BRILL

Obituary

Michael Wagner, 1952-2020

On March 11, 2020, Michael Wagner died in the Coronado Hospital in San Diego, where he was undergoing treatment for laryngeal cancer with head and neck malignancy. Michael was born in Victoria, Texas on September 29, 1952. He received his B.A. in Philosophy from Texas A&M and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Ohio State University. His dissertation was entitled *Concepts and Causes: The Structure of Plotinus' Universe*. He began teaching at the University of San Diego in 1980, where he served as an associate dean in 1988-89 and as chair of the Department of Philosophy from 1988 until 1998. He continued teaching there until he entered the Coronado Hospital in November 2019.

Michael's publications are known and used by all of us. His research centered on Plotinus, but his interests also extended to Augustine—and, of course, Plato and Aristotle. In 2008 he published *The Enigmatic Reality of Time* in the Brill series "Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition." In 2002 he edited the anthology *Neoplatonism and Nature: Studies in Plotinus' Enneads* in the series "Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern" of SUNY Press. 1991 saw his *Moral Philosophy: An Historical Introduction* published by Prentice Hall. He has published multiple articles, including "Platonism" in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia: Ethics and Philosophy Supplement* (2013), "Plotinus on the Nature of Physical Reality," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* and most recently "Foundations of Ecology in Plotinus' Neoplatonism" in the ISNS anthology from the 2018 Los Angeles conference, *Platonic Interpretations* (published by Prometheus Trust).

At the University of San Diego, Michael taught courses across the spectrum, including courses on Platonism, Augustine, Aquinas, Kant, logic, and the philosophy of science. One of his undergraduate students summed up his role as her teacher this way: "Professor Wagner is an adorable nice old man and will

answer any questions you have during class or office hours”—a description that captures his affability and his desire to assist students in their learning.

Michael had been a member of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies for over forty years. He edited its newsletter from 1982 until 2004, had served on the Board of Directors since 1998, and was its Secretary-Treasurer from 2004.

I knew Michael for over twenty years. We have worked together on many ISNS projects, and I was always grateful for his calm and his attention to detail. I am going to miss his advice, which he would dole out with care and tact. No one could explain his views more clearly and gently than he. Even when he and I disagreed (which did happen occasionally), he never became angry or frustrated but simply laid out the facts calmly and logically. I was never sorry that I took his advice to heart. I will miss his humor as well and our many email conversations. Michael was a major force and a guiding light in the ISNS.

Michael was only 67 years old when he died. He is survived by a sister, Gayle, brother, Dennis, two nieces and a nephew, and by his beloved Sue Higgins. His body was cremated in San Diego, and his remains were returned to his native Texas for burial. His legacy of scholarship, devotion, and caring will live on.

John F. Finamore

University of Iowa