CHAPTER-1

MAN: CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE WORLD

An understanding of Sartre's concept of freedom needs to be prefaced by a detailed discussion of the ontology of consciousness. Consciousness, for Sartre, is the being –for-itself. Being-for-itself is preceded by being-in-itself, that is, the unconscious external world. This division of Being into being– for –itself and being – in – itself should not be interpreted as a dualism of Being – Being is one.

In this chapter, I shall deal with some of the fundamental aspects of the ontology of consciousness as discussed in Sartre’s Being and Nothingness. I shall begin with a summary discussion of a few historical views on the topic of consciousness and its relation to the world. It is generally thought that consciousness is the locus of freedom and the external world is either an extension of consciousness or else an independent determinant to be confronted by consciousness. Berkeley saw the material world as an extension of consciousness and Descartes saw the material world as independent of consciousness. There is a third view; the view of Kant. According to this view consciousness transcends the world. I shall now see how Sartre’s view differs from these three aforementioned views.

1.1 Three Historical Approaches To The Problem: Descartes, Berkeley And Kant

To begin with in his ontology Sartre took great pains to establish not only the independence of the consciousness but also its relatedness to the world. He seems to have been more than aware of the irremediable
difficulties of his predecessors who after establishing the freedom of consciousness struggled for a solution to the problem of explaining the relatedness of consciousness to the world of things. Some of the more important solutions to this problem were to give consciousness a superior status as in Kant or Berkeley or to totally delink consciousness and the material world and search for some makeshift relatedness as in the Cartesian theory. Sartre’s solution to the problem is interesting on a number of accounts: negatively speaking, (a) he does not fall back on the age-worn method of trying to integrate the best of all preceding philosophical systems and (b) he was cautious not to begin with a dichotomy within being or existence to be later bridged by a dubious tertium-quid. Positively speaking, (c) he describes consciousness in such a way that it enjoys the dual facilities of transcendence and situated-ness (d) all this is achieved through careful reasoning and cautious avoidance of pitfalls and hasty generalization committed by his predecessors. A detailed discussion of Sartre’s argument will illustrate the above observations.

But before going into such a discussion, we may take up a selected study of the history of consciousness vis-á-vis matter. Such a comparison with Descartes, Berkeley and Kant will facilitate the understanding of Sartre.
Descartes envisaged the possible existence of a malicious demon, who had the power to cause us to mistake false propositions for true ones and then sought to discover whether there is any proposition which one could not be mistaken in believing. His answer is that I could not be mistaken in believing that ‘I exist’, since my denial or even doubt of my own existence itself implies it. Descartes asserts the existence of the external world from the existence of the thinking subject. He conceived the world as consisting of two heterogeneous substances, namely, Body and Mind, and sought to overcome the difficulty of explaining the relation between mind or consciousness and matter by holding that conscious mind acts upon body and body on mind.

Sartre has made a distinction between consciousness and the world and put this distinction between world and consciousness in a reverse order. Descartes spoke of the primacy of the thinking subject while Sartre spoke of the primacy of existence. Consciousness, according to Sartre, is not substance as Descartes thinks. Sartre is convinced that there is something fundamentally wrong with the traditional Cartesian point of departure. The Cartesian notion, according to Sartre, involves a “minor being”. Further, consciousness cannot be considered determined by something external to it. If determinable from outside then consciousness would be a thing, something unconsciousness and it is also a problem how a space-less, weight-less utterly non-physical thing like a mind able to
cause the movement of a spatial, crass object like a body. i.e., how merely by intending that my arm go up can it happen that it doe? Sartre attempts to close both gaps at once, by a radical re-characterization of mind and body together, by supposing that there is just one thing, which stands in that original relationship with the world of which Sartre says that action and knowledge are but two abstract limits. Gabriel Marcel, in the concluding pages of his *Journal Metaphysique* epitomizes Sartre’s thought thus, “I do not use my body; I am my body”¹. So in the sense in which a stick is a tool, my hand is not. And in the sense in which a stick might be object of knowledge, my knowing the stick is not, except perhaps pre-reflectively; between myself and my body, no gap has to be traversed by cognition and causation.

We find another extreme in Berkeley’s view where the Cartesian dualism is replaced by a sort of uniformity. Berkeley identified what are ordinarily taken to be physical object with collections of sensible qualities. This move was made partly in the interest of his theology, since having argued that sensible qualities exist only as long as they are perceived, he avoids the paradoxical consequence that things like trees and stars vanish out of existence when one ceases to perceive them, by assuming that they continue to exist as ideas in the mind of God. This led him to hold the view that what we take to be physical objects are nothing more than permanent possibilities of sensation, or the world must be exactly as we
perceive it to be. Berkeley treats one's own existence as a primitive datum and treats the self as spiritual substance, which has a permanent existence.

Sartre felt Berkeley’s starting point to be correct but his conclusions misleading. The conclusions Sartre reaches should also have been the logical conclusion for Berkeley, according to Sartre. Sartre argues that it would be wrong to make a distinction between the being of the subject and the Absolute Being. This is perhaps how Berkeley understood the problem. For him every individual had a subjective being a percipii and over and above these subjective existences there was the eternal and absolute perception of God. There is nothing outside the phenomenon, according to Sartre, which could act as a support for that phenomenon; phenomenon has to be its own support. Seen in another way, the Sartrean stance may also seem to be an echo of Berkeley, namely, ‘what appears is’. But seen more closely, Sartre does not intend to equate being with mere appearance. If the ‘being of phenomenon’ consists in the first instance in its being perceived, this will lead to a Berkelean Idealism without God. But Sartre argues very briefly that the ‘being of phenomenon’ cannot be reduced to phenomenon or appearance and he feels that this is a logical consequence that even the Berkelean idealist will have to accept. Rejection of this conclusion would lead to circularity – ‘knowledge would depend on percipii and vice -versa’. The thesis that
the being of phenomena reduces to their *percipii* is an idealistic one and Sartre assures us that the idealistic position, which reduces being to cognition, can not escape the positing at least in the case of cognition itself. This breach in the idealistic principle promises, as a sequel, a non-idealistic solution to the problem of phenomenon. Were cognition itself to succumb to the principle *esse est percipii* it would lack a foundation in being and so be reduced to mere givenness fall away into nothingness. We cannot, therefore, say that cognition or knowledge is reducible to the status of *percipii*. So even the Berkelean being is transphenomenal since justification of knowledge must not be knowledge. (The difference between Sartre's idealism and Berkeley's idealism shall be discussed in the chapter 'Literature Creativity and Freedom'). Sartre of course can only be called an idealist in an extended sense of the term. Thus Sartre’s view is different from Berkeley’s idealism according to which objects exist only in so far as they are perceived and Cartesian realism according to which mind some how holds within itself representation of objects existing external to it.

Now let me briefly examine how Sartre’s view of consciousness is positional in relation to Kant. Kant is led by his researches into making a Copernican Revolution in Philosophy. The essence of Copernican Revolution is that there is a distinction between appearance and reality or in Kant’s term phenomena and noumena and the real things-in-
themselves are unknown and unknowable and we can know only phenomena. One consequence of this revolution is that the real self becomes unknown and unknowable, and the known is only the phenomenal self, which is rigidly determined by causal laws. One of the essential postulates of Kantian morality is that our self is free. Morality cannot prove that our self is free. Kant’s only point is that nothing is known against the possibility of human freedom for all we know is that human self is not free. Kant has postulated a transcendental self, which is always a subject and in turn an object of consciousness.

Kant felt the logical necessity of introducing the transcendental ego for organizing the moments of knowledge and presenting them as items to be cognized by the same knower. In other words, “Kant argues that, since the diverse segments of our experiences at a series of moments need to be finally synthesized so as to form a definite object, there should be a unifying principle that must be able to accompany all our representations or experiences. This formal unifying principle Kant terms “I think”. Sartre’s initial retort to this observation is this; from the assertion that “I think” must be able to accompany all our experiences, it does not follow that this I inhabits all our states of our consciousness, so that there are moments of consciousness without the I. And hence it would not be proper to conclude that this I actually effects the supreme synthesis of our experiences. In fact, Sartre denies this Kantian I a reality. He rather argues
that the unity of our representations is not affected by the I think. Rather, the I that we seem to encounter in our consciousness is made possible by the synthetic unity of our representations. The synthetic unity of a series of moments of consciousness does not come about through the agency of an accompanying I, but rather by the object of experience - that is to say, the unity is brought about by the object which consciousness comes to grasp at which these moments are intentionally directed, and which consciousness grasps as an object."²

Next, Sartre endeavours to establish his anti-Husserlian thesis about consciousness, According to Husserl the Transcendental ego is an innate I — subject present in every conscious activity, contributing to the structuring of our experience. Accordingly Husserl argues that whenever I am conscious of, say a table, I readily and simultaneously recognize that it is I who am the subject of this consciousness —an I who is not contained in the structure of that consciousness. In brief, in each instance of reflective consciousness, a subject or rather a Transcendental I — Transcendental because this I Transcends the arena of consciousness reflected upon by the I — subject — is directly acknowledged. Sartre just denies this Transcendental I or ego. His arguments are as follows.

Whenever I am conscious of an object my consciousness is directed only towards of the object and not toward any Transcendental I. In other words, in reflective consciousness, no Transcendental ego is encountered, I
come to apprehend the so called 'Transcendental I' when I reflect upon my consciousness of the object – that is to say, when I become conscious of my consciousness of the object. The structure of this would be this: I am conscious of the fact that I am conscious of the object. Here the first I eludes the arena of 'I am conscious of the object' and hence here also the 'I subject' is not an item in the reflecting consciousness, i.e., in the consciousness which is directed towards or reflects upon 'I am conscious of the object'. So the original I subject, i.e. I who was conscious of the object is grasped as an object by the aforesaid first I, because it falls within 'I am conscious of the object' the whole of which is the object of the first I. In short, the reflecting or unreflected consciousness never comprehends any so-called I subject or Transcendental ego. Such an alleged 'I subject' or Transcendental ego is invariably had in the reflected consciousness – that is to say, the consciousness which is reflected upon, and not the consciousness which is reflecting upon. In sum, no Transcendental ego is or could be located within reflective consciousness. Since the Transcendental I postulated by Husserl cannot be understood as being one among all other phenomenon, Sartre concludes that it does not exist. In our normal unreflective or rather prereflective involvement in things, there is no I that forms part of the structure in our experience. No such ego, Sartre concludes, is in or behind consciousness. The ego is rather outside of consciousness, in that there is only an object-ego toward
which consciousness would be directed, just as consciousness is directed toward any other object. The ego is, thus, ‘out there’, in the world, an object among objects. Sartre puts this point rather radically, when he says that “it is not in some hiding place that we will discover ourselves; it is on the roads, in the city, in the midst of the crowd, a thing among things, a man among men.”\(^3\) So the ego is the object of consciousness; in fact, consciousness has no contents, so that the question, how and by whom the contents of consciousness are to be transformed into an object does not simply arise. All contents belong to the sphere of objects. Consciousness contains nothing, consciousness is simply a spontaneity, simply an activity transcending invariably towards objects. So, I have no privileged status, it is just an object among other objects in the world.

Though Kant believes that all we do ever experience are appearances or phenomena and never things in themselves, Sartre’s believes the object of consciousness to be real things in themselves. In a kind of manifesto, published in *La Nouvelle Revue Francaise* in 1939, Sartre declared, “We shall touch things themselves we are no longer imprisoned in our sensations like Proustian man. Consciousness is always outside of itself; it is consciousness of something.”\(^4\) Sartre argues : to be conscious of a phenomenon is not the same as to know the existence or being of the same phenomenon. Though phenomenon has a being, it has to be proved, since it cannot be directly known. To say that the being of
phenomenon cannot be known has led to extreme conclusions like the
Kantian one, namely, that the being and essence of phenomena exist
beyond the phenomena in an unknown and unknowable realm or in the
Bradlean sense where the Absolute is the unchangeable basis of all
existence.

According to Sartre, “the essence is no longer a property sunk in the
cavity of this existent; it is the manifest law which presides over the
succession of its appearances, it is the principle of the series.” Sartre
further says that “The phenomenal being manifests itself, it manifests its
essence as well as its existence and it is nothing but the well connected
series of its manifestations.”

For Sartre, the being of phenomena is unknowable in the ordinary
sense of knowing. This is not due to the illusions of the being of
phenomena but due to the limitations of knowledge, which is necessarily
discursive. One should not search beyond phenomena for its being. In the
philosophy of both Kant and Descartes the relation between
consciousness and the world has not been conceived as bilateral. They
have detached consciousness from the world and have not presented
the world with that absolute certainty which consciousness has.

“Descartes and particularly Kant detached the subject or
consciousness by showing that I could not possibly apprehend anything as
existing unless I first of all experienced myself as existing in the act of apprehending it. They presented consciousness, the absolute certainty of my existence for myself, as the condition of there being anything at all. But the relations between subject and world are not strictly bilateral; If they were, the certainty of the world would in Descartes, be immediately given with that of the Cogito and Kant would not have talked about his “Copernican revolution.”

There is another theory, which may be labelled as Epiphenomenalism. It is an alternative to the theories of interactionism and parallelism and as proposed in the late 19th century. Epiphenomenalism conceives the relation between body and mind in a different way. According to this doctrine, mind is nothing but an ‘epiphenomenon’ of the body, and physical events cause mental events but mental events do not in turn cause physical. This thesis assumes a transition from unconscious to conscious. “One of its proponents, T.H. Huxley in his paper ‘On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata’ (1874), considered consciousness to be an epiphenomenon of molecular changes in the brain and hence all mental events to be effects of physical events but never cause of either physical or other mental events.”

All these attempts in the history of philosophy have led to a free detached domain where absolute freedom is secured. Professor Kalidas
Bhattacharya in his article ‘Different Notions of Freedom Compared and Evaluated’ says “philosophers like Kant and Husserl” believe in that “primal stage as the only form of positive freedom” where one just stands conscious of one’s status, but not in the additional sense of consciously doing anything else or knowing anything else or being intrinsically disposed in any other way to any such thing.”

1.2 Sartre’s Treatment of the problem

Sartre consciously makes an effort to dissociate himself from such theories. Sartre believes in active or ‘living’ consciousness. Consciousness, according to Sartre, is a practical consciousness a ‘pre-reflective’ consciousness. Sartre’s strategy is to secure absolute freedom for consciousness in his ontology and at the same time he tries to denude consciousness of any possible essentialism. He also tries to stress the dependence of the subject on the object. To establish his position he takes recourse to the ‘ontological proof’ and later gives a detailed exposition of consciousness as freedom.

1.3 Ontological Proof

Sartre at the beginning of his L’Être et le Neant which is often treated as a philosophical foundation of existentialism and an ontologico-phenomenological treatise on human freedom speaks of an ontological proof for the existence of being. We begin from the phenomena as the
given. This is the phenomenon of the appearance or the phenomenon of being or existence which occurs to all human beings in some form or the other; it may be in the form of boredom, it may be in the form of nausea and so on. “Being will be disclosed to us by some kind of immediate access—boredom, nausea, etc.”¹⁰ Such an appearance would be a ‘phenomenon of being’ but in such a phenomenon of being, being is not itself appearance.

In *The Psychology of Imagination* Sartre has argued that as the aesthetic objects are unreal, they exist so long as and only when they are brought into being by consciousness. The events and characters of a novel exist only as they are sustained by the act of reading. In *The Family Idiot* Sartre has elaborated his distinction between the printed book, printed canvas or whatever and the aesthetic object evoked by it. The former is “A real and permanent center of derealization.”¹¹

In imagination the objects are designed not primarily to modify or to elicit action in the real world but to cause whoever encounters it to create unreal images.

Sartre moves beyond a phenomenology of consciousness and imagination in which the object of consciousness is nothing more than its intentional correlate, to a deeper ontological level in which appearance is to be taken as appearance of being. The appearance that I confront,
the phenomenon, has a being of its own, the “being of the phenomenon”. But the phenomenon of being is not identical with the being of phenomenon. Sartre argues, if there is a being whose phenomenon this is, that being, must itself be transphenomenal.

All the examples of phenomena are examples of experience in a sense knowledge (nausea, boredom). The law of being for such a knowing subject is consciousness. Consciousness is not peculiar to this or that knowledge but it is being of all knowledge or all phenomena. This is the transphenomenal being in the knowing subject.

Transphenomenality has a very special sense for Sartre. To understand this we must be able to distinguish between the transphenomenal and the transcendental. The transcendental being can exist without the phenomena but the Sartrean transphenomenal has no independent existence. Sartre speaks of transphenomenal in two different senses.

The transphenomenal being of consciousness.

The transphenomenal being of phenomena. The second is proved by the ontological argument. The phenomenon – what appears – is presupposed as having a transphenomenal foundation. The first step towards the establishment of transphenomenal being is to authenticate the being of what appears in terms of the one species of being about which we can really be certain namely our own. The notion
of transcendence in Sartre’s theory does not refer to something, which lies beyond consciousness but simply to the object as it is. Husserl believes that consciousness constitutes object. According to Husserl intentional act of consciousness immediately refers to some object. Husserl says, one does not see colour sensations but coloured things, one does not hear tone sensations but the songs of singer. Sartre does not believe so. Sartre believes consciousness to be dependent for its existence on the object of which it is conscious.

The things I am conscious of are not themselves in consciousness, consciousness intends them, they belong in the world. We come to know them through consciousness. Sartre claims for consciousness a dimension of being not founded on its given-ness to a subject. All consciousness is consciousness of something, i.e. to be consciousness is to be aware in a transitive way of something external to consciousness. This concept has been borrowed from Husserl by Sartre and this is a fundamental concept which plays a central role in Being and Nothingness. ‘Consciousness of’ means: Consciousness has no content of its own. There are no given contents of consciousness to be found either ‘in the world’ or ‘in the psyche’. This explains Sartre’s non-acceptance of any pre-given. So consciousness is translucent, has reference to itself. In this way it excludes all other being from itself. It is a type of being of its own. Its trans-phenomenality consists in its ‘being’ a self given-ness instead of being ‘for’
a knower. Consciousness is typically always of the world and almost never of itself. Sartre supposes that we always and necessarily are conscious of being conscious. But consciousness is never in this sense given to itself the way the world is given to it. It is never an object for itself.

Sartre treats ‘consciousness of object’ as primitive. An important characteristic of consciousness, according to Sartre, is that consciousness is necessarily consciousness (of) objects. “This means”, Sartre says, “there is no consciousness which is not a positing of a transcendent object, or .......... that consciousness has no ‘content.’”12 Sartre stresses the dependence of the subject on the object. ‘Consciousness of’ means ‘consciousness of something’. This means that transcendence is the constitutive structure of consciousness; “that is, that consciousness is born supported by a being which is not itself.”13 This is what Sartre means by ‘ontological proof’.

Sartre’s notion of transcendence does not refer to that which lies ‘beyond’ or ‘behind’ consciousness or to the objects of consciousness but simply to the objects themselves. According to Sartre, there is no distinction between “object” and “object of consciousness”.

So in Sartre there is no dichotomy within consciousness in the manner of consciousness (of) itself. Nor is there any prior existence which causes the existence of consciousness. Even “nothingness of
consciousness” cannot precede consciousness. As Sartre tells us, “consciousness is prior to nothingness” and “is derived” from being.”

1.4 Consciousness and Positional Consciousness

All consciousness is related to the world. It has to be related to the world because it is after all just consciousness and there is no consciousness without an object. Consciousness (of) means consciousness in a position to the world. Sartre believes that the objects of which we are consciously aware are real objects. Therefore all consciousness is positional consciousness of the world since it is oriented towards a being, which is the object of that consciousness. This relation of positionality leads consciousness to go beyond itself to reach out to the world to be related to the world. This going beyond is what Sartre calls transcendence of consciousness by itself. Consciousness, according to Sartre, can have no independent existence apart from its world. There is no consciousness, which is independent of any object at all but object only determines the content of consciousness not its existence. The peculiar nature of consciousness is that consciousness is dependent for its existence on the object of which it is conscious i.e. consciousness is typically always of the world and never of itself in this way.

Consciousness is simultaneously self-conscious, in that as Sartre thinks, human consciousness cannot exist except as consciousness of itself. But such consciousness is not consciousness of itself in the same manner as
it is of an object. Sartre here speaks of two kinds of consciousness, namely positional and non-positional. As consciousness of an object, it is a positional consciousness while as consciousness of itself it is non-positional. As Sartre puts it, “in so far as my reflecting consciousness is consciousness of itself, it is non-positional consciousness. It becomes positional only by directing itself upon the reflected consciousness which itself was not a positional consciousness of itself before being reflected.”15

When I see a horse, I am positionally conscious of the conscious-transcendent object ‘horse’. As such, I am at the same time non-positionally conscious of myself in so far I am positing that activity. So we find that all subjective knowledge is rooted in Transphenomenal consciousness, which transcends itself in its positional relation to the world. Thus we must give up the primacy of knowledge and search for its origin in consciousness. Of course consciousness can know itself but this knowing itself is not a form of introspection where the self figuratively bends backward in order to know itself. Such knowing is of an entirely different nature from the phenomena of knowledge. This knowing is possible due to the translucent nature of consciousness. “I am always aware of being aware when I am aware and I always am aware in so far as I am a conscious being.”16 Sartre supposes that we always and necessarily are conscious of being conscious but consciousness is never in this sense given to itself the way the world is given to it. It is never an object for itself.
Consciousness has a “relation to itself.” It is “an immediate, non-cognitive relation of the self to itself.”\textsuperscript{17}

When the analytic philosophers speak of the knowledge of knowledge they speak in reflective terms. When they say, “we know that we know” they also pass judgments on the consciousness reflected on. This, Sartre thinks, is not permissible. For him knowledge and the knowledge of knowledge do not belong to the same category. Knowledge belongs to the reflective stage whereas the knowledge of knowledge belongs to the pre-reflective stage, (Sartre has called this stage the un-reflective consciousness.) i.e., to the pre-reflective consciousness. Sartre makes the distinction between two phases of consciousness, pre-reflective and reflective or the Cartesian cogito “All that there is of intention in my actual consciousness is directed toward the outside, toward the world…… every positional (reflective) consciousness an object is at the same time a non positional (pre reflective) consciousness of itself.”\textsuperscript{18}

“For Sartre, there is no “I” or “me” in the self of which consciousness is non-positionally aware, no admixture whatsoever of the personalized, biographical self. Consciousness is subjectivity in that it is awareness (of) being aware as well as awareness of its object, but there is no structured subject. The “I” and the “me” are the result of the work of reflective consciousness, a consciousness that takes its awareness as its direct
object. We will find them in the ego but not in translucent pre-reflective consciousness." 19 In The Transcendence of The Ego, Sartre himself says, “While I was reading, there was consciousness of the book, of the heroes of the novel, but the I was not inhabiting this consciousness. It was only consciousness of the object and non-positional consciousness of itself. I can now make these a-thetically apprehended results the object of a thesis and declare: there was no I in the unreflected consciousness. 20 “Yet we must note that the pre-reflective consciousness is never confined within a present ‘now.’ To be conscious of a particular object is to be aware that this awareness is not the same as the just past awareness. Consciousness in its very existence is temporal, which means that it is aware of its background of past and future awareness.” 21

By means of this distinction between reflective consciousness and pre reflective consciousness, Sartre wants to say, consciousness of consciousness is not objective consciousness and is different from objective consciousness, which is reflective. Consciousness is a presence to its object, a reflection of it. But consciousness is not its object to be aware of something is thus doubly negating. Every intending act is positionally aware of the object it posits and non positionally aware of itself as awareness. Consciousness is conceived by Sartre as absolute transparency for total emptiness, which never penetrates the objects it is of. The reflective consciousness takes the pre-reflective consciousness as
an object. "......the reflecting consciousness posits the consciousness reflected - on, as its object. In the act of reflecting I pass judgment on the consciousness reflected – on; I am ashamed of it, I am proud of it.........." 22

There is relation between reflective and pre-reflective consciousness and this causal relation is unidirectional. Although reflective consciousness takes pre-reflective consciousness as its object in the reflective consciousness, pre-reflective consciousness according to Sartre, simply is self-conscious; it does not take itself as an object: "consciousness of self is not dual."23 “Every conscious existence exists as consciousness of existing. We understand now why the first consciousness of consciousness is not positional; it is because it is one with the consciousness of which it is conscious.”24 This self-consciousness is not as a new consciousness but as the only mode of existence which is possible for a consciousness of something. Merleau-Ponty in his book The Phenomenology of Perception defends the same thesis. “All consciousness is at the same time self-consciousness...self-consciousness is the very being of the mind in action.”25 About the relation between pre-reflective and reflective consciousness Merleau-Ponty says, reflection is the expression of pre-reflective consciousness and the reflective cogito is the expression of a pre-reflective self-consciousness. In Sartre’s view the reflective consciousness cannot reveal pre-reflective consciousness, reflective consciousness only explains the object of consciousness whereas the pre-
reflective consciousness makes the reflective consciousness possible as well as reveals itself. Sartre argues, “…it is the non-reflective consciousness which renders the reflection possible; There is a pre-reflective cogito which is the condition of the Cartesian cogito.”\textsuperscript{26} In this way an infinite regress of knowing knowers is avoided.

Though reflective consciousness is necessarily positional since it posits a being, which is the object of that consciousness and thus transcends itself, it is only when reflective consciousness becomes self-conscious that knowledge of object becomes possible. A.C. Danto, in his book \textit{Sartre}, explains this point, thus: “consider Sartre’s illustrative use of the concept of counting at this point. To count my cigarettes implies that I do not know how many there are and mean to find out. But I don’t in the same sense find out that I am counting: I am immediately aware of this and this pre-reflective awareness that counting is what I am doing is presupposed by the actual act of adding which I perform.”\textsuperscript{27} This doctrine of accepting a consciousness which is a revealing revealed was adopted by Sartre from Heidegger. The transphenomenal being of the pre-reflective consciousness explains the basis of the knowledge of appearance. But the being of the \textit{perciipii} or appearance cannot be reduced to consciousness. So we have yet to prove the being of phenomena. Appearance is related to consciousness but not revealed to consciousness.
The being of appearance in question is not itself appearance, i.e., phenomenon is not appearance which makes its being, it is not also a ‘quality’ or ‘meaning’ or ‘essence’ of the object. Being is not what the phenomenon refers to but “simply the condition of all revelation.”

Sartre argues from the statement that all consciousness is consciousness of something to the existence of something, namely, being. I have already explained how consciousness on its positional aspect transcends or goes beyond itself. This going beyond is a constitutive structure of consciousness. In order for this transcendence of the consciousness to be realized there must be a real world to be related or to be positioned to. Without such a real support of the external world consciousness by definition can not exist. Sartre seems to be intuitively aware of such consciousness.

Here an objection may be raised, that there need not in fact be anything to satisfy this need for consciousness for a transcendent object. But Sartre refutes this objection by taking recourse to Husserl’s theory of intentionality. Sartre observes that an analysis of intentionality shows that only the possible being for consciousness is “…that precise obligation to be a revealing intuition of something.” And he goes on to say “revealing intuition implies something revealed.” Subjectivity cannot by itself constitute anything objective, so that if objectivity is revealed to it in this way, that must be because it existed independently.
1.5 Some Similar Trends in the Treatment of Consciousness: Descartes to Sartre

A continuity of the French approach to such problems of consciousness may be traced from Descartes to Sartre however devious the lineage may be. A close parallel can be observed between Descartes’ way of arguing and Sartre’s way of arguing. Descartes argues that in doubting we cannot doubt the doubter, similarly Sartre argues that a revealing intuition implies something revealed. But the two (the revealing and the revealed) are not identical, that is, in Sartre’s argument subjectivity does not constitute objectivity because subjectivity does not have that power. Such powers of subjectivity would be accepted by Idealists. But for Sartre subjectivity and objectivity are two modes of being. Like Descartes Sartre’s enquiry begins from given experience. By the method of doubt Descartes establishes the existence of the ‘thinking subject’ and from the ‘thinking subject’ consequently he establishes the external world; or in other words, Descartes finds the existence of the ‘thinking subject’ to be self-evident and the existence of the world to be derived from it. Sartre begins from the given phenomenon of experience and gives a phenomenological argument for the law of such experience or knowledge. The law is consciousness, the pre-reflective consciousness. Here Sartre goes a step beyond Descartes. As if to say he passes from the
phenomena of being to the revealed revealer of being, which may be illustrated thus:

The revealed revealer $\leftarrow$ phenomenon of being

The revealed revealer is fundamental and uncaused consciousness. So now we have the consciousness of the phenomenon of being which is nothing but the consciousness of appearance and we have the pre-reflective consciousness.

Though there are some basic points of similarity between Sartre’s mode of arguing and that of Descartes, still Sartre differs from Descartes in an important respect. While Descartes asserts the existence of the external world from the existence of the ‘thinking subject’, Sartre asserts the existence of the external world by his ‘ontological proof’. Descartes believes that we can know the external world only through mediation of ideas of which we are directly aware and which truly and falsely represent correspondent external things, Sartre believes that the objects of which we are consciously aware are real objects and we can have direct awareness of them. Even in case of imagination Sartre believes what we are aware of are not imaginary objects but real things. “The capacity to imagine, to present to oneself that which is not real”, Sartre concluded, ‘is not a contingent character of consciousness; far from being a mere adjunct to consciousness, it is consciousness itself “in so far as it realizes its freedom”’. Sartre believes, image acts as “a way of being related to the
real world”. Descartes ends by establishing two substances, viz., mind and body whereas for Sartre there is only one being with its two modes, viz., being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Here it would be worth observing that both Descartes and Sartre are anxious to free consciousness from determinism of the world by giving it a transcendence of some sort. “Consciousness” according to Sartre “is not being but the activity whereby a human being recasts an impersonal universe in the form of the human life world. Its revelation of being is a creative revealing but consciousness never becomes its creations. It is the interplay of the structuring by consciousness and its free transcending of structures that provides the unity of Sartre’s philosophy.”

Now we may sum up Sartre’s programme of arguing for the being of phenomena in two following steps:

The revealed revealer ← phenomenon of being.

The revealed reveler → the transphenomenal being of the world.

Husserl believed in the existence of an ego which as it were stands outside its experiencing it. The positing of an absolute ego Sartre finds quite unacceptable. Sartre vigorously rejects the idea of a transcendental ego any existential right, which all experience must necessarily refer to. The self, Sartre says, certainly exists but it is an object in the phenomenal world. “The ego is not the owner of consciousness, it is the object of consciousness”. And “our states and actions are also objects.”
1.6 Distinction between the World and Consciousness

According to Sartre, everywhere around the World there is Being in one form or another, either the being-in-itself or being-for-itself. Being includes within itself both being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Being-for-itself is the human consciousness whereas being-in-itself is the phenomenon of the inanimate world. Being which exist in itself in the respect that its existence does not depend upon anyone’s conscious of them is being-in-itself. But this is not the case for the being-for-itself. It depends upon something other than itself and upon those things other than itself, of which it is conscious. According to Sartre, the being-for-itself or man is not what he is, while the being in itself or nature is always what it is. (It is worth mentioning here A.C. Danto’s clarification of the Sartrean principle, “the pour-soi is what it is not.” To quote Danto; “The phrase ‘I am what I am not’ must be understood in the specific sense of not-being-x. And this is the sense in which the pour soi contrasts with the en-soi when the latter is characterized as being what it is. Of course, the entire argument is a kind of logical proof. We are, are identical with, these various nihilations, if Sartre’s analysis is at all correct, in just the way in which a stone is identical with itself. ‘Nihilation n’ is identical with nihilation n’ is as good as instance of the principle of identity as ‘stone s is identical with stone s’ is. So the first ‘is’ in ‘the pour-soi is what it is not,’ is just the ‘is’ of identity.”

Outside-in-itself
is the being of the phenomenon of the in-animate world and overflows the knowledge, which we have of it. Being-in-itself has infinite perspectives and an infinite process is required to discover the total aspects of a thing. “The in-itself has nothing secret it is solid (massif).” 35 The in-itself is identical precisely because it merely is what it is, and maintains no relation to another. Being-in-itself, according to Sartre, is ‘opaque’ and ‘coincides exactly with itself.’ The principle of identity thus associated with the in-itself does not, according to Sartre, hold for the for-itself and therefore constitutes a synthetic and contingent principle of the in-itself. Being-in-itself is in its own right and “can neither be derived from the possible nor reduced to the necessary.” 36 It is contingent. Man is not a café-waiter or soldier or professor in the same sense as a tree is a tree. Man, the being-for-itself is full of negation, being not what he is, man, according to Sartre, is not subjected to the principle of identity and is unlike-the being-in-itself which being what it is does not contain any negation within it and subjected to the principle of identity. For-itself has no reality except in so far it is the nihilation of a particular being. By nihilating a particular being each for itself can stand out from being and judge other being by knowing what it is not. “In as much as the distance between a man and the roles he may play cannot be overcome, that a man never is a waiter or a husband or a father or a philosopher or whatever, that a man is not what he is. Taking the first ‘is’ as that of identity, and the second as the ‘is’
of predication, it is false in the first use that Jean is a waiter, even if true in the second sense, even if, as a matter of calling, a waiter is what he is. The two formulations together express what Sartre condenses in the rather infuriating formula: ‘Men are what they are not and are not what they are.’ ”

An echo of this distinction we find in Kant’s *Ground work of the Metaphysics of Morals*, where Kant says, “Beings whose existence depends, not on our will, but on nature, have none the less, if they are non-rational beings, only a relative value as means and are consequently called thing. Rational beings, on the other hand, are called persons because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves…”

1.7 **The Role of Nothingness in Distinguishing Being-in-itself and Being-for-itself.**

Being-for-itself or in other words human consciousness is different from being-in-itself by means of negation or to be more precise by means of ‘nothingness’, which is originated by his ever-questioning attitude. Nothingness comes in the world through consciousness by his act of nihilation or in other words by his double nihilating role. Sartre conceives man as essentially free. (This issue I shall discuss in chapter-II) In order to realize his possibilities, freedom and choice, man must be able to dissociate himself from the causal world. So, to be human, or to be a
consciousness is always to stand at a distance from the world or perhaps simply is to be this distance. When the being questions the relation of himself with the world he is not subject to the causal order of the world and dissociates himself from the world. As Sartre says, “it is essential therefore that the questioners have the permanent possibility of dissociating himself from the causal series which constitutes being and which can produce only being. If we admitted that the question is determined in the questioners by universal determinism, the question would thereby become unintelligible and even inconceivable…….. Thus so far as the questioner must be able to affect in relation to the questioned a kind of nihilating withdrawal, he is not subject to the causal order of the world.” 39 Just as consciousness or being-for-itself exists by means of his act of nihilating the being, he performs the act of self nihilation also. Sartre says, “the for itself cannot sustain nihilation without determining itself as a lack of being.” 40 Being originally mere existence without any essence, man never coincides with himself and continues to make himself until he dies. He transcends himself from his essence which is his past and from his project, which is his future and towards which he is striving. Thus the for-itself exists without essence or nature, without there being anything that would function for it as a normative ideal to which he must live up. Being never what it is, being always abstracted from the causal order and being always in the making man is full of negation an ever questioning and
denying hollowness projected towards the future. For Sartre, human existence does not just precede essence: It is exclusive of it. So long a man is a for-itself, he cannot say that he is anything at all. Since nothing can ever inhabit consciousness—“there is no inertia in consciousness” 41 Sartre conceives nothingness within being, “........... If nothingness can be given, it is neither before nor after being, nor in a general way outside of being. Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being – like a worm.” 42 Nothingness for Sartre is no entity, “nothingness is made to be” 43 Nothingness comes about through consciousness and consciousness is itself also nothingness. “The being by which Nothingness comes into the world must be its own Nothingness.” 44 So consciousness, for Sartre, ‘is a kind of pure transparency’, a ‘nothing’ which is merely an openness to a world to which it adds no tincture of its own. The question that now arises, what is it in being that might generate Nothingness and through what kind of activity of being does Nothingness come into the world? “ If Nothingness can be conceived neither outside of being nor in terms of being, and if, on the other hand since it is non-being, it cannot derived from itself the necessary force to “nihilate itself” where does nothingness come from?” 45 Being in-itself, in which there is no gap and is full positivity can not be able to originate Nothingness because there would be nothing in such being which could surpass itself toward non-being. This being-in-itself cannot carry within itself the seeds of its own nihilation. Being-in-itself is simply
there, being-for-itself on the other hand, is a being of possibilities. “The for-itself is nothing but the pure nihilation of the in-itself.” 46

Man, according to Sartre, is the being by which nothingness in the form of negatities comes into the world. The structure of consciousness is such that nothingness is bound up with it. Consciousness, for Sartre, is action, the act of detachment, which brings into being a signifying nothingness. There exist, he contends, “types of human activity which while not obviously involving a negative judgment nevertheless contain negativity as an integral part of their structure, e.g., experiences involving absence, change, interrogation, destruction.” 47 These are not only objects of man’s judgement but are suffered, opposed, feared and fought by human beings. The world or in-itself contains no negation rather ‘Non-being always appears within the limits of human expectation.’ 48 Because of the constant possibility of dashed hopes and thwarted expectations that nothingness haunts being. In Sartre’s famous illustration in which he goes to café to meet Pierre, it is Pierre who “serves as foundation for the judgment – ‘Pierre is not here.” 49 While the café itself is a ‘fullness of being’ it is Pierre who proves not to be there. “I myself expected to see Pierre, and my expectation has caused the absence of Pierre to happen as a real event concerning this café. It is an objective fact at present that I have discovered this absence and it presents itself as a synthetic relation between Pierre and the setting in which I am looking for him. Pierre absent haunts this café and is the condition of its self nihilating organization as ground.” 50 Nothingness can even be perceived through such experiences as lack or absence or destructions of things or in
other words what Sartre calls negatities. These negatities are different either from logical negation or negation as a category. Absence may be defined either as a separate category or in terms of that which is present but negatities cannot be so defined. A.C.Danto explains this point in this way. “In Sartre’s system …… negation has nothing to do either with the content of propositions or with the operations on propositions such as denial, nor as a kind of psychological analysis, since negation is not a kind of mental state like doubt or a feeling of emptiness; nor, finally it is a kind of objective vacuity, like Nirvana.” As Sartre observes negatities like absence change otherness repulsion, regret destruction and so forth, “derived their origin from an act, an expectation or a project of human being.” By his self-detaching activities each for-itself or human consciousness isolates him from every thing and thus constitutes himself. So destruction or absence gets its meaning when for-itself hopes or believes something. It is because we expect the world such and such that we experience the world as lacking. “Destruction is a relational concept where one of the terms of the relationship is a human being or set of human beings who stand or gain or loss by the objective change- after all we are largely indifferent to the coming and going of sun sets, since there is no inhuman investment in these.” By his self-detaching activity each for-itself of human consciousness isolates him from everything and thus constitutes himself. As a lack and a nihilation, for-itself always chooses to surpass to the future. “Human reality is a perpetual surpassing toward a co-incidence with itself which is never given.” So it is through nihilation or nothingness that human freedom is realized. “Every man is originally free in the sense that he spontaneously casts himself into the world.” Human
consciousness is a being of possibilities and is a bridge between the actual and the possible and has the full power to determine which of those possibilities is to be realized. In order to envision possible world, man must be able to nihilate the actual world: "This means that by a double movement of nihilation, he nihilates the thing questioned in relation to himself by placing it in a neutral state, between being and non-being and that he nihilate himself in relation the thing questioned by wrenching himself away from being in order to be able to bring out of himself the possibility of non-being." 

Kant also in the second critique describes the nature of human reason as such that it is capable of postulating any end whatsoever and man is capable to do so because he is a rational moral agent is free from determinations by nature, by his environment and by his own natural inclinations. In Sartre’s view we find a reflection of this Kantian insight. If man would be determined by the causal world he could have no choice, no freedom and no possibilities.

Thus we see, how Sartre establishes the freedom of consciousness and the relatedness of consciousness through his ontology. It would be wrong to surmise that all these deliberations on the freedom of being for-itself were mere esoteric exercises in theoretical speculation. Sartre experimented with different ways and constantly developed and practiced means of achieving freedom, that is, by writing philosophical and literary works or by participating in indirect political activities he was always in search of the roads to human freedom.
In his well-known tribute to freedom in 1944, the tie between politics and philosophy comes out clearly. “We were never more free than under the German Occupation. We had lost all our rights, above all the right to speak; we were insulted daily and had to remain silent, we were deported, because we were workers because we were Jews, because we were political prisoners. All around us on the walls, in the newspapers, on the screen, we met that foul and insipid image that our oppressors wanted us to accept as ourselves. Because of all this we were free. Since the Nazi poison was seeping into our thinking, each accurate thought was a victory; since an all powerful police was trying to force silence upon us, each word became precious as a declaration of principle; since we were haunted, each gesture had the weight of a commitment. 

At each moment we were living to the full the meaning of that banal little phrase “All men are mortal.” The choice that each of us made of himself was authentic, because it was made in the presence of death since it could always be expressed in the form “Rather death than….”.  

Sartre is one of the few philosophers of our time who practiced what he preached and showed us how metaphysics could be given concrete expression in praxis. Whether his philosophical insights are correct of not and whether his political applications are acceptable or not, are separate questions. But one must acknowledge that this was perhaps for the first time after the Greek period that a philosopher tried to display the applicability of his concept of freedom. To understand the applicability of Sartre’s concept of freedom I shall have to deliberate further on the ethical or psychological aspect of being for-itself. Such a discussion will be taken up in the next chapter.