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Remembering Claudia Card: Two Tributes

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Remembering Claudia Card: Two Tributes¹

Lynne Tirrell and Paula Gottlieb

Editor's note: On behalf of the editors of *FPQ*, I thank our colleagues for providing us their public addresses at the Celebration of Life of Professor Claudia Falconer Card of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who died on Saturday, September 12, 2015. Claudia Card was the author of over one hundred articles and books, key works of moral and feminist philosophy including *Confronting Evils: Terrorism, Torture, Genocide* (Cambridge 2010), *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil* (Oxford 2002), and *The Unnatural Lottery: Character and Moral Luck* (Temple 1996). She was the president of the Central division of the APA 2010-2011, which she often described as her favorite division of the APA. She earned her BA from UW-Madison, and her PhD in 1969 from Harvard University, as the advisee of John Rawls, whom she spoke of with affection as one of the most sensitive and generous of philosophers. I remain grateful to Claudia for being the sort of philosopher who helped her students, colleagues, and readers to confront our responsibilities, and the responsibilities of others, as she lived her own philosophy of taking responsibility for one's own identity.
K.J. Norlock

Tribute from Paula Gottlieb (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

There is a plaque on the door of the Philosophy department seminar room in 5181 Helen C White Hall commemorating Claudia Card's more than 40 years at the university. If you walk up Bascom Hill, you'll find another famous plaque on the side of Bascom Hall encouraging the "continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth may be found." There's a story behind the plaque. The students of sociology professor Edward Ross presented it to the university in 1910, but because Ross had invited Emma Goldman to speak in one of his classes, the regents at first rejected the plaque. The students complained, and the rest is history.

Emma Goldman was a Jewish anarchist born in Lithuania in 1869. Among other things she was imprisoned for distributing birth control literature, and she made numerous public speeches defending the right of gay men and lesbians to love as they pleased and condemning homophobia. Emma Goldman had a zest for life. When criticized for not taking things seriously enough, she apparently said, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution." Claudia Card was the Emma Goldman Professor of Philosophy and I am lucky to have been her colleague for almost 30 years.

¹ Tributes by both Lynne Tirrell and Paula Gottlieb were first presented October 11, 2015, on the occasion of the family's Celebration of Life for Claudia Card, Pyle Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

I don't have PowerPoint, but here are some snapshots of Claudia's life that I was able to witness—Claudia being made SWIP's distinguished philosopher of the year, Claudia being feted by her students (many of whom are here) at Cardfest, a festival in honor of her 65th birthday, Claudia presenting the Dewey lecture to a packed hall at the Central conference of the *American Philosophical Association*, Claudia receiving a long standing ovation for her Presidential address at the APA, and most recently, Claudia being awarded the prestigious Carus lectures.

Claudia Card was a true Wisconsinite. Born in Pardeeville, she did her undergraduate work at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with Marcus Singer and returned as an assistant professor in Philosophy after studying at Harvard. At that time women were not accepted for the Ph.D. at Harvard except under the aegis of Radcliffe College. Professor Card almost threw away her acceptance letter because she did not recognize the sender.

Professor Card was a pioneer, not just at Harvard, but especially in her work on feminist and lesbian philosophy. For example, her book entitled "The Unnatural Lottery: Character and Moral Luck" (a brilliant twist on Rawls' coinage of the "natural lottery") addresses the luck involved in forming a good character when, for example, wealth, gender, race and sexual orientation introduce factors beyond one's control.

Professor Card was in the process of completing a third book on her theory of evil. In her Dewey lecture she says: "My current work on torture, terrorism, and genocide addresses the problem of how to respond to atrocities without perpetrating atrocities oneself in responding. The challenge is to find ways to respond that preserve humanitarian values. Torture, for example, is one current response to terrorism, insofar as it is used to extract information regarding suspected terrorists. But torture fails the test of preserving humanitarian values. Much of this work is not focused on women. Yet all of it is permeated and shaped by my experience with feminism."

Now one might think that someone who spent so much time on such grim topics would be rather an off-putting colleague. Far from it. Claudia was a very generous, cheerful, and optimistic person. She had great faith in the ability of others to improve, so when she was confronted with an English colleague who on arrival in Madison knew nothing about feminist philosophy nor U.S. women's sports, another passion of Claudia's, here was a double challenge to be taken up. Claudia's help was unobtrusive. Writing about the spirited and competitive part of the soul in Plato? You might want to read Vicky Davion's paper on whether feminists should favor competition. Thinking about Aristotle's practical syllogism? You might want to read Maria Lugones's paper about agency and oppression. One summer Claudia asked me to join a reading group on feminist epistemology. Philosophy "Claudia style" was very Socratic, lots of dialogue and lots of fun.

Improving my knowledge of sports proved more difficult. Claudia was a great supporter of women's sports; her generosity is acknowledged on the wall of the Kohl Center. She often took her junior female colleagues and graduate students to the games, and she took me too. I don't think that I ever got the hang of women's basketball. In England, as you know, everything is slower than in the U.S. Politicians stand, not run, for office. I was brought up on netball, where you had to stand still when you caught the ball and were absolutely forbidden to run with it. But Claudia was undaunted. With her usual lack of arrogance, she never gave up on the idea that I or anyone else could understand all the things she could.

Claudia remained undaunted and her zest for life unquenched even in her last days at the hospice. She enjoyed Babcock Hall ice cream, and pastries brought by her brother Bruce from the Amish bakery near her hometown of Pardeeville. She enjoyed listening to the many heartfelt messages from CaringBridge courtesy of Lynne Tirrell and Melissa Card. She enjoyed musical performances; her advisee Brendan Moriarty played his 'cello and Jeanne Swack, Professor of Music, played Poulenc's sonata for the flute—and she enjoyed the good company of friends and family, especially Bruce, Sue, Melissa, John, and Kim, her beloved cats Mischief and Persia, and of course Vicky Davion. Claudia also enjoyed watching movies, hundreds of them, especially her favorites with Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire because, to paraphrase Claudia's heroine Emma Goldman, "Where would we be without dancing?"

Tribute from Lynne Tirrell (University of Massachusetts Boston)

I am trying to think of today as a belated birthday celebration, because we just passed what would have been Claudia's 75th birthday. Those of us lucky to have known Claudia are so grateful for her life, her friendship, her emergence into a strong and feisty feminist, and also for her kindness—always, her generosity in fact and in spirit, and her laughter and impishness, her music, and her dancing. Claudia loved people and she loved LIFE, she had a gift for it, and this became a gift to all of us.

Claudia worked intensely hard, day in and out, and was often alone, and yet, she had a vibrant social life too. She once wrote that "social vitality exists through relationships, contemporary and inter-generational, that create an identity that gives meaning to a life" ("Genocide & Social Death," 2003). Claudia had social vitality, that's for sure. Wherever she went, she made friends, because she took delight in all the ways that we humans can be, she wasn't insular, and she wasn't a snob. Claudia brought people together, was very loyal to her friends, was always open to meeting new people, and was extremely generous to young philosophers. Claudia took real delight in the accomplishments of others. She was both a mentor

and a role model in these crucial respects. Claudia's amazing capacity for friendship is one of her great virtues.

So you might guess by now that my remarks today are a reflection on just some of Claudia's lived virtues, as I've seen them -- a perfect blend of theory and practice in how she lived. It's common for philosophers to think (and know) that specializing in ethics doesn't make one a better person, but I think in Claudia's case it strengthened her goodness. Although she was a philosopher's philosopher, Claudia didn't settle for the easier task of pure theory: she did ethics engaged in real world problems, not applied ethics, but engaged ethics, and this made all the difference. She took seriously the genuine conditions within which people make moral choices. Finding her voice as a feminist really enriched her work in ethics and politics, because her feminism reinforced her tendency to look closely at the real problems of real people. In living real-world, real-time, thoughtful ethics, I believe Claudia came to embody the unity of the virtues. She'd probably scoff at this a bit, but I think it is true.

Claudia's incisive mind was tempered by mercy: she was very patient with the rest of us. Her flexibility of mind and charity of heart enabled her to find the best in an idea or a theory and polish it until it gleams. And she knew to quickly throw away philosophical foolishness and distractions. She was a talented listener, which made her a wonderful interlocutor. You always felt that Claudia heard you, and thought carefully about what you were saying. Claudia never took cheap shots, never hid behind someone else's views, and stood strongly on her own two feet. She also always did her homework, and always was careful to give credit where credit was due. And she, optimistically, wonderfully, expected the same of all of us. These are just a few of her virtues.

Claudia was my teacher, my mentor, and a steadfast friend for 37 years. My years at Wisconsin (1977-1980) just happened to be the years that Claudia was beginning to write again. She was widely respected for her "Mercy" paper, and some of her other early work, but she had gone through some significant life events and felt a need to change her philosophical approach, to integrate feminism into her philosophy, in short, to find her voice. In 1978, I enrolled in Claudia's new "Sexual Politics" course, exploring the feminist philosophy that was happening just as the field was developing. It was exciting. As a professor, Claudia was a breath of fresh air, speaking to us openly, with knowledge but without pretense, making it clear that what mattered were the questions we could ask and our work together in finding possible answers. She made us *be* philosophers, every day. She also made us take daily life and ordinary experiences seriously, just as seriously as we took our studies. The course was intense, and was a great training ground for the senior thesis I went on to do with Claudia, developing a philosophical analysis of rape. Claudia's guidance and support made the challenges less daunting, but she also

made sure that I set ambitious goals, didn't waiver from high standards of philosophical process, and never gave up. It is a gift to encounter a teacher like this once in a lifetime. To have remained friends all these years is truly a life's blessing.

Claudia's virtues were well expressed in her mentorship. When I left Wisconsin and went to Pittsburgh for graduate school, Claudia made sure to keep in touch. She sent frequent long hand-written newsy and philosophical letters, checking in, telling me what she was working on, asking what was I studying and writing, and so on. I appreciated it then, but in hindsight I realize how crucial this support was. I loved my years at Pitt—we had a fabulous faculty and I was blessed with a great cohort of students—but it's a wonderful thing to know that your philosophical world is not all in one department. Claudia always made my philosophical world bigger, and she still does, even today in her absence.

What I am saying here is personal, about my own history with Claudia, and even though it might seem like I am claiming to be special, we all know that Claudia gave her philosophical incisiveness and her humane support to so many other students and colleagues all through her career. We were each special to her.

I remember Claudia saying something once about how you have to slay the fathers to become yourself, and she did, truly, become herself, a major figure in ethics and feminism and so much more, but she never forgot to look back and say "thank you." She was so grateful for all the care and support that her own teachers gave her; she knew that she owed a lot of the life that she loved to their support at crucial times. Read her Dewey Lecture sometime—there she eloquently expressed her gratitude to her teachers, especially Professor Singer, who is here with us today. And isn't that a lesson to the rest of us, to remember to be grateful to those who throw us a lifeline, and to push any sense of hubris aside.

My gratitude to Claudia is deeper than I could ever pay forward, though, like her, I try. Nietzsche said "One repays a teacher poorly if one remains always only a pupil." (Zarathustra, 1885). Getting out into the world, using what you have learned, and building the world of tomorrow is how we pay it forward. Claudia did that, so well, in how she taught, in what she wrote about, in how she mentored, in her friendships. To continue to honor her gifts to us, so we must do the same, taking good care of the students we teach, mentoring our colleagues, making the world more just whenever we can.

Claudia's philosopher's life has left a legacy through her teaching, her writing, and through her mentoring others across nearly 50 years at UW-Madison. After her surgery in 2014, Claudia told me she might not finish the papers she was currently working on, but what mattered most to her was to return to the classroom and teach her seminar. She did that, while undergoing chemotherapy. (To paraphrase the Bard): though she be but little, she was mighty.

Despite living a brilliant life of the mind, she also loved embodied life; Claudia loved to sing, dance, and play her gorgeous piano. Claudia loved the materiality of bodily experience, from the smooth sweet taste of butter and cheese, to the rich aromatics of a deep red burgundy. With permission, I cite a note from Naomi Scheman to Claudia, in July 2015:

Ah yes, pleasure. I've been struck, Claudia, by what a talent you have for it. When my mother was going through chemo I learned from watching & being with her that finding pleasure in the world & the people & other things in it was truly a virtue. That habit of mind & heart attunes one to the world in a wonderful way. You are, I think, a phronemos of the virtue of pleasure. (Naomi Scheman, July 9, 2015.)

Not quite an Epicurean, not a full hedonist, Claudia knew how to live life fully. And yet there were elements of stoicism always present in her realism. She was a gifted judge of when to accept reality and when to fight for change. Her focus, as we all know, was fighting injustice, oppression, cruelty, and violence.

Claudia was worldly and wise. She had really become quite a sage and a virtuous person in a deep, deep way, and yet, she always carried the earnest girl from Pardeeville in her heart, with honor. She knew who she was, she loved the life she had, and she especially loved that she could teach. And we are all the better for having the gift of her friendship.