

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the status and prospects of the general field of the Humanities in the contemporary university. It begins with an acknowledgement that the Humanities have experienced an intellectual and cultural demotion within modern societies over the past few centuries, as a result of the momentous impact that the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions have had on contemporary life, particularly within modern universities, whose curricula have been dominated by subjects located within the fields of the natural and social sciences, which have a crucial instrumental and functional contribution to make towards the perpetuation and improvement of modern technological society.

The thesis provides an historical perspective on the emergence of the humanities, which, in general, enjoyed an intellectual and cultural status from the inception of the European universities in the 12th century through to the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century. It examines their relative decline as the natural and social sciences gained their ascendancy in university curricula over the centuries since the inception of the Industrial Revolution, and considers justifications for the presence of the humanities in university curricula today.

In presenting a vindication of the place of the humanities in the contemporary university, the thesis focuses on their indispensability for a liberal education, which is itself necessitated by the interminable and irreducible epistemological and ethical disputes that characterize the pursuit of knowledge itself. It also claims that since the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions have produced a proliferation of professionals, who constitute the social and economic core of modern society, the universities have a responsibility to complement these professionals' education in the natural and social sciences with an education in the humanities to ensure that their epistemological and ethical understandings meet the stringent demands of the modern world.