

National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Department of Philosophy / Roinn na Fealsúnachta

Professor John Cleary (1949 – 2009)

It was with deep regret that the university community at NUI Maynooth learned of the death of Professor John Cleary of the Philosophy Department on Easter Sunday morning (April 12). He died while undergoing a liver transplant operation in St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin. Professor Cleary joined the Department of Philosophy in 1991. He was also Professor of Philosophy at Boston College since 1988, and was elected a member of the Royal Irish Academy in 1997. John Cleary received his Ph.D. (summa cum laude) in Philosophy from Boston University in 1981 for his dissertation on Aristotle's Theory of Abstraction, which was published in 1982. This was followed by two further books dedicated to Aristotle: Aristotle on the Many Senses of Priority (1998) and Aristotle and Mathematics (1995), both of which were widely acclaimed both inside and beyond the world of Ancient Philosophy. He also edited two volumes of essays: The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism (1997) and Traditions of Platonism (1999). In 1985, Professor Cleary founded the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy, the Proceedings of which he published until the time of his death. He was awarded the Alexander Von Humboldt Research Fellowship on three occasions (1989, 1993 & 1998), and was the recipient of the NEH University Research Fellowship in 1996 for his work on "The Mathematical Basis for the Theology of Proclus". A student of Karl Popper, Alasdair MacIntyre and Hans-Georg Gadamer, Professor Cleary was widely admired at Maynooth for his conscientious approach towards students and colleagues, and the manner in which he sought to advance interdisciplinary work across all faculties. In February 2008, Professor Cleary was appointed Acting Head of Philosophy following Professor Thomas Kelly's untimely death. It is universally acknowledged that he steered the Department through that traumatic period with admirable sensitivity and skill. His tragic death is yet another great loss to the Philosophy Department and the University that he served so diligently and tirelessly. May he rest in peace.

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