

BOOK REVIEWS

Rules of the Game

Academic Duty. DONALD KENNEDY. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1997. viii, 310 pp., \$29.95 or £19.95. ISBN 0-674-00222-9.

"Academic freedom has a counterpart, academic duty, that is much more seldom used. Democratic societies such as ours regard these two as opposite sides of the same coin. John Gardner put it well when he said, of the symmetry between individual freedom and communitarian obligation, 'Liberty and duty, freedom and responsibility: that's the deal.'"

That, indeed, is the deal. Why then, when we talk so freely about academic freedom, does academic duty sound so much less idiomatic?"

So asks Donald Kennedy, Bing Professor of Environmental Science and president emeritus of Stanford University, in an important and timely book that explores the implications of academic responsibility and the obligations of the professoriate. The importance of this book lies in the fact that, within the university, "professional responsibility" is taught to everyone except those headed for the university itself. The book is timely because, if professors are unwilling to establish reasonable norms and standards for their own professional conduct and performance, others—who will be less qualified and less sympathetic—will do so. Anyone who doubts this contention should consider the number of states now specifying minimum teaching loads in their universities, previous congressional investigations of indirect costs and alleged scientific fraud, and the present congressional inquiry into tuition levels at universities and colleges. Congressman John Dingell of Michigan, who has led some of these investigations, receives conspicuous mention in the book.

The major areas of faculty responsibility—preparation, teaching, mentoring, service to the university and beyond, research, publication, and integrity—are each re-

viewed. The discussions are thoughtful, lucid, and enlivened with examples and case studies, both fictitious and real. Kennedy writes as both an observer and participant with regard to many of these important activities and the difficult questions they have provoked.

Each broad topic, of course, raises a host of practical questions: What should be taught? What of evaluation and grading? How can the usefulness of letters of recommendation be preserved in a litigious age? What is the impact of electronic communication on traditional publication? Has tenure outlived its usefulness? Should there be limits to external consulting? How should research misconduct be judged? Some might cavil that the treatment of these topics is not always as balanced as one might expect—some 75 percent of a 20-page chapter on student mentoring, for example, is devoted to credit for authorship (9 pages) and sexual harassment (6



Donald Kennedy at Stanford.

pages). However, these two problems are divisive, difficult, and becoming more pressing. And, while I might like more discussion about the nature and role of mentoring, I will happily settle for the glimpses one is given of a fine mentor—Donald Kennedy—in action, as he describes the value of academic advising: "personal caring and interest," "the most meaningful and memorable influences," "the special joy in watching a student succeed," and his recognition of mentoring as "the highest form of academic duty."

Other large and difficult topics—graduate education, plagiarism, faculty governance, presidential leadership—are discussed creatively. The writing is lean, lively, thoughtful, sensitive, balanced, and never pedantic. Because the topic is large, and the issues complex, there are, inevitably, few crisp solutions or normative prescriptions. The value of the book lies in its breadth of

coverage and the thoughtfulness and fairness of its treatment of these issues.

One conclusion is clear: Change is required. For all the vast investment in universities over the past half century, Kennedy concludes: "In some respects the changes have been meager, and in others have moved in the wrong direction. Departments are still the focus of academic development in the university, but their leadership has tended to narrow its vision and interests, thereby losing its public voice and regard." How then can change come about? It will come, Kennedy argues, by reclamation of the central mission of the university: "Its improvement must entail putting students and their needs first. Once that is done, the rest falls into place Placing students first is a simple design principle, but it has great power."

That message, simple and direct, is one that universities need to hear. And the most distinguished universities perhaps need to hear it most. After it is established, all other aspects of academic duty follow.

Donald Kennedy has given us a splendid book on a topic of great importance. Without a serious debate on the meaning of academic duty, and increased respect for its implications, universities can neither hope to play a fully effective and responsible social role, nor expect the level of public trust and private support that their mission requires.

Frank H. T. Rhodes
President Emeritus,
Cornell University,
Ithaca, NY 14853, USA

Reprints of Books Previously Reviewed

The Heavens and the Earth. A Political History of the Space Age. Walter A. McDougall. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1997. Paper, \$19.95. ISBN 0-8018-5748-1. *Reviewed* 230, 1154 (1985).

The Lives to Come. The Genetic Revolution and Human Possibilities. Philip Kitcher. Touchstone Books (Simon and Schuster), New York, 1997. Paper, \$14 or C\$19. ISBN 0-684-82705-5. *Reviewed* 274, 1147 (1996).

Making PCR. A Story of Biotechnology. Paul Rabinow. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1997. Paper, \$12.95 or £10.25. ISBN 0-226-70147-6. *Reviewed* 274, 934 (1996).

Mathematics of the Incas. Code of the Quipu. Marcia Ascher and Robert Ascher. Dover, New York, 1997. Paper, \$11.95. ISBN 0-486-29554-0. Reprint of *Code of the Quipa*. *Reviewed* 216, 869 (1982).

Science on Trial. The Clash of Medical Evidence and the Law in the Breast Implant Case. Norton, New York, 1997. Paper, \$13.95 or C\$17.99. ISBN 0-393-31672-6. *Reviewed* 273, 917 (1996).

Suffering Made Real. American Science and the Survivors at Hiroshima. M. Susan Lindee. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1997. Paper, \$15.95 or £12.75. ISBN 0-226-48238-3. *Reviewed* 268, 1201 (1995).