



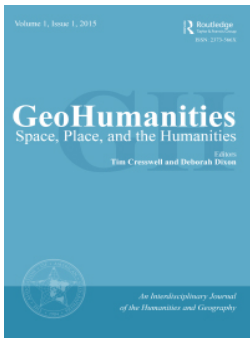
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Beyond the Flâneur: Urban Walking as Peripatetic Phenomenological Pedagogy

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This essay analyses a key motif in geographical scholarship: the most basic form of mobility achieved by an abled-bodied person engaging in acts of walking. By embedding “walking” firmly within a phenomenological tradition, the essay places “being mobile” qua walking within a field of enquiry that conceptualises an embodied form of mobility as both enabling and limiting. Building furthermore from a growing body of literature that has differentiated between “walking” as an active form of engagement and a host of different geographically relevant modes of being, the paper adds a specifically epistemological set of considerations in an attempt critically to contribute to existing literatures and to interrogate the embodied practice of walking. Key in this endeavour is the contribution mobile modes of existence make to the construction of knowledge about the social world. The paper concludes with a prolegomena that recasts walking in the form of a geographically informed pedagogical practice. **Key Words: mobility, pedagogy, phenomenology, urban geography, walking.**

If citizens do not go out on the streets, heads up, ready to fight with their bare hands, they will end up losing their real worth. (Louis-Sébastien Mercier, 1782, *Tableau de Paris*, 1, 63)

Man walks straight because he has a goal; he knows where he is going, he decided to go somewhere and he goes straight. (Le Corbusier, 1925, *Urbanism*, 4)

INTRODUCTION

As humankind is on the verge of leaving behind an era defined by the individualised motorcar, a technology that has fundamentally altered especially urban environments, alternative modes of mobility are gradually making their presence felt in everyday life: we encounter scooters, electrically powered bicycles and rediscover the modesty of a non-technologically enhanced form of mobility in the practice of walking. SARS CoVid-19 furthermore attributed to walking a different use value when, during various lockdowns, many of us re-discovered walking as a means of exploring spaces in our home-surrounding vicinities (Linehan 2020; Adey et al. 2021). In truth, however, walking was never far from the surface of mobility-facilitating practices, not even in places built exclusively around cars, where “walking” became a proxy for a form of mobility associated primarily with lower economic classes, especially in the US (Addie and Fraser 2019); nor was it “non-technologically enhanced” but for the able-bodied amongst us.

The resurgence of “walking” as a theme is perhaps most obviously embodied in the notion of the “15-minute city,” a concept coined by Carlos Moreno in the context of Paris, France, and presently discussed by urban planners in cities around the globe, orientating urban practices

away from car-centred and towards walkable practices (Moreno et al. 2021; Pozoukidou and Chatziyiannaki 2021). It is hence no accident that “walking” has once again asserted its centrality to discourses in the GeoHumanities, a claim that will be substantiated in the literature overview to follow. In that part of the essay and seemingly in contradiction with the title to this essay, it will also become evident that the literature on walking has long since *moved “beyond the flâneur.”* It is this kinetic tension, the rhetorical relocation of “moving beyond,” that will become a key focal point in what follows. The very ability publicly to “move beyond,” the essay will assert, necessitates symbolic and real figures that are capable of walking not unlike the “flâneur.” It is hence the contention motivating this essay that in a range of specific senses we really have yet to move beyond the “flâneur,” senses that are originally epistemological in kind and orientation but which we’ll soon uncover to be simultaneously thoroughly political.

In the context sketched above, the essay traces the outer contours of this epistemological and political forgetfulness. It does so against the backdrop of an existing, substantial literature about a diverse range of issues attaching to and being expressed by “walking.” Drawing from same, the essay positions the ability (and its absence, as well as its technologically enhanced capacity) to walk as key in the experience of what it means to be human because it facilitates the ability to navigate reality through a thoroughly human form of engagement: the ability to position oneself in an ever more differentiated manner within a materially existing world.

As such, this experience expands an insight central to phenomenological forms of inquiry, where the ability to navigate (and eventually: to know) reality is contingent upon our individual and collective position within and sensory access to “world.” Walking, this essay and countless other papers content, is but a natural extension of this original insight. At the same time, it is also an extension that renders the phenomenological point of embarkation a thoroughly problematic one—and it is to the difficulties emerging from recognising a range of consequences of this insight that the present essay will devote most of its attention. It does so in the form of an essay, an occasionally-maligned form of writing that dates back at least to Michel de Montaigne’s name-bestowing collection of ruminations written in the seventeenth century, which comprehensively aimed to map and relate the lay of the land surrounding a particular issue, rather than construct and defend an argument. Reader of GeoHumanities in particular, given the journal’s stated ambition to explore the spatial conditions of possibility underlying and informing the Humanities broadly construed, could be counted on being open to such a less confrontational, argumentative approach. In the form practiced here, an essayistic manner of writing is at home amongst a number of explorations within geography that have sought to broaden our modes of expression. Even colloquially though the term is mostly used to denote students’ engagements with learning in the form of essay submissions, the term itself has been used and reflected upon in geography at some length. Older readers may recall Mark Billinge’s infamous essay condemning what he perceived to be “jargon-infested” writing within the discipline (Billinge 1983); others have used the term to denote “richness” (Matless 1994), “depth” (Livingston 1990), “the personal” and “kaleidoscopic” (Cosgrove 2008), a kind of “exploratory” “juxtaposition” (Sidaway 2000) or, seemingly simply enough, “story” (Macdonald 2014), while in most cases the term “essay” merely designates a collection of contributions to an edited volume. Perhaps the author most directly invested in the use of the essay working in the English-speaking geohumanities today is Hayden Lorimer. His use of the term “essay” to designate what most others would refer to by “paper” or “chapter” is used consistently to probe to limits between different forms of narrative, to provide a space for “creative non-fiction” capable of rendering visible “potentials” (Lorimer

2014, 583) and is perhaps best captured by the adage of “place-writing” (Lorimer 2019, 333). The present essay is indebted to these traditions. At the same time, it aims to restore the sense in which Montaigne composed his “attempts”: as a way of *essaying* to bring into contact the concrete, the abstract and the lived within a humane—which is to say: finite—context, carrying “the seed of a more rich and a bolder matter, and sometimes, collaterally, a more delicate sound” (Montaigne, *Essays*, Chapter 39—A Consideration Upon Cicero).

To finally begin, let us turn to the two gestures readers found towards the beginning of this essay. When the architect Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, better known as Le Corbusier, penned the second of the quotes above as an epigraph to his 1925 book entitled “Urbanism,” his aim was clear: to develop a set of principles for a truly human-centred form of urban planning. To get us there, “the human” had to be differentiated from the “non-human,” a gesture skilfully delivered by the opening gambit of the book. Here, the stand-in for the “non-human,” as far as urban planning was concerned, came in the form of a donkey, or more precisely, in the form of the paths taken by a donkey, which “zigzag” and are determined by distractions because “the donkey does not think” (Le Corbusier 1925, 6). Regrettably, Le Corbusier continues, cities (“even Paris, unfortunately”) have been built as if its pathways had been created by donkeys (“we have even created a religion built around the path of the donkey,” Le Corbusier 1925, 9); high time, according to the author of “Urbanism,” to rectify this mistake by recognising that “man walks straight because he has a goal.”

It is easy today to mock the gendered desires that materialised in 1925; easy, too, to lament the categorical differentiations between the “human” and the “non-human” that motivates the pages of “Urbanism.” After all, we have learnt to mistrust binary distinctions of this kind, especially of the “human”—“other-than-human” variety. And is not the meandering, aimless manner of movement attributed to donkeys akin in result, if perhaps not in motivation, to an often-celebrated embodiment of human freedom in the city in the actions of the “flâneur”? That man—for a man it was—who was able to free himself from the shackles of mere want or rational procedures to engage in unrestricted urban walks along newly emerging boulevards (“especially in Paris,” fortunately, one is inclined to add): was he not “human” in his abdication of desires and acquired abilities?

If Le Corbusier denotes one pole of the engagement presently underway, another observer of all things human and Parisian, the eighteenth century chronicler Louis-Sébastien Mercier marks another. His decidedly normative plea quoted above for walking as an act of taking roots, of appropriating a city, of taking note as a precondition for meaningful social action, took place at a time when the very act of walking in both nature and through urban environments began to constitute a novel, conscious practice (see Thompson 2011, 32–33). His observation still rhymes today even if—or possibly because—Mercier’s politics at the time were of a decidedly conservative kind. Mercier’s urban walker is not defined by the manner in which he (and soon indeed she) walks but by the attentiveness they bring to the task, allowing them to become citizens, rather than the mere subjects that at the time of writing in 1782 they still were.

What we find here, in these different ways of approaching the seemingly unassuming act of walking, is not merely the whole of modernity wrapped into a particular, everyday practice, but a condition of possibility for any *geohumanism* to acquire meaning, to become knowledge, to symbolise encounters and to facilitate highly political engagements with the human condition. “Walking,” in other words, metonymically comes to symbolise normative qualities deemed to be important in a particular interpretation of modernity: the ability rationally to navigate space in Le Corbusier and the rather more affective attitude of political agency embodied in a certain kind of

walk in Mercier. Where Le Corbusier's walker orders space in an attempt rationally to plan, colonise and subjugate it to futures not yet realised, Mercier's equivalent engages with space, positions the walking subject as a political entity ready to translate what they observe into tangible action.

Both these authors, writing 150 years apart, therefore position "walking" as a socially important activity—and thus place it beyond the realm of a credibly pleasurable, yet always possibly impaired, individualistic capability. The present essay explores this "public" dimension of an individually owned and collectively practiced activity. The essay asks if and how a widely shared, if not universal, bodily experience contributes to and possibly shapes our ability to know, to share and to learn. It will open with a short enquiry into the phenomenology of walking, aimed at establishing common ground with a widely shared entrance point into the practice of walking. Following a diagnostic engagement with some assumptions underlying this body of scholarship, the essay will apply a critique of phenomenology influenced *inter alia* by research emanating from queer studies to embrace an openly pedagogical gesture in its final passages in an attempt to "mobilise" pedagogy within the realm of any possible geohumanities.

WALKING HUMANELY

Our empirical starting point is contained in the simple enough recognition that a majority of us cannot *not* walk: even when being physically restricted due to limitations imposed upon our bodies, most of us strive to overcome those limitations with the help of crutches, wheelchairs, Zimmer frames, artificial limbs or, towards the beginning (and often the end) of our lives, by being mobilised through the help of others. The interweaving of a generalist with a relativist starting position is important for many reasons—of which seeing the mobilities achieved through acts of walking as constituting a historically established, "ableist" norm is perhaps the most important. Starting here, rather than from a non-qualified position, affords us with little less than "an invitation to think again about the human" (Goodley 2014, 13): stepping outside the binary mobile/immobile continuum (see Oliver 1993) may thus succeed in the articulation of a differently conceptualized but still increasingly mobilised world. The word "mobile" is key here because the abstract re-conceptualisation of "walking" as a form of mobility greatly aids in the avoidance of ableist tropes and practices. Rather than posit an act of walking as an ability that acquires meaning in the form of a dualist capability ("can walk/can't walk"), this essay approaches walking practices as situated forms of everyday mobility that are inclusive because they are ideally owned by the person achieving mobility through whatever means. Built into this subtle but potentially acute change in nomenclature is a pedagogical opportunity: the possibility to focus not on abilities and what they facilitate by way of insights or knowledge but on acts of doing and learning instead. I will explore this further in the final section of this essay, where readers will be invited to work towards an understanding of "walking" as a form of mobility that quite literally mobilizes knowledge.

The "everyday" quality associated with "walking mobilities" invoked above is rendered visible by the mutation of the word "pedestrian" to describe dull and otherwise not terribly exciting mental activities—"thinking that shuffles when it could fly" (Kingwell 2013, 86; see also Truniger 2013). If indeed the act of putting our bodies into motion is pedestrian, what does this entail for our desire to know about "being human in the world"? Can we think about the human

subject without also considering its inherent mobility? Acknowledging that human and other beings are inherently mobile is an often-repeated truism (Creswell 2010)—but how does “being mobile” affect knowledge about “embodied beings” and about the world they inhabit as “mobile beings”?

There are two ways to approach this question: one the one hand, the production of knowledge has always acknowledged its indebtedness to mobility not just by embracing change throughout its history but by conceiving its own existence along mobile forms of construction. The very notion of “epistemology”—the branch of philosophy occupied with the pursuit of knowledge—offers an initial cue by building from the Greek “epi,” “eph” or ἔπι” variably translated as “upon,” “near” or “over,” thereby embracing a spatial gesture that is fundamental to any understanding: the recognition that knowledge is not identical with its subject matter. Instead of bringing about a “mirroring” or “mimetic” (and thus self-effacing) relationship, the creation of knowledge involves a step aside, a relationship, a walk or dance of sorts. A trace of this understanding of knowledge can similarly be found in the notion of “discourse,” at least as expressed in its Latin roots where “discursus” designates the motion of pacing, of coming and going, of “taking steps” (see Barthes 1979). At the same time, a doubling inherent to these steps continues to trouble any straightforward thinking of epistemology as a mobile endeavour: the uncertainty of how the “taking steps” of any knowledge construction can claim a relationship to no less mobile human beings. In the absence of a choreographer, how, where and to what end do these two partners required for knowledge to emerge meet?

It is this precise question that has motivated a close proximity between research on “walking” and the branch of philosophy known as phenomenology. Phenomenology, readers will recall, set out from a deliberate bracketing of metaphysical claims to be replaced with a thoroughly humanist embrace of embodied capacities and limitations. In other words, rather than starting with and from a world that can be known through a variety of different methods, phenomenology posits that world is only open to our epistemic desire through our senses, which connect us to that world. In phenomenology, “the human” is therefore the facilitating *and* limiting condition of knowledge, with “perception” of “world” being the starting point of any understanding of empirical realities (Pickles 1985).

Even though the early proponents of phenomenological thinking, from Brentano to Husserl, conceptualized human experience through largely static explorations of human senses and their connection to the world, it wasn’t long before another generation of writers opened the canon of phenomenological inquiry towards explicitly mobile renditions of experience. It is in the writings of Merleau-Ponty, Schütz and later Derrida that phenomenology begins to concern itself with the mobility of both the experiencing body and of the apparatus that we deploy to acquire and express knowledge. Especially Merleau-Ponty’s insistence that the foundational corporeality of existence “extends and withdraws (...) in its dynamic apprehension of tools and things in the world” (Richardson and Wilken 2009, 23; see also Seamon 2018b) implies a focus on mobile subjects capable of and possibly defined by such acts of *extending and withdrawing*. Schütz’s expansion of Husserl’s concept of the lifeworld furthermore, with its many differentiations concerning the shared social dimension of experience, provided an open invitation to reconsider the experiencing subject not as a static but as a contextual, practical and inherently mobile one (Kusenbach 2003; see also Bauman 1987). “Walking” here becomes an embodied practice attempts at knowing ignore at their peril (Leible 2013) and occasions a departure from older idealisations of subjects, which in turn entails an embrace of a process-orientated, non-static epistemology.

[T]his amounts to saying that phenomenalisation originates in the world in which the subject is involved through his or her movements, or that it is the moving subject who, by going towards the world, makes it appear (R Barabas, quoted in Thibaud 2013, 4).

This insight is matched by contemporary thematic forms of mobility-related enquiry inspired by phenomenology (Seamon 2018a; Salamon 2015; Richardson and Wilken 2009; Rao 2007; Allen 2004) and geohumanist scholarship on phenomenology more generally (see Ash 2020; Kinkaid 2020; Roberts 2018; Ash and Simpson 2016; Simonsen 2013; Lea 2009), often weaving together a mobile body and the spaces it traverses as co-constitutive articulations (see Wylie 2005, 2006; Lund 2013). Furthermore, as Spinney (2015, 234) observed, the mobility of such articulations does not merely attach to observably “mobile” bodies (and their encounters with “world”) but starts with and from the mobility contextualising our sensual relation to that world through the ability to direct our senses before we begin to walk or otherwise become bodily mobile. Note that this “ability” encompasses both a conscious and a sub-conscious element, as well as being instigated either by ourselves or by a “world”: we may turn our head, re-orientate our hearing or redirect our eyes because something caught our attention—or we may do so voluntarily, without a conscious or observable prompt (Hannah 2018).

We will (have to) return to the notion of “attention” soon—but before we do allow me properly to contextualise this essay in the literature alluded to above. As already mentioned, the last decade and a half has witnessed a genuine explosion in the number of publications in the cultural and social studies broadly conceived—the geohumanities in short—focusing on one aspect or another of “walking.” From texts narrating the practice of walking (Mortimer 1999; Sinclair 2003; Wunderlich 2008; Vergunst 2010) to thematic and historical overviews (Solnit 2000; Amata 2004; Nicholson 2009; Coverley 2012; Self 2012) and investigations of walking as a performative (Bissell 2010; Waitt, Gill, and Head 2009; Beaumont 2015) and a differentiated, occasionally impaired practice (Oliver 1993; Hansen and Philo 2007; Parent 2016), from philosophically motivated ruminations (Gros, 2014; Kagege 2019) to philosophers walking (Milot 2018), from neuroscientific exposés lauding the benefits of walking (O’Mara 2019) rendering it, in turn, as a “superpower” (Fleming 2019) that might transform the meeting of bodies and minds in these post-SARS-CoV-2 times of ours (Merchant 2013), to histories of walking (Amata 2004), not forgetting the exposition of walking as a key consideration in contemporary urban planning (Speck 2013) or as an artistic medium (Strohmayer and Corre 2012; Careri 2017; Morris 2020), the reasonably modest act of placing feet in front of one another or of mobilising a body through other means has met with renewed enthusiasm amongst scholars originally working in many languages and subjects. Amongst this wealth of scholarship, it is perhaps Gros’ *Philosophy of Walking* (2014) that is most stubbornly associated with the phenomenological tradition. In this monograph, Gros analyses the many characteristics emerging from and indeed attaching to walking as an expression of personal freedom that cannot, however, be contextualised or explained fully through recourse to phenomenological instruments. Walking, in other words, is not wholly subject to “intentions,” “directionality” or “achievement,” as the repertoire of classical phenomenological concepts would have us believe. Even intentional acts of walking afford the ambulatory person with nothing approximating assurances about neither the walking self nor the world inhabited by such a subject. Even accepting a hither to fore naturalised human vantage point that varies between roughly 150 and 200 cm in height for an able-bodied adult allows no deduction towards a uniform condition of possibility of a non-stationary engagement

with the world as we encounter it. Crucially, differentiating elements such as the speed of walking and the attention we devote to the environments we traverse contribute to any such engagement. Furthermore, acts of walking are often expressly not intended to lead to, prioritize or encourage engagements *en route*: we walk to get somewhere, after all. “Walking,” as Gros notes, it is “not a sport” (Gros 2014, 1)—but offers the promise of something else instead: escape, excess and un-anticipated encounters with “world” in the broadest sense imaginable. Here the “self” that embarks on a journey very much becomes a site of possibility, rather than the stable *condition of possibility* it was in older, phenomenologically inspired thinking and practice. Significantly, the boundary between “self” or “inside” and “world” or “outside” (and the many correlations in the “culture”—“nature” mould) thus becomes permeable and situated (see also Edensor 2000; Wylie 2005; Murphy 2011; Ingold 2004; Macfarlane 2013).

It is therefore no surprise that geographers have been no strangers to such research and writing. Here, a rekindled interest in mobilities more generally met with a focus on embodied practices to bring about a diverse array of captivating research (see in particular the work of Middleton 2009, 2010, 2011a and 2011b, Olwig 2008, and Lorimer 2010). This essay would not have been written without this delightfully broad, engaging and multi-faceted literature. That said and *pace* a sizeable amount of recent scholarship that has succeeded at incorporating “observable walking” (Pierce and Lawhon 2015, 656) into a number of methodological or regional contexts (O’Neill and Roberts 2020; Springgay and Truman 2018; Joseph-Lester et al. 2016; Brown and Shortell 2016), the present essay will *not* take the embodied and mobile experience of “world” sketched above (of which “walking” is but one engagement) as *per se* relationally enabling, as traditional forms of phenomenological inquiry had us believe. Rather, it conceptualises phenomenological access to world as being both facilitating and limiting with regard to the shape and scope of what we can know. In this, it aligns to some extent with post-phenomenological thought-and-practice (Lea 2009; Spinney 2015; Ash and Simpson 2016; Roberts 2018; Gibas 2019; Ash 2020) that has considerably expanded our understanding of “the human” by abandoning *a priori* established notions of “agency” and critically interrogating human-non-human differentiations. Post-phenomenology shares much with recent geographical and geohumanist scholarship that has effectively entered its post-human phase: having chiselled away competencies and stable positions erstwhile attributed to and embodied by human actors and agents, scholars have begun to explore alternatives to traditional, anthropo-centric forms of knowledge (Dewsbury and Cloke 2009; Dixon, Hawkins, and Straughan 2012). In this body of literature, phenomenology shares the fate of its sister epochal concept “humanism”: both are increasingly conceived as tainted by centuries of flawed starting assumptions separating the human from the many contexts that constitute its existence (Castree and Nash 2006; Lorimer 2009). Answers emanating from this position point in the direction of a broader, “more-than- (and occasionally less-than-) human” (Whatmore 2006; Panelli 2010; Wright 2015; Philo 2017; Macpherson 2010), a different because affective (McCormack 2017; Dewsbury 2015; Pile 2010) or re-materialised (Tolia-Kelly 2013; Kirsch 2013) and a deeper, “other-than-reason” (Marston, Jones, and Woodward 2005; Pile 2010; Anderson 2014) orientation for thinking, research and teaching. Any “geohumanism,” it would appear, would be well advised to engage with such novel ideas of how to approach “the human” or any “human” characteristic—like “being mobile.”

However, as Kinkaid (2020) has concisely argued, phenomenology is not so easily brushed aside as some post-phenomenological writing would lead one to suspect. Rather than claiming

that we have entered into an era of “post-phenomenological” knowledge construction, Kincaid argues instead for a “critical” form of phenomenology that is centred in social differences and intersubjectivity. And they insist that such judicious scholarship is necessarily political through a “retool[ing of] classical phenomenology to address perceived shortcomings of the phenomenological subject, namely its lack of specificity and its situatedness in intersubjective fields of power” (Kincaid 2020, 4). Although such an approach shares key concerns with post-phenomenological research, it retains an anchor in the recognition of (1) the entanglement of both subject and object in any process of understanding and (2) of unavoidable limitations attaching to our collective and individual embodied practices. The mobility of bodies, I would content, is not just one such limitation (together with “finitude” and other contextual dynamics in play); rather, it holds a potentially crucial place in developing a phenomenology that is at once critical—and pedagogical.

It does so because, and mirroring the above two-fold distinction, (1) it matters whether a walking individual is white and male and strolls through Southern Manhattan (Sorkin 2009; see Mott and Roberts 2014 for a critique of the gendering of urban walks), walks the same space as a migrant (Cole 2011; see Ehrkamp 2013 for an academic engagement), is named Ahmaud Arbery and jogs through suburban Satilla Shores in Brunswick, GA (Read and Lampen 2020), is a young hiker in remote parts of wherever with gear to match or is walking out of necessity because the nearest source of water is miles away (Sultana 2009). Furthermore and *à propos* (2), becoming bodily mobile involves a change, often a reduction, in sensory possibilities. We walk at different paces, turn our heads to greet someone, know (or not) where we’re going while we walk or engage with a mobile phone along the way: time permits only so many re-directed forms of experience or linkages to world, after all. Finally, we may walk alone or walk *with*—a friend, a dog, a child in a pram (Springgay and Truman 2018, 137), an elderly in a wheelchair, which again changes the form of mobility we engage in, as well as alters the attention we devote to “world.”

None of this is new. As the references above make clear, authors in the geohumanities have engaged with the contextual and embodied horizons that make every knowledge about walking deeply situated and relative. But in a majority of the emerging literature, the notion of “situated knowledge” is conceived as a scaled-down and localized claim to knowledge that can tell us something precise about “world.” The more we know about the situatedness, the more nuanced our understanding of the world we seek to understand. What we forget is that, taken together, an individual’s social position in the world and their momentary positioning towards “world” condition the quality and amount of attention we can devote to “world.” In other words, this “conditioning” does not work in a scalable, additive and differentiating way only: it also implies that there are aspects of “world” that we do not, cannot and will not perceive no matter how conscious or deliberate our methodological armoury is developed. It is this aspect of a phenomenologically inspired epistemology that has been the focus of the work of Sara Ahmed (2006), David Wills (2008) and, in geography, of Matthew Hannah (2015, 2018)—and it is directly relevant to any critical engagement with “walking.”

TOWARDS A CRITICAL EPISTEMOLOGY OF WALKING

The link between a critically reformulated, epistemologically orientated phenomenology and walking as a form of mobility extends from the kinesis embedded within our corporeal existence

discussed above towards the mobilisation of entire bodies (Middleton 2010). We turn our heads, we fix our eyes, we direct our hearing—all of these personal moves emulate the “epi” of “epistemology” because they are characteristic of a directed approach central to any act of knowledge. “Walking” extends this directedness both metaphorically and for real: *approaching* an issue is one condition of possibility of knowing about it. And while this is one of the more obviously “banal” aspects of our corporeality (Hannah 2018, 95 and *passim*), its repercussions are anything but since they de-naturalises the step from “epi” to “epistēmē,” from “over” or “above” or “relational” to “knowledge”: every “approach,” in other words, is simultaneously conditioned and curtailed by the mobility that makes it possible.

These abstract ruminations about the status of a relational, mobile engagement with “world” also comprise an ethical dimension. As David Wills (2005) has argued, the recognition of the partial and always mobile nature of our engagement with “world” inevitably involves a “facing” towards “world,” which often occasions something else alongside the phenomenological recognition of that world: it also entails turning your back towards other aspects of equally present worlds, inclusive of materials, people and possible encounters. Willis, following Derrida, develops an anti-Schmittian ethics (obsessed with justifying the use of “power” to create knowledge) of “turning” from this initial insight, a “queer” or other-than-normatively-overdetermined form of friendship that does not require face-to-face interaction but allows for vulnerabilities, limitations and other forms of ability to inform and shape a social relationship towards “world.” Rather than confront (and thereby seek to dominate) what we strive to know, Willis invites us to engage with “world” by acknowledging the partiality of our “being positioned” towards it, by appreciating that *something* or *someone* we cannot presently perceive might be important or require our care. If “queer” forms of practicing epistemology aim primarily to “undo” normal categories (Donna Haraway, as quoted in Springgay and Truman 2018, 8), it is to the status of what replaces established categories that walking can make us more attuned. Simply stating that alternative categories will remain instable, relative and/or relational will not do if these latter attributes are accorded the same status as knowledge as their thought-to-be universal and stable predecessors were. Instead, we need to conceptualise insights gleaned from acts of walking as thoroughly political because we notice some things and some human beings while turning our backs towards others. In the context that opened this intervention, we need to appreciate that Le Corbusier’s ideal of a rationally knowable and orderable world not merely entails, by way of contrast, always already partial and compromised political citizens of the kind alluded to by Sébastien Mercier but that “walking” puts into question any epistemic solution to the ensuing challenge of bringing the two together.

In a specific way, this partial and situated choice of “turning” our attention to and from “world” is what mobility, and thereby “walking,” is all about. In the context of the present engagement, such a recognition leads initially to a less *per se* enabled and more modest positioning of what we can know while being mobile, all the while embracing the augmentation in the number of possible encounters likely to be produced from and through differently structured mobilities—like “walking.” But beyond such rather mechanical thinking, we need to allow for epistemic practices that acknowledge forms of “not-knowing” (by *literally turning our backs*) to have a place in our repertoire of engagements. As I will argue later, following both Pierce and Lawhon (2015, 657), Edensor (2010, 70) and Springgay and Truman’s astute introduction to a highly relevant collection of papers (2018), an iterative form of pedagogy is one way of

practicing such an acknowledgment that furthermore allows for a reconfiguration of the impasse that emerged early on in this essay between the quotes from Le Corbusier and Sébastien Mercier.

To be clear: to explore such a “queer” approximation of a peripatetic, epistemologically orientated pedagogy is not the same as to celebrate “giddiness” (see Ahmed 2006, 544) or outright disorientation. Rather, it is to broaden the scope of knowledge about likely encounters with “world” emanating from a differently mobilised practice. Note, too, that being mobilised in this manner is to escape from the shackles of binary “here/not here” differentiations: “world” is always “asymmetrical” (Hannah 2018, 107) vis-à-vis and towards our respective mobilised positionality: “[w]hatever it is that we are actively *doing*, we are also *in so doing*, not actively engaged with the vast realm of what is behind us” (Hannah 2018, 109) or, in a mobilised context, what is also “whizzing by,” noticed but in passing. Ahmed (2006) develops this line of inquiry with regard to an object most commonly involved in most published research: the writing desk. Scaling up and sideways from a writing individual sitting behind a desk to a mobilised one, walking down a street, we need to differentiate this kind of critique from a (no less important) critique of ideology, which posits our attention as always being pre-formatted to notice certain objects at the expense of others. The appreciation of Paris embodied in Benjamin’s *flâneur* (Benjamin 1983), to use a widely known historical archetype of a mobile individual by way of example here, while imagined to be walking through the arcades of the 1820s and 1830s was already directed by reconfigured forms of urban capital that invested widely into newly emerging shopping windows and their displays. A critique of ideology might furthermore hone in on the fact that like other embodied practices, “walking,” too, takes place within contexts that are in turn in need of analytical labour. To illustrate the point, take the production and design of surfaces on which to walk or gates that may get in the way of accessing certain spaces: not only do these form part of a social infrastructure designed to facilitate mobility (and, more often than not, fail to do so adequately especially for differently mobilised bodies), their design explicitly or implicitly prioritizes (and thereby naturalize) particular forms of mobility (Monchaux 2020; Hynes 2022). Attention, as the arch-archivist of all things modern, Georges Perec understood, is never wholly owned by a “subject” but is at least in part pre-shaped by what we are conditioned to see¹. If pre-modern streetscapes presented its users with a wide array of different, “mixed” forms of mobile bodies, its modern equivalent increasingly became the space of the automobile during the first half of the twentieth century (Groth, Hebsaker, and Pohl 2017). Ahmed’s point (and Hannah’s after her) is that while such a critique is always possible (and thoroughly appreciated), its absence does not occasion less by way of pre-formatting, only that in the latter case, “pre-formatting” comes wrapped in a mobile individual’s existence. It is thus at once political and existential.

To develop this epistemological point in a context likely to be more familiar to readers, let us dwell on the well-worn figure of the *flâneur* for a moment longer. Here is neither the time nor the need to develop in detail on the history of the concept, with Tester’s edited volume (1994), Jenks concise summary (1995), Featherstone’s exploration (1998), Hazan’s practiced form of *flânerie* through contemporary Paris (2010 and 2017) and Nuvolati’s gentle updating of the concept (2016) providing more than adequate material to serve that purpose; building on their insights, the concept is arguably better understood as a metaphor or trope than forming a fully-fledged concept (Jenks and Neves 2000, 3). Noting furthermore a number of critiques, amongst which the reminder of its gendered origins is but the most pertinent and well-known one (see

Wolff 1985; for a critique see Wilson 1992; for a contemporary, differentiated view see also van Ness and Nguyen 2009), we can observe that the reduction of mobility towards its expression through a generalized walking male subject has served to naturalise a highly particular point of view that is not just ableist in essence but a product of the bourgeois revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and thus of the liberation of time from the necessities of work for a minority part of (French) society (Strohmayr 1997, 2007; Gluck 2003; Burton 2009). It is thus the particulars of this position, Mercier’s “head held high,” the controlled (and often controlling) gaze that has the backing of society, that looks at things and observes practices that are condoned by that society, that is taken as providing an archetype of sorts of urban walks. Even the *flâneur*’s walk itself normalizes by eliminating the differences between strolling and goal-directed walks. Gone, too, or rather: subsumed are the kind of walks that serve either one or multiple purposes (say the difference between walking a dog and running errands) or the distinction between actively seeking the experience of sauntering, walking while being engaged in other experiences (say walking with or without a map; see Richardson and Wilken 2009), being mobile and “gauking” (Alsdorf 2022) and being on “auto-pilot” (see Middleton 2011b for an exploration of the latter state). Not that these differences are necessarily linked causally to different forms of experience—after all, there is no linear correlation between intention and experience—but to flatten these out by subsuming the *flâneur* to be able metaphorically to encapsulate most of these is plainly misleading (see Macauley 2000 for an excellent discussion of these differences).

Such streamlining of possible experiences into a partial but generalized metaphor and from hence into an epistemologically sound link between a certain kind of subject and whatever kind of urban “world” he, she or they reflect through being mobile can thus be critiqued and augmented, reconfigured, sensuously adjusted and deconstructed—and much of the reflective literature on the *flâneur* has done just that. Yet and again, in most of this literature the presence and/or absence of an embodied phenomenological stance characteristic of that subject is carried through into its mobile existence. To quote from Keith Tester’s astute characterization:

The *flâneur* is a secret spectator of the spectacle of the spaces and places of the city. Consequently, *flânerie* can be understood as the activity of the sovereign spectator going about in the city in order to find the things which will occupy his gaze and complete his otherwise incomplete identity, satisfy his otherwise unsatisfied existence and replace a sense of bereavement with a sense of life. (1994, 7)

Mercier’s “head held high” once again is implied in this definition but it is the “find[ing of] things” that matters in our present context since it connects the “going about” of the mobile male body previously invoked in the quote with a phenomenological capacity that may momentarily be incomplete but is always capable of linking an engagement with “world” to a subject in question. It is as if we cannot—or do not want—to conceive of “world” other than through ableist concepts. From an epistemologically queer point of view borrowed from Wills (2005, 2008), the postulation of such an encounter to be bundled in the figure of the *flâneur* presupposes the existence of a proprietorial relationship between “world” and “subject” that can be enacted when the mobile body engages in a sensual relationship to what surrounds him or her. The problem is that this is rarely the case when not being mobile—and become virtually impossible when being mobilized in whichever manner using whatever technology available. None of this matters if the *flâneur* retains its status as a metaphor or as a “contradictory figure” (Nuvolati 2016, 23)—but

becomes a fatal, because never demonstrably articulated, presupposition once we deploy it to create knowledge.

Readers may object that as far as the *flâneur* is concerned, nothing other than a metaphorical deployment was or is ever desired. In fact, such relative vagueness is asserted to be an asset in its own right: “The *flâneur* is elusive to the point that he cannot be located at all, but the search for this figure itself takes on the characteristics of *flâneury* and offers new ways of experiencing the city” (Coverley 2010, 62; see Paeslack 2010 for an interesting reflection of such a “distracted” processes in Berlin). Even allowing for such a “soft” epistemological practice does not, however, resolve the question in hand: how, we continue to ask, *does* mobility contribute towards our understanding of “world”? Simply adding to or recasting a subject’s engagement with “world” as a mobile one, we can now say with increased robustness, will not do because it cannot then account for the qualitative and quantitative differences bestowed onto our mobile engagement with world, crucially including that which we see tangentially, see in passing, investigate closer by halting, turn towards or leave behind unnoticed. Recall also that a variant of this issue has been at the heart of older debates between phenomenological positions and critiques of ideology centering on the question whether our attention was directed by a subject’s desires, as opposed to structural properties embedded in and expressed by the environment. Our opening positioning of Le Corbusier and Sébastien Mercier recast one variant of this debate in the context of mobile bodies.

Perhaps it is time to summarise: so far in this essay, we have traced the effects of walking as an embodied form of mobility for phenomenologically-inspired attempts at creating knowledge in the geohumanities. We noted that a likely enhancement of epistemic possibilities attributable to walking (as a non-static form of engagement with “world”) materialises at the price of a specific kind of neglect or forgetfulness that casts, no matter how many qualifications we attach to its results, walking as an inherently ableist and de-politicised form of knowledge. “Ableist” because it *enables* the creation of knowledge; de-politicised because it can never fully account for the many conscious and unconscious decisions that contribute to its coming into existence.

But the creation of “knowledge” does not exhaust the contribution of walking to our engagement with world, not even in realm customarily associated with knowledge, ie. academia. In fact, many of the qualities associated with walking mentioned further up in this essay point towards and imply different characteristics and potentials that can be actualized and articulated dialogically. Of these, it is the heading of pedagogical engagements that will form the focus of the next section.

WALK THE WALK: PERIPATETIC PEDAGOGIES

Reconstituting “walking” within a deliberately cast pedagogical realm is one possible answer to questions borne of the co-constitution of knowledge and world—not just but also within phenomenological research. Many of us working in geography, anthropology or related fields of inquiry have walked this walk in the form of field-based pedagogical engagements; the present, pen-ultimate section of this essay seeks to alter our understanding of same in the context of our preceding discussion. If field-based forms of engagement have, at times, degenerated into practices that were barely distinguishable from bus-induced, mobility-enhanced tourist tours (see Bassett 2004; Phillips 2004), it is time to reimagine these as a form of pedagogy that engages

with material realities in a non-determinist manner. Key to such an engagement is not just a break with an overt reliance on the “visual” (Rose 2003; Jarvis et al. 2016) and an encouragement of novel forms of critique (Reilly, Clavin, and Morrissey 2016). *Pace* Israel (2012), the goal of embedding walking within progressive pedagogies is thus not primarily about enhancing effectivities or relevance but about linking embodied experience, attention and the directedness of one’s engagement with the environment in which we walk or become otherwise mobile bodies. The focus, in other words, is less about “knowledge,” “epistemology” and “method” and more about the conditions of possibility of these to emerge (see Goertz 2018). Consciously experiencing ourselves while learning can thus become central to any further learning.

A number of observations are in order at this point. As mentioned before, walking rarely happens in a vacuum. Geographers in particular, even those blessed with a keen sense of direction, rarely walk in an unaided fashion. Rather, we are supported by maps and other, spatially coded, internet-enhanced and increasingly visualised forms of information when we do. The twenty-first century has added further complexities to this situation by affording most of us opportunities of walking virtually, especially when using “google streetview” in most, but not all, urban environments. Whether these are used to complement the assessment of news, enrich the reading of place-based novels or simply add to the pleasure of (re-)acquainting oneself with spatial configurations “out there”: technological innovation has greatly expanded the scope of “walking.” We are, in other words, directed in our engagement while we are mobile: we experience certain articulations in space while blanking out others. As the Situationists’ practice of *detournement* illustrated so pointedly (Bonnett 1989; Pinder 1996), stepping outside the normalized relation between information and space yields insights into the prescriptive workings of power—results we should reflexively harness with students. Note, too, how the reflexivity aimed for in such pedagogical exercises all but eliminated the danger of narcissism often associated with (self-) reflexive fieldwork. Pointing towards a (clogged up) drain cover on a road, the presence or absence of laundry hanging over a street, or any adjustment in height, speed, direction will do as long as we thematise how a particular observation came about. Beyond trained and normalized engagements through the eye, we should involve other senses, use alternative information, deploy historical images to emulate palimpsest-like layerings, follow graffiti to pursue available information while *in situ*, learn to listen to noises and voices of various kinds—or many other changes to the articulation of urban connections. None of this will surprise those readers customarily engaged in field-based teaching practices. In fact, most of what I have sketched here at least partially mirrors what many academic readers do when “in the field.” What we don’t always do is explicitly to engage with a key element shaping the modern city: the circulation of people, goods, “material” and information. It is in this precise and in turn mobility-facilitating context that being a mobile body “in the field” creates distinct possibilities for a progressive and critical, geohumanist pedagogy, opportunities that are enhanced considerably through a critical engagement with recent work on the notion of infrastructure.

Modern infrastructure is traditionally defined by its multiple functionings, which all help to order and secure the flows of modern life, from subways and underground waterworks to electricity and internet cables and “wireless” conditions of possibility for the circulation of information and capital (Wakefield 2018). Given the unquestionable importance of such forms of “circulation” for urban life (see both Harvey 1996 and Adams 2018), it comes as no surprise that the concept of “infrastructure” has occupied an important place in literatures especially on the modern city. Recent scholarship informed by the developments mapped in preceding sections of

this essay have expanded and added important nuances to this body of knowledge (Graham and McFarlane 2015; Addie 2016) through an insistence on the “blur[ing of] the boundary between material objects and social services” (Rankin quoted in Furlong 2020, 537), allowing infrastructures to become, inter alia, “a sociometric terrain for the reproduction of racism” (Appel, Anand, and Gupta 2018, 2) and other forms of spatial injustice. At the same time, infrastructures require knowledge, people and capital for them to function—and to function reliably. Recently renewed interest consequently not merely attaches to the construction and hence presence of such a connective tissue, it also analyses its availability, state of repair and affordability to different social groups within a given city. As such, it necessarily extends into linguistic, legal and socio-cultural domains as it is these latter that determine the likelihood of breakdown, the specifics of care or governmental embeddings attaching to all sorts of infrastructures.

From a pedagogical point of view, however, it is the invisibility of infrastructures that poses considerable problems. Or rather the partial invisibility attaching to their functional properties, as Larkin astutely observed:

“Infrastructures are matter that enable the movement of other matter. Their peculiar ontology lies in the facts that they are things and also the relation between things. As things they are present to the senses, yet they are also displaced in the focus on the matter they move around” (Larkin 2013, 329)

It is these parts that the linking mobile articulation we call “walking” can emulate to an extent. It does so emphatically *not* by mimetically mirroring flows and networks of circulation or by becoming part of the circulatory system itself (which it does necessarily) but by affording the mobile self (say a student) with a potentially infinite number of encounters of “sameness” often barely held together and in various states of functioning, of being instable and fragile, of becoming ruinous. Here, the mobile self simultaneously encounters, becomes part of *and* constitutes infrastructural properties. “Encounters” made all the more productive by blending voices and mixing strategic and tactical practices (Lugones 2003), by aiming better to understand habits akin to those practiced not just by the *flâneur* but also by the no less eponymous streetwalker (Buck-Morss 1986), in other words, by continuously blending intentional and non-intentional engagements. The link between the mobility of the body and urban infrastructures supporting the mobility of the body, in other words, becomes open to a different kind of critical scrutiny by being practiced: it is in this manner that the relational interdependence of body and infrastructures, the simultaneity of dependence on and constitution of, can be opened to experience and, from hence, to critical interventions. Much like Benjamin’s *flâneur* (Benjamin 1983) navigated the newly emergent infrastructure of the Parisian passages, the navigation of streets, bridges, subways, parks and elevators, the use of water fountains or observing the delivery of goods to urban shops today involves the mediation of visible and invisible devices, technologies, structures and practices. It involves encountering and reflecting on the conditions of possibility of urban life.

Why should any of this matter in the context of geohumanist pedagogical practices and ambitions? Because it is in the form of such reflective mobile practices that the divergence we encountered between the rational aspirations of a Le Corbusier and the political desires of someone like Mercier, that the ability to think and order on the one hand and the eagerness not to be detached from everyday concerns, aspirations, affects and experiences on the other ceases to inform concrete practices in the form of an “either-or” choice. We saw earlier that an attempt at achieving such a reconciliation inspired phenomenological research; we can now begin to

formulate a response based on an epistemology anchored floatingly on infrastructure and expressed in the form of pedagogical practices. Rather than being relegated into two separated realms, the rational and the political can be experienced as simultaneously effecting behaviours and laying the foundations for broadly civic forms of action (Sawyer 2005).

Another way of appreciating this understanding of an epistemologically informed pedagogical practice is to conceptualise it—through its mobile properties—as an emergent method. Again, “emergence” is not primarily of interest because, like “walking,” it describes non-static processes (which again it does) but because it curtails the temptation to conceptualise knowledge as an inert result, rather than the open-ended, overdetermined practice, indeed route, that it is. “[E]mergence,” writes Michael Fisch in his superb reading of Tokyo’s rail infrastructure, “can be understood generally as referring to the self-ordering protean creativity immanent to a decentralized network topology” (Fisch 2013, 324). Taken not as an ontological but as an epistemological statement and applied within the context of pedagogical practices, “emergence” thus rhymes well with the mobility we customarily call “walking” where decisions are made on the basis of new information that becomes available through networked activities that are interpreted and validated by way of past knowledge and experience.

Take, by way of example, those ever-more popular urban “walking tours” organised by local residents to engage with tourists or interested “others”: through their situated blend of personal narratives, embodied experience, student ownership (see Bairner 2011), unpredictable trajectories and pedagogical intermediaries in target urban environments², they approximate the infrastructure-dependant and—maintaining emergence of walking where “[t]he material landscape evoked not a reified past but the intersections of active historical and social relations, and walking and talking through this landscape was an opportunity to become consciously entangled in those relations” (Aoki and Yoshimizu, 2015, 279). Conceived as a dialogical and conscious exercise (Pink 2008), practices such as the ones embodied in “walking tours” and “field-based” forms of engagement allow the walking individual to “go-along” with other individuals, teachers, fellow students and locals (see Kusenbach 2003; Carpiano 2009; Gatta and Palumbo 2016) and thereby to co-produce a form of shared knowledge which, by definition, cannot be other than in a state of “becoming” or “emergence” (Pink 2008).

From a pedagogical standpoint it is crucial that these “states” not merely remain open and fluid but that each and every articulation—every turn along a path—is contextualized dialectically as a *possibility amongst others*. The paths not taken, in other words, must form part of the pedagogical exercise. What attracted our attention in turning? What instruments induced us to pay attention here, rather than there? Why did we pause now? Questions of this kind will transform learning to become both critical and relevant while being rooted in the material world of human practices. What the emergent pedagogy no longer requires is a phenomenology that dwells on, indeed is anchored in, a subject capable fully and unambiguously to associate particular sensations with him-, her- and themselves. In its stead, a kind of social phenomenology begets its own social pedagogy riddled with contradictions. In the field, the art is to render these latter as an integral part of the urban experience, is to allow Kevin Lynch’s well-known structuring modalities of urban “paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks” (Lynch 1960, 47) to acquire a new potential when embedded within such a reformulated pedagogical practice—they become socially produced norms and practices instead of being taken for positively existing structuring devices. What students, what we collectively experience here is the co-constitution of any “walk” with the activity of “walking”: where we go, whether we turn left or right, any pause

along the way defines the kind of walk that emerges from the sum of our decisions. And note that this applies equally to deliberate walks aiming efficiently to get from point “A” to “B” as it characterizes leisure-induced acts of loitering or dallying—or outright sleepwalking. Michel de Certeau celebrated equating of the emerging paths with “intertwining, unrecognizable poems” (de Certeau 1984, 93) is perhaps an apt metaphor for the emerging geohumanist practice. It is also, finally, a way of celebrating Le Corbusier’s donkey as a latent presence in all of us.

Exploring such states syn- as well as diachronically in and between bodies and buildings, on streets and while using public transportation, whilst at the same time constantly mixing “talking” and “walking” (Anderson 2004; Morris 2004) finally echoes earlier pedagogical practices: it was Aristotle’s Lyceum in Athens, after all, in which a peripatetic approach to teaching and learning was practiced and gave birth to an entire tradition within Greek philosophy. Beautifully captured in Raffael’s 1511 wall-sized fresco “The School of Athens” in the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican, pedagogy as an animated practice conducted while being mobile challenges the ordering, quasi-panoptic classroom (McGregor 2004; Piro 2008) and replaces it with something novel, experimental, and potentially disruptive. It also affords us with an opportunity to reconcile our opening gambit in the form of an urban ethics: Aristotle’s definition of a “gentleman,” after all, came in the form of a human being afforded the public grace to walk purposely through the streets of Athens, thereby combining Mercier’s “head held high” with Le Corbusier’s “goal” to give birth to a deliberate form of societal purpose that must embrace tolerance for it to work. Pedagogically motivated, shared urban walks “into the border-bursting realms of crowds, solidarity, shared action and plural subjects” (Macauley 2000, 21) are ideal vehicles to teach more than just geography: they become laboratories towards a geohumanism increasingly absent from global society.

CONCLUSION

As conceptualised above, mobile forms of pedagogical engagement not merely hold the promise of activating the creative and critical tension that materialises between Le Corbusier (or the promise of attaining rational knowledge) and Sébastien Mercier (or the recognition of an irreducibly political dimension) but of furthermore establishing an ever-changing laboratory of methodological practices related to urban planning broadly conceived. Given that the mobility we call “walking” has recently become a proxy for quality of life in the form of “walkable cities (or neighbourhoods)” (Leyden 2003; Southworth 2005), or through the invocation of the aforementioned “15-minute city” (Martínez Eukliadiadas 2020), such a renewed focus will be welcomed by many across the range of the social sciences. It is in this context that the possibility of chance encounters beyond the proverbial echo chambers and filter bubbles that have come to dominate internet-based engagements is so important. Retooled accordingly, the figure of the *flâneur* can once again become central, not in its nineteenth century form borne of dandy-esque freedoms but as the materialisation of non-conformity and spontaneity: “The contemporary *flâneur* is by nature and inclination a democratising force who seeks equality of access, freedom of movement and the dissolution of corporate and state control” (Self 2012).

It is this quasi-political quality attaching to walking that also renders it uniquely interesting in the context of progressive pedagogical practices such as field-based learning or other, mobility-based forms of pedagogy (Bairner 2011). Allow me to conclude with the help of an example: the use of “walking” and of “walks” in a surprisingly wide range of contexts and progressive

practices by the *Institut für Raumexperimente* (“Institute for spatial experiments”) at the Universität der Künste (“University of Arts”) in Berlin (see <http://www.raumexperimente.net>) in the years 2009 to 2014 is perhaps exemplary in the context of the present essay for its stated desire to challenge and critique everyday spatial practices through a proliferation of material encounters. The brainchild of artist and pedagogue Olafur Eliasson, *Raumexperimente* posited space as an everyday linkage between living and dead materials and worlds and did so in a genuinely open and non-traditional manner. At the same time, its tagline “nothing is ever the same” directly illustrates the problem the present essay sought to explore: the deployment of “walking” in an almost nominalist experiment that contributes little towards an epistemology of mobility while rendering the experience of walking itself central to its endeavours. In this walking is clearly related to dancing in that the experience itself is often thought to embody a clue to “being-in-the-world”: forms of mobility both that replace older, subject-centred forms of explanation. But, again, in the absence of phenomenologically stable web of relations, both walking and dancing can only ever illuminate themselves: aesthetic performances that may express, may please, and may well be genuine (Lorimer and Wylie 2010); any statement or claim beyond this, however, would require an epistemology of sorts, a linkage, for it to resonate within something other than itself.

In being mobile, in “walking,” we thus arguably escape momentarily from the violence imposed onto knowledge through epistemological differentiations—or rather: the violence imposed onto our understanding of reality by epistemology: we deviate and derail epistemological expectations by never encountering sameness and thereby “opening in the direction of an undefined something else,” as Roland Barthes once named the practice of approaching what he termed “the Neutral” in his Lectures at the Collège de France before his untimely demise in 1980 (Barthes 2005, 112). Walking, in other words, qua mobility, achieves a transitory *époque*, a deferral of judgement not by refusing to engage with the creation of knowledge but by moving on, by bringing about gradients, by “waylaying the assertiveness that language perversely encourages in its users” (Teeuwen 2020, 119). Waylaying, scrambling, intercepting—mobile practices all that may well provide novel tools for relevant and critical geohumanist practices.

NOTES

1. Recall the opening epigraph to his *Life: A User's Manual*, a quote attributed to the artist Paul Klee, that reads as follows: “The eye follows the paths that have been laid down for it in the work” (Perec 2003, preamble).
2. For all of its “everyday” qualities, it remains noteworthy that most narratives that deploy walking in an analytical manner remain stubbornly enthralled to somewhat extraordinary encounters and contexts. Note, for instance, the prevalence of Paris over Cologne in the annals of flânerie; note, too, the longevity of a Romantic ideal of landscape in the context of non-urban walks.

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