

INTENTIONALITY IN JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

INTENTIONALITY  
THE RELATIONSHIP OF IMAGE AND OBJECT  
IN THE THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS OF JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

By  
KEITH ALAN WICKENS, B.A.

A Thesis  
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree  
Master of Arts

McMaster University  
(October) 1971

MASTER OF ARTS (1971)  
(Philosophy)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY  
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Intentionality: The Relationship of Image and Object  
in the Theory of Consciousness of Jean-Paul Sartre

AUTHOR: Keith Alan Wickens, B.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor James Noxon

NUMBER OF PAGES: iii, 119

CONTENTS:

PREFACE	iii
I. Introduction: Brentano and Husserl	1
II. Misconceptions: Hume	25
III. Imaginative and Perceptual Consciousness: Sartre	56
IV. Conclusion	102
V. Bibliography	117

SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The notion of intentionality is introduced by an examination of the "intentional inexistence" of Brentano, and "intentionality" of Husserl. The intentional thesis is seen to entail two aspects within a noetic/noematic correlation: an ontological thesis concerning the nature of the object intended, and a psychological thesis concerning the constitution of the object as intended by consciousness. A rather lengthy examination of Hume and associationist tenets shows that we can no longer distinguish the image from the percept by such characteristics as inner/outer, stronger/weaker, original/copy, et cetera, in the light of the intentional thesis. All consciousness is consciousness of something. Imagination

is a form of consciousness, and apprehends or approaches its objects directly, not as a copy of a perception. The image is fundamentally different and distinguishable from the percept, and is known by consciousness to be different. Reflexive consciousness recognizes that the percept is here and now, is a full positivity, is virtually infinite in content (overflowing), and yields new information. The image, on the contrary, is recognized immediately as having different characteristics, all of which are a form of "negation": it posits its object as absent, non-existent, existing elsewhere, or as neutralized (not-existing). The image is limited in content to precisely what consciousness puts into it, and can therefore yield no new knowledge. Sartre is seen not to discuss how involuntary images cannot surprise or yield new knowledge; the problem of voluntary and involuntary images is avoided by Sartre, nor does he examine the psychological basis of streams of images in hallucination, memory, or day-dreaming, nor how these various different kinds of image-streams might be distinguished. However, in an examination of isolated images and percepts Sartre's thesis is seen to provide new insight into the ontological and psychological aspects of these images and percepts. This would seem a necessary point of departure for a more extensive theory of mind, and accordingly Sartre has contributed not a theory of mind but an examination of certain basic properties of human consciousness. Finally, these new insights into the nature of human consciousness are seen to alter the view of the world, not only in so far as the world is an object of consciousness, but also in so far as the meaning of the world is constituted by the apprehending consciousness.

## PREFACE

If I were to think of an unicorn, knowing that unicorns do not in fact exist, then what is it that I am thinking about? It is certain that I am thinking, and that I also have an object of my thought: i.e. I am thinking about something. But this something does not exist. Is the object of my thought then "an intentionally inexistent" object, existing only as the object of my thought? And what would it mean to say that it is an "intentionally inexistent" object which nevertheless exists in some way (i.e. mentally)?

The relationship between thought, the objects of thought, and the objects sui generis remains a problem in philosophy. It is my belief that the theories of Jean-Paul Sartre have enriched our understanding of this problem. It is the purpose of this paper to examine the distinction Sartre draws between the physical and the psychical, the objects of the imagination and those of the perception, in an effort to better understand the concept of existence as applied to these two realms.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF INTENTIONALITY:  
BRENTANO AND HUSSERL

Prior to an examination of Sartre's theory of intentionality it would be well to examine briefly the influence of Brentano upon the development of his theory. Husserl once wrote concerning Brentano:

Great indeed...is the respect and gratitude with which the author remembers this gifted thinker as his teacher, and strongly convinced...he is that his conversion of the scholastic concept of intentionality into a descriptive root-concept of psychology constitutes a great discovery apart from which phenomenology could not have come into being at all.<sup>1</sup>

Brentano was interested in discovering new explanations for what he considered to be the distinctions between physical and psychical or mental phenomena, between, for instance, my experiences of a horse, and my thoughts of an unicorn. In his endeavours, Brentano struck upon the much older concept of "intentional inexistence", and although he later abandoned this theory himself as unsound<sup>2</sup>, his refinements of the theory in the newly developing field of psychology may have had a strong influence upon Sartre. Certainly the

---

<sup>1</sup>Edmund Husserl, Ideas, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Collier Books, 1967), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Franz Brentano, The True and the Evident, trans. Oskar Kraus (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 75-104, especially p. 83.

paragraphs which outline this "intentional inexistence" of mental phenomena as opposed to physical phenomena have become very familiar -- perhaps the first to be read by any student of phenomenology:

...psychologists of an earlier period have already directed attention to a particular affinity and analogy which exists among all mental phenomena, while the physical do not share in it. Every mental phenomena is characterized by what the scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (and also mental) inexistence (Inexistenz) of an object (Gegenstand), and what we would call, although in not entirely unambiguous terms, the reference to a content, a direction upon an object (by which we are not to understand a reality in this case), or an immanent objectivity. Each one includes something as object within itself, although not always in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love (something is) loved, in hate (something) hated, in desire (something) desired, etc..

This intentional inexistence is exclusively characteristic of mental phenomena. No physical phenomena manifests anything similar. Consequently, we can define mental phenomena by saying that they are such phenomena as include an object intentionally within themselves.<sup>3</sup>

Two theses are given here: an ontological thesis concerning the "intentional inexistence", and a psychological thesis that reference to an object is what distinguishes the mental from the physical, in so far as mental objects are characterized as mental objects by the reference to their

---

<sup>3</sup>Franz Brentano, Psychologie Vom Empirischen Standpunkt, Vol. I, Book II, Chapter I. This chapter is translated by D. B. Terrell as "The Distinction Between Mental and Physical Phenomena" in Realism and the Background of Phenomenology, ed. R. M. Chisholm (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1960).

inexistence, whereas the physical are not. At the outset Brentano's major interest was the psychological thesis; but he also gives ontological considerations as to the nature of that object. Sartre further refines this revolutionary but basically simple thesis which Brentano had presented. Indeed, I believe that Sartre very deftly carried to scholarly refinement the ontological thesis which Brentano had only formulated as "intentional inexistence" in 1874 but which he himself later abandoned as basically untrue. It seems Brentano's interests were primarily psychological with epistemic undertones which led to his eventual rejection of the crudely formulated ontological aspect opened by his psychological considerations: Brentano came to view the non-existence thesis of psychic phenomena as inadequate and inaccurate. We shall see that Sartre re-examines and reclarifies both the psychological thesis and the ontological thesis of our experience; and this is perhaps his greatest contribution to philosophy. It is important to study Brentano in this introduction because Brentano is the first to have examined the psychological and ontological theses, and the results of his parallel approach are of both interest to and bear upon the works of Sartre. In lieu of rejection of Brentano's "intentional inexistence" he realized that the problem had only been partially clarified, and that enough attention had not been paid to the ontological aspects of the objects. The concept of the inten-



tionally inexistent of Brentano was vague, ontologically and metaphysically unrefined, and open to devastating critique. It is surely for this reason, above all, that Brentano later rejected the concept of "intentional inexistence", formulated paradoxically and crudely as it was. But in conjunction with Brentano's concept that the objects of intentionality are definite in nature, the reference to "intentional inexistence" can take on new dimensions. Sartre recognized that, indeed, the objects of imaginative intention do not exist in the "real" world of physical objects, but that to categorize these objects simply as "mind-dependent" or "inexistent" was too vague and indistinct. For one thing, they seemed contradictory when defined as inexistent objects which nevertheless existed (intentionally at least) in some manner. A category mistake was made between two differing realms of reality; or "existence" was being used equivocally (which comes to the same thing!). That is, one meaning of the word "real" was used for the external world, another for the mental or psychical world. The single word "inexistence" was at best ontologically poor, weak, and misleading. In chapter III it will be shown that Sartre's examination of the objects of mental consciousness (imaginative and conceptual consciousness) replaces Brentano's weak and equivocal "inexistence" by four negative categories of intentional objects of the imagination. With these four categories of negative or non-physical objects, the psychological thesis can again be

presented: that the reference to these objects as "negation" constitutes their distinction from physical objects. Simply for comparative purposes it would be of worth to examine Brentano's "intentional inexistence". However, I feel it is much clearer to understand Sartre's work on the intentional thesis in the light of Brentano's successes and failures.

Brentano recognized the intentional aspect that human consciousness has an object of which it is conscious. But he avoided the ontological problem concerning the "mind-dependent" objects, which exist as objects of consciousness, yet which he knew did not exist as concrete physical objects. This is why he at first employed the term "intentional inexistence": to denote their physical inexistence in the world of "real" objects. Again we can clearly see how his seemingly equivocal use of existence must always be read as "concrete physical objects". The weakness of "intentional inexistence" was a failure to positively determine how these non-physical objects of consciousness did exist. He never posited an ontological term or further described these non-physical objects of consciousness, and eventually was led to take the position that, in fact, there was only physical existence: his eventual rejection of the weakly conceived "intentionally inexistence" led to a total rejection of all ens rationis.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>An examination of this tangent is beyond the needs and purposes of this introduction. We are interested in "intentional inexistence" and not in Brentano's treatment of

I feel Brentano's successes and his failures are important for more than merely comparative purposes with Sartre's position. The problem of "intentional inexistence" and the ontological status of ens rationis is one of the oldest in metaphysics. Yet, I feel Sartre's thesis could not have been written without the intentional thesis revolutionized by Brentano. Further, perhaps the dirt left by Brentano's weak ontological distinctions between mental and physical objects of intentional consciousness may well have prompted Sartre's phenomenological and existential examination of the problem. From Sartre's position then, Brentano is as important for what he did not contribute as for what he did contribute. This paper deals with both the psychological thesis of intentionality -- that the reference consciousness has to its object distinguishes that object as mental or physical -- as well as the ontological thesis of the existential characteristics or nature of both types of objects.

An examination of Brentano's distinctions between physical and "mind-dependent" objects will be of help prior to studying Sartre's "perceptual" and "imaginative" consciousnesses. With these introductory and precautionary remarks concerning the success and failure of Brentano's presentation

---

such "convenient fictions" and his resulting "reism" on p. 83 especially, but also throughout The True and the Evident and also his Kategorienlehre, ed. Alfred Kastil (Leipzig, 1933)

of these two aspects of intentionality, let us go on to examine his concept of "intentional inexistence".

Brentano felt that the doctrine of "intentional inexistence" was not difficult to arrive at; the process of thinking itself would lead to it, if thought were merely directed towards an object which did not exist as a physical phenomenon. If one were to think about Pegasus, an unicorn, a golden mountain, or any such age-old examples, there is something being thought about. Brentano recognized the obvious point that there is also a distinction between thinking about Pegasus, or an unicorn, and thinking about a horse. This distinction does not lie within the person thinking, but rather lies within the objects being thought about. If "x" thinks about Pegasus and "y" thinks about a horse, the difference does not lie in their differing psychological make-up (at least for what concerns us here), but rather lies in the objects of their respective thoughts: the "real" horse and the "imaginary" Pegasus. The difference between the intentional objects here is the kind of objects about which "x" and "y" are respectively thinking, and not that "x" has an object, whereas "y" does not. Certainly there would be a marked distinction to be made if this latter difference was all that concerned us. There is a difference between someone who is thinking of either a horse or Pegasus, and a man who is thinking of nothing. This would only serve to strengthen the point of the former distinction, for either an

intentionally existing or an intentionally inexistent object of thought is still an object of that thought. The man who thinks of nothing at all does not have any such object of thought. He thinks of nothing at all, as Plato had pointed out in the Theaetetus:

Socrates: And does not he who thinks some one thing, think something which is?

Theaetetus: I agree.

Socrates: Then he who thinks of that which is not, thinks of nothing?

Theaetetus: Clearly.

Socrates: And he who thinks of nothing does not think at all?

Theaetetus: Obviously.

Socrates: Then no one can think that which is not, either as a self-existent substance or as a predicate of something else?

Theaetetus: Clearly not.<sup>5</sup>

It serves no purpose to dismiss Pegasus or an unicorn as an object of "x's" thought because it does not exist in physical fact. For to say that "x" is thinking about something which cannot be Pegasus (because Pegasus does not in fact exist) does not say what is the object of the man's thought. Further, it is clear that if this something is not Pegasus (again because Pegasus does not in fact exist), then the man cannot be said to be thinking about Pegasus. Thus, if "he who thinks some one thing, does think something which is", then Pegasus as an object of thought is something which is.

---

<sup>5</sup>Plato, Theaetetus, 189b.

Further, Pegasus is intentionally characterized as something which can only be an object of thought (i.e. the intentionally inexistent object, for Pegasus does not exist in the physical world.) "Intentional inexistence" can be predicated of, and only of, objects of thought as opposed to perception; this is one of Brentano's major distinctions between the physical and the psychical.<sup>6</sup>

With regard to the distinctions Brentano wished to make between the psychological and the physical worlds, what distinctions are made between their respective objects? What is the difference between Pegasus, the conceptualized horse, and the actually existing horse?

In contrasting the A which is contemplated about with the A which is actual, are we saying that the contemplated A is itself nothing actual or true? By no means! The contemplated A can be something actual and true without being an actual A. It is an actual contemplated A and therefore-- since this comes to the same thing -- it is an actual contemplated A (ein wirkliches gedachtes).<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>"Intentional inexistence" is seen to be more or less synonymous with the traditional term ens rationis or better with William of Ockham's "intentional existence" or "objective existence" and Descartes' objective in intellectu esse. It merely describes the psychological world as its objects are distinguished from the physical world. As A. O. Lovejoy states, such terms describe "a second world to which could be allocated all experienced objects which do not appear to satisfy the rules of membership in the physical system." A. O. Lovejoy, The Revolt Against Dualism (New York, 1930), pp. 28-9.

<sup>7</sup>Franz Brentano, The True and the Evident, p. 27.

Brentano believed that if a man thinks about an "A" (say Pegasus), that this Pegasus does come into being as an actual, contemplated entity, remains such as long as the man thinks about it, but ceases to exist when the man ceases to think about it. Clearly Pegasus would thus be an ens rationis, in the classical sense of the term, and as such would be mind-dependent. However, it is clear from this that the contemplated "A" is an entity which has an ontological status, yet which is not a physical or concrete entity. It is an objective in intellectu esse: a psychological product of man's mind.

But here a distinction must be drawn within the class of these mind-dependent entities which are (in some manner). All such concepts or ideas cannot be classified as solely chimeras or dreams, and a distinction must be made between mind-dependent entities which are purely imaginary (e.g. Pegasus and the unicorn) and mind-dependent entities which are conceptualizations, such as " $E=MC^2$ ", or the concept of the six-sided cube, which do not in themselves refer to objects in the physical world, but which none the less refer to relationships which hold between objects in the physical world.

The distinctions and characteristics of mind-dependent objects had been further confused by metaphysical arguments in the history of philosophy. One of these seems to have influenced Brentano's first ontological considerations

of the objects of consciousness. The medievalists believed that they had found in the intentional thesis a class of intentionally existing objects which were not definite physical objects, nor wholly mind-dependent. This led to an ontology which allowed for the existence of a class of objects beyond just ens rationis or ens physica. The old metaphysical question of intentionality led to three categories of existence and only served to confuse the issue. Brentano expanded his concept of "intentional inexistence" to include just such objects which were somehow not wholly mind-dependent and not not particular physical objects, but which still were supposedly objects of consciousness. However, he did not assert the existence of the class of these objects, but only the "concreta in question". Consequently he soon discovered the hopelessness of such a position, but his subsequent rejection of the possibility of such objects has further import. A brief look at a medieval passage by Walter Burley will suffice to demonstrate the metaphysical argument involved in arriving at this third category of intentionally existing objects, which Brentano seems to have adopted but quickly altered.

But hunger and thirst are not had with reference to this particular food or this particular drink, because one who is hungry does not specifically desire this or that particular food, and likewise one who is thirsty does not desire this or that particular drink, because even supposing he did not have a knowledge of any food or any drink he would nevertheless be hungry or thirsty. Therefore hunger and thirst, which are natural



appetites, are not pointed toward something individual, and yet are pointed toward something else outside the soul that is able to preserve an individual in existence. Therefore something exists outside the soul other than an individual.

...the same conclusion is proved as follows. Something about which real promises and contracts are made, such as buying and selling, donations, pledges, etc., exists outside the soul. But contracts are not always made about individual things. Therefore something exists outside the soul that is other than an individual nature. The major is obvious. The proof of the minor is that in the statement 'I promise you an ox', something outside the soul is being promised to you, and yet no individual thing is being promised to you, because you cannot lay claim to this or that particular ox on the strength of this promise. Therefore something outside the soul that is other than an individual thing is being promised to you. And the same sort of argument can be applied to buying and selling. For instance, if you buy a quarter of wheat from me by handing over the cash price, it is certain that you have bought something outside the soul, and yet you have not bought an individual thing because you have not bought this or that particular quarter. Likewise, if you owe me one florin for any reason whatever, what you owe me is not an individual thing, because you do not owe me this or that particular florin.<sup>8</sup>

Burley's major point was to assert the existence of universals, probably in the wake of Ockham's "razor". This

---

<sup>8</sup>Walter Burley(also Burleigh), Exposito in octo volumina, Aristoteles de Physico auditu, Prologue, (Venice: Johann Herbert, 1482), with emendations from an edition of 1491. Trans. John Wellmuth, "The Existence of Universals" in Philosophy in the West, ed. Katz and Weingartner (New York, 1965), p. 564.

certainly does not concern us here, as much as the belief in the existence of non-mentally dependent objects which were also not physically definite. In hunger, for instance, no definite object of a desiring consciousness had been specified, for such an "indefinite" object could never be the specific object of satisfaction. In short, the objects of which Burley speaks are not produced by nor are they dependent upon the mind, therefore not fitting into the category of ens rationis. Yet, they were held to be intentionally non-existing objects, for at the time of the hunger, or thirst, or promise of a florin, no particular physical object had been the object of consciousness, but only some "indefinite intentional object". The appeal to such objects is misleading, for indeed it is the desire which is indefinite, and not the object of satisfaction; but Brentano adopted this third category at one point in his career, dubbing such a category as ens non realia, to account for such "intentionally inexisting" objects which Burley had pointed out beyond mind-dependent objects. In a letter to Anton Marty in 1906, Brentano stated:

...the point is that the understanding does not produce such entities.

But if one must speak of such entities, then one should be consistent and affirm that in addition to whatever is a thing, there is a second set of entities, subsisting quite independently of reason, and that these might be called entia non realia, but not entia rationis. I would say that relations and concepts such as shape, extension, position (I am speaking of the concreta in question) are included among things.

What leads to the entia rationis is best recognized in those cases where this term is most appropriate -- i.e., 'A as object of thought'.<sup>9</sup>

Physical objects, ens rationis (imaginative and conceptual), and ens non realia --- these are the classes of objects of our consciousness for Brentano. Yet, Brentano did realize the error Burley committed in projecting upon the world of concrete particulars the indefiniteness which general terms impose. He did not fall into the error of asserting the existence of the class as well as its members. The objects must be, claimed Brentano, far more specific than Burley's indefinite object. Even such an entia non realia must be seen as a thing, and as a concrete thing. And here we enter upon perhaps the most important discoveries of Brentano, so far as the later phenomenologists are concerned, and most especially Sartre. This ontological discovery is that, not only does "he who thinks some one thing, think something which is"<sup>4</sup> but that we can only think of some one thing. In a letter to Oskar Kraus Brentano writes:

I shall begin at once, today, by giving you what I believe to be a simple and rigorous proof of the fact that only things can be objects of our ideas and therefore that only things can be objects of any type of mental activity at all.

The proof is based upon the fact that the concept of having an idea -- of having something before the mind -- is one that is uniform; the term 'thought', therefore is univocal and not equivocal. But it is essential

---

<sup>9</sup>Franz Brentano, The True and the Evident, pp. 80-1.

to this concept that thinking be always a matter of thinking of something. If the term 'something' were ambiguous, then the term 'thought' would also be ambiguous. And therefore it is not possible to interpret this 'something' as being at one time a thing and at another time a non-thing; for there is no concept which could be common to things and non-things.

One may verify the result, again and again, by analysing those cases in which a non-thing appears to be the object of a person's thought....And also this: that whenever we do seem to be concerned with a non-thing, we will find --- if we are attentive enough --- that there is in fact some thing with which our thought is also concerned ...it is good to remind ourselves of Leibniz's pertinent observation: whenever we put anything into abstract terms, we should be prepared to translate it back into concrete terms, in order to be sure that we have not altered the sense.<sup>10</sup>

When we think, we think of something. Further, this is some one thing, and thought remains univocal. Brentano explains:

...if the term 'something' has no unambiguous meaning in the expression 'to think of something', then the term 'thought' itself cannot be univocal. The fact that the term is univocal cannot be denied;...The 'something' is the object of our thoughts -- in the one case, horse; in another, that which is coloured; in another, the soul; and so on. But the term 'horse' does not signify 'contemplated horse', or 'horse which is thought about', the term 'coloured' does not signify 'coloured thing which is thought about', and the term 'soul' does not signify 'soul which is thought about'. For otherwise one who affirmed or accepted a horse would be affirming or accepting, not a horse, but a 'contemplated horse'; or, more precisely, he would be accepting or affirming a person thinking about a horse, and this is certainly false. To see the matter even more clearly, you might want to consider the following.

---

<sup>10</sup>Franz Brentano, The True and the Evident, p. 94.

If the 'something' in the expression 'to think about something' really meant only 'something thought about', then the 'something' in 'to reject or deny something' would mean no more nor no less than 'something rejected or denied'. But nothing could be more obvious than the fact that if a man rejects or denies a thing, he does not reject or deny it as something rejected or denied; on the contrary, he knows it as something which he himself does reject or deny.<sup>11</sup>

Thus any object of thought is some one thing, whether or not that thought poses imaginative or conceptual objects which have no physical existence in themselves. We see here a problem emerging in this thesis of Burley: the object must be some definite thing, and not merely an indefinite product of intellection, of the understanding. Burley's ens non realia was precisely an example of some such indefinite object of the intentional consciousness which Brentano here comes to grips with. Objects of indefinite character such as vague abstractions of intellection and general words must be called into question, if indeed objects of consciousness are definite things. If in hunger we only crave a definite object, or at least it is ourselves which are indefinite and not the object hungered for, what becomes of ens non realia as a category of intentional objects? Can the desired object of a desiring consciousness be merely this indefinite "object of thought", or can we only ever have a definite object desired to satisfy? In a letter to his friend Anton Marty, Brentano

---

<sup>11</sup>Franz Brentano, The True and the Evident, pp. 95-6.

stated:

But by an object of a thought I meant what it is that is thought about, whether or not there is anything outside the mind corresponding to the thought.

It has never been my view that the immanent object is identical with 'object of thought' (vorgestelltes objekt). What we think about is the object or thing and not the 'object of thought'. If, in our thought, we contemplate a horse, our thought has as its immanent object -- not a 'contemplated horse', but a horse. And strictly speaking only the horse -- not the 'contemplated horse' -- can be called an object.... I have always held (in agreement with Aristotle) that 'horse' and not 'contemplated horse' is the immanent object of thoughts that pertain to horses!<sup>12</sup>

We see then, a major shift in Brentano's position from the initial positing of "intentional inexistence" involving ens rationis and ens non realia. Originally a psychological thesis to explain intentional reference to mental objects, the position was soon abandoned by Brentano simply because the objects referred to were inexistent. How can something be asserted to be inexistent and also be asserted as the existing object referred to? Whatever our consciousness of an object, that intentional reference is to an object which must be in some manner, in order to be referred to at all. Brentano came to reject all intentional reference to entia irrealia: all reference is directed upon things, and as such the irrealia of Burley is rejected. One cannot promise to marry someone, with no particular person in mind, and keep

---

<sup>12</sup>Franz Brentano, The True and the Evident, p. 167.

the promise! Brentano stated that "it would be paradoxical to the highest degree to suppose that you could promise to marry an ens rationis and then to keep that promise by marrying an actual, concrete particular."<sup>13</sup> To be conscious is to be conscious of a particular thing. Whether the object is a physical or a mental object, as the object thought, the object is so in its own right and not merely an intentionally in-existent object. Primary consciousness has for its objects horses and not contemplated horses; it is concerned only with the objects of consciousness, and not with the consciousness of objects. If I think about Pegasus, it is precisely Pegasus which is the intentional object of that thought: Pegasus as an individual phenomenon is posited as the object of my thought. In this case there would be a non-reflexive immanent object but no "real" or physically existing object. But if I think of the moon, on the contrary, then along with the so-called immanent object, there would also be a "real" object which exists "outside the mind". Nevertheless, it is to the object itself that judgements (e.g. acceptance, affirmation, denial, etc.) are directed and not to the "object of thought". For example, when American astronauts approached the moon for their first landing, it was not toward the "object of thought" (vorgestelltes objekt) that their preparations and purposeful

---

<sup>13</sup>Franz Brentano, Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt, quoted by Oskar Kraus in the introduction (2nd. ed.; Leipzig, 1924), p. xlix. It would seem that Brentano should have written ens irrealis in lieu of ens rationis.

decisions were directed -- but toward the actual moon, the physical object, the ens realia. Consciousness is not intentionally directed upon objects that exist merely in our understanding -- ens irreale -- but upon the actual objects. If I am hungry, I may well be indefinite as to what I would like to eat, but only actual food will satisfy my hunger. Diogenes was looking for an honest man without knowing if such a man "in fact" existed; but the object of his quest was an actual honest man, not an intentionally inexistent honest man. Indeed, if "intentional inexistence" is adopted, what was Diogenes searching for, since he must have already possessed the honest man as an intentionally inexisting immanent object? If objects of consciousness therefore are actual objects and not merely the intentional objects of the understanding, then they are transcendent, i.e. not of the understanding! This is the important announcement of the ontological aspect of the intentional thesis. The object of thought is what is thought about; it is not the thinking. Whether this object or phenomenon is a physical object (like the moon, or Diogenes' honest man) or a mental object (like Pythagorus' theorem or Pegasus), the object of consciousness is the object itself. This can only mean that the object is not the contemplating, but that which is contemplated. The object is transcendent in so far as it is not that consciousness: it is the object of that consciousness. Consciousness has for its



object something which is beyond itself, which is transcendent to itself. Whether the object is an entia rationis or an ens realia, as the object of thought, the object is an object in its own right, and not merely intended in the thought: it transcends the consciousness which takes it for an object.

Consciousness is consciousness of something; but we have stated that this something is transcendent to that consciousness. How is this possible and what does it mean? If I keep a table constantly in view, yet walk around it, I am continually conscious of that same table which remains such throughout my perception of it. Yet, the perception has changed continuously. The table is a continuum of spatially altering perceptions, and temporally altering perceptions if I stop and watch it fixedly from one perspective. It is the perception which is in the steady flow of consciousness then, and not the table. The perceptions are constantly in flux, whereas the perspected -- the table itself with all its aspects, parts, phases, perspectives, etc. -- are necessarily transcendent to that flux. To be sure, the table is as it appears, but it appears in a series or continuum of differing appearances. The consciousness synthesizes this continuum of past and ever-changing present perceptions to give me the intuition of the object through its appearances. Thus the table is transcendent to the perceptions I have of it, but the table is constituted by those same perceptions. This is the

meaning of intentional constitution of the object: "the thing is the intentional unity, that which we are conscious of as one and self-identical within the continuously ordered flow of perceptual patterns as they pass the one into the other." Perception "is the one identical thing derived through the confluence into one unity of apprehension."<sup>14</sup> Thus the intuition of an object and that object itself are essentially related: the intuited is given in the intuition, but it is not that intuition, it is transcendent to that intuition; for it is the intentional synthesis of all possible intuition. I turn a cube in my hand: I can only see three sides in any one intuition, yet I am conscious of the object as cube, as a six-sided object, transcending this one intuition as the synthesis of former intuitions (and possible future ones as I continue to turn it) which revealed the other three sides not revealed in this one intuiting consciousness. In perceptual consciousness then, I am conscious of an object, but that object necessarily is transcendent to the perceptual consciousness I have of it -- it is the synthesis of all possible immediate consciousnesses. Thus, the simple formula that consciousness is always consciousness of something, provides us with the more general condition that all consciousness is transcendent, that "a thing cannot be given

---

<sup>14</sup>Edmund Husserl, Ideas, p. 119.

as really immanent in any possible perception, or, generally, in any possible consciousness."<sup>15</sup> It is equally clear that the same will hold for any object of consciousness. I hear a voice, but I hear it from in a series of perceptions which could be another series (farther away, for instance) of the self-same sound. I imagine Pegasus, but my imaginative consciousness could imagine the same idea with other imaginative properties, etc..

In other words, the sensory data which exercise the function of presenting the object to consciousness, are not the object; they are particular appearances of the object which my intentional consciousness synthesizes into a unity which I call the object. The sensory data are the perspective variables, or experiences of the object. Objects are given through experience, through the perspective variables, but remain necessarily essentially related to the perspectives or sense data.

Thus consciousness must be seen as a new dualism, the psychological, noetic aspect of any act of consciousness indissolubly tied to a noematic correlate, a definite object. Consciousness is no longer a self-sufficient and self-contained interiority. Rather, it must be conceived as a kind of "directedness" or "pointing towards" the object of which it

---

<sup>15</sup>Edmund Husserl, Ideas, p. 120.

must be a consciousness in order to even have meaning as being consciousness. As consciousness of something then, consciousness is "said to be 'intentionally related' to this something."<sup>16</sup> An indissoluble relationship ties consciousness to a world: the very fact that it is consciousness implies that it is consciousness of that world. The cogito implies a world as its cogitatum. What ontological status this object-world is to have will be the result of the analysis of the objects of consciousness themselves in chapter III. This world will be as I am conscious of it; the world as it appears to the cogito is the only meaningful world, as Kant has said. But the fact that it appears can be the only justification of its existence. It will appear as the necessary noematic correlate to my consciousness, and as that correlate, will construct the noematic world for consciousness. Consciousness is not alone, but is only in relation to the objects of which it is a consciousness. As Husserl states: "Common language catches this sense of 'relativity', saying, I was thinking of something, I was frightened of something, etc."<sup>17</sup> All consciousness is intentional, because all consciousness must have the essential reference character to

---

<sup>16</sup> Edmund Husserl, Ideas, p. 108.

<sup>17</sup> Edmund Husserl, "Phenomenology", Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th ed. (1922), XV, 700.

the phenomena of which it is a consciousness. "In unreflective consciousness we are 'directed' upon objects, we 'intend' then;"<sup>18</sup> Intentionality means this peculiarity of human consciousness -- "to be a consciousness of something;" to denote something, to refer to something which exists in some manner as a definite transcendent object. We shall see that in the very act of reference whereby objects are presented in the consciousness of them, they "appear" to consciousness as transcendent objects of that consciousness. We have seen that consciousness is of its objects and these objects are not that consciousness. We must now examine the thesis of intentionality to investigate further that objects are not in that consciousness, an examination which may well require an alteration from our normally accepted view of the image.

---

<sup>18</sup>Edmund Husserl, "Phenomenology", p. 700.

## II

### MISCONCEPTIONS OF THE IMAGE AND ASSOCIATIONISM

Consciousness is consciousness of something. Further, this something is seen to be a definite object, necessarily transcendent to the consciousness which experiences it, and it is essentially related to this intending consciousness to which it appears.

But, here a further consideration ensues. For the experience of an object is possible only as experience. I have only perspective variables (or "sense data") of the perceived object. But as experience, as sense data, as perspective variables, this experience is not spatial. Thus, for instance, the table appeared as brown, as hard, as three-dimensional, as rectangular. I am conscious of a table with spatial features. But it is nonsensical to consider the consciousness, the appearance, the sense data, of that table as brown, hard, or rectangular. The experience of a rectangular object is itself not rectangular. The consciousness I have of the table has no "content", for the spatiality of the object cannot itself enter into my consciousness. "The perceived variable (the object), however, is in principle possible only as spatial, but not possible as experience."<sup>1</sup> I experience hardness through my experience of the object; my

---

<sup>1</sup>Edmund Husserl, Ideas, p. 119.

experience is of hardness, it is not hard itself. The hardness, the spatial features belong to the transcendent object experienced and not to the consciousness, the experience itself. Thus my "consciousness is positional in that it transcends itself in order to reach an object." "A table is not in consciousness -- not even in the capacity of a representation."<sup>2</sup> The spatiality of a table remains transcendent to my consciousness, and care must be taken to avoid such expressions as phenomena existing "in the world" as opposed to phenomena existing "in the mind". Consciousness posits all its objects as transcendent, and as such that object cannot enter into consciousness. Consciousness is a consciousness of its object; it does not contain its object, even in image form:

All that there is of intention in my actual consciousness is directed toward the outside, toward the table; all my judgements or practical activities, all my present inclinations transcend themselves; they aim at the table and are absorbed in it.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, it would seem that we normally do tacitly assume that objects exist within the psyche, opposing objects "in the world" with objects existing only "in the mind". This view posits an image or idea in the mind as a "picture"

---

<sup>2</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, trans. H. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. lxi.

<sup>3</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. lxi.

or "copy" of the original (which may or may not be extended in space). This picture is looked on as a "mental snapshot" in the psyche. Our ordinary language portrays our acceptance of this view in the use of such phrases as "I see it in my mind's eye", "I see her as clearly in my mind as the day she walked through that door!", etc. Indeed, "we pictured consciousness as a place peopled with small likenesses and these likenesses were the images."<sup>4</sup> For instance:

When I say that 'I have an image of Peter', it is believed that I now have a certain picture of Peter in my consciousness. The object of my actual consciousness would be precisely this picture, and Peter, the man of flesh and bone, would only be reached very indirectly, in an 'extrinsic' manner, because it is he whom the picture represents....In other words, an image is inherently like the material object it represents.<sup>5</sup>

Sartre calls this tendency to consider the transcendent physical properties of objects as more or less residing in the psyche the "illusion d'immanence."<sup>6</sup> Arising from the use of spatial metaphors, "without doubt, the origin of this deception should be sought out in our habit of thinking in space and in terms of space."<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pp. 4-5.

<sup>5</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, pp. 7-8.

<sup>6</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imaginaire, (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1940), p. 15.

<sup>7</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 5.



Accordingly, Sartre names Hume as a firm exponent of this misconception. Later associationism may rely more fully upon such a view of consciousness, but from the outset the critique Sartre levels upon Hume must be seen as somewhat superficial and taken out of context. Hume only ever considered the mind as a collection of impressions and images, and not as an independently existing cauldron or box in which these perceptions were collected. Hume's mind is a collection of the marbles (ideas and impressions) and not the marble bag itself. Although Sartre's reading and analysis of Hume's position is therefore somewhat erroneous, his thesis is none the less only damaged by the exemplary author he refutes. One could just as well invent a position relying on the illusion of immanence. The later associationism, assumed, for instance, in Freudian psychology, and Sartre's own horror of psychologism, perhaps led Sartre to such a reading of Hume, however innocent Hume might be concerning the question in hand. I think one could easily include Wittgenstein in Sartre's illusion of immanence, especially since he specifically employs mental "pictures" in the mind as modes of reality. In view of Sartre's irresponsible attribution to Hume's position that it included a mind which was independently existent of the images, in which those images resided, it might be well to briefly include just such a position here from another source. I cite a passage from one of my current

professors, Fernand Van Steenberghen:

My consciousness is stocked with a great number of images, which are residues of my previous perceptions....I can by conscious effort reinforce this presence and bring a certain image to the fore in my consciousness....They remain in my consciousness when the sensory datum has disappeared. The images are corporeal, in the sense that they represent the corporeal datum with its spatio-temporal characteristics...The image presents itself...as a mysterious 'means' of evoking the object in my consciousness without appealing to an external sensory perception.<sup>8</sup>

Such a position is certainly that which Sartre erroneously believed Hume had adopted. Any associationism which posits the mind as existing in addition to the bundle of images and impressions would seem to lead directly to such a position, and perhaps Sartre's misreading of Hume had led him to consider Hume in this position. With such forewarning of the misrepresentation of Hume's theory of mind, let us continue to examine Sartre's critique of the illusion of immanence.

According to such a position, images actually exist in the mind, although the qualities these images possess in the mind are never seriously examined. Their qualities are taken to be re-appearances of the spatial object, despite the fact that the "image" may be composed of different "reappearances" rearranged somehow by the imagination (e.g. Pegasus: a

---

<sup>8</sup>Fernand Van Steenberghen, Epistemology, trans. Martin Flynn (New York: Joseph F. Wagner Inc., 1949), p. 122.

horse plus wings, etc.). Thus the image and the impression both occur in the mind, yet the qualities they possess there differ only in degree and not in kind:

'Tis evident at first sight, that the ideas of the memory are much more lively and strong than those of the imagination, and that the former faculty paints its objects in more distinct colours, than any which are emplo'd by the latter.<sup>9</sup>

The "mental pictures" or ideas of the imagination differ from those of memory, but they do so only in the degree of vividness. They share essentially the same properties, one being a sort of "copy" of the other; they differ basically only in degree and not in kind. According to the degree of difference, their strength or weakness, Hume would categorize them as either one or the other of the two faculties:

Those perceptions which enter with most force and violence we name impressions; and under this name I comprehend all the sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul. By ideas I mean the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning;...I believe it will not be necessary to employ many words in explaining this distinction. Everyone of himself will readily perceive the difference betwixt feeling and thinking. The common degrees of these are easily distinguished.<sup>10</sup>

But are they so easily distinguished if their difference is one of degree, and not essentially of nature? Several observations may be made.

---

<sup>9</sup>David Hume, A Treatise of Human Understanding, ed. L. A. Selby-Begge (London: Oxford Press, 1888), p. 9.

<sup>10</sup>David Hume, A Treatise of Human Understanding, pp. 1-2.

There are impressions and ideas; the latter are "reappearances in the soul" of the former. If all mental activity is maintained to be but such reappearances or images of perception and the rearrangement of these by imagination, then perhaps it is true that "the empiricism of Hume endeavours to reduce all thought to a system of images."<sup>11</sup> For human thought by such an account must be reduced to mere rearrangement of the "things" of the physical world, and any originality beyond variations of composition of the "picture" is dismissed. The mind can rearrange, but never truly create. But, the reduction of all thought to mere "rearrangements" has a misleading spatial connotation unfortunately followed by Hume. As has been pointed out, "this view inevitably leads to the belief that images are some sort of mental picture, a kind of internal analogue to a real picture or photograph. From these internal snapshots we can obtain information in the same way that we can obtain information from a real snapshot; memory consists partially in looking at our picture collection."<sup>12</sup>

The standpoint of the "picture-image" is precisely its representational form; the image or picture is one thing, the perception which it represents is something else quite

---

<sup>11</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969), p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Manser, Sartre: A Philosophical Study, (London:

different. The position Hume takes is that the object in the imagination is extrinsic to the object perceived because it is in fact a representation of it:

But to form the idea of an object, and to form an idea simply is the same thing; the reference of the idea to an object being an extraneous denomination, of which in itself it bears no mark or character. Now as 'tis impossible to form an idea of an object, that is possest of no precise degree of either; it follows, that there is an equal impossibility of forming an idea, that is not limited and confined in both these particulars. Abstract ideas are therefore in themselves individual, however they may become general in their representation. The image in the mind is only that of a particular object.<sup>13</sup>

On this account there are perceptions. Further, there are "ideas" or "faint images" of the perceptions, remembered or resuscitated in the mind, and therefore less vivid. They differ radically in character from the perception, since they are representations only; but they partake of the same qualities. There are two distinct entities, sharing the same qualities, but fundamentally differing only in the vividness of those qualities.

Here a problem arises for Hume. The idea itself, as an adequate reproduction, must be "possest of" the same qualities as the object of the perception (differing only in degree), despite this extraneous relationship, or it will fail to "copy" or reproduce properly that perception. This

---

<sup>13</sup>David Hume, A Treatise of Human Understanding, p. 20.

has two profound ramifications for Hume's thesis.

First, despite the fact that the idea is an entirely different and separate entity in the mind, with an extraneous and representational relation to the perception, none the less the idea must somehow share the same qualities as that perception. The image and the percept must share the same determinations of these qualities or the representation will not be accurate. The mind becomes a type of camera which reduces the objects of perception to objects as images, yet it reduces them in vividness only. All the original qualities of the perception, including its physical properties and spatial relationships as perceived, must be reproduced in the imagination, or the representation has not been accurately made. "Thinking" becomes the assembly of these faded photographs, the images in themselves necessarily maintaining the qualities of the perception despite their extraneous relationship with the object from which they somehow copy their qualities.

Sartre criticizes Hume in the following lines:  
 According to this view my actual idea of a chair has but an extraneous relation to the existing chair...What can this mean but that, for Hume, the idea of chair and the chair ~~is~~ an idea are one and same thing. To have an idea of chair is to have a chair in consciousness. That this is so is shown by the fact that what is true of the object is also true of the idea. If the object must have a determined quantity or quality, then the idea must also possess these determinations.<sup>14</sup>

---

5. <sup>14</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p.

But Sartre's critique is wholly false and unsubstantiated, ironically by his own reasoning. If the idea is a copy of the impression, then as we shall see, problems of distinguishing them may indeed arise. However, we have seen that the perception of the hardness of the chair does not lead to a perception which has the property "hard". The spatial properties remain transcendent to the perception, residing in the chair, not the perceptual consciousness. Hume's ideas are merely copies of the perceptual consciousness (impressions), only less vivid. Therefore, "what is true of the object" is not "also true of the idea", but only what is true of the impression is true of the idea; and spatial properties have been ruled out of perceptual consciousness. Objects of impressions are reduced to objects as images; it is not the case that objects of the spatial world are reduced to images. Surely, this is what Hume means by saying ideas bear an extrinsic relationship to the objects: they do not nor cannot possess its spatial properties which necessarily are transcendent to any conscious experience we have of them. The determinations of the idea are not those of the object, but copied determinations of the impression. Thus "to have an idea of chair" is not "to have a chair in consciousness"; such a position is absurd. Rather, to have an idea of chair is to have a chair as an idea in consciousness. Sartre here not only assumes that Hume posits the mind as containing

ideas rather than merely being the collection of those ideas; he quite falsely accuses Hume of stating that ideas are not copies of the impressions, but of the actually existing object "chair". Nowhere, it seems to me, has Hume departed from his position that ideas are and can only be copies of the impressions alone, and as such bear an extraneous relation to (are transcendent to!!) those spatial qualities of the object.

Accordingly, the insinuation Sartre makes that Hume's position entails ideas with spatial properties in the mind is doubly erroneous. The position he takes to Hume's theory is absurd, given a proper reading of Hume. To imply that the chair would burn in my mind as idea just as the chair would burn in space, and therefore to ask if the mind gets hot, is ludicrous. Since the impression is of heat, and it itself not hot, the idea which copies that impression can only be a "weaker impression" of heat, and not hot either. Since the impression is not capable of representing heat, the idea cannot represent heat either.

However, Sartre does point out that Hume's theory of impressions and ideas -- one being the copy of the other -- leads to a basic philosophical problem of ultimate distinction between the two. Sartre believed the distinctions between ideas and impressions, the objects of imaginative and perceptual consciousness, were fundamentally distinct, as we



shall see in the next chapter. It would do well to examine Sartre's critique of Hume's "failure" to account for their ultimate distinction. This is a major point of disagreement between Sartre and Hume, for just as Sartre's purpose of L'Imaginaire was precisely to point out how these distinctions were experienced, it was one of the main purposes of Hume's Treatise to show that the problem of ultimate distinction between impressions and ideas was irresolvable.

Hume states that the idea and the perception differ in their degrees of quality and quantity, and that this alone is sufficient to make them two distinct entities. They are distinguishable by their varying degrees of vividness of any given quality. Yet, they cannot fundamentally differ in nature, because they share the same qualities which differ only in degree, not in kind. This leads to one of Hume's greatest difficulties regarding the image. For despite its separated existence, the qualities of the image are precisely and exactly those of perception; otherwise the "representation" has not been made. Hume must ultimately face the problem that his conceptual and imaginative "images" are not separable from the perception! The image can never be recognized as a truly separate entity, if it must have all the qualities and only the qualities of the perception, yet differ only in degree of vividness. For, if the difference is only in matter of degree, one is ultimately faced with the problem of

what criteria will distinguish the one as representation from the other as the thing represented. In short, our "picture gallery" has originals and perfect copies, and the curator has the problem of distinguishing the picture from the original. Is this criterion of vividness alone, then, enough to distinguish the original (impression) from the copy (image)? For Hume the problem of a "separate" idea which nevertheless shares precisely and only the qualities of that impression which it represents is never resolved. That which is first of all given as fundamentally and necessarily common, qualitatively, cannot be ultimately distinguished without the initial determinations for their exact similitude being invalidated. This, of course, would be tantamount to invalidating the entire metaphysical basis to the philosophy of the image for Hume. This question must be pursued to see if, indeed, Hume cannot fundamentally distinguish his perception from his weaker but otherwise exact copy.

For Hume, mental objects exist as representational of, but are asserted to be for the most part quite distinct from the original impression. Yet, adoption of such a view leads Hume to construct a world of the imaginative consciousness out of objects entirely like those of perceptual consciousness, only less vivid.

Hume had stated, concerning impressions and ideas that "Everyone of himself will readily perceive the distinc-

tion betwixt feeling and thinking."<sup>15</sup> Yet, he fails himself to plunge deeper into the status which he has given the image, which somehow borrows its qualities from the impressions which it must adequately represent. It is fair enough not to push for the "causes" of the impressions in his casual mechanism, which "arise in the soul from unknown causes." However, this should have been yet another warning. For his causality cannot explain the way in which the images in our minds imitate the mysterious association of impressions in order to give us these "mental pictures". As Sartre states, Hume's images "adhere together according to attractions which are semi-mechanical and semi-magical in nature."<sup>16</sup> For the ideas "borrow" this magical/mechanical association, just as they "borrow" all of their qualities from the impressions. Nevertheless, Hume maintains for his impressions and ideas, that the "common degrees are easily distinguished." Yet, how are they to be distinguished? A distinction in the vividness of the same qualities is not enough. His mistake was to assume from the outset that images and impressions were fundamentally alike: i.e. partake in the same characteristics, but differ only in their amount or degree of participation in those characteristics. The obvious result is that he would

---

<sup>15</sup>David Hume, A Treatise of Human Understanding, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 13. My own translations are used through this paper.

never find the precise manner by which they were actually distinguished. In positing images as copies of impressions, copying their qualities as well, Hume has made them fundamentally the same:

...for Hume the image is an element of thought exacting adherent to the perception, presenting the same discontinuity and the same individuality as perception. According to Hume the idea appears as a weakened aspect of perception, an echo which temporally follows it...the idea is an exact replica of the object, opaque and impenetrable as the object, rigid and stiff, itself a thing.<sup>17</sup>

It is precisely because they have the same qualities that Hume's perceptions and ideas must have the same nature; however, it may be that they differ in their degrees of these qualities. For Hume the image and the perception become fundamentally identical in nature, but different in intensity. The perceptions are the "strong impressions", whereas the images are, indeed, the "weak impressions", in so far as they are weaker mechanical reappearances of that same impression:

The image is brought about mechanically in some manner. Of their own accord, the strong impressions expel the weak impressions to a secondary level of existence. Unfortunately, this hypothesis does not withstand investigation. The stability, richness, and precision of the perception could never distinguish them from the images. First of all, because these qualities are greatly exaggerated.<sup>18</sup>

Hume had exaggerated the quantitative difference. Images and

<sup>17</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 49.

<sup>18</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, pp. 92-3.

impressions were supposedly easily distinguished on his account, simply because his impressions were always strong and the weaker ideas could be easily seen as being weaker. Yet, we experience weak, confused, hazy, and indistinct perceptions constantly. There are all the peripheral objects which I perceive, but do so indistinctly, because I do not take the time -- cannot take the time -- to make them distinct by purposefully being attentive to them. There are, for example, multi-sided objects all about me which remain partially or quasi-perceived. . Does the ashtray have four or five cigarette slots? How many panes are there in the leaded windows? How many slats are there in the backs of the chairs about the room? What colour is the ceiling? etc. There are interferences between myself and objects which present indistinct perceptions no matter how I try; for instance, more auto accidents occur in fog, not because of "imaginary" trees or pedestrians, but because of weakly perceived trees, obscurely observed pedestrians! Hume's account cannot distinguish between weakly perceived objects in the fog and illusions created by the shadows. If then the qualities of the objects themselves can be confusing, as indeed they often are, where does the mechanical distinction -- the "strong which automatically rejects the weak"--- occur? How can Hume draw the final line to separate the strong from the weak? Since we do have confused and indistinct impressions, "for this reason

do we make them into images?"<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, there is the question of thresholds: for, a sensation to cross the threshold of consciousness, it is necessary for it to have a minimum intensity. If the images are of the same nature, it is necessary that they have at least this intensity. But then, would they not be confused with the sensations of the same intensity? And why does the image of a cannon-shot not seem to be like an actual feeble retort? Wherever does it come about that we never take our images for perceptions?<sup>20</sup>

Yet, Hume allows a peculiar twist here, for he adds an allowance at this point, for the occurrence of hallucinations and illusions in which images in consciousness are taken for perceived objects. He allows precisely for just such a case in which the objects of one faculty are mistaken for those of the other, whereby the strong impressions could be taken for weaker ideas, and vice versa, by an unusually greater amount of the quantitative degrees necessary to make the judgement:

The common degrees of these are easily distinguished; tho' it is not impossible but in

<sup>19</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 93.

<sup>20</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 93. It may be said of course, that we do confuse images with perceptions, for instance, a tree with a man. Using this example, it may be pointed out that we are not confusing an image with a perception, but rather we are not properly interpreting the actual perception. We have taken a weakly perceived object as one classification of objects instead of another. "Il y a fausse interpretation d'une perception réelle. Il n'y a pas d'exemple qu'une image d'homme apparue soudain dans notre conscience soit prise pour un homme réel, réellement perçu." (L'Imagination, p. 93-4) How these impressions and ideas present themselves as radically distinct is one of the major purposes of chapter III.

particular instances they may very nearly approach to each other. Thus in sleep, in fever, in madness, or in any very violent emotions of the soul, our ideas may approach to our impressions: As on the other hand it sometimes happens, that our impressions are so faint and low, that we cannot distinguish them from our ideas.<sup>21</sup>

Hume, therefore, admits that "they are in general so very different", but none the less makes provisions for the existence of illusions, hallucinations, seemingly "realistic" dreams, etc. A weak perception may deceive us into believing it to be an illusion, and conversely a strong idea may deceive us into thinking it is perception, precisely because ideas are essentially the same kind of experience as impressions; for the only "difference betwixt these consists in the degrees of force and liveliness with which they strike upon the mind and make their way into our thought or consciousness."<sup>22</sup> They are apprehended in the same manner; they differ only in the strength or force of that apprehension. If, indeed, we did only make use of differences in intensity to distinguish our perception from our imagination, we would be hard pressed to ever be able to effectively differentiate them, and when we did, we would often make mistakes. "Briefly, if the image and the perception do not differ in quality from the outset, it is pointless to endeavour subsequently to distinguish them by

---

<sup>21</sup>David Hume, A Treatise of Human Understanding, pp.1-2.

<sup>22</sup>David Hume, A Treatise of Human Understanding, p. 1.

their quantity.<sup>23</sup>

Sartre rejects Hume's allowance for an idea being mistaken for an impression, or an impression being mistaken for an idea as yet another problem arising from his "illusion d'immanence". Hume's spatial thinking has led to a qualitative identity of the two faculties; it is no wonder that the qualities of one can on occasion become confused with the qualities of the other, since they share identical qualities!

Sartre cannot permit such an allowance, for, as we shall see, under closer examination, his imaginative and perceptual consciences are qualitatively distinct and occur immediately to us as radically distinct. But, indeed, how can one mistaken even a weak perception for a strong idea, or vice versa, for which Hume has made such provision? One listens to a musical recording, and thinks he hears the doorbell. Upon inspection he realizes that the doorbell could not have been rung. Did he only "imagine" it? On Hume's view we would take it that the "image" of the doorbell ringing crossed his mind through quasi-mechanical, quasi-magical association of ideas (initiated by the music?) which he took to be an actual perception of the bell. An image or idea was mistaken for a perception or impression. Is this possible? Surely, what has happened is that a sound (a perception) in the musical recording was taken to be the sound (again a

---

<sup>23</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 94.



perception) of the doorbell. The interpretation of the perception led to a misinterpretation of the origin of that perception. Images cannot be mistaken for perceptions, nor can perceptions be "so faint and low that we cannot distinguish them from our ideas". A weak perception cannot be mistaken for a strong idea, but remains a perception of a weakly perceived object.<sup>24</sup>

One never has to resort to a judgement to question the validity of a perception; perception does not operate that way. One never wonders whether what he perceived, or even imagined, was really a perception or not, as can be seen in these examples.

I was sure that I put my hat away in the closet and there it is, I find it on the chair. So I set about to doubt myself, "Do I not believe my own eyes?" Not for a moment. I could wear myself out in search of explanations: but what I would take for granted throughout my reflections, without even going out of my way to go and touch the lining of the hat, is that the hat which I

---

<sup>24</sup>Sartre maintains this position even in cases of insanity and madness: cf. The Psychology of Imagination, pp. 190-191. We will see that images and perceptions (ideas and impressions) are radically distinct for Sartre, and this is why a weak or vague perception cannot be mistaken for a strong idea, but remains a perception of a vaguely perceived object. "This is what we call the phenomenon of quasi-observation. To be vaguely conscious of an image is to be conscious of a vague image. We are far from Berkeley and Hume, who denied the possibility of general images, of non-specific images. Berkeley's error lay in ascribing to the image conditions which apply only to perception. A hare vaguely perceived is nevertheless a specific hare. But a hare which is an object of a vague image is a vague hare." The Psychology of Imagination, pp. 18-9.

see is indeed my real hat. I believe my friend Peter is in America. Here he is; I perceive him at the corner of the street. Do I say to myself, "It's an image."? Not at all; my first reaction is to find out how it is possible that he has returned already: was he called back, is someone sick in his family? etc.<sup>25</sup>

One never employs reasoning to put perceptions into doubt; indeed, it is the perceptions which alter our reasonings. Such is the radical distinction which we experience to be between perception and images. Constantly images are a part of our world. I see the pen and paper; I feel the omnipresent Belgian rain, but amidst it all I imagine my wife preparing supper, or my brother's face though he is eight thousand miles away -- but always I can distinguish the imaginary supper from the real rain.

No image ever comes to be mixed in with real things. And that is indeed fortunate, for, as we have just seen, if this were otherwise, we would have no means to separate them and the world of the wakeful would not definitely distinguish itself from that of dream.<sup>26</sup>

If an image could be mistaken for a perception in any one given instance, it would seem that we could never be certain as to which was which. As Hume's distinction between them is solely one of degree (i.e. of "force and vivacity"), the decisions which distinguish them would surely always be said to be arbitrary at best, especially since Hume would surely

---

<sup>25</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 106.

<sup>26</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 109.

agree that some people have a "more vivid imagination" than others. Such a state of affairs would be very similar to the distinction Descartes had to face between waking and dreaming states. If the one is only distinguished from the other by degrees of coherence or force, how is one to know the level of coherence or force sufficient to judge their difference? At any later date we may realize that we thought it was enough at the time, but now we realize that it was, after all, only a vivid dream. And so the infinite regress continues into the future. There is no point of reference for the decision at any one given time: categories are judged on this account by non-categorical criteria. There can be no guarantee that at a future time we may realize that all these consciousnesses were not impressions but ideas, not perceptions but images; for we were as ignorant of the degree of force required to constitute a perception as Descartes had been in his effort to come to a definite present criteria to distinguish dreams from wakefulness. Hume fails to recognize that a categorical decision cannot be made with non-categorical evidence for that judgement. His "degrees" of force and liveness, which are qualitatively identical in both categories or faculties, cannot ultimately differentiate them categorically. "Consequently it would be necessary to give up trying to make an intrinsic distinction between an isolated image and an isolated sensation. Briefly, there would no longer be an

immediate recognition of an image as an image."<sup>27</sup>

Hume's metaphysic of the image fails because of the very nature of the image as it is first given on page one of the Treatise. His mistake is a common one: that the mind somehow "copies" and "represents" the true external reality. A successful examination of Sartre's concept of the imagination, with its intentional correlate, must begin with the breakdown of this misconception. Without realizing the impossibility of patching up some feeble connection between perceptual and imaginative consciousness, one cannot examine the distinctive characteristics of each, which renders them distinct. One cannot affirm their identity, then go on to explain their radical natures! If one begins by asserting their essential identity, this very assertion destroys the possibility of ultimately being able to distinguish them.

We must extricate ourselves entirely therefore from this common, but fallacious "illusion d'immanence", in which one can think only in physical terms. "It is necessary particularly to rid oneself of our almost unshakeable habit of

---

<sup>27</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 94. Sartre believes the image to be radically distinct, and part and parcel of its distinctness is that it is presented and known to consciousness as distinct: i.e. the image presents itself immediately to consciousness as image. "On voit ce qui s'ensuit et qui est le résultat direct de l'attitude métaphysique que nous avons signalée (Hume's position): c'est que l'image en tout que telle perd son caractère de donnée immédiate." L'Imagination, p. 95.

habit of conceiving all modes of existence on the model of physical existence."<sup>28</sup> Where does one start? This "thinking" in physical terms, alone, ought to be fair warning: one thinks in mental terms and perceives in physical terms. Yet, the terms themselves of both physical and psychical reference refer to the same object. I see the desk-clock before me, I close my eyes and imagine it: it is still the desk-clock itself which is the object of my thought. The physical perception of the object and the mental image of the object share the same essence.<sup>29</sup> But in chapter III we shall see that they are not different entities which share similar qualities as Hume would have us believe. The imagination "indicates" or "points" intentionally at the same object which "appears" to perception: their essence is the same because they indicate

---

<sup>28</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup>By essence here, I believe Sartre means no more than an identity of essential reference. Consciousness is only consciousness of an object: if two different consciousnesses intend the same object, then the essence of those two consciousnesses is said to be the same. The use of essence in this manner may be better understood by pointing out that two perceptual consciousnesses of the same object are essentially alike (share the same essence) because they intend or refer to the same object. In other words, the object is the same (essential) object of those two perceptions. The notion of essence here introduces the notion of objective identity into the concept of intentionality. Sartre uses this term merely to signify the basically identical object which different forms of consciousness may refer to. They refer to the same essential object, but that same essential object of each consciousness is said to exist differently, i.e. the object as perceived, or the object as imagined.

precisely the same object. However, this does not mean their mode of existence is the same. A shared essence does not imply a shared existence, for one exists as a perceived object, the other as imagined object. For Sartre this had been Hume's error: he had assumed that the image shared the same basic kind of existence as the percept, because he constructed it to share ultimately the same qualities. "...a sliding occurs, and from the affirmation of the identity of essence between the image and the object, one passes to an identity of existence."<sup>30</sup>

Sartre says it is this confusion of the "deux plans différents d'existence" which led to the many different kinds of naive metaphysics of the image.<sup>31</sup> In the case of Hume's theory of the image, his problem lay in making of the image an internal, reawakened perception: the one having the same "thing-like" existence as the other. "This metaphysics consisted in making of the image a copy of the thing, making the image itself exist as a thing."<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup>In L'Imagination Hume is only one of a long list of such metaphysical theories which Sartre criticizes in this work. Others include Taine, Descartes, Leibnitz, Spinoza, Bergson, Lachelier, Robot, Spaier, Mayerson, and others.

<sup>32</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 4.

To be sure, in an "intending" perceptual consciousness of an object, there remains an element which is not wholly synthesized by consciousness. There exists a thing perceived. "The perceived object opposes itself to and imposes itself upon thought. We must fashion the sequence of our ideas by reference to the perceived object; we must await it, make hypotheses concerning its nature, observe it."<sup>33</sup> All that is meant by this is that we cannot create perceptions, for the base of the perceptive consciousness is its reference to the world as "toujours-déjà-donnée."<sup>34</sup> Nor does this mean the image has no less of a reference to its object as object. However, we observe perceived objects; but images are not observed. If all thought were reduced to the "recalling, reorganizing, and taking note" of previously formed ideas as according to Hume, then all thought would be reduced to an observation of images exactly parallel fundamentally to perception. Imagination becomes a mental mosaic, if images are given this "sensory" character of weakened and reawakened impressions. The mind in such a case would have a receptive character and not a creative one. Yet, in fact, this does not seem to be the case. I do not "call up" images, I "conjure" up" images. "Nous formons des images, nous construisons

---

<sup>33</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 113.

<sup>34</sup>A. De Waelhens, Le Choix, Le Monde, L'Existence, (Paris: Arthaud, 1947), p. 56.

des schèmes."<sup>35</sup> The imaginative consciousness is not receptive, but actively creative; indeed, this power of creativity seems generally a part of imagination: our images and concepts often drain our conscious attention from our perceptual consciousness as much as the reverse occurs. The daydream imagines fantastical and absent worlds which absorb our attention from the observed here and now. The contemplative thinker conceives of roots and binary systems, categorical imperatives, and "time" while observing no more than a piece of chalk or a black-board. Yet, conceived as a "copy" in the mind, observed as an object, the image loses its spontaneous character. Hume seems to have realized that this fundamental spontaneity was missing from his faculty of the imagination, for he attempted to restore this missing spontaneity by means of his mechanical "powers" of the imagination which somehow combine the "simple" ideas into the fantastical "complex" ideas of imagination (golden cities, fairy lands, etc.). Yet, he could not undo what was a necessary part of his system, i.e. his adoption of a resuscitated perception rather than a spontaneous image. Accordingly Sartre states:

The primary characteristic of Hume's "im-pression", indeed, is their opacity. And it is this very opacity which constitutes their character as sensory. Nothing could be truer, moreover, with reference to perceptions. There is, finally, in the yellow colour of this ashtray, in the roughness of that piece of wood, something irreducible, incomprehen-

---

<sup>35</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 113.



sible, given. This given reveals not only the opaque side of perception, but also the receptive side, and these are only two sides of the same reality. But Hume did not limit himself to describing the sensory content of perception: he wanted to constitute the world of consciousness by means of these contents alone, that is, he doubled the perceptual order with an order of images which are the same sensory contents but at a lower degree of intensity. Thus, the images of association represent centres of opaqueness and of receptivity. The yellow colour of this ashtray when it is reborn under the classification of a weakened impression, retains its character of givenness: it remains an irreducible, an irrational. Above all, and precisely because it is pure positivity, it remains an inert element.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, as an inert element, Hume's image could never "call itself to mind" of its own energy; it is not spontaneously created. It relies on something else, some force. Hume's appeal to the mechanistic powers which impart this energy cannot succeed. The appeal to such a psychological principle which unites these passive picture-images in the mind cannot impart spontaneity to an imagination containing only inert representations of the opaque world of perception. Nor could this force be a systematizing spontaneity, for such a spontaneity could not contain passivity within itself. For, "a spontaneity could never contain portions of passivity. It is activity through and through, and as a result, transparent to itself -- or else there is no such thing."<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, pp. 119-20.

<sup>37</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 120.

Hume's ideas are passive and weakened "particles" of reflected impressions. They are inert. In a simple example, Hume's ideas are like a big bag of marbles, and each marble is an irreducible "simple idea". The force required to play with the marbles cannot come from the marbles themselves. It remains, even within Hume's system, an external force. Moreover, this power is an assumed concept of inertia; it is this inertial force which is external to and not a part of the mind whatever, yet, which nevertheless manipulates the marbles and operates human reasoning. The mind is inert "things" in which all changes and impulses come from without and remain radically external to these inert participles or "simple ideas" which it sets in motion. Such an assumed inertial force acting on a mind filled with inert objects, in effect, all but denies the mental world, and any valid distinction between psychic and physical reality. Hume ultimately is seen to deny any distinction between psychic and physical reality. If the distinctions between impressions and ideas were of such a nature as Hume describes them, this analysis of his position would be simply descriptive. Yet, we shall see that adoption of such a view is untenable simply because the distinctions between impressions and ideas are quite apparent. The one presents itself as distinct from the other to such an extent that Hume's failure to recognize their distinctions and to assert their ultimate similarity does not

account for our experiences which we have of impressions and ideas.

Sartre admits that Hume's system is consistent; associationism is internally sound in its adherence to its axioms and assumptions. Yet, it is not adequate. We shall see that the spontaneity of imaginative consciousness alone demonstrates to us that, though consistent, Hume's theories cannot give an adequate description of reality. Consciousness, as consciousness of its object, is a spontaneous act performed by consciousness; consciousness is spontaneous activity, not the association of passive "thought-pictures". "And so the metaphysical theory of images fails ultimately in its attempt to relocate the spontaneous awareness of an image, and the first step of a concrete psychology must be to rid itself of any metaphysical postulates."<sup>38</sup>

It has been said that an image is not a copy of a perception -- not even in the world of semi-differentiation to which Hume's metaphysical hypothesis led. It even has been said that it is not possible for the one to be characterized and be given the same qualities as the other because they "exist differently". It must now be shown that they exist differently, and also be demonstrated that imaginative consciousness is, indeed, spontaneous. In short, it must first be shown how each consciousness exists and how we come

---

<sup>38</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, pp. 109-10.

to know that they exist in that way, distinct from the other.

### III

#### IMAGINATIVE AND PERCEPTUAL CONSCIOUSNESS: THEIR QUALITIES AND THEIR DISTINCTIONS

To declare that the image is not a perception is all well and good. But simply to state this is not sufficient. It is necessary to buttress this affirmation by a consistent description of the psychic fact we call "an image". If one ends up implicitly confounding image and perception, it is, indeed, pointless to cry so loudly that they are distinct.<sup>1</sup>

But what is a "psychic fact", and how can it be described, that is, what method can be employed to give an accurate description of that psychic fact with assurance?

As already implied, the concept of intentionality is called upon to renew the notion of the image. "It is known that for Husserl...all consciousness is consciousness of something."<sup>2</sup> Intentionality becomes the essential structure of all consciousness, first of all, in so far as it makes a radical distinction between consciousness and the object of which it is a consciousness. The object remains "outside of us", or it is transcendent. "Without doubt there are contents of consciousness, but these contents are not the object of consciousness: through them intentionality envisages the object, which itself is the correlative of consciousness but is

---

<sup>1</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 144.

not that consciousness.<sup>3</sup> The mind contains immanent subjective or "hyletic" elements, but consciousness is not constituted by these elements, for these in and of themselves do not form the image per se, the "image of 'x'". Nor can the consciousness of a tree be reduced to the fibro-vascular twitchings in the brain, simply because these again are not the image of the tree as such. These, rather, are the means by which consciousness constitutes itself as aiming at or pointing to its transcendent object. In other words, the subjective, hyletic data which Hume unfortunately used as the constitutional element of the image are, in fact, the subjective matter on which an intentional transcending consciousness can operate. The object itself, of which I have a consciousness, is always radically distinct from my consciousness as such.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 145.

<sup>4</sup>Even the "non-existing figment of the imagination" remains an object of which I am conscious, albeit that the consciousness has itself created the object of which it is a consciousness; consciousness cannot be reduced even to its own imaginative creations as "constituting elements". It remains a consciousness of such creations. One is referred here in this regard to section 23 of Husserl's Ideas: "Naturally the centaur itself is not mental (psychic), it exists neither in the soul, nor in consciousness, nor anywhere else, it is in fact "nothing", mere "imagination"; or, to be more precise, the living experience of imagination is the imagining of a centaur. To this extent, indeed, 'the centaur as meant', the centaur as fancied, belongs to the experience itself as lived. But we must also be aware of confusing this live experience of imagination with that in the experience which is imagined, qua object imagined." (Or "One cannot confuse the Erlebnis of the imagined centaur with that

The results of this position are far from associationism. If the hyletic elements of the image no longer constitute the imagination, then imagination, as a form of consciousness, becomes an active apprehension of its object; the image is an intentional structure of that object by consciousness.

One realizes the immediate consequences for the image: the image, too, is an image of something. We are dealing, then, with an intentional relationship between a certain consciousness and a certain object. In a word, the image ceases to be a psychic content; it is not in consciousness in the aspect of a constitutive element, but is in consciousness as an object in image form.<sup>5</sup>

The image is no longer an inert content in the mind, some faint memory of a perception, far removed from its object.

---

centaur which has been imagined as such.") Cf. also Sartre's L'Imagination, p. 147.: "The non-existence of the centaur or of the chimera does not give us the right to reduce them to mere psychic functions. Husserl restored to the centaur its transcendence in the very heart of its unreality (néant). Unreality (néant) such as you wish: but precisely by that token it is not in consciousness." "Negation" as a property of the imagination will necessitate further examination, but this will necessarily have to follow in a study of the image as such. It suffices here to show that consciousness is not reduced to mere hyletic elements.

<sup>5</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 146. The last phrase, that the image "is in consciousness as an object in image form" is contradictory to Sartre's thesis. The very purpose of Sartre's arguments is to show that nothing can be in consciousness, and this phrase sticks out in total contradiction to his general thesis expressed: "But the chair is not in consciousness, not even as an image." The Psychology of Imagination, p. 7. Evidently, what the reader must do is to interpret this flagrant error on Sartre's part as just another of the many examples of his lack of philosophical precision and rigour which one finds in his texts. To remain in keeping with his thesis, Sartre should have written this phrase as "but is presented to consciousness as an object in image form;"

It is itself an intentional structure of consciousness, an unitary and synthetic consciousness in relation to its transcendent object. "There are not more could there be images in consciousness. But the image is a certain type of consciousness. The image is an act and not a thing. The image is conscious of something."<sup>6</sup> The image has a direct relationship to its object, and not an extrinsic and enfeebled relationship.

The image of my friend Peter is not a vague phosphorescence, a wake left in my consciousness by the perception of Peter; it is an organized form of consciousness which refers in its own way to my friend Peter; it is one of the possible means of aiming at the real being of Peter. Thus, in the act of imagination, consciousness refers directly to Peter.<sup>7</sup>

The "image" becomes an intentional "Erlebnis" with its own characteristic modes of apprehension, but the object which it apprehends in a different manner is still the same object as that apprehended by perception.

Whether I see or imagine that chair, the object of my perception and that of my image are identical: it is the chair of the straw on which I am now seated. Only consciousness is related in two different ways to the same chair. The chair is envisioned in both cases in its concrete individuality, its corporeality. Only, in one of the cases the chair is "encountered" by consciousness; in the other it is not....What we find here is...a certain type of consciousness, a synthetic organization, which has a direct relation to the existing chair and whose

---

or "is expressed by consciousness as an object in image form."

<sup>6</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 162.

<sup>7</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, pp. 147-48.



very essence consists precisely of being related in this or that manner of the existing chair.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, by the intentional character of consciousness, to be an image, or to be a perception means to be related to the same object in a certain way. "An image is nothing else than a relationship."<sup>9</sup> And since it is an intentional relationship between consciousness and its object, the result is a consciousness of that object, even for imagination. It is for this reason that Sartre would prefer the terms "perceptual consciousness" and "imaginative consciousness" in lieu of perception and image, to show that they are the same species of relation towards a transcendent object. The distinction points out that imagination is a form of active consciousness, and that "an image is only a name for a certain means which consciousness has to take aim on its object."<sup>10</sup> It is only one of differing relationships which consciousness has towards its object. Their essence remains the same. "To perceive, conceive, imagine: these are the three types of consciousness by which the same object can be given to us."<sup>11</sup>

In the preceding section it was shown that perceptual

---

<sup>8</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 148.

<sup>11</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 8.

consciousness and imaginative consciousness must be radically different in character if the problems of the "illusion d'immanence" and "naive metaphysics" are to be overcome. Now it seems clear that both modes of consciousness intend the same object, but do so in different ways. The manner which consciousness approaches its object, that is, the relationship consciousness adopts towards its object (i.e., as perceptual or imaginative), will radically distinguish imagination from the same object as perceived. Imagination is but one way consciousness has to "intend" or to consider its object.

The word image can therefore only indicate the relation of consciousness to the object; in other words, it means a certain manner in which the object makes its appearance to consciousness, or, if one prefers, a certain way in which consciousness presents an object to itself.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, the way in which consciousness presents an object to itself determines the character of that object as either perceived or imagined. That is to say, consciousness presents the same essential object to itself, but that object exists in different ways because it is intentionally experienced by consciousness in different ways: i.e., as perceptual or imaginative. Each form of consciousness "apprehends" its objects with distinguishable characteristics. "Certainly we now are able to understand that the image and the perception are two different intentional Erlebnisse, distinguished

---

<sup>12</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 7.

above all by their intentions."<sup>13</sup> Imagination is an intentional consciousness of its object, just as is perception. But as imaginative, the intentional correlative is experienced by consciousness with different characterizations than the object experienced as perceived. We shall return to an examination of these distinguishing characteristics as found in our general experiences, but first we must see how our experiences themselves are to be examined.

We have seen what a "psychic" fact is. It is the transcendent object appearing as a correlate of imaginative consciousness; that is, our image of "x". A coherent and consistent description of the psychic fact known as an "image" becomes the point of departure for the discovery of the true nature of our imaginative consciousness. A description of the different manners in which imagination and perception "posit" their object will radically distinguish the two.

To show their distinctive characteristics, each must be described, and described assuredly. Thus, "it is by eidetic description that one is required to begin."<sup>14</sup> Sartre does not wish to begin such a phenomenological description upon naive foundations. In the method of phenomenology, he wishes to "turn naturally to our immediate experiences."<sup>15</sup> Husserl

---

<sup>13</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 150.

<sup>14</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 159.

<sup>15</sup>Edmund Husserl, "Phenomenology", p. 699.

stated in Ideas that "we must always bear in mind that what things are...they are as things of experience. Experience alone prescribes their meaning, and indeed, when we are dealing with things that are founded on fact, it is actual experience...which does the prescribing."<sup>16</sup> Sartre, too, wishes to return to the undeniable certainty of actual, immediate experience, "to recommence from the beginning...and attempt, above all, to acquire an intuitive vision of the intentional structure of the image."<sup>17</sup> The "psychic fact" is intuitive and therefore certain; that is, the image qua image as direct experience, is the subject of the enquiry. How is it to be described accurately as image? Just as Sartre wishes the certainty of immediate encounter as evidence, so too does he wish an accurate description of that evidence (which necessarily cannot be given in that experience). He returns to the spirit of the Cartesian and Husserlian cogito for such a basis:

So we shall ignore theories. We want to know nothing about the image but what reflection can teach us....For the present we only wish to attempt a "phenomenology" of the image. The method is simple: we shall produce images, reflect upon them, describe them; that is, attempt to determine and to classify these distinctive characteristics.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup>Edmund Husserl, Ideas, p. 133-4.

<sup>17</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 158.

<sup>18</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 4.

Why return to reflection in the Cartesian spirit? In order to achieve its irrefutable certainty and to avoid the pitfalls of a naive metaphysics.

It is certain that when I produce the image of Peter, it is Peter who is the object of my actual consciousness. As long as that consciousness remains unaltered, I could give a description of the object as it appears to me in the form of an image, but not of the image as such. To determine the properties of the image as image, I must turn to a new act of consciousness: I must reflect.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, although one examines experiences themselves, one must reflect upon the experience in order to carry out that examination. It is, however, of the very nature of consciousness and the reflexive attitude, to have an immediate awareness of the experience as primary evidence. That is, "what has come to be known as an 'image' occurs immediately as such to reflection."<sup>20</sup> The image appears to consciousness as immediately distinguishable from other forms of consciousness such as perception, "because it presents itself to reflection with certain traits, certain characteristics, which at once determine the judgement 'I have an image.'" The art of reflection thus has a content of immediate certainty.<sup>21</sup> One must begin with the experience or intuition of the event itself, and through reflection upon that experience examine its charac-

---

3. <sup>19</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p.

3. <sup>20</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p.

3. <sup>21</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p.

teristics immediately given within that experience in order to effect a description. The characteristics of that description will be the answer to the question, "What is an image?" "One must try to set out the eidetic of the image, that is to say, fix upon and describe the essence of this psychological structure such as it appears to reflexive intuition."<sup>22</sup>

The method of producing images, reflecting upon them, and describing them is, indeed, relatively straightforward. However, if the description relies upon reflection, can we be sure of the certainty of reflexive intuition? Since Sartre begins with an examination of the immediate experiences apprehended as such by the reflexive cogito, we must further examine the nature of the reflexive cogito before examining the evidence it is to furnish us with. We must examine further the nature of consciousness and of reflecting consciousness, before assuming it will furnish the evidence this method hopes to provide. Therefore:

The starting point must be, rather, this irrefutable fact: it is impossible for me to form an image without at the same time knowing that I am forming an image; and the immediate consciousness which I have of the image as such may become the basis for judgements of existence (of the type: I have an image of 'x'; this is an image, etc.), but it is itself a pre-predicative evidence.<sup>23</sup>

The immediate intuition or experience becomes the

---

<sup>22</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 143.

<sup>23</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 110.

"pre-predicative" evidence or the basis of our knowledge of the image; description is carried out by the certainty of reflection. This is first of all possible because of the very existential inference encountered in any situation.

"Existence for consciousness includes a consciousness of its existence. It appears as a pure spontaneity, confronted with the world of things which is pure inactivity."<sup>24</sup>

The consciousness is not only consciousness of its existing object, but also of its own existence. For, if it were a consciousness of a chair, but did not know it was a consciousness of a chair, it would be unconscious of its being as a consciousness of that chair which, according to Sartre, is a contradiction. It would be consciousness which remained an unconsciousness.<sup>25</sup>

To exist spontaneously is to exist for oneself and by oneself. Only one reality deserves the name of spontaneity; and that is consciousness. In effect, to exist and to be conscious of

---

<sup>24</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Being and Nothingness, p. lxi. "However, the necessary and sufficient condition for a knowing consciousness to be knowledge of its object, is that it be conscious of itself as being that knowledge. This is a necessary condition, for if my consciousness were not consciousness being consciousness of that table, it would then be consciousness of that table without consciousness of being so. In other words, it would be consciousness ignorant of itself, an unconscious -- which is absurd. This is a sufficient condition, for my being conscious of being conscious of that table suffices in fact for me to be conscious of it." Cf. also, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 14.

existing are one and the same thing for consciousness. In other words, the supreme ontological law of consciousness is as follows: the only way for a consciousness to exist, is to be conscious that it exists. It is therefore evident that consciousness can determine itself to exist, but that it is only able to act upon itself.<sup>26</sup>

Consciousness can determine itself to exist precisely because it intends its object. Even in the "passive" perceptual consciousness, it remains self-determining, in so far as consciousness presents the object to itself with certain intentions. Clearly, I can imagine at will, and it is not difficult to see that imaginative consciousness is fully self-determining. Yet, in perceptual consciousness as well, this intentional act of consciousness is equally self-determining. When I fix my intentional consciousness as perception upon a stone, for example, I can do so as a gravel-pit worker concerned only with its crushing qualities, as an historian of ancient civilization or an archæologist concerned only with its past uses, as an architect concerned only with its present structural uses, as a geologist concerned only with its crystallization and internal formation, as a collector concerned only with its colour or peculiar shape, as a prospector concerned only with its possible value, etc. Because the object can be constituted as such and such a kind of object by an active consciousness, consciousness can determine

---

<sup>26</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, pp. 125-6.



itself to view or constitute its objects. I can change my intentional "attitude": I can determine my consciousness to exist by intentionally constituting an object of which I am conscious, i.e. by directing my attention upon an object. I can alter my consciousness to exist differently by constructing any different consciousnesses of that object as listed above; or, I can determine my consciousness not to exist by simply turning away, forgetting the object, or in any way simply ceasing to be conscious of it. My consciousness can only act upon itself, i.e. determine its own intentions of the object it presents to itself. I can determine an imaginary rock to jump upwards or do anything I wish because the imagination is "a consciousness through and through"<sup>27</sup> and totally creates its object as imaginary: i.e. only having whatever I intend for it. Yet, I cannot make my consciousness act upon the perceived object sui generis, to jump up in mid-air. Consciousness can only act upon itself. Precisely because it acts upon itself, the immediate intuition is certain. I look at an object; it is stone. Later I discover it cannot be a stone, but is a piece of rubber. My object of the original intuition, however, remains as a certainty simply because it had been perceived and constituted by my intentional consciousness as stone at that time, and I only subsequently altered my intentional attitude towards the

---

<sup>27</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 17.

object. But, I can never deny or alter how I experienced that object. Consciousness is spontaneous; its act of intuition itself cannot also give a spontaneous description of that intuition itself. We must move to a "meta" level -- step back from the intuition to grasp it as such. Only its existence as consciousness of a transcendent object is given in the immediate intuition. Anything beyond the actual experience itself belongs to the domain of reflection. We must return to the certainty of the cogito ergo sum, to learn not only that the intuition is (it gives its own existence), but also how it exists, and with what characteristics.

Yet, Sartre recognizes the problems of this cogito argument, as well as its irrefutable evidence. In the "I think, therefore I am" of Descartes, the "consciousness" which says "I am" is not the same consciousness which does the thinking. The thinking or "doubting" is a primary consciousness, whereas placing that doubting consciousness under reflection is to reduce it to a secondary order, to make of it an object for consciousness, but not that consciousness itself, which remains in the act of reflecting. The Cartesian cogito or doubting consciousness is not the same doubted consciousness of the ergo sum; rather the doubting consciousness reflects upon the doubted consciousness as its object.

Consciousness is always consciousness of something, as we have seen. This means that consciousness is intentional

and directive in nature, necessarily pointing to a transcendent object other than itself. The cogito, therefore, cannot be the same "I am" which follows the Cartesian "ergo" of equivalence. In contrast, the laws of intentionality specify that the true cogito must remain non-thetic, non-personal (non-positional), and purely spontaneous or active. Consciousness becomes simply a "pointing-towards" -- il y a une chaise, il y a la feuille de papier. Only this simple "pointing-towards" its object remains irrefutable in the immediate intuition, the immediate experience. There is no me until reflection posits one. There is no "ego consciousness", only a consciousness of an objectified and constructed Ego. That is, even the ego becomes a transcendent object of consciousness. The concept of intentionality entails that consciousness remains pure act, never an object. It is pre-reflexive. The ego therefore is not a subject which manipulates consciousness; consciousness remains pre-reflexive and spontaneous, and the ego becomes a constructed unity of these spontaneous consciousnesses in the petrification process of reflection. Sartre posits this "pre-reflexive cogito" as primary consciousness.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, "La Transcendence de l'Ego: Esquisse d'une description phénoménologique", Recherches Philosophiques, VI (1936-37), 85-123. It is translated into English as The Transcendence of the Ego, trans. F. Williams and R. Kirkpatrick (New York: Noon Day Press, 1968). Cf. especially p. 38 of this translation.

This pre-reflexive cogito remains non-thetic and directive. But, if it is directive and spontaneous, then its object is transcendent, and the cogito remains unique and isolated on pain of losing its spontaneity. This cannot be done; it can never lose its spontaneous characteristic: to "capture" the cogito is to reflect upon it, which inevitably changes it from a spontaneous consciousness to a static object of reflective consciousness. Consciousness itself remains in the act of reflecting, merely having posited the previous act of consciousness as the new object of that spontaneous reflecting. Thereby, consciousness remains spontaneous and transcendent, even to its own past. One can find where it has been, but this necessarily and radically alters where it is. Consciousness remains non-thetic, non-positional, and purely spontaneous even when this involves a transcendency to itself; "reflecting consciousness posits the consciousness reflected-on, as its object. Consciousness of self is not dual."<sup>29</sup>

And, here is Sartre's basic point of departure from Hume. If consciousness is non-thetic and non-positional, but rather pure act or pure spontaneity, the imagination or imaginative consciousness can never be a reified image, nor something filled with such images. Imagination remains pure,

---

<sup>29</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. lxii.

active consciousness. "Therefore, if the image is consciousness, it is pure spontaneity, that is to say, consciousness of itself, transparent before itself, and it exists only in so far as it knows itself. It is not, therefore, a sensible content."<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, once images become "sensory contents" or objects in the mind -- passive little marbles brought out of the bag<sup>31</sup> -- and observed like things, then they become expelled from thought itself. For as objects in the mind,

---

<sup>30</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 126.

<sup>31</sup>The "bag" may also be the theory of the unconscious, which is a handy concept of more modern associationists which Hume was unfortunate enough not to have had recourse to, but which he, nevertheless, seems to have made implicit use of! The assumption of an unconscious obviously implies the view that consciousness not only "contains" thoughts or ideas but that this "box" of the mind has dark corners containing ideas of which we are not conscious ourselves, or at least of which we refuse to allow ourselves to be fully conscious, and which need the help of a psychoanalyst to extract from us and interpret for us. In such a classical Freudian view the external force needed to manipulate the marbles was the "sexual libido". Modern psychology places less and less emphasis upon psychoanalysis and has rejected the classical Freudian "libido" theory, because of the innate problems of a consciousness being unaware of part of its mental activity. Modern psychiatry and psychology is becoming increasingly aware that the consciousness is, indeed, aware of itself entirely, and precisely because it wishes to avoid this self-awareness, attempts to effect a "mauvaise-foi", that is, reject its self-awareness in attempting to make of spontaneous consciousness a petrified object with certain character traits. Even the mental patient feels he must follow these traits to avoid reality because the imaginary world is easier or more enjoyable: "Le schizophrène sait fort bien que les objets dont il s'entoure sont irréels: c'est même pour cela qu'il les fait apparaître. A ce sujet l'observation de Marie B. est significative: (Borel et Robin, "Les Reveries morbides", Annales medico-psychological, mars 1924)...J'ai dit

nevertheless, they must still be observed qua objects by some thinking faculty which is necessarily above and beyond the sensible contents apprehended. The apprehending even of sensible contents of imagination still entails some imaginative act of consciousness which does the apprehending. As sensible contents, the images would necessarily be external to and independent of consciousness: they would rather appear to consciousness somehow, which would constitute, manipulate them, etc.; that is, as sensible contents they would still need a consciousness to which they would appear, even as sensible contents. The image, as sensible contents, still would require a consciousness which is aware of it:

One sees therefore, the image posed as an independent object which is apprehended by thought in one manner or another, but which exists in itself in a manner different from that of consciousness.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, Hume's image which exists as a sensible copy of a percept, sharing the same qualities, must ultimately be distinguished from and expelled out of thought itself. It remains an object for thought only. After all, if something becomes an object, something passive and inert to be "observed", then it is mental activity, consciousness, which must still perform the observing, the understanding, or whatever. The "picture gallery" must end somewhere in order to be seen by the mind, even if it is only to be seen as a group of

---

que j'étais le reine d'Espagne. Dans le fond je savais bien que ce n'était pas vrai."

<sup>32</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 128.

hanging or inert pictures. There must be an active force, a "spontaneity". The image must be comprehended, not only apprehended, in order to hope to find its meaning. Yet, both comprehension and apprehension imply a subject and an object, not just an inert group of objects. Indeed, Hume's images become a once-removed world of perception rather than a distinct world of imagination; it is like having the reproductions in the guidebook of the Louvre existing in the mind as inert, unobserved objects, rather than a conscious looking at the paintings themselves. In short, Hume's "faint images" and "strong impressions" both obey the laws of things, not the laws of consciousness. His images do not adhere to the laws of thought. The mind obviously cannot distinguish the impressions from ideas, the ideas from the rest of the "things" of the world. Further, the all-important question remains unanswered: how is this "thing", the image with physical properties ever to be related to human thought? Hume's associationism must be abandoned because the role of his image cannot fulfill the requirements of any adequate theory of imagination:.

Every theory of the imagination must satisfy two requirements: it must account for the spontaneous distinction which the mind establishes between its images and its perceptions; and it must explain the role which the image plays in the operations of thought.<sup>33</sup>

And so, the image can never be interpreted as a

---

<sup>33</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 128.

faded, weakened, copied, or vague impression, and still hope to account for our awareness of it. Rather, as imaginative consciousness, it is a consciousness immediately directed towards its object, and not towards a previous perception of that object. An image of this piece of paper (i.e. when I am not perceiving it) remains an image of this piece of paper upon which I have written; it is not a faded revival of a previous perception of the piece of paper. The latter would be an image of the perception as object and would be written: "I am conscious of perceiving the piece of paper", or "I am conscious of my perception of this paper." It is possible to make such a perceptual experience the object of imaginative consciousness, but the object of that consciousness has changed from the original piece of paper to a new imaginative consciousness of a previous perceptual consciousness. Here we would be on the reflexive level, and would have posited a new and different object of consciousness, i.e. "the-act-of-perceiving"; this new object of consciousness remains quite distinct from either the perception of the paper itself or the image of the paper itself.

The consciousness of the paper remains a directly pointing act of apprehension towards the paper itself, whether that consciousness of the paper is perceptual or imaginary. It is the paper, and not the reflected or "faded" perception of the paper which is posited as the object of the image.



I turn my head away. I no longer see the sheet of paper....However, the sheet appears to me again with its shape, its colour, and its location; and I know well enough, the instant that it appears to me, that this is precisely the sheet I was looking at just a moment ago....Assuredly I do affirm that it is the same sheet with the same qualities.... The sheet which appears to me at this moment has an identity of essence with the sheet which I was looking at just a moment ago. And, by essence, I understand not only the structure but also the individuality. Only this identity of essence is not accompanied by an identity of existence. It is, indeed, the same sheet of paper...but exists in a different manner.<sup>34</sup>

With this simple intuition of (and reflection upon) an image, the image can safely be described. For the object of consciousness, whether reflexive or not, remains certain ...What has come to be known as an image occurs immediately as such to reflection. If this consciousness is immediately distinguishable from all others, it is because it presents itself to reflection with certain traits, certain characteristics, which at once determine the judgement 'I have an image.' The act of reflection thus has a content of immediate certainty which we shall call the essence of the image.<sup>35</sup>

However, a true "phenomenology" of the image cannot go beyond a mere description. Sartre, perhaps, remains stricter than Husserl himself to phenomenology as a "descriptive science". "It is one thing to describe the image and quite another to draw conclusions regarding its nature. In going from the

---

<sup>34</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, pp. 3-4.

one to the other we pass from certainty to probability."<sup>36</sup>

The essence is the same in perceptual as in imaginative consciousness, simply because in both modes of consciousness the object is the same. Both "intend" the same transcendent object. But the existence of the two forms of consciousness differs. This had been the error of Hume's metaphysic: "it resulted in the formation not of a single sheet of paper on two levels of existence but of two sheets exactly alike existing on the same level."<sup>37</sup>

This needs further examination. In "imagination" or in "imaginative consciousness" -- that is, in "imagining an object" -- the image can never be in consciousness, but remains an intending consciousness of a transcendent object. All consciousness is an act. In imagining an object, it is the act, and not the "mental image" which distinguishes perception and imagination. We have seen that such post facto analysis of a "mental image" can never lead to any precise distinction between imagination and perception, especially when the "mental image" is initially conceived as qualitatively the same as the percept. Rather, the act of consciousness as imagination is a consciousness of its object in a particular way which is different from the way in which consciousness as perception is a consciousness of that same

---

<sup>36</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Imagination, p. 4.

object. "To perceive, conceive, imagine: these are the three types of consciousness by which the same object can be given to us."<sup>38</sup> For all forms of consciousness the object (or "essence") remains the same:

The imaginative consciousness I have of Peter is not a consciousness of the image of Peter: Peter is directly reached, my attention is not directed on an image, but on an object.<sup>39</sup>

To form an image of Peter is to make an intentional synthesis which gathers up a mass of past events, which proclaims the identity of Peter by means of these diverse appearances and which presents this selfsame object in a certain form (in profile, three-fourths, full-length, half-length, etc.). This form is necessarily intuitive; what my actual intention grasps is the corporeal Peter, the Peter I can see, touch, hear, if I did see him, hear him, or touch him.<sup>40</sup>

In imagining an object, whether it be my absent friend or my now dead pet dog, I do not think of the "mental images" of them (not even in reflection, in which I would imagine, conceive, etc., a previous act of consciousness). Rather, I think of the friend himself, of my dog itself, etc. The object is the same for each manner in which I direct my consciousness at that object. It is this essential identity which Sartre calls the "essence" of the object. The first

---

<sup>38</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 16.

characteristic of this description of the image can now be clearly enunciated. The image is a consciousness, and as such it is therefore an act and not an object; it is spontaneous or pure activity. It apprehends its object directly as such activity, and the "image" comes to be seen as a relation which consciousness has towards an object. Imagination shares this characteristic of "spontaneity" or activity with perception, both positing the same essential object. This characteristic that imagination is pure activity has been emphasized due to its radical and initial departure from associationism and our "every day" attitude towards the nature of the image.

The object of imagination and perception is the same. Yet, the manner of existence of that object as it appears before our consciousness does differ according to how it is intentionally constituted or presented to consciousness, i.e. by imagination, perception, or conception. As consciousnesses, they are all spontaneous, all acts; their differences lie in how they intentionally constitute their object. How does this constitution of the same essential object differ between imagination and perception?

Perception proffers its object as here and now. "There is a chair" which confronts me, and imposes itself here before me in the immediate present. The image does not share this characteristic. It is of the very nature of imag-

inative consciousness that its object is posited as absent, or non-existent, or elsewhere, or "neutralized" (i.e. not posited as existing, but as figmentary such as Pegasus, unicorns, centaurs, Pickwick, etc.). Thus negation or negative attribution is not only a part of imaginary consciousness, it is a necessary part and forms a fundamental and essential characteristic of consciousness of an object constituted as imaginary. It is, perhaps, the principle characteristic quality of the image. When I imagine a friend, his image is characterized by his absence, either elsewhere in the city, or far away in North America. If I attempt to imagine him here, he is immediately imagined as non-existent here, for otherwise I could perceive him and not need to rely upon imagination. Therefore:

The characteristic of the intentional object of imaginative consciousness is that the object is not present and is posited as such, or that it does not exist, and is posited as not existing, or that it is not posited at all.<sup>41</sup>

It is impossible for a theory of the image such as that of associationism to incorporate this essential characteristic of imagination. Elements which share only the positive qualities of perception cannot include the idea of negative attribution as evident in imagined objects. Perception posits its objects in a position of existing before me in the present and only here and now. Imagination negates

---

<sup>41</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 16.

this perceptual presence (we often close our eyes to aid our imagination by attempting to annihilate our perceptions as much as possible) and posits its objects in the negative positions as absent, not-existent, non-existent, or as existing elsewhere (the positive "somewhere else" still contains the negative sense of "not here".) "The transcendent consciousness of Tree as an image posits the tree. But it posits it as an image, that is, in a manner which is not that of perceptual consciousness."<sup>42</sup> These negative attributes constitute an essential part of the intuition "I have an image". The image is formed with these characteristics: imagination actively approaches its object in the relationship of imagination in a negative manner, that is, negation actively is constitutive of the image from the outset. "This positional act -- and this is essential -- is not superimposed on the image after it has been constituted. The positional act is constitutive of the consciousness of the image."<sup>43</sup> Negation is a constitutive element in the formation of the image. How can associationism account for the sorrow which is a constitutive part of an image of a dead or absent loved one, if the image is only conceived as a resuscitation of the perception in happier circumstances? How can Hume add

---

<sup>42</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 14.

<sup>43</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 15.

the qualities of anxiety or loneliness to an image which by his theory can only copy precisely those qualities of the percept which would dispel that loneliness in the image: the perceived presence? Only the negative characteristic of the image as essentially different from the perception can include the "lack" which any image necessarily includes:

For instance, if the image of a dead loved one appears to me suddenly, I have no need of a 'reduction' to feel the ache in my heart: it is part of the image, it is the direct consequence of the fact that the image presents its object as not existing.<sup>44</sup>

Perception is total positivity: an object is posited as here and now. In imaginative consciousness, albeit a consciousness of something, nevertheless, the object of its consciousness is necessarily posited as negated in some way; otherwise it would be a perceptual consciousness. An image is, therefore, intentional (i.e. of something), but part of that very intentionality of the image is the positing of a "not-here-ness" or some negative attribution. "Nihilation" is thus a part of the "being" of an image in its distinct existence from that of a perception. Negative quantifiers and qualifiers are a part of the initial "givenness" of the image; consciousness constitutes its image as intentionally negated in some manner.

To be even more precise, a perceptual consciousness posits one negation in its existence, whereas an imaginative

---

<sup>44</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 16.

consciousness posits two negations in and by its existence. All consciousness, because it is a pre-reflective and primary consciousness of something, posits all its objects as transcendent. Further, in order to be consciousness, consciousness must know it is consciousness of that object. Thus the very transcendence of the intentional object means there is a separation between the cogito and the objects -- a separation between human consciousness and the things of and in the world. This is the gulf which, in Sartre's terms, separates pour-soi (consciousness) from en-soi (the world of objects). Immediately, therefore, a perceptual consciousness implies not being that transcendent object, and a spontaneous nihilation occurs. Imaginative consciousness immediately implies a double negation, or two negative qualifiers. The first posits an object which is not present (not here, not existing, etc.), the second distinguishes the object which is itself not the consciousness which is imagining that negated object. For instance, I do not imagine the paper while I am looking at it: I simply perceive it; yet, I perceive it as transcendent to my consciousness, as not my consciousness. Consciousness is no more than its object, yet simultaneously recognizes itself as consciousness of an object and therefore not that object. Consciousness, thus, is only pure act, and only when recognized as pure act, can one hope to understand why Sartre considers consciousness (pour-soi) a "nothing", a



hole in being (en-soi, the objects for consciousness). It is non-positional and recognizes all else as transcendent. Yet, there is precisely nothing left when the abstraction is made between en-soi and pour-soi, and the relation between consciousness and its object is broken, i.e. when the objects are taken away from consciousness. As pure act, then, perceptual consciousness posits its object as full positivity but posits it as a transcendent not-consciousness. In order to imagine the paper, however, I must not perceive it, i.e. I must posit the paper which is not there, and which is also not the consciousness which is actively positing. Imaginative consciousness therefore posits a truly negative object: it posits a transcendent object which is given as not existing in the existing world. Perceptual and imaginative consciousness -- percept and image -- are essentially constituted as qualitatively different.

We now see that the image is first and foremost a consciousness which actively posits its object, and secondly a consciousness which intentionally posits that object as an essential negation. These two characteristics of the image which are radically different from Hume's theory of the image, are supplemented by a third and equally essential characteristic. It must be admitted immediately that Hume did recognize this third characteristic when he proposed that images are faint and weak. However, the psychological considera-

tions concerning the nature of human consciousness responsible for this weaker state of the image remained an admitted mystery for Hume. We find that the two modes of consciousness are indeed distinguished by the strong as opposed to the weak, but certainly not because one has more and the other has less of the same qualities as Hume had believed. Precisely because they fundamentally differ in regards to positivity and negativity, their respective objects are constituted and formed distinctly as well. The positivity of perception and the negativity of imagination lead us then to a consideration of the third characteristic of the image, which Sartre has named the characteristic of "quasi-observation".

A perceptual consciousness is one of observed objects. By definition this means that although the object appears to me in its entirety as a complete object, nevertheless I see it only from one side at a time, that is, from one vantage point or position which could never of itself reveal the complete object to me.

The characteristic of a perception is that the object appears only in a series of profiles, of projections. The cube is certainly presented to me, I can touch it, see it; but I always see it only in a certain fashion which includes and excludes at one and the same time an infinity of other points of view. We must learn objects, that is to say, multiply upon them possible points of view. The object itself is a synthesis of all these appearances.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 9. One is referred to Husserl's classic description of the unity of the object from single view-points, Ideas, section 41.

The objects of perceptual consciousness are given by one point of view of that object, but are given as the synthesis of all possible points of view. When I perceive a cube, I can never see more than three of its sides at one time, and yet, I define the object as a cube with its necessary six sides. We must observe objects, perceive them from different points of view, pronouncing them this or that object by the evidence of one (or perhaps several remembered viewpoints) of an infinite number of possible viewpoints. This leads to error to be sure: we may occasionally call a stage-prop a house or a stranger a friend by hastily pronouncing judgement upon an insufficient number of viewpoints -- the front of the "house", the back of the "friend's" head, etc.. Usually, however, one viewpoint is enough to distinguish this chair from that table, this pen from the other still in its holder. That is to say, most objects which surround us have already been "learned" by us; we have already served an apprenticeship years ago and with reasonable accuracy most objects are disclosed to us through a single perspective, one profile or point of view being sufficient to present us with an object which itself is a synthesis of all such possible perspectives.

Although an object may disclose itself only through a single Abschattung, the sole fact of there being a subject implies the possibility of multiplying the points of view on that Abschattung. This suffices to multiply to infinity the Abschattung under consideration.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. lv.

Perception seen in this way as the unfolding of "the infinite in the finite"<sup>47</sup> radically differs from the objects of the imaginative consciousness. "The object of the perception overflows consciousness constantly."<sup>48</sup> That is, there is and will always be infinitely more possible viewpoints; an infinitely greater number of perspectives are always available which would add to our awareness of the object, theoretically at least. There is always more to see of an object by a mere turn of the head, alteration in lighting, distance from the object, etc. "There is always at each and every moment infinitely more than we see...this manner of brimming over is of the very nature of the objects."<sup>49</sup>

However, this is not characteristic of the intentional relationship which imaginative consciousness has with its object:

I think of a cube as a concrete concept, I think of its six sides and its eight angles all at once; I think that its angles are right angles, its sides squared. I am at the centre of my idea, I seize it in its entirety at one glance. I can think of the concrete essences in a single act of consciousness; I do not have to re-establish the appearance, I have no apprenticeship to serve. Such is, no doubt, the clearest difference between a thought and a perception. This is the reason why we can never perceive a thought or think a perception.

---

<sup>47</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. xlix.

<sup>48</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 11.

<sup>49</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 10.

The two phenomena are radically distinct: the one is knowledge which is conscious of itself and which places itself at once at the centre of the object; the other is synthetic unity of a multiplicity of appearances, which slowly serves its apprenticeship.<sup>50</sup>

Both modes of consciousness remain intentional relationships, that is, each is a consciousness of an object; for as Theaetetus admitted, consciousness without an object of that consciousness is tantamount to not thinking at all. The distinction between imaginative and perceptual consciousness does not rest on the object, but rather on the distinct ways in which each respective consciousness posits or presents or "approaches" its object. The relationship of imaginative consciousness to its object is one of totality and immediacy; that of perceptual consciousness is immediate in profile, but partial in view of the entire object posited: this perceptual object must be synthetically constructed, and can never be truly known or presented in its totality.

Perceptual consciousness involves not only a plenitude, but because of the infinite possible "approaches" the consciousness can adopt towards its object in the "field" of perception, perception is overflowing to the point of infinity. Perceived objects are abstractions and synthetic organizations; the planes and angles of a cube which are distended and distorted by the point of view the perceiver adopts, must

---

<sup>50</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 9.

be synthetically reconstructed as squares and ninety degree angles. On the other hand, unlike the perceived cube which must be "toured" for its profiles, "the cube as an image is presented immediately for what it is. In perception, a knowledge forms itself slowly; in the image the knowledge is immediate."<sup>51</sup>

And here we see the essential distinction it seems Hume has missed. Whereas the object of perceptual consciousness has an infinity of possible views (from which we can constantly learn more as these different profiles are reorganized and resynthesized together to form our object), the image can give no more after its initial formation without destroying itself and reconstructing another image. Therefore, unlike the overflowing perception, the image is static:

The image, on the other hand, suffers from a sort of essential poverty. Objects exist only in so far as they are thought of. This is what all those who consider the image to be a reborn perception fail to understand. The difference is not that of vividness but rather that the objects of the world of images can in no way exist in the world of perception; they do not meet the necessary conditions.<sup>52</sup>

The object of perceptual consciousness by its very nature has an infinite possibility of different points of view; there is always more to see from a different tilt of

---

<sup>51</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 10.

<sup>52</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 11.

the head, etc. The object of imaginative consciousness is limited to nothing more than that conscious attitude itself, which one takes towards an object. The image is negated as not being here and now and not being the consciousness itself; further, it contains no more than its immediate intentional constitution. It "never precedes the intention."<sup>53</sup> This is precisely why it yields certain and assured knowledge, and precisely why it can never yield more knowledge than it gives immediately, that is, which the consciousness intentionally gave it in its initial formation. The image is only in so far as it is imagined, or, in other words, the image is no more nor less than its intentional constitution. For this reason I can "learn" no more from it, as I can from the perceived object. For, it is precisely my intentions which have already given the image what it possesses: I have already synthetically constituted it in its totality.

The object of consciousness overflows consciousness constantly; the object of the image is never more than the consciousness one has; it is limited by that consciousness: nothing can be learned from the image that is not already known.<sup>54</sup>

The image teaches nothing, never produces an impression of novelty, never reveals any new aspect of the object.<sup>55</sup>

---

53Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 13.

54Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 11.

55Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 12.

The image gave me everything it possessed in a lump.<sup>56</sup>

The image teaches nothing: it is organized exactly like the objects which do not produce knowledge but it is completed at the very moment of its appearance.<sup>57</sup>

It is precisely consciousness itself which totally and wholly constitutes the object as an image of which it is a consciousness. This object can only be transparent to itself, teaching nothing new; it is precisely the knowledge already possessed by consciousness and put into the image which makes it what it is. The centaur is indeed an object of which I am conscious, but unlike the paper before me, the centaur can only be exactly what my intentions have constituted it to be.

In the image a certain consciousness does indeed present itself with a certain object. The object is therefore a correlative of a certain synthetic act, which includes among its structures a certain knowledge and a certain 'intention'. The intention is at the centre of the consciousness: it is the intention that envisages the object, that is, which makes it what it is....The object as an image is therefore contemporaneous with the consciousness I take of it, and it is determined exactly by that consciousness: it includes nothing in itself but what I am conscious of.<sup>58</sup>

---

p. 12. <sup>56</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination,

p. 11. <sup>57</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination,

p. 12. <sup>58</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination,



Since imagination is limited to precisely my consciousness of its object, yet, that object is wholly constructed and constituted by the intentions I put into it initially, intentionality does not only define consciousness; it defines and constitutes my imaginative objects as well. They can never exceed my intentional constitution of them.

Herein rises, perhaps, the greatest objection to Sartre's theory of the image. If the image is poverty-stricken, and cannot yield any more knowledge regarding its object than it was initially given, then the image cannot be "observed", or studied for new properties. Those who raise this question are immediately failing to recognize that they view the image not as an activity of an intentional consciousness, but as an inert object, a picture which can be studied.

Mary Warnock objects to an "unanalysable" image:

This is Sartre's view, and it seems to me to be neither very clear, nor, as far as I can understand it, strictly true. For in fact it is sometimes plausible to conjure up an image specifically in order to find out more about the object under consideration. If I am asked, for example, what colour somebody's tie was whom I met yesterday, I may create a mental image of the man and then discern by this means the colour of his tie. The difficulty is that I may get the colour wrong, and if I do, there is no immediate check on this. But at least this example might suggest that we sometimes suppose that we can study an image, and learn from it something which we did not at least consciously build into the image.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup>Mary Warnock, "The Concrete Imagination", The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology, I (1970), 9.

Such criticism is itself somewhat vague; whether we "suppose" that we can study and image or not, and whether we can or not, may alone be worth an examination. However, let us examine the possibility of extracting any new knowledge from our image. If I conjure up an image of an absent friend, let us say my wife whom I believe to be shopping, I constitute my image from the memory I have of her last appearance, that is, the image follows a definite and predetermined pattern. I can think of her by imaginative consciousness in a red coat, but I constitute the imaginative consciousness as wearing a yellow coat, because prior to the imaginative consciousness I know she does not have a red coat, but rather a golden leather one. Thus, my imagination intentionally constructs the image --- approaches her as image and defines her with the knowledge supplied by memory. But what of her scarf? My consciousness as imagination depicts her scarf as bright green. This coincides with my knowledge that she has a green scarf. But did I "look at the image" to discover its colour? No, nor upon reflection can I "suppose" I did so, as Warnock suggests. However, if there is a poverty, say, of her footwear, completely lacking in my image, I may reconstruct my image from knowledge I already have, to create an imaginative consciousness of her in coat, scarf, and boots; but no matter how long I study my image of head, coat, and scarf, no boots will appear! However, because precisely of the distinctive

character of her boots, I may realize the lack of "something" below the coat, and my knowledge that she always wears her boots in winter immediately compels me to reconstruct the image to a new consciousness of her as head, scarf, coat, and boots protruding below. Again I can ask of my imaginative consciousness "are the boots tied?" I examine the image once again. If I am honest, I see that I cannot answer this question. I realize that there is a "lack" of this information, i.e. it is not initially given by the image and I rationally reconstruct my image with boots tied or untied, and repeat the preceding process. That is, I progressively reconstruct the image to fulfill the needs my questioning demands of it: this is all done "after the fact" of the original imaginative act. I recognize the fact that as soon as I asked the question of the imaginative consciousness, that consciousness, thereby, having its attention drawn towards the lack of information it needed in order to supply the necessary answer, immediately reconstitutes itself to produce a new imaginative consciousness of her. Perhaps why Warnock feels we may study, or "suppose" that we can study an image, is simply this trait of imaginative consciousness to actively yet almost immediately reconstitute itself when attention is directed towards one aspect of its fundamental poverty. In her example of a man's tie (which I feel is an unfortunate example, because it is often the character of a man's tie to

be remembered), when she examines her image and finds a "lack of tie" or at least a lack of information as to its colour, imagination may immediately -- especially as I say when it concerns a man's memorable tie -- reconstitute itself to include the sole splash of colour most European men allow themselves, as a part of a new image. Indeed, the very gulf between consciousness and its object, as Sartre repeatedly points out, is the gulf whereby the questioning consciousness approaches its object. If then, the imaginative consciousness again questions an aspect of its object (the tie), a new questioning consciousness approaches the object and with its intentional attitude now encompassing the object from this new questioning approach (tie colour), the object is reconstituted with the new question, and, if possible, answered by that new intentional gaze. But the reflexive gaze of consciousness towards itself, i.e. the examination or questioning not of the object but of the image or imaginative consciousness itself can never yield any new information about the object: how can it, since the image is already petrified and limited as the intentions consciousness takes of its object. It is for this reason that examination of the image can never yield tie colour, but rather a new image is constituted to incorporate an answer to the question of its colour. Since Warnock admits that we have no immediate means to verify the colour of the tie, consciousness has no verified

means of constituting the image with the proper colour either. For this reason often we subsequently find our image was wrong because the knowledge which constituted the intentions was wrong. However, the image can never "precede" the intentions. The image can never yield knowledge beyond its constituting intentions because it is precisely these intentions which constitute everything about the image. Rather than Warnock's vague, hypothetical example, let us examine another example. It is concerning this very question that Alain writes:

Many people report having an image in their memory of the Pantheon and being able to evoke it quite readily. I ask them to please count the columns that support the facade; and they not only fail to do so but even to try it. However, this is the easiest thing to do the moment they have the real Pantheon before their eyes. What then do they see when they imagine the Pantheon?<sup>60</sup>

Alain of course mistakenly concluded that images could not exist because they could not be studied, rather than recognizing the image as an intentionally filled and completed act of consciousness. Warnock believes the image is some miniature analogue or picture in the mind which can be observed there. Rather, the imagination can only vaguely and incompletely form my image of the Pantheon, one aspect at a time, as my intentional gaze constitutes it. The number of

---

<sup>60</sup>Alain, Systeme des Beaux-Arts, (New Edition; Paris: Gallimard), p. 342. Quoted by Sartre, p. 114 of The Psychology of Imagination and p. 117 of the original text L'Imaginaire.

columns can never be taken from the image, not unless I knew it previously as a concept, as knowledge, and constituted the image as having such and such a number of columns. But, in this case my own intentional gaze gives the number as the image is created. The image has exactly what my intentions (therefore, my knowledge in those intentions) give it, and no more. "An imaginative consciousness is a consciousness of an object as an image and not consciousness of an image;"<sup>61</sup> the imaginative consciousness points directly to its object. This "image" of the Pantheon which Alain has asked me to conjure up is none the less the Pantheon itself on the Left Bank, in the Latin Quarter, near the Sorbonne, with trucks of gendarmes always parked in front awaiting student mobs. Alain could never have included those trucks in his image; they were never a part of the Pantheon itself which he either saw or imagined, though they are part and parcel of the Pantheon and its "real" neighbourhood now. Yet, precisely because it is that object -- the Pantheon -- as image, (i.e. not here), it is intentionally constituted as such only by what my knowledge can remember. Only my mental imaginary faculty can create the Pantheon of Paris for me here in Louvain. It is entirely imaginary. If then it is nothing but a construction of the mind, clearly it cannot contain more than what my

---

<sup>61</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, p. 112.

mental activity puts into it. Perhaps this is what Warnock meant when she shifts to say that we might find something we did not "consciously" build into the image. To this I can only ask what it would mean for a consciousness to intentionally construct an unconscious image, or an unconsciousness (and therefore, non-consciousness) to construct a conscious image.

As "quasi-observed" then, the image is different in character from the infinite plenitude of perception in so far as it possesses only what the imagination gives to it. As such it is greatly limited, yielding no more than the knowledge which the intentions constituted it within the first place. The image is given immediately in its totality. It cannot be observed, because it is itself an act, a means consciousness has of apprehending its transcendent object. Nor can reflexive consciousness give more knowledge because the reflected imaginative consciousness teaches nothing: its knowledge was completely given and already known by the constituting imagination. The image is related (intentionally) to the object of which it is an image --it is that object as an image -- but it is not related to the rest of the world. It is for this reason that imaginary horses can fly, that we can conjure up unicorns and centaurs. They are constructions of imaginative consciousness through and through, and are thereby freed from the laws of the physical world to which

they bear no relation except what I might intend them to have. The image is limited by consciousness and only by that consciousness which constitutes it. The rest of the world does not limit it, as fire is limited by water for example; indeed, one can easily "imagine" water burning. To imagine something, to construct an object as an image, necessarily presupposes the knowledge it contains, for it is with this knowledge that the intentions constitute it for what it is. It is for this reason that my intentions limit the image; for, it is also limited in terms of the knowledge I have. I cannot imagine something of which I have absolutely no knowledge whatever, for this is tantamount to having an empty or blank thought, i.e. of not thinking. However, my knowledge may subsequently add synthetically to the image, as we saw with the image of my wife to which boots were added synthetically when my knowledge reminded me of her actual (physical) habits. I could just as easily of course have synthetically added wheels, but my knowledge would immediately pronounce the intentional negation "non-existent" as well as the "not-here-ness" of the object. Since the image contains no more than what my intentions give it, and it is limited by my consciousness of it, nothing happens in the image of its own accord. It cannot surprise me as can my perception, for example, of a frog who suddenly leaps away. My image is limited wholly by my conscious awareness of it; my consciousness controls it.



The image can never precede the intention I have of it, as the frog can precede my intentional apprehension. As a result, my image can never surprise me. I know what will happen, because it is precisely and only myself who causes it to happen. Yet, by the same token, the intentional consciousness never precedes the object. If I wish the object to move, it moves with my wish as a result of my wish. It is my wish, or at least, the object as I wish it.

The image then, or rather the object as object of an imaginative consciousness, can never be an inert copy in the mind. It is a consciousness, that is, an active manner which consciousness has of relating to its objects. Yet, as imaginative, it negates that object as necessarily imaginary, that is, as not here, not-existing, or non-existent. As a result of its negation from the physical world, the image comes into being and ceases to be wholly within the imaginative consciousness; consequently, the image cannot obey the laws of the physical world, but is limited only by the conscious awareness I take of it. Since it is constructed and limited only by my imagination, it can never tell me more than I already know, for it is itself only an intentional product of my knowledge.

Hume aimed to show that no ultimate philosophically satisfactory distinction could be made between his mental and physical worlds; perhaps because his empirical psychology

was more interested in the mechanisms involved in the association of impressions and ideas. Had he looked at the nature of our perceptions and images themselves, perhaps he would have realized that "the image contains in its very nature an element of basic distinction."<sup>62</sup>

The classical metaphysical distinctions between perception and imagination, besides being inadequate, are no longer valid. Perception cannot be said to be distinguished from the imagination as the passive from the active, because we have seen that both modes of consciousness are pure activity, i.e. a consciousness apprehending its object. Nor can they be distinguished by appear to the "outer" and "inner" as both refer to the object; intentionality has banished objects from within consciousness. All consciousness is actively a consciousness of a transcendent object. They can no longer be distinguished by an appeal to the qualitative and quantitative nature of the image and percept themselves, but only to the manner in which consciousness is aware of its transcendent objects in its different faculties.

---

<sup>62</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, pp. 14-5.

## IV

### CONCLUSIONS AND MORE GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Husserl persistently affirmed that one cannot dissolve things in consciousness. You see a tree, to be sure. But you see it, just where it is: at the side of the road, in the midst of the dust, alone and writhing in the heat, eight miles from the Mediterranean coast. It could not enter into your consciousness, for it is not of the same nature as consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

In this concept of intentionality we find a restoration, above all, of the essential relationship between ourselves and the world around us. We no longer measure the world about us by the way it appears, rather the world is the way it appears to us. "The being of an existent is exactly what it appears. Relative the phenomenon remains, for 'to appear' supposes in essence somebody to whom to appear."<sup>2</sup> Yet, this object intentionally constituted by our consciousness and therefore relative to it, does not have a further essence beyond its nature as appearing: "it reveals itself as it is."<sup>3</sup> Objects are not in my consciousness any

---

<sup>1</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology", trans. J. P. Fell in The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology, I, no. 2 (May 1970), 4. This first appeared in Nouvelle Revue Francaise, III (1939), and subsequently as "Une Idée fondamentale de la phénoménologie de Husserl: l'intentionalité" in Situations I, (Paris: Gallimard, 1947).

<sup>2</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. liv.

<sup>3</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. liv.

more than my consciousness is in the objects; we avoid this peculiar and troublesome theory when we realize the nature of the intentional relationship which unites consciousness to the world of which we are conscious. Everything is given in the relationship itself, and there is no longer need for an ego "behind" consciousness than there is for a reality "behind" objects.

...this tree on its bit of parched earth is not an absolute which would subsequently enter into communication with us. Consciousness and the world are given at one stroke: essentially external to consciousness, the world is nevertheless essentially relative to consciousness.<sup>4</sup>

Consciousness can only be a consciousness of its object or it is nothing. Not to have an object of consciousness is not to perceive, imagine, conceive, etc.. Every conscious act unites us with the world of which we are conscious, and necessarily asserts the existence of both sides of that relationship. Consciousness as a consciousness of something means that "the intentional structure of consciousness ultimately implies that all beings in the world are relative to consciousness in so far as they must be conceived as a possible correlate or object of consciousness, and that therefore the latter itself cannot be part of the world or nature, but must be transcendental."<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology", p. 4.

<sup>5</sup>James Morrison, "Husserl and Brentano on Intentionality", Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, XXXI (1970), 45.

In the Die Idee der Phänomenologie<sup>6</sup> Heidegger points out that the philosophical study of being has led to the post-Kantian philosophy not of Being but of consciousness. This is not surprising. As indicated above, Being is defined and constituted by the intentional apprehension consciousness has of it. A study of Being begins with a phenomenological description of Being; that is, ontology or the study of Being is a description of Being only as it is revealed to the consciousness, for it is consciousness which defines, separates off, distinguishes, and gives meaning to the objects of the world. First then, intentional consciousness is itself an "ontological proof" of a world of which we are conscious. "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."<sup>7</sup>

The world as such is given to consciousness: to be conscious means there is an existing world to be conscious of.

---

<sup>6</sup>Martin Heidegger, Die Idee der Phänomenologie und der Rückgang auf das Bewusstsein. Originally to be Heidegger's contribution to the definition "Phenomenology" along with Husserl in the fourteenth edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica but never completed in time, it is now in English, trans. John N. Deely and Joseph A. Novak, "The Idea of Phenomenology", The New Scholasticism, XLIV (1970)

<sup>7</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. lxxiii.

It is only in abstraction that we can even talk of a consciousness without its intentional correlate, or a world as yet unrevealed as that correlate of an apprehending consciousness.

I am aware of a world, spread out in space endlessly, and in time becoming and become, without end. I am aware of it, that means, first of all, I discover it immediately, intuitively, I experience it. Through sight, touch, hearing, etc., in different ways of sensory perception, corporeal things somehow spatially distributed are for me simply there, in verbal or figurative sense "present", whether or not I pay them special attention by busying myself with them, considering, thinking, feeling, willing.<sup>8</sup>

I find myself at all times, and without my ever being able to change this, set in relation to a world which, through its constant changes, remains one and ever the same. It is continually "present" for me, and I myself am a member of it.<sup>9</sup>

The world is the necessary correlate to consciousness, and is revealed to us in some aspect in every act of consciousness. It is always there as the field of conscious activity, the basis of consciousness itself.

We emphasize a most important point once again in the sentences that follow: I find continually present and standing over against me the one spatio-temporal fact-world to which I myself belong, as do all other men, found in it and related in the same way to it. This 'fact-world', as the world already tells us, I find to be out there, and also take it just as it gives itself to me as something that exists out there.... 'The' world is as fact-world always there... 'it' remains ever, in the sense of the general thesis, a world that has its being out there.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Edmund Husserl, Ideas, p. 91.

<sup>9</sup> Edmund Husserl, Ideas, pp. 92-3.

<sup>10</sup> Edmund Husserl, Ideas, p. 96.

The world (en-soi) is always there, transcendent to consciousness. It is "toujours-déjà-donné".<sup>11</sup> This world is a plenitude, a superfluity of being, providing an infinite number of possible viewpoints and thereby unending possibilities for my conscious apprehension. It simply is and in itself has no other property but its existence. Human consciousness, the pour-soi has for its transcendent objects this world of "things", heretofore undifferentiated, merely existing. Consciousness itself, as we have seen, contains nothing, it can only intentionally point at the world (the en-soi). Its existence remains nothing but this pointing towards its transcendent objects, for it is nothing but a consciousness of them. Consciousness, as a consciousness of its transcendent correlate, is not an object but a consciousness of an object. Consciousness is not a thing, but a consciousness of things. It is not a thing: it is "no-thing". Being or the en-soi is a full plenitude, solid (massif), superfluous (de trop), and full positivity. "Being is. Being is in itself. Being is what it is."<sup>12</sup> It has nothing above and beyond its own existence, in and of itself. Anything beyond its mere existence is attributed in the intentional gaze of the apprehending consciousness. Human consciousness,

---

<sup>11</sup>Alphonse De Waelhens, Le Choix, Le Monde, L'Existence, p. 56.

<sup>12</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. lxxix.

or the pour-soi, remains a pure activity and pure spontaneity in the face of this amorphous plenitude. As a "no-thing", consciousness is negation, or a nothingness in Sartre's terminology. This means that in itself consciousness is nothing and has no being or meaning, but is only "supported by a being which is not itself." We can talk about this consciousness and describe its actions, and the results of its actions. But in itself it contains nothing and exists only as a revealing intuition of l'être en-soi. Sartre admits his indebtedness to Husserl for the full realization of the difference between consciousness and the objects of consciousness, pour-soi and en-soi. It is the intentional character of consciousness, the transitive and transcendent value of the "of" that consciousness takes of its object, which demonstrates the gulf between consciousness and its objects.

Indeed, consciousness is defined by intentionality. By intentionality consciousness transcends itself. It unifies itself by escaping from itself.<sup>13</sup>

This means that transcendence is the constitutive structure of consciousness; that is, that consciousness is born oriented towards a being which is not itself.<sup>14</sup>

To say that consciousness is consciousness of something means that for consciousness there

---

<sup>13</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Transcendence of the Ego, p. 38.

<sup>14</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. lxxiii. Corrected by Herbert Spiegelberg, Phenomenological Movement, p. 488.



is no being outside of that precise obligation to be a revealing intuition of something, i.e. of a transcendent being.<sup>15</sup>

Yet, if consciousness (pour-soi) is nothing, or rather is only a revealing intuition of being (the world, en-soi), and the world is and just is, then the consciousness becomes "un trou dans l'être". Its own existence, to talk of whatever sort of existence it has, becomes an existence for the revelation of what does in fact exist. Being (en-soi) is the "totalité" of Lévinas: it cannot be added to. Consciousness does not add to being, rather it "apprehends" it. Yet, it cannot apprehend it in its totality, for as Brentano (and Socrates) had pointed out, consciousness is a consciousness of some one thing. Thus consciousness, although existing only as a revelation of the en-soi or totality of existence, becomes a negating element within the world, "un trou". In order that consciousness be a consciousness of some one distinguishable thing in particular, that one object of consciousness must be differentiated or negated from the rest. Any affirmation, judgement, or apprehension of one object within the plenitude of Being ipso facto denies the rest. The very fact that we speak of the word "object" implies a negating differentiation which has already removed, defined, and separated off this "object" from the mass of totality. Consciousness is a consciousness of the world. The pour-soi

---

<sup>15</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. lxiii.

stands opposed to and in the face of the en-soi.

The two realms are utterly distinct: neither can be reduced to the other, neither can be derived from the other, each is its own justification. And yet, there is a de facto dialectical relationship between the two. All being is relative to consciousness, not as being, but as known, and all consciousness is intentional, i.e., is consciousness of being. Of itself consciousness is 'non-substantial'; its only 'substance' and 'content' come from its objects; it is pure intentionality.<sup>16</sup>

Existing only as an intentional revelation of Being, consciousness in and of itself has no being. It is nothing in and of itself, existing only as a negative or distinguishing feature in relation to Being. There is only Being, but this is defined, differentiated, and given meaning by the intentional attitude of the transparent and transcendent pour-soi. Pour-soi or consciousness becomes a "positive" negation in the sense that in itself it is nothing, but as an intentional act in relation to the world, it is the revelation of the world to us. Intentionality defines the world as it is revealed to consciousness. The en-soi, the world as such, just is, but in this amorphous existence it has no meaning. Our consciousness gives meaning to the world. It is only our intentional gaze which is capable of defining and importing meaning on the objects about us. Let us examine one hypothetical but concrete example.

---

<sup>16</sup>James M. Edie, "Sartre as Phenomenologist and as Existentialist Psychoanalyst" in Phenomenology and Existentialism, ed. Lee and Mandelbaum (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1969), p. 148.

I hold an object, small, "dish-like". Already my consciousness has differentiated it as not the wardrobe, not the blotter on my desk, etc.. I have given it a "partial" meaning in defining its shape, but I do not, for the purposes of this example, give it a meaning, a raison d'être for myself or anyone else, I will not "define it" for what my consciousness has already taken or apprehended it to be. In my exemplary reverie now, I proffer this circular, indented object to a cigarette-smoking friend from Paris. That object is immediately and unhesitatingly designated by him; its meaning is constituted by his defining consciousness of it as "ash-tray", with all the implications of that meaningful designation (e.g. he deposits his ashes in it, leaves his cigarettes in it, being cognizant that the object will not burn, etc.). However, if I were to proffer this same object to a Lapland Eskimo, a serious change would occur. The object might be designated "lamp" again with the knowledge that it would not leak the precious oil, would not burn when overheated or empty, etc.. The "physical properties" of this object remain identical. Its essence does not change regarding its spatio-temporal existence. Its essence remains the same because the object remains the same. If we leave the constitutive intention of the person who fabricated the dish-object aside, it can readily be seen that in this hypothetical case, the meaning, purpose, and identification

of the object were constituted from the stand-point of the two persons. Since they both knew the physical properties of this same dish-object, it is apparent that their intentionality, the way in which the object was presented to their consciousness, constituted that dish-object as two intentionally different utensils. That dish-object is an ash-tray to the Parisian, just as much as it is a lamp-bowl for the Eskimo. Nor are there two modes of existence; the object simply exists as two different and distinct correlatives of intentional consciousness. The object is encountered and interpreted differently; but it is an object meant and intended, and taken exactly and only as it is meant and intended. The consciousness of our two subjects have constituted the object for what it is. It might be interesting to point out that neither of these intentionally constituted objects "grasped" the object in this case with the same meaning or purpose for which the dish was fabricated; it had always remained, in my example, a ceremonial eating dish of the Samoan Islanders.

Consciousness is a negating element in the face of full positivity. It is a hole in being, a non-substantial activity in the face of substantial inertness. Husserl had stated himself that "between consciousness and reality there yawns a veritable abyss of sense."<sup>17</sup> Sartre specifically

---

<sup>17</sup>Edmund Husserl, "Zwischen Bewusstsein und Realität" gähnt ein wahrer Abgrund des Sinnes", Ideen zu Einer Reinen

attempts to ford this ontological gap necessarily implied by the intentional nature of consciousness: that consciousness cannot be reduced to the world (en-soi) and vice versa. One is negative, the other positive; one apprehends, the other is apprehended. For Husserl, it is of fundamental importance to keep before us this difference between reality and consciousness, between object and subject. As Spiegelberg points out, however, it is precisely this which Sartre wishes to overcome. "Sartre's most authentic statement of his fundamental objective thus far is contained in the closing paragraph of his latest book, Saint Genet: 'To reconcile the object and the subject.'<sup>18</sup> Yet, there remains this gap which separates Being and the consciousness of that Being. The gap as such signifies the unending struggle of the pour-soi to negate the en-soi, of human consciousness to apprehend, categorize, understand, and define the infinite world which engulfs him. The rift between en-soi and pour-soi is not one of polar duality so much as one of an endless, developing continuum: our constant discovery of the world, the meaningless en-soi delineated as meaningful objects for human consciousness. It is precisely this "positive negativity" which reconciles the

---

Phänomenologie und Phänomenologischen Philosophie, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950), I.

<sup>18</sup>Herbert Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), II, 455.

gap between subject and object, "man and his world". Consciousness as negation is a dialectical counterpoint of Being as total positivity: consciousness lacks Being, and Being lacks consciousness. Yet, in this "balance" of what lacks what, an uneven distribution is clear: the pour-soi or human consciousness is a total "lack" of anything. Yet, they both remain interlocked and interdependent; each requires the other. And here we meet a duality which is irreconcilable. In the opening pages of L'Être et le Néant Sartre claims that duality lies merely between the infinite and the finite. Yet, his ontological thesis of pour-soi and en-soi necessarily implies a metaphysical dualism which I feel cannot be reconciled. As Rauch states the question: "How can unconscious Being be absorbed in unreal consciousness?"<sup>19</sup> Are we not making a categorical error in the Kantian sense if Sartre is allowed the possibility of reconciliation; for what category of understanding would include simultaneously that which is and that which is not, a positivity with not only a negativity, but a negation of that very positivity? Yet, despite the necessity of posing these all too common criticisms, it is plain that no greater metaphysical question arises, if, indeed, all phenomena are reduced to objects for consciousness. The intentional consciousness of Brentano implies that all consciousness is consciousness of phenomena, and Kant's work

---

<sup>19</sup>Leo Rauch, "Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and the Hole in Being", Philosophical Studies, XVIII, (1969), 125.

precisely outlined that phenomena are only actual when presented to consciousness. The position seems sound even if Sartre's presentation seems unclear. Consciousness can only be consciousness of its object; the world can only exist as an object for consciousness. The gap between pour-soi and en-soi, Bewusstsein and Realität, subjectivity and objectivity, is not filled in and can never be filled in. But it is bridged by the appearing of the one for the other, the apprehending of the other by the former. Omnis determinatio est negatio.

Yet, from this intentional bridge which relates the world to our consciousness of it, comes a greater realization of how our world behaves. Subject and object "poles" are recognized as only two aspects of the same phenomenon. "To be is to fly out into the world, to spring from the nothingness of the world and of consciousness in order suddenly to burst out as consciousness-in-the-world."<sup>20</sup> In recognizing that the objects are defined by our intentional apprehension of them, we see how vast our world is, yet, also how many times we have already defined objects for which we still seek yet another definition. Each time we have thought, imagined, or perceived the object, we have been defining it, constituting it, giving it meaning as an intentional correlate of consciousness. We forever seek the "final" definition which

---

<sup>20</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Philosophy", p. 5.

will give "the true meaning" of the world. Our error lies in forgetting the relative nature the world has, relative to human consciousness which alone gives the world its true meaning. How rich the world becomes when we recognize how richly and vastly the world is constantly presented to our intending gaze, instead of seeking its meaning through the restricted approach of epistemological investigation.

The French philosophy that has moulded us understands little besides epistemology. But for Husserl and the phenomenologists our consciousness of things is by no means limited to knowledge of them. Knowledge, or pure 'representation', is only one of the possible forms of my consciousness 'of' this tree; I can also love it, fear it, hate it, and this surpassing of consciousness by itself that is called intentionality finds itself again in fear, hatred, and love.<sup>21</sup>

So it is that all at once hatred, love, fear, sympathy -- all these famous 'subjective' reactions which were floating in the malodorous brine of the mind -- are pulled out. They are merely ways of discovering the world. It is things which abruptly unveil themselves to us as hateful, sympathetic, horrible, loveable. Being dreadful is a property of this Japanese mask, an inexhaustible and irreducible property which constitutes its very nature -- and not the sum of our subjective reactions to a piece of sculptured wood.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Philosophy", p. 5.

<sup>22</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Philosophy", p. 5.



Husserl has restored to things their horror and their charm....It is not in some hiding-place that we will discover ourselves; it is on the road, in the town, in the midst of the crowd, a thing among things, a man among men.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Philosophy", p. 5.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alain. Systeme des Beaux-Arts. Paris: Gallimard.
- Brentano, F. Psychologie Vom Empirischen Standpunkt, I.  
Translated by D. B. Terrell as "The Distinction Between  
Mental and Physical Phenomena" in Realism and the  
Background of Phenomenology, edited by R. M. Chisholm.  
London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.
- The True and the Evident. Edited and translated by  
Oskar Kraus with the English edition also edited by R. M.  
Chisholm. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.
- Burley, Walter. The "Prologue" of Expositio in Octo Volumina,  
Aristoteles de Physico auditu. Venice: Johann Herbert,  
1482. Translated by John Wellmuth as "The Existence of  
Universals" in Philosophy in the West. Edited by Katz  
and Weingartner. New York: 1965.
- Chisholm, R. M. "Brentano on Descriptive Psychology and the  
Intentional", Phenomenology and Existentialism. Edited  
by E. N. Lee and M. Mandelbaum. Baltimore: John Hopkins  
Press, 1969.
- Edie, J. M. "Sartre as Phenomenologist and Existential  
Psychoanalyst", Phenomenology and Existentialism. Edited  
by E.N. Lee and M. Mandelbaum. Baltimore: John Hopkins  
Press, 1969.
- "Existential Psychoanalysis", Journal of Philosophy, LI  
(1955).
- Gurwitch, Aron. "Husserl's Theory of the Intentionality of  
Consciousness in Historical Perspective", Phenomenology  
and Existentialism. Edited by E. N. Lee and M. Mandelbaum.  
Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1969.
- Heidegger, Martin. "Versuch einer zweiten Bearbeitung", Die  
Idee der Phänomenologie und der Rückgang auf das Bewuss-  
tein. Translated by J. N. Deely and J. A. Novak as  
"The Idea of Phenomenology", The New Scholasticism, XLIV  
(Summer, 1970).
- Hume, David. A Treatise of Human Understanding. Edited by  
L. A. Selby-Begge. London: Oxford University Press, 1888.

- Husserl, Edmund. Cartesianische Meditationen. Translated by Dorian Cairns as Cartesian Meditations. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969.
- . Die Idee der Phänomenologie. Translated by W. P. Alston and G. Nakhnikian as The Idea of Phenomenology. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964.
- . Ideen zu Einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Translated by W. R. Boyce Gibson as Ideas. New York: Collier Books, 1967.
- . Pariser Vorträge. Translated by P. Koestenbaum as The Paris Lectures. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967.
- . "Phenomenology", Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th ed. (1922).
- Lovejoy, A. O. The Revolt Against Dualism. New York: 1930.
- Manser. Sartre: A Philosophical Study. London.
- Merleau-Ponty. "Preface" to La Phénoménologie de la Perception. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1945.
- Morrison, J. C. "Husserl and Brentano on Intentionality", Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, XXXI (September, 1970).
- Rauch, Leo. "Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and the Hole in Being", Philosophical Studies, XVIII (1969).
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. L'Être et le Néant. Translated by Hazel Barnes as Being and Nothingness. New York: Washington Square Press, 1966.
- . "Une Idée Fondamentale de la phénoménologie de Husserl: l'Intentionnalité", Situations I. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1939. Translated by Joseph P. Fell as "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology", The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology, I (May, 1970).
- . L'Imaginaire. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1940. Translated by Bernard Frechtman as Psychology of the Imagination. New York: Washington Square Press, 1966.
- . L'Imagination. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969.

- . "La Liberté cartésienne", Situations I. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1946. Also translated by Annette Michelson in Literary and Philosophical Essays. London: Rider, 1955.
- . "La Transcendance de l'Ego: esquisse d'une description phénoménologique", Recherches Philosophiques, (1937). Translated by F. Williams and R. Kirkpatrick as The Transcendence of the Ego. New York: Noonday Press, 1968.
- Spiegelberg, Herbert. The Phenomenological Movement. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960.
- Steenberghen, Fernand Van. Epistemology. Translated by Martin Flynn. New York: Joseph F. Wagner Inc., 1949.
- Thevenaz, Pierre. "What is Phenomenology", What is Phenomenology. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1962.
- Waelhens, Alphonse de. Le Choix, Le Monde, L'Existence. Paris: Arthaud, 1947.
- Warnock, Mary. "The Concrete Imagination", The Journal of The British Society for Phenomenology, I (May, 1970).
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig Van. Tractatus Logico Philosophicus. Translated by Pears and McGuinness. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961.