CHAPTER I

Dealing with proximity of an imminent end

...war is not to be abolished so long as the conditions
of existence among the notions are so varied and the repulsions
between peoples so intense, there will be, must be wars.10

There are a variety of causes which provoke thoughts about the meaning of the being's existence and her/ his fight against an imminent end. War is one of the states where such questions are more intense. Very often experience of traumas provokes a being to ask her/ himself about real meaning of life. However, a state of war brings traumasisms in itself.

This chapter will not investigate the causes of war but will examine relationships between the being and the other, created in those circumstances, in particular the case of genocide, where there is an aggressor and a victim. The relationships of the being and the other, will apply in relation to an aggressor towards the victim, as an example of the relation of negation of the other, and the relation of the non aggressor and the victim will be seen as an example of responsibility and acknowledgement of the other. These two opposite relations toward the other proposed by E. Morin and E. Levinas upon which is realised a self identity, could not separately lead to a discovery of the real being's essence, but only understanding of the complementation of their contradictions leading to a better understanding of that essence.

As mentioned, this part of the paper will deal with the visual expressions of those opposite relations in contemporary works of four Bosnian artists, assuming that between those oppositions exists an mutual dependence, whose entity represents a necessity in a pursuit for an authentic essence of a being.

However, before proceeding with 'materialisation' of relations of negation and responsibility toward the other, through the means of visual arts, it is important to first introduce the key terms necessary for examination.

The basis for this research is created upon the contradictory nature of a being who is compounded by two components, body and mind, with ego having an important part in this examination.

Body could be described as a visible and ‘touchable’ part of a being, a transient nature as it terminates with termination of genetic process in cells, and mind is being’s ‘invisible’ component. Mind is ‘untouchable’ for physical eyes or hands while it can only be sensed, not by physical senses as through the ear, eye or nose, but from some unknown senses, whose nature is transcendental. Ego is a place of formation of an self identity based upon experiences with exterior.

The term mind could be identified with term spirit or from theological terminology, soul. A further interpretation is offered by Plato following Socrates. They agree that mind is, “not the familiar creature of flesh and blood but rather the incorporeal occupant and director of, even the prisoner in that corporeal being.” 11 The third important component is ego, term which could be described as “the centre of organisation of attitudes towards the body, the physical and social world and all experiences that determinates identity and individuality...” 12

Spirit’s transcendence is connected to the physical body, as chained by some invisible chains, unable to live during the bodily existence. It materialises self through bodily expressions while still not in its full potential because of bodily limitations, which leads to disharmony between wills and possibilities, provoking as the first disharmony in a being her/ himself, then in her/ his relations with the other, making it contradictory in her/ himself.

Ego, as mentioned, is the place which forms the picture of a being’s identity, constructed upon experience of the self with the exterior world. Ego can not be considered the authentic identity of a being, as the circumstances under which experience with exterior are built. It cannot be taken as a stable matter because its nature is relative. Being’s necessity is to establish the picture of self-affirmation for the purpose of procuring the self with a feeling of self-preservation, which is the basic condition for self-survival. Thus, the need for self-acknowledgement, as the basis for self-survival, is the cause of formation of an ego. Paradoxically, ego is the ‘protector’ of individuality, giving the self a sense of distinction from the other, while simultaneously placing obstacle to the prospects of self-revelation. Being seems ‘chained’ by her/ himself, as a marionette in the ‘hands’ of its own contradictory nature. She/ he has the potential to love but also to hate, and also to kill but not kill. Being is ethical as well unethical. In the state of war these contradictions appear more accentuated, as will be seen in the example of Bosnian artists.

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12 Ibid., p. 102.
Visual expression was the first means of illustrating the notion about the being’s self existence. This calls to memory the oldest traces this expression found in the history of the humankind made by prehistoric man from Altamire. The drawings of the line around fingers on the sand could be seen as the ‘archaic’ beginning of what is termed today, the notion of self. The drawings of animals on the walls of the cave, could be seen as the roots of the notion of exterior world. These are the early signs of difference between self and the other. Furthermore, being possesses the inborn instinct for survival and self preservation, what could be understood as an opposition against the fear of death. This archaic instinct and fear is still alive in a human being, as visualised through the artists of our time.

Lingis says that for Heidegger the death is, “…the first ‘object’ of our awareness.” Its proximity causes a terrible anxiety which is the centre of concern in works of Bosnian artists E. Pasic, S. Jukic, Z. Bogdanovic and P. Waldegg. Their works, predominantly installations, were constructed during the civil war in Bosnia in a period from 1992-1993. There is an attempt to establish a relation of responsibility for the other, between the being (the exterior viewer) and the other (the victim of the war). The artists aims were, quoting Achille Bonito Oliva, "...to remind on cynical passivity of international public opinion and of those numb spectators viewing the events in Sarajevo from the safety of their homes." This attempt is ‘visualised’ through pondering on the suspicious in the presence of an ethics in a modern world, as represented in the Sarajevo Ghetto Spectacle (Fig. 1), video and mixed media by Sanjin Jukic. It is compounded by the big screen on which appears words ‘Sarajevo Ghetto Spectacle’, with under- inscription ‘Sarajevo’ on the black background, illuminated by a red light on the edges, in a mode that is paralleled to ‘Hollywood’ which looks down on Los Angeles. The putting together of such opposite terms as ‘ghetto’ and ‘spectacle’ hides a disharmony of the relationship between the being and the other; while the term ‘ghetto’ does not necessarily mean ‘ghetto’ for the other, but ‘spectacle’. There is an assumption in mutual dependence of relation of negation and acknowledgement of the other, which is present in Jukic’s work, if it is considered that the cause of his work rests upon the consequences of genocide in Bosnia, thus a consequence of a relation of negation of the other. However, such a relationship paradoxically, is used to provoke its opposition, which is the relationship of responsibility for the other, while it is not the attempt of such connotation that the relation of negation is an imminent condition for realisation of a relationship of responsibility for the other. There is one basic ethical law related to the other, which is not to kill. Witnesses of Existence (Fig. 2), an installation by another Bosnian artist, Nusret Pasic, addresses the question of fundamental ethics, which comes across in relation with the other. This installation is combined with pieces of destroyed buildings in the city of Sarajevo. Above that pile, fixed to the roof, are long tapes of the linen pieces onto which the artist has painted the eyes. The image is terrifying. It is a macabre

Fig. I
‘party’, group of mute ghosts, who indicates the presence of death, while represents the existence. Pasic says of his work:

There is metaphorical relationship between trees and the human body. When the tree is felled it lies horizontal on the ground, it is death broken. I wanted to address man’s aggression against man to ask who is felling the trees cutting the normal position of life. 15

Questions of ethics are addressed toward questioning the basis upon which is formed an ego, manifesting the suspicion in its attitude toward ethical law. Witnesses of Existence (Fig. 2) points out a demand for establishment of the relation of responsibility for the other, the demand which could be seen in analogy with Levinas’ demand for, “deposition of sovereignty of ego,”16 which he claims to be an escape from frightening nothingness, or as he terms it, ‘there is’. Another work, Memory of People (Fig. 3, 4, 5) by Zoran Bogdanovic points out the emptiness in relation between the being and the other. It is a wall collage with portraits of the dead cut from newspapers. There are about four hundred faces. In front of the collage is posed a wooden chair with a radio on it, transmitting the program with messages to the families and friends who remain blocked in the other parts of the city; the radio signifies the only means of connection. While in the Sarajevo Ghetto Spectacle (Fig. 1) Jukic uses provocation to establish a relation of responsibility for the other, ‘using’ the relation of negation of the other, thus showing an entity of those contradictions, in Witnesses of Existence (Fig. 2) Pasic ponders the question about ethics, which leads to an examination of ego, expressing a necessity for its reconstruction, and furthermore its deposition. In Memory of People (Fig. 3, 4, 5), Bogdanovic claims establishment of relation of responsibility, using the representation of an emptiness provoked by lack of a such relation.

As discussed, the being’s fight with her/ himself is the fight for establishment of a harmony between body and mind which contradicts itself, and whose contradiction can be seen as analogous to being’s contradictory states of mind. Those contradictions form an obstacle for the revelation of authentic identity of a being, while at the same time their entity ‘teaches’ the being how to search the true essence of existence.

The last example is work by P. Waldegge, titled Untitled Installation (Fig. 6). This installation is

presented in the form of a pyramid made of bricks, which has only four fundamental holding walls. It appears more like a set of steps. On one side of the construction Waldegg inserted pieces of glass and on the other, soot. Irregular triangles with jagged edges in charcoal are drawn on white paper on the wall above the structure. The parts between the four walls are missing, evoking a sense of instability of the construction. There is "the dialectic of heaven and earth"\textsuperscript{17} says J. Gambrell. In relation to his pyramid of brick steps, Waldegg says that, "every step up You try to realise a spiritual connection with heaven."\textsuperscript{18} The attempt to establish a relationship between earth and heaven, could be observed as analogous to tentative to harmonise the relationship between body and mind, as well as analogous to the tentative to establish the relationship between the being's limited physical nature and the absolute and unlimited transcendence, if it could be called a Supreme Existence, discussed in Chapter III.

In the roots of war exists the desire for power. This desire probably contains in itself the need for self preservation, the need which raises facing the horror of the termination of life. The being's power (in this case aggressor) which is established through the annihilation of the others, builds the feeling of superiority and even the feeling of the supreme control over the life. Certainly, the death of the other doesn't provide eternal life, but upon the other's death, the being, in this case the aggressor, builds a picture of self distinguished individuality, thus identity is realised through relation of negation of the other. It is similar to a king's way of establishing individuality, as Morin quotes, "The sublime individuality of a king is founded on the denial of individuality of the others..."\textsuperscript{19} Behind such an attempt is hidden a desire for immortality, while it relates more to the establishment of memories which last much longer than the individual who left them behind, it looks rather as an attempt to live the imprint of a past existence in the future.

On the other side are the victims, between whom rises a relation of responsibility and acknowledgement toward each other. The care for the other caused by proximity of death, whose horror at the same time terrifies and unites them. This kind of relationship is not only raised between beings who experiences similar terrifying destiny, but also between them and one part of the exterior, which is the non aggressor. The case of victims in a war is an extreme which shows how the horror which brings the proximity of an end of existence unites beings provoking a relation of responsibility, while this relation is not necessarily provoked by these circumstances only.

Visual arts is the oldest form of self-expression, has a variety of roles such as educative, social and

\textsuperscript{17} J. Gambrell, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 105.
\textsuperscript{18} P. Waldegg cited in J. Gambrell, (ibid., p. 105.).
\textsuperscript{19} Z. Bauman, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 67.
humane, it transmits messages, and more. Yet, Hegel says that art is, "kind of thought [he states that] thought culminates in art, religion and philosophy... [for him] ...art is not just a means of expressing or evoking feelings, but is a kind of thought; it is a way of apprehending reality, which it presents in the form of what can be sensed"\textsuperscript{20} as seen in the examples of the Bosnian artists.

The next chapter will deal with feelings. The life would be deprived of meaning, if the human being does not possesses them. They are like a guidance of interhuman relations.

\textsuperscript{20} Hegel cited in J. Speake (Ed.), \textit{op.cit.}, p. 142.
CHAPTER II

Feelings: a fundamental part in relationships between being and the other

Our feelings are the most important aspect in our life.
Where there is no feeling life has lost its value.
Feelings are real as atoms, tables and chairs.21

The previous chapter examined how the notion about self is established through the notion of the other, via two opposite mutual interactions between being and the other. The focus of this chapter will be on feelings which play an important part in the creation of those interactions. Establishing that interactions between being and other depends on of feelings raised between them. What in fact is a feeling? The meaning of the term is generally associated with

...state of non-perceptual awareness or bodily sensation which is sometimes a component of an emotion...it may be associated with the occurrence of fear, relief, anger, joy, etc., or with concurrent respiratory, digestive, cardiac, or other sensations.22

From a scientific aspect, feelings are based on a state of body chemistry as argues Birch, “...Nobel laureate Francis Crick tells us that our joys and sorrows, our memories and ambitions, our sense of personal identity and free will are not more than the activity of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules in the brain.”23 But is that all? Could feelings be a fact of only chemical matter? Yet Birch wonders if cells could also have some kind of feelings. In regard to this, he mentions the example of one’s feeling of redness while one looks at a rose. Birch further quotes, "...the first impact of the rose on me is on the cells of the retina at the back of my eye which are sensitive to colours. When cells of the retina are hit by light rays from the rose we presume that the particular wavelength causes chemical changes in the cells such that a particular message about redness is conveyed along the optic nerve to the sight centre of the brain.”24 Birch further points out that there could be more than pure chemistry, assuming that "nerve impulses to the brain don’t just miraculously become converted from electricity into feelings. In some way they must register the feelings of the cells of the

22 J. Speake (Ed.), op. cit., p. 120.
23 C. Birch, op. cit., p. IX.
24 Ibid., p. 34.
retina. Of course we don’t suppose that the retina cells have the feeling of redness that our brain gives us. But if they are sentient in some sense, than they have their own subjective response to the light waves hitting them...[so Birch concludes that feeling is the]... feeling of feeling.” Thus, it could be said that feelings are ‘product’ not only of chemicals in body but also of ‘feeling of feeling’.

As indicated earlier, feelings play an important part creating a relationship between being and the other, but their relative nature should be pointed out in that; certainly their changeable nature could partly be the result of physical chemistry. Some examples of the dependence of feelings on physical chemistry have been mentioned by Paul Davies who states that, “hormone imbalances can produce various emotional disorders. Drugs can produce or depress a variety of mental states and emotional dispositions...brain surgery can produce major alterations of personality.” However, the changeable nature of feelings could also result from a social atmosphere that had an impact on the creation of being’s attitude, thus influencing a certain feeling between being and the other. Before the Eighteenth century, the term ‘feeling’ was identified with ‘affection’, while today this term is associated with a variety of opposite feelings, varying from feeling of affection to feeling of repulsion. The feeling of repulsion and aversion toward the other could certainly be seen as the dominant one in a circumstance of war, which provokes the feeling of pain and sorrow in other.

Proposing a close relationship between feeling of pain, suffering and death, Levinas says that, “...in suffering there is ...the proximity of death. There is not only the feeling and the knowledge that suffering can end in death...[but]...death...announcing itself in suffering...” The impact of experienced pain is doubled in the sense that it provokes two different reactions in a being who experiences it. First provoking its passivity in a sense that being ‘see’ death as a ‘solution’, thus termination of a such feeling. As the opposite, such a feeling could instigate in a being a higher ‘state of mind; in a sense of reconstructing the feelings of anger, sorrow and hate which were provoked by feelings of pain and sorrow, turning them in their opposition, in comprehension and forgiveness. Levinas further ponders about the difference between physical and moral pain arguing that, “while in moral pain one can preserve an attitude of dignity and compunction and consequently be free; physical suffering in all its degrees entails the impossibility of detaching oneself from the instant of existence...the content of suffering merges with the impossibility of detaching oneself from suffering.” Levinas accentuates physical over moral pain, underlining in the first one the ‘impossibility of detaching oneself from suffering. It could be related to an impossibility of detaching self from anxiety provoked by proximity of death. This point leads to an important connotation of the examination that recalls the establishment of being’s relation of acknowledgement and responsibility for the other as seen through its

25 Ibid...
28 Ibid., p. 39.
(other’s) experience of pain and suffering. Levinas quotes, "the fear for the death of the other is certainly at the basis of the responsibility for him."²⁹

The responsibility for the other considers the responsibility for the other’s death. Levinas further claims that this kind of relation between the being and the other is a ‘means’ to, "...stop the anonymous and senseless rumbling of being. It is in the form of such a relation that the deliverance from ‘there is’ appeared to me,"³⁰ what sounds like deliverance from nothingness, the death. However, what could be assumed here is that a being’s essence could be understood through the notion of the other while creating a feeling of responsibility for him.

In discussing responsibility in relation to the being and the other, there is another term which relates to that context, compassion. Birch quotes that, "the word is derived from the Latin cum and patior, meaning 'to suffer with'... [he further continues that] its fuller meaning is extended to include experiencing another’s feelings through emphatic identification, be it with another’s joy or grief."³¹ However, this examination is limited in observing the other’s grief and its impact on the other being. So what could be concluded here is that in creating a feeling of responsibility for the other it is necessary to identify oneself with that other and to do that it is necessary to take off the ‘chains’ of ego.

In his art works Sacco S3 (Fig. 7) and Sacco e Rosso (Fig. 8), Alberto Burri, an Italian artist insists upon revitalisation of a such feelings. These compositions were made of pieces of old linen bags, sewn together to create an allusion of a being’s physical injury. In the background the dominant colour is red, which could have dual symbolism. It is the colour of death, blood and injury, while also the colour of fertility and life. The visual attempt to recall the feeling of pain through representation of a bodily wound suggests at the same time recall of a being’s relation of responsibility for the other. What it possibly eliminates, as is suggested by Levinas, is the fear of ‘there is’. In relation to this there is one important thing upon which Levinas insists, and that is, "deposition of sovereignty by the ego."³² At the same time he recalls the establishment of a personal relationship between the ego and death, as a condition for illumination of the mystery of such an event, while I would rather call that the being’s authentic identity instead of its ego.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 52.
³¹ C. Birch, op. cit., p. 25.
³² E. Levinas, (R. Cohen, Trans.), op. cit., p. 52.
In Burri's art work Two Shirts (Fig. 9) there is a suggestion of solitude, symbolised by pieces of cloth sown together, still empty of a human presence. Could this allusion to solitude relate to Levinas' claim to, "...not let the other alone..."\textsuperscript{33} He considers this the basic component of relation of responsibility for the other. In Burri's works the opposition of the dominant colours white (as symbol of immortality) in Two Shirts, and red (symbol of pain) in Sacco and Rosso (Fig. 8) could possibly represent an allusion to the mutually caused establishment of a being's acknowledgement of the other. Through this the being possibly realises its authentic identity, but under the condition if deposes its own ego what could conduct him to make an 'personal' relation with event of death yet identifying itself with the other and its experience of pain.

It is interesting to mention that Burri was first a surgeon who became an artist while imprisoned in a concentration camp during the Second World War. Rubiu describes his work as a, "Monument of the crisis."\textsuperscript{34} However, the artist's representation of the consequences of a crisis appeared in interhuman relations and points again to the mutual dependency of a notion of authentic self as it relates to relation of negation and responsibility for the other. Burri's work evokes representation of feelings which have a dominant role in the establishment of relations between the being and the other. His work is missing only the physical resemblance of human figures and representations of his feelings through its bodily expressions. Burri's primary influence on my work is the use of stitch. Burri uses the stitch to simulate the feeling of pain, in my works the stitch is used for the purpose of suggesting an impossibility of detaching oneself from the chains of human ambivalent and contradictory nature and ego. This is at the same time a being's 'means' for 'discovery of its authenticity, while also its 'trap.'

The focus of this paper has started with the supposition that for 'illumination' of the mystery of death it is necessary to discover the authentic self which is hidden behind the shell of the ego. This is not its real identity when based upon the relativity of human interrelations. Continuing the idea that through the notion of the other and the establishment of a relationship of responsibility, a being could conceive the real self identity while claiming deposition of the ego, and dealing with relations of negation as an 'means' for awakening feelings of responsibility for the other.

In the first chapter the focus was on an examination of an obscure entity that of relations of negation and responsibility for the other, while in this second chapter the point was to underline feelings as an important part in the creation of such relations, especially accentuating feelings of pain. The next chapter will focus on the representation of the presence of a transcendent and absolute existence (which will be termed Transcendent or the Supreme Existence), which is materialised in interhuman relations through their bodily expressions, while acknowledging their free will.

\textsuperscript{33} ibid., p. 119.

\textsuperscript{34} Rubiu cited in M. Calvesi, Alberto Burri, [Alberto Burri]. Gallerie Roma II Arte Contemporanea, Italy, 1976, p. 28.
CHAPTER III

Acknowledgement of being's experiences of transcendence

For every man, assuming responsibility for the other is a way of testifying to the glory of the Infinite...  35

Until now the examination was dealing with the relationships of the being and the other  and  with the role of feelings which has been the basis for these relationships. This chapter will deal with the being's relationship with the Transcendent36 which closely relates to the term God from Christian theology while of an transcendental nature. However, this being's relationship with the Transcendent would not be observed as isolated from its relationship with the other. On the contrary it will play an integral part in it. The examination will proceed with the being's experience of the Transcendent and the issue of faith, for the purpose of discovering its impact on the human search for authentic identity.

In the beginning, it was assumed that the nature of the Transcendent could be materialised through the physical, verbal and other kinds of communications between being and the other. It is obvious that whilst creating such a relationship the being is experiencing the other. Beside this, she/he is capable of experiencing the transcendental dimension. Before proceeding with that experience, it would be interesting to see what is an experience. According to Aristotle, “having experience of something... is not simply a matter of perceiving things; judgement and memory are needed, and experience is with a view to action.”37 For Locke, “...having experience of something may simply be a matter of having sensations, for sensation is the great source of most of the ideas we have....” 38

36 this term is used by D. A. Lane to describe the omnipresence of God, (The Experience of God: an invitation to do theology, Paulist Press, New York/ Ramsey, 1981.
38 Locke cited in (ibid., p. 110.)
When talking about being's variety of experiences, D. A. Lane classifies them into primary and secondary or outer and inner experiences. More precisely he quotes that

ordinary experiences may be described as those
everyday subject-object encounters we have in life.
These experiences are primarily sense experiences
and do not go beyond the external surface of life...
in addition to this external sense contact with the
world, there are those special moments when we
go beyond the surface of life to discover a deeper
dimension which is not immediately evident.\textsuperscript{39}

D.A. Lane is limiting this ordinary experience on subject-object encounters. I believe it should be extended also to subject-subject (being-other) encounters which concern only the superficial level of the relationship; the level which belongs to the physical reality, while the relationship contains also the deeper dimension which belongs to the transcendental.

The physical reality is the one perceived through the physical senses and created on natural knowledge. This kind of knowledge is based upon interhuman relations in society, and thus, is attached to the being and not inborn in her/him. Furthermore Lonergan states his division of human experience as, "...the world of immediate experience and the world mediated by meaning."\textsuperscript{40} In the relation to the world mediated by meaning, Lonergan further considers that

...it is the world intended by questions, organised by
intelligence, described by language and enriched by
tradition...It is within the realm of this new world of
meaning generated by secondary depth-experiences
that we can begin to talk about what is involved in a
religious experience. The underlying characteristic of
a religious experience is that individual find themselves
called and drawn into a new relationship with that which
is termed the Transcendent.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{39} D. A. Lane, op.cit., p.10.
\textsuperscript{40} Lonergan quoted in D. A. Lane, (ibid., p. 10.).
\textsuperscript{41} ibid., pp. 10/11.
But Lonergan’s description of the secondary depth-experiences, fails to account for the world of intuition. He further arguing how in Rahner’s opinion human being can experience the Transcendent through the experience of responsibility, aloneness, freedom, encounter of death and hope. However, it is that in order to realise the Transcendent, the being needs to create a relationship with the other. The experience of aloneness is also a kind of being’s relationship with the other, as alienation from the other is also a relationship with her/him.

Even if the being is able to conceive the Transcendent, she/he is still incapable of recognising, comprehending and experiencing it, in its plenitude. This is because the being’s capability of comprehension lies on natural knowledge which is, according to Thomas Aquinas, “...determined by our native capacity (finite and limited) to know and experience.”42 According to him, the being’s natural knowledge is based upon the senses and could be extended as far as they can go. But, he further quotes that, “from the knowledge of sensibles the whole power of God cannot be known, nor can this essence be seen.”43 In relation to this, it could be assumed the intelligibility of the transcendental dimension goes beyond the ability of the being’s knowledge based upon the senses and sense-experiences. In that way the being cannot assume the true nature of the world. Kant quotes that, “we cannot know about things-in-themselves, but only about the ways in which they appear under the a priori forms of reason...”44

Inability of the being to experience the Transcendent in a direct way, could be also seen as consequence of her/ his loss of the contact with the own intimacy, the real self and through her/ his stunted approach to the primordial knowledge. As stated earlier in this paper (p. 8), the being needs the other as an mediator to experience the self and the Transcendent. This is confirmed in Martin Buber’s suggestion about the presence of the Transcendent. He refers to it as the “eternal You[ in every] I-You”45 encounter or ‘self-other’ encounter. Buber states that, God is, “the wholly other; but he is also the wholly same: the wholly present of course, he is the mysterium tremendum... [he further states that God] appears and overwhelps; but he is also the mystery of the obvious that is closer to me that my own.”46 The being other encounters are every day experiences from which arises the experience of a religious dimension, the transcendental dimension. But to acknowledge them and to discover their true interpretation is quite impossible. The interpretations vary from individual to individual. In regard to recognition of their true interpretation and explanation in the differences of recognition, Buber relates the example of a music class.

43 Ibid., p. 59.
46 the term mysterium tremendum is used by Rudolf Otto as an description of the power and otherness of God, cited in (Ibid., p. 109).
He quotes

Imagine a beginning class in music appreciation that is devoted to the study of symphonies. The instructor opens it by playing Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony and comments on the composer’s style. The following week he plays a record and says it is Mozart’s Fortieth. The students dutifully note this, but one of them says: “I’d bet that it’s a Beethoven Symphony.” The teacher does not say anything but plays a different record and announces: “This is another Beethoven Symphony, the Fourth.” The same student protests: “But this one doesn’t sound like Beethoven!” He turns out to be right both times. The instructor had deliberately mislead these students, who had never listen the two Symphonies before, in order to check out their sense of style. Through the course this student displayed a remarkable gift for identifying composers after hearing one or two of their works. Most of the other students gradually developed a sense for it, but they often made mistakes. Some students, even at the end of the course were never able to identify any composers.\textsuperscript{47}

From this example emerges an analogy with the identification and the recognition of the transcendental dimension manifested in the interhuman relations. Some people recognise it immediately, some people after repetition of being-other encounters, and some never recognise. It thus it could be concluded that being’s notion of the Transcendent has a variety of degrees. But it is not only the notion of it that counts, as there is also a variety of interpretations and ways of acceptances of Transcendent.

There is another thing which emerges from the being-other-Transcendent relationship, which is faith. D.A. Lane claims that, “faith is a fundamental human quality, it is universal, it is constitutive of humanity, it enables the individual to realise personalhood in community,”\textsuperscript{48} thus, it means that faith is something which belongs only to the religious. In addition to the religious dimension of faith, there is also faith termed primordial.\textsuperscript{49} This kind of faith is as D.A.Lane further quotes, “an attitude of trust and confidence and acceptance that is brought to bear on the value and worthwhileness of human existence.”\textsuperscript{50} Faith has a significant role in relationships being-other-Transcendent relationships.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 111.
\textsuperscript{48} D. A. Lane, op.cit., p. 67.
\textsuperscript{49} this term primordial faith is used by D. A. Lane, (Ibid., p. 65).
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p. 65.
This is the main issue in the works of the artist, Colin McCahon, as well as issues of doubt and hope. Using predominantly the Christian narrative, McCahon examines the being's relationship with God. From 1954 on McCahon's paintings started to appear the texts with religious content. In his philosophical theology, Paul Tillich terms God as a, "Being [or] the Ground of all Being," for the purpose to avoid description of God as an object. But, when the being is trying to conceive her/his relationship with the Transcendent by assuming the Transcendent as a Being, Gregor Smith comments that then we are trying to understand, "...the way God 'comes' to us. The key word is 'comes' not 'is'. We can speak of Being only through our experiences of 'beings'." This acknowledges the being's inability to enter into the essence of transcendental. In McCahon's work Victory over Death II (Fig.10), is appearing in dominant size, the words 'I AM'. According to the Christian narrative, that is how God named himself to Moses and the people of Israel. For Alexa M. Johnston, this kind of naming could be understood as, "...a refusal of Moses' request, requiring him to enter into a relation with an unnamed God and to accept the uncertainties of such a relation." This kind of naming avoids the reduction of the Transcendent to either subject or object as it has an unlimited nature which goes beyond the boundaries of this reality.

According to what Levinas stated, it could be assumed that for the notion of the presence of the God's transcendence, the being should establish the relationship of responsibility for the other. But, to be truly responsible for the other requires an effort to depose the ego, the artificial identity of the being. Z. Bauman states that to, "'have a sense' being human, only when there are others who need me...filling me with the feeling of responsibility for them...without this there will be hole,...source of my terror." This is the kind of the relationship which McCahon is establishing between his work and a viewer. It is more obvious in the works such as Am I Scared (Fig. 11) and The Figure In The Landscape (Fig.12). In The Figure In The Landscape, the ear of the figure is turned toward the viewer suggesting the demand for communication and sense of responsibility. In Through the Wall of Death (Fig.14), McCahon represents the wall in the form of two black squares, which occupies half of the surface of the painting. The image of the wall suggest an barrier or line between life and death, as well as a door to the source of the being's terror, the famous Levinas' 'there is'. On the dark part of the painting appear the words of prayer, signifying a way of communication with the Transcendent, while expressing human faith. McCahon's work deeply acknowledges the presence of the transcendental dimension and even assumes the being's disability to find the full solution of it. Because of this disability, the being is doubtful. In Will He Save Him (Fig.13) appears this doubt, posed in the question 'Will Elias Come to Save Him, EVER/ NEVER'.

52 G. Smith cited by A. M. Johnston, (Ibid., p. 60.).
53 Ibid., p. 60.
54 Bauman, ibid., p. 40.
55 As noted at the beginning of the paper, this term is used by E. Levinas to describe the horror which brings the proximity of nothingness, thus death. (E. Levinas, (R. Cohen, Trans.), op. cit., p.47-48).
Fig. 11

Fig. 12
By representing the being's weaknesses, hopes and fear of death, Colin McCahon's work underlines the necessity for establishment of communication between the being (viewer) and the Transcendent. I consider this as one possible interpretation of his work, as Gordon Brown quotes, "for all the desire for comprehension McCahon paintings are more than written messages."  

Croatian artist, Ivan Lackovic Croata, is currently one of the prominent Naif artists. On his work appear the motifs of idyllic memories from childhood. Croata depicts houses, people, nature and moods of the four seasons in a way that everything appears as one vivid song. Colours are similar, vivid and expressive. In 1991 when war in Croatia began, Lackovic made a series of many prints dealing with the new experience, which were strongly in contrast with his previous 'singing' works. The prints titled, *My Carriage Is Heavy* (Fig.15), *The Birds Do Not Dying Singing* (Fig. 16) and *Cry The Innocent Nature* (Fig. 17) are part of The Horrors o the War series. The other series is titled *Chronicle of Calamity* (Fig. 18). In comparison to his previous works prior to the war, there is a notable change in colour. The earlier vivacious variety of work, now is substituted with a reduction to white, red and black. The visions of the coming winter with snow, or the villages party has disappeared. There is now the dead bird which is bleeding in the hands of a man. In his series *Chronicles of Calamity*, Lackovic accentuates the image of hands, which are in the positions of a man holding pieces of wood on his shoulders, pushing against a barrier, tendering, and at the same time holding the cross. But his hands are not positioned against the other man. Lackovic is talking about the being's sorrow. He is pointing out the necessity for the establishment of the relationship of responsibility in interhuman relations. Lackovic, as well as Burri, accentuates blood, as in *Cry The Innocent Nature* and *The Birds Are Not Dying Singing*, also absent of the human presence. But the representation of blood, as a testimony of life which disappeared, suggests an rebirth.

This chapter was concerned with the being's experience of Transcendent and the relationships of the being-other. It has shown that the being through the notion of the other, affirms and conceives the self and the manifestations of a transcendental dimension. Yet still the big part of the dimension remains unknown, as the being is not able to comprehend it in its essence. But, the ability of her/his intuition announces to her/him that there is another reality beside the physical one which contains the essence of the existence. The human being has one quality termed faith. But still on the other side she/he doubts. The combination of these two opposites gives to her/him a critical ability through which she/he judges the external and conceives self, other and the Transcendent. The artists Colin McCahon and Ivan Lackovic Croata, through the medium of the visual arts, are pointing out the establishment of the relationship of responsibility between the being and the other. McCahon does this

by using the religious texts, reminding one of the proximity of an imminent end, the death. Lackovic 'builds' the relationship of responsibility upon the experience of the relationship of the negation of the other; that is upon the experience of the war. Here again emerges the mutual dependence of the two opposite principles, of the good and the evil.
Fig. 18
DISCUSSION

The meaning of duality

Each of us is guilty before everyone and for each one, and I more than others.57

This paper is titled 'Is There Life Before Death?', while the content is focused on pursuit for a continuation of existence after death. In relation to this, the examination was argued that the revelation of the mystery of death claims a meditation about the reality and truths of life before death. In regard to life before death, it was stated in part of the Chapter III (p.32), that knowledge about the real self identity of the being, is alienated from her/him, and because of this alienation, it is impossible to acknowledge the supreme or final truth of existence, the acknowledgement of which would come to overcome the frightened reality of death. This leads to the point which claims for the reunion of the being with her/ his authentic identity. But because of the complexity of the being’s dual nature and her/ his ego, the reunion becomes a very hard task. In could be assumed from the Chapter I that the being’s contradictory nature creates a confusion and disharmony in the being itself, yet it could be said that just this kind of nature is the barrier for a reunion with the real self. This paper on the contrary, is claiming that these contradictions are the necessary element for the discovery of the being’s real self. So, the contradictions are represented here not as a barrier, but rather as a means for the realisation of that aim.

Further in the paper the being’s contradictions were realised in her/ his interactions with the other, which plays an important role in the being’s search for the real self. As quoted J.P. Sartre, “The other is the indispensable mediator between myself and me.”58 Here it could be said that the other is the way and ‘means’ for the realisation of the acknowledgement of the authentic self identity, but it is also at the same time the trap in a sense that it could be a ‘means’ for establishment of the non real self identity. Chapter II dealt with human feelings as an important part upon which depends the relation of the being and the other, while Chapter III dealt with the presence of a supernatural existence named Transcendent, whose presence rivals a transcendental dimension and without which the answer to the question about immortality could not be imagined. The notion of the real self can be realised only through the rationality of the intellect.

58 J. P. Sartre, Being and Nothingness: an essay on phenomenological ontology, P1
In the beginning of the paper two contradictory statements were quoted. The first was by Edgar Morin in which he claimed the negation of the identity of the other as a necessity for the acknowledgement of self identity. This opposes the statement of Emmanuel Levinas, who proposes the establishment of the responsibility for the other. This paper is arguing that neither of these relations toward the other could separately lead to the notion of the authentic self identity. This is because they are mutually caused, in a sense that the notion of the one is necessary for the realisation of the notion of the second (similar to the notion of what is black is realised through the notion of what is white). This also has its application in interhuman relations of the negation and acknowledgement of the other. But, unfortunately, it seems that the presence of the bad and evil is imminent.

In Chapter II it was seen what is a feeling and what kind of dimensions it possesses, as well as how it could vary from the positive to the negative. It was seen how consequent upon the being’s different kinds of feelings toward the other, are established different kinds of mutual relationships; but the real self identity should be seek behind the rational dimension of those encounters which is in the realm of their transcendental dimension. But how could this transcendental dimension otherwise be explained if not in terms of the Transcendent or the Supreme Existence?! This might be the ‘reality’ in which belongs Birch’ ‘feeling of the feeling’.59

However, how does art relate to this issue? In the previous three chapters contemporary art works were looked at, divided into three parts and each of them have been put in relation to the three separate components, pointed out as necessary for the search for the real self identity (first: the being’s contradictory structure; second: the mutual feelings of the being and the other; and third: the experience of the Transcendent).

Undeniably, the mentioned works have had a particular influence on my work. My work aims to represent, in one entity, these three components. In some of the works, appears the physical images of the human being, in dark and light tones, as an allusion on the positive and negative side of her/ his contradictory nature; while in the rest of the work there appear different images of animals, fruits, objects, etc. Each of them has a certain meaning according to Christian symbolism, which has a symbolic allusion on what characterises the human character- her/his fears, dilemmas, contradictions, hopes, awareness of life and death, and given choices.

The representation of the images of the skull and the branches, with the placement of human images between the two, suggests the being’s awareness of her/ his position in between the life and death, as well as pointing out the contemplation of this position. There is the old Chinese symbol of ‘Ying &

59 C. Birch, op.cit., p. 35.
Yang”, which says that in every black there is a little part of white and in every white there is a little part of the black. The image of the skull could represent death, also representing the negative and dark side; while the representation of the branches could symbolise the life, or the positive and light side. But each of them is joined to the opposite colour of the background, that is the representation of life (the branches) has the dark background, while the representation of the death (the skull) has the light background. The purpose of this is to recall the meaning of the old Chinese symbol, pointing out that neither life nor death should be taken as one-sided, in the sense that each of them has its positive and negative side, which should instigate the search for the transcendental meaning.

In one of the works there is the appearance of the egg. It too contains a double meaning; representing life, but at the same time, it is the representation of the ego. The flake of the egg representing the allusion of the chains of the ego under which is ‘imprisoned’ life.

In opposition to this image, there is the work composed of the image of the child with, on each side, two separate images of the oranges cut in half. According to Christian symbolism, the oranges represent immortality, while the image of the child could be seen as the representation of purity. Most of the images are represented for the purpose of contradicting each other, to accentuate the opposition of the human character and her/his battle, in itself with oneself.

The representation of the image of the eye is also important. It represents the conscience of the being, of the other, as well as the presence of the Transcendent. The appearance of the stitch in the works function as a symbol of the added artificial identity of the being, that is ego.

These works are addressed as a way to induce, in a viewer, self-interrogation about her/his awareness of the other, in a sense to enquire about the conscience of oneself, through the establishment of a relationship of her/him with the inner self. The art work is the mediator, which has the ability to visualise the ‘invisible’, but whose presence is obvious. It is like an inner mirror which aims to represent the picture, not of the physical, but of the ‘inside’ of the self. Yet, it misses the representation of the other as it is addressed firstly towards the being itself, for the purpose of accentuating the first place, which should be searched, questioned and possibly rebuilt in oneself. The importance of the figure of the other should not be neglected as without it she/he is indispensable to the search for discovery of real identity. The being and the other can not be separated, as they are mutually dependent in a different way and because of unknown reasons which build the invisible network in between, as previously said by Dostoyevsky, “Each of us is guilty before every one, for everyone and for each one, and I more than others.”

CONCLUSION

The truth of existence

...any true flight we make will always be externally assisted.\(^{61}\)

Art is one of the 'vehicles' for the mind, which is the victim of the body. The mind is as a prisoner attached to the body, condemned to such a destiny till the end of the bodily existence, while its nature is transcendental. The body is of a transient nature which ends with the termination of the genetic process. There is also the ego, which is built upon the genetic, familiar and social structure in which the being is born and raised. If it could be visually described, the ego is a kind of 'flake' which 'wraps' the authentic being's personality. Because of the danger of destruction of the personality, as a consequence of the entangled conflicts of free wills, it is necessary to build the ego as a kind of the protection of the being from the exterior. Therefore, ego is double handed, it is the being's protector, and also the being's enemy. But mind is a place of the spirit and transcendental, the place at which the connection with the Transcendent is possible. Yet, the notion of the transcendental dimension is possible through the relationship of the being with the other, which is according to Levinas the establishment of the "responsibility for the other."\(^{62}\) Levinas claims to put the other before oneself, which seems to reveal vanity, one of the barriers in the search for the real self. But Levinas states that, "We want both, to die and to be."\(^{63}\) This may be understood as the being's indecision to live life without the truth.

The art works mentioned in this paper deal with the problems which are raised as consequences of the being's contradictory nature; her/his contradictions with the self and with the other, as well as their relationships with the transcendental dimension. This was the search for the authentic identity whose discovery, could reveal the Supreme Truth; thus the answer to the question about immortality. But unfortunately, this mystery is still not illuminated, death is still an event in complete darkness and no one has returned from there. Art is just an attempt to understand the mystery of death, as said by Jo. C. Tartt Jr., "When all is said and done we take the photographs of the dead and we look closely at them...we do so in hope that closeness may attenuate horror, that knowing may come through seeing, and that from authority of proximity may come understanding, even eventually acceptance."\(^{64}\)

As the matter of fact, the complete answer still rests open, unanswered.

Bibliography


Nedlands, Western Australia: University of Western Australia Press.


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IS THERE LIFE BEFORE DEATH?

Pursuit of eternal existence through the examination of
a being’s ambivalent and contradictory nature -
an examination of the hypothesis that for understanding
death, firstly a being’s real essence, which is hidden
under the ego, should be discovered

KATHARINE BULJAN
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1998

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PLEASE NOTE

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I, Katharine Buljan declare that ‘Is There Life Before Death?’, thesis for the Master of Arts (Visual Arts) is my original work, and neither the part nor the whole paper has not been published before nor submitted to any other institution for any examination.

Signed: Katharine Buljan  Date: 4/3/98

© 1998 Katherine Buljan 'Is There Life Before Death?'
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Acknowledgments

It is a pleasure for me to express my appreciation and gratitude to my supervisors Debra Porch and Dennis Del Favero, who gave me helpful suggestions and whose patience, time and effort have been invaluable to me. To Debra, I owe a special word of thanks. Her vivid personality encouraged and motivated me to finalise this paper (Thank God!). I am grateful to Dennis for helping me to define my place in the new environment. His seriousness and support helped me to clarify my ideas related to this paper.

I am indebted to Professor Joan Kerr, who at the time was at the College of Fine Arts, UNSW, and Ms. Jo Holder for helping me in directing me to the right path in the professional field in Australia.

I deeply acknowledge the help of my friend Sandra Wantuch, Secretary of Visual Arts at UWS Nepean, who provided me the variety of information and without whom I would feel a little bit lost in the new place.

A sincere thanks to the artists; Milan Knezevic-Emka and Ivan Lackovic-Croata from Zagreb (Croatia) for supporting me with materials necessary for my research.

As well, I must thank the staff of English Learning Centre at UWS Nepean, in particular to Erst Carmichael and Joanne Tiernan for their assistance in grammatical part of this paper. Thanks to Robyn Magers my colleague and artist for a final grammar check.

For practical assistance, I have to thank Simon, Vian, Jules and Michael, who supported me with a useful technical advises.

To my friends and colleagues a big thanks for their encouragement and support. In particular, I feel grateful to my friend and artist Jacqueline Martin whose exceptional personality inspired me during the time of my research.

I am delighted to the special family friend, Julia Park who provided me with the use of technical facilities that rendered my task more pleasurable.

I am eternally indebted to my mum, dad and my brother
whose support, optimism and love were of essential importance to me.

I am grateful to Enrico whose help and love is always around.
ABSTRACT

The anxiety provoked by acknowledgement of the imminent end of existence or death, is probably the one which agitates a human being most deeply.

The attempt of this paper is not to give an answer as to how to reach immortality, but to explore my assumption that for acknowledgement of the mystery of death it is necessary first to discover a being’s authentic identity. That is to discover her/ his real essence which is hidden under the ‘artificial’ identity, where this identity is considered the being’s ego, an identity formed upon the relative truth of life. The truths of life are relative because they are established by the people, thus they are based upon the changeable and contradictory nature of human beings.

The focus of the paper will be on researching the establishment of a being’s identity, which is formed through she/ he having two contradictory relationships with other human beings. The first one is of negation and the other one is of acknowledgement of the identity of the other.

The being ¹ and the other ² are two main subjects of this research paper. To the feelings will be given an important role upon which depends their mutual relationships. Moreover, in the Chapter III, the third important ‘subject’ will be included; that is a Supreme Existence, ³ whose nature is transcendental and absolute but which could be materialised in interhuman relations.

However, exploring the being’s contradictory relations with the other, could possibly bring some revelation about the mystery of the end of existence, death.

The examination will deal with the art works of several contemporary artists, where most of them have experienced war, which is a state of accentuated contrast between the powers of construction and destruction, which are analogous with a being’s dual nature, her/ his constructive and destructive side. The philosophical framework of this examination will use the texts of French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, amongst others.

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¹ as noted from the previous paragraphs, this term considers the human being.
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INTRODUCTION

IS THERE LIFE BEFORE DEATH?

pursuit for eternal existence through examination of a being's dual nature
as an medium for discovery of her/ his real essence

Is there life before death? This is a title which seems at first glance paradoxical and pathetic while the subtitle suggests the contrary. It is an attempt for examination of the limits of existence. Logically, it may be termed 'Is there life after death?' I am quite convinced that the content of this paper will give a justification for the title.

Endless of existence in time is pictorial expression of the self-reconciliation of an anguished consciousness wounded by its experience of the rift in God's Nature.4

Today, in an age of notable technological and scientific progress, remains obscure the answer to the question about a human being's real essence and her/ his mortal nature. Still a human being who powerfully grasps life, hides within her/ himself a dread of mortality and death. A variety of attempts to discover the mystery of death have not resulted in a complete answer.

However, the aim of this research is not to give an answer to 'how to vanquish death', but it is just an attempt which is subjective, limited and relative in its nature, to come closer to an understanding of the obscurity of an end of an existence, or death.

This paper is going to examine a being's ambivalent and contradictory nature with an assumption that behind those contradictions and their obscure entity is hidden the being's authentic identity; and that the notion of it, could lead to the notion of the mystery of the existence.

The examination will be concerned with the human being and the manifestations of her/ his contradictory nature in relationships to the other human being. Their' mutual interactions I will consider as an intention of an affirmation of self identity.

In relation to affirmation of self identity which is formed through a relationship with the other, two mutually opposite ways will be pointed out.

The first one is based on Morin's quotation, "At its limit the absolute affirmation of one's individuality calls for the absolute destruction of the others." Therefore, this is an affirmation realised through the relationship of negation of the other. While on the other hand Emmanuel Levinas proposes a "...relationship of disinterestedness and responsibility for the other." Thus, this is on the contrary to the first one, a relationship of acknowledgement of the other. The mutual conditions of these relationships will be observed as a means of searching for immortality.

Furthermore, the examination will consider the supposition of a presence of a Supreme Existence whose nature is transcendental and whose materialisation appears via verbal and bodily expressions of a being, while her/ his free will remains an independent matter.

The framework of the paper will use some philosophical ideas taken from philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman and Professor Paul Davies, a Mathematical Physicist. Further ideas from theological texts, particularly Christianity, will be connected to these ideas.

Research will proceed with an examination of a being's move (between the two opposite poles of her/ his nature) materialised through the aesthetic dimension of the visual arts, dealing with some contemporary works, where some of them was made under experience of war.

In regard to my visual work, interest in this topic was raised after an war experience in a country where I was born, former Yugoslavia. Levinas once was asked about the process of the thinking and how does it start in a being? He stated that the experiences such as separation, violent scene, traumas and so on could be the initiators of it. But, I would like to add here that those experience does not provoke only the process of thinking as such, but it rather provokes the thoughts about the purpose and meaning of life. War is one of those experiences and my work aims to 'visualise' thoughts awakened by it. The techniques I am using in my works are combination of photography and oil on canvas, concentrating mainly of series with separated pieces of canvas. They are different in size to represent an allusion of the 'mosaic', of the inner being's structure. There is not much variation and gradation in colour. Yellows and greys, with additions of red, black and brown predominate in the background part of the surface. Dominant combination of yellow and grey hues aim to symbolise two

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7 Ibid., p. 21.
extremes which are entity of a being, its bright and dark side. Accentuation of the two extremes does not ignore the importance of rich variety of a being’s state of mind. This simplification, as it can be described, is made to accentuate the contradictions and their mutual interactions. The yellow and grey symbolise a relation between life and death, the addition of red, paradoxically, is contained within their mutual complementation, red could be seen as the blood of an victim, and thus colour of death, while in the same time, it represents the colour of the menstrual blood of woman, which represents fertility, and thus the colour of life.

The paper will be divided into three chapters, including a separate introduction, discussion and conclusion, where each section will deal mainly with examples of contemporary art works. As mentioned, this examination will deal with the works of contemporary artists who have had a direct experience of war, and this being reflected in their work.

Chapter One will examine an attempt to recall the relationship of responsibility for the other, what claims, in accordance to Levinas, "deposition of the sovereignty of ego."8 This will be done by examining the examples of visual works of four Bosnian artists: E. Pasic, S. Jukic, Z. Bogdanovic and Petar Waldeg, which were constructed during the civil war in Bosnia in the period from 1992 to 1993. The attempt for such recall was based upon the consequences of a relationship of negation of the other, in this case the victims of the war. The examination will proceed with question: could realisation of mass-death be seen as a medium for establishment of self affirmation of the identity of the other, in this case the aggressor.

As human feelings have an important role concerning issues of relationship with the other, the Chapter Two will be concerned with the feeling of pain, which is important in establishing a sense of self-identity in the individual. This part of research will deal with the art works of Italian artist Alberto Burri, and the examples of his work which was dealing were 'physical' and 'spiritual' wounds.

Since being and the other are two central subjects of this research, the Chapter Three will deal with the other important subject which is termed Supreme Existence and is related to the relationship between the being and the other. This part of paper will deal with the art work of Colin McCahon, from New Zealand and Ivan Lackovic Croatia, from Croatia who are dealing with the establishment of a relationship of responsibility for the other. McCahon’s works through recalling consciousness awakened by religious experience and Croatia's work accentuates the consequences of the relationship of negation of the other based on war experience.

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8 Ibid., p. 52.
The section: Discussion will be discussing my art work and the attempt to represent an reflection about the search for the meaning of duality which is present in the being itself and extended in the field of communications of the being and the other.

This paper hopes to illustrate the paradox that two opposite relationships of the being and the other are mutually dependent and are necessary for a self-consciousness about the real self identity that possibly could lead to understanding of the frightening reality of death.

However, before making a contradictory entity of the relationship of negation of the other as was suggested by Edgar Morin and the relationship of responsibility for the other, as was suggested by Emmanuel Levinas, I will start with an examination of the mutual interactions of the physical and spiritual components of a being, and observe how this invisible matter is represented in the visual arts. As Joseph Beuys quotes, "...art is a means of connecting two worlds, the visible and the invisible, the physical and the spiritual..."9

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9 Joseph Beuys interviewed by L. Wijers, From the Competitive to a Compassionate Society, Art and Design, Vol. 6, No. 21, p. 9.