

H. STAN THAYER, 1923-2008

Horace Standish Thayer was born on May 6, 1923 in New York City, and died on August 8, 2008, in South Nyack, New York.

Stan grew up in Columbus, Ohio, and Dobbs Ferry, New York, before attending Bard College in the Hudson River Valley and graduating with his BA in 1945. Concentrating on American philosophy and pragmatism, he earned the MA in 1947 and the Ph.D. in philosophy in 1949 from Columbia University, studying with Ernest Nagel, Herbert Schneider, and John H. Randall, Jr. He stayed at Columbia to teach philosophy from 1949 to 1961. Then he moved to City College of New York to teach from 1961 until his retirement as Professor Emeritus in 1990. While at City College he chaired the philosophy department from 1965 to 1968.

Thayer was the recipient of numerous honors. He was awarded a Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship in 1970 and a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship in 1974-75. He was a member of the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study in 1974-75 and 1982-83. Thayer was Vice President of The John Dewey Foundation, served on the editorial board of the *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, and served on advisory boards for the Peirce Edition Project and for the editions of the correspondence of both William James and John Dewey. He received the Herbert W. Schneider Award for contributions to American philosophy from the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy in 1989. Although Thayer published numerous essays and articles about all of the major pragmatists, his research on John Dewey's philosophy has been the most penetrating and influential. His 1952 book *The Logic of Pragmatism: An Examination of John Dewey's Logic* was the first full-length exposition of Dewey's theory of inquiry and knowledge. This valuable book and subsequent articles have powerfully shaped Deweyan scholarship.

Thayer's interests extended beyond American philosophy, including several publications on ancient philosophy. However, Thayer's definitive histories of pragmatism are his major works and have served for decades as the most comprehensive studies available. The first edition of *Meaning and Action: A Critical History of Pragmatism* appeared in 1968 and remained in high demand as the best single volume examination of both the primary and secondary figures of pragmatism. The greatly expanded edition of *Meaning and Action: A Critical History of Pragmatism* (1981) still stands as the essential guide to classical pragmatism and its figures in America and Europe. His anthology *Pragmatism, the Classic Writings* (1970) remains in print as well. Thayer's tremendous scholarly efforts were essential to the preservation and appreciation of classical pragmatism during an era of analytic philosophy's neglect for the traditions of American philosophy.

In high school Stan Thayer was a fine athlete who played football, basketball, and baseball. Years later, after getting his doctorate in Philosophy at Columbia, Thayer ran into his old high school coach who, unimpressed with his academic achievement, remarked that he would have made a good baseball player. Before getting interested in philosophy,

Thayer attended the Yale University School of Art where he established a lifelong friendship with fellow student and artist Leonard Baskin. Although Thayer painted and drew throughout the tenure of his professional career, retirement allowed him the time to work prolifically at his art in a great variety of media. As a writer, Thayer was deeply influenced by the works of Byron, Shelley, Keats and Shakespeare. He could quote passages from Shakespeare's plays and sonnets at length, and enjoyed writing verse of his own. His children's stories have been a continuing source of delight for his grandchildren. While at the Institute for Advanced Study in 1974-75, Thayer published a letter to the editor of the New York Times regarding the depletion of the ozone layer and the need to preserve our environment for future generations. This led to an invitation by Jacques Cousteau for Thayer to join the Cousteau Society's Board of Advisors, and to a lifelong friendship with Cousteau. Those who knew Stan Thayer will also remember his love of the ponds, birds, and beaches of Cape Cod, and the great games of tennis which were played around the town of Truro.

John R. Shook, University at Buffalo, and the Children of H. S. Thayer
