

**In Memoriam: Gerald Gaus
(1952 - 2020)**

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University of Arizona Rogers Professor of Philosophy Gerald Gaus unexpectedly died asleep in the early hours of August 19, 2020. He was Head of the Department of Political Economy and Moral Science as well as a distinguished member of the Department of Philosophy. Prior to his appointment at the University of Arizona, Professor Gaus served on the regular faculties of Tulane University, the University of Minnesota, Queensland University, the Australian National University, and Wake Forest University.

Respiratory failure due to cardiac stenosis stole this spectacularly original and extraordinarily influential political philosopher from his family, friends, and the search for truth. Since the death of John Rawls very few have tempered and tested the liberal tradition as importantly as did Jerry Gaus. None have written more profoundly about the place and problem of irreconcilable disagreements among members of democratic societies. Tragic that his light should go dark when its illumination could not be more important - as it is somewhere inscribed - to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

Throughout their long marriage Jerry was in love with his hometown and ever-only sweetheart, Andrea. And with her first in his heart was their precious daughter, Kelly. His family was paramount for Jerry. But such an intensely private man would never publicize anything as personal as that. Still, those who knew this catholic thinker as well as he would permit, understood that he most treasured neither sparkling trinkets nor professional praise but rather individual personal relationships - the separate threads, weft and warp, we, if wise, willingly weave into our social fabric. Perhaps that is why Jerry held his friends so closely and gave himself with such unbounded generosity to his students - regardless of their talents and prospects - when they brought their unflinching best to rigorous reason. His respect for integrity, personal and intellectual, matched this too rare virtue all the way to its elusive asymptote. And when Jerry saw it in someone, he saw a friend.

By summer's last hurrah in the Southwest the punishing sun blisters quartz at noon. Not a bad time to escape the furnace. But when it descends behind the mountains at the end of a scorching day, the solar reactor mercifully relents. The roasted air cools just enough to coax the critters from their burrows. Owls hoot; coyotes howl; students stir. It is about that

time of year when doctoral aspirants most everywhere, bearing books and boxes, hit the road *en route* to their beckoning fall seminars. So, Kelly too is wending her way - first north, then east. Jerry and Andrea have hitched a ride from the inferno of the low Sonoran desert to the elevated juncture where the Kaibab plateau forsakes Arizona for Utah and trades the Grand Canyon for Zion. The thirsty tan desert, now to the travelers backs, has risen into quenched verdant meadow. Tent pitched, daughter and father are playing catch in the evening's lingering twilight, glad for the simple pleasure that this kind moment allows. The iambic meter of hurled horsehide snapping into receptive leather: whoosh snap, whoosh snap, whoosh snap. Andrea watches, silently coaching her knuckleballers - not knowing; never imagining - this to be the last time they are to be together. Good, perhaps best, that it should end this way. Maybe Jerry would have scripted his exit just so. Silent joy shared within a trinity who created a life - like any, imperfect, but - unlike many, just about as good as it gets in defiance of entropy. Is there a better way to walk off the field when the game is done?

Jerry was a philosopher of the first order. The American Philosophical Association bestowed its 2009 Kavka Award well and wisely. However, the founding co-editor of *Politics, Philosophy, & Economics* (PPE) and a leading figure in what would become that journal's complex domain of inquiry refused the limitations adopted by the disciplined hedgehog. Rather, this daring fox took his lessons from an array of any, if not all, of the subjects that bear upon the natural norms by which cooperating incarnate individuals coalesce into inevitably squabbling communities. The hardscrabble public school kid from rusty Buffalo climbed over the fence to win his B.A. in 1974 from the State's university in the better part of that town. Five years later he earned the Ph.D. in political science - no, not philosophy - from the University of Pittsburgh. Jerry leapt into a career that would become richly interdisciplinary, steeped in empirical science, and finally inspired by formal modelling. Jerry was fearless of the risks to his career involved in searching through the confusing fog for undiscovered peaks in the shrouded theoretical landscape. He welcomed the renegade thought that political philosophy, done properly and washed down with the best beer on tap, is largely the philosophy of the social and psychological sciences. For surely their discoveries must inform any plausible explanation of how and why, when things go well for naturally selected primates of our sort, life is a little less solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short than Hobbes would otherwise have it.

Jerry was a marvelous mentor for his students. While some distinguished scholars favor profitable exchange with lucid graduate students over trade deficits with bewildered undergraduates, Jerry's quiet devotion to all of his dedicated students qualifies as legendary. When I was Department Head, I would often wander up the stairs to Jerry's remote office, just to chat with such a damned smart and always funny guy about this or that at the end of a long day after the halls had gone mute. Night owl Jerry would have recently arrived on his rickety bike. But more often than not, when I would appear at his den, that good professor would impatiently shoo me away from the door. Me! The pontifical, croziered and august signatory of all faculty paychecks and arbiter of

promotions! Flabbergasting! Prudence abandoned! But the inveterate tutor would already have been busy, happily huddled with his hodgepodge PPE juniors and seniors flocked to his office hours. First things first; last things last. Guess, if you can, the pontiff's place in Jerry's queue! How my good friend managed also to pour inexhaustible energy into his dissertators after so much time and effort cultivating his green sprouts remains a riddle in thermodynamics. And how, exactly, did he first create and then direct Arizona's enormously successful PPE major? Yet, somehow in recent years Jerry directed, here and at Tulane, impressive dissertations by terrific students, all of whom have since advanced to successful careers, thanks in no small part for their demanding but inspiring teacher. Don't believe me? Just ask them:

- Julinna Oxley
- Jonathan Anomaly
- Kevin Vallier
- John Thrasher
- Brian Kogelmann
- Chad von Schoelandt
- Jacob Barrett
- Adam Gjesdal

Immediately upon his unanticipated death, many of Jerry's close colleagues and former students spontaneously wrote in different ways and in several venues their own touching memorials to the philosopher whose brilliance they admire and whose friendship they will forever cherish. They are among the many who either have read with respect his nine - soon to be ten - books and many papers, sat in his seminars, or attended his invited public lectures. Read what they say about Jerry, and you cannot help but infer that they count themselves luckier than lottery winners for knowing him and his ideas as well as they variously did. Their consensus is that Jerry's *The Order of Public Reason* stands out as his towering achievement. But some of the privileged few who have studied in draft form his posthumous *The Open Society and Its Complexities* venture that it may prove to be his most lasting contribution to understanding the dynamic nature of justifiable political arrangements once moral merit is liberated from approximation to irrelevant, if not fictitious, Platonic ideals. Jerry did not genuflect before either idols or ideals.

Alone, I cannot pretend fully to portray Jerry Gaus. So, with their kind permission, below I draw selectively - I hope representatively - from messages to me from four of Jerry's international colleagues, each among his few best friends and partners in crime.

Chandran Kukathas is Dean and Lee Kong Chian Chair Professor of Political Science at the School of Social Sciences, Singapore Management University. He says:

“As a philosopher and an intellectual Jerry had many fine qualities, but one I particularly treasured was his willingness to read broadly in search of answers. This is evident in the disciplinary reach of his writings--in psychology in *Value and Justification*, in economics in *The Order of Public Reason*, and in different areas of philosophy throughout. But it's also

evident in his readiness to read different political philosophers, including many I expected him to avoid. I think it's unusual to find political philosophers who will read Rawls but also Hayek, Oakeshott, and even Ayn Rand, with the intention of trying to figure them out ... The funniest story he told me about his development as a philosopher was about his paper in graduate school at Pittsburg. Since he was doing a PhD in political science, he had to take a subfield and ended up having to complete a course in politics in the Middle East, but he had no interest in writing a paper on it. He ended up writing a paper on Wittgenstein's private language argument. He explained at the beginning of the paper that to understand the Middle East one had to understand power, and to understand power one had to understand language, and to understand language one had to understand Wittgenstein. He concluded the paper by saying that now that we have understood Wittgenstein, we are in a position to understand language, and so to understand power and eventually to understand the Middle East. He told me he got an A but also a warning not to do that again!"

University of Queensland Emeritus Professor of Philosophy Fred D'Agostino remarks:

"As news of Jerry's death rolled around the internet, I was struck by the many tributes from early career scholars who had been touched by Jerry. This most private of people had, really as a heroic act of self-transformation, adopted the persona of mentor and networker, latterly perhaps melting into the role, but, in any event, playing it so tenderly, so toughly, with such nuance, that others were also transformed, learning, as Jerry himself had learned, to read widely, to think without prejudice, in order to see deeply and clearly what's really at stake. Jerry wasn't unique but he was unusual in the avoidance of a "following the leader" approach to a career in philosophy. He was always responsible, not so much to the literature, whose center of gravity is largely determined by the incentive structure of the academy, as to the problems the literature is supposed to be addressing. And he was going to look far and wide – well beyond the confines of the co-citation circles that most scholars inhabit – for ideas and intellectual tools that might assist in addressing these problems. And he wasn't going to sweat the small stuff; he was going straight to the heart of what it is, empirically, about our own times that ought to be most alarming ... namely, the diminishing prospects for convergence or compromise among diverse moral and intellectual systems. His see-deep-by-looking-widely approach meant that not every potential reader was willing to put the time and effort into following him into unfamiliar territories ... he was playing the long game and that [is] ... the right game to be playing. But, of course, it demands courage to play that game ... you spend a lot of time out on your own. I was proud to be a companion in those unfamiliar territories

and am sorry that I will henceforth have to imagine what he'd discovered there rather than simply asking him. I am immensely thankful that he didn't, as far as we can know, suffer in dying.

Here's a fun Jerry and Fred story. We were in New Orleans for the conference of the PPE Society. We had a booking at a top-tier restaurant ... Jerry had a Hawaiian shirt and unconstructed sports coat ... with his long white hair in a pony tail and I, bald as a billiard ball, was wearing a coat of many colours. When we entered and were seated, you could see that some of the other diners were, if not aghast, then anyway perplexed at our presence ... Jerry and I decided to go deep into the wine list and ordered a bottle of Hill of Grace. When you do that ... you get the sommelier, emerging from the bowels of the cellar, with his full regalia ... pushing a cart before him on which the instruments for decanting the wine were placed ... you get, in short, the full monty. And now the neighbors are even more perplexed ... where was the sommelier when they ordered? Why were these bozos getting a form of service that they weren't? I think, by this time, they had decided that we weren't aging hippies, but, rather, drug dealers! ... They were well and truly routed. Jerry wore his unsophisticated background well, but, when it came to fine dining ... he was likely to surprise those who were already preparing to look askance at, if not down on, him.

I guess the thing I'd want to emphasise is how courageous Jerry was in his determination to make his own way in relation to the tasks of philosophy. Because I'm interested in how disciplines work, I have written about the incentive structure for scholarly activities and how it pushes people to the median (of doing normal science work on well recognized topics using widely accepted tools). That wasn't what Jerry was doing and it meant that, many many times, he was chastised for (I'm quoting his interlocutors now) '*not doing philosophy*', where what that meant was reading and thinking and writing about ideas that we're not already familiar with, some of them empirical and many of them from different disciplines. (And, by implication, what was '*meant*' was: You're giving us a choice between realizing that we're underinformed about the topics or ignoring your work.) This takes guts and Jerry had them. Another way of putting this is: Lots of people want to respond to what's in the literature; Jerry wanted to respond to what the problems were (that the literature was supposed to be about ... though it often ended up being about itself).

The other thing was Jerry's joy in living and in his family. There was always lots of laughter when we were together ...

Jerry was incredibly generous with his students and other younger scholars. This is widely acknowledged, and, importantly, by them. But my point is: He was, intrinsically, SO private and so to give so much and to help them get jobs and to travel around and schmooze in order to support them was even more generous than it would have been if he'd been naturally a gregarious networker. He really really wasn't but he made himself one in order to support his students.

So, in summary, for me: It's courageous and generous. That's my Jerry and I miss him tremendously."

Tulane University Professor of Philosophy Eric Mack wrote,

"I mourn the passing of Jerry Gaus, a philosophical powerhouse and a good and true friend ... After Jerry and Andrea moved to Tucson, I would often contact them when I was heading out that way for some philosophical meeting to invite them out to dinner. Instead, a wonderful tradition evolved of my coming to their home for a dinner party for which I was always assigned the task of grilling the steaks for the three of us plus other guests. Not until about the third of these dinners did it occur to me that the family dogs were never present. When I asked about this Jerry said that since Andrea and he knew I did not much like those dogs, they always boarded the dogs when I was visiting...

One of the things that I learned through my interaction with Jerry is how much two people can agree on deep philosophical matters and still disagree on others. Jerry and I deeply agreed on the importance of rules and the rationality of rule-based decision-making. We deeply agreed about the importance of local knowledge and the value of institutions – especially the institutions of property - that enable and encourage people to cultivate and act upon their local knowledge. We deeply agreed about the value of liberty and need to justify any coercive actions to which people are subjected. Yet we deeply disagreed about whether the traditional goal of political philosophy, viz., to identify (at least in general terms) the best or most justified type of political (or anti-political) order, is a worthwhile or even sensible goal. Jerry thought that there was something authoritarian (or even tyrannical) about even libertarian versions of the traditional enterprise."

University of Buffalo Professor of Philosophy Ryan Muldoon adds:

“Jerry was simply a wonderful friend and colleague. His work exemplified a wide-ranging curiosity, intellect and rigor that is the best version of interdisciplinarity. He had a combination of skills and knowledge that very few possess, and that led him in fascinating directions. He built out the foundations for the New Diversity Theory, which continues to grow and flourish. He was generous with his time, and helped cultivate and promote the work of more junior people, not just his students. This engagement with younger scholars is reflected in his own work, as he adjusted his views and expanded his methods as he learned from his students and colleagues.

I have spent a fair amount of time reading Jerry's last book a few times. It fills me with excitement - this is a project that really has only just begun, and there are so many fascinating things that one can do to develop it more. It is hard to not get the sense that Jerry was hitting a new stride. Occasionally, I find myself frustrated as I think Jerry got a detail wrong and I want to argue with him about it, and then I am filled with sadness that I can't. We are lucky that Jerry enriched our lives with his friendship, and that he left us with so many cool things to think about.

I am very lucky to count Jerry as a friend and a mentor. Jerry was one of my favorite people to talk to, and bounce ideas off of. I loved it. I saw him as a kindred spirit, and someone to aspire to be more like.

Many of the people who have come across my work assume that I was a PhD student of Jerry's. I wasn't - indeed we never talked until after my PhD. We shared an interest in diversity, complexity, norms, and discovery, which especially when I was first starting out, were kind of weird topics to work on. But more likely, it was because he made it a point to talk up my work to others, and generally do all the stuff a generous advisor does for their students. He also got in the habit of inviting me out to Arizona to guest lecture in his seminars when he taught a paper of mine. He was incredibly generous toward me, and he didn't have to do any of that ...

In the many years since, I have been fortunate to have Jerry as a friend and fellow traveler. I am sad that I won't be able to talk to my friend anymore. I am grateful that he built up a community, and brought me into the fold.”

Two academic awards, each of which welcomes financial contributions, have been established upon his passing to honor Gerald Gaus:

- The Philosophy, Politics and Economics Society has instituted has The Gerald Gaus Memorial PPE Essay Prize
- The University of Arizona Department of Political Economy and Moral Science in conjunction with the university's Center for the Philosophy of Freedom has created the Gerald Gaus Prize for Political Economy.