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THE QUESTION OF TRANSCENDENCE IN HEIDEGGER AND SARTRE

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The first task of phenomenology is the elucidation of the concept of phenomenon, because it has received different meanings in the history of philosophy. Husserl himself has dedicated an appendix of his *Logical Investigations* to this clarification.¹ Heidegger too confronts this problem in the § 7 of the introduction to *Being and Time*, where he explains the phenomenological method of his research. Heidegger begins by giving a formal definition of the greek word of *phainomenon* as “what shows itself in itself”. On the basis of this formal definition it becomes possible to distinguish between phenomenon (*Phänomen*) and semblance (*Schein*), which is a “privative modification” of the phenomenon, because in it the thing shows itself as something it is not, whereas in the phenomenon, it shows itself as something it is. Phenomenon and semblance are the names of the positive or negative phenomenon of a thing, whereas the word appearance (*Erscheinung*) is the name of a non phenomenon. What appears in the *Erscheinung* does not show itself, but makes itself known through something that does show itself. Heidegger gives as example the symptoms of an illness, which as occurrences in the body show themselves and in

¹ See E. Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen*, II/2, Niemeyer, Tübingen 1968, Beilage, p. 222—244, in particular § 5, p. 233—237.

this self-showing indicate something that cannot show itself: the illness as such.²

The question is then for Heidegger of the de-formalisation of this notion of phenomenon in order to obtain the properly phenomenological concept of phenomenon. The question becomes: what are the concrete phenomena which are the objects of a phenomenology defined as the attempt “to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself”?³ Such a definition is the developed expression — on the basis of the formal concept of phenomenon, as Heidegger defined it — of the famous Husserlian maxim of phenomenology: “To the things themselves!” One can certainly wonder if it is really necessary to “let what shows itself be seen” and if for the phenomenon defined as “what shows itself in itself”, a phenomenology is really required, but Heidegger’s answer to this is that it is quite possible that the phenomenon is at first concealed and therefore not immediately accessible. This concealed phenomenon is nothing else in fact as what he names “Being” and has to be distinguished from the beings which are what is immediately accessible.⁴ For we do not have here to do with the traditional difference between being and appearing that implies that Being is “behind” what appears and belongs to a transcendent world, because the beings are not appearances that indicate a being which could not appear itself. Being is phenomenon and not appearance and can therefore be shown without the help of another thing which could indicate it. The question becomes therefore: through which particular being can Being be researched? For Heidegger, we are ourselves this exemplary being as far as we are in our own being opened to Being.

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If we turn now to Sartre, we will find the same desire to look for “the phenomena as they are”. Sartre’s first preoccupation, in the introduction to *Being and Nothingness*, is to break away with all the dualisms that have hindered the development of philosophy and to avoid all recourse to the distinction between the inside and the outside of a thing, in other words between its essence and its existence, because these distinctions imply that the real nature of a thing is “behind” its appearing. For Sartre, the situation is quite different: the thing that

² M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Niemeyer, Tübingen 1963, p. 29 (noted in the following SZ); *Being and Time*, transl. by J. Slambough, SUNY Press, London 1996, p. 25 (noted in the following BT).

³ SZ, p. 34; BT, p. 30.

⁴ In the following, we will distinguish, in relation to Heidegger, Being (*Sein*) from beings (*Seiende*).

is perceived does not refer to any internal dimension or concealed essence. It seems therefore that Sartre and Heidegger agree on the definition of the phenomenon as being something else than what indicates a concealed essence. But Sartre does not differentiate clearly between phenomenon, semblance and appearance, but considers all these terms as synonyms.⁵ Sartre's thinking, if his terminology, is nevertheless clear and he expresses it unambiguously: "The dualism of being and appearance is no longer entitled to any legal status in philosophy."⁶ The appearance does not refer to a "hidden reality which would drained to itself all the being of the existent", because "if we no longer believe in the being-behind-of-the-appearances, then the appearance becomes full positivity, its essence is an 'appearing' which is no longer opposed to being, but on the contrary is the measure of it".⁷ Sartre does not want here to say that being is a superfluous notion, what is important is the determination of the appearance, i. e. of the phenomenon as "full positivity". On this point, Sartre agrees with Heidegger, who also declared that being should not be searched "behind" the phenomena. Moreover Sartre refers in an allusive manner to Heidegger and his definition of the phenomenon as "what shows itself in itself" when he declares that the phenomenon "reveals itself as it is" and "is *absolutely indicative of himself*".⁸ There is however a fundamental difference between them, because if for Heidegger the phenomenon is the Being of beings, for Sartre it is merely "a wordly thing", i. e. in Heidegger's language, a being. We can nevertheless find a discourse on being in Sartre's philosophy, and we have now to determine the meaning of it.

Sartre differentiates in the second part of the introduction the "phenomenon of being" from the "being of the phenomenon". Each phenomenon, merely because it is, refers to a being, which implies that there is here no return to the traditional dualism of being and appearing: "The object does not *possess being*, and its existence is not a participation in being, nor any other kind of relation. It is. That is the only way to define its manner of being."⁹ The phenomenon

⁵ J.-P. Sartre, *L'être et le néant*, Gallimard, Paris 1943 (noted in the following EN); *Being and Nothingness*, transl. by H. E. Barnes, Washington Square Press, 1956 (noted in the following BN). See EN, p. 12: "série des apparences"; BN, p. 4: "series of appearances"; EN, p. 13: "série des apparitions"; BN, p. 5: "series of appearances"; EN, p. 14: "phénomène d'être, une apparition de l'être"; BN, p. 7: "a *phenomenon* of being, an appearance of being".

⁶ EN, p. 11; BN, p. 4.

⁷ EN, p. 12; BN, p. 4.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ EN, p. 15; BN, p. 8.

does not therefore refer to a being outside of itself, it does not exist on the modus of relation or participation, it merely is, in the sense that in order to be a phenomenon, it has to be in the first place. But being is itself a phenomenon, because it appears, which is the minimal condition of possibility of a discourse on being: this is what Sartre calls the “phenomenon of being”. However “phenomenon of being” and “being of the phenomenon” are not identical, because, as Sartre explains, the phenomenon of being “requires a foundation which is transphenomenal”.¹⁰

26 One may wonder if the being of the phenomenon of which Sartre speaks here is identical with the Being in the heideggerian sense, which is always the Being of being. Sartre explains that it is possible to “pass beyond” the thing towards its being, but this requires to turn one’s eyes away from the phenomenon in order “to concentrate on the phenomenon of being, which is no longer the condition of all revelation, but which is itself something revealed — an appearance which as such needs in turn a being on the basis of which it can reveal itself”.¹¹ It is therefore impossible to find an access to the being of the phenomenon, which “can be subjected to the phenomenal condition” and consequently “surpasses the knowledge which we have of it and provides the basis for such a knowledge”.¹² It follows from there that the sartrian being of the phenomenon cannot be identified with the heideggerian Being of beings which shows itself in itself. What is now the case of the phenomenon of being? Sartre understands with this expression the phenomenal character of being and considers it as similar to the being of any other being. From the heideggerian viewpoint, Sartre transforms Being in a being. For Heidegger, Being does not need a foundation, whereas for Sartre the phenomenon of being requires a transphenomenal foundation. Being in the heideggerian sense can be neither “the being of the phenomenon” nor “the phenomenon of being”.

If we now go back to the sartrian notion of phenomenon, it appears that it is not as easy as one thinks to suppress all difference between being and appearing, if there should be a “transphenomenal” being of the phenomenon. Moreover, as Husserl already emphasized, a thing cannot be reduced to what we perceive of it, i. e. to its *Abschattungen* or adumbrations. In order to be able to admit that

¹⁰ EN, p. 16; BN, p. 9.

¹¹ EN, p. 15; BN, p. 8.

¹² EN, p. 16; BN, p. 9.

things are “real” things, it is necessary to consider their existence as being independent from their being perceived. Sartre also declares that the being of things cannot be defined by their “relativity” and “passivity”.¹³ We have therefore to give up the idea of a thing being identical to its appearing. Sartre explains that the reality of a thing is nothing else than its transcendence in regard to the perceiving subject: “The reality of that cup is that it is there and that it is *not me*. We shall interpret this by saying that the series of appearances is bound by a *principle* which does not depend on me /.../ If the phenomenon is to reveal itself as *transcendent*, it is necessary that the subject himself transcend the appearance toward the total series of which it is a member. He must seize *Red* through his impression of red. By *Red* is meant the principle of the series”.¹⁴ Sartre has earlier called this principle the essence. But it should not be opposed, in a traditional way, to appearance: “Essence, as the principle of the series, is definitely only the concatenation of appearances; that is, itself an appearance”.¹⁵

Sartre must nevertheless reintroduce this dualism that he wanted to eliminate, because it is necessary to consider that the series of appearances is “infinite” in regard to the singular appearance as well as in regard of the thing itself, which are both finite. And with this dualism of the finite and infinite, the opposition of the outside and of the inside reappears, because the object shows itself entirely in one singular appearance but remains at the same time outside since the whole series of appearances cannot appear as such. Sartre acknowledges that there is something like a “potency” of the phenomenon, that is its potency to reveal itself. There remains therefore a difference between the thing as independent from its being-perceived and the phenomena through which it shows itself and which are perceived by someone. Here a new dualism appears, the dualism of the appearing and of the person to which it appears. This leads Sartre to name the phenomenon “the relative-absolute”: it is absolute because it is absolutely what it is and relative in so far as to appear supposes in essence somebody to whom to appear.¹⁶ But for Sartre, it is evident that something can only appear to a consciousness, whereas Heidegger questions the ontological foundation of consciousness itself.

¹³ EN, p. 24; BN, p. 19.

¹⁴ EN, p. 13; BN, p. 6—7.

¹⁵ EN, p. 12; BN, p. 5.

¹⁶ EN, p. 12; BN, p. 4.

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From there it is necessary to come back to the question of transcendence. Sartre wants to elucidate the relation of consciousness to the phenomena, which are for him the wordly things. This relation constitutes in itself transcendence, which has to be understood, on the basis of the etymology of the word, as a passage from one thing to another one. We have therefore on one hand consciousness which performs the passage which is transcendence, and on the other hand the word or the wordly things which are the goal of this movement of transcendence.

28 Sartre names “for-itself” the internal structure of consciousness, in opposition to the “in-itself” which constitutes the structure of things. In the same manner, Heidegger designates with the term of *Dasein* what constitutes the specificity of the human being. This is not an arbitrary terminological change, but a necessary one, in order to avoid traditional expressions which do not allow to think “the phenomenal content” of the being of man.¹⁷ For what matters to him is to separate his ontological viewpoint from these domains of ontic researches which are anthropology, psychology or biology. Sartre wants to engage in a similar ontological way in *Being and Nothingness*, which is, as says the subtitle, “a phenomenological essay on ontology”. But it seems in fact that his goal is rather the elucidation of the being of man, whereas for Heidegger, it is the elucidation of the meaning of Being which requires a prior suitable explication of the being of man.¹⁸ Because all questioning of Being itself is founded on the explication of *Dasein*, the existential analysis or analysis of *Dasein* is called “fundamental ontology”. For *Dasein* is essentially defined, by opposition to the other beings, by his capacity of understanding Being. As Heidegger declares: “Understanding of Being is itself a determination of being of *Dasein*”.¹⁹ *Dasein* has therefore a relation to his own being, and this is this internal relation to Being that Heidegger calls *Existenz*, breaking therefore in a decisive manner with the usual meaning of this term, which names the factuality of the thing in opposition to its essence. What on the contrary defines the existence of *Dasein* is his relation to his own being, which differentiates him fundamentally from the mere being-there of a thing.

¹⁷ SZ, p. 46; BT, p. 43.

¹⁸ SZ, p. 7; BT, p. 6.

¹⁹ SZ, p. 13; BT, p. 11.

But for Sartre, a being able to have a relation to its own being can only be a consciousness. In order to describe it, he transforms one of Heidegger's definitions of *Dasein*: "Consciousness is a being such that in its being, its being is in question in so far as this being implies a being other than itself".²⁰ In the first part of this definition one can find an echo of Heidegger's statement saying that "in its being this being /i. e. *Dasein*/ is concerned about its *very* being",²¹ in the second part, a reference to the intentional structure of consciousness which Sartre found in Husserl and which implies the relation of consciousness to a world which is outside consciousness itself. Consciousness is essentially defined by intentionality, which means that it is nothing else than the act of meaning an object. But an object can be perceived only in an self-conscious act: "The necessary and sufficient condition for a knowing consciousness to be knowledge of its object, is that it be consciousness of itself as being that knowledge. This is a necessary condition, for if my consciousness were not consciousness of being consciousness of the table, it would then be consciousness of that table without consciousness of being so. In other words, it would be a consciousness ignorant of itself, an unconscious — which is absurd. This is the sufficient condition, for my being conscious of that table suffices in fact for me to be conscious of it. That is of course not sufficient to permit me to affirm that this table exists *in itself* — but rather that it exists *for me*".²² To say that the object exists for a consciousness means that this object, in so far as it is perceived, is a phenomenon. Consciousness is therefore the condition of the existence of phenomena. But, as we have seen, a phenomenon requires to be founded on a transphenomenal being, which is not in turn a phenomenon. Such a being, which cannot depend on a consciousness, and which has no relation with anything other than itself is "opaque" to itself, "solid", "filled with itself":²³ it is the "being-in-itself", which Sartre defines as such: "It is what it is". Being-in-itself, which is the being of things, is therefore fundamentally other than the being of phenomenon and consciousness. The phenomenon exists only for a consciousness, which in turn exists only for something that is external. Consciousness does not therefore coincides with itself, its "distinguishing characteristic is that it is a decompression of being" in opposition to the in-itself which is so "full of itself" that "no more total plenitude can be imagined".²⁴

²⁰ EN, p. 29; BN, p. 24.

²¹ SZ, p. 12; BT, p. 10.

²² EN, p. 18; BN, p. 11.

²³ EN, p. 32; BN, p. 28.

²⁴ EN, p. 110; BT, p. 120—121.

The fact that consciousness does not coincide with itself is what explains that it can be at the same time consciousness of an object and self-consciousness. If one think that in order to be a self-consciousness, consciousness should posit itself as an object, one encounters an unsurmountable difficulty, because the duality between an object-consciousness and a subject-consciousness leads to a *regressus in infinitum*, because the subject-consciousness should posit itself as object in order to be conscious of itself and so on indefinitely. Such a false conception of consciousness, according to Sartre, comes from the fact, that consciousness is reduced to knowledge: “Consciousness of self is not dual. If we wish to avoid an infinite regress, there must be an immediate, non-cognitive relation of the self to itself.”²⁵ We must therefore understand that “it is one with the consciousness of which it is consciousness” and that “at one stroke it determines itself as consciousness of perception and as perception”.²⁶ This non-positional consciousness of self — in order to avoid a misinterpretation of it, Sartre decides in the following to put the “of” inside parentheses — is “the only mode of existence which is possible for a consciousness of something”.²⁷ By abandoning the primacy of knowledge, Sartre has discovered that consciousness is “a plenum of existence” and that ist existence “comes from consciousness itself”.²⁸ Sartre calls “pre-reflexive cogito” such a consciousness. But in spite of the fact that consciousness is not a objectifying reflection, it can nevertheless be characterised by a certain internal duplicity, because to exist as a consciousness means always to exist as the witness of itself. The non-coincidence with itself of consciousness is the origin of what Sartre names the play or structure of the reflection-reflecting.²⁹ Sartre gives the example of a belief, which does not exist in itself, but is always a consciousness (of) belief: “The consciousness of belief, while irreparably altering belief, does not distinguish itself from belief; it *exists in order* to perform the act of faith”.³⁰ Reflection is indeed always possible on the basis of the unreflective consciousness, but, as Sartre underlines, it is “an intrastructural modification” of the for-itself “which makes itself exist in the mode reflective-reflected-on instead of being simply in the mode of the dyad reflection-reflecting”, which subsists on the reflection “as a primary inner structure”.³¹ Reflection represents for Sartre an attempt for

²⁵ EN, p. 19; BN, p. 12.

²⁶ EN, p. 20; BN, p. 14.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ EN, p. 22; BN, p. 16.

²⁹ EN, p. 111; BN, p. 122.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ EN, p. 188; BN, p. 215.

consciousness to coincide with itself, but it only succeeds in enlarging “the internal cleft” of consciousness. The notion of self is for him the symbol of this manner of being its own non coincidence, this presence to itself which is consciousness: “The presence of being to itself implies a detachment of being in relation to itself.”³² What separates thus consciousness from itself is however nothing: “The being of consciousness qua consciousness is to exist *at a distance from itself* as a presence to itself, and this empty distance which being carries in its being is Nothingness.”³³ This Nothingness is the basis of all possible consciousness. There is therefore no other explanation of consciousness for Sartre than to say that it is an “absolute event which comes to being”.³⁴ The for-itself denies its own being by separating itself from itself by a nothingness. Without such a nihilating power, it would be only in-itself. The for-itself is therefore its own foundation: “The in-itself cannot provide the foundation for anything; if it founds itself, it does so by giving itself the modification of the for-itself. It is the foundation of itself in so far as it is *already no longer* in-itself, and we encounter here again the origin of every foundation.”³⁵ The upsurge of the for-itself is an “absolute event” because nothing can be at the origin of the for-itself except the for-itself as such: “Consciousness is its own foundation but it remains contingent *that there may be* a consciousness rather than an infinity of pure and simple in-itself.”³⁶ This contingency is the “facticity of the for-itself”.

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It seems that we are now able to understand why consciousness is for Sartre an indispensable and unsurpassable notion: to conceive the “human reality” on the mode of the for-itself is the only possible manner of avoiding to identify it with a mere thing. This is the reason why Sartre blames Heidegger for having left aside the notion of consciousness. At the beginning of the second part of *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre declares that the fact that Heidegger begins with the existential analysis without going through the cartesian cogito explains that the *Dasein*, being deprived from the start of the dimension of consciousness “can never regain this dimension”, which implies that the self-understanding endowed to the “human reality” remains incomprehensible: “How could there be an

³² EN, p. 113; BN, p. 124.

³³ EN, p. 114; BN, p. 125.

³⁴ EN, p. 115; BT, p. 126.

³⁵ EN, p. 118; BN, p. 130.

³⁶ *Ibid.* (mod. trad.).

understanding which would not in itself be the consciousness (of) being understanding? This ekstastic character of human reality will lapse into a thing-like, blind in-itself unless it arises from the consciousness of ekstasis.”³⁷ And a little further, he repeats the same reproach: “We cannot *first* suppress the dimension ‘consciousness’, not even if it is in order to re-establish it subsequently. Understanding has meaning only if it is consciousness of understanding. My possibility can exist as *my* possibility only if it my consciousness which escapes itself toward this possibility. Otherwise the whole system of being and its possibilities will fall into the unconscious — that is into the in-itself.”³⁸ There is here, as it seems, a misunderstanding: Heidegger wants, like Sartre, to distinguish in a radical manner the being of man from the being of thing, from what he calls *Vorhandenheit*, objective or substantial presence. The determination of *Dasein* as a being “which is concerned in its being about its being” does not exclude but on the contrary requires consciousness. If Heidegger does not *begin* with consciousness, a traditional notion which is for him to avoid, it is because he does not want to conceive the human being as a separate and autonomous subject.

32 This is the reason why he determines the being of man as a being-in-the world (*In der Welt-sein*). This expression does not designate a pure spatial relation of inherence, nor the contingent fact of being there, but the fundamental mode of being of man. One cannot find the same definition of the being in the world in Sartre, who defines it as the synthesis of two abstracts moments, consciousness on one side and phenomenon on the other side: “The concrete can be only the synthetic totality of which consciousness, like the phenomenon, constitutes only moments. The concrete is man within the world in that specific union of man with the world that Heidegger, for example, calls ‘being-in-the-world’.”³⁹ Heidegger does not consider being in the world as the result of a synthesis, because for him it is the primary mode of being for the *Dasein*, which cannot be thought as an “abstract moment” that could be prior to the world itself.

For what is the meaning of world in “being-in-the-world”? For Heidegger, it is not the totality of the things that a *Dasein* could encounter, but that within *Dasein* is already always situated: “In directing itself toward /.../ and in grasping

³⁷ EN, p. 109—110; BN, p. 119—120.

³⁸ EN, p. 121; BN, p. 134.

³⁹ EN, p. 37—38; BN, p. 34.

something, *Dasein* does not first go outside of the inner sphere in which it is initially encapsulated, but, rather, in its primary kind of being, it is always already 'outside' together with some being encountered in the word already discovered."⁴⁰ A being can be encountered only on the basis of the world, which is always already discovered: this means that for Heidegger world is not the totality of beings, but constitutes rather the *Bewandnisganzheit*,⁴¹ the whole of what is relevant for *Dasein* and the structure of *Bedeutsamkeit*,⁴² of the significance in which *Dasein* always already is. *Dasein* does not have a relation to the world in the same sense as he has a relation with another being than himself, he stays in a familiarity with the world: this is what designates the "in" of "in-the-world". World is therefore only the structural moment of the whole structure that is being-in-the-world. The fundamental structure of *Dasein*, the understanding of Being, makes possible his dealing (*Umgang*) with the beings. This may be the reason why Sartre speaks of the heideggerian *Dasein* as being a "revealing-revealed": "It is this project of the self outside the self which he / Heidegger/ calls 'understanding' (*Verstand*) and which permits him to establish human reality as a 'revealing-revealed'."⁴³ But, in spite of this accurate interpretation, it does not seem that Sartre understands the true meaning of the heideggerian *Erschlossenheit* (disclosedness or revelation).

The upsurge of the for-itself is in fact an "act" of the for-itself whereby there is being, whereas for Heidegger activity is possible only on the basis of the *Erschlossenheit* of world and being. *Erschlossenheit* implies *Angewiesenheit*, *Dasein*'s dependency⁴⁴ from world and being, which allows to be seen in *Dasein* only the revealer and not the creator of being. There is certainly, for Sartre also, a reciprocal dependency between the world and the for-itself, but it is not possible to find in Sartre the idea that being has to reveal itself in man. One finds rather the idea that the absolute event which is the upsurge of the for-itself within the in-itself is at the same time the upsurge of the world. Only the for-itself makes possible the fact that there is a world. The intentional structure of consciousness implies that it can be consciousness of an object only if it is not

⁴⁰ SZ, § 13, p. 62; BT, p. 58.

⁴¹ SZ, § 18, p. 84; BT, p. 78.

⁴⁰ SZ, § 13, p. 62; BT, p. 58.

⁴¹ SZ, § 18, p. 84; BT, p. 78.

⁴² SZ, § 18, p. 87; BT, p. 81.

⁴³ EN, p. 121; BN, p. 134.

⁴⁴ SZ, p. 87; BT, p. 81.

itself this object, only if it becomes “presence to this object”. Such a grasping of the object happens necessarily on the basis of a presence to the whole of being and reciprocally presence to the world can be realised only through presence to things: “It is through the *world* that the for-itself makes itself known to itself as a totality detotalized, which means that by its very upsurge the for-itself is a revelation of being as a totality inasmuch as the for-itself has to be its own totality in the detotalized mode.”⁴⁵ The self of the presence to itself, the ideal point of coincidence with the self is aimed at by consciousness through a surpassing of the totality of being and it is this nothingness which separates human reality of itself that is the source of time. Sartre names this lack of self of the for-itself the possible: “The possible is the *something* which the For-itself lacks in order to be itself.”⁴⁶ But the possible for-itself is for itself as presence to the world and the world is itself merely the being beyond which the for-itself projects its impossible coincidence with itself. From there, Sartre comes to his definition of world: “We shall use the expression ‘circuit of selfness’ (*circuit de l’ipséité*) for the relation of the for-itself with the possible which is, and ‘world’ for the totality of being in so far as it is traversed by the circuit of selfness.”⁴⁷ There is therefore a reciprocal dependency between selfness and world: “Without the world there is no selfness, no person; without selfness, without the person, there is no world.”⁴⁸

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But what Sartre calls selfness is a personal consciousness which can only be the result of reflection. One could therefore be lead to think that the world appears only on the reflective level. Sartre seems however to acknowledge that the world is know on the level of the pre-reflective cogito. What he calls knowledge is precisely the presence to world and to things, and what constitutes the synthetic link between the for-itself and the world.⁴⁹ For Heidegger, knowledge is only a behaviour of *Dasein* which is founded on the primary structure of being-in-the-world.

For Sartre, consciousness is essentially linked to the phenomenon, it is in the world. This means that the upsurge of the for-itself happens through its negation of the in-itself. This explains that there is a “synthesis” between the for-itself

⁴⁵ EN, p. 217; BN, p. 251.

⁴⁶ EN, p. 139; BN, p. 155.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ EN, p. 141; BN, p. 157.

⁴⁹ Cf. EN, p. 217; BN, p. 251: “Knowledge is *the world*.”

and the the phenomenon of this in-itself that he denies to be. There is consequently a nothingness which separates the for-itself from the in-itself of the object. Sartre has therefore separated consciousness and object: unity, synthesis are only related to consciousness and phenomenon. What connects the phenomenon to the in-itself remains obscure, because for Sartre the in-itself is defined as that which has relation to nothing other than itself. For Heidegger, the Being of beings is not closed upon itself: *Dasein* has an access to this Being precisely because Being is disclosed or revealed (*erschlossen*) to him. The access to the Being of beings is made possible through the fact that *Dasein* as being-in-the-world is always already situated in the disclosedness of Being, what means that prior to any behaviour in regard to the beings, there is for him an horizon of Being which gives the significance and the total possible relevance of beings.

For the beings are not at first “objects” for the *Dasein*, but things that he makes use of, what Heidegger calls *Zeug*, useful thing. *Zuhandenheit*, handiness, is therefore the primary mode of being of the beings in so far as they are encountered in the daily world.⁵⁰ They can show themselves as simply being there, as *vorhanden*, only if one abstains from understanding their function and their in order to submit them to a pure theoretical look.

Sartre relies upon Heidegger’s analysis of *Zuhandenheit* when in the chapter on transcendence, he defined the world as “world of tasks”⁵¹ and recognizes that the original relation between things is the relation of instrumentality. He has nevertheless begun by “putting in relief the thing in the world”, which implies, as he himself says, that “we might be tempted to believe that the world and the thing are revealed to the in-itself in a sort of contemplative intuition”.⁵² Even if he does not want to maintain a “a kind of primacy as concerns the *representative*”, he nevertheless does not conceive as Heidegger does the primacy of the *Zuhandenheit* in regard to the *Vorhandenheit*: “The thing is not first a thing in order to be subsequently an instrument; neither it is first an instrument in order to be revealed subsequently as a thing. It is an instrumental-thing.”⁵³ One sees clearly here that Sartre, while

⁵⁰ SZ § 15, p. 69; BT, p. 65.

⁵¹ EN, p. 236; BN, p. 274.

⁵² EN, p. 234; BN, p. 272.

⁵³ EN, p. 236; BN, p. 274.

acknowledging the primacy of the utensility of beings, maintains at the same time the ontological primacy of the in-itself of things.

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This leads us back to the problem of transcendence, which should not be understood as the possibility of establishing a relation between *Dasein* or consciousness and things. For this would be a traditional formulation of the problem of transcendence, that is of the famous question of the reality of the outside world. Such a question presupposes the opposition between an internal sphere, the subject, and an external sphere, the world. Heidegger, who has dedicated the most part of § 43 in *Being and Time* to the problem of the reality of the external world, simply declares here that this question “makes no sense at all”.⁵⁴ For such a question can only be asked if one starts with the simple opposition between a subject and an object, if in other terms one places itself directly on the level of the theoretical attitude. But this attitude leaves aside the world in which one is always already situated. What is therefore not taken into account in this so-called problem of transcendence or of the reality of the external world is the original level of *Zuhandenheit* and the fact that, prior to all discovery of the beings, *Dasein* is always already situated in the openness of being and possesses therefore already the understanding of the ontological structures of the beings that he discovers. For Heidegger, the traditional presupposition of a worldless subject directly confronted to objects does not permit to find an access to the ontological foundation of the discovery of beings.

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What is now Sartre’s attitude? It is not possible to say that he oversees the phenomenon of world, because he conceives consciousness as dependant on world in its own being et does not explains transcendence in terms of subject and object. But the question remains: is it possible, by appealing to a more concrete notion of consciousness than the traditional one, to really transform the terms of the classical problem of transcendence?

One can wonder if Sartre really succeeds in getting out from the traditional opposition of subject and object. For there remains already an ambiguity on the terminological level. It is true that Sartre refuses to reduce conscience to knowledge and, as we already saw, with the notion of “consciousness (of) self”

⁵⁴ SZ, p. 202; BT, p. 188.

understood as non reflective consciousness, Sartre wants to overcome the opposition subject-object in so far as consciousness is conceived as simultaneously consciousness of the thing and consciousness (of) self. But Sartre must consider the thing grasped by consciousness as an “object”. The nihilation of the in-itself through which consciousness surges is nothing else than the act of becoming present to something objective: “What is present to me is what is not me. We should note furthermore that this ‘non-being’ is implied *a priori* in every theory of knowledge. It is impossible to construct the notion of an object if we do not have originally a negative relation designating the object as that what *is not* consciousness.”⁵⁵ It is no possible to explain, on the sole basis of the idea of nihilation, that the thing could show itself otherwise than as an object. The relation between the thing as phenomenon and the thing as thing-itself remains obscure: the transphenomenal being of thing remains unrevealed. By thinking the being of the thing as in-itself and not as “revealed” (*erschlossen*), i. e. open to *Dasein*’s understanding, Sartre passes over the phenomenon of world, as does the entire ontological tradition.⁵⁶

It becomes now possible to show in a clear manner the *difference* between the heideggerian and the sartrian concepts of transcendence.

In the chapter on “Transcendence”, Sartre recalls the question encountered in the Introduction: “What is the original relation of human reality to the being of phenomena or being-in-itself?”⁵⁷ In the Introduction, Sartre already gave a first answer to this question in the form of an “ontological proof”: “Consciousness is 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. This is what we call the ontological proof.”⁵⁸ One can wonder if speaking of a “proof” here is adequate, for it is in a way to confess that one would have wished to “demonstrate” the existence of a transcendent being, of a being exterior to consciousness. This would mean to fall again into the traditional manner of understanding the problem of transcendence. This is what Heidegger reproaches to Kant in connexion with the section on “Refutation of idealism” added to the second edition of the *Critique of pure*

⁵⁵ EN, p. 210; BN, p. 241.

⁵⁶ Cf. SZ, p. 100; BT, p. 93.

⁵⁷ EN, p. 207; BN, p. 238.

⁵⁸ EN, p. 28; BN, p. 23.

reason, because for him the very fact of looking for a proof of the existence of the external world constitutes a “scandal of philosophy”.⁵⁹ What can nevertheless be retained in a positive manner is that Sartre does not conceive transcendence as the conjunction of two different beings, consciousness of one side, thing on the other side, mais sees in it a “constitutive structure of consciousness”.

In the chapter dedicated to transcendence in *Being and Nothingness*, transcendence is defined as the original relation of the for-itself to the in-itself, a relation which is based on nihilation. Consciousness is defined therefore as a negative relation to the in-itself: “We shall define transcendence as that inner and realizing negation which reveals the in-itself while determining the being of the for-itself”.⁶⁰ On the basis of this definition, we can try to determine the constitutive moments of transcendence. Consciousness is what performs transcendence and what is thus transcended is consciousness itself. But towards what? towards things? But things are the in-itself, whereas transcendence can only reach the phenomenon of the in-itself, which as such remains transcendent in the sense of inaccessible for consciousness. Consciousness surges within the in-itself, it can aim at something, but cannot reach the in-itself. It is also possible to understand this movement as a flight, consciousness fleeing out of itself in the direction of the in-itself. We have therefore to do with two different movements: on one hand, transcendence is a movement of consciousness towards things, without ever reaching them in their in-itself, and on the other hand transcendence is projection of the for-itself in direction of the ideal point of coincidence with the in-itself, the in-itself for-itself, which too can never be reached. These two movements are one and the same since presence to things is at the same time presence to self, a consciousness of something being indissolubly consciousness (of) self. It is true that the for-itself cannot, as Sartre emphasizes, “flee toward a transcendent which it is not, but only toward a transcendent which it is”,⁶¹ but this transcendent which it is without being it is the self which is projected as “in itself” and which, if it were reached by the for-itself, would not remain “in-itself”. This explains why the flight of the for-itself is perpetual and why “we run towards ourselves and we are — due to this very fact — the being which cannot be reunited with itself”.⁶² The expression

⁵⁹ SZ § 205; BN, p. 190.

⁶⁰ EN, p. 216; BN, p. 249.

⁶¹ EN, p. 239; BN, p. 277.

⁶² EN, p. 239; BN, p. 278.

“transcendence” is therefore in Sartre the name of the constitutive structure of consciousness as perpetual flight of the for-itself in the direction of an inaccessible in-itself.

Heidegger sees also in transcendence “the fundamental constitution of *Dasein*”, a constitution which is prior to all behaviour, as he says in *De l'essence du fondement*.⁶³ Which are its constitutive moments? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to take into account the formal model of transcendence which can be found in *De l'essence du fondement*, a text where the concept of transcendence is more developed than in *Being and Time*. Heidegger defines here transcendence as the surpassing (*Überstieg*) of something toward something. It is therefore possible to distinguish two formal moments, the something towards which the surpassing is performed, which is usually but inadequately called the “transcendent”, and the something which is surpassed, i. e. precisely the beings themselves. *Dasein* cannot consequently be understood as transcending towards the beings, because this would imply an idea of transcendence as a relation between a subject and an object. *Dasein* transcends towards the world, which is part of transcendence and which is what makes possible to encounter the beings. Transcendence understood in this manner is the foundation of the ontological difference, as Heidegger emphasizes.⁶⁴ What is therefore the foundation of the ontological difference is *Dasein*'s capacity of transcending the beings in the direction of Being. This towards which there is transcendence is for Sartre the beings, whereas for Heidegger it is Being itself.

One could object that for Sartre there is transcendence toward the being-in-itself. But consciousness reveals the existence of a being-in-itself, i. e. its phenomenon, but not the in-itself as such. For “the in-itself has no need of the for-itself in order to be”.⁶⁵ There is therefore an ontological primacy of the in-itself in regard to the for-itself. To the question: “Why is it that there is being?”, Sartre answers: “‘There is’ being because the for-itself is such that there is being. The character of a *phenomenon* comes to being through the for-itself.”⁶⁶ For Sartre, the ontological questioning cannot go farther. But this limitation comes from the fact that Sartre considers consciousness as his basic concept

⁶³ Martin Heidegger, *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, Klostermann, Frankfurt/M. 1955, p. 17.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁶⁵ EN, p. 670; BN, p. 791.

⁶⁶ EN, p. 667; BN, p. 788.

and thus deprives himself of all possibilities of knowing from being something else than what is relative to consciousness. Being-in-itself is not relative to consciousness, one cannot know it, one can only know that “there is” the in-itself. At the end of the chapter on “Transcendence”, Sartre intends to escape from the kantian relativism by affirming that being is “relative to the For-itself” not in its being, but in its “there is”.⁶⁷ But is this overcoming of kantism really accomplished? In order to answer this question, it has first to be remarked that the sartrian “there is” (*il y a*) is quite different from the heideggerian “there is” (*es gibt*), especially if we take into account Heidegger’s late thinking, where the “*es gibt Sein*” means a primacy of Being which “gives” itself to a *Dasein* who is able to receive it and to respond to it. For the late Heidegger, Being gives itself to *Dasein*, which means that it needs *Dasein* as the locus of its *Erschlossenheit*, of its revelation or disclosedness. Such an idea is already implicitly present in *Being and Time* in so far as it is implied in the very definition of *Dasein*, which is not the point of departure of the existential analysis in the same way as consciousness is the point of departure of the sartrian phenomenological ontology, because the heideggerian *Dasein* is not the foundation of its own revelation, but is on the contrary depending upon Being. *Dasein* has the possibility to let Being reveal itself or disclose itself, but this possibility has been given to him by Being itself. *Dasein* has therefore no power upon Being, but depends on the contrary upon it. But what is finally the meaning of this dependency (*Angewiesenheit*)?⁶⁸ It means that the conditions of possibility of the revelation of beings do not lie in the subject, neither in its spontaneity (Kant), nor in its activity (Sartre). They lie in the dependency in regard to beings which is at the basis of the *Befindlichkeit*, of *Dasein*’s being-situated in the middle of the world, a being-situated which implies a certain passivity in *Dasein*. This explains why, in a near proximity to Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty could say that *Being and Nothingness* seemed to need a continuation et that what he awaited from its author was a “theory of passivity”.⁶⁹ One can therefore still wonder if Sartre really succeeded in escaping from kantian relativism, since he has to search in consciousness or the subject, like Kant, the conditions of possibility of knowledge, in spite of the fact that he must also

⁶⁷ EN, p. 254; BN, p. 296 (mod. trad.).

⁶⁸ See Martin Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, Klostermann, Frankfurt/M. 1973, § 41, p. 221—222: “Existenz bedeutet Angewiesenheit auf Seiendes als ein solches in der Überantwortung an das angewiesene Seiende als ein solches.”

⁶⁹ M. Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens*, Nagel, Paris, p. 133.

acknowledge that the being-in-itself of things can by no means be grasped by the subject.

Sartre does not think the ontological difference because its point of departure remains consciousness, a consciousness which is its own foundation and does not depend upon Being. This explains why, in order to avoid a total subjectivism and therefore idealism, he must, like Kant, presuppose a being-in-itself of things that remains unrevealed. One can now understand why Heidegger refuses to consider consciousness as a point of departure: it is because consciousness, in opposition to *Dasein*, does not contain in itself the source of all revelation.