CONCLUSION

The goal of this dissertation was two-fold: to show how the ontology of ideas gave rise to the problem of the external world and to show the paradigm shift away from that ontology effected by the intentionality thesis. In the first and second chapters I argued that the problem had its origins in the philosophy of Descartes and that it was exacerbated by the reductionism inherent in the philosophies of Berkeley and Hume. Ontologically, the dominance of the subject category in these philosophies meant that all objects, including external objects, were treated as subjective entities. I argued that although Locke might appear to be an exception given the absence of reductionism in his thought, this is in fact not the case because of his adoption of the main premise of the ideas ontology.

That ontology is premised either upon a metaphysics of substance/properties or properties alone and its only objects are mental entities or ideas. Since reflexive reference is a necessary condition of mental acts, consciousness is regarded as being reflective in essence.
In chapter three I looked at the attempts of Frege and Moore to develop an object category independent of the subject. Both thinkers were concerned to address the solipsism of the ontology of ideas. In both instances these attempts failed because of residual commitments to subjective entities, ideas in the case of Frege, and sense-data in that of Moore. Despite this these thinkers made important contributions that would ultimately find their place in the new paradigm of consciousness provided by the intentionality thesis.

In chapter four I argued that although Brentano re-introduced the concept of intentionality into modern philosophy it was Twardowski’s tripartite analysis of the mental act and in particular his notion of the ‘presented object’ that allowed for an independent object category which ranged over non-mental as well as mental entities. Private, immanent entities do not figure at all in a ‘presented object’ analysis of the mental act. There is only the ‘presented object’ and intentionality as the condition of its presentation. Where the ontology of ideas provided for reflexive reference in respect of one entity only, Twardowski views reference as being univocal and directed to an
independent entity. Similarly, where the ontology of ideas views relations between subject and object as internal to the one entity, on Twardowski's model such relations serve to connect entities. Although the ontology of ideas can provide mental content as the referent, or object, of the mental act this content is not independent of the act itself but is rather a constituent of it. This conception of the object is thus inappropriate to Twardowski’s notion of the 'presented object' since the latter serves as the referent of the intentional object and should not, therefore, be seen as a constituent of the mental act itself.

In his account of transcendent perception (but not of immanent perception) Husserl remains true to this aspect of Twardowski’s doctrine: he declares all aspects of the object perceived transcendent to, or outside of, the perceiving subject. Husserl’s perceived aspects of the object correlate with present perceptions; the unperceived aspects of the object correlate with possible future perceptions and possible recollected passed perceptions. In this way, while only an aspect of the object can actually be seen at any given
moment reference to the entire object is implicated in the present perception itself.

Husserl’s development of the concept of transcendent perception, which is based on Twardowski’s tripartite assay of the mental act, allowed him to shift the focus of the problem of external reality away from an opposition between private sense-data and the ‘thing-in-itself’ and to relocate it on the terrain of the relationship between intentional acts and appearances where the latter are understood as being transcendent to the subject and in no way constitutive of it. In this way Husserl effected a paradigm shift away from the immanent object as a model for all objects that was the case with the ontology of ideas.