

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

JEFFERY SMITH (1907 – 1981)

Jeffery Smith, Professor Emeritus of Humanities and Philosophy, died on September 27, 1981, in the fortieth year of his life among the Stanford community. The son of missionary parents in India, he received his higher education in this country and in England, earning his doctorate at Columbia University and also studying with several noted humanistic scholars at Oxford. Before he came to Stanford, courses in general humanities had been very few, and all of them dealt exclusively with literature in translation. But in 1942, the year of his arrival, the School of Humanities was organized, and its dean, Professor John W. Dodds, brought in a group of four new faculty members to enlarge and diversify the offerings in humanities. None of the other appointees remained long at Stanford, but Jeffery Smith was to be a prominent, inspirational, controversial, and much-beloved member of the faculty until his retirement in 1972.

The list of courses and seminars that he introduced is impressive in its range, its innovativeness, and its suggestiveness for later developments by other colleagues. Among them were *The Arts and Civilization*, *Values and Ideas in Literature*, *Human Values and the Machine* (a forerunner, perhaps, of the present program in Values, Technology, and Society?), and his famous series on *World Personalities*. In his seminars in *The Arts and the Humanities*, he did not permit his students merely to read and talk grandly about human artistic achievements. As a philosopher of aesthetics, which he also taught for many years after his appointment to the Department of Philosophy in 1945, he knew that one may best explore and comprehend creative processes through producing artifacts of one's own. Evidence of his own artistic creativity endures around us in the dwellings that he designed or improved for colleagues and for others who recognized his exceptional architectural talents.

In the classroom, he could baffle, frustrate, and mystify his auditors, for he taught as he lived -- usually idiosyncratically, sometimes inscrutably, always productively. He was concerned with helping others to find not the right answers to the wrong questions, but the right questions. He wanted everyone to discover his or her own questions, for he believed in students and knew how to teach them to believe in themselves. As with his students, so with his fellow professors: he dazzled some and dazed others with his leaps of the imagination, yet in soaring above the flock he somehow remained behind his colleagues, always with encouraging support, often with gentle proddings. He knew that it is through what men and women think and through what they do and make that they become most human. Because Jeffery Smith communicated that knowledge so well, he truly fulfilled in this University his mission as a teacher of philosophy and the humanities.

Lawrence V. Ryan, Chairman
William A. Clebsch
John W. Dodds

John D. LaPlante