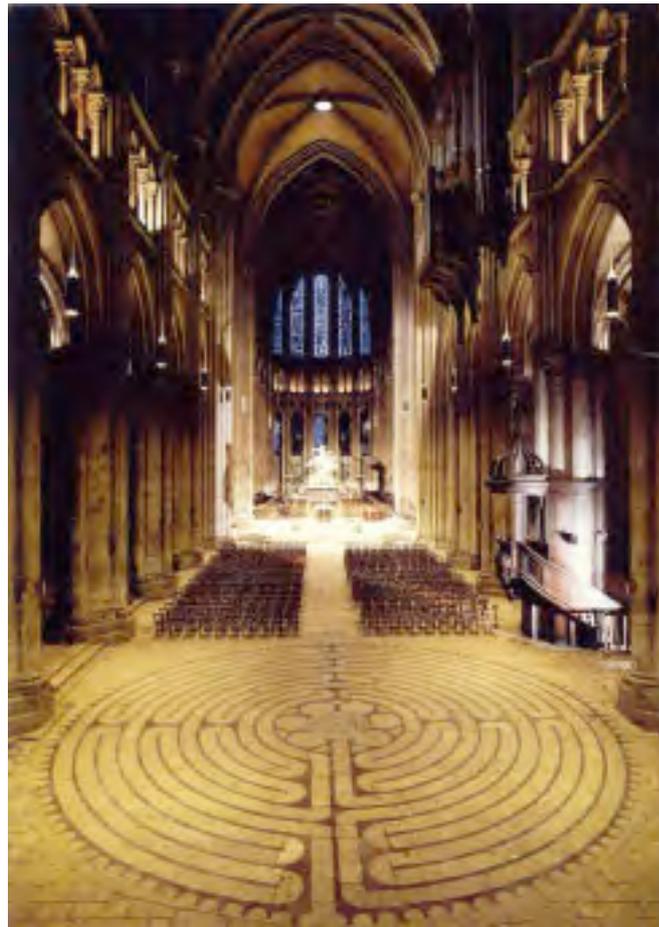


THE LABYRINTH

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INTRODUCTION

The labyrinth has fascinated my father for over 40 years when a friend introduced him to the concept of the Theseus and Ariadne myth in which the labyrinth is introduced. Over the years he has read numerous books on the topic, visited several lectures and presented his own paper on the topic a number of times. In this paper I will present an introduction on the labyrinth, which I summarized and translated from his research. It deals with the myth of Theseus and Ariadne in which the labyrinth is introduced. His research takes an in-depth look at the structure and numerology build into the labyrinth of the cathedral of Chartres in which the most well known labyrinth is situated. Over the years my father has been convinced that the labyrinth and its mythical references hold the key to a philosophical approach of our life experiences.

THE MYTH OF THESEUS AND ARIADNE

The concept of the labyrinth stems from the myth of Theseus and Ariadne. It tells the story of the King Minos of Crete who was aided into power by Poseidon, the God of the sea. Poseidon presented Minos with a bull as a symbol of approval, which Minos was required by Poseidon to sacrifice to the Gods after his coronation. He was so captivated by the bull's beauty however, that he decided to keep it and sacrifice a different bull. When Poseidon got wind of this he took revenge by letting Minos' wife, Pasiphea, fall in love with the bull. In order to consummate the relationship, she asked the architect Daedalus to build a cow for her in which she could hide. She became pregnant of the bull and gave birth to Minotaur: half bull and half human. Minos' son was encouraged by the King of Athens to kill Minotaur, but was killed by the bull-man in his attempt. Upon his son's death Minos decided to lock up Minotaur in a labyrinth that he had especially designed by Daedalus. Minos held the people of Athens responsible for the death of his son and forced them to sacrifice seven boys and seven virgins every nine years. During the third year of these sacrifices the son of the King of Athens, Theseus, joined the fourteen children in an attempt to kill Minotaur in order to be released from the cruel sacrifices. The daughter of King Minos, Ariadne, fell in love with Theseus and offered her assistance to Theseus. Daedalus, the architect, stood by her side and advised Ariadne to hand Theseus a long line of thread in order to find his way out of the labyrinth. Their plan worked; Theseus killed Minotaur in the centre of the labyrinth and together with Ariadne he escaped the wrath of Minos by fleeing to Naxos.



THESEUS DEFEATS MINOTAUR IN THE LABYRINTH

THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE MYTH

The philosopher Hein Stufkens offers an explanation of the myth and its symbols. The sacrifices the people from Athens have to make towards the King of Crete represents psychological oppression of the individual mind, they have to follow an order against their will. The sacrifices had to be young, which represents purity of the individual. They had to be male and female to represent the dual aspects of the individual mind being given up and it had to be seven, as that number reinforces the purity and completeness of the individual. Male also represents our spiritual, non-earthly side while female represents the physical or earthly side. The sacrifices made in the myth represent the sacrifices we all make in order to maintain peace and harmony in our environment, thereby surrendering elements of our own personality that make us who we are. Theseus' action represents the power within us that awakens and no longer accepts the sacrifices of the individual personality.

THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE LABYRINTH

The labyrinth in which Theseus ventures, is representative of the subconscious, the unknown or dark elements of our mind. The support he receives from Ariadne can be recognized as the unsuspected support one receives when battling a situation. The thread handed to him by Ariadne to find his way out of the labyrinth represents the

female support of love. The male powers of the mind need to be balanced by the female powers of the mind in order to achieve success. The thread connects the male power with the female intuitive power to create the balance needed to overcome the struggle, the killing of Minotaur. The bull has been a symbol of intimidating force in many ancient cultures, and in this myth it represents our inner struggles we hide in our subconscious. By killing it we not only overcome our obstacles, since death can also be interpreted as a transition, we take the strength of the 'beast' within us, the dark and negative energy, and transform or re-direct it into a positive life force. Duality teaches us that we need to unify the male (Theseus) and female (Ariadne) powers in order to create oneness, a unified power.

THE LABYRINTH IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD

In 1996 there was an exhibition in museum Comenius in Naarden, The Netherlands about the labyrinth with as motto: "The labyrinth; a source of confusion." From the catalogue of that exhibition comes the following information:

The labyrinth is an ancient symbol. It is unknown when it was drawn for the first time, but in Memphis, Egypt, a 4700-year-old seal was found picturing a labyrinth. The myth of Theseus and Ariadne is the oldest known tale of the labyrinth, but the meaning of the symbol has most likely transformed over the ages. The fascinating aspect is that the symbol appears throughout different parts of the world in different civilizations, from Europe to India, Indonesia, South America and Egypt. Images of it can be found in cathedrals and other places of worship but also on coins and gardens. The labyrinth in Crete is round, but elsewhere one can find square, triangular and octagonal versions. The most well known, round labyrinth can be found in the cathedral of Chartres.

THE LABYRINTH IN ART

Jan Amos Comenius wrote 'Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart' in the 17th century. In it he uses the labyrinth as a metaphor of the path that needs to be traveled in order to overcome the sins of the world, which in turn will lead to the achievement of divine inspiration.

Over time the labyrinth is transformed by painters, from a path of suffering and sins in the 16th century to one of virtues in the 17th century. The 7 virtues are brought forward, namely faith, hope and charity (the theological virtues) as well as temperance, prudence, fortitude and justice (the cardinal virtues). Comenius lets his main character find the 7 virtues after he has found the divine light in his own heart.

Pablo Picasso identified himself with the powers of the Minotaur. He created his most famous drawing of this subject in 1956 of a dying Minotaur in which he, contrary to 16th and 17th century painters, turned the struggle of the human duality inwards.

Through the centuries we see painters and writers develop their approach in relation to the labyrinth turn from negative to positive. From sin to virtue and from exoteric to esoteric.



LABYRINTH IN THE CATHEDRAL OF CHARTRES

THE BUILDING OF CATHEDRALS

In 1020 Fulbert, the Bishop of Chartres, formed the ‘School of Chartres’. The philosophical and Christian thoughts that formed the school’s foundation were recorded in hand written books and brought to life in the cathedral’s shapes, sculptures and symbols. In the 19th century Victor Hugo therefore called the cathedral a ‘book in stone’.

During that period many conceptual thoughts were recorded in numbers according to Hebrew traditions, which introduced the concept of a number value to each of the 22 letters. This process led to the development of geometry, enabling those who could not read to communicate through calculation.

Prior to the Arabic number system values were recorded in stripes. Egyptian, Roman and Greek cultures incorporated this system of stripes into their structures and buildings. The numbers 3, 4 and 5 played a major role in this and can be found in triangles, squares and pentagrams.

This system brings up parallels with Pythagoras who is depicted in the cathedral. His thesis that 3, 4 and 5 create a right triangle with 5 as hypotenuse has been discovered previously in Egypt. Theories exist that Pythagoras was connected to a temple school in Egypt and brought the model to Europe.

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LABYRINTH IN THE CATHEDRAL OF CHARTRES

Over time the labyrinth has been known under various names. Jean Vilette has published several of these names in a publication titled “L’énigme du Labyrinthe”.

“**LE DEDALE**” – This stems from the name Daedalus who designed the labyrinth for King Minos of Crete.

“**DOMUS DAEDALI**” – The house of Daedalus.

“**LA LIEUE**” – The mile, a distance which takes roughly an hour to walk. When pilgrims crawled through the labyrinth on hands and knees it would take them an hour to cover the distance, which is 261.5 meter.

“**CHEMIN DE JERUSALEM**” – The road to the heavenly Jerusalem.

At the centre of the labyrinth in Chartres used to be a copper plate depicting Theseus and Minotaur. The plate has been long gone, but the anchors for the plate are still present. This demonstrates how the church has transformed the myth to Christian traditions.

- The labyrinth is circular with at the centre another circle with 6 petals.
- The diameter is almost 13 meters, 12.89 to be exact.
- The length of the path through the labyrinth is 261.50 meters.
- The centre line is perpendicular to two columns on the North and South side of the Cathedral.
- The nave of the cathedral consists of 7 spans, the labyrinth lies on the edge between the third and fourth span.
- The rosette in the western window, which consists of 12 parts, is equal in size to the labyrinth. The centre of the labyrinth, the entrance of the cathedral and centre of the rosette form a triangle, the line between the two centers forming the hypotenuse. The horizontal line between the entrance and the centre of the labyrinth represents the earth while the vertical line between the entrance and the rosette in the window represents heaven. The hypotenuse between the rosette in the window and the rosette in the centre of the labyrinth represent the human link between heaven and earth.

- The outer border consists of 113 teeth.
- The entrance of the labyrinth lies in the west, across from the main entrance of the cathedral.
- The labyrinth consists of 11 concentric circles.
- It is subdivided in 4 quadrants.
- The centre consists of 6 lobes around a circular heart. $6 + 1 = 7$
- The entrance to the centre also starts in the West and leads to the East.

ABOUT SYMBOLISM

A symbol is twofold, consisting of a physical and a spiritual representation. The exoteric and esoteric elements form parallels with matter and spirit, thereby revealing to us that behind what we know lays an unknown message.

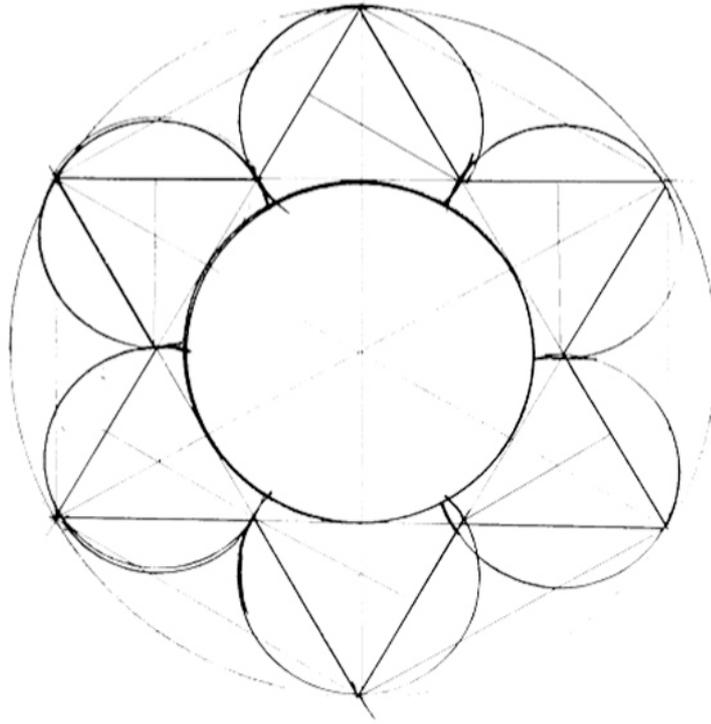
Searching the cathedral for symbols yields an astonishing amount of messages that bring us a deeper understanding of the philosophy behind the labyrinth.

The position of the labyrinth between the 3rd and 4th span refers to the transition between spirit (3) and matter (4). The centre line is perpendicular to two columns, North and South of the nave of the cathedral. Considering Pythagoras' influence on the building of cathedrals it is very well possible that the two columns refer to the columns J and B of Salomon's temple. They mark in this setting the passing of one world to the next, leading from the material to the spiritual.

The entrance of the cathedral is in the West, towards the entrance of the cathedral. When entering through the West, representing the outside world, the initiate proceeds towards the East, representing the inner self.

THE ROSETTE OF THE LABYRINTH

The rosette at the centre of the labyrinth has the appearance of a flower. It's base is formed by a hexagram within a circle. By drawing a circle within the hexagram and drawing 2 bisectors within the 6 triangles, the centers of the 6 circles forming the lobes are found. Together the 6 lobes and circle within the hexagram form the flower shaped rosette.



ROSETTE AT THE CENTRE OF THE LABYRINTH

NUMEROLOGY WITHIN THE LABYRINTH

The labyrinth is engraved with 113 teeth. The meaning of that number is revealed in 'Mystik und Magie der Zahlen' by Dr. Erich Bischoff. In his book he explains the workings of a magic square. A magic square is defined by the sum of each horizontal, vertical and diagonal row being equal, as seen in the following example.

6	1	8
7	5	3
2	9	4

The sum in this example for each of the three rows is 15. This magic square is based on 3 by 3 rows and the formula to calculate the centre number is as follows:

$$\{(3 \times 3) + 1\} : 2 = 5$$

When a magic square is build consisting of 15 by 15 rows the calculation of the centre fields will reveal the following centre number: $\{(15 \times 15) + 1\} : 2 = 113$

The key numbers in the magic square used in the labyrinth are three numbers that are all linked to Pythagoras. $3 \times 5 = 15$.

The Labyrinth consists of 11 concentric circles. The number 11 is the symbol of the inner struggle and sin of humanity.

The 4 quadrants that are connected to each other point to the four seasons, the circle of life or time in other words.

The entrance of the labyrinth is in the West, across from the entrance of the cathedral. The first turn is at the 5th concentric circle and turns towards the North. As

the North is dark it symbolizes the dark side of humanity, the subconscious. The number 5 is the number of humanity, placed between heaven and earth and forms the link between these two principles.

The entrance towards the centre starts at the second turn at the 6th concentric circle and turns into the 7th circle after which it points straight towards the centre. The number 6 is the number of creation; it symbolizes the balance between good and evil. The number 7 is the number of perfection. It is the completion and start of a new beginning.

The entrance of the 6th circle at the second turn points towards the South, the place of consciousness and is followed by the third turn into the 7th circle which points to the East, the place of light.

The arrival at the centre formed by the rosette brings a series of new symbols and numbers. The rosette is based on Salomon's seal formed by two intersecting equilateral triangles. One pointing up while the other is pointing down. The six sides represent the 6 base metals in alchemy (silver, iron, copper, tin, mercury and lead) and the circle in the inner triangle represents the sun, which refers to gold. The downward pointing triangle represents the female principle while the upward pointing triangle represents the male principle. The square and compasses also form a perfect overlay.

CONCLUSION

By positioning of the 113 teeth around it, the labyrinth is placed by the builders within a magic square and it becomes apparent that it consists of several layers.

1. The first layer is the imaginary magic square represented by the 113 teeth.
1. The second layer is the labyrinth.
1. The third layer is the hexagram or Salomon's seal.
1. The fourth layer is the flower shaped rosette.

The symbolism behind the four layers can be thus explained: The magic square, dating from the beginning of science, conceals a hidden secret and mystical powers. The square is a representation of earth or micro cosmos. By placing the 113 teeth around the circle one can read it as a circle placed within a (magic) square, which is synonym with heaven on earth. It can therefore be argued that the labyrinth is the embodiment of an initiation path. Like daily existence, it has as goal to lead the initiate to a new life without getting lost, leading a person to the altar of the self.

The hexagram or Salomon's seal creates harmony by forming one symbol out of two interlocking triangles. In the labyrinth it means that the initiate has found the perfect balance by conjoining the two dualities of the male and female powers. Mention of this marriage is made by Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas, Legion 22: *"When ye make the two one, and when ye make the inside like unto the outside and the outside like unto the inside, and that which is above like unto that which is below, and when ye make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male no longer be male*

nor the female female; [...] then will ye enter into the kingdom." In Legion 11 it becomes clear that life's purpose is to *reunite* two into one: "*When ye come to dwell in the **light**, what will ye do? On the day when ye were one ye became two. But when ye become two, what will ye do?"* The conclusion can be drawn from these two passages that the two concepts were originally one: an ideal concept. The two were fatally torn apart and Jesus directs his apostles to eliminate the polarity between the feminine and the masculine.

The flower shaped rosette at the centre lastly symbolizes the transformation from darkness to light, which is representative of the victory of the mind over matter. It leads to the place where the initiate's best-kept secret lays, the hidden meaning of life.

The four layers also portray creation. The earth (magic square) is the micro cosmos. The path of life (path of the labyrinth) is the connection between spirit and matter and the former is brought in balance by the hexagram in the centre, which connects to the circle, the macro cosmos within the rosette. The triangular connection between the entranceway, the centre of the labyrinth and the window above the entranceway emphasizes this correlation.

The labyrinth symbolizes the path we follow during our lives, creating the opportunity to learn more about our hidden struggles and ourselves. This awareness process provides the ability to develop our self into a balanced human being. With every step towards spiritual wholeness, the centre located in the East, a person can return reborn to the physical world in the west.

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