

WAR OF TIME

03/11/2016

First day without a clock

Thursday, the first day of the time challenge

I broke up with my boyfriend a week ago, after a relationship lasting nearly six years. We travelled from Syria to Vienna in the hope of finding a better life. Now I don't even know what's better, living with the war or enduring the psychological struggle here. Everything is difficult, distasteful, hideous.. It requires so much effort, the language barrier too.

I have suffered a lot.

Oh I forgot I wanted to talk about the challenge, sorry...

The time challenge is an experiment that I carried out on myself, in order to tune in more to me, what I need. The experience of living sixty days without a clock.

I noticed since arriving in Austria a strange condition, a condition that kept me busy for four years. A state of time sensory deprivation. I can't feel time and yet I feel that I am in a race against it.

There are so many older people here, I started imagining the life style I would have by the end of .. my life.

I started to get to know the city. At first everything was amazing, different but changing rapidly.

I wake up, then go back to sleep.. It's as if an old tape is being fast forwarded.

Then I entered a state of psychological disorder, because of this time sensory deprivation.

I remember well in the first few months after arriving in Austria, I met a Palestinian girl and we became friends. The odd thing was that even though we only met every two months or so, I felt as if it was yesterday. I couldn't pinpoint why I was feeling that way.

The loss of time was nerve-wracking. So I started carrying a calendar, I got the idea from an Austrian acquaintance, and started scheduling my week around the things I do.

At that time I was living at my sisters. My sister, her husband and daughter were out all day, not arriving home until six, so I end up assuming the role of housekeeper. My days were structured as if an official working week.

Monday: Sport in the morning, prepare dinner at noon and then clean the house. We dined together, watched TV, then went to bed.

Tuesday: Sport in the morning, prepare dinner at noon and then clean the house. We dined together, watched TV, then went to bed.

Wednesday: Nap in the morning, prepare dinner at noon and then clean the house. We dined together, watched TV, then went to bed.

Thursday: Sport in the morning, prepare dinner at noon and then clean the house. We dined together, watched TV, then went to bed.

Friday: Nap in the morning, prepare dinner at noon and then clean the house. We dined together, watched TV, then went to bed.

Saturday: Take a walk in the park in the morning, prepare dinner at noon and then clean the house. We dined together, watched TV, then went to bed.

Sunday: Often our sister's in-law visited, so we would busy ourselves preparing a cake, or even cook some Syrian food.. just to put a smile on their faces.

Through that period of my life, which lasted almost nine months!.. I forgot why I left my country in the first place..

I would remind myself of the war.. watch despicable videos.. Pieces of people being pulled from underneath the debris of their destroyed homes. I went to sleep convinced that moving was the best solution at that time.

Ah sorry I forgot to mention, during this phase, my boyfriend whom I arrived here with, was moving house every few weeks and sometimes he would have to stay with us. We missed each other and hoped that we would have the chance to make love, but we couldn't. Sometimes we would steal a kiss and a touch.. but most of the time we suppressed ourselves.

Why you ask? I forgot to fill you in. My sister and I are from a Christian family, and my boyfriend is a Muslim. When I came to Austria, my sister had never met him. And when she eventually did, she loathed him.. despite the fact that he was my only haven.

She tried all the time to prevent us having sexual contact, and I would soothe her by saying that we were so depressed that we are incapable of having sex.

I admit that during that period, despite all this pressure I was still stable. Ascetic and with no clue about what my future would be like.. and with no desire to know what it would be.

Sometimes I would escape this reality, surfing the ads of big houses with gardens, bright sun and roses! I would imagine living there and writing my first book. For hours and hours I would lie before sleeping, surfing the internet for second hand furniture, that I have always dreamt of renovating. I have always loved handcraft, it was the only thing that could relax me.

Anyway, I don't want to bore you or tire you with this story

In reality time was passing in the blink of an eye. The same image repeated over a long period of time. And kept repeating itself over and over again.

Ah I forgot about the challenge.. sorry about the overlapping thoughts.. but the time is confusing me. I don't know what time it is, but I know that I'm relaxed and curious to know how long it took me to write this.

But I think that's enough for today, I'll take a rest now and get back to you tomorrow.

04/11/2016

The second day without a clock

I think it is early morning. It was late by the time I started writing. I didn't sleep well yesterday. I dreamt about my ex-boyfriend, he was stealing a small chair, that I loved so much, and he took it to Berlin. And that was what really got to me. I wanted to leave Vienna as soon as I finished studying, in the dream I dreamt that he gave up our home and decided to move to Berlin before me.

It bothered me, this feeling of loss. It's what bothers us often in failed relationships, a changed situation or even a new phase, possessed by the fear of loss, and then we start thinking of what we have lost or what we could lose. Often we learn from our mistakes, and we learn how to use our time in a more useful and enjoyable way. Other times we don't learn or won't have the opportunity to choose the life we always wanted.

We are so paralysed by limitations; money, rent, food, washing etc. so much pressure, that we forget at times, what's the motivation or purpose of it all? What are we getting out of this Whatever

A brief period of time has passed since I woke up; there's a knock at the door. My heart races when I hear the knock on the door.

I thought it was my boyfriend, he had come to apologize, tell me how much he missed me and that letting me leave that way had been one of the worst mistakes in his life. We hugged, kissed insanely and start having sex. He would tell me how the week had been and the talk about his suffering. I would answer with a faint smile.. don't worry I forgive you.. and hug him tenderly.

But unfortunately it was not my boyfriend. It was my neighbor from down stairs, complaining about the sound of my footsteps.

My German is good, they have told me, but in such situations I become mute, as if I don't know how to speak at all. I turn red and mumble an apology for my footsteps, even though I don't know what to do in my house if not move. It's like things accumulate until they become substantial...

I say to myself that the new house. The distant small house that I can't stand and can't find a place to hold my stuff.. Besides hearing my neighbor snores at night and movements, because of the lack of insulation in the walls, and now my neighbor is annoyed at the sound of my footsteps.

Should I hover??

I called the landlord. He had left his number in case I needed something, but he didn't answer.

What irritates me the most is the losing; I lost the ability to argue.

If I hadn't froze, I would have said the following:

Look! I understand that you are annoyed from the sound of my footsteps, but this is my house, and there is nothing I can do to help you with that. The only thing that I can do, is not wear high heels because that really would be annoying, otherwise you really can't blame me.

It is not my fault, not even yours, it is the landlords fault who hasn't insulated the floors well. Believe me, if I knew it would be like this, I wouldn't even have consider living here!

I laughed. Be thankful!! You just hear my footsteps, but I get to hear our elderly neighbor snoring, and when he sleeps with his girlfriend! So you can imagine how bad it is for me? Now go with a smile on your face, because I can't help you with this, just as my neighbor can't help me. Sometimes we have to accept reality as it is, and learn not to complain. At least that's what I learned in my country.

I wish I could have said that.

It would have been an amazing speech, which I end up practicing when he had gone.

I prepared the teapot. I began to recollect and try to link this new phase of my life to an earlier stage, where my emotions were so similar.

It was when I first moved to Damascus to study. I am from Homs and Damascus was to me that beautiful, distant but scary place.

It is the capital!!! And you know what that means.

It was an amazing experience, yet tough at the same time.

I remember my first day at university, I went with a couple of students that I'd just met to buy coffee and biscuits, so we could talk and get to know each other better. We ordered five cups of coffee, as I remember, and three chocolate filled biscuits. In Homs I had been taught not to think about money, even if you were poor and had no money, you should be generous with others. So I offered to pay the bill, expecting that one of the guys would insist and then pay the bill, as that's what I had been accustomed to in Homs. Women don't pay when there is a man there. But to my surprise, they accepted my invitation. I wasn't sure that I had enough money! Fortunately, I had enough money and I paid in amazement.

But I learnt not to offer to pay again.

It was a beautiful time. I felt completely different. It was the same thing that was happening to me here in Vienna.

I feel different. Yet time repeats itself in an odd way, and the same feelings and sensations come back to us. I lived in Damascus for six years. My memories there ... I feel like it was heaven.

I lived for four years in Vienna and I feel like it's just one. There are strange things happening here... I can't feel time.

Knowing that I worked for almost a year, travelled a lot and got to know many people, yet I keep forgetting everything and falling back to this state of nothingness.

While I can actually write of my experience in Damascus with exact dates.. good and bad, as if it was all engraved, second for second.

And that's what keeps me going with this project, what makes me hope to find some relief in the result.. That it is not just me, but almost all the Syrians that I have recently met.

Mohammed (26) described the days as being in a constant state of repeat, to the point of confusion.

"I am lost in the days, Fridays become Sundays, Sundays become Mondays.. I am really lost. I started smoking weed, it's confusing me more. My life now is a never-ending nightmare."

Thirty two year old Joan said that he will wake up one day a 70 year old man; "I feel that the clock here in Vienna is totally different, (that hour time). The day is so short, but I have become accustomed to it."

While 23 years old Raed says; "My life in Austria is different. The sense of time is really different. I was studying and working in Syria, I met with my friends on a daily, we

would stay up late and talk, and wake up again in the morning, full of energy. Maybe it's the weather.. or maybe because the stores close early.. or maybe our life as a refugee has something to do with it"

Interviews I had codified when I was researching the subject before, I did not know I was going to use them then.

The strange thing is that most of the refugees, or a good number of them, are still not working, not progressing. They are attending language courses, every three months on average.

One of theory about time is that the less busier people are, the more they feel it. But in the case of the refugee, the majority could relate to that theory.

05/11/2016

Third day without a clock

We can't feel time without movement. I can't feel time without a clock, I wouldn't feel time if the sun didn't move for example, and a lot of other things.

Time has always been strange, and what's stranger is our sense of it. We have a certain amount of time, and that's what makes it scary.. for me at least.

I do not like committing to anything, but that does not mean I'm neglectful. I simply don't like constraining my freedom to the time of others, times where my mood could have changed.

The thing that confused me the most when I came to Vienna, was that you have to organize a date, just to meet for a coffee. Even though I wanted to meet the person, the formality makes it become an obligation. I would become nervous, sometimes even my head would even hurt.. it was as if I were going for a test.

And most of the time, I would be late. I felt as if such things can't be planned. They say you can always cancel the date, but that wasn't what I bothered me. What I mean is how could I know if I want to see a person on a certain predetermined time and place, in the future. I simply don't like it. I want to see them when I feel like it. Of course they could be busy, or maybe they don't even want to see me.

But that's just how life goes. We could meet, or not.

When plan for something personal, like meeting a friend or a lover, we destroy the element of surprise and the simple joy of the moment. That's why they say that "preparing for something is better than the actual thing".

One of the biggest mistakes I have realized in Oriental Societies, is the hysterical attachment to the past. Chanting about the glory of their ancestors, or the wealth of their forefathers, bemoaning over the past, as if everything that happened in the past is better than what is to come.

Whereas Western Societies, drawn from my limited experience, focuses on the opposite. It's based on planning for the future, and this can be something that takes away the element of surprise.

When I worked at the Institute of Refugees, I experienced this first hand.

I was working from 8:20am until five pm. I would go out in the dark and come home when it was dark again. So I learned to plan for the weekend, otherwise I wouldn't enjoy my time at all.

Expectations are one of the biggest problems that people face. Expectations of certain relationships, expectations of happiness. The older you get, the bigger your expectation and the bigger the disappointment.

That was what I explained to the refugees during my time working there.

They all share the same problems and pains. They aren't aware of the cause, and sometimes if we don't know the cause we can't find the solution.

We have always heard about Europe, its civilization, social security and balanced economic systems that are for everyone. We have heard about the equality the European enjoy, the equal opportunities that make all the impossible possible.

The youth in the Middle East have suffered from the loss of hope, the hope of change. Disparity and depression has become the point of departure, despite the optimism of the past.

The youth started to hear frustrating sentences and phrases, which were actually valid in the current situation, but the impact was dangerous.. things like:

- Do you believe that you can really change the world
- Everything is collapsing and we can't fix it
- We can't change anything
- There are those who conspire us, conspire our religion and civilization
- They want to destroy us.

And a lot of other phrases that can't be translated, you can't translate the hidden meanings.

While Europe went through a stage of development, a time of economic and intellectual advancement.

So the dreams of young people began to come out of the frame of place and tower towards a vicinity of a fictitious place.

This place was Europe or western world in general, but it was an imaginary place and the youth's dream came smashing down when reality kicked in. It led to a form of both shock and hatred at the same time.

Youth need space to express their feeling without any restrictions, but even finding that space is difficult.

This is one of the most realistic examples of the idea of expectations meeting reality.

This also applies to time. We expect ourselves to live the life we want, but we rarely hear words related to meet expectations.

06/11/2016

I have to change my curtains. They are too dark, I can't wake up in the morning. I feel like it is 12 o'clock. It doesn't matter.

The deeper I dig into the topic of time, the more I find it both exciting and scary.

I'm going through a difficult time, I don't know how my suffering will end. They say that time is capable of everything. Things change with time How many times have we wondered what makes the painful times long. Long.. Endless.

Despite the pain that Refugees are suffering, even the loss and suffering does not stop the feeling that time is passing quickly.

It is a strange decision, when I decided to give up on time and routine, which I had become used to lately.

Yesterday evening I returned to the house, I had been out taking a walk. In my new building there is one main door and another external door through which you can access the street. In between these doors there is yard, people park their cars there, and on the right there are three big trash containers each for a designated type of garbage; paper, glass and other wastes.

Everyday my seventy-year-old neighbor closes these doors and locks them. And each time someone comes to visit me after nine o'clock I have to go down and open the locks and then close them again and when they go, I have to do it again. It's frustrating. Why not twelve o'clock?! Not nine!!

Yet I became accustomed to this system anyway..

When I came back I opened the outer lock as usual, I closed it but it was too dark so I hit my head and got hurt,, I locked it and entered the yard on my way to the door of the building.. I opened it, entered and locked it again. Waiting for the elevator I heard the door of my old neighbor, so I hurried into the elevator and pressed number two. The moment the metal door was about to shut, he arrived and started banging and yelling. I was like the victim of a horror movie victim. The elevators get stuck, allowing the serial killer with the miserable childhood to reach the victim.

I arrived on the second floor as he was half way up the stairs, barefoot, in stripped prisoner-like pyjamas, with his white hair and his light blue eyes.

So I walked down a few steps down, asking him gently if there was problem?

He exploded instantly, yelling that I wake him every day and that he can't tolerate this any longer.

I asked if he was sure that it's me who is bothering him daily? He answered a confident yes, questioning who else it would be!

I left him screaming in his harsh German accent and I went into my house and closed the door.

I drank some water, and I lied down in my bed staring at the ceiling, wondering what's wrong with people.. why they are always angry!

Has this old man lived a happy and satisfied life or did he feel like he had been robbed of something.

Because anger and sadness are two different things

Anger that I see in people carries meanings and messages. Most of these messages stem from a feelings of injustice.

Like the human feeling that someone else has taken their place in life..

The feelings of injustice towards the things they had wished to have.

Or things they wished to live alone with, without needing to share them with others
All this is possible.. or he could just be a stupid hateful old man
Everything is possible.

This is what I sometimes see in the eyes of the Austrians or even the older immigrants. A
craving to share their sorrow with the new immigrants, so they turn into this unjust that
became part of their lives someday.

You can also find it evident when dealing with government employees. Living a life of
ugly routine.. a life of repetition.

They begin to feel jealous of the new arrivals, these who are getting the help which they
believe needed..

And they start to feel injustice so they unload their anger in terms that don't
correspondent with the current situation.

Phrases that are almost personal to some extent.

Speaking on this subject I had a similar experience. It isn't the experience of my racist old
neighbor who likes to unload his anger on the large amount of foreign people in the
building, by annoying me and disturbing my rest. But a similar, clearer situation..

When I came to Austria I registered at the university. The goal in the beginning wasn't
to study, but rather to obtain a visa to enter Europe because of the tragic situation in my
country. At the time I obtained a twenty-day visa.

I arrived in Austria, knowing that I was not going back.

I did the entrance exam and was accepted; it really pleased me at that time.

In the meantime, I applied for asylum. I waited nearly a year until it was approved, and
during that time, things were difficult. I wasn't allowed to travel, study or work.

I end up doing undeclared work. I didn't have many options. I had to live with my boyfriend for a year without help. Not working wasn't an option. I postponed my registration at the university for two semesters.

By the end of the year I had to follow up on a lot of things related to claiming asylum. Papers I had to take care of, registering with social services, health insurance and all the other bureaucratic things. I had to go to the social welfare office on a regular basis to look for work.

Once someone told me that there was an office to help artists, to help find work for artists. I went there immediately to register, hoping they would help me in find part-time work, while I waited for the start of the academic year.

I got an appointment after a week, during which I had to gather my passport details, type, and all related info to my residency in Austria. We agreed that I was to send them an email every two months, with work applications I made in that period. The other side of the agreement was that they would find me a job and inform me about it within that period..

I came out of the office after the appointment with high spirits and a sense of satisfaction that my life had become productive.

During this period I was also learning the German, five hours a day, five days a week.

Less than a week later they sent me an email, it was a job offer in a library or a museum. I couldn't understand very well as my German wasn't very good at the time. But I was sure that it was in Linz.

I didn't apply for the job for several reasons, first I didn't want to change my apartment and secondly because my German wasn't good enough to work yet.

Two months following the appointment she sent me an email asking about what I had done in that period.

Quite simply and honestly I told her that I hadn't applied for the job she told me about in Linz, as I didn't want to leave Vienna because my sister lives here. As for other proposals, I hadn't received anything. Best regards, Marwa

I just sent the email and boiled some water, when the phone rang. Strange, no?
I usually respond in Arabic because the Alo (in Arabic) is like Hello
I was stunned when I answered the phone to a woman screaming in German. I couldn't understand anything.

As usual, my heart started beating, I began stuttering excuses..

* Excuse me, who's speaking, I can't hear you well!

** I am the employer at the social welfare office and I'm calling to let you know that it is inappropriate that you have sent such an e-mail!!

* What is wrong with my email! I really haven't got any offers I do not know where to look, isn't this that your role?

** Our role is to work so you can rest??

* Excuse me I didn't say that, but isn't it your role to find me job offers, and mine was to apply for these jobs? And I'm sorry if I wrote something that's inappropriate, my language doesn't really help, I didn't mean to.

** I see that you speak fluently. There are no problems with the language, as you claim. Anyway, there are somethings that you need to know, you aren't on vacation here, and you're not here to have fun. You should be grateful for what Austria has offered you!

Her voice began to spiral into a list of things I have gained from being here.

They are paying my health insurance, and thank God every day that I got this

opportunity, and that I had to work full-time as soon as possible, so I could start paying my taxes!

I was traumatized, I started crying.

It was impossible to understand this malevolent women.

I called my sister, who has long been my protector, especially in these situations. She was used to shouting on the street and ignoring the haters who cynically commented on her foreign accent.

I called her crying..

She reassured me that she would contact them to clear up the matter, and asked me not to worry and don't cry in such situation..

I wiped my tears, took a breath and I prepared the boiling tea.

Ten minutes later, my sister rang me back and reassured me that she explained the story, and told them that she does not have the right to talk to me that way. They decided that I should go to the office, she had arranged an appointment for the following week.

That week I shared the story with some friends, wondering if it was a normal thing, and venting my annoyance.

A week later I went to the appointment. She was nice at first. I apologized to her, explaining that it was a misunderstanding. It wasn't long until she start shouting again.

As she closed the door, she began saying:

Look I know you speak German fluently and that this was not a misunderstanding.

Let's get some things straight, I have a daughter almost your same age and I know you do not want to work!

I cut across her, saying: It's not true, I want to work! I'll start studying soon and I have to find work before that!

She looked at me in shock: You are wasting my time and the time of everyone who works with me! And again started to yell..

I spoke to her softly: I don't know exactly is happening here, I will go and I don't want the help of the social welfare office anymore. Thank you for your cynicism towards me!!

And I left!

Shortly afterwards, I receive a bill from the job center, ordering that I pay a large fine for breaking the law, which she claimed I had done. I'm still paying it until now.

What I wanted to say by telling this story, is that later I knew; this woman is an old time immigrant, who is just reacting to the difficulties and troubles she suffered from when she arrived. Or she is suffering from stress at work, or in life. She needed an opportunity to unload.. Or maybe she is just a stupid hateful woman, nothing more.

Sharing is a humans quality, not only sharing joy, but also sorrows and difficulties.

Our ability to share our tragedies, is a means of making our tragedies easier to live with.

Sharing our sorrows with a close person or group makes them less daunting, compared to the ones that we are forced to live alone in silence with.

After sometime I started to realize and understand these things, and I felt that I, too, should share and empathies.

I started lying about certain things, such as my living circumstances and financial situation, to appease them.

I began experimenting, what were the things that scared them and what gave them a sense of relief. To understand the situation more clearly, I began telling variations of one scenario.

The first was that I pretended that I was in love with my country and I would not hesitate to return if the war ends. The second was opposite, I'd talk about the uglier problems in my country, such as violence against women and other polemic issues, and I would insist that I would not go back, even if the war ended. The purpose of this was to test their reactions, pinpoint for them what was the issue with us.

And other types of scenarios to find out what the problem really was.

One of the main conclusions I reached was; their sense of injustice, knowing that the life they live -compared to the whole world- was the better in terms of quality of life, money, health, etc. Yet despite this, they had a sense of injustice. This was most evident in the non-happy, working classes.

This -in my opinion- comes down to the feeling that they are wasting time with work. The perception is that there are those who enjoy their time without work, and that's what leads to them placing pressure on the refugees to work.

The misunderstanding extends to both sides, a general state of disconnect exists. Many refugees don't feel a sense of responsibility to their newly adapted country, they see their presence here as temporary. Then on the other side, there is a completely different understanding; that this is the refugees new home and there is a feeling that they need to assimilate fast.

I began to get to know a lot of elderly women in various artistic and other social circles, and women in their mid-forties.

The conversations would always lead to awkward places, where I was forced to explain the status of refugees, and the reasons for they are coming to Europe and the whole situation.

And then the usual argument:

We are not determined to occupy their country, we do not want to rob them, the displacement of people because of conflict has happened throughout history. In Syria we also host refugees, that life will move on.

This subject drained me and I began to feel upset every time I heard the words; Refugees or Syrian.

I started to become introvert, and I refused to go to any cultural gatherings with Syrians and Austrians. My social circle began to get smaller; it was focused around just the two of us.

We smoked together and watched funny videos
Until I broke up with my boyfriend.

And my circle became only me.

17/11/2016

Today I travelled to Germany to celebrate my niece's birthday, she's two now. Her two years were different from my two years or the two years of others around.

I didn't write last week, I didn't work and I didn't attend the meeting with my professor, too many difficult things were going on.

My boyfriend, whom I broke up with a month ago, cheated on me. Can I actually say cheated? We were separated.

It's true, but I can still consider it cheating in spite of my friends' many attempts to convince me of the contrary. I had another conviction.

Can we live together for six years and after a month of separated, take another woman in my place?

My mind could hardly endure it, I started to go crazy. I started running and screaming in the streets at night.. Strangers in the streets hugged me.

Hitting my head against the walls of buildings..

I was scared, I have always called Vienna the city of the crazy, and I was afraid to become that creature who enters public trains stinking, talking to themselves and complaining in different languages. No one cares about them; no one wants to help them.

I was afraid of being lost and of losing my mind.

It was impossible for me in that week to understand that it was just the immediate reaction, and that time is able to solve many issues, especially those we can't solve by ourselves.

I started calling him hundreds of times in a minute.

All that ran through my mind was; what of the past years!?

And even then the same idea came back to me.

I wasted my time. I burnt it.

We exchange our time with pleasure, feelings and moments of short-time happiness..
The longer the time, the higher the expectations..

The longer the refugees trip in boats and the longer they have lost in land and sea, the longer they will feel frustrated.

Time is the actual currency we're dealing with. We spend time to get what we want.

The next day and after resting a little. I wrote in one of the women groups on a social network that I needed low costs psychological help. I heard about those sessions and how much they cost..

Luckily a psychology consultant was in the same group and offered to help me for free..
My first appointment was Monday the 21st of November, eight thirty in the morning..
I hoped that she could inspire me. I never imagined that I would need daily psychological help

But I was so relieved. I always know that when I write, it means I'm fine

All these things say that I'm alive. We're alive when we feel, when we rejoice and suffer and mourn, all of these are called life.

2016 11 18

I studied as a kid in religious schools and I attended a class every Sunday, which was .taught by a Dutch priest. He came to my city to become a monk

He lived in a monastery near my house, and he became famous in the neighborhood, and the city

Our region which is considered the oldest in the city, known for its black stones, big houses and courtyards.

I was young when he came. He was called Frans Van der Lucht.

My simple city Homs was in a fuss over his arrival, and then doubts began to spread among the people of the city. Some of them considered him an Israeli spy, and some of them considered him an atheist disguised with religion to manipulate the minds of the youth with his western liberal ideas.

We loved him very much, we the parish. I loved him so much too, he was my tutor. He taught me to meditate, to listen and to remain deeply silent..

He taught us yoga and many other things which I wouldn't have learnt without him.

I lived my childhood, my teenage years and my youth under his guidance until the war separated us.

I lived a different childhood from many others, I think.

Not every child gets such an inspiring tutor in their life, who teaches the most important things about life. I always felt lucky when I talked about him in front of my friends in Damascus, and about the things and books I had learnt from him; about concepts and morals, ideas which schools at that time had abandoned.

Syria was strictly an Islamic and Christian country. Religion plays a significant role in people's life, regardless which religion they followed. Secular ideas weren't public, if anything, it was restricted.

And we all know, even if just a little, about religion.

Religious philosophy is a matter that always caught my attention. My life in my city and country was an adventure into the world of spirituality, especially after what I learnt from Father Frans.

I was like everyone and everyone was like me.

The sense of sharing in the Middle East, or let's say in my country, was high as I mentioned earlier. We love to share everything with everyone, we sympathize with the weak, and sometimes we wish we were the poor to get sympathy.

One of the strangest philosophies is the philosophy of Islam.

It's a way of living and raising of a whole population. If we understand the philosophy, we can communicate better with the people.

Christians and Muslims both believe in the afterlife. Which is related the most to time. The love of immortality is divided in two sections; survival instincts and the philosophy of time.

We want to stay, but forever.

Which means that we want to reproduce, but we also want immortality. As if it is not enough to have children, but we as individuals want to be immortal too.

These religions work by giving humans hope, that this short tiring life is just a start for the non-ending journey full of happiness and time.

Eternal life is just greed for time.

The concept behind religion was just a way to rule through history, and religious philosophy a morphine for people to steal their time, promising them of more time later.

Muslim prays five times a day

Fajer (early morning) prayer

Allduhr (noon) prayer

al-aser (afternoon) prayer

moghreb (sunset) prayer

Ishaa (night) prayer

And each time he prays, he repeats a specific recitation;

repetition

repetition

repetition

Just like work. Like the boring work which is empty of communication, empty of feelings, of sensations and of humanity.

There are many cases of the need for a spiritual moment, to communicate with ourselves and with the Creator. These are human needs that transcend cultures, but I think the problem is repetition.

Repetition eliminates the element of surprise, ritualising something makes it just that, a ritual, not because of meaning.

We can't live spiritual, creative or productive moments when we are compelled by either religious or work authorities.

Few working people get jobs, where they can work freely without restrictions and obligations.

The capitalist system is the contemporary religion of civilized people, which takes away time in an inhumane and in-just way, promising people; money and holidays. Controlling peoples' time, selling it back to you.

Therefore we see so much suffering and sorrow in countries that follow a harsh religious system, quite like the suffering we see in countries that follow a harsh practical system as well.

Somehow there is hatred after grief, revenge after pain and forgiveness after joy.

This explains the hatred of some people towards others, because of dissatisfaction with time.

Which means there is grief and pain caused by robbing people of their time, resulting in the accumulation of hateful feelings, which is caused by the pain of losing time.

Away from repetition.

Refugees, war refugees especially, suffer from the effects of post-traumatic stress. Because of the amount of loss that is associated to some extent to the concept of time. Most people invest their time to secure a satisfying life, in the case of war one loses everything they have invested their time in.

And so one begins to experience stages of shock in different ways; like denying reality, then anger, and later that shock turns to acceptance of reality, then begins the phase of depression and separation from reality as a result of the pain.

Pain of loss, whether a physical loss, material loss or a moral loss, such as the loss of a father or a brother or relatives or even a certain lifestyle he was used to.

As a result of shock.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, there has been controversy over the fact that the painful memories are different in nature from the rest of our memories.

For example, Janet * 1889 * argued that the painful memories interfere in linking painful experience with the current state of consciousness, thinking and acting this case of indifference separation from reality leads to forgetting the painful experience but this memory loss affects only the living retrieval of the conscious memory.

But the full embodiment of the memories remains stored in the brain and is expressed implicitly through dreams and behavior.

Brewer and Freud have similarly suggested that painful memories are subject to the process of another mental power, which is repression.

It is a conscious act of inhibition or prevention which makes the person suppress a memory.

Whether the process is separation from reality or repression of the memories, the result is the same which is to prevent the contents of a certain mentality from submission to control voluntary and conscious awareness.

This situation of indifference, which is the separation from reality that the person lives is a way of self-defense, a person may come back and use it again when exposed to other painful experiences.

This is clearly related to war refugees.

Where even, when they arrive to a new country, they are subjected to a series of life events that are associated with a high degree of so-called units of life-altering as psychological tension to Holmes and Rahe scale.

Whether from forced retirement, a change in the line of work, a change in living conditions, changing the place of residence, changing of school, changing religious and social activities and even a change in eating habits. All these difficulties arrive in the life of a refugee at the same time, and cause as a result a state of separation from the new reality as a means of self-defense.

In research at Stanford American University the following idea was tested; Is it possible for our conscious to suppress or change our feelings during a certain event through changing memories of that event?

They exposed a group of participants to material that evoked different emotions, such as videos, and then asked some of them to suppress their emotions and not show them to the others. They then measured their ability to remember the external stimuli that was offered to them. It was interesting that those who tried to suppress and not show their feelings were less capable to retrieving stimuli and remembering it.

Richard and Groos, 2000

One of the explanations for these results is that conscious focus and self-awareness of the emotional state of the individual may detract from the observation of that individual to the surrounding environment, including from external alerts. Whether through continuous conscious focus on the emotions and trying to address them or by separation from unconscious reality.

A refugee finds himself in front of long stage test without leaving any impact or memories. Which answers a lot of questions about the of lack sense of time.

This table, designed in 1967 by psychiatrists Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe, depicts, in a simple way, stress levels of life changes that human's experience. And the psychological effects that could be the result, by collecting and measuring life events and

then comparing them with the results presented below in this table.

Measuring the Potential Impact of Change on Health

The Social Readjustment Rating Scale, designed in 1967 by psychiatrists, Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe, evaluates the stress levels of important life changes (both planned and unplanned) and correlates them with illness. The scale measures stress in Life Change Units (LCU) and has been used in hundreds of studies on life change and illness onset.

To measure your stress according to the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale add the number of "Life Change Units" that apply to events you experienced in the past year. If the event occurred more than once, multiply that number by the life change units. The cumulative score will give a rough estimation of your potential risk for illness.

Life event	Life change units	Life event	Life change units
Death of a spouse	100	Trouble with in-laws	29
Divorce	73	Outstanding personal achievement	28
Marital separation	65	Spouse starts or stops work	26
Imprisonment	63	Begin or end school	26
Death of a close family member	63	Change in living conditions	25
Personal injury or illness	53	Revision of personal habits	24
Marriage	50	Trouble with boss	23
Dismissal from work	47	Change in working hours or conditions	20
Marital reconciliation	45	Change in residence	20
Retirement	45	Change in schools	20
Change in health of family member	44	Change in recreation	19
Pregnancy	40	Change in church activities	19
Sexual difficulties	39	Change in social activities	18
Gain a new family member	39	Minor mortgage or loan	17
Business readjustment	39	Change in sleeping habits	16
Change in financial state	38	Change in number of family reunions	15
Change in frequency of arguments	35	Change in eating habits	15
Major mortgage	32	Vacation	13
Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30	Christmas	12
Change in responsibilities at work	29	Minor violation of law	11
Child leaving home	29		

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holmes_and_Rahe_stress_scale

Studies show a modest correlation between the number of life change units experienced in the previous year with a person's health in the present year.

Interpretation of Your Score

≥ 300: high risk of illness.

150-299: moderate risk of illness

< 150: reduced risk of illness

***Please note: This self-assessment tool provides only a rough estimation of your risk for illness as correlated with your stress level. An individual's response to life events can vary greatly from one person to another and factors such as personality, coping strategies, lifestyle, and availability of resources also alter the effect the situation has on health and risk of illness. When "change happens" in your life, we hope you'll implement the strategies discussed in the webinar to help you move through life's challenges with greater ease and confidence and reduce your risk of illness.

References:

Richard Rahe's website: www.drrahe.com. (Revised and updated "Life Changes Stress Test" and "Stress and Coping Inventory" tools are available for a small fee)
T.H. Holmes and R. H. Rahe, "The Social Readjustment Rating Scale," *Journal Psychosomatic Research* 11(2): 213-8, 1967.

Not only are the refugee's suffering from the above mentioned problems.

Repetitions cause the same result

If you duplicate the action for a relatively long period of time the brain saves the event, in cases of repetition, as a continuous memory in the absence of a thing is linked to emotion,

If the work is non-renewable or alternative to the machine constantly repeating, the individual makes exactly the same reaction to the person traumatized and we go back to the same result

Either separation from reality or through continuous focus on feelings and trying to treat them

Resurrecting the same result, which is not to store any memories

Making the life of the worker short in terms of sense because of the lack of memory.

I went to my first therapy session..

I knew the therapist before she helped me, a nice, middle-aged woman.. We had met several times in the past at cultural events or ceremonies

I had expectations about what I wanted to hear, and was excited to hear that from someone who didn't know me that well.

I wanted to hear statements of moral support, which I needed.

I wanted to hear those statements from a friendly face.

= Marwa, You are a strong woman who has endured many difficulties and suffered enough, I totally understand this, and I can see that you have a wonderful future ahead. You are a unique person, talented and sensitive, it is normal that you go through the stages of weakness and collapse.

This is what I actually hoped to hear, but it was quite different from what I experienced during my first appointment.

The appointment was early in the morning. The weather was cold in the absence of the sun, it was as if the sun never shone upon this city at all. Grey skies and people moving about in a hurry, angry. It made the scene around me extremely dramatic.

I arrived at the door of the building and rang the bell.

She opened the door, smiling.. I was relieved and I smiled back.

How beautiful it is that we can empathise with people we do not know, to receive help from someone who does not know me and wants nothing in return.

Is this not happiness?

Receiving a beautiful thing without expectations

Is that not happiness?

We can repeatedly return to building back up our expectations, which can be capable of destroying us.

I entered the apartment; it was typical of Austria, with high ceilings, wooden floors and large windows.

I sat across from her, sharing smiles.

"how are you?" she asked.

"tired" I said.

Then I remembered that she had already informed me that our first session will only be 40 minutes long, as she is busy.

I took a deep breath.

How can I tell her anything in 40 minutes, I need 3 hours at least to explain what I feel, without narrating the problems and accidents I had been through in these four years.

Then I calmed myself and remembered that this was just an introductory session.

The monologue only took seconds.

We spoke for a while, everything was nice.

I was a little nervous when the session was about to end, I was anxious for her to tell me something comforting.

I'm restless, I don't eat regularly, I refuse to sleep in my new house because of the strange fear I have at night, not to mention the nightmares and the strange tantrums which resulted in me destroying things that I value.

I needed a temporary solution.

I really needed help.

I forgot how to think rationally, how to cope with things and solve problems, and I became annoyingly weak.

I interrupted her speech about general issues, and said:

"I need a temporary solution"

"Solution?" she asked with surprise.

I can't take it anymore, the idea of war and asylum, the effort of dealing with people, I no longer have enough energy to work and carry on.

I feel like there is no point.

Everything collapses in a moment.

Here I am after four years working and studying, trying to build a life, but so soon I fall.

How can I protect myself, how can I carry on... and I cried.

It's one of the few times I have cried in front of someone.

Time is capable of everything.

You have to accept reality and find what makes you happy.

Time, time, time, time,

I went out comforted, I felt like someone was standing by my side.

Loneliness is something distasteful and sad.

I started going there weekly.

And with each weekly talk, the better I began to feel.

I want to get better and to live happily, but our mind works against us sometimes.

What we want is a short, happy film of beautiful moments to make ourselves smile, but it either suppresses those memories or forces us to remember the sorrow.

We have to create happy moments, we have to improve reality sometimes, especially in times when reality is too awful, like war. That is what eastern nations usually do, which always surprised me. Wars, blood, poverty, children being tortured and many other things. When we look at TV or even the life style of people on TV, we are shown life as colorful and full of dances, everything is exaggerated. .

This is what shocked or suffering people do all the time.

They create a parallel world, which is beautiful and exaggerated, to store an equal amount of both bad and good memories so it can be retrieved when needed..

According to research by Duke University, sports fans were better able to recall the good things their teams had done, rather than the bad things. The study used fans from a basketball match which went into extra time, between Duke University and the University of North Carolina.

This research studies the relationship between memory and feelings subjectively, which is present in post-traumatic stress disorder in particular, even in a person's ability to remember their own history.

This way of measuring brain activity during exposure to fast and strong emotional pulses, negative or positive using the passionate basketball fans. Which was one of the best studies made away from more sensitive topics.

The aim of the study was to show the brain capability of vanishing certain issues that cause trauma, through suppressing it..

And this is exactly what has been happening to me lately.

I remember nothing

Sometimes I forget the way things were in my family house in Homs

I called my mother to ask her details that I have dreamt of related to my childhood and our house.

My siblings often share my feelings, we would sit down together and try to retrieve the simple memories of our family home.

Each of us goes through phases at some point. We have to always understand the reasons to find the solution, or even to at least understand the situation.

We owe it to the people. To understand life events that happen and still be able to go on.

I recovered a portion of my energy and began searching for a new home

We have to start over, always

This analysis reflects the point of view of the writer

