



A Philosophy of Walking

By *Frederic Gros*

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"It is only ideas gained from walking that have any worth." —Nietzsche

In *A Philosophy of Walking*, a bestseller in France, leading thinker Frédéric Gros charts the many different ways we get from A to B – the pilgrimage, the promenade, the protest march, the nature ramble – and reveals what they say about us.

Gros draws attention to other thinkers who also saw walking as something central to their practice. On his travels he ponders Thoreau's eager seclusion in Walden Woods; the reason Rimbaud walked in a fury, while Nerval rambled to cure his melancholy. He shows us how Rousseau walked in order to think, while Nietzsche wandered the mountainside to write. In contrast, Kant marched through his hometown every day, exactly at the same hour, to escape the compulsion of thought. Brilliant and erudite, *A Philosophy of Walking* is an entertaining and insightful manifesto for putting one foot in front of the other.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Philosopher Gros ponders walking, that most mundane mode of transportation or exercise, elevating it to its rightful place in inspiring creativity, evoking freedom, and quieting a troubled soul. Whether taking a leisurely wandering stroll or a purposeful trek along an assigned path, when walking we are reduced to “a moving two-legged beast,” momentarily detached from obligations. Beyond his own perambulations, Gros evokes the wanderings of Kerouac and Ginsburg. Nietzsche walked to restore his health and get release from debilitating migraines, until he could walk no more. Rimbaud walked Paris to release his creativity. Nerval walked to ease his melancholy. Rousseau found inspiration only when walking, pondering memories and dreams. And of course, Thoreau walked to commune with nature and meditate. Gros examines the creative philosophies of these writers, artists, and thinkers so deeply influenced by the simple act of walking. He also examines the long journeys, pilgrimages, and protest walks of so many others in this fascinating look at the not-so-simple act of walking. --Vanessa Bush

Review

“A passionate affirmation of the simple life, and joy in simple things. And it’s beautifully written: clear, simple, precise.” —*Observer*

“Poignant life-stories ... are interspersed with the author’s own meditations on walking ... In the way a landscape is gradually absorbed by the long-distance Rambler they steadily build into an insistent exhortation: get up, get out and walk!” —*Independent*

“Life-affirming stuff.” —*National Geographic Traveler*

“Impressive.” —*Daily Telegraph*

“Philosopher Gros ponders walking, that most mundane mode of transportation or exercise, elevating it to its rightful place in inspiring creativity, evoking freedom, and quieting a troubled soul.” —*Booklist*

“This elegant book inspires consideration of an oft-overlooked subject.” — *Publisher's Weekly*

"Frédéric Gros asks why so many of our most productive writers and philosophers – Rousseau, Kant, Rimbaud, Robert Louis Stevenson, Nietzsche, Jack Kerouac – have also been indefatigable walkers ... there are certain magical things that happen on the trail, and Gros is familiar with them. He thinks like a hiker." — *Financial Times*

"An admirable little book which will delight even the most sedentary." —*Le Monde*

"An unclassifiable book in which ideas are illuminated by the bright light of the morning." —*L'Express*

About the Author

Frederic Gros is a professor of philosophy at the University of Paris XII and the Institute of Political Studies, Paris. He was the editor of the last lectures of Michel Foucault at the College de France. He has written books on psychiatry, law and war. He lives in Paris.

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