

Ideal of the University

Robert P. Wolff

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Robert P. Wolff : Ideal of the University before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ideal of the University:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. The Ideal of the UniversityBy A CustomerRobert Wolff's The Ideal of the University is a very interesting and stimulating book. He proposes an ideal model of undergraduate education from the perspective of a socialist, philosopher, and educator. The interesting thing about his book is not only his super-creative and somewhat crazy ideas, but also how he honestly presents his ideas and responds to the anticipated questions and concerns over his arguments. Several times I found myself questioning his arguments and then in the next paragraph or two he would respond to my questions. I do not necessarily agree with his points, but I found this "conversation" very thought provoking and interesting.

The Ideal of the University is a lucid, comprehensive analysis of the rationale, principles, and presuppositions that make contemporary universities what they are. The book begins with four sharp, carefully delineated models of a university. After analyzing such controversial issues as the role of grading in the university and the "myth" of value neutrality. Wolff turns to the crucial question of how the university should be governed. He argues for a radical reconstruction based on a "social contract" that would place ultimate authority in the hands of the faculty and students. The book concludes with a series of "practical proposals for Utopian reform," including such provocative recommendations as a variable-length, ungraded undergraduate program and elimination of the Ph.D. degree. In his introduction to this new edition, Wolff expands upon his original speculations to argue in substantive detail for the

liberating potential of the liberal arts. Drawing upon Freud and Marcuse, Wolff proposes that literature, art, and philosophy embody a promise of gratification that engenders a negative critique of the social and cultural status quo. The rationale for the liberal arts university is society's need for a reservoir of critical thinking that is the motor of social, economic, and political progress. Elegantly written and passionately argued; *The Ideal of the University* is essential reading for educators and sociologists.

About the Author Robert Paul Wolff is professor of philosophy at the University of Massachusetts. His books include *The Poverty of Liberalism*, *The Autonomy of Reason*, *In Defense of Anarchism*, and *Understanding Marx*. Robert Paul Wolff is professor of philosophy at the University of Massachusetts. His books include *The Poverty of Liberalism*, *The Autonomy of Reason*, *In Defense of Anarchism*, and *Understanding Marx*.