**Why the Labyrinth is Relevant in 2020**

Buckminster Fuller wrote, ‘If you want to teach people a new way of thinking, don’t bother trying to teach them. Give them a tool instead, the use of which will lead to new ways of thinking.’ The labyrinth is just such a tool with the capacity to show us a new way of being in the world. It is a gift for uncertain times because it is that rare and precious thing, a universal symbol within which all our perspectives can find a home. The labyrinth teaches acceptance, inclusion and flow. Acceptance of the path and its obstacles. Inclusion of the other, both within and without, and to be in flow with all that is. We are held by the structure of its winding path and received by its mystery.

Walking the labyrinth is often considered a threefold path: releasing on the way in, receiving in the middle and then returning. This idea blends well with the Jungian analyst, Helen Luke’s principles of the Divine Feminine: ‘Receiving, Nourishing and Birthing’. If we synergise these concepts, then the path receives what we release on the way in, nourishes us with inspiration as we pause in the centre, then births us back out into the world, refreshed. It’s a symbolic integration of our capacity to give and to receive. A true mystic path. Rather than merely a personal sense of activating the intuitive aspects of our consciousness, it’s a much bigger idea of the Great Mother rising up to meet us, using the labyrinth as her portal.

As an archetype, the labyrinth has no opposite, but its shadow is the maze (which is ultimately just a complicated labyrinth, after all). The labyrinth welcomes and soothes with the ease of its step by step journey, whereas the walls and dead ends of the maze are designed to frustrate and confuse. The maze has been the dominant paradigm for so long, most of us barely notice we’re in it. Western culture, to its detriment, has valued head over heart and thought over feeling. The rules and hierarchies are so deeply woven into our social fabric, that it’s hard to imagine any other way of being.

The maze is a game with more barriers than freedoms, whose primary goal is power and control. In corporate life, an organisation which operates like a maze would be adversarial and competitive, a dog-eat-dog environment in which the end justifies the means. It would be filled with employees chasing individual agendas rather than working as a team. The labyrinth is a game with more freedoms than barriers, whose primary goal is flow and acceptance. An organisation which operates like a labyrinth would be more collaborative, an interdependent community of individuals.

The labyrinth is a form of ‘maze therapy’ offering us the opportunity to experience ourselves as vessels through which power flows, rather than seeing power as something external to self. It is a paradigm within which we can access real power. The power of our essential nature. Not power over, which is the obsession of the maze, but power with. A mutually expansive sharing of the destiny of our world.

So how do we know if we’re living in a labyrinth or a maze? It’s all a matter of perspective. When we feel lost and confused, we’ve probably turned our path into a maze. The signs are anxiety, comparison and a need to control things. The myth of the maze is that it is real, that there’s no alternative. When we surrender to fear we build walls and create dead ends.

We can only be free when we accept our experience and understand how it might be transformed into something useful; when we realize that what’s in the way, is the way. We are the alchemists of our own lives and the lead with which that alchemist is working and we are the gold it becomes.

The coronavirus has highlighted many problems at the heart of our social and economic systems. It could be seen as the minotaur of our times, the hidden beast that must be confronted in the maze of modern life. The minotaur represents the shadow of our nature, the unconscious material we choose to ignore about ourselves. In the myth, Theseus slayed the Minotaur and managed to escape the maze, but he couldn’t do it alone; he needed the spool of thread given to him by Ariadne, to find his way back out. The hero aspect of our nature ventures into the dark of the subconscious mind to slay the monster of fear or shame, but it needs to be guided back to the light by the intuitive heroine within. The great task of individuation involves slaying all the monsters we keep locked in the heart of our interior labyrinth. Not just once, but over and over again.

Our cultural minotaurs are the aspects of modern life that are draped in shame. The choices made to serve the few at the expense of the many. The malignant delusion of endless growth on a planet with finite resources. The rape of the earth, the pollution of the seas, the enslavement of millions. These are truly monstrous realities which, when fully acknowledged can be overwhelming. The answer is to do what we can from where we are, one step at a time. To clean up our small patch of ground and support those who extend their reach beyond. The gift of these minotaurs is to wake us up to the interconnection of all things. To show us our power to destroy and create. We have the power to change our minds and change the game; to honour and revere the immense blessing of the earth instead of claiming dominion over it.

The labyrinth invites us to tune ourselves to what is possible. To reach down into the earth and up into the stratosphere, bridging spirit and matter within the vessel of our being. As a living metaphor, the labyrinth helps us to remember that we are held and blessed by all that is. Even this.

Emily Simpson, 2020