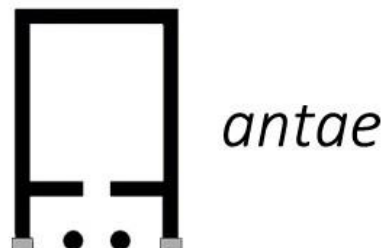


## Notes for an Aesthetic Approach to Walking

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## Notes for an Aesthetic Approach to Walking

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### Introduction

In his brief and witty essay dedicated to the philosophy of travel, written almost one century ago, George Santayana advanced the idea that locomotion, ‘the privilege of animals’ and of mankind, is for them also ‘the key to intelligence’. In his opinion, ‘[i]nstead of saying that the possession of hands has given man his superiority, it would go much deeper to say that man, and all other animals, owe their intelligence to their feet’.<sup>1</sup> An echo of these observations is found in the recent ideas expressed by Francesco Careri in his small volume *Walkscapes*, dedicated to *Walking as an Aesthetic Practice*, as the subtitle intones. According to Careri, walking was for mankind the first ‘symbolic form with which to transform the landscape’.<sup>2</sup> Walking around their surroundings has, in fact, allowed men and women to ‘dwell in the world’, creating order from chaos and ‘modifying the sense of the space crossed’—that is, one could add, transforming what they were crossing into spaces, places, environment, territories, landscapes.<sup>3</sup>

In Careri’s view, one hears a Simmelian echo that does not seem to be present to the author. Indeed, in the same years as Santayana, Georg Simmel had already written that ‘the people who first built a path between two places performed one of the greatest human achievements’; as Simmel himself points out, however, only the act of ‘visibly impressing the path into the surface of the earth’ made this path a connection that was objective and therefore continuously walkable, so that ‘the will to connect’ became ‘a shaping of things’.<sup>4</sup> This is an aesthetic action because it is connected to the sphere of the senses (*αἴσθησις*), regarding not only the sense of sight, as it was for Simmel, but all the senses and the whole body, thus giving birth to an experience in which the meanings and values of the space depend on the existential investment of the subject who lives there and walks, in terms of emotions, expectations, desires, physical or moral well-being or unease, goals, and needs.

These references and these observations may be sufficient to advance the conviction that it makes sense to talk about the aesthetic meaning of walking. To test the significance of this sense, in the following pages I will investigate—without any claim to completeness, but rather in the form of provisional notes—some decisive moments and problems concerning walking as a subject of reflection: a subject that, between the twentieth and twenty-first century, was discussed and is still discussed in its features within a wide range of disciplines and practices, from psychology to philosophy to the visual arts. We owe to this discussion an adequate terminology, which was coined with the purpose of encompassing the various aspects of such a phenomenon in a satisfying way: case by case, the ways, the travelled spaces and places, the walking subject, the relationship with the destination, and so on. Among the terms that have been appositely created, four will be taken

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<sup>1</sup> George Santayana, ‘The Philosophy of Travel’, in *The Birth of Reason and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 5-17 (pp. 5 and 9).

<sup>2</sup> Francesco Careri, *Walkscapes: El andar como práctica estética / Walking as an Aesthetic Practice*, trans. by Steve Piccolo and Paul Hammond (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2002), p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Georg Simmel, ‘Bridge and Door’, trans. by Mark Ritter, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 11(5) (1994), 5-17 (p. 6).

into consideration here: 'odology' (John Brinckerhoff Jackson), 'hodological space' (Kurt Lewin), 'walkscapes' (Francesco Careri), and 'strollology' (Lucius and Annemarie Burckhardt).

### Jackson's concept of 'odology'

I shall start this investigation by introducing the concept of 'odology', coined by the American cultural geographer John Brinckerhoff Jackson. Jackson, basing its etymology on the Greek *óδός*, meaning 'road or journey', intended to use this word to describe the study of roads and ways.<sup>5</sup> He proposed the following definition: 'Odology is the science or study of roads or journeys and, by extension, the study of streets and superhighways and trails and paths, how they are used, where they lead, and how they come into existence'.<sup>6</sup>

Hence, odology, as a category of study, is 'part geography, part planning, and part engineering' without neglecting the socio-political aspects involved in such a study.<sup>7</sup> This kind of inquiry focusses mainly on the communication routes and on the destinations, without taking into consideration the specific features of walking. In fact, ways, roads, motorways, and paths can be travelled by whatsoever means of locomotion. Coherently, Jackson referred mostly to the contemporary North American roadway system and its organisation, following the conviction that roads are not just crossings: rather, they create new space forms and, with them, new social forms and ways of inhabiting these spaces. Quoting a famous statement of his: 'Roads no longer merely lead to places, they *are* places'.<sup>8</sup>

### The notion of 'hodological space': Lewin, Sartre, Bollnow (with a detour to the Andes)

The remark that in Jackson's view there is no reference to the peculiarity of walking implies that such issues as the following ones are absent: What sense does it make to walk on a road or on a street instead of travelling along it by car, or by bicycle, or by another vehicle? What is the sense of the speed or slowness with which one travels? How does the state of mind affect those who walk?

A poetic thematisation of such issues can be found in *Camino del indio*, the famous Argentine song written and performed by Atahualpa Yupanqui, one of the most authoritative interpreters of the tradition of his country. The rocky and arduous Andean path, which looks like a conjoining of the earth and sky—'*Caminito del indio | Sendero colla | Sembrao de piedras | Caminito del indio | Que junta el valle con las estrellas*'—assumes a quasi-personal dimension, participating in the walker's effort, pain and sense of missing.<sup>9</sup> The path knows who the beloved woman is, whom the *indio* wistfully thinks of when playing the *quena* at night—'*En la noche serrana | Lloro la quena su*

<sup>5</sup> John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 191.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. See also Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, pp. 21-27.

<sup>8</sup> Jackson, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*, p. 190. See also Gilles A. Tiberghien's 'Hodologique', *Les Carnets du Paysage* 11 (2004), 7-25 (pp. 7-9) and his 'Nomad City', in Careri, *Walkscapes*, pp. 10-17 (pp. 14-15).

<sup>9</sup> '*Little Indian trail | Colla path | Planted with pebbles | Little Indian trail | That joints the valley with the stars*'. Translation (here and in the following footnotes) by Lisa Garrison, in Suni Paz, *Earth and Ocean Songs / Canciones del mar y de la tierra*, trans. Lisa Garrison (New York: Folkways Records FW 8785, 1982). "Colla" is a Quechua word, meaning an indigenous people living among Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina.

*honda nostalgia | Y el caminito sabe | Quién es la chola | Que el indio llama*'.<sup>10</sup> What is more, the path feels itself guilty of the gap, both real and experienced, that it is not unable to bridge—'*Y el camino lamenta / Ser el culpable / De la distancia*'.<sup>11</sup>

It was Jorge D. Goldfarb who drew the attention to Atahualpa's song within a discourse concerning the experience of landscape and of walking.<sup>12</sup> The reference indicates the concept of 'hodological space', in which the word 'hodological' assumes a meaning different to Jackson's theory. We owe the elaboration of the concept of 'hodological space' (*hodologischer Raum*) to the German psychologist Kurt Lewin, who introduced this term within the framework of a human behavioural theory which looks at individuals not in isolation but rather as situated in their environment. Given these premises, such a notion seems to be *prima facie* more attentive in considering the specific features of walking. In this light, hodological spaces are characterised as discrete and qualitative spaces, organised in 'regions' the meaning and value of which depend on the degree of psychic investment in terms of 'interpretation, emotions, expectations, aspirations', as observed by Jean-Marc Besse.<sup>13</sup> The sum of these regions constitutes the 'life space', defined by Lewin as 'totality of facts which determine the behaviour of an individual at a certain moment'.<sup>14</sup>

This space is thus distinguished from the Euclidean space, which is continuous, homogeneous, and measurable—not only because it is generated by an embodied subject, but also because the subject's field of forces varies continuously.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, as pointed out by Gilles A. Tiberghien, 'odology favours [...] walking over the path, the "sense of geography" over metric calculation'.<sup>16</sup> However, at closer sight, Lewin, too, is not concerned with walking and its peculiar features, but rather, more generally, with moving from a place to another with the help of any means: what he considers under the term "locomotion".<sup>17</sup> Hence, Tiberghien's observation should be re-formulated in this way: 'odology favours moving over the path, the "sense of geography" over metric calculation'.

Lewin's first formulation of the notion of life space can be traced back to his 1917 essay 'The Landscape of War', aimed at analysing the transformation of a front-line soldier's perception of open spaces and places.<sup>18</sup> Upon closer inspection, the words 'life space' and 'hodological space' are not found in this brief essay: they surfaced later, to reach a moment of deepening in a 1934 essay explicitly dedicated to the 'special and general hodological space', as the subtitle states.<sup>19</sup> However, even in the absence of its "name" and of the formulation of the relative concept, the "thing" is

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<sup>10</sup> '*In this night of hills | The quena cries its deep nostalgia | And the little trail knows | Who the girl is | The Indian calls*'. The *quena* is an Andean wind instrument made of cane or wood.

<sup>11</sup> '*And the road laments | Being guilty | Of distance*'. The song was recorded for the first time in 1936. Some versions are available on the YouTube channel 'Atahualpa Yupanqui Official'.

<<https://www.youtube.com/user/AtahualpaYupanquiOk/videos>> [accessed 1 December 2019].

<sup>12</sup> See Jorge D. Goldfarb, 'On and About Landscape Experiences' in *On, around and about Landscape Appreciation*. <<http://www.freewebs.com/jorgeg/landscape-experience-iii>> [accessed 1 December 2019].

<sup>13</sup> Jean-Marc Besse, 'Quatre notes conjointes sur l'introduction de l'hodologie dans la pensée contemporaine', *Les Carnets du Paysage* 11 (2004), 26-33 (p. 27). My translation.

<sup>14</sup> Kurt Lewin, *Principles of Topological Psychology*, trans. by Fritz Heider (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936), p. 216.

<sup>15</sup> See Adrian Mirvish, 'Sartre, Hodological Space, and the Existence of Others', *Research in Phenomenology*, 14 (1984), 149-173 (p. 157).

<sup>16</sup> Gilles A. Tiberghien, 'La città nomade', in Francesco Careri, *Walkscapes: Camminare come pratica estetica* (Turin: Einaudi, 2006), pp. vii-xiii (p. x). My translation. This passage is absent in the English edition. See also Tiberghien, 'Hodologique', p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> See Kurt Lewin, 'Der Richtungs-begriff in der Psychologie: Der spezielle und allgemeine Hodologische Raum', *Psychologische Forschung*, 19 (1934), 249-299 (p. 252 footnote 1).

<sup>18</sup> See Kurt Lewin, 'The Landscape of War', trans. by Jonathan Blower, *Art in Translation*, 1 (2009), 199-209.

<sup>19</sup> See Lewin, 'Der Richtungs-begriff in der Psychologie'.

already present in the 1917 essay with all its essential features.<sup>20</sup> It is also of significance that here Lewin talks about landscapes, whereas in his following writings the recurring terms are 'environment' and 'space'. For example, in the 1936 *Principles of Topological Psychology*, the word 'landscape' only appears once.<sup>21</sup> As Lewin notes, in soldiers' perceptual experience landscapes are transformed in relation to their experience and needs, particularly to those involving their personal safety. As such, a normal 'peacetime landscape' appears 'to extend out to infinity on all sides almost uniformly' and is characterised as 'round, without front or behind'; on the contrary, a 'landscape of war' 'appears only to be *directed*; it has a front and behind, and a front and behind that do not relate to those marching, but firmly pertain to the area itself'.<sup>22</sup>

Landscape/space, to Lewin, is always perceptively and emotionally oriented: the 'regions' in which it is organised are more or less attractive according to the values and meanings they convey. In virtue of these values and meanings, the subjects will follow a 'distinguished space', surely chosen on the basis of the objective that they are pursuing, but also depending on the specific situation (which is never finalised), as well as on their psychophysical state. Urgency, the will or the unwillingness to encounter people, health-related issues, their tiredness or alertness, all play a role in what Lewin defines as 'principle of choice'.<sup>23</sup> As we can gather from these examples, a path is chosen regardless of whether or not it is the shortest or most direct one from a Euclidean point of view. The 'distinguished spaces' followed by an individual will thus reveal their concrete experience of the world.

Later and with explicit reference to Lewin, Jean-Paul Sartre also used the notion of hodological space, although under a different perspective, first in the 1939 *Sketch for a Theory of Emotions* and then more profusely in his 1943 *Being and Nothingness*.<sup>24</sup> It is in the latter that Sartre elaborates in depth his famous theory according to which 'man and the world are relative beings and the principle of their beings is the relation' (BN, 407). This way, he thematises a world as 'world-for-me', where the relational implication between "world" and "me" is such that 'the world refers to me that univocal relation which is my being and by which I cause it to be revealed' (BN, 411, 407). The essence and meaning of the world, hence, opens up in the relation between the Self and the world. To the Self, being signifies its engagement in the world, temporally and spatially: 'For human reality, to be is to-be-there; that is, "there in that chair", "there at that table", "there at the top of that mountain, with these dimensions, this orientation, etc."' It is an ontological necessity' (BN, 407).

In this context Sartre reminds us that 'the real space of the world', which is that of the engagement with the world, 'is the space which Lewin calls "hodological"' (BN, 407). Aside from what has already been discussed, this space is also tied to the significance which places and paths have acquired to other people: the hodological space is the space of the encounter with the Other. On the matter, he refers to a passage, inspired by Proust's *Recherche*:

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<sup>20</sup> The conceptual pair "name" and "thing" is used here more or less in the same sense as Emilio Betti. See, for instance, Emilio Betti, 'Diritto romano e dogmatica odierna', in *Diritto metodo ermeneutica: Scritti scelti*, ed. by Giuliano Crifò (Milan: Giuffrè, 1991), pp. 59-133, (p. 123).

<sup>21</sup> See Lewin, *Principles of Topological Psychology*, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> Lewin, 'The Landscape of War', pp. 201-02.

<sup>23</sup> See Lewin, 'Der Richtungsbegriff in der Psychologie', (pp. 283-86).

<sup>24</sup> See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sketch for a Theory of Emotions*, trans. by Philip Mairet (London: Routledge, 2002), and Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992). The latter is henceforth cited in text and footnotes as (BN, page number).

A being is not *situated* in relation to locations by means of degrees of longitude and latitude. He is situated in a human space between “the Guermantes way” and “Swann’s way”, and it is the immediate presence of Swann and of the Duchesse de Guermantes which allows the unfolding of the “hodological” space in which he is situated (*BN*, 372).

On the other hand, there is a strict relation between the hodological space and the body. The body, according to Sartre, is primarily ‘*lived* and not *known*’: it is revealed to me within my original relation to the world, and it ‘is *given concretely* and fully as the very arrangement of things’ (*BN*, 427). As “me” or as “mine”, the body is not thus separated from the world, but instead, according to what discussed so far, it is intertwined or even coincides with it:

It would be impossible for me to realize a world in which I was not and which would be for me a pure object of a surveying contemplation. But on the contrary it is necessary that I lose myself in the world in order for the world to exist and for me to be able to transcend it. Thus to say that I have entered into the world, “come to the world”, or that there is a world, or that I have a body is one and the same thing. In this sense my body is everywhere-in-the world (*BN*, 419).<sup>25</sup>

As Besse puts it, hodological space appears to be an ‘intermediate reality, which is neither the subject nor the object in terms of classic dualism, it’s simply the real world or the concrete world’—in short, it is the ‘concrete space of human existence’.<sup>26</sup> Following Besse, such a space presents four distinguishing traits or characteristics, which I shall here list:

1) It is a space which is actively lived: it is not a space of abstract spatial coordinates, but a space which is defined by ‘axes of practical reference’ (*BN*, 424). As seen in the Proustian example, the localisation of a person or thing, or the direction taken to reach people, things, or locations acquire their own meaning and their existence (which, as we said, is the same thing) in relation to the concrete movement of an existing being. As Sartre specifies: ‘Perception is in no way to be distinguished from the practical organization of existents into a world’ (*BN*, 424).

2) Insofar as it goes beyond classic dualism, hodological space is not just subjective, but it also possesses a certain degree of objectivity: it is in space that one can find, as Besse points out, ‘the thickness of things, their texture, their light, their orientation, their way of opposing or not my movement’.<sup>27</sup>

3) In its objectivity, the world appears to Sartre as ‘objectively articulated’: the world, in fact, ‘never refers to a creative subjectivity but to an infinity of instrumental complexes’ (*BN*, 425). Besse considers this trait ‘decisive’: with it, the matter of hodology becomes that of the ‘use of the world’.<sup>28</sup> Sartre, taking from Martin Heidegger’s studies—but also from Lewin himself, and from Jakob von Uexküll before that—considers the lived world as the world in which ‘each instrument refers to other instruments, to those which are its *keys* and to those for which it is the *key*’ (*BN*, 424).<sup>29</sup> The lived world, hence, emerges as a system of relations and actions, as an ‘indication of

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<sup>25</sup> See also: (*BN*, 428-29).

<sup>26</sup> Besse, ‘Quatre notes conjointes’, (pp. 29, 30). My translation.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, (p. 29). My translation.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* My translation.

<sup>29</sup> Sartre’s reference to Heidegger on this point is recurrent within Sartrean studies. It is asserted by, among others, Besse, p. 29. However, Lewin himself, with explicit mention of Uexküll’s notion of operative world (complementary to the perceptive world), considers the primary significance of objects in terms of ‘functional possibilities’. See Mirvish,

acts to be performed', which in turn refer back to other acts and so on. Sartre summarises it as follows: 'The space which is originally revealed to me is hodological space; it is furrowed with paths and highways; it is instrumental and it is the location of tools' (BN, 424).

4) All of that implies that paths, roads, and what is perceived and acted out present themselves as bearers of possibilities, promises, or as openings towards the future. In fact, things always refer us back to a project horizon in virtue of which the future already seeps into the present. The world, as it is 'the correlate of the possibilities which I am', appears 'as the enormous skeletal outline of all my possible actions'; it manifests itself as 'an "always future hollow", for we are always future to ourselves' (BN, 425).

The German philosopher Otto Friedrich Bollnow carries out a further analysis of the hodological space in his *Human Space* (1963), in the framework of a thematisation of life space or, as he prefers naming it, 'experienced space'. Such a space is defined as 'the general form of human living behaviour'.<sup>30</sup> Bollnow's intent is to assign the 'problem of the spatial element of human existence [...] its place with a weight and question of its own beside that of temporality',<sup>31</sup> whereas twentieth-century philosophy placed the issue of space in the background and focus on temporality. On the topic, Bollnow himself reminds us of Bergson, Simmel, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Minkowski.<sup>32</sup>

In this light, Bollnow essentially takes the same stance as Lewin. In so doing, he detaches from Sartre, claiming that the latter's theory is an illegitimate broadening of the former's which ends up confusing its traits and minimising its innovative aspects.<sup>33</sup> Bollnow would rather consider Sartre's vision within 'an entirely different aspect of spatial construction', which he designates as 'space of action' and defines it, at first, as 'the space occupied by man when engaged in meaningful activity, working or resting, dwelling in it in the widest sense'.<sup>34</sup> He agrees with several aspects of Sartre's reasoning but refutes their overall framework. In his view, it is more appropriate to separate the original idea of hodological space, as conceived by Lewin, in order 'to distinguish it as a special aspect from the more general concept of experienced space and to look out for other aspects that may make visible the greater wealth of this concept'. Thus, hodological space, even though it renders 'transparent a certain inner structure of experienced space, [...] cannot simply be equated with experienced space itself'. In order to avoid a unilateral observation, it is necessary to take into

'Sartre, Hodological Space, and the Existence of Others', (p. 155), with reference to Kurt Lewin, 'Environmental Forces in Child Behavior and Development', in *A Dynamic Theory of Personality: Selected Papers* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1935), pp. 66-113 (pp. 76-77). An affinity between Sartre and Uexküll on this point is seen by Tiberghien, seemingly without recognising a direct link: see Tiberghien, 'Hodologique', (pp. 12-13).

<sup>30</sup> Otto Friedrich Bollnow, *Human Space*, trans. by Christine Shuttleworth (London: Hyphen Press, 2011), p. 24.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15. As Andrea Pinotti points out, maybe Bollnow's diagnosis is too pessimistic. After all, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty—to take just two names among those mentioned by the German philosopher—'dedicated fundamental analysis to spatial constitution'. See Andrea Pinotti, 'Introduzione', in Erwin Straus and Henri Maldiney, *L'estetico e l'estetica: Un dialogo nello spazio della fenomenologia* (Milan: Mimesis, 2005), pp. 7-33 (p. 8). My translation. In today's scenario of the spatial turn, there also appeared investigations aimed at tracing a genealogy of the reflection on space: an example is the vast anthology edited by Stephan Günzel, which includes texts from the 18th century to the present: see *Texte zur Theorie des Raums*, ed. by Stephan Günzel (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2017).

<sup>33</sup> Bollnow, p. 191.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

account the other dimensions of experienced space such as the space of action and the mood space.<sup>35</sup>

As to ‘make visible the greater wealth’ inherent in the concept of hodological space, and with the intent of providing some examples to make it less abstract, Bollnow refers to what he calls ‘the hodological structure of landscape’.<sup>36</sup> Consistently with his assumptions, his starting point is Lewin’s essay on the landscape of war. He attributes a foundational role to it, but also an exemplary value. This essay, in fact, reveals some general traits of landscapes by presenting an ‘extreme’ and ‘borderline’ case.<sup>37</sup> Numerous examples follow, especially concerning the borders and obstacles that can be found along our paths and which influence the accessibility of locations (mountain ranges, the ocean, the great rivers which split cities in half, and so on). Relying on examples is a distinguishing attribute of Bollnow’s method. In it, examples are not to be considered as external empirical data, but rather it is only through the concrete phenomenological analysis of the experienced space that we can come to ontological conclusions on the structure of human spatiality.<sup>38</sup>

### **The role of the “walking artists”: Perception, drawing, reflection**

From a point of view similar to that of the theorists of ‘hodological space’—and this time with an exclusive focus on walking—we can consider the attention to body by the so-called “walking artists”. Such a term refers to those artists who placed walking at the centre of their practice, such as Richard Long, Hamish Fulton, Michael Höpfner, and many more, often categorised as land artists despite their intention. In this sense the following statements by Long are explicit:

Land Art is an American expression. It means bulldozers and big projects. To me it seems like a typical American movement; it is the construction of works on lands purchased by the artists with the aim of making a large, permanent monument. All this absolutely does not interest me.<sup>39</sup>

Fulton is equally determined: suffice it to recall his statement—‘This is not land art’—written in various wall paintings tied to the climb to the summit of Denali, Alaska (2004), which was also the title of an exhibition that took place in Oslo in 2005.<sup>40</sup> On this issue, it is true that, as Paolo D’Angelo points out, “Land Art” has become ‘an umbrella-term comprising very various artistic experiences, from the American Earth Art to the Art in Nature tendencies of the last years’. Nonetheless, following his suggestion, it makes sense to adopt the expression “Outdoors Art” as ‘perhaps the only term really capable to gather, giving an important indication, *all* the recent tendencies concerning art in nature’.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Bollnow., pp. 191-201 and pp. 215-28.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 188-91.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>38</sup> See Salvatore Giammusso, *La forma aperta: L’ermeneutica della vita nell’opera di O.F. Bollnow* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2008), pp. 113-114, footnote 211.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Long in Claude Gintz, ‘Richard Long, la vision, le paysage, le temps’, *Art Press*, 104 (1986), 4-8 (p. 8). This passage is translated in Careri, *Walkscapes*, p. 146.

<sup>40</sup> See the presentation at the Galleri Riis, Oslo. <<http://www.galleririis.com/exhibitions/60/>> [accessed 1 December 2019].

<sup>41</sup> Paolo D’Angelo, *Filosofia del Paesaggio* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2010), pp. 70 (footnote 1), 71. My translation.



While Besse focuses on walking as the 'fundamental or foundational moment'<sup>42</sup> of the bodily experience of landscape, Tiberghien, referring to the same topic, points out how in his view the artistic approach is a useful tool to understand the 'dimension of sensitive and affective experience of walking'.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, as we have seen earlier, Careri supports the idea that walking is an aesthetic practice tout court. On the one hand, following Careri's insight, the body as experienced by the walking artist in their own practice can be interpreted as a mere 'instrument of perception'; this is the case of Fulton and Höpfner, who do not intentionally leave any trace of their passing.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, the body can act as a 'tool for drawing', such as in Long, who on the contrary leaves traces of his passing, however fleeting and destined to disappear they may be.<sup>45</sup> This formative intent is recognised by Höpfner too, who states that Long's walking 'gains the significance of a sculpture'.<sup>46</sup> For his part, Höpfner himself specifies what kind of different experience—a perceptual, not a 'sculptural' one—he intends to do when he goes on foot: 'It's clearly about achieving a different—heightened—state of perception: taking a trip, like taking drugs'.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, Fulton sometimes tries to push his physical, perceptual, and mental limits, when for example walking for days without talking or sleeping. For both artists, walking in perfect solitude does not just imply practicing an activity that 'exorcises melancholy' and allows them to acknowledge 'the deep pleasure one encounters changing scenery', as Fernando Castro Flórez writes about Fulton.<sup>48</sup> Rather, it also concerns, first and foremost, a real challenge against oneself and a different way of relating to the places. The 'heightened state of perception' Höpfner is talking about regards, of course, not only the five senses, but the whole bodily relationship to oneself: experiencing stress, feeling pleasure or pain, perceiving the distance, being aware of the flow of time, and so on. In any case, beyond their reciprocal differences, every walking artist would agree with the following sentiments by Long: 'All of my work is carried out entirely with my body, it is composed of the time of my walking, of the measurement of my steps'.<sup>49</sup>

But, at its root, practising a leisurely and free activity such as walking, to the point of making it 'an art form in its own right', as Fulton states,<sup>50</sup> can be interpreted as a political stance against our technocratic contemporary society which is devoted to urgency, efficiency, to the rationalisation of labour, and to maximum profit. Walking artists, hence, not only pose 'a kinetic counterpoint to the

A quick list of the various "labels" may be found in Kenneth White, 'L'art de la terre', *Ligeia*, 11 (1992), 71-79 (p. 73).

<sup>42</sup> Jean-Marc Besse, 'Le paysage, espace sensible, espace public', *META*, 2 (2015), 259-86 (pp. 270-71). My translation.

<sup>43</sup> Tiberghien, 'La città nomade', p. x. This passage is absent in the English edition. My translation.

<sup>44</sup> From this perspective Fulton shows his debt to the ethical practice of 'Leave No Trace'. See Hamish Fulton, 'Foots Notes', in *Hamish Fulton und Peter Hutchinson*, ed. by Raimund Stecker (Düsseldorf: Verlag des Kunstvereins für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, 1998), pp. 27-29 (p. 28); Hamish Fulton, *Mountain Time Human Time* (Milan: Charta, 2010), p. 41; and Andrew Wilson, "'The Blue Mountains Are Constantly Walking": On the Art of Hamish Fulton', in *Hamish Fulton: Walking Journey*, ed. by Ben Tufnell and Andrew Wilson (London: Tate Publishing, 2002), pp. 20-31 (p. 23).

<sup>45</sup> Careri, p. 148.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Höpfner, in Christian Kravagna and Christian Reder, 'News from No-Man's Land: Michael Höpfner Talking to Christian Kravagna and Christian Reder', in *Micahel Höpfner. Unsettled Conditions*, ed. by Kunstraum Niederösterreich (Vienna: Kunstraum Niederösterreich, 2008), para 2.

<<https://www.galeriewinter.at/en/artists/michael-hoepfner/unsettled-condition-dt/>> [accessed 1 December 2019].

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Fernando Castro Flórez, *Mierda y catástrofe: Síndromes culturales del arte contemporáneo* (Madrid: Fórcola, 2015), pp. 130-31. My translation.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Long, as quoted in Ester Coen, 'Richard Long: Cerchio di fango', in *La Repubblica*, 4 May 1994. My translation. <<http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1994/05/04/richard-long-cerchio-di-fango.html>> [accessed 1 December 2019].

<sup>50</sup> Fulton, *Mountain Time Human Time*, p. 39.

principle of speed’ and create the basis of ‘a kinetic and kinaesthetic counterculture against the principle of acceleration’, as Ralph Fischer writes about Long,<sup>51</sup> but also ‘move within the interstices and the downtimes of productivism’, to quote Nicolas Bourriaud.<sup>52</sup> This is the common thread which connects Long, Fulton, and the other walking artists to the wanderings of dada and surrealist artists, and to the *dérives* of lettrists and situationists.<sup>53</sup>

### **Careri and Stalker: ‘Walkscapes’ between practice and knowledge**

Such a thread is very familiar to the Italian urban planner and activist Francesco Careri, who has made it one of the pillars of the narrative he illuminates in *Walkscapes*.<sup>54</sup> The urban and suburban exploration activity performed by Stalker, the collective of artists and architects founded and promoted by Careri himself, can also be reconnected to that same leitmotiv. Drawing from the artistic movements mentioned above, this group conceives ‘the practice of path-journey’ as ‘an evocative mode of expression and a useful instrument of knowledge of the ongoing transformations of the metropolitan territory’.<sup>55</sup> They concentrate their attention especially on those territories that show themselves as transitory, abandoned, immune to every form of planning. In such contexts, the exploration on foot appears ‘capable of describing and modifying those metropolitan spaces that often have a nature still demanding comprehension, to be *filled with meanings* rather than designed and *filled with things*’.<sup>56</sup> Hence, given the manner in which it is conducted and the aims it intends to achieve, that way of conceiving of planning is not prone to functionalism and rationalisation. Rather, it is open to the meaningfulness, potentially inexhaustible, of the experienced places and spaces, even where those territories appear without identity and are at the edge of the urban world.<sup>57</sup>

### **Lucius and Annemarie Burckhardt’s concept of ‘strollology’**

The idea of a ‘strollology’, or *Spaziergangswissenschaft* (a science of strolling, developed during the last decades by the Swiss sociologist Lucius Burckhardt and his wife Annemarie), is in many ways analogous to Careri’s project, where practice and aims are concerned. In this regard, although “strolling” seems to refer to something more specific than walking, it sounds more convincing to maintain that Careri’s *Walkscapes*—not to mention the wanderings of the surrealists and the *dérives* of the situationists—would be better defined as “strollscapes” given that what is at stake here is not the simple act of walking but rather an intentional practice. The group’s strolls and on foot explorations, organised by Lucius and Annemarie Burckhardt, were not conceived as moments of disinterested pleasure and relaxation; rather, they had—similarly to Careri’s and Stalker’s actions—a knowledge and a didactic purpose, even when they assumed the aspect of an artistic performance

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<sup>51</sup> Ralph Fischer, *Walking Artists: Über die Entdeckung des Gehens in den performativen Künsten* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011), pp. 59 and 61. My translation.

<sup>52</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, *Forme di vita: L’arte moderna e l’invenzione del sé*, trans. by Michela Dellaia (Milan: Postmedia, 2015), p. 10. My translation.

<sup>53</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> See Careri, pp. 68-176.

<sup>55</sup> Stalker, ‘Transurbanza’, quoted in Careri, p. 188.

<sup>56</sup> Careri, p. 26.

<sup>57</sup> See Francesco Tedeschi, *Il mondo ridisegnato: Arte e geografia nella contemporaneità* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2016), p. 201.

with wit and distancing effects which betrayed a possible reference to the situationist legacy.<sup>58</sup> A paradigmatic example is the re-enactment of James Cook's *Voyage to Tahiti*, which they did by walking along an area near Kassel—on documenta 8, 1987—and in the outskirts of Milan—during the 1988 Triennale.<sup>59</sup> The Burckhardts' 'scientific walks' are aimed at the 'didactic processing of knowledge';<sup>60</sup> they give birth to a reflection focussed on what we perceive while we are walking, according to the conviction that 'one sees that which one has learned to see'.<sup>61</sup> In their view, strollology is defined as a 'minor subject' which 'examines the sequences in which a person perceives his surroundings'; its research topic is individuated in the 'aesthetics of space'.<sup>62</sup> From this point of view, it is interesting that the practice of investigating the metropolitan spaces and its surroundings takes place by evoking, by manner of defamiliarisation, the explorations around the world that in past centuries led to the discovery of new lands; it is as if the Burckhardts wanted to claim that the first lesson we learn by the intentional practice of walking is that 'the landscape, the space, are still to be discovered', as in fact Jean-Marc Besse has recently pointed out.<sup>63</sup> Conceived this way, strollology—once again similarly to Careri's practices—becomes the first step for understanding the urban and suburban contexts, as well as for planning in a conscious manner.

### Less than a conclusion

Since in these pages I have just outlined some provisional notes, the conclusion cannot be but equally provisional. To provide a first sketch, it is possible to maintain that the leitmotiv that connects the walking artists, Stalker and the Burckhards, and the theorists of the hodological space is to be found in the inexhaustibility of the meaning of walking, and this from an aesthetic point of view. Nowadays, more than ever, facing the cultural, political, and social challenges of the third millennium, aesthetics is aimed at rethinking its own disciplinary paradigm, imagining new epistemic configurations and most certainly rereading its own past and indeed drawing new lymph from it. However, as noted by Luigi Russo almost ten years ago, while not lacking to 'credit modern Aesthetics with the huge historical merit of having happily reorganized the ancient tradition within the frame of Modernity[,] likewise, it does not fail in its disciplinary duty to contribute to the interpretation of current times'.<sup>64</sup> Hence the conception implied in these pages, a conception of aesthetics as that inclined to rethink itself not just as a philosophy of art but rather as a pluralistic constellation centred on the term 'αἴσθησις'. This means, according to the etymology of the word, to conceive of aesthetics as a philosophy of the senses and/or of the feelings, that is, as a philosophy of perception and/or of experience, capable of taking into consideration all those moments of life imbued with aestheticity or aesthetic attitudes, starting with everyday life.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>58</sup> See Thomas Fuchs, in Lucius Burckhardt, *Why Is Landscape Beautiful? The Science of Strollology*, trans. by Jill Denton, ed. by Markus Ritter and Martin Schmitz (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2015), pp. 285, 275. On the affinity between the Burckhardts and situationism, see Jean-Marc Besse, *La nécessité du paysage* (Marseille: Parenthèses, 2018), p. 104.

<sup>59</sup> See Lucius Burckhardt, *Landschaftstheoretische Aquarelle und Spaziergangswissenschaft* (Berlin: Schmitz, 2017), pp. 297-331.

<sup>60</sup> Burckhardt, *Why Is Landscape Beautiful?*, p. 284.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 225, 282.

<sup>63</sup> Besse, *La nécessité du paysage*, p. 104. My translation.

<sup>64</sup> Luigi Russo, 'Neoaesthetics: Strategies of the Crisis', in *Sociedades en crisis: Europa y el concepto de estética*, ed. by Rocío de la Villa (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 2010), pp. 22-30 (p. 30).

<sup>65</sup> For a first approach, see Paolo D'Angelo, 'Tre modi (più uno) d'intendere l'estetica', in *Dopo l'estetica*, ed. by Luigi Russo, *Aesthetica Preprint: Supplementa*, 25 (2010), 25-49; Paolo D'Angelo, 'Aesthetics as Philosophy of Experience',

It is in this perspective, briefly outlined, that the relationship between walking and aesthetics can be framed. Be walking an ‘aesthetic practice’ (Careri) or even ‘an art form in its own right’ (Fulton), be it an activity linked to the ‘aesthetics of space’ (Burckhardt and Burckhardt), or a practice capable of triggering reflections on a particular way of experiencing ourselves, our own body and the surrounding world (the theorists of the hodological space, but also the walking artists, Careri and the Burckhardts again)—in all these cases, walking finds within the aesthetic field some irreplaceable reference points for understanding itself and its foundational features.

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