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Wandering, winding, wondering: Moving in the labyrinth / Wędrowanie, podążanie krętą drogą, zdumienie: poruszanie się w labiryncie

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Wandering, rambling and tourist hiking have traits of labyrinthine movement. The understanding of the labyrinth as a form of movement challenges the traditional Western image of the labyrinth as being primarily a symbol. There is strong historical evidence for the connection between labyrinth and bodily movement. In modern gymnastics, this started by running in labyrinths on German and Russian gymnastics places between 1810 and 1850. Besides running, however, also other forms of dance, play, game and other movement in labyrinths are documented since ancient times and the Middle-Ages. And yet, it is far from clear, why people through centuries (probably since Stone Age) and in different cultures (as in India and among some Native Americans) have built labyrinthine stone settings, and for which use. During more than ten years, students and professors of the Gerlev Sports Academy in Zealand (Denmark) have moved, danced, walked and run in the labyrinth. These movement practices have brought forward a rich panorama of personal experiences. On the basis of this bodily phenomenology, the labyrinthine experience can be described as a series of stories or narratives. They reveal surprising relations between the labyrinth and rhythm, concentric and eccentric movement, regularity and irregularity, panic and laughter, the Other and the In-Between, change of the state of conscience – and the question mark. This type of bodily experience contributes to the understanding of wandering as deep ecology¹.

1. Wandering “in” and “out”

“Hänschen klein ging allein
in die weite Welt hinein...”
(Little Hans walked alone into the large wide world...)

This song is known well to any German child. Hans wanders out into the world, with a stick, a hat and a good mood. But his mother is crying alone. That is why Hans returns home.

This simple story may be the most broadly known song about wandering in German language. It delivers a picture of moving forth and back again. The wanderer changes his course under the impact of a human relation.

Many fairy tales, as told by the brothers Grimm, start with a similar phrase: Once upon a time, a boy walked off into the world... At a closer look, however, the song and the fairy tales contain a slight difference and even a contradiction. Little Hans wanders *in die Welt hinein*, “in” into the world, into the inner of the world. In the fairy tales – as in *Daumerlings Wanderschaft* (Daumerling’s wandering), *Das tapfere Schneiderlein* (The brave tailor) and *Die vier kunstreichen Brüder* (The four ingenious brothers) – the protagonists wander *in die Welt hinaus*, “out” into the world. *In and out* – or *in or out*: what does this contradiction tell us about the movement of wandering?

Indeed, there exists one particular form of movement, where the walking-“in” and the walking-“out” are connected without losing their respective contradictory directional meanings. It is the movement in the labyrinth. It seems not to be accidental that poetic phenomenology of wan-

¹ Some parts of this study were previously published in: *Imeros, Journal for Culture and Technology*, Athens: Foundation of the Hellenic World, vol. 5 no. 1.

dering has again and again referred to the labyrinth [Chatwin 1988, Solnit 2000]. The problem in the study of “wanderlust” has, however, been its habitually impressionistic character, which stems from collecting – in an associative way – all sorts of poetic evidence. This may be a good read, but finally it may tend to tell that all that is wandering. If we want to avoid this trap, we have to search for more analytical ways – in particular, for the anthropology of movement. In this perspective, talking about the labyrinthine character of walking will be more than metaphorical. The complex cultural movement of wandering can be analyzed with the labyrinth in mind.

If we understand the labyrinth as a movement, this challenges the traditional Western understanding of the phenomenon that tends to read the labyrinth as a symbol. The largest part of the booming labyrinth scholarship of the last years sees the labyrinth primarily as an abstract figure, which is bearing a certain symbolic meaning².

But there is a strong historical evidence for the connection between labyrinth and bodily movement³. Let us start in the world of running.

Moving along straight and curved lines – The gymnastic "Miracle Course"

When in the early nineteenth century German youngsters, educationalists and oppositional intellectuals started the gymnastic movement *Turnen*, running was one of their usual activities side by side with the other athletic competitions. When these young people installed the first gymnastic grounds in Berlin and other places, those included – among other facilities – a *Rennbahn*, a racing track consisting of a start, a straight track, and a finish. This will not surprise the present day observer – we all know the form well. Starting point – straight track – finishing line: that is racing.

However, the early *Turn*-gymnasts also created courses of quite another design on their gymnastics grounds. A picture of the gymnastic ground on the Hasenheide near Berlin from ca. 1817 shows not only the straight track, *Laufbahn*, but includes two further facilities – a so-called *Schlingellauf* (twisting course), which had the form of three connected circles, and a *Wunderkreis* (miracle circle, circle of surprise) in the form of a labyrinth. These three forms of tracks were all used for racing [See: Gasch 1928, Steins 1987].

The non-linear practices of racing and related facilities were described and discussed in several books of the founder of German gymnastics, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, and his disciples. In 1829, the gymnast Ernst Wilhelm Bernhard Eiselen published a small book specifically about “*Der Wunderkreis*”, its idea, its practice and its construction [Eiselen 1829]. Further historical research as well as the new constructions were presented by another disciple of Jahn, Hans Ferdinand Massmann, in a book on “*Wunderkreis und Irrgarten*” (miracle course and maze) dating from 1844 [Massmann 1844]. These seem to be the very first monographic works about the labyrinth. It was not before the end of the nineteenth century that monographic work on the labyrinth started, and this began in the spirit of Neo-Romantic and nationalist mythological speculation [Krause 1893a, 1893b; Pastor 1895].

The side-by-side disposition of a labyrinth and a racing track did not last long. During the later nineteenth century, the labyrinths and twist courses disappeared from the German gymnastic grounds again. It was only the track suitable for sportive competition that survived – and expanded.

Thus, while the straight racing course and the type of competitive running for which it was designed developed with some continuity and can be recognized in the patterns of modern ath-

² Current collection, research and discussion of labyrinth matters in Saward 1981 ff.; an important collection of Nordic labyrinths combined with mythological interpretation: Kraft 1985; from the perspective of the architect: Fisher/Gerster 1990; a New Age inspired spiritual interpretation: Lonegren 1991; a philosophical and political approach: Attali 1996; important and deep contributions from literature and the aesthetics of the ornament: Raullet/Schmidt 2000; an archeological view on ancient history: Castleden 2000; a collective work with a bias of actual artist use of the labyrinth: Seifried 2002; a broad collection of labyrinths from all times, especially from Denmark and Nordic countries: Thordrup 2002; a collective work around the work of a photographer: Hohmuth 2003.

³ For a recent attempt to bridge between the philosophical symbol of the labyrinth – here expressed by the Czech educator Johann Amos Comenius and his work *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* – and the wandering of tourism see: Jirásek 2008.

letics, the other forms of the non-linear courses and the activities associated with them are unknown in the world of sports and gymnastics today. They are a part of a history of disappearance. What was their meaning? What is the historical, societal and psychological logic that made labyrinth appear in the body culture of that period, and what is the logic of its disappearance? The same question might be asked in a more provocative way: which historical logic accounts for the fact that the straight racing track did not yet disappear? Under which circumstances may it once be forgotten as well? And what do these historical changes around running and racing tell us about the movement of wandering?

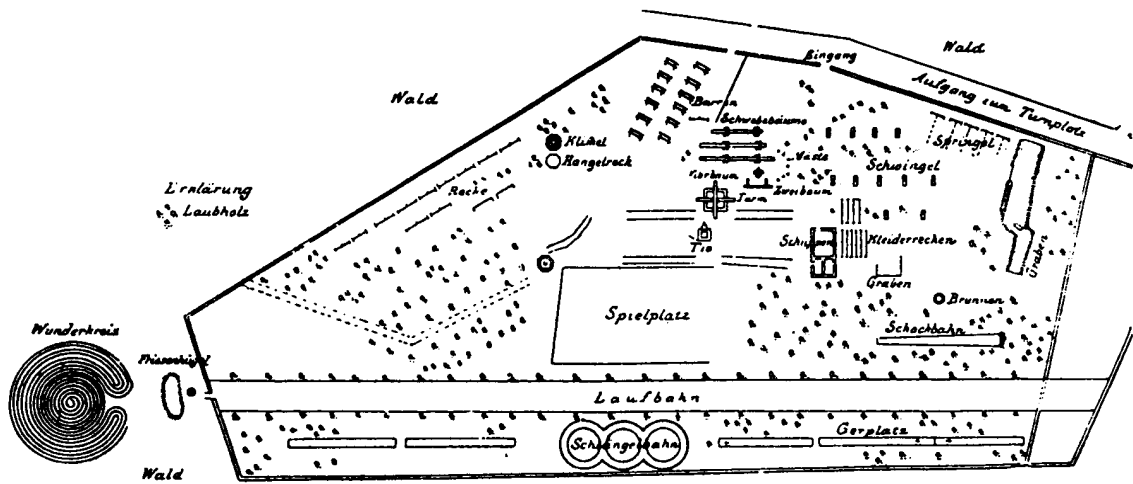


Figure 1. The gymnastic ground of Hasenheide in Berlin around 1817, with the labyrinth *Wunderkreis* to the left [Gasch 1928, 1: 317] / **Ryc. 1.** Plac gimnastyczny Hasenheide w Berlinie około 1817 roku z labiryntem „Cudowne koło” po lewej stronie

Racing, wandering, playing – and labyrinthine speculation. Human movements are often regarded as consisting of basic and universal elements, which can be defined as sports and which finally have become elaborated by modern Olympic movement. Racing is one of these characteristic *"basic forms of human movement, which in the whole world have been taken as occasion for sport competitions"* [Ulf 1981, p. 20]. Across all cultures and eras, human beings have liked to run competitively, driven by their original pleasure and delight, by the need of chasing and survival or by impulses and drives of a socio-biological nature. Modern sport has only systematized this and brought it to the top. Racing is simply human.

Thus goes the story from the mainstream of modern thinking, and international sport science has expressed this again and again. Indeed, modern culture has made the 100-meter-race the ideal paradigm of centimeter-gram-second activity and the perfect figurative symbol of sport in general. Empirically, however, the general characteristic of racing as a universal activity of “all the peoples of the world” with roots back in prehistory is not convincing. Quite a few cultures are known that never practised this type of sport. Native American, Inuit Eskimo, African and Indonesian cultures are known, which practised a rich variety of competitions and games, but never raced. And others had ritual races, indeed, but these followed cultural patterns quite different from modern competition.

It is in the modern civilization that racing became highly significant – much more significant than just a matter of sport. The racing track delivers the imagination for the human strive towards records and achievements as a universal myth. Racing on the straight line between start and finish embodies something that the modern human being regards as existential. It is a bodily basis for the modern concepts of "progress" and "career" and for the credo of modern functionalism with its "natural" hegemony of the straight line and the right angle. If such a functionalism can be called the modern religion, then racing is its ritual.

The trajectories of ‘moving forward’, ‘pursuing a particular goal’ and ‘going straight’ are not to be found in the labyrinth. In this perspective, the labyrinth – by means of its alternativeness – is a living critical comment about a central myth of modernity. And if wandering is related to a labyrinthine movement, it must also be seen in the context of – and as an alternative to – the racing, the modern cult of the straight line. The research that has been done on the labyrinth has not yet paid the well-deserved attention to this aspect. Research on labyrinths has hitherto rather the character of academic curiosity. It reveals a taste of the marginal – though the relevant literature is vast and embraces different fields of knowledge. It spans from archeology, linguistics and history of the ancient world over medieval studies, folklore and ethnology to the history of sport. Some contributions came from the history of arts and the history of religion, philology and architecture.

This scholarly literature is full of dubious hypotheses. Some derive the labyrinth from astronomical constellations and others from fishing magic; some from mythological imagination and others from concrete, “functional”, need for the aid to navigation. Scholars connect the labyrinth with the intestines of Oriental sacrifices, with underground galleries of mining, with Egyptian architecture, with Pacific fertility myths. Whether discussing astral symbolism or city fortification, textile ornaments from ancient Greece or equestrian exercises from Asia Minor as the "origin" of the labyrinth, these studies are mostly characterized by an unworldly tone and remain far from human practice and experience [Among others: Kerényi 1941; Birkhan 1976; Kürvers, 2003].

Such speculative theories are therefore of minor interest for the point of view presented here. The present investigation attempts to take seriously what other types of research through many decades have revealed: namely, that labyrinth is a pattern of a movement culture, of a bodily practice and play [Kern 1981; Eichberg 1989a].

Labyrinth and maze

The following study about labyrinthine movement refers primarily to the classical one-way labyrinth. In this pattern, there is only one single way and no possibility to go astray, nor any situation of choice. The path goes in a complex way, changing directions on one unmistakable track to the center, where one has to turn in order to get out. The (one-)way of the circulation labyrinth forms a spiral-like and a kidney-formed pattern, similar to a snail’s shell, with typically seven or eleven circuits.

This is the original form of the labyrinth, as documented as Neolithic rock engraving in the Mediterranean. Coins from ancient Crete from about 400 BC show the same labyrinth, as do stone settings in the North of Europe, which are dated back to the period between the Bronze Age and early Iron Age. Similar labyrinths were built or used as amulets in India and were known as a pattern of game and decoration in some American Indian cultures, especially among Hopi and Pima. The classical labyrinth of the North is composed on the flat ground where stones of the size of a head or a fist mark a curved way in the form of a kidney. The diameter varies between 7 and 18 m, the number of circuits between seven and fifteen. The path is broad enough for one or two walkers.

The one-way labyrinth should not be confused with the maze, puzzle or *Irrgarten*, as it often happens in the literature on the psychology or philosophy of the subject. In the maze or *Irrgarten*, the movement consists in a quest for the right way. By means of false



Figure 2. The labyrinth of Visby, Gotland/Sweden – the classical form of the one-way labyrinth. Kern 2000: 274 /
Ryc. 2. Labirynt z Visby w Szwecji-klasyczna forma jednokierunkowego labiryntu. Kern 2000: 274

pathways and dead ends, the maze produces a series of choices, a permanent confusion in order to lead the searcher astray. It is a picture of entanglement. The classical labyrinth, in contrast, is no pattern to search – or otherwise to miss – the “right” way. The maze can therefore more exactly be called a pseudo-labyrinth or crypto-labyrinth.

The multi-directional maze as a puzzle is historically much newer. In pictures it does not appear before the European Renaissance. The typical form of the maze is the hedge labyrinth in a geometrical garden. The pseudo-labyrinth is imagined as a world of tunnels, i.e. as an architecture where people are moving between walls, which are hindering the view.

2. An experimental psychology of labyrinthine running

What have people done in the labyrinth? How have they used it in practice? And why did they build labyrinthine stone settings during centuries, even millennia?

There is no simple answer. Archeology, folkloristic research and other cultural studies have documented different forms of movement games and play in the labyrinth.

The labyrinth was a place of *footraces*. The gymnasts of Berlin modeled themselves after the labyrinth races, which were annually held in Brandenburg during the early seventeenth century [Massmann 1844, pp. 7–10]. Among the *equestrian games*, the “Troy game” of ancient Rome became notable [Pfister 1977]. This ritual ride of young men in labyrinthine patterns was used for Imperial propaganda, but can actually be dated back to Etruscan pictorial evidence from 620 BC.

Labyrinth and *procession* can be seen in connection, too. Procession constitutes one possible link from labyrinth as a labyrinthine movement to the labyrinth as architecture. The procession moves between a variety of holy places towards a holy center and back again, thus delivering the to-and-fro pattern for labyrinthine choreographic mosaics and buildings [Pieper pp. 1987]. *Ball games* were played on the labyrinthine mosaics of medieval cathedrals in France. (They were later persecuted as “pagan”) [Kern 2000, pp. 146–147].

Wrestling or other fighting was in the center of the classical ancient myths of the Cretan labyrinth where Theseus slew the Minotaur [Kern 2000, pp. 41–42]. In the German epic *Nibelungenlied*, the dark warrior Hagen from Tronje (i.e. from Troy, from the Troja-labyrinth?) slay the hero Siegfried at the end of a “sportive” race [Höfler 1961, pp. 76–89].

Also children's *jumping* and *limping games* like “Heaven and Hell” and “Limp Snail” may be related to or derived from the labyrinth, too [De Vries pp. 1957]. The Etruscan word for labyrinth, *truia*, which is a relative of the Nordic labyrinth terms *Trøjborg* and *Trojborg*, entered into the Roman verb *antruare* or *amtruare* (to jump, to spring, to dance).

Dominant among the movement games in the labyrinth was *dance*, mostly the chain dance. The myth from ancient Crete tells about the labyrinthine *geranos*, the “crane dance” of Ariadne, and Homer described it in his *Iliad* (Song 19, Verses 590–605). In our times, labyrinthine patterns can be rediscovered in the “snail dance” of Pays Basque, the chain dances of the Faeroe Islands or the dancing chains of Breton *fest noz*.

Young people played *erotic games* in the labyrinth. The races of flirtation were documented in England, Finland and Sweden [Kraft 1985, pp. 15–19].

The manifold reports and myths, however, do not give one over-all picture of the labyrinthine practice. Why people through centuries have built labyrinths again and again remains unclear. Thus, our question is directed back to ourselves, to our own experience and experimentation. The labyrinth can be tested as a way of calling forth deeper emotions and experiences, which make its cultural use possible at the first place. The labyrinth can serve as a laboratory producing sensual awareness through bodily movement. Which type of bodily movement and which type of awareness?

During more than ten years, students and professors have moved, danced, walked and run in the labyrinth of the Gerlev Sports Academy (Zealand, Denmark). These movement practices have brought forward a rich panorama of personal experiences, which the participants tried to explicit,

to qualify and to shade by explorative dialogues. From labyrinthine movement, thus, a sort of active introspection was developed. On the basis of this bodily phenomenology, the labyrinthine experience can be described as a series of stories or narratives. The narratives are different from each other, but in their connection they describe a sort of an inner movement landscape. What do these stories tell us about the phenomenology of wandering?

Of course, this empirical method and the introspection are centered on the *modern* subject – with its particular horizon of progress, career, stress and tension. This path does not lead directly to the reconstruction of pre-historical experience, which as such may be lost forever. But the self-experience of the modern subject can be helpful to obtain deeper knowledge of human movement; the movement anthropology may bridge the gap between the lost bodily practices and us in a more convincing way than symbolic speculations. The same is true for the reconstruction of what is *wandering*. The following should therefore be regarded as a contribution to the wandering of the *modern* subject – not more than that.

First story: In the labyrinth one experiences the turn

The labyrinth is a bodily and sensual arrangement of the turn. One enters, turns around in the center and leaves. This is a form of initiation by movement – a *rite de passage* [See: van Gennep 1960]. One “dies” and comes to life again. The narrative of the labyrinth is about entrance and introduction, winding and change, wandering and wondering. *Rite de passage* displays and puts on stage a crisis and crucial turn in the discontinuity of life: The crisis is the chance. This is what the turn in the labyrinth is about.

Second story: The labyrinth is a pattern of detour

The detour of the labyrinth is a roundabout path. When striving to get to the destination, the wanderer is repeatedly made believe that the goal will soon be reached. But the way continues, and the expectation meets surprise or disappointment. Thus, working with impatience is an essential element of labyrinthine experience. There is tension, expectation, and surprise. But as an alternative to stress and disappointment, one has the chance of leaving oneself to the movement, the rhythm, the way, the group.

One may also be reminded of what the avant-garde theatre of the sixties described as a difference between Western and Oriental arts of acting. As the instructor of the Danish Odin Theatre, Eugenio Barba expressed it:

“To look at a person who is seated on his right, a Western actor would use a direct, linear movement of his neck. But the Chinese actor, and most other Oriental actors, would begin as if he wanted to look in the opposite direction. Suddenly he would change direction and direct his gaze at the chosen person. The Oriental actor always begins a action in the direction opposite to its final objective. According to this principle, if one wants to go to the left, one begins by going to the right and suddenly turns and goes toward the left. If one wants to crouch down one begins by rising up on tip-toe and then crouches down... In Oriental theatre, the straight line doesn't exist...” [Barba 1986, pp. 118–119].

Whether the described bodily detour is specifically Oriental, or rather avant-garde Western or whatever else does not matter much in our context. And it is more significant by itself than as a part of theatrical technique only.

“Ta' en omvej. Genvejen er hurtigst. Dem der vælger omvejen, har så herligt meget at fortælle.”

(Take a detour. The straight way is the quickest. Who chooses the detour has so lovely much to tell.)

With these words, the Danish free Folk Academies, *højskoler*, use to advertise their alternative way of people's education. For liberal education it is not the goal but the way that matters. Learning is a labyrinthine wandering: learning by detour.

In this perspective, the running in the labyrinth – as going astray – is a contrasting narrative about the progress. If progress means *go a-head*, and the “head” means to “see” the goal (established by the authority of others) and to advance directly, it does not work in the labyrinthine situation. The labyrinth, where seeing of the goal is meaningless or even impossible, rather says: *go a-body*. The center of the labyrinth is empty – it is the bodily way of detour that matters.

Third story: The labyrinth cultivates the curved line

By an artificial configuration of a movement, the labyrinth arranges an alternative to the straight line. Le Corbusier expressed the view of modern functionalism:

"The human being steps straight ahead, because he (sic! – H.E.) has a goal. He knows where to move, he has decided on one direction, and he strides resolutely forward" [Le Corbusier 1925].

This corresponds to the fundamental pattern of a sport race that demands a straight track. The straight-linearity of the sport movement displays – on the level of societal myths and ideas – the meaning of "career" and "progress". Highway, blitzkrieg, and streamline favor moving in a straight line. Seen from late modernity, thus, the labyrinthine movement may look like a trans-modern alternative to "dromocracy" [Virilio 1977; see also Kern 1983, chap. 5]. Instead of building “democracy” on the people [*demos*] and their slow processes of communication, “dromocracy” means to build power [*-kratia*] on movement [ancient Greek *drómos*], on decisive action, quick forward-race and acceleration⁴. This is based on a specific anthropological imagination: The human being is seen as a sort of projectile [Lichtenstein/Engler 1993].

The labyrinthine movement opposes this. Or, turned into a positive description, the labyrinthine movement is about what is “in the way”. While running and striving along the labyrinthine path, one meets the fold, the knot. This is why the labyrinthine game is related to many popular practices of running by using handicaps or obstacles, such as jumping over bundles of straw, the sack race and the cross-country race. In the steeplechase of modern sport, the runner tries to solve the task as if the way was smooth and even, as if nothing was in the way. The labyrinth, in contrast, tells about what *is* in the way. The curve is not a hindrance, but life.

Fourth story: The labyrinth has its own time

On the level of time, the labyrinthine movement is opposed to the modern cult of velocity [Virilio 1977; Eichberg 1978, 1989b; Schönhammer 1991]. Sport with its linearity and functionality is a cult of speed and acceleration. In contrast, time acceleration cannot be forced upon the labyrinthine movement. In the curved ways, one cannot speed up as one wants. Neither slow nor quick in itself, the race between the labyrinthine stones has its own time. Labyrinthine time means to pay attention rather than to speed up, to find time rather than to impose it.

One of the most ancient myths of the Nordic labyrinth, told by Snorri Sturlason in his *Heimskringla* around 1230, can be understood in this context [Snorri Sturlason 1922, 14–16]. The legendary Swedish king Adils was very fond of horses and owned the best ones of his time. Once he wanted to attend a sacrifice for the *dises*, the female spirits or goddesses of the pre-Viking religion. Instead of dismounting, Adils rode his horse through the *disarsalr*, the labyrinth hall of the *dises*. The horse stumbled under him, and the king fell headlong to the ground. His head hit a stone so that his skull broke leaving his brain on the stones. Thjodolf, a *skald* from the ninth century, who made a poem about this dramatic event, praised Adils as a mighty king and man of vigorous action who had ended by witchcraft. However, what killed Adils was the neglect of “the time of the stones”.

For our modern perception, the narrative of the labyrinth comments on the problem of modern time, which we call stress. Stress means that “we have no time”. In the labyrinth, in contrast,

⁴ The need of quick decisive action in the “state of emergency” was a central argument of Fascist theory against democracy. This “sportive” argument was developed especially by the German jurist Carl Schmitt.

the runner practices and experiences movement, which takes time. And this labyrinthine time is not only “our” time, but related to the “time of the environment”.

The attention to “the time of the stones” has, thus, an ecological dimension. What is needed in labyrinthine movement can be compared to the spinning of the top; this game demands a certain attention to the “thing”, otherwise it will not succeed. And the ringing of a bell by pulling the string is not a matter of doing it as quickly as possible or as slowly as one wants. There is a certain swing in the “things” deserving our attention. We need our bodily presence for a dialogical relation to the environment. This presence is ecological – not in terms of preservation or protection of environment, as it is seen from the “high” position of the acting (and repentant, remorseful) human being, but in a deeper sense. It is ecological from a “lower” perspective, from the level of the stones, of the earth. In this respect, the labyrinthine movement as a body ecology is related to the ecology of the subconscious (see below).

Fifth story: Labyrinthine time is rhythmic

The race in the labyrinth is a dance. Like a pendulum, the movement oscillates to the right and to the left. The bending of the body changes, too, as well as the bending of the dancing chain does. These rhythmic shifts can be compared to the rhythm of breathing and to the throb of the heart – diastole-systole – as well as to the shifts between day and night, winter and summer.

The rhythmic repetition in the labyrinth, unlike the oscillation of the metronome, is not a mechanical period. The ways around and around are of different length and resist precise quantification. There is a fundamental difference between the rhythmic swing in the labyrinth and the machine-made period that is used in a modern temporalized regulation of life.

Sixth story: The labyrinth is irregularity in the regular

The rhythmic repetition does not have the character of mechanical time measure; nor is the labyrinthine figure exactly symmetrical in space or has the circuits of the same length. The labyrinth shows irregularity in regularity. And vice versa: in its turn, the labyrinthine movement develops a feeling of regularity in the “chaotic”.

Surely, the labyrinth can be constructed out of a strictly symmetrical cross, and by rotation it can be derived from a strict meander. This would look regular, but the result – as experienced in movement – would be an asymmetrical tension. The labyrinth is an order, but without a geometrical scheme, without the symmetry of a system of coordinates. In this respect it is placed between the circle, the spiral and the swastika on the one hand, and the maze or complete chaotic disorder on the other. It shows a benefit of complexity, which lies in asymmetry.

This complexity of a third order has recently been (re-) discovered and described by mathematical methods as fractal geometry [Mandelbrot 1982]. Fractal figures are not the straight lines, triangles, circles, squares, and spheres that we have been told about at school, nor are they the complete chaos and disorder. Fractal figures help to understand better the structure, aesthetics and change of trees and human faces, water whirls and coast lines, leaves and clouds, body cells and town landscapes [Eichberg 2003b]. The labyrinth is a part of this fractal world. The fractal “monsters” of geometry have been characterized as the branching, confused, folded, hydra-like, in-between, polyp-like, ramified, seaweed-like, strange, tangled, tortuous, wiggly, winding, wispy, and wrinkled ones – and indeed, most of this fits to the labyrinth, too. The labyrinthine logic is fractal.

Seventh story: The labyrinth displays the impossibility of survey

The labyrinth creates a situation of the unobservable. The capacity of human view has its limits. In spite of all the order, which is manifested in the pattern of the labyrinth, it produces visual entanglement and confusion. In spite of the existence of a center, no point of the labyrinthine configuration is dominant.

This contrasts notably to the configuration of the pyramid with its panoptical peak. “God’s eye” on the top can see everything. The modernist system builders try to copy this form – and act aggressively against the labyrinthine *Neue Unübersichtlichkeit* [*New Non-transparency*]. [Habermas 1985; see also: Loos 1908]. There is affinity between a pyramid and the centralist social structures such as state, social hierarchy, military, and sport, which Michel Foucault has analyzed as the panopticon of the Western culture; labyrinth, on the contrary, has a rather “anarchist” flair [Foucault 1975]. That is why labyrinth fascinated the avant-garde artists [Jorn/de Jong 1963, Hundertwasser 1984].

Instead of surveillance and domination, labyrinth cultivates the doubt: Where am I? This may be experienced as a narcissistic offence to our will to see. But it is also a chance.

This narrative of the labyrinth has an epistemological point. While the visual capacity of survey in the labyrinth is restricted, the actual movement through the labyrinth is no problem at all. We cannot “see” the way, but we can go, run, dance or wander it. Movement can do something, which view cannot.

There is a social and pedagogical point, too. From outside (in fact, from wherever) there is no visual control of the labyrinthine movement possible. One cannot correct anything in the labyrinthine running. There is no leader – only the first person in the dancing chain; but she or he is following the same way as the others. The labyrinth is non-disciplinary.

Eighth story: Labyrinthine movement is concentric – and ex-centric

The labyrinth leads to concentration as a sort of condensation of movement. Swinging towards the center, the dancers – if dancing in a chain – place their bodies closer and closer to each other. Searching for a center means searching for the densest point.

This activity contrasts to other configurations of race seeking flight and expansion rather than contact. The labyrinth, instead, arranges contraction, touching, togetherness, and implosion. This is a bodily base for the meditative qualities of the labyrinth on the one hand and its erotic signification on the other. The widespread erotic symbolism of the labyrinth may be derived from this experience. The movement also leads, however, out of the labyrinth. This is an ex-centric side of it. Ex-centric movement – out of the center – is related to eccentric behavior, both by the linguistics of “eccentricity” and the bodily pattern beneath the word. The labyrinthine way does not only lead into the center, it does not just end in “the inner of our-selves”, but the way goes out again. The strangeness remains. The eccentric habitus is crooked, not straight, strange and unexpected, like the ex-centric movement. It seems not quite accidental that the labyrinth is a favorite object of interest and collecting for British eccentrics. The labyrinth is ex-centric and eccentric.

Ninth story: The labyrinth is a challenge

The labyrinth does not appeal to individual achievement. *Every* dancer will finally reach the center or finally get out again (not only the most trained, the quickest, or the most skillful one). There is the only one way and there is never a choice. The runners, wanderers, dancers are not assorted after their ability or training, after the luck of hazard or the “cultural capital” of their education. The labyrinth is non-assorting.

This is the main difference between labyrinth and maze as a configuration of crossways and blind alleys, “right” or “wrong”. The pseudo-labyrinth demands permanent resolution, while the labyrinth requires swinging and sensibility. The labyrinth produces less “action” than experience.

On the other hand, the labyrinthine race does not mean, “anything goes”. Indeed, it is a challenge. One is not floating like a piece of wood in the sea, but one is not striving towards a particular goal either. Besides floating or drifting and striving or aspiring – with all their psychoanalytical connotations [Goldschmidt 1988] – there is something else. The Scandinavian name of the labyrinth, *Trelleborg*, is related to Danish *drill*, German *drehen* and *Drall*, “turning” [Knudsen 1948]. English “thrill” meaning tension and sensation is not far from this. The labyrinthine turning or thrill is circular, but does not close at the end.

Tenth story: Labyrinthine movement changes the state of consciousness If dancing in and out of the labyrinth is continually repeated several times, the rhythmic changes may by means of their repetitive character produce the experience of trance. At the end, we may forget how many times we have danced in and out. The narrative of the labyrinth is, thus, about the repetition – and altered state of consciousness.

That is what connects the movement in the labyrinth with the rhythm of the drum [Neher 1962]. Movement is repeated, the rhythm of repetition creates a field of energy – and the subject changes.

Eleventh story: The labyrinth leads into the In-Between

In the labyrinth, one meets the Other. “The Other” are the other dancers in the dancing chain. The Other is also the strange world of the labyrinthine way itself. Searching oneself and finding otherness are intertwined – identity meets estrangement.

The labyrinth leads the dancer into a space “between”. The runner does not conquer the space. He or she is entering an artificial configuration of intermediary space.

This means that the labyrinth is no place for the isolationism and the solipsism of “I am who I am”. In a certain opposition to the Western individualism, the movement in the labyrinth is a “turning to...”. The labyrinthine runner is “running *between...*”, the dancer is in “movement *with...*” and the wanderer “is there, *too*,” and wandering “*also*” (where others have been wandering before).

In the labyrinth, the Western ego may be calling from each corner “here am I” – but without being able to say, where exactly. The subject moves between the stones (and between the other dancers), moves together with the others, moves also, where there is “the other” before. In the labyrinthine way the moving subject does not appear as a monad or “the center”, but as a Between, as an Also, as a With. This is a hint towards another humanism: The human being is not alone in the world, and what is fundamentally human is not somewhere inside the single human being (in singular), but between the human beings (in plural). Labyrinthine movement is an exercise of togetherness [Buber 1923, Sloterdijk 1998].

Twelfth story: The labyrinth is a landscape of panic

In this world of In-Between, somewhere between identity and estrangement, anxiety develops. There were participants in the labyrinth experiments who refused to enter the narrow stone rows. They were afraid. Wandering into the unknown is not harmless.

The ancient myth from Crete tells about the labyrinth as a prison of the man-eating monster Minotaur. The labyrinth is not just fun. The dance ground of Ariadne became in Western imagination a prison, a landscape of horror.

When one looks on the labyrinth from outside, it seems impossible to follow the path towards the center with one's eyes. Sooner or later the view will be entangled and will lose the direction. The reliability of the visual orientation is disproved. This causes uncertainty and doubt. As the gaze has a prominent place among the human senses in Western culture, the situation provokes fright.

The movement on the labyrinthine path leads into situations of uncertainty, too. One expects to approach nearer to the center, but suddenly the track turns and seems to lead to the outer periphery again. We may ask: “Am I on the wrong way? But I did not do anything wrong, did I?” – One may become afraid of getting lost, and what seemed to be easy in the beginning may end up as a nightmare. The person may believe that the labyrinth finally will lead to the center, but he or she will be afraid nevertheless.

Consequently, Western literature about the labyrinth is mostly about horror and nightmare – see, for example, the works of Ina Seidel, Franz Kafka, Jorge Luis Borges and Umberto Eco [Seidel 1922; Kafka 1922/1923; Borges 1983; Eco 1980]. The ego loses control, gets imprisoned, experiences narrowness and claustrophobia [Bachelard 1971, pp. 210–260].

On the other hand, the relation between labyrinth and anxiety may be a background for some “therapeutic” potentials of running. Running in the labyrinth shows on practice that there is no wrong way. You always get to the center and back again... Anxiety is not only an enemy but also

a resource. Instead of running away, we can dance into the labyrinthine landscape of fear; we can take the chance to wander into the unknown.

Thirteenth story: There is laughter in the labyrinth

The seriousness of ritual, identity quest and anxiety is not the whole story of the labyrinth. When running in the labyrinth, when stumbling over the stones, when trying to catch or irritate one another, we will laugh. Laughter reveals another side of the labyrinth, contrasting the existential gravity. In the labyrinth, by failure and stumbling, the human body shows its grotesque sides. In this respect, labyrinthine movement is similar to the eccentric movement of three-leg race, the sack race, the tug-of-war and other forms of fun and folk competitions [Eichberg 2003a].

Especially the children's games in the paths of the labyrinth are full of laughter. Some labyrinthine mosaics in French medieval cathedrals had to be destroyed because playing children disturbed the sacred atmosphere. And the labyrinth is the dance of the joker, the world of the fool. In the eighteenth century, a May ritual of artisans was reported from the so-called *Windelbahn* in Pomerania; in the center of this festivity were two fools who played their tricks to the townsfolk and to the dancers in the labyrinth [Haken 1784].

3. Movement anthropology – some interpretations

Identity and question mark

On the way through the labyrinth, questions arise: “Where am I? Where do I go? Where did I come from?” Doubt is growing: “Is this really the right way?”

These questions are related to the questions of identity “Who am I? Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going?” In this respect, the center of the labyrinth can be seen as a point of the identity shift, as the point of initiation and *rite de passage*.

“In a labyrinth, one does not lose oneself.

In a labyrinth, one finds oneself.

In a labyrinth, one does not encounter the Minotaur.

In a labyrinth, one encounters oneself” [Kern 2000, p. 23].

This sounds, however, surer and more definitive than it is in real life. The quest of identity does not mean that there is a definitive answer to be found in the labyrinth. The center, towards which the labyrinthine movement is directed, is not the goal, but an empty turning point. The labyrinthine movement does not give any promise: it rather follows the swing in a sort of a question mark.

Indeed, the question mark consists of similar elements as the labyrinth. There is the winding line, the point, and asymmetry. The race of identity is more a quest and a question than an ascertainment. Running for identity is not finding, but searching.

If the labyrinth resembles a question mark, it must be taken seriously what a psychoanalyst has polemically called the “obscenity of asking” [Bodenheimer 1984]. The question sets surety dancing. The question thereby produces dizziness, which is comparable to the giddiness of twisting and spinning around. By being asked, one feels attacked, pressured, and ashamed – and what is hidden is revealed. The open circle of a question mark offends the human perception. In Hebrew, to ask, *scha'ol*, is related to *sche'ol*, the hell, the underworld, the diabolic. All this sounds like a comment on the labyrinth as well – if reinterpreted from the patriarchal perspective, with Satan sitting in the center as “the master of the labyrinthine world”.

Asking is not only in the mind; it is also a bodily process. When we ask, the voice **rises** at the end of the sentence. Something that was sure before is suddenly questioned. By asking, things are “made dancing”. A feeling of turning around, a “thrill,” may arise, as in the *Trelleborg* labyrinth. There is something subversive in posing questions.

The relation between movement, question and identity can be illustrated with the help of a word of Buddha: "You cannot go a way before you have become the way yourself."

You cannot pose a question before you have become the question mark, the question-movement yourself.

(India is one of the classical labyrinth cultures. The distribution of labyrinths, however, does not go hand in hand with the Buddhist religion. In China and Japan, the "way", *dao* and *do* did not spread in the form of the labyrinth but rather as yin and yang. The cultural map of the labyrinth on the globe is not simple.)

Labyrinthine wandering in the order of ablaut

The labyrinth delivers a sort of grammar for the understanding of wandering. Wandering is a movement of detour and curved lines. What is the "own time" of wandering, its rhythm, and its fractal logic? How is wandering related to what is impossible for visual survey and what is possible for the body? If wandering strives towards "the blue flower", as the German youth movement of the early twentieth century expressed it in Neo-Romantic terms, we remember that the center of the labyrinth is empty. How does wandering change the state of consciousness, how does it create panic – and laughter?

The wandering movement in the labyrinth is not simple but multidimensional. But there seems to be an overarching connection, nevertheless. Language calls our attention to the linguistic connections of ablaut⁵.

"To wander" has an ablaut relation to "to wend", "to wind" and "to wonder". Wandering out, wending home and moving along winding lines: these are all the figures of the labyrinth – and of Alice's Wonderland.

In Danish, one finds a corresponding series. *At vandre* (to wander), *vandring*, (wandering) and *forvandling* (change) – *at vende om* (to turn) – *at vinde sig* (to wind) and *vinging* (winding, turn) – *at undre sig* (to wonder).

In German, *wandern*, *wandeln* and *sich wandeln* describe the same complex of wandering and change. This corresponds to the labyrinth name of *Wandelburg* (used in Pomerania in the eighteenth century) [Haken 1784]. *Wenden* and *sich wenden* describes the turn. *Winden* and *sich winden* marks the curved lines, which is witnessed in the names of the Pomeranian labyrinth *Windelburg* or *Windelbahn*. And *Wunderkreis* or *Wunderlauf* is what the gymnasts in Germany and Russia in early nineteenth century called their labyrinths: the circles of wondering.

This linguistic evidence confirms the role of the labyrinth as a configuration of wandering and as a quest by means of a bodily experience. Wandering reveals itself as a winding way of movement and wondering.

In experimental archeology or "moving introspection", the labyrinth can be read as a sort of an inner map. Its outer configuration of space reveals the landscapes of the "moving" soul. The labyrinth, however, is only one map among others (and as such it is returning in the form of graffiti on the walls of our cities). The straight racing track is another one (surviving in the world of sport). The puzzle maze or a pseudo-labyrinth is a third one (reborn in the form of computer games). The frictions between these forms of movement and their particular unbalances have become fundamental for the modern Western modern practice: body is controlled on the straight racing track, intellect is checked in the puzzle maze, body is experienced in the labyrinth. The multiplicity of these maps is what we call culture – culture being always cultures in plural. And the plurality of cultures includes a potential of cultural conflict.

⁵ Ablaut is the change of vocals in the root syllable of words, which have the same origin, for instance: to drink, drank, drunk. From the vowel mutation of the ablaut, words of slightly different, but related meaning have been derived.

Towards a materialistic psychology on the basis of bodily existence

The labyrinth would scarcely reveal its secrets if regarded primarily through its symbolic aspects. Scholarly and speculative thinking has focused too much on labyrinth as a symbol, which is expressing a certain idea, "architectural" or "literary". Surely, the idea of labyrinth as a meaning, a sign or a metaphor can also be enlightening [Raulet/Schmidt 2000]. However, such a discourse remains on the level of "interpretations of interpretations" (of "interpretations...").

If we are not following in the footsteps of this idealistic symbolism, what would be the "material" reference of an alternative, materialist understanding? The material dimension of cultural phenomena cannot be reduced to what were called "materialist" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The material base of the footrace in the labyrinth consists not only of the stones, which form the labyrinthine path or pavement. Nor can it be reduced to the economic "function" of the activity of racing or dancing or whatever it might have been. Rather, the "material" is human bodily practice, which is the starting point for a social meaning.

How can we reenter into philosophy from the very beginning if we want to avoid the blind alleys of idealistic speculation? This is what Karl Marx was asking in 1845. We have to search for the fundamentals of the human ideas on the basis of in the "really existing world", was his answer. But what is this basis, and where is its "very beginning" located? What are the "*materielle Lebensbedingungen*" ("the material preconditions for human life") and what is the basis of a social existence?

"The first condition of all human history is of course the existence of living human individuals (of societies, we would say today – H.E.). The first matter of fact, which has to be stated, is the bodily organization of these individuals and their thereby established relation to the rest of the nature" [Marx/Engels 1845/1962, p. 16].

The bodily existence of the human beings in their social organization and in their relation to the rest of the nature: this is a complex approach, and there is no longer any reason to reduce it to a simple matter of "production" and "productivity", as the classical Marxism did. Bodily organization is more than that: it is related to identity and anxiety, to laughter, erotic quest and seduction. And it has its practice not only in work, but also in wandering, racing and dancing. Movement includes the whole historicity, sociality and inner contradictions of human bodily existence [Schönhammer 1991; Eichberg/Hansen 1996; Eichberg 1998; Sheets-Johnstone 1999].

Trialectics of movement – The other of racing

The relations between movement, knowledge and power as they are visible in the labyrinth, call for a new type of "praxeology" (study of praxis). Life consists of a dialogue between the body and the environment that produces superstructures of representations, symbols and explicit rationalizations. The labyrinth is just one example of this. It probably was the earliest European "sporting ground", if we understand the sports ground as a place culturally constructed and used for particular types of movement.

When we return to the Berlin gymnastic ground of the 1820s with its *Wunderkreis* of the 1820s, the activities of the gymnasts are now more transparent. Moving forward, racing, is not one; it is full of inner contradictions as any bodily organization of human beings is. Which really significant contradictions can be detected in running?

First, there is the achievement on the straight *Rennbahn*.

"The straight race is trained on the race track. If one wants to know how quick and how far each runner is able to run, the circuits must be on straight lines, from one post to the other" [Jahn/Eiselen 1816, p. 11].

The runners are classified by age, body length or ability. Measured by a stopwatch and graded according to the results, this kind of race became Olympic and hegemonic in the modern West.

Second, there is the movement of discipline and regularity. The gymnastic twisting race (*Schlängellauf*) should enlarge the possibilities and improve the body skills. The *Turners*

practiced zigzag race (*Zickzacklauf*), snake race (*Schlangenlauf*), snail race (*Schneckenlauf*), peewit race (*Kibitzlauf*) and backward running (*Rücklauf*). As a formal training of discipline the runners were supposed to make the body flexible and skillful either through special spatial choreographies like circles or through special types of steps. The body of the gymnast should be controlled and brought to a good posture, subjected to certain rules of what is good, beautiful and correct. This idealism became characteristic for the attempts of gymnasts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to form a counter-culture in contrast to the dominant sportive racing.

The movement in the labyrinth reveals, however, some further important aspects of running which do not fit into the dual pattern of sports vs. gymnastics. Racing can be reduced neither to the striving for results nor to the training of bodily control. The cultural struggle between sport and gymnastics, between racing for records and running for discipline seems, indeed, to constitute a major conflict in modern Western body culture, but it does not tell the whole story. The labyrinth was not suitable for agonistic competition or for the training of posture and rules. While the sport of results and the gymnastics of order have developed their languages, the bodily experience – the third dimension – has not, or not yet. It is more by means of poetical pictures and psychological metaphors that the aspects of festivity and alienation, of identity and community, of anxiety and laughter find their expression. The labyrinth makes us enter into the third dimension.

This has an epistemological point. Indeed, intellectual understanding does an important step when analyzing dialectical contradictions. There exists a dialectic relation between sport race and gymnastic motion, and the tension between the movement of production and the movement of regularity seems to constitute a main contradiction in the ritual of industrial modernity. But this is not exhaustive, and the dialectic step from thesis and antithesis to synthesis remains reductive. The dual tension has to be completed by a third aspect, which allows an oblique approach to the “main contradiction”. Here the labyrinthine movement becomes illustrative. The third aspect enlarges the dialectical analysis towards a trialectical method [Eichberg 1997].

Wandering is related to this “third”: It is not by accident that the *Turn*-gymnasts, who built the labyrinth, also started the first organized wandering movement in Germany. It constituted a central element of what can be described as the first “green wave” of a modern body culture with its wandering and tourism [Eichberg 1990].

Cultural ecology of wandering as deep ecology

Thinking of the third dimension of wandering should be understood not as the construction of a system, but rather as a method of quest and discovery: There is always something important besides what may be defined as a main contradiction in a given cultural situation. Trialectical awareness is of special importance for the reading of “other” forms of practices, for the understanding of American Indian running and Chinese dragon boat racing, of Kenyan running and Aboriginal wandering on song lines – none of which can be understood along the straight lines of Western competition or the discipline of collective regularity [Nabokov 1981; Yang 1647; Bale/Sang 1996; Chatwin 1988].

Space and body are connected, with feelings and emotions involved. Wandering, as racing, is a quest of identity. In a bodily action, place and space are fellow players. You cannot use the labyrinth for whatever you want (this is what the *Turn*-gymnasts had to learn), but the same is equally true for the straight racing track.

All this is not only a question of different ideas, but of different bodily energies. It is here that the ecology of sport and movement nears the psychology of the subconscious, thus contributing to a new type of “ecology of the subconscious”, of deep ecology. Wandering “in” and “out” into the world, winding in curved lines and wondering: the labyrinth delivers a bodily “language” for the anthropology of human movement.

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Słowa kluczowe: bieganie, gimnastyka, taniec, turystyka, gra, głęboka ekologia, fenomenologia, antropologia, kultura ciała, kultura ruchu

STRESZCZENIE

W pracy autor przedstawia tezę, iż wędrowanie, spacerowanie, chodzenie po górach ma cechy poruszania się po labiryncie, który nie tylko musi być rozumiany symbolicznie. Od czasów antycznych i średniowiecza w labiryntach odbywały się różne formy aktywności ruchowej, np. tańce, gry, zabawy i biegi.

Przez 10 lat przykłady owej aktywności w labiryncie zostały przetestowane przez studentów i wykładowców z Danii. Na podstawie fenomenologii ciała doświadczenie to może być opisane jako seria historyjek pełnych związków z labiryntem, rytmem, koncentrycznym i ekscentrycznym ruchem, regularnością i nieregularnością, zmianami świadomości. Ten typ doświadczenia przyczynia się do zrozumienia wędrowania jako głębokiej ekologii, związku z naturą. Wędrówka okazuje się także krętą drogą zmuszającą do zastanowienia się nad własną tożsamością i do stawiania rozlicznych pytań.