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A Review of David H. Smith, "Entrusted: The Moral Responsibilities of Trusteeship"

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Comments

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Josiah Royce once said that the world is a progressively realized community of interpretation. Certainly that is true of the world of trustees in nonprofit organizations, according to David H. Smith. Trustees have a responsibility to interpret the mission of their institution in light of its history and changing circumstances. They must do so within the bounds imposed by two further responsibilities: fidelity to the purposes of donors and respect for the common good, or at least for common decency. Smith insightfully explores the difficulties in applying and in resolving conflicts among these responsibilities. Of special interest are his detailed accounts of case studies such as the controversial exhibit of Robert Mapplethorpe's homoerotic art at the Corcoran Art Gallery, the Catholic Church's conflict with theologian Charles Curran, the football scandal at Southern Methodist University, and an abortion controversy involving Planned Parenthood and the United Way. The book examines, albeit briefly, issues concerning paternalism, representation, deception, and loyalty in an area of inquiry largely ignored by philosophers. It deserves attention from applied ethicists, in addition to being essential reading for trustees.

M. W. M.