

# **A History of Philosophy**

## **71 Jean-Paul Satre**

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Nineteenth-century philosophy is looking through that transcendental self, the self-consciousness so unified, in order to see reality made in the image of the self. The image of the self means reality is of the nature of mind or spirit, and so you get nineteenth-century idealism and then other things emphasizing concrete human experience, organized, unified in various ways. You can see how it's organized for Whitehead by God's superjective nature, coupled with a decision of the new event, which brings things into unity.

And you can see how it's organized for Dewey by virtue of the problem situation, which is experienced, which brings everything into unity, ready for a problem-solving decision. But when you come to Sartre, it's a different story. And if you like, you find in Sartre the culmination of a process that Richard Taylor, not Richard Taylor, Charles Taylor, in his recent book on the self, calls the loss of the self.

Because the thesis of the transcendence of the ego is that there simply is no transcendental self. There's no unifying core to the self that has any enduring identity. I create myself with every act of thought, with every experience, with every sense perception.

I create myself. Now, you say that sounds like a wild idea. Well, maybe it seems so to us.

But keep in mind that Sartre is doing phenomenology. And, if you like, that's the third reason why I selected this book: it gives an example of phenomenological description at work. And as you've probably noted, Sartre explicitly interacts with what Husserl has done with regard to the self.

Husserl emphasized the intentionality of consciousness. Remember, that was the main theme that came out of his phenomenological work. Intentionality.

He tried to bracket consideration of particular objects, or particular beliefs and theories, so as to examine the universal structures of consciousness, so that they could become the objects of what he called eidetic intuition. Kant speaks of them, using another of Husserl's phrases, as phenomenal objects. A phenomenal object is obviously the object that appears.

It's an object of thought, not necessarily an independent entity, but what directly appears to the consciousness. So when Husserl brackets out all of the particulars and tries to concentrate on the universal structures of consciousness, of being in the

world, that hyphen relationship between subject and object, then that hyphen relationship becomes the phenomenal object. Those structures, those ideas, using Plato's term, those universals, become the phenomenal object.

Now, intentionality then is involved with reference to external objects in all of our consciousness. But if the external objects are bracketed, what they are in particular is excluded in phenomenological reduction, then the intentionality is directed instead to the phenomenal objects, which Husserl attempts to describe, and of course, his description is of the act of intentionality. That's the universal that appears most prominently.

Now Sartre is doing phenomenology. He's an existential phenomenologist. So you can anticipate that he's not interested in, not going to be interested in, some transcendental self in order to provide a new foundationalism to rescue science from its relativizing tendencies.

Remember his concern about the foundations of science. Nor is he going to be like Heidegger, doing a phenomenology of human existence, Dasein as a key to perceiving Zein, being itself. He's going to do a phenomenology of human existence for its own sake, in order to gain this clearer perception of these universal characteristics of human existence, of being in a hyphen.

But rejecting any transcendental ego, all that remains for him to concentrate on is intentionality as such. You'll find that he says that consciousness is nothing but intentionality. Nothing but, if you like, a consciousness meaning, or pointing to objects.

You see? Consciousness means pointing to, intentional reference to objects. So that you can see why Husserl is often said to tell us that intentionality is a meaning-giving act. Meaning-giving act.

Not primarily in the sense that we talk about the meaning of life, or the meaning of some political event, but in the sense of attending to, focusing on that object. Making it present to us. So the thing becomes a phenomenal object, having meaning for me, can't sting for a mickle.

I pull it into phenomenal status by the intentional act. And in meaning it, it has meaning for me, in effect. Now, this means that the self, itself, is nothing but the act of consciousness.

And he develops that in another place, in a little work of his, *The Emotions*, where he rejects behavioristic psychology, outright, by which account the self would simply be a product of environmental causes. Now, he's not going to say that. Nobody after the

Kantian-Copernican revolution, who agrees with the Copernican revolution, would say that.

Behaviorists are pre-Kantian enlightenment types, as if the self is the passive recipient of these behavioral cause-effect mechanisms, you see. No, rather, he's inclined towards a depth psychology. Intentionality is the characteristic of human beings, the act of being in the world, towards the world, and emotion simply reveals that.

Emotions have intentionality. Emotions are directed towards, you're angry with, hopeful about. You love somebody, you feel sorry for them.

Emotion reveals our being in the world, our facticity. It's for that reason that you couldn't even in your wildest dream imagine Sartre debating with Descartes whether an external world exists. It's as if he says, I vomit, therefore it exists.

It'd be just the experience of being nauseated by something, which means that the external reality is given in the feeling of nausea, you see. If you've ever been seasick, you know what I mean. There's never any question about the reality of the external world, or the internal world, for that matter.

So, by virtue of the intentionality of emotion, our being is being for something, being in relationship to the world. The basic term is not I, but I it. Not subject, but subject-hyphen-object.

That's the basic given, together. Descartes still hated Rome, being an illusory affair. So then, that's the theme and the way in which it relates to Husserl.

You'll see it again. Let me pick this up now. You'll see it again, if ever you've read his little essay, *What is Existentialism?* That is sometimes published simply under the title *Existentialism*. It was a one-lecture thing. It's there that he defines existentialism as saying, existence precedes essence.

Existence precedes essence. And he's talking particularly about the self. My existence precedes any essence, you see.

My existence precedes any essence. I have to create my own nature, my own self. There is no transcendental ego.

It's in that essay that he cites Dostoevsky: if God is dead, then anything is possible. But he enlarges it from, if God is dead, then anything is possible, to saying, if there are no universals, then anything is possible. If there is no transcendental self, then anything is possible.

Because there are no fixed points of reference, no fixed entities, no fixed universal structures of the self. It's just intentionality, you see. So anything could be possible.

We have to create our meanings, our values, our world. Well, let's see, that is developed much more systematically, maybe I should leave that up. Developed much more systematically in his major work, *Being and Nothingness*.

Oh, I wish I could have asked you to read that. Trouble is, it has about 500 pages, small print. But there you get the whole works.

This is his philosophical magnum opus, it's the system, if you like. And it's there that he develops explicitly the dialectic for which he's well known, which seems to echo the master-servant relationship of Hegel. The *l'aussoir-poursoir* dialectic.

Now, the terms, very simple, *poursoir* is for the self, and *l'aussoir* is what is already in itself. And you can readily see that if intentionality makes an object into a phenomenal object, an object for me, that he's going to be saying that any person in the world in meaning, getting involved in, relating to any other person or object is seeking to make that person part of what is for me, trying to make that into a phenomenal object. His well-known play, *No Exit*.

I think I asked you before how many had read *No Exit*, and got a dismal response. These illiterate philistines. Well, you see, in that room from which these three people cannot get themselves to escape, one starts trying to relate to another, but in that for-me fashion, it's not a dialogical I-thou relationship respecting the two persons, but it's in a manipulating or dominating sense.

That's why in *Being and Nothingness*, when he talks about sexuality, it's always masochism or sadism, you see. The for-me is the thing. And the same is true in his play, *The Flies*, which is a version of the old Greek drama about Orestes, the prince who comes back to the palace where he had been raised as a boy, and so on and so forth.

And now his mother has married somebody else after killing his father, and he of course was secreted away by a servant in order to save his life, and now he's a grown young man and comes back and he recognizes that little door in the palace wall, and as he directs his attention to it, the intentionality, he says, that's my door I used to go in and out of, but immediately in that intentional act of referring to that door, it gains meaning for him. It becomes his, and the door into the palace becomes his, and the palace becomes his, and the throne should be his, you see, the intentionality. And so he kills his mother, and then the flies, the fates, haunt him, drive him, you see.

But the foreme, the in-itself then, if the foreme is the phenomenal object, the in-itself is of course the noumenal object, the thing which simply is in itself. Now the

dialectic becomes obvious when what already is in itself, regardless of me, doesn't respond to my intentionalities, you see. So that you get a dialectic that is not simply a dialectic of possessing, but also of rejecting, repudiating.

Now, that *lossois-poursois* dialectic, he spells out in relationship to endless things in being and nothingness. And one of the things that he applies it to is, of course, understanding knowledge. Now we were watching this in Nietzsche, in Heidegger, in terms of the postmodern tendency.

And in such, likewise, knowing, he says, is a mode of our being in the world. Now that's obviously the starting point, because knowledge is a mode of intentionality. Intentionality is our being in the world.

In knowing something, it's an intentional act. It's referring to. Now, his point is that the, and notice the vocabulary, because you get the same vocabulary in Transcendence of the Ego.

The for itself, the for itself, yes, that's this contentless self, no essence to the self. It has been by not being in itself. Yeah.

How does the servant have identity as a servant, have its being as a servant? By not being a master. How does the master have identity as a master? By not being a servant. It has been by not being something other than itself.

So that by being conscious of something other than myself, I now see myself. I realize my own being as not that other. Now, when you see the master-servant relationship and bring that to that language, it seems to be perfectly simple and obvious.

I find my own being in not being the other. Now, he goes on to say that this removes the illusion of having objective intellectual knowledge of things exactly as they are. The illusion of enlightenment knowledge is removed.

Because what I know is always identified as what it is not. If I'm talking about it in itself, what I know is that it's not for myself, it's for the other. So what I know then is nothing but what I intend, what I mean.

Nothing but what it is for me. So there is my being, which is other than that, and the nothingness of what is in itself. And so what's the title of the book? Being, pour soi, finding my being in relationship to others, being and nothingness.

Last one, the in itself, which is nothing but what it is for me, being and nothingness. So, in trying to determine enlightenment style, what this is, in trying to determine its essence, all that I'm actually doing is determining what it is for me and nothing else. So knowledge is not representational.

Exit Descartes through Kant's first critique. Knowledge is not representational. That's an invention of philosophers, he says.

Knowledge is simply being present for me, because intentionality makes something present to me. Knowledge is intentionality. So knowledge is the act of making something present for me.

Well, you can see then what that does to traditional enlightenment epistemology. Do you get the last word, pour soi thing? The in itself, for itself? That's really the philosophical thesis that runs all the way through his writings. If you get a hold of that, then he's very easy to read.

Relatively speaking, it's not exactly comic strip stuff. Could you just run the being and nothingness? Yeah, yeah. No, let me back up, let's see.

His concern is with the nature of the self. And as with Heidegger, the concern is what it means to be in the world? Dasein, being in the world. What does it mean? The phenomenological discovery of intentionality.

Okay, all conscious acts are intentional acts, pointing to meaning. Intentionality is the act that presents to me an object which otherwise is just what it is in itself. And in the intentional act of knowing, it becomes what it is for me.

It becomes part of it for me. For me, it is not just the isolated individual. It's me and my world, my understanding, my knowledge.

You see, the whole thing is organically related. In that sense, me. Now, that is the being, you see, that is creating its own meaning.

My being. For me. What then is the other, the in itself? Well, it's nothing but what it is for me.

I don't know anything else about it, but it's for me-ness. I only know it as a phenomenal object. So from the standpoint of intentional consciousness, the in itself is nothing.

So the whole of being and nothingness is a tale of being and nothingness. Get it? Carl? Yeah. Yeah, this is the interesting thing.

Because in Hegel, you get the sense that the master-servant relationship is potentially an I-thou relationship. In which the I is a for me and the thou is another for me. Okay? And the way Hegel plays it out in that selection you read, each of these is seeing the other as he is for me.

Right? Now, the thing about Sartre is that it's more of a one-sided relationship. It's not an I-thou but an I-it. That's Martin Buber's language.

It's not an I-thou, it's an I-it. You see? So that the other person is, we tend to say, dehumanized. You see? If the in itself is indeed a human being with a consciousness, I don't know the other person's consciousness.

I only know what he is for me. I don't know what he is for himself. And so in that sense, you never get inside the other self.

And all you have is an I-it. In that sense, a one-way street. Now, he does point out that sometimes the I-it, no, not the I-it, sometimes the in itself, sort of rises up against you.

And that's what happens with the flies, they rise up against orestes. But sometimes the I-it that rises up against you is maybe another person who does it out of the foremeanness of his intentionality. But it's always antithesis, antithesis, antithesis, the clash of opposites.

Dialectic struggle. So, in effect, you see, Sartre has a dialectical antithesis, thesis, and antithesis with no synthesis. Yes.

Because there are no universals. No synthesis. Yeah, I suppose if you're talking of a father-child relationship, the tendency of the child is to see the father as an it, especially in early adolescence, growing up.

Yes, and the, shall I say, the unsympathetic father is apt to see a child as just another one to be provided for, you see. As a foreman, in some other way. But my kids, you see, you get it between students in administration, or faculty in administration, where it's a we, them.

You know, and I use the accusative case to get the dehumanization into it. Yeah. Labour management.

Well, it's no wonder that Sartre, at one phase in his life, sort of allied himself with French Marxism. You see, because the theme of alienation runs through both. The dialectic with its alienation runs through both.

Now, say that again, I missed it. Wouldn't the in-itself, inside of the dialectic, almost dissolve when Sartre paints himself? Wouldn't the in-itself, do you say inside of the dialectic? Or would that be in? Oh. Yeah, you see, the in-itself, insofar as it's made for me, I make it for me, the in-itself is nothing less than what it is for me.

As far as I'm concerned. That's why it's nothing. You say dissolved.

He would say negated. Same thing. Well, the clash comes inasmuch as the in-itself is resistant.

Inasmuch as there is some boomerang effect. Yes, sir? Or in those three people in that room, *No Exit*, when the third person intrudes into the budding relationship. And by intruding and making up to the one who's becoming for me, makes that one into a for-me for herself.

So what was someone for me becomes just an in-itself, dissolving the for-me-ness. I can't reach her anymore. You see? Or it could just be that the other person doesn't like me and slaps my face.

Yes, sir? So, you know, just reflect for a moment on interpersonal relationships. You see how realistic the description sounds. Which is why it makes such gripping and sickening plays and novels.

You see? All right, now, against that background, the transcendence of the ego. The transcendence of the ego. And the introduction by the editor, you'll find helpful in setting the context in relation to Husserl.

Now, I've already tried to do that. Okay? But you'll find it helpful in that. The text itself begins on page 31.

And the opening lines will, I think, begin to make some sense. For most philosophers, the ego is an inhabitant of consciousness. Hey, that sounds like Descartes, doesn't it? Inhabiting my consciousness is this self that has the consciousness.

Some affirm its formal presence at the heart of *erelibness*. *Erelibness* is literally lived-through-ness. *Erelibness*, lived-ness, it's the German equivalent of concrete experience.

The notion we found in both Whitehead and Dewey. Concrete experience is here, if you pardon the new verb, existentialized. Okay? Lived experience, concrete experience in existential terms, *erelibness*.

Some affirm its formal presence as an empty principle of unification. Unifying the self, like a transcendental ego. Others, psychologists for the most part, claim to discover its material presence as the center of desires and acts in each moment of the psychic life.

That sounds like the behaviorist. We'd like to show here that the ego is neither formally a transcendental structure nor materially in consciousness. It's outside, in the world.

It's a being of the world, like the ego of another. There's no hidden soul tucked away within. All that self refers to is in the world.

Being in the world. Dasein. He refers to Kant and builds up the historical story that you're familiar with.

Then on page 34, at the bottom of the page, he formulates the question arising from Descartes' cogito. Bottom of 34. Is the I that we encounter in our consciousness made possible by the synthetic unity of our representations? Now, whose position was that? Kant.

The I made possible by the synthetic unity of our representations. Or, is it the I that in fact unites the representations to each other? Now, if we reject all the more or less forced interpretations of I that are offered by post-Kantians, which are intended to solve the problem of the existence in fact of the I, we meet in our path the phenomenology of Husserl. So, to Husserl he turns, and Husserl's attempt at a scientific kind of phenomenology.

On page 37, he says towards the top, Husserl gives his reply, having determined in his logical investigations that the me is a synthetic and transcendent production of consciousness. Is a synthetic transcendent production of consciousness. Yes, intentionality.

He reverted to ideas towards a new phenomenology and phenomenological philosophy to the classic position of the transcendental I. This I, so to speak, behind each consciousness, would light up each phenomenon presented in the field of attention. This transcendental consciousness becomes thoroughly personal. So forth.

What Sartre goes on to do is simply to repudiate that at the top of page 38. It's certain that phenomenology doesn't need any appeal to any such unifying and individualizing I. By intentionality, consciousness transcends itself. It unifies itself by escaping from itself.

Notice how he loves paradoxical statements. And I think he loves them because he's trying to capture the dialectic. Thesis antithesis.

It unifies itself by escaping from itself. Yes, in the intentionality of dealing with something new, I am transcending what I already am and becoming something different. You see? Yeah, it's as if Whitehead or Dewey were saying, each experience, each event, each problem, adds to the experience that is the continuing core of you.

What constitutes personal identity, after all, in the empiricist tradition? But the continuity of consciousness is born by memory. But as Hume pointed out, those memories are atomistic, fragmented, and gapping. So there's actually no continuity of consciousness.

And for Sartre, each moment of intentionality is new. And it's in the focus of attention, in this new experience, that my consciousness is unified once more. So it unifies itself by escaping from itself, into a new kind of unification.

Somehow or other, every new experience has to be integrated into what we are. So then, on 39, about eight lines down, it's consciousness that unifies itself concretely by a play of transversal intentionalities, which are concrete and real retentions of past consciousness. Yeah, because not only do I encounter a new experience, but I also live with my memories of the past.

I grab on to a past experience, and in the intentionality towards that past experience, you see, I'm incorporating into this new unity, which is me, the past as well as the present, and the emerging future. But I do it every moment in the me, in the intentionality of the now. It's almost as if Whitehead would say, here you have positive and negative prehensions.

Positive prehensions that are unified into the decision, negative prehensions that are rejected. All right. You move on further, and he addresses himself to this all the way through, I think, to about page 60, but look at page 49 and see if this illustration helps.

The very last line on 48, when I run after a streetcar, when I look at the time, when I'm absorbed in contemplating a portrait, there's no I. There is consciousness of the streetcar having to be overtaken. That's what you're conscious of. That's what focuses your attention.

That's where the intentionality is. Everything else is brought to bear on that. A new unity.

In fact, I'm then plunged into the world of objects. It's they that constitute the unity of my consciousness. It's they that present themselves with values, attractive qualities.

But me, the self, I've disappeared. There's no self-awareness in that process if you're really concentrating on the streetcar that's got to be overtaken. If at the same time you're self-conscious in the process of doing it and thinking of the spectacle you're making to all the people who are watching you, you see, then there is a little bit of self-consciousness.

But in the absorption in the streetcar, no. I've annihilated myself. There's no place for me at this level.

It's not a matter of chance, due to a momentary lapse of attention, but happens because of the very structure of consciousness. Get that business, the structure of consciousness? Here's his phenomenological description illustrated by the streetcar, you see, showing a structure of consciousness. Or page 50, let's see, no, page 60.

Page 60, let's start it there. The I, page 60, the little paragraph, the I is the ego as the unity of actions. The me is the ego as the unity of conscious states and qualities.

The distinction one makes between these two aspects, the I and the me, two aspects of the same reality, seems simply functional, grammatical. Now, in the section that follows on the constitution of the ego, he picks up on that paragraph and says, in effect, that the ego is constituted of the I. The I of, constituted of, actions, states, and qualities. Actions, states, and qualities.

So that on 61, he starts into states as transcendent unities of consciousness. That runs to page 68, where he picks up on actions. But in order to get what he means by states, look at page 66.

Hatred is a state, a state of mind. It's not simply an act of thinking, feeling. It's an enduring, as it were, state of mind.

And he says that by this term, state, I've tried to express the character of passivity, which is constituted of hatred. You're not doing something, you're just hating. It's a state of mind.

So then, when you get to actions on page 68, you notice that he says at the bottom of the page, we'd like to remark that concerted action is, first of all, a transcendent. Transcend, simply a state of mind. Take, for instance, playing the piano, driving a car, and riding.

These are actions taken in the world of things. It's the concrete realization of something. Actions.

And he works with that a little, and then on 71, pulls it together, you notice the new heading, The Constitution of the Ego is the Pole of Action, States and Qualities. All three. And you might want to look, for instance, on page 77.

No, 76, back up there. The new paragraph on 76, the second sentence, The ego is the spontaneous transcendent unification of states and actions. Spontaneous? Yeah, it just, if you like, happens.

Not necessarily planned. Transcendent? Yes, because in that I transcend what I was. By acting, I transcend what I was and become something I am not yet.

It's a transcendent, a self-transcending, an old self-transcending. Unification of states and actions. The spontaneous transcendent unification of states and actions.

And on 77, he says, Everyone, by consulting the results of his intuition, Intuition, of course, is the act of looking at the structures of consciousness in phenomenological ways, can observe that the ego is given as producing its states. We undertake here a description of the transcendental ego, of the transcendent ego, rather, not transcendental, but transcendent. Important difference.

Right, transcendental is Kant's a priori structures. Transcendent is rising beyond by becoming something new. So, we begin with the undeniable fact that each new state is fastened directly to the ego as its origin.

This mode of creation is creation ex nihilo, in the sense that the state is not given as having formerly been in the me. I make it for me. I create it for me.

I'm creating me. The for me. My being in the world.

So, next paragraph, the unifying act of reflection assesses each new state to the concrete totality. The me. Reflection isn't confined to apprehending a new state as attaching to this totality, as fusing with it.

It intends a relation which traverses time backwards and gives the me as the source of the state. I made it for me. Okay.

So, that's the way he goes. Now, let's see. 88.

Take a look there. Now, let's pick up a little. Top of 88.

Phenomenology will understand without difficulty that the ego may at the same time be an ideal unity of states, the majority of which are absent, and a concrete totality wholly giving itself to intuition. A tree or a chair exists no differently. It's a concrete totality of states.

And then the next paragraph. What radically prevents the acquisition of real cognitions of the ego, that is to say, really knowing the ego, is the very special way in which it's given to reflective consciousness. And here he is making a distinction that runs pretty well throughout the book between reflective and non-reflective consciousness.

When you're running for the streetcar, totally absorbed in that, that's unreflective consciousness, non-reflective consciousness. But when you are thinking about yourself running for the streetcar, that is obviously reflective consciousness. So the meaning of the terms is pretty clear.

And he says then on 88 that there's a very special way in which the ego is given to reflective consciousness. The ego never appears except when one's not looking at it. You, you know, introspect and try to see the self.

The reflective gaze must be fixed on the irrelevantness, the lived experience, insofar as it emanates from the state. Then, behind the state on the horizon, the ego appears out of the corner of the eye. As soon as I turn my gaze to it and try to reach it, it vanishes.

This is because, in trying to apprehend the ego for itself as a direct object of consciousness, I fall back onto the unreflective level. Yes, I'm not looking at myself, I'm looking at the ego. It's just like a greased pig; you just can't catch it.

The ego disappears along with the reflective act. Whence that vexing sense of uncertainty that many philosophers expressed by putting the eye on this side of the state of consciousness. Where did I see it? Why, in me, of course.

And affirming that consciousness must return upon itself in order to perceive the eye which is behind it. And so Descartes looked inside and said, I think, therefore, ah, I exist. He even said, I have a notion of the self as mind.

Notion is an unclear, undistinct idea. In other words, I'm not sure what I got, but I got something. Well, says Sartre, you don't have it.

Because it's not in there. It's not something to be in there. You see, the self is being unified, created, formed in each act of reflection or unreflection, of intentionality.

So on page 90, then, he develops that further. The eye that we find here is in some way the support of the actions that I do in the world. For example, the wood has to be broken into small pieces for the fire to catch.

It has to, that's the quality of the wood, the objective relationship of the wood to the fire, which has to be lit. Now I'm breaking the wood. The action is realized in the world.

The objective and empty support of the action is the eye concept. This is why the body and bodily images can consummate the total degradation of the concrete eye of reflection to the eye concept by functioning for the eye concept as its illusory fulfillment. When I say, I break the wood, and I see and feel the object, body,

engaged in breaking the wood, the body there serves as a visible and tangible symbol for the eye.

What is the body? It's being in the world, my being in the world. That's what it is as a phenomenal object. So then we see the series of refractions and degradations, which an ego-ology, that's a nice new word, ego-ology would be concerned with.

Reflective, unreflective. Well, finally, page 98, bottom of the page, we may therefore formulate our thesis. Transcendental consciousness is an impersonal spontaneity.

It determines its essence at each instant without our being able to conceive anything before it. Existence precedes essence. It determines its essence at each instant without being able to conceive of anything before it.

The before it is mere existence from the standpoint of this new essence. Thus, each instant of our conscious life reveals to us a creation ex nihilo, not a new arrangement, but a new existence. There's something distressing for each of us to catch in the act, this tireless creation of existence, of which we are not the creators.

At this level, the man has the impression of ceaselessly escaping from himself, trying to be something else. The creative process continues. So, now, when Sartre says that if God is dead, if there's no transcendental ego, anything is possible, you see, what he's saying is that in this creative act of spontaneously becoming a new self, there is absolute freedom.

Because your freedom to act in any way in the world is what is going to create the new you, your freedom, your act, you see. So, what we have here is what he regards as absolute freedom. Now, he argues backwards from this.

If there is absolute freedom, there can be no transcendental ego. Because if there were a transcendental ego, it wouldn't be absolute freedom; it would be pre-structured by the transcendental ego. If there is absolute freedom, there can be no God.

Because then the ego would be structured by what God makes possible. So, what he does with the Dostoevsky account is this. If God is dead, then anything is possible.

Anything is possible, therefore... No, it's the fallacy of affirming the consequent, you see. But all right. He's not trying to argue it logically.

He's trying phenomenologically to show this is the case, you see. After all, if it is the case that there is a God or there is a transcendental ego, then there couldn't be that absolute freedom, you see. It's as if his argument is more: if there is a God, there couldn't be absolute freedom.

There is absolute freedom, so there isn't a God, which is an appropriate modus tollens argument. Well, some people have pointed out that what you have in such, then, is the absolutization of freedom, a process that began in the Enlightenment with its emphasis on freedom from tradition and authority, enlarged in Kant with his assertion of freedom of the will, the autonomy of the will, enlarged in Hegel where the whole of history is the gradual manifestation of freedom more and more fully, you see, and now culminating in Sartre where, in his words, it is dreadful freedom. You see, the Romanticist rubs his hands in glee at the freedom for complete self-expression, but Sartre wrings his hands in despair at the dreadfulness of the fact that something I do could blow up the entire universe.

Anything is possible. Well, the heart of that is the concept of the self. Do you follow? I think he has a pretty consistent position.

I think he's mistaken in the phenomenological description, and I want to make some comments about that next time.