

I never think while walking, And even though Nietzsche claimed one can only produce great thoughts by walking, he still had to sit down to write down his thoughts. And in those cases he did achieve great fragments conceived during his mountain walks they were just that, bits and pieces of a never completed system of thought.

But I never really thought about walking in relation to thought – thought is a voyage in itself, and there are still worlds to be discovered without taking a step. I never thought while walking. Until once, some years ago, on the Chemin de St. Jaques de Compostelle, when me and my companions shared the path with an experienced wanderer on this specific pilgrim route. Usually I avoid a stop-and-chat with people I barely know, not to mention those I already know... But since we we're walking at the same speed, and in the same direction I had no other choice but to listen to her: "It's only after a couple of days of constantly running through one's daily routines, shopping lists, relations, television shows and whatever else occupies one's mind, emptying out every minuscule habitual thought that the mind can really take in the fact of simply walking. That's when you break down and cry, and then you just keep going, and going..."

This was however contradicted by a priest I met a few days later. After having been offered shelter in the communion house we spoke about the possible religious experiences a pilgrimage can offer and began discussing both the tradition of ancient hermits and the early christian saint Anthony who reportedly had told others who ventured into the desert in the search of God: "You can only find God in the desert if you bring him with you."

Of course I'd thought the point of the pilgrimage was to be brought closer to one's beliefs, the ascetic walk was surely a means to test one's faith but the purpose was to reach the goal. How much of a tourist and a modern man aren't we, weren't I in believing this, how far haven't we gone to reduce the voyage to nothing more than a few hours in an aeroport, plane and shuttle, whose very design is meant to be obliterate the passing of time, as if a travel was nothing more than it's goal.

A year later, i decided to continue on the Chemin de St. Jacques de Compostelle, but this time i had no intent of reaching Compostelle, I had set out on a different path starting from the center of the Pyrenees I would walk to the Atlantic coast. Having started in the end of march, during the winter season, I quickly found myself trapped on a mountain ridge, made it through the night but the hike would have been impossible to continue so I instead settled in a shepherds hut until my food ran out. Perhaps I realized no matter what goal I had set, the aim of the walk was getting away. And I haven't hiked since, although I have continued reflecting on the relation between walking and thinking, e.g. in an essay I wrote for sarma.be on the work Walk+Talk by several different choreographers.

"On ne peut penser et écrire qu'assis" – Nietzsche responded to this statement with disdain, calling it's author, Flaubert, a nihilist who thereby sinned against the holy spirit. I would rather conceive of walking as a way to either express thought, in movement, or as a way to maybe absolve oneself from the constant chattering and mindless constant murmurings endlessly and obsessively repeating themselves. An absolution not from earthly sins, but from the banality and misery of everyday life. Not as a way towards God, nor the remains of his disciples supposedly holy relics, since I wouldn't claim to be carying God with me deep into the forest, but as a way towards myself in an emptying out and setting free through the metaphorical vomiting of habitual reasoning.

(I sat down while writing this letter)

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