

# PHILOSOPHERS ON HOLIDAY

*Philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday--LW*

Volume II, no. 1 Summer 1998



## Wittgenstein's Irish Retreat

*Peg writes:* For a travellin' philosopher gal who wrote a dissertation on Wittgenstein, a trip to Ireland must include a trip to Maurice O'Connor Drury's cottage on Little Killary Harbor in Connemara. This area is considered a fjord in Ireland. Given Wittgenstein's time in Norway, the terrain was probably welcoming in its familiarity. From May through August of 1948, Wittgenstein lived there, working on *Philosophical Investigations*. So important was Wittgenstein's time there that President Mary Robinson in 1993 dedicated a plaque to mark this cottage (see picture above).

The cottage is no longer a single family residence. Its original two rooms have been joined to a newer, much larger structure. Since this radical reconstruction, it has become a youth hostel (a change that Wittgenstein would most undoubtedly loathe). We chose not to stay at the cottage; it would have felt far too sacrilegious to do so. Instead, we stayed at the Little Killary Activity Center a mile up the road. There we had the opportunity to water ski while wearing a wet suit (we passed), to go kayaking while wearing a wet suit and life jacket ( we didn't go) and to go gorge walking while wearing a wet suit, life jacket and hiking boots (we completely passed on this too).

But the walk to Rosro cottage was quite grand. The road curved between the harbor and the hills. The misty conditions made for poor visibility, but we knew we had reached the cottage when we came to the end of the road. We first walked around the side of the cottage that directly faced the harbor. For some reason, perhaps because it was right before our eyes, we failed to notice the large plaque dedicated

**See Cottage, p.3**

## From the Editors

The temperature still climbs to the 90s each day, and the tomato vines are still bright green, but despite all the appearances of summer, the fact remains that we are on a collision course with the autumnal equinox. This summer issue of *Philosophers on Holiday* is gonna squeak in just under the wire.

Okay, okay. Summer is over. It was ninety degrees two days ago when we wrote that, but it's fifty today. And, although the tomato vines are still green, the equinox has come and gone. This issue is now officially late. Humble apologies. At our salaries, we can't yet afford to quit our day jobs and devote the time this 'zine richly deserves.

### Philosophers on Holiday

**Published** when we have the free time

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Our summer travels took us to Ireland, Boston and Maine. In Boston, we assumed our alter-egos, as philosophers-at-work, when we attended both the World Congress of Philosophy and the International Association of Women Philosophers (IAPh) conference. (Hats off to **Linda Lopez McAlister** of the University of South Florida for a magnificent job organizing the latter conference, the first conference on this side of the ocean for the IAPh.) You'll find several stories about our Irish adventures in this issue, along with a restaurant tip or two from Maine.

What you won't find in this issue, unfortunately, are tales of trips to China, France, Germany, Idaho, or any of the host of other philosophically-rich travel destinations that our friends and subscribers visited this summer. And why not? you ask. Why not, indeed? Suffice it to say that it is not because we here at *Phil on Hol* have such exacting journalistic standards that we have rejected every single piece that has been submitted for publication. No, dear readers; there are no accounts from Beijing, Berlin or Boise because you haven't contributed them! Don't forget; it's the faithful contributions of readers like yourself that keep this zine on the cutting edge of the new millenium. Submit early, submit often; you *can* put this on your c.v. or resume! And the fall issue is due out soon.



### New Subscription Information!!!

Beginning with this issue, *POH* has instituted a new subscription policy. A one-year subscription (that's four big, big issues) will cost just ten dollars. Many of you lucky subscribers have already sent in your subscription fees. The rest of you will find a convenient payment envelope tucked in with this issue. Hint, hint.

### Cottage, continued

by Mary Robinson. With a bit of trepidation, we entered the hostel hoping to find a friendly, helpful person.

We were not disappointed in our hopes. The caretaker on duty was a most friendly woman, who just happened to be married to the son of Tommy Mulkerrins, the caretaker of the cottage while Wittgenstein was living there. She took us to the large room where Wittgenstein spent most of us time working. She also mentioned the plaque. She remembered quite vividly when the plaque had been dedicated. Terry Eagleton ("a very nice man") attended the service. We learned that we were among many philosophers who have visited the cottage on a pilgrimage. After taking our leave, we returned to the Little Killary Activity Center.

On the day we were to depart for Galway, we took another walk to the cottage, armed with new film in the camera. After taking several shots of the cottage and harbor, we noticed one man bailing his boat. Another man approached us and greeted us warmly. When we told him we were philosophers on a quest, he told us that he had lived there as a child. "All of us kids were afraid of that Wittgenstein," he told us eagerly. And he went on, "See that fellow in the boat? That's the caretaker's son. He says that Wittgenstein was the damnedest fellow he ever met. He would stay up all night long working, and then sleep most of the day." Having heard this testimony from a source close to Wittgenstein I felt fulfilled in my journey.

*Last night I dreamt I went  
down to Rosro Cottage.\** Rosro

Cottage appeared out of the fog as I walked from main road to the harbor. The cottage

appeared the same as it was when Wittgenstein lived there. The cottage was dominated by one room with a large window overlooking the harbor. The other room was small and spartan and seldom, if ever, used. I stood at the window, seeing the harbor as Wittgenstein must have. Little about the harbor had changed; the boats had small motors now. Sensing Wittgenstein's presence in this room, I felt compelled--guided almost--to run my hands along the bookshelves underneath that large window. There were few books on these shelves, and the ones that were there were fiction. Mysteries with hard-boiled detectives to be exact. Knowing about Wittgenstein's passion for tough-guy mysteries, I pulled out several and skimmed them to see if Wittgenstein had left any annotations. I fully expected to find terse, nasty comments if he had solved the mystery early in the book, or if there had been some completely implausible plot twist. But I was disappointed in that venture.

I stared out the window while absentmindedly running my hands along the bookshelf. My hand grazed over a spine that was not smooth like the others. Surprised out of my reverie, I withdrew the book. It was *A Christmas Carol*, one of Wittgenstein's favorite books. Wedged between the spine and the sewn binding was a very neatly, but tightly folded piece of paper. My heart started racing, and my hands became slick. I knew that I had found something heretofore hidden, and the thrill of the discovery was intoxicating. On one side in English was the single expression, 'milk!'

As soon as I saw this expression, I knew that I had stumbled upon one of the greatest discoveries in the history of philosophy. I also knew that there were three other expressions hidden somewhere else in that room. I knew they must be 'tea' 'biscuit' and 'sandwich'. The

See Rosro, p.7

## Factory Food

*Lisa writes:* Can someone please explain to me what is going on with the names of restaurants? Who thinks it is a good idea to name a place—a place in which you expect people to plunk down good money to eat—“The Souvlaki Factory?” Why would I want to eat in a place that actually has so little self-respect as to *call* itself a factory?

First there was the Spaghetti Factory. Now, so help me Hannah, there’s the Cheesecake Factory. (I went to a mall in suburban Washington D.C. in which the Cheesecake Factory gave its customers a beeper, so they could shop the sales while they were waiting for their table. But that’s another story.) Next it’ll be the Tiramisu factory—you just watch.

Given my obsession with truth in advertising (I froth at the mouth when a package label refers to its frozen contents as “fresh”), I suppose I ought to applaud this particular trend in restaurant naming. After all, chances are good that most of the things you find on your plate at either of these restaurants was, in point of fact, mass-extruded in some central food-production factory somewhere, and then shuttled to the various “Factory” locations around the country, ready to be microwaved specially for me. I ought to be delighted. So why am I not?

First, I’m not delighted because I don’t think this phenomenon has anything to do with truth in advertising. The Cheesecake Factory isn’t admitting to the world that its cheesecakes are made on an assembly line; they’re calling it a factory because it sounds cute or clever or some damn fool thing. (Ironic, perhaps: “look at us; we call ourselves a factory, and yet here we are producing these delectable just-like-homemade goodies. Isn’t that *droll*?) And that’s the second reason I’m not delighted—why I’m in fact downright

depressed. People apparently think it’s cute and clever to eat in a place named “industrial site.” Since when are factories cute and clever? Since when do we think it’s special and wonderful to have them produce our food?

But of course the proper response here is, “people don’t *hear* the word ‘factory’ when you say ‘Spaghetti Factory.’ It’s just a word, a noun, a place holder. It doesn’t have anything to do with real factories.”

Consider, on this score, the Hut phase of restaurant naming. The Hut phase gave us the Pizza Hut and Waffle Hut chains, to name two of its better-known exemplars. Now, I’m puzzled by huts no less than by factories; I mean, who wants to pay money to go to a hut? (Okay, so I once paid fifteen bucks to visit a “traditional” Maori village, where some little girls showed me the huts they lived in, and then spit on me when I wouldn’t pay them any more money, but that was different.) Who wants to pay money to eat in a hut? Why would advertising gurus, in their infinite wisdom, think that people would be charmed/intrigued/tantalized by a restaurant named “Schnitzel Hut?”

But the point is, we don’t really *hear* the word Hut when people say “Pizza Hut.” We just hear “restaurant chain that serves up the very same very mediocre pizza in Bemidji as in Boston (as in Bogota, for all I know—Bogota is lousy with lousy American fast food). “Hut” has ceased to have any connection to thatch or bark or dung or wattle-and-daub whatsoever. The same thing is going to happen with “Factory.” When people hear “Cheesecake Factory,” they are not going to think about stainless steel and concrete; they’re going to think “gummy cheesecake nationwide.”

(Now, for the record, and completely beside the present point, I think the Clam Shack in Kennebunkport, Maine, see *Factory*, p.5

## PANTHEON GASTRONOMIQUE

Ireland may be the land of good solid brown soda bread (delicious at breakfast; deadly by dinner), but few bakeries in the country have mastered the fine French tradition of crustiness. Perhaps it was sheer cussedness that kept us looking for good French bread in Ireland, but cussedness is sometimes rewarded. We found a delightful (tiny) French bakery on the River Liffey at Ha'Penny Quay. Panem Bakery had a kitchen the size of a galley on an airplane, done entirely in stainless steel, and a seating area that could accommodate about six slender children comfortably, but it managed to turn out baked goods in ways that defied several fundamental laws of physics and architecture (whose chief branch, you will recall, is confectionery).\* Peg found the *petite pain* particularly pleasing, while Lisa noshed on a chocolate croissant that Kant would surely have ruled sublime.

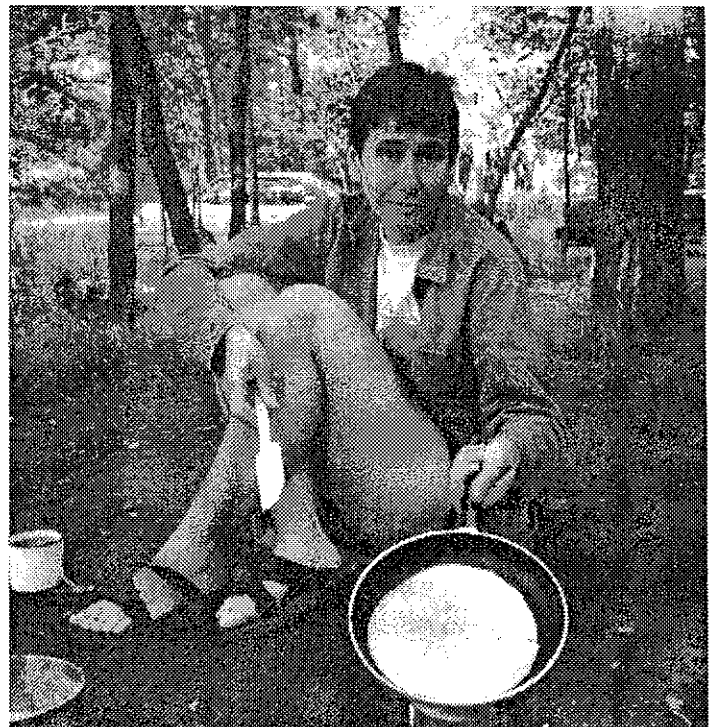
\*On pastry-as-architecture, we turn to Antonin Careme (the cook of kings and king of cooks), who was the personal chef to Prince de Talleyrand (later known as King George IV), Tsar Alexander I, and Baron de Rothchild. Careme was one of the first masters of haute cuisine. An abandoned child, he worked his way up in kitchens of working-class restaurants. Careme writes that "the fine arts are five in number, namely: painting, sculpture, poetry, music, architecture--the main branch of which is confectionery." (Thanks to Glenn Kuehn, philosopher-chef of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, for the biographical information.)

*Of course if you can't make it to Dublin any time soon, you could just go camping with us. Lisa this summer perfected the pancake-on-a-one-burner-stove technique, during a camping trip with Peg and niece Emma Gehrman. Here's Lisa, smirking with hubris at having successfully flipped this frisbee-sized pancake.*

## Factory, continued

is perfectly named; it's a small, well, shack of a building that sells clams. And that place I once went to on the North Sea in Germany called the Aal Katte (Eel Cottage)? What can I say about it, other than that no name ever fit a place better? But Pizza Hut doesn't even look like a plastic replica of a hut—red plastic roof notwithstanding. And Waffle Huts always reminded me more of shoeboxes (albeit glass shoeboxes) than huts.)

The people who name restaurants seem to be following the same trajectory that anthropology used to: first there was the [Waffle] Hut, and then eventually (after a few centuries that gave us the [White] Castle and the [Chicken] Shack) came the [Spaghetti] Factory. Does that mean that the next restaurants will be called Web sites? While you were waiting, you could log on, and instead of beeping you, they could email you when your table was ready. (You could eat virtual food, which would have the advantage of not even having any calories in it.) But what am I saying? Reality, as so often happens, has already beaten me to my clever punch line: allow me to introduce you to the Cyber Café.



## The Greatest Philosophical Hits Never Recorded

*Philosophers have a tough time getting gigs; let's face it. A lot of great songs about philosophers have been written, but never seem to make it onto the charts. Heck; a lot of them never even make it onto eight-track. (Try to hum a few bars of "Hey Quine," or "Descartes, Descartes, Descartes," and you'll see what we mean.) Therefore, as a service to our profession, the editors are printing the lyric of some of the greatest of these unknown philosophical hits. In the coming months, watch for the opportunity to download audio clips from our web site.*

### Richard Rorty

They say that Richard Rorty rules one-half of this whole field,  
with political connections through which his power to wield.  
Bred into philosophy, a Yalie to the end,  
He has all philosophers could want; tenure,  
contracts, friends.

Chorus:

But I, I teach philosophy  
and I curse the load I'm teaching,  
and my anonymity  
and I wish that I could be Richard Rorty.

The journals print his papers, every one he can produce,  
Richard Rorty in the *Phil Review*, and in *J Phil* and in *Nous*  
And the colleges he speaks at and the reviews he receives,  
Oh, he must be so contented, with the prestige he's achieved.  
(Chorus)

He's fluent in all discourses; he speaks the native tongue--  
be it Dewey, be it Heidegger, even Wittgenstein or Jung  
So my mind was filled with wonder when the gossip columns read,  
"Richard Rorty, at home last night, was reading Ayer in his bed."  
(Chorus)

### Richard Cory

(the Simon and Garfunkel one--for comparison)

They say that Richard Cory owns one half of this whole town  
With political connections to spread his wealth around  
Born into society, a banker's only child  
He had everything a man could want; power, grace and style.

But I work in his factory  
and I curse the life I'm livin'  
and I curse my poverty  
and I wish that I could be  
Richard Cory

The papers print his picture almost everywhere he goes;  
Richard Cory at the opera, Richard Cory at a show  
And the rumors of his parties and the orgies on his yacht,  
Oh, he surely must be happy with everything he's got  
(Chorus)

He freely gave to charity, he had the common touch  
and they were grateful for his patronage,  
and they thanked him very much.  
So my mind was full of wonder when the evening headlines read,  
Richard Cory went home last night,  
and put a bullet through his head  
(Chorus)



### At the Video Store

*Movie maven Barb the Brief is back again, with another three-second review.*

Stop what you are doing. Rent "ZERO EFFECT" (Pullman/Stiller). Best movie since "The Sting."



## Wilkerson's World

### SOS: Sartorial Slippage and Social Dissolution (or : It's Worth a Try)

While doing research for an upcoming conference, your correspondent has learned of disturbing trends. Dear reader, it is my duty to warn you: what may begin as innocent fashion iconoclasm may eventually pit you against every norm we hold dear in society.

How many of us can say we have looked into our closets without ever being tempted to substitute, just once, a T-shirt for a crisp and freshly pressed proper shirt under our regulation blazers?

If you are subject to such tendencies, it is not too late to get help. The first and most important step is awareness. Beware of insidious buzzwords such as "casual" and "comfortable," which lure impressionable people into disruptive and even dangerous lapses of judgment. Arm yourself with information. Study and know your enemy.

We recommend *The Second Skin: An Interdisciplinary Study of Clothing*, in which the insightful Prof. Marilyn J. Horn notes that some individuals, their minds undoubtedly corrupted by a climate of sartorial self-indulgence, go so far as to "choose to oppose group norms by being negativistic and rebellious toward the established code of dress." She cites the alarming case of "the young man who arrives at the formal dance in Bermuda shorts and sports shirt. His aggressive and exhibitionistic tendencies are satisfied by the adoption of antithetical patterns of dress" (Houghton Mifflin, 1968, p. 203). Not a pretty thought, is it?

Steel yourself against the siren call of sweats and sneakers. Down that road anarchy and madness surely lie.

Note to the editors: If it were that

easy to satisfy our aggressive tendencies, every single untenured person at the APA, and quite a few tenured ones would be wearing those bermuda shorts and sports shirts. Now that I think about it, maybe aggression and exhibitionism do explain APA fashion (excuse the oxymoron).

### Rosro, continued

expressions were commands, obviously meant for Tommy Mulkerrins, the man who took care of the cottage for Maurice O'Connor Drury.

For Wittgenstein, these four words constitute an entire language. These were the original words he intended to use in section 2 of the *Philosophical Investigations*. The mystery was why he switched from what was really important to him to building words ('slab' 'beam' 'block' and 'pillar').

Upon awaking from this dream, I knew that I would never know the answer to this question. But this not knowing has not troubled me in the least. The world's greatest mysteries are not meant to be comprehended, and Wittgenstein's switch is certainly one of them.

\* Name the title and author of the book from which this phrase has been revised with artistic license. Send your answer to Plagiarism, c/o POH.

●	MILK!
	TEA!
●	BISCUIT!
	SANDWICH!
●	



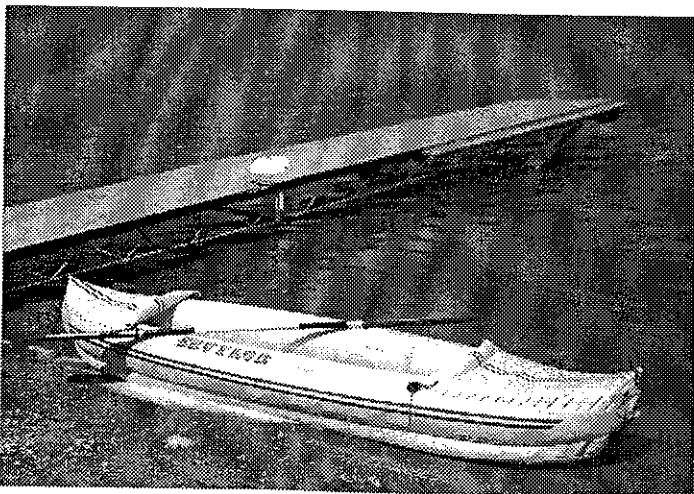
## On Traversing the Shortest Distance

*"For if [the planets'] movement is considered with respect to a circle in the plane of the elliptic concentric with the cosmos so that our eye is the centre, then it is necessary to suppose that they make their regular movements... along concentric circles; not with these simply, but with other circles borne upon them called epicycles." Ptolemy*

*"It's time to make the donuts." Dunkin Donuts commercial, circa 1985*

*Lisa writes:* Two summers ago, I presented Peg with a gift: a six-foot-long yellow vinyl inflatable watercraft, rather grandiosely described in the REI catalogue as a "kayak". Aside from the occasional trip that has had to be aborted due to, ahem, a loss of cabin pressure, that little boat has given us many hours of pleasure. We took it with us on our adventure to Putver State Park (see vol. I, no. 2), and were able to sail right up to the headwaters of the mighty Mississippi there on Lake Putver. At home, we regularly put in for a paddle on little Lake Emily, where we can watch the smart-alecky water skiers whiz around, and laugh when they fall in the water.

But yar she ain't.\* In fact, she handles a lot like a cardboard box in the water. Canoe and kayak experts have explained to us that this is partly due to the fact that she has no keel. A keel is the thing that enables boats to move through



the water in a straight line, and, well, keeps them on an even keel (to coin a phrase). When we move through the water, we are just as likely to turn about in a tight little circle as we are to move forward. Experience has taught us that, whenever we sense one of these little donut motions coming on, there is no point in trying to stop it—it's better just to let it happen. Almost invariably, once it has made its corrective little cycle, the boat will carry on smartly for at least a short distance, before it interrupts its course for another spin. Proceeding in this manner, we can often move quite briskly around the little island in the middle of Lake Emily.

Her Ptolemaic tendencies actually inspired her name—her first name, at least. (Her last name, Tahiti, came already emblazoned on her side—although "blaze" is perhaps an inapt word to use in reference to a rubber boat.) We christened her MaryAnn, in honor of Mary-Ann's Donut Shop of Fitchburg Massachusetts.\*\* Sometimes, you have to make the donut.

\*"My, she was yar!" Name the actress and the movie that gave us this line and you could have a chance to win this issue's fabulous **READER'S CONTEST!** Send your answer to Puzzles, c/o POH.  
\*\* Little Peg had a chocolate covered donut from MaryAnn's Donut Shop every Sunday of her growing-up life. We regret to tell you, however, that it closed shortly after this photo was taken. If you are ever hungry for a donut in Fitchburg, you will now have to satisfy yourself at one of the other 75 or 80 other donut shops located in that town.