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Being refugee

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"Being is?" by Sophie Hjerl with text by Dady de Maximo, Jan Pêt Khorto, Christian Franklin Svensson and Adrian Wilding.

4 different AR experiences aim to view the situation of being a refugee, from a philosophical, poetical, narrative and testimonial perspective:

"Being Refugee", by Christian Franklin Svensson. Ideally, watch it by a roadside:
☞ https://tinyurl.com/BeingIsBeingRefugee
"Being is?", by Adrian Wilding. Ideally, watch it by a crossroad:
☞ https://tinyurl.com/BeingIsBeingIs
"If the Sea Could Talk", by Dady de Maximo. Ideally, watch it by water:
☞ https://tinyurl.com/BeingIsIftTheSeaCouldTalk
"Transcendence", by Jan Pêt Khorto. Ideally, watch it in nature:
☞ https://tinyurl.com/BeingIsTranscendence

Being refugee

By Christian Franklin Svensson (Ph.D, anthropology)

To be or not to be is indeed the question for all of us, but for many refugees, this is often a matter of actual life and death. Globally, millions of people are denied their livelihood and citizenship for economic, cultural and social reasons. So-called dissidents are by governments in their home countries forced to flee to avoid persecution. Many more are internally displaced, often denied free movement and basic human rights like access to education and health care. What is *being*, then, when one's home and country must be abandoned, and what sense of belonging and identity remains?

When standing at a crossroads, one has the choice of going in any direction, or to stay in the middle, but refugees are trapped and cannot escape their flight. *Being* depends on each context as different ways in which something or someone can exist. If one attempts to construct *being* as essence - das Ding an sich - the project is doomed to fail, because our worlds are constructed from experiences, imagination and actions. The world - or rather our worlds - is one of phenomena and not something in itself. Here, absolute and universal truths do not exist - the truth is what we reason.

We attempt to create meaning in a seemingly meaningless world. Sisyphus' fate represents the absurdity of *being*. Sisyphus is the stranger and a rebel who epitomises the consequences of the farce of *being* through passivity or action, but someone who under no circumstance subscribes to an unreflected set of social norms.

What is good and evil depends on the individual's perception and *being* allows for a miscellany of sensory impressions of experiences, but in a humanistic society, social justice, freedom of expression and basic human rights are prevalent. A prerogative for *being* is that no person shall rule over others in the form of private property and ideologies like ethnicity, religion and nation-state government. It may seem unattainable, but without such utopian deliberation there can be no perception of the current state of affairs and therefore no prospect for social change.

 Being is something that can be created - potentially to change social and moral norms as the basis of community. One is not born a woman, says Simone de Beauvoir - you become one, so *being* is not merely predetermined by biological and economic factors. In this sense, a sense of *being* for refugees has no meaning in itself, because it is continually in a process conditioned by the present conditions and directed towards the future in the shape of hope, concerns and expectations. Sorrow and joy are two absolute states by which one can become paralyzed. Being a refugee presents such a potential state of paralysis - an absolute condition, so the prudent question is whether a mode of existence ever be reached where *being* is not determined by the insecurity of coming to a foreign country with no sense of what the future will bring? Refugees seem to have lost everything and being caught between a diversity of cultural expectations may present a desperate situation. On the other hand, cultural in-betweenness can force one to create identities as an amalgamation of the new and the old in a balance between holding on to and letting go of relationships and communities. In a world when every two seconds a human being is forced to become a refugee due to armed conflict, hunger or targeted persecution, such *being* as a sense of belonging is more important than ever.