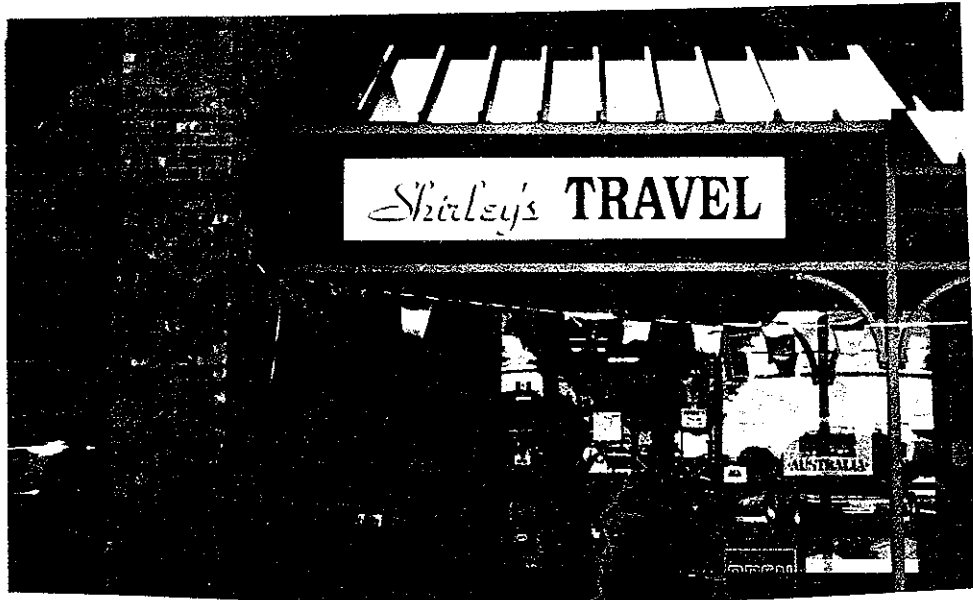


PHILOSOPHERS ON HOLIDAY

Philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday-LW

Volume 1, no. 1 Summer 1997

Dedication



One of the many travel agencies founded by Shirley Freud

We dedicate this 'zine with love and affection to Shirley Freud, philosopher queen, travellin' gal, whose intrepid spirit lives on, though her Rockport Pro-Walkers stand still.

Shirley Freud is the younger, less-well-known, but arguably smarter sister of Sigmund Freud. That her parents would name her "Shirley" already marked the infant for the life of an outsider within this very traditional Austrian family. But the last laugh was hers; she went on to make her own very distinguished mark on the intellectual world (as is evidenced by the phrase "Shirley Freud would have known that"). In this and subsequent issues, we will track the travels that were the substance of Shirley's life.

As a rebellious teenager, Shirley left Freiberg, Moravia, the family home, because the young Sigmund kept quizzing her about how she was adjusting to life without a penis. When Shirley replied that the only good thing about having a penis was that one could pee standing up (especially helpful when camping), young Sigmund took this to be evidence of the syndrome he would

see Shirley page 7

Gal Phil Pals Hit Road

When philosophers go on holiday, we take language with us. The results, as Wittgenstein might have foretold, had he been interested in the matter, are not pretty. The problems that arise for philosophers on holiday are not limited to philosophical problems (which tend, for all their

Philosophers on Holiday

Published whenever we have the free time

Editors Peg O'Connor
 Lisa Heldke

Submissions Always welcome. Send us evidence of your philosophical exploits in the form of art, essay, letter to editor, puzzle, dream narrative, multiple choice exam, restaurant menu, or anything else you think of.

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Direct all correspondence to

1002 Riverview Hills South
St. Peter, MN 56082
(507) 931-4296
poconnor@gac.edu
heldke@gac.edu

thorniness, at least not to be life threatening). Set loose upon the real world, philosophers can actually hurt themselves--or others. (One philosopher friend in our acquaintance, for example, has trouble remembering whether the red lights on the car in front of her mean that the car is coming towards her or is going away from her. Needless to say, this can prove rather dangerous to persons in cars around her.)

A special highlight of this, and subsequent issues of *Philosophers on Holiday*, will be a sampling of travel notes from your intrepid editors, as they take their buffed philosophical minds out on the open road--and discover just how ill-equipped philosophy leaves those minds for functioning in the Real World of traffic cops, sand dunes and crowded hotels.

The Phlogiston in the Forest

"...the proponents of competing paradigms will often disagree about the list of problems that any candidate for paradigm must resolve ... Lavoisier's chemical theory inhibited chemists from asking why the metals were so much alike, a question that phlogistic chemistry had both asked and answered. The transition to Lavoisier's paradigm had...meant a loss not only of a permissible question but of an achieved solution" (Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p.148).

We are from Minnesota.
We see snow as an obstacle

that must be overcome. Snow is always relevant, snow always must be accounted for, snow is never outside the frame of the picture, beside the point, beyond the scope of the study. Normal science in the Minnesota paradigm must always take snow into consideration.

While hiking on a well-marked trail in Crater Lake National Park, we suddenly came upon a large patch of snow, into which the

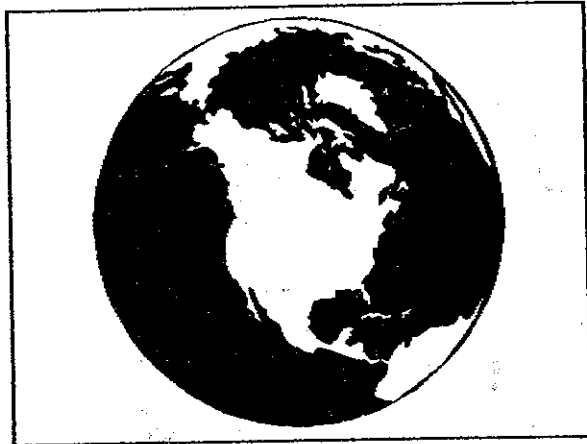
trail disappeared. Without a moment's hesitation, we stomped onto the big icy patch in our big tough boots, and followed it to its terminus, where we proceeded to attempt to pick up the trail where it reappeared from the snow. Much to our surprise, there were no indications of a trail whatsoever. None. We did a systematic search of the area, walking five minutes in each direction, but found nothing. see Phlogiston, p.4

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<p>FIND THESE PHILOSOPHERS' HOMETOWNS: Freiberg (Shirley!)</p> <table> <tr> <td>Burlington</td> <td>Rice Lake</td> <td>Fitchburg</td> <td>Athens</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vienna</td> <td>Idalou</td> <td>Copenhagen</td> <td>Bay Area</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Paris</td> <td>New York</td> <td>Geneva</td> <td>Konigsberg</td> </tr> </table>																												Burlington	Rice Lake	Fitchburg	Athens	Vienna	Idalou	Copenhagen	Bay Area	Paris	New York	Geneva	Konigsberg
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Phlogiston, cont.

After this futile, 20-minute search, we looked at each other and said, "You don't suppose...?" and "You don't think...?" a few times, before, yes, returning to the place where we had first encountered the snowbank, to see if an anomaly had arisen and the trail had not in fact entered the snowbank, but instead, had turned off to the right or left at the snowbank.

Operating under this new paradigm, under which a snowbank doesn't necessarily count as a phenomenon to be explained, we immediately found the trail, which took a smart right just at the beginning of the snowbank.



Rational Reconstructions

"In writing a historical case study, one should, I think, adopt the following procedure: (1) one gives a rational reconstruction; (2) one tries to compare this rational reconstruction with actual history and to criticize both one's rational

reconstruction for lack of historicity and the actual history for lack of rationality. Thus any historical study must be preceded by a heuristic study: history of science without philosophy of science is blind." Lakatos, The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes, p.53.

Philosophers on a holiday give new meaning to the term "rational reconstruction." We actually can give after-the-fact justifications for our completely harebrained actions, justifications which show why our hare-brainedness made perfect sense.

To wit: When setting out to cross two-and-a-half miles of virtually unmarked sand dune, in order to reach the ocean, we chose between: a) following two people who were striding purposefully, and, it seemed, knowingly, in one direction; and b) following a motley collection of several adults, a couple kids, and two dogs, one of whom was gasping for breath and hobbling along on little stick legs. Naturally, we chose the latter. (Note also that both alternatives involved "following".)

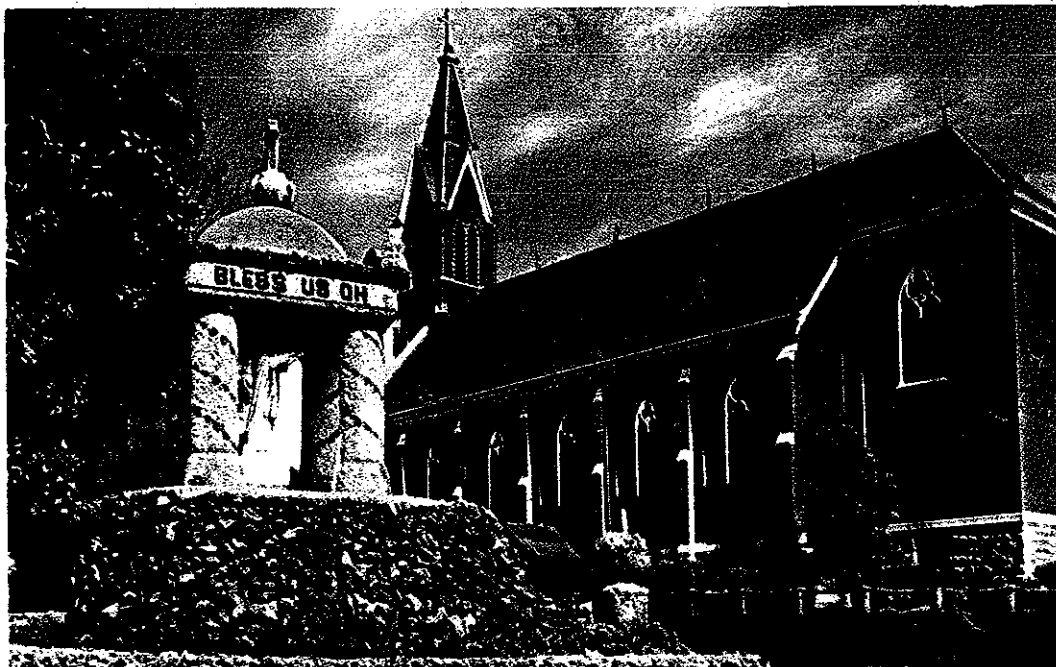
When this plan turned out to be a Very Bad One indeed (we quickly left that crew behind and found ourselves wandering, literally without compass, for quite some time), we began to do some serious after-the-fact justification for our actions. Here is how it went: The trail map, posted on a sign at the beginning of the hike, featured cartoon characters of giant adults and dogs crossing a seemingly tiny but unmarked

stretch of sand dune--a big cat box, perhaps? The map seemed to indicate that *there were no trail markers* on the dunes themselves. (So who would look for any, right?) A trail description in a book, which we left in the car due to its bulk, began with the phrase "This isn't really a trail but.... This description confirmed our belief that there would be no markers. So, we reasoned, the texts offered full justification for striking out across the dunes without even pausing to look for a marker. This wasn't a hike: it was a stroll across a largish cat box.

And about those giant adults and the tiny stretch of dunes: despite the fact that it was clear that things were not drawn to scale (hint: the trees were tiny compared to the adults as well; and the map specifically stated that the dunes were two and a half

miles across)--despite all this, the overall sense that the map managed to convey (so they reasoned later) was that one could stride across the dunes in a few short minutes. (The fact that one can, literally, see the ocean near the beginning of the hike of course reinforced the plausibility of this interpretation--nature, it seems, is not "to scale" either.)

Of course the truth (if we may be permitted to use this word without a footnote) that is told by this particular episode is something considerably less rational. As such, it reveals the severe limits of rational reconstruction, at least insofar as it is practiced by oneself on one's own practices. It's just too tempting to make sense of one's behavior, when the awful
See Rational page 6



Peg and Lisa recently visited the lovely Dickeyville Grotto, in Dickeyville, Wisconsin, where they photographed (using their Kodak Instamatic) this statue of the BVM, a gift from the good people of Bless Us, Ohio.

Rational, cont.

truth in this case is that a lot of times one behaves like an idiot. The truth is that we were bewitched--not by language, but by dogs and children. We followed the dog. Maybe we wanted to see how the story came out: would the pathetic, overweight dog with two-inch legs be able to make it across two and a half miles of sand, to frolic in the waves? Or would it expire halfway there and have to be carried back in someone's knapsack? Maybe we wanted to see how long it was before one of the kids (or adults) pitched a fit and demanded to be taken to the ocean Right Now. But here we see ourselves slipping back into rational reconstruction, even as we attempt to tell the truth for once: the truth is that we shut off our brains and followed a dog across hot sand.

Of course lots of folks have done the same thing. But only philosophers feel like it's possible to make such behavior seem rational.

The Philosopher's Knapsack

"Think of the tools in a toolbox: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screwdriver, a rule, a glue pot, glue, nails and screws--the function of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects."
Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* §11

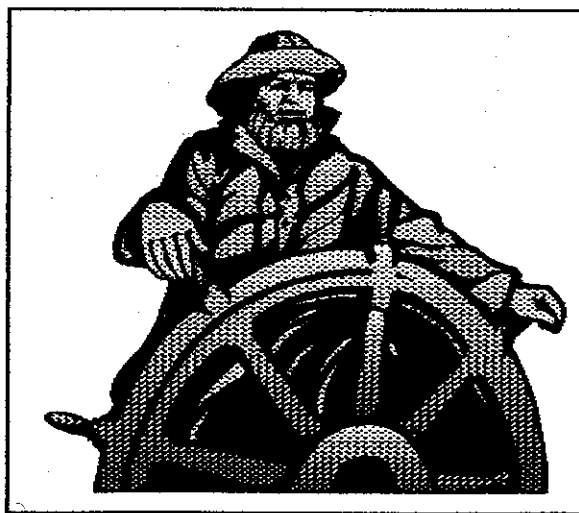
While hiking, we leave our Sears Craftsman at home and strap on the Jansports. For our foray into the dunes,

ours contained:

1. a copy of Lorraine Code's *Rhetorical Spaces*;
2. a notebook of ideas about Wittgensteinian moral naturalism
3. food (fortunately, one of us works on food, so we thought to include that)
4. water (we're not complete idiots, after all)
5. hard candy (keep flies out of both mouth and fly bottle)

It did not contain about five of the ten essentials, including (or not including!):

1. a compass
2. a knife
3. rain gear or warm clothes
4. a flashlight (no one has proven the law of induction; why should we assume that night would follow day just because it had in the past?)
5. toilet paper (god only knows why--it was definitely missed. Have you ever experienced the leaves of a plant that lives on sand?)



Ahoy, Matey! Be on the lookout for Peg and Lisa's tales of their adventures on the high seas, featured in the next issue.

Shirley, cont.

later label "penis envy." Fed up with Sigmund's constant questions, Shirley took off to ride the rails. Soon tiring of riding in the prim and proper passenger cars of European trains, she made her way to Marseilles, where she boarded a tramp steamer headed for Gloucester. Gloucester was her port of choice because she had heard so many good things about the British coast. Imagine her surprise when she and the boat landed in Gloucester, Mass., USA.

To Be Continued...



If a lion could cook....

Phil Cooks Gather to Celebrate Solstice

Philosophers not only go on holiday; they celebrate holidays too. On June 21, many philosophers gathered at an undisclosed location for a festive potluck to herald the arrival of summer. An unnamed source close to the philosophers offers *Phil on Hol* this exclusive peek at the menu, noting who brought what. We think you'll agree it met the Naomi Scheman law of potlucks: you don't need to tell anyone what you're bringing, because the potluck goddess is watching over us and will ensure that there's something for everyone.... Rousseau brought some wild things he and Emile gathered while wandering in the state of nature. Not to be outdone, Mary Wollstonecraft had Sophie help her gather even wilder foods, which she assembled into a most rational dish. Abby (a.k.a. Abra) Wilkerson set everyone's tongues afire with her chipotle pepper sauce, while Spinoza brought some Gouda cheese. (We note that Locke didn't eat any, probably a result of his having spent a bad period of his life in that low country.) Corrinne Bedecarre made a lovely venison stew, which we note Rousseau devoured. Wittgenstein brought his usual sandwich--for himself--and ate it alone in the corner. Mark Chekola brought a dish to pass. Sartre tried to make Simone de Beauvoir cook something splashy for the event, figuring their reputation as French cooks was on the line, but Simone, having recently reread her own book, would have none of it. She brought chips, which went nicely with Abra's salsa. Anne Phibbs brought her special logic fish sandwich. Peg O'Connor brought an impressive array of cold cereals. Marti Crouch brought a nice yard salad. Members of the NEH Seminar on Feminist Epistemologies brought everything BUT bagels. Amy Hilden drew a Venn diagram of what Kant willed all ought to eat. Lisa Heldke was last seen sitting on the floor surrounded by cookbooks, trying to decide what to make....

Where Are They Now?



Where do philosophers go when they pass from academia? Phil Pals Peg and Lisa spotted the current digs of one Herbert Feigl, this grocery store in Rushville, Illinois. Peg and Lisa were passing through Rushville while doing field research for this issue of *Phil on Hol*, and travelling to the National Women's Studies Association conference in St. Louis, MO.

Yes! I want to be on the cutting edge of discursive practices that explore the interstices of travel and philosophy!!!! Please deploy future issues of *Philosophers on Holiday!* to my situatedness. I understand that I don't owe anyone a red cent until you cough up another issue--and then I'll pay you two bucks.

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

Return to: O'Connor and Heldke
1002 Riverview Hills
St. Peter, MN 56082
poconnor@gac.edu; heldke@gac.edu

Send us photos, stories, puzzles, etc. about YOUR philosophical adventures, and we'll publish them in a future *Phil on Hol*.