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Araştırma Makalesi/Research Article

## THE REPRESENTATION OF DASEIN'S AWARENESS OF DEATH IN LOUIS DE BERNIÉRES' NOVEL BIRDS WITHOUT WINGS <sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

Throughout the human history, people have searched the ways of being different and unique. This quest has shaped various literary representations of uniqueness and especially in the postmodern period this concern gains more ground. Particularly, Heidegger's theory of Dasein becomes most appealing, as Dasein's difference and uniqueness emerges with his awareness. His level of awareness determines his status among ordinary people. His decisions and behaviours prepare him to become Dasein. The switch from everyday mode to authentic mode takes place through questioning. Authentic mode brings another level of awareness which establishes Dasein's difference and characteristics. His awareness brightens his difference even in most terrific, outrageous situations such as the experience of death.

This study focuses on Louis de Bernières' novel *Birds Without Wings* which depicts death as the most personal, unique and traumatic experience in one's life. The novelist reveals how this trauma, experienced by his characters, leads to great suffering and pain. Using Heidegger's perspective, Louis de Bernières depicts Dasein's difference during this experience. His awareness of his fragmentariness and his acknowledgement of his loneliness in this universe thwart the attempt to complete himself. This fragmentariness makes him Dasein. It is the reason that he accepts and embraces death of others. On another level, he embraces his own death, death of the self. This study considers mostly Georgio P. Theodorou from *Birds Without Wings*, a character who is beyond limitations as a Dasein, as he grasps the meaning of death and makes the readers aware of his dying process. His awareness of nothingness comforts him in the process of dying and allows him to be conscious during this process.

**Key words:** Awareness, Dasein, death, *Birds Without Wings*, Louis de Bernières

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the long history of humankind there were numerous enquiries concerning both creation and death. Although much questioned, death still represents a mystery which could not be completely solved. In different eras death has been considered from a variety of perspectives, as it represented a true challenge for religion, literature, art and philosophy. Starting with antiquity, there were developed various definitions of death, each period presenting new arguments and approaches, which were influenced by the fears or expectations of society, crisis of the self, or the world. The crises experienced in these periods has led to the creation of a consolatory contextualization of death in immortality or to the development of a more inquisitive attitude, by reflection on the anxieties of death and dying process as a transition to nonexistence.

Heidegger is one of major philosophers who addressed the question of death and his theory on Dasein and death has influenced many postmodern philosophers and writers. Louis de Bernières is a contemporary novelist who employs in his novel *Birds Without Wings* Heideggerian concept of Dasein in his exploration of the individuals' ultimate journey to death.

Relevant to the purpose of this study is the presentation of some major concepts of Heideggerian philosophy as they should be applied in order to reveal how de Bernières' characters during the dying process attain Dasein's awareness of death.

## 2. HEIDEGGER'S VIEWS ON DEATH AND DASEIN

Heidegger depicts the term "Dasein" to represent human being. In German language "Da" refers to "There" and "Sein" refers to "Being", so that this term literally means "Being there". From a metaphysical perspective, being is undoubtedly present within one's self, within one's capacity to interrogate the kind of being one is, or the being that raises one's awareness of a being; the experience of being "there"— Dasein. Heidegger's ontological framework of "being there" or "in the world" might create the misleading impression that Dasein has to be distracted from other objects and subjects; on the contrary, Heidegger insists that Dasein has to protect the relation with the world and environment. He argues that Dasein is not able to separate from other subjects and objects genuinely, purely. Respectively, for Dasein's ontological existence the connection with the environment is absolutely necessary.

In his work *Being and Time*, Heidegger produces a radical alternative to the Cartesian knowing subject when he explores Dasein as being in the world. He dismisses the idea that the beginning of being is in the individual's consciousness as a knowing subject. In fact, Heidegger insists that there is no experience of oneself that is not connected to the experience of the world. One's true experience of oneself, which is lived in every daily action of eating, talking or observing, can be perceived only in continuous relation to the world. Similarly, the world cannot be experienced as a detached and remote unity of objects which is completely disconnected from our existence. Da Sein, therefore, assumes its being in its existence. Dasein does not exist *per se*; the only explanation of its existence emerges from its own being. Heidegger justifies the name Dasein, as it differentiates the being from other objects, as table, tree or house. Dasein has its own essence, own existence and being. According to Heidegger, Dasein is always ego-centric, who is neither aware, nor unaware about its existence. In the process of becoming Dasein, one is in between awareness and unawareness of its existence, and with the process of awareness its existence begins.

Each Dasein is inevitably connected with life and death. Heidegger explains that Dasein is connected with time in three different stages: existence, thrownness and fallenness. Existence stands for future, thrownness refers to past and fallenness is the most significant part of Dasein essence, which refers to present that involves a moment within a moment Dasein struggle

begins with present. Dasein's inevitable process of becoming starts with the awareness of the self that emerges from the awareness of the finitude of human existence. Heidegger defines it "being-towards-death".

Prior to Heidegger, many philosophers asserted the idea that death resents the most terrifying experience of human being. Heidegger contradicts this attitude, claiming that in Dasein's case the situation is different, since death represents the most outstanding moment of Dasein's existence. Only with Dasein's awareness of himself and of death the unique and private bond with death is created.

Heidegger develops another theory about Dasein existence, which is represented by a twofold being in the world: one mode is "average everydayness" (Alitaglichkeit), which is the inauthentic way of existence, whereas the other one is the mode of mindfulness of being, an ontological mode in which the awareness comes with being's authenticity. These two modes of being are extremely important when one approaches the issue of awareness or unawareness of death. The period in which human being is unaware of death is considered by Heidegger only a waste of time, since this being fails to become Dasein. The being emerges as a Dasein with the awareness of death. Death confers great authenticity that Dasein acquires as a result of the process of great struggle which is experienced in order to establish the self.

Although everydayness is depicted as the less-than-ideal state of being in a world inhabited by others, in which one lives without a particular claim or ability for exceptional insight into the meaning of his human condition, this mode of existence is essential for the formation of the self-awareness, which results from the way one identifies himself with the world or from the way one is involved in the world. Seen frequently as an inauthentic or fallen state of being, where one seeks refuge in an anonymous "they", everydayness is essential for one's gaining capacity of viewing the self through the reflection of the world, which is a necessary step, taken by one in the process of becoming Dasein. Actually, one prepares its being to Dasein in everydayness unconsciously, by every act that the one performs and every decision that one makes, that leads its being and existence to the substance of Dasein.

As an existence, Dasein determines itself in its environment and in the situations of confrontation. More or less it leads Dasein to understand its being and the self. The everydayness mode by far is not like nothingness, in the fact that it possesses some positive phenomenal characteristic. Heidegger explains that this everydayness and being ordinary are always condemned to be overlooked, however average everydayness represents the actual *a priori* state of Dasein.

According to Heidegger, being thrown into the world of everydayness awakens a certain awareness which forces one "find" himself in some way or another. Thinking-as-usual in unusual situation creates an inadequacy, as one would think that there is more in life than this average everyday experience. In the desire to understand the self, one experiences contradiction, strangeness or violation of expectations, which trigger fear and anxiety. Whereas fear is understood as a dread of something particular, like a beast or creature, anxiety is viewed by Heidegger as "That in the face of which one has anxiety is Being-in-the-world as such" (2013:231). Contrary to very particular reference of fear, anxiety lacks a specific object as its source, emerging rather from an ontological state of being-in-the world confronting who the one truly is. It particularly this quest for who the one truly is, or what the one truly knows of himself arouses the anxiety. In the encounter with negativity one experiences hesitation and self-doubt that forces one to examine the everydayness and, eventually, attain authenticity. Only in this authentic mode, human being becomes Dasein, gains great awareness of death and of the self. Dasein emerges from the great struggle, which is the most painful process that one is able

to experience. In this mode, Dasein escapes from the banality of life and grasps the awareness. Death elevates Dasein from ordinariness to superior position.

Heidegger also insists on the experience and nonexistence/inexistence. According to Heidegger, inexistence is achieved only by death and through the dying process. On the other hand, Heidegger claims that all previous attempts to grasp meaning of existence are useless and he states that "Existence is a way of understanding what constitutes his own existence". (2014:299). Therefore, existence is viewed as a constant quest for self-awareness. Nevertheless, when Heidegger is asked to explain how one reaches inexistence, he replies simply, by death. Heidegger comes up with idea that Dasein needs a shelter, hometown to alter his status of self-awareness. Death represents that great threat that jeopardises Dasein's sense of safety. Death forces the one to be concerned about life. Respectively, death becomes the moment of awareness of everything in life, so life and death are interrelated.

As Heidegger assumes that death has a mirror role in life; it reflects the self and it triggers the self-awareness. As he explains,

Existence is not complete with death and does not simply disappear; it is not even ready or fully accessible. On the contrary, Existence is always ahead of his not-yet, as its front end. It is determined that death is in no way intended to imply existence, but towards the end (being towards the end), this is implicated. Death is a manner of existence as soon as it takes it for itself. (2014: 327)

Therefore, Heidegger claims that death is beyond the prior and after states. It is always there with Dasein. Death projects Dasein's self during the dying process, it is not a finitude or completeness for Dasein. It is Dasein's other threshold the for self-reflection and self-awareness.

### 3. DASEIN'S AWARENESS OF DYING OF THE SELF

Louis de Bernières, in his novel *Birds Without Wings*, depicts the process of dying of several characters, each of these representations questioning where the end point of the self lies. As Heidegger stressed out that death is a unique and deeply individual process, de Bernières tries to create a moment of one's achieving authenticity through the narrativization of the experience of death. Louis de Bernières reveals the first-hand experience of dying of G.P. Theodorou, by allowing the reader to assume the privileged position of an eye-witness to the character's confrontation with nothingness.

In his study *Gift of Death*, Derrida speaks about the moment when one is so close to death and he refers to it as the one "comes to consciousness"(Derrida, 1995: 14-15). The Being recalls all his memories, thoughts and feelings in this last moment of his life. A similar experience is depicted in de Bernières' novel when G.P. Theodorou conveys his feelings and thoughts about death, in an attitude and voice of a supreme calmness:

When you are not a strong swimmer, my friends, you are even less of a strong swimmer when fully dressed. This is a law of nature that no one can deny. I have been proving it empirically for the last hour or so. Sooner or later one has to give up the struggle, and the weight of one's sodden garments, combined with the extreme exhaustion brought about by panic and physical exertion, causes one to make peace with death at last, and then begins the long, slow descent to the murky realm of crabs and flatfish, seaweed, abandoned anchors encrusted with mussels and limpets, and inexplicable offcuts of thick rope and rusty hawser. (de Bernières, 2004: 647-648)

He portrays his situation as a normal phenomenon. Yalom explains that in this situation one experiences "anxiety of death" (2008: 12), but this anxiety does not signify the fear of

death. This anxiety makes Dasein more authentic and closer to the confrontation with the self. In the beginning of his dying experience, Theodorou still considers his everyday issues, grasping only the surface layer of his death. As a Dasein, he still narrates his physical experiences and his environment during his sinking.

You catch me at an awkward moment, my friends, and you may find my thoughts a little disconnected, but if you find me a little incoherent, if you detect that my discourse has come adrift, you will surely find me blameless, for I am at this very moment sinking slowly through the oily waters down to the harbour floor of this very lovely city that was Smyrna. I am, so to speak, neck-deep in the proverbial excrement only in a most metaphorical sense, as I am in reality considerably over my head in brine. (de Bernières, 2004:647)

In the novel, G.P. Theodorou, as Dasein, narrates all the stages of dying process by a formidable calmness. In this respect, readers grow aware that he welcomes the possibility of dying and overcomes the anxiety of death. He indicates his relief through the portrayal of death as a normal phenomenon of life. This particular realization entitles Dasein to disclose the process of dying. Firstly, he draws his environment from the perspective of a sinking old man and he reveals his thoughts about his way of dying:

I was very bitter about this death until I started to die it properly. I had envisaged a more ideal death, such as being shot at the age of ninety by a jealous lover of twenty-one whilst in the arms of her nineteen-year-old rival. Better still, and thoroughly ideal indeed, would have been never to die at all. I loved my life. (de Bernières, 2004: 649)

This process is accepted as self-disclosure by Yalom. The character crosses beyond the limits of self-disclosure. This attempt renders an affectionate relationship between the character and readers. G.P. Theodorou reveals all the details of his dying process and this transparency shocks the reader, as the reader is unprepared to accompany him in his last moments of life. As companions to this ultimate experience, readers face the existential bewilderment which results from the encounter with death. The character's narration of the dying process begins with the depiction of the physical experience, when his body is steadily yielding to death:

All the canals of my nose have filled up, but my ears are hurting, and above me I can see the hull of a boat, and I have already become accustomed to the taste of salt. There are knocking noises reverberating through the water, and the sound of engines. They must be from the Allied warships that are watching with principled neutrality and cautious apathy as we struggle and drown. At first the water was stinging the burns on my face and hands, but now they are quite cool, I am pleased to say, and I can hardly feel the wound where the Turkish soldier shot me as I tried to swim away from the jetty. (de Bernières, 2004: 648-649)

The portrayal of his bodily dying is extremely shocking, as it is delivered by a serene, sensible and aware consciousness. Theodorou's awareness deepens gradually, from moment to moment, exposing the ways in which the consciousness' layers are disclosed one by one. His next layer of awareness is disclosed through his thoughts about his past life, government's politics, his dreams and desires which are not fulfilled. In this moment he passes through another sphere of consciousness, in which he realises that the physicality and appearance are the most insignificant and worthless subjects in a human's life. They are the first issues that are abandoned even when the person is still alive.

In the process of reaching the inexistence, Dasein's awareness resembles an iceberg. On the surface, there are Dasein's corporeality and appearance, which are visible to the others. On a deeper level of Dasein's iceberg, there are the invisible issues, as his existential crisis and his questioning of the self that is constantly growing. As Yalom claims, it is the physicality of death which destroys the one while perishing from the earth, but the one's thoughts and memories

save him from vanishing (2008:33). The bodily dying renders Dasein's awareness of his physical ending. In this deep experience, Dasein reaches an authentic awareness gradually; it begins with his past memories, his thoughts about others, the circumstances of life, and in the end Dasein attains the ultimate meaning and the awareness by mirroring his own self through dying. At the last moment, Dasein bids a farewell to his own self and crosses the threshold into nonexistence.

In the next stage of inexistence and his awareness, Georgio P. Theodorou struggles to be cautious about his use of language and kindness. This conscious plight might be accepted as his wish to live as a memory in readers' mind that would prevent him from complete vanishing. He shares his ideas about historical figures that, although died, still live in the memory of the posterity, regardless of their foolish or great acts:

Here are some of the lackbrains in random order: the Greek people for electing to office a romantic, His Romantic Adventureness, Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, who honestly thought he could annex the nicest half of Turkey and tack it on to Old Greece, even though no one had given him permission, even though most people here are Turks, and no one with any sense pisses off the Turks, because the one thing the Turks are very good at is overreacting when pissed off. Clodpoll number two, the Greek people again for being just as romantic as the aforementioned romantic, for thinking that just because the civilisation here used to be approximately Greek in the distant past and is now partially Greek, it should be forced into political union with Old Greece. Timbernonce number three, the aforementioned elected romantic, Eleftherios Venizelos, Prime Minister of Greece, prodigiously overendowed with Big Ideas. (de Bernières, 2004:651)

In this passage, Theodorou realises the meaninglessness of earthly desires and concomitantly he criticises all of these historical figures for creating victims in order to satisfy their greed and ambitions. He criticises them for being self-centred, for their blindness and irrationality displayed in the pursuing of their desires. Theodorou's language changes when he is closer to death; his hatred and anger nudge his disturbed conscience. He is a witness of these guilty, idiotic failures of historical figures. He is also aware of the fact that this game which is played by those historical figures is destructive. His existential crisis triggers the questioning of the hypocrisy of clergy and religion:

Talking of which, what about the positive plague of firebrand priests we've been inundated with? All these men of God who want us to go out and kill Turks in the name of Holy this and Holy that? What about all this talk of rebuilding Byzantium? What on earth for? And some of them even alking with all seriousness about the imminent return of the Marble Emperor! What are we supposed to make of it when Archbishop Chrysostomos himself puts on his mitre and blesses our troops when they land at the quay, and strikes at Turkish gendarmes with his pastoral staff, and encourages his entourage to spit on them?( de Bernières,2004: 651)

He questions all the trivial defences that leaders and their followers use in order to explain their wicked actions against innocent people. This passage, in a way, reveals Derrida's attitude towards history, which is a problematic projects, since every historical period repeats the same idiotic excuses of their predecessors. This eternal loop does not end; it rather perpetuates the same errors of history of humanity.

Yalom mentions that stages of dying and awareness are threefold. Firstly, Dasein gains awareness of the mortality of soul (2008:79). In this awareness, he realises that humankind is doomed to be mortal, so death is an inevitable act of life. The acceptance of this truth comforts Dasein because there is nothing to prevent this unstoppable experience of life. From Yalom's perspective, the fear of death is meaningless. It is an experience that no one is capable of escaping from. G.P. Theodorou gains this awareness of inevitable ending, however he does not

accept of the mortality of soul. Dasein's soul continues to live by his awareness which is gained through his thoughts and memories and shared with the readers. His awareness widens while being closer to death, however, his great wit and his authentic awareness give him immortality in thoughts and memories. This moment might be likened to a flying balloon that in order to be capable of flight it must dispose of all the trivial and meaningless issues one by one, though every layer. This is what happens to Dasein until he ascends authentically, even though he descends and sinks physically. He shares his thoughts with readers, although they are very trivial topics, he tries to transfer everything that has an impact on him. It is his threshold which is necessary to be crossed in order to attain an authentic awareness. Progressively, he recognises the miracle of "being" itself and he appreciates the ontological and authentic awareness that these things are, the way Dasein exists. In a way, death becomes an awakening experience to Dasein. (Yalom, 2008:31). This awakening begins in the inexistence mode in which Theodorou discloses his identity and his thoughts about the life and the world around him.

The last things which he acknowledges in his ultimate moment are his dreams, desires and his possibilities or his regrets. These are the things he was not able to accomplish or left incomplete; his wishes will never be accomplished by him anymore. This stage reveals the incompleteness or unwholeness of Dasein (Heidegger, 1986:237). However, Dasein does not regret this incompleteness. On the contrary, the incompleteness allows a possibility for fluidity and continuity of his existence, whereas the completeness would signify the end, the certain death for Dasein. The embracement of fragmentariness suggests in fact the continuation of his existence. Theodorou, as a Dasein, narrates all his thoughts, dreams, memories and wishes in an attempt to challenge the act of forgetting. In this respect Kundera suggests that "What terrifies most about death is not the loss of future but the loss of the past. In fact, the act of forgetting is a form of death always present within life" (Kundera in Roth, 2001:97). Therefore, Theodorou's fear is not about dying or death in itself. He is afraid of being forgotten and vanishing from earth forever.

In the second stage of dying and awareness, Dasein gains ultimate nothingness after death (Yalom, 2008:80). Only after facing with death and crossing the threshold of death, Dasein enters into nonexistence. He loses his voice, his physicality, his consciousness. However, somehow he continues his existence through his awareness of nothingness. In this respect, it could be seen that Dasein tries to transfer all his distinguishable parts through his memories, thoughts and feelings to the readers. As a result of this act, the readers also gain the awareness of nothingness, which is strengthened in the novel by the representation of the end of his physical life. The sudden ending of Theodorou's narration shocks the readers that acknowledge once again the abrupt and brutal ending of life. The readers suddenly grow aware that the end of life is very easy; it is an issue of a moment. This momentary knowledge functions like an epiphany for readers, since in the process of accompanying Theodorou to his death, the readers gain first authentic experience of Dasein's awareness of death.

The last stage of dying and awareness is represented by the argument of symmetry. (Yalom, 2008:81). Dying implies the risk of Dasein's losing his identity and self when he crosses the threshold to nonexistence. This situation confers an ambiguity concerning the malleability of Dasein's identity, especially when he passes into the mode of nonexistence. This ambiguity leads Dasein to a great anxiety and fear. However, G.P. Theodorou is very comfortable with this situation, because he shares the most precious experiences of his existence with readers; thus, it means that his identity and self are rescued from the possibility of being airbrushed from world. In this process, Dasein does not allow his self to die and vanish from world.

In conclusion, it could be said that Dasein's awareness during the dying process strengthens his uniqueness. G.P Theodorou, as representative of Dasein, experiences and

reflects all the stages of death. Although it is considered that dying cannot be shared with other people, it becomes visible in the novel that de Bernières challenges this belief and shares G.P Theorodou's dying process in an frightening way. He breaks all the boundaries by allowing his readers to attain an awareness that goes beyond all limitations and human condition. Theodorou unveils his own dying, as he is already there, as a living being, governed by empirical laws of life and speaking being, capable of using a language that is pre-existed long before him. He detaches himself from all the boundaries of the empirical laws of life and exposes his being by his control over language, which is used in order to create his awareness.

#### **4. DASEIN'S AWARENESS WHILE WITNESSING DEATH OF OTHER**

In de Bernières' novel, Karatavuk is another character which exhibits the qualities of Dasein. He participates in the war and the battlefield experience triggers his awareness, as it is the stage in his life when he begins to interrogate everything. In the war, Karatavuk discloses his inner self and becomes Dasein solely. As Heidegger claims, the one who witnesses other people's death and dying process for multiple times, can easily become indifferent and insensitive towards death. These multiple exposures to death creates an opportunity for one to grasp the ultimate meaning of life and death and also an awareness of nothingness which follows after dying.

Karatavuk portrays his existential shock when his army has its first combat with the enemy. However, his astonishment is not produced by the battle itself, as Karatavuk is a very brave soldier, it is rather generated by the act of witnessing corpses scattered all around the field and the futile attempts of the dying ones still trying to save their own lives. After this experience of observing someone's dying, Karatavuk changes drastically, so that the war becomes his threshold which is crossed by him in his passage from the everyday mode to the authentic mode. He struggles to live on the verge of death. His frequent proximity to death makes him incapable of feeling any sympathy for martyrs. All the moral norms and beliefs collapse after witnessing the spectacle of death. After he passes his first existential shock, he strives to stay alive and conscious within this madness. He accepts the nothingness that follows after death. He is also aware that after dying, one passes into nonexistence mode, and it signifies the loss of the self, of identity, or any goods. It is a mode in which one abandons all the perceptions, desires, ability of activity and thoughts which were once possessed by the individual, therefore depriving one of his own identity. The novelist reflects upon what is left after one's dying:

If you are a soldier, you are forced to think about God more than those who are at home. All around you is death and devastation. You look at a disembowelled body, and you see that man consists of coils of slime inside, and yet he is smooth and beautiful on the outside. You look at a body and you see that it is not a man because the spirit has fled, and so the body does not fill you with grief. (de Bernières, 2004:493)

Louis de Bernières depicts the soldiers' incapacity of mourning the loss of their brothers whom they hold in their arms while dying, even though some of them are aware of everything. They just drag from this to there; their actions being automatic and mechanic, rather than humanitarian. Although they survive on the battlefield, they lose their free will and humanness, which are the most precious qualities of their identities. They become nobody and this makes them similar to the dead ones, bodies without soul, without conscious and awareness.

The only one who is capable to go beyond this chaos is Karatavuk. As a Dasein, Karatavuk questions everything around and thus he keeps his consciousness alive. This struggle evokes his awareness. Firstly, he gains the awareness of the meaninglessness and stupidity of warfare; he also acknowledges that soldiers on both sides are the innocent ones who do not know about the greed and ambition that exists behind this massacre. Karatavuk grows aware that the soldiers slaughter each other without knowing the true reason. Karatavuk understands



that the leaders of countries are blinded by their ambitions and become ignorant to their enslavement by their greed. By acknowledging this truth, he passes through his first threshold of awareness.

The second threshold for raising his awareness is represented by his acknowledgement of the clergy's hypocrisy, which G.P Theorodou considers as well. He is aware that this is only a simulacra, to use Jean Baudrillard's term, as it suggests a model of real without originals or reality that the clergy create in order to ensure soldiers' unawareness of the true nature of warfare and thus to prevent possible revolt against governments (Baudrillard, 2001: 166). Louis de Bernières conveys this truth in the following manner:

I will say now that I doubt if there is any such thing as a holy war, because war is unholy by nature, just as a dog is a dog by nature, and I will say now, since no one will read these lines until I am dead, that in my opinion there is no God either. I think this because I have seen too many evil things and I have done too many evil things even when I believed in Him, and I think that if there was a God He would have prevented all these evil things. These are thoughts that I have not dared to say to anyone (...). (de Bernières, 2004: 426)

His doubts prevent him from remaining a believer or a faithful man. He cannot accept this nonsense mentality that every Friday, they pray for peace, mercy and atonement for their erroneous actions. These praying sessions become nonsense for Karatavuk because instead of begging mercy and atonement, they could do anything to avoid these atrocities.

The ultimate awareness comes along with the death of others to Karatavuk. He accompanies his fellow Fikret throughout his dying process. Fikret is severely injured during skirmish and his arm is should be amputated. Therefore, Karatavuk is forced by the circumstance to cut his injured arm and Fikret's dying process begins alongside Karatavuk's gaining of the existential awareness of death. Karatavuk accompanies his dying process as if it were his last duty. He tries to comfort Fikret in his last instants of life. In these moments Karatavuk gains the awareness of his different and unique existence. He detaches his self from this terrible situation and circumstances. He preserves his rationality and conscious during his great loss while losing his one of best friend. This great loss does not affect Dasein dramatically because Dasein does not allow sorrow and agony to surrender his soul or consciousness. He strikes back all these negative moral values in order to preserve his own value and existence. After this awareness, he discloses Dasein's egocentric nature, as he cannot bear the ordinary existence. His difference becomes his self defence mechanism that rescues his being and self from these frightening, unbearable situations. Suddenly he reveals one of Dasein's characteristics, that is the otherness. Richard Kearney explains Dasein's otherness as an alter ego that refers to be indifferent to everyone and everything except his own being and self-existence. (Kearney, 2005:16). Everyone and everything can perish, except Dasein. Dasein survives from the most terrible and appalling circumstances, by the help of his awareness of his self-existence and being. For this reason he accompanies Fikret's in his dying process and he avoids empathy, as he is aware that death is private and most precious moment of a human's life and that Fikret should experience this event alone. He cannot die instead of Fikret.

Karatavuk stays away from Fikret's dead body after the dying process ends. He does not accept any relation with this impersonal body or flesh. His Dasein part finds this situation very repulsive, as it presents the possibility of becoming like everyone. In other words, what repels Karatavuk is the possibility of being anonymous or ordinary. Karatavuk panics in front his great loss, and after many years he realises that his reaction is very shocking. He acknowledges death as a finitude, but later on he learns how to overcome this shocking awareness. His initial clumsy reaction develops into an awareness of maturity. He does not allow the possibility for Fikret's finitude; instead, he confers immortality to his friend's

existence by speaking loudly about his memories of Fikret. His loss does not affect him deeply thanks to his awareness of fragmentariness. Dasein's state of unwholeness stimulates his desire to experience the authenticity (Heidegger, 1986:137).

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, Heidegger's Dasein struggles to switch his everyday mode to authentic mode via his awareness and questioning. Through this process, Dasein's awareness increases gradually. Every experience allows him to gain awareness, especially terrific and traumatic ones as death. In Louis de Bernières' novel *Birds Without Wings*, characters who represent Dasein experience death from different aspects; one who is Karatavuk experience death of others, the other one is Georgio P. Theorodou experience his own death. Both of them express and experience different characteristics of Dasein through these dying processes.

On the other hand, it could be stated that Dasein cannot attain a mode of completeness or accomplishment. The unfulfillment of his desires reveals his condition of perpetually being in a process of becoming and seeking. This quest forces him to question everything about life, death, constitutions of life. This questioning preserves him alive; without the inquisitive aspect of his existence it becomes Dasein's death of the self. Death is most private and valuable experience which Dasein grasps. This experience leads him to the ultimate awareness by his authentic questioning and existence. Even though the experience of death of the self or death of someone else's is a painful experience, it should not be ignored that death is the only experience which causes great authentic awareness for Dasein.

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