What is born is consciousness which needs an organism to manifest itself in, and that organism

is the physical body.

What is it that gives sentience — capacity to feel sensations, to respond to stimuli—to a

sentient being? What is it that distinguishes a person who is alive from the one who is dead? It is, of course, *the sense of being,* the knowledge of being present, consciousness, the activizing spirit

which animates the physical construct of the body.

It is consciousness indeed that manifests itself in individual forms and gives them apparent existence. In human beings through such manifestation arises the concept of a separate ‘I’. In each individual the Absolute gets reflected as awareness, and thus pure Awareness becomes self-awareness or consciousness.

The objective universe is in continuous flux, constantly projecting and dissolving innumerable forms. Whenever a form is created and is infused with life (Prana), consciousness (Chetana)

appears, simultaneously and automatically, by the reflection of the Absolute Awareness in matter. Consciousness (it must be clearly understood) is a reflection of the Absolute against the surface of matter, bringing about a sense of duality. As different from it, pure Awareness, the Absolute state, is without beginning and end, without the need of any support other than itself. ***Awareness becomes consciousness only when it has an object to reflect against***. Between pure Awareness and awareness reflected as consciousness, says Maharaj, there is a gap which the mind cannot cross. Reflection of the sun in a drop of dew is not the sun!

Manifested consciousness (Manifested consciousness is nothing but the physical body that consciousness has taken) is time-bound. It disappears as soon as the physical construct it inhabits comes to an end. Nevertheless, according to Nisargadatta Maharaj, it is the only 'capital' a sentient being is born with. And manifested consciousness being his only connection with the Absolute, it becomes the only instrument by which the sentient being can hope to get an illusory

liberation from the 'individual' he believes himself to be. By being one with his consciousness and treating it as his Atma, his God, he can hope to attain what he thinks as the unattainable.