

## MEMORIAL NOTICE

# In Memoriam: Terence M. Penelhum

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Terence M. Penelhum, a cofounder of this journal, “was born in Bradford-on-Avon, England, and demonstrated genius at an early age. From his late teens, his entire life was devoted to two great loves, his wife Edith and his academic work. From Edinburgh University to Oxford to Yale and then to Alberta, he and Edith followed Terry’s scholarships and academic opportunities. He authored eight academic books and contributed to many others. He wrote dozens of articles and papers, and traveled the world to speak to other scholars, receiving collegial recognition and awards.”<sup>1</sup> Deeply appreciated by his colleagues and students at the university of Calgary, where he spent most of his career, and internationally respected among scholars in philosophy and religious studies, Terry was awarded the Alberta Achievement Award in 1987 and the Canada Council Molson Prize for the Humanities and Social Sciences in 1988.

From the very beginning of his studies, Terry was consumed with two philosophical questions: the possibility of religious knowledge and the possibility of survival after death. He engaged these issues in his winning entry to *Analysis* Competition No. 11,<sup>2</sup> in *Survival and Disembodied Existence*,<sup>3</sup> *Religion and Rationality*,<sup>4</sup> *God and Skepticism*,<sup>5</sup> and in many articles and books.<sup>6</sup> Finding the most systematic and sustained arguments on these topics in the works of David Hume, he returned again and again to Hume. His first published paper is “Hume on Personal Identity,”<sup>7</sup> and his last academic book is *Themes in Hume: The Self, The Will, Religion*.<sup>8</sup> In 1994, his work was celebrated by colleagues and critics in *Faith, Scepticism and Personal Identity: Essays in Honour of Terence Penelhum*.<sup>9</sup>

Terry Penelhum’s work in and for philosophy was not limited to writing and teaching. He played a central role in establishing institutions that continue to flourish half a century later. Arriving at the Calgary branch campus of the University of Alberta in 1963, Terry began building a department of distinguished Anglo-American philosophers, among them Antony Flew, Kai Nielsen, and Zeno Vendler. His view of philosophy was neither parochial nor partisan; he invited colleagues with interests far from his own and some who vigorously opposed his own views. He created a summer institute that attracted well-known philosophers and talented graduate students, then established one of the first graduate programmes at the newly independent University of Calgary. The department and the graduate programme continue to attract colleagues and students from around the world.

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<sup>1</sup>“Obituary Terence Penelhum,” *Calgary Herald*, March 4, 2020. Written by his daughter, Rosemary Sargent. I follow her in referring to him as “Terry,” the name by which he was known to colleagues, critics, and friends.

<sup>2</sup>Winning entry, *Analysis* Competition No. 11, *Analysis* XVII (1957).

<sup>3</sup>*Survival and Disembodied Existence* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970).

<sup>4</sup>*Religion and Rationality* (New York: Random House, 1971), xvi and 393.

<sup>5</sup>*God and Skepticism: A Study in Skepticism and Fideism* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983).

<sup>6</sup>See also *Problems of Religious Knowledge* (London: Macmillan, 1971).

<sup>7</sup>*Philosophical Review*, LXIV (1955): 571–89.

<sup>8</sup>Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000.

<sup>9</sup>J. J. MacIntosh and H. A. Meynell, eds., *Faith, Scepticism and Personal Identity: Essays in Honour of Terence Penelhum* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1994).

In the 1960s, philosophers were widely scattered across the Canadian prairies and only a few were able to make the trek to the annual meetings of the Canadian Philosophical Association, usually held in Eastern Canada. During the 1963 CPA meeting in Québec, a few philosophers from Manitoba and Saskatchewan gathered in Terry's hotel room to talk about a philosophy meeting in the west. So that fall, philosophers from the prairie universities met for a day, sharing a few papers and discussion. The Western Canadian Philosophical Association, as these meetings came to be called, has grown into a three-day conference with concurrent sessions, commentators, and distinguished guest speakers. A model of anarchic organization, the WCPA has endured over fifty years without a constitution, by-laws, officers, or formal funding and is brought together each year by volunteers motivated by the sole desire to meet and share philosophical work.<sup>10</sup>

In 1970, Terry met with colleagues in Calgary and Edmonton to establish a new publication, the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*. Their aim was to create an international journal to publish the best work in any area of philosophy in French or English. Working as a team, they refereed submitted papers and brought out the first issue in 1971. They kept receiving so many high-quality submissions, many from outside Canada, that they found it necessary to publish supplementary volumes of essays focussed on single topics. The first of these, *New Essays in the History of Philosophy* and *New Essays in Philosophy of Mind*, appeared in 1975.<sup>11</sup>

Terry's academic work extended beyond the bounds of his discipline. As dean from 1965 to 1967, he led Calgary's Faculty of Arts and Sciences through the challenging transition from branch campus to independent university. He served a term as president of the Canadian Philosophical Association, was a consultant on academic planning to the Council of Ontario Universities, and reviewed graduate programmes in Philosophy and Religious Studies for the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies. He chaired both the Negotiated Grants Committee and the Advisory Academic Panel of the Canada Council.

When the Calgary Institute for the Humanities was established in 1976 to promote innovative research in the humanities, he was appointed its first director and guided the institute through its early years. Terry believed that the role of religions and religious practices in human thought and social organization was largely ignored in course offerings at the University of Calgary. His efforts to remedy this defect were rewarded in 1978 with the founding of the Department of Religious Studies where he remained until his retirement from the University in 1988.

In 1989, Terry once again answered the call to service when the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada appointed him to the Commission to Evaluate the *Book of Alternative Services*, a contemporary counterpart to the *Book of Common Prayer*. The final report, with substantial contributions by Terry, was produced in 1995.

Terry Penelhum's lifelong intellectual enterprise was to develop a systematic philosophy, a rival to Hume's, that would demonstrate the rationality of religious belief. His own religious commitments changed during his academic career, and he spent the last years of his life a Christian. He continued to address difficulties raised by his critics and expanded his views on ethics in two more books: *Reason and Religious Faith* and *Christian Ethics and Human Nature*.<sup>12</sup> Commenting on Terry's contributions, Peter Loftson wrote:

Penelhum's stance in philosophy of religion is exemplary. Few thinkers in this area manifest the conjunction of synoptic intelligence and intellectual honesty that Penelhum displays.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Béla Szabados, *Once Upon a Time in the West: The Making of the Western Canadian Philosophical Association 1963–2004* (Academic Printing and Publishing, Kelowna, 2005).

<sup>11</sup>A note on the history of the founding is on the *CJP* website: <https://www.canadianjournalofphilosophy.com/>. Information on all the issues and supplementary volumes is available on the Cambridge University Press website: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/canadian-journal-of-philosophy/all-issues>.

<sup>12</sup>*Reason and Religious Faith* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995); *Christian Ethics and Human Nature* (London: SCM Press, 2000).

<sup>13</sup>*Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 27, no. 1 (March 1997).

Edith and Terry were together for sixty-six years. At home in Calgary, they were cordial and generous hosts, and gracious in providing support to colleagues and friends. In 1975, they suffered a terrible blow when their teenage son, Andrew, died from a fall. Beginning in 1980, they enjoyed visiting England together where Terry held several visiting appointments including one at the University of Edinburgh where their life together began. They were finally separated by Edith's death in 2016. Terry was supported and comforted in the years following Edith's death by their daughter, Rosemary Sargent. He died on February 27, 2020.