

Experience and Meaning
in the
Cathedral Labyrinth Pilgrimage

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

“Experience and Meaning in the Cathedral Labyrinth Pilgrimage”

Master of Arts 2001

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A medieval design based in Sacred Geometry principles, this unicursal path through concentric circles is a metaphorical container for spiritual journeying. Contemporary practice, as reflexive walking meditation, encourages personal transformations, notably physiological, emotional, spiritual, and cognitive events including release of tension, increased sense of well-being and communion, triggered early memories with related insights and conflict resolution, often revealed through symbolic imagery. Reasons for site-specificity of such events are examined through phenomenological and arts-informed inquiry into the engagement with sacred spatial “technology,” referencing elements of Classical mythology, Christian mystical practice, and analytical psychology. Walking the labyrinth activates pre-Modern, “whole brain” patterns of consciousness, leading to an alternative, authentic, holistic perceptual standpoint. Using the labyrinth myth as a conceptual model of the individuation process, and the walk as embodied experiential learning, creates the opportunity to restore the balance in the relation between self, soul, society, and world, thereby “re-enchanting” contemporary life.

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⊗ TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
PREFACE.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	i
1. A LIST FOR ARIADNE.....	5
2. WHAT NEEDS TRANSFORMING.....	9
The Crisis of Modernity	
Denial	
3. MYTH AS MODEL OF TRANSFORMATION.....	22
The Archetype of the Heroic Journey	
The Meaning of the Minotaur.	
4. A PERSONAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE LABYRINTH.....	34
In Search of Transformation	
A Phenomenological Study	
5. CONTEMPORARY LABYRINTH PRACTICE.....	59
CONCLUSION: TOWARDS AN EDUCATION IN ALIGNMENT.....	66
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	75
APPENDIX.....	80
History of the labyrinth	

LIST OF FIGURES

1. The Chartres Cathedral Labyrinth. Diameter 12.5 metres.....	vi
2. The square divided by its diagonal: a greater order of complexity.....	1
3. Minotaur. Mixed Media (Bone, horn, steel, wire, leather, paper mâché, fabric) 6'x15". Vanessa Compton.....	41
4. Drawing the seven-circuit labyrinth.....	42
5. Derivation of the Classical labyrinth from the meander pattern.....	80
6. Nine-dot pattern basis of Classical labyrinth and variations.....	81
7. Classical labyrinth and topological transformation.....	85
8. Roman mosaic labyrinths.....	87

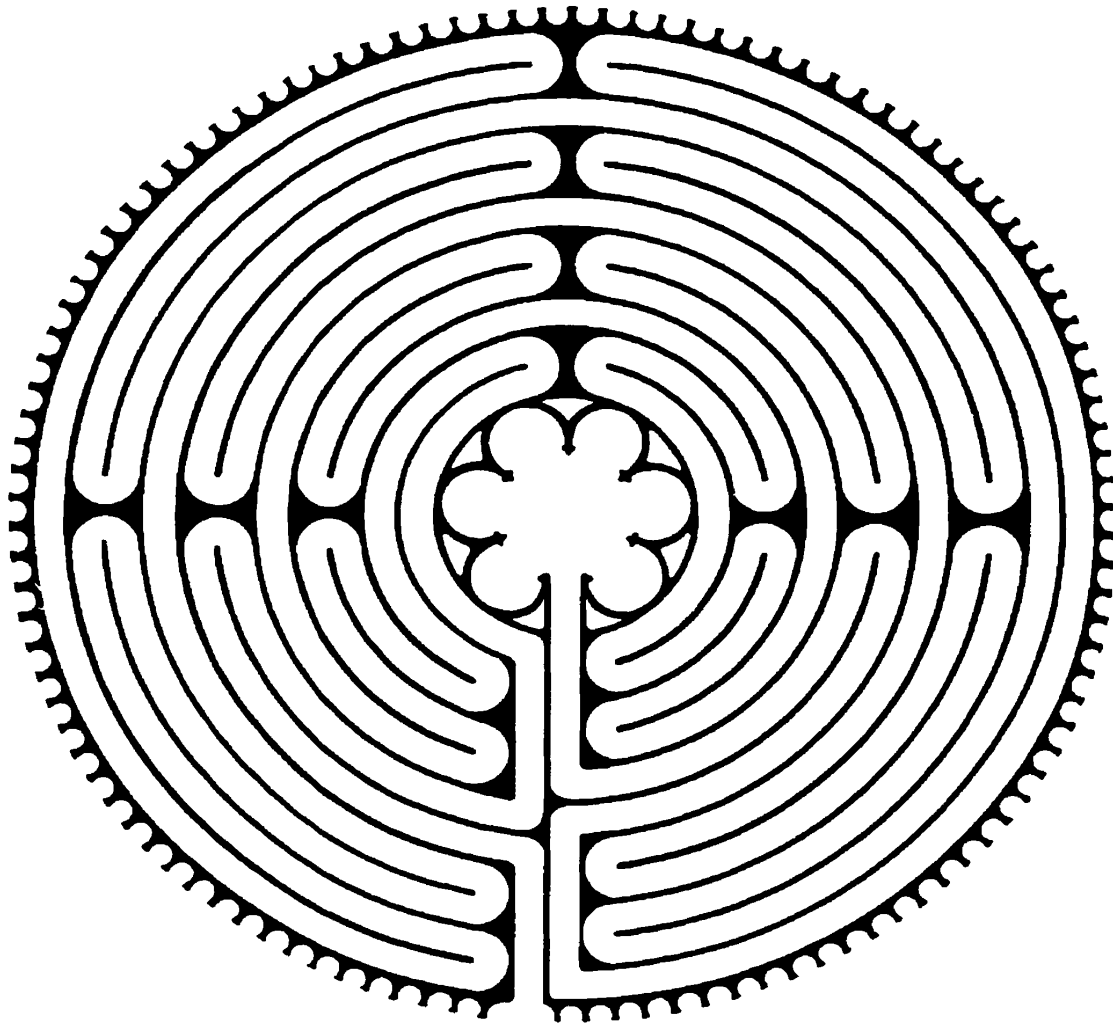


Figure 1. The Chartres Cathedral Labyrinth.

⊗ PREFACE

As I sifted through the layers, debating where to aim the battering ram of continuity at the fortification of books and articles all around me, wondering which gate of the many available to charge through first, and where in this crowded neighbourhood of historians, theorists, theologians, mathematicians and critics to begin mapping co-ordinates, what sequence to impose on all the forays, direct or tangential, into this material, and what thread might be the easiest, the most likely, the most logical, or the most inclusive to follow between disciplines, perspectives, and centuries, the question of where to begin threatened to become overwhelming. It dawned on me that this odd combination of clarity and opacity, crystalline order and sludgy sediment, raptor focus and shuffling ambiguity, surging flow and retreating ebb, these swings in polarity and the constant doubling back that goes on in my thinking whenever I undertake an exegesis of the labyrinth, are actually the familiar signal that, once again, I have fallen into its rhythms, taken one too many turns, and lost my place in its coils. It is definitely from an embodied knowing that I understand why labyrinths have always represented the human quandary of how to proceed through multiplicity and confusion,¹ with the one-foot-tentatively-ahead-of-the-other iambic gait, squinting as we make our way into the light of revelation-in-retrospect, that seems to be our distinctive exploratory mode.

So, instead, I imagine that you have come to the “slightly guided” labyrinth walk we host on the third Thursday of the month at St. Paul’s Anglican. Earlier, I would have swept the Sunday School cookie crumbs off the floor and washed it, and now the labyrinth is glowing, serene and elegant in the flickering light of the candles arranged round the perimeter and in the deep window sills of this high-ceilinged hall. The lines of the pattern are scratched and dented from the usual parish hall ructions; I particularly like the little Neolithic animal people on the right outside ring. In the centre of the labyrinth there is a bouquet of roses and a bowl of sand with some tapers and sticks of incense for people to light when they get there.

“Have you walked on one of these before?” I ask. You may say No, you have not, you’ve heard a bit about it though, it was in the newspaper.

“The main thing to remember,” I say in reply, “is to find your own pace...”

¹ “They presume a double perspective: maze-treaders, whose vision ahead and behind is severely constricted and fragmented, suffer confusion, whereas maze-viewers who see the pattern whole, from above or in a diagram, are dazzled by its complex artistry.” Penelope Reed Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth from Classical Antiquity through the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 1.

⊗ INTRODUCTION

These are extraordinary times. We stand in wonder and bafflement as witnesses to an historical moment of evolutionary change at the same time as we are experiencing it, trying to understand it, sometimes scarcely enduring it, and not infrequently wishing it would go away and leave us in peace, “the way things used to be.” All the while we are challenged to try, consciously and conscientiously, to find our place in this new form of processual existence that is now unfurling on so vast a scale that cultural historian and eco-theologian Thomas Berry says we are living

not in a cosmos but a cosmogenesis; a universe ever coming into being through an irreversible sequence of transformations moving, in the large arc of its development, from a lesser to a greater order of complexity and from a lesser to great consciousness.²

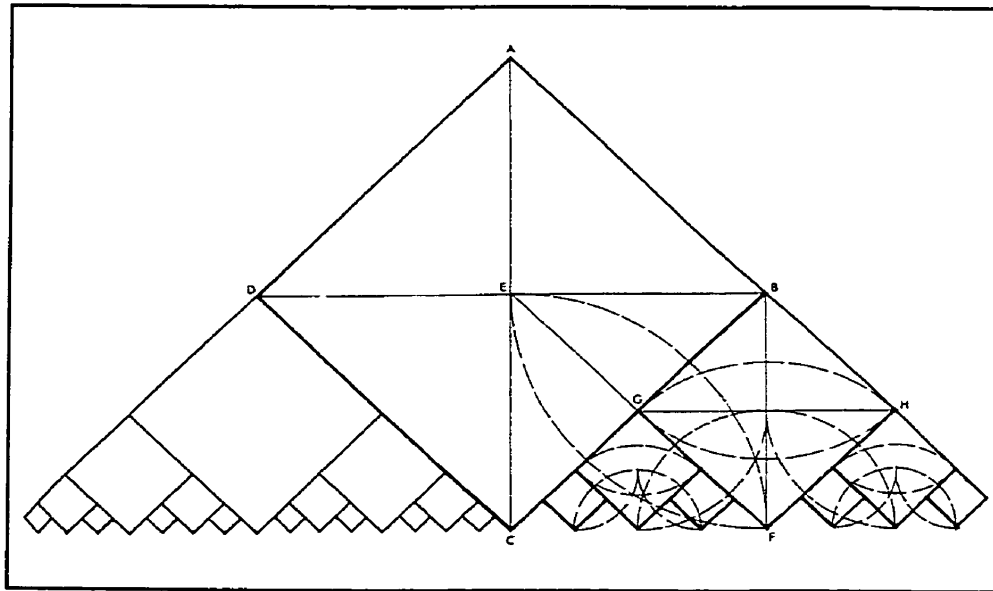


Figure 2. The square divided by its diagonal: a greater order of complexity

What has that got to do with us? Berry and his co-author, scientist Brian Swimme, are specific about the human role in the transition from what they call the “terminal Cenozoic” period of earth history to the “emergent Ecozoic,” terms that refer to historical divisions in our

² Thomas M. Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Random House, 1999), 26.

species' cultural story marked by the degree to which the human presence impacts on the earth's processes.³

If the emergence of the Cenozoic in all its brilliance was independent of any human influence, almost every phase of the Ecozoic will involve the human. While the human cannot make a blade of grass, there is liable not to be a blade of grass unless it is accepted, protected, and fostered by the human.⁴

Such sensitive responsibility is going to require our own personal evolutions, out of the late Cenozoic modernist mindset that has brought us to this pass, and into alignment with the emerging "great consciousness." There is no shortage of evidence that the project of modernity—"the rational-industrial worldview, and roughly the Enlightenment generally"⁵—in which we are as deeply enmeshed as its patterns of thought are embedded in us, has reached its limit as a useful cultural paradigm. The ever-vigilant George Grant has observed that, where "technology is the ontology of the age," our primary faculty, reason itself, is reduced to the instrumental in the service of the myopic.⁶

Indeed, to think "reasonably" about the modern account of reason is of such difficulty because that account has structured our very thinking in the last centuries...Scholars are impotent in the understanding of it because they are trying to understand that which is the very form of how they understand. The very idea that "reason" is that reason which allows us to conquer objective human and non-human nature controls our thinking about everything.

If this is so, with what faculties are we to engage in this evolutionary process? How do we get out of our own way?

From the perspective of cosmogenesis three principles govern the formation of this emergent consciousness, and every other being in the universe as well: these are differentiation, subjectivity, and communion,⁷ hardly the mantras of the competitive global market. How then are we to conduct ourselves during this crucial and tenuous period, in line with these principles? Clearly it is time for envisioning a more inclusive account, with all the parts that have been up to now imperceptible to the "single vision": a more heterogeneous and nuanced understanding, one

³ Edmund V. O'Sullivan, *Transformative Learning: Educational Vision for the 21st Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 17.

⁴ Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story*, quoted in O'Sullivan, 20.

⁵ Ken Wilber, *A Brief History of Everything* (Boston: Shambala, 1996), 69.

⁶ George Grant, "The Computer Does Not Impose on Us the Ways It Should Be Used," in *Beyond Industrial Growth*, ed. Abraham Rotstein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 125.

⁷ Berry, 162.

less belligerent, centrist, imperialist, conformist, and fearful than our contemporary myths of globalism and Progress; a new story of the world where all subjectivities could find a place. This is not impossible: our species has always told itself stories and we are especially good at Creation myths. In these, we “re-member” the way our ancestors came from mud and were taught the arts and skills, the *technê*, necessary for life, as well as the limits to our powers, the consequences of our hubris, and our place in the universe. The patterns of characters and story lines, in the form of archetypal figures and situations, are so prevalent cross-culturally in these story cycles (including, I will argue, in the non-verbal forms) that one could say we are hard-wired to do this: it is a faculty we can rely on, whether or not we are aware of it.

There is a sense of urgency about bringing to collective consciousness a compelling alternate vision to what many see as a destructive socio-economic juggernaut. I for one struggle with both my impatient tendency towards a motherly but coercive “eco-totalitarianism,” and a nihilist mix of disgust and futility; both, in their limitation, signs of an embattled imagination, according to Susan Griffin:

To free oneself from old ways of seeing requires imagination. Every important social movement reconfigures the world in the imagination. What was obscure comes forward, lies are revealed, memory shaken, new delineations drawn on old maps: it is from this new way of seeing the present that hope for the future emerges. Often one fears that solitary and unique voices will be silenced by mass tyranny, yet this is not the only danger. In a society that is atomized and alienated, the imagination is endangered by the limitations of the ego: the danger is of being restricted to a canvas that is too small.⁸

As an artist and art educator, I see the systematic cutback (and simultaneous corporatization and commodification⁹) of access to opportunities for honing and encouraging the creative imagination in its application and expression: this constitutes a mass deprivation and even exile on the basis of class, and the effects will be with us a long time. A restoration of access to the imagination would accomplish many things: an emancipation and bringing home, a healing and making whole, a sense of spaciousness and opening up to possibility, a sense of our own rhythm.

⁸ Susan Griffin, “Can Imagination Save Us? Thinking about the Future with Beginner’s Mind,” in *Utne Reader* (July/August 1996), 45–46. See also Richard Kearney, *The Wake of the Imagination: Ideas of Creativity in Western Culture* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 3: “We no longer appear to know who exactly produces or controls the images which condition our consciousness.”

⁹ “We appear to have entered a post-modern civilisation where the image has become less and less the expression of an individual subject and more and more the commodity of an anonymous consumerist technology.” Kearney, 6.

Imagination refers to several related functions and capacities; as the source for the language of the soul, which speaks in metaphor and “never thinks without an image,”¹⁰ the imagination accesses deep, resonant psychological strata. It is also the mechanism for juggling the external, imported images characteristic of “monkey mind”; we notice the difference in quality between these different states particularly during the practices of meditation, which quiets the mind, and ritual, which awakens the “old ones” inside of us, the parts of the brain that are ignored—these parts that do not speak in English, but in candlelight and colour. Discernment between these levels of response through attending to the qualities of resonance constitutes a kind of interior mapping. If we are looking for ways to restore fundamental connections within the ecological matrix, roadmaps of our underlying structures and patterns of development will temper the urgency that so easily slides into the arrogance of progress, that deafening wilfulness:

The modern is all too easily snapped up by the future, by all its values of promotion, pro-gram, pro-gress...dominated by a very strong emphasis on wilful activism. Whereas the postmodern implies, in its very movement (going further than modernity in order to retrieve it in a kind of ‘twist’ or ‘loop’)...a capacity to listen openly to what is hidden within the happenings of today.¹¹

Going further and returning with an increased capacity to listen for that which is concealed in front of us, sounds remarkably like making a pilgrimage in a labyrinth.

¹⁰ Aristotle, “On The Soul, ” Book III, Chapter 7, line 15, trans. D.W. Hamlyn, in *A New Aristotle Reader*, ed. J.L. Ackrill (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 199.

¹¹ J-L. Lyotard in Kearney, 27.

1. A LIST FOR ARIADNE

Our task as storytellers, then, is to “listen openly to what is hidden,” discerning in this jumble of images the “obscure” that needs to come forward, allowing us to perceive that when the movement towards “greater order of complexity and consciousness” manifests, there are other responses to consider besides the impulse to control. As the mother of, currently, one teenager, and the teacher of others, I am struck by the echoes in their travails¹² of the collective human dilemma: we are phylogenetically re-enacting their necessary Hero’s Journey towards individuation, the stage in the developmental process that Joseph Campbell has named it, the Monomyth.¹³ Indeed, when Thomas Berry calls on us to reinvent the human, he specifically mentions developing “radical new cultural forms...[that] would place the human within the dynamics of the planet rather than place the planet within the dynamics of the human.” This, too, is not impossible, because we already have the instructions:

We must find our primary source of guidance in the inherent tendencies of our genetic coding. These tendencies are derived from the larger community of the Earth and eventually from the universe itself. In Jungian terms, these tendencies identify with those psychic energy constellations that take shape as the primary archetypal forms deep in the unconscious realms of the human.¹⁴ Such forms find expression in the symbols of the Heroic Journey, Death-Rebirth, the Sacred Center, the Great Mother, and the Tree of Life.¹⁵

¹² “But what lies inside, rather than whether one can get in or out, is what matters in the most popular etymology, deriving *laborintus*, the common medieval spelling...from ‘labor’ and ‘intus ... the key word in almost all medieval etymologies is *labor*, with all its connotations of difficulty...The labyrinth is a process involving internal difficulty (or error, or artistry, or fatiguing effort).” Doob, 97.

¹³ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 2nd ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 36. Somehow I arranged my life so that I will have teenage children for twenty years. The family provides me with a research field of exceptional longitudinal continuity! Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.

¹⁴ Jung defines archetypes this way: “In addition to our immediate consciousness, which is of a thoroughly personal nature and which we believe to be the only empirical psyche (even if we tack on the personal unconscious as an appendix), there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. Whereas the personal unconscious consists for the most part of *complexes*, made up essentially of contents which have at one time been conscious but which have disappeared from consciousness through having been forgotten or repressed, the content of the collective unconscious is made up essentially of pre-existent forms which have never been in consciousness, the *archetypes*. There is good reason for supposing that the archetypes are the unconscious image of the instincts themselves, in other words, that they are *patterns of instinctual behaviour*...the forms which the instincts assume.” C.G.Jung, “The Concept of the Collective Unconscious,” in *The Portable Jung*, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York: Viking Penguin, 1971), 60–1.

¹⁵ Berry, 160.

We have in the cathedral labyrinth a tool which, in both form and function, recapitulates the symbols Berry lists as constellating psychic energy in accord with genetically coded tendencies; these are, specifically, the Heroic Journey, Death-Rebirth, the Sacred Center, and the Great Mother. Although in my experience I have found that it is certainly possible to stimulate psychological phenomena through the most innocent wandering, the two streams in the current recuperation of labyrinth use and practice, the Christian meditative and the Earth-based geomantic, have between them developed major insights into the transformative effects upon individual humans of engaging, conscientiously and intentionally, with the labyrinth site. As with any spiritual discipline, a teacher and/or supporting community is always a good idea.

What I propose to investigate is this: What is the personal experience of the labyrinth, and how does it connect to social transformation? To attempt a response to this question will involve finding out several things. First, a context: what state are we in, that needs transforming so urgently? Here I will look at the relationship between the symptoms of our malaise and how the characteristics of Modernity have shaped the ways in which we perceive and experience our being in the world. Then the question can be posed: Is that condition susceptible to the influence of myth and symbol, as Berry suggests? A culture in denial is analogous to the labyrinth in its maze-prison aspect: the Shadow aspect of denial connects the contemporary crisis of transformation to the *dramatis personae* of the labyrinth myth, in particular the strangely immortal Minotaur. I will examine how rage is used, individually and culturally, to avoid the truth that is hidden “in the happenings of today.” How is myth a model of the necessary transformation? The Heroic Journey form situates and contextualizes these archetypal figures so that, knowing where we are, we can address who and what we are. Drawing the parallel between the ritual of walking the labyrinth and the undertaking of the metaphorical Heroic Journey, is it possible observe the underlying biological origins of archetype in instinct begin to emerge in the analogy between a spatial journey and a developmental transition. Is that what it that happens in the labyrinth? In this section, I use personal life history material and a phenomenological study of one particular event in the labyrinth, locating epiphanal moments and emergent images to illustrate the connections I see between sense experience, the imaginal function, and language in making meaning from personal experience. How do the spatial features help us to re-enact the mythic and ritual forms that we apparently need? This section looks more generally at contemporary labyrinth practice in relation to the techniques of small group work, meditation, and psychosynthesis. Built in to the labyrinth journey is the path outward, the Path of Communion back into the world. Reflection and discernment protects us from the superficiality

of “spiritual mall-ism,” as well as, in the restless and less than critical search for panacea, a coercive essentialism. Instant conversion experiences tend not to last, and many labyrinths were lost to ignorance and neglect the first time round. The conclusion speculates at what a pedagogy of journeying could look like.

Reviewing the literature, theories, and research, and reflecting on the years with the labyrinth, I find myself making a list: labyrinth as archaeology, as architecture, as Medieval software, as liminal site, as geometrical figure, as sacred space, as transformative crucible, as spiritual container, as developmental scaffolding, as spatial mnemonic, as graphic, as sign, as search algorithm, as Zen koan, as Goddess site, as Western medicine wheel, as public sacred art, as dance notation, as social technology, as *omphalos*, as enclosure. But it is less a list than a web of ideas and associations, as is this collection of writers and influences: Thomas Berry on deep ecology, Fritjof Capra and James Gleick on situating us in relation to the web of life, Edmund O’Sullivan on praxis of transformation; Daniel Goleman on the varieties of meditation practice, John P. Miller on spirituality, mythmaking and reflective practice in education, Marcel Danesi on the mythic origins of Vico’s tripartite model of the mind, David Abrams and Vivian Darroch-Lozowski on the relationships among the body, the imagination, the subsymbolic and the emergence of language; Carl Jung and Marion Woodman on archetype and the symbolic, Roberto Assagioli and Piero Ferrucci on the theory and use of psychosynthesis—and David Hunt for its application in educational practice, David Barry on symbolic constructivism, Victor Turner on agency and the liminal; Gaston Bachelard and Martin Heidegger on just how it is we are in space with the other things; Tons Brunés, Keith Critchlow and Robert Lawlor on the ancient system of Sacred Geometry within that space; Penelope Doob and the Rev. Dr. Lauren Artress, encyclopaedically, on humans and labyrinths, metaphorical and spatial; and the artists Michael Ayrton and Pablo Picasso, whose models of living with (or as!) the Minotaur have been so provocative.

The longer I am involved with the labyrinth, the more levels, layers, entry points, and meanings appear—and I haven’t even mentioned crystallography, topological geometry, and hyperbolic space. In fact, a chapter on “The Path Not Taken” would be a thesis in itself. For all its apparent simplicity, the labyrinth is *the* generative site for differentiation, it foregrounds subjectivities, and if we could discern a telos, it would have to be communion, for all of those who are seekers:

On pourrait dire que le labyrinthe dont chacun reconstruit un morceau de carte par sa propre battue, est pour les artisans de la science l’archétype du champs de

recherche, et la battue, l'esprit de recherché: "Ce qu'il y a d'heureux quand on cherche la vérité, c'est qu'on n'en trouve qu'une partie."

J'aime voir les mathématiques comme des labyrinths multiples, sans entrées imposées, avec à chaque époque certains labyrinths nouvellement accessibles. Bien qu'il s'agisse de dédales universels, chaque voyageur est à peu près assuré d'une exploration originale—c'est-à-dire d'un regard utile, au sens où il est intéressant pour les autres. La créativité est pour chacun.¹⁶

¹⁶ "One might say that the labyrinth, of which each one reconstructs a part of the map by his own 'beating the bushes,' is, for the artisans of science, the archetype of the field of research, and the beating, the spirit of research: 'What there is of happiness when one searches for the truth, is that one has found only a part of it.'" Pierre Rosenstiehl, "Les mots du labyrinthe," in *Cartes et Figures de la Terre*. (Paris: Centre Culturel G. Pompidou, 1980), 96. "I like to see mathematics as multiple labyrinths, without imposed entries, with certain labyrinths newly accessible in each era. Though it concerns universal dedales, each voyager is nearly assured of an original exploration—that is to say of a useful look in a direction of interest for the others. Creativity is for everyone." 99–100.

2. WHAT NEEDS TRANSFORMING

⊗ The Crisis Of Modernity

The term “modern” does not refer to a chronological ordering, but rather to defining social and economic principles. Pre-modern societies were (and are, what remains of them) self-sufficient units of production and exchange, with human relations including, but not limited to, commercial exchange, governed by complex rituals of social status and kinship obligation.¹⁷ Modern societies, in contrast, are defined as market-based, within which all human relations are commodified—seen as impersonalized commercial transactions—and all development of knowledge is measured in terms of the new scientific and technological discoveries by which these societies harness nature to produce ever more material wealth. Modern societies are concerned primarily with what is “*modo*”—“the new,” in Latin. “This modern era was predicated on a notion of progress in knowledge, in the arts, in technology, and in human freedom as well, leading to a society emancipated from poverty, despotism, and ignorance.”¹⁸

We take for granted modernity’s benefits to many of us in the West, its “excellences and wonders”:¹⁹ democratic government, the outlawing of slavery, public education, development of arts, ethics, and technologies, the emergence and triumphs of empirical science, high standards of health care and increased lifespan,²⁰ definitive values including liberty, equality, human rights, the dignity of the individual, the right to privacy, due process of law.²¹ However, it is becoming

¹⁷ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 46–47. Polanyi views economics as originating in reciprocal obligation and social cohesion rather than the self-interest of barter. His analysis of the patterns of administration in a non-market economy demonstrates the subsidiary position economic activity occupied in the social structure, even in groups that practiced trade. Social, economic, and religious activity were meshed to the point of being indistinguishable: transactions were considered gifts, with elaborate kinship patterns to regulate reciprocation, devoid of the concept of gain or remuneration, or the existence of a separate institution based on economic motives. Polanyi describes as an example the matrilineal agricultural society of the Trobriander Islands, where the motivation to farm arose from the traditional obligation to provide for one’s sister and her family, the enhanced status associated with doing it well, and the shame of ostracism if one should refuse, rather than the immediate fear of starvation.

¹⁸ Kearney, 21.

¹⁹ O’Sullivan, 1.

²⁰ Wilber, 69.

²¹ Tu Wei-ming, “Beyond the Enlightenment Mentality,” in *Worldviews and Ecology*. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, eds. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994), 21. Today I wrote another letter of protest for Amnesty International. When I put myself in the place of the individual on whose behalf I was writing, the horrified recoil told me how *unnatural* the injustice of her situation seems to me.

apparent to all but the most short-sighted, self-serving or blithely optimistic²² that the problems of the world now confronting us individually and collectively are not coincidental, isolated, manageable local phenomena, nor the inconsequential, temporary, justifiable costs of “progress.” Rather they are universally interconnected, manifesting in similar patterns of dysfunction within and among the planetary, bioregional, community and individual spheres of life on Earth, directly and causally related to the economic and cultural system that produced the benefits enjoyed in the First World.²³

The litany of symptoms amounts to a lamentation on the state of modern life: irreversible degradation of the environment all over the planet, widespread endangerment of habitat and species including our own, increasing disparity between the wealthy minority and the impoverished majority of the world’s human population, unprecedented disruption of millions of lives through wars, displacement, disease and famine, the rise of religious, ethnic, and ideological fundamentalist groups to replace the security of lost community, generations of young people growing up traumatised and brutalized in and by mercenary armies and refugee camps. In the West, concurrent with consumer glut and dump sites, are growing numbers of homeless people and children living in poverty, addictions to drugs, violence, and electronic stimulants, delusional trance states of denial, narcissism, and “scarcity mentality,” personal isolation, alienation, cynicism and lack of meaning and a profound spiritual hunger.

All of these dysfunctions and pathologies have in common a disconnection of human consciousness from the rhythms and cycles of the natural world. This disorder arises from a fragmentation discernible at every level of social organization, but reflecting primarily that within ourselves: “the reason the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps,” said Ralph Waldo Emerson, “is that man is disunited with himself. We have lost the original relation to the

²² According to O’Sullivan, proponents of the “everything’s fine” global competitive market view include: Ronald Bailey, ed., *The True State of the Planet: Ten of the World’s Premier Environmental Researchers in a Major Challenge to the Environmental Movement* (New York: The Free Press, 1996); John Templeton, *Is Progress Speeding Up?: Our Multiplying Multitudes of Blessings* (Philadelphia: Templeton Press, 1997); Julian L. Simon, *The Ultimate Resource* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); the Fraser Institute website at www.fraserinstitute.ca; corporate mass media generally, both print and television, documented in Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing of Consent* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), Noam Chomsky, *Media Control: The Spiritual Achievement of Propaganda* (New York: Several Stories Press, 1997), Richard Barnett and John Cavanagh, *Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order* (Toronto: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

²³ In: O’Sullivan; Berry; Lester R. Brown et al. *State of the World 1988: A Worldwatch Institute Report on Progress Toward a Sustainable Society* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1988. Annual editions 1990–1996); Tucker and Grim.

universe.”²⁴ This rupture in the fundamental continuity between humans and the universe has developed out of a multitude of contributing factors, each of which is a field of study in itself.

A propulsive linearity in patterns of thought has been attributed to the effects of alphabetization introduced into Mediterranean civilisations in the 7th Century B.C.E., which permitted the abstraction of language from the specific descriptive purpose in the older oral cultures for application to conceptual purposes; similarly the quantification of thought and therefore time and space was made possible by the new Hindu-Arab numbering systems.²⁵ Advances in cartography and navigational techniques made exploration and colonialism possible, leading to the rise of a new merchant class. Competition for wealth and agricultural surplus among royalty, the aristocracy, the church, and the bureaucracies of the emerging nation-states put increasing pressure on the land and the peasants who worked it, resulting in forced depopulation and the infamous Enclosures of common lands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The resulting pool of cheap, mobile, landless, displaced workers was a factor in the general expansion of trade. But the traditional kinship patterns, relations between humans and the cycles of nature, and Christian ethics of stewardship and natural law, all of which had contributed to maintaining balance and constraint in land use and labour, were utterly disrupted.²⁶ Enlightenment thinking however, particularly the influential writing of Thomas Hobbes, made clear that the difference between classes of people was due not to a pre-ordained gradation of natural excellence but rather the disparity with which resources are distributed among them. Building on Bacon and Galileo’s theories that all that exists and can be known on Earth and in the Heavens is matter in motion, Hobbes concluded that all biological beings are mechanisms,

²⁴ Emerson in John P. Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum* (Toronto: OISE Press, 1996), 1.

²⁵ Marshall McLuhan, in *The Mechanical Bride* (1951), *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), and *Understanding Media* (1964). “In McLuhan’s mythology, the Fall that alienated man from his naïve acoustic paradise was the change in the ratio of his sense brought about by the development of phonetic literacy. Gradually, the linear, sequential, and segmented ordering of syllables and words on the page came to serve as a model for all thought, and Western culture began to take on its characteristic individualistic, analytic, and visual form—literally its point of view. With the invention of printing...the visual bias of European culture began to assume murderous proportions. All values that could not be reconciled with mathematical order, utility, or empirical rationalism were undermined and subverted. McLuhan’s fallen visual world is similar to Blake’s ‘single vision and Newton’s sleep’ and Eliot’s ‘dissociation of sensibility’.” Neil Compton, “The Paradox of Marshall McLuhan” in *McLuhan: Pro & Con*, ed. Ray Rosenthal (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), 115–116. See also David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Random House, 1996), chapters 4 and 5, on the alphabet and language.

²⁶ Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 49–50.

and all humans are desiring mechanisms: thus the world is there for humans to manipulate in order to satisfy their ever-increasing desires. The social contract did not include the earth.

The dominator ethos of capitalism found justification in the Protestant Reformation of the Christian message,²⁷ building, in the eco-feminist view, on the pattern of dominance and control characteristic of a far older patriarchy.²⁸ The idea that Nature was there to be tamed and exploited, rather than a gift from God to be carefully nurtured, “reflected and legitimated a new account of humanity’s place in a cosmos increasingly perceived as devoid of moral significance or divine purpose, other than its material value to humans.”²⁹ Descartes’ statement, “I think, therefore I am,” located the human as a reasoning intellect residing in the brain, transported by, and distinct from, a mechanistic, experiencing body.³⁰ Out of this separation of subject and object, dichotomies of matter/spirit, body/mind, sacred/profane, man/nature, public/private, male/female, arranged in hierarchies of power, replaced the interdependencies of the natural world.

Besides the forced removal from the land, a profound change in the relations of humans to the world through the work they do came about through the irresistible logic of the industrial revolution, when steam and coal powered manufacturing made possible the development of the

²⁷ “The theologians generally believed that [God] returned...to reward the worthy with material abundance, and punish the unworthy with sickness and poverty. Those with wealth and power were by definition worthy in God’s eyes and the poor and powerless were unworthy. Thus it was that Western theology affirmed the righteousness of both materialism and political oppression and absolved humans of responsibility either for one another or for the earth. Furthermore, since humans were the end product of creation, not an instrument of its continued unfolding it followed that what ever the deficiencies of the world as any individual might find it, it was to be accepted as God’s will.” David C. Korten, “The Spirit of Sanity” for s26.org (www.s26.org). See also Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis,” in *Science*, 155 (1967)1203–7, blaming the command in Genesis to dominate and subdue the earth.

²⁸ See for example Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: an Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (London: SCM Press, 1993); Mary Daly, *Gyn-Ecology: The MetaEthics of Radical Feminism* (London: Women’s Press, 1984); Susan Griffin, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

²⁹ Northcott, 41.

³⁰ Compare in Capra: “The central insight of the systems theory of cognition, sometimes called the Santiago theory, is the identification of cognition, the process of knowing, with the process of life... A brain is not necessary for mind to exist. A bacterium, or a plant, capable of perception and thus of cognition, has no brain but has a mind. Mind and matter no longer appear to belong to two separate categories but represent different aspects, or dimensions, of the same phenomenon of life. The relationship between mind and brain are clear. Descartes’ characterization of the mind as ‘the thinking thing,’ (*res cogitans*) is finally abandoned. Mind is not a thing but a process—the process of cognition, which is identified with the process of life. The brain is a specific structure through which this process operates. The relationship between mind and brain therefore is one between process and structure.” Fritjof Capra, *The Web of Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 172–3.

assembly line. Dividing the production of an item into separate processes, each performed by a different worker, resulted in what Ursula Franklin calls a “prescriptive” technology, replacing the “holistic” technology of the artisan who is responsible for the creation of each piece from beginning to end.³¹ Such a relationship is not possible in an economic system that uses the term “labour unit” to describe human beings. This sort of objectifying language separates the individual from the work s/he does as well as from the moral, political, social, and emotional consequences of doing it, and from those who would be impacted by the activity. In this atomistic view, the world is made up of subjects and objects, or more specifically one subject, “I” the individual agent, and everything else as objects: the not-I, the Other, generalized or particular.

This stance makes social fragmentation possible: in the polarisation of I-It, community itself becomes instrumental, a ganging together behind gated walls of those (Us) who see themselves with something similar to protect from a generic and demonised evil (Them). At a macroscopic level this disconnection makes possible the emphasis, in the modern global market economy worldview, on the primacy of short-term gain, at the expense of less aggressive or vocal parties such as indigenous peoples and bio-systems, rather than on long-term sustainable interactions and interdependence. Only that which fits within a very narrow range of what is considered valuable monetarily counts in policy-making.³²

The nature of the human-technology interaction is important here. I will quote at length what Heidegger has to say about the distinction between we would call holistic and prescriptive technologies, because it underlies the problem of our monocular world-view and compulsion to control, while providing the beginnings of a rationale for the labyrinth as a “remedial” technology. In this passage, while looking at the difference between technology as a means to an end, and technology as a human activity, Heidegger has just examined Aristotle’s Four Causes, the material, the formal, the final, and the efficient. He finds that etymologically, “cause” means “responsible for,” and “efficient” means something more like “bring forward into appearance”:

Lying before and lying ready characterize the presencing of something that presences. The four ways [causes] of being responsible³³ bring something into

³¹ Ursula Franklin, *The Real World of Technology* (Toronto: Anansi, 1990), 18–19.

³² Marilyn Waring, *If Women Counted: A New Feminist Economic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 33.

³³ “*Verschuldet*: to be indebted, to owe, to be guilty, to be responsible for or to, to cause. Heidegger intends to awaken all these meanings and to have connotations of mutual interdependence sound throughout the passage.” Translator’s note, page 7, note 5. “*An-wesen*—here translated as ‘presencing,’ (in construction *wesen*, ‘to endure or continue,’ with the prefix *an-* ‘at, to, toward’) stresses the interactive: there must be a someone who receives the presencing, to whom it comes as enduring.” Translator’s note, page 9, note 7.

appearance. They let it come forth into presencing. They set it free to that place and so start it on its way, namely, into its complete arrival. It is in the sense of such a starting something on its way into arrival that being responsible is an occasioning or inducing to go forward.

The four ways of occasioning...let what is not yet present arrive into presencing.

They are ruled over by a bringing that brings what presences into appearance.

Plato tells us what this bringing is in a sentence from the Symposium (205b):

“Every occasion for whatever passes over and goes forward into presencing from that which is not presencing is *poiesis*, is bringing forth.”

Not only handcraft manufacture, artistic and poetical bringing into appearance and concrete imagery, is a bringing-forth, *poiesis*. *Physis* also, the arising of something out of itself, is a *poiesis*. *Physis* is *poiesis* in the highest sense, the bringing forth in itself (*en heautoi*), in contrast to the bringing forth in another (*en alloi*), in the artist.³⁴

Bringing-forth comes to pass only insofar as something concealed comes into unconcealment. This coming rests and moves freely within what we call revealing. The Greek have the word *aletheia* for revealing. The Romans translate this with *veritas*. We say “truth” and usually understand it as the correctness of an idea.

Techne is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Techne* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiesis*; it is something poietic. *Techne* is a mode of *aletheuein*. It reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us, whatever can look and turn out now one way and now another. It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that *techne* is a bringing-forth. Technology is a mode of revealing. Technology comes to presence in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *aletheia*, truth, happens. The revealing that holds sway throughout modern technology does not unfold into a bringing-forth in the sense of *poiesis*. The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging forth.³⁵

Heidegger goes on to distinguish between the “putting in order” of a field cultivated by a peasant farmer, and the “setting upon” and “challenging forth” of the field as a coal mining deposit, where the activity is “always itself directed from the beginning toward furthering something else.” The coal is stockpiled, as standing-reserve (Bestand)—the translation emphasises the “orderability and substitutability of objects” rather than their permanence as objects (Gegenstand).³⁶ And that is what is thought of humans when they are called “labour units,” or

³⁴ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), 9–11.

³⁵ Heidegger, 14.

³⁶ “Heidegger uses the word to characterize the manner in which everything commanded into place and ordered according to the challenging demand ruling in modern technology presences as revealed.” Translator’s note, page 17, note 16.

“market segments,” or “branded”: they are Bestand, a means to an end other than their own. It is this kind of reductionism exactly, that the engagement with the labyrinth so gently and thoroughly undermines. What is revealed in there, by making the choice *to* be in there, by refusing to be Bestand, is the bringing forth in itself of oneself, *poiesis en heautoi*: unique, wondrous, never before seen, and entirely incapable of being ordered or substituted.

Denial

While we may not ourselves consciously adhere to the practice of objectification and instrumentality in respect to others, and would no doubt be horrified at the suggestion that we do, it has an effect on our own perceptions, thinking, and behaviour. Such an attitude is pervasive, encoded into the competitive language of a self-preserving individualism, embedded in the media, underlying and informing the philosophy and practices of governments subject to the trans-national corporations, so that the entire social discourse is distorted and dysfunctional. Where Berry sees this stage of modernity as “less a deviation than the fulfilment of certain aspects of the Western tradition,”³⁷ for Richard Kearney it is “an integral mutation within its own development, a symptom of its own unconscious infancy which needs to be retrieved and reworked if we are not to be condemned to an obsessional fixation upon, and compulsive repetition of, the sense of its ending.”³⁸ Berry using the term “fixation” as well in reference to a more pathological interpretation, saying that

Our present situation is the consequence of a cultural fixation, an addiction, an emotional insensitivity...Our more human experience of the world of meaning has been diminished in direct proportion as money and utilitarian values have taken precedence over the numinous, aesthetic, and emotional values.³⁹

Elsewhere he refers to cultural ‘autism,’ and makes this diagnosis: “The profoundly degraded ecological situation...reveals a deadening or paralysis of some parts of human intelligence and also a suppression of human sensitivities.”⁴⁰

Rachel Naomi Remen, associate clinical professor of family and community medicine at the UCSF School of Medicine, where she teaches a course called “The Care of the Soul” to medical students, and a post graduate course for physicians called “Relationship-Centered Care,” notes how standard medical education perpetuates this distortion, which she identifies as a cultural valorizing of individualism and devaluing of the quality of compassion:

Recovering compassion requires us to confront the shadow of our culture directly. We are a culture that values...self-sufficiency, competence, independence, mastery and control. In the shadow lies a profound sense of isolation from our human wholeness. We have developed a contempt for anything

³⁷ Berry, 182.

³⁸ Kearney, 27.

³⁹ Berry, 60.

⁴⁰ Berry, 115.

in ourselves and in others that has needs, and is capable of suffering. In our isolation, we tend to develop a suspicion of anything beyond ourselves, anything that falls outside of our control.⁴¹

Parker Palmer, writing of the problem of our dualism in educating for wholeness, identifies the need to acknowledge that-which-suffers as key to restoring balance in all our relations:

True compassion requires us to come into right relationship with that which is most human in ourselves, that which is most capable of suffering. By recognizing and attending to that basic humanness, we find the place of profound connection to all life.⁴²

Remen's reference to the shadow takes this discussion to the area of analytical psychology, anticipated earlier in Berry's call for radical new cultural forms: "that which is capable of suffering" is relegated to the shadow of both the individual and of the society and culture. Shadow is a technical term in Jung's description of parts of the psyche. Briefly: Jung distinguishes between "natural" and "cultural" symbols:

The former are derived from the unconscious contents of the psyche, and they therefore represent an enormous number of variations on the essential archetypal images. In many cases they can still be traced back to their archaic roots in the most ancient records and in primitive societies. The cultural symbols on the other hand, are those that have been used to express "eternal truths," and that are still used in many religions. They have gone through many transformations and more or less conscious development, and have thus become collective images accepted by civilised societies.

These cultural symbols still carry their original "numinosity," a psychic charge that evokes deep emotional responses in some individuals, functioning much like unexamined prejudices. Jung warns that dismissing them as absurd or irrelevant is a mistake: "They are important constituents of our mental make-up and vital forces in the building up of human society; and they cannot be eradicated without serious loss." But rationalism has destroyed our capacity to understand these symbols, and with neglect or repression, their psychic energy disappears underground, beneath the level of consciousness. There, they give life to whatever is uppermost in the unconscious:

tendencies, perhaps, that have hitherto had no chance to express themselves or at least have not been allowed an uninhibited existence in our consciousness. Such tendencies form an ever-present and potentially destructive "shadow" to our conscious mind. Even tendencies that might in some circumstances be able to exert a beneficial influence are transformed into demons when they are repressed.

⁴¹ Rachel Naomi Remen, "Educating for Mission, Meaning, and Compassion," in *The Heart of Learning: Spirituality in Education*, ed. Steven Glazer (New York: Jeremy Tarcher, 1999), 35.

⁴² Parker Palmer, "The Grace of Great Things: Reclaiming the Sacred in Knowing, Teaching, and Learning," in Glazer, 23–24.

This is why many well-meaning people are understandably afraid of the unconscious, and incidentally, of psychology.⁴³

This is a dangerous situation: the modern human is at the “at the mercy of the psychic underworld.” There are personal and social repercussions: “His moral and spiritual tradition has disintegrated, and he is now paying the price for this break-up in world-wide disorientation and dissociation.”⁴⁴

Berry says, “The dark side, the toxic waste, was denied, ignored, hidden from sight, buried,”⁴⁵ literally, with the pass-through of resources to waste dumps via built-in obsolescence within the logic of consumerism: the loss here, in the reduction to standing-reserve, is of the Earth as of the symbol sacred, where our engagement is instrumental rather than reverential. With it goes anything else associated with nature, along the fault lines in the man-nature duality mentioned earlier, including actual females and the feminine generally, such as qualities, traits, habits of mind such as receptivity and the intuitive. This denial of the external aspect into the dark side is matched by suppression of the inner life. So into the shadow go our vulnerabilities such as grief for all kinds of losses, including the devaluation of the work of our hands and minds, and the destruction of our habitat, the fear that anyone will discover these things about us, and hope that things might change. The Jungian writer Marion Woodman says of this connection of the outer with the inner reality, “The earth is screaming. Our bodies are in trouble. Matter wants to be redeemed.”⁴⁶

The psychological mechanism of denial, a survival function whose purpose is to keep the organism in homeostasis through interpretive means, operates at both the individual and social level to maintain false consciousness about a given situation:

While it affects most of us in varying degrees, denial runs particularly deep among those with heavy stakes in the status quo, including the political and business leaders with power to shape the global agenda. This kind of denial can be as dangerous to society and the natural environment as an alcoholic’s denial is to his or her own family. Because they fail to see the addiction as the principal threat to their well being, alcoholics often end up by destroying their lives.⁴⁷

⁴³ Carl Jung, “Approaching the Unconscious,” in *Man and His Symbols*, ed. C.G. Jung (New York: Bantam, 1968), 83.

⁴⁴ Jung, 84.

⁴⁵ Berry, 112.

⁴⁶ Marion Woodman and Elinor Dickson, *Dancing in the Flames: The Dark Goddess in the Transformation of Consciousness* (Boston: Shambala, 1996), 197.

⁴⁷ Sandra Postel, in O’Sullivan, 131.

The persuasion, masking denial, going on with globalization is part of a cultural dream structure, or entrancement, that has lost the integrity of its meaning. It has become an exaggerated and destructive manifestation, in Berry's view, "of that deep inner rage of Western society against its earthly condition as a vital member of the life community." This rage may be a cover-up for the grief of which there is so much, of which we are so ashamed. In psychoanalytic process, rage marks a state of heightened resistance to the approach of anything that might disrupt the carefully constructed shell of meaning covering the denied or suppressed reality. To approach it is a fraught process. Berry's solution is radical: "Such entrancement must be considered as a profound cultural disorientation...a disturbance sanctioned by the very structures of the culture itself in its present phase. It can be dealt with only by a corresponding deep cultural therapy."⁴⁸

Marion Woodman outlines a scenario familiar from Freire's Pedagogy, in the gendered terms of analytic psychology's archetypal polarities, around the icon of brutal suppression that Woodman sees as the epitome of patriarchy's terminal distortions:

In any revolution the greatest danger is that the oppressed become carbon copies of their oppressors. Men and women who have worked diligently to liberate their femininity from internal Nazi prison camps too soon may find themselves again collaborating with the very energies that imprisoned them in the first place. Since these regressive energies resist giving up control, they become more subtle and dangerous. Hope withers into despair, unless creative masculinity protects the feminine values.⁴⁹

Is pessimism an unresolved despair? Is it an ironic posturing? Kearney warns of "an apocalyptic pessimism" and, in "cultivating the ecstasy of self-annihilation...abandoning the emancipatory practice of imagining alternative horizons of existence (remembered or anticipated)." Why would anyone do this? Because of a disconnection so irrevocable that one is haunted by a Kierkegaardian dread, as in this bleak scene that could be the setting for a Samuel Beckett play:

the recurring image of our contemporary condition as a labyrinth of interreflecting mirrors from which there is no escape. There is not even a Minotaur lurking within to be slayed or subdued: the mythic monster is itself but a mirror reflection which refers to no "original" reality. The danger stalking the post-modern labyrinth is nothingness. The empty tomb. The paralysing fear that there is nothing after post-modernism.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Berry, 165.

⁴⁹ Marion Woodman, *The Ravaged Bridegroom: Masculinity in Women* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1990), 121-2.

⁵⁰ Kearney, 30-31.

I cannot resist the tangent of this bracing retort from the decidedly unpost-modern George Grant, addressing the troops in the struggle with industrial society:

Aesthetic pessimism is a form of self-indulgence to which protected academics are particularly prone. Insofar as one is aware that one is prone to such sick pessimism, it should be dealt with in privacy and not presented publicly. It always matters what we do. Moreover, at a much deeper level, authentic despair is a human possibility and a very great evil. Therefore, it must be prepared for. Our first obligation is to seek acquaintance with joy so that the arrival of despair does not carry us into madness. The complete absence of joy is madness. However, the stating of the facts in any given situation has nothing to do with despair, but only with the possible destruction of inadequate sources of hope—the destruction of which is a necessary part of all our lives.⁵¹

O'Sullivan distinguishes between despair and grief, and their respective parts in the historical process. Not to grieve would be an act of unacknowledged despair and so a perpetuation of denial. Such denial in turn diminishes the possibility of “the expression of the joy of existence we all feel, within the matrix of community life, [that] is the core of what we call celebration.”⁵² He reminds us that

Our despair is not a morbid occupation. Despair is part of the process of coming out of denial. The natural experience of anguish and anxiety in the face of the perils of our time is a healthy reaction. This sense of living in a period of decline leaves all historical actors who become conscious of this fact in a state of loss and grieving.⁵³

Eventually, the strategy of denial becomes too costly, and the individual is compelled, most often through the advent of some crisis, to undertake the next developmental step. That is the point that the human species finds itself now. In Von Franz' comment on the perils of the individuation process, we begin to see the outlines of this dynamic:

The difficulty is that every personification of the unconscious—the shadow, the anima, the animus, and the Self—has both a light and dark aspect. The shadow may be base or evil, an instinctive drive that one ought to overcome. It may however, be an impulse toward growth that one should cultivate and follow.⁵⁴

This idea that the shadow, and indeed all the parts of the unconscious, can have both positive and negative dimensions is intriguing: the darkness becomes nuanced rather than uniformly the absence of light. This is something we can work with. But to discern between “light and dark”

⁵¹ Grant, 127.

⁵² O'Sullivan, 280.

⁵³ O'Sullivan, 36–7.

⁵⁴ Marie-Louise Von Franz, “The Process of Individuation,” in *Man and His Symbols*, 235.

shadow content, with the possibility of having to confront not only the “base,” but also evil itself—within our own psyche!—this is a daunting prospect.

With a little self-criticism one can see through the shadow—so far as its nature is personal. But when it appears as an archetype, one encounters the same difficulties as with anima and animus. It is quite within the bounds of possibility for a man to recognize the relative evil of his nature, but it is a rare and shattering experience for him to gaze into the face of absolute evil.⁵⁵

We are myopic about the shadow in which we are standing, we cannot see that the features about ourselves that we resist recognizing the most obstinately and defensively, are those which we have projected onto another, because the cause of the disturbing emotions appears to lie in the *other* person, who inexplicably refuses to change. The fact that this pattern operates at a cultural level as well as an individual one is actually a reason to have hope, despite what seems to be the intractable enormity of such a problem. That is because it is an opportunity to resist the outwardly directed “wilful activism” characteristic of Modernity’s problem-solving mentality, that dovetails so neatly with the hegemonic practices of commodity culture, with its covert, and not so covert, coercive measures; instead, we can begin where we always ought to, with ourselves:

To take responsibility for such images in our dreams sensitizes us to take responsibility in our culture. As long as we are blind to our own inner tyrant, we blame an outer tyrant, some person or system, for victimizing us. In the fear of the shadow is the pervading sense of loss in so many people in our twentieth century wasteland. We can choose to tyrannize our inner victims and deny our fear, as millions of addicts are doing, or we can try to connect to the soul energy in our handful of dust.⁵⁶

Between a rock and a hard place, between stasis and evolution, standing on the threshold, neither here nor there, it is easy to look back with nostalgia at the comforts of denial. With Sojourner Truth, we could say, “Sometimes I wish my eyes had never been opened!” No wonder Death/Rebirth is one of the archetypal symbols built into our genetic coding—why would anyone undertake the process voluntarily?

⁵⁵ Jung would say that the shadow represents the personal unconscious, and is personified for the individual as a same-sex figure, while the animus and anima are archetypes, functioning as contrasexual figures “whose autonomy and unconsciousness explain the stubbornness of their projections.” C.G.Jung, “Aion,” in *The Portable Jung*, 147–8.

⁵⁶ Woodman, 120–1.

3. MYTH AS MODEL OF TRANSFORMATION

⊗ The Archetype Of The Heroic Journey

There is the spirituality of our time that is moving us on a sacred journey. If we do not perceive the sacred nature of our journey, then we will not be able to bring about the deeper transformation needed. We are in a time of exodus. We must carry this off.⁵⁷

The capacity of humans to develop and grow, even evolve, beyond the apparent limits of personality and circumstance is both a gift and a burden. We can move towards individuation, personal integration, and spiritual fruition with increasing awareness, consciousness, and grace. But often, perhaps inevitably, we begin in and repeatedly cycle through states of denial, confusion, fear and pain. Pre-Modern religions and cultures have developed very similar rituals and practices to guide the individual through this growth process, often through a trial of physical endurance, or some form of attention meditation, either concentration or mindfulness or both, alone or in combination with an ascetic physical discipline.⁵⁸ These techniques are based on the understanding that humans are habitual creatures, reluctant to change, with conflicting inner drives, for whom mental discipline is difficult and progress in mastery painfully slow, especially at the start. Daniel Goleman's description strikes a chord for novice meditators:

In the effort to keep his attention on the sensations of breathing, the meditator tries to keep his mind concentrated. His mind will not actually stay concentrated, but will wander to other thoughts and feelings. In practice he spends most of his time trying to remember to return his wandering mind to his breath, the object of concentration. The important thing is his attempt to concentrate on the breath.⁵⁹

Characteristic of our conflictedness is that, in spite of our resistance to change, we are restless creatures compelled to pursue what Joseph Campbell called the archetype of the Quest myth (which includes the resistance), in our lives. As a species it appears we are genetically predisposed or encoded, to unfold along certain lines—a spiritual emergence for which Aristotle's term *entelechy* is appropriate, “the full and perfect realisation of what was previously

⁵⁷ O'Sullivan, 39.

⁵⁸ Daniel Goleman, *The Meditative Mind* (Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, Inc., 1988), 106.

⁵⁹ Goleman, 135–6.

in a potential state.”⁶⁰ This unfolding is socially supported in many cultures, but an entirely individual and often solitary, misunderstood, and inappropriately concretized process in the modern West. Traditional rituals of initiation by default are replaced by random triggers, which will appear, apparently coincidentally, to meet the requirements of the next stage of the developmental process if the modern Western seeker recognises the significance of the synchronicity and cooperates with it.

This is an example of a universal pattern that we have been remiss to ignore. According to Rupert Sheldrake’s generative evolutionary theory of habit, the whole evolutionary process, at all levels, involves the interplay of creativity and habit:

Even though all organisms follow historical patterns of natural constraints and possibilities, they do so in an open system of evolution that allows both stability and creativity. But innovation is not arbitrary or capricious. Without creativity, no new habits would come into being; thus nature would follow repetitive patterns and behave as if it were governed by non-evolutionary laws. Conversely, without the controlling influence of habit formation, creativity would be a chaotic process with nothing ever stabilized.⁶¹

The tension between habit and creativity appears to be reproduced in our longing for and simultaneous resistance to change, and the difficulty that we face in learning, for example, the habits and discipline of meditation.

Ritual functions as a means of enacting this fundamental pattern in a form that can be integrated by humans, “fashioning a container out of the very energy it transforms. Ritual holds the raw energy with discipline.”⁶² Traditional rituals associated with institutional faith practices continue, such as the *bris* for male babies, and *bar* and *bas mitzvahs* for thirteen year olds, with which Jewish people mark and celebrate the arrival into the group of the new member as an infant and a young adult. But in the absence of faith traditions, rituals and rites of passage are haphazard and unfocused in secular Western society. Yet the inborn need for them remains, which probably goes a long way to explaining the popularity of exploits of endurance such as tattooing, branding, piercing, and extreme sports, all of which are scarcely imaginable without the circle of witnesses into which the initiate gains entry.

⁶⁰ Piero Ferrucci, *What We May Be* (Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, Inc., 1982), 163.

⁶¹ O’Sullivan, 239.

⁶² Woodman, 151–2.

Joseph Campbell has written extensively about the universality of certain themes in the mythologies of cultures that are otherwise very different and separated by geography and history. With Jung, he sees this as the functioning of archetypes in the collective unconscious; the practicality of such patterns explains one of his book titles, “Myths to Live By.” The Monomyth, the Hero’s Journey or Quest, is the most common of all. Campbell has documented many of its variations throughout the history of pre-Modern human culture, and its appearance in Western industrial civilisation through the analysis of dreams and the critique of the imagery of popular culture.

In Campbell’s schema of the Heroic Journey or Quest, the opening event and beginning of the Departure phase, is the Call to Adventure. Right after that comes the response, Refusal of the Call, followed closely the stages of Supernatural Aid, The Crossing of the First Threshold, and The Belly of the Whale.⁶³ Meeting up with your Resistance, you undertake the journey resolutely, or you get dragged into it, kicking and screaming. Or you remain for whatever reason, immobilized in stasis. The classic archetypal symbol for this state is the Fisher King, the ruler of a realm which has fallen into disorder, or into a kind of trance; or the king himself might be inexplicably ill or wounded or behaving unwisely, inflexibly, or tyrannically. All life forms in the realm suffer until the hero or heroine undertakes the journey in search of the remedy, which is often a trifle, but an extremely inaccessible one. The subsequent adventure of Departure, Initiation, and Return, with all the tests and encounters within that, comprise the Heroic Journey, Quest, and Individuation pattern. This pattern would appear to be encoded within the species. In Jungian psychology it is essential to individuation and development:

The journey contains experiences that characterize all of our mythic journeys into the farthest regions of ourselves in search of the real thing: awakening; the call; the journey; the descent; the darkness; a healing crisis; an epiphany; the ascent; accepting unlikely companions on the journey; new visions of self and world; the long integration of the experience into daily life. These are developmental steps we all face if we actively surrender to the call of our soul.⁶⁴

Henderson identifies an anima figure associated with the Heroic Journey, a “spirit of compassion,” echoing Remen and Palmer:

One of the commonest dream symbols for this type of release through transcendence is the theme of the lonely journey or pilgrimage, which somehow seems to become a spiritual pilgrimage on which the initiate becomes acquainted

⁶³ Campbell, 36.

⁶⁴ Marion Woodman and Jill Mellick, *Coming Home to Myself*, (Berkeley: Conari Press, 1998), 17–18.

with the nature of death. But this is not death as a last judgment or other initiatory trial of strength: it is a journey of release, renunciation and atonement, presided over and fostered by some spirit of compassion. This spirit is more often represented by a “mistress” of initiation, a supreme feminine (i.e. anima) figure such as Kwan-Yin in Chinese Buddhism, Sophia in the Christian-Gnostic doctrine, or the ancient Greek goddess of wisdom Pallas Athena.⁶⁵

It would seem that the journey is not only a test of courage, endurance and determination, but also paradoxically of the willingness to let go of identity, status, and materiality: what is released and renounced? The earliest model for this is the story of the Sumerian Goddess Inanna, who, descended to the Underworld to visit her enemy- sister goddess, gradually removing her garments and jewellery at each of seven portals she passes through, until she is standing naked in the underground court, before undergoing ritual death and rebirth. This “letting go” is characteristic of liminality, the second state in Turner's basically tripartite processual structure of ritual consisting of separation, margin or *limen*, and reaggregation; in Turner's words,

the state and process of mid-transition in a rite of passage. During the liminal period, the characteristics of the liminars (the ritual subjects in this phase) are ambiguous, for they pass through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or the coming state. Liminars are betwixt and between. The liminal state has frequently been likened to death; to being in the womb; to invisibility, darkness, bisexuality, and the wilderness. Liminars are stripped of status and authority, removed from a social structure maintained and sanctioned by power and force, and leveled to a homogeneous social state through discipline and ordeal...Much of what has been bound by social structure is liberated, notably the sense of comradeship and communion, or *communitas*.⁶⁶

Turner goes on to a description of *liminoid*—genres of leisure (he mentions art, poetry, music, dance, and pilgrimage, among others) in industrial societies developing outside the central economic and political processes, “along their margins, interfaces, in their tacit dimensions...subversive, idiosyncratic and experimental” akin but not identical to the ritually liminal (because individualistic and idiosyncratic in production and consumption, rather than

⁶⁵ Joseph Henderson, “Ancient Myths and Modern Man,” in Jung, 149–150. Ariadne would be the personification of the anima in the Theseus myth. All of Chartres cathedral is dedicated to the Virgin Mary who is certainly a spirit of compassion. Transposing Henderson's insights on behalf of women “sojourners,” we look for an equivalent in the “light” animus; in my own experience, dreams of readying horses for travel always mark a significant life change. Jean Shinoda Bolen, a feminist Jungian, rejects the animus concept as artificial “grafting,” identifying instead various goddess archetypes constellating within the individual woman at different stages of her life. The Virgin goddesses, Hestia, Athena, and especially the hunter Artemis with her “distance” attributes of horse, hound, and bow & arrow, would be likely to make an appearance.

⁶⁶ Peter McLaren, *Schooling as a Ritual performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 300.

anonymous or divine). This distinction sheds some light on Berry's comment on art making in a time of disconnection:

We make music, write poetry, do our painting, sculpture, architecture, but these activities easily become aesthetic expressions simply of the human. They lose the intimacy and awesome qualities of the universe. We have...little capacity for participating in the mysteries that were celebrated in the earlier literary, artistic, and religious modes of expression.⁶⁷

Woodman, writing within the therapeutic focus of recuperating masculine and feminine energies from the pathological concretization of a culture in a trance or state of enchantment, says of ritual that it “has to be accompanied by a depth experience of the [symbolic] material. Otherwise ritual becomes merely another holding pattern against the inner masculine, not a redemption of it.”⁶⁸

All three writers make the same rather harsh distinction between a truly arduous rite of passage that is a “depth experience,” a “participation in mysteries,” or a “deathlike” loss of status and identity, and a superficial going through the motions, or the secular and individualistic liminoid, or a merely human aesthetic expression. In the latter case, what is described is an experience at the surface, at the level of mask or persona. It sounds as if there is a large degree of control being maintained, and a predetermined limit to the intensity of the engagement. Berry is probably talking about artists in the gallery system, who are not shamans any longer, but “culture workers” (and Bestand!). In fairness to the maligned “liminoids” and artists (and to those of us who sometimes show up at church on Sundays without necessarily being “all there”), the pattern is one of *alternation* between habit and creativity. To be constantly in a liminal state would be psychotic.

Nevertheless, when people show up to walk in the labyrinth, they are not there for exercise, or to be entertained. People come when they are troubled, when they need to feel their way through a dilemma, when something in their lives is not working any longer—when the realm is barren, when the old ruler's time is up. They come because they have heard a call, in spite of how embarrassing it might seem to be following a voice no one else can hear, or how absurd it appears to be trudging in circles round and round the parish hall. Crossing that threshold, the one that separates you from caring about what other people think, is the first obstacle. Visually it is articulated by the ring of spiky lunations round the outside circuit, a sign of both warning and

⁶⁷ Berry, 17.

⁶⁸ Woodman, *Bridegroom*, 152.

protection to the initiates: do not enter unless you are willing, and once you do, you are safe in here.

And then on into the darkness.

⊗ The Meaning of the Minotaur

We are caught in a mind-tormenting ambivalence. We have such vast understanding of the universe and how it functions, and yet we manifest such inability to use this knowledge beneficially either for ourselves or for any other mode of earthly being.⁶⁹

What are we missing? What is it about this connection that is so difficult for us to make? Pierre Rosenstiehl talks about a common search pattern—"hand on the left wall"—as an unhelpful heuristic, a simple-mindedness that doesn't work, and would cause you to miss everything if you used it—fear of the Minotaur would prevent you from "seeking the beloved,"⁷⁰ and yet we stubbornly persist in our "wrongheadedness." Do we construct the Minotaur as obstacle? Does he represent the absence of insight or an excess of wilfulness? Is he a monument to our dual, conflicted nature? Or does he remain to us, an enduring relic of the bi-cameral mind?

Campbell's re-telling and explication of what happened at Crete clearly embeds the mythic in the social and the psyche: King Minos was a judge and ruler of a great trading kingdom. His queen, Pasiphaë, had been seduced by a bull. Minos' mother Europa had herself been carried off to Crete, by the god Zeus in the form of a bull: Minos was their royal son. But Pasiphaë bore a monster from her union, contrived with the help of Daedalus who designed a false cow in which the queen had concealed herself to deceive the bull. The queen took the blame but king was aware of his own guilt in all of this. The bull had been sent from the sea by Poseidon as a sign of Minos' right to be king. In return Minos had promised to sacrifice the animal as an offering and symbol of service. But Minos reneged, and, thinking Poseidon would not notice, had kept the bull, and slaughtered another one from his herd instead. Minos prospered, becoming a celebrated law-giver. But the queen meanwhile developed a passion for the bull, and so the Minotaur was brought into being.

The primary guilt was the king's: he had taken personal advantage of a public event. The return of the bull was meant to symbolize his selfless submission to the obligations of his role. By keeping it, he subverted this greater purpose, giving in to self-serving impulse. Thus the divinely anointed king became the tyrant "Holdfast," looking out for himself. This is an example of the principle "As above, so below" in the realm of the self: "As the rituals of initiation lead the individual through the death of the old self and rebirth into the new, so the great ceremonials of

⁶⁹ Berry, 85.

⁷⁰ Rosenstiehl, "Les mots du labyrinthe."

investiture divested him of his private character and clothed him in the mantle of his vocation.” To refuse the rite was a sacrilege, cutting the individual off from the community, breaking the whole social body into fragments, who then, as the many, made war on each other, each out for himself, and governable only by force. Campbell’s description of this universal monster resonates in folktales and legends as well as in the news of the world and its nightmares: the hoarder of the general good, greedy, claiming all rights to “mine”; inflated ego-aggrandizement, yet fearful, defensive of the aggressions coming at him from his own projections, isolated in self-made independence; making a wasteland wherever he is.

By contrast, the hero has achieved submission. Theseus has undertaken a journey, receiving help to go underground and confront the frightful monster hidden therein the dark. Campbell links the collective and the individual with the image of a spring:⁷¹

Dream is the personalized myth, myth the depersonalized dream. Thus the hero is the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms. Such a one’s visions, ideas, and inspirations come pristine from the primary springs of human life and thought. Hence they are eloquent, not of the present, disintegrating society and psyche, but of the unquenched source through which society is reborn.⁷²

Through his actions, Theseus delivers the people from the terror of the Minotaur, restoring the balance to society from the disorder Minos’ greed had caused.

There have been a variety of portraits of the Minotaur created over the years. The Cretans stamped silver coins with representations of the Minotaur that suggest a mask being worn by an actor, while Greeks usually portrayed him fleeing and being killed on vases; though there is one that shows a line of what could be bull-masked actors. So it’s possible that enactments were part of drama repertory or seasonal cult rituals. Minotaurs being killed appear in mosaic floor and wall labyrinths, usually at the centre, though not at all in French churches and cathedrals.

More recently the Minotaur has been not only a favourite theme of Picasso’s, but of the Surrealists as well. To them, the Minotaur represents a symbol of “revolt against authority,” but also, in psychoanalytic terms, it is a symbol of unconscious impulses.⁷³ Picasso later said, while

⁷¹ The spring beneath Chartres Cathedral can still be seen, in the Crypt on the north side. It is very deep and lined with bricks. The tour guide tells with relish the story of the Christians martyrs slaughtered by the invading Vikings and thrown down the well shaft.

⁷² Campbell, 20.

⁷³ Cabanne Pierre. *Pablo Picasso: His Life & Work*. Translated from the French by Harold J. Salemsen. (New York: William Morrow & Co. 1977), 275. In: Dr. Enrique Mallon, “June, 1933.” *Online Picasso Project*

discussing the painting *Guernica* with Jerome Seckler, that the bull represents “brutality.” Thus, using his own artist vocabulary, Picasso may be warning Europe (the female) to be vigilant against the brutality of Hitler and Fascism (the Minotaur); using the Minotaur, instead of a bull, may have been Picasso's way of emphasizing the brutal, human aspect of the threat against Europe.⁷⁴ The variety of Minotaur portraits in the collection known as the Vollard Suite suggests more complexity and psychological depth than simply political caricature, however. In these drawings and etchings, the Minotaur has a social life and girlfriends with whom he shares a loving gaze. In revolt against the restrictions of bourgeois society by insisting on his right to be present, the Minotaur is a counter-cultural hero, the artist's alter-ego persona in a way reminiscent of Claus Oldenburg's Ray-Gun series. But he is much more tragic: in the Suite the Minotaur is blinded, wounded, and killed. He suffers violence but is never shown inflicting it.

The work of the English sculptor and Classics scholar, Michael Ayrton, on the labyrinth in its maze/puzzle/prison form, and the characters Daedalus and the Minotaur, constitute an inquiry that is arts-informed in both its exploratory and its representational functions. In this excerpt from the novel *The Maze Maker*, we see the results of Ayrton's efforts to “operationalize a mental image...in order to explore...non-verbal subtexts,”⁷⁵ although it is unlikely he would think of it in those terms.⁷⁶ Ayrton's Minotaur is painfully real:

Available: <http://www.tamu.edu/mocl/picasso/>

⁷⁴ “Picasso Explains.” *New Masses* (New York), 1945, 4–7. Mallon, *Online Picasso Project*.

⁷⁵ Maura McIntyre in “Re-reading Anne,” in Ardra Cole and J.Gary Knowles et al. *Lives-in-Context* (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira, 2000), 245.

⁷⁶ “My allegiance to the Greeks and the Renaissance...finds its ideals... in their ‘archaic’ phases. I tend to seek in the art of the past as I tend to find in places long inhabited, a certain intensity, a double life relevant to its own period and to my own which centres upon the interpretation and extension of myth. I do not feel myth to be material for a poetic or aesthetic exercise to be played with as it came to be played with after the fifth century B.C. I must be seized with a belief in the validity of the myth in a sense comparable, however minimally, to Virgil's ‘belief’ in the myth contained in the Aeneid...the reality of my belief is not totally dissimilar to the reality contained in the myth for those who, before Herodotus, identified myth with history as being the “Truth.” [W]hat I do is driven through me by a force of myth which is nothing to do with aesthetic or allegorical conceit...my slightly absurd conviction that I have been in receipt of some sort of revealed truth concerning a mythical, archetypal craftsman, his vainglorious son, and a cast of subsidiary characters in the drama of their lives. My involvement with the Minotaur began for me the gradual process of evolving from a particular identification with the legend into a more generalized use of images from the myth as demonstrating my own and the human condition. The process of identification with the subject of one's own work...takes place at different coexistent levels. Icarus is remote from me. I have no heroic vein in my nature and can only regard him with wonder and a certain lack of sympathy. The Minotaur is part of me, as Daedalus is part of me, albeit a different part.” Michael Ayrton, “The Path to Daedalus,” in *Virgil*, ed. D.R. Dudley (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 181–2. Certainly Ayrton creates a virtual reality, ensures the presence of ambiguity, uses expressive, contextualised, and vernacular language, promotes empathy in the reader, and evidences a personal signature and an aesthetic form, all features of Arts-based research. See Tom Barone and Elliott Eisner, “Arts-

The Minotaur cannot think clearly. He does not know where he is or why...The click of horn against stone, an abrupt snort, a whistling breath, the sounds of the Minotaur, were ominous because they were such normal cattle sounds. They came to me [Daedalus is speaking] in the same instant as his alarm. His uncertainty naturally coincided with his instinct to stir. His private darkness, hung like a ragged curtain before his brain, was lit with a quick unease and this caused him, so far as he was able, to think...There are...flaws in his design which can defeat him because he is neither bull nor man. He is uncertain how to attack and this confusion is central to his condition...A bull is equipped to fight as a bull and a man may be adept in battle between men, but the Minotaur is marvellously made to kill in either capacity except that he cannot decide which. His instincts are double and in perpetual conflict. If he grasps his enemy in his arms he can break him like a twig or tear him apart, but he cannot bring his horns into play, and if he seeks to gore his victim his arms and hands are of no use to him. He is not humanly intelligent, but he is also less simple than his animal nature, so that his reflexes are not so certain as a bull's. He is capable of enough thought to frustrate his impulses. His urge to murder is not a lust but his response to the uncertainty by which, so far as his slow brain permits, he is tormented

He opened and closed the squat stub fingers of each hand, opposing the thumb, aware of this approximation to a human gesture. Suddenly he spun around on his heels and, off balance, struck one horn against the wall...He bellowed and the sound was full of doubt and the will to overcome it.

As his spittle dropped I knew his thought to spatter and drip with it. Menaces took shape for him and vanished among the landscape of stains upon the walls of his prison as each eye registered and rolled...He was the colour of weathered bronze and in the sudden detachment of my relief, I saw him as beautiful in his majestic absurdity. I saw him indomitable and ridiculous in all the grandeur and all the fragility of useless physical strength. Icarus, in all his foolishness, had once believed himself half-brother to the Minotaur and believed me the father of both. In that moment I felt I could have been and in that moment I heard the Minotaur begin to weep.⁷⁷

When we overcome our fear and resistance to the initiation process then it becomes possible to go and confront the disowned, unloved and unlovable monstrous Minotaur parts of ourselves. The labyrinth is a technology both by and in which to do this, instantiating architecturally the enveloping safety of the compassionate receptive principle, activated when we, as heroes, penetrate the site. The crisis of faith unfolds with the decision to take the first step, risking the vulnerability to meaninglessness in the echoing post-modern fear Kearney described in the

based educational research," in *Complementary Methods for Research in Education*, 2nd ed. ed. Richard M. Jaeger (Washington, D.C.: AERA, 1997), 75–78.

⁷⁷ Ayrton, 187–190.

mirrored labyrinth image. If we talk of “nothing” we are assuming the possibility of a something, when we ask (or don’t ask or don’t admit to wanting to know), “what if there’s nothing here for me? What if God is not there for me? What if there’s no God, or meaning, or purpose? What if there’s nothing at all?” Something dark initiates it the movement, some aspect of ourselves, unrecognised or suppressed, breaks out with pent-up force. Berry sees this as collective:

Behind the long disruption...is the refusal of Western industrial society to accept needed restraints upon its Quest for release, not simply from the normal ills to which we are subject, but release from the human condition itself. There exists in our tradition a hidden rage against these inner as well as outer forces that create limits on our activities. Some ancient force in the Western psyche seems to perceive limitation as a demonic obstacle to be eliminated, rather than as a strengthening discipline. Acceptance of the challenging aspect of the natural world is a primary condition for creative intimacy with the natural world.⁷⁸

This rage against constraint may be connected to the cultural devaluing of the feminine-as-nature. Where women learn early on to adjust to the constraints of cyclic biological inevitability, males in Western Industrial culture do not have this opportunity since leaving behind direct dependence on or even familiarity with the land. The reality of Death/Rebirth is also confronted in the medical industry’s efforts to control life itself through pharmaceuticals, biotechnologies, genetic engineering, and cryogenics. The Western reaction is an extreme and hubristic form of response to the challenge of the task of coming to consciousness:

The labyrinth is a graphic symbol of initiation as well as a physical inducement for the process. In all cultures, the Labyrinth means the entangling and confusing representation of the world of Matriarchal consciousness; it can be traversed only by those who are ready for a special initiation into the mysterious world of the collective unconscious.⁷⁹

A woman's experience of the labyrinthine initiation process may in some respects be qualitatively different from a man's (although in patriarchal culture, the shadow animus can be equally pathological, as Marion Woodman has persuasively demonstrated). Jungian theory refers to female awakening (rather than masculine heroic storming) towards relatedness, in the non-sexual sense of the erotic. Here, the related symbolism is revealing; rather than the maiden at the centre of the labyrinth,⁸⁰ the woman may find herself dealing with the Minotaur. In the case of the mature women, the Beast theme may not indicate the need to find the answer to father

⁷⁸ Berry, 67.

⁷⁹ Henderson, 117.

⁸⁰ See the reference to the anima in note 65, and the historical outline in the Appendix.

fixation or to release a sexual inhibition or other psychoanalytic construct, but may be a form of woman's initiation, when the union of spirit and nature is disturbed. For example the image in a dream of a Beast in a strange house represents the transition to lower, unconscious levels from the too highly conscious, a meaningful aspect of the collective unconscious; as a challenge to accept the masculine principle as the Animal-Man, a Trickster figure; to accept the unpredictable element of the creative masculine, and to harmonize both the Creative and the Nurturing.⁸¹

The thread running through this chapter is the sense of obligation humans have to be whole, whatever that may mean. The interpretation Campbell provides for the Minos myth evokes the origins of the word “religion” in the Latin *religare*, to tie [back] together. By giving in to his impulse to self-serving greed, Minos concretized a symbolic aspect of relationship between the divine and the people that ought to have remained flowing, causing it to distort and become corrupt. By his grasping, he objectified it as the product rather than harmonizing himself with the process: he mistook the bull, which he could own, for the power of which the bull was the symbol, which can only be divinely bestowed. Acting as if we are gods results in having Minotaurs living in the “basement.” What needs “tying back together” from the disarray is the same everywhere: all the lost parts, demonised, projected outward, and loaded with hurt and rage; the ignored and disowned, the perceptions and wisdom of the animal body, the reports from Earth, all the other names and frames for subjectivities and communions unheard, unseen, and unimagined in the wake of the juggernaut.

⁸¹ Henderson, 130.

4. A PERSONAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE LABYRINTH

The first section of this chapter traces in narrative form my own quest to recognise, make sense of, and protect the glimpses and sensations of the Oneness to which we all belong, up until it was time to go into the labyrinth. I say “protect”: as a holistic educator, I am necessarily critical of the education I went through, though it certainly has motivated me to be an agent of change. The second section examines in some detail the physiological and subsymbolic data from one particular event and the process of making meaning after the fact, with reference to a range of theoretical writings. My purpose was to investigate how it is we understand that we are profoundly transformed: liminal, rather than liminoid.

🌐 IN SEARCH OF TRANSFORMATION

When I was little my favourite book was an outsized picture-book edition of stories from Greek mythology. It had dramatic illustrations in the Archaic black-figure style (the way Paul Klee might have interpreted it, as I recall) of the Olympian gods and Attic heroes, done in ochre, terra cotta, and black, using chalk and tissue paper collage. The multiple layerings of colour and the contrasting cut and torn edges conveyed the idea that interactions with deities could happen anytime, since these beings could apparently disguise themselves and move between or even make themselves at home in the forms of any thing or creature they wished.

This shimmery mysterious potential immanence of the everyday was much more intriguing to me than the only other alternative in those days, the fairhaired blandness of the 1950s High Anglican Sunday School Jesus, His remote and ominous Father upstairs in the hulking Norman fortress of a church that my family intermittently attended, and that cipher of a Mother who was the property of the Catholics anyway, seeing as no one else knew what to do with Her except on Christmas Eve. All this and you had to wear scratchy clothes too and sit still and be quiet! Surely that was not the kind of impersonation the ancient shapeshifters practiced.

Both lifelike and larger than life, the Olympians were entirely plausible and even possible: Hera yelling and Zeus thundering back certainly reflected the behaviour of some of the adults that I knew;⁸² bellicose hotheads like Ares were a definite “type” among young men, as were the self-absorbed Narcissi (these were languid and wrote bad free verse; a variant species read Nietzsche too early and college girls were warned against them, to little avail); there were scatterbrained nymphs and disconsolate, tearful naiads everywhere, the occasional aloof and self-contained Artemises, a few really devastating Aphrodites, and always the leering satyrs, fun for a

⁸² Bolen, Jean Shinoda. *Goddesses in Everywoman* (New York: HarperCollins, 1984) 139–167.

while, until push came to shove. There was much to be learned from mythology in the confusion of growing up.



The stories of Hephaestus/Vulcan forging magnificent armour and magic golden nets drew me first into the Ancient World and Medieval sections at the Montreal Museum of Art and later on the Royal Ontario Museum. This in turn led to design school and on to a long career in metalsmithing and foundry work. To discover that he shared his studio with “golden women” technicians and a temple with master craftwoman, strategist and warrior Athena,⁸³ opened up for me most vividly the possibility of “non-traditional occupations” and collegiality, counterbalancing the limited roles women were assigned in both Ancient Greece and the mid-Sixties. Vulcan! Just the name conjures up the flickering light and heat of fiery caverns, the smells of sweat and sulphur, the sound of metal clanging on metal, the solid feel of a hammer handle in the grasp of a calloused palm, of muscle straining against the heft of a crucible full of molten bronze, in a multi-sensorial Milt Caniff/Stam Lee comic book hero constellation that carried me a long way down the demanding trail of apprenticeship to metalwork.

Hephaestus/Vulcan had an irresistible muscularity about him, but the great inventor Daedalus was then, and continues to be, the more subtle, provocative, and culturally influential.⁸⁴ When I first encountered him in the great big picture book, and again in the grade nine copy of Bulfinch’s *Mythology*, he was an ambiguous figure in the midst of a very complicated situation. There seemed to have been some important bits left out of the story, at least in the editions I was given to read. Did Daedalus work for King Minos, or for Queen Pasiphaë? Where did his

⁸³ Graves, Robert. *The Greek Myths*. 2 Volumes. (New York: Penguin Books, 1955) Vol. 1, 87.

⁸⁴ “The link between Daedalus and craftsmanship in general was commonplace, as use of the adjective *daedalus* (‘artificial, skilful; intricately worked’) makes clear.” Doob, 32. Mathematician Pierre Rosenstiehl, addressing the assembly at Roland Barthes’ seminar on interdisciplinary research at the Collège de France in 1979, says: “Suggérons à notre Académie d’architecture de rendre un jour hommage au plus virtuose des bâtisseurs.” in “Les mots du labyrinthe,” 95, note 3. Of Barthes, his mentor, Rosenstiehl says “Vous m’avez beaucoup appris dans l’art de faire voyager une question. J’ai suivi le Dédale du Séminaire (aujourd’hui j’y ai trouvé un siège!). J’ai collectionné vos labyrinthes variés et bouleversants d’humanité.” Elsewhere, Rosenstiehl refers to the labyrinth as perhaps the medieval cathedral builders’ homage to “l’ingénieux Dédale, patron des maîtres-d’oeuvre,” in “Le Dodécadédale ou l’éloge de l’heuristique,” in *Critique* (août-septembre 1982), 786. But we should not underestimate Hephaestus, who struggles with the moral dilemma associated with his craft when he is ordered by Zeus to chain Prometheus to the rock, in Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*, lines 45 and 48: “O handicraft of mine—that I deeply hate! Would another had had this craft allotted to him.”

loyalties lie?⁸⁵ Did an artist have to have loyalties? (“Is that what clients paid for?” asked the young designer, further on down the road. And what about that cow-suit? If he’d only said “No” to the Queen’s request, none of it would have happened.) Why did Daedalus then help Ariadne with the golden “clew”? Was it golden? Or linen? In some versions of the story, the ball of string even re-wound itself, returning to the hands of its keeper!

It was very mysterious, this overlap of mythology, design history, art, and the non-rational. The story of Daedalus’ nephew Perdix inspired by a fish skeleton to invent the handsaw seemed entirely plausible to me, as did Daedalus’ subsequent jealousy and murderous rage. There were paintings on the walls of the palace at Knossos of dancers leaping over the heads of bulls. Similar stunts apparently took place during the running of the bulls in Pamplona, in Spain. There were pictures in the National Geographic and Life magazine. It was not impossible. There was more than one way to be. There was reason to question the official version of reality; the “adjustment myths” concerning how good little girls ought to behave had already begun to grate.⁸⁶

The epiphanic moment had occurred in Sunday school class: while colouring the illustration in the Bible story handout, I had pointed out to the little girl sitting next to me that if you looked outside you could see that the blue of the sky was not just a line across the top, as she was colouring it, but actually went all the way down to the horizon. A well-meaning teacher removed me from the group and told me to hush. “But that is what the sky does!” I protested. “I know, dear,” she said, “But we don’t want to confuse the child.” I remember quite clearly how shocked I was. If they could so easily suppress the truth about things you could see, what were they telling us about things you couldn’t see? I became deeply suspicious and refused to go back. I was six years old.



⁸⁵ “Most curiously, the very scientist who, in the service of the sinful king, was the brain behind the horror of the labyrinth, quite as readily can serve the purpose of freedom. But the hero-heart must be at hand. For centuries Daedalus has represented the type of the artist-scientist: that curiously disinterested, almost diabolic human phenomenon, beyond the normal bounds of social judgment, dedicated to the morals not of his time but of his art. He is the hero of the way of thought—single-hearted, courageous, and full of faith that the truth, as he finds it, shall make us free.” Campbell, 24.

⁸⁶ Northrop Frye’s term for those subversions of historically constructed foundation mythologies aimed, though not consciously, at producing obedience and docility in mass society, unquestioning acquiescence to the “natural” order of the hierarchy of power. Everyone knows what happens to “bad” little girls: they get kicked out of Eden. Northrop Frye, *On Education* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 123.

I had a scholarship to a private school where I stayed until I graduated at sixteen. It was small, relatively new, and “progressive.” That meant we wore uniforms but we also had a pottery room. We were taught to write using Italic pens. We did not learn to type or book-keep, because we would be going on to Ivy League schools to become professionals. It was a learning environment with a heterogeneous atmosphere. Sometimes it was quite strict and traditional, sometimes flexible and egalitarian, occasionally fluid to the point of being chaotic. I am not sure my education was in any way consistent, although I recall moments of brilliance with skilled and generous teachers doing the best they could by the available light. I did not come away with a sense of the interconnectedness or continuity of knowledge and learning. French class, math class, pottery class, history class were mutually exclusive domains.

At home in my room, however, I pursued my interest in Classics, mythology, armour, ships with eyes and animal heads, pottery, woodcarving, textiles. I read widely and re-searched the history of art and technology by making models and copies of these historical objects. I read about artists and zookeepers, including all of Gerald Durrell’s books, studied animal anatomy, the sketchbooks of Leonardo da Vinci, the sculpture of Michelangelo, Rodin and Barye, and the paintings of George Stubbs and Rosa Bonheur. I kept all kinds of animals as pets, which I drew and modelled. None of this had anything to do with school.

At sixteen, I wished I could be an artist and make things for a living. I dismissed the idea as impractical and went to university. It was a disaster. I went to another university, closer to home. That was not a success either, except for learning about the circle of fifths in Music Composition class. Suddenly, all those years of practicing scales made sense. The concept of an overview dawned on me. Why hadn’t “they” told me about this before? I gave up on university and went to a design school far from home. There I learned a technique and an aesthetic that could inform a way of life. It was a great relief. I was very happy for years. Subject and object, technique and approach, practice and theory were all united. History, biology, mythology, anthropology, art could all be involved. Thinking and feeling and doing and imagining were all equally useful. There were no barriers and mutual exclusions any more. Achievement in one medium encouraged exploration in another. Problems in one area could be worked out in a different material. I felt so good, I wondered whether I could risk going back to school.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ In *Women’s Ways of Knowing*, (New York: Basic Books, 1986), Mary Belensky et al. talk about this stage of growing confidence that one’s voice is strong enough to return to university.



Years later, the catalogue from Picasso's Vollard Suite exhibition of 1977 lay open on the young designer's desk. Picasso had given the Minotaur a life: girlfriends, parties at the Sculptor's studio, a tender gaze upon a sleeping lover; now he is grievously wounded, now pathetically blinded, led around by a little girl holding flowers or a dove, past sailors with a boat. What was going on here? These were not illustrations of a quaint archaic story cycle for a children's picture book! The way Picasso had drawn the Minotaur, he appeared to be a regular character in the neighbourhood. There was something reassuring about the scribbly quality in the drawings and etchings, like finding yourself in a foreign country with enough knowledge of the language to understand what people are saying. The quick contouring marks Picasso had used to capture the solidity of a moving figure was a technique so familiar that, as I traced the gestures in the rhythm of the lines, I could practically feel the stiff curly mane and stocky body he'd been drawing. It was easy to see that the Minotaur's presence had felt "real" to Picasso. The bull's head was a closely observed study—Picasso was Spanish, he went to bullfights—and the man's body was drawn from the inside out, by someone who knew what living in one felt like; but the pathos and desire in the creature's character took the drawings out of the genre of documentary life drawing into the realm of psychological, maybe even autobiographical, portraiture.

I remember being intrigued. What did these marks on paper *signify*? Were they not the traces left behind sometimes when something important—a Minotaur, maybe, or the curve of your child's upper lip—has come towards you through the veil? I had spent many hours at life drawing class, enough to know the difference between practicing and performance. Practicing was that regular, faithful exercise to hone skills. But what was being "performed"?



I was teaching jewellery design and bronze casting in short courses through the provincial Arts Council and the community colleges. Jewellery is intimate and talismanic. Metalworking is ancient and traditional. The actual moment of bronze casting is quick, difficult, terrifying and exhilarating. Once you start the pour, you can't turn back. It's dangerous and you can lose everything. It's an initiation. Time and again I noticed transformation in my students as they

mastered difficult skills in a very short time in the effort to make a significant personal piece. The motivation to complete something is powerful, but metalworking is so arduous that it requires a commitment. It's not easily discarded like paper, nor is it pretty right away like watercolour.

My students hardly ever dropped out, they were devoted and enthusiastic, and often an alienated sort of individual—the bright academic non-achiever—would finish something for the first time all year. I wondered what was going on with them and the process. Although we were concentrating on metal techniques, it seemed to be the least of what we were really doing and really talking about. I thought I should teach them the practices that I used as an artist, as that's what I was hired to do, no matter how unrelated it might appear. So I asked them to write a stream of consciousness journal first thing each class period, similar to the writing I do every morning. They grumbled that they “hated” writing, but they did it.

What they wrote was so remarkable that I went back to school full-time, switching majors to a program where I could learn to analyse their data quantitatively and “really” see what the journals were saying. The idea was that somehow the act of writing, no matter how incoherent and rushed it may be, was giving the students a venue or vehicle with which to synthesize the initiation event (fire-and-brimstone scary bronze-casting, of an image and piece in which they were deeply invested) and transfer their resolution to other aspects of their lives including their sense of themselves. This tool for reflection was something I wished I'd had at their age. If I could demonstrate that such an idea were valid, and how it worked, maybe other people could use it too.⁸⁸

I began to see a theme emerging in my ideas about education, as I moved from feeling resentment about my own mis-education, to coalescing a resolve that other “baby” artists should not have to suffer the way I had, if I could help it. My fellow artist-teachers in other media were reporting similar transformations in their students, as well as personal histories that had a lot in common with my own. Our perceptions of innate connection and being part of a flow had had nothing to do with any institution whatsoever, and were entirely personal events that we had

⁸⁸ “Hot Metal / Hot Words: Event and interpretation as developmental tools in adolescent self concept.” *The Journal of Experiential Learning* 20, no. 2, (Fall 97). A revised version of my Psychology thesis at University of Waterloo, specifically a multi-dimensional content analysis instrument for stream-of-consciousness journal material produced in conjunction with intensive art/technology (foundry) workshop. Frequencies of particular journal topics and references to affective states (fear, excitement) correlate significantly to statements of resolve in the face of perceived obstacles, during the initiatory process of sequenced foundry practice, peaking shortly after each participant had completed their first casting.

recognised as significant, even numinous, but had thought to be entirely idiosyncratic. Discovering Jung and Campbell had been the first clue for most of us that we were not alone, nor were we just “zany theatre people,” or “crazy artists.” What we had to say, in our various media, mattered—we were bringing the “boon” back to society, if society would just wake up and listen.



From Classical Studies (where I had been puttering along part time through Distance Education before I switched programs), I was familiar with the tendency of the Olympians to hang around mountain tops, particular groves of trees, and underground in certain caves, and that temples and cathedrals were sometimes built in places that were known to be particularly suitable in ways that had nothing to do with architecture or town planning or transportation or drainage. From Carl Jung’s writing and Joseph Campbell’s I had learned how myth and archetype functioned within the human psyche and in society, translated through iconography and architecture into forms accessible to anyone who paid attention. I had visited churches and cathedrals in Europe, guidebook in hand; these buildings were magnificent and beautiful, but I was not a cradle Catholic, or even much of a Christian, and my response was appreciation for the skill and devotion of the builders rather than a sense of transcendent awe at being in “God’s house.” I had yet to experience that unity between inner life and calling, and public, historical life. I felt collegiality with the medieval builders, for example, but identification with what had moved them eluded me. Though trained by European craftsmen and respectful of tradition, I felt as if I were pressing my nose against the glass, on the outside of faith looking in. I recognised and admired their mastery and perseverance, but I could not share their certitude in the sacredness of the space they inhabited and manipulated.

Gallery space, though similarly remote, is secular, no matter what the artist in the studio may think of what s/he is doing, or for Whom s/he is doing it. This division between sacred intent and secular context was problematic for a long time. But the power of created sacred space to provoke and effect profound personal transformation was made dramatically clear to me during a seminar presentation in an undergraduate course on Sacred Places, in 1997. It was an epiphany, a breakthrough experience, which totally changed my thinking on such polarities as public and private, sacred and secular. Actually, it changed my life.

When I first approached the labyrinth, I was looking for a way to understand the multiplicity of choices that, it seemed, had to be made by me in the world. I had left art practice and returned

to university. The impervious rationality of the curriculum system and the strain of learning the computer were overwhelming. Our engagement required so many concessions on my part, that I could scarcely remember who or what I was. Apprehension about the future and physical exhaustion had crystallised into a dark figure glimpsed out of the corners of my eyes, a manifestation, in shadowy stairwells and corridors, of the conflicts within me between the beast and the human construct, nature “up against the wall” of technology. Fear was projected onto a phantasm that resolved itself into a Minotaur lurking out of the archaic darkness. My anxiety



Figure 3. Minotaur

expressed itself in a large “found object” sculpture I made of a Minotaur, which represented for me the hidden unlovable parts of ourselves that become huge and fearsome in the Shadow, lurking there until a crisis energizes them and forces their recognition. I took the sculpture into the seminar, along with copious handouts of background material and a method I had found for the class to create a temporary masking tape version of the unicursal seven circuit Classical or Cretan labyrinth on the refectory floor. This we did, making it large enough for everyone to walk through and double back out again in one long continuous line.

One older student, Joan, felt very uncomfortable being in such close proximity to others. This surprised me, as no one else had commented one way or the other on that aspect at the time, and I personally enjoyed the “village square dance” atmosphere and sensations. At class the following week, however, Joan reported a remarkable incident. Her husband suffered from Alzheimer’s Disease, and over the weekend,

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down and stay away from it. I was full of questions: how could masking tape on a classroom floor have such power? All we'd been was curious; was a degree of belief on our part not necessary? What was the operative factor anyway? The group? The pattern? The walking itself? Who had invented it in the first place? How had they used it originally? Had only Joan undergone a transformation, or had everyone? How come they weren't talking about it? How could I find out? Methodological questions reared up, questions of subjectivity, objectivity, reliability, validity. How come nothing like that had happened to me? In retrospect, I could see I had been too pre-occupied making sure everything was under control to be able to appreciate the actual experience. Then it dawned on me that this was not unusual, that I was often overly controlling, albeit well-intentioned, about social situations, and detached from the immediacy of experience. It took months for this insight to come to consciousness. I realised that the labyrinth experience could be slow and subtle as well as dramatic and immediate as Joan's had been.

When I discovered that the eleven circuit cathedral labyrinth was connected with the medieval neo-Platonic School of Chartres, my questions proliferated with the entry-points. Was this the technology of a pre-modern Holistic Curriculum? Was there relevance for us in education now? Was the current interest in labyrinths another sign that were we in a transitional state similar to the one the medieval Europeans had experienced? At one point, I was reading Michael Talbot on the implicate order in the holographic universe, and Danah Zohar on quantum consciousness, while deciphering the mathematics of the labyrinth in its cathedral setting. It was a heady combination. Suddenly I had a clear intuition that the labyrinth pattern was somehow an analogue of synthetic thought process, and that I would have to trace an equally meandering path to make the case for its relevance to education. Being neither a mathematician, nor a physicist, nor a psychologist, nor a medievalist, nor even very far along in the study of education, I had a serious and legitimate concern about a tendency towards psychological inflation and the wisdom of undertaking academic wild goose chases. On the other hand, the field was so new that this task might be very rewarding: difficult, but not impossible. I needed to find a teacher. At this point, "book synchronicity" played a part, and within six months of conjuring up the Minotaur, I found myself in a combined weekend pilgrimage and labyrinth facilitator-training session at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco.



⊗ A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

I was well prepared to be on a pilgrimage to the Labyrinth, or so I thought. For months I had studied the history of the device and the writings of the leader, an Episcopalian priest and psychotherapist, the Reverend Dr. Lauren Artress. The priest at my own church had just returned from a pilgrimage to the Taizé community in France. He was so enthused about it that I knew I could be in for a powerful experience. With my academic advisor I had discussed how I was going to document the adventure, and ways that my thesis would incorporate the material. The long flight across the continent ended at the edge of the world. The city on the coast was beautiful; our lodgings there were comfortable. My companion and I had time before the first meeting of the group to visit the cathedral and walk both the indoor and outdoor labyrinths by ourselves, so the place was familiar. Everything was under control!

At dusk on the second day of the pilgrimage, we walked silently in procession from the rectory to the cathedral nave, carrying candles. The cathedral was lit with many votive candles. A group of musicians played medieval chant music with Oriental overtones, some were singing. We stood in a circle round the perimeter of the labyrinth, and Dr. Artress invited us in one by one; I was in the middle of the group to enter. I expected to be perfectly happy and to have a joyous meditation in a beautiful setting. As I moved along the last few turns before reaching the centre of the labyrinth, a strong feeling of sadness welled up in me and tears poured down my face. They did not stop, it was more than dampness, it was a torrent. I was thick with grief throughout my chest and throat and clenched my teeth to keep from making a noise. I was very embarrassed by being so snotty and unprepared with no Kleenex to cover my face and mop up the mess. The thought in my mind was about my children and how sad the past few years had been for them. I was shocked that I had come so far to such a place and still that grief was with me! I was irritated with myself that I could not “get over it.” Then I heard all around me people sniffing, and I saw many of them covering their faces. We all had something we could not get over. I saw that the flood of tears was a River of Sorrow and all of us humans were in it forever, that tranquil joy was a rare thing to be treasured: this was the meaning of life.

As soon as I could, I finished the walk and took myself to a dark part of the cathedral. The dome of the transept towered far overhead. I felt like a wild creature in a cave licking her wounds. I went to the marble altar rail at the far end of the nave, and laid my face on it, hot skin on cold marble. The stone against my skin felt unmoving and eternal. I felt like I had been carved out and released to life from mother rock and I wanted to return to that stillness from the

unmanageable turmoil of creature existence. I was exhausted and limp and sprawled there like a flotsam for a long time. Occasionally other people came slowly by seeking solitude, but no one spoke and we kept our distance. The music continued, unearthly sounds with traces of ancient chanting modes and eastern tonalities identifiable in it. Eventually I felt calm again and wandered back along the side aisles to the enormous font beside the labyrinth. All our shoes were laying there two by two round the base, like dogs waiting patiently for owners outside a door. Each shoe held the impression of foot-shape and memory of paths followed. I imagined them new, like a picture of your mother as a child before life happened to her beautiful face.



In the months that followed, I puzzled over my notes and memories, trying to understand what had happened. Most useful for getting beneath the surface to analyze the event were the tools of phenomenology. At the time, I had felt constrained by a sense of having to remain “objective,” so that I was never quite sure if I was being “present in the moment.” I am not sure I even knew what that meant. Now, three years later, such a split is hard to imagine. I believe that the inherent nature of the labyrinth process is so powerful that it overrides such constructions; that is one of the lessons.

The experience was complex; it unfolded on many levels. The image I have of the event is of intersecting spherical orbits, the meshing of world-lines. The sensory realm was rich and elaborate: intricate and evocative music, flickering candles, gleaming fabric drapery and banners in brilliant colours and the thick soft carpet underfoot, soaring architecture full of shadows, cold marble and polished wood and metal, smells of beeswax and burning incense. The non-sensory world, the transpersonal, the presence and movement of the Spirit in us and among us, was mysterious. With what sensors do we pick up on this? It reminds me of Christo’s “Running Fence,” the long curtain across California to the shore of the Pacific, in which you “see” the movement of the wind in the rippling fabric. That’s how you know it’s been and gone. Like the indentation on the bed where the cat slept all day before getting up to greet you when you come home.

I wondered about the influence of instinct on the ways people behave in the labyrinth. By oneself, alone in the labyrinth, the experience is very different from walking in a group of people, many of whom may be strangers to each other. An ethnologist defines instinct as a disposition

towards a pattern of behaviours. Closed instincts are genetically fixed, like the honey dance of bees. Open instincts can be described as “programming with a gap” to be filled by a range of experiences depending on the circumstances within which the creature finds itself. Aggression in humans, a general tendency to attack members of one’s own species, can be seen as an open instinct, and is related to dominance over territorial space. The engagement can be symbolic, the submissive party making themselves “small.” A symbolic response might be a friendly gesture. This exchange is often highly complex, but the capacity is innate in a species.⁸⁹

One of the things some people did that evening was to take advantage of the scarves provided, to use in various ways but most often to shroud their faces. To see someone so veiled evokes the *chador* of Muslim women. The experience of being veiled might be very comforting, although to me as a Western woman, the imposition of the rule that I must be veiled and the threat to me if I did not comply undermines a sense of agency in the choice and gives the veiledness an entirely different meaning. However I do live in a social system that includes surveillance and policing of behaviour, differently framed in legal terms, and differently imposed, than Islamic law. At any rate, I did not take a scarf, preferring to be unencumbered. But, as a sensory cue, the profile of veiled people was beautiful to see, mysterious to an onlooker, like a pupa with something going on invisibly concealed within.

After I began to cry, I very much wanted to be veiled, to be physically inside such a capsule with my snot and misery. I did not want to be seen so apparently out of control of my emotions. This was a high pitch of self-consciousness: in retrospect, objectively, who would care besides me? But in misery the body becomes an encapsulated world. I have heard the psychological state of suicidal people so described, that in such a state the world of the psyche is very small, nothing else matters but to end the pain. I think that I am far too enmeshed with too many people to even imagine such isolation. But at that moment, I did want to hide. But the labyrinth obliged me to stay with it.

Hearing other people sniffing and stifling sobs was a revelation. Here we were in public, a collection of individuals not managing! Then to see other people apparently having a wonderful time, dancing and swaying and smiling, was a shock. How could they be so happy? Then the image of the River of Sorrow arose, and the understanding that though we were all on it forever, it was possible to experience great joy and gladness, perhaps even because of the continuo of

⁸⁹ Mary Midgley, *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature* (London: Routledge, 1980), 53. Compare with Jung’s identification of archetypes as unconscious images of instincts, note 14.

sorrow to enhance the contrast. If we could all be in one place at one time experiencing the range of emotions, then why not in different places at the same time, or the same place at different times, or simply throughout our own life spans? Then I began to see the non-linearity of time.

I wonder about the function of the group, as a cue to this emotional somatic event, given Midgley's discussion about aggression and space. As labyrinth "facilitators," we are responsible for setting the tone of the event. The instructions people most want to hear is how to behave in this unfamiliar group setting, the "protocol." If you step out of the lines you will go back the way you came, returning either to the centre or the entrance without completing the full circuit. This is very disconcerting for people; they feel as if they've failed. So we have to tell them how that happens. It's easy to do, because people going in will meet people coming out. The path is too narrow for two people to pass, so a social negotiation of space is necessary. Do you make eye contact and greet? Is that an invasion of privacy? Is it rude not to? Do you keep your eyes downcast? If so, how do you choreograph the pass? As a dance aficionado and a student of holistic education, I think this is a fascinating subject, but my job as a facilitator is to make people comfortable.

Another aspect of this instinctual behaviour concerns passing people whose chosen pace is different than your own. This brings up feelings of aggression and competitiveness, and false politeness inwardly resented. There are techniques for graceful overtaking, which facilitators also teach, but each individual must deal with the feelings that rise. Similarly, the issue of "appropriate" behaviour comes up, when people with varying degrees of inhibition about body gesture are together on a walk. Some not only prefer a slow dignified pace but are shocked by those who are more expressive and expansive in their movements. We emphasise at the outset that there is no "right" way to walk, but my bias is towards the dance mode, and I was brought up short when my training supervisor suggested that the more uninhibited needed to be aware of and sensitive to the needs of others! Policing! As much as any of the participants in events I facilitate, I had to learn to see that my stance of rebellion was not helpful to my capacity for compassion. All of these issues are consciously used as metaphors within labyrinth practice for concerns in real life.



There is some support for my intuition about the analogy between the functioning of the

brain and the layout of the labyrinth. The triune brain, vertically and laterally inter-connected, finds “the appropriate stimulus and supportive environment”⁹⁰ in the labyrinth. Parallel-processing in/of/between reptile-brain, limbic system, and neo-cortex “entities” seems to be diagrammed by the layout of the labyrinth path itself: the concentric layers of the three trans-quadrant circuits identifiable among what appears at first to be a jumble of twists and turns. It’s possible that there is an analogy here as well to the images and experiences of emotion/feeling that arise on the stages of the path. The welling of emotion that occurred during the event in San Francisco came as I moved towards the centre. That part of the path I know to be located in the last and outermost, “deepest” of the trans-quadrant circuits. So I had walked through all the depths of the labyrinth. Perhaps I had simultaneously traversed the depths and lateral breadth of the three brain levels. Reptile-brain reported on the “safety of the tribe,” the limbic system was full of compassion, the neo-cortex was vexed at my messy public behaviour; I was “trapped” and suspended in public exposure, yet, paradoxically, safe.

Rosenstiehl’s graph theory analysis of the labyrinth is a left-brain schematic, linear and programmatic, while a sketch of his “infinite field” diagram illustrates “the flux of global patterns of activation over the entire network” in Ashbrook’s description of right hemisphere activity.⁹¹ This evidence of coherence between left and right hemisphere patterning and product has a numinous glow about it. I am drawn to it; I think the Answer might lie there. Body-knowing and concept-forming and rational/scientific description of the labyrinth experience overlay each other in alignment: “The order was there before we were.” Maybe my tears were a response to, an expression of, the sense of home-coming. Maybe the public humiliation was a necessary unmasking. It is both private and social. Unmasking is the collective great fear, the dark side of the culture’s brutal competitiveness, which appears to be a function of left-hemisphere lop-sidedness, a cruel dualism, one bridged by the labyrinth experience.

Activation of the senses is essential; I cannot imagine the experience without them. Sight, smell, sound were factors in my experience, cues and stimuli to desired response, and all traditional within Christian practice. The music was Taizé, a kind of contemporary chant in which the words themselves call for the Holy Spirit to “come” (if you choose to attend to word-

⁹⁰ Joseph Chilton Pearce, *Evolution’s End: Claiming the Potential of our Intelligence* 2d ed., (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 49–50.

⁹¹ James B. Ashbrook, “The Human Brain and Human Destiny: A Pattern for Old Brain Empathy with the Emergence of Mind,” *Zygon Journal of Religion and Science* Vol. 24, No. 3 (September, 1989), 343.

meanings), while the construction of the harmony and mode is minor key and the intervals between notes are conducive to heartbreaking. The Oriental overtones in the percussion, horns, and a wailing continuo added an otherworldly dimension that made the whole more universal than familiar Western Christian practice. Visually, the looming shadowy cathedral in candlelight, the draped heads, and the circularity of movement evoked the archaic; the tactility of stone and marble supported this. Though I do not rely on my sense of smell, I have observed that burning sweet-grass and sage calms me down, so perhaps the smell of beeswax and incense also affects me, though I can only presume causality. Snot and tears on the face are themselves external sensations, outward signs of inner loss of control; Jung writes of the associations with sea and moon of the salt of tears. So the taste of salt marks the cyclic (lunar) return: perhaps the River of Sorrow is a tide-basin, the delta of a great river meeting the sea?

A social sense of touch figures largely in the labyrinth event, beyond the tactility of walking. The feet are bare on the path. The huge baptismal font at Grace Cathedral, where we had left our shoes, is carved all the way around in low bas-relief with a scene of pilgrims walking. All feet have walked a path! We are indeed part of a long line of saints. In the labyrinth, bodies brush past each other. A kinaesthetic sense of bodies in space aware of one another is involved, even if direct contact is sometimes studiously avoided. To be in the labyrinth is a social event; protocol is necessary.⁹²



Intuition is thought formed before you are aware of it. First came: “I am walking and crying and I am embarrassed”: self-consciousness. Then “All these people are walking and crying!” so “I am not alone!” Then came the River of Sorrow image, which I would call intuition. Did Words and Image emerge simultaneously? One function of the labyrinth is dance notation, so the choreography of walking can easily express a river vortex pattern. The sensation of a private flood of tears adds a water element. An eternal quality arises in many people all walking the same pattern, at different stages at any given moment, in one architectural site, within a continuo of music. All weeping! Sorrow is eternal. So an equation of stimulus to embodied meaning

⁹² The facilitator website “talk-room” sometimes has postings on new developments in protocol: part of this emerging practice is an investigation and construction of tradition.

would be:

Water + vortex + group = tactility (private grief) + pattern (seen and traversed) + continuity of tribe.

The sudden consciousness is the “island,” a high dry place in all the flooding. The Intuition image coheres the whole experience to preserve the individual from ego dissolve. I could cry forever for certain losses; women have gone mad on the Via Dolorosa. Indeed I avoid situations that trigger such feelings, like stories of refugee families. So the River of Sorrow is Eternal and Universal, River Ocean. How can humans live with such grief? I am grateful to Faculty of Intuition for the island of respite.

The Three-fold path on the labyrinth finishes with the Path (outward) of (comm)Union. Here the direction is resolve in the World. This is great wisdom, attained on the island of consciousness, by means of intuitive integrating. Yes, there is sorrow; no, you are not alone; yes, you can take action.



Insights from yoga practitioners provide a radical interpretation of Graeco-Roman and Judeo-Christian mythological heritage as literal, though concealed, descriptions of body functions as sensors and moderators of human existence. In this view, the dynamics between mythological deities and entities are analogs to breath, senses, perceptions, cognition. Awareness of our inner workings, freed from our entanglements of desire with external objects/goals by means of the disciplined yogic shamanic practices intended to attain trance state, will bring us in line with the harmonies apparent in all creation (as expressed by all ancient wisdom traditions and modern quantum physics). The archaic origins of trance state lie in repetitive motions, evolving later to control of breath and other body functions. In labyrinth practice, the repeated turns and runs have a pattern of concealed logic that subverts rational linear thinking—the mind “gives up” to being lost and compelled through space. Western concepts of relative value, e.g. “ahead” and “behind,” lose their meaning. One falls back on proprioceptive awareness of one’s own pace, in time with one’s own breathing. Strong emotions and realisations lie suppressed beneath normative social behaviours such as following a pace not your own. The process of adjustment can be a shock.

The result, eventually, is a profound and energizing sense of relaxation.⁹³

In the beginning, dance was the symbolic action, the sacred language of the dancer as healer and priest. In western civilisation, mind and body were polarised and attended to by different professional disciplines, and ranked in value. The mind was associated with spirit, clarity, objectivity, and differentiation. Its masculine principle is represented in the Christian Trinity. The receptive feminine principle was located in a parallel trinity with the living body and that psychological repository for rejected impulses and qualities, with its personal, cultural, and collective aspects, which Jung called the Shadow. This triune dimension of human existence was demonised and devalued, suppressed and consequently distorted in eruption and projection. One result is that body gesture is under cultural surveillance.

To re-acquaint ourselves with body gesture “language” is an act of attentive non-intervention, on the part of the actor and the witness in the “analytic hour” of clinical practice, allowing oneself “to dance and be danced by the inner other.”⁹⁴ Proprioception of sensory data and the inner “image” alternate and combine to transmit impulses emerging from the unconscious in its personal, cultural, and collective dimensions and the fourth, the synthetizing Self. Moving through continuum of the idiosyncratic “comfort gestures” of the pre-verbal early personal, the mime vocabulary of culture, and the numinous, phylogenetic primordial levels of the unconscious, reveals the exact correspondance of the psyche to the organism of the individual and species, in Jung’s view. In the memory of the event, I am looking for the personal comfort gesture. My idiosyncratic gesture when distressed or frustrated is to cross my arms around myself and rock and croon. I do this sitting or standing, alone or in public places—it is soothing to myself and whatever baby I happened to be carrying, though I was shocked to find myself doing it with a bag of potatoes in a supermarket line-up once. In several important ways I was a motherless child; I comforted myself a lot. On the labyrinth, a slow walk turns into a shifting of weight from one foot to the other, though I do not recall crooning. The labyrinth as Mother architecture, was rocking me.

I put my hands over my face to cover the mess of snot and tears and wipe it up—I forget what I was wearing, maybe I used the sleeve? (It was cold in San Francisco; we wore layers of clothing.) That is a cultural gesture, to cover the nose and muzzle and mouth, to bury the face in

⁹³ J. Nigro Sansonese, *The Body of Myth: Mythological Shamanic Trance and the Sacred Geography of the Body* (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions International, 1994).

⁹⁴ Joan Chodorow, “To Move and Be Moved,” *Quadrant* Vol. 17 no. 2 (Fall 1984): 41.

the hands. But I had to keep moving, not block traffic, so I could not cover my eyes but kept watching the path ahead of me, staying aware of other people in the vicinity. The necessity of keeping to the path in a group walk adds to the “containment” quality of the psychic crisis within the labyrinth setting.

Stewart’s four-fold crisis/survival affects and specific stimuli for each one were operating: these are Distress (loss); Fear (the unknown); Anger (restriction); and Contempt/Shame (rejection).⁹⁵ I was fearful of the unknown quantity of the public, social qualities of the labyrinth experience, and of anticipated disappointment—what if I had come all this way and there was nothing for me? Something triggered memories of loss, bringing on distress, which led to fear of loss of control, associated with the primordial level, and consequent shame and humiliation, then anger at myself for the restrictions imposed by the lack of preparation in not bringing tissue, thus subjecting myself to shame. I felt my flood as chaotic, a-rhythmic amidst the flowing, serene veiled figures in calm progress. The cultural model of inscrutable concealment was the archetype against which my discomfort was contrasted.



Jung talks about the formal elements in the process of development in the psyche and many are represented in the labyrinth pattern and thus re-traced by the walker: the chaotic multiplicity (in the apparent confusion of the lines and turns) and order; the opposition of right and left, in the alternation of the turns; the radial arrangement around the quadraform, rotation, and centring process—the climax in his view and also in the labyrinth sequence of the Threefold Path, on reaching the middle. Clockwise and counter clockwise circumambulations characterize the labyrinth—a corkscrew or augur (in contrast to the single direction of Buddhist circumambulation) whereby one walks “inward” counter clockwise, and then brings “up” or “out” and consolidates the psychic “sample” on the clockwise circuits.

It would be interesting to keep track of the different images/feelings coming up on different directions of the walk. There is a long part on the NE/SE quadrants, two half-circuits on the outer rim, just before the last bit of business in the throat before the centre. I love this part—it is unimpeded by turns—the imagery that arises is one of splendid isolation/solitude. I always feel

⁹⁵ Chodorow, 45.

like the best incarnation of my totem horse, the “mare roaming the plain” of the second hexagram in the I Ching, intentional and unburdened in stride, watchful in a very big view, with the challenge of distance to cover. As a girl I loved track (and hated games) because it was mostly solitary, and running is a gate to trance state, after the sickening rebellion of the body at the “wall” and subsequent rush of endorphins. I like the pumping of arms and legs, the sense of speed (Kundera’s description of speed experienced by the body running, versus mediated speed of the body on a motorbike, rang true for me. I can’t understand recreational engines) and particularly I like to feel the pounding of feet on earth. It’s percussive, which is what I enjoy about Flamenco dance also, both to observe and to perform. A whole tangential story to this would be the transmediation of the image of Horse from the training at the gym to writing my thesis, the analogue of miles to chapters.

But sometimes this horse just plods and makes it to the end. In the described event I felt drained and exhausted, not noble and joyful. Reading Behnke on “matching” reminds me of the washed up on shore feeling by the altar rail. Normally I hold myself straight-backed. This was characteristic when I was young, and then I lost it through having babies and an oppressive marriage. In dream-work, after I left the marriage, I put down a knapsack of rocks I had been carrying (I built a bench with them, and stepping stones across a stream). In waking life, I had incapacitating back spasms, and had to enter a conscious dialogue with my back, which meant something other than telling “It” what to do. Though I constantly tell myself to drop my shoulders, I see that it is a body “signature.” I could use the technique of “matching”⁹⁶ to be aware of this stance.

On the labyrinth, the turns must be negotiated, they too seem a-rhythmic, unpredictable, nothing to be blasé about, a 180-degree turn out of nowhere. There are dance turns you can use, jazz turns with a kick, pivots, crossovers, and twirls on the balls of your feet, which are fun to do but seem “showy” in a sedate group. I did not do them in such company; I “police” myself, unless other dancers are there. There is some choreography/improvisation I would love to do with these other dancers such as responding to each other in the encounters at the labrys (opposing turns on the axes)—I see hints of it occasionally, and also of the possibilities of voice expression.

⁹⁶ “In its most schematic form, the matching technique may be said to consist of three parts: (1) an awareness of something in one’s own body; (2) an inner act of matching or aligning oneself with this; and (3) allowing something to change...There is a widespread impoverishment of the experience of one’s own body in our culture.” Elizabeth A. Benke, “Matching,” *Somatics* Vol. 6 no. 4 (Spring/Summer 1988), 25.

There was one particular Taizé chant/walk event where a performance artist-participant boomed Tantric energy sounds as her contribution to the singing; the “round” format of the communal chant fragmented and re-formed into another structure altogether, spatial, improvisational, evocative of an image common in all reports of a “network” of sounds. It was a collective experience of something tangible, electric, through the peripheral vascular system, stimulated by chorale architecture and candle-lit gloom.



Some labyrinth practice, including Sig Lonegren’s, a geomancer and early proponent of labyrinth restoration and use for meditation, combines the seven chakra system with the seven circuit Classical form, posing a different question about one particular concern on each circuit of the path. The activities associated with the heart chakra seem most relevant, particularly the combination of empathy and healing, and the advance from linear thinking to lateral. The characterization of fourth or heart chakra reasoning as “transcending polarities...into mutually sustaining unities”⁹⁷ through reconciliation sounds like the process that unfolds over the course of the labyrinth walk. The heart chakra is the first spiritual level, an “initial tentative step” on the spiritual path; Artress talks of this first step as being the only sustained commitment you need to make in labyrinth practice, and then the device takes over. So, feet making steps embodies soul moving towards initiation.

I needed to learn compassion for my own self in my flood “without aversion or resentment”; this was hard to do. I did not feel self-pity, just surprise at first, then vexation, then wonder, at hearing the other people also grieving. That was the beginning of empathy outward—they too might be going through what I was, so I could imagine myself in their place—perhaps that isn’t empathy, but projection? The image of the River of Sorrow, is that out of empathy or compassion? At the time, I was too self-conscious to feel anything other than my own misery and sense of exposure, certainly not consciously receptive to other people’s specific pain, just to its expression, in the weeping. In the Cathedral experience, the insight that joy was a rare treasure in the eternal flow of grief was offered outwards in compassion. It had calmed me; maybe by

⁹⁷ John E. Nelson, “Madness or Transcendence? Looking to the Ancient East for a Modern Transpersonal Diagnostic System,” *ReVision* Vol. 17 no.1 (Summer 1994), 18.

offering it, the collective energy was transformed.

In labyrinth facilitation there is a component of witnessing, but individual participants are encouraged to consolidate their insights in writing and image making. Artress reports cases of prolonged weeping and collapse on the labyrinth, but never a truly uncontrollable psychotic episode; she thinks that individuals who can sense such a shattering of the ego coming on tend to feel too threatened to enter it. This is a great relief for those of us facilitators who are not trained therapists. But it points to its potential as a ritual healing tool.

The *communitas* context is significant in labyrinth practice. Clarissa Pinkola Estes describes weeping as a call for comfort and support. Weeping on the labyrinth does not necessarily mean you will receive gestures of comfort, though I have seen complete strangers fall into each other's arms when a family in crisis reached an emotional climax at the centre and called soundlessly for help from the other participants. However, there is no "protocol" for this, it was spontaneous. In a way congregation is "small-scale society" with doctrine and practice as the frames for understanding and containing transformative process, if the individual chooses to engage with the group. Perhaps if we were more explicit about this, it would be more widely recognized as an alternative to cultural "pathologizing" of the symptoms of initiation to the rites of passage.



Discussions of initiation ritual refer to metaphorical dismemberment as the "skeletalization" stage, associated with crossing the threshold between worlds and lives.⁹⁸ I had been working for years in art practice with projects on "recreating" life, by skinning and tanning, dissection and reconfiguration of animal parts in sculpture. There were pedagogical reasons for it: my students needed to know the skills of close observation of skeletal and muscle systems, a study traditional since prehistoric hunting societies and clear in the work of Da Vinci, Stubbs, Bonheur. In contemporary art the term is "the bony aesthetic." But my introduction to the labyrinth began with the appearance of the Minotaur, fleeting glimpses in the corner of my eyes, then a "calling" to be given form. Long hours were spent constructing a head and body upon the "relic" of a set of horns and skull fragment; big decisions made about the technical and symbolic dimensions of the

⁹⁸ Larry G. Peters, "Rites of Passage and the Borderline Syndrome: Perspectives in Transpersonal Anthropology," *ReVision* Vol. 17, No. 1 (Summer 1994), 39; Campbell, 25–26, 93.

“brutal” confrontation and merging of the animal remains of the head with the industrial coiled steel representation of the human torso. Sitting cross-legged on the floor with this contraption in my lap, building up layer upon layer of form evoked the Pietà and the ritual enactment of birth/death/rebirth cycle, and also a solidarity across time with stone age craftswomen working with bone, hair and hide. The repeated gestures of brushing and gluing sent me into a state that was certainly trance-like. Rocking and crooning!

Many of my students were already working with bone shapes and skulls, reproducing the forms or distorting them in the super-hero/monster vocabulary of contemporary popular culture. We talked of the necessity for monsters to have an underlying recognisable form, human or animal. From this origin springs the distortion that engenders the fright: how far can you go and still be human?



The labyrinth is feminine; it marks transition, passage to a liminal state. Even as I scrape the cookie crumbs and sticky bits from Sunday school off the tattered tape one at St Paul’s—Holy Housekeeping!—I am struck by how beautiful, austere, and elegant it is. She is a dignified Mother. Lauren Artress talked about the first canvas one they had at Grace Cathedral, how grubby it got. Someone said: “But think how many tears have been cried on this.” All those tears I could not cry in my absent mother’s arms, I began to cry in the arms of this mother architecture for all the missing children: myself, my own children. In this place the abandoned are found, brought back, restored.

After seeing the scene in the Black Earth video about the village cultures of India, of the woman drawing the dots and lines of threshold patterns, I remembered the long hours we spent crawling around on the floor, hunched over, laying out and taping the new labyrinth into place. Our bodies knelt while torsos and arms described the great and small arcs of the labyrinth. We cried, those of us who worked together, for our hurting muscles and our private sorrows. Tears are expression but they are not language. In California, stiff procession gave way to arcs of dance gesture and the Gothic peaks of the body in grief: hunched shoulders, covered eyes. Above us giant banners in remembrance of the AIDS dead moved gently in the currents of candle-heated air. People’s children, dead of love! It is hard to reconcile love and pain; Aphrodite is not an underworld goddess. Hecate makes much more sense to me now.



Giving up on reason as the sole method of discerning what is subjective and what is objective (are these categories even relevant?), abandoning the concept of existence as limited to what this late twentieth century Western mind “knows” through the evidence it chooses, or is culturally conditioned, to accept from the sensory organs of this particular body, allowing the underlying truths of our cultural heritage to return from the wastebasket of Modernity: taking these steps has opened up the possibility of simultaneity of consciousness. History, science, mythology, all the ways that humans have understood the world, the cultural inheritance, telescoped into the awareness of each consecutive moment, once I relinquished the narrowness of objectivity, and began to “listen” to bodyself, my own and others, and to learn to “read” its messages. It has been fruitful to undergo this learning while maintaining a relationship to the pavement labyrinth as a constant amidst the flux and upheaval of shifting viewpoint and levels of awareness. I could at least keep track of the evolution in my responses to this unchanging spatial device.

Here I am encouraged by Joan’s report on the impact walking the labyrinth had had on her life. This proves to me what a powerful tool it is, overriding all our comforting (or despairing) assumptions about our evolutionary distance from what we once been able to “know” and the “bodiness” of knowing it. That the wisdom we could gain from it was accessible through the experience of the body, rather than the machinations of reason, I had no doubt. Joan’s story suggested that the physical event of walking the labyrinth activated a template of tacit meaning: in mythological terms, she had gone into the darkness at the centre and, by integrating and reviving her inner Theseus, had rescued her own “maiden” self. I saw then that we had evoked mysterious invisible powers beyond my understanding, and that we ought to approach this site with awe and trembling and a open mind. For the first time ever, I knew what it was to be standing on sacred ground. No more tourism!

I have learned some of the sensory cues humans need in the immediate atmosphere to assist them in moving into a state receptive to such alternation in consciousness. The labyrinth schema is unchanging, but the individuals coming to it are in ceaseless flux. Time of day, light levels, number of people present, the evocative effect of candles, music, incense, all make a difference to what ensues, even for the same individuals. The intentions of the group gathering to “create” an event can be influenced by what is said and done in the introduction, when the ringing of bells signals the onset of sacred time; or the group can gather on the surface of the labyrinth to drink coffee and chat after a service elsewhere in the building, with no intention of engaging with it

whatsoever—only the children running on what fragments of the path are free of Sunday school tables remind us it is there (and me of the infamous Canon Jacquemart, ripping up the “impolite pavement” at Amiens in the eighteenth century, to stop the noisy interruptions). Then I wonder how as a group of our species we rely on a leader to say, “Look! Listen! Touch!” so as to break through consensual oblivion, to draw the line between the sacred and the profane.

I am astonished when it all comes together and takes off, when all in the group feel some peripheral vascular “rush” simultaneously, spontaneously. After the fact, one Pentecost, when Taizé chanting in rounds had fragmented into some auditory architectonic structure, acentric and fluid, I asked some tentative questions of the others. I did not want to suggest anything and so “contaminate the evidence.” But everyone I talked to volunteered some version of the same physical and imaginal experience: an “electric” feeling, a surge of energy, a glowing vision of a net spread out between us, a glorious and majestic freedom in the improvisational harmonies of the music we were creating, a sense of contribution to and return from that creation. At the end our priest-cantor walked alone into the centre and we sang him through, a gift of attention to reciprocate all the care he takes of us. It me think of the fifteenth century Paschal liturgical dance on the labyrinth at Auxerres, where the canon of the cathedral walked to the centre, re-enacting Jesus’ harrowing of Hell for lost souls, while the monks stood round the outside, singing in call-and-response pattern. Recently I had the same privilege; I had worked hard as facilitator to arrange an event, and I felt like celebrating its conclusion. The labyrinth was vibrating with accumulated energy and my feet spun vortexes on the turns. It reminded me of the Flamenco circle where everyone supports the one in the middle, clapping and exhorting until the performer is filled with the wild spirit the Rom call *duende*. I felt myself relax finally into trusting the sense of *communitas*, dancing and singing all the way to the centre, where I sat for a long time staring into the red roses and candlelight and incense smoke.



⊗ CONTEMPORARY LABYRINTH PRACTICE

The unicursal labyrinth, in both its seven circuit Classical and eleven circuit cathedral forms, has been undergoing recuperation as a spiritual tool for the past ten or fifteen years. In North America, this renaissance originated with two separate though related streams.⁹⁹ One group, practitioners of dowsing and geomancy, builds on traditional knowledge (now empirically documented) of telluric earth energies and continental ley patterns, and their effect on human behaviour, activities and settlements. While the dowsers and geomancers deal with the not-visible, their focus is practical and materialist, a matter of aligning human actions and installations with underlying telluric energy patterns, a sort of Celtic *Feng Shui*, rather than propagating an explicit institutional doctrine. In this view, the placement of the original eleven circuit labyrinth at the west end of the nave of Chartres Cathedral in France is not a random decision but one informed by the principles of sacred, or temple, geometry. It marks a precise position within an ancient and extensive system of sacred sites and buildings across northern Europe that may have been intended to function as an enormous astronomical laboratory. This earthly construct reflects and expresses a divine, and mathematically consistent, cosmology.¹⁰⁰

There is evidence that earth-based and Goddess-focused spiritual practices and religions have always been connected with these sites, although many of them now lie buried beneath later Christian edifices. Thus, Notre Dame de Chartres Cathedral is built over the original spring in the crypt where the Druids used to worship, and the statue in the crypt chapel of the Black Madonna, Notre Dame Sous-Terre, seated with her divine son in her lap, is a reproduction of the original pear-wood carving (destroyed in the Revolution) that predated the Christianization of Western Europe and the twelfth century cathedral itself. Even before the birth of Christ, there was at the location of Chartres an altar and a statue to honour the Virgin which medieval texts call *Virgo*

⁹⁹Information on these streams and practitioners can be found at www.labyrinthociety.org and www.gracecathedral.org respectively.

¹⁰⁰ Keith Critchlow, in *Time Stands Still* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1979) has extended the work of archaeologist Alexander Thom on the co-ordinated siting and use of the megaliths found in Britain and France, referring to these installations as “neo-lithic software.” The Danish archaeologist Tons Brunés in *The Secrets of Ancient Geometry and Its Use* (Two volumes, translated by Charles M. Napier. Copenhagen: Rhodos, 1967) offers a plausible account of the prehistoric origins of the geometrical circle in the tracking and representation of astronomical events such as sunrise at the equinoxes and solstices. Robert Lawlor's *Sacred Geometry, Philosophy and Practice*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982) embeds the practices of sacred geometry within the worldviews of those who first observed it in nature and developed it.

partitura. This was the Virgin of the Druids, one third of the Triple Goddess, transposed into Mary, the Virgin Mother of Jesus, as the pagans were converted.¹⁰¹

A second stream, most closely associated with the American Episcopalian minister and psychotherapist Lauren Artress, Canon Pastor at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, is the introduction of the cathedral labyrinth into contemporary Christian congregational use as a means to restore to the spiritual balance both the intuitive imagination and the receptive principle, through what Artress describes as the personal experience by the participant of an archetype of transformation and symbol of the feminine divine.¹⁰² Artress learned of the labyrinth at a seminar on Mystery Schools with the psychologist and scholar Jean Houston in 1991. Shortly afterwards, she travelled to Chartres with Alan Jones, Dean of Grace Cathedral and author of many books on spiritual growth. Together they moved the chairs covering the labyrinth, to walk it and to take measurements of it for the first portable canvas reproduction used at Grace later that year.

Since that time Artress has toured and lectured all over North America and Europe, developing the curriculum for practitioners, and collecting data for research into the effects of walking the labyrinth upon the individual and the collective psyche. With the co-operation of Dean Jones and Chanoine François LeGaux, the Rector of Chartres Cathedral and member of the Vatican Committee on Marian theology, Artress leads each May a series of workshops at Chartres. During these weeklong seminars, participants are introduced, in small group and lecture form, and through the indescribable experience of re-tracing by candlelight the catechumen's path from the Crypt through the Chartres labyrinth itself, to a range of topics, Christian mysticism, Thomist discernment, Marian theology, sacred geometry, and Spiritual Emergence in the post-modern era, as these relate to labyrinth practice.

Much of Artress' writing and teaching focuses on the access to the soul, through the realm of the imagination, made available by the experience of walking the labyrinth. Something about the process provokes a response in the participant, such as the dramatic "tearing of the veil" that my colleague Jean had experienced. At the training sessions in San Francisco and Chartres, I heard

¹⁰¹ Lauren Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995), 120.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 120–2, 150–1.

many similar stories from other practitioners. Artress describes the labyrinth as a “spiritual container,” a liminal space that permits unusually quick access to the substrates of personality, memory and emotion, yet provides a way of integrating the resulting insights without trauma or excessive disruption. She sees it as a “whole brain re-patterning” template that restores our Western rational imbalance and mind-body split back to wholeness. In her opinion, labyrinth walking is cumulative: the more frequently you walk it, the more far-reaching are the effects felt in daily life.

In this sense, labyrinth walking can be seen as a form of walking meditation, a kind of mindfulness practice arising out of the necessity of slowing down and finding your own pace. This awareness has a communal aspect if there are other people on the labyrinth, whom you will encounter, and either have to negotiate your way around, or make the decision to follow or to pass in a commitment to your own rhythm. Here, the spiritual discipline of humility comes into play; in the sense Dag Hammarskjöld meant when he said, “Humility is just as much the opposite of self-abasement as it is of self-exultation. To be humble is not to make comparisons.”¹⁰³ On the labyrinth, it is nearly impossible to tell where anyone else is, or where you are. There is no point rushing. There is no advantage to getting there first. It is challenging for competitive, hurried, worried people to let go of external comparisons and listen instead to their own sense of time.

It is also difficult to let go of internal comparison, which takes the form of expectation about what the experience will be. This is a form of control, masking the fear of being found unworthy of God’s attention and so finding nothing, no God, no answers, no peace. One man said, “Oh, nothing happened, I just wanted a smoke, that’s all”! Often the messages that come through in the labyrinth are sensory, such as that one, sometimes accompanied by memory fragments and gestures and feelings of elation, tenderness, or grief. (Each emerging image holds out the end of a thread of associations. Had the ex-smoker pursued what had triggered his sudden craving, he might have been less dismissive of the experience.) Because the labyrinth is both a liminal and a public place, dealing with such physical expressions of particular yet universal feelings often leads to a powerful sense of shared brokenness and healing in the group, often spontaneously at the centre, sometimes in fellowship afterwards. “We’re all just somewhere on the Path” is a

¹⁰³Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketcham, *The Spirituality of Imperfection* (New York: Bantam, 1992), 187.

common expression of this sense of belonging, echoing Piero Ferrucci's comment that "Acceptance means no comparison."¹⁰⁴

As a facilitator, I have found that this flows more easily if the group is in some way given "permission" to be expressive with their gestures. Following the research findings of the dance anthropologist Cielle Tewksbury, I teach a series of hand gestures and mudras related to pilgrimage and evolution of the spirit. While Artress believes that simply walking allows the body to release some of the energies generated in the labyrinth, Tewksbury observes that modelling with the body what it is you want to happen makes the process more intentional. Particularly useful for the groups I have led are the gestures of letting go, of prayer, and of awe.¹⁰⁵ These engage the arms and upper body, opening the chest, releasing an enormous amount of tension, and changing the characteristic hunched shoulders into graceful gestures of flight. People respond very positively when I teach these. It may be the only time some of them feel free enough to move in this way.

If one accepts gesture as imagery, and imagery as one of the paths through the imagination to the soul, then there is much in common here between Artress' approach to the labyrinth and the process of psychosynthesis, the system of self discovery and psychological re-structuring developed by the Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli. In the section on free drawing and other routes to the unconscious, his student, Piero Ferrucci writes:

With body movement we become aware of the organic resonance of a block or psychological contents at the physical level, and then we express it in a posture or a movement, as if we were a statue symbolising that block or a dancer representing it in our own choreography. In this way we gain a greater understanding of it, and at times we trigger some change. Sometimes it is helpful to work with body and imagery at the same time, either by starting with a body sensation or block and then letting an image emerge that represents it, or by being aware of specific, even subtle bodily reactions which may be going on as we work on an image.¹⁰⁶

Using Tewksbury's technique, the participants start off with gestures of openness to forgiveness of self and others, consolation, and transpersonal dialogue. In a sense the gesture becomes

¹⁰⁴ Piero Ferrucci, *What We May Be*. (Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher Inc. 1982), 116.

¹⁰⁵ We particularly like the gestures of "letting go." One is to cross your arms over your chest as if you're giving yourself a hug, then you brush down from your shoulders, getting rid of all the extra junk you brought in with you. The other is derived from a Balinese gesture, bending your open hands right back and away from you towards the floor. Cielle says, "So often when we let go, we keep a little back to hang on to (shows cupped hands). With the Balinese gesture, everything falls out!"

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 40-1.

universal and the response can be received and understood at that level.

The structure of the labyrinth walk, with its alternation of turns and gradual descent or penetration to the centre, creates a physical analogue to the psychological processes of both Christian repentance and Buddhist non-attachment. The English designer Adrian Fisher has written in depth about the significance in Christian tradition of the exact numbers and placements of the turns and circuits in the cathedral labyrinth, symbolizing variously the years of life, Stations of the Cross, days in the Tomb, and so on. Sacred geometry is so complex, all-encompassing, and esoteric that this may very well be part of the original intention of the medieval builders, and there is evidence that liturgical practice up to the Renaissance referred to the spatial allegory. I am not sure one has to be aware of such sub-structures in order to be influenced by them. I do think there has to be a psychological impact on anyone making all the movements through quadrants and depths, and the constant 180-degree turns.

Both repentance and concentration meditation require the practitioner to turn away from the distractions that the mind has followed, and return to the original object of concentration. It was noticeable to me when I was first starting to meditate, that if I continued along a line of (distracted) thought, that thought would soon gain an enormous amount of energy and a life of its own. However, if I let the thought go and returned to the breath, the thought fell away. In the labyrinth, the turns accomplish the same thing. To make a 180-degree turn on a twelve inch wide path requires focused attention. Because the eleven circuits vary so much in diameter, the arcs are of different lengths, unpredictable. Like returning to the breath in meditation, the line of thought has to come to an end in order to make the turn. Therefore, the turns become significant, as finials and as elements themselves. Often, people stop at the turns, stepping onto the axe-shaped labryses along the x- and y- axes to pause and reflect. The analogue to the turns and reversals in life are obvious. The physical act of turning away can be seen to support what Assagioli would call “dis-identification,” the psychological act of detaching oneself from an emotional state or situation to regain some autonomy for oneself,¹⁰⁷ some “dry land.”

It seems that the reversals are also analogous to the back and forth of dialectical thinking. In myth and psychology, there appears to be a binary pattern to addressing and resolving conflict and the mediation of opposites, with symbols being “the psyche’s primary vehicle for helping

¹⁰⁷Ibid. 49.

people to reconcile the opposing tendencies that reside within, their “transcendent function.”¹⁰⁸ Feinstein et al. indicate here that the “trialectic” approach, where the thesis and antithesis are mediated by the observing ego, is a more accurate model. One could see the labyrinth as “spiritual container” performing the contextual third function here. The path through the labyrinth actually traces three circumnavigations, two clockwise and one anticlockwise, through four quadrants, before arriving at the centre. It suggests to me the image of a psychic “augur,” whereby the participant gradually plumbs the depths of the tri-level brain (reptilian, limbic, and neo-cortex) through a quadriform space that may be analogous to Jung’s personality typology. This could account for the profound sense of journey, discovery, enlightenment, and spiritual and psychological re-alignment that is consistently reported by practitioners.

Another factor is the way one can “read” the journey through concentric circles as “up” or “down” rather than simply “in” or “out.” As in Chinese painting, where concentric layers represent increasing heights of celestial realms, the labyrinth can be seen as a vertical schema. Keith Critchlow has an intriguing theory about this. The School of Chartres was neo-Platonic in philosophy, and had in its library a copy of the neo-Platonist Macrobius’ Commentary on Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio*. In this book can be found a diagram illustrating the concentric circles of classical cosmology, from the earth at the centre, to the moon, stars, and planets around it, then the fixed stars, then three “powers” subsuming these: “World Soul,” “Mind,” and Supreme God, the “One,” all together equal in number to the concentric circles of the labyrinth. Critchlow comments

The implications point to the diagram being not only the structure of the universe but also, in neo-Platonic terms, a “diagram” of the shells of reality. The individual, when confronted with this model and having chosen to traverse the path to the middle, was in fact re-enacting “the descent of the soul” into manifestation in earth (the centre). One of the psychological functions of traversing the maze apparently being to re-enact the contributing factors to the structure of one’s personality.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸David Feinstein, Stanley Krippner, Dennis Granger, “Mythmaking and Human Development,” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 28 No.3 (Summer 1988): 35.

¹⁰⁹Keith Critchlow, Jane Carroll, Llewelyn Vaughn Lee, “Chartres Maze, Model of the Universe?” *Architectural Association Quarterly* 5, 2 (1972), 18. This article is well worth hunting down.

This bears a striking resemblance to Assagioli's technique of ascent, "psychological mountain climbing," where the imagery of climbing a mountain represents and models the "inner act of rising to the higher levels of our being."¹¹⁰

The descent too, is part of this: although Ferrucci goes on to quote the French psychiatrist Desoille "on the contrary, descent provokes dark images and feelings of sadness, uneasiness, and anguish," Assagioli himself was well aware of the value of "the dark night of the soul" in the crisis of spiritual emergence. He labelled the apparent setbacks, aridity, meaninglessness, and despondency characteristic of the ebb part of the cycle, as "rightly called 'purgation' ...one of the most useful and rewarding stages of growth," and, quoting St. John of the Cross, " 'this pure Light shines upon the soul in order to expel impurities,' bringing them to the consciousness of the individual in order to work them out."¹¹¹ Embedded in the labyrinth journey can be found what Teresa of Avila called The Threefold Path of Christian mysticism, the Paths respectively of Purgation, Illumination, and Union.¹¹² Purgation, the path from the entrance to the centre, is the first part, where we let go of our expectations and quiet ourselves. Prayer and receptivity, clarity and insight are found in the centre on the Path of Illumination. The Path of Union is marked by consolidation and an energetic return to the world, ready to manifest the gifts we have received. Thus the pattern provides a template for all the stages of spiritual emergence.

¹¹⁰Ferrucci, 55.

¹¹¹Roberto Assagioli, "Self Realization and Psychological Disturbances" in *Spiritual Emergency*, eds. Stanislov Grof and Christina Grof. (Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher Inc., 1989), 40.

¹¹²Artress, 28.

⊗ CONCLUSION: AN EDUCATION TOWARDS ALIGNMENT

The labyrinth was designed using the principles of sacred, or temple geometry, a mathematical system of number and relationship that is considered to be, in its contemplative aspect, a metaphor of universal order. The word “geometry” means “measurement of the earth,” and the earliest records of its practice come from ancient Egypt, when the annual rising of the waters of the Nile flooded the fields, whose perimeters would then need to be measured again and restored using readings based on the planets, constellations, and the horizon line. That is, the order created by humans was harmonized with that of the earth and heavens, a differentiation and particularity derived from an overarching pattern of planetary movements. Geometry is activated when one point is placed in relation to another, and movement can begin as a line; the addition of another point opens up the generative possibilities of the triangular plane, the circle and square and so on. These are patterns of relationship, with the coming into appearance of the until now unmanifested mapped by the practice of geometry and experienced by the geometer in the process. The significance of this fact of embodiment should not be underestimated.

As the great scientist Ernst Mach (1906) pointed out at the turn of the 20th century, our notions of space, as idealized by geometry, are rooted in our physiological selves, in our bodily experiences and perceptions. They are not out there in any objective sense. Geometric concepts are metaphors transforming our iconic organization of the world into abstract experiences of space.¹¹³

The practice of geometry, that is, manually swinging a pair of compasses round a central point to make arcs, joining points with a ruler to make a line and then planes, and with these simple skills, dividing the Unity of a circle into increasingly complex forms, recapitulates the process of the creative unfoldings of the universe. The spatial, simultaneous pattern-seeking function of the right hemisphere is activated through the manipulation of patterns in space, while the left hemisphere, grasping the progress in development of this order in space through the sequencing of steps used to construct the figure, formalizes the concept. Lawlor believes this provokes a synaesthetic perception, beyond the objective, analytical, linearity of the visual—he refers to “hearing” colours and shapes, and suggests that Pythagoras’ ability to conceive of sound vibrations as visual is a result of this function. So our relationship with the pure Form of the unfolding of the Universal order can be a multi-sensorial one, if we remember how. This would

¹¹³ Marcel Danesi, *Vico, Metaphor, and the Origin of Language* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993, 102.

explain the physiological responses provoked in an encounter with an environment designed along these principles, when attention is rewarded by a relational engagement with a space caught at the moment of manifesting.

How does this matter? Consider Lawlor's observation about the fundamental purpose of Sacred Geometry practice, what it seeks to reveal:

The relationship between the fixed and the volatile (between proportion and progression) is key to Sacred Geometry...Everything manifest belongs to the ever-flowing progressions of change; only the non-manifest realm of Principles is immutable.¹¹⁴

"Progressions of change" suggests to me the language and theories of the new sciences, particularly systems theory, chaos theory, quantum physics, and the generative evolutionary theory proposed by Rupert Sheldrake, mentioned at the outset, where habit and creativity alternate. These are considered "open systems." In an open system, characteristic of all forms of life, there is a balance and flow, a combination of stability of structure with fluidity of change. Energy is dissipated and recycled as material passes through the system. Prigogine's theory of "dissipative structures" describes these contradictory tendencies and also suggests the idea of points of instability, where new structures can develop and new forms of order can establish themselves. (A simple example would be the states of order found in water as it comes to a boil and "collects" itself to turn to steam.)

Systems always evolve towards a stationary state close to equilibrium, with a minimum of disorder (entropy) in flow processes—these can be described mathematically in linear equations. In a state "far from equilibrium," the flow processes are stronger, entropy increases, dissipative structures may develop. These are of ever-increasing complexity: at this stage, far from equilibrium, these flow processes are linked by multiple feedback loops, mathematically described by non-linear equations (used for mapping curves and parabolas). "The higher the non-linearity, the greater the number of solutions." Characteristic behaviour moves from repetitive phenomena and universal laws to indeterminacy at crucial points of bifurcation, where the choice of path depends on internal history of the organism and the influence of external conditions on the one hand, and on the other, "chaos-type unpredictability" arising from the impact on

¹¹⁴ Lawlor, *Sacred Geometry, Philosophy and Practice*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982) 23. He goes on in that passage to describe the great error of Modernity in trying to "fix" into permanence that which is flowing, the same error that turned Minos into Holdfast the tyrant.

trajectory of the tiniest variations in reiteration.¹¹⁵

The responsiveness to both external conditions and the self-referencing of feedback loops in “decision-making” (bifurcation) at the cellular level led scientists to develop the concept of “auto-poiesis”—self-making or self-organizing—such that it could be said that “Living systems are cognitive systems, and living as a process is a process of cognition...with and without a nervous system.”¹¹⁶ The interactions of a living organism with its environment are therefore cognitive. Because cells, the smallest living components of a living system, are autopoietic, so, at a greater scale of complexity, are living systems. Capra provides the definition of autopoiesis as a “network pattern in which the function of each component is to participate in the production or transformation of other components.”¹¹⁷

Are all living systems autopoietic networks? The defining characteristic is the degree of autonomy of the component parts: the component parts of cells have the least independence, and exist for the functioning of the whole cell, while human individuals have the most independence, and their social system exist for the benefit of the components. This explains why totalitarian societies limit the freedom of individual members in the service of the regime, and are consequently so conformist, inhumane, and ultimately unnatural. The evolutionary impulse to differentiation and variation is suppressed.

How can we relate these new understandings of living systems to the experience of being in the labyrinth? I see this relationship of human to labyrinth environment as a dynamic and dialogic unfolding. While the labyrinth itself remains stable, its underlying mathematical structure suggests a “circuitry,” of which the participant is a component, that could be n-dimensional. I say this based on what I understand of the work of the mathematician Pierre Rosenstiehl, whose comments have appeared throughout. A topological geometer (“rubbery space,” to the rest of us), he has written extensively on various aspects and approaches to the mathematics of the labyrinth; primarily as a “maze” requiring one or more search algorithms¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Capra, *Web of Life*, 176–8.

¹¹⁶ Capra, 97.

¹¹⁷ Capra, 206.

¹¹⁸ the research question being, “What is the simplest instruction Ariadne could have given Theseus?” Answer: to traverse each corridor but once in each direction. The markings at the end of each corridor constitute depth-first search automata. Rosenstiehl expanded at length on acentric communication networks, based on this paper, “*Les Mots du Labyrinthe*.” Most provocative are his comments on a spontaneous simultaneity of expression (or “reporting” as in posting of sign-automata indicating the end of a search), possibly like the

but also on the cathedral labyrinth, in the article “How the ‘Path of Jerusalem’ separates birds from fishes.”

This paper, delivered to a conference on the art and science of the artist M.C. Escher, is ingenious. Imagine if you will, cutting the labyrinth open along the “throat” at the entranceway, grasping the radii on each side of the throat, and bending the labyrinth inside out like a Chinese paper flower. You end up with a rectangle, with all the turns still and runs still there, but the different lengths of the circuits have been equalized. It looks like a graph. Rosenstiehl then removed the frame and found an infinite repeat pattern in the central piece remaining. This he turned into a crystallographic arrangement of birds going one way, fish the other, like in an Escher design.

His algorithm says that everything alternates: the three long trans-quadrant sequences probe gently into the body of the labyrinth, first clockwise, then anti-clockwise, then clockwise again, the steps of each sequence themselves similarly alternating, the sequences separated by little blind runs across one quadrant. The walker is gently engaged into progressively deeper psychic realms (if one accepts the analogy of external, spatial site to inner psychic realm), coming back “up” (for “air”? Perspective? Spatial orientation? Consolidation into the known matrix?) before going further. This is the architectural gesture proposed earlier as a spiritual or psychoanalytical augur, a helix.

Rosenstiehl’s interpretation of the earlier work on “maze-threading with Ariadne” idea, that this can be seen as a pattern for pursuing the research question, marking “corridors” of exploration, “concatenating” investigation reports with others of grammatically sympathetic minds (other parts of one’s own mind, possibly) and so on, is an intellectual rather than emotional or sensory take on our species’ propensity for both curiosity and closure, the familiar and the strange, solitude and society. (So many dimensions accessible in one algorithm!) His later work, locating the path as a finite ground on an infinite field, and that a model of congruence, supported the idea of meta-pattern suggested by the medieval model.

Rosenstiehl says that, in the absence of received evidence about what the labyrinth was intended for originally, all one has to go on is the fact of the pattern on the floor: “what one may say of it appears simply to be about the form itself...the topical is richer than the general, the denoted richer than the connoted, the literal richer than the symbolic.” It is not a symbol: unlike

decision of bees to swarm, which Rosenstiehl labels the Hapax Legomena, “the Word spoken but once,” a term from linguistics. This phenomenon reminds me of the collectivity of Pentecost.

the cross, it has no dogma attached, it is “multivocal,” a cue for anyone’s private unfolding. Nor is it a myth in the structuralist sense of collective agreement on interpretation: the labyrinth serves everyone as “the geometry of welcome” for private, spiritual, site-specific events. Nor is it metaphor: it is illogical—there is no connection between the visible signifier-pattern and the signified journey of the soul. Not any of these, but rather, says Rosenstiehl, the labyrinth is “a method for the arrangement of a multitude of metaphors.”¹¹⁹ Certainly the translation into twentieth century graph theory provides a model for a non-hierarchical way of relating, to the world and to each other as nodes and nexuses of implicated possibility.

Investigations such as this on the structures underlying a site where I have witnessed and experienced such profound interior changes compel me to think David Abrams is right, “We may think of the sensing body as a kind of open circuit that completes itself only in things, and in the world.”¹²⁰ My imagination, the *fantasia*, takes what I know of such experiences (from *memoria*) and heads off on the slimmest of intuitive links into a wild blue yonder of speculation. What if, for example, we took the Escherized fishes and birds labyrinth, kept these creatures, and returned the labyrinth to its circular shape? I think it would look something like Escher’s “Circle Limit” series, which are listed under the hyperbolic space category in geometer Doris Schattschneider’s compendium of Escher’s work.¹²¹ Hyperbolic imagery suggests to me the toroids and Cycladic shapes of space-time representations, which brings me back round to the perceiving body, and the question of whether we even have insides and outsides, whether we are not actually “threshold bodies.” Or, looking at a Poincaré section of a pendulum’s orbit around a strange attractor,¹²² I wonder at the similarity to the labyrinth’s path; that would leave us participants lying along the orbit of the pendulum, each step along the path representing one of thousands of iterations tracked of an entity’s response to an environmental factor, based on its own innate disposition.

What will it take to understand this device? How does a researcher go about documenting the mysterious relationship between undertaking that path, and the falling away of misconceptions, outworn narratives, inappropriate graspings, obstacles in the way of communication or

¹¹⁹ Rosenstiehl, “La Dodécadédale ou l’éloge de l’heuristique,” 785–796.

¹²⁰ Abram. 125.

¹²¹ Doris Schattschneider, *Visions of Symmetry: Notebooks, Periodic Drawings, and Related Works of M.C. Escher* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1990).

¹²² James Gleick, *Chaos: Making a New Science* (New York: Viking, 1987), 142.

authenticity or the destiny they were supposed to live out—all manner of Minotaurs—that people carry in with them? I see them burdened, then wrestling, then releasing something, breathing differently, and walking out even just a little differently than when they walked in. Something is re-iterated just a slight bit off the trajectory. What is it? Can we know? What would that tell us? Is it somehow a return “home” to a spatial array that resonates with the genetic coding Berry talks about? One aspect that intrigues me is that the device was designed by scholars and artisans (recalling here Heidegger on “bringing forth that which is concealed”) who were pre-Modern. Their minds had not yet been bifurcated by reason and Modernity’s dualisms. Perhaps, by walking, we are engaging with the social technology of people with a very different perception of reality than ours.¹²³ Perhaps all the spiritual reconnections and perceptual realignments that Berry, O’Sullivan, the ecologists and the eco-theologians refer to, was a customary state of being for those medievals.

In spite of my intermittent tendency towards “eco-totalitarianism,” I am reluctant to say any one thing is the solution to the imbalance and misalignment we are experiencing in the world, for which we are all to the best of our ability responsible for redeeming. Nor would I advocate a nostalgic “return” to the archaic. It’s neither possible nor desirable. Yet, as an educator, and particularly reviewing my own circuitous route to whatever level of awareness I have managed to attain, I have to think that a regular engagement with a labyrinth would certainly not harm anyone, and may even go a long way to providing some benefit, especially for young seekers just starting on their own quest. As a meditation site, the labyrinth has the advantage of dissipating the build up of physical energy that makes sitting meditation so trying for some of us. Dancing meditation, minotaur wrangling meditation, mathematically contemplative meditation, social, communal, or private meditations are all possible. It is a mystery, and a challenge to us, that nothing remains from the Middle Ages as to the origins or purposes for which the labyrinth was used, although we do know there was a Mystery School at Chartres with a Quadrivium curriculum based in neo-Platonic principles, that flourished, until the neo-Aristotelian University of Paris was founded; the Chartres School gradually petered out with the change in thinking. But I cannot imagine that a community of scholars and pilgrims would have such a device centrally located in their midst, and not be using it in some fashion.

¹²³ See Donald M. Lowe, *History of Bourgeois Perception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), Robert D. Romanyshyn, *Technology as Symptom and Dream* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

We are certainly challenged, as educators, to come up with some way to create a recuperative curriculum, within an entirely reconstructed (or newly evolved) education system. Jack Miller describes holistic education as an attempt “to bring education into alignment with the fundamental realities of nature”¹²⁴ Edmund O’Sullivan insists that “the fundamental educational task of our times is to make the choice for a sustainable planetary habitat of interdependent life forms over and against the dysfunctional calling of the global competitive marketplace.”¹²⁵ Thomas Berry says we need “a new alignment of our government, our institutions, and our professions with the continent in its deep structure and functioning”; laying the foundations for this re-alignment in thinking needs to begin in early education. He refers to Maria Montessori’s statement in *To Educate the Human Potential*:

Only when the child is able to identify its own center with the center of the universe does education really begin. The universe is an imposing reality, an answer to all questions. We shall walk together on this path of life, for all things are part of the universe, and are connected with each other to form one whole unity. No matter what we touch, an atom, or a cell, we cannot explain it without knowledge of the wide universe. This context enables the mind of the child to become centered, to stop wandering in an aimless quest for knowledge.¹²⁶

Berry believes such a re-alignment will require not only a new economic system but also a conversion experience deep in the psychic structure of the human.

What kind of education can facilitate this “conversion experience”? At the end of Brian Swimme’s beautiful passage about his own personal breakthrough, on a wet night on the pavement face to face with a bug when, for just one moment, he “left ‘California’ and entered the ‘universe’,”

I end these reflections with two questions. First, is it the case that cosmogenesis remains just a scientific theory for those who have never experienced directly its truth? And second, is it possible that when humans begin consciously to create educational forms trained on evoking an embodiment of cosmogenesis, they will be activating the next era in the evolution of earth?¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Miller, 1.

¹²⁵ O’Sullivan, 2.

¹²⁶ In Berry, 16.

¹²⁷ Swimme, Brian. “Cosmogenesis” in Tucker and Grim, 241–2.

We are asked here for two things: first, Swimme's hypothesis concerning the relation between knowledge and embodiment, and the means of bringing about—for those for whom it is “just a scientific theory”—a direct experience of the “truth” of cosmogenesis: a pedagogy consciously intended to evoke an embodiment of this truth; a treatment, in a sense. Then to observe whether activation of the next era has occurred! How do you evaluate that? Without a doubt, it will not be a linear process, but rather an unfolding, or waves of advance and retreat. How then is it to be determined which is the best way to proceed? How does a group conclude which advances to retain, which to consign to the “Nice Try” category?

Far from moving towards a homogeneous transparency in human relations, we are becoming increasingly oriented in the direction of a complexification which will, in Lyotard's words, “demand of each of us a greater degree of decision and choice...a developed society is one where everyone must judge for himself.”¹²⁸

Complexification is not necessarily opaque, though it can be idiosyncratic and unreadable to another cultural perspective, within another ecological niche, or even and especially, to those traversing another developmental stage. The use of the collective cultural symbol during large scale transformation, that did not have belligerence as its central (shadow?) meaning, could be very helpful:

A Tibetan abbot once told Dr. Jung that the most impressive mandalas in Tibet are built up by imagination, or directed fantasy, when the psychological balance of the group is disturbed or when a particular thought cannot be rendered because it is not yet contained in the sacred doctrine and must therefore be searched for. In these remarks, two equally important basic aspects of mandala symbolism emerge. The mandala serves a conservative purpose—namely, to restore a previously existing order. But it also serves the creative purpose of giving expression to something that does not yet exist, something new and unique. The second aspect is perhaps even more important than the first, but does not contradict it. For, in most cases, what restores the new order simultaneously involves some element of new creation. In the new order the older pattern returns on a higher level. The process is that of the ascending spiral, which grows upward while simultaneously returning again and again to the same point.¹²⁹

Prignonine describes the historical reconceptualization of science evidenced in the new systems thinking by comparing the 18th century image of a clock, and the 19th century icon of an engine running down, the “stillness and motion,” the junction of time stopped and time passing, expressed in an Indian sculpture of a dancing Shiva. As in the mandala, the use of image as

¹²⁸ Kearney, 27.

¹²⁹ Von Franz, 247–8.

symbol points to a reality beyond a superficial perception: art image as ikon. Looking at the *technê* of mantra and meditation, at the reports in the literature from phenomenology, the physiological explanations for the events of consciousness, and the speculations on mind, matter, space, and eternity I wonder if it's all the labyrinth. You stride in, make one short turn and then you're there, peering into the centre, across the one thin line—a shimmering membrane—separating you from the place of Illumination, a glimpse of Paradise. It's the closest you come on the long ensuing path, that wandering in the wilderness, until the moment when suddenly, without warning, you arrive. The finale of the Quest is to come back from nirvana with gifts for humankind: so all mythologies say about heroes, so is the outward path of the labyrinth walk identified. From all of this, I retain the idea of template, the pattern of patterns, as the sustaining thread.



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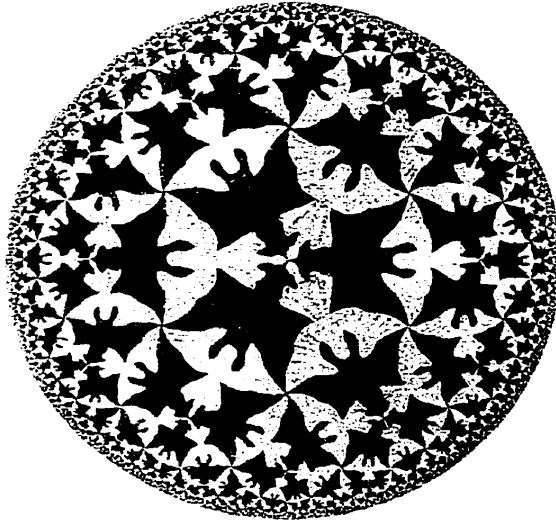


Figure 12. *Circle Limit IV* M.C. Escher, 1960

Investigations such as this on the structures underlying a site where I have witnessed and experienced such profound interior changes compel me to think David Abrams is right, “We may think of the sensing body as a kind of open circuit that completes itself only in things, and in the world.”¹²⁰ My imagination, the *fantasia*, takes what I know of such experiences (from *memoria*) and heads off on the slimmest of intuitive links into a wild blue yonder of speculation. What if, for example, we took the Escherized fishes and birds labyrinth, kept these creatures, and returned the labyrinth to its circular shape? I think it would look something like Escher’s “Circle Limit” series, which are listed under the hyperbolic space category in geometer Doris Schattschneider’s compendium of Escher’s work.¹²¹ Hyperbolic imagery suggests to me the toroids and Cycladic shapes of space-time representations, which brings me back round to the perceiving body, and the question of whether we even have insides and outsides, whether we are not actually

¹¹⁹ Rosenstiehl, “La Dodécadédale ou l’éloge de l’heuristique,” 785–796.

¹²⁰ Abram. 125.

¹²¹ Doris Schattschneider, *Visions of Symmetry: Notebooks, Periodic Drawings, and Related Works of M.C. Escher* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1990).

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APPENDIX 1

Labyrinth History

The Classical Pattern

The labyrinth is unusual among archaeological sites in that the cultural tradition surrounding the physical manifestations is charged with vitality. While the significance and intended purpose of many ruins are now obscure, the labyrinth resonates with stories, anecdotes, and myths that provide clues and insights into ancient peoples and the ancient parts of ourselves. The seven ring

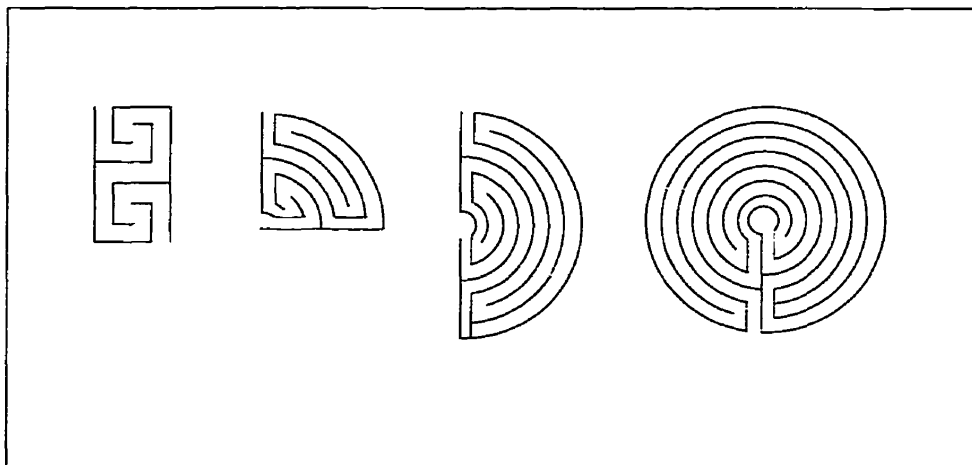


Figure 5. Derivation of the Classical labyrinth from the meander pattern

concentric unicursal type known as the Cretan or Classical labyrinth, found in its square or round forms in Europe, India, Java, Sumatra, and the American Southwest,¹³⁰ developed from the spiral and the meander patterns which are generally considered to be connected symbolically with death and rebirth.

Pennick's analysis of the labyrinth graphic shows how the Greek double meander evolved when bent and extended outward. Patterned borders on pottery "soul-houses" from burial sites at Knossos have been interpreted to mean that the single square spiral was a hieroglyph for palace,

¹³⁰ According to Kern, all other labyrinths are European in origin, adding to the controversy of whether the labyrinth is common to all cultures, thus an ahistorical expression of psychological processes, or a particular cultural phenomenon imported elsewhere through migration and trade, and assimilated in those societies where the form was nascent. Hermann Kern, *Through the Labyrinth: Designs and Meanings over 5000 Years*. Translated by Abigail Clay. (New York: Prestel, 2000), 27.

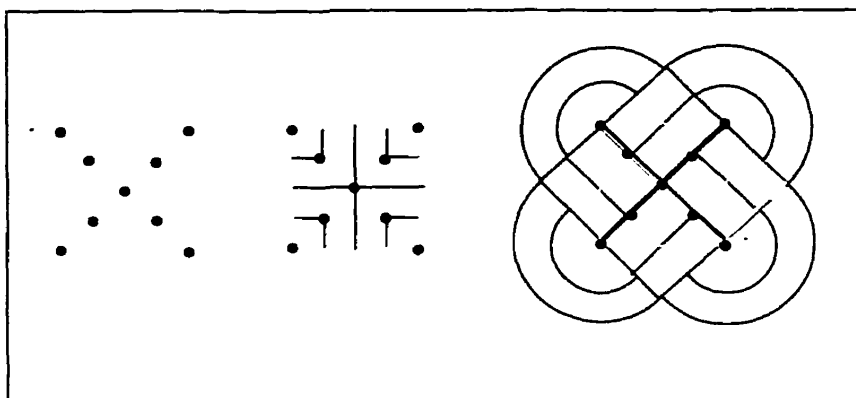


Figure 6. Nine-dot pattern, basis of Classical Labyrinth, and variations

while the double meander represented a crenellated enclosure¹³¹. This protective aspect of the labyrinth is what Kern calls its magical “apotropaic function,” a defensive device, or barrier at a transitional stage or place, between actual or invisible realms, marking the change in state, warning the uninitiated, and protecting the participant.

Paleolithic carvings of both the seven ring form and the “Celtic rose,” based on the same nine dot configuration as the Hindu Nandyavarta lunar swastika form, can be found on burial cave entrances as well as pilgrimage paths in Ireland and England. Connections with death and burial can be seen in the stone seven ring labyrinths to be found throughout Scandinavia in graveyards, on the ancient sites of earth-deity cults were later taken over by Christian churches, and sometimes at the foot of gallows hills, as if it were the last journey to be taken by the condemned in this lifetime, before the release of the soul.

Binding Magic

The site-specific protective function is also to be seen in the Scandinavian labyrinths located along the seashore near fishermen’s villages and seasonal fishing areas. The tradition, practiced within living memory, was that the fishermen would run through the labyrinths and straight out to their boats and to sea, leaving the *smagübbar*, the evil spirits, trapped in the coils.¹³² The ritual,

¹³¹ Nigel Pennick, *Mazes and Labyrinths*. (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1990), 30.

¹³² According to Pennick. Kern locates the easily confused evil spirits in south Indian tradition. Kern, 81.

besides controlling the winds and the spirits, also assured a good catch and safe return.¹³³ This is an example of “binding” magic, attributed also to figures called *kolam* (a word meaning also current, snake, waterway, road etc, the motif of the continuous moving line) drawn outside houses in south-eastern India where, as the sigil of Ganesh, the swastika with dots between the arms invokes the elephant-headed household protector. It shares a protective function with the women’s practice, seen in England up until the Second World War, of drawing elaborate Celtic knots in chalk on the threshold of newlyweds.¹³⁴ Threshold patterns, typical of Celtic and Hiberno-Saxon artwork, and like the labyrinth, based on the nine dot array, were known in ancient Ireland as *luaithrindi*, and were drawn on the ground in front of an opponent, as on a threshold, or on a warrior’s shield. The great Irish hero Cuchulainn was said to have carried one so decorated,¹³⁵ as did Achilles, according to Homer, one made by Hephaestos with “a dancing circle, broad as the circle Daedalus once laid out on Knossus’ spacious fields...in rings...and rows crisscrossing rows—rapturous dancing.”¹³⁶

Fortified Cities

Knossos and Troy are the cultural associations with the labyrinth most familiar to Westerners, through the Greek myths of the Trojan War and Theseus’ battle with the Minotaur. Both were fortified sanctuaries, though the breaching of each through treachery and deception are qualitatively different stories in terms of outcome and thus archetypal significance. Troy, divinely constructed according to its foundation myth, represents the Holy City, a tradition surviving in the names given labyrinths and labyrinthine games, and its image illustrated in Roman pavement mosaics and medieval manuscripts. Stone and turf labyrinths in Scandinavia and the British Isles were called Troytown (Troyaburg in Scandinavia). In Scotland, a hopscotch game and temporary seaside sand labyrinths are still called Walls of Troy or Troytown. The stone mazes were also called Jerusalem, Ninevah, Jericho, Lisbon, Constantinople, Trondheim, or Veiborg, names of great or fortified cities or those defeated by siege. Troy had been considered the “centre of the world,” before Jerusalem; the archetype of the Holy City is one with seven walls and a central shrine. Thus Joshua circumambulating Jericho before attacking it in a sense

¹³³ Kern, 268. These stone labyrinths on the White Sea were located near spawning grounds.

¹³⁴ Pennick, 52. See also Kern, 289.

¹³⁵ Pennick, 46.

¹³⁶ Homer, *The Iliad*, Book 18, lines 690–704, trans. Robert Fagles (NY: Viking Penguin, 1990).

reverses the original founding ritual of creating a protected, encircled site—he “unwound” the defenses of the city.¹³⁷ Similarly, Achilles chased Hector three times around the walls of Troy before killing him, and dragged his corpse round Patroclus’ tomb for twelve days, a repugnant form of sacrilege utterly demoralising to the Trojans.

The Maiden at the Centre

The Trojan War was fought to retrieve Helen from the Trojan interloper Paris and return her to her husband Menelaus; similarly, the ancient Indian epic known as the Ramayana tells the story of the demon Ravana abducting Sita, the wife of the hero Rama, and keeping her in a seven walled castle in Lanka, depicted as a Classical labyrinth in an eleventh century Iranian manuscript. Rama wins the war and triumphantly circles the castle seven times in a chariot stolen from Ravana.¹³⁸ Both versions of the story illustrate the theme of the maiden held captive in the centre of a stronghold, the labyrinth being thus a place of confusion to an intruder, who was vulnerable to the military strategy of *enfilade*, a raked attack in defence of non-aligned entrances that provided protection from penetration. The maiden in the centre motif is also associated, less belligerently, with ritual dances connected to birth and fertility: the *geranos*, Crane Dance, a bobbing, weaving pattern of multiple turns and returns was performed by Ariadne and Theseus and his companions on Naxos in celebration of their safe escape from Crete.

Birth Death Cycle

Besides being actual and mythological geographical locations, the Classical labyrinth marks gestural interval and sequence. The notation of time-based events underlies the spatial record. The cyclic process of birth/death/rebirth is represented symbolically and recorded in the carved recoiling spirals and meanders of many cultures. A slab of slate about six by eighteen inches, inscribed with a seven ring labyrinth, evidence from the pre-Industrial “Wise Woman” tradition, was donated to the Witchcraft Museum at Boscastle near Tintagel in Cornwall, by the last of a long line of women practitioners on the Isle of Man. Known as a Troystone, it was used for entering an altered state of consciousness by tracing the paths with the fingers while humming *galdr*, ceremonial calls, until the transcendent state was reached. A similar tradition exists in

¹³⁷ Kern, 83; Pennick, p. 49.

¹³⁸ Kern, 32, 289; Pennick, 38.

India, where a *yantra*, a sacred labyrinth diagram known as a *Chakra-Vyūha*, is an aid to concentration for women in childbirth. The labouring mother follows the path to the centre with her gaze and fingers, a deictic mimesis of the physical experience of uterine contractions¹³⁹. [As one who endured that particular ordeal fully conscious, this writer can attest emphatically to the accuracy of describing the process of childbirth as a tortuous path apparently going nowhere endlessly in a confined space, the classic definition of a labyrinth.] That the journey takes place across time within the body of the “pilgrim” is an example of homologizing—making equivalent—a cosmogonic process at the site of the human “kinesphere,” illustrating the concept of labyrinth as event in vertical time, as well as site.

Dance Origins

Evidence exists for the origin of the seven-circuit Classical form labyrinth as dance notation. Linguistic origins include Germanic and Scandinavian labyrinth names such as *Jungfrudans* (Maiden's Dance), and *Steintanz* (Stone Dance), and etymological connections to the word Troy: the old German verb *drajan*, the Gothic *thraian*, the Celtic *troian*, the Anglo-Saxon *thrawen*, the Middle English *throwen*, the Modern English *throe*, the Dutch and Low German *draien*, the Danish *dreje*, and the Swedish *dreja*, all of which mean “turn.”¹⁴⁰ Cretan seal impressions circa 1500 BCE, show dancers leaping over bulls; an Etruscan pitcher of the 6th century BCE and a coin from Knossos circa 500–431 BCE, show dancers wearing bull masks; the reverse of this coin, and others depicting the Minotaur himself, show angular double-spirals, in a swastika layout, or encircling meanders.¹⁴¹ Virgil records an equestrian ballet-tournament known as the *lusus Troia*, the Trojan Ride; an Etruscan wine pitcher from the 6th or 7th century BCE shows such an encounter.¹⁴²

A version involving a three-step and circle dance combination and a ball “too big for one hand,” is recorded as having being performed as late as 1538 by the dean and monks on the pavement labyrinth in the cathedral at Auxerre.¹⁴³ The spiral form continues in contemporary folkdances. Kern provides diagrams of contemporary Basque dances, the “snail” and the

¹³⁹ Pennick, 26.

¹⁴⁰ Pennick, 35.

¹⁴¹ Kern, 51–52.

¹⁴² Doob, 27; Kern, 78.

¹⁴³ Kern, 148.

“abduction” dances, similar in form to the descriptions of the *geranos* found in the writings of Plutarch, Callimachus, Lucian, and Pollux (who also refers to a Minotaur pantomime).¹⁴⁴

Sig Lonegren, the master geomancer, teaches a manoeuvre called The Appleton Dance, after Jon Appleton, who “discovered” it with his partner in the mid nineties. Couples begin arranged in two lines at the mouth of the seven-circuit labyrinth. The first line goes in and traverses the labyrinth. On the way back out from the centre, the leader of line one meets up with his or her original partner, the leader of the second line, each individual connecting with his or her respective, incoming, partner across the dividing line (“wall”) facing the entrance (α in the drawing). Arm in arm, the couples proceed, the second line accompanied part way on its walk for four of the seven paths by their partners of the first line (though they are in fact going in opposite directions!) before each lets go of the original partner (as line one completes the circuit and exits) and picks up a new partner. The one rule, advises Lonegren, is that “those going clockwise go over those couples going counter-clockwise. (This is simpler than it “sounds” or, rather, “reads,” belonging as it does to the oral tradition, and hilarious to perform. See Lonegren’s website at <http://www.geomancy.org/home.html>)

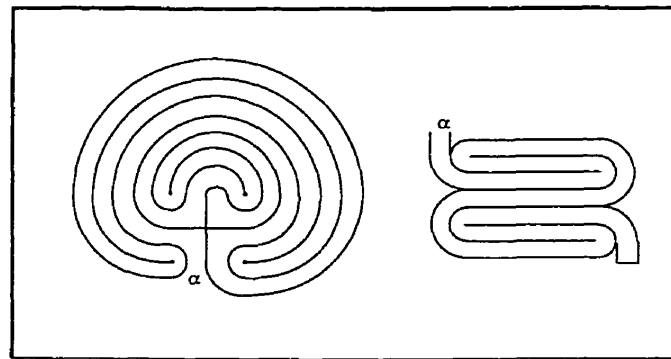


Figure 7. Classical labyrinth and topological transformation

It is thought that the labyrinth may be a permanent marker installed where the dance was customarily performed. This is relatively clear in the geometry and construction of the seven-circuit labyrinth, also known as the ‘basic cross’. The simplest to draw with a minimum of tools, using compasses centred on certain points of a square, or five pegs and a string marked out with knots in regular intervals, or even a two unit measuring string, half the labyrinth is composed of

¹⁴⁴ Kern, 45, 50.

concentric semicircles, the other half made up of a cross/corners/dots pattern connected into semicircles by quadrants of various radii¹⁴⁵. By joining the top arm of the central “cross” to the top “corner” to its right using a small arc, and repeating this joinery with concentric semi-circles, the pen (or the stick in the dust) “dances” a back-and-forth, turn-and-return pattern.

Evolution of the form

The seven ring Classical form underwent several developmental stages in response to communal needs. The “Rad” type, of German and Scandinavian origin, has two entrances, permitting the quest-based dynamic of the game where two young men race each other to the girl at the centre. The “Otfrid,” a rare form named for Otfrid von Weissenberg, a priest of Alsace (790-875), that marks the appearance of sectors and quadrants in the transition between the Roman and the Medieval patterns, was found primarily in manuscript illumination, often marking the beginning or conclusion of particularly difficult passages.

Roman labyrinths were invariably decorative, or intended for protective or contemplative purposes, the extant mosaic ones being too small to walk on. Though squared versions of the concentric seven-circuit exist and may be precursors, the square unicursal Roman form always consists of four meander patterns arranged around a cross, the path traversing one quadrant completely before going on to the next, and eventually to the centre. Variations include the simple meander, a Classical labyrinth “opened out” to form a quarter of the new one, the complex meander, with the coils turning in on themselves, the back and forth serpentine, and the spiral type which goes in and back out of each quadrant.¹⁴⁶

Like the typical Roman town and fort layout, the Roman labyrinth is based on the Etruscan Discipline, a pre-Roman system of geomancy which, through a combination of divination and topography, located the “centre of the world,” the *omphalos*. There the planner sat, facing south. In front lay the *pars antica*, the forward part. To the left, the east, was the *templum anticum sinistrum*; to the right, in the west, the *templum anticum dextrum*. Behind, in the northeast, was the *templum posticum sinistrum*, and to the northwest, the *templum posticum dextrum*. The two lines crossing at the omphalos/umbilicus were the *cardo*¹⁴⁷, running along the north-south

¹⁴⁵ Pennick, 29.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 105.

¹⁴⁷ *cardo, cardinis* : m. hinge; turning point; (astro) axis, pole.

meridional direction, and the *decuman*¹⁴⁸, running equinoctially east-west. So was divided the surface of the earth and the celestial vault.¹⁴⁹

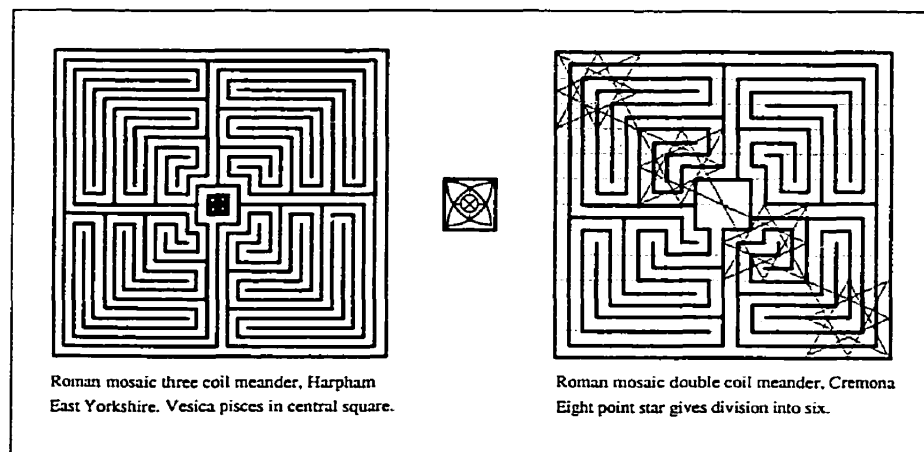


Figure 8. Roman mosaic labyrinths

Roman labyrinths were often portrayed as fortresses with corner bastions, and the quadrant and city-at-the-centre-of-the-world motif were both carried over to the Medieval Christian period, as for example the octagonal labyrinth with four bastions at Rheims Cathedral (built 1211-40, destroyed in 1779). The combination of points of view, the outside wall portrayed three-dimensionally and the internal circuits as ground plan, underscores the two-fold nature of the labyrinth as ordered protective boundary and confusing interior convolutions. Penelope Doob points out that the transcendent perspective required to synthesize these apparent opposites was a function of medieval dialectics.¹⁵⁰ This consciousness of the labyrinth as allegorical journey reached a peak in the early medieval period, a time of great advancement in labyrinth design as

¹⁴⁸ *decumanus*, -a, -um : adj. paying tithes; of the tenth cohort or legion; porta decumana : main gate of the Roman camp on the side turned away from the enemy.

¹⁴⁹ Pennick, p. 108.

¹⁵⁰ Doob, 44. Panofsky describes the dialectical process in the *summa* as a reconciliation of contradictory statements, both sanctioned by canonical authority. First the question is posed. Then the arguments for one side, "*videtur quod*," are presented, then the opposing "*sed contra*," and the solution, "*respondeo dicendum*" are given, a final transcendence of what Abelard refers to as the "*sic et non*" of discourse, though Bacon called it the forced harmonisation, "*concordia violentes*," of jurists. Panofsky illustrates this with an example from Honnecourt's dispute with another architect on the Ideal Chevet in which, he says, "scholastic dialectics has driven architectural thinking to a point where it almost ceases to be architectural." Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*. (Cleveland: Meridian, 1967), 69.

well as cathedral design generally.

The circular pattern, with the path meandering back and forth between the Roman quadrants, is thought to have been developed by ninth century French mathematicians influenced by Greek, Persian, and Indian treatises on science, philosophy and mathematics newly translated from the Arabic. It can be seen in the diagram of the Roman labyrinth at Harpham that the leap would be made conceptually to the regularly alternating opposing turnabouts and straight runs of the medieval cathedral labyrinths. Although earlier examples of irregular, cross quadrant meanderings can be found in manuscripts, in the fourth century CE mosaic at Kato Paphos in Cyprus, and in the sixth century, twelve foot wide Byzantine pavement mosaic in the church of San Vitale in Ravenna, the resolved form was not prevalent before renewed contact with the Eastern Empire in the eleventh century. One channel for the influence of the Byzantine Church to the West was Desiderius, the abbot of the Benedictine Monastery in Monte Cassino and papal legate to Constantinople; on his return in 1066 he reintroduced Byzantine architectural techniques including a school of mosaic work employing Greek teachers.¹⁵¹ A Byzantine/Mediterranean tradition developed in Italy, intersecting with a northern European Germanic/Norse and Celtic stream in France, where bastioned octagonal examples can be found at St. Quentin, Reims, Arras, and Amiens.

The octagon is a significant form in Christian iconography representing rebirth and resurrection; many baptismal fonts are octagonal in design. The influence of the military-ecclesiastic orders of chivalry, the Knights of St. John and the Knights Templar, can be seen here. The Templars, associated with the round form in church design (extant in London and Cambridge), are by tradition the protectors of the “mysteries” uncovered at Jerusalem;¹⁵² the square or Maltese cross, emblem of the St. Johns, is discernible in the octagonal labyrinth forms such as St. Quentin. The cross underlying the concentric circles of the “cosmos” culminated in the circular quadriform built at Chartres between 1220 and 1260, and used as the model for many others after.¹⁵³ Known as *La Lieue*,¹⁵⁴ The League, or *Le Chemin de Jérusalem*,¹⁵⁵ the Path to

¹⁵¹ Pennick, 116.

¹⁵² Possibly a diagram of the Sacred Geometry of the dimensions of Moses' Tabernacle, given as directions in the Book of Exodus. Moses is thought to have trained at the temple in Egypt. Tons Brunés devotes a chapter to this subject.

¹⁵³ Kern dates the Chartres labyrinth construction to some time before 1230, the date when Villard de Honnecourt made a sketch of both the labyrinth and the rose window on the west wall above it. In Kern's opinion, the Chartres-type labyrinth existed in the 12th century, in Italy in churches at Pavia, Piacenza, Lucca, and Rome, and as early as the 10th century, in manuscripts. Kern, 145, 153.

Jerusalem, the labyrinth at Chartres is located as are most cathedral labyrinths in the west end of the building, by the entrance in the manner of threshold devices, and in the allegorical terms of ecclesiastical architecture, at the “foot” of Christ’s body-as-building.

Of the Chartres pattern, some interesting theories have been suggested. Peter Schmid, Professor of Architecture at the University of Technology at Eindhoven, in the Netherlands, has said of his willow tree version created for an architecture and ecology conference in 1984, that it was the longest way to the centre in a given space, and the most balanced way of covering the ground, geometrically. Referring to its traditional association with initiation, magic, and ritual walking meditation, Schmid described it as a pattern for dancing for the purpose of accumulating energy within the dancer, and serving as “a focus for geomantic and radiaesthetic power, creating a special field of harmony.”¹⁵⁶ Pierre Merceaux’ research into geomagnetic fields and ley lines at Carnac in Brittany suggest that movement patterns performed at specific sites may, by providing optimum contact between human bio-electric fields and the earth’s geomagnetic forces, affect electromagnetic impulses in the human brain, facilitating those changes in consciousness that we recognize as distinct.¹⁵⁷ The subtle power inherent in sacred places, whether found or created, has long been known to pre-scientific, pre-industrial cultures. Cathedrals were generally built on sites long considered sacred in Druid, Goddess, and Earth religions, adhering to the layout on the east-west axis at the summer solstice already established. The labyrinths were an integral part of their overall design, which itself was part of the much older system of sacred geometry.

¹⁵⁴ A French league is 2282 yards. Matthews suggests an etymological connection with the old Gaulish measure *leuca*, *leuva*, or *leuga*, 1500 paces, p. 60.

¹⁵⁵ Doob questions the use as a penitential pilgrimage, as all such references are post-Renaissance. Doob, 120.

¹⁵⁶ Pennick, 167.

¹⁵⁷ Pennick, 178. See also Winnifred Gallagher, *The Power of Place*. (New York: Poseidon Press, 1993), especially the section on Michael Persinger’s research.