

Walls, certainly one of the oldest of human constructions if not the oldest. Walls originally came into existence in order to define a space which we considered as "ours" and which kept out "others" or something else. Essentially we can say that walls are the direct extension of the concept of ownership which, in turn, also reflects on our relationship with space and time. When the basic reality of physical existence dictates that no two beings can be in exactly the same place at the same time, then, in a sense, not only are walls erected everywhere but we ourselves become walls with regards to each other. Walls define the concept of the dividing line wherever and however we find it. It is on the one hand a barrier, keeping out what we don't want, something that says "no", and on the other hand it is something that encloses a situation that is pleasant and familiar to us, treating it protectively, as something positive requiring protection. From the plasma membrane of the microscopic cell to the Great Wall of China, that which separates one existence from another, one environment from another, one state from another is essentially a wall. These material or exterior walls as we refer to them, are clearly visible and the role they play is equally clear. But are these "external" walls actually nothing more than the projection in the outer realm of "internal" walls that are within us and that ultimately define our relationship with the whole of existence, or at least with the infinitesimal segment of it that we are able to perceive? In order to erect a wall against someone or against a group of other people, animals or natural phenomena, the prerequisite is that there is an imaginary wall within us that defines each "other" as an enemy, or at least as something that cannot and should not coexist together with us in the same space. Walls of this type, such as those found around a city, settlement, or house, begin with the premise that anyone and anything outside of them is a potential threat to those inside. The walls, in this case, in an initial phase, afford time to the insiders to consider whether what is outside is indeed a threat or not. But at the same time, they also enable some, usually a few in powerful positions, on the inside to control and manipulate the narrative of what is

happening on the outside in a way that serves their own goals. Goals which often do not coincide with those of the whole of the community on the inside. In this case the wall, apart from all else, serves to facilitate a fallacy.

In this day and age, we unfortunately see more and more walls being erected and, more specifically, often against people who are forced to leave their natural living space for various reasons. Some due to conflicts, some because of natural disasters, and still others for no other reason than that they simply have no means of making their livelihood in the place where they were born. The opposite meaning of the wall, is that of the opening. The opening represents free passage, the ability to move in a given direction, or even in all directions without restriction. People who are forced to leave their own space in search of a better life, such as immigrants or refugees, are usually surrounded by so many walls of various types that they render a tolerable (let alone pleasant) life impossible. All over the world we see more and more people being forced to migrate and seek asylum ever further from their homes, in places distant and often radically different from their own natural environment. When a person, in his/her own natural environment, is trapped by so many walls that make life unbearable, it is quite natural that he/she will seek to find, in any way that they can, some way out and some way to go to any other place where at least they believe and hope that they will be able to live more freely. No person leaves their homeland without a very serious reason. Unfortunately, these people are usually met with a wall of denial and rejection. It is here that other people, those already in the environment envisioned by the persecuted as the possible space of their new life, clinging to a narrative that sees outsiders as threatening, simply close the door on them and fortify themselves behind a wall of an “exterior” type. This wall, of course, is nothing more than the direct extension of their "internal" wall, which does not allow them to see the real situation of these people that they have so thoughtlessly and cruelly rejected.

Particularly in Europe in recent years, most states have adopted policies and passed laws that essentially function in just such a manner, as walls against these people whose suffering is already at a level unimaginable to those rejecting them. In this way, these walls remove, from both sides, the possibility of having at least some contact that would help to form a real perception about who the "other" truly is and what needs their needs are, what are their capabilities, their dreams and visions, what they hope for, and of course what is *our* obligation towards them. An obligation that essentially derives from our very human nature. Walls unfortunately, in this case, become the primary means of those who erected them in order to control and often distort the narrative of the "other" for the benefit of their own selfish interests. In these cases it is not even necessary for the wall to have a specific material form. On the contrary, every time the concept of "us" and "them" arises, a wall is erected which functions definitively between the two. This wall, however, is the direct extension of internal walls and, to the degree that they exclude other people and other things from the outside, they also confine and entrap those who erect them in an increasingly smaller space.

Of course, although this particular reference to walls clearly points to their negative aspect, which is clearly evident in the present case, it would be incorrect to say that walls are always something negative. Walls, apart from all else, represent choices..... In order to say yes to something, we say no to something else.... The human being, as the creature within our earthly realm with the broadest and most developed intelligence, faces a great multitude of choices in every circumstance of life, but these choices are not infinite in number. Also, the ability to judge, even though it differs significantly from person to person, is nevertheless also limited. Our path through life consists of a dialogue, a trajectory, and often a struggle involving our desires and our judgment. Throughout this journey we encounter walls and openings that appear and disappear according to the nature of each person. From this process arises what we call our "destiny" which derives from precisely that nature. Since ancient times, in

various cultures around the world, this process has been depicted through the means of the symbol of the labyrinth. The labyrinth, depending on the culture in which we find it, assumes various forms. In some cases we encounter it as unicursal and therefore as an initiatory path to the center of our being and then as a reverse path outwards starting from our true nature which, through the inward path of the labyrinth, has been revealed. In other cases we find it as polycursal or as a maze as it is otherwise called. Here, in contrast to the unicursal Labyrinth, which shows a single initiatory path, the maze reveals a myriad of possible paths, thus revealing a multitude of options. In both cases the Labyrinth consists of walls and openings just like life itself. Perhaps what determines more than anything else the placement of walls and openings in each of our personal Labyrinths is the totality of our desires. Within each person there are myriad desires, often contradictory, competing with each other for a place closer to the surface of our consciousness, in other words, closer to fulfillment. We are usually consciously unaware of the existence of all these desires as, as previously stated, they exist below the surface of consciousness. This does not mean however that they do not exist and that they do not influence our choices and the course of our lives in numerous ways, they do and they are what largely make up the walls of the personal labyrinth of each one of us. It can often happen that someone can desire two or more things and that the one desire contradicts the other or the others, resulting in fragmentation and indeed a blockage in a person. In this case, if the person were to look deeper into themselves, they will usually find that behind each desire or each set of desires, there is ultimately a single one that exists on a deeper level and that gives birth to the others. In his case, if one focuses one's attention on this deeper desire, the other derivative desires will gradually dissipate, as they are naught but extensions of it and are enclosed within it. If one were to look deeper still one would find that ultimately all desires were born from one which is at the center of one's being and which, by focusing on it, all others lose their meaning and gradually disappear. When one is left alone with

only that one desire, one literally “becomes” that desire, and at some point it is revealed to the person that after all it is not just a desire, it is the person’s very nature from which all of his/her actions flow. If and when a person reaches this stage, they are now free, and, in this state, there are no more walls like those such as we all encounter, walls that we have ultimately erected ourselves.

According to the great Sufi mystic Muhiy'uddin Ibn Arabi who lived in Muslim Spain during the 13th century, there are 70,000 veils of light and darkness between creation and its source. He further stated that if these veils were lifted, then the oneness of all being, of all existence, would be evident and no single being (such as ourselves for example) could possibly exist. These veils are of course also a form of wall that protects us from parts of existence that are beyond our capacity to witness. In this case, they simultaneously limit and protect us, revealing that what we imagine to be reality is ultimately an illusion, behind which lies another illusion, and yet another and many more, until we reach the ultimate truth where there are and never can be either walls or veils. Is there a “place” for us there? And if so, what is the nature of it?