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Racing in the labyrinth? About some inner contradictions of running

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Abstract

The movement of running is not as simple and elementary, as the theory of sports often has thought it – side by side with jumping, throwing etc. Running in the labyrinth leads towards a complexity of experiences, feelings and imaginations of movement. Whilst interpretations normally have speculated about the labyrinth as a symbolic expression or idea, it is here proposed to approach the labyrinth as bodily practice. This is attempted by combining historical archaeological materials – from Mediterranean and Nordic cultures – with an empirical phenomenology of labyrinthine movement.

The labyrinth as an experimental space of movement tells about the turn, the detour and the curved line, the own time of the things and the rhythmic change, the fractal form and the situation of non-survey. The story which labyrinthine is telling, is about movement the centric and de-centric, the challenge without achievement test, the question and the being in-between, the panic and the laughter.

What is characteristic for the history of modern sports is the contradiction between the labyrinth and the straight line of sportive running. But the contradiction between the one-way labyrinth and the pseudo-labyrinthine maze (*Irrgarten*), which has been dominating the modern imagination of the labyrinth, is illustrative for Western thinking, too.

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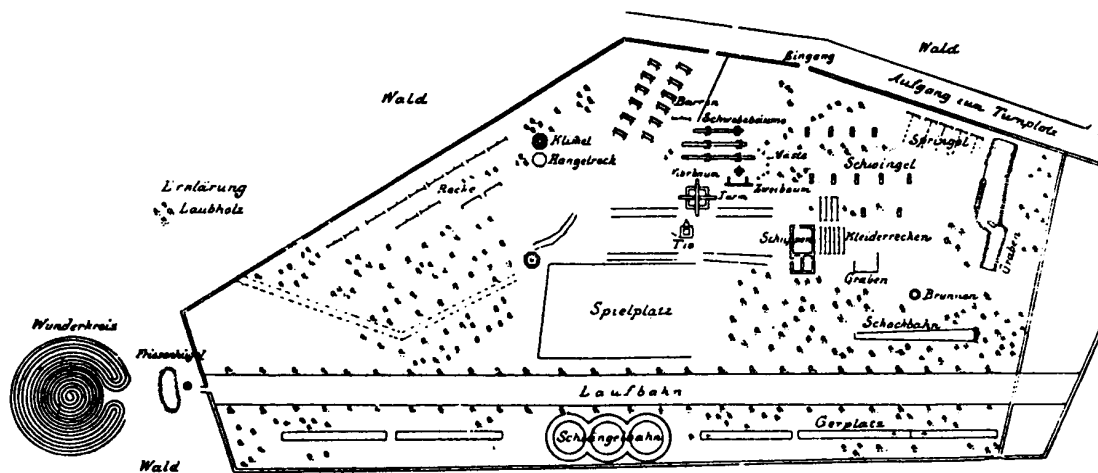
Towards a materialistic psychology on the base of bodily existence

1. 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 other athletic competitions. When these young people installed the first gymnastic grounds in Berlin and other places, these included among other facilities also a *Rennbahn*, a racing track consisting of start, straight track, and goal. This will not surprise the present day observer – we all know the form quite 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 the plan also includes two further facilities. There was a so-called *Schlingellauf* (twisting course), which had the form of three connected circles. And there was a *Wunderkreis* (miracle circle, circle of surprise) in the form of a labyrinth. These two further forms of tracks were also used for racing (Gasch 1928, 1: 317; Steins 1987).

Figure 1. The gymnastic ground of Hasenheide in Berlin around 1817, with the labyrinth *Wunderkreis* to the left. Gasch 1928, 1: 317.



The non-linear practices of racing and their facilities were described and discussed in several books, sent out by the founder of German gymnastics, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, and his disciples. In 1829, the gymnast Ernst Wilhelm Bernhard Eiselen published a small book especially about "*Der Wunderkreis*", its idea, its practice and its construction. Further historical research as well as new constructions were presented by another disciple of Jahn, Hans Ferdinand Massmann, in a book about "*Wunderkreis und Irrgarten*" (miracle course and maze) from 1844. These seem to be the first monographic works ever, which were written about the labyrinth in history.

Together with German gymnastics, labyrinths spread also to Russian gymnastic grounds. However, the side-by-side order of labyrinth and racing track was not long-lasting.

During the later nineteenth century, the labyrinths and twist courses disappeared from the gymnastic grounds again. It was only the track suitable for sportive competition, which survived – and expanded. After all, the straight running track became the archetypical icon of modern sport.

Thus, while the straight racing course and the type of competitive running for which it was designed, developed with some continuity and nowadays still can be recognized in the patterns of standardized athletics, the other forms of non-linear courses and the activities associated with these are unknown in the world of sports and gymnastics today. They are part of a history of disappearance. What was their meaning? What is the historical, societal and psychological logic, which made the labyrinth appear in the body culture of that period, and what is the logic of its disappearance?

In a more provoking way, it may be asked, which historical logic accounts for the fact that the straight racing track did not yet disappear. Could it once be "forgotten" as well – as were the ancient stadiums, excavated not before the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? And which circumstances contribute to the disappearance respectively reappearance or rediscovery of racetrack (and labyrinth)?

Racing, jumping, playing – from labyrinthine speculations to movement

Human movement is often regarded as consisting of basic and universal elements, which can be defined as sports and which finally have become elaborated by modern Olympism. One of these characteristic *"basic forms of human movement, which in the whole world have been taken as occasion for sports competitions"* (Ulf 1981: 20) is racing. Across all cultures and eras, human beings have liked to run for competition, driven by their original pleasure and delight, by the need of chasing and survival or by impulses and drives of socio-biological character. 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 meters race the ideal paradigm of c-g-s activity – centimeter, gram, second – and the perfect configuration of sport in general. Empirically however, its general character as an activity of "all the peoples of the world" and its universality with roots back in prehistory are not convincing. There are enough cultures known, which never practiced this type of sport. Native American, Inuit Eskimo, African and Indonesian cultures are known, which practiced 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 modern civilization that racing became highly significant – and much more significant than only as a matter of sport. The racing track delivers the imagination for the human strive towards record and achievement as a universal myth. Racing on the straight line between start and finishing-line embodies, what the modern human being regards as existential. It is a bodily base for the modern concepts of "progress" and "career". The racing track became the icon of modern functionalism, materializing the modern belief in the "natural" hegemony of the straight line and the right angle. If this credo can be called the modern religion, then racing is its ritual.

The configuration of forward move, goal orientation and straightness is not what can be found in the labyrinth. In this perspective, the modern labyrinth is a living critical comment about a central myth of modernity. Labyrinthine movement can be seen in the context of – and as an alternative to – the race, the modern cult of the straight line. While if seen in the context of ancient Mediterranean cultures, the labyrinth may be understood as a

configuration of non-Olympic movement, the modern labyrinth has traits of an anti-Olympic configuration.

If we understand the labyrinth as a pattern of movement, this challenges the traditional Western understanding, which tends to see the labyrinth as a symbol. The largest part of the labyrinth literature booming through the last years treats the labyrinth primarily as an abstract, aesthetic figure, which is bearing a certain symbolic meaning (journal *Caerdroia*: Saward 1981 ff and 2002, Kraft 1985, Fisher/Gerster 1990, Castleden 1990, Lonegren 1991, Attali 1996, Raulet/Schmidt 2000, Seifried 2002, Thordrup 2002, Hohmuth 2003).

Research on labyrinths has hitherto rather the character of academic curiosity. It reveals a taste of the marginal – though the literature is vast and embraces different disciplines of knowledge. It spans from archeology, linguistics and history of the ancient world over medieval studies, folklore and ethnology to the history of sports. Contributions came from the history of arts and the history of religion, from 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 imaginations and others from concrete “functional” needs as the aid to navigation. Some scholars connect the labyrinth with the intestines of Oriental sacrifices and others with underground galleries of mining, some with Egyptian architecture and others 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 were mostly characterized by an unworldly tone and remained far from human practice and experience.

These speculative theories are therefore of minor interest for what is in focus here. The present investigation attempts to take seriously what other types of research through many decades also have revealed: namely, that the labyrinth is a pattern of movement culture, of bodily practice and play (Kern 1981, Eichberg 1989 a).

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 leads in a complex way, with changing directions on one unmistakable track to the center. In the center one has to turn in order to get out again. The (one) way of the circulation labyrinth forms a spiral-like and kidney-formed pattern, similar to a snail's shell. The labyrinth has 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 consists of a choreography 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 persons walking on it.

Figure 2. The labyrinth of Visby, Gotland/Sweden – the classical form of the one-way labyrinth. Kern 2000: 274.



The one-way labyrinth should not be confused with the maze, puzzle or *Irrgarten*, as it often happens in the literature on the philosophy of the labyrinth. In the maze or *Irrgarten*, the movement consists in a quest for the right way. By false pathways and dead ends, the maze confronts with repeated situations of choice. It produces a permanent confusion in order to lead the searcher astray. The maze 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-coursal maze as a puzzle is historically much younger. 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 survey.

Thus, the labyrinth and the pseudo-labyrinthine maze are two different configurations. Movement is the indicator of this difference.

2. An experimental psychology of labyrinthine running

What have people done in the labyrinth? How have they practically used it? 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 took their model from labyrinth races, which were annually held in Brandenburg during the early seventeenth century (Massmann 1844: 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 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 1987).

Ball games were played on the labyrinthine mosaics of medieval cathedrals in France. They were later persecuted as "pagan" (Kern 2000: 146-147).

Wrestling or other fighting was in the center of the classical ancient myths of the Cretan labyrinth. Theseus slay the Minotaur... (Kern 2000: 41-42). In the German epic

Nibelungenlied, the dark warrior Hagen from Tronje (i.e. from Troy, from the Troja-labyrinth?) slay the light hero Siegfried at the end of a “sportive” race (Höfler 1961: 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 (Vries 1957). The Etruscan word for labyrinth, *truia*, which is in family with the Nordic labyrinth terms *Trøjborg* and *Trojaborg*, entered into the Roman verb *antruare* or *amptruare*, to jump, to spring, to dance.

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

Young people played *erotic games* in the labyrinth. These races of flirtation are documented from England, Finland and Sweden (Kraft 1985 pp.15-19).

The manifold reports and myths, however, do not give one consistent over-all picture of the labyrinthine practice. Why people through centuries have built labyrinths again and again, remains unclear. Thus, our question is handed 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 first make its cultural use possible. The labyrinth can serve as a laboratory producing sensual awareness through bodily movement. Which type of bodily movement and which type of awareness?

From the early 1980s, students and professors have moved – danced, walked, run – in the labyrinth of 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 inner movement landscape.

Of course, this empirical method of doing and introspection is centered around the *modern* subject – with its particular horizon of progress, career, stress and tension. This way does not lead directly to the reconstruction of pre-historical experience, which as such is lost forever. But the self-experience of the modern subject can be helpful to obtain deeper knowledge of human movement. And by the bridge of a movement anthropology one can approach lost bodily practices in a more convincing form than by symbolic speculations.

If the configuration of the labyrinth and its inner contradictions are what we want to know about, movement is the way of discovery.

First story: In the labyrinth one experiences the turn

The labyrinth is a bodily and sensual arrangement of the turn. One enters, turns in the center, and leaves again. This is a form of initiation by movement – *rite de passage*. 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 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 aspiring to the destination, one is again and again made believe that the goal will soon be reached. But the way continues, and

the expectation meets surprise or disappointment. Thus, the work on impatience is an essential subject of labyrinthine experience. There is tension, expectation, surprise. The dancer in the labyrinth can counter stress and disappointment by 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 art of acting. As the instructor of the Danish Odin Theatre, Eugenio Barba (1986: 118-119), 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...”

Whether the described bodily detour is specific Oriental or rather avant-garde Western or whatever, does not matter so much in our context. And it is more significant than as a part of theatrical techniques 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*, used to advertise for their alternative way of people's education. For liberal education it is not the goal but the way, what 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 progress. If progress means: Go ahead, and the “head” means to “see” the aim – as it is established by the authority of others – and to advance directly, this does not work in the labyrinthine situation. In the labyrinth, it is meaningless or even impossible to see the goal. The labyrinth rather says: Go abody. 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 movement, the labyrinth arranges an alternative to the straight line. This is how Le Corbusier (1925) expressed the view of modern functionalism:

“The human being steps straight ahead, because he (sic) has a goal. He knows where to move, he has decided on one direction, and he strides resolutely forward.”

This belief of functionalist anthropology is based on the fundamental pattern of the sports race, demanding the straight track. The straightness of sport movement displays what – on the level of societal myths and ideas – is “career” and “progress”. Motor-highway, “blitzkrieg”, and “streamline” favor the straight line forwards. 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 acceleration. 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, if it is turned into a positive description: the labyrinthine movement is about what is “in the way”. When running and striving along the labyrinthine way, one meets the fold, the knot.

This is why the labyrinthine game is in family with many popular practices of running, by using handicaps or obstacles, as jumping over some bundles of straw, sack-race and cross-country race. In the steeple-chase 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 indeed *is* in the way. The curve is not hindrance, but life.

Fourth story: The labyrinth has its own time

On the level of time pattern, the labyrinthine movement is contrasting the modern cult of velocity (Virilio 1977, Eichberg 1978 and 1989 b, Schönhammer 1991). Sport with its directedness 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 more to pay attention than to speed up, more to find the time than to impose it.

One of the most ancient myths of the Nordic labyrinth, told by Snorri Sturlason (1922: 58-59) in his *Heimskringla* around 1230, can be understood in this context. The legendary Swedish king Adils was very fond of horses and owned the best of them in his time. Once he wanted to attend a sacrifice for the *dises*, the female spirits or goddesses of the pre-Viking religion. But 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, 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. Also the ringing of a bell by pulling the string is not a matter of doing it as quickly as possible, nor 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 is ecological not in the meaning of preservation or protection of environment, as seen from the “high” position of the acting – and repentant, remorseful – human being, but in a deeper meaning. It is ecological from a “lower” perspective, from a position down by the stones, down by the earth. In this respect, labyrinthine movement as body ecology is related to *deep ecology*.

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, too, changes, as well as the bending of the dancing chain. This rhythmic shift can be compared to the rhythm of breathing and to the throb of the heart – diastole, systole. We may also be reminded of the shift between day and night, between winter and summer.

The rhythmic repetition in the labyrinth is not a mechanical measure. The ways around and around are of different length and give no basis for a precise time measure, as the metronome produces it. There is a fundamental difference between the rhythmic swing in the labyrinth and the machine-made measure, which is used for modern temporal disciplining.

Sixth story: The labyrinth is irregularity in the regular

The rhythmic repetition has neither the character of mechanical time measure, nor is the labyrinthine figure exactly symmetrical in space, nor have the circuits the same length. The labyrinth shows irregularity in regularity. And vice versa: Labyrinthine movement develops a feeling of regularity in the “chaotic”.

Surely, the labyrinth can be constructed from 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 – is an asymmetrical tension. The labyrinth is order, but without a geometrical scheme, without the symmetry of a system of coordinates. In this respect it is placed in-between the circle, the spiral and the svastika 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, which we have been taught by school knowledge, nor are they the complete chaos and disorder. Fractal figures help to understand the structure, the aesthetics and the change of trees and human faces, water whirls and coast lines, leaves and clouds, body cells and town landscapes (Eichberg 2004). The labyrinth is a part of this fractal world. The fractal “monsters” of geometry have been characterized as branching, confused, folded, hydra-like, in-between, polyp-like, ramified, seaweedy, strange, tangled, tortuous, wiggly, winding, wispy, wrinkled – and indeed, most of this fits for the labyrinth, too. The labyrinthine logic is fractal.

Seventh story: The labyrinth displays the impossibility of survey

The labyrinth arranges a situation of non-survey. The capacity of human view has its limits. In spite of all order, which is manifest 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 with the configuration of the pyramid with its panoptical peak. “God’s eye” on the top of the pyramid can see all, as the picture on the US dollar note shows. The system builders of modernism try to copy this – and act aggressively against the labyrinthine *Neue Unübersichtlichkeit*, the “New Non-transparency” (Habermas 1985, also Loos 1908). The pyramid has an affinity to centralist social structures like state, social hierarchy, military, and sport, which Michel Foucault (1975) has analyzed as the panoptical in Western culture. The labyrinth, in contrast, has a rather “anarchist” flair. That is why the labyrinth fascinated artists of the avant-garde (Jorn 1963, Hundertwasser 1983).

Instead of survey and domination, the labyrinth cultivates the doubt: Where am I? This may be experienced as a narcissistic offence of 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 practical 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 something, which view cannot.

There is a social and pedagogical point, too. From outside or from where ever, there is no visual control of the labyrinthine movement possible. One cannot correct any movement of the labyrinthine runner. There is no leader, only the first in the dancing chain, but she or he is following the same way as the others. The labyrinth is non-disciplining.

Eighth story: Labyrinthine movement is con-centring – and ex-centric

The labyrinth leads to con-centration as a sort of condensation of movement. Swinging towards the center, the dancers – if dancing in a chain – approximate their bodies more and more closely and compactly. 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, nearness of touch, togetherness, and implosion. This is a bodily base for the meditative qualities of the labyrinth on one hand and its erotic signification on the other. The wide-spread erotic symbolism of the labyrinth may be derived from this experience.

The movement leads, however, also out of the labyrinth again. This is the 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 ourselves”, 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 collection 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 only one way and never a choice. The runners 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 vis-a-vis the maze as a configuration of cross-ways and blind alleys, of “right” or “wrong”. The pseudo-labyrinth demands permanent resolution, while the labyrinth demands swing and sensibility. The labyrinth produces less “action” than experience.

On the other hand, the labyrinthine race does not mean “anything goes”. It is a challenge, indeed. One is not driving like a piece of wood in the sea, but not striving towards a goal either. Besides driving or drift and striving or aspiration – with their psychoanalytical connotations (Goldschmidt 1999: 66 ff, 135) – there is something else. The Scandinavian name of the labyrinth, *Trelleborg* (Knudsen 1948), is related to Danish *drill*, German *drehen* and *Drall*, “turning”. 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 the dance in and out of the labyrinth is repeated several times and continually, the rhythmic changes may by their repetitive character produce experiences of trance. We finally forget,

how many times we have danced in and out. The narrative of the labyrinth is, thus, about 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 entangled – identity and 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 solipsism of “I am who I am”. In a certain opposition to Western individualism, the movement in the labyrinth is a “turning to...” The labyrinthine runner is “running *between...*”, is in “movement *with...*” and “goes there, *too*,” running “*also*” (where others have been running 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 (Sloterdijk 1998/99). As Martin Buber (1923) expressed it:

“Alles wirkliche Leben ist Begegnung – Every real life is encounter, meeting.”

Labyrinthine movement is an exercise of this togetherness.

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 rejected 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. Earlier or later the view will be entangled and miss the direction. The reliability of the visual orientation fails. This causes uncertainty and doubt. As the gaze has a prominent place among the human senses in Western culture, this causes 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 make anything wrong, didn't I? – One may become afraid of getting lost, and what seemed to be easy in the beginning, may turn out as a nightmare. The subject can believe that the labyrinth finally will lead it to the center, but will be afraid, nevertheless.

Consequently, Western literature about the labyrinth is mostly about horror and

nightmare – Ina Seidel (1922), Franz Kafka (1923/24), Jorge Luis Borges (1986), Umberto Eco (1980). The ego loses control, gets imprisoned, experiences narrowness and claustrophobia (Bachelard 1948: 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 by practice that there is no wrong way. You always get to the center and back again ... Anxiety is not only an enemy, but 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 2003).

The children's games in the paths of the labyrinth are full of laughter. Some labyrinthine mosaics in French medieval cathedrals had to be abolished, because playing children disturbed the sacred atmosphere. 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 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: 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 point of turn. The labyrinthine movement does not give any promise, but it rather follows the swing in a sort of question mark.

Indeed, the question mark consists of similar elements as the labyrinth. There is the winding line, the point, the non-symmetrical order. The race of identity is more a quest and 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 polemically has called the "obscenity of asking" (Bodenheimer 1984). The question makes all what is sure, dancing. The question produces thereby dizziness, which is

comparable to the giddiness of twisting and spinning around. By being asked, one feels attacked, under pressure and ashamed – and what is hidden, is revealed. The open circle of the question mark offends the human perception. In Hebrew, to ask, *scha'ol*, is in family with *sche'ol*, the hell, the underworld, the diabolic. All this sounds like a comment on the labyrinth as well – seen from the perspective of patriarchal reinterpretation, with Satan sitting in the center as "the master of the labyrinthine world".

Asking is not only in mind, it is also a bodily process. When we ask, the voice rises at the end of the sentence. What has been sure before is suddenly questioned. By asking, things are "made dancing". A feeling of turning around may arise, a "thrill" – like in the *Trelleborg* labyrinth. There is something subversive in putting 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 put a question, before you have become the question mark, the question-movement yourself.

(India is one of the classical labyrinth cultures. The distribution of the labyrinth itself, however, did 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 movement in the order of ablaut

The labyrinth delivers a sort of grammar for understanding racing and running. Running is not just simple movement straight ahead, it is also a movement of detour and curved lines. It has its "own time", its rhythm and its fractal logic. It is related to survey – but also to what is impossible for visual survey and what is possible for the body. Running may change the state of consciousness...

Thus, running – like the movement in the labyrinth – is multidimensional. But there seems to be some over-all connection, nevertheless. Language calls to our attention that some linguistic connections of ablaut connect "to wander", "to wend", "to wind" and "to wonder". Wandering out, wending home and moving on winding lines this is the figure of the labyrinth – and of Alice's Wonderland (Chatwin 1988, Solnit 2000).

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 the names *Windelburg* and *Windelbahn* of the Pomeranian labyrinth witness about. And *Wunderkreis* or *Wunderlauf* is what the gymnasts in Germany and Russia in early nineteenth century called their labyrinths: circles of wondering – *sich wundern*.

This linguistic evidence confirms the labyrinth as a configuration of quest by 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 inner map. Its outer configuration of space reveals landscapes of the "moving" soul. The labyrinth is, however, only one map among others (and as such 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 pseudo-labyrinth is a third one (reborn in the form of computer games). The contradictions between these forms of movement with their particular unbalances have become fundamental for Western modern practice – body control on the straight racing track, intellectual control in the puzzle maze, body experience 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.

Towards a materialistic psychology on the base of bodily existence

The labyrinth reveals scarcely its secrets if it is only or primarily regarded under the aspect of symbolism. Scholarly and speculative thinking has too much focused on the labyrinth as symbol, which is expressing a certain idea, whether an "architectural idea" or a "literary idea". Surely, the concept of "labyrinthicity" as an idea, as meaning, sign or metaphor can also be enlightening (Raulet/Schmidt 2000), but the discourse of symbolism remains on the level of interpretations of interpretations (of interpretations ...).

If we are not following in the paths of idealistic symbolism, what is the "material" reference of an alternative, materialist understanding? The material dimension of cultural phenomena cannot be reduced to what would have been called "materialist" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The material base of the footrace in the labyrinth does not only consist 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. But material is human bodily practice, which is the starting point for 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 asked in 1845. We have to search for the fundamentals of the human ideas in the "really existing world", i.e. to start from their base, was his answer. But what is this base, and what is this very beginning? What are the "*materiellen Lebensbedingungen*", the "material preconditions for human life", what is the base of social existence?

"The first condition of all human history is of course the existence of living human individuals (of socialities, 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: 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 classical Marxism did. Bodily organization is more, 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. In movement, the whole historicity, sociality and inner contradictions of human bodily existence are included (Schönhammer 1991, Eichberg 1996 and 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. Life consists of a dialogue between body and environment producing superstructures of representations, symbols and explicit rationalizations. The labyrinth is one example. Probably it was the earliest European "sports" ground, if we under-

stand "sports ground" as a place culturally constructed and used for particular types of movement.

When we now return to the Berlin gymnastic ground with its labyrinthine *Wunderkreis* of the 1820s, the activities of the gymnasts have become more transparent. Moving forward, racing, is not one, it is full of inner contradictions as any bodily organization of human beings is. Which contradictions of actual significance can be "read" from their 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: 11).

The runners are classified after age, body length or ability. Measured by stop watch and streamlined after results, this type of race will become Olympic and hegemonic in Western modernity.

Second, there is the movement of discipline and regularity. The gymnastic twisting race (*Schlingellauf*) should enlarge the possibilities and the skill of the body. 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 in special spatial choreographies like circles or through special types of steps. The body of the gymnast should be controlled and formed to a good posture, subjected to certain rules of what is good, beautiful and correct. This idealism became characteristic for the gymnastic attempts 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 neither be reduced to the striving for results nor for the training of bodily control. The cultural struggle between sport and gymnastics, between record race and disciplining run seems, indeed, to constitute a hegemonic conflict in modern Western body culture, but it does not tell the whole story. The labyrinth was neither suitable for agonistic competition nor for the training of posture and rules.

While the sport of results and the gymnastics of discipline have developed their languages, the body experience – the third dimension – has not, or not yet. It is more by 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 this 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).

Cultural ecology of running as deep ecology

Thinking the third dimension should not be misunderstood as the construction of a system, but it is 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 the Aboriginal wandering on songlines – none of which can be understood along the straight lines of Western competition or the discipline of collective regularity.

Space and body are connected, feelings and emotions involved. Racing is a quest of identity. In bodily action, place and space are fellow players. One cannot use the labyrinth for whatever one wants, this is what the *Turn-gymnasts* had to learn, but the same is true for the straight racing track.

By racing in the labyrinth, the modern human being experiences tensions between the straight and the curved line, between meditative running and competitive race, between anxiety and laughter. The configuration of modern Olympic sport – a cult of competition, straightness and productivity – becomes relative. This raises questions about the inner tensions inside ancient Greek and Mediterranean movement cultures as well: The Olympic model was not the only one. The labyrinth tells that there were "other" ways.

All this is about human identity – and its complexity. By running identity, human beings meet otherness. The ancient Olympic athletics were not just placed at "the roots", "the origins" and "the tradition" of modern identity, but they have their place in the midst of contradictions and change.

Finally, contradictions are not only a question of different ideas, but of different bodily energies. It is here that the ecology of sport and movement leans to deep psychology, thus contributing to a new type of "ecology of the subconscious", of deep ecology. Racing or wandering "in" and "out" into the world, winding in curved lines and wondering – the labyrinth contributes to a bodily "language" for the anthropology of human movement.

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