



## CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY Faculty Senate

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### **Associate Professor Emeritus Michael R. Baumer, Philosophy**

Professor Michael Baumer, who was born and raised in Chicago and raised in Indiana began his career at Cleveland State University in the fall of 1976. He was married to Lida Allen, whom he met here at Cleveland State University. She retired in 2009 from the division of information technology. Michael retired in 2013 after 37 years of service. He continued to teach up until the spring of 2017 when he fell ill and was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. It was this disease that was responsible for his death on April 19, 2019.

For those of you who did not know Michael, he had the kind of appearance and temperament people frequently associate with being a philosopher. He was tall, on the slim side and had a long whitish-gray beard and equally long and graying hair, which was never fettered. He was rather soft spoken and seemed more at home in the land of abstract thought. I once encountered him in the then Main Classroom around six in the evening, ambling down a long hallway deep in thought. I greeted him, and asked what he was doing in Main Classroom and he replied that he had class. I noted it was after six, the time for an evening class to start and he responded, “Oh, I don’t do time.”

His dissertation, *A Possible-Worlds Reconstruction of Duns Scotus's Proof for the Existence of God*, completed at the University of Notre Dame, provides evidence of his passion for logic as much as in medieval philosophy. Professor Baumer had a keen interest and proficiency in logic, especially modal logic, which is the study of the deductive behavior of the expressions ‘it is necessary that’ and ‘it is possible that.’ Wanting to take a quick look at an article based on his dissertation, I blew the dust off the 1980 volume of the journal *New Scholasticism* in the Michael Schwartz Library. What I read was an elegant presentation of how Scotus’s argument for the existence of a first efficient cause is flawed, based on the work of philosophers from the 1970s and Michael’s application of modal logic to medieval proofs for the existence of a first efficient cause, or God. While his interest in logic never waned, Michael broadened his purview by, as it were, reaching back, and he became a skilled scholar and teacher of the works of Plato and Aristotle. He also taught ancient Greek, sometimes for no credit, because he thought it was important to offer those interested in learning the language the opportunity to do so. The title of one of his journal articles, published in 1993, “Chasing Aristotle’s Categories Down the Tree of Grammar,” indicates his continued love affair with ancient texts, language, and logic. His passion for learning led him to study physics here at CSU and in 2004, Michael earned a Bachelor of Science degree, in physics—his first bachelor’s degree was in history.

I became department chair after Michael had retired and was teaching part time. He delighted in the opportunity to continue to teach, especially a course he developed, Philosophy and Science Fiction. He was teaching an upper level logic course to seniors and the last students to graduate from our Master’s Program when he fell ill. It pained him greatly not to be able to finish the last few weeks of the semester and he kept hoping he would regain enough strength to return to the classroom. Alas, that was not to be. Please join me in a moment of thought for Dr. Michael Baumer and a life of the mind well lived.

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