childhood & philosophy

núcleo de estudos de filosofias e infâncias (nefi/uerj)
internacional community for philosophical inquiry with children (icpic)

impressa issn: 1984-5987 | on-line issn: 2525-5061

article

philosophical walks:

a method of philosophical practice

authors

peter harteloh

philosophical practitioner; erasmus institute for philosophical practice, rotterdam, the netherlands
email: info@filosofischepraktijk.com
orcid: 0000-0001-6271-3813

chiaki tokui

assistant professor of education; shizuoka university of welfare, shizuoka, japan
email: tokui@suw.ac.jp
orcid: 0009-0003-2031-7611

editor

walter omar kohan
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2263-9732

doi: 10.12957/childphilo.2026.95451

abstract

The philosophical walk is a recent addition to the spectrum of philosophical methods. Philosophical walks are a practice through which people of all ages — from children to adults — not necessarily trained in or familiar with academic philosophy can engage in philosophy through the simple act of walking. This article is based on an interview with Peter Harteloh, a philosophical practitioner well known for his philosophical walks. The interview was conducted by Chiaki Tokui during the 18th International Conference on Philosophical Practice (ICPP). Harteloh started a private philosophical practice in the city of Rotterdam (The Netherlands) in 2007 with a focus on individual consultations, Socratic group dialogue, courses on the art of living and philosophical walks. He has conducted philosophical walks in many countries all over the world and developed a method for it consisting of nine steps. The interview will examine the nine steps of this method in more detail and address the philosophical background, the development of the method, the characteristic features of Harteloh's walks, and its application to the philosophy for children. An experience of Chiaki participating in a walk completes the interview and will lead to some conclusions on walking as philosophical practice.

keywords: philosophical practice; philosophical walk; conceptualization; environment; embodiment.

caminatas filosóficas:
un método de práctica filosófica

resumen
La caminata filosófica es una incorporación reciente al espectro de métodos filosóficos. Las caminatas filosóficas son una práctica mediante la cual personas de todas las edades, desde niños hasta adultos, sin necesidad de formación o familiarización con la filosofía académica, pueden involucrarse en la filosofía mediante el simple acto de caminar. Este artículo se basa en una conversación con Peter Harteloh, un filósofo reconocido por sus paseos filosóficos. La entrevista fue realizada por Chiaki Tokui durante la XVIII Conferencia Internacional de Práctica Filosófica (CIPP). Harteloh abrió una consulta filosófica privada en Rotterdam (Países Bajos) en 2007, centrándose en consultas individuales, diálogo socrático grupal, cursos sobre el arte de vivir y caminatas filosóficas. Ha realizado caminatas filosóficas en numerosos países del mundo y ha desarrollado un método de nueve pasos. La entrevista examinará los nueve pasos de este método con más detalle y abordará los antecedentes filosóficos, el desarrollo del método, las características de los paseos de Harteloh y su aplicación a la filosofía para niños. Una experiencia de Chiaki participando en una caminata completa la entrevista y conducirá a algunas conclusiones sobre la caminata como práctica filosófica.

palabras clave: filosofía práctica; caminata filosófica; conceptualización; medio ambiente; corporalidad.

caminhadas filosóficas:
um método de prática filosófica

resumo
A caminhada filosófica é uma recente adição ao espectro de métodos filosóficos. Caminhadas filosóficas são uma prática através da qual pessoas de diversas idades - desde crianças até adultos -, não necessariamente treinadas ou familiarizadas com a filosofia acadêmica, podem se envolver com a filosofia a partir do simples ato de caminhar. Esse artigo se baseia em uma entrevista com Peter Harteloh, um praticante da filosofia conhecido por suas caminhadas filosóficas. A entrevista foi conduzida por Chiaki Tokui, durante a 18ª Conferência Internacional de Prática Filosófica (ICPP). Harteloh iniciou uma prática filosófica privada na cidade de Roterdã (Países Baixos), em 2007, com foco em consultas individuais, diálogo socrático em grupo, cursos sobre a arte de viver e caminhadas filosóficas. Ele conduziu caminhadas filosóficas em diversos países ao redor do mundo e desenvolveu um método de nove passos para elas. A entrevista analisará os nove passos desse método mais detalhadamente e abordará o contexto filosófico, o desenvolvimento do método, as características das caminhadas de Harteloh e sua aplicação à filosofia para crianças. Uma experiência de Chiaki participando de uma caminhada completa a entrevista e levará a algumas conclusões sobre a caminhada como prática filosófica.

palavras-chave: prática filosófica; caminhada filosófica; conceitualização; ambiente; corporalidade.

caminhadas filosóficas:
philosophical walks:

introduction

The philosophical walk is a recent addition to the spectrum of philosophical methods. Philosophical walks are a practice through which people of all ages — from children to adults — not necessarily trained in or familiar with academic philosophy can engage in philosophy through the simple act of walking. They are part of a relatively new development in philosophy, called philosophical practice (Ding et al. 2024). This article is built on an interview with Peter Harteloh, a philosophical practitioner well known for his philosophical walks. The interview was conducted by Chiaki Tokui on June 14, 2025, during the 18th International Conference on Philosophical Practice (ICPP). Harteloh started a private philosophical practice in the city of Rotterdam (The Netherlands) in 2007 with a focus on individual consultations, Socratic group dialogue, courses on the art of living and philosophical walks. He has conducted philosophical walks in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Sweden, Japan, Cambodia, China, Croatia and Greece (Athens) and developed a method for it consisting of nine steps (Harteloh, 2021):

1. Preparation. Harteloh selects philosophical quotes suiting the theme of the walk, puts them in a small bag with each quote on a separate piece of paper and defines a route (which could be in a city, a rural area, or a combination of both) for what generally amounts to an hour and a half walk.
2. Participants (usually between 6-15) are instructed to conceptualize a philosophical statement/quote and choose a (one!) place during the walk that suits both the statement/quote and its underlying concept.
3. Every participant draws one quote randomly out of the small bag (see step 1).
4. The group begins to walk in silence ("We walk *or* we talk", i.e. no talking when walking).
5. A participant calls for a stop when meeting a spot suiting the quote and the underlying concept.
6. The participant reads the quote, mentions the concept and explains the

relationship with the place chosen.

7. Other participants question the conceptualizer (these questions are not answered).
8. The conceptualizer chooses one question ("the best question").
9. The participants walk on until the next conceptualization takes place (More than one person conceptualizing at the same place allowed).

After the walk, the group sits down and is instructed to make a story out of all the concepts that emerged during the walk ("narrative abstraction"). The story represents the common theme of the walk - the moral for participants to take home - and lifts the individual experience up to a more common frame of meaning. In this way, walks enabled participants to philosophize about wisdom, justice, love or beauty. Reports on specific walks can be found in several publications (Harteloh, 2013a, 2015, 2021, 2025). The following interview will examine the nine steps of the method in more detail and address the philosophical background, the development of the method, the characteristic features of Harteloh's walks, and its application to the philosophy for children. An experience of Chiaki participating in a walk completes the interview and will lead to some conclusions on walking as philosophical practice.

the practice of walking

chiaki: How did you first come up with the idea of philosophical walks? Please tell me where this idea came from, and which texts or ideas informed your practice.

peter: Basically, I was inspired to do philosophical walks by the Phaedrus of Plato (1973, p. 23-24). At the start of this dialogue, Socrates takes his partner out for a walk into the countryside. It is the only dialogue of Plato situated outside Athens. Socrates and Phaedrus are looking for a place to philosophize. The two companions walk along the river Ilissos and sit down under a tree near the rock where Boreas (The North wind) abducted Oretheia, where they start to philosophize about love. Such places facilitate the search for meaning by virtue of their history, geography, atmosphere and/or metaphorical character. That text was both a philosophical source and an inspiration for me. It confirmed my intuition that there are places more suitable for philosophizing than others, and that we

have to actively look for them. Another source of inspiration was, of course, the act of walking itself. Many philosophers (e.g. Aristotle, Kant, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Nishida Kitaro) walked. I think walking played a role in producing their work. Movement is crucial for connecting the thinking mind with the experiencing body. It can clear up thoughts or transfer the rhythm of movement in the logic of thinking. Philosophy is often represented as the act sitting still and producing ideas. However, the rhythm and pace of a walk facilitates thinking and the walk feeds thinking with experience. The philosopher Immanuel Kant gives a theoretical background in his dictum: experience without concepts is blind, but so are concepts without experience. Thus, reflection on experience during walking and conceptualization are in line with Kant's theory of knowledge (Kant, 1999).

chiaki: How did you train to become a facilitator?

peter: I was trained by taking courses and participating in workshops provided by the Dutch Association of Philosophical Practice (VFP). I became a (Neo) Socratic Dialog facilitator, and in the course of that training you must both study and practice dialogue, not only by spoken words but also by interacting with architecture in cities or aspects of nature (Harteloh & Mochizuki, 2009; Harteloh, 2013b). Nelson (1922) first pointed the way by reconstructing a method for group dialogue out of the works of Plato and Immanuel Kant. In Holland many variants were developed after this. We call them Socratic exercises. My philosophical walk is one of them.

chiaki: Did you train while you were a philosophy student?

peter: No. It was a post academical course offered by the VFP. When you are trained as a facilitator, you study Plato's dialogs in order to construct Socratic exercises. It is a different form of study from that I encountered as a student. It was when I studied the dialogs in this way that I first thought: could the walk also be a format of a Socratic exercise? So, while I first encountered the dialogs during my study of philosophy, the method itself emerged during my post-academical training as a philosophical practitioner. Also, there is the fact that many philosophers were avid walkers. For instance, Nietzsche would often walk up and down mountains, Aristotle walked with his students while teaching, and Heidegger was known for taking long walks in the woods. This simple fact seems to be a neglected part of the history of philosophy. But if you look at the outcome,

i.e. the works that these philosophers wrote and the papers that they produced, well, you can clearly see that their process of philosophizing, their ideas, emerged from their walking. That is my thesis, my idea. The style of walking seems to be reflected in their work, for example, Immanuel Kant walking regularly every morning at precisely the same time, and the very strict, rigid structure of his work, or Nietzsche boldly going out into the mountains, traversing through hills, and the bold, idiosyncratic nature of his work, and Heidegger quietly moving through the woods, very secluded. So, these philosophers were examples that inspired the practice. The process of philosophizing that we actually do not see or that is not immediately presented in their work is important and reflects the character of a person and his philosophy. And when we think about ourselves, it is the philosophical walk enabling a reflection on our character and who we actually are. Therefore, we should walk.

In addition, I wanted to emphasize the point about physical posture. When I studied the difference between Eastern and Western philosophy, I noticed that there is a different attitude towards posture, and especially the way people sit or stand in order to philosophize. Think, for example, of yoga and all kinds of meditational exercises that play a part in Eastern, but not in Western philosophy. Western philosophy seems to neglect posture. By walking and searching for a spot to philosophize, you must adopt a physical posture. And so, in order to bring back the importance of posture to philosophizing, I started to walk.

chiaki: Do you like walking?

peter: Personally, I do. That is probably why I developed the thing. A personal preference is transformed into a philosophical method as is often the case in philosophical practice.

developing the philosophical walk

chiaki: My favorite thing about the philosophical walk is that you can directly feel nature with your own body and give your own meaning to it. I think it's a very lovely process.

peter: Yes, although that process has changed over time. My first philosophical walks were rather loosely structured. We walked together as a group in nature, and I read some mostly Stoic texts at certain spots, after which people

were asked to conceptualize. Then, after returning to the classroom, we picked up on the concepts that they formed and discussed their experiences. But gradually the walk has come to be structured more as a Socratic exercise (Harteloh, 2015). Now the walk is informed by citations (step 1), but in the beginning, it was rather a free exercise.

chiaki: Where did your first walk take place?

peter: We began from the International School of Philosophy (ISVW), in the middle of the Netherlands. It is a flat landscape with woods and a lot of heather shrubs. After giving everyone instructions and reading the beginning of Plato's Phaedrus (to prime the mind and set the atmosphere), we left the classroom, walked across the heather rather freely, read texts, returned to the classroom, gathered up the concepts we came up with and reflected on the experience we just had. I still remember and love this kind of format. But in order to guide the philosophical content I started to use specific quotes for conceptualization and added more structure to the walk.

chiaki: Were there nine steps from the beginning?

peter: No. At the beginning, we stopped and conceptualized at predefined spots.

chiaki: Was there no story at the beginning?

peter: No. It was more like a Socratic exercise, in which you go back to the underlying assumptions, performing a kind of regressive abstraction from the concepts being formed.

chiaki: Was conceptualization there from the beginning?

peter: Yes, the participants were already conceptualizing (step 5), but the initial input was mine and participants conceptualized their own experience. In other words, it was the other way around from how I currently practice it. My input was a story or quote, usually from Stoic philosophy. And then participants conceptualized based on the input. Finally, we would look for the underlying assumptions. Thus, we went from story to concept. In the current format, we go from concept(s) to story.

conceptualization

chiaki: What is the most important step in your philosophical walk?

peter: Conceptualization! The act of conceptualization (step 5) turns the participant into a philosopher. Deleuze (1994) called philosophy the art of conceptualizing. Philosophers are tasked with developing new concepts to capture the meaning of phenomena. This is evident throughout the history of philosophy: from Plato's Forms, Aristotle's logic, and Descartes' cogito to Kant's categorial imperative, Sartre's freedom and Foucault's concept of self-care. A concept is a word or combination of words (either an existing word or a neologism) that expresses meaning. Plato (2007) thought of them as ideas existing behind the observed or experienced world. Aristotle (1999) considered them the most general characteristics of objects or phenomena. I follow Wittgenstein (1953) who showed that a concept is a semantic rule in interhuman communication. For example, the concept of quality expresses a rule that allows us to compare experiences with a normative frame of reference (e.g. expectations or production norms). The rule is expressed by the structure of different definition(s) of the quality concept (Harteloh, 2003). Thus, the exercise of conceptualization during the walk invites a participant to discover the semantic rule of a philosophical quote in relation to the environment and herself, i.e. in a practice. Conceptualizing is at the heart of philosophizing, as it turns the participants of a walk into philosophers and enables them to achieve an understanding of a piece of philosophical wisdom in practice.

A concept is the major outcome of the philosophizing during the first part of the walk. In philosophical practice we consider philosophizing a general human competence, a kind of thinking ranging from speculation to strict rational analysis. Everyone is philosophizing now and then about life, work or relationships. By study and training, the philosopher is an expert thinking along with the lay person, not specifically trained in philosophizing. It is like wine tasting. Tasting is a general human competence. Everyone can tell if a wine tastes nice of not. With growing experience, a person can tell if the wine is sweet, dry or floral and experts (vinologists) can write a whole paragraph about the taste of a wine, some even telling you the vineyard of origin by a single drop. So, it is with philosophy and philosophizing. The academically trained philosopher can get involved in philosophizing with a lay person, sharing a human competence while being like the expert in wine tasting. The philosopher can recognize patterns of thinking, reveal assumptions or contradictions, deepen insights by questioning, structure

the flow of thoughts, facilitate conceptualizations and can help the person to discover himself as a philosopher.

"wanderdenken"

chiaki: What do you think is the relationship between walking and thinking?

peter: In his phenomenology of thinking, Martin Heidegger (1984) hits upon a pre-philosophical principle of "movement" that sets thinking in motion. Philosophy is thinking and thinking means motion, a flow of thoughts, an order of arguments, a logos. Such a motion requires a source, a "principle of movement". Note, the relationship between "movement", "motion" and "thinking" that is expressed here. I think it is this relationship that is explicitly addressed in a philosophical walk.

During the walk you get into a rhythm of walking and thinking. Some groups go slow, some groups go fast. So, walking comes to reflect the rhythm of body and mind and also allows for you to pay attention to the environment. If you for example jog, you are drawn into the body, you move through an environment, and yet you don't see a thing. While in a philosophical walk, and that's also related to your question, you keep silent during the walking ("we talk or we walk"), and you have to be aware of your environment in order to find the right spot, the spot you're looking for.

In fact, I think it is less a relationship between two activities, and more a single form of activity, a "walking-thinking" (this is a neologism; "Wanderdenken" in German). This means that the thinking is not separated anymore from the bodily activity. "Walking-thinking", I would say, is the concept covering the activity. If we sit, then we can meditate or switch off our thinking, or we can focus on pure thinking and forget our body. Well, here we are in a kind of balance: both mind and body, both the environment and the mind. It is an embodied interacting with the environment. You have a kind of phenomenological sense, the body takes up a kind of, what do you call it, pre-conceptions (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). And then that's what, I think, happens during the walk, and by the philosophizing you become conscious of that pre-conceptions.

And also, you might ask, in the tradition of Plato, how it is that concepts

interact with place? One answer we might give is that, well, it's by virtue of the fact that the human being is in between these two things. It's the human being that carries the concepts and connects them with the place. That's a philosophical background, you might say, or rather a philosophical explanation of the need for seeing walking and thinking as a single activity.

chiaki: Why do we walk quietly?

peter: We walk in silence because then you don't disturb the other participants in their process of looking for their spot, conceptualizing or meditating on the question chosen after conceptualization. It helps you to focus. And the golden rule is: "We talk or we walk". I'm curious how other facilitators will do it, but in my practice, I always try to stop the chatting. Whenever I hear chatter in the group, I say, "What is it? Oh, you're chatting. Well, then we'll stop. What do you have to say?" And then people chatting often end up saying nothing. So, then we keep going.

chiaki: How do you choose the philosopher's quotes that you distribute to participants?

peter: According to the group and the assignment, you might say. So, for a group of philosophers, I would take citations from both Eastern and Western philosophers on a specific topic (step 1). But if you conduct a walk for a school, specifically for teachers - say, a kind of teacher training exercise - then of course you select citations from the history of philosophy that relate to learning, teaching, etc. The citations are adapted to the group that you're walking with.

chiaki: Is there always a theme?

peter: Yes. And all citations are about the theme. This ensures that the group is really working on that theme. And it's also important to study the group's dynamics. Because in the stage of narrative abstraction, when you make a story out of the concepts, the instructions stress that participants should not leave out any concept. Because if you leave a concept out, you leave one of the members of the team out. The participants will struggle to make a story out of all the concepts, but that is the point. It is a good exercise for teams or companies. You choose quotes according to the theme and the group. And for children, you might choose other citations if they can read, adapted to their cognitive level.

the walk representing life

chiaki: Why are we only allowed to stop once?

peter: Participants of my philosophical walk have to call out to the group for everyone to stop (step 5). They are allowed to do this once. Only once, so you have to choose. That's the existentialist part of the walk, the part that accepts the condition of an unknown future. You don't know if there will be, or there might be a better spot. Also, it becomes an important question in the evaluation stage: was there a better spot later on? Do you regret asking the group to stop when you did? That makes the walk, I think, just like life, it mimics life. All our lives are lived with an uncertainty about the future, and you are forced to make choices in the now. That's what you do during this walk, too. In that sense, the walk can show you something about life and about yourself.

chiaki: We don't know what the future holds.

peter: Indeed, in real life people have to choose under conditions of uncertainty, and so it is in the philosophical walks. The difference between characters becomes visible. You can observe different kinds of conceptualizers. There are early conceptualizers who, during the beginning of the walk, will say fairly quickly, "Hey, this is my spot." And there are late conceptualizers that are motivated by the thought: "Hey, the end, the end is near." So, you see them suddenly grab some tree and say, "this is my spot". But the more balanced participants are able to conceptualize in the middle of the walk. Studying the group dynamics in that way can be very revealing. And also, I should add that after a participant's conceptualization (step 6), the group is allowed to ask questions (step 7), and the person who has conceptualized is asked to pick one question (step 8) to walk with for the remainder of the walk (step 9). Because for those people who pick their spot earlier in the walk, they might think that they are finished and can just walk, which is certainly nice. But with the questioning part of the exercise, after you have finished looking for your concept and conceptualized, you're spending the rest of the walk working with your question. And in your evaluation, of course, you have one more chance to elaborate on that, on your concept, and on the question. What kind of question did you pick and what did it do to you? You know, that's the Socratic exercise of the art of questioning. Some questions are better than others, "better" in a sense they fit your practice. But also,

life is full of questions that cannot be answered. You have to learn to live with them. So, walking with a question and not being allowed to answer it, is also an exercise for life.

chiaki: Some people want to stop a second time, you know?

peter: Yes, but that is not allowed. There is only one stop per person. You have used your stop and then, you walk till the end. This also is an existentialist part of the walk representing life: you choose and have to live with your choice.

chiaki: Why do we create a "story"?

peter: Stories are important. We live in stories. Stories about ourself (who we are), events (what is happening), others (what they do) and what we do. The underlying concepts or ideas are translated in a narrative to express meaning. The narrative captures the conscious flow of thoughts. It might have the form of a theory, a metaphor, a biography, a fairy tale or even a poem. And it's an important modification of the original Socratic dialogue, wherein you end up with a regressive abstraction. You go back to the underlying principles or presuppositions (Nelson, 1922). That's usually the end of a traditional Socratic dialogue. I modified it in a narrative sense. I think we're now living in a more narrative-conscious world and we create a story. The philosophical walk fits into our idea of narrative, and of narrative philosophy. Also, the story sticks in the memory of the participants: if they remember the walk, I hope they will remember the story.

chiaki: Is the story that is developed the same for all participants?

peter: Yes, the outcome is one common story. It's what you might call the consensus process of having a Socratic dialogue. The participants have to use all the concepts that emerged during the walk and agree on the story. You impress upon them that they must use all the concepts, without leaving one out. Sometimes you can do a kind of concept mapping, positioning them on a board and then connecting them by asking, "All right, what is the connection between these two concepts? Is it logical?" So, logic comes to be considered a kind of story, or a theory is presented as a story. Don't think too narrowly about stories.

chiaki: When do we create the story?

peter: After the walk is over, so the whole exercise takes a full morning or afternoon, at least two to three hours. Typically, you walk for one hour, or an hour

and a half, and then you withdraw into a classroom. Or what is sometimes even nicer, if the weather is okay and you have the facilities, you can just do the discussion outside in the countryside or an open space somewhere. You gather in a circle and discuss. But remember, we're in a Socratic dialogue. We want people to be visual, to show the concept on the blackboard. And I have even tried to work with photos (Harteloh, 2015), although that was challenging from a technical perspective. It can be very powerful to be able to show participants on the spot where they conceptualized and say, "Look, this was the spot you were in. What does it tell you as a picture?"

chiaki: What do you like best about the philosophical walk?

peter: The fact that we actually leave the (class)room and go out walking in order to philosophize, that we interact with architecture during a city walk or with nature during a walk in the countryside. Also, it is very rewarding when the group is enjoying itself. And if it has a nice story as outcome, that is also very rewarding. It helps you to remember the walk.

chiaki: Do you think about environmental education when you do this practice?

peter: Yes, there is an environmental interface. Environment - that's basically it. Nature, Love, Placefulness – all of these things are at play, and each person discovers them for themselves. It's not extrinsic knowledge, right? But perhaps "environment" should be replaced with the idea of "experience". For example, we do not experience global warming as such, until a disaster attributed to a rise of temperature appears. A more conscious and direct experience of environment should be placed in between and might prevent such disasters by a change of conduct. The philosophical walk should be such an experience. It is your experience, your interaction with a place, upon which your concept is built. Thus, I came to the concept of "placefulness", covering the meaning of my philosophical walks (Harteloh, Tokui & Janeš, 2025). It is a variety of mindfulness. Think for example of people who are contemplating a tree, a common practice in Japan in March, when people gather around trees and contemplate the cherry blossom. A kind of Zen (禅) practice. A fine example of "placefulness": the mind is filled with the atmosphere of the place. So, for Japan the philosophical walk is actually a very good method, because there is a widespread use of contemplating

nature.

walk with children

chiaki: As I am practicing philosophy for children, I wonder if the method can also be applied to children.

peter: Yes, I did apply the method to school children (7-11 years of age). The quotes were left out. This is too difficult. For children, it seems like it is most important to find their favorite place and then think about why they chose it. You can start with the question: "What is your favorite spot?" In my opinion, the "what is" part of the question makes it a philosophical question. So, when I ask them "What is your favorite spot?" they're really into the heart of philosophy. As philosophizing is a general human competence, everyone can do it, children too, and you might say that we philosophers are trained in it, or even specialized in it. By creating the right circumstance and structure as we do during a philosophical walk, anyone can philosophize - children can do it, and you can see them do it. By just asking questions you make them philosophizing.

chiaki: Can you give an example?

peter: After the walk, or after doing something on the playground ("Search your favorite spot"), you can ask children to reflect with the question: "Why is this your favorite spot?" Usually, the answers are very interesting and by just questioning you can deepen their thoughts and make them conceptualize. For example: suppose a child has chosen a spot. (Philosopher:) Why is this your favorite spot? (Child:) "It is a quiet spot." (Philosopher:) Why is it a quiet spot? (Child:) "It makes me feel relaxed." (Philosopher:) "How would you call a spot that makes you feel relaxed?" (Child:) "A magical spot!" (Philosopher:) "Why?" (Child:) "Because it is my own world." For children, it becomes a kind of game. I think that in this case it's not necessarily crucial that they walk. Rather, in the course of the practice you will use the movement and the place - the heading of my philosophical walk is "placefulness," meaning the fact of *being* in the place - and the physical ways in which the children look for their favorite place, as part of the exercise.

chiaki: That's all! Thank you for the interview!

an experience

After the interview, Chiaki took part in Peter Harteloh's "Philosophical Walk in Diogenes Village," a part of the closing session of the 18th ICPP (Harteloh, Tokui & Janeš, 2025). She expressed her experience as follows.

Each participant drew a slip of paper with a philosophical quote written on it (step 3). My slip said "Know Thyself." I began walking while searching for a place that matched these words. I walked slowly, yet my inner thinking moved actively back and forth between the philosopher's words and the scenery of the world, repeatedly trying to find the right place. The innovative aspect of the philosophical walk lies exactly here: I am the one who gives meaning to the world.

I sharpened both my senses and my thinking toward things I would normally overlook—tiny differences in the shapes of leaves, the sound of the wind, and the surrounding smells. In a world where overlooking things is the norm, stopping at times, looking carefully, and trying to express the world in words is, I believe, the core of philosophizing.

Peter's golden rule of "we talk or we walk" made each of us—even though we were walking close to one another—into independent, thinking individuals. During that time, it felt as though only the world and I existed together.

Then came the courage to stop. Because I am not confident in my English, it was not easy for me to interrupt the flow. But, inspired by the words in the interview—"We only have one life"—I boldly said "Stop." And I brought forward my concept "Only", expressing the theoretical priority of self-knowledge on the one hand ("*Only,* know thyself") and the unique personal practice of living the quote on the other hand ("Striving for (unique) self-knowledge, *only*"). The environment gave me the courage for conceptualization.

conclusions

In recent years, the connection between walking and philosophy has been explored by writers such as Rebecca Solnit (2001) and Frédéric Gros (2021). Frédéric Gros (2021) says that, for children, no two walks are ever the same. Becoming an adult means becoming more sensitive to general ideas, similarities, and categories of existence. Through philosophical walks, we can learn to walk as a child again and to give meaning to the world by ourselves. Harteloh made the

walk part of philosophical practice by development of method. The method can be applied to children and adults. Therefore, we conclude with the hope that philosophical walks will be created in many places around the world and become a recognized method of philosophizing.

references

Aristotle. (1999). *The Metaphysics* (Transl. H. Lawson-Tancred). London: Penguin Books.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1994). *What is philosophy?* (H. Tomlinson & G. Burchell, Trans.). Columbia University Press.

Ding, X., Harteloh P., Pan T. & Yu F. (2024). The practical turn in philosophy: A revival of the ancient art of living through modern philosophical practice. *Metaphilosophy* 00:1-18. doi.org/: 10.1111/meta.12702.

Gros, F. (2021). *Marcher,une philosophie*. Albin Michel.

Harteloh, P. P. M. (2003). The meaning of quality in health care. A conceptual analysis. *Health Care Analysis*, *11*(3), 259-267.

Harteloh, P. P. M., &Mochizuki, T.(2009). Thinking in the City. City Walks as Philosophical Practice. Kyoto: *Proceedings of the 2nd Conference on Architecture and Phenomenology*.

Harteloh, P. P. M. (2013a). Philosophical Walks. *Journal of the American Society Philosophical Practice*, *8*(3), 1297-1302.

Harteloh, P. P. M. (2013b). Philosophical Walk. Tokyo: Rikkyo University, Department of Education, *Journal of Educational Research*, *57* 107-114. (Japanese Supervised by Tetsuya KONO, Translated by Kei Nishiyama and Aya Watanabe)

Harteloh, P. P. M. (2015) . It is better to travel than to arrive. A philosophical walk as a

Socratic exercise. In: Weiss HM (Ed.). *The Socratic Handbook*. Zurich: LIT Verlag, p. 191-204.

Harteloh, P. P. M. (2021). The nine steps of a philosophical walk. *Journal of Human Cognition*, *5*(2), 4-16.

Harteloh, P. P. M., Tokui, C., & Janeš, L. (2025). Placefulness: A philosophical walk at Diogenes Village, Medimurje, Croatia. *Interdisciplinary Research in Counseling Ethics and Philosophy*, *5*, 56–68.

Heidegger, M. (1984). *Was heisst denken?* Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Kant, I. (1999). *Critique of Pure Reason* (P. Guyer & A. W. Wood, Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Nelson, L. (1922). *Die sokratische Methode.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2013). *Phenomenology of Perception* (D. Landes, Trans.). Taylor & Francis Publishing.

Plato.(1973). *Phaedrus and Letters VII and VIII* (W. Hamilton, Trans.). London: Penguin books.

Plato. (2007). *The Republic* (. H.D.P. Lee, Trans). London: Penguin Books.

Shepherd, N. (2008). *The Lining Mountain*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press.

Solnit, R. (2001). *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. London: Penguin Books.

Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical Investigations* (G.E.M. Anscombe, Ttransl.). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

peter harteloh

peter harteloh, Ph.D., is a philosophical practitioner. He has a private philosophical

practice in the Netherlands with a focus on individual consultations, Socratic group dialogue, courses on the art of living and philosophical walks. He has conducted philosophical walks in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Sweden, Japan, Cambodia, China, Croatia and Greece (Athens).

chiaki tokui

chiaki tokui, Ph.D. (Education), is an assistant professor at shizuoka university of welfare, Japan. Her research focuses on education and philosophy for children. She conducts research and practice in philosophy for children in schools and communities, recently exploring education through children's lived experience from a phenomenological perspective.

how to quote this article:

APA: Harteloh, P. & Tokui, C. (2026). Philosophical walks: a method of philosophical practice *childhood & philosophy*, 22, 1–17. doi:10.12957/childphilo.2026.95451

ABNT: Harteloh, Peter & Tokui, Chiaki. Philosophical walks: a method of philosophical practice, *childhood & philosophy*, 22, 1–17, 2026. Disponível em:_____.Acesso em:_____. doi:10.12957/childphilo.2026.95451

credits

- **Acknowledgements:** The authors would like to thank a native English speaker for reviewing the manuscript and for helpful comments on the language.
- **Financing:** Not applicable.
- **Conflicts of interest:** The authors certify that they have no commercial or associative interest that represents a conflict of interest in relation to the manuscript.
- **Ethical approval:** Not applicable.
- **Availability of data and material:** Not applicable.
- **Authors' contribution:** Conceptualisation; Writing, revising and editing the text; Formal analysis; Research; Methodology; Resources; Validation: HARTELOH, P.; TOKUI, C.
- **Image:** Not applicable.
- **Preprint:** Not published in preprint repository.

article submitted to the similarity system :::plagium™

submitted: 30.11.2025 *approved:* 16.02.2026 *published:* 28.02.2026

reviewer 1: pablo muruzábal lamberti **reviewer 2:** anonymous