

versity become once again the scene of real pursuit of truth, especially moral truth. It is the merit of this book to provide the theoretical framework which can guide our efforts toward this goal.

—Reviewed by David Gallagher

The Mission of the University

Universities and the Future of

America, by Derek Bok, *Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990. ix + 136 pp. \$14.95.*

PRESIDENTS OF UNIVERSITIES are expected to comment from time to time on the relation of higher education to the greater society and in the United States it is not uncommon for the presidents of the leading prestigious universities particularly to make some kind of national impact. Harvard's Derek Bok did this earlier in a much more extended form in *Beyond the Ivory Tower. Social Responsibilities of the Modern University and Higher Learning* (1982). Many of the same problems discussed there are much more briefly discussed in this little book which is an expansion of the Sanford Lectures delivered at Duke University on March 23 and 24, 1988. These lectures were sponsored by the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust Endowment Fund in honor of Terry Sanford and arranged by the Institute for Policy Sciences and Public Affairs of Duke University. They show Bok's continued concern that universities address the country's most pressing social problems in ways that will fruitfully utilize the expertise of the universities and through mutual cooperation enable academic leaders, trustees, foundations, and government agencies develop strategies "to help America surmount the obstacles that threaten to sap our economic strength

and blight the lives of millions of people."

Bok believes he is raising two different issues in his lectures: Are universities doing all they can to meet the many challenges that affect our ability to maintain a growing competitive economy while providing adequate security and opportunity for all our citizens? Are our universities doing all they can to build a stronger sense of civic responsibility, ethical awareness, and concern for the interests of others? Bok expects that the universities can do much more than they are now doing to assist in developing an efficient corporate management, technological progress, competent government, effective public schools, and the alleviation of crime, poverty, drug abuse, alcoholism, and illiteracy. And he believes in programs in moral education as an essential concomitant to American society's improvement.

All advanced countries depend on new discoveries, highly trained personnel, and expert knowledge and Bok would argue that universities are especially important for providing these in one way or another. In reviewing older views of higher education, Harvard's president who will have served twenty years in that capacity by the time of his announced retirement from that job at the end of the 1990-1991 academic year, would suggest that "the true mission of universities would be to nurture a healthy balance between applied intellectual pursuits and the search for truth and meaning for their own sake." Bok need not forget that Harvard's own motto is *Veritas* (Truth)—and this little book would insist that the "truths" of universities should be made available in an "applied" way to the greater society.

Bok wants "to make students more perceptive in detecting ethical problems when they arise, better acquainted with the best moral thought that has accumulated through the ages, and more equipped to reason about ethical issues they will

face in their own personal and professional lives." Medical schools have taken the lead in courses or programs in professional ethics but other professional schools, including business and law, have been slow or reluctant to follow. Such courses are often bypassed because of issues involving accusations of indoctrination, on the one hand, and ethical relativism, on the other. Still, Bok insists that moral education must be a high priority because "offering courses in applied ethics at the college and professional school level, discussing rules of conduct with students and administering them fairly, building strong programs of community service demonstrating high ethical standards in dealing with moral issues facing the university, and, finally, being more alert to the countless signals that institutions send to students and trying to make these messages support rather than undermine basic norms" are the basics of a comprehensive program of moral education.

Bok acknowledges that he is being critical of the current behavior of American institutions of higher education because he believes that they can do much more for a society that needs all the help it can get, but one has to wonder whether the universities themselves are not already too much a reflection of the greater society itself with all its shortcomings and they themselves need moral reform before they attempt—for all their idealism—to reform society. Will not even further involvement with the world outside academe corrupt even further those within it? Derek Bok's proposals, well intended as they certainly are, would risk the possibility that universities would become the captives and servants of their social environment even more than they currently are. *Quis custodes custodiet?*

—Reviewed by John E. Rexine