

Jonathan Edwards
and the Trinitarian Shape of Beauty

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Jonathan Edwards and the Trinitarian Shape of Beauty

*It didn't require great character at all
our refusal disagreement and resistance
we had a shred of necessary courage
but fundamentally it was a matter of taste*

Yes taste

in which there are fibers of soul the cartilage of conscience

*Who knows if we had been better and more attractively tempted sent
rose-skinned women thin as a wafer
or fantastic creatures from the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch
but what kind of hell was there at this time
a wet pit the murderers' alley the barrack
called a palace of justice
a home-brewed Mephisto in a Lenin jacket
sent Aurora's grandchildren out into the field
boys with potato faces
very ugly girls with red hands*

*Verily their rhetoric was made of cheap sacking
(Marcus Tullius kept turning in his grave)
chains of tautologies a couple of concepts like flails
the dialectics of slaughterers no distinctions in reasoning
syntax deprived of beauty of the subjunctive*

*So aesthetics can be helpful in life
one should not neglect the study of beauty*

*Before we declare our consent we must carefully examine
the shape of the architecture the rhythm of the drums and pipes
official colors the despicable ritual of funerals*

*Our eyes and ears refused obedience
the princes of our senses proudly chose exile*

*It did not require great character at all
we had a shred of necessary courage
but fundamentally it was a matter of taste*

Yes taste

*that commands us to get out to make a wry face draw out a sneer
even if for this the precious capital of the body the head
must fall¹*

~ Zbigniew Herbert

Beauty can be consoling, disturbing, sacred, profane; it can be exhilarating, appealing, inspiring, chilling. It can affect us in an unlimited variety of ways. Yet it is never viewed with indifference: beauty demands to be noticed; it speaks to us directly like the voice of an intimate friend. If there are people who are indifferent to beauty, then it is surely because they do not perceive it.²

~ Roger Scruton

¹ Zbigniew Herbert, "The Power of Taste," in *Report from the Besieged City*, trans. John and Bogdana Carpenter (New York: Ecco Press, 1985). In this insightful poem, Herbert claims that resistance to the totalitarian regime in Soviet-era Poland was attributable not to ethics ("great character"), but to aesthetics (it "was a matter of taste. ... Yes taste."). He argues for the utility and value of aesthetics saying, "So aesthetics can be helpful in life / one should not neglect the study of beauty."

² Roger Scruton, *Beauty: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), preface.

„Das Alte stürzt, es ändert sich die Zeit, Und neues Leben blüht aus den Ruinen.”³ So Schiller claims. This is welcome news for theological aesthetics. As a theological construct, beauty generally did not fare well in much of modernity. Contemporary theology, however, is witnessing a resurgence of interest in the concept of beauty. Numerous studies in theological aesthetics have been propounded in recent years. This is not surprising, nor is it new; the relation of art and religion has been a topic of ongoing interest, especially since the emergence of Romanticism. What is new, however, is the reemergence of beauty per se as a locus of theological interest—not merely as it relates to art, but in its own right. This seems to mark a shift in thought. As “the old crumbles” and “the times change,” I wish to recommend the aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) to nurture the “new life blossoming from the ruins.”⁴

Beauty lies at the very heart of Edwards’ theological program. He develops the whole of his theology as a *motet* of harmonizing voices around the *cantus firmus* of being, understood in terms of beauty. Therefore, this dissertation seeks to explicate Edwards’ notions of beauty with a view toward recommending him as profitable source and guide (on some issues) in the contemporary resurgence of interest in theological aesthetics. This dissertation, then, is a *ressourcement*, i.e., a retrieval and reinscription, of Jonathan Edwards’ theological aesthetics. It explores Edwards’ views of beauty, framing them according to their trinitarian shape and presenting them as a seminal and fruitful resource in the contemporary context.

In service of that end, this introductory chapter will serve as a guide to the dissertation. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first division, “Introductory Questions,” addresses

³ Friedrich Schiller, “Wilhelm Tell,” Act 4.2, lines 2425–2426 in *Schillers Werke, Nationalausgabe*, ed. Norbert Oellers (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1980), 178.

⁴ I render the lines from Schiller (above): “The old crumbles, the times change, And new life blossoms from the ruins.”

four questions: 1) The Question of Purpose: *The Aims and Contributions of This Project*; 2) The Question of Beauty: *Why Beauty?*; 3) The Question of Edwards: *Why Jonathan Edwards?*; and finally 4) *The Status Quaestionis: Edwards' Aesthetics in the Secondary Literature*. The second division of the chapter proffers a typology of theories of beauty. While many discreet species of the notion of beauty can be identified, they tend to fall into three overlapping genera, or categories: 1) Ontological Conceptions of Beauty, 2) Formal Conceptions of Beauty, and 3) Affective Conceptions of Beauty. The final section of the chapter limns the remaining chapters of the dissertation.

PART I: INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

1. THE QUESTION OF PURPOSE: *The Aims and Contributions of This Project.*

The contributions of this dissertation lie chiefly in three areas. The primary aim of this study is to advance the burgeoning field of the study of Jonathan Edwards by elucidating his views of beauty. In so doing, I present him as a rich source for the theological engagement of beauty, which could serve not only the field of Edwards studies, but also that of theological aesthetics more broadly. Secondarily, this project proffers a typology of conceptions of beauty. It identifies and analyzes conceptual categories in which particular theological aesthetics tend to be developed, observing that the majority of the manifold theories of beauty in Western thought fall into one of three morphological classes: *ontological*, *formal*, and *affective* conceptions of the beautiful. This typology provides a clarifying schema of beauty to discuss and analyze the distinct conceptions of it. As a tertiary contribution, I suggest that Edwards' aesthetics offer the latent rudiments of a trinitarian grammar of beauty that, while Edwards does not himself develop, might nonetheless be explored in generative and important ways.

At the opening of a work on Jonathan Edwards' theological conception of beauty, a question presents itself: Why undertake such a project? Phrased more specifically in two parts: Why focus on beauty as a theological idea, and what can Jonathan Edwards contribute to the field of theological aesthetics?

2. THE QUESTION OF BEAUTY: *Why Beauty?*

While beauty is generally recognized as a deep human good, and while a well-ordered love of beauty was lauded in most pre-modern Christianity, a minority report has persisted in some Christian views of beauty. Rooted as it was in a horizon of Platonic ambivalence about the created order,⁵ created beauty was sometimes viewed askance as a potential distraction from,⁶ or as an ersatz substitute for,⁷ *higher* forms of beauty, i.e., moral,⁸ spiritual,⁹ and especially, divine

⁵ In some cases (e.g., Manichean or Gnostic and some platonisms), the Greco-Roman context of the first few centuries of the Christian era were marked not by an ambivalence toward material reality, but by an outright antipathy for it.

⁶ Gregory of Nyssa is representative of this common worry when he says, "As regards the inquiry into the nature of beauty, we see, again, that the man of half-grown intelligence, when he observes an object which is bathed in the glow of a seeming beauty, thinks that the object is in its essence beautiful, no matter what it is that so presupposes him with the pleasure of the eye. He will not go deeper into the subject. But the other, whose mind's eye is clear, and who can inspect such appearances, will neglect those elements which are the material only upon which the Form of Beauty works; to him they will be but the ladder by which he climbs to the prospect of that intellectual Beauty, in accordance with their share in which all other beauties get their existence and their name" (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second series, vol. 5, Select Writings and Letters of Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa*, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wallace [Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894], *On Virginit*y, ch. 11, 355).

⁷ Gregory of Nyssa believes that created beauty cannot ultimately satisfy our hunger for divine beauty and therefore simply serves as an appetizer for a greater banquet. He says, "All other objects that attract men's love, be they never so fashionable, be they prized never so much and embraced never so eagerly, must be left below us, as too low, too fleeting, to employ the powers of loving which we possess; not indeed that those powers are to be locked up within us unused and motionless; but only that they must first be cleansed from all lower longings; then we must lift them to that height to which sense can never reach. Admiration even of the beauty of the heavens, and of the dazzling sunbeams, and, indeed, of any fair phenomenon, will then cease. The beauty noticed there will be but as the hand to lead us to the love of the supernal Beauty whose glory the heavens and the firmament declare, and whose secret the whole creation sings. The climbing soul, leaving all that she has grasped already as too narrow for her needs, will thus grasp the idea of that magnificence which is exalted far above the heavens" (*ibid.*).

⁸ E.g., Augustine, who lauds the beauty of righteousness (*iustitia*). He reminds his hearers, "You have external eyes with which to appreciate marble and gold, but within you is an eye which enables you to see the beauty of

beauty,¹⁰ which tend to be incorporeal.¹¹ Feminine beauty, in particular, was regarded with suspicion as a preferred wile of the devil to draw people (i.e., men) into lascivious sensual pleasure.¹² Wariness about conceptions of beauty rooted in *eros* (or pleasure, desire, and

righteousness” (“Enarrationes in Psalmos,” 64:8, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Expositions of the Psalms 51-72*, Part 3, Vol. 17 [New York: New City Press, 2001]). “There is beauty in righteousness,” he asserts elsewhere, “righteousness has its own fair character” (ibid., 32:6).

⁹ Augustine lauds the spiritual beauty of the truths of scripture. “Let us keep our eyes on beautiful things,” he says, “let us gaze with the eyes of our minds at what is conveyed by the various senses of the divine scriptures, and rejoice at the sight” (ibid., 32:25).

¹⁰ Regarding divine beauty, Nyssen says, “The ardent lover of beauty, although receiving what is always visible as an image of what he desires, yet longs to be filled with the very stamp of the archetype. And the bold request which goes up the mountain of desire asks this: to enjoy the Beauty not in mirrors and reflections, but face to face” (Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, tr. Abraham Malherbe and Everett Ferguson [Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1979], 2.32, 114).

¹¹ Such beauty, of course, is not beheld with physical eyes. “Let us love beauty,” says Augustine, “but let it be the beauty that appeals to the eye of the heart” (“Enarrationes in Psalmos,” in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Expositions of the Psalms 1–32*, pt. 3, vol. 15, trans. Maria Boulding, ed. John E. Rotelle [New York: New City Press, 2000], 32:6). Here we see an instance of Augustine’s extensive employment of the metaphor of the “inner eye.” He refers to the concept variously as “a different kind of eyes” (“Enarrationes in Psalmos,” 44:3 in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Expositions of the Psalms 33-50*, pt. 3, vol. 16, trans. Maria Boulding, ed. John E. Rotelle [New York: New City Press, 2000]); “the eye of the heart” (ibid., 32:6); “the eyes of our minds” (ibid., 32:25); and “the eyes of our spirit” (ibid., 44:3). This of course is not exclusive to Augustine, but is common in Platonic thinking. Gregory of Nyssa, to cite just one writer, refers to one “whose mind’s eye is clear” (*On Virginity*, XI, Schaff, 355) and says, “Such an experience seems to me to belong to the soul which loves that which is beautiful. Hope always draws the soul from the beauty which is seen to what is beyond, always kindles the desire for the hidden through what is constantly perceived” (*The Life of Moses*, 2.31, 114).

¹² The writings of many of the Church Fathers are tainted with the general sexism of Hellenistic culture, but Tertullian (ever tending to the austere and mordant) descends into misogyny. While on the one hand Tertullian writes a tender letter to his wife (see *To His Wife*, trans. S. Thelwall, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 4, Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wallace [Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894], 39–44), on the other hand when addressing women in a work concerned with feminine beauty and modesty he says, “And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. *You* are the devil’s gateway: *you* are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: *you* are the first deserter of the divine law: *you* are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. *You* destroyed so easily God’s image, man. On account of *your* desert—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die” (*On the Apparel of Women*, trans. S. Thelwall, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 4*, 14). Valiant Adam, the image of God, was lead astray by Eve’s beauty. While men ever after follow in Adam’s folly, the odium of men’s lust attaches to women. For a man, Tertullian says, “as soon as he has felt concupiscence after your beauty, and has mentally already committed (the deed) which his concupiscence pointed to, perishes; and you have been made the sword which destroys him: so that, albeit you be free from the (actual) crime, you are not free from the odium (attaching to it)” (ibid.). “Natural beauty, as (having proved) a cause of evil” (ibid., 15) must henceforth be downplayed rather than highlighted by means of becoming clothing and jewelry, which “are all the baggage of woman in her condemned and dead state” (ibid., 14). The same is true of cosmetics (i.e., “they who rub their skin with medicaments, stain their cheeks with rouge, make their eyes prominent with antimony” [ibid., 20] and hair dyes (ibid., 21). Female beauty, he says to women who would be holy, “from whatever point you look at it, is in *your* case superfluous, you may justly disdain if you have it not, and neglect if you have. Let

enjoyment) have persisted through the ages. Dimitri Karamazov captures the worry, saying, “The terrible thing is that beauty is not only fearful but also mysterious. Here the devil is struggling with God, and the battlefield is the human heart.”¹³

As some in the late nineteenth century, e.g., Adolph von Harnack, came to view Hellenistic syncretism as having vitiated New Testament Christianity *tout court*, misgivings about the role of beauty in theology took express form in thinkers such as Anders Nygren.¹⁴ Believing that remaining vestiges of Greek thought should be excised from Christian theology, Nygren asserts that “Eros is of a markedly aesthetic character. It is the beauty of the divine that attracts the eye of the soul and sets its love in motion. To speak of the ‘beauty’ of God in the context of Agape, however, sounds very like blasphemy.”¹⁵ Karl Barth acknowledges the perennial Christian disquiet about eros when he observes that

owing to its connection with the ideas of pleasure, desire, and enjoyment (quite apart from its historical connection with Greek thought), the concept of the beautiful seems to be a particularly secular one, not at all adapted for introduction into the language of theology, and indeed extremely dangerous.¹⁶

Barth concludes that *prioritizing* the role of beauty in theology is a mistake. He affirms that God is beautiful and that the concept of beauty is necessary in theology, but also strongly qualifies

a holy woman, if naturally beautiful, give none so great occasion (for carnal appetite). Certainly, if even she be so, she ought not to set off (her beauty), but even to obscure it” (ibid., 20) So then, feminine beauty is superfluous at best, or more likely, a temptation to vanity in women and lust in men. Therefore, “where modesty is,” argues Tertullian, “there beauty is idle” (ibid.)

¹³ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990), bk. 3, ch. 3, 108.

¹⁴ The rejection of the dependence of theology on sources other than revelation including not only pagan Hellenistic thought, but also reason and human philosophy (that had been typified by nineteenth-century Liberal theology) is characteristic of “Lundensian” theology, or that theology that emerged in the University of Lund in Sweden between the two world wars. Nygren, along with Gustaf Aulén, is representative of this form of theology.

¹⁵ Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 223–24. NB: This is merely asserted rather than defended.

¹⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, 2.1: The Doctrine of God, Part 1*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. T. H. L. Parker and J. L. M. Haier (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957), 651.

and limits the conception and use of beauty, insisting that beauty must be a “subordinate and auxiliary” concept.¹⁷

Furthermore, in modernity the importance of beauty is no longer assumed. As Roger Scruton points out, “The status of beauty as an ultimate value is questionable, in the way that the status of truth and goodness are not.”¹⁸ Indeed, esteeming beauty strikes some as trifling or sybaritic. “The word ‘aesthetic,’” observes Hans Urs von Balthasar, “automatically flows from the pens of both Protestant and Catholic writers when they want to describe an attitude which, in the last analysis, they find to be frivolous, merely curious and self-indulgent.”¹⁹ For those living in the shadow of a century that witnessed relentless genocide, global warming, and the advent of AIDS, an emphasis on beauty as a seminal theological category might seem to risk displacing a much-needed ethics with an effete aestheticism.²⁰ A question emerges that must be asked and answered. David Bentley Hart poses it well: “Is beauty theologically defensible?” He admits that beauty “might appear at best merely marginal, at worst somewhat precious.”²¹ In a world of appalling ugliness, is not beauty irrelevant (especially for the poor), escapist (especially for the bourgeois), or pretentious (especially for the elite)? In short, why elevate beauty?²² In the course

¹⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 2.1, 653. See Chapter Two of this work for a summary of Barth’s cautions about beauty as an overdetermining theological idea.

¹⁸ Scruton, *Beauty*, 3.

¹⁹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1, *Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 51.

²⁰ In addition to the examples I cite below, a version of this concern is tackled by Wendy Steiner in *The Scandal of Pleasure: Art in an Age of Fundamentalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

²¹ David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 1.

²² For a well-reasoned counter to such arguments made by those she calls the “opponents of beauty,” see Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). Scarry argues that valuing a beauty may engender a valuing of justice (*ibid.*, 57). See also John W. de Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation: Theological Aesthetics in the Struggle for Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). On the particular question of the relevance of beauty for the poor, see Patrick T. McCormick, “A Right to Beauty: A Fair Share of Milk and Honey for the Poor” *Theological Studies* 71 (2010): 702–20.

of this work, one set of answers to this question emerges from Edwards' theological aesthetics; in many ways this dissertation is an Edwardsian apologia for a theology of beauty.

The legitimacy of allotting beauty a significant role in theology will, of course, turn on how it is conceived. "Beauty" is a polysemous term and has been quite variously understood at different times and within different systems of thought in Western culture. Indeed, after centuries of reflections on beauty, many of which contained inherent contradictions, Renaissance thinkers began to assert the indefinability of beauty. Petrarch's (1304–1374) admission that beauty is *non so ché* ("I know not what") was repeated for centuries. By the seventeenth century this phrase became basic to aesthetic discourse, acquiring an axiomatic formulation in both Latin (*nescio quid*) and French (*je ne sais quoi*).²³

We might expect that as an Enlightenment thinker Edwards would adopt a strategy of establishing clarity through a definition by which we can determine when the designation "beautiful" always and only applies. But this is not Edwards' approach. In his early musings on "The Mind" (c. 1724), Edwards notes a standard definition of beauty by observing, "Some have said that all excellency is harmony, symmetry or proportion."²⁴ ("Excellency" is Edwards' favorite synonym for beauty.²⁵) The mature Edwards, however, confesses "a degree of obscurity" in the definition of "sublime" things, e.g., glory and beauty. He then immediately adds that it may be "an obscurity which is unavoidable, through the imperfection of language,

²³ Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas: An Essay in Aesthetics* (Boston: Kluwer Academic, 1980), 135.

²⁴ Jonathan Edwards, "The Mind," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 6, *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, ed. Wallace E. Anderson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 332. Hereafter, *WJE* 6. The original text of "The Mind" is not extant and therefore impossible to date precisely. It nonetheless may be placed between Edwards' New York pastorate in 1722 and his teaching at Yale through 1727. Given this early dating, Edwards is likely referring to the Third Earl of Shaftesbury's 1711 work, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, given that Hutcheson's *An Inquiry concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design* had only been published in 1725.

²⁵ Elsewhere in "The Mind," Edwards says, "Excellence, to put it in other words, is that which is beautiful and lovely" (*ibid.*, 344).

and words being less fitted to express things of so sublime a nature. And therefore,” he concludes, “the thing may possibly be better understood, by using many words and a variety of expressions, by a particular consideration of it, as it were by parts, than by any short definition.” This is the strategy I adopt in this dissertation: to come to a rich understanding of Edwards’ conception of beauty by an examination of the types of conceptions of beauty deployed by Edwards (i.e., ontological, formal, and affective).

In the end, Edwards’ theology provides the content to his notion of beauty, and his conception of beauty provides the means to communicate his theology. Louis J. Mitchell makes this point well, saying,

It was in the vocabulary of the language of beauty that Edwards expressed his most important theological and philosophical ideas. ... For Edwards, [God] was the “foundation and fountain” of all beauty. The triune God was seen to be a society of love and beauty. God’s Holy Spirit was beauty. All beauty, indeed all creation, was the overflow of God’s inner-trinitarian beauty. Beauty was, for Edwards, the very structure of being.²⁶

As a capacious notion, beauty can be variously applied. Nonetheless, for Edwards, beauty is rooted in trinitarian harmony, reflected in the created order, and enacted in God’s redemptive action in the world. These distinctive and defining aesthetic tenets persist across his corpus. Conceived thusly, the importance of the notion of beauty becomes apparent, introducing the question as to why one might turn to Jonathan Edwards as a resource for engaging this important feature of life.

²⁶ Louis J. Mitchell, *Jonathan Edwards on the Experience of Beauty* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, 2003), 105.

3. THE QUESTION OF EDWARDS: *Why Jonathan Edwards?*

To this day, many are horrified at Edwards' unblinking affirmation of divine wrath and the justice of hell, and his horrendous, disturbing portrayal of them.²⁷ It is probable that many students in the hands of angry literature teachers, whose only exposure to Edwards is the sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (1741), dismiss him as a preacher of hellfire and brimstone.

Those, however, who are not familiar with the major themes of Edwards' work may be surprised to find that Edwards speaks relatively little about hell, and nearly incessantly about love, joy, delight, heaven—and particularly, *beauty*.²⁸ "Given that Edwards is associated with American Puritanism and took some of his thinking from a rather extreme Calvinist position, emphasizing election," muses Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen, "his extensive and passionate writing on the beauty of the world, the beauty of the human being, spiritual beauty, and the beauty of the triune God comes almost as a surprise."²⁹

Surprising or not, at least seven reasons emerge to recognize Jonathan Edwards as a significant resource for theological aesthetics: 1) the priority of beauty in his thought, 2) the pervasiveness of beauty in it, 3) the Protestant character of his theology, 4) the precedents of his

²⁷ For instance, in "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (1741), Edwards portrays God as angry and ready to execute his wrath. He says, "The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and Justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood." He goes on vividly to assess the wrath-deserving wickedness of his hearers: "The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours" (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 22, *Sermons and Discourses, 1739–1742*, ed. Harry S. Stout [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003], 411; hereafter, *WJE* 22).

²⁸ Norman Fiering estimates that less than two percent of Edwards' extant sermons mention hell. (*Jonathan Edwards' Moral Thought and Its British Context* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981], 35).

²⁹ Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen, ed., *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 157.

views, 5) the period of them in history, 6) the pertinence of them today, and 7) the paucity of studies of his aesthetics.

3.1 The Priority of Beauty in Edwards' Thought.

The concept of beauty is eminent in Edwards' thought; it is the cornerstone and the keystone of Edwards' theological vision. Indeed, he calls it "the most important thing in the world,"³⁰ saying emphatically, "it is what we are more concerned with than anything else whatsoever: yea, we are concerned with nothing else."³¹ In terms of his intellectual biography, it is his alpha—in that he discusses beauty from the very first of his "Miscellanies,"³² penned in 1721 at age nineteen—and his omega—in that his most sustained reflections on beauty are found in his final work, *The Nature of True Virtue* (1757), completed not long before his death on March 22, 1758.³³ In the 1735 sermon "The Sweet Harmony of Christ," Edwards makes the radical claim that "the essence of Christianity" "don't consist chiefly in" (sic) either truth (i.e., "any certain profession, or set of principles or tenets") or goodness (i.e., "moral behavior"), but rather in beauty (i.e., "but in such an internal, spiritual harmony between Christ and the soul.")³⁴

From the advent of the twentieth-century revival of interest in Edwards, Perry G. E. Miller (in many ways the father of modern Edwards studies) recognized that beauty is the

³⁰ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, *Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), 274. Hereafter, *WJE* 2.

³¹ Edwards, *Notes on the Mind*, no. 1., *WJE* 6, 332.

³² The opening line is "Holiness is a most beautiful and lovely thing" (Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13, *The "Miscellanies," Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500*, ed. Thomas A. Schafer [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994], 163; hereafter, *WJE* 13).

³³ Though *The Nature of True Virtue* was completed before February 1757, it was not published until seven years after Edwards' untimely death in 1765.

³⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 19, *Sermons and Discourses 1730-1733*, ed. Mark Valéry (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 447. Hereafter *WJE* 19.

“crown of his [Edwards’] thought.”³⁵ Roland Delattre opens his classic work on Edwards’ aesthetics as follows:

The conviction upon which this book rests and the validity of which it is designed to demonstrate is that the aesthetic aspect of Jonathan Edwards’ thought and vision, which finds its definitive formulation in his concepts of beauty and sensibility, provides a larger purchase upon the essential and distinctive features of his thought than does any other aspect, such as the idealist, empiricist, sensationalist, Platonist, scholastic, Calvinistic, or mystic.³⁶

Delattre aptly concludes: “The significance of beauty for Edwards is difficult to overstate.”³⁷

Edward Farley recognizes that no other Christian theologian makes beauty more central to his or her thought than does Edwards.³⁸ Historian Patrick Sherry concurs, specifically including Augustine and von Balthasar in this assessment.³⁹

3.2 The Pervasiveness of Beauty in Edwards’ Thought.

While beauty is paramount in Edwards’ theological program, it is also pervasive throughout it. Beauty is not an isolated concern for Edwards; rather, it shapes every loci of Edwards’ dogmatics. As we shall see, it frames his ethics—“true virtue” is defined as “primary beauty.”⁴⁰ “Excellency” and “beauty” are functional synonyms for him. Beauty frames the doctrines of creation and redemption.⁴¹ It establishes the semantics of spirituality—Edwards views the apprehension of divine beauty as central to Christian experience, being the sine qua

³⁵ Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (New York: William Sloane, 1949), 241.

³⁶ Roland André Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards: An Essay in Aesthetics and Theological Ethics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), vii.

³⁷ Roland André Delattre, “Beauty and Theology: A Reappraisal of Jonathan Edwards,” in *Critical Essays on Jonathan Edwards*, ed. William J. Schieck (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980), 136.

³⁸ Edward Farley, *Faith and Beauty: A Theological Aesthetic* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2001), 43.

³⁹ Patrick Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: SCM, 2002).

⁴⁰ See Jonathan Edwards, *The Nature of True Virtue*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 8, *Ethical Writings*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 539. Hereafter, *WJE* 8.

⁴¹ See Chapter Three of this work, on the formal nature of beauty (q.v.).

non of conversion and our *raison d'être*.⁴² “He that sees the beauty of holiness,” Edwards exclaims, “sees the greatest and most important thing in the world, which is the fullness of all things, without which all the world is empty, no better than nothing.”⁴³ While beauty, then, constitutes our experience of the *Deus pro nobis* for Edwards, significantly, it also constitutes the *Deus in se*. Beauty frames his ontology and his doctrine of God.⁴⁴ Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott come to the conclusion that “There are many reasons to regard Edwards as an original and venturesome thinker. Yet his placement of beauty at the heart of his theology may have been the boldest stroke of all.”⁴⁵ As will be made clear in Chapter Two, Edwards’ way of anchoring and developing his thought in terms of beauty is audacious and unprecedented.

3.3 The Protestant Character of Edwards’ Views of Beauty.

Third, Edwards’ thought can serve as a truly ecumenical resource. While discussions of beauty are not uncommon in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theology, they are much more so in Protestant thought. Edwards provides an example and resource of engagement in the broader Christian tradition,⁴⁶ the secular discussion, and, significantly, his own (Reformed) Christian tradition. This may serve to assuage some Reformed ambivalence regarding the concept of beauty as a proper theological category.

3.4 The Precedents of Edwards’ Views of Beauty.

⁴² See Chapter Four of this work, on the affective nature of beauty (q.v.).

⁴³ *WJE* 2, 274. He continues: “Unless this is seen, nothing is seen, that is worth the seeing: for there is no other true excellency or beauty. Unless this be understood, nothing is understood, that is worthy of the exercise of the noble faculty of understanding. This is the beauty of the Godhead, and the divinity of the Divinity (if I may so speak), the good of the infinite Fountain of Good; without which God himself (if that were possible to be) would be an infinite evil; without which we ourselves had better never to have been; and without which there had better have been no being.”

⁴⁴ See *WJE* 8.

⁴⁵ Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 94.

⁴⁶ As has been observed by Anri Morimoto in *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

Next, Edwards gathers and utilizes much of the prior thinking regarding beauty. He is not a historian of aesthetics, nor does he transmit pre-modern views of beauty in a stated or self-conscious way. Rather, as a highly educated man, he simply absorbs and redeploys many of the grand ideas in Western culture, as we will see particularly in Chapter Three. Furthermore, his own tradition (as well as his own predilections) are shaped by a general Augustinianism, in which theological aesthetics are integral.⁴⁷ In Edwards, we find a theorist who consolidates many pre-modern views, while adapting them in conscious dialogue with Enlightenment thought.

3.5 The Period of Edwards' Views of Beauty.

Fifth, the eighteenth century was a climacteric in Western aesthetics.⁴⁸ It was at this time that Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten coined the term “aesthetic,”⁴⁹ and “aesthetics” was established as a discrete academic discipline. It was at this time that the modern notion of the fine arts or *les Beaux Arts* emerges,⁵⁰ along with the rise of art museums, concert halls, and the like.⁵¹ It was at this time that the concept of *taste* and judgments of taste came to the fore in

⁴⁷ Edwards' Augustinianism not comes from Augustine himself, but also through Puritanism, which was shaped by a number of Augustinian themes as interpreted by various strands of Calvinism as well as Cambridge Platonism. For more on Edwards' Augustinianism see Christine Mary Dixon, *The Concept of the Heart in the Theological Thought and Experience of Augustine of Hippo and Jonathan Edwards* (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013).

⁴⁸ While this is commonly observed and accepted, the precise nature of that change continues to be debated. The seminal text that sees in the eighteenth century an epochal shift into modernity is Kristeller's *The Modern System of the Arts*. James I. Porter claims that Kristeller's view has been so widely and uncritically received that he complains, “We are having to do here no longer with an academic thesis, and not even with an orthodoxy, but with a dogma” (“Is Art Modern? Kristeller's ‘Modern System of the Arts’ Reconsidered,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 49 [2009]: 1). Recently, Peter Kivy has sought to reestablish what can be salvaged from Kristeller's original thesis. See Kivy, “What Really Happened in the Eighteenth Century: The ‘Modern System’ Reexamined (Again),” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 52 (2012): 61–74).

⁴⁹ Alexander Baumgarten (1735), *Meditationes Philosophicae de Nonnullis ad Poema Pertinentibus*; published as *Reflections on Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), § 25.

⁵⁰ See Paul Oskar Kristeller, “The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics (1),” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12, no. 4 (October 1951): 496–527. Kristeller argues that viewing the fine arts to consist primarily in “painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry” is a view that coalesced in the eighteenth century.

⁵¹ See Paul Oskar Kristeller, “The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics (2)” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 13, no. 1 (January 1952): 44.

aesthetics. It was at this time that notions of “disinterestedness” emerged as a leading aesthetic idea.⁵² And it was at this time that the beautiful was distinguished from the sublime, the fair, the charming, and, by the end of the century, the picturesque.⁵³ British thought was a chief locus of the development of aesthetics in the eighteenth century. Furthermore, it was to influence the thought and directions of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), whose views have profoundly shaped modern aesthetics and culture.

As a colonial American and British subject, British philosophy and theology is Jonathan Edwards’ intellectual milieu, and he was a full participant in the transatlantic community of letters.⁵⁴ Edwards read the *Spectator* from his teen years,⁵⁵ and his aesthetics are developed in dialogue with many of the leading thinkers of this era, notably Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), and David Hume (1711–

⁵² This concept is discussed at length in Chapter Four.

⁵³ See Chapter Four.

⁵⁴ By “British,” I mean those thinkers from England and Scotland (these two lands having been united to Great Britain by the Treaty of Union of 1707). I also, however, include the Irishman Edmund Burke, who moved from Dublin to London in 1750 at the age of twenty-one and remained in England the rest of his life, serving for years in the House of Commons. Edwards consistently stayed abreast of the intellectual trends of his time, engaging many of the thinkers of his day. The influence of John Locke (1632–1704) has been acknowledged and debated since the renaissance of Edwards studies that was inaugurated by Perry Miller in 1949. Edwards’ first biographer, Sereno Dwight, tells us, “Edwards read Locke on the Human Understanding with peculiar pleasure,” and that he took more pleasure in it “than the most greedy miser finds, when gathering up handfuls of silver and gold, from some newly discovered treasure” (*The Works of President Edwards: With a Memoir of His Life*, vol. 1, 3 [New York: S. Converse, 1830], accessed March 17, 2012, <http://books.google.com/books?id=k1wPAAAAIAAJ&oe=UTF-8>). Edwards also expressly refers, *inter alia*, to Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), George Turnbull (1698–1748), John Taylor (1694–1761), Joseph Addison (1672–1719), Thomas Chubb (1679–1747), Daniel Whitby (1638–1726), David Hume (1711–1776), and Isaac Watts (1674–1748). Norman Fiering has helpfully situated Edwards’ moral thought in its eighteenth-century context. (See Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’ Moral Thought*). Furthermore, Edwards’ theological commitments connected him especially to Scottish, i.e., Presbyterian, theology. Edwards had a wide committed readership in Scotland and was in almost continual contact with Scotch clergy, e.g., William McCulloch (1691–1771), Thomas Gillespie (1708–1774), John Gillies (1712–1796), James Robe (1688–1753), and especially John Erskine (1721–1803). For more on Edwards’ connection to Scotland, see Kelly Van Andel, Adriaan C. Neele, and Kenneth P. Minkema, eds., *Jonathan Edwards and Scotland* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2011).

⁵⁵ George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 62, and *A Short Life of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 3.

1776).⁵⁶ Furthermore, Edwards engages the nascent concepts of his eighteenth-century British context—notably disinterestedness—formulating his views in marked contrast to Kantian (and subsequent Continental) conceptions that conceive disinterest and desire as mutually exclusive. Edwards’ alternative views are fundamentally erotic; they employ the valid insights of the eighteenth-century British thinkers while also retaining the best of the eros tradition of beauty.

3.6 The Pertinence of Edwards’ Views of Beauty.

Next, Edwards’ aesthetics are pertinent to the concerns of the twenty-first century. “Time and again,” confesses Rian Ventner (speaking of Edwards’ focus on beauty), “a student of Edwards is surprised by his relevance for our day.”⁵⁷ Katalin G. Kállay agrees. “It is exactly the focus on divine beauty and aesthetics,” she says, that makes Edwards timeless, inspiring, and pertinent to contemporary concerns.⁵⁸ Edwards’ views of beauty inform disciplines beyond aesthetics. His works have been the subject of a number of works in ethics.⁵⁹ His focus on beauty, desire, and consent has been seen as a fund for feminist thought,⁶⁰ and his rapturous exultation in the beauty of nature has been seen as a resource for environmental ethics.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Edwards’ interaction with the Moral Sense theorists is treated in Chapter Four.

⁵⁷ Rian Venter, “Trinity and Beauty: The Theological Contribution of Jonathan Edwards,” *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal* 51, nos. 3–4 (September–December 2010), 189. This is also a central claim of Robert W. Jenson’s *America’s Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁵⁸ Katalin G. Kállay, “Alternative Viewpoint: Edwards and Beauty,” in *Understanding Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to America’s Theologian*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 127.

⁵⁹ See the literature review below for many examples.

⁶⁰ E.g., Sallie McFague, who sees in Edwards’ notion of consent a model of Christian love (*Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982], 14–29). See also Carol J. Adams, ed., *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (New York: Continuum, 1993), 84–98; Paula M. Coe, “Eros and Intimacy in Edwards,” *Journal of Religion* 69 (October 1989): 484–501; Zachary Hutchins, “Edwards and Eve: Finding Feminist Strains in the Great Awakening’s Patriarch,” *Early American Literature* 43, no. 3 (November 2008): 671–86; and Sandra Gustafson, “Jonathan Edwards and the Reconstruction of ‘Feminine’ Speech,” *American Literary History* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 185–212.

⁶¹ See, e.g., Belden C. Lane, “Jonathan Edwards on Beauty, Desire and the Sensory World,” *Theological Studies* 65, no. 1 (March 2004): 44–72; Nicola Hoggard Creegan, “Jonathan Edwards’ Ecological and Ethical Vision of Nature,” *Stimulus: The New Zealand Journal of Christian Thought & Practice* 15, no. 4 (November 2007): 49–

3.7 The Prestige of Edwards' Thought.

Finally, Edwards' philosophical and theological acuity have been widely recognized. "It has often been claimed," observe Paul Helm and Oliver Crisp, "that Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) was America's greatest philosopher and theologian."⁶² George Marsden calls the North Hampton theologian "extraordinary," claiming that "he was the most acute early American philosopher and the most brilliant of all American theologians."⁶³ He concludes that Edwards was "America's greatest theologian" and "colonial America's most powerful thinker."⁶⁴ While Robert Jenson recommends Edwards simply and weightily as "America's theologian,"⁶⁵ Paul Ramsey calls Edwards the "greatest philosopher-theologian yet to grace the American scene."⁶⁶ Given Edwards' general theological ability, it would be remiss not to attend to his aesthetics.

4. *STATUS QUESTIONIS: Edwards' Aesthetics in the Secondary Literature.*

Jonathan Edwards' reputation and corresponding interest in his work have been subject to shifting cultural values and historical vagaries. As one of the last of the Puritans and one of the first of the Evangelicals, his status has been linked to attitudes toward these more general religious orientations. Furthermore, Edwards' character and theological style are marked by an intriguing conjunction of disparate qualities: his affective preaching and careful logic, his

51; Scott R. Paeth, "'You Make All Things New': Jonathan Edwards and a Christian Environmental Ethic," *International Journal of Public Theology* 5, no. 2 (2011): 209–32. Edwards is sometimes styled as a proto-Transcendentalist (*à la* Ralph Waldo Emerson or Henry David Thoreau). See J. Baird Callicott, "What 'Wilderness' in Frontier Ecosystems?" *Environmental Ethics* 30, no. 3 (2008): 235–49. Edwards' attitude toward nature is seen as a "variation of Virgilian pastoralism" in Moon-ju Shin, "Emily Dickinson's Ecocentric Pastoralism" (PhD dissertation, Marquette University, 2007).

⁶² *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver Crisp (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), i, ix.

⁶³ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 369.

⁶⁵ Jenson, *America's Theologian*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁶⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1, *Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsay (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957), 591. Hereafter, *WJE* 1.

innovative creativity and his staunch Calvinist orthodoxy, his abiding emphasis on love and his inflexible moral resolve, his confidence in reason and his joyful, even ecstatic experience of God in Christ. Such Janus-like character can fund not only conflicting interpretations of Edwards, but also can provoke intense reactions.⁶⁷ Edwards is one of those thinkers who engenders few lukewarm appraisals.

In this section, I will review publications regarding Edwards' theological aesthetics from three perspectives: the chronological, the perennial, and the ideological, i.e., 1) a Diachronic Development in Interpretations of Edwards' Aesthetics, 2) some Perennial Motifs in Interpretations of Edwards' Legacy, and 3) two Ideological Orientations in Interpretations of Edwards' Project.

4.1 Diachronic Development in Interpretations of Edwards' Aesthetics.

Here I will show that, over the last three centuries, studies of Edwards' aesthetics have increased from almost nil to a recognizable subfield of aesthetics (although it is still commonly aggregated with studies of his ethics). Works published concerning Edwards' aesthetics can be divided usefully into four chronological divisions: 1) from 1703 (the year of Edwards' birth) to 1948, 2) from 1949 (the year of Perry Miller's *Jonathan Edwards*) to 1968 (the year of the first monograph devoted to Edwards' aesthetics), 3) from 1969 to 2002, and 4) from 2003 (the tricentenary of Edwards' birth—a year with many publications in the field of Edwards' studies) through the present.

4.1.a 1758–1948. For the century between the two Great Awakenings (i.e., from c. the 1730s to the 1830s), “President Edwards,” as he was respectfully known (having briefly been

⁶⁷ As Iain Murray notes, “Edwards divided men in his lifetime and to no less degree he continues to divide his biographers” (*Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987], xix).

president of what would become known as Princeton University), was generally held in high esteem. Immediately following his untimely death in 1758, Edwards was regarded as an exceptional exemplar of personal holiness.⁶⁸ During his lifetime he was often known primarily as a revivalist, especially in England and Scotland. This was an accurate construal (if slightly myopic) given that, as George Marsden notes, “His central concern ... was the salvation of souls.”⁶⁹ The means to that end for Edwards, however, is primarily through preaching; he delivered over twelve hundred sermons. As Marsden writes, “Jonathan Edwards was first of all a preacher.”⁷⁰

Given that beauty was central to each of these aspects of Edwards’ project (beauty grounds his personal religious experience, his defense of the Great Awakening, and is a constant theme in his homiletics), it is unfortunate that his aesthetics were largely overlooked. There were

⁶⁸ According to Edwards’ obituary in *The Boston Gazette*, Edwards was “admired by all who knew him.” (See Sereno Dwight, *The Life of President Edwards* [New York: S. Converse, 1829], 582.) While this, as most eulogies, is a generous evaluation of Edwards’ reputation, many who knew him did esteem him highly. His “uncommon union” (ibid., 578) with his wife, Sarah, was widely celebrated. Edwards’ first biographer claims it was “founded on high personal esteem, and on mutual affection, which continually grew, and ripened, and mellowed” (ibid., 115), and the evangelist George Whitefield (1714–1770) writes, “A sweeter couple I have not seen” (*George Whitefield’s Journals* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989; reprint, March 1960], 477). Edwards’ daughter Esther (mother of Vice President Aaron Burr Jr. and wife of Princeton University President Aaron Burr Sr.) recorded in her journal, “What a mercy that I have such a Father! Such a Guide!” (Esther Edwards Burr, *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr, 1754–57*, ed. Carol F. Carlson and Laurie Crumpacker [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984], 224). Samuel Hopkins (1721–1803), theologian and one of Edwards’ live-in protégés, saw Edwards as “one of those men of whom it is not easy to speak with justice, without seeming, at first, to border on the marvelous, and to incur the guilt of adulation ... in the esteem of all the judicious, who were well-acquainted with him, either personally or by his writings, [he] was one of the greatest, best and most useful of men that have lived in this age” (cited in Gerald R. McDermott, “Jonathan Edwards, Theologian for the Church,” *Reformation and Revival* 12 [Summer 2003]: 12). George Whitefield, who also stayed with the Edwards family while touring New England, said, “Mr. Edwards is a solid, excellent Christian ... I think I have not seen his fellow in all New England” (*Journals*, October 17, 1740). Even John Wesley (1703–1791), who disagreed with Edwards’ Calvinism, called Edwards “That good and sensible man ... that great man” (*The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, 3rd ed., vol. 10, ed. Thomas Jackson [1831; London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872], 463, 475). John Newton (1725–1807), former slaver trader turned hymn writer and author of “Amazing Grace,” esteemed Edwards as “the greatest divine of his era” (Murray, *Edwards: A New Biography*, xx).

⁶⁹ George Marsden, foreword to *The Saving of Souls: Nine Previously Unpublished Sermons on the Call of Ministry and the Gospel by Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Richard A. Bailey and Gregory A. Wills (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 11.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

a handful of publications in the early 1770s, not long after the posthumous publication of Edwards' *Dissertation on the Nature of True Virtue* in 1765, debating Edwards' conception of beauty insofar as it informed internecine debates about ethical theory in the New Divinity that emerged in New England in the generation following Edwards' death.⁷¹

After the waning of the Second Great Awakening—an era in American religious history in which Calvinist theology and Puritan piety were increasingly unpopular—Edwards came to be viewed with corresponding antipathy.⁷² The humorist Mark Twain (who believed that Edwards “had no more sense of humor than a tombstone”⁷³), for instance, generates a colorful *ad hominem* attack calling Edwards “a drunken lunatic,” referring to his writing as an “insane debauch.”⁷⁴ Possibly because it would undermine the caricature of Edwards as an inhuman preacher of hellfire, very little was written that treated Edwards' aesthetics.⁷⁵

⁷¹ See, e.g., William Hart's *A Letter to the Rev. Samuel Hopkins, Occasioned by His Animadversions on Mr. Hart's Late Dialogue, in which Some of His Misrepresentations of Facts, and Other Things, Are Corrected* (New London, CT: T. Green, 1770), 11–12, cited in M. X. Lesser, *Reading Jonathan Edwards: An Annotated Bibliography in Three Parts, 1729–2005* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 55, in which Hart calls Edwards' framing true virtue in terms of primary beauty “wrong, imaginary, and fatally destructive of the foundations of morality and true religion.” The same author advances similar concerns in *Remarks on President Edwards' Dissertation Concerning the Nature of True Virtue* (New Haven, CT: T. & S. Green, 1771), cited in Lesser, *Reading Jonathan Edwards*, 56. He is answered by Samuel Hopkins in 1773 with the publication of *An Inquiry into True Holiness* (Newport, RI: Solomon Southwick, 1773), cited in Lesser, *Reading Jonathan Edwards*, 56.

⁷² Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896), for instance, deemed Edwards' sermons about hell as the “refined poetry of torture” (*The Minister's Wooing*, 1859 [New York: Library of America, 1982], 730). Similarly, Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. (1809–1894) saw Edwards' thought as “to the last degree barbaric” (*The Writings of Oliver Wendell Holmes: Pages from an Old Volume of Life* [Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1891], 395). While Holmes may or may not be warranted in his assessment of Edwards as barbaric, he clearly did not understand Edwards well. In the same sentence he calls Edwards (who was a philosophical Occasionalist and Idealist) “mechanical and materialistic.” In keeping with his mid-nineteenth-century American sensibilities (e.g., freedom and progress), Holmes assumes that if Edwards “had lived a hundred years later and breathed the air of freedom, he could not have written with such old-world barbarism as we find in his volcanic sermons” (*ibid.*, 396).

⁷³ Cited in Joe B. Fulton, “Jonathan Edwards, Calvin, Baxter & Co.: Mark Twain and the Comedy of Calvinism,” chapter 10 of *John Calvin's American Legacy*, ed. Thomas J. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 239.

⁷⁴ After reading Edwards' *Freedom of the Will* late into the night, Twain (Samuel Clemens) writes to thank his friend for lending him the book. He says, “I wallowed & reeked with Jonathan in his insane debauch; rose immensely refreshed & fine at ten this morning, but with a strange & haunting sense of having been on a three days' tear with a drunken lunatic.” Later he says, less facetiously, “All through the book is the glare of a

Aversion to Puritanism in general and Edwards in particular continued through much of the first half of the twentieth century. In a less-than-subtly titled tract, “Jonathan Edwards: The Divine Who Filled the Air with Damnation and Proved the Total Depravity of God,” one Freethinker from this era opines that Edwards “believed in the worst God, preached the worst sermons, and had the worst religion of any human being who ever lived on this continent.”⁷⁶ Similar, if less emphatic, views of Edwards generally held until mid-century. While we find little engagement with Edwards’ notions of beauty in this anti-puritan time,⁷⁷ Henry Bamford Parkes provides an interesting exception. In an article entitled “The Puritan Heresy,” Parkes claims that Edwards, “the only original thinker” in Puritan New England, was no true Puritan. Rather Edwards’ thought concerning the beauty of God, nature, and Christian experience was “Catholic and not Calvinist.”⁷⁸ Interestingly, Parkes published this article in a Harvard literary magazine a year after Perry Miller began teaching there.⁷⁹

resplendent intellect gone mad—a marvelous spectacle. No, not *all* through the book—the drunk does not come on till the last third, where what I take to be Calvinism and its God begins to show up and shine red and hideous in the glow from the fires of hell, their only right and proper adornment. By God I was ashamed to be in such company” (Letter to the Reverend Joe Twichell, February 1902, repr. in *Mark Twain’s Letters*, 2 vols., ed. Albert Bigelow Paine [New York: Harper, 1917], 2:719–20). Interestingly, Twain was baptized Presbyterian, raised learning the Westminster Shorter Catechism, and died as a Presbyterian, never fully disowning his theological heritage. As always, Twain’s attacks tend to be humorous. Other instances of name-calling are less so. George Stanley Godwin, for instance, says, “Edwards was a psychopath, a spiritual quack, a sadist, half-insane, self-tortured prophet” (*The Great Revivalists* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1950], cited in McDermott, “Jonathan Edwards, Theologian for the Church,” 12).

⁷⁵ One exception was George P. Fisher, who found Edwards’ grounding of morality in the sense of spiritual beauty to be “the most questionable feature in Edwards’ whole theory” (“The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards,” *The North American Review* 128, no. 268 [March 1879]: 297. Published by University of Northern Iowa Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25100733>).

⁷⁶ Matilla M. Ricker, *Jonathan Edwards: The Divine Who Filled the Air with Damnation and Proved the Total Depravity of God* (New York: American Freethought Tract Society, 1918).

⁷⁷ On the bicentennial of Edwards’ birth, the Congregational Churches of Berkshire County, Massachusetts, published a collection of conference papers including one by John DeWitt that lauded Edwards’ fusion of holiness with spiritual beauty in *Jonathan Edwards: The Two Hundredth Anniversary of His Birth. Union Meeting of the Berkshire North and South Conferences, Stockbridge, Mass., October Fifth, 1903* (Stockbridge, MA: Berkshire Conferences, 1903), cited in Lesser, *Reading Jonathan Edwards*, 135.

⁷⁸ Henry Bamford Parkes, “The Puritan Heresy,” *Hound & Horn* 5 (January–March, 1932): 165–90. Interestingly, in an earlier work Bamford affirmed Edwards’ status as a Puritan, entitling his intellectual biography *Jonathan Edwards, the Fiery Puritan* (New York: Minton, Balch, 1930). In the latter work Bamford does, however, claim

The prevailing anti-Puritanism of the previous half century began to wane in academic circles in the 1930s. In his chapter “Jonathan Edwards” in *Philosophical Ideas in the United States*, H. G. Townsend boldly esteems Edwards as “the first and perhaps the greatest philosophical thinker in America” in part because the New England philosopher recognized the aesthetic nature of logical ideas and because the “real heart” of his ethics is grounded in his belief that people love God because he is beautiful.⁸⁰ Around the same time Perry Miller published *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, 1630–1650*⁸¹ and closed the decade out with his influential *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*.⁸² Both works recast New England Puritanism in a more favorable light. By 1944, Joseph Haroutunian could identify Edwards not as a purveyor of the wrath of an angry god but, due to his devotion to beauty, as the theologian of the love of God and neighbor.⁸³ After returning to Harvard from military service in World War II, Miller wrote two essays published in 1948 and began to establish the importance of beauty in Edwards’ thought.⁸⁴ Both essays adumbrate his watershed contribution to Edwards studies in the following year.

4.1.b 1949–1968. The period of time from 1949 to 1968 is inaugurated by the birth of contemporary Edwards studies and culminates in the first book-length study of Edwards’

that Edwards was “not truly an American.”

⁷⁹ Something was in the air at Harvard during this time. A 1932 PhD dissertation by Rufus Orlando Suter Jr., “The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards,” also treated Edwards’ view of beauty (although only in relation to ethics).

⁸⁰ Harvey Gates Townsend, “Jonathan Edwards,” in *Philosophical Ideas in the United States* (New York: American Book Co., 1934), 35–62.

⁸¹ Perry Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, 1630–1650: A Genetic Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933).

⁸² Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (New York: Macmillan, 1939).

⁸³ Joseph G. Haroutunian, “Jonathan Edwards: Theologian of the Great Commandment,” *Theology Today* 1 (October 1944): 361–77.

⁸⁴ Miller wrote “Jonathan Edwards on the Sense of the Heart,” in *Harvard Theological Review* 41, no. 2 (April 1948): 123–45, in which he expounded “*Miscellany*” #782, a rich statement of Edwards’ aesthetics. Miller also introduced his edition of Edwards’ *Images or Shadows of Divine Things* with a short essay, “Beauty of the World.” (Jonathan Edwards, *Images or Shadows of Divine Things*, ed. Perry Miller [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948], 1–41.)

aesthetics. Perry Miller's 1949 intellectual biography, *Jonathan Edwards*, served both to revitalize Edwards' reputation and to launch a burgeoning era of Edwards studies that continues unabated today.⁸⁵ Furthermore, by drawing on insights from his 1948 "Beauty of the World," Miller's biography of Edwards firmly established the importance of beauty in Edwards' thought. Kin Yip Louie, however, overstates the case when he writes that "Miller reinterprets the whole corpus of Edwards' works ... putting aesthetics as the heart and soul of Edwards' thinking."⁸⁶ Miller makes about a dozen scattered remarks about beauty in his biography. Most of these comments, however, are intended to bolster Miller's reading of Edwards as applying Lockean sense-based epistemology to every area of Edwards' intellectual interests.

Following Miller's nascent insights it is Douglas Elwood who, in 1960, begins to grasp how fundamental beauty is to Edwards' thought. Elwood recognizes Edwards' "stress on the primacy of the aesthetic element,"⁸⁷ not only in human experience, but "most prominently in his fundamental conception of God in terms of absolute *beauty*."⁸⁸ Indeed, Elwood rightly sees that Edwards' conception of God "is at once supreme Being and supreme Beauty since all being and all beauty are enfolded in his fullness."⁸⁹ He goes on to note that "spiritual beauty is the primary essence of God."⁹⁰ While Elwood makes such startling claims, he does not explore them, and his interests are not ultimately aesthetic. Roland Delattre is correct in his assessment of Elwood when he says of him, "He takes note of, though he does not fully exploit, the decisive

⁸⁵ Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*. Miller's study of Edwards was preceded by other revisionist works of New England Puritanism such as *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939) and *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953).

⁸⁶ Kin Yip Louie, "The Theological Aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards" (PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2007), 7.

⁸⁷ Douglas Elwood, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 9.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

significance of beauty and sensibility for understanding the distinctiveness of Edwards' thought."⁹¹

It is Delattre who must be credited with demonstrating "the decisive significance of beauty and sensibility for understanding the distinctiveness of Edwards' thought."⁹²

Delattre gathered observations from Miller and Ellwood concerning the role of beauty in Edwards and produced the first monograph devoted to Edwards aesthetics. In 1968, Delattre's Ph.D. dissertation from Yale was published as *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards: An Essay in Aesthetics and Theological Ethics*.⁹³ This pivotal work has given the most thorough exposition of Edwards' aesthetics to date and is rightly regarded as a classic in the field of Edwards studies.

4.1.c 1969–2002. While the study of Edwards' view of beauty appears to have come into its own in Delattre's work, often (following Delattre) aesthetics are conflated with ethics.⁹⁴ This was the case with Clyde Holbrook's 1973 work, *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: Morality and Aesthetics*,⁹⁵ which views Edwards' project as a fusion of Calvinism and Neoplatonism. Considerations of beauty seem to be subordinated to ethical concerns. While there are fruitful observations scattered throughout (e.g., observations about the trinitarian model of beautiful

⁹¹ Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility*, 9.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Roland André Delattre, "Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards: An Essay in Aesthetics and Ethics" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1966), published as *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards: An Essay in Aesthetics and Theological Ethics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

⁹⁴ These two types of value theory are, indeed, integrally related in Edwards. They are not, however, indistinguishable, and clarity can be served by disaggregating the two concepts of beauty and morality. Ethical studies of beauty continue in this period, e.g., Roland A. Delattre, "Beauty and Politics: A Problematic Legacy of Jonathan Edwards" in *American Philosophy from Edwards to Quine*, ed. Robert W. Shahan and Kenneth R. Merrill (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 20-48; William C. Spohn, "Sovereign Beauty: Jonathan Edwards and the Nature of True Virtue," *Theological Studies* 42 (September 1981): 394-421; Paul Ramsey, "Editor's Introduction" in *WJE* 8; and Roland A. Delattre, "The Theological Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: An Homage to Paul Ramsey," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 19 (Fall 1991): 71-102.

⁹⁵ Clyde A. Holbrook, *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: Morality and Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973).

relational consent), the lasting effect of this work has been to restrict the view of Edwards' aesthetics to Neoplatonic and ethical categories.⁹⁶

In a fascinating article from 1976, Sang Lee advances an interpretation of Edwards' philosophy of mind in which "habit" (defined as "an active and real tendency to behavior or event of a determinate sort") is "key" to Edwards' aesthetics.⁹⁷ The sense of the heart is understood to be conditioned by habit to grasp actively (*à la* the dynamic view of the mind of the Cambridge Platonists) spontaneous, unmediated intuitions (*à la* Lockean sensationalist empiricism) *qua* beauty. Lee sees this as anticipating Coleridge's notion of *imagination*. The imaginative power of cognition shapes reality, making the mind ontologically generative. While few ideas from this article were integrated into interpretations of Edwards by other thinkers (the article may have been too idiosyncratically creative), many of them resurface in refined form in Lee's later monograph.⁹⁸

In 1978, Terrence Erdt further developed the field of Edwardsian aesthetics by extending it to the arts and by identifying the sense of the heart as the "cornerstone" of Edwards' notion of aesthetic sensibility. Following Conrad Cherry's corrective of Miller,⁹⁹ Erdt rightly frames Edwards' notion of the sense of the heart not in terms of Lockean sensationalist epistemology (as had Miller), but in those of Reformed conceptions of the experience of God's sweetness. Tracing

⁹⁶ Delattre found Holbrook's work to be "a great disappointment," failing to integrate Edwards' ethics and aesthetics ("A Review of *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: Morality and Aesthetics* by Clyde Holbrook," *New England Quarterly* 47 [March 1974]: 155–58). Similarly, Fiering found the book uninformed regarding both Edwards' ethics and his aesthetics ("*The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: Morality and Aesthetics* by Clyde Holbrook," *William and Mary Quarterly* 32 [January 1975]: 139–41).

⁹⁷ Sang Hyun Lee, "Mental Activity and the Perception of Beauty in Jonathan Edwards," *Harvard Theological Review* 69 (October 1976): 369–96.

⁹⁸ I.e., Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

⁹⁹ Cherry argues that far from abandoning his theological tradition in favor of a wholesale subscription to the epistemology of Locke's *Essay*, Edwards draws on and defends the central tenets of Reformed theology—often even against Lockean assumptions. See Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (1966; reprint, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

Calvin's notion of *suavitas* through the Puritans and Edwards, Erdt locates Edwards' conception of sensibility to Calvinist "experimental" (i.e., experiential) psychology.¹⁰⁰ Erdt summarizes,

Calvin's explanation that the sense of the heart was the particular feeling that the saint had toward the message of salvation was not a piece of pietistic vaguery. He labeled the feeling itself *suavitas*, sweetness, which Edwards incorporated into his own lexicon to describe the religious experience.¹⁰¹

Furthermore, Erdt captures an aspect of Edwardsian methodology that has led many interpreters astray. He notes that Edwards recasts a traditional concept in contemporary philosophical (in this case Lockean) language, thereby both retaining and reframing it. Edwards holds to Reformed distinctives but also adapts them to his own theological vision. Erdt notes, "To a degree Edwards' uniqueness in the Puritan tradition was to define, apparently as a result of his own experimental knowledge of regeneration, *suavitas* as an aesthetic response."¹⁰² While Erdt's reflection on the application of Edwardsian aesthetics to the arts has been a nonstarter, his analysis of aesthetic sensibility in Edwards has been quite influential.¹⁰³

Norman Fiering further helped situate Edwards' thought in its intellectual context. In *Jonathan Edwards' Moral Thought and Its British Context* (1981), he takes note of Edwards' Lockean language while claiming, contra Miller, that "Edwards himself was no Lockean."¹⁰⁴ Rather Fiering shows the influence of British Sentimentalist ethics, e.g., that of Francis Hutcheson and the Third Earl of Shaftesbury. Fiering's focus (as the title of this work

¹⁰⁰ See Terrence Erdt, "The Calvinist Psychology of the Heart and the 'Sense of Jonathan Edwards,'" *Early American Literature* 13, no. 2 (Fall 1978), 165–80, and *Jonathan Edwards, Art and the Sense of the Heart* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 2–23. The latter work began as a PhD dissertation at the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1977.

¹⁰¹ Erdt, "Calvinist Psychology," 171.

¹⁰² Erdt, *Art and the Sense of the Heart*, 23.

¹⁰³ Other reflections on Edwardsian sensibility and the "sense of the heart" followed in this time period, including William J. Wainwright, "Jonathan Edwards and the Sense of the Heart," *Faith and Philosophy* 7 (January 1990): 43–62, and Miklos Vetö, "Beauté et compossibilité: l'épistémologie religieuse de Jonathan Edwards," *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*, 4, vol. 76 (Octobre–Décembre, 1996).

¹⁰⁴ Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards' Moral Thought*.

announces) is Edwards' *moral* thought. From the perspective of this dissertation, it is unfortunate that more attention was not paid to the aesthetic theories of these same thinkers.¹⁰⁵ In a later work, Fiering goes on to explore the Rationalist sources of some of Edwards' metaphysics. These "theocentric metaphysicians," e.g., John Norris, Bishop Berkley, and Nicolas Malebranche, were decidedly not Lockean.¹⁰⁶

Robert W. Jenson's masterful 1988 work on Edwards is an excellent example of Edwardsian scholarship put to constructive ends.¹⁰⁷ Jenson employs an interpretation of Edwards' trinitarian theology in which "the God into whose beauty Edwards is led by the beauty of nature is no nature-God or God of natural theology, but from the very first and essentially the triune God."¹⁰⁸ For Jenson's Edwards, God is a "fugued hymn"— beauty consisting in harmonious diversity. While questioned by Marsden as an attempt to "make Edwards into Karl Barth,"¹⁰⁹ Jenson ignited a wave of scholarship that was to read Edwards' trinitarian thought as a foundational hermeneutic for understanding his work, e.g., Amy Plantinga Pauw¹¹⁰ and William Danaher.¹¹¹ Whether Edwards operates from a Cappadocian-esque social analogy of the Trinity, a basically Augustinian psychological analogy, or a developing doctrine of the Trinity with varying emphases depending on polemical need,¹¹² such studies serve deeply to inform Edwards'

¹⁰⁵ While I address some of this in Chapter Four of this work, a full-scale study is still needed.

¹⁰⁶ Norman Fiering, "The Rationalist Foundations of Jonathan Edwards' Metaphysics," in *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience*, ed. Harry S. Stout and Nathan O. Hatch, 73–93. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 77.

¹⁰⁷ Jenson, *America's Theologian*.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰⁹ George Marsden, "The Edwardsean Vision," *Reformed Journal* 39 (June 1994): 23–25, 25.

¹¹⁰ Amy Plantinga Pauw, *"The Supreme Harmony of All": The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002). Chapter 2, "A Redefinition of Divine Excellency," pp. 57–89, treats Edwards' aesthetics most directly.

¹¹¹ William J. Danaher Jr., *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

¹¹² Recently, Steven Studebaker, by deploying a "historical-theological" methodology, has argued against a perichoretic read of Edwards' trinitarianism (e.g., as in Plantinga Pauw and Danaher), in favor of an

aesthetics.

One significant publication may represent a “coming of age” of Edwardsian studies in aesthetics; it shows the expansion of Edwards’ thought beyond the field of Edwards studies into the broader area of general theological aesthetics. Patrick Sherry observes that Edwards’ views of beauty are “keyed” to a “fully developed” trinitarian theology, rooted in an Augustinian conception of the Holy Spirit as the *vinculum amoris* between the Father and the Son. He further notes Edwards’ view of sanctification as beautification by the Spirit. In the end, Sherry finds Edwards’ trinitarian aesthetics comparable in status to those of von Balthasar, whom he esteems as “perhaps the greatest modern writer” in theological aesthetics.¹¹³

In 2004, Ken Minkema lamented that the “1990s saw a significant drop in” works on Edwards’ ethics and aesthetics.¹¹⁴ In 2010, however, he and Harry Stout revised this estimation noting,

Nearly half of the studies on Edwards’ ethics and aesthetics completed during the 1990s were dissertations, the number of which has held constant for three decades. This is usually an indicator of a good showing in the coming years. Another good indicator was the interest in Edwards’ ethics in connection with the tercentenary of his birth in 2003. And so the concept of beauty, with implications for aesthetics, is a topic continuing to attract attention.¹¹⁵

Augustinian conception of “mutual love” within the Trinity. (Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards: Social Augustinian Trinitarians in Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* [Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008].) Kyle Strobel, however, offers a convincing mediation between the two views by showing a change between the trinitarianism of the Edwards of the *Notes*, and that of the Edwards of the late *Essay or Discourse on the Trinity*, arguing that Edwards’ views develop as he polemically engages the proto-unitarianism of his context. (Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards’ Theology: A Reinterpretation* [T & T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology vol. 19; London: T & T Clark, 2013].) One of the reasons such diverse interpretations may be drawn is the exploratory and ad hoc nature of his reflections on the Trinity—none of which he published.

¹¹³ Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty*, 15. Another work could be mentioned as representing the recognition of Edwards as a resource for theological aesthetics: Farley, *Faith and Beauty: A Theological Aesthetic*. Farley, however, simply provides an overview of some of Edwards’ ideas.

¹¹⁴ Kenneth P. Minkema, “Jonathan Edwards in the Twentieth Century,” *JETS* 47, no. 4 (December 2004): 659–87, 667.

¹¹⁵ Kenneth P. Minkema and Harry S. Stout, “Jonathan Edwards Studies: The State of the Field,” in *Jonathan*

While other interesting articles on Edwards' aesthetics were written during this time period that never gained much traction,¹¹⁶ it is to the time of "the tercentenary of his birth in 2003" that I now turn.

4.1.d 2003–Present. Of the one monograph, 6 chapters or essays in edited volumes or compilations, 24 journal articles, and 7 Ph.D. dissertations from 2003 onward that treat Edwards' aesthetics fairly directly,¹¹⁷ 7 treat Edwards' views of beauty from a general or comprehensive perspective.¹¹⁸ Twenty-seven of these publications may be assigned, without undue procrustean violence, into three general groups. First, eight publications consider Edwards' view of beauty from a *metaphysical* perspective, engaging Edwards' aesthetics as they apply to the Trinity and

Edwards as Contemporary: Essays in Honor of Sang Hyun Lee, ed. Don Schweitzer (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 241.

¹¹⁶ I think, e.g., of David Weddle, "The Beauty of Faith in Jonathan Edwards," *Ohio Journal of Religious Studies* 4, no. 2 (October 1976): 42–52; W. Clark Gilpin, "'Inward, Sweet Delight in God': Solitude in the Career of Jonathan Edwards," *Journal of Religion* 82 (October 2002): 523–28; and particularly of Paula M. Cooley, "Eros and Intimacy in Edwards."

¹¹⁷ This is necessarily a somewhat imprecise number; others might include publications that I did not consider as having treated "Edwards' aesthetics fairly directly" or may not have included publications that I do. This notwithstanding, my analysis of these forty publications will provide a helpful, general picture of recent literature on Edwards' aesthetics. The statistics may be summarized:

TYPE	#	%
Monographs	1	2.63%
Chapters/Essays	6	15.79%
Journal Articles	24	63.16%
PhD Dissertations	7	18.42%

Book reviews, reprints, dictionary and encyclopedia entries, newspaper articles, and passing references are not included.

¹¹⁸ These include: E. Brooks Holifield, "Jonathan Edwards," in *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 102–26; Louie, "The Theological Aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards"; Louis J. Mitchell, "The Theological Aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards," *Theology Today* 64, no. 1 (April 2007): 36–46; Oliver D. Crisp, "Divine Beauty and Excellency: Some Lessons from Jonathan Edwards," *Crux* 44, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 2–11; Sang Hyun Lee, "Edwards and Beauty," in *Understanding Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to America's Theologian*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 113–26; Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, "Beauty and Aesthetics," in *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 93–101; and Kin Yip Louie, *The Beauty of the Triune God: The Theological Aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013).

ontology.¹¹⁹ These works operate in the register of *philosophical theology*. A second group of seven publications proceeds from an *ethical* perspective, engaging Edwards' aesthetics as they pertain to ethics.¹²⁰ Such studies draw on and inform *moral theology*. The third set of twelve publications treats Edwards' views of beauty from a *phenomenological* perspective; they address the experiential or affective aspects of beauty.¹²¹ These works concern *experiential theology*. The

¹¹⁹ These include: Amy Plantinga Pauw, "‘One Alone Cannot be Excellent’: Edwards on Divine Simplicity," in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 115–25; George M. Marsden, "Jonathan Edwards in the Twenty-First Century" in *Jonathan Edwards at 300: Essays on the Tercentenary of His Birth*, ed. Harry S Stout, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Caleb J. D. Maskell (Latham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 152–64; Richard R. Niebuhr, "Being and Consent," in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 34–43; Amy Plantinga Pauw, "The Trinity," in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 44–58; Patrick Sherry, "The Beauty of God the Holy Spirit," *Theology Today* 64, no. 1 (April 2007): 5–13; Brian Keith Sholl, "The Excellency of Minds: Jonathan Edwards' Theological Style" (PhD dissertation, University of Virginia, 2008); Venter, "Trinity and Beauty"; and Oliver D. Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards on God and Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Of this last, Chapter 5 (94–116) is on divine excellency.

¹²⁰ These include (in chronological order): Gerald R. McDermott, "The Eighteenth-Century American Culture War: Thomas Jefferson and Jonathan Edwards on Religion and the Religions," *Litteraria Pragensia: Studies in Literature and Culture* 15 (29, 2003): 48–63; Roland A. Delattre, "Aesthetics and Ethics: Jonathan Edwards and the Recovery of Aesthetics for Religious Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31, no. 22 (Summer 2003): 277–97; Gerald R. McDermott, "Franklin, Jefferson and Edwards on Religion and the Religions," in *Jonathan Edwards at 300: Essays on the Tercentenary of His Birth*, ed. Kenneth Minkema and Harry Stout (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 65–85; Ki Joo Choi, "The Role of Beauty in Moral Discernment: An Appraisal from Rahnerian and Edwardsean Perspectives" (PhD dissertation, Boston College, 2006); William J. Danaher Jr., "Beauty, Benevolence, and Virtue in Jonathan Edwards' *The Nature of True Virtue*," *Journal of Religion* 87, no. 3 (July 2007): 386–410; Richard B. Steele, "Transfiguring Light: The Moral Beauty of the Christian Life According to Gregory Palamas and Jonathan Edwards," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 52, no. 3–4 (2008): 403–39; and Ki Joo Choi, "The Deliberative Practices of Aesthetic Experience: Reconsidering the Moral Functionality of Art," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 29, no. 1 (Spring–Summer, 2009): 193–218.

¹²¹ These include (in chronological order): Louis J. Mitchell, "Jonathan Edwards on the Experience of Beauty," *Studies in Reformed Theology and History*, no. 9 (2003): 1–115; Max L. Stackhouse, "Edwards for Us," *Christian Century* 120 (4 October, 2003): 32–33; Belden C. Lane, "Jonathan Edwards on Beauty, Desire, and the Sensory World," *Theological Studies* 65 (March 2004): 44–72; Finbarr Curtis, "Locating the Revival: Jonathan Edwards' Northampton as a Site of Social Theory," in *Embodying the Spirit: New Perspectives on North American Revivalism*, ed. Michael J. McClymond (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 47–66; C. Samuel Storms, *One Thing: Developing a Passion for the Beauty of God* (Fearn, Rosshire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2004); Wilson N. Brissett, "Beauty among the Puritans: Aesthetics and Subjectivity in Early New England" (PhD dissertation, University of Virginia, 2007); Joseph D. Wooddell, "Jonathan Edwards, Beauty, and Apologetics," *Criswell Theological Review* 5 (Fall 2007): 81–95; Kállay, "Alternative Viewpoint: Edwards and Beauty," 127–32; Peter J. Leithart, "Beauty Seize Us," *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity* 21, no. 5 (June 2008): 6; Belden C. Lane, *Ravished by Beauty: The Surprising Legacy of Reformed Spirituality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Christine Mary Dixon, "The Concept of the Heart in the Theological Thought and Experience of Augustine of Hippo and Jonathan Edwards" (PhD dissertation,

four remaining publications are not readily unclassifiable¹²² according to my categories.¹²³

Significantly, the three most common perspectives on beauty in recent Edwards scholarship map onto my proposed typology; the *metaphysical* perspective corresponds to my Ontological type, the *phenomenological* perspective corresponds to my Affective type, and (though it will not be clear until Chapter Three) the *ethical* perspective corresponds to my Formal type.

4.2. Perennial Motifs in Interpretations of Edwards' Legacy.

Having just completed a chronological review of the secondary literature, I must point out that understandings of Edwards recur in various forms. This may be observed by considering five perennial motifs that reappear in understandings of Edwards and his legacy. Some will be familiar from the chronological overview in 4.1, others I will illustrate in the next section, 4.3. While each motif reflects truth, when overemphasized, studies of Edwards' aesthetics can be eclipsed or skewed by tendentious interpretations of Edwards' thought. The five motifs are the Prodigy, the Demon, the Revivalist, the Ideologue, and the Frustrated Philosopher.

Macquarie University, 2008); and Kathryn Reklis, *Theology and the Kinesthetic Imagination: Jonathan Edwards and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2014).

¹²² These include: Stuart Piggin and Dianne Cook, "Keeping Alive the Heart in the Head: The Significance of 'Eternal Language' in the Aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards and S. T. Coleridge," *Literature and Theology: An International Journal of Religion, Theory, and Culture* 18 (December): 383–414; William A. Dyrness, "Jonathan Edwards: The World as Image and Shadow," in *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture: The Protestant Imagination from Calvin to Edwards* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 240–99; Michael D. Gibson, "The Beauty of the Redemption of the World: The Theological Aesthetics of Maximus the Confessor and Jonathan Edwards," *Harvard Theological Review* 101, no. 1 (January 2008): 45–76; and Joseph G. Prud'homme and James H. Schelberg, "Disposition, Potentiality, and Beauty in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Defense of His Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin," *American Theological Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (January 2012).

¹²³ The perspective on beauty taken in these recent works may be summarized as follows:

PERSPECTIVE	#	%
General	7	18.42%
Metaphysical	8	21.05%
Ethical	7	18.42%
Phenomenological	12	31.58%
Unclassifiable	4	10.53%

First, Edwards is frequently viewed as *a prodigy*. Whether seen as a paragon of piety (as immediately after his death, among some in the Second Great Awakening, and among some contemporary Evangelicals), as a preacher anointed by God to lead a transformation of Colonial culture through spiritual conversion (as he was viewed at home and abroad in the First Great Awakening), or as genius of such towering intellect that he was perpetually ahead of his own time (as in Miller, Lee and others), Edwards has often been cast as preternatural. While his heartfelt devotion, his lasting cultural influence, and his exceptional intellectual acuity are not in question, hagiographic or super-human interpretations of Edwards can overlook ordinary influences and explanations of his views. This may account, in part, for the general lack of attention to the influence of aesthetic (and not only ethical and theological) ideas that were afoot in Edwards' intellectual milieu. Conversely, demonizing motifs of Edwards as *villain* (e.g., as a dour Puritan, a doctrinaire sectarian, a dogmatic tyrant, or the unfeeling hellfire preacher of *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*) obscure Edwards' emphasis on beauty, God's delight in Godself, and God's intention for human delight and flourishing.

At some times (e.g., in both Awakenings) and in some circles (e.g., among nineteenth-century Scottish Presbyterians and among some contemporary American Evangelicals), Edwards is viewed primarily as a *revivalist*. While his interest in spiritual awakenings was acute and abiding and while his literary production in defense of them is substantial, so too were his theological and philosophical endeavors. Furthermore, Edwards' philosophical commitments must not be construed in terms of a particular philosophical school of thought, e.g., Neoplatonism (as is quite common and about which I have much to say in Chapter Two), Newtonian physics, or Lockean Sensationalism. Faulty assumptions concerning Edwards' philosophy—particularly by reading him through a Neoplatonic grid—have led to significant

misinterpretations of Edwards' aesthetics. While Edwards stands self-consciously in the Reformed tradition, even this lens can overcolor Edwards' complicated fusion of innovation and orthodoxy (as he sees it). The motif of Edwards as *ideologue* must not overinterpret him.

Relatedly, the motif of Edwards as a *frustrated philosopher* who, due to his Colonial and Puritan context, could only pursue philosophical inquiry in a theological register and through a ministerial vocation is also recurrent. Perry Miller, for instance, seeing Edwards' pastoral duties as distractions, laments that Edwards "was forced repeatedly to put aside his real work and to expend his energies in turning out sermons" and "defenses of the Great Awakening."¹²⁴ We have no evidence, however, that Edwards resented preaching or that he viewed his philosophical work as primary and other aspects of his work as secondary. Wilson Kinnach reminds us, "Although the reputation of Jonathan Edwards is appropriately multi-faceted and he is deservedly recognized as a theologian, philosopher, and pioneering psychologist, the popular conception of him as a preacher is essentially correct."¹²⁵

Indeed, as Kinnach observes, Edwards is a complex thinker with diverse undertakings and interests. Highlighting one aspect of his thought to the exclusion of others invariably skews interpretations of him. In the case of his aesthetics, however, most of the common interpretive motifs eclipse the role of beauty in his thought. Viewing Edwards one-dimensionally as a genius, demon, philosopher, or revivalist likely obscures Edwards' aesthetics while casting his thought as Neoplatonism will yield prominent but inaccurate conceptions.

4.3. Ideological Orientations in Interpretations of Edwards' Project.

Whether issuing from consciously held convictions or precognitive presuppositions, two

¹²⁴ Perry Miller, "Jonathan Edwards on the Sense of the Heart."

¹²⁵ Wilson H. Kinnach, Introduction to *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 10, *Sermons and Discourses, 1720–1723*, ed. Wilson H. Kinnach (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 3. Hereafter *WJE* 10.

ideological orientations and two resulting methodological styles in Edwards studies have emerged. In a recent piece entitled “Jonathan Edwards Studies: The State of the Field” (2010), Ken Minkema and Harry Stout have observed this “divergence of scholarship on Edwards’ thought”¹²⁶ in “recent” work “over the past decade.”¹²⁷ For these writes (from the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University), this “debate is over issues of disposition vs. finality, inclusiveness vs. exclusiveness, liberal theological innovation vs. consistent Reformed orthodoxy,” and “comes down to ... an American school and a British school.”¹²⁸ In the “American school,” Minkema and Stout place Sang Hyun Lee (from Princeton Theological Seminary), Anri Morimoti (sic, from the International Christian University in Tokyo, but who studied under Lee at Princeton) and Gerald McDermott (from Roanoke College).¹²⁹ Each of these scholars have produced highly original constructive projects, built on highly creative (and contested) readings of Edwards. Minkema and Stout see the “British school” as consisting of writers who “criticized the extent to which Edwards has been correctly portrayed” by the American school. These include, “Paul Helm, Oliver Crisp, Stephen Holmes, and John Bombaro (a Yank who trained under Helm).”¹³⁰

While Minkema and Stout have rightly sensed a “divergence” in Edwards studies that may have even grown into a “debate,” I see the issue as older and more complex. From my perspective, the difference is not 1) one “liberal theological innovation vs. consistent Reformed orthodoxy,” 2) a “recent” issue “over the past decade,” or 3) well conceived in terms of “an American school and a British school.” I will explain these three objections and then offer an

¹²⁶ Minkema and Stout, “Jonathan Edwards Studies,” 248.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 247.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 249.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 248–49.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 249.

alternative schema.

First, the notion of liberal and orthodox theology is largely anachronistic and of limited descriptive value. In the putatively liberal school is Gerry McDermott, who self-identifies as an Evangelical, and Sang Lee and Anri Morimoto from Princeton Theological Seminary, for which the designations “liberal” or “orthodox” are particularly poorly suited. Concerning the British school (as constituted by Helm, Crisp, Holmes, and Bombaro), Minkema and Stout are close; it is concerned with some kind of “Reformed orthodoxy,” but I take the issue between the two camps to be one of historiography and hermeneutics, not theology per se. The scholars of the so-called British school see themselves as performing better historical exposition of Edwards by acknowledging and highlighting the Reformed sources, ideas, and commitments in Edwards’ thought. It could be said that these thinkers seek Edwards’ “authorial intent” and see their American counterparts as selectively engaging Edwardsian themes and insights in order to fund constructive projects.

Second, this divergence in strategies is traceable at least to 1966, when Conrad Cherry’s “Reappraisal” of Edwards’ theology challenged Miller’s central thesis of the 1950s in favor of a self-consciously Reformed Edwards.¹³¹ So too in 1973 with Clyde Holbrook, who in contradistinction to Miller’s interpretation, framed Edwards’ “theological objectivism” as self-consciously Calvinist. Likewise with Terrance Erdt, who in 1978 also stressed Calvinist themes, as mentioned above.¹³² While Norman Fiering does not stress Edwards’ Calvinism in the manner of the British School, his 1981 work is rooted in historical exposition aimed at recovering a less novel reading of Edwards’ eighteenth-century thought. Furthermore, Marsden’s comment that

¹³¹ Conrad Cherry, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*.

¹³² See Erdt, “Calvinist Psychology of the Heart,” and *Art and the Sense of the Heart*, 2–23.

Jenson fashioned “Edwards into Karl Barth”¹³³ in 1988 could serve to locate Jenson’s project in the style of the American school.

While further examples could be adduced, enough have been mentioned to establish that a divergence of two theoretical dispositions and methodologies that are not established primarily by theological commitments is much older than the twenty-first century, and began solely on American soil. Rather than “an American school and a British school,” then, I will refer to these two orientations, tendencies, and approaches as an “Innovative Constructive” reading and use of Edwards (that is, concerned with Edwards’ historical context and theological commitments) and a reading and use of Edwards that gives a *pro tanto* preference to a “Historically Reformed” reading of him. Each approach has value—I imagine both approaches see themselves as doing something analogous to a *Ressourcement* of Edwards—and both entail potential shortcomings for Edwards scholarship in general and for the use of his aesthetics in particular. I will illustrate both below.

4.3.a The Innovative Constructive Orientation to Edwards Scholarship.

Innovative Constructive readings of Edwards tend either to view him as a prodigious integrator of Modern (i.e., Enlightenment) philosophy or as a pioneering developer of Post-Modern (e.g., post-metaphysical or Post-Structural) thought. In both cases, the motifs of *the prodigy*, *the ideologue*, or *trapped philosopher* are often in interpretive play.

Perry Miller is representative of the first, modern, version of this orientation. He is also largely responsible for founding contemporary Edwards studies in a particularly strong version of the prodigy motif. Miller’s rehabilitation of Edwards’ late nineteenth– and early twentieth–century reputation as a fear-mongering preacher of eternal torments was achieved by recasting

¹³³ Marsden, “Edwardsean Vision,” 25.

him as a true American hero: a brilliant, open-minded sage who absorbed European philosophy and refashioned it for local consumption. As Nathan Hatch and Harry Stout observe, “From Miller, students of American culture inherited an image of Edwards as an isolated genius who stood so completely above and beyond his immediate culture that our own time is “barely catching up.”¹³⁴

On Miller’s reading, Edwards achieves a bold syncretization of Christian doctrines and Newtonian physics mediated through Lockean epistemological psychology. While Edwards continues to use the idiom of theology, the content of his system has now become Enlightenment philosophy. Therefore, Miller can audaciously claim that Edwards “became, therefore, the first consistent and authentic Calvinist in New England.”¹³⁵ It is only in this sense that beauty is a doctrinal or theological idea. Rather, for Miller’s Edwards, beauty is a philosophical notion derived from reflection on immediate sense experience. Ultimately, this transmutes to a mystical reorientation to the world; when one apprehends “a sense of the beauty of the universe” one apprehends “a sense of reality.”¹³⁶

While Miller’s revisionist presentation of Edwards has come in for revisionist scrutiny itself, there is much to commend in it. Edwards was, indeed, possessed of an exceptional and highly creative mind. From his youth Edwards was *au courant* with Enlightenment ideas and made significant, if idiosyncratic use of contemporary philosophical language and concepts. Furthermore, as a Congregationalist of the time, he held to Puritan orthodoxy but was not particularly confessional in his theology. Regarding Edwards’ aesthetics, Miller rightly highlights Edwards’ view of harmony as the essence of reality.

¹³⁴ Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout, eds., *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4.

¹³⁵ Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 98.

¹³⁶ Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 192.

Nonetheless, it seems implausible that Edwards conducted an elaborate ruse whereby his doctrinal claims are mere ciphers for deeper philosophical truths. On the contrary, Edwards' doctrinal carefulness and the energy he expends in polemics evince that he held his theological beliefs *ex animo*, with no duplicity. Nor was Edwards uncritical in his adoption of Enlightenment thought. Stephen Nichols has highlighted Edwards' role as an apologist against many of the new ideas.¹³⁷ In Chapter Four, I will illustrate Edwards' nuanced interaction with the aesthetic theories of some of the British Moral Sense theorists, particularly Francis Hutcheson. Wilson Brissett summarizes well what Miller has missed: "Edwards' expansive idea of beauty was theorized by him at the level of the scientific and philosophical, but its origin and end were defined by the spiritual and the theological, which were always ruled in turn by the biblical."¹³⁸ In the end it would seem that, creative reframing of traditional notions notwithstanding, he was a Calvinist in the same sense as were other New England Puritan divines.

While a particularly interesting and creative Post-modern version of the *Innovative Constructive* orientation to Edwards may be seen in Stephen Daniel's *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards: A Study in Divine Semiotics*, I will pass over it quickly as it relates only indirectly to Edwards' aesthetics and because I address some of its relevant claims in Chapter Four. Rather than from Enlightenment sources, Daniel reads Edwards as drawing from "Stoic-Ramist" and Renaissance logic to develop a semiotic metaphysics, or "an ontology of signs."¹³⁹

In Edwards' use of such a logic, the notion of communication is expanded to include ... the ontology for determining being. It is in terms of this combination of ontology and logic (in an ontology of signs or "semiotics") that he justifies his arguments

¹³⁷ See Stephen Nichols, *An Absolute Sort of Certainty: The Holy Spirit and the Apologetics of Jonathan Edwards* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2003).

¹³⁸ Brissett, "Beauty among the Puritans," 2.

¹³⁹ Stephen H. Daniel, *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards: A Study in Divine Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 4, 68–83.

about God, the Trinity, creation, freedom, knowledge, and beauty.¹⁴⁰

In other words, communication evinces being in that being is constituted by relationship. Daniel rightly observes that in Edwards “the beauty or excellence of a thing consists in its relations to others. Since the very existence of a thing consists in those relations, the ontological and aesthetic dimensions of the thing cannot ultimately be differentiated.”¹⁴¹ Both beauty and being are established relationally by participation in a intersubjective semiosis.

Certainly the most influential Post-modern version of the *Innovative Constructive* methodology in Edwards studies has been Sang Lee’s presentation of Edwards’ metaphysics as a “dispositional ontology.” I examine this claim in Chapter Two showing that, as insightful and helpful as Lee’s analysis is, he has nonetheless overinterpreted certain central themes in Edwards who operates not from a dispositional ontology, but an aesthetic ontology.

While Perry Miller grasps Edwards’ intrepid and venturesome engagement of the new ideas in the Republic of Letters, and while Lee helpfully highlights the centrality of dispositions in Edwards and his creative ontology, such gains have embedded costs. Overemphasis on Edwards’ innovative utilization of Enlightenment philosophy (as in Miller) or overemphasis on the role of disposition in Edwards’ ontology—such that it appears to be tantamount to Barthian actualism or Heideggerian post-metaphysics (as in Lee)—obscures the influence of Edwards’ intellectual context and theological tradition.

4.3.b The Historically Reformed *Orientation to Edwards Scholarship*.

Proponents of the Historically Reformed approach to understanding Edwards include, as mentioned as part of the “British school,” Paul Helm, Oliver Crisp, Stephen Holmes, and John

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 177.

Bombaro. I would also add established Edwards scholars Michael McClymond, Sam Logan, and David Fergusson. More recent additions include, *inter alias*, Steven Studebaker, Robert Caldwell, Kyle Strobel, and Kin Yip Louie.

From this perspective, beauty is primarily a theological notion, and only secondarily a philosophical one. It is assumed that the philosophical constructs employed by Edwards are to be framed in terms of his doctrinal aims and commitments, not vice versa. Furthermore, situating Edwards' thought in his theological tradition and sources is considered to be critical to an accurate interpretation of him. The aim is not an interpretation of Edwards repristinated according to some static standard in the history of Puritan or Reformed thought, but to allow those views that shaped Edwards to shape the interpretation of him. This has clear advantages. Edwards was well trained and well read in Reformed Scholasticism and, as I mention above, gives every indication that he self-consciously aligns himself with that tradition.

This, however, can be overdone, interpreting Edwards through the motif of a Calvinist *ideologue*. Historically Reformed readings of Edwards can risk reading past Edwards' philosophical and theological innovation and the (sometimes subtle) reframing of traditional concepts. While Edwards has a remarkable ability to develop a doctrine in a way that is simultaneously innovative and orthodox by most eighteenth-century Reformed standards, he sometimes exhibits significant departures from his received inheritance (e.g., his ambivalence concerning some formulations of the doctrine of divine simplicity¹⁴²). Edwards himself argues for theological development and against rejecting "any addition of light." He says that they "who bring any addition of light ... to true religion ought not to be despised and discouraged," as if it

¹⁴² On this see Amy Plantinga Pauw, *Supreme Harmony*, 69, and "'One Alone Cannot be Excellent': Edwards on Divine Simplicity," in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 115–25.

were presumptuous to think that anything could be added to the work of eminent divines of the past. He concludes by doubting “that the church of God is already possessed of all that light ... that ever God intends to give it.”¹⁴³

Furthermore, and sadly for aesthetics, writers from this orientation in the past have had little to contribute to discussions of beauty. Kin Yip Louie, a writer decidedly from the Historically Reformed perspective, however, has recently undertaken to rectify that deficiency. With the 2013 publication of *The Beauty of the Triune God: The Theological Aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards*,¹⁴⁴ Louie states, “In this treatment, the aesthetics of Edwards is examined within an explicitly theological framework.” The work proceeds through seven chapters. After a literature review in Chapter One in which Perry Miller looms large as the polemical other, Louie offers “Definitions of Beauty,” skimming from Plato through the Puritans and then focusing more closely on the eighteenth-century British thinkers, Shaftesbury, Addison and Hutcheson. Chapter Three treats the “Metaphysics of Beauty,” Chapter Four “the Beautiful God,” Chapter Five “the Beautiful Christ,” and Chapter Six “Eschatological Beauty.” Chapter Seven concludes the work.

Kin’s work explores how Edwards frames theological topics in terms of beauty with attention to the influence of Reformed doctrine. It is, however, difficult to discern why the particular topics were selected.¹⁴⁵ Nor does there seem to be an overarching thesis beyond something like, “Edwards operates from Reformed categories in the development of his

¹⁴³ Jonathan Edwards, preface to Joseph Bellamy, *True Religion Delineated* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1750), iii.

¹⁴⁴ Kin Yip Louie, *The Beauty of the Triune God: The Theological Aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton Theological Monograph Series Book 201)(Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013). This is a revision of 2007 Louie, K. Y. “The theological aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards.” Ph.D. dissertation, Edinburgh, 2007.

¹⁴⁵ It does not appear to follow, for instance, the six traditional theological loci of Reformed scholasticism, of Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology.

theological aesthetics.” This work may best be used as a reference for questions about particular doctrines.

Burgeoning as the field of Edwards studies is, a desideratum remains in the treatment of Edwards’ aesthetics. While the importance of beauty in the thought of Jonathan Edwards is widely acknowledged, it nonetheless has received relatively little sustained attention. Louie’s work is the first monograph on Edwards’ aesthetics since Delattre’s a half century ago, and adds little that is new. What is needed is a conceptual treatment of Edwards’ aesthetics—a thematic, rather than topical approach; one that provides synthesis, not just analysis. Finally, an engagement of Edwards’ views is needed that attends not only to his theological tradition, but also engages his aesthetic notions *qua* aesthetics. This lack likely accounts for Edwards remaining a largely untapped resource for aesthetics outside the field of Edwards studies. My work intends to address this lacuna.

PART II. A TYPOLOGY OF THEORIES OF BEAUTY

5. THREE AESTHETIC HORIZONS: *A Morphological Analysis.*

A central aim of this dissertation is to identify and analyze conceptual horizons from which particular theological aesthetics have been commonly or recurrently employed in Western thought. This aspiration arises in part from a delphic lack of clarity in aesthetic discourse that may impede the resurgence of interest in beauty as a theological construct.

This turbidity stems from a number of factors. First, the concept of beauty is particularly capacious; conceptions of beauty are rich and diverse. Consequently, notions of the beautiful are

capable of entailing a great many other ideas. Similarly, the language utilized to discuss beauty can be particularly ambiguous; the same words may be applied with markedly different semantic connotations. As G. W. Leibniz observed, “*Les hommes ont des différentes notions qu’ils appliquent aux mêmes termes.*”¹⁴⁶ This is especially true given that conceptions of beauty are often developed in relation to other disciplines (e.g., ethics, psychology, axiology, etc.), and are often embedded in broader theoretical commitments (e.g., various Platonisms, Romanticisms, Idealisms, etc.) and can overlap with other aesthetic ideas (e.g., the sublime, the pastoral, the picturesque, the anti-beauty aesthetics of much twentieth-century art, etc., and recently even the grotesque¹⁴⁷). Furthermore, the phenomenology of beauty often entails a sense that more is being experienced than can be apprehended. As Simone Weil notes regarding beauty, “[It is] impossible to define it psychologically, because of the fullness of the aesthetic contemplation.”¹⁴⁸

Conceptual clarity in the aesthetics of beauty could be advanced by at least three strategies. First, a rigorous analytical definition could be sought—one in which the designation “beauty” always and only applies. Given the spaciousness, abstruseness, theoretical embeddedness, concurrence with other aesthetic conceptions, and surplus of meaning mentioned above, it is likely that any analytical definition would be too thin or too parochial to advance a theology of beauty. A second approach could be historiographical. Clarity can be had by careful historical analysis of precisely what, say, Pythagoras, Plotinus, Aquinas, Ficino, Kant, or Keats meant by beauty. This is critically important; I intend to do this with Edwards. However, while

¹⁴⁶ “People have different notions which they apply to the same terms.” G. W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. and ed. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

¹⁴⁷ On the grotesque, see Victor Anderson, *Creative Exchange: A Constructive Theology of African American Religious Experience* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 7–12.

¹⁴⁸ George A. Panichas, ed., *Simone Weil Reader* (Mt Kisco, NY: Moyer Bell, 1977), 421–22.

this approach is necessary, it is not sufficient for constructive aesthetics. Grazia Marchiano is surely right when she claims that “the aesthetic universals are not philological fossils belonging to an archaeology of thought, but milestones on the cultural path of humanity. To explore them, and to relocate them in the framework of the spirit of the present time is an essential path for the research of a world aesthetics at its outset today.”¹⁴⁹ While definitional clarity must be sought where possible, and historical aesthetic conceptions must be accurately unearthed and contextualized, I wish to offer a third strategy for advancing conceptual clarity regarding notions of beauty.

In order to disentangle the many divergent understandings and uses of the concept of beauty (both in Edwards and in Western thought generally), I proffer a typology of theological conceptions of beauty. This will contribute to conceptual clarity in discussions of beauty not by limiting or more narrowly defining its usage, or by exploring particular historical cases in isolation, but by identifying certain types of thought about beauty. This approach goes beyond definitional and historical analysis to a morphological analysis and provides a framework for analyzing what is pertinent in Edwards’ (or other thinkers’) various horizons for engaging aesthetic ideas. Such a schema is also a basis for comparing those perspectives and ideas. I believe a typology can provide clarifying analytical language, but also some useful cartography in the misty woodlands of theological aesthetics.

By “typology” I mean a heuristic classification of conceptions of beauty into genera or genuses. By categorizing various conceptual horizons from which aesthetic reflection and analysis may be undertaken, and the ensuing modalities in which conceptions of beauty are

¹⁴⁹ Grazia Marchianò and Raffaele Milani, eds., *Frontiers of Transculturality in Contemporary Aesthetics: Proceedings Volume of the Intercontinental Conference, University of Bologna, Italy, October 2000* (Turin: Trauben, 2001), 6.

expressed, this typology identifies major *clusters* of theories. As clusters (which cannot be *precisely* defined but must be described¹⁵⁰), theories about beauty maybe recognized by a certain “family resemblance.” The types, then, are not archetypes, i.e., ideal types. Furthermore, the categories are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. Indeed, they commonly overlap. Nonetheless, each type describes vantage points from which Edwards (or, again, another theologian) attends to particular features of beauty.

While particular aesthetic theories are framed and expressed in very different contexts, and therefore exhibit both synchronic particularity and diachronic development, certain categories of thought, nonetheless, perennially frame particular theories. The multiplicity of aesthetic theories—manifold and diverse as they are—tend to cluster in three discernable categories: ontological, formal, and affective conceptions of beauty. While exceptions are sure to exist, most of the myriad theories of beauty in Western culture may be recognized as a generally belonging to one of three classes. Whether in Golden Age Athens, late-medieval Paris, or late-modern New York, some aesthetic theories will issue from the horizon of being, some from the horizon of form, and others from the horizon of affective experience.

5.1 The Ontological Horizon in Western Aesthetics.

Many of the discernable strands of thought about beauty in the history of Western culture are cast in metaphysical and ultimately ontological terms. From the Pythagoreans through the Phenomenologists, beauty has been recurrently understood as reflecting “reality” or “being.” Claims about beauty and ontology emerge not only from philosophical and theological commitments, but also from common human experience. When people are moved aesthetically,

¹⁵⁰ Here I follow a widely accepted notion of “cluster” from computer science as not susceptible to exact definition. See, e.g., Vladimir Estivill-Castro, “Why So Many Clustering Algorithms—A Position Paper,” *ACM SIGKDD Explorations Newsletter* 4, no. 1 (June 2002): 65–75, doi:10.1145/568574.568575.

they sometimes sense an enhanced connection to “reality” through the experience of the beautiful, often believing they have glimpsed something that transcends quotidian existence. Philosophical reflection on such experiences of the beautiful has not infrequently lead to beliefs concerning ultimate reality. From here, the step to religion then is a short one. Significantly, two of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century, Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar, both develop their theological aesthetics with an eye toward ontology.¹⁵¹

While beauty is perennially conceived in Western culture in ontological terms, it must be noted that conceptions of “being” vary tremendously across time and within various philosophical systems.¹⁵² Minimally, “being” need only denote existence, as in Parmenides.¹⁵³ Aristotle, however, develops a metaphysics of substance. “What being is,” he claimed, “is just the question, what is substance?”¹⁵⁴ Much of Western philosophy followed from this seeing “being” as an existent essence. This conception was refined by Thomas Aquinas with lasting influence. For him, “being” (*esse*) is an essence (quiddity, or substantial form) in the act of existence. More or less Thomistic conceptions of being are common in many theological aesthetics. Étienne Gilson, for instance, defines being as “the substance, nature, and essence of

¹⁵¹ Karl Barth—famously wary of “metaphysics”—conceives being actualistically, primarily in dynamic and relational, rather than substantial terms. God’s being is in act, and therefore may not be conceived apart from his free action. There is no divide in God “between his being and essence in himself and his activity and work as the Reconciler of the world created by him” (*Church Dogmatics, 4.1: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Part 1*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley, [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956], 184–85. Hereafter, *CD/IV.1*). Likewise for human beings: to say, “I am” means to say, “I am in encounter” (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, 3.2: The Doctrine of Creation, Part 2*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. H. Knight, J. K. S. Reid, G. W. Bromiley, and R. H. Fuller [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1960], 247. Hereafter, *CD/III.2*). Balthasar, another of our theologians, adopts much of this Barthian actualism while accommodating it to more Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysics.

¹⁵² C.f., for instance, the transcendent notion of being in Plato and the immanent view of it in Heidegger.

¹⁵³ A. H. Coxon and Richard D. McKirahan, eds. *The Fragments of Parmenides: A Critical Text with Introduction and Translation. The Ancient Testimonia and a Commentary* (revised and expanded edition; Las Vegas: Parmenides, 2009), 58.

¹⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book VII Section 1 (paragraph 1028b), Aristotle: *Metaphysics*, Books I–IX, trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933, 1979), 310.

anything existent.”¹⁵⁵ Some contemporary analytic philosophers (e.g., Trenton Merricks¹⁵⁶ and Peter van Inwagen¹⁵⁷) see “being,” or its synonym “existence,” as univocal, i.e., there is only one sense of “existence,” and it is indefinable because it is a fundamental feature of reality. For the purposes of this chapter, however, *how* beauty is conceived in terms of being affects little my claim *that* beauty is often conceived in terms of being—in whatever way “being” is understood. My claim is independent of any particular ontology. Rather, it is simply an observation that beauty has commonly been conceived in ontological categories. While conceptions of being vary significantly (indeed, often irreconcilably) in various ontologies across time, nonetheless aestheticians perennially resort to ontological concepts and vocabulary to develop their theories of beauty.

At least five versions of this line of thought may be identified, but in each case the essence of beauty is conceived in ontological terms. I offer these examples simply as illustration (without explication or analysis) of my claim that beauty is often conceived ontologically. The five examples are as follows.

5.1.a Beauty and Presence. Beauty has been perennially conceived in metaphysical terms such that the beautiful is ultimately understood as an instantiation of transcendent being or ultimate reality. In such views, aesthetic experience entails a sense of *presence*—that there is a sense of the givenness of the aesthetic object; that it *exists* beyond our subjectivity.¹⁵⁸ In very

¹⁵⁵ Étienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (2nd ed., corrected and enlarged; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952), 2–3.

¹⁵⁶ Personal correspondence, November 2011.

¹⁵⁷ Peter van Inwagen, “Being, Existence, and Ontological Commitment,” in *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*, ed. David John Chalmers, David Manley, and Ryan Wasserman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁵⁸ See, e.g., Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, trans. Edward S. Casey (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 72ff.

different ways, some Neoplatonic metaphysical monism,¹⁵⁹ the Medieval Scholastic notion of transcendentals¹⁶⁰ and Phenomenological phainesthetics *à la* Martin Heidegger,¹⁶¹ Mikel Dufrenne,¹⁶² Hans Georg Gadamer,¹⁶³ and George Steiner,¹⁶⁴ assume the *presence* of being in the beautiful. Hans Urs von Balthasar expresses this view when he contends that “everything in the world that is fine and beautiful is *epiphaneia*, the radiance and splendour which breaks forth in expressive form from a veiled and yet mighty depth of being.”¹⁶⁵ On such readings, beauty is often an indication of metaphysical presence.

5.1.b Beauty and Semiotics. In other strands of this ontological type, beauty (or at least some forms of it) is an indication of transcendent reality not by instantiating it, but rather by casting a shadow, pointing to, alluding to, or evoking awareness of some reality that transcends

¹⁵⁹ For instance, Plotinus says, “We hold that all the loveliness of this world comes by communion in Ideal-Form.” Here the word “communion” is employed quite literally to indicate a “union with” Ideal-Form, not merely a representation of it. Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen McKenna (Burdett, NY: Larson, 1992), Ennead I, VI.2.

¹⁶⁰ Predications that apply to all Aristotle’s categories came to be known as “transcendentals.” When considered ontologically, the transcendentals are the features of being, inhering in being wherever it is found. Jan Aertsen summarizes well: “The term ‘transcendental’—medievalists themselves speak of *transcendens*—suggests a kind of surpassing. What is transcended are the special modes of being that Aristotle called the ‘categories’, in the sense that the transcendentals are not restricted to one determinate category. ‘Being’ and its ‘concomitant conditions’, such as ‘one’, ‘true’ and ‘good’, ‘go through (*circumeunt*) all the categories’ (to use an expression of Thomas Aquinas). The doctrine of the transcendentals is thus concerned with those fundamental philosophical concepts which express universal features of reality” (“The Medieval Doctrine of the Transcendentals: The Current State of Research,” *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale* 33 [1991]: 130).

¹⁶¹ Here I deploy John D. Caputo’s locution. For his explanation of phainesthetics, see John D. Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 3ff and 66–67; or *Against Ethics: Contributions to a Poetics of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 184. William J. Richardson explains, “This term is Caputo’s confection from the Greek word *phainesthai* (to show oneself, to appear) and characterizes one of the fundamental ways that Heidegger experiences the meaning of Being among the Greeks, particularly in the form of *physis*. Thus, from the very beginning of his way, Heidegger conceived of phenomenology as the logos of *phainesthai*, and the conception of truth (*aletheia*) as unconcealment is but another modality of the same experience.” See Richardson, “Heidegger’s Fall,” *Filosofia Unisinos* 5, no. 8 (2004): 19–48.

¹⁶² Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, 335ff.

¹⁶³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. rev. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1996), pt. 1.

¹⁶⁴ See George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), ch. 3, “Presences,” 135ff.

¹⁶⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 2, *Clerical Styles* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press; Crossroad Publications, 1984), 11.

the subject. This type of thought is employed in Plato's famous "Diotima myth," in which Socrates presents this-worldly beauty as stirring a longing for something beyond itself.¹⁶⁶ Plato's *Symposium* was seminal for much patristic theology in both the East (*à la* Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite) and the West (*à la* Ambrose and Augustine), and for the medieval tradition (notably, Erigena, Suger, the Victorines, the Cistercians, and to varying degrees most of the Scholastics before Albertus Magnus, especially Bonaventure). As a sign pointing to a more ultimate form of Being, beauty *in se* is an indication not of metaphysical presence, but of metaphysical absence. Nonetheless, the important aspect of beauty is its relation to some existent reality.

5.1.c Beauty and Perfection. Beauty has often been framed in terms of perfection.¹⁶⁷ In such views, the beautiful is that which best approximates an ideal standard, whether that be Pythagorean proportions, a Platonic Form, the "Golden Mean,"¹⁶⁸ or some general metaphysical notion of perfection as in the Early Modern German Rationalism of Christian Wolff¹⁶⁹ or Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten.¹⁷⁰ A diachronic investigation of the notion of "perfection" quickly reveals that conceptions of perfection have varied greatly at various times in Western culture. However it is disparately conceived, perfection is nonetheless commonly related both to beauty and to ultimate reality.

¹⁶⁶ Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Robin Waterfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁶⁷ For a good historical survey of this angle on aesthetics, see Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *On Perfection* (Warsaw: Warsaw University Press, 1992), 9–51. See also Tatarkiewicz, "Aesthetic Perfection," *Dialectics and Humanism: The Polish Philosophical Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (Autumn 1980): 145–53.

¹⁶⁸ The Golden Ratio, Golden Section (Latin: *sectio aurea*) or Golden Mean, or Divine Section (Latin: *sectio divina*) is a ratio believed to express an ideal aesthetic proportion. The ratio is $(1+\sqrt{5})/2$, or 1 to the irrational 1.618034...

¹⁶⁹ See *Empirical Psychology* by Christian Wolff in which he defines beauty as perfection. *Psychologia empirica methodo scientifica pertractata, qua ea quae de anima humana indubia experientiae fide constant, continentur...* [Empirical Psychology] Frankfurt and Leipzig: 1732.

¹⁷⁰ Such views extended through the work of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, though the notion of perfection as the constitutive element of beauty faded after Immanuel Kant.

5.1.d Beauty and Transcendence. The experience of beauty is also frequently expressed in terms of transcendence not only in the sense of “other than,” but also in the sense of “more than,” i.e., more than can be apprehended, experienced, or processed. The profusion of the superabundant nature of beauty has been described in terms of excess (John Milbank),¹⁷¹ surfeit (Xenophon),¹⁷² overflow (Jonathan Edwards),¹⁷³ uncontainability (von Balthasar),¹⁷⁴ infinity (Gregory of Nyssa¹⁷⁵ and David Bentley Hart¹⁷⁶), and myriad other descriptions of the sheerly overwhelming nature of beauty. The plenitude of beauty is often attributed not only to human psychology, but also to an ontological transcendence inherent in some beauty. Such conceptions of beauty can highlight the role of mystery and wonder in the beautiful.

5.1.e Beauty and Revelation. Finally, ontological readings of beauty commonly conceive beauty as a truth-bearer and associate it with the acquisition of real knowledge. This is frequently expressed in terms of illumination, enlightenment, aletheia, phainesthetics, etc. Christian theological aesthetics of this type often conceive beauty as a conduit of revelation. Metaphors of light, radiance, effulgence, and illumination are frequently employed for the realization of truth in the experience of beauty (e.g., Augustine,¹⁷⁷ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite,¹⁷⁸ Abbot Suger

¹⁷¹ John Milbank, “Beauty and the Soul,” in *Theological Perspectives on God and Beauty*, ed. John Milbank et al. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International Press, 2003), 1.

¹⁷² Xenophon, *The Symposium*, ch. 8, trans. H. G. Dakyns (Project Gutenberg, 1998), <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1181/old/sympm10.txt>. “Ay, and in the enjoyment of external beauty a sort of surfeit is engendered. Just as the eater’s appetite palls through repletion with regard to meats, so will the feelings of a lover towards his idol. But the soul’s attachment, owing to its purity, knows no satiety. Yet not therefore, as a man might fondly deem, has it less of the character of loveliness. But very clearly herein is our prayer fulfilled, in which we beg the goddess to grant us words and deeds that bear the impress of her own true loveliness.”

¹⁷³ *WJE* 8, 713 and passim.

¹⁷⁴ Von Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, I, 18.

¹⁷⁵ Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*.

¹⁷⁶ E.g., Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses* (II, 231.232). Abraham Malherbe and Everett Ferguson see this as “the fundamental doctrine for his (Gregory of Nyssa’s) spirituality.” *Life of Moses*, introduction, 14.

¹⁷⁷ Emmanuel Chapman contends regarding Augustine’s aesthetics that “from whatever direction analysis is pursued, his doctrine of illumination is reached” (“Some Aspects of St. Augustine’s Philosophy of Beauty,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1941): 46–51.

of St. Denis,¹⁷⁹ Aquinas,¹⁸⁰ and John Paul II¹⁸¹ to mention only a few). These metaphors are recurrent in much Eastern Orthodoxy, especially the Hesychast tradition.¹⁸² The revelatory nature of beauty was assumed in much High Medieval Scholasticism due to its transcendental convertibility with truth. In some Romantic thought, beauty is understood to induce compelling experience that yields affective knowledge; Keats famously avers that “Beauty is truth, truth beauty.”¹⁸³ In Heidegger and those in his wake, beauty as a disclosure of being becomes a phainesthetic channel of precognitive knowledge (as in Gadamer) or spiritual truth (as in von Balthasar).

As varied as these five conceptions of beauty are, each assumes that ontology (in some form) is a pertinent factor in considerations of beauty. While conceptions of being vary significantly (indeed, often incompatibly) in various ontologies across time, nonetheless aestheticians perennially employ ontological concepts and vocabulary to develop their theories of beauty. Ontology, then is one horizon of aesthetic reflection.

5.2 The Formal Horizon in Western Aesthetics.

The second genus of notions about beauty conceives it in *formal* terms. The word “form” is a difficult one with a particularly broad semantic range. Especially in classical and medieval aesthetics it can carry a metaphysical sense. In the High Middle Ages the influence of Aristotle’s

¹⁷⁸ Augustine’s doctrine of illumination is well known. See e.g., the *Confessions*, 4.15.25.

¹⁷⁹ *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Divine Names and Mystical Theology*, trans. J. Jones (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980), ch. 4; and *The Celestial Hierarchy*, chs. 3 and 13 in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. C. Luibheid and P. Rorem (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1987).

¹⁸⁰ E.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, rev. ed. 3 vols. (New York: Benziger, 1948; reprint, 5 vols. Westminster: Christian Classics, 1981), 1a 84.5c.

¹⁸¹ John Paul II asserts in *Veritatis Splendor* that “The light of God’s face shines in all its beauty on the countenance of Jesus Christ ... ‘full of grace and truth’” (Jn 1:14).

¹⁸² Fundamental to this tradition is the seeking of the “light of Mount Tabor,” i.e., the light of Christ manifested at the Transfiguration.

¹⁸³ John Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” *The Oxford Book of English Verse: 1250–1900*, ed. Arthur Quiller-Couch, 1919.

metaphysics gradually supplanted that of Plato's metaphysical dualism. Accordingly, Aristotelian notions of form, especially that of formal causality, grew to ascendancy and came to ground theories of beauty that located the cause of an object's beauty in its form.¹⁸⁴ Even now "form" can refer to a thing's "essence," "internal identity,"¹⁸⁵ or "significant form"¹⁸⁶ in contradistinction to its mere outward appearance. Volume 1 of von Balthasar's theological aesthetics, for instance, is entitled *Seeing the Form*.¹⁸⁷ In that work, "*Gestalt*" ultimately refers to the incarnate Christ. My use of the term "form" does not preclude some metaphysical connotations—indeed, it extends to the beauty of the Trinity. However, this is not the primary sense in which I use the term in this dissertation; My usage of form does not necessarily entail metaphysical conceptions.

By "formal" conceptions of beauty, I mean those aesthetic theories that center in "form," or the *structural composition* of the beautiful. Aesthetic concepts such as shape, structure, balance, harmony, and arrangement come to the fore in this type of aesthetic theory. While my usage of form is not synonymic with formalist theories of art, some aspects of such theories do serve to highlight my conception of form.¹⁸⁸ In 1890, the French artist and theorist Maurice

¹⁸⁴ Plato's conception of form and the Forms (εἶδος *eidos*) is subject to various interpretations, but we may safely say that, for him, the Forms are the immaterial, immutable, and more real than the material and changing copies of them that we normally have access to in this world. For Aristotle, however, whatever exists "x," exists qua "x" precisely due to its form, which inheres inseparably in its material instantiation. The form of a thing is its essential properties that distinguish it as a particular species. While Plato maintained that the form of a thing exists in a realm that transcends materiality, Aristotle conceived the form of a thing as inseparable from physical, or this worldly, existence. So-called Thomistic homomorphism develops from this Aristotelian conception of form.

¹⁸⁵ "Internal identity" is Clement Greenberg's term. He asserts that form evinces the "internal identity," the object of art, better than its representational aspects of a work that presumably are "external" ("Towards a Newer Laocoon," *Partisan Review* 7 [1940]).

¹⁸⁶ Clive Bell's term. See *Art* (1914; London: Chatto and Windus, 1928), 50 *inter alia*.

¹⁸⁷ Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, 1.

¹⁸⁸ Formalism refers to an aesthetic and critical theory of art that prioritizes form over content. While there are pre-modern adumbrations, formalism finds its ideological expressing in modernity. Some famous formalists include Clive Bell and Roger Fry of the Bloomsbury Group and the influential American art critic Clement Greenberg. My use of form diverges from formalist theories of art in numerous of ways. My focus is on beauty generally,

Denis famously reminded us “that a picture—before it is a picture of a battle horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote—is essentially a plane surface covered in colors assembled in a certain order.”¹⁸⁹ My usage of the term “form” shares features with Formalist conceptions only insofar as I mean the *composition and interrelation of the elements* in question.¹⁹⁰ In the visual arts, in this sense, form concerns the *design* or composition and interrelation (e.g., balance, contrast, tension, dominance, harmony, movement, proportion, proximity, rhythm, similarity, unity, variety, etc.) of particular *elements* (e.g., color, line, dimensions, mass, medium, scale, shape, space, texture, value, etc.).

Three aspects of form, in this sense, are important for our consideration, namely, perceptibility, objectivity, and relationality. First, form concerns that which is *perceptible*. This does not mean the beautiful object is necessarily material; the immaterial can be perceptible (e.g., negative space in sculpture,¹⁹¹ harmonious music, elegant mathematical solutions, beautiful moral acts, etc.). Beautiful things are detectable, discernible, or ostensive, even if not material. Such things may be described in formal terms. The perceptible quality of form, as I use it here, distinguishes it from Platonic conceptions of form in which beauty cannot be perceived with common human senses or faculties. In my usage, the formal qualities of beauty are perceptible in the beautiful object, not in a transcendent realm—elevated reason or spiritual sensitivity is not

not on particular theories of art. Furthermore, at this point, my interest in form is primarily as a descriptive category, while formalist theories frequently establish criteria for interpretive and evaluative aesthetic judgments about art.

¹⁸⁹ Maurice Denis, “Definition of Neo-Traditionism,” cited in Charles Harrison, Paul J. Wood, and Jason Gaiger, *Art in Theory: 1815–1900: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998), 685. Denis’ article appeared originally as “Définition du Néo-traditionnisme” under the pseudonym Pierre-Louis in *Art et Critique*, 23 and 30 August 1890. It was reprinted in Denis, *Théories 1890–1910: Du Symbolisme et de Gauguin vers un nouvel ordre classique* (Paris: Bibliothèque de l’Occident, 1912).

¹⁹⁰ My usage of the term does not embrace other aspects of Formalist aesthetics, which are often too a-contextual, antinarrative, a-historical, and generally strike me as too ideological.

¹⁹¹ Henry Moore once observed the power of voids within sculpture: “A hole can have as much shape-meaning as a solid mass.” See Vera Russell and John Russell, “Moore Explains His ‘Universal Shapes,’” *New York Times Magazine* (November 11, 1962), 60–82.

necessarily required. The formal aspects of beauty focus on its this-worldly instantiation, attending to blood and guts embodiment. In theological aesthetics, I will assert (in the concluding chapter of this work), formal beauty mirrors the Incarnation—both pertain to that “which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands.”¹⁹² Related to this orientation toward perceptibility, my conception of form emphasizes objective features of the beautiful. While beauty is often held to be in the eye of the beholder, formal features (e.g., design, composition, etc.) can be objectively observed and discussed.

While the term “form” is multivalent and my usage of it can draw on various senses of the term, the primary significance of “form,” as I am using it, lies in the *relation of entities* to each other, to their purpose, and to their context.¹⁹³ Form entails *relationship*; it denotes how one thing relates to another. Shape relates to negative space; balance concerns the relation of one aspect to another; composition entails the relation of the parts to each other. So then we must disambiguate my primary usage of the term “form” in this chapter from other usages in aesthetics. By form I mean the perceptible, objective structural composition or relations of the elements in the beautiful object.

5.3 The Affective Horizon in Western Aesthetics.

While *formal* theories tend to focus on *objective* aspects of the beautiful, *affective* views of beauty highlight the *subjective* experience of beauty. A third category of theories of beauty focuses on the affective effect of the experience of the beautiful. The phenomenology of beauty can be variously described in terms of attraction, invitation, pull, fascination, longing, freedom, release, delight, exultation, worship, a loss of a sense of time, an approximation of wholeness,

¹⁹² 1 John 1:1, *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and the New Testaments with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, New Revised Standard ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). Hereafter, NRSV.

¹⁹³ Here I manifestly part ways with most Formalism, which tends to excise from context “external” factors and meaning apart from form.

surprise, fear, a bittersweet melancholy, “homelessness,” realization, illumination, a need to share the experience and affirmation, or a deep sense of something that is “right”—an emphatic “Yes!”

The concept of affect itself is the subject of interesting historical research, but that is beyond the scope of this work.¹⁹⁴ While in psychology the term is sometimes restricted to observable evidence of an emotional state,¹⁹⁵ I will use “affect” more broadly in a generally psychological (but nontechnical) sense to communicate the conscious, subjective aspect of an *experienced* emotion, preference, sentiment, attitude, or disposition. The word usually indicates a change in one’s emotional state in response to some stimulus. While the appellation is often distinguished from cognitive and conative aspects of experience, neither Edwards nor I envision these as mutually exclusive aspects of experience. Furthermore, when I expound Edwards’ conception of the affections, I will show that he resists the reduction of affections to the emotions, passions, or feelings.¹⁹⁶

Reflection on the nature of beauty in Western thought has almost always included attention to the affective aspect of the experience of beauty. Four examples from critical moments in aesthetic history will serve to establish this point. Although conceived differently indeed, the effect of beauty is framed affectively in Classical aesthetics and in those of Augustine, Aquinas, and Kant.

¹⁹⁴ Such research has moved beyond psychology. The emotions are now the subject of philosophical inquiry, e.g., that of the late Robert C. Solomon and the International Society for Research on Emotions, and cross-disciplinary study as at the Australian Research Council (ARC) Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions (Europe 1100–1800), established in 2011 at the University of Western Australia.

¹⁹⁵ In this sense, for instance, the American Psychological Association characterizes affect as “a facial, vocal, or gestural behavior” (*APA Dictionary of Psychology*, ed. Gary R. VandenBos [Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006], 26).

¹⁹⁶ Edwards’ view is closer to the etymology of “affect,” which comes from the Latin *affectus* (the past participle of *afficere*) meaning disposition, affection, or desire.

5.3.a Classical Affective Aesthetics. Beauty is linked to delight and pleasure in most Hellenistic thinking. In Platonic schema, the good, the true, and the beautiful all have a pleasant effect on the properly ordered soul. Likewise, Aristotle defines beauty as “that which, being good, is also *pleasant*.”¹⁹⁷ Some Sophists describe the beautiful as that which is “*pleasant* to sight or hearing.”¹⁹⁸ In addition to delight, desire is central to the affective role of beauty in much pre-modern Western thought.

In the Diotima section of Plato’s *Symposium*, Eros, the offspring of Poverty and Plenty, is cast as simultaneously yielding an experience of delightful filling and deep hunger in the presence of beauty. With the advent of Neoplatonism, the affective nature of beauty becomes increasingly important. Plotinus’ use of terms like “Dionysian exultation” and “pangs of desire” illustrates the intensification of the affective focus in Neoplatonism. Observe the many (italicized) references to affect in the following citation from Plotinus’ Sixth *Ennead*:

And one that shall know this vision [of the beautiful] – with what *passion of love* shall he not *be seized*, with *pang of desire*, what *longing* to be molten into one with This, what *wondering delight*! If he that has never seen this Being must *hunger for it with all his welfare*, he that has known must *love and reverence* It as the very Beauty; he will be flooded with *awe and gladness*, *stricken by a salutary terror*; he *loves with a veritable love*, with *sharp desire*; all other loves than this he must *despise*, and *disdain* all that once seemed fair.¹⁹⁹

Affective language is employed in discussing the beautiful throughout this *Ennead* (e.g., “attracts,” “calls,” “allures,” “desire,” “longing,” “hunger”).

Clearly, the two principal emotions noted by Plotinus are *delight* and *desire*. This “eros” tradition of beauty passed directly into much medieval theology.

¹⁹⁷ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, 2nd ed., trans. George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 31, 1.9 1366a. Emphasis added.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 122. Emphasis added.

¹⁹⁹ Plotinus, *Enneads*, Ennead I, VI.5.

5.3.b Augustine's Affective Aesthetics. Augustine is the theologian of love.²⁰⁰ Not surprisingly, therefore, affective love is fundamental to Augustine's aesthetics.²⁰¹ For Augustine, beauty and love are inseparable: The beautiful elicits love, and love's object is always beauty. "Do we love anything," he asks rhetorically, "save what is beautiful?"²⁰² Furthermore, Augustinian love of beauty is erotic; it entails experiences of pleasure and desire.

The object of pleasure is *beauty*. "Only beauty pleases,"²⁰³ Augustine asserts. He frames the experience of both material and spiritual beauty in terms of delight. He sees great beauty in creation,²⁰⁴ and entreats us to "rejoice at the sight," and to take delight in "beautiful things."²⁰⁵ While earthly beauties yield pleasure, they simultaneously point to a source of even greater delight. For Augustine visible, created beauty is good in itself, but it also serves a semiotic purpose. "We are in some measure educated through visible things toward apprehension of the

²⁰⁰ Love is a capacious notion in Augustine's thought. As John Burnaby, Gerald Bonner, and others have demonstrated, Augustine's approach is at odds with attempts by some twentieth-century thinkers to define precisely conceptions of love such as of *agape*, *eros*, etc. (See John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine. The Hulsean Lectures for 1938* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007], vi. See also Gerald Bonner, *Freedom and Necessity: St. Augustine's Teaching on Divine Power and Human Freedom* [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007], 28–29.) Indeed, in his own day, he argued against consistent, clear-cut distinctions between *amor*, *caritas*, and *dilectio*. Even though, after Ovid, the Latin use of *amor* had acquired a salacious connotation, Augustine illustrates that all three terms are used both of noble and ignoble objects in Latin literature.

²⁰¹ Carol Harrison concurs, showing that the concept of beauty is integral to his theological vision. See *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press/Clarendon Press, 1992), 253–57.

²⁰² Augustine, *Confessions*, 105. See also *De Musica* 6.38 in *Augustine. Aurelius Augustinus: De musica liber VI*, trans. Martin Jacobsson. *Studia Latina Stockholmiensia*, 147. (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2002). Von Balthasar notes, "That we love only what is beautiful was self-evident in the ancient world" (*Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 2, 130).

²⁰³ Augustine, *On Order* (De Ordine), trans. Silvano Borruso (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2006), II, XV.

²⁰⁴ E.g., *Enchiridion* 10–11, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 8, *On Christian Belief*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. Boniface Ramsey (New York: New City Press, 2005).

De libero arbitrio 111.9.24–27, in *Augustine: On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, trans. Peter King (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); "De civ. Dei," XI.23 and XVI.8, in *Augustine: The City of God against the Pagans*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

²⁰⁵ Augustine, "Enarrationes in Psalmos," 32:25, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, Part III, Volume 15, *Expositions of the Psalms (1–32)*, trans. Maria Boulding, ed. John E. Rotelle (New York: New City Press, 2000).

invisible,” he instructs.²⁰⁶ “Let your mind roam round the whole creation:” he urges, “from all sides creation will cry to you, ‘God made me.’ Whatever delights you in art points you to the artist.”²⁰⁷ The beauty of creation points to the beauty of the Creator.²⁰⁸ Correspondingly, Augustine insists, “It is proper to God to delight you by his beauty.”²⁰⁹ Human delight is to center in the Divine beauty, which, in turn, orders one’s delight in all other beauties.²¹⁰

Augustine conceives the affective nature of beauty not only in terms of delight, but also in terms of *desire*; he teaches that we are delighted by what we love and, correspondingly, we take delight in what we desire. He routinely uses words like longing²¹¹ and thirst²¹² when referring to beauty, which he conceives as that which allures and attracts the soul.²¹³ He asks, “And, what is beautiful then? Indeed, what is beauty? What is it that *entices* and *attracts* us in the

²⁰⁶ “Enarrationes in Psalmos,” 44:6 in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*: Part III Volume 16, *Expositions of the Psalms (33-50)* translated by Maria, Boulding O.S.B., edited by John E. Rotelle, O.S.A., (New York: New City Press, 2000).

²⁰⁷ Augustine, “Enarrationes in Psalmos,” 26:12. He continues, “and all the more so if you go round the whole created order: gazing on it fills you with longing to praise its maker. You see the heavens: they are the mighty works of God. You see the earth: God made the numbers of different seeds, the different species of plants, the great multitude of animals. Keep going round the heavens, right around back to the earth, leaving nothing out. Everything everywhere shouts back to you the name of the Creator, and the varied beauties of created things are a chorus of praise to him.”

²⁰⁸ Augustine’s *frui/uti* distinction applies in his aesthetics. Earthly, material beauties are delightful. We are to use them. However, greater pleasures yet abound. Augustine says, “Beauty, which is indeed God’s handiwork, but only a temporal, carnal, and lower kind of good, is not fitly loved in preference to God, the eternal, spiritual, and unchangeable good” (“De Civ. Dei,” xv. 22). In *Confessions XI.4.6*, Augustine says, regarding created beauties, “So, it was you, Lord, who made them: you who are beautiful, for they are beautiful; you who are good, for they are good; you who exist, for they exist too. Yet they are not beautiful, they are not good, they do not exist, in the same way as you, their Creator.” The same point is made in *De Vera Religione*, 52 (Augustine, *Of True Religion*, trans. H.S. Burleigh [Washington, DC: Regency, 1990]).

²⁰⁹ Augustine, “Enarrationes in Psalmos,” 44:9.

²¹⁰ Augustine explains that the problem is not the material nature of lower beauties: “When the miser prefers his gold to justice, it is through no fault of the gold, but of the man; and so with every created thing. For though it be good, it may be loved with an evil as well as with a good love: it is loved rightly when it is loved ordinately; evilly, when inordinately. So that it seems to me that it is a brief but true definition of virtue to say, it is the order of love.” In *De Musica*, Augustine speaks of an “order of love (*ordo amoris*) and delight,” noting that, “Delight is a kind of weight of the soul. Therefore delight orders the soul.”

²¹¹ For him, a well-ordered reality produces delight in a well-ordered soul.

²¹² E.g., in “Enarrationes in Psalmos,” 26:12 (exposition 2).

²¹³ E.g., in “Enarrationes in Psalmos,” 41:7.

²¹³ While the soul-stretching longing (*distensio*) of love can indeed entail hunger pangs, nonetheless, *caritas* is pleasant even when it produces a bittersweet homesickness. As this desire is properly ordered and rightly sated, it transmutes into delight.

things we love? Surely if beauty and loveliness of form were not present, they could not possibly *appeal* to us.”²¹⁴ Beauty is not passive or inert. It allures. It calls like a Siren. In Augustine’s words, beauty “appeals to the eye of the heart;”²¹⁵ it “catches the eye and sets its lovers on fire.”²¹⁶ In Augustine’s anthropology, all human actions are motivated by desirous love of the beautiful²¹⁷ and in his adaptation of the aesthetics of eros, God in Christ becomes the ultimate object of desire. He addresses Christ as “Beauty” and says, “I pant for you; I tasted you, and I hunger and thirst; you touched me, and I burned for your peace.”²¹⁸ Elsewhere Augustine addresses God as “love” (*caritas*) and uses the same erotic language: “O love, who are ever aflame and are never extinguished, O Charity, my God, set me aflame!”²¹⁹ He says of divine beauty, “You called, shouted, broke through my deafness; you flared, blazed, banished my blindness; you lavished your fragrance.”²²⁰ Ultimately, this love is a desire to see God—the *visio Dei*, “then face to face.”²²¹ Augustine’s views about the affective nature of beauty were to shape much of the aesthetics of Christendom for almost a millennium.²²² In Aquinas we find both continuity and change to the Augustinian affective conception of beauty.

²¹⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, 105. Italics added. Note the similarity to Plotinus’ question, “What is it that *attracts* the eyes of those to whom a beautiful object is presented, and *calls* them, *lures* them towards it?” (Plotinus, *Ennead I*, VI.1).

²¹⁵ “Enarrationes in Psalmos,” 32:6 (exposition 2).

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Augustine accounts for human actions in terms of the soul’s intentional stance as it apprehends an intuition of the beautiful. Interested love is what animates all human activity. All conscious activity of the soul (*animus* and *mens*) is *toward* some desired aim or *away* from some unappealing threat. According to Augustine, the person (soul) cannot choose an action without the will, which is precisely the locus of directed and interested love, which is a movement of the whole soul, entailing the cognitive, the volitional, and the affective.

²¹⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, X.27.38.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, X.29.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, X.27.38.

²²¹ 1 Corinthians 13:9 ff., *NRSV*. For Augustine (in whom visual metaphors for the apprehension of the Divine abound) this vision of divine beauty is not simply spectating. In this “seeing” the innate longings of the human soul are satisfied and transformed. (See *City of God*, XXII.) As the soul sees God, it becomes like God—indeed, through the *visio dei* the soul comes to participate in the divine life. Beauty then, for Augustine, draws us (finally) into eternal blessedness. The mature Augustine’s aesthetics are deeply eschatological.

²²² On this see Chapter Four (Beauty: History of the Concept) of Tatarkiewicz, *History of Six Ideas*.

5.3.c Aquinas' Affective Aesthetics. Pleasure is central to Aquinas' conception of beauty.²²³ He discusses the experience of beauty in terms of *delectatio* and, in the *Summa Theologica*, proffers a definition of beauty that locates its essence in the capacity to give pleasure. This definition is advanced in two essentially similar versions: 1) as *id qua visum placet* ("that which *pleases* when seen"),²²⁴ and 2) as those things that *cuius ipsa apprehensio placet* ("the very perception of which *gives pleasure*").²²⁵ Both of Aquinas' formulations of his definition of beauty center in "sight." Here we observe some resonance with Augustinian aesthetics. However, the concept of sight does not carry precisely the same Augustinian emphasis on the soul or heart. Thomas' definition communicates (among other things) that beauty involves contemplation of the *intelligible*. In Aquinas' day, as in our own to a lesser extent, "seeing" (*visio*) and "perception" (*apprehensio*) were not restricted to sensation. "Sight" and "perception" are to be understood in Aquinas' aesthetics as tropes for intellectual cognition.²²⁶ Aquinas says, "Beauty ... is the object of *cognitive* power, for we call beautiful things which give pleasure when they are *seen*."²²⁷ For Thomas, the affective experience of beauty centers in contemplative pleasure when the beautiful is "gotten," or apprehended—the "I see" moment.

²²³ Aquinas draws on both the Neoplatonic tradition (particularly Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's account of beauty in *De Divinis Nominibus*) and Aristotle (again, who had included the notion of pleasure in his definition of beauty as "that which is both good and also pleasant because good" (*On Rhetoric*, 31, 1.9 1366a).

²²⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I q. 5 a 4 ad 1.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, I-a II-ae, q. 27 a 1 ad 3. Similar understandings may be found in Albert and others, but Thomas is the most systematic. William of Auvergne, who like Aquinas also taught at Paris, says, "We call a thing visually beautiful when of its own accord it *gives pleasure* to the spectators and delight to the vision" (*De Bono et Malo*, ed. J. Reginald O'Donnell, "Tractatus Magistri Guilielmi Alvernensis de bono et malo," *Mediaeval Studies* 8 [1946]: 245–99; 16 [1954]: 219–71).

²²⁶ Aquinas says, "The name seeing indicates that it is used first and foremost to denote the activity of the sense of sight; but because of the dignity and certainty of this sense, the name is extended, in accordance with linguistic custom, to all cognition by the other senses, and ultimately, even to cognition by the mind" (*Summa Theologica*, I q. 67 a. 4 c).

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, I q. 5 a 4 ad 1.

Aquinas appears to part ways with Platonic legacy regarding conceptions of beauty in which beauty is seen to pique, stir, or engender desire, and is the object of properly ordered love. At first, he seems to divorce beauty from desire. “*Good* is the object of desire,” says Aquinas, “Beauty, on the other hand, is the object of cognitive power.”²²⁸ Thomas assigns the affective aspect of beauty to the intellect and the erotic desire for the good to the appetitive faculty. The beautiful, as such, appeals to the intellect and not to the will. We take pleasure in beauty, but desire the good. Władysław Tatarkiewicz summarizes: “For St. Thomas ... the beautiful is the object of contemplation, and not of desire, while the good is the object of desire, and not contemplation.”²²⁹

Thomas appears, relatedly, to subordinate beauty to the transcendentals. In *De veritate*, the good is named among the six transcendentals, but beauty is not listed.²³⁰ The good, as a transcendental feature of being, is the object of desire, while beauty functions as that which makes the good perceptible to us. So it would seem that Thomas does not have a place for desire in his conception of beauty.

However, Umberto Eco and some neo-Thomist thinkers like Étienne Gilson argue that, while Thomas does not include beauty as a transcendental per se, he nonetheless gives beauty a status tantamount to the transcendentals.²³¹ John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock refer to

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics: Vol. II: Medieval Aesthetics* ed. C. Barrett. (Paris: Mouton, 1970), 248.

²³⁰ He lists *unum, res, ens, aliquid, bonum, and verum*. Much emphasis in the high middle ages is placed on goodness as a transcendental feature of being in order to battle the Cathar’s reappropriation of Manichean dualism, in which some of that which exists is evil. See Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Hugh Bredin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 21.

²³¹ See Eco, *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, chapter 2.

beauty in Aquinas as a “further transcendental” that mediates the transcendentals.²³² And Jacques Maritain says of beauty, “It is in fact, the splendor of all the transcendentals together.”²³³

Aquinas does, indeed, see an *essential* sameness in beauty and goodness. He says, “Beauty and goodness in a thing are identical fundamentally; for they are based upon the same thing, namely, the form; and consequently goodness is praised as beauty.”²³⁴ The difference, he teaches, is a *conceptual*, or *logical* one, having to do with our *modus cognoscendi*, not an ontological difference. Thomas sees beauty as always inhering in goodness, and assumes transcendental convertibility between beauty and goodness. He frequently mentions both together, presenting them as “coinhering.” A thing is not beautiful because we love it,” Aquinas tells us, “but is loved by us because it is beautiful *and* good.”²³⁵ Elsewhere he says, all “turns toward the *beautiful and the good*.”²³⁶ For Aquinas, beauty is that which makes the good intelligible *qua* good. Thomas says, “beauty complements good by subordinating it to the cognitive powers.”²³⁷ As Milbank and Pickstock say, “beauty shows goodness through itself.”²³⁸ It would seem that beauty is conceived as a *daemon* (*à la* the *Symposium*)²³⁹ that connects human *eros* with the eternal good of Being. Beauty, then, in Thomism, is *necessarily* associated with desire.

²³² John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2001), 6.

²³³ Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, trans. J. F. Scanlan (London: Sheed and Ward, 1932), 134.

²³⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I q. 5 a 5.

²³⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *In Librum Beati Dionysii De Divinis Nominibus expositio*, ed. C. Pera (Turin: Marietti, 1950), ch. IV, lect. 10. Here he may be following Aristotle for whom the beautiful *is* good: In the *Rhetoric*, he defines beauty as “that which is both good and also pleasant because good” (Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 31, 1.9 1366a).

²³⁶ Aquinas, *In Librum Beati Dionysii*, Ch. IV, 1. viii, 382. Aquinas is commenting on Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite’s claim that beauty is “the goal of all things and the object of their yearning (since the desire of the beautiful brings all into being).” (See Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De Divinis Nominibus*, Ch. IV, no. 7, in *Pseudo Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Paul Rorem (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987).

²³⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-a II-ae, q. 27 a 1 ad 3.

²³⁸ Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 7.

²³⁹ In the famous “Diotima myth” of the *Symposium*, Socrates puts forth the idea that beauty is a passage and connector to transcendent reality. The beautiful is a *daemon* between this world and the Good. Plato, *Symposium*, 210.

Whereas the Platonic-Augustinian view emphasized the piquing of desire by beauty, Thomas' model stresses the slaking of desire in the experience of the beautiful. In Aristotelian terms, it must be recalled, pleasure is the satisfaction of desire, or coming to rest of the appetite. Referring to pleasure, Aquinas follows Aristotle saying, "It pertains to the notion of the beautiful that in seeing or knowing it the appetite comes to rest."²⁴⁰ Pleasure is conceived as the satisfaction of desire. Elsewhere, Thomas asserts, "The cause of pleasure is love."²⁴¹ Here he echoes the Platonic tradition (which links love to longing for that which one does not have, rather than in the satisfaction of that longing). However, he reformulates the notion by saying, "for everyone delights *in the possession* of what he loves."²⁴² Again, pleasure is conceived as satisfaction, fulfillment, or gratification. Thomas says clearly, "It is part of the essence of beauty that the seeing, or cognition, of it satisfies a desire."²⁴³

There is an evident shift in Aquinas regarding the affective locus of beauty. Pleasure, rather than desire, becomes the focus. Nonetheless, the old *eros* model is simply rearranged to accommodate Thomistic systematic theology. Desire and delight remain central to reflections on the experience of the beautiful.

In the preceding section I have shown that prominent pre-modern affective views of beauty often center in *eros*. I reviewed pre-modern erotic aesthetics in which *desire* and *delight* emerge as central affective loci of beauty. I showed this manifestly to be the case in Augustine and even to be true for Aquinas, who at first glance seems to anticipate Kant's relocation of the affective of beauty to pleasure.

²⁴⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 1 ad 3.

²⁴¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, 2 vols., trans. C. I. Litzinger (Chicago: Regnery, 1964); repr. with revisions as *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1993), III. 19.6.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-a II-ae, q. 27 a 1 ad 3.

5.3.d Kant's Affective Aesthetics. Immanuel Kant gathers and reshapes many of the nascent ideas of German Rationalist and British Moralist thought in a way that profoundly altered affective aesthetics conceptions. First, in a significant departure from the aesthetics of eros, Kant grounds the judgments of beauty in a *disinterested pleasure* that is free from all desire. Kant says that the notion of disinterest “is of prime importance.”²⁴⁴ Nonetheless, precisely what he means by it has generated many interpretations. Clearly, Kant conceives *disinterest* privatively, as that which is “devoid of all interest.”²⁴⁵ However, Robert Clewis’ research has revealed five distinct senses in which Kant uses the term “interest,”²⁴⁶ and therefore five distinct senses of disinterest.²⁴⁷ I will focus on *aesthetic* disinterest, and more specifically on disinterest as it pertains to beauty, not the sublime. Furthermore, I will restrict my inquiry to the concept of desire in Kant’s notion of disinterest.

“Interest,” Kant defines, “is what we call the liking we connect with the presentation of an object’s existence. Hence such a liking always refers at once to our power of desire.”²⁴⁸ From this, we can deduce the following about interest (*Interesse*):

- 1) Interest is a species of pleasure, satisfaction or “liking.” (*Wohlgefallen*)
- 2) This pleasure requires the object’s existence (*Existenz*), i.e., the pleasure that one has in the perception of an existent thing, not in a mere “appearance” of it.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), § 2, 205.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

²⁴⁶ They are 1) pleasure in the object’s existence; (2) rational or sensory desire, the satisfaction of which is pleasant; (3) self-interest: direct promotion of one’s preservation, welfare, or happiness; (4) that by which reason becomes practical or determines the will: the attempt to achieve a moral or prudential end; and (5) active interaction or engagement with an object. Robert Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime and the Revelation of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 146–47.

²⁴⁷ They are 1) not taking pleasure in the object’s existence; 2) not having a rational or sensory desire; 3) not directly promoting one’s preservation, welfare, or happiness; 4) not attempting to achieve a moral or prudential end; and 5) not being partial. *Ibid.*, 149.

²⁴⁸ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, § 2, 204.

²⁴⁹ Existence, we read later, is necessary for pleasure in the *agreeable*, which is rooted in the “interest in the senses” and for pleasure in the *good*, which is grounded in the “interest of reason.” For an interpretation and defense of

3) It is connected always, immediately and integrally to the faculty or capacity of *desire* (*Begehrungsvermögen*).²⁵⁰

The significance of this definition is in the third aspect²⁵¹—that, as Nick Zangwill summarizes, “interest” is “a pleasure that has some kind of necessary connection with a desire.”²⁵² Interest for Kant, is a *desirous* pleasure; it is erotic.

In the First Moment, Kant establishes the beautiful as the object of *disinterested* (*uninteressiert*) liking, thereby circumscribing beauty from the realm of desire (*Begehr*).

Concluding that moment, he says, “Taste is the ability to judge an object, or a way of presenting it, by means of a liking or disliking *devoid of all interest*. The object of such a liking is called *beautiful*.”²⁵³ So then, the beautiful is the object of a disinterested pleasure; all desire is excluded.

Part of Kant’s rationale for such a claim (the part drawing on his British sources) is fairly straightforward. If one enjoys a particular work of art because it is a sound financial investment, or because she may impress her friends as a cultured person, or because the artist was a dear friend, then such interest will cloud objective judgment through bias. That is, if such is the case, one’s pleasure in the work does not stem from taste (*Geschmack*) alone; indeed a pure judgment of taste will be precluded.²⁵⁴ “Everyone has to admit,” asserts Kant,

this contested idea of Kant’s, see Nick Zangwill, “Kant on Pleasure in the Agreeable,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53:2 (Spring 1995): 167–76.

²⁵⁰ Zangwill observes that in eighteenth-century German (more than in contemporary German), “*Interesse*” indicates a kind of pleasure that is not connected with desire (“Aesthetic Judgment,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [Summer 2013 Edition], ed. Edward N. Zalta, forthcoming. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/aesthetic-judgment/>).

²⁵¹ The first aspect, that interest is a type of *Wohlgefallen*, is not a new insight. The second aspect is required by how Kant conceives the third.

²⁵² Zangwill, “Kant on Pleasure in the Agreeable,” 167.

²⁵³ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 211.

²⁵⁴ At this point, for most twentieth-century thinkers, objections to the very existence of a faculty of taste emerge. Many eighteenth-century thinkers assumed its existence. Surely it is at least a logical possibility that “taste” is socially constructed, and therefore as “biased” as any other interest. If this is the case, Kant’s theory suffers a crippling blow. For one thing, if taste does not exist objectively, then his arguments against both interest and universality suffer.

that if a judgment about beauty is mingled with the least bit of interest then it is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste. In order to play the judge in matters of taste, we must not be in the least biased in favor of the thing's existence but must be wholly indifferent about it.²⁵⁵

Kant goes well beyond battling bias here. He opposes judgments of beauty not only to prejudice, but to *desire*, and to concern for the *existence* of the object. This leads him to distinguish the realm of beauty from that of the *agreeable* (i.e., that which is sensually pleasing, e.g., the pleasure taken in warmth on a cold day, or food when we are hungry), and from that of the *good* (that which is pleasing morally and is discerned through reason). "Both the agreeable and the good refer to our power of desire..." he says,

A judgment of taste, on the other hand, is merely *contemplative*, i.e., it is a judgment that is indifferent to the existence of the object: it [considers] the character of the object only by holding it up to our feeling of pleasure and displeasure.²⁵⁶

In other words, the discernment of the beautiful stems not from a desire to possess or consume (in which existence is necessary), but merely to behold (in which only the image is necessary). Oftentimes, Kant observes, we take greater aesthetic pleasure in, say, the reflection in a river of a building than in the building itself. Unlike the case of desire, the object is irrelevant to aesthetic pleasure, which is concerned with a subjective image.

At this point it would seem that Kant has begun with a common-sense observation and then extended it to an ideological extreme.²⁵⁷ He insists that pleasure in the beautiful must be

²⁵⁵ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, § 2, 205.

²⁵⁶ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, § 5, 209.

²⁵⁷ Presumably, one might check one's bias in ways that do not require one to be "indifferent" about the object in question. And it seems counterintuitive to say that the subjective image is all that matters. Should we destroy the original, if a good image can be made? Would we not care if the *people* we love and find beautiful did not actually exist? Kant's doctrine that beauty engenders no interest or desire leads thinkers such as Paul Guyer to pronounce the theory "absurd." [Paul Guyer, "Disinterestedness and Desire in Kant's Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 36 (Summer 1978), 450.]

“devoid of *all* interest;”²⁵⁸ such judgments of taste cannot entail “the *least bit* of interest.”²⁵⁹ Kant entirely proscribes desire from the contemplation of beauty.

Second, having excluded desire, Kant restricts the affective aspect of aesthetic experience to pleasure.²⁶⁰ In this, he is in keeping with both major philosophical strains of influence on his thought: Continental Rationalism and British Empiricism. While the attitude toward reason is different in each of these intellectual orientations, both conceive assessments of the beautiful in terms not of reason, but of pleasure (as opposed to pain). Leibnitz’ disciple Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, who coined the term “aesthetic,” presents it as appealing to the affective faculty of human psychology (in contradistinction to reason).²⁶¹ In so doing he formulates his conception of affect solely in terms of pleasure and pain,²⁶² locating aesthetic experience in the realm of pleasure. From different motivation, many of the eighteenth-century British thinkers held the same criteria for establishing judgments of *taste*—that of producing pleasure and pain.

As in both of these influences, Kant situates his discussion in the Third Critique (from the very first paragraph) in terms of pleasure. Following the Rationalists at this point he says:

If we wish to decide whether something is beautiful or not, we do not use understanding to refer the presentation to the object so as to give rise to cognition; rather, we use imagination (perhaps in connection with understanding) to refer the presentation *to the subject and his feeling of pleasure or displeasure*.²⁶³

²⁵⁸ Kant, Critique of Judgment, § 2, 205.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 211.

²⁶⁰ Disinterest, of course, does not imply *indifference*. Affective experiences of the beautiful are pleasurable—presumably, significantly so.

²⁶¹ For Baumgarten, *aesthetic* images are *clear but confused*; that is, they are immediately present but do not attain to the Cartesian/Leibnitzian goal of being *clear and distinct* ideas, i.e., ideas of *reason*.

²⁶² Baumgarten, *Meditationes Philosophicae*, § 25.

²⁶³ Kant, Critique of Judgment, § 1, 204.

For Kant, in all judgments of taste (of which the recognition of beauty is a particular case), we consider “the character of the object only by holding it up to our feeling of pleasure and displeasure.”²⁶⁴

While pleasure, says Kant (nor any feeling, for that matter) cannot be defined,²⁶⁵ it is clear that his conception of pleasure differs from many others, e.g., Aristotle, in which pleasure is understood as the satisfaction, or coming to rest of the appetite. Kant occasionally employs the locution “satisfaction” (*Wohlgefallen*)²⁶⁶ in discussions of aesthetic pleasure, but he does not conceive satisfaction as the slaking or the gratification of desire. Rather, experiences of getting what one wants or needs inhere in the *agreeable*. Nor is aesthetic pleasure akin to the delight that is taken in the *good*, which is an ethical category and which, unlike aesthetic pleasure, is apprehended rationally and requires conceptualization.

Kant argues that the pleasures enjoyed in *judgments of taste* are based on the experience of the harmony of the cognitive powers of imagination and understanding.²⁶⁷ Though seemingly taking pleasure through a judgment concerning an external object, the person is actually taking pleasure through a judgment concerning him- or herself. Aesthetic pleasure consists in a peaceful self-satisfaction borne of the cooperation of the faculties. When one is aware of such a harmonious interplay, pleasure is experienced. This is recognized by the wish to perpetuate it. Kant explains: “Consciousness of a presentation’s causality directed at the subject’s state so as to *keep* him in that state, may here designate generally what we call pleasure.”²⁶⁸ So, for Kant, an

²⁶⁴ Ibid., § 5, 209.

²⁶⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*, pt. 2 of Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 2nd ed., ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁶⁶ E.g., in the *Metaphysics of Morals* he refers to disinterested pleasure as “passive satisfaction,” 116.

²⁶⁷ See *Critique of Judgment*, particularly § 9, but also: lxiv, cii, 190, 191, 197, 209, br. n. 19, 216–19, 244, 289, 292, 306, 223’, and 224’.

²⁶⁸ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, § 10.

awareness of a proper functioning of one's faculties that one hopes will continue constitutes aesthetic pleasure.²⁶⁹

Almost all aesthetic theories *include* the phenomenon of pleasure. What is new in Kant and his immediate predecessors is to assign the criteria for judgments of beauty to this subjective standard²⁷⁰ rather than to some other objective criteria. Furthermore, Kant's innovation is the *exclusive* status of pleasure in identifying the beautiful and the consequent and systematic dissociation of beauty and desire. It is this move in which a decisive turn from prevailing aesthetic theory is evinced.

So then, while many discreet species of the notion of beauty could be identified, analytical reflection reveals that they may be categorized according to three genera: ontological, formal and affective theories. This observation will frame the structure of this dissertation.

²⁶⁹One of the oddities of pleasure is its deep and utterly subjective role in the human experience, which makes it difficult to argue about rationally. Nonetheless, I cannot identify much of what Kant posits in my own experience of it. Having never, even upon reflection, located my own experiences of pleasure in the proper functioning of my faculties, I personally find Kant's theory implausible, and suspect it is born more of a procrustean desire for systematic consistency in his philosophy than in an accurate phenomenological description of pleasure.

²⁷⁰Some of the eighteenth-century British thinkers believed that beauty was objective, but located its recognition in the subject. Shaftesbury, for instance, says, "in the very nature of things there must of necessity be the foundation of a right and wrong taste" (Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury, *Characteristic of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 337). Hume may differ on this.

PART III: THE STUDY IN OUTLINE

6. JONATHAN EDWARDS AND THE TRINITARIAN SHAPE OF BEAUTY

This work consists of five chapters: the present introduction, a conclusion, and a chapter analyzing and applying each of the three types of theories of beauty in Jonathan Edwards' theological aesthetics.

6.1 Chapter 2: Edwards' Ontological Conceptions of Beauty: *Beauty and the Self-Communicating God.*

In chapter two I show that Edwards elevates the concept of beauty to a place of ontological centrality in his theology; he develops both his understanding of being and his understanding of God in essentialist terms identifying each as beauty. Furthermore, by stressing God's disposition to self-communication, Edwards develops an ontological aesthetics that envisions nature as an analogical (or "ectypal") semiosis of divine beauty in created beauty. Edwards envisions God as a signally communicative being, and therefore, Edwards envisions a substantial and constructive role for created beauty, including the beauty of nature, in Christian theology and experience.

To demonstrate this, I first explicate Edwards' ontology of beauty, in which he develops an ontological aesthetics that locates beauty at the core of theological vision, conceiving beauty as the essence of "Being in general." I describe Edwards' ontology and distinguish it from ways in which it is commonly misunderstood. Next, I elucidate Edwards' analogy of beauty, in which the spiritual beauties of God are "communicated" ectypally into created forms of beauty, including the beauty of nature. Lastly, I expound Edwards' semiotics of beauty, which funds his

expansive conception of signs by which he envisions a considerable role for the beauty of nature, in Christian theory and praxis.

Beauty and being are extensive and abiding themes in Edwards' work. Therefore, I cite widely from his corpus, but particularly from his philosophical works.²⁷¹ The fundamental insight of this chapter—the self-communication of God's glory, excellency, or beauty—however, is rooted in his posthumous work *The End for Which God Created the World* (1757; published 1765).²⁷²

6.2 Chapter 3: Edwards' Formal Conceptions of Beauty: *Beauty and the Redemption of Ugliness.*

In the third chapter I explicate *formal* conceptions of beauty and examine Edwards' particular use of formal conceptions, drawing primarily on his posthumously published *The Nature of True Virtue* (1757; published in 1765). I develop this chapter in four sections, the first three corresponding to Edwards' conception of formal or relational beauty in terms of three enduring and significant formal conceptions of beauty: 1) fittingness, 2) harmony, and 3) the conjunction of opposites. Each of these aesthetic ideas has a *longue durée*, extending from the dawn of Western culture to Edwards' time in the first half of the eighteenth century, to our own era. By augmenting and amplifying these overlapping modalities, recasting them in terms of love, and envisioning them as culminating in the beauty of Christ's redemptive work, Edwards generates a conception of beauty that makes the centrality of beauty in theology warrantable in a fallen world.

²⁷¹ By Edwards' philosophical works I mean the two posthumous dissertations (*Dissertation Concerning the End for Which God Created the World* and *The Nature of True Virtue*) collected in volume 6 of the Yale edition of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* as "philosophical works," chiefly Edwards' essay on the Mind.

²⁷² *WJE* 8, 563–64.

The fourth section of this chapter applies Edwards' thought to constructive ends. I show that deployment of these formal aesthetic categories engenders a robust theological conception of beauty capable of engaging the ugliness of the world. I use Edwards' thought to show how an emphasis on beauty is not only warranted in theology, but even provides rich resources for grappling with the lapsarian horrors of the world.

Edwards' aesthetics provide resources that can envision beauty not as a mere escape from ugliness, but as able to enter ugliness, incorporate it, and sublimate and redeem it. By joining Edwards' notion that Beauty is beautifying (i.e., that primary beauty has an active tendency to make other things beautiful as well) with Edwards' counterintuitive insight that the death of Christ should be conceived in aesthetic terms, I show that beauty, in its highest form, beautifies people and creation by redeeming it. Beauty is redemptive, as illustrated by the achievement in the crucifixion of the redemption—a sublation of ugliness into beauty. In order to establish this, I consider Edwards' retrieval and enlargement of the aesthetics of *fittingness*, *harmony*, and the *conjunction of opposites*.

6.3 Chapter 4: Edwards' Affective Conceptions of Beauty: *Beauty, Eros and*

Disinterestedness in Aesthetic Conversion.

In the fourth chapter I explore the affective aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards. I show that, while *eros* and *disinterest*—two central aesthetic concepts—were set in opposition to each other in the eighteenth century (largely through Kant), Edwards does not sequester desire from the affective realm of beauty. On the contrary, for him the erotic love of beauty is rooted in both divine and human natures. Indeed, the affections evince one's essential nature. Given the importance of the affections in Edwards' thought generally—and to his aesthetics particularly—I pay special attention to his 1746 work, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*.

In the first section of this chapter, I situate Edwards' thought in both his social and intellectual contexts and then distinguish his views from common misconceptions of the affections. I then show that Edwards envisions the affections as cognitive, emotional, and behavioral manifestations of the dispositions of the whole person. For Edwards, the affections govern the loves and hates of the heart, and thereby disclose to us the nature of the true self. In the second section, I demonstrate that Edwards conceives beauty affectively in terms of eros, or desire and delight. I show that eros is basic to his system of thought. In the third section, I establish that Edwards engages the emerging eighteenth-century concept of disinterestedness, but conceives it in marked contrast not only to the notion of "disinterested benevolence" in the *New Divinity*, but also to Kantian (and subsequent Continental) conceptions that conceive disinterest and desire as mutually exclusive, thereby proscribing eros from the construct of disinterest. In this section I show that Edwards draws on the eighteenth-century British thinkers while also retaining a role for desire in the experience of the beautiful as recognized in the eros tradition of beauty. Finally, in the fourth section, I demonstrate that conversion, for Edwards, is constituted by a new aesthetic *visio* in which eros culminates in a participation in True Beauty: that is, participation in the triune life through union with Christ. The chapter proceeds, then, in four sections: Edwards and Affections, Edwards and Eros, Edwards and Disinterestedness, and finally, Edwards and Conversion as an Aesthetic Reordering.

6.4 Chapter 5: Edwards' Trinitarian Shape of Beauty (Conclusion): *Suggestions for an Edwardsian Trinitarian Aesthetics.*

In the concluding chapter, I first present a *recapitulation* of the dissertation, summarizing the key arguments and contributions of each chapter. This reinforces my central objective in recommending Jonathan Edwards as both an exemplum and an endowment for theological

aesthetics. Secondly, I observe an *implication* of the dissertation: that Edwards' conception of beauty bears a trinitarian shape and structure. Finally, I advance a *recommendation* from the dissertation, limning directions for further study.

„*Das Alte stürzt, es ändert sich die Zeit, Und neues Leben blüht aus den Ruinen.*” As the marginalization of beauty in modernity crumbles, and the times change, Edwards may indeed contribute to new life blossoming from the ruins.

Chapter Two

ONTOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS OF BEAUTY

Beauty and the Self-Communicating God

*Glory be to God for dappled things—
 For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
 For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
 Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
 Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;
 And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.
 All things counter, original, spare, strange;
 Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
 With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
 He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
 Praise Him.*

~Gerard Manley Hopkins²⁷³

²⁷³ Gerard Manley Hopkins, “Pied Beauty” (1877), in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Major Works*, ed. Catherine Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 132.

The central aim of this dissertation as a whole is to recommend Jonathan Edwards as a source and model for constructive theological aesthetics. Additionally, it identifies genera or categories of thought about beauty that have been commonly or recurrently employed in Western thought. In Chapter One, I observe that views of beauty, manifold and diverse as they are, may be distilled into three categories: ontological, formal, and affective conceptions of beauty. This second chapter considers the first, ontological, category of thought. The following chapters will consider the remaining two types and patterns of thought about beauty.

Ontological views of beauty inform understandings of how God and God's beauty relate to the world and its beauty. If beauty is not conceived ontologically—i.e., not seen to be rooted in reality (i.e., the nature of God and the nature of creation)—it tends to slip into irrelevance, reducing finally to mere prettiness. Even if beauty is conceived ontologically, as rooted in God, but is divorced from the created order, it may degenerate into an otherworldly concern, becoming either irrelevant or restricted to the realm of private mystical experience.

Edwards elevates the concept of beauty to a place of ontological centrality in his theology, developing both his understanding of being and of God in essentialist terms as beauty. Furthermore, by stressing God's disposition to self-communication, Edwards develops an ontological aesthetics that envisions nature as an analogical (or "ectypal") semiosis of divine beauty in created beauty. Edwards envisions God as a eminently communicative being, and therefore, Edwards envisions a substantial and constructive role for created beauty, including the beauty of nature, in Christian theology and experience.

To demonstrate this, I will first explicate Edwards' ontology of beauty, in which he develops an ontological aesthetics that locates beauty at the core of theological vision, conceiving beauty as the essence of "Being in general." I will describe Edwards' ontology and

distinguish it from the way in which it is commonly misunderstood. Next, I will elucidate Edwards' analogy of beauty, in which the spiritual beauties of God are "communicated" ectypally into created forms of beauty, including the beauty of nature. Lastly, I will expound Edwards' semiotics of beauty, which funds an expansive conception of signs by which Edwards envisions a considerable role for the beauty of nature, in Christian theory and praxis.

Beauty and being are extensive and abiding themes in Edwards' work. Therefore, I will cite widely from his corpus, but particularly from his philosophical works.²⁷⁴ The fundamental insight of this chapter—the self-communication of God's glory, excellency, or beauty—however, is rooted in his posthumous work *The End for Which God Created the World* (1757; published 1765).²⁷⁵

1. EDWARDS' ONTOLOGY OF BEAUTY

Jonathan Edwards' ontology is innovative and capacious. In this section, I will illuminate Jonathan Edwards' aesthetic ontology. While Edwards tends to identify "being" with mind in act,²⁷⁶ this will not serve as a comprehensive definition. For my purposes, I will describe rather than define his views of being. By this methodology, I hope to avoid procrustean interpretations of Edwards' ontology that commonly appear.

Edwards' metaphysical theories have given rise to many constructive readings of them by later thinkers. Interpretations of Edwards' ontology include seeing it as a nascent form of process

²⁷⁴ I lists these works in footnote No. 271

²⁷⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *Dissertation Concerning the End for Which God Created the World*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 8, *Ethical Writings*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 563–64. Hereafter, *End of Creation*, WJE 8.

²⁷⁶ Being is dynamic for Edwards. "The divine nature," Edwards tells us, subsists "in pure act and perfect energy" (*Misc.* no. 94: *The Trinity*, in Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13, *The "Miscellanies,"* (*Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500*), ed. Thomas A. Schafer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 262. Hereafter, *WJE* 13.

theology,²⁷⁷ as a dispositional ontology,²⁷⁸ as a postmodern semiotic ontology,²⁷⁹ as a relational metaphysics of love,²⁸⁰ and as a trinitarian harmony in plurality.²⁸¹ The capacity for plastic construal of his ontology, however, is not simply due to the novelty or obscurity of Edwards' ontological formulations, but also because, as John E. Smith observes, they are inconsistent.²⁸² Amy Plantinga Pauw laments that Edwards' "reflections have a distinctively unsettled character."²⁸³ She goes on to observe that there "is an experimental, ad hoc quality to his employment of theological traditions that stubbornly resists systematizing."²⁸⁴ Edwards himself confesses,

there is a degree of indistinctness and obscurity in the close consideration of such subjects, and a great imperfection in the expressions we use concerning them; arising unavoidably from the infinite sublimity of the subject, and the incomprehensibility of those things that are divine.²⁸⁵

Others, seeking not a constructive use of Edwards' ideas but a historical exposition of them, have found one philosophical hermeneutical key or another by which to unlock and interpret Edwards' thought. He has been variously interpreted as a Neoplatonist, an Idealist, a

²⁷⁷ E.g., in Jeffrey A. McPherson, "Jonathan Edwards and Alfred North Whitehead: The possibility of a constructive dialogue in metaphysics." (PhD dissertation, McMaster University, 2006).

Similarly, Roland Delattre compared Edwards and Whitehead a number of times in *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards: An Essay in Aesthetics and Theological Ethics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 25, 29, 111, 130. Hereafter, *Beauty and Sensibility*.

²⁷⁸ Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988). Hereafter, *Philosophical Theology*.

²⁷⁹ Steven Daniel, *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards: A Study in Divine Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) and "Postmodern Concepts of God and Edwards' Trinitarian Ontology," in *Edwards in Our Time: Jonathan Edwards and the Shaping of American Religion*, eds. Sang Hyun Lee and Allen C. Guelzo (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 45–64.

²⁸⁰ Sally I. Matless, "Jonathan Edwards' Relational Metaphysics of Love" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2002).

²⁸¹ Amy Plantinga Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

²⁸² John E. Smith, "Jonathan Edwards as Philosophical Theologian," *Review of Metaphysics* 30 (December 1976): 306.

²⁸³ Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All*, 50.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *End of Creation*, *WJE* 8, 462–63.

Lockean, a Malebrachean, etc. There are, indeed, many elements of Enlightenment thought in Edwards; he read and absorbed many of the ideas of his day. However, Edwards follows no particular Enlightenment philosophy as an ideological adherent. Edwards borrows and adapts various philosophical tenets for his own theological ends. Nor did he ever abandon his own theological tradition shaped by Puritan piety and Reformed Orthodoxy. On the contrary, for as manifestly original as Edwards frequently is, he is also an essentially conservative figure. Noting that “Reformed theology and Enlightenment philosophy are two legs that together build the philosophical theology of Edwards,” Kin Yip Louie offers an interesting analogy of another theologian who attempted to fuse his theological tradition with the philosophy of the day, saying, “We may regard Edwards as a Thomas Aquinas of the eighteenth century.”²⁸⁶

While Kin’s analogy does not reflect Edwards’ ad hoc usage of contemporary philosophical sources as compared to Aquinas’ more thoroughgoing systemization and valorization of Aristotle, the comparison does highlight Edwards ability to deploy the emerging thought of his day for his own theological ends.

Although frequently abstruse, ad hoc, and unsystematic, Edwards develops an ontological aesthetics that locates beauty at the core of his theological vision, conceiving both beauty and being in terms of consent. In explicating this I will explore 1) the ontological status of beauty in Edwards, 2) the aesthetic conception of being in Edwards, 3) the aesthetic doctrine of God in Edwards, and 4) the misinterpreted ontology of Edwards.

²⁸⁶ Kin Yip Louie, “The Theological Aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards” (PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2007), 63.

1.1 The Ontological Status of Beauty in Edwards.

The prominent standing of beauty in Edwards' theology must be taken into account if he is to be read well. His theological vocabulary is replete with aesthetic terms and concepts. Beauty, its synonyms (e.g., loveliness, amiability, and especially, excellence), and its formal contributive aspects (e.g., fittingness, harmony, and the conjunction of opposites) appear on almost every page of his work. This aesthetic vocabulary evinces an aesthetic grammar that structures Edwards' thought. As we saw in Chapter One, then, the concept of beauty is both integral and essential to his thought. Herein lies one of the pillars of Edwards' much lauded originality. His elevation of beauty is unusual among Protestant thinkers, especially Lutheran and Reformed thinkers who tend to privilege auditory metaphors (e.g., hearing the Word of God) over visual ones (e.g., the *visio Dei*, the *visio beatifica* or beholding the beauty of God).

Nowhere is Edwards' elevated status of beauty more evident than in his ontology, which is unprecedented not only in Protestant theology, but even in the entire history of Christian thought. Even in Christian Platonism—in which beauty is often held in very high esteem indeed—beauty is never (to my knowledge) afforded an ontological primacy over goodness and truth, as does Edwards.²⁸⁷ Edwards' aesthetic ontology goes beyond Barth, beyond von Balthasar, and beyond Christian Platonism.

1.2 The Aesthetic Conception of Being in Edwards.

As I have observed, Edwards' ontology is better described than defined. This being said, it must surely be described as an *aesthetic* ontology. Beauty grounds Edwards' conception of being; it is a fundamental ontological concept for him. "Existence or entity," he says, "is that into

²⁸⁷ If we were to see such a move, we might expect it from Origen, or Gregory of Nyssa or Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. Even Plotinus, the panegyric apostle of beauty, demurred from raising beauty to a quintessential height. To elevate beauty above goodness and truth would be very un-Platonic indeed.

which all excellency is to be resolved.”²⁸⁸ Given Edwards’ Idealism, it can be difficult to determine if this is a logical claim or an ontological one, meaning (a) when logically distilled we come to recognize that all the manifold forms of excellency or beauty are actually manifestations of being (“existence or entity”) or, more neo-Platonically, (b) that all the various forms of beauty will be fused together or absorbed, losing their separateness in their *reditus* into being. However, his usage of “resolved” (a peculiarly Edwardsian phrase) is most often analytical, not metaphysical, akin to the mathematical use of the word, meaning to reduce an idea, analytically, into a more elemental form. Edwards’ claim then is that, when considered carefully, instances of beauty turns out to be instantiations of being.

The notion that beauty may be resolved into being, or that beauty *is* being’s consent to being might be taken, as does Roland Delattre, to imply that being is ontologically prior, “above” or “behind” beauty. “Being is the highest metaphysical concept for him,” Delattre claims. “Nothing has a prior or higher ontological status.”²⁸⁹ While Delattre recognizes that “Beauty is fundamental to Edwards’ understanding of being,”²⁹⁰ he casts beauty in service “to the articulation of his system of being.”²⁹¹ This essentially neo-Platonic reading of Edwards, however, is not the case. Beauty and being for Edwards, at the highest level, elide (or “resolve,” if we will) into a relation of identity. They are not just equal, or equivalent, but identic, as I will show below.

To speak of “higher” and “lower” forms of beauty and being is to recognize that Edwards operates from his own version of a *scala natura*, or “chain of being” ontology. Both beauty and

²⁸⁸ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 6, *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, ed. Wallace E. Anderson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 381. Hereafter, *WJE* 6.

²⁸⁹ Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility*, 27, 28.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

being are a matter of degree for Edwards. Some beings are “more excellent” because they “partake more of being.”²⁹² This participation in being is achieved by *consent to being*—an essential feature both of beauty and of being in Edwards’ thought—and corresponds to the *object* of a being’s consent, which I enumerate in the following scale of ontological consent.²⁹³

- (1) consent to *being*
- (2) consent *of being* to being
- (3) *cordial* consent of being to being
- (4) cordial consent of being to *being-in-general*

Edwards’ conceptions of beauty and being are conceptually established and theologically built out in terms of this scale of ontological consent, which I will construe as (1.2.a) consensual, (1.2.b) relations of (1.2.c) personal (1.2.d) love.

1.2.a Beauty and Being as Consensual: Consent. “Beauty,” Edwards avers, “does not consist in discord and dissent, but in consent and agreement.”²⁹⁴ (Edwards’ usage of “consists in” denotes “is an essential feature of.”) He explicates both of his fundamental categories of beauty—primary and secondary—in terms of consent and agreement (which in Edwardsian parlance are synonymous). Primary beauty consists in “consent, agreement, or union of being to being,”²⁹⁵ while secondary beauty consists “in a mutual consent and agreement of different things, in form, manner, quantity, and visible end or design.” Edwards continues by observing

²⁹² *WJE* 6, 363.

²⁹³ I have adapted my list from Roland Delattre (*Beauty and Sensibility*, 21). While this presentation helpfully illustrates Edwards’ scaled notion of ontological consent, Delattre counts five, rather than the four types of consent I have enumerated. He begins his list simply with *consent*, with no object of the consent. This does not exist in Edwards. The idea of consent must stand in relation to something.

²⁹⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *The Nature of True Virtue*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 8, *Ethical Writings*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 541. Hereafter, *Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8. Here and throughout this section, Edwards is referring to “complex beauty,” rather than the bare equality of “simple beauty.” See “The Mind” for this distinction, *WJE* 6.

²⁹⁵ *Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8, 561. See Chapter Two of this dissertation (q.v.).

that this latter kind of beauty is referred to by various names including harmony.²⁹⁶ Consent is the condition of beauty because it founds harmony; it serves to unite multiplicity into a greater whole through the establishment of affinity. Consent, then, is not only the condition of harmony, but also the means of it. Beauty is constituted by consent-borne *harmony*.²⁹⁷ Furthermore, Edwards' most frequent definition of *higher forms* of beauty as "being's consent to being" is fundamentally ontological.²⁹⁸ In Edwards' understanding, beauty consists in consent, or consent is an essential feature of beauty.

Corresponding to his aesthetics of consent-borne harmony, Edwards also works from an ontology of consent-borne harmony. Harmony can be synonymous with a conception of "due proportion," or an agreeable relation of correspondence.²⁹⁹ For Edwards, being consists a relationship between entities that he defines as "nothing else but proportion,"³⁰⁰ or the harmonious relation of consenting entities. By defining being as beauty or proportion, Edwards accounts for our phenomenological orientation toward beauty and away from its contrary. The beautiful is consonant with being, the unbeautiful contradicts it. Edwards explains,

The reason why equality thus pleases the mind, and inequality is unpleasing, is because disproportion, or inconsistency, is contrary to being. For being, if we examine narrowly, is nothing else but proportion. When one being is inconsistent with another being, then being is contradicted. But contradiction to being is intolerable to perceiving being, and the consent to being most pleasing.³⁰¹

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Harmony is a perdurable category in Western aesthetics. See Chapter Three, section 2 (q.v.), Edwards' *Aesthetic Modality of Harmony*, of this dissertation for a fuller explication of Edwards' views of harmony.

²⁹⁸ E.g., *inter alia* *WJE* 6, 382. I explain what I mean by "higher forms" of beauty in the following section.

²⁹⁹ Aquinas, for instance, sees due proportion and harmony as interchangeable when he lists *debita proportio sive consonantia* as one of the three conditions of beauty. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, rev. ed, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger, 1948; repr. Westminster: Christian Classics, 1981), I.39.8.

³⁰⁰ *WJE* 6, 336.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

We enjoy harmony and find discord jarring due to our ontological participation in being; our affective and perceptual pleasure in beauty is equally an enjoyment of being. Furthermore—and representing a major and abiding theme in his work—both beauty and being are, for Edwards, essential features of the consensual harmony of the Trinity.³⁰²

Edwards *equates* beauty and being. Even in secondary beauty this the case. By arguing that beauty inheres in being (as an essential feature), and being inheres in beauty, then beauty *is* being and being is beauty, by the antisymmetry of parthood.³⁰³ However, Edwards’ conception of “true” or “primary” beauty goes beyond the coinherence of beauty and being. By arguing that being *is* consent (since it is “nothing else but proportion,” conceived as the consent or agreement of entities) and that beauty, in its higher forms *is consent* (“being’s consent to being”) beauty *is* being, *modus ponens*.³⁰⁴ Edwards, then, advances an ontology in which beauty is not only identified *as* being (which is not uncommon in Christian theological aesthetics), but also in which, in its higher forms, being is identified *as* beauty—beauty being conceived not merely as a property of being (which is uncommon, indeed).

1.2.b. Beauty and Being as Relational: Consent of Being. Edwards develops his conception of beauty in terms of the relations of one entity to another. As Amy Plantinga Pauw observes, “Beauty was irreducibly relational for Edwards.”³⁰⁵ “For it’s to be observed,” notes Edwards, “that one thing which contributes to the beauty of the agreement and proportion of

³⁰² This will be considered below, in section 1.3, “Edwards’ Aesthetic Doctrine of God” (q.v.).

³⁰³ Symbolically, this argument from the antisymmetry of parthood can be presented as follows. Where beauty = (a), consent = (b), and being = (c), If (a) inheres in (b) and (b) inheres in (a) then (a) = (b) and if (c) inheres in (b) and (b) inheres in (c) then (b) = (c). ∴ (a) = (c).

³⁰⁴ Symbolically, this argument *modus ponendo ponens* can be presented as follows. Where beauty = (a), consent = (b), and being = (c), given that (a) = (b): (c) → (b), (c) ∴ (c) = (a).

³⁰⁵ Pauw, *Supreme Harmony*, 81. Furthermore, she sees relationality as the cohesive theme in Edwards’ ontology, saying it is “held together” by “the conviction that relationality is at the heart of metaphysical excellence.” *Ibid.*, 80.

various things is their relation one to another.”³⁰⁶ Such formal conceptions of beauty are the topic of Chapter Three of this dissertation, where I examine the relation of fittingness, harmony, and the conjunction of opposites in Edwards’ aesthetics.

Similarly, Edwards’ aesthetic ontology is relational; for him, all existence is relational. Wallace Anderson notes, “He concluded that the relations of a thing to others are the fundamental condition of its existence.”³⁰⁷ Furthermore, while Edwards does not disavow the ontological category of substance, he reconfigures Aristotelian notions in terms of relations of consent—the very notion of which implies multiplicity. As Edwards argues, “One alone, without any reference to any more, cannot be excellent; for in such a case . . . there can be no consent.”³⁰⁸ As I have noted, Edwards concludes that “being, if we examine narrowly, is nothing else but proportion.”³⁰⁹ He continues, “When one being is inconsistent with another being, then being is contradicted.”³¹⁰ In other words, a lack of consent yields a lack of being. “Disagreement or contrariety to being is evidently an approach to nothing,” which he conceives as “nothing else but disagreement or contrariety of being.”³¹¹ Edwards’s is an ontology of consent.

1.2.c. Beauty and Being as Personal: Consent of Being to Being. Edwards frequently extols the beauties of nature (which are instances of secondary beauty), but states that the highest forms of earthly beauty are enacted by personal beings.³¹² While both primary beauty and secondary beauty are marked by consent, the difference is of kind, not simply of degree.

³⁰⁶ Nature of True Virtue, WJE 8, 563.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 30.

³⁰⁸ Edwards, “The Mind,” no. 1, WJE 6, 332.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 336.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, *Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), 280. Hereafter, WJE 2.

Relations of consent mark the secondary beauty “found even in inanimate things.”³¹³ The consent that comprises primary beauty, however, is the “consent, agreement, or union of being to being.”³¹⁴ As such, it issues from dispositional, animate beings, or *persons*. Primary beauty applies only to “spiritual and moral beings, which are the highest and first part of the universal system for whose sake all the rest has existence.”³¹⁵

For Edwards, persons are irreducibly *minds*. Edwards’ Idealist philosophy is evinced in his framing of being ultimately in terms of minds. He develops his notion of being in terms of *consciousness*. In his essay “Of Being” (and repeated in “The Mind”³¹⁶) Edwards says, “Nothing has any existence anywhere else but in consciousness. No, certainly nowhere else but either in created or uncreated consciousness.”³¹⁷ Being, however, for Edwards, is not reducible simply to intellect or awareness. For him, persons are constituted by intellect and will.³¹⁸ Personal consent, then, entails concerted acts of the intellect and will. Consent of being to being is not only a cognitive phenomenon, but also a volitional one—as both consent and dissent are operations of the will.

For Edwards, the conscious, intentional consent or agreement of one being with another establishes a harmonious concord between them recognized as beauty.

³¹³ *Nature of True Virtue*, WJE 8, 561–62.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 561.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ WJE 6.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

³¹⁸ Here we see vestiges of Reformed Scholastic Thomism, even though it must be noted that the Reformed appropriation of Thomistic thought was selective and adapted. Furthermore, by Edwards’ time, the Aristotelian underpinnings of Reformed Scholasticism were no longer assumed or used. For this and other reasons, Edwards’ conception of both intellect and will are not identical with either his Reformed predecessors or Thomas.

1.2.d. Beauty and Being as Love: Cordial Consent of Being to Being. Lastly, Edwards' conception of harmonious personal relations culminates in an aesthetic ontology of love. The designation "primary beauty" (which he also refers to as "highest" or "first") is reserved for a certain type of relations of interpersonal consent consisting in love between beings.³¹⁹ "The primary and original beauty or excellence that is among minds is love," claims Edwards.³²⁰ Primary beauty consists in *cordial* consent of being to being. Paul Ramsey has succinctly summarized "cordial consent" as "pure love."³²¹ The term "cordial" harkens to the language of the *Religious Affections*, denoting not only the decision of the will, but also the disposition of the heart.³²² "Cordial consent" consists in "concord and union of mind and heart."³²³ Elsewhere, the synonymous phrase "consent, propensity and union of heart" is cast, by apposition, as comprising the love of benevolence.³²⁴ Beauty is an enactment of benevolent love; it is being in act, not a static substance.

For Edwards, the measure of beauty is love between beings, and the measure of being is the harmonious personal relations of love. Furthermore, "the more the consent is, and the more extensive, the greater is the excellency."³²⁵ The ultimate form of beauty, then, is love in and for God and all that God comprehends, or *Being in general*— an Edwardsian concept to which I now turn.

³¹⁹ Nature of True Virtue, WJE 8, 561.

³²⁰ WJE 6, 362.

³²¹ WJE 8, 36.

³²² Chapter Four of this dissertation (q.v.).

³²³ Nature of True Virtue, WJE 8, 565.

³²⁴ Ibid., 544.

³²⁵ "The Mind," no. 1, in WJE 6, 336.

1.3 Edwards' Aesthetic Doctrine of God.

The notion of “cordial consent to Being” is so central to Edwards’ thought that he develops his doctrine of God in relation to it. This is clear in both his idea of “Being in general”³²⁶ and in his conception of the Trinity as *perichoretic* harmony.

1.3.a. Being in general. The highest form of beauty is consent to the highest form of being—“Being in general.” Neither this recondite and controverted phrase, however, nor Edwards’ synonyms for it (e.g., “Being, simply considered,”³²⁷) denote an *ens commune*. Edwards’ question does not concern the object of the *scientia* of metaphysics; rather it concerns the object of truly virtuous love. Whereas for Aquinas, neither God nor intellectual substances are included under the heading of being in general (*ens commune* or *ens inquantum ens*),³²⁸ this is indeed what Edwards means by it. In Edwards, Being in general refers not to an abstract genus, but to God and to all beings, which subsist in God—particularly intelligent beings.³²⁹ “The first Being, the eternal and infinite Being,” Edwards says, “is in effect, Being in

³²⁶ Edwards may have picked up the term “Being in general” from Nicolas Malebranche, whom he had read. (Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 26, *Catalogues of Books*, ed. Peter J. Thuesen [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008], 115. Hereafter, *WJE* 26.) Malebranche says that God is “the being without individual restriction, the infinite being, being in general” (*The Search after Truth: With Elucidations of The Search after Truth*, trans. and ed. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 3.2.8, 241).

³²⁷ Nature of True Virtue, *WJE* 8, 544.

³²⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, prooem., trans. John P. Rowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1961), 1–2.

³²⁹ Norman Fiering is generally correct in his interpretation of “Being in general” as including “the transcendent God plus his ordered creation” (*Jonathan Edwards’ Moral Thought and Its British Context* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981], 326). Paul Ramsey concurs with Fiering (see *WJE* 8, 31), as does Sang Lee (Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 21, *Writing on the Trinity, Grace and Faith*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002], 94. Hereafter, *WJE* 21). Yet, in the strictest sense, Edwards has God and *souls* in view. He clarifies, “I thereby mean *intelligent* Being in general. Not inanimate things, or Beings that have no perception or will, which are not properly capable objects of benevolence” (*Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8, 542). Edwards similarly says, “Nothing else has a proper being but spirits, and . . . bodies are but the shadow of being (“The Mind,” *WJE* 6, 337). Elsewhere Edwards ties this qualification to his idealism: “Those beings which have knowledge and consciousness are the only proper and real and substantial beings, inasmuch as the being of other things is only by these. From hence we may see the gross mistake of those who think material things the most substantial beings, and spirits more like a shadow; whereas spirits only are properly substances (“Of Being,” in *WJE* 6, 206).

general.”³³⁰ Nor is God, “a” being conceived under a class of being in general with other beings. Rather, the inverse is the case: all being subsists in God, who “comprehends universal existence.”³³¹ For Edwards, the philosophical Idealist, existence is “only in the divine consciousness.”³³² There are not, properly speaking, immaterial and material substances. The “substance” of material objects is “resistance” to other solid objects. Since for Edwards, the philosophical Occasionalist, this resistance is enacted by God’s direct intervention (he says that “resistance or solidity are by the immediate exercise of divine power”³³³), God is properly the substance even of matter. He says,

that the substance of bodies at last becomes either nothing, or nothing but the Deity acting in that particular manner in those parts of space where he thinks fit. So that, speaking most strictly, there is no proper substance but God himself.³³⁴

Being, then, is *being in act*, not a static substance. Both immaterial substances (as enactment of mind) and material substances (as the enactment of divine power) are dynamic. Edwards concludes that God is “properly” said “to be *ens entium*,” or the substance of all things, saying, “Thou art and there is none else besides Thee.”³³⁵ Ultimate beauty is, therefore, an enactment of benevolent love for God and all that he has made. It is “exercised in a general good will,” Edwards says.³³⁶ This is the meaning of his “universal definition of excellency,” or beauty, as “consent of being to being, or being’s consent to entity.” Nowhere is this enacted more perfectly than in the relations of the divine life.

³³⁰ End of Creation, WJE 8, 461.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² WJE 6, 204. Elsewhere, Edwards confirms, “We have ... shewn that all existence is mental, that the existence of all exterior things is ideal (“The Mind,” WJE 6, 341).

³³³ Ibid., 215.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ This is an interesting adaptation of 1 Samuel 2:2.

³³⁶ Nature of True Virtue, WJE 8, 540.

1.3.b. Perichoretic Harmony of the Trinity. For Edwards (who is more daring than many in the Reformed tradition), beauty constitutes not only our experience of the *Deus pro nobis* (or the Trinity *ad extra*, in Edwardsian parlance), but also and significantly, beauty constitutes the *Deus in se* (or the Trinity *ad intra*). Drawing on the traditional notion of *perichoresis* or *circumincessio*,³³⁷ Edwards says that the unity of the Godhead exists “in the mutual love and friendship which subsists eternally and necessarily between the several persons in the Godhead, or that infinitely strong propensity there is in these divine persons one to another.”³³⁸ Because beauty is ultimately the consensual union of minds, i.e., love, God is necessarily plural for Edwards. He says, “One alone, without reference to any more, cannot be excellent.”³³⁹ The paradigm for both Edwards’ aesthetics and his ontology is the Trinity—a unity of plurality. God *is* consent. God *is* harmony. Divine beauty, or harmonious love, *in* God (i.e., God’s nature, consisting of beauty and love) is a love *of* God (i.e., God loves Godself.³⁴⁰). In Edwards’ first note on the Trinity (no. 94) he says, “His infinite beauty is his infinite mutual love of himself.”³⁴¹

Edwards’ aesthetic conception of the Trinity is further evinced in that God’s self-love is affective—God enjoys Godself. Edwards says, “God is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of

³³⁷ *Perichoresis* (Greek), *circumincessio* (Latin), coinherence (English) could be rendered “envelopment.” It speaks to the mutual indwelling and interpenetration of the three persons of the Trinity. Although the term *perichoresis* isn’t found until John of Damascus (c. 676–749 AD), the idea was first expressed by the Cappadocian Fathers (c. 330–395 AD) to help conceive how the three persons are a unity. It was prominent in the Victorines and a number of Puritans (e.g., John Owen), and has become central to discussions of the Trinity since the mid-twentieth century. Its clearest biblical expression is found in John 17.

³³⁸ *Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8, 555. Recently, Steven Studebaker, by deploying a “historical-theological” methodology, has argued against a perichoretic read of Edwards’ trinitarianism (e.g., as in Amy Plantinga Pauw and William Danaher), in favor of an Augustinian conception of “mutual love” within the Trinity. (See Steven M. Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards: Social Augustinian Trinitarians in Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* [Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008].) Kyle Strobel, however, offers a convincing mediation between the two views by showing a change between the trinitarianism of the Edwards of the *Notes*, and that of the Edwards of the late (unpublished) *Essay or Discourse on the Trinity*, arguing that Edwards’ views develop as he polemically engages the proto-unitarianism of his context.

³³⁹ *WJE* 6, 337.

³⁴⁰ Edwards gives deep and sustained reflection to God’s glorious, joyful, and always giving self-love in *The End for Which God Created the World*.

³⁴¹ *WJE* 6, 363.

himself.”³⁴² God’s beauty consists in “infinitely loving and delighting in himself.”³⁴³ God’s experience of Godself is one of *beatific vision*. (Edwards calls the effect of the *visio dei* “happifying,” in a delightfully eighteenth-century locution.) Said another way, God’s self-knowledge (intellect) is a beholding of beauty and God’s self-love (will) is a delighting in that beauty. This is God’s own religious affection in pure act.

Edwards’ remarkable ability to uphold his theological tradition *ex animo* while simultaneously innovating it is evinced in the following quote in which we see vestiges of Cappadocian *perichoresis* and Augustinian notions of the Holy Spirit as the *vinculum amoris* given a decidedly Edwardsian construal. He says,

As to God’s excellence, it is evident it consists in the love of himself. For he was as excellent before he created the universe as he is now. But if the excellence of spirits consists in their disposition and action, God could be excellent no other way at that time, for all the exertions of himself were towards himself. But he exerts himself towards himself no other way than in infinitely loving and delighting in himself, in the mutual love of the Father and the Son. This makes the third, the personal Holy Spirit or the holiness of God, which is his infinite beauty, and this is God’s infinite consent to being in general.³⁴⁴

It is a commonplace that understanding Edwards’ doctrine of the Trinity is a hermeneutical key to his thought. I have now made apparent that an accurate conception of that doctrine must grasp the aesthetic nature of God for Edwards.

Furthermore, Edwards makes the essentialist claim that God’s beauty is what constitutes his Godness, calling “the beauty of the Godhead ... the divinity of Divinity.”³⁴⁵ In an ambiguous statement, Edwards claims that divine beauty is that “wherein the truest idea of divinity does

³⁴² Ibid., 363–65.

³⁴³ Ibid., 364.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ *WJE* 2, 274.

consist.”³⁴⁶ Regardless of whether Edwards is here making a claim about the divine essence or about our mental apprehension of it, it is clear that Edwards gives beauty a superlative role in his doctrine of God. Elsewhere he avers: “God is God, and distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above ’em, chiefly by his divine beauty.”³⁴⁷ Here “distinguished” could be read epistemologically (as “identified” or “known”)³⁴⁸ or it could be understood ontologically (as that which marks his otherness or transcendence). Regarding epistemological claims regarding the knowledge of God, Edwards is clear: human apprehension of divinity is an apprehension of beauty. But other passages make equally clear that Edwards is also advancing an ontological argument. He states, “’Tis peculiar to God that He has beauty within Himself.”³⁴⁹ The delight-inducing harmonious unity-in-diversity of the Trinity, i.e., the perfect relational proportionality, defines and evinces true Beauty. Edwards conceives divine beauty not merely as one attribute among others, nor does he make the meager and commonplace claim that God is beautiful. In the end, Edwards does not envisage beauty simply as an attribute—even the chief attribute—of God, which may be predicated of his existence. Rather, beauty is cast as constitutive of the divine being. As we have seen, the highest form of beauty is love (cordial consent or harmonious agreement). For Edwards, the claims that “God is love” and “God is beauty” are identical claims. Edwards’ conception of beauty generates both his aesthetic conception of God and his extraordinary ontology of beauty.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 275.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 298.

³⁴⁸ Edwards receives God in God’s revelation as beauty. God can only be recognized *qua* God when recognized as Beauty.

³⁴⁹ *Notes on the Mind*, no. 45, *WJE* 6, 363–65.

1.4 The Misinterpreted Ontology of Edwards.

Edwards' provocative views have led to a number of misreadings of his ontology. I will consider three here. First, I will evaluate a recent reinterpretation of Edwards' ontology as a "dispositional ontology," simply because it has been so significant in recent Edwards' scholarship. I will then dispute two misunderstandings of Edwards' ontology—pantheism, and Neoplatonism—both of which inform understandings of how God and God's beauty relate to the world and its beauty.

1.4.a Dispositional Ontology. Edwards' innovative ideas led Sang Lee to claim that Edwards developed a new "dispositional ontology." Lee's thesis is succinctly stated at the outset of his influential 1988 work, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*:³⁵⁰

Edwards departed from the traditional Western metaphysics of substance and form and replaced it with strikingly modern conception of reality as a dynamic network of dispositional forces and habits. Dispositions and habits, conceived as active and ontologically abiding principles, now play the roles substance and form use to fulfill. It is this dispositional ontology that provides the key to the particular character of Edwards' modernity as well as the interpretative clue for the underlying logic.³⁵¹

Lee argues that Edwards moves beyond the traditional Aristotelian substance metaphysics that had characterized Christian thought for a millennium and a half. Rather than a substance or an essence that possesses various attributes or properties, Lee claims that Edwards came to understand "being" as "dispositional," i.e., as a dynamic, active, and relational inclination, or power. Being is known by its *habitus*. He says,

When Edwards defines the structure of an entity as a law or habit, he is refusing to think of the what-ness of things in terms of individual, particulate forms. He is rather

³⁵⁰ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

contending that the what-ness of entities can be conceived only in terms of their relations.³⁵²

Whereas many earlier ontologies (following Aristotle) distinguished between the *actuality* of a thing and its *potential* actions and relationships, Lee's Edwards rejects the notion of some inert substance "behind" a thing's inclinations, doings, and interaction. God, rather, is a fully actualized disposition. "In God," Lee says, "actuality and disposition coincide."³⁵³ Furthermore, "God's being, for Edwards, is not a substance but a disposition of beauty."³⁵⁴ Lee's work is creative and insightful. Furthermore, he stresses in Edwards much of what Edwards stresses (e.g., relations, love, God's self-giving and self-communication). Lee builds on Delattre's highlighting of Edwards' actualistic emphasis: Delattre observes that "*the model of beauty is the beautifying rather than the beautiful.*"³⁵⁵ Similarly, McClymond and McDermott stress that "Beauty was never something static, but was instead a dynamic and creative principle operating within the Trinity and the created World."³⁵⁶ Lee is also correct to observe that "for Edwards, what an entity is, is inseparable from its relations"³⁵⁷ and to highlight the originality and genius of Edwards.

Nonetheless, Lee's thesis has not gone unchallenged. Stephen Holmes, for instance, says Lee's work "is simply wrong in its main thesis."³⁵⁸ Indeed, this is true. Lee's creativity has outstripped a plausible interpretation of Edwards. Ultimately, his reading is anachronistic,

³⁵² Ibid., 77–78.

³⁵³ Sang Hyun Lee, "Edwards on God and Nature: Resources for Contemporary Theology," in *Edwards in Our Time: Jonathan Edwards and the Shaping of American Religion*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee and Allen C. Guelzo (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 19.

³⁵⁴ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 184.

³⁵⁵ Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility*, 108. The italics are Delattre's.

³⁵⁶ Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 97.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 77.

³⁵⁸ Stephen R. Holmes, "Does Jonathan Edwards Use a Dispositional Ontology? A Response to Sang Hyun Lee," in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 99.

remolding Edwards into a late (rather than early) Modern thinker. It is true that Edwards is innovative; nonetheless, Edwards' thought emerges from the paradigm of his time. He conceives of disposition as an attribute or property of *mind*. For instance, he says that "disposition, inclination or affection ... indicate the spiritual temper, affection or inclination of a mind."³⁵⁹ Lee is close. Edwards accentuates disposition in his ontology. As Lee says of Edwards' thought, "Dispositions and habits, [are] conceived as active and ontologically abiding principles."³⁶⁰ However, they do not "now play the roles substance and form use to fulfill."³⁶¹ In the end, Edwards does not deny or refute notions of substance in his metaphysics. His is not a dispositional ontology, but an aesthetic ontology.

Furthermore, Sang Lee rightly highlights Edwards' emphasis of God's disposition toward "enlargement," or God's tendency to self-communication to and in creation.³⁶² However, this theme in Edwards has led to much confusion; he is perennially accused of pantheism and/or misunderstood as a Neoplatonist. In both cases Edwards is conceived as a metaphysical monist in his version of the *scala natura*. Not only are Edwards' subtle ideas the fount of the confusion, but also his use of language. By considering these two related charges (of pantheism and Neoplatonism) we can uncover Edwards' view of God's relation to the created order.

1.4.b. Pantheism. Versions of the charge of pantheism arose in the eighteenth century (Edwards' own day).³⁶³ In the nineteenth century, Charles Hodge (the Princeton Calvinist)

³⁵⁹ End of Creation, WJE 8, 422.

³⁶⁰ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 4.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Edwards would not, however, accept that God's disposition to "enlargement" means that God is "continually 'creating himself,'" as Lee claims (*Philosophical Theology*, 196).

³⁶³ The Scottish Calvinist Sir William Hamilton, for instance, levels this charge. For Edwards' complicated reception in Scotland, see Kelly Van Andel, Adriaan C. Neele, and Kenneth Minkema, eds., *Jonathan Edwards and Scotland* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2011). A comparison (with Edwards) of similar controversial charges leveled against Schleiermacher might produce an interesting study.

claims that “there is scarcely a dividing line” between orthodoxy and pantheism in Edwards.³⁶⁴

In the twentieth century, Scott Oliphint worries that, “Philosophically, Edwards may, in his earlier writings, be too close to pantheism to be comfortable as a Christian theologian.”³⁶⁵ And John Gerstner says baldly that our thinker was “pantheistic by implication and pantheistic by intention.”³⁶⁶

Having noted that not only Edwards’ ideas, but also his language contribute to such confusion, we find both in Edwards’ conception of God as “Being in General.” Indeed, Edwards can sound almost Spinoza-esque when he says,

The first Being, the eternal and infinite Being, is in effect, Being in general; and comprehends universal existence, as was observed before. God in his benevolence to his creatures, can’t have his heart enlarged in such a manner as to take in beings that he finds, who are originally out of himself, distinct and independent. This can’t be in an infinite being, who exists alone from eternity. But he, from his goodness, as it were enlarges himself in a more excellent and divine manner. This is by communicating and diffusing himself; and so instead of finding, making objects of his benevolence: not by taking into himself what he finds distinct from himself, and so partaking of their good, and being happy in them; but by flowing forth, and expressing himself in them, and making them to partake of him, and rejoicing in himself expressed in them, and communicated to them.³⁶⁷

For Edwards, the created order is “comprehended” under “being in general,” since God, by “communicating and diffusing himself” causes all things to participate in his “infinite Being.”

³⁶⁴ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 432–33. See also Samuel Baird, “Edwards and the Theology of New England,” *Southern Presbyterian Review* 10 (1858): 581–82, 586–90; *The First Adam and the Second: Elohim Revealed in the Creation and Redemption of Man* (Philadelphia: Lindsay, 1860), 161; and *A History of the New School* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen, and Hafflefinger, 1868), 182, cited in Mark Noll, “Jonathan Edwards, Edwardsian Theologies, and the Presbyterians,” in *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of the New England Theology*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 305.

³⁶⁵ Scott Oliphint, “Jonathan Edwards: Reformed Apologist,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 57 (1995): 168.

³⁶⁶ John H. Gerstner, “Jonathan Edwards and God,” *Tenth: An Evangelical Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (January 1980), 7.

³⁶⁷ End of Creation, WJE 8, 461–62.

Elsewhere, Edwards joins God's "omneity" (i.e., God's omnipresence) to God's infinity and concludes, "An infinite being, therefore, must be an all-comprehending being. He must comprehend in himself all being."³⁶⁸ Further, Edwards seems to imply that God is the sum total of all existing things; he avers that God "is the sum of all being, and there is no being without his being; all things are in him and he in all."³⁶⁹ It is not difficult to understand the confusion surrounding Edwards' doctrine of God. His strongly participatory ontology raises significant questions about the nature of God's self-communication to and in creation. Statements like those cited here can be easily read as betraying an underlying pantheism.

As we consider this assessment, however, we must observe that what is taken for pantheism in Edwards is actually his philosophical idealism. For him, nothing exists independently of the mind of God. All that exists is projected or externalized from that mind. And herein lies the key Edwardsian distinction that removes him from the realm of pantheism, i.e., that which exists in God *ad intra* and that which exists *ad extra*. Edwards says that creation is "God's internal Glory extant, in a true and just exhibition, or external existence of it."³⁷⁰ Creation is an "existence" of God's glory; it is also an external exhibition of it. He commonly speaks of it as an image or shadow. Those ideas that are projected externally, while in the mind of God, are not God. While ideas in God exist infinitely, finite existence participates in these ideas only to a point and are, therefore, not coterminous with God.³⁷¹ They are different in kind, not only in degree. The notion of *external* existence mitigates against pantheism, and sustains the

³⁶⁸ Jonathan Edwards, *Misc.* no. 697, in Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 18, *The "Miscellanies" (Entry Nos. 501–832)*, ed. Ava Chamberlain (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 281. Hereafter, *WJE* 18.

³⁶⁹ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 20, *The "Miscellanies" (Entry Nos. 833–1152)*, ed. Amy Plantinga Pauw (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), *Misc.* no. 880, 122. Hereafter, *WJE* 20.

³⁷⁰ End of Creation, *WJE* 8, 527.

³⁷¹ This is a basic Calvinist principle, often expressed as *finitum non capax infinitum* (the finite cannot contain the infinite), which was developed in conjunction with the *extra-Calvinisticum* in the Christological and eucharistic debates with Lutheranism in the sixteenth century.

creator-creature distinction.³⁷² While Thomas Schafer sees a susceptibility to monism in Edwards' idealism,³⁷³ nonetheless, the two are distinct ideas. Edwards is an idealist; he is not a pantheist. In the end, Edwards' view is simply a particular, albeit vigorous, expression of standard Reformed thought. John Calvin, influenced as he was by Stoicism,³⁷⁴ could affirm that the expression, "Nature is God", may be piously used, if dictated by a pious mind."³⁷⁵ (I think we may grant that quality to Edwards' mind.) Calvin does caution, however—and Edwards would agree—that we may never "confound," or conflate God and God's works, thereby blurring the creator-creature distinction.³⁷⁶ In the end, Edwards' views (as idiosyncratic as his language may be) go no further than those expressed in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, that God "is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things."³⁷⁷

³⁷² While Edwards was not a pantheist, Oliver Crisp has recently categorized Edwards as a panentheist. He is right to point out that "As applied to the work of the Northampton Sage, the term 'panentheism' is anachronistic. Edwards does not use the term. It was coined some time after his death in 1758 (*Jonathan Edwards on God and Creation* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], 140. John W. Cooper believes that the term "panentheism" in common theological usage is traceable to its use in process theology in which Charles Hartshorne deployed the term (Cooper, *Panentheism, the Other God of the Philosophers* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006], 26). Crisp's working definition of panentheism is as follows: "The being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part exists in Him, but His Being is more than, and not exhausted by, the universe" (*Jonathan Edwards on God and Creation*, 142). This is true enough.

³⁷³ Thomas Schafer, Editor's Introduction, in *WJE* 13, 49.

³⁷⁴ As a student, and in his first efforts as a humanist scholar, Calvin was deeply interested in Stoic thought. His first published work was on Seneca.

³⁷⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1.5.5.

³⁷⁶ Calvin goes on to warn that the phrase "Nature is God" "is inaccurate and harsh (Nature being more properly the order which has been established by God), in matters which are so very important, and in regard to which special reverence is due, it does harm to confound the Deity with the inferior operations of his hands."

³⁷⁷ *The Westminster Confession of Faith* 2.2 in Philip Schaff, *Bibliotheca Symbolica Ecclesiae Universalis: The Creeds of Christendom: The Evangelical Protestant Creeds*, vol. 3, pt. 1 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877); hereafter, *Creeds*. The Westminster Standards represents the confessional theology of the Presbyterian Church (in which Edwards served in his first pastorate), but summarized well the theology of New England Congregationalism, which differed slightly with Presbyterians on matters of ecclesial polity but little else. When considering a move to Scotland (a land of strict subscription to the *Westminster Confession*) during his troubles with the church in North Hampton, Edwards wrote to John Erskine (July 5, 1750) the following: "As to my subscribing to the substance of the *Westminster Confession*, there would be no difficulty" (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 16, *Letters and Personal Writings*, edited by George S. Claghorn [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998], 355. Hereafter *WJE* 16).

1.4.c. Neoplatonism. Finally, we must avoid the remarkably common mistake of overreading Edwards as a Neoplatonist. Douglas Elwood was influential in establishing this interpretation of Edwards as normative. In 1960, he characterized Edwards’ project as an attempt “to Neoplatonize Calvinism.”³⁷⁸ In his influential 1968 work on Edwards’ aesthetics, Roland Delattre commonly reads Edwards as a Neoplatonist.³⁷⁹ Clyde Holbrook’s 1973 work read Edwards’ ethics as rooted in Neoplatonism.³⁸⁰ Norman Fiering contributed significantly to this understanding in 1981 by speculating on possible sources of Edwards’ Platonism.³⁸¹ Janice Knight followed suit in 1994 by situating one strain of the thought of Edwards’ immediate intellectual forebears in the context of those formed by Cambridge Platonism.³⁸² Edwards’ Neoplatonism is now commonly assumed. We find this assessment in such leading Edwards scholars as William Danaher,³⁸³ Michael McClymond,³⁸⁴ Oliver Crisp,³⁸⁵ and Sang Lee³⁸⁶ to mention only a few.

Edwards’ thought overlaps a number of Platonic features and themes. As mentioned, Edwards—like Platonists in general—is an idealist, although his idealism took its particular form

³⁷⁸ Douglas Elwood, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 91–110.

³⁷⁹ Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility*.

³⁸⁰ See Clyde A. Holbrook, *Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: Morality and Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973), 104–112.

³⁸¹ Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’ Moral Thought*. See especially chapters 2 and 4.

³⁸² Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). See 1–33, 109–163, 198–213. Knight traces the incorporation of Platonism into puritan thought through thinkers such as Richard Sibbes, John Cotton, Thomas Goodwin, and John Owen. This connection may be more than intellectual in the case of the latter. I believe that John Owen married one of Ralph Cudworth’s daughters.

³⁸³ Danaher says, e.g., “Running through both chapters in *God’s End* is a reiteration of Neoplatonism” (“Beauty, Benevolence, and Virtue in Jonathan Edwards’ *The Nature of True Virtue*,” *Journal of Religion* 87, no. 3 [July 2007]: 396).

³⁸⁴ See Michael J. McClymond, “Salvation as Divinization: Jonathan Edwards, Gregory Palamas, and the Theological Uses of Neoplatonism,” in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver Crisp (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003).

³⁸⁵ See Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards on God and Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), chapters 2, 5, and especially 7.

³⁸⁶ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 127.

more from the influence of John Locke and other British thinkers than from Platonic sources. Also, Edwards stands in the Augustinian tradition, which bears a complicated and changing relationship to Platonism. Admittedly, Edwards' vocabulary is replete with Platonic themes and language. He speaks of "emanation," "diffusion," and God's "self-communication," and refers to secondary beauty as "shadows" and "images" of primary beauty. However, he is eclectic and original in his adaptation of Platonic motifs and terminology. Furthermore, Edwards' acquaintance with Neoplatonism was secondary or tertiary at best.³⁸⁷ Consequently, the interpreter of Edwards must not assume traditional meanings of Neo-platonic tropes, but must allow for idiosyncratic usage in Edwards. The best of those who classify Edwards as a Neoplatonist intuitively recognize this; they find it necessary to use various qualifiers for the term.³⁸⁸ Further, as innovative as Edwards can be, his ideas are not without theological parentage. Edwards' thought is rooted in Reformed Scholasticism, à la William Ames, Francis Turretin, and Petrus Van Maastricht—to whom Edwards was far more indebted than he was to the likes of Porphyry or Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.³⁸⁹

In the end, the usefulness of the label "Neo-platonic" is dubious, as applied to Edwards. At the very least we must carefully distinguish between use of the term *simpliciter* or *secundum*

³⁸⁷ Whatever textual knowledge Edwards had of Platonism likely came through Reformed Scholasticism influenced by the Cambridge Platonists by way of thinkers of the Florentine Academy, e.g., Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.

³⁸⁸ Danaher, for instance, recognizes Edwards' particular usage of Neoplatonic language and tropes. He says, "To elaborate on this Neoplatonic vision, however, Edwards borrowed terms and concepts from Hutcheson ("Beauty, Benevolence, and Virtue," 396). Oliver Crisp qualifies his assessment: "Edwards' view turns out to be a *version* of Christian Neoplatonism in the Augustinian tradition" (emphasis added; *Jonathan Edwards on God and Creation*, 56). Stephen Wilson notes that Edwards' Neoplatonism is "theologically circumscribed" (*Virtue Reformed: Rereading Jonathan Edwards' Ethics* [Leiden: Brill Academic, 2005], 98). Examples could be multiplied.

³⁸⁹ While Edwards read and approved Turretin, in 1747 he told his pupil Joseph Bellamy that Van Maastricht was "much better than Turretin, or any other book in the world, except the Bible, in my opinion" (*WJE* 16, 217.) McClymond and McDermott call Turretin and Van Maastricht Edwards' "favorite authors" (*Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 323) and report that Edwards was required as a child to memorize William Ames's *Marrow of Theology* (*ibid.*, 24).

quid, paying particular attention to *how* it is qualified. The term “Neoplatonism,” coined in the nineteenth century, is an extremely imprecise one covering many related concepts applied variously over many centuries. Edwards’ status as “Neoplatonist” will depend, in large measure, on how we conceive Neoplatonism. While Neoplatonisms are eclectic and intricate philosophical systems, the pertinent features of it for our purposes are (1) a conception of a “great chain of being,”³⁹⁰ rooted in a metaphysical monism; (2) a cosmological narrative that envisions creation as a series of necessary emanations of divinity³⁹¹ into an imperfect material world;³⁹² and (3) a conception of salvation as an escape from embodiment and materiality through the ascent of the soul achieved by moral askesis and intellectual contemplation to a mystical reunion with an ineffable “One.”³⁹³ Even if Edwards uses similar language at points, his thought bears little conceptual resemblance to that of Plotinus or Porphyry and even less to the theurgy of Iamblichus and Proclus. As to Christian Platonism, Edwards is generally Augustinian, but shares little with the Neo-platonic strains of Augustine’s early thought.³⁹⁴ In Edwards we do not find the escapism and devaluation of the material world³⁹⁵ typical of much Christian Platonism.³⁹⁶ Nor is

³⁹⁰ The *locus classicus* for the history of this idea is Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936).

³⁹¹ In Plotinus, for instance, the One does not *act* to create (as in Edwards), but automatically generates a power (*dunamis*), which is the Intellect (*nous*) and simultaneously the object of contemplation (*theôria*) of this Intellect.

³⁹² Again, for Plotinus, perfect Form (*eidōs*) degenerates into material expression as it emanates from The One through the Divine Mind (*Nous*), the Cosmic Soul (*Psyche*), and the World (*Cosmos*).

³⁹³ For more on Neoplatonic soteriology, see A. C. Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), especially chapter 7, “Mysticism and Metaphysics.”

³⁹⁴ As in, e.g., *On True Religion* or the *Soliloquies*. Augustine’s methodology may be summarized by the axiom *fides quaerens intellectum*, in which the middle word of this phrase, *quaerens*, or seeking, is determinative. Therefore, his views change and develop.

³⁹⁵ While Edwards casts secondary beauty as “inferior” and derivative (in its relation to primary beauty), it is not disparaged. On the contrary, it is extolled. Secondary beauty is a real communication of God’s glory. Indeed, over half of Edwards’ *Nature of True Virtue* treats secondary beauty and natural virtue precisely because it is so glorious as to be habitually mistaken for primary beauty and true. This, believes Edwards, is the error of the Moral Sense theorists generally, and Hutcheson in particular.

³⁹⁶ Gregory of Nyssa is representative of this perspective regarding beauty when he states: “As regards the inquiry into the nature of beauty, we see, again, that the man of half grown intelligence, when he observes an object

secondary beauty valued merely instrumentally, to be discarded after it has served its purpose to lead to a higher form of beauty. On the contrary, Edwards' eschatological vision lauds—with hopeful anticipation—secondary beauty as an eternal good.³⁹⁷ Further, as a vehement opponent of anything even remotely redolent of Pelagianism, Edwards certainly does not envision an ascent-of-the-soul model of salvation.³⁹⁸ Regarding Cambridge Platonism, which had some influence on those who influenced Edwards³⁹⁹ (the only Cambridge Platonist that Edwards read directly, to my knowledge, was Ralph Cudworth⁴⁰⁰), Elizabeth Agnew Cochran demonstrates that Edwards' thought bears as much discontinuity as it does continuity with Cambridge Platonism.⁴⁰¹ I imagine that the Cambridge Platonists were the source of Edwards' platonic *language*, but clearly he significantly reworks both what those terms denote and connote in his usage. While common Edwardsian tropes such as “shadows,” “images,” “emanation,” and

which is bathed in a glow of a seeming beauty, thinks that the object is in its essence beautiful. . . . But the other, whose mind's eye is clear, and who can inspect such appearances, will *neglect the elements which are the material only* upon which the Form of Beauty works” (emphasis added; *On Virginity*, 11, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Volume V: Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978], 355).

³⁹⁷ Edwards envisions, “Paradise in the world to come, always springing up with well-scented and fragrant beauties, a new Jerusalem paved with gold, and bespangled with stars, comprehending in its vast circuit such numberless varieties, that a busy curiosity may spend itself about to all eternity” (*WJE* 8, 217).

³⁹⁸ This Christian Platonist notion of the ascent of the soul, drawing heavily on Neoplatonic religious ideas, envisions a scheme for religious praxis and redemption (i.e., reunion) that may be summarized in three stages: (1) moral purification, (2) introspection, and (3) mystical union; or, (1) “turn away,” (2) “turn in,” and (3) “turn up.” Christian versions of this program found their archetypal expression in the writings of Origen, who schematized the Christian life according to the three canonical writings of Solomon: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. The first stage, symbolized by the book of Proverbs, is the *purgative* stage, which is essentially concerned with ethical and moral purification. The second, typified by Ecclesiastes, is an *illuminative* stage, based in human contemplation, which is summarized by Solomon's cry, “vanity, vanity, all is vanity.” Solomon's (and subsequently, our) realization entails not only an awareness that this world is not ultimate, but also that God's presence pervades all of creation (including the human soul). This evinces God's ineffability and omnipresence. The third, *unitive* stage follows from this and is summarized in the Canticles by the affirmation “My Beloved is mine and I am His.” These three stages correspond to the three divisions of Greek philosophy: Ethics (the purgative stage), Physics (the illuminative stage), and Anoptics or Metaphysics (the unitive stage).

³⁹⁹ Here we think of people like Richard Sibbes, Stephen Charnock, John Flavel, and especially John Owen.

⁴⁰⁰ Edwards owned Cudworth's *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London, 1678; *WJE* 26, 191).

⁴⁰¹ Elizabeth Agnew Cochran, *Receptive Human Virtues: A New Reading of Jonathan Edwards' Ethics* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 25, 31.

“enlargement” have been commonly misread in a Neo-platonic fashion, all such terms pertain not only to God’s relation to creation, but even more fundamentally for Edwards, are expressions of God’s self-communication. Much, then, turns on precisely what Edwards means by “communication.”

First, Edwards differs from Neoplatonism in God’s self-communication issues from love, not necessity. Granted, God’s nature entails a disposition to repetition and enlargement (as in some Neoplatonism); God, by *habitus*, is not just beauty and beautiful but also beautifying. However, this disposition is actualized by God’s will. Edwards is strongly voluntarist;⁴⁰² for him God freely (and continually) *chooses* to create in love. All the communicated goodness of God, from *creatio ex nihilo* to the beauty of nature to God’s self-giving of his Holy Spirit, is a freely given gift of love, not an automatic emanation. For Edwards, following in his Reformed tradition, this is the meaning of the Covenant: God, in love, freely chooses to condescend by communicating and giving Godself to God’s creatures. *Sola gratia* applies not only in soteriology, but in all God’s relations with God’s creation.

Secondly, however—and almost invariably missed—Edwards’ usage of the term “communication” is formulated in very particular relation to Reformed orthodoxy. In the seventeenth century, a standard distinction arose among the Reformed (partly to counter Lutheran Christological notions of ubiquity and the *communicatio idiomatum*) between *attributa communicabilia* and *attributa incommunicabilia*. The distinction was clear in Turretin, who tells us that “among the various distinctions of the divine attributes, none occurs more frequently than

⁴⁰² I use the term “voluntarism” loosely here. For Edwards, both the intellect and the will shape the affections, but it is one’s disposition (one’s loves and hates) that energizes choice.

that by which they are distributed into communicable and incommunicable.”⁴⁰³ It was also common coin in the *Nadere Reformatie*, the Dutch Second Reformation, which shaped Petrus van Maastricht. “Of all the ways to classify God’s attributes,” Herman Bavinck observes, “among Reformed theologians the distinction between communicable and incommunicable properties became the favored distinction.”⁴⁰⁴ According to this distinction, no *attributa* (i.e., attributes, properties, or perfections of God) are—or could be—communicated in a univocal sense from God to his creatures. However, some attributes, namely the communicable ones (e.g., love, graciousness, knowledge, goodness, mercy, etc.) can, in an analogical sense, be imparted to creatures.⁴⁰⁵ Some Puritans, and Edwards, can even use the term “infused” for certain of these virtues.⁴⁰⁶ Nonetheless, some *attributa* remain incommunicable—even analogically. These are the incommunicable attributes (e.g., infinity, perfection, impassibility, immutability, etc.). By locating communicable attributes under a doctrine of analogy, Reformed Scholasticism could affirm that the regenerate do partake of God’s nature through union with Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and not blur the infinite qualitative distinction between creator and creature.

It is in this sense, not a Platonic one, that the Reformed thinkers used terms like “shadow,” image,” “trace,” or “vestige.” Turretin, for instance, uses the word “shadow” this way

⁴⁰³ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology: Volume 1: First Through 10 Topics*, ed. James T. Dennison, trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1992), 189.

⁴⁰⁴ Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1979). Edwards, while he uses these terms and concepts, actually prefers the terms *natural* and *moral* attributes, and *real* and *relational* attributes.

⁴⁰⁵ In a description of heaven as eternal progress (or *epektasty*) Edwards says, “There are many reasons to think that what God has in view, in an increasing communication of himself throughout eternity.” He goes on, however, to frame this in terms of the communicable attributes of “an increasing knowledge of God, love to him, and joy in him” (*End of Creation*, *WJE* 8, 443). Commenting on this passage, Paul Ramsey concludes, “Progress in heaven can be (only) asymptotic; monism will never be” (*WJE* 8, 639n5).

⁴⁰⁶ This term, of course, was polemical in the Reformation if applied to justification (which Trent affirms and the Reformers deny), but John Owen, Edwards, and others use it freely in terms of sanctification. On this see Appendix IV, “Infused Virtues in Edwardsean and Calvinistic Context,” *WJE* 8, 739–50.

when he says that God “willed to express in his creatures some resemblance and *shadow* of his own perfections.”⁴⁰⁷ He can speak of “any image and trace ... found in creatures” of God’s attributes being “similar or analogous,” containing “some appearance or certain faint vestiges” of God.⁴⁰⁸ It is also in this sense that Edwards deploys the term “communication.” He says regarding the nature of the Holy Spirit,

which he communicates *something of* to the saints, and therefore is called by divines in general a communicable attribute; and the saints are made partakers of his holiness, as the Scripture expressly declares (Heb. 12:10), *and that without imparting to them his essence.*⁴⁰⁹

Elsewhere Edwards is aghast at the thought that he could be misunderstood to mean the “abominable and blasphemous” and “heretical” idea that God communicates his essence to creatures. He says,

Not that the saints are made partakers of the essence of God, and so are ‘Godded’ with God, and ‘Christed’ with Christ, according to the abominable and blasphemous language and notions of some heretics; but, to use the Scripture phrase, they are made partakers of God’s fullness (Eph. 3:17-19; John 1:16).⁴¹⁰

So then, God’s “communication” in this sense in no way means what it would in any Neo-platonic schema in which being (in some univocal sense) emanates from higher to lower forms, or where created beings are mere “copies” of some eternal Form or Archetype. William Spohn falls prey to this mistake when he conceives the relation between primary and secondary

⁴⁰⁷ Turretin, *Institutes*, 190, emphasis added.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁹ *WJE* 8, 639, emphasis added.

⁴¹⁰ *WJE* 2, 203. In spite of this denial, readers in his day (as in ours) were confused as to what he really meant by God’s communication. This is evidenced by a letter he received after the publication of the *Religious Affections*. “As to my saying that the Spirit of God,” Edwards wrote in response, “in his saving operation communicates himself to the soul in his own proper nature, implying, as you suppose, God’s communicating his essence [*sic*] ... I have particularly explained my meaning and expressly declared what I do not mean, that by his proper nature I don’t mean his essence” (“Unpublished Letter on Assurance and Participation in the Divine Nature,” in *WJE* 8, 638).

beauty in Edwards on the “Neo-Platonic model of image and reality, type and archetype.”⁴¹¹

Indeed, native to Edwards’ conceptual apparatus is the Reformed Scholastic distinction, not between type and archetype, but between ectype and archetype, or *theologia ectypa* and *theologia archetypa*.⁴¹² This distinction, rooted in the creator/creature distinction, pertains to epistemology, not ontology: archetypal knowledge is that perfect knowledge God has of Godself and is known only to him, whereas ectypal knowledge of God is that which God *reveals*.⁴¹³ Revelation to finite and fallen creatures is always, following the Calvinist principle, “accommodation” to those creatures.⁴¹⁴ This knowledge of God, far from apprehending an ontological instantiation of being, as in Neoplatonism, is analogical knowledge with no one-to-one correspondence between our conceptions of God and his essence.⁴¹⁵ Richard Muller summarizes the implications of the archetype/ectype distinction well, saying,

Thus, the theology of the Reformation recognized not only that God is distinct from his revelation and that the one who reveals cannot be fully comprehended in the revelation, but also that the revelation, given in a finite and understandable form, must truly rest on the eternal truth of God: this is the fundamental message and intention of the distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹¹ William C. Spohn, “Jonathan Edwards and Sovereign Beauty,” Santa Clara University Publications, n.d. Accessed September 19, 2011, <http://www.scu.edu/ethics/publications/submitted/spohn/jonathanedwards.html>.

⁴¹² For more on this distinction, see Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) and Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003).

⁴¹³ As John Owen puts it, “God has, in His mind, an eternal plan or concept which is truth, and which He wishes to be known by us. All of our theology, therefore, flows from that act of divine will by which He wishes to make known this truth to us” (*Biblical Theology, or the Nature, Origin, Development, and Study of Theological Truth in Six Books*, trans. Stephen P. Westcott [Pittsburgh: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, {1661} 1994], 15).

⁴¹⁴ As Calvin puts it, “For who even of slight intelligence does not understand that, as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in measure to ‘lisp’ in speaking to us? Thus such forms of speaking do not so much express clearly what God is like as accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity. To do this he must descend far beneath his loftiness” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.1).

⁴¹⁵ This state of affairs continues even after the saints behold God face to face; knowledge of the mind of God (*theologia archetypa*) is as inaccessible to creatures after death as it was before. The theology of the blessed (*theologia beatorum*) is equally *theologia ectypa* as is the theology of pilgrims (*theologia viatorum*).

⁴¹⁶ Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 229.

Edwards, following his Reformed tradition, frames God's self-communication in terms of analogy.⁴¹⁷

While Edwards' reliance on ectypal analogy as a theological tool is often overlooked (being eclipsed by his putative Neoplatonism), he is as opposed to the ancient monism found in Stoicism and Neoplatonism as he is to the Deistic monism of his own day. Having introduced Edwards' theological dependence on analogy, it is to his analogical aesthetics that I now turn.

2. EDWARDS' ANALOGY OF BEAUTY

2.1 The Analogical Method of Edwards.

In simple terms, an analogy may be conceived as a proportional relation between two words or things that highlights points of similarity, while acknowledging the difference between them.⁴¹⁸ The concept of analogy, however, is notoriously problematic. As David Burrell points out, "Analogy, it seems, is closely linked to a purposive use of language."⁴¹⁹ Conceptions of analogy are bound up with the extratheoretical purpose for which the analogy is deployed, therefore formal definitions are inevitably procrustean and "self-defeating."⁴²⁰ Burrell concludes that we should eschew "attempts ... to collate the ways we use analogical expression into one theoretical mold."⁴²¹ As Philip Rolnick summarizes, "In lieu of a theory about analogy," Burrell suggests that paying "attention to the way analogous terms are actually used will demonstrate the

⁴¹⁷ C.f. Turretin, who links analogy only to the communicable attributes, since no communication of the incommunicable attributes is, by definition, possible (*Institutes*, 190).

⁴¹⁸ David Tracy, for instance, conceives the language of analogy as "a language of ordered relationships articulating similarity-in-difference" (*The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* [New York: Crossroad, 1981], 408).

⁴¹⁹ David Burrell, *Analogy and Philosophical Language* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), 15.

⁴²⁰ See Burrell, *Analogy and Philosophical Language*, 15.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

freedom, fluidity, responsibility, and judgment actually involved in such usage.”⁴²² It is this strategy that I will adopt in elucidating Edwards’ use of analogy; Edwards uses analogies variously, depending on his purpose.

Edwards’ usage of analogy issues from very different concerns than did those of medieval Scholasticism, of which Edwards had little direct knowledge,⁴²³ and which had been largely obviated by the ectypal/archetypal distinction. Edwards, therefore, does not sense a need to articulate a theory of analogy to legitimize the possibility of speaking meaningfully about God while simultaneously protecting God’s transcendence. Nor are Edwards’ purposes identical to those of his more immediate forbearers. While analogical language concerning the *attributa divina* is usually affirmed in Reformed Scholasticism, and univocal language about God is generally rejected,⁴²⁴ the polemical exigency among Protestants at this time was largely hermeneutical. In such usage, *analogia* denotes similarity or likeness. Reformed Orthodoxy developed notions of an *analogia Scripturae*, to establish the principle that the clearer parts of scripture should frame the interpretation of more obscure passages of scripture that treat the same subject.⁴²⁵ More broadly, the *analogia fidei* was posited as the principle that the entire scope of scripture (the *scopus Scripturae*) communicates a unified theological message.⁴²⁶ This too, is

⁴²² Philip A. Rolnick, *Analogical Possibilities: How Words Refer to God* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 101.

⁴²³ It is possible (but not at all clear; see *WJE* 26, 189) that Edwards read John Owen’s “Dissertation on Divine Justice,” in which Owen both deploys a Thomistic conception of analogy and cites Aquinas approvingly. (See *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 10 [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust: 2009.])

⁴²⁴ See e.g., Turretin, 1.190–91. Turretin is representative in this.

⁴²⁵ Here the Reformed follow Calvin in whom the *analogia fidei* had come to mean that, since the scriptures share an essential unity (owing to their common source in the Holy Spirit), each passage must be interpreted in light of other passages and the whole of scripture and in dependence on God to grasp the authorial intent.

⁴²⁶ See Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Carlisle, PA: Paternoster Press, 1985/2001), 32–33; Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 490–97; and Martin I. Klauber, “Hermeneutics and the Doctrine of Scripture in Post-Reformation Reformed Thought,” *Premise 2*, no. 9 (October 19, 1995): 8ff.

simply an accepted part of Edwards' theological inheritance; its is not, for him, a polemical issue.

Furthermore, while some theorists envision analogy in primarily *linguistic* terms, as a mode of predication,⁴²⁷ Edwards' conception of analogy extends to extralinguistic phenomena as well. Edwards, who has an abiding concern with homiletics, makes extensive use of figurative language including metaphor, simile, metonymy, etc.—which can overlap with analogical reasoning. For Edwards, however, as is evident in his typology and his understanding of the semantics of nature, God has constituted his revelation in both scripture and creation such that analogies are embedded in them.

2.2 The *Analogia Pulchritudinis* in Edwards.

Edwards builds his ontological aesthetics on analogy—an *analogia pulchritudinis*, or analogy of beauty, if we will. He maintains, “All beauty consists in similarness, or identity of relation.”⁴²⁸ This is because beauty consists in a harmonious relation between entities. He says that “if there are two bodies of different shapes, having no similarness of relation between the parts of the extremities, this, considered by itself, is a deformity, because being disagrees with being.”⁴²⁹ This aesthetic lack is a corollary of an ontological privation. The two bodies manifest dissent, not being related by consent and therefore are absonant to being. Further, this objective lack of beauty and being, then necessarily yields subjective displeasure for those capable of seeing. Such lack of harmony, he says, “must undoubtedly be disagreeable to perceiving being.”⁴³⁰ For Edwards, we are “wired” for the perception of and delight in analogies. Likeness

⁴²⁷ This is Burrell's understanding of Aquinas' use of analogical God-talk and is shared by Ian Ramsey. See *Religious Language* (Norwich: SCM-Canterbury Press, 1965).

⁴²⁸ “Notes on the Mind,” no. 1, in *WJE* 6, 334.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 335.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*

obtains in all that exists—from the eternal Trinity to the created order. Vestigial analogies are simply a “law of nature,” he says, asserting that “it pleases God to observe analogy in his works ... and especially to establish inferior things in an analogy to superior.”⁴³¹

This being the case, Edwards envisions secondary beauty as analogously related to primary beauty. In addition to primary beauty (conceived in terms of “consent, agreement, or union of being to being”⁴³²), Edwards also speaks of “another, inferior, secondary beauty,”⁴³³ which is a reflection of the higher beauty. Some objects and relations approximate the order, harmony, due proportion, and fittingness of primary beauty and are rightly called beautiful even if they are related only analogously to primary beauty.⁴³⁴ Material and physically enacted beauty are the analogues of mental and spiritual beauties: “There is an analogy,” Edwards says, between “a beautiful body, a lovely proportion, a beautiful harmony of features of face, delightful airs of countenance and voice, and sweet motion and gesture” and “excellencies of the mind.”⁴³⁵ Stressing the point, he continues, “And there is really likewise an analogy, or consent, between the beauty of the skies, trees, fields, flowers, etc. and spiritual excellencies.”⁴³⁶ In *The Shadows of Divine Things* he says,

Again it is apparent and allowed that there is a great and remarkable analogy in God’s works. There is a wonderful resemblance in the effects which God produces, and consentaneity in His manner of working in one thing and another throughout all nature. ... We see that even in the material world, God makes one of it strangely to agree with

⁴³¹ *Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8, 566. Edwards says, “That which God has respect to, as the rule or ground of this law of nature he has given us, whereby things having a secondary beauty are made grateful to men, is their mutual agreement and proportion, in measure, form, etc.”

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 561.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁴ Edwards says that secondary beauty consists “in a mutual consent and agreement of different things, in form, manner, quantity, and visible end or design,” and continues by observing that this kind of beauty is “called by various names of regularity, order, uniformity, symmetry, proportion, harmony” (*Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8, 561).

⁴³⁵ *Misc.* no. 108, “Excellency of Christ,” in *WJE* 13, 278.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*

another, and why is it not reasonable to suppose He makes the whole as a shadow of the spiritual world?⁴³⁷

Creation is suffused, then, with analogical reflections of the divine beauty because God's works reflect God's nature.

These ectypal analogies of beauty point us to realities that transcend us both ontologically and epistemologically. *Finitum non capax infinitum*. Therefore, it is here, around the notion of analogy, that we sense Edwards—uncharacteristically—grasping at elusive, inchoate notions. Analogies, by their nature, entail ambiguity in that both similarity and dissimilarity are found between analogues.⁴³⁸ In trying to isolate the lower analogue, Edwards confesses that there is “a sort of I know not what in them.” He continues, saying that the higher analogue is even more hidden and requires even greater discernment. In the end, he settles for the assertion that lower and higher beauties “have a strange kind of agreement.”⁴³⁹ Ultimately these spiritual excellencies, found in “bodies” (i.e., matter) are not only trinitarian (as we have seen), but also Christocentric analogies. There is a profound continuity in Edwards' theology between God's internal trinitarian life and his economic work⁴⁴⁰ through creation and redemption in Christ, as I show in Chapter Three.

2.3 The Analogical Communication of God.

The end for which God created the world, according to a fundamental Edwardsian conviction, is to *communicate* his glory, i.e., his beauty or excellency in and to all that he has

⁴³⁷ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 11, *Typological Writings*, ed. Wallace E. Anderson, Mason I. Lowance, Jr., and David H. Watters (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 53. Hereafter, *WJE* 11.

⁴³⁸ As David Burrell says, “Theory construction demands that its key terms remain unambiguous. . . . But analogous terms may usefully be described as ‘systematically ambiguous’” (Burrell, *Analogy and Philosophical Language*, 6). Furthermore, theologians of analogy often emphasize the *maior dissimilitudo*—that the dissimilarity in any analogy applied to God is greater than the similarity.

⁴³⁹ Edwards, *Misc.* no. 108, “Excellency of Christ,” in *WJE* 13, 278.

⁴⁴⁰ However, Edwards does not collapse the distinction, as in some contemporary theology.

made—both spiritual and material. In the last section of *The End of Creation* Edwards expounds “the emanation or communication of the divine fullness” in terms redolent of earlier exitus/reditus theologies. He stresses 1) the primacy of God; and 2) that God’s self-communication is epistemological (“knowledge of God”) and affective (“love to God, and joy in God”), rather than ontological. Edwards says repeatedly that “something” of God is “communicated” to God’s redeemed creature. While this passage is replete with Neo-platonic-sounding phrases (and therefore easily misread), Edwards’ stresses the ectypal and analogical nature of God’s self-communication rather than a transmission of divine being in a univocal sense.⁴⁴¹ He says that this communication consists in

the knowledge of God, love to God, and joy in God, has relation indeed both to God and the creature: but it has relation to God as its fountain, as it is an emanation from God; and as the communication itself, or thing communicated, is *something* divine, *something* of God, *something* of his internal fullness; as the water in the stream is something of the fountain; and as the beams are of the sun. . . . Here is both an emanation and remanation. The refulgence shines upon and into the creature, and is reflected back to the luminary. The beams of glory come from God, and are *something* of God, and are refunded back again to their original. So that the whole is of God, and in God, and to God; and God is the beginning, middle and end in this affair.⁴⁴²

God’s self-communication is, then, analogical. It is to Edwards’ use of analogy that I now turn.

2.4 The Analogical Beauty of Christ.

Christ is the primary analogue of Edwards’ *analogia pulchritudinis*.⁴⁴³ He develops an analogical imagination that frames the fundamental Christian forms and symbols in light of the beauty of Christ’s person and in his work in creation and redemption.⁴⁴⁴ Ultimately, for Edwards,

⁴⁴¹ Elsewhere, Edwards stresses that God’s beauty “is infinitely diverse from all other beauty” (*WJE* 2, 298).

⁴⁴² *End of Creation*, *WJE* 8, 531, emphasis added.

⁴⁴³ See Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, 15. In David Tracy’s sense, Christ is a religious “classic” for Edwards.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 407. This encounter grounds Edwards’ analogical language (although he has elements of dialectical language as well) that works out the whole range of his thought in light of Christ’s beauty.

beauty is Christological. “All the beauties of the universe,” Edwards says, “immediately result from the efficiency of Christ.”⁴⁴⁵ He explains that, just as the external beauty of the human countenance (i.e., “beautiful airs of look and gesture”) evinces an inner beauty of soul, so too does the “beauty of the world” come from Christ. He says,

When we see beautiful airs of look and gesture, we naturally think the mind that resides within is beautiful. We have all the same, and more, reason to conclude the spiritual beauty of Christ from the beauty of the world; for all the beauties of the universe do as immediately result from the efficiency of Christ, as a cast of an eye or a smile of the countenance depends on the efficiency of the human soul.⁴⁴⁶

Reiterating one of his basic themes (that God creates to express and share God’s glory), Edwards specifies that this is more particularly a Christological self-giving. Christ’s purpose in creation is to communicate an *image* of his beauty, or excellency. Edwards explains,

The Son of God created the world for this very end, to communicate himself in an image of his own excellency. He communicates himself properly only to spirits; and they only are capable of being proper images of his excellency, for they only are properly beings. . . . Yet he communicates a sort of shadow or glimpse of his excellencies to bodies, which as we have seen, are but the shadows of being, and not real beings.⁴⁴⁷

So then Christ’s beauty is reflected analogically both spiritually and materially, although the image is clearer in the former than the latter. He continues to elucidate this incarnational analogy of beauty by explaining that Christ, as Beauty, seeks to beautify through his Spirit, analogously repeating and enlarging his beauty. Edwards says, “By his immediate influence, gives being every moment, and, by His Spirit, actuates the world, because He inclines to communicate Himself and His Excellencies, doth doubtless communicate His Excellency to bodies.” He qualifies this, however (again evincing an analogical conception of divine self-communication),

⁴⁴⁵ *Misc.* no. 185, “Excellency of Christ,” *WJE* 13, 330.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁷ *WJE* 13, 279.

adding “as far as there is any consent or analogy.”⁴⁴⁸ Having framed “emanations” expressly in terms of analogy, Edwards concludes that “the beauties of nature are really emanations, or shadows, of the excellencies of the Son of God.”⁴⁴⁹ Again, the divine beauty in nature is an “emanation” set forth epistemologically, not ontologically (“we may consider that ...”). The “adumbrations” and “shadows” of God’s attributes are analogous “metaphors and similes,” which are “called by their names.” Edwards writes,

when we are delighted with flowery meadows, and gentle breezes of wind, we *may consider that* we see only the *emanations* of the sweet benevolence of Jesus Christ. When we behold the fragrant rose and lily, we see His love and purity. So the green trees, and fields, and singing of birds are the emanations of His infinite joy and benignity. The easiness and naturalness of trees and vines are *shadows* of His beauty and loveliness. The crystal rivers and murmuring streams are the *footsteps* of His favor, grace, and beauty. When we behold the light and brightness of the sun, the golden edges of an evening cloud, or the beauteous bow, we behold the *adumbrations* of His glory and goodness; and, in the blue sky, of His mildness and gentleness. There are also many things wherein we may behold His awful majesty, in the sun in his strength, in comets, in thunder, in the hovering thunder-clouds, in ragged rocks, and the brows of mountains. That beauteous light with which the world is filled in a clear day, is a lively *shadow* of His spotless holiness, and happiness and delight in *communicating* Himself; and doubtless this is a reason that Christ is *compared* so often to those things, and *called by their names*, as the sun of Righteousness, the morning star, the rose of Sharon, and lily of the valley, the apple tree amongst the trees of wood, a bundle of myrrh, a roe, or a young hart. By this we may discover the beauty of many of those *metaphors and similes*, which to an unphilosophical person do seem so uncouth.⁴⁵⁰

Rather than advancing a notion that God’s self-communication in nature is an “emanation” in a necessary, ontological (read: Neo-platonic) sense, Edwards uses the term meaning a God-intended epistemological trope that one can learn to interpret. Guided by the metaphors, similes

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ *Misc.* no. 108, “Excellency of Christ,” *WJE* 13, 279, emphasis added.

and comparisons in scripture, we “discover” the beauties of Christ in the beauties of nature. This will significantly inform Edwards’ typology and semiotics, as we shall see.

2.5 The *Analogia Entis* and Edwards.

Edwards’ copious use of analogy and his manifest ontological orientation have led some to claim that, although he doesn’t use the phrase, Edwards affirms and uses the *analogia entis*.⁴⁵¹ This, however, is unhelpful and anachronistic, reading Edwards through either thirteenth- or twentieth-century lenses. Edwards’ *analogia pulchritudinis* necessarily implies a participation in being, but not necessarily an *analogia entis*— particularly not in a Barthian, or even Balthasarian sense. In Edwards’ ontology, God is not general, or abstract “Being.” The locus of analogical similarity is in God, not in being. God’s transcendence is retained in Edwards’ ectypal analogy; the creator/creature distinction is uncompromised.

Furthermore, the analogy proceeds from above to below; the inverse (which might establish an inductive knowledge of God apart from revelation) is not seen to generate any beneficial knowledge of God for the unregenerate. Rather, the *analogia pulchritudinis* begins with primary beauty, which establishes the criteria for secondary beauty. The creator is the analogue; creation is the analogate. As we have seen, Edwards establishes the direction and the source of the analogy when he says that “it pleases God to observe analogy in his works ... and especially to establish inferior things in an analogy to superior.”⁴⁵² This is not the *analogia entis*; analogy is ordained by God (“it pleases God to observe...”), not established by “being,” which,

⁴⁵¹ See Alister E. McGrath, *Scientific Theology: Theory*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 118. See also Paul Baumgartner, who says that the extensive use of images and figurative language in Edwards in particular and the Puritans in general draws on the “the analogy of being makes them expressive of the ‘literal’ truth” (“Jonathan Edwards: The Theory Behind His Use of Figurative Language,” *PMLA* 78, no. 4, pt. 1 [September 1963]: 321–25).

⁴⁵² *Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8, 564. He says, “That which God has respect to, as the rule or ground of this law of nature he has given us, whereby things having a secondary beauty are made grateful to men, is their mutual agreement and proportion, in measure, form, etc.”

strictly speaking, is *not* communicated to the created order. While communication is *epistemological* (“we may consider that,” “compared to”⁴⁵³), *linguistic* (“called by their names,”⁴⁵⁴ “metaphors and similes”⁴⁵⁵), and *analogical* (“similarity,”⁴⁵⁶ “something of” God,⁴⁵⁷ “analogy, or consent,”⁴⁵⁸ “consent or analogy,”⁴⁵⁹ “shadows ... footsteps ... adumbrations”⁴⁶⁰), it is expressly not ontological. God communicates God’s divine beauty “without imparting to them his essence.”⁴⁶¹ God’s people are not “‘Godded’ with God,” or “‘Christed’ with Christ.”⁴⁶² Nor is matter invested with divine being, rather “he [God] communicates a sort of shadow or glimpse of his excellencies to bodies, which as we have seen, are but the shadows of being, and not real beings.”⁴⁶³ So then, God’s *presence* is communicated in created beauty only analogically; there is equally an *absence* of the divine in the created order.⁴⁶⁴ For Edwards, there is a manifestation of God in creation. Consequently, beauty points to something in addition to itself. There exists in creation a semiosis toward Divine beauty. Edwards would agree with Charles Sanders Peirce who claims, “This universe is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs.”⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁵³ *WJE* 13, 280.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁶ “The Mind,” no. 1, in *WJE* 6, 336.

⁴⁵⁷ *WJE* 8, 145.

⁴⁵⁸ *Misc.* no. 108, “Excellency of Christ,” in *WJE* 13, 278.

⁴⁵⁹ *WJE* 13, 279.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁴⁶¹ *WJE* 8, 639.

⁴⁶² *WJE* 2, 203.

⁴⁶³ *WJE* 13, 279.

⁴⁶⁴ We might stretch Luther’s categories to say that, in creation, there is both the *Deus revelatus* and the *Deus absconditus*.

⁴⁶⁵ Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vol. 5, *Pragmatism*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 448n.

3. EDWARDS' SEMIOTICS OF BEAUTY

Due to the *analogia pulchritudinis*, Edwards utilizes an expansive conception of signs. These ectypal images of spiritual realities in the created order are a repetition of the content of special revelation, i.e., scripture. Edwards, therefore, envisions a significant role, not only for uncreated divine beauty, but also for created beauty in theology, in nature, and in Christian experience, the latter of which both issues from and is nourished by holiness or consent to Being in general.

As I demonstrate these claims I will consider (1) *The Shadow of Divine Things: An Edwardsian Conception of Signs*, (2) *The Semiotics of Divine Action: An Edwardsian Discourse of Typology*, (3) *The Semantics of Creation: An Edwardsian Repetition*, and (4) *The Sanctity of Created Beauty: An Edwardsian Piety*.

3.1 The Shadow of Divine Things: *An Edwardsian Conception of Signs*.

Edwards operates with an expansive conception of signs. Like Augustine, who defines a sign as “a thing, which besides the impression it conveys to the senses, also has the effect of making something else come to mind,”⁴⁶⁶ for Edwards anything that points beyond itself, refers to something else, stands for something else, bears meaning, communicates, provokes memories, or makes a point can be a sign.

As we consider Edwards' semiotics, however, we must avoid retrojecting modern and contemporary sign theory into his views, which bear little resemblance to the “Semiological”

⁴⁶⁶ Augustine, Book II of *Teaching Christianity (De Doctrina Christiana)* in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle. Part I –Books, vol. 11, tr. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1996), 129. In an earlier incomplete work, *De Dialectica*, Augustine gives essentially the same, but more succinct definition of a sign as “something that shows itself to the senses and something other than itself to the mind” (*De dialectica*, ed. Jan Pinborg, trans. with introduction and notes by B. Darrel Jackson [Dordrecht: Reidel. 1975], 86.

theories of the structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure, and his poststructural descendants.⁴⁶⁷

Semiology tends to views signs as dichotomous,⁴⁶⁸ arbitrary,⁴⁶⁹ and entirely psychological.⁴⁷⁰ For Edwards, however, signs are triadic (rather than dyadic), a relational, diachronic *process* (rather than a static, synchronic event) and not exclusively immaterial. Further, they connect us truly, though analogously, to reality.

Edwards operates with a tripartite sign that is constituted by (1) the *signifier*—that which points beyond itself, e.g., words, flowers, the sun, sacraments, objets d’art, types in scripture or in nature; (2) the *signified*—that to which the signifier points; its referent, the object indicated; and (3) the *significance*—the sense, or meaning of the sign, i.e., the consequence of the sign as it is instantiated at this moment in time to a particular community of interpreters in a particular context. This meaning can change, even within the understanding of a single interpreter or community, or over time.

I illustrate this with Edwards’ own reaction to thunderstorms. The *signifier* is the tempest, what is *signified* is God’s “majestic and awful” power, and the *significance* depends on the disposition (or “intentional stance” to use the language of Phenomenology) of the interpreter. Before his conversion, Edwards confesses, “I used to be a person uncommonly terrified with thunder: and it used to strike me with terror, when I saw a thunderstorm rising.”⁴⁷¹ After his

⁴⁶⁷ E.g., *inter alia* (the later) Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Jean Baudrillard, and Umberto Eco.

⁴⁶⁸ As a “dyad,” the sign is understood to be constituted by two inseparable but discrete parts (for Saussure) or two interrelated aspects (for many poststructuralists). This tradition typically follows Saussure in designating the two features of the sign under the appellations “signifier” (*signifiant*) and “signified” (*signifié*).

⁴⁶⁹ The semiological tradition emphasizes the *arbitrary* nature of the sign, particularly linguistic signs. Signification is seen as wholly conventional. Language is a conventionally agreed upon system (structure) of difference between arbitrary terms. Linguistic signs, such as words, are not positive terms; rather, Saussure avers that “the process which selects one particular sound-sequence to correspond to one particular idea is completely arbitrary” (Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris [London: Duckworth, 1983], 111).

⁴⁷⁰ There is nothing inherent in a sign that connects it to the material or external world. Signs are wholly psychological phenomena. Signs, e.g., words, bear meaning only in relation to each other, and only within a coherent conventional system. Signs, then, do not “mirror” reality, rather they “fashion” it.

⁴⁷¹ *WJE* 16, 794.

conversion, he says that “scarce anything, among all the works of nature, was so sweet to me as thunder and lightning.” He continues, speaking of the significance of storms for him in his new state of soul:

I felt God at the first appearance of a thunderstorm. And used to take the opportunity at such times, to fix myself to view the clouds, and see the lightnings play, and hear the majestic and awful voice of God’s thunder: which often times was exceeding entertaining, leading me to sweet contemplations of my great and glorious God.⁴⁷²

Conversion then, gives new eyes to the interpreter and new significance to the sign.⁴⁷³ “When the true beauty ... is discovered to the soul,” he says, “it as it were opens a new world to its view.”⁴⁷⁴

For the regenerate, the natural beauties of creation become revelatory of the divine beauty.

Edwards, in his own version of *pankalia*, envisions all things as shot through with God’s symbolic meanings and signs. “Almost everything,” Edwards says, had “as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory.”⁴⁷⁵ He continues nearly rapturously:

God’s excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, moon and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water, and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind. I often used to sit and view the moon, for a long time; and so in the daytime, spent much time in viewing the clouds and sky, to behold the sweet glory of God in these things.⁴⁷⁶

For Edwards, signs are ectypal “shadows of divine things.”⁴⁷⁷

3.2 The Semiotics of Divine Action: *An Edwardsian Discourse of Typology.*

Edwards’ semiotics can also be seen in the typology that he deploys to interpret the biblical text, history, and nature. For him, God speaks both “by his word and works”⁴⁷⁸ and

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ I will explicate the Edwardsian conception of a “new spiritual sense” in Chapter Four (q.v.).

⁴⁷⁴ “The Treatise on Grace,” *WJE* 2, 274. Similarly, Edwards says, “The first effect of the power of God in the heart in regeneration, is to give the heart a divine taste or sense, to cause it to have relish of the loveliness and sweetness of the supreme excellency of the divine nature.” For more on this, Chapter Four of this dissertation (q.v.).

⁴⁷⁵ *WJE* 16, 793.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 794.

⁴⁷⁷ I borrow this phrase from Edwards’ title of a personal notebook. See *WJE* 11.

therefore, I add, in the world. I will briefly explore this under the headings (a) *The Semiosis of God's Word: The Book of Scripture*; (b) *The Semiosis of God's Works: The Book of History*; and (c) *The Semiosis of God's World: The Book of Nature*.

3.2.a The Semiosis of God's Word: The Book of Scripture. While Edwards' interpretation of types in the biblical text is extensive, it is not unusual in his hermeneutic and homiletic context.⁴⁷⁹ By the time of the Westminster Assembly, the *analogia totius Scripturae*—or the analogy (similarities or likenesses) of the total scriptures—was interpreted through Covenantal theology that saw a pattern of progressive revelation coming through a series of ever-clearer covenants that often worked typologically. Consequently, the Old Testament was seen to contain prefigurements, or types, of teaching, people, and events in the New Testament.⁴⁸⁰ Edwards' biblical typology ranges from the conventional to the unusual.⁴⁸¹ It is, nonetheless, simply a pronounced usage of type and antitype, or promise and fulfillment, interpretation drawn from the hermeneutics of Reformed Covenantal theology.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁸ End of Creation, WJE 8, 419, 422.

⁴⁷⁹ See my note about the *analogia fidei* and the *analogia totius Scripturae*, above.

⁴⁸⁰ Here they followed Augustine who famously maintained that “*Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, Vetus in Novo Patet,*” often rendered “the New is in the Old contained, the Old is in the New explained.” *Quaestionem in Heptateuchum* cap. 2,73, in PL 34.

⁴⁸¹ Some of Edwards' conventional types include envisioning God's clothing of the leaf-clad Adam and Eve in animal skins, which “was a lively figure of their being clothed with the righteousness of Christ” (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 9, *A History of the Work of Redemption*, ed. John Frederick Wilson [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989], 139). Abel's sacrifice “was appointed to be a type of the sacrifice of Christ till he should come and offer himself a sacrifice to God” (*ibid.*, 134). He says that the waters of Noah's deluge “that washed away the filth of the world, that cleared the world of wicked men, was a type of the blood of Christ that takes away the sin of the world” (*ibid.*, 151), and the ark as a provided shelter from the “storm and floods was a type of Christ, the true hiding place of the church from the storms and floods of God's wrath” (*ibid.*, 152). The exodus “was the greatest type of Christ's redemption of any providential event whatsoever” (*ibid.*, 175). Typological readings of prophets, priests, and kings abound. Edwards says that “there must be a number of typical prophets, priests, and princes to complete one figure or shadow of that which Christ was the ante-type, he being the substance of all types and shadows” (*ibid.*, 218). Other common types could be multiplied. Edwards also uses less common biblical types. For him the burning bush represents the dual nature of Christ (*ibid.*, 175). As David slew the giant Goliath with a sling, “Christ slew the spiritual Goliath with his own weapon, the cross, and so delivered his people” (*ibid.*, 206).

⁴⁸² This could be put to tremendous effect in Puritan homiletics. Edwards (like many of the Puritans before him) was a tremendously vivid imagist in his preaching. This was not merely homiletical artistry in the service of

3.2.b The Semiosis of God's Works: The Book of History. Edwards also, however, unhesitatingly interprets both ancient and contemporary history typologically. Conrad Cherry observes that the "Puritans' detection of divine action in the world about them was an extension of their typological interpretation of Scripture to the whole of nature and history."⁴⁸³ Some of Edwards' interpretations of history are familiar (e.g., reading the pope as the Antichrist). However, other interpretations are more original. He says, for instance, that "those glorious things that were accomplished for the church in the days of Constantine the Great ... is all but a shadow of what will be bestowed at the day of judgment."⁴⁸⁴

3.2.c The Semiosis of God's World: The Book of Nature. Edwards also applies typology to nature. Sounding like an American St. Francis of Assisi, Edwards lyrically refers to "flowers and bespangled meadows [that] makes lovers delight so much in them,"⁴⁸⁵ and speaks of "the beauty of the shape of a flower,"⁴⁸⁶ "the green trees and fields,"⁴⁸⁷ "the skies,"⁴⁸⁸ the "colors of the rainbow,"⁴⁸⁹ or "the stars."⁴⁹⁰ Furthermore, he celebrates the beauty of human beings: "the beauty of the features of a face,"⁴⁹¹ or "a very beautiful human body."⁴⁹² Significantly, however, such secondary beauty is established by God as types of God's own beauty. In his journal

emotional effect. As Paul Baumgartner says, "To call Christ, then, the 'rose of Sharon' or the 'lily of the valley' is more than mere accommodation or concession to the sensuous side of fallen human nature; it is a proper and beautiful way of speaking, since it expresses the true relation and 'consent' between creature and Creator, between the finite and the Infinite" ("Jonathan Edwards," 322). For Edwards it is also basic to human epistemology and psychology, which, as he learned from Locke, took its initial grasping of ideas through sense data. Therefore it is an "accommodation or concession to the sensuous side of" even unfallen "human nature."

⁴⁸³ Conrad Cherry, *Nature and Religious Imagination: From Edwards to Bushnell* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 18.

⁴⁸⁴ *WJE*, 9, 493–94.

⁴⁸⁵ *WJE* 13, 278–79.

⁴⁸⁶ *WJE* 21, 315.

⁴⁸⁷ *WJE* 13, 279.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 278.

⁴⁸⁹ *WJE* 21, 314.

⁴⁹⁰ *WJE* 2, 217.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁴⁹² *WJE* 2, 216.

entitled “The Images of Divine Things” (and sometimes referred to as “The Language and Lessons of Nature”), Edwards gives more than two hundred examples of how “the works of nature are intended and contrived of God to signify ... Spiritual things.”⁴⁹³ For example, he draws spiritual instruction from the silkworm’s breaking forth from a cocoon,⁴⁹⁴ and says that “the rising and setting of the sun is a type of death and resurrection in Christ.”⁴⁹⁵ Significantly, Edwards views these spiritual lessons as intended by God.

3.3 The Semantics of Creation: *An Edwardsian Repetition.*

Meaning, according to Edwards, is woven by God into the fabric of the created order. Creation is therefore revelatory. While he makes more of this than do most in his tradition, a hallmark of Reformed thinking is that “all of creation declares His glory.”⁴⁹⁶ Edwards stands with Calvin, for whom each of us is “formed to be a spectator of the created world, and that he was endowed with eyes for the purpose of his being led to God Himself, the Author of the world, by contemplating so magnificent an image.”⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 66.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., 100.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁹⁶ Interestingly, Randall Zachman provides a fresh reading of Calvin as similar Edwards in this. In *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 436, he concludes: “Calvin describes the self-manifestation of God in a vast array of mirrors, living images, signs, and symbols, not only in the works of God in the universe, but also in the works of God in Israel and the Christian Church. ... Far from replacing images with words, Calvin combines image and word in all aspects of our lives with God and with others. We must hear the Word of God if we are rightly to behold the symbols in which the invisible God becomes somewhat visible; but we must also behold with our eyes the goodness of God that the Word declares to us. Calvin will accentuate the visibility of divine self-revelation by describing the Word of God itself as a living image of God, in which the hidden thoughts of God might be beheld, even as human thoughts are represented in the language we use.”

⁴⁹⁷ Calvin’s comments on Romans 1:19 in *Calvin’s Commentaries: The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, trans. Ross Mackenzie, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 31. This perspective is consistent throughout the *Institutes* and his commentaries on scripture, especially the Psalms, Acts, and Romans. Indeed, the Calvinist notions of an innate *sensus divinitatis* and the *semen religionis* seem to support something like a notion of a *desiderium naturale visionis beatificae* (see Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.5.1–3; *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, in *Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 4, trans. and ed. James Anderson [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979], Psalm 19, pp. 308–11; *Commentary Upon the Acts of the Apostles* in *Calvin’s Commentaries*, tr. Christopher Fetherstone, ed. Henry

While Edwards affirms the Reformed distinctive of *sola scriptura*, which stresses the priority of special revelation over general revelation, he also affirms the common Reformed perspective that God communicates through both scripture and nature.⁴⁹⁸ This is the uniform report of the Reformed confessions.⁴⁹⁹ The opening line of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, for instance, presents a theology of revelation in which “the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence” yield positive knowledge of God (including His “goodness, wisdom, and power”) even if such knowledge is insufficient for salvation.⁵⁰⁰ So too with an immediate theological forerunner to Edwards, Cotton Mather, who affirms both scripture and creation when he says,

Beveridge, vol. 19, Acts 14:17; 17:22, pp. 19–20, 154, 158; *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans in Calvin’s Commentaries*, trans. and ed. John Owen, Romans 1:19–21, pp. 69–72). Indeed, Calvin seems to believe that we come first to a knowledge of God the creator, which being insufficient for salvation, helps drive us to God the redeemer. In the *Gallic Confession of Faith*, Calvin says, “God reveals himself to men; firstly, in his works, in their creation, as well as in their preservation and control” (Gallican Confession of Faith [1559], article 2, in Schaff, *Creeds*).

⁴⁹⁸ Edwards calls scripture “*the surest guide*” (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1, *Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsay [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957], 106). Historically, few Protestants understand *sola scriptura* to mean that divine revelation comes *solely* through scripture. This was not the issue under contention in the Reformation. Rather, the issue addressed by the *sola scriptura* doctrine was, rather, what source of knowledge and authority was *ultimate*. Ironically, the Roman Catholic view is often cast as holding to *two* types of revelation (i.e., scripture and tradition), whereas the Reformers are seen as holding only to *one*. But the actual positions are precisely the reverse. Vatican II clarifies explicitly the Roman Catholic view that scripture and tradition comprise one source of revelation. In chapter 2 (Handing on Divine Revelation) of *Dei Verbum* we read that “Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form *one* sacred deposit of the word of God (emphasis added; *Dei Verbum*, ch. 2, ed. Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* [Dublin: Dominican Publication, 1975], 10). Tradition is understood as the instantiation of the teaching of scripture. Tradition expresses that accurate understanding of scripture; therefore, they are never at odds. “For both of them,” we read, “flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end” (*Dei Verbum*, ch. 2, 9). This stands in contradistinction to the clear claim of the Belgic Confession, “We know Him by two means.”

⁴⁹⁹ See, e.g., the second article of the Belgic Confession: “We know Him by two means: first, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, namely, His eternal power and divinity, as the apostle Paul saith (Rom. 1:20). All which things are sufficient to convince men, and leave them without excuse. Secondly, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word” (Schaff, *Creeds*, 384). Interestingly, Turretin adds a third, eschatological, category to the “two book” view of revelation. He says, “As there is a threefold school of God (that of nature, grace and glory), and a threefold book (of the creature, of Scripture and of life), so theology has usually been divided into three parts: the first of which is natural, the second supernatural and the third beatific; the first from the light of reason, the second from the light of faith, the third from the light of glory. The first belongs to men in the world, the second to believers in the church and the last to the saints in heaven” (*Institutes*, 1.2.9, 5).

⁵⁰⁰ See the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (ch. 1, Of the Holy Scripture) 1, in Schaff, *Creeds*. Interestingly, this perspective seems easily to line up with Aquinas’ three ways of obtaining knowledge about God.

Chrysostom, I remember, mentions a twofold book of God: the book of the creatures, and the book of the scriptures. God, having taught us first of all by his works, did it afterwards, by his Words. We will now for a while read the former of these books; 'twill help us in reading the latter. They will admirably assist one another.⁵⁰¹

For Edwards, these two books communicate the same message, the meaning of which is established in scripture and then reinforced in creation as people are reminded of scriptural truths by the things they see around them. Concerning the images used in scripture itself (e.g., the associations of the tongue with the poison of asps, or fire, etc.), Edwards proposes that we understand such things in quotidian life as “God speaking to us.” He recommends that,

If we look on these shadows of divine things as the voice of God, purposely, by them, teaching us these and those spiritual and divine things, to show of what excellent advantage it will be, how agreeably and clearly it will tend to convey instruction to our minds, and to impress things on the mind, and to affect the mind. By that we may as it were hear God speaking to us. Wherever we are and whatever we are about, we may see divine things excellently represented and held forth, and it will abundantly tend to confirm the Scriptures, for there is an excellent agreement between these things and the Holy Scriptures.⁵⁰²

So Edwards stands squarely within the Reformed tradition when he calls nature “a certain sort of language, as it were, in which God is wont to speak to us.”⁵⁰³ Edwards stresses this to such an extent that Perry Miller misunderstands him to elevate “nature to a level of authority coequal with revelation,”⁵⁰⁴ missing that Edwards conceives the voice of God in nature as analogously mediated through secondary beauty and that Edwards affirms the Reformed distinctive of *sola scriptura*. The message of nature is a subordinate repetition of the message of scripture.

⁵⁰¹ Cotton Mather, *The Christian Philosopher*, ed. Winton U. Solberg (Champaign: U. of Illinois Press, 1994), 8.

⁵⁰² *WJE* 11, 74.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁵⁰⁴ Perry Miller, introduction to Jonathan Edwards, *Images Or Shadows of Divine Things* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948), 28.

3.4 The Sanctity of Created Beauty: *An Edwardsian Piety*.

Significantly then, Edwards envisions a substantial and constructive role for created beauty not only in theology, but also in Christian experience. He speculates that God has established the analogy between secondary beauty and divine beauty because the former aids the regenerate in the apprehension of the latter.⁵⁰⁵ “Wherever we are and whatever we are about,” says Edwards, “we may see divine things excellently represented and held forth.”⁵⁰⁶ For Edwards, the effect of beauty is to beautify, i.e., beauty (both primary and secondary) has an effect upon the well-ordered soul such that that person becomes more beautiful herself. As she participates in beauty, her soul is “enlarged” to greater consent to being—which is the nature of beauty. Therefore, the enjoyment of natural and created beauty (as well as primary, spiritual beauty) is both critical to, and flows from, Christian piety.⁵⁰⁷ He says that secondary beauty has “a tendency to assist those whose hearts are under the influence of a truly virtuous temper, to dispose them to the exercises of divine love, and enliven in them a sense of spiritual beauty.”⁵⁰⁸ For him, the human’s *sensus divinitatus* is constantly bolstered by the experience of beauty in the world.⁵⁰⁹ Edwards would agree with the playwright Jean Anouilh, who quips, “Beauty is one of the few things that don’t shake one’s faith in God.”⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁵ Nature of True Virtue, WJE 8, 564–65.

⁵⁰⁶ WJE 11, 74.

⁵⁰⁷ Conrad Cherry observes the same dynamic in Edwards’ ethics. He says that Edwards’ “theory of virtue brought into symbiotic relation the beauty of the cosmos, the beauty of human morality, and the beauty of divine benevolence” (*Nature and Religious Imagination: From Edwards to Bushnell* [Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1980], 62).

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 564–65.

⁵⁰⁹ Of course this is only salutary, in the end, for the regenerate. The *natural* draw of beauty to God cannot generate a theology of ascent apart from conversion. Edwards’ conversionist theology protects God’s sovereignty in both revelation and salvation and also precludes Barthian worries about human ascent to God through secondary beauty.

⁵¹⁰ Jean Anouilh, *Becket; or, The Honor of God*, trans. Lucienne Hill (New York: Coward-McCann, 1960), act 1, 36.

4. CONCLUSION: *Self-Communicating Beauty*

At the dawn of the revival of Edwards studies, Perry Miller cast Edwards as a Romantic visionary genius who was strikingly ahead of his time. This perspective has continued in thinkers like Robert Jenson⁵¹¹ and, as we have seen, Sang Lee. While this narrative rightly highlights Edwards' brilliance, it has cast Edwards as such a radically innovative prodigy that his cultural and theological context and commitments are eclipsed. By attending to the sources and methods used by Edwards to develop his theological aesthetics, I have resisted this narrative. Rather, I have shown that Edwards—innovative as he is—stands self-consciously and intentionally within the Reformed Protestant tradition.⁵¹² While his theological project is a constructive one rather than one of repristination, he nonetheless sees himself as in continuity with his theological forbearers. Here Edwards may repay his debt to his tradition by serving to ally some of the reticence and ambivalence about theological aesthetics in some Reformed quarters.⁵¹³

In addition to recommending Edwards as an exemplar and resource for theological aesthetics, I seek, in this dissertation, to promote clarity in the discussion of beauty by identifying three main categories of thought that theologians commonly draw upon in their conceptions of beauty. After explaining the need for such clarity in Chapter One of this work, I group many of the identifiable patterns of thought about beauty into three basic categories: *ontological* (illustrated here in Chapter Two), *formal* (considered in Chapter Three), and *affective* types (explored in Chapter Four). In this chapter I have shown that Edwards operates from an

⁵¹¹ See Robert W. Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁵¹² Some, contra the Miller narrative, find greater affinity in Edwards thought with medieval rather than modern modes of thought. Brian Sholl, for instance, argues that "Edwards' theology places him 'in frame' of the medieval mind" ("The Excellency of Minds: Jonathan Edwards' Theological Style," PhD Dissertation, University of Virginia, 2008, 32).

⁵¹³ Again, as I stress in the first chapter of this work, Protestants have written much on art but little on beauty. The latter aspect of theological aesthetics is my concern in this dissertation.

ontological conception of beauty. Far from conceiving beauty as a decorative, irrelevant, or indulgent notion reserved for the pretentious, the maudlin, or the effete, Edwards positions beauty as the essential nature of God and all that God creates. It is, therefore, a basic and fundamental human good.

Furthermore, casting God as an eminently communicative being, Edwards envisions a substantial and constructive role for *created* beauty in Christian theology and experience. Here Edwards stands in the Reformed mainstream, which, like Barth, has tended to have little use for natural theology per se but, unlike Barth, does not typically reject the concept of *general revelation* in creation. General revelation⁵¹⁴ in the Reformed tradition is seen as insufficient and limited and always read through the noetic effect of sin, but it is not seen as useless, and certainly not rejected as dangerous. Further, nature/grace distinctions simply do not apply in Edwards, nor can a strict natural theology be found. While Edwards proffers a view of created beauty as revelatory of God, what is communicated by beauty is not, for Edwards, knowledge of God *simpliciter*, but an affective “knowledge,”⁵¹⁵ which takes the form of desire, hunger, yearning, or *eros* for Beauty—something like a *desideratum naturale visionis beatificae*⁵¹⁶ in all people and *caritas* for God in the redeemed. Fulfillment of this creational desire is had only by grace. Edwards’ views clearly do not posit an alternate path to God; Barthian worries that might apply to Neoplatonism, Solov’ëv, or Bulgakov’s sophiological version of the *analogia entis* simply do not apply to Edwards.

⁵¹⁴ The term “general revelation” is slightly anachronistic when applied to the whole Reformed tradition; it came into general use in nineteenth-century Dutch Reformed theology. Nonetheless, I use it here as it serves well to cover a variety of terms such as “God’s works,” “creation,” “the created order,” etc., and even to some extent “the light of nature” and the *sensus divinitatis*.

⁵¹⁵ Edwards’ view of the affections will be expounded at length in Chapter Four of this dissertation (q.v.).

⁵¹⁶ Here I mean a natural desire not as distinguished from grace, but natural in the sense of embedded in creation. Hence, I use this in a more Augustinian than Thomistic sense, or at least a more de Lucian/Balthasarian Thomism reformulated through *la nouvelle théologie*.

In a recent work, the Hungarian literary theorist Katalin G. Kállay notes, “It is exactly the focus on divine beauty and aesthetics that makes all the difference between the texts of Jonathan Edwards and other Puritan writers, as well as between Edwards and his eighteenth-century contemporaries.” This focus, she claims, renders him more timeless, stimulating, and relevant to modern readers.⁵¹⁷ In this chapter I have sought, like Kállay, to recommend the work of this brilliant thinker as providing resources that can ground an exceptionally capacious and fertile ontological aesthetics, and one that can celebrate with Gerard Manley Hopkins dappled things that have been fathered-forth.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁷ Katalin G. Kállay, “Alternative Viewpoint: Edwards and Beauty,” in *Understanding Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to America’s Theologian*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 127.

⁵¹⁸ Gerard Manley Hopkins, “Pied Beauty,” 132.

Chapter Three

FORMAL CONCEPTIONS OF BEAUTY

Beauty and the Redemption of Ugliness

*Only a suffering God can help.*⁵¹⁹

~Dietrich Bonhoeffer

One aim of this dissertation is to identify and analyze conceptual categories in which particular theological aesthetics tend to be developed. As I have explained in Chapter One, I have grouped many of the diverse conceptions of beauty into three classes, types, or genera. Some theories emphasize *ontological* features of the beautiful, others prioritize *formal* aspects, and still others focus on the *affective* nature of beauty. In the second chapter, I explored a type of thinking about beauty that centers in ontology and analogy. That chapter elucidated Edwards' conception of the self-communication of God's glory, excellency, and beauty—a major theme of *The End for Which God Created the World*. In the following, fourth chapter, I will consider affective perspectives regarding beauty, observing that beautiful things stir affections such as desire and

⁵¹⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 361.

delight. Edwards' *Treatise on the Religious Affections* will serve as our primary guide to his affective conception of beauty. In this current, third, chapter I explicate *formal* conceptions of beauty and examine Edwards' particular use of formal conceptions,⁵²⁰ drawing on his posthumously published *The Nature of True Virtue* (1757; published in 1765).⁵²¹ I will develop this chapter in four sections, the first three corresponding to Edwards' conception of formal or relational beauty in terms of three enduring and significant formal conceptions of beauty: 1) fittingness, 2) harmony, and 3) the conjunction of opposites. Each of these aesthetic ideas has a *longue durée* extending from the dawn of Western culture, to Edwards' time in the first half of the eighteenth century, to our own era. By augmenting and amplifying these overlapping modalities, recasting them in terms of love, and envisioning them as culminating in the beauty of Christ's redemptive work, Edwards generates a conception of beauty that makes the centrality of beauty in theology warrantable in a fallen world.

The fourth section of this chapter applies Edwards' thought to constructive ends. I will show that deployment of these formal aesthetic categories engenders a robust theological conception of beauty capable of engaging the ugliness of the world. I will use Edwards' thought to show how an emphasis on beauty is not only warranted in theology, but even provides rich resources for grappling with the lapsarian horrors of the world.

Edwards' aesthetics provide resources that can envision beauty not as a mere escape from ugliness, but as able to enter ugliness, incorporate it, and sublimate and redeem it. By joining Edwards' notion (established in Chapter Two) that Beauty is beautifying (i.e., that primary beauty has an active tendency to make other things beautiful as well) with Edwards'

⁵²⁰ For an explanation of what I mean by "form," see Chapter One of this dissertation.

⁵²¹ While some key ideas of this chapter are drawn from *The Nature of True Virtue*, I will also illustrate various points from other of Edwards' writings.

counterintuitive insight that the death of Christ should be conceived in aesthetic terms, I will show that beauty, in its highest form, beautifies people and creation by redeeming it. Beauty is redemptive, as illustrated by the achievement in the crucifixion of the redemption—a sublation—of ugliness into beauty. In order to establish this, I will consider Edwards’ retrieval and enlargement of the aesthetics of *fittingness*, *harmony*, and the *conjunction of opposites*.

1. EDWARDS’ AESTHETIC MODALITY OF FITTINGNESS

The beautiful has often been conceived in terms of that which is becoming, appropriate, proper, suitable, “right,” adequate to a purpose, or useful under a particular set of circumstances. I will group these closely related concepts under the heading of “fittingness.” This capacious concept can be variously conceived. For Nicholas Wolterstorff, fittingness entails “cross-modal similarity.”⁵²² Our ability to discern a fittingness between things is a recognition of a similarity between various kinds of modes or qualities. Wolterstorff illustrates, saying, “Something’s being larger than something is (intrinsically) more like something’s being louder than something than it is like something’s being softer than something.”⁵²³ While Wolterstorff’s conception centers in likeness, fittingness may also refer to dissimilar entities that correspond to each other in a complementary reciprocity. Some aspects of fittingness emphasize aptness or usefulness, and are therefore established according to pragmatic function. When applied to human behavior, fittingness may inform ethics in terms of morality and condign rewards and punishment and to socially constructed notions of manners and decorum.

⁵²² Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), 99. For an analysis of fittingness, see 96ff.

⁵²³ Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 99.

Whether envisaged in terms of similarity, complementarity, utility, or propriety, fittingness concerns *relationships*. Aesthetic fittingness concerns the relations of one part of the beautiful object to another part and to the whole of it. While the notion of fittingness is expansive, it may be defined as an apposite cross-modal relationship. At core, it pertains to the cognizance that the relation of some things is more apposite than are others.

Edwards is both heir and innovator in his aesthetics of fittingness; he absorbs many ideas from the long history of the idea and integrates them into the heart of his theological project. In this section, I will situate Edwards' notion of fittingness in its eighteenth-century context, showing that Edwards intensifies and amplifies the insights of the aesthetics of fittingness, deploying them for his own theological ends. I will show that his appropriation of it engenders an awareness of the contextual nature of beauty. Toward this end, I will consider the *endowment* of the discourse of fittingness upon which Edwards draws, his *engagement* of, and finally his *enlargement* of it.

1.1 Edwards' Endowment of the Discourse of Fittingness.

Edwards is heir to an ancient idea. Edwards' understanding of fittingness is informed directly through eighteenth-century moral philosophy and indirectly due to its deep roots in Western thought. In the eighteenth century the link between the fitting and the beautiful was common enough that Edwards' contemporary, Edmund Burke (1729–1797), saw no need to attribute to anyone in particular. "It is said," Burke simply observes, "that the idea of utility, or of a part's being well adapted to answer its end, is the cause of beauty, or indeed beauty

itself.”⁵²⁴ Notions of fittingness have persisted since the dawn of Western culture and Edwards absorbed many features of them.⁵²⁵

Conceptions of fittingness are traceable at least to Hesiod (c. 750–650 BCE), who uses the word *kairos* (καῖρός) for this idea.⁵²⁶ In the fifth century BCE the participial phrase *to prepon* (τό πρέπον) came to have not only a moral, but also as an aesthetic valence.⁵²⁷ The aesthetics of fittingness came to the fore in Stoicism (which in its Roman phase rendered *to prepon* as *decorum*)⁵²⁸ and became prominent in the thought of Cicero and those following in his wake,⁵²⁹ especially the Latin Doctors of the Church⁵³⁰ and, through the Middle Ages,⁵³¹ passed into

⁵²⁴ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste*, ed. James T. Boulton (first publ. 1757; London: Routledge, 2008), 3.

⁵²⁵ Here I do not intend to illustrate the direct influence of particular texts on Edwards’ conception of fittingness. Rather, I simply observe that an idea with such a long history in Western thought is part of the intellectual stream in which Edwards swims.

⁵²⁶ Hesiod, *Works and Days*, line 694 in *Hesiod: Volume 1, Theogony, Works and Day, Testimonia* s Loeb Classical Library No. 57N trans. Glen W. Most (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 142. A common early meaning of *kairos* was “fittingness” or “propriety.” (See Phillip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin, eds., *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002], 1–2.)

⁵²⁷ See e.g., Xenophon, *Memorabilia*. trans. Amy L. Bonnette (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 3.10.10. Xenophon reports that Socrates advanced a definition of beauty in which beauty is dependent on its intended purpose such that a well-designed trash can could be beautiful, but a golden shield (which would be quite heavy) would not be beautiful since the former is serviceable and the latter is not (*Memorabilia*, 3.8.4.). See also Plato, *Hippias Major*, 294e and *Republic* Book I, 352d ff. and Book X, 601d; and Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 3.12.6 and *Topics* 1.5 102a6. A classic study of the role of *to prepon* in Greek thought may be found in Max Pohlenz, “To Prepon: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des griechischen Geistes,” In *Nachrichten von der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Goettingen, Philologisch-historische Klasse*, Heft 1 (1933): 53–92. “It is important,” stress Bychkov and Sheppard, “to bring out the aesthetic connotations of this term, often obscured in English translations” (Oleg V. Bychkov and Anne Sheppard, *Greek and Roman Aesthetics* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], xli).

⁵²⁸ And variants of it, e.g., *decens* and *quod decet* and synonyms, e.g., *aptus*, *conveniens*.

⁵²⁹ See e.g., Cicero, *Orator*, 70, and *De Officiis* 1.94; Seneca *Epistles* 41.6-7.

⁵³⁰ See, e.g., Gregory the Great (Mor. 26.12.18, Ep. 8.4.), Ambrose (*De officiis ministrorum*, modeled on Cicero’s *De officiis*). We recall from Book IV of the *Confessions* that the first work written by Augustine (in whom we find much of the Classical philosophical thought regarding beauty) was entitled *De Pulchro et Apto* (380) (“The Beautiful and the Fitting”). See Augustine, *The Confessions*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Maria Boulding, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, Vol. I/1. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997), 105.

⁵³¹ By the Middle Ages, *honestum* had assumed much of the sense of *to prepon*, and *decorum*, *aptum*, and *conveniens* were manifestly aesthetic concepts. By the High Middle Ages, fittingness is basic to aesthetic discourse, as Alexander of Hales (*Summa theologica* I, p. 1, i. 1, tract. 3, q. 3, nn.103, 162) and Robert Grosseteste (see Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* trans. Hugh Bredin [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986], 48). Aquinas makes famous use of *argumentum ex convenientia* (see, e.g., *Summa*

common aesthetic discourse in modern Europe, notably in the British thought that so shaped Edwards.⁵³² For instance, partly to counter Hobbesian egoism, Samuel Clarke makes significant use of fittingness in his moral philosophy, as does Francis Hutcheson, who draws upon notions of *decorum* as he develops his ethico-aesthetic notion of a Moral Sense in which the sensibility of beauty also orients us morally.⁵³³ The use of Ciceronian *decorum* is also evident in Hume.⁵³⁴ Consequently, it is not difficult to see why Burke assumes common knowledge of the aesthetics of the fitting. The concept of fittingness is deeply rooted in Western thought.

1.2 Edwards' Engagement of the Discourse of Fittingness.

Edwards appropriates the discourse of fittingness imparted to him in his eighteenth-century intellectual context, making both intensive and extensive use of it. This is evident in a number of ways. First, Edwards' language evinces both the vocabulary and grammar of fittingness. While Edwards never uses the word "fittingness" (the form of the word that is more common in our time), his work is nonetheless replete with the notion. He uses other variations of the word, e.g., "fit," "fitting," "fitly," "fitness," and synonyms for it, e.g., "becoming" (as an adjective), "congruity," "condecant," "consistence," "proper," "suitableness," etc., on almost every page of his writing. This habit of language attests the integral role of fittingness in Edwards' thought.

theologica, III, q.1,a. 2, and *Summa contra gentiles*, Book 4, chapters 53–55). Scotus has a fascinating trinitarian aesthetics of fittingness ordered (see *Reportatio* I-A,d.3,q.3,n. 80).

⁵³² According to Jennifer McMahon, "The British Library holds many more editions and translations of [Cicero's] *On Duties* dating back to before 1600 than any of the other classics from Virgil to Plato" (Jennifer Anne McMahon, "Beauty as Harmony of the Soul: the Aesthetic of the Stoics," in M. Rossetto, M. Tsianikas, G. Couvalis, and M. Palaktoglou, eds., "Greek Research in Australia: Proceedings of the Eighth Biennial International Conference of Greek Studies," Flinders University June 2009, 59.)

⁵³³ On Samuel Clarke's use of the idea of fittingness, see Mark LeBar, *The Value of Living Well* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 189ff. See Chapter Four of this dissertation for a discussion of anti-Hobbes moral philosophy in the early eighteenth century.

⁵³⁴ Gregory Des Jardins, "Terms of *De Officiis* in Hume and Kant," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28: 237–42.

Second, Edwards not infrequently defends his doctrinal claims in terms of aesthetic appropriateness. A theological methodology for which truth is argued on the grounds of beauty is uncommon in the Early Modern era. Many of his theological arguments include *argumenta ex convenientia*, framed in terms fitting congruities between doctrines.⁵³⁵ For instance, Edwards argues for divine providence on the basis of “a superior fitness” and that it is “much more becoming and proper” to hold this doctrine. Edwards reasons,

In short, I would ask whether every point ... which God has appointed from the beginning of the world to this day, had in itself and in the nature of things, such a superior fitness, that it could not be determined otherwise? Surely it is much more becoming and proper for us to think and say, that God has determined these things by his own will and self-determining power and free choice.⁵³⁶

Likewise, regarding the fittingness of Christ as mediator, he holds “that it would not be condecant not suiting with God’s excellency, to bestow mercy upon us without Christ’s mediation.”⁵³⁷ Edwards also frequently asserts that it is not fitting for God’s people to be left in

⁵³⁵ E.g., concerning providence, Edwards says, “In short, I would ask whether every point ... which God has appointed from the beginning of the world to this day, had in itself and in the nature of things, such a superior fitness, that it could not be determined otherwise? *Surely it is much more becoming and proper for us to think and say, that God has determined these things by his own will and self-determining power and free choice:* for it seems to me a very harsh and bold affirmation, that not one of all these punctilios could ever have been otherwise appointed by God himself” (emphasis original; *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1, *Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsey [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009], 104. Hereafter, *WJE* 1). On the fittingness of Christ as mediator, he says “that it would not be condecant not suiting with God’s excellency, to bestow mercy upon us without Christ’s mediation” (Misc. no. 476, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13, *The “Miscellanies,” Entry Nos. a–z, aa–zz, 1–500*, ed. Thomas J. Schafer [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994], 522. Hereafter, *WJE* 13.). For Edwards, conversion occurs when one recognizes “perfect fitness” or “perfect suitableness” of the saving work of Christ for the need and misery of the sinner (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 18, *The Miscellanies 501–832*, ed. Ava Chamberlain [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000], 466. Hereafter *WJE* 18). Further, Edwards frequently asserts that it is not fitting for God’s people to be left in sin, but is more becoming that they be morally changed by God’s Holy Spirit. (See, e.g., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 15, *Notes on Scripture*, ed. Stephen J. Stein [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998], 542. Hereafter, *WJE* 15). Many more examples could be adduced. Perhaps the most striking concern the fittingness of the trinitarian nature. For a succinct discussion of this, see Amy Plantinga Pauw. *The Supreme Harmony of All: The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 57ff.

⁵³⁶ *WJE* 1, 104.

⁵³⁷ Misc. no. 476, *WJE* 13, 522.

sin, but is more becoming that they be morally changed by God’s Holy Spirit.⁵³⁸ Many more examples could be adduced. Perhaps the most striking concern the fittingness of the trinitarian nature.⁵³⁹ Edwards’ adoption of fittingness is further evident in three more ways that are particularly germane to the aims of this chapter: that beauty is purposive, relational, and contextual.

Beauty is purposive in that it “consists in the visible fitness of a thing to its use, and unity of design.”⁵⁴⁰ By “unity of design” he means that the intended purpose of each constituent part serves the intended purpose of the whole. He explains that

The answerableness of a thing to its use is only the proportion, fitness, and agreeing of a cause or means to a visibly designed effect, and so an effect suggested to the mind by the idea of the means. This kind of beauty is not entirely different from that beauty which there is in fitting a mortise to its tenon.⁵⁴¹

This intentionally concerted design necessarily entails another aspect of aesthetic excellence such that a “double beauty” obtains.

In addition to purposive beauty, fittingness also manifests a *relational* beauty. “For it’s to be observed,” notes Edwards, “that one thing which contributes to the beauty of the agreement and proportion of various things is their relation one to another.” Drawing on a version of the Stoic conception of beauty as “an agreement of the parts with each other and the whole” (*convenientia partium inter se et ad totum*), Edwards notes that, in this relational beauty, “all the various particulars agree one with another as the general medium of their union, whereby they

⁵³⁸ See, e.g., *WJE* 13, 542.

⁵³⁹ For a succinct discussion of this, see Pauw, *Supreme Harmony*, 57ff.

⁵⁴⁰ Jonathan Edwards, *The Nature of True Virtue*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 8, *Ethical Writings*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 563–64. Hereafter, *WJE* 8.

⁵⁴¹ A *tenon* is a piece of wood designed to be inserted into a *mortise* (i.e., a hole or recess designed to receive the tenon) so as to join the two parts.

being united in this third, they thereby are all united one to another.”⁵⁴² In other words, the beauty of fittingness entails a triple relation of 1) each part related to 2) another, and to 3) the whole. The “double beauty” of fittingness, then, issues from its purposiveness, or its wholly coherent design for usefulness and from its threefold harmonious relations.

Edwards also, and importantly, recognizes that beauty is *contextual*. Embedded in notions of fittingness is an awareness that beauty is relative to its circumstances; it is context dependent. What is beautiful in one situation can be inane, sentimental, or grotesque in another.⁵⁴³ Citing Ecclesiastes 3:11, “He hath made everything beautiful in his time,” Edwards says. “Every[thing] is most beautiful and most pleasant in its season. Snow is not beautiful in summer, or rain in harvest.”⁵⁴⁴ Edwards’ conception of fittingness attends to the *situatedness* of beauty.

The eighteenth-century discourse of fittingness, then, was fully imbibed by Edwards, as is evident from his theological vocabulary and his theological methodology. Fittingness also frames beauty in terms of purpose, relationship, and context, such that these notions are integral to Edwards’ theological aesthetics. However, while he is an heir to the rich inheritance of the aesthetics of fittingness, Edwards also bequeaths a greatly expanded version of it to his own theological descendants. It is to this expansion that I now turn.

1.3 Edwards’ Enlargement of the Discourse of Fittingness.

“Enlargement” is a core Edwardsian theological trope. Rooted in the insight that whatever participates an infinite and communicative God will increase, burgeon, develop, and

⁵⁴² Edwards, *The Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8, 563–64.

⁵⁴³ For instance, a lachrymose penitential hymn may be moving in a Lenten church service, but would surely be unfittingly odd for a first dance at a wedding reception.

⁵⁴⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 14, *Sermons and Discourses, 1723–1729*, ed. Kenneth P. Minkema (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 104. Hereafter, *WJE* 14.

expand.⁵⁴⁵ It is a principle of the ever-increasing manifestation of beauty and glory of God and an ever-increasing participation in the divine life of those made in God's image, which continues in an eternal eternally.⁵⁴⁶ With God, there is always more—not because of an increase in God's being, *ad intra*, but because of an inclusion of being in general in the divine life, *ad extra*. In this section I will extend and apply Edwards' motif of enlargement to his augmentation of the received notion of fittingness. While Edwards' expansion of fittingness is so thoroughgoing that it extends to each of the six traditional theological loci of Reformed Theology in which Edwards was trained,⁵⁴⁷ here I will focus on Edwards' expanded application of fittingness to his categories of secondary and primary beauty.

⁵⁴⁵ Sang Hyun Lee interprets Edwards' notion of enlargement such that creation is an actualization of God's being that results in an "increase or enlargement of God's own being" (Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988], 184 and 196–210.) While Lee casts Edwards as giving a "bold preconception of the very nature of God," I find it more plausible that Lee has made a bold preconception of the very nature of Edwards (Ibid., 170). Edwards' ontology of God affirms divine infinity, which seems to preclude enlargement as an ontological principle that may be applied to the divine nature. Furthermore, while Edwards' notion of divine simplicity is idiosyncratic, he nonetheless affirms it. (See Oliver Crisp, unpublished essay, "Jonathan Edwards on the Trinity and Individuation," 13, cited in W. Ross Hastings, *Giving Honour to the Spirit: A Critical Analysis and Evaluation of the Doctrine of Pneumatological Union in the Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards in Dialogue with Karl Barth*, Phd dissertation, University of St. Andrews, 2004, 89. See also Paul Helm and Oliver Crisp, eds., *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian* [Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003].) It would seem that Lee has read Edwards anachronistically, retrojecting certain twentieth-century tenets of process philosophy or open theism into Edwards' eighteenth-century idea.

⁵⁴⁶ Edwards' view of enlargement is remarkably similar to the idea of *epekstacy* that was developed by Gregory of Nyssa, and is articulated most fully in his *Life of Moses* (trans. Everett Ferguson and Abraham J. Malherbe [New York: Paulist Press, 1978]).

⁵⁴⁷ Reformed Theology in the seventeenth century was generally structured with a Prolegomena (which treated the doctrines of revelation and scripture) and then the six theological loci of Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology. The division of systematic theology into these six loci was common in Reformed Orthodoxy, especially among the Dutch, e.g., Petrus Van Mastricht (1630–1706), whose work Edwards lauded as better than "any other book in the world, excepting the Bible, in my opinion" (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 16, *Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. George S. Claghorn [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998], 266. Hereafter *WJE* 16). Similarly, the six loci provide the topics of Johannes Hoornbeeck's (1658–1731) *Summa controversiarum religionis*, which Edwards read. In his work on Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711), whose *The Christian's Reasonable Service* follows the order of the six loci of Reformed systematic theology, Bartel Elshout notes that the six loci "had become the accepted structural framework for the presentation of Reformed doctrine" (Elshout, *The Pastor and Practical Theology of Wilhelmus à Brakel* [Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 1997], 20–24). This is not to imply that Edwards organized his own thought under the loci of systematic theology. On the contrary, Edwards' thought is overlapping and intertwined, and he seems little to employ systematic categories. I wish only to mention that Edwards enlarges the notion of fittingness into every area of theology.

1.3.a Edwards' Enlargement of Fittingness to Secondary Beauty. In Edward's aesthetics, fittingness pertains to all instantiations of secondary beauty.⁵⁴⁸ He applies the concept of fittingness to those things that might commonly be considered in terms of beauty such as, in the following, "a beautiful building, or piece of skillful architecture." However, he then makes the claim that social structures may be beautiful in a way that is "not of a different kind." He explains,

There is a beauty of order in society ... As, when the different members of society have all their appointed office, place and station, according to their several capacities and talents, and everyone keeps his place and continues in his proper business. In this there is a beauty, not of a different kind from the regularity of a beautiful building, or piece of skillful architecture, where the strong pillars are set in their proper place, the pilasters in a place fit for them, the square pieces of marble in the pavement in a place suitable for them, the panels in the walls and partitions in their proper places, the cornices in places proper for them, etc.⁵⁴⁹

The application of the same aesthetic criteria both to a colonial courthouse and to colonial societal arrangement illustrates Edwards' expansive conception of beauty. For him, evaluations of beauty may be applied univocally to any instances of secondary beauty (e.g., that of the arts, technology, morality, and, as we see here, social structures). However, this type of expansiveness was not without critics.

It is the rejection of just such extensions of the notion of fittingness that leads= Burke to then reject altogether fittingness as a quality of beauty. Burke conceives the notion of beauty in terms of that which is visually pleasing—as opposed to that which is morally or intellectually beautiful.⁵⁵⁰ He then famously argues, in a *reductio ad absurdum*, that if fittingness were a criterion of the beautiful,

⁵⁴⁸ Secondary Beauty is explicated in Chapter Two. In sum, secondary beauty consists "in a mutual consent and agreement of different things, in form, manner, quantity, and visible end or design." Edwards observes that this kind of beauty is "called by various names of regularity, order, uniformity, symmetry, proportion, harmony" (*The Nature of True Virtue*, WJE 8, 561).

⁵⁴⁹ *The Nature of True Virtue*, WJE 8, 568 (emphasis original).

⁵⁵⁰ Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 3.1 and 12. The definitional restriction of beauty (often to that which may be apprehended by sight) is not uncommon in modernity.

the wedge-like snout of a swine, with its tough cartilage at the end, the little sunk eyes, and the whole make of the head, so well adapted to its offices of digging and rooting, would be extremely beautiful.⁵⁵¹

He continues in this section, entitled “Fitness not the Cause of Beauty,” to enumerate other patently useful features of animals that he finds not beautiful in the least.

Edwards, however, reduces neither beauty nor fittingness to the *merely* useful. For him, while fittingness is aesthetically normative, it is a necessary but not sufficient condition of beauty.⁵⁵²

Therefore, that which is not fitting will not be beautiful.⁵⁵³ Nor, in a sense to be explored next, is that which is not fitting *good*. It is to Edwards’ fusion of the beautiful and the good that I now turn.

1.3.b Edwards’ Enlargement of Fittingness to Primary Beauty. Ultimately, Edwards applies the aesthetic criterion of fittingness not only to secondary beauty but also to primary beauty or true virtue. Edwards identifies the beautiful with the good. Since the higher forms of the beautiful and the good coincide, expressions of goodness can be framed in various aesthetic terms. One way is in terms of fittingness. For him, fittingness entails not only that which is aesthetically pleasing, but also that which is ethically proper. He presents the deeds of “morally good” acts of agents “as it becomes ’em to be and to act, or so as is most fit, and suitable, and lovely.”⁵⁵⁴ Furthermore, Edwards not only identifies the biblical locution “the beauty of

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., 3.6.

⁵⁵² Seldom has fittingness also be seen as a sufficient cause of beauty. Before its adoption by seventeenth-century French classicism under the concepts of *convenance*, *vraisemblance*, and especially *bienséance*, fittingness was usually considered to be a feature of the beautiful, but not a stand-alone theory of beauty in which fittingness alone could account for beauty.

⁵⁵³ Here I think Edwards is right: That which is utterly unfitting (e.g., the solid-gold toilet seats in Saddam Hussein’s palaces, or an elderly supreme court justice wearing the extremely trendy fashions of a Hollywood teen star) is seldom considered beautiful. Even when the intentionally “unfitting” is incorporated into a work of beauty as a joining of opposites (as is not uncommon in many of the arts) it, if successful, thereby *becomes* fitting.

⁵⁵⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, *Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 254. Hereafter *WJE* 2. Here Edwards is affirming and expounding the distinction made by “the divines” between moral and natural evil.

holiness” with genuine ethical goodness, but even asserts that it is the sole form of “true excellency or beauty.”⁵⁵⁵ He proclaims,

He that sees the beauty of holiness, or true moral good, sees the greatest and most important thing in the world, which is the fullness of all things, without which all the world is empty, no better than nothing, yea, worse than nothing. Unless this is seen, nothing is seen, that is worth the seeing: for there is no other true excellency or beauty.⁵⁵⁶

This conflation of the good and the beautiful, which William Spohn calls “Edwards’ metaethics of the fitting,”⁵⁵⁷ is deep in the marrow of his theological aesthetics. The beautiful is what ought to be. Beautiful “oughtness,” however, is not rooted in mere moralism, but in an eudaimonistic teleology, i.e., what beings are meant for, how they will flourish, and what is fitting for them.

Here Edwards embraces a tradition of beauty with a long pedigree in Western thought: what I will call the “kalonic” tradition. In Greek thought (and its progeny), beauty (Gr. *καλόν ta kalon*, Lt. *honestum*) entails both aesthetic and ethical connotations. *Ta kalon* could be rendered “the excellent” or “the fine” as well as the beautiful.⁵⁵⁸ This ethico-aesthetic fusion of the good and beautiful was characteristic particularly of Platonism and much Stoicism (as we saw in the notion of *decorum*) and was intensified in Neo-Platonism. It passed into Christianity, and then into Western thought, particularly through Augustine, and generally through medieval philosophy and theology. Edwards imbibed it fully.⁵⁵⁹ By Edwards’ day, such views enjoyed contemporary vitality in many of the British Moralists, particularly the Third Earl of Shaftesbury

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 274.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ William Spohn, “Jonathan Edwards and Sovereign Beauty,” Santa Clara University Publications, n.d., <http://www.scu.edu/ethics/publications/submitted/spohn/jonathanedwards.html>, accessed September 19, 2011.

⁵⁵⁸ Martha Nussbaum notes, “Kalon is a word that signifies at once, beauty and nobility. It can be either aesthetic or ethical and is usually both at once, showing how hard it is to distinguish these spheres in Greek thought.” Cited in Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 330.

⁵⁵⁹ This is perhaps due to his general Augustinianism, or to his Anglo-Puritan heritage that was shaped by the Cambridge Platonists, e.g., Ralph Cudworth, whom Edwards read.

and Francis Hutcheson, with whom Edwards interacted.⁵⁶⁰ While Edwards' corpus is shot through with reflections on beauty, it is very significant that his fullest explication and most careful and sustained engagement of the topic of beauty comes in a work devoted to ethics—*The Nature of True Virtue*. In that work, Edwards links true virtue fundamentally to beauty, distinguishing two major types of beauty: *primary* and *secondary*. These types correspond to two kinds of virtue, also designated *primary* and *secondary*. Edwards' notion of primary beauty is equivalent to his conception of true virtue, i.e., the particular kind of beauty that rises to the level of *true* virtue is *primary* beauty.⁵⁶¹ There is a deep connection between beauty and ethics in Edwards, for whom “excellency” and “beauty” are functional synonyms.⁵⁶² He maintains,

Whatever controversies and varieties of opinions there are about the nature of virtue, yet all (excepting some skeptics who deny any real difference between virtue and vice) mean by it something *beautiful*, or rather some kind of *beauty* or excellency.⁵⁶³

In the early sermon “The Pleasantness of Religion” (1723), based on a proverb that enjoins people to eat honey because it is good as well as sweet, Edwards argues that the beauty

⁵⁶⁰ Burke and Hume are notable exceptions. Interestingly, Immanuel Kant, another major figure in eighteenth-century aesthetics, was also influenced by British philosophy and also retains a connection between the beautiful and the good, albeit in a radically different way than the precritical tradition. For Kant, beauty is a symbol of morality. In §59 and §60 of the *Critique of Judgment*, he says, “We often describe beautiful objects of nature or art by names that seem to put a moral appreciation at their basis. We call buildings or trees majestic and magnificent, landscapes laughing and gay; even colors are called innocent, modest, tender, because they excite sensations which have something analogous to the consciousness of the state of mind brought about by moral judgments. Taste makes possible the transition, without any violent leap, from the charm of sense to habitual moral interest . . . pleasure is derived which taste regards as valid for mankind in general and not merely for the private feeling of each. Hence it appears plain that the true propaedeutic for the foundation of taste is the development of moral ideas and the culture of the moral feeling, because it is only when sensibility is brought into agreement with this that genuine taste can assume a definite invariable form” (*Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar [Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987], §2, 205).

⁵⁶¹ As Roland Delattre observes, *primary beauty* is “variously referred to as true, highest, moral, spiritual, divine, or original beauty” by Edwards (*Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards: An Essay in Aesthetics and Theological Ethics* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968], 17).

⁵⁶² While Edwards often uses the terms almost interchangeably, he does distinguish them. He explains, “Excellency may be distributed into greatness and beauty. The former is the degree of being, the latter is being's consent to being” (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 6, *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, ed. Wallace E. Anderson [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980], 383. Hereafter, *WJE* 6. In any case, excellency always entails beauty.

⁵⁶³ *The Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8, 539. Italics Edwards'.

we desire is the goodness or excellency of God, and that the experience of God's beauty is an experience of his goodness.⁵⁶⁴ As Ken Minkema shows in his introduction, "In this sermon, religion, pleasure, and excellency are synonymous."⁵⁶⁵ Elsewhere, Edwards directly affirms that "goodness is excellent in whatever subject it be found; it is beauty and excellency itself."⁵⁶⁶ Ultimately, the beautiful and the good are not only connected, but also, at the highest level—that of the love of God—elide into one *bonum formosum*.⁵⁶⁷

Edwards' creative brilliance manifests itself in the consolidation and amplification of his endowment of the eighteenth-century aesthetics of fittingness, deploying them for his own theological ends. Edwards engages this discourse of fittingness not only by adopting the language of fittingness, but even in theological methodology of *argumenta ex convenientia*. This engagement yields aesthetic criteria of the purposiveness, relationality, and contextuality of beauty. Lastly, Edwards "enlarges" the concept of fittingness to encompass all forms of beauty, both primary and secondary. In the end, Edwards would agree with Roger Scruton's claim that "In art as in life fittingness is at the heart of aesthetic success."⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁴ The text of this sermon is Proverbs 24:13–14, which Edwards has as "My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste: so shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off."

⁵⁶⁵ *WJE* 14, 21.

⁵⁶⁶ Jonathan Edwards, "The Excellency of Christ," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 19, *Sermons and Discourses, 1734–1738*, ed. M. X. Lesser (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 588. Hereafter, *WJE* 19.

⁵⁶⁷ See *WJE* 2, 262. Edwards distinguishes, "The grace of God may appear lovely two ways; either as *bonum utile*, a profitable good to me, that which greatly serves my interest, and so suits my self-love; or as *bonum formosum*, a beautiful good in itself, and part of the moral and spiritual excellency of the divine nature. In this latter respect it is that the true saints have their hearts affected, and love captivated by the free grace of God in the first place" (*ibid.*, 262–63).

⁵⁶⁸ Roger Scruton, *Beauty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 126.

2. EDWARDS' AESTHETIC MODALITY OF HARMONY

Edwards likewise enlarges the aesthetics of harmony. Edwards can speak narrowly in terms of dulcet or euphonious sounds, as in the “harmony of voice,”⁵⁶⁹ and readily expands the notion metaphorically to include visual relations as in the “beautiful harmony of features of face.”⁵⁷⁰ Expanding further, he relates beauty to immaterial realities such as wisdom.⁵⁷¹ Ultimately, argues Edwards, all beauty, whether it be in art, nature, morality, or God, consists in harmonious *relations*. Beginning from a traditional aesthetic foundation, Edwards goes on to develop a notion of harmony that informs a rich conception of love and extends to metaphysical intersubjectivity. Consequently, harmonious beauty becomes a seminal category not only for “aesthetics” (narrowly conceived), but also for ethics (as we have seen) and even for ontology and the doctrine of God (as we saw in Chapter Two). I will elucidate Edwards’ aesthetic modality of harmony in terms of its antiquity, affinity, correlativity, ideality, intersubjectivity, integrity, and charity.

2.1 The Antiquity of Harmony: *Edwards’ Reappropriation of the Great Theory of Beauty.*

Edwards adopts aspects of aesthetic discourse from what Polish philosopher and historian of aesthetics Władysław Tatarkiewicz has called the “Great Theory” of beauty.⁵⁷² This

⁵⁶⁹ *The Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8, 539. Similarly, in Misc. no. 782 (*WJE* 18, 461) he says, “when the ear hears a variety of sounds harmoniously proportioned, the soul has a sensible knowledge of the excellency of the sound.”

⁵⁷⁰ *WJE* 13, 278.

⁵⁷¹ He says, “There is the same kind of beauty in immaterial things, in what is called *wisdom*, consisting in the united tendency of thoughts, ideas, and particular volitions, to one general purpose” (*The Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8, 568; emphasis original).

⁵⁷² See Władysław Tatarkiewicz, “The Great Theory of Beauty and Its Decline,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31 (1972): 165–80. The notion is further developed in Tatarkiewicz’s *The History of Aesthetics* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), and was refined in his *History of Six Ideas: An Essay in Aesthetics* (Boston: Kluwer Academic, 1980). Given its utility, I use the term here. While it is not entirely common coin in Anglophile aesthetics, neither is it altogether infrequently used. Furthermore, it is referenced in some leading works and authors, e.g., Jennifer A. McMahon’s chapter on beauty in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, 2nd edition, ed. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes (London and New York: Routledge, 2005); Noël Carroll, *Beyond*

understanding of beauty was an amalgamated conception of beauty drawn from various schools of Greek, and later, Roman philosophy, which centers in the notion of *due proportion*.⁵⁷³

Tatarkiewicz explains that the Great Theory “declared that beauty consists in the proportions of the parts, more precisely in the proportions and arrangement of the parts, or, still more precisely, in the size, equality, and number of the parts and their interrelationships.”⁵⁷⁴ On this view, beautiful proportions establish a form of unity through harmony.⁵⁷⁵ While the Great Theory was the dominant (although not sole) theory for two millennia, its hegemony had waned by the Early Modern period.⁵⁷⁶ Edwards, however, reinscribes many of these ideas in his aesthetics. His is not a *ressourcement* (in that he does not draw on particular thinkers); rather, Edwards’ work is a reappropriation of perdurable ideas in Western thought. As Tatarkiewicz observes, “There have been few theories in any branch of European culture which have endured so long or commanded such wide-spread recognition, and few which cover the diverse phenomena of beauty quite so comprehensively.”⁵⁷⁷

Early in his career, Edwards observes, “Some have said that all excellency is harmony, symmetry or proportion.”⁵⁷⁸ He uses a variety of synonymous expressions for these related

Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 20 ff.; Edward Farley, *Faith and Beauty: A Theological Aesthetic* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2001), 17ff.; Stephen Davies, “Functional Beauty Examined,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 40, no. 2 (June 2010): 315–32; and Piotr Jaroszyński, *Beauty and Being: Thomistic Perspectives*, trans. Hugh McDonald (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2011), 15ff.

⁵⁷³ The quest for perfect proportions became the hallmark of Greek aesthetics, continued with the Romans, (e.g., Vitruvius’ *Ten Books on Architecture*) and passed directly into Christian reflections on beauty. Augustine is representative when he says plainly, “Beautiful things please by proportion (*numero*)” (*De Musica* 6. 13. 38).

⁵⁷⁴ Tatarkiewicz, “The Great Theory,” 167.

⁵⁷⁵ From the beginning of the Classical tradition, beauty was conceived in terms of harmony (Gr. *harmonia*, Lt. *convenientia*). That concept was expanded almost immediately beyond the aural, however, to include symmetry or similitude (Gr. *symmetria*, Lt. *similitudo*), which was conceived as the visual or spatial equivalent of harmony.

⁵⁷⁶ See Tatarkiewicz, “The Great Theory,” 173–74.

⁵⁷⁷ Tatarkiewicz, *History of Six Ideas*, 125.

⁵⁷⁸ I remind the reader that “excellency” is Edwards’ favorite synonym for beauty. “The Mind,” no. 1, *WJE* 6, 332. The original text of “The Mind” is not extant and therefore impossible to date precisely. It nonetheless may be

concepts, which he notes are “called by the various names of regularity, order, uniformity, symmetry, proportion, harmony, etc.”⁵⁷⁹ When operating in a philosophical register, Edwards develops his aesthetics in terms of proportion—a concept that is, at core, rational and mathematical.⁵⁸⁰ His more typical language, however, frames these ideas in terms of harmony. While other of these terms could easily be used, I have selected “harmony” for a number of reasons. First, “harmony” communicates more clearly to the modern ear (than, say, “proportion” or “order”) the priority of personal relations in Edwards’ thought. Second, the notion of harmony entails many of the bundle of concepts Edwards uses, e.g., proportion, order, symmetry, and a unity achieved from diversity. Third, Edwards’ usage of harmony is an aesthetic and therefore axiological concept, not merely a descriptive term (as are some of the other synonyms). Finally, as has been observed by many, especially those following Perry Miller’s reading of Edwards, harmony is a central notion in Edwards’ thought. By framing his thought in terms of harmony, then, Edwards draws on an enduring general strand of Western aesthetics. I will now explicate his particular conception of harmony.

2.2 The Affinity of Harmony: *Consent and Agreement as the Means of Beauty.*

In *The Nature of True Virtue*, Edwards explicates beauty in terms of *consent* and *agreement*. He maintains, “Beauty does not consist in discord and dissent, but in consent and

placed between Edwards’ New York pastorate in 1722 and his teaching at Yale through 1727. Given this early dating, Edwards is likely referring to the Third Earl of Shaftesbury’s 1711 work, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, given that Hutcheson’s *An Inquiry concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design* had only been published in 1725.

⁵⁷⁹ *The Nature of True Virtue*, WJE 8, 561–62.

⁵⁸⁰ See, e.g., WJE 6, 336. The Great Theory was initiated by the great mathematicians of the fifth century B.C., the Pythagoreans, who conceived beauty in terms of the ordered relation of parts that could be expressed numerically. This view was based on observations of the harmonies produced by the relation of the strings of a musical instrument in terms of simple numbers. Likewise, while Pythagoras was observing a blacksmith, he noted that different tones resounded when hammers of different weight struck the anvil. The connection between weight and pitch was observed to be numeric, illustrating that sound is governed by *number*. The same truth, so the Pythagoreans claim, is observable in all sensible beauty.

agreement.”⁵⁸¹ These two words, which are synonymous in Edwards, represent workhorse concepts for him.⁵⁸² The contemporary usage of the word “consent” can connote a (often formal) granting of permission. Similarly, current usage of “agreement” can sometimes reduce to a state of mental assent. Neither is Edwards’ usage. For him, consent and agreement entail a *joining* of two entities into a greater whole. These words denote the syndetic means of harmonious unity through the establishment of affinity.

This is true of the secondary beauty “found even in inanimate things.”⁵⁸³ Consequently, “a number of pillars, scattered hither and thither, does not constitute beauty,” as would “pillars connected in the same building in parts that have relation one to another.” The former are marked by “disagreement,” the latter by “some relation or connection of the things thus agreeing one with another.”⁵⁸⁴ This is an Edwardsian description of harmony. Secondary beauty, however, is so named because it is derivative—being an analogical representation of a greater (i.e., primary) beauty.⁵⁸⁵

The consent or agreement that comprises primary beauty is enacted by dispositional, animate beings. It entails concerted acts of the intellect and will. Consent is both a mental phenomenon and a volitional one, as both consent and dissent are operations of the will. The conscious, intentional, joyous consent or agreement of one being with another, then, establishes a

⁵⁸¹ The Nature of True Virtue, WJE 8, 541.

⁵⁸² Forms of “consent” are used over 1,400 times in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* published by the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University. While the semantic field of the word “agreement” is broader and may apply to other concepts than harmony, forms of the word “agree” are used over five thousand times in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. (These numbers include uses of them by the editors in their introductions and notes to Edwards’ works.)

⁵⁸³ The Nature of True Virtue, WJE 8, 561–62.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 567–68.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 561.

harmonious concord between them. Terrance Erdt captures this feature of Edwards' use of "consent" when he says it "means *feeling together*, harmonizing."⁵⁸⁶

Stephen Daniel misunderstands Edwards' conception of personal consent. He claims, "Consent to being is the acknowledgment that being consists in the activity of substitution or displacement of individuality with some other [being]."⁵⁸⁷ Edwards' aim is not the effacement of lower forms of being, rather he envisions their *participation* in ultimate being. Consent establishes and reflects a harmonious combination of two or more entities, such that their distinctiveness is retained. Far from obliterating it, harmony *establishes* alterity and particularity, which are necessary to it. Singularity has nothing with which to harmonize. Consent or agreement in Edwards is the willing incorporation of the self into the Other, without absorption. It is a uniting of minds and wills that is experienced not as abnegation but as joyful completion.⁵⁸⁸

2.3 The Correlativity of Harmony: *The Relational Nature of Beauty.*

By conceiving beauty as harmonious consent and agreement, Edwards highlights the *relational* nature of beauty. As in all formal conceptions of beauty, aesthetic theories of harmony concern relationships, i.e., the relation of how one entity is arranged vis-à-vis another. Proportional reciprocity and correspondence mark harmonious beauty. For Edwards, *all*

⁵⁸⁶ Terrence Erdt, *Jonathan Edwards, Art and Sense of the Heart* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 36. Erdt's italics. Both Erdt and Edwards follow the etymology of consent more closely than does our contemporary usage. Consent may be traced to the Latin *cons entire*, from *con-* "together" and *sentire* "feel."

⁵⁸⁷ Stephen H. Daniel, *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards: A Study in Divine Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 179. Clarification mine.

⁵⁸⁸ For more on this major theme in Edwards see Chapter Four, in which I distinguish Edwards' views of disinterested benevolence from those of the "New Divinity."

existence is relational; being entails a relationship between entities and may be conceived as “nothing else but proportion.”⁵⁸⁹

This was not true for most Greek and pre-modern Christian thought in which *simplicity* was valued. Plotinus (and many following him) had questioned the conception of beauty as a harmonious or proportionate arrangement of parts, since such views require complexity and composition in the beautiful. One of his cases in point was the beauty of light, which was assumed to be uncomposed.⁵⁹⁰ Always a lover of the new science of the day, Edwards found an answer to the problem of the beauty of light in Newtonian optics.⁵⁹¹ “Mere light,” Edwards asserts, “is pleasing to the mind,”

if it be to the degree of effulgence, 'tis very sensible, and mankind have agreed in it: they all represent glory and extraordinary beauty by brightness. The reason of it is either that light, or our organ of seeing, is so contrived that an harmonious motion is excited in the animal spirits and propagated to the brain. That mixture of all sorts of rays, which we call white, is a proportionate mixture that is harmonious (as Sir Isaac Newton has shown) to each particular simple color and contains in it some harmony or other that is delightful.⁵⁹²

Even the apparent unity of beautiful light was shown to be established by relational harmony.

2.4 The Ideality of Harmony: *The Mental Quality of Beauty.*

Some eighteenth-century thinkers (notably Burke) sought to wrestle a unwieldy concept

⁵⁸⁹ *WJE* 6, 336. As I note in Chapter Two, Wallace E. Anderson rightly concludes that for Edwards “the relations of a thing to others are the fundamental condition of its existence” (*WJE* 6, 30).

⁵⁹⁰ Plotinus, *Enneads* V I.7.22. He also cites gold as an example. Significantly, after Plotinus, thinkers often add the concept of “brilliance,” “brightness,” “radiance,” or *claritas* to definitions of beauty. This is true of Augustine, Boethius, and the Pseudo-Dionysius. On their collective authority, the added criterion became standard in the Middle Ages—famously as one of Aquinas’ three conditions of beauty. (See *Summa Theologica*, rev. ed., trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province [New York: Benziger, 1948; reprinted: Westminster: Christian Classics, 1981], 1.39.8). For a genealogical account of the addition of the notion of radiance to theories of beauty based in proportion, see Tatarkiewicz, “The Great Theory,” 168–69.

⁵⁹¹ Following in the footsteps of his Puritan forebearers (e.g., Cotton Mather), Edwards maintained a lifelong fascination and delight with science and technology. His first submission for publication (his famous “spider” paper) was to the Royal Academy of science.

⁵⁹² *WJE* 6, 306.

like beauty into greater manageability by defining it more narrowly, e.g., by restricting the notion of beauty to material reality. Edwards counters that the same criteria of beauty may be applied to both material and immaterial beauty, therefore exclusion of immaterial beauty is not warranted.

He points out,

If uniformity and proportion be the things that effect, and appear agreeable to, this sense of beauty, then why should not uniformity and proportion affect the same sense in immaterial things as well as material, if there be equal capacity of discerning it in both? And indeed more in spiritual things (*ceteris paribus*) as these are more important than things merely external and material?⁵⁹³

However, as we see in the last sentence above, Edwards looks not only for the inclusion of the immaterial to the category of beauty (a quite common move), he grants mental beauty greater aesthetic value than physical beauty, all other things being equal. For Edwards the philosophical Idealist, the correlative harmony in lower beauty is an analogical reflection of a more real—and therefore ideal—reality.⁵⁹⁴ As we have seen, higher forms of agreement or consent are mental; beauty is rooted in a mental act of agreement or consent. Secondary beauty reflects harmonious relations of all sorts of things—whether material or immaterial, personal or non-personal. Primary beauty, however, is spiritual and ideal—consisting in a love between minds.⁵⁹⁵ Ultimate beauty then, is immaterial, because it is ideal. Edwards’ idealist conception of beauty, however, should not be confused with psychological conceptions of beauty in many of the eighteenth-century British thinkers, e.g., Hutcheson and Hume. In Edwards, beauty obtains in objective (even if mental) reality; it is constituted by existing mental phenomena. In some British thought, beauty is constituted by the subjective recognition of the beautiful object *qua* beautiful.

⁵⁹³ The Nature of True Virtue, WJE 8, 568.

⁵⁹⁴ See Chapter Two of this work on the “Semiotics of Creation.”

⁵⁹⁵ The Nature of True Virtue, WJE 8, 561.

For Edwards, beauty has subjective effect not because it exists “in the eye of the beholder,” but because it exists in the mind of God and those “who have eyes to see.” The role of mental subjectivity (as it perceives objective beauty), then, figures prominently in Edwards’ aesthetics, which prioritize the harmony of *personal* relationships.

2.5 The Intersubjectivity of Harmony: *The Priority of Personal Beauty.*

As I showed in section 2.2, Edwards conceives all beauty in terms of harmonious relationships, established by agreement or consent. However, he distinguishes “two sorts of agreement or consent,” one of “cordial” and another of “natural” agreement. The former is personal; it “consists in concord and union of mind and heart.” The latter, natural, sort “is entirely a distinct thing”; it is impersonal—“the will, disposition, or affection of the heart having no concern in it.” As such, natural beauty is an “inferior secondary sort of beauty” when compared to cordial beauty, which he also calls “moral,” “spiritual,” “divine,” and “original beauty.”⁵⁹⁶ The designation “primary beauty” is, therefore, reserved for a certain type of interpersonal and intersubjective harmony and applies only to “spiritual and moral beings, which are the highest and first part of the universal system for whose sake all the rest has existence.”⁵⁹⁷

Cordial consent marks a beauty that integrates the distinct subjectivities involved. Therefore, well-ordered relations among people are marked by harmony and thereby become beautiful—whether in families, churches, or societies.⁵⁹⁸ Daniel rightly observes that Edwards’

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., 566.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid. Similarly, in the *Religious Affections*, Edwards extols the beauties of nature, but states that the highest forms of earthly beauty are enacted by persons. *WJE* 2, 280.

⁵⁹⁸ This notion also has deep roots in Western culture. The Greek goddess Harmonia (Ἄρμονία), and her Roman counterpart Concordia, represented societal humanity and civic order. The opposing forces were personified in Eris (Ἔρις), the Greek goddess of strife, and Discordia, for the Romans.

aesthetic vision “recognizes that the intelligibility of individual existence consists in being related to others in virtue of a divinely established harmony.”⁵⁹⁹

2.6 The Unity of Harmony: *Unity as the Basis of Beauty.*

Furthermore, in Edwards’ thought, beautiful, harmonious relations between various entities yield unity.⁶⁰⁰ Primary beauty, as we recall, consists in “consent, agreement, or *union* of being to being.”⁶⁰¹ Through design, for instance, Edwards observes that “all the various particulars agree one with another as the general medium of their *union*, whereby they being *united* in this ... they thereby are all *united* one to another.”⁶⁰² On this point, Edwards interacts with his near contemporary Francis Hutcheson, who in 1725 anonymously published a highly influential work in philosophical aesthetics.⁶⁰³ In that work, Hutcheson locates beauty in the pleasure we derive from the unity (or, in eighteenth-century language, “uniformity”) in diversity achieved by harmony. While Edwards disagrees with Hutcheson on some foundational assumptions (as I show in the next chapter) he, nonetheless, expressly approves Hutcheson’s thesis that beauty entails a harmonious unity in diversity.⁶⁰⁴ Edwards says that his own views on

⁵⁹⁹ Daniel, *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards*, 184.

⁶⁰⁰ Here Edwards’ thought shows an affinity with Augustine, who said that “unity is the form of all beauty” (*De vera Religione*, cap. 41, this translation cited in Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism and the Frontiers of Poetry*, trans. Joseph W. Evans [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974]).

⁶⁰¹ *The Nature of True Virtue*, WJE 8, 561. See Chapter Two.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*, 563–64.

⁶⁰³ Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue: Treatise I: A Critical Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965). The first part of that work was originally a stand-alone piece entitled *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design*. Norman Fiering describes Francis Hutcheson as “probably the most influential and respected moral philosopher in America in the eighteenth century.” He notes that the *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* was used at Harvard as early as the 1730s. (*Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard: A Discipline in Transition* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981], 199).

⁶⁰⁴ This is a very old idea. As Stobaeus, the fifth-century CE anthologist of Pythagorean thought, says, “Things that were alike and of the same kind had no need of harmony, but those that were unlike and not of the same kind and of unequal order—it was necessary for such things to have been locked together by harmony, if they are to be held together in an ordered universe” (in G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983], 327).

this are⁶⁰⁵ “the same that Mr. Hutcheson, in his treatise on beauty, expresses by uniformity in the midst of variety: which is no other than the consent or agreement of different things, in form, quantity, etc.”⁶⁰⁶ For Edwards, unity from diversity marks the very nature of God’s work of redemption in that *harmony* is restored by reconciliation between God and people, by restoring harmonious relations to people intrapersonal within their own formerly fragmented souls, and between people interpersonally as they become “one holy and happy society.” Social harmony in Edwards’ thought begins in the Church but is perfected in the consummation of all things, when the “church of God shall be beautiful and glorious” since “all the world [shall then be] as one church, one orderly, regular, beautiful society, one body, all the members in beautiful proportion.”⁶⁰⁷

In the sermon series “The Work of Redemption” (1738), Edwards argues for a greater unity behind various seemingly discrete events. For Edwards, form follows function. As the work of redemption is to reestablish *harmony*, so too are the various aspects of redemption in the *historia salutis* various aspects of one unified project. Edwards’ aesthetics of history are clear when he says of the work of redemption, “’tis one work, one design. The various dispensations and works that belong to it are, in essence, but the several parts of one scheme.”⁶⁰⁸ Providence follows the same pattern: “The events of providence ben’t so many distinct independent works of

⁶⁰⁵Edwards uses this Hutchesonian formulation when he says, “As the agreement of a *variety in one* common design of the parts of a building, or complicated machine, is one instance of that regularity which belongs to the secondary kind of beauty” (*The Nature of True Virtue*, WJE 8, 568; emphasis added). The degree to which Edwards follows Hutcheson is a matter of debate. A. Owen Aldridge (“Edwards and Hutcheson,” *Harvard Theological Review* [1951] 44:35–52), believes Edwards to be heavily indebted to Hutcheson, while Paul Ramsey (see Appendix 2: Jonathan Edwards on Moral Sense, and the Sentimentalists, in *The Nature of True Virtue*, WJE 8, 689–705) does not see a significant influence of Hutcheson’s thought on Edwards. In Chapter Four of this work I argue that Edwards adopts much of the language of the British moral philosophers, but sometimes uses it with quite different meanings.

⁶⁰⁶ *The Nature of True Virtue*, WJE 8, 562–63.

⁶⁰⁷ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 9, *A History of the Work of Redemption*, ed. John Frederick Wilson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 484. Hereafter, WJE 9.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.

providence,” he instructs, “but they are rather so many different parts of one work of providence: ’tis all one work, one regular scheme.”⁶⁰⁹ Similarly, the work of Christ, the mediator, both accomplishes harmony and exhibits harmony in that Christ’s “office of mediator between God and man”⁶¹⁰ entails a harmonious interplay of the *munus triplex*, i.e., Christ’s work as Prophet, Priest, and King. The three aspects of Christ’s work harmoniously unite in the salvation of humanity. “’Tis but one design that is done to which all the offices of Christ do directly tend.”⁶¹¹ Similarly, following the axiom that *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*, Edwards says, “All the persons of the Trinity do conspire and all the various dispensations that belong to it are united, as the several wheels in one machine, to answer one end and produce one effect.”⁶¹² At the close of this long sermon series, Edwards stresses that the “effect” of the various means and ends of the work of redemption is “union.”⁶¹³ For Edwards, beauty obtains whenever some wholeness, integrity, or unity emerges from various differing elements that are harmoniously related. *E pluribus unum*.

2.7 The Charity of Harmony: Love as the Quintessence of Beauty.

For Edwards, beauty is the ground and means of this participatory union between beings, and for him the highest form of harmonious beauty is *love*.⁶¹⁴ Beauty is not simply the *splendor ordinis*, as in some aesthetics of harmony, but is measured by “cordial consent to Being,” or

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., 519.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., 130.

⁶¹¹ Ibid., 118.

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ I am indebted to the work of Charles Geschiere for pointing out the aesthetic aspect of the *Work of Redemption*. See Charles L. Geschiere, “Taste and See That the Lord Is Good”: The Aesthetic-Affectional Preaching of Jonathan Edwards,” Th.M. thesis, Calvin Theological Seminary, 2008, ch. 6: “A History of the Work of Redemption: An Aesthetic Analysis.”

⁶¹⁴ Interestingly, our word “harmony” comes to us through Middle English from the Latin *harmonia*, meaning not only “concord,” but also “joining” from the Greek *harmos*, for “joint.” Just as joints connect distinct parts, allowing them to function as a whole, so too aesthetic harmony binds disparate elements into a unity.

conscious, heartfelt love.⁶¹⁵ “As all spiritual beauty lies in “true *virtue*, or “love of Being,” says Edwards, “so ’tis primarily *on this account* they are beautiful, viz. that they imply *consent* and *union* with Being *in general*.”⁶¹⁶

Edwards frames this ethico-aesthetic ontology of love in terms of “consent” (his antonym of dissent⁶¹⁷), described as consisting in “concord and union of mind and heart.”⁶¹⁸ Primary beauty, defined as “consent, agreement, or union of being to being,”⁶¹⁹ both reveals and engenders a unifying love among spiritual beings. Deploying an Augustinian conception of the Holy Spirit as the *vinculum amoris*, or bond of love between the Father and Son, Edwards appropriates the enactment and power of beautifying love to the Holy Spirit.⁶²⁰ He says, “The Holy Spirit is the harmony and excellency and beauty of the Deity.”⁶²¹ For Edwards, beauty is the harmonious unity of love.

⁶¹⁵ *The Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8, 36. See Chapter Two, where I note that the term “cordial” harkens to the language of the *Religious Affections*, denoting not only the decision of the will, but also the disposition of the heart.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 548.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 541, where Edwards says, “Beauty does not consist in discord and dissent, but in consent and agreement.”

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 565.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 561.

⁶²⁰ As Patrick Sherry observes, “Edwards derives the Holy Spirit’s mission as beautifier from his role within the Trinity (and also the Son’s, as image of beauty, likewise), and he explains that both the role and the mission in terms of harmony, consent and agreement, in that the Holy Spirit, being the harmony and beauty of the Godhead, has the particular function of communicating beauty and harmony in the world” (*Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics*, 2nd ed. [Oxford: SCM, 2002], 93. While Sherry is correct in this observation, it must not be totalized due to the indivisibility of the external work of the Trinity. Elsewhere Edwards says that love flows “throughout the whole blessed society or family in heaven and earth, consisting in the Father, the head of the family, and the Son, and all his saints that are his disciples, seed and spouse of the Son” (“Treatise on Grace,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 21, *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002], 186. Hereafter *WJE* 21).

⁶²¹ Misc. no. 293, *WJE* 13, 384.

An aesthetics of harmony is so fundamental to Edwards' thinking that, as we have seen (in Chapter Two), it grounds his ontological conception of God. Edwards does not totalize divine simplicity⁶²² in a way that undermines a perichoretic conception of the Trinity, which exists *ad intra*, "in the mutual love and friendship which subsists eternally and necessarily between the several persons in the Godhead."⁶²³ Amy Plantinga Pauw, adopting a phrase from Edwards' Miscellany 182, aptly entitled her influential 2002 work on Edwards' trinitarianism *The Supreme Harmony of All*.⁶²⁴ The paradigm for Edwards' aesthetics of harmony is the Trinity—a unity of plurality, established by love.⁶²⁵

In *Spirit and Beauty*, Patrick Sherry criticizes Edwards for "limiting" his conception of beauty to harmony.⁶²⁶ While I have shown that Edwards does no such thing (harmony is a major but not exclusive criterion of beauty for him), I have also shown that harmony is a vast, not limiting, idea in Edwards. By developing his aesthetics as an extension of established conceptions of harmony whereby relational, personal, unifying love is entailed in it, Edwards has enlarged it indeed. His extension of beauty to soteriology, to the realm of spiritual intersubjectivity and to metaphysics bespeaks the depth and breadth of his theological aesthetics.

⁶²² Interestingly, the early Edwards had defined being itself as "nothing else but proportion" (*WJE* 6, 336). Reality itself is a web of relations. Later, Edwards revised his definition of being as "nothing else but proportion." Nonetheless, he held fast to his conception of beauty or excellency as "the consent of being to being" rooted in the very nature of being. For more on this, see "Personal Narrative," *WJE* 16, 791ff; "The Mind," *WJE* 6, 332–36, 362; Thomas A. Schafer, Introduction to "The 'Miscellanies,'" *WJE* 13, 14–15.

⁶²³ *The Nature of True Virtue*, in *WJE* 8, 555. Observe how unlike the typical Neoplatonic impulse to conceive ultimate divinity as a simple unity, not a necessary multiplicity.

⁶²⁴ Amy Plantinga Pauw, "The Supreme Harmony of All": The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002).

⁶²⁵ Amy Plantinga Pauw argues that it is here that Edwards moves beyond the overdetermining commitment to divine simplicity in Reformed Scholasticism (*à la* Peter van Mastricht and Francis Turretin). Edwards himself affirmed but was ambivalent about simplicity. See Pauw, *Supreme Harmony*, 57ff. For more on Edwards' handling of this doctrine see Oliver Crisp, "Jonathan Edwards on Divine Simplicity," *Religious Studies* 39, no. 1 (March 2003): 23–41. See also Wallace Anderson, *WJE* 6, 81ff, and Erdt, *Jonathan Edwards*, 35ff.

⁶²⁶ Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty*, 95.

3. EDWARDS' AESTHETIC MODALITY OF *DISCORDIA CONCORDS*

The assignation of aesthetic value to concepts such as “regularity,” “uniformity,” and “symmetry” could lead one to worry that Edwards’ criteria might produce an aesthetics of tedium. However, Edwards loves mysterious beauty⁶²⁷ and his aesthetics affirm “variety” and the “mixture” of “diverse” qualities. After approving some of his Scottish interlocutor’s views, Edwards notes that Mr. Hutcheson

observes that the greater the variety is, in equal uniformity, the greater the beauty: which is no more than to say, the more there are of different mutually agreeing things, the greater is the beauty.⁶²⁸

Edwards is aware that that harmonious fittingness can be most beautiful not through an overuse of symmetry, similitude, or predictable order, but through a surprising and pleasing conjunction of dissimilar things. The tension inherent in the combination of disparate things lends vitality to the experience. When this “resolves” (an eminently Edwardsian word) into a harmonious integrity or wholeness, the combination becomes beautiful—even when the constituent parts entail ugliness. Sometimes it is precisely disparate alterity, joined and held together, that achieves the greatest beauty through an unexpected, greater fittingness. While this insight may be found, in seed form, in the idea of harmony as *difference-in-unity*, in this section I will explore the full-grown form.

⁶²⁷ For instance, “hidden and secret beauties” are more interesting and “by far the greatest, because the more complex a beauty is, the more hidden is it,” according to Edwards. He says, “There are beauties that are more palpable and explicable, and there are hidden and secret beauties. The former pleases and we can tell why: we can explain and particularly point forth agreements that render the thing pleasing. Such are all artificial regularities: we can tell wherein the regularity lies that affects us. The latter sort are those beauties that delight us and we can’t tell why. Thus we find ourselves pleased in beholding the color of the violets, but we know not what secret regularity or harmony it is that creates that pleasure in our minds. These hidden beauties are commonly by far the greatest, because the more complex a beauty is, the more hidden is it. In this latter sort consists principally the beauty of the world” (“Beauty of the World,” *WJE* 6, 306).

⁶²⁸ The Nature of True Virtue, *WJE* 8, 562–63.

3.1 *Coincidentia Oppositorum*: A Perdurable Idea.

Along with the related notions of simultaneity, paradox, and even absurdity, the idea of contraries being united in a pleasing or transcendent way is an age-old and cross-cultural idea; the notion of the coincidence, juxtaposition, or resolution of polarities (apparent or real) bears a long lineage in Western philosophy and art.⁶²⁹ According to Mircea Eliade, the *coincidentia oppositorum* is also a perennial idea in religion.⁶³⁰ Due to its Classical inheritance, ideas about the union of contraries come into various strands of Christianity. These ideas took both metaphysical (unity in multiplicity) and rhetorical (the yoking of opposing words or concepts) forms.

The Apostle Paul uses rhetorically combined contrast,⁶³¹ as do many of the Church fathers. Tracing the notion to the Latin Rhetoricians, Augustine affirms both metaphysical and rhetorical perspectives saying, “Just as these oppositions of contrary to contrary give beauty to speech, then, so too is the beauty of this age formed by the opposition of contraries in an eloquence, so to speak, not of words but of things.”⁶³² The conjunction of opposites has a

⁶²⁹ It is common in art, e.g., in the chiaroscuro of Caravaggio or Rembrandt, Bach’s counterpoint, complementary color schemes, etc. Similarly, many ideas in another area of aesthetic inquiry—creativity—center on the surprising combination of disparate things.

⁶³⁰ The unifying of the dissimilar is also a perennial idea in religion. Mircea Eliade saw in the *coincidentia oppositorum* a “mythical pattern” to many religious myths, rituals, and experiences. (See, e.g., *Myths, Rites, Symbols: A Mircea Eliade Reader*, eds. Wendell C. Beane and William G. Doty [New York: Harper Colophon, 1976], 439–49). For an analysis of Eliade’s views see John Valk, “The Concept of the *Coincidentia Oppositorum* in the Thought of Mircea Eliade,” *Religious Studies* 28, no. 1 (March 1992): 31–41.

⁶³¹ See, e.g., 2 Corinthians 6:8-10, New Revised Standard Version: “In honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.” See also 2 Corinthians 4:7-12.

⁶³² Augustine, *City of God*, 11.18. Prior to this he says, “For God would never have created any human beings, let alone any angels, whose future evil he foreknew, if he had not known equally well how he would put them to use for the good and so adorn the course of the ages, like the most beautiful poem, with antitheses of a sort. Antitheses, as they are called, are among the most elegant ornaments of literary style. In Latin they might be called oppositions or, more precisely, contrapositions, but we do not ordinarily use the term, even though the Latin language—and, indeed, all languages—employs these same ornaments of speech.” Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: The City of God, 11-22, Part I, Vol. 7*, trans. William

continuous history in medieval thought. Indeed, Heinz Heimsoeth sees the unity of opposites as the first of his “Six Great Themes of Western Metaphysics” in the middle ages.⁶³³ The conjunction of opposites is often found in “mystical”⁶³⁴ theology, e.g., that of Pseudo-Dionysius,⁶³⁵ Bonaventure,⁶³⁶ or Meister Eckhart⁶³⁷ and, significantly, in Nicholas of Cusa—a

Babcock, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2013). Thanks to Jim Webber of New City Press for early access to this work. See also *De ordine*, 1.7.18, where he affirms the same point, and *Confessions* 1.4.4.

⁶³³ See Heinz Heimsoeth, *Die sechs grossen Themen der abendländischen Metaphysik und der Ausgang des Mittelalters* (orig. publ. 1922; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1987), ch. 1.

⁶³⁴ As Kevin Hart notes, “‘Mysticism’ has proved to be one of the most elusive yet most recalcitrant words used in discussing religious experience and discourse” (*The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology, and Philosophy* [New York: Fordham University Press, 2000], 174). Here I simply mean a theology in which kataphatic affirmations (while often necessary) are seen to be insufficient descriptors of the *Living God*, who can, nonetheless be apprehended suprationally and described (if not conceptualized) apophatically. “The point of theology,” for Dionysius, Hart observes, “is to pass from knowing to unknowing, to attain ‘that Union which exceeds our faculty, and exercise of discursive, and of intuitive reason’” (*Trespass of the Sign*, 199). Hart is citing Dionysius, *The divine names* 1.1, 585B-588A. Elliot R. Wolfson’s description of another, but parallel tradition, makes the point well: “Traditional kabbalists (in line with the apophaticism of Neoplatonic speculation) assume there is a reality beyond language, a superessentiality that transcends the finite categories of reason and speech, but this reality is accessible phenomenologically only through language. Silence, therefore, is not to be set in binary opposition to language, but is rather the margin that demarcates its center” (*Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* [New York: Fordham University Press, 2005], 289).

⁶³⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius, for example, uses the phrase “dissimilar similarities” (see *The Celestial Hierarchies*, 2.3 141D, 151, and 15.8 337B, 189). He can also speak of the “ray of the divine shadow.” For more on this, see Matthew C. Bagger, *The Uses of Paradox: Religion, Self-Transformation, and the Absurd* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). For Pseudo-Dionysius, God “precontains all opposites” in *Godself* (*On the Divine Names* 9.4, 912C, 116). He says, “That which is numerous in its processions is one in its source. For there is nothing at all lacking a share in that One which in its utterly comprehensive unity uniquely contains all and every thing beforehand, even opposites” (*ibid.*, 13.2, 980A, 128), and, similarly, “In the totality of nature all the laws governing each individual nature are gathered together in one unity within which there is no confusion, and in the soul the individual powers providing for all the parts of the body are assembled together as one. So there is nothing absurd in rising up, as we do, from obscure Images to the single Cause of everything, rising with eyes that see beyond the cosmos to contemplate all things, even the things that are opposites, in a simple unity within the universal Cause” (*ibid.*, 5.7, 821B, 100).

⁶³⁶ For Bonaventure, Christ himself represents the unity of opposites. According to Cousins, for Bonaventure, Christ mediates five loci of theological *coincidentia oppositorum*: the Trinity, God and the world, the Incarnation, redemption, and return to the Father. See, e.g., Ewert H. Cousins, “La ‘coincidentia oppositorum’ dans la théologie de Bonaventure,” *Etudes Franciscaines* 18 (Supplément annuel, 1968), 15–31; and, by the same author, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1978). Bonaventure also uses the concept rhetorically. He says, for instance, “God is mocked, so that you may be honoured; flogged, so that you may be consoled; crucified, so that you may be set free; the spotless Lamb is slaughtered, so that you may be fed; the lance brings forth water and blood from his side, so that you may drink . . . O Lord Jesus Christ, who for my sake did not spare yourself: would my heart through your wounds, inebriate my spirit with your blood, so that whenever I may go, I may continually have you before my eyes as the crucified . . . and may be able to find nothing else but you” (Bonaventure, *Solil.* I, 33–34 [VIII39b-40a], cited in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, vol. 2, *Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989], 276).

transitional figure to the Renaissance and the coiner of the phrase *coincidentia oppositorum*.⁶³⁸

Edwards' use of the aesthetics of contrariety stands in a long line of thought in Western culture and Christianity.

3.2 *Discordia Concors*: The Eighteenth-Century Version.

The more immediate context of Edwards' use of the conjunction of opposites, however, can be found in a trend among the British "men of letters" of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The self-conscious idealization of the Classical past by the Restoration and eighteenth-century writers (perhaps because the distant past could be sanitized more gloriously than the more recent horrors of the English civil wars, regicide, and Interregnum) led to a *ressourcement* of Greco-Roman authors and literary devices.⁶³⁹

The aesthetics of contrast first entered Early Modern English arts and letters⁶⁴⁰ though Renaissance⁶⁴¹ humanism⁶⁴² and took the form in the eighteenth century of *discordia concors*, or

⁶³⁷ In Eckhart, this takes the form of the resolution of opposites into a greater unity.

⁶³⁸ Nicholas of Cusa makes the principle of *coincidentia oppositorum* a key to his philosophical theology. He solved the problem of the One and the many by an appeal to a higher harmony in God. In a reworking of the *exitus-reditus* theme, God is in all and all is in God; in creation *omnia explicans* (all unfolds) and *omnia complicans* (all enfolds) into and from God. Thus all distinction, all composition, and opposites are harmonized in God. This ultimate harmony in God makes him also ultimate beauty. "Your face, Lord," prays Cusanus, "is absolute beauty to which all forms of beauty owe their being" (Nicholas of Cusa, *De visione Dei* 6.1.20 in *Nicholas of Cusa: Selected Spiritual Writings*, trans. H. Lawrence Bond [Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997], 244.II). The *locus classicus* for the development of the principle of the coincidence of opposites by Nicholas of Cusa is in his "On Learned Ignorance," *Selected Spiritual Writings*, trans. H. Lawrence Bond (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997). See also Jasper Hopkins, trans., *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Nicholas of Cusa* (Minneapolis: Banning, 2001).

⁶³⁹ This is one reason this time period was previously, if problematically, referred to as "Neoclassical" or "Augustan." In the recent debates over how to characterize the period from 1660–1800, the terms "Neoclassical" and especially "Augustan" have generally been abandoned.

⁶⁴⁰ It is evident in Spenser (see, e.g., Jessica Wolfe, "Spenser, Homer, and the Mythography of Strife," *Renaissance Quarterly* 58 [2005]: 1220–88) and Shakespeare (in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theseus asks, "How shall we find the concord of this discord?" given that the questionable fittingness of the tragi-comedy of *Pyramus and Thisbe* with the harmonious "nuptial ceremony" [5.1.60], 640) and the "idea of *discordia concors* explains much," says Melissa Wanamaker, "about the metaphysical wit of poets such as John Donne, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marvell, and John Milton." (*Discordia Concors: The Wit of Metaphysical Poetry* [London: Kennikat Press, 1975], 5).

⁶⁴¹ Giordano Bruno is generally credited with ushering this notion into the Renaissance. (See, e.g., Noel L. Brann, *The Debate over the Origin of Genius During the Italian Renaissance* [Leiden: Brill Academic, 2001], 320; and

Cesare Catà, “Forking Paths in Sixteenth Century Philosophy: Charles de Bovelles and Giordano Bruno,” *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 40, no. 2 [2009]: 381–92.) According to Wanamaker, “Contrast itself became an aesthetic ideal” (*Discordia Concors*, 9). She notes, “Gradually the Renaissance moved from an ideal of simple unity in multiplicity toward the aesthetic of stark contrariety” (*ibid.*, 10). For more on Renaissance uses of the aesthetics of contrast, see Christopher D. Johnson, “Coincidence of Opposites: Bruno, Calderón, and the Renaissance Drama of Ideas,” *Renaissance Drama* (special issue: Italy in the Drama of Europe) 36/37 (2010): 319–52; S. K. Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony, Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics* (San Marino, CA: Huntingdon Library, 1974). In a fascinating woodcut from 1518 of Franchinus Gaffurius, the Italian musicologist, teaching the dictum “*Harmonia est discordia concors*” is emblazoned on a banner apparently coming from the professor’s mouth:



⁶⁴² The humanist return *ad fontes* revived interest in Classical literature. Erasmus, for instance, explores the device of *enantiosis*, or paradoxical contrast in the witty, often ironic adages of the ancient paroemiographers, e.g., “make haste slowly” or “unfortunate good fortune.” For instance, in “*Festina Lente*,” Erasmus classifies that adagium as ἐναντιώσιν, or *contrariety*. He says, “This proverb carries with it a pretty riddle, particularly as it consists of contradictory terms. Thus it is to be referred to that ... class of proverbs which go by contraries, as for instance *infelix felicitas*” (Desiderius Erasmus, *Adagia* II, 1, 1: “*Festina Lente*” in *Adages: Ii1 to Iv100* [*Collected Works of Erasmus*], vol. 31, ed. R. A. B. Mynors, trans. Margaret Mann Phillips [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982], 171).

a harmonious discord. The term is a synonymous inversion of a phrase penned by Horace⁶⁴³—*concordia discors*⁶⁴⁴—that was to become an enduring trope in the first Augustan Age.⁶⁴⁵ (Horace rightly attributes the concept to Empedocles,⁶⁴⁶ but similar ideas are found in the cosmology and metaphysics of other Pre-Socratic thinkers, e.g., *inter alia*, the Pythagoreans,⁶⁴⁷ and especially Heraclitus.⁶⁴⁸ It became a standard conceptual resource in Greek⁶⁴⁹ and Hellenistic philosophy.⁶⁵⁰)

⁶⁴³ Horace (65 BC–8 BC) draws on Empedocles to refer to “the world’s discordant harmony.” In his *Epistles*, bk. 1, Letter 12.19 to Iccius (c. 20 BC), he says, “*Quid velit et possit rerum concordia discors*” (*Satires and Epistles*, trans. John Davie [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 80).

⁶⁴⁴ Horace also speaks of a “*symphonia discors*” in the *Ars Poetica*, line 376.

⁶⁴⁵ See, *inter alia*, Ovid (43 BCE–17 CE), *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, 1.433; Seneca (c. 4 BCE–65 CE), *Naturales quaestiones* 7.27.3–4; and Lucan (39–65 CE), *Pharsalia* 1, 98, II, 101. Similarly, Quintilian (c. 35–c. 100 CE) can speak of a “*dissimilium concordia quam vocant ἁρμονία*” in *De institutione oratoria*, 1.1.c.17. The concept, although not the phrase, is evident in Manilius (fl. 1st century CE), *Astronomica*, 1.140–149.

⁶⁴⁶ In Empedocles (c. 495–435 BCE), it is precisely *Harmonia* that balances the olamic and competing forces of Love and Strife in the world. (For Empedocles, the cosmos evolves as harmony balances the use, by love [φιλία] and strife [νεῖκος], of the four fundamental elements of air, fire, water, and earth. *Harmonia* is the daughter of Ares, the god of war, and Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Unlike in Edwards, harmony is not identified with love.)

⁶⁴⁷ As we have seen, cosmic harmony is foundational to Pythagoreanism, and as one Pythagorean writer puts it, “Harmony in every way arises out of opposites. For harmony is the unification of what is a mixture of many ingredients and the agreement of the disagreeing.” (This Pythagorean fragment is often, but doubtfully, attributed to Philolaus, Fragment 10. See C. A. Huffman, *Philolaus of Croton: Pythagorean and Presocratic: A Commentary on the Fragments and Testimonia with Interpretive Essays* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 416. The quote does bear affinity to Philolaus, who says, “Like things and related things did not in addition require any harmony, but things that are unlike and not even related . . . it is necessary that such things be bonded together by a harmony, if they are going to be held in an order.” See Philolaus, Fragment 1, in Huffman, *Philolaus of Croton*, 124. Stobaeus, the 5th c. CE anthologist of Pythagorean thought, repeats this passage almost verbatim. See Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 327.)

⁶⁴⁸ The coincidence of opposites (Pleger identifies twenty-four pairs of opposites in Heraclitus; see Wolfgang H. Pleger, *Der Logos der Dinge: eine Studie zu Heraklit* [Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987], 42–43) is especially important in the metaphysics of Heraclitus (c. 544–483 BCE). (Jonathan Barnes understands Heraclitus’ conception of the unity of opposites as holding that “every pair of contraries is somewhere coinstantiated; and every object coinstantiates at least one pair of contraries.” *The Presocratic Philosophers*, rev. ed. [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982], 70.) For the enigmatic “Riddler” from Ephesus, “The way up and the way down are one and the same” (Heraclitus, Fragment 108 [Diels-Kranz numbering], in *Heraclitus: The Complete Fragments Translation and Commentary and the Greek Text*, trans. William Harris, Middlebury College). His intention, however, is not simply to observe paradox, or to conflate two disparate things in a way that obliterates distinction, but to establish the *interconnectedness* of the contraries—that, in the providence of *Logos* (Abel Jeanniere says, “*Logos* is the name of identity as a creative dynamism of harmony” [*Heraclite* {Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1977}, 17, 42, 46]), two seeming contradictory entities are united in the cosmological order. (In Fragment 106, Heraclitus says, “To God all things are beautiful, good, and right. Men, on the other hand, deem some things right and others wrong.” The early Christians recoiled at such a notion. *Ibid.*) For instance, he observes that “Sea water is at once very pure and very foul: it is drinkable and healthful for fishes, but undrinkable and deadly for men” (Fragment 101, *ibid.*). For Heraclitus, “Opposition brings

While the term *concordia discors* is occasionally used in various types of literature (e.g., essays⁶⁵¹ and religious polemics⁶⁵²), it is manifestly deployed in John Denham (1615–1669),⁶⁵³ John Dryden (1631–1700),⁶⁵⁴ and significantly for our purposes, John Milton (1608–1674),⁶⁵⁵

concord. Out of discord comes the fairest harmony” (Fragment 98, *ibid.*). While he laments that “People do not understand how that which is at variance with itself agrees with itself” (Fragment 117, *ibid.*), Heraclitus, who was notoriously arrogant, chides Hesiod for this in Fragment 114. He also notes, “The hidden harmony is better than the obvious” (Fragment 116, *ibid.*). For more on Heraclitus’ harmony of opposites, see Eva Brann, *The Logos of Heraclitus* (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2011), section 3.K, “Contentious Harmony,” 50ff.

⁶⁴⁹ Both Plato and Aristotle (following Plato’s read of Heraclitus) criticized the notion as incoherent. (See, e.g., Plato’s *Cratylus*, 402a.) Interestingly, he explores the idea that opposites attract in human friendships in the *Lysis*, and does use the notion in the *Timaeus*, 35a. Aristotle says, “The statement of Heraclitus, that everything is and is not, seems to make everything true, but that of Anaxagoras, that an intermediate exists between two contradictories, makes everything false; for when things are blended, the blend is neither good nor not-good, so that it is not possible to say anything truly” (*Metaphysics*, trans. Hippocrates Gorgias Apostle [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966], bk. 4, 1012a, 25–29). There is some debate as to whether they understood Heraclitus correctly (see, e.g., Daniel W. Graham, “Heraclitus’ Criticism of Ionian Philosophy,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 15 [1997]: 1–50). Nonetheless, while Plato and Aristotle reject the idea in metaphysics, both deploy the idea *rhetorically* (see e.g., Matthew Colvin, “Heraclitean Flux and Unity of Opposites in Plato’s *Theaetetus* and *Cratylus*,” *The Classical Quarterly* 57, no. 2 [December 2007]: 759–69, and Robert Wardy, “The Unity of Opposites in Plato’s *Symposium*,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 23 (Winter 2002). Aristotle does approvingly cite Heraclitus as observing that “the finest harmony arises from discordant elements” (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans. Terence Irwin [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999], 1155b, 120).

⁶⁵⁰ E.g., the Neoplatonic (and late in life, Christian) philosopher Marius Victorinus refined the conception of opposites, interpreting them as contrary (*contrarium*), disparate (*disparatum*), and relative (*ad aliquid*). (Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages: Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature*, vol. 1 [Leiden: Brill Academic, 1990], 133).

⁶⁵¹ E.g., an early essay by Francis Hutcheson in which, by way of refuting Hobbes’ egoist account of laughter, Hutcheson claims that laughter can emerge from parody, burlesque, and wit, not just a sense of superiority—the Hobbesian view that had been repeated in the *Spectator*, no. 47. Hutcheson links laughter to “the bringing together of images which have contrary additional ideas, as well as some resemblance in the principal idea; this contrast between ideas of grandeur, dignity, sanctity, perfection, and ideas of meanness, baseness, profanity, seems to be the very spirit of burlesque, and the greater part of our raillery and jest are founded on it.” See Peter Kivy, *Seventh Sense: Francis Hutcheson and Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetics*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 92.

⁶⁵² E.g., as in William Prynne’s 1659 *Concordia discors*, or, The dissonant harmony of sacred publique oathes, protestations, leagues, covenants, engagements, lately taken by many time-serving saints, officers, without scruple of conscience, or Samuel Grascome’s 1705 *Concordia discors: or, some animadversions upon a late treatise; entituled, An essay for Catholick communion. In a letter to a friend at Westminster, by a presbyter of the Church of England.*

⁶⁵³ See, e.g., Earl Wasserman’s oft-quoted essay on Denham’s “Cooper’s Hill” in *The Subtler Language: Critical Readings of Neoclassical and Romantic Poems* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959). A clear instance is in Denham’s apostrophe to the Thames: “Oh, could I flow like thee, and make thy stream My great example, as it is my theme! Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull; Strong without rage; without overflowing full.”

⁶⁵⁴ See, e.g., *Palamon and Arcite* and *The Secular Masque* in which the traits of idealized kingship are set forth in terms of a *concordia discors* between the trains of Mars (force) and Venus (persuasion). On this, see Winifred Watkins Ernst, “John Dryden: The Old Lion in 1700,” PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2011, <http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/etd/id/3655>.

the preeminent Puritan poet, whom Edwards read and quoted.⁶⁵⁶ During Edwards' time (the first half of the eighteenth century), the notion of *concordia discors* becomes not only a literary device, but also a social ideal—a way of reconciling the diverse and fragmented aspects of British society.

The notion is prominent in Alexander Pope (1688–1744), perhaps the paragon of verse in this era, whom Edwards also read. We see it in Pope's heroic couplets and find it thematically in the *Essay on Man*, where he juxtaposes a number of contraries, e.g., reason and passion, virtue and vice, nature and art, etc. The notion is clear in Pope's theodicy, "All nature is but art unknown to thee; All Discord, Harmony, not understood; All partial Evil, universal Good."⁶⁵⁷ Earl Wasserman concludes that "the active harmonizing of differences ... permeates almost all of Pope's writings"⁶⁵⁸—so much so that Mark Wildermuth speaks of "Pope's obsession with the concept of *concordia discors* as a prime agent in poetics."⁶⁵⁹

The phrase *discordia concors* in the eighteenth century, however, is famously found in Samuel Johnson (1709–1784). While Johnson admires its use in Pope, he seems to use the term in this form (i.e., *discordia concors*, as opposed to the Classical *concordia discors*) as a term of reproach for the tortured stretching of it found in the metaphysical poets.⁶⁶⁰ In "The Life of

⁶⁵⁵ As William Kolbrener explains, "In the center of *Paradise Lost*, the *discordia concors* of Milton's thought ... expresses itself in the figure of Christ's intervention in history" (*Milton's Warring Angels: A Study of Critical Engagements* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 62. See also pages 6, 12–13, 39, 101, 125, 133–35, 162, 179n55).

⁶⁵⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 26, *Catalogues of Books*, ed. Peter J. Thuesen (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 86. Hereafter *WJE* 26.

⁶⁵⁷ Alexander Pope, *The Essay on Man*, The First Epistle, 10. Vol. 3 in John Butt, et al., *Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*. 11 vols. (London: Methuen, 1939–69), 515.

⁶⁵⁸ Wasserman, *Subtler Language*, 103.

⁶⁵⁹ Mark E. Wildermuth, *Print, Chaos, and Complexity: Samuel Johnson and Eighteenth-Century Media Culture* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 62.

⁶⁶⁰ One possible example of this can be seen in John Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." In that work, the poet likens his concord with his beloved to a draftsman's compass. He says, "If they be two, they are two so, / As stiff twin compasses are two: / Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show /

Cowley,”⁶⁶¹ he castigates the “discovery of occult resemblances” of “ideas are yoked by violence together” that strains the patience of the hearer, rather than passing as wit (that esteemed virtue in eighteenth-century discourse). Dr. Johnson instructs,

But wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they have more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtlety surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.⁶⁶²

Again, while Johnson disparages the ill use of *discordia concors* in the Cowley essay, he approves it when well used,⁶⁶³ and does so himself. Following a tradition popular in the Renaissance, Johnson (in *Rambler* 167 of 1751) uses the notion of *concordia discors* to describe a pleasant and generative tension between the sexes in marriage.⁶⁶⁴ We find a similar usage in Addison and Steele in *The Spectator* 128⁶⁶⁵—a publication eagerly read by Edwards from his teens on.⁶⁶⁶

To move, but doth, if the other do; / And though it in the center sit, / Yet when the other far doth roam, / It leans, and hearkens after it, / And grows erect, as that comes home.”

⁶⁶¹ Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, vol. 1, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁶³ On this see Mark E. Wildermuth, “Samuel Johnson and the Aesthetics of Complex Dynamics,” *The Eighteenth Century* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2007): note 39, 59.

⁶⁶⁴ *Rambler* 167 of Tuesday, 22 October 1751, “The marriage of Hymenaeus and Tranquill,” *The Works of Samuel Johnson, Vol. 4, The Rambler*, ed. W. Jackson Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 250. For more on this, see Steven Lynn, “Sexual Difference and Johnson’s Brain,” in *Fresh Reflections on Samuel Johnson*, ed. Prem Nath (Troy, NY: Whitston, 1987), 134.

⁶⁶⁵ Donald F. Bond, ed. *The Spectator*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), no. 128, July 27, 1711.

⁶⁶⁶ George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 62, and *A Short Life of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 3.

3.3 Plain and Unpolished Dress: *Edwards' Measured Use of Rhetorical Conceits.*

While Edwards had not read Dr. Johnson's *Cowley* essay,⁶⁶⁷ he agreed with its sentiments. Edwards' near contemporary,⁶⁶⁸ the American Puritan poet and clergyman Edward Taylor (1642–1729),⁶⁶⁹ might ask “Should Stars Wooe Lobster Claws,” but Edwards will not strain a metaphor. He uses the device when it is pleasing or effective, but is unwilling to sacrifice clarity in his communication. In his *Preface to Discourses on Various Important Subjects* (1738), Edwards admits awareness of the “polite” standards of rhetoric,⁶⁷⁰ but eschews “modishness of style and method,” given the urgency of his subject matter and his (feigned?) inability.⁶⁷¹ He admits that the publication of his sermons

appear in that very plain and unpolished dress, in which they were first prepared and delivered; which was mostly at a time, when the circumstances of the auditory they were preached to, were enough to make a minister neglect, forget, and despise such ornaments as politeness, and modishness of style and method, when coming as a messenger from God to souls, deeply impressed with a sense of their danger of God's everlasting wrath, to treat with them about their eternal salvation.—However unable I am to preach or write politely, if I would, yet I have this to comfort me under such a defect, that God has showed us he does not need such talents in men to carry on his own work, and that he has been pleased to smile upon and bless a very plain, unfashionable way of preaching. And have we not reason to think that it ever has been, and ever will be, God's manner to bless the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, let the elegance of language, and

⁶⁶⁷ Johnson's essay was written twenty-two years after Edwards' death. Nor had he read Lord Kame's *Elements of Criticism* (1772), which also proscribes “improper” figures of speech. See *Elements of Criticism*, bk. II, *passim*. Edwards had read other of Lord Kame's and Dr. Johnson's works.

⁶⁶⁸ Taylor was a friend of Edwards' father, Timothy Edwards.

⁶⁶⁹ Taylor, like Anne Bradstreet, was shaped by the metaphysical poets.

⁶⁷⁰ As Peter Thuesen observes, “Though Edwards' Northampton was removed from the Old World metropolises, the kinds of books one might hear discussed in a European *kaffeeklatsch* were hardly unknown to readers in the colonies” (*WJE* 26, 61).

⁶⁷¹ In some note to himself about his publishing career Edwards reminds himself as a young man and an American, it is important to appear humble to London audiences. See *WJE* 6, 192–95.

excellency of style, be carried to never so great a height, by the learning and wit of the present and future ages?⁶⁷²

We should not take from this, however, a boorish rejection of the taste of the day. As an active participant in the Republic of Letters, Edwards was *au courant* with the intellectual trends of the day. In addition to reading the *Spectator*, Peter Thuesen notes in his introduction to Edwards' *Catalogue of Books*, "Despising politeness in preaching was one thing; despising politeness in reading was quite another. Indeed, nearly 10 percent of the titles in 'Catalogue' and 'Account Book' are titles that may be classified as polite."⁶⁷³

Having noted that Edwards eschews an affected use of this concept, I turn now to consider some ways in which Edwards embraces and utilizes the concept of *discordia concors*. While other examples could be adduced, I will briefly illustrate the natural, mystical, Christological senses in which Edwards deploys what became, for him, a richly generative concept.

3.4 Edwards and *Concordia Discors* in Nature: "Complicated Harmony."

First, Edwards attributes much of the beauty of nature to the "complicated harmony" of "particular disproportions." He explains,

That sort of beauty which is called "natural," as of vines, plants, trees, etc., consists of a very complicated harmony; and all the natural motions and tendencies and figures of bodies in the universe are done according to proportion, and therein is their beauty.

⁶⁷² *WJE* 19, 797. Similarly, Edwards writes in a preface to Joseph Bellamy's (1719–90) *True Religion Delineated* of 1750: "Such a discourse as this is very seasonable at this day. And although the author (as he declares) has aimed especially at the benefit of persons of vulgar capacity; and so has not labored for such ornaments of style and language as might best suit the gust [in the nineteenth-century American reprints {above, 93} this word is changed to "taste"] of men of polite literature; yet the matter or substance that is to be found in this discourse is what, I trust, will be very entertaining and profitable to every serious and impartial reader, whether learned or unlearned" (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 4, *The Great Awakening*, ed. C. C. Goen [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972], 572).

⁶⁷³ *WJE* 26, 61. See Thuesen's section, "Polite Literature: the Republic of Letters," in his introduction to this volume.

Particular disproportions sometimes greatly add to the general beauty, and must necessarily be, in order to a more universal proportion.⁶⁷⁴

As I have shown above, there is an intimate and intended connection between the beauty of nature and the beauty of God for Edwards. It is not surprising then that *concordia discors* of nature is the context of some of Edwards' most moving experiences of God.

3.5 Edwards and *Concordia Discors* in God: "Sweet Conjunctions."

Edwards sometimes frames Christian piety in terms of a fusion of contraries.⁶⁷⁵

Significantly, he recounts his own religio-aesthetic experience by appealing to "sweet conjunctions" in God. He recalls walking in a "solitary place" and being overcome with the inexpressible beauty of God. He says that as he

looked up on the sky and clouds; there came into my mind, a sweet sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God, that I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction: majesty and meekness joined together: it was a sweet and gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high, and great, and holy gentleness.⁶⁷⁶

Here Edwards offers a mystical account of his experience of coincidence of opposites in God. In many of the usages of the concept in Christian mysticism, the emphasis is on paradox and supra-rationality. Edwards' use of the idea bears some affinity to these at least *en passant*, but seems to emerge from soil less conditioned by apophaticism.⁶⁷⁷ While he can describe the apprehension of God in "sweet conjunctions" as ineffable, his emphasis seems to be on the

⁶⁷⁴ *WJE* 6, 335.

⁶⁷⁵ E.g., he says, "Religious fear and hope are, once and again, joined together, as jointly constituting the character of the true saints" (*WJE* 2, 103) and "the freeness of grace, and the necessity of holy practice, which are thus from time to time joined together in Scripture, are not inconsistent one with another" (*ibid.*, 458).

⁶⁷⁶ *WJE* 16, 793.

⁶⁷⁷ Each of the four thinkers mentioned above (Pseudo-Dionysius, Bonaventure, Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa) are all broadly Neoplatonic. However, they are separated by geography and epoch, and their respective "Neoplatonisms" entail as many dissimilarities as similarities. Nonetheless, a theological methodology rooted in (varying expressions of) the *via negativa* is shared by each.

failures of language, not on the inscrutable nature of a “God beyond concepts” or of the divine transcendence exhibited in paradox. His description of the aesthetics of conjunction is a phenomenology of amazement, wonder, delight, and exultation.⁶⁷⁸ To my ears, Edwards’ usage of the notion sounds closer to a proto-Romantic overawe with beauty than a Neo-Platonic mystical union with a Reality beyond rational categories. While Edwards affirms the transcendent supra-rationality of God, he nonetheless almost always deploys the category of *coincidentia oppositorum* when referring to the revealed God, not the hidden one. Nowhere is this more true than in the revelation of God in Christ.

3.6 Edwards and *Concordia Discors* in Christ: “Diverse Excellencies.”

While we have seen that Edwards’ aesthetic conception of the Trinity is one of multiplicity in unity, that multiplicity consists in *repetition*, not contrariety, i.e., the Son is an eternally generated, perfect Idea or exact image of the Father, not something contrary to him. Likewise, since God *is* love, the Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son, who is the Father’s idea of himself.⁶⁷⁹ So the Trinity is about oneness, not difference. Rather, the joining of contraries is, for Edwards, a *Christological* notion; he almost invariably uses the language of a fusion of disparates in reference to the *Incarnate* Christ. This he applies *pastorally*, *hermeneutically*, and *homiletically*.

In a letter to Mrs. Pepperell of November 28, 1751, for instance, Edwards offers pastoral encouragement, reminding her that the conjunction of opposites in Christ makes Him beautiful, even if sublime. He says of Christ:

⁶⁷⁸ In the sermon “The Excellency of Christ,” Edwards uses the adjective “wonderful” over a dozen times when referring to the “admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ” (*WJE* 19, 560–94).

⁶⁷⁹ Edwards’ doctrine of the Trinity will be explored further in the final chapter.

He is indeed possessed of infinite majesty, to inspire us with reverence and adoration; yet that majesty need not terrify us, for we behold it blended with humility, meekness, and sweet condescension. We may feel the most profound reverence and self-abasement, and yet our hearts be drawn forth sweetly and powerfully into an intimacy the most free, confidential, and delightful. The dread, so naturally inspired by his greatness, is dispelled by the contemplation of his gentleness and humility; while the familiarity, which might otherwise arise from this view of the loveliness of his character merely, is ever prevented by the consciousness of his infinite majesty and glory; and the sight of all his perfections united fills us with sweet surprise and humble confidence, with reverential love and delightful adoration.⁶⁸⁰

The *coincidentia oppositorum* in Christ also becomes a hermeneutical guide for Edwards.

In his “Notes on Scripture” 324, Edwards renders an allegorical interpretation of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey in terms of “a most admirable conjunction of diverse qualifications appearing in him.” He says,

His riding an ass betokened two things, viz. kingly glory, and great humility and meekness ... As Christ ascended in great glory, so he also ascended in unparalleled humility and meekness, a most admirable conjunction of diverse qualifications appearing in him, which may probably be signified by the colt’s being found at a place where two ways met, denoting that two things that seem very diverse, and seem to have a very diverse relation and tendency, meet here, as two men that go diverse ways meet together at the meeting of two paths. The path of humility seems to lead him that walks in it a diverse way from the path of honor; one seems to tend downward, and the other upwards. Yet indeed they both meet, and become the same; both carry a man to the same place, as the ass was a token both of kingly honor and great humility. The ass, the symbol of humility, carries a king on his back; and on an ass does the King of glory ascend into the city and temple of the great King, as by humiliation Christ ascended into heaven.⁶⁸¹

This principle becomes for Edwards not only a mystical one (as in his own piety), or a pastoral one (as in his encouragement of Mrs. Pepperell), or a hermeneutical guide (as above),

⁶⁸⁰ *WJE* 16, 416.

⁶⁸¹ “Notes on Scripture,” #324. Matthew 21:1–11. *WJE* 15, 308–9.

but, significantly, a *homiletical* one.⁶⁸² Wilson Kinnach sees something of this concept in the paired sermons “Living to Christ” and “Dying to Gain” (1722). He says that the “emphatic juxtaposition of levels of being parallels the radical verbal conjunctions of the metaphysical poets” and that “the level of paradox and irony so apparent in both sermons extends even to the arrangement of the sermons.”⁶⁸³ However, in perhaps Edwards’ rhetorically finest sermon, “The Excellency of Christ” (August 1736),⁶⁸⁴ he makes extensive use of this conception of beauty. He casts beauty in terms of numerous “admirable conjunction[s] of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ.”⁶⁸⁵ Edwards presents Christ as a beautiful union of:⁶⁸⁶

- “the Lion and the Lamb”
- “the King and the suffering servant”
- “infinite highness and infinite condescension”
- “infinite glory and lowest humility”
- “infinite majesty and transcendent meekness”
- “deepest reverence towards God and equality with God”
- “infinite worthiness of good, and the greatest patience under sufferings of evil”
- “an exceeding spirit of obedience, with supreme dominion over heaven and earth”
- “absolute sovereignty and perfect resignation”
- “self-sufficiency, and an entire trust and reliance on God”⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸² Edwards, like his Puritan forebears, took preaching very seriously. Seen as the primary channel for the work of the Holy Spirit, preaching was considered an art form. Furthermore, Edwards (like many pastor-scholars) used sermons to work out the ideas of his theological writing.

⁶⁸³ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 10, *Sermons and Discourses, 1720-1723*, ed. Wilson H. Kinnach (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 564.

⁶⁸⁴ Sermon 406 on Rev. 5:5-6, published as “The Excellency of Christ,” in *Discourses on Various Important Subjects* (Boston, 1738). *WJE* 19, 560–94.

⁶⁸⁵ *WJE* 19, 565.

⁶⁸⁶ We must note that this is not merely rhetorical comparison. Edwards frequently uses that homiletical device as well as in the “Shadows of Divine Things,” no. 81 (c. 1739), where he works out an extended comparison between the triumph of Rome and Christ’s ascension. Here Edwards’ point is the *uniting* of opposites.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Finally, Edwards presents beauty in Christ's suffering as flowing from the excellency of infinite justice conjoined with infinite grace.⁶⁸⁸ Ultimately, Edwards casts the beauty of the conjunction of opposites in Christ in soteriological terms. This sermon mounts toward an impassioned crescendo that rejoices in the wonder of such implausible and unimaginable joining of qualities—those we could never imagine and scarce can believe—that advance both the glory of God and the eternal bliss of his people.

Edwards' formal Christology is typical of his tradition: it is Chalcedonian in its conception of the hypostatic union, and Calvinistic (as opposed to Lutheran or Roman Catholic) in its understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum*. What is remarkable is how Edwards—as he does in almost every locus of systematic theology—frames his Christology in patently aesthetic categories.

The aesthetics of contrariety is deep in Edwards. He enlarges the concept extensively, generating a rich use of an ancient idea. While he draws on eighteenth-century conceptions of *discordia concors* in his rhetoric and homiletics, he also incorporates more ancient ideas that embrace the *conjunctio oppositorum* in his view of the beauty of nature, of his own experience of God, and particularly of his Christology and soteriology. It is this latter loci of Edwards' theology to which I now turn.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

4. EDWARDS' AESTHETICS OF THE CROSS

4.1 The Problem of the Beauty of the Cross.

This third chapter treats Edwards' formal conception of love; it concerns form. The crucifixion, however, is perhaps the quintessential instance of *deformity*—of ugliness, not beauty. Even so, Edwards envisions the cross as the quintessence of beauty. While this claim has notably been made in the last century by Hans Urs von Balthasar, Edwards made it some three hundred years before, and Edwards himself was not the first to do so.⁶⁸⁹ While this claim, then, is not unknown, it is nonetheless counterintuitive—to say the least. Given that the crucifixion was an event of gruesome torture, humiliating degradation, and manifest injustice (or as Edwards says, “the most ignominious of all deaths”⁶⁹⁰), in what sense can the claim that it was “beautiful” be sustained? Richard Viladesau observes, “To speak of the beauty of the cross . . . is to speak of a ‘converted’ sense of beauty.”⁶⁹¹ For Edwards, such a converted sense of beauty issues from a converted sensibility. In other words, not only does the crucifixion redefine beauty in divine terms—in contradistinction to merely human aesthetics (as Barth and von Balthasar strongly maintain⁶⁹²)—even the perception of this kind of beauty is dependent on a new aesthetic

⁶⁸⁹ For examples throughout premodernity, see Richard Viladesau, *The Beauty of the Cross: The Passion of Christ in Theology and the Arts from the Catacombs to the Eve of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁶⁹⁰ *WJE* 13, 226.

⁶⁹¹ Viladesau, *The Beauty of the Cross*, 9.

⁶⁹² Von Balthasar, for instance, argues, “If the Cross radically puts an end to all worldly aesthetics, then precisely this end marks the decisive emergence of the divine aesthetic, but in saying this we must not forget that even worldly aesthetics cannot exclude the element of the ugly, of the tragically fragmented, of the demonic, but must come to terms with these. Every aesthetic which simply seeks to ignore these nocturnal sides of existence can itself from the outset be ignored as a sort of aestheticism” (*The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1, *Seeing the Form* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982], 460).

sensibility given in conversion.⁶⁹³ Some clarification will be required to make sense of what, precisely, Edwards means by the beauty of the cross.

Some writers seem to mean by such claims that Christ is (and remains) beautiful, even while undergoing the horrendous ugliness of the crucifixion.⁶⁹⁴ On this view, the locus of beauty is Christ, not His passion—indeed, despite it. While Edwards agrees with Christ’s ongoing beauty on the cross, his own view goes further. A related claim about the beauty of Good Friday turns out to mean that Christ’s motives in undergoing crucifixion (e.g., his love, obedience, etc.) were morally or spiritually beautiful.⁶⁹⁵ From this perspective, the passion of Christ—even while foregrounding the beauty of Christ’s character—is not beautiful; rather it is his virtue that is beautiful. While Edwards likewise identifies (true) virtue with beauty, this formulation also fails to capture the fullness of Edwards’ aesthetics of the cross. Another perspective emphasizes the beauty, not of Christ’s subjective motivation, but the objective effect of his suffering (e.g., redemption of the world, victory over death and the forces of evil, etc.).⁶⁹⁶ While this approach may stir desire for the effects of Christ’s suffering and evoke delight in such effects, it nonetheless locates beauty in the outcomes wrought by Christ’s atonement, not in his immolation *in se*. Here again, Edwards concurs, but makes an additional claim. While some explications of

⁶⁹³ I develop this point at some length in Chapter Four of this dissertation, in which I show that, for Edwards, the perception of beauty comes neither through reason (as for the rationalists) nor from an innate natural sense (as for the Moral Sense theorists). Rather, the apprehension of spiritual beauty is “given immediately by God, and not be obtained by natural means.” It comes through “a new spiritual sense.”

⁶⁹⁴ Augustine, for instance, claims that Christ was “beautiful on the cross.” (See Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* [Oxford: Oxford University, 1992], 97–139.) Augustine avers that Christ “is everywhere beautiful.” He is “beautiful in his flagellation, beautiful giving up his spirit, beautiful carrying the cross . . . beautiful on the cross.” Augustine, *In Psalmum XLIV Ennaratio. Sermo* (ML 36), Cited in Viladesau, *The Beauty of the Cross*, 11.

⁶⁹⁵ Augustine says that Christ is beautiful not in the flesh, but in his virtue. See *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 118, trans. Maria Boulding, ed. John E. Rotelle, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Expositions of the Psalms 33-50*, Part III, Vol. 19. (New York: New City Press, 2003).

⁶⁹⁶ Jerome (among others) expresses this view with an eye to the transformation wrought in humans by Christ’s sacrifice when he asks, “What could be more beautiful than that the form of a slave should become the form of God?” Hieronymus Stridonensis: S. Eusebii Hieronymi Stridonensis Presbyteri Commentariorum In Isaiam Prophetam Libri Duodeviginti, (C) bk. 14, ML 24, Cited in Viladesau, *The Beauty of the Cross*, 12.

“the beauty of the cross,” then, are imprecisely named (being more accurately conceptions of Christ’s beauty), Edwards affirms both the beauty of Christ and of his sacrifice.⁶⁹⁷

4.2 Edwards and the Beauty of the Cross.

Edwards refers to the death of Christ on the cross as “the greatest thing that ever the eyes of angels beheld,”⁶⁹⁸ and claims that the only thing “greater and more wonderful” than Christ’s incarnation was his death.⁶⁹⁹ Elsewhere, he says, “The time of Christ’s last suffering, beginning with the night wherein he was betrayed, till he expired on the cross, was in almost all respects more [excellent or beautiful] than all the rest of his life.”⁷⁰⁰ He explains his reasoning for this view, which is threefold. First is all that was accomplished in Christ’s passion.⁷⁰¹ Second was the “amiableness and excellency” of the many virtues he displayed.⁷⁰² (Edwards does not believe that Christ’s beauty is increased or enhanced by his sacrifice, rather it is exhibited more clearly,

⁶⁹⁷ I do not claim that Edwards is unique in this. Viladesau reads Anselm’s “satisfaction theory” as locating beauty in the crucifixion itself, by framing beauty in terms of necessity, i.e., that the crucifixion was beautiful because it was *necessary* to satisfy God’s besmirched honor, thereby accomplishing salvation (Viladesau, *The Beauty of the Cross*, 12). Anselm’s theories of the atonement are so contested at the moment, I venture no opinion on the validity of Viladesau’s interpretation. I simply offer his view as another possible option for how the cross may be read as beautiful.

⁶⁹⁸ *WJE* 9, 337.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 299. He says, “Christ’s incarnation was a greater and more wonderful thing than had ever come to pass; and there has been but one that has ever come to pass which was greater, and that was the death of Christ.”

⁷⁰⁰ Misc. 791, *WJE* 18, 488. See also, *WJE* 19, 576–80.

⁷⁰¹ While Edwards utilizes a number of theories of the atonement, he is uncommonly reticent to “nail down” a theory of the atonement. Stephen Holmes registers “something of a surprise to find how little systematic treatment is offered by Edwards; the doctrine is everywhere assumed, certainly, but not often discussed at any length.” Substitutionary moral influence and *Christus Victor* theories are evident in the sermon “The Excellency of Christ.” Not infrequently, Edwards seems to affirm some version of a penal substitution theory consonant with Anglo-Puritan Calvinism, but he is also uncomfortable with aspects of that theory—largely because he does not see the Father becoming personally angry with His beloved Son. Furthermore, the doctrine of the atonement is shifting in New England theology even during Edwards’ lifetime. In the “New Divinity” of many of Edwards’ disciples, a governmental view of the atonement, or moral government theory, comes to the fore. This is a very complicated issue and beyond the scope of this project. In any case, my preceding paragraph stands without depending on a particular theory. In my own view, Edwards’ affirmation of this central doctrine without dogmatic specification may be wise.

⁷⁰² “Amiableness,” here, is a synonym for “loveliness” or beauty, from the Latin *amicabilis*. Current usage of the word (for friendliness) stems from the French *aimable*, “trying to please.”

set in the context of such a trial. “Pure gold shows its purity chiefly in the furnace,” he says.⁷⁰³) The primary reason that Christ’s crucifixion is beautiful, however, is that it is the quintessential act of *love*.

In the suffering of Christ, his beauty shines forth most clearly and “ravishes” the human soul, because it is a “wonderful act of love,” indeed “’tis most lovely love.” Edwards says,

Whenever the saints behold the beauty and amiable excellency of Christ as appearing in his virtues, and have their souls ravished with it, they may behold it in its brightest effulgence, and by far its most full and glorious manifestation, shining forth in a wonderful act of love to them, exercised in his last sufferings, wherein he died for them. They may have the pleasure to see all his ravishing excellency in that which is the height, and, as it were, the sum of its exhibited and expressed glory, appearing in and by the exercise of dying love to them; which certainly will tend to endear that excellency, and make that greatest effulgence of it the more ravishing in their eyes. They see the transcendent greatness of his love shining forth in the same act that they see the transcendent greatness of his loveliness shining forth, and his loveliness to shine in his love; so that ’tis most lovely love. Their seeing his loveliness tends to make them desire his love, but the sight of his loveliness brings satisfaction to this desire with it, because the appearance of his loveliness as they behold it, mainly consists in the marvelous exercise of his love to them.⁷⁰⁴

Love, then, entails loveliness, and loveliness issues from love. Love phainesthetically “shines forth” in transcendent beauty, and conversely, beauty phainesthetically discloses the “brightest effulgence” of transcendent love. Beauty entails disclosure—an unconcealment through the “lighting-up” or shining-forth of Reality, which is Love.⁷⁰⁵ *Qua* love, Edwards believes the sacrifice of Christ to be *beautiful*. Indeed, “by far” the “most full and glorious manifestation” of Christ’s beauty “shining forth in a wonderful act of love to them, [was] exercised in his last

⁷⁰³ Misc. 791, *WJE* 18, 488.

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 494–95.

⁷⁰⁵ I borrow the adjective “phainesthetic” from Heidegger, who draws upon the Greek *phainein*, “to show.” See Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 14.

sufferings, wherein he died for them.” His work on the cross is an act of cordial consent to Being in general. It is an instance of true virtue and primary beauty, in which Christ offers himself for the sake of humankind as the exemplum par excellence of the highest form of love: the love of benevolence.⁷⁰⁶

Furthermore, Edwards develops his formal aesthetics of fittingness, harmony, and *discordia concors* ultimately in terms of love. Enlarging formal conceptions of beauty into a comprehensive notion of beauty as love, Edwards uses each of these formal theories of beauty with an eye toward the redemption of the world. For Edwards, redemption is a deeply aesthetic event. The cross achieves 1) a morally *fitting* 2) reestablishment of *harmonious union* between God and people that 3) uniquely combines a glorious and surprising *conjunction of contrasts*. His aesthetics of fittingness becomes an *ethic* of love; his aesthetics of harmony frames a *metaphysics* of love; and his aesthetics of *discordia concors* funds a surprising and mysterious *mode* of love.

4.3. Fittingness and the Beauty of the Cross.

In some hands, an aesthetics of “love” could degenerate into a cloying sentimentality or a pie-in-the-sky escapism. What good is beauty in a tragically and horrifically fallen world—a world full of sin, misery, and death? As Jeremy Begbie puts it, “There can be nothing sentimental about God’s beauty.”⁷⁰⁷ It would seem that a warrantable view of beauty must account for ugliness in all its forms. It must attend to a context. Formal theories of beauty generally, and notions of fittingness in particular, attend to the relation of beautiful elements,

⁷⁰⁶ On the love of benevolence, see Chapter Four of this dissertation.

⁷⁰⁷ Jeremy Begbie, “Beauty, Sentimentality, and the Arts,” in *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts*, eds. Daniel J Treier, Mark Husbans, and Roger Lundin (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2007), 63–64. Here Begbie seems to draw on Barth and von Balthasar.

both to each other and to the larger setting in which they are situated. Beauty, then, is context dependent: what is beautiful in one context is not in another.

Edwards develops his aesthetics in light of a lapsarian context. He believes that creation was established in original beauty but became vitiated by an abysmal (although not total) ugliness. The *splendor formae* has become deformed. This perspective leads Edwards to develop a conception of beauty that, far from ignoring or minimizing ugliness, accounts—unflinchingly—for it. For Edwards, the cross of Christ is the divine beautification of ugliness. Through Christ’s passion, beauty engages ugliness, enters ugliness, and overcomes ugliness.

In developing this view, Edwards deploys an aesthetics of fittingness. Reframing traditional strands of Reformed satisfaction theories of the atonement in the language of fittingness (e.g., “propriety,” “requisite,” “fitly & beautifully”), Edwards asks

how a perfectly wise, holy disinterested arbiter whose office it should be to regulate all things within the whole compass of existence according to the most perfect propriety, would determine in case the creature should injure the most high, should cast contempt on the majesty & trample the authority of the infinite Lord of the universe ... And that it was very requisite in order to things being regulated & disposed most fitly & beautifully, that such injuries should not be forgiven in the neglect of this or without due care taken of this matter.⁷⁰⁸

If God is to act “according to the most perfect propriety,” he could not grant forgiveness “fitly & beautifully” without attending to the “injuries” perpetrated against him.

Furthermore, Edwards uses the concept of the fittingness of the cross to cast Christ’s passion as uniquely corresponding to the fallen human condition.⁷⁰⁹ In the cross, Christ responds

⁷⁰⁸ *The Nature of True Virtue*, WJE 8, 9n9. See similar arguments in Misc. 1208, WJE 23, 134.

⁷⁰⁹ Edwards’ multifaceted view of the work of Christ sees it not only as an answer to human *guilt* (as is commonly stressed Reformed thought), but also as an overcoming of *death* and a conquering of the forces of *evil* (as is commonly stressed the Church Fathers). Edwards says, “There is no one else can conquer our enemies but Christ alone: that can conquer the world; that can triumph over the devil and make a show of him openly, as

suitably to human misery and need. “How well the remedy is suited to the disease,” Edwards says, ⁷¹⁰ reminding his hearers, “’Tis love that is suited to the most extreme case.”⁷¹¹

Ultimately, however, as we have seen, Christ’s suffering issued from divine love. Edwards finds it “exceeding congruous and [in] the highest manner consentaneous,” (i.e., fitting) that such a beautiful God would want to bestow the finest, most costly type of love on his creatures. Love that costs little, he argues, *is* little. “The highest sort of manifestation and evidence of love,” on the other hand, “is expense for the beloved.” Costliness befits glorious expressions of love. Therefore, Edwards deems God’s giving of Christ at “greatest expense” to be “exceeding noble and excellent, and agreeable to the glorious perfections of God.”⁷¹²

In the end, even the cruciform shape of the cross redounded to a pose befitting of Christ’s love. “The posture that he died in,” muses Edwards,

was very *suitable* to signify his free and great [love]: he died with his arms spread open, as being ready to embrace all that would come to him. He was lift up [upon the] cross above the earth with his arms thus open, and there he made an offer of his love to the world; he was presented in open [view to] the world as their Savior.⁷¹³

Edwards’ soteriology is rooted in an *ethic* of love framed by an aesthetics of fittingness. “’Tis love,” he says, “that moves to and carries through the greatest sufferings.”⁷¹⁴

4.4 Harmony and the Beauty of the Cross.

Edwards’ aesthetic of unity through harmony gets to the heart of Edwardsian aesthetics. Robert Jenson rightly affirms that Christ’s work on the cross is at “the center of Edwards’

Christ did upon the cross; that overcame death and break his bands, that can take away his sting, and that can raise us up at the last day” (*WJE* 14, 525).

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 408.

⁷¹¹ *Ibid.*, 417.

⁷¹² Misc. 197, *WJE* 13, 336.

⁷¹³ Misc. no. 304, “Crucifixion,” *WJE* 13, 390 (emphasis added).

⁷¹⁴ *WJE* 14, 417.

unifying construal of reality: all things are one harmony, because of Christ's reconciling life and death."⁷¹⁵

Edwards' understanding of redemption entails, at its core, the notion of *reconciliation*—an essentially relational concept. Humans are restored to harmonious relations with God, themselves, others, and the world.

As I have shown, Edwards' paradigm of beauty is the perichoretic, harmonious oneness of the Trinity. This archetypal beauty issues forth in ever-enlarging inclusion in the reciprocating love of the Trinity. Salvation, effected on the cross, achieves not only reconciliation between God and humans (as well as intra-human and inter-human reconciliation), but also (as I show in Chapter Two) participation in the divine life.

Edwards' view of justification, drawing on categories of Reformed theology, centers in *unio cum Christo*.⁷¹⁶ Christ's suffering love is accepted by God because it *unites* Christ and his people.⁷¹⁷ This union, however, is costly, for "if he [Christ] unites himself to them that are in debt, he brings their debt on himself," and therefore "at the same time that he unites himself to [someone], he takes it upon himself to bear [their] penalty."⁷¹⁸ Christ becomes the Mediator between God and humanity because he united himself to both. He becomes "a bond of union between them."⁷¹⁹

Not only does Edwards' view of justification center in harmonious union, so too does his conception of sanctification and glorification in that they are a union of likeness (or

⁷¹⁵ Robert W. Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 125.

⁷¹⁶ See e.g., the 1751 sermon in Stockbridge, "Sacramental Union In Christ," *WJE* 25, 584–89. See also Edwards' early sermons on 1 Cor. 1:9 and Luke 14:16, cited by William J. Danaher in "By Sensible Signs Represented: Jonathan Edwards' Sermons on the Lord's Supper," *Pro Ecclesia* 7 (Summer 1998): 261–87.

⁷¹⁷ *WJE* 13, 464.

⁷¹⁸ *WJE* 18, 411.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*

“conformity”), which continues in an eternal *epekstasy*, or “infinite progress and increase,” toward an asymptotic approximation of the harmonious union of the Trinity. He says,

In the view therefore of God, who has a comprehensive prospect of the increasing union and conformity through eternity, it must be an infinitely strict and perfect nearness, conformity, and oneness. For it will forever come nearer and nearer to that strictness and perfection of union which there is between the Father and the Son: so that in the eyes of God, who perfectly sees the whole of it, in its infinite progress and increase, it must come to an eminent fulfillment of Christ’s request, in John 17:21-23: “That they may all be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.”

For Edwards, God’s redemptive action restores a harmony for which we were created and that we will increasingly enjoy forever. Edwards’ soteriology is rooted in a metaphysics of love, given its shape by an Edwardsian aesthetics of harmony.

4.5 *Concordia Discors* and the Beauty of the Cross.

Finally, Edwards presents Christ’s “offering up himself a sacrifice for sinners in his last sufferings” in terms of *concordia discors*. He explains,

This admirable conjunction of excellencies remarkably appears, in his offering up himself a sacrifice for sinners in his last sufferings. As this was the greatest thing in all the works of redemption, the greatest act of Christ in that work; so in this act especially does there appear that admirable conjunction of excellencies, that has been spoken of.⁷²⁰

He goes on to enumerate the “admirable conjunction of excellencies” made manifest on the cross:⁷²¹

⁷²⁰ “The Excellency of Christ,” *WJE* 19, 576.

⁷²¹ Each is from “The Excellency of Christ,” *WJE* 19, 576–81. Each is followed by a page or two of exposition.

1. Then was Christ in the greatest degree of his humiliation, and yet by that, above all other things, his divine glory appears.
2. He never in any act gave so great a manifestation of love to God, and yet never so manifested his love to those that were enemies to God, as in that act.
3. Christ never so eminently appeared for divine justice, and yet never suffered so much from divine justice, as when he offered up himself a sacrifice for our sins.
4. Christ's holiness never so illustriously shone forth, as it did in his last sufferings; and yet he never was to such a degree, treated as guilty.
5. He never was so dealt with as unworthy as in his last sufferings, and yet it is chiefly on account of them that he is accounted worthy.
6. Christ in his last sufferings suffered most extremely from those that he was then in his greatest act of love to.
7. It was in Christ's last sufferings, above all, that he was delivered up to the power of his enemies; and yet by these, above all, he obtained victory over his enemies.

Richard Viladesau points out, "Clearly, when we speak of the 'beauty' of the cross, we are speaking in a purposely paradoxical way."⁷²² Edwards' aesthetic of *conjunctio oppositorum* allows us to locate beauty in paradox, mystery, and surprise. It is certainly not predictable that the most abhorrent human evil (the killing of God and, simultaneously, the killing of the only innocent human being) should become the means of the highest human good. Nor is it intuitive that the most repulsive act should at the same time be the most beautiful.

⁷²² Viladesau, *The Beauty of the Cross*, 9.

Finally, this asymmetrical fusion of contraries becomes beautiful not due to some Manichean balance of opposites, but because the negative is absorbed, overcome, and transformed. Augustine said it this way: “Ugly looks; the looks of the crucified; but that ugliness gave birth to beauty. What beauty? That of the resurrection.”⁷²³ But it is not simply that beauty may come from a purely instrumental ugliness, as health may be restored through chemotherapy. Rather, the ugliness itself is included, reconfigured, and transformed in a type of sublation.⁷²⁴ The larger “yes” absorbs the “no” in a way that both permanently alters the “yes” and utterly modifies the remaining vestiges of “no-ness.” Christ’s wounds are illustrative: The evidence of Roman violence remains in Christ’s resurrected body, but comes to signify to Thomas hope rather than despair. Christ’s wounds become symbolic not just of pain, but much more, of love. A hymn writer puts it well: “*Crown him the Lord of love; / behold his hands and side, / rich wounds, yet visible above, / in beauty glorified.*”⁷²⁵ A particularly clear example of such an absorption, transformation, or sublimation (or even a “transubstantiation” or “transelementation,” if we will) is evident not only in the events of the crucifixion, but in the symbol of it: the cross. While retaining something of the valence of cruelty, suffering, and shame that would have horrified and repulsed those who knew of a cross in the context of the Roman Empire, the symbol of the cross has come to carry a greater and primary meaning to Christians of *salvation*—indeed the cross has become the very symbol of Christianity itself. Edwards’ soteriology, availing itself of an aesthetics of *discordia concors*, can account for such a surprising and mysterious *mode* of love.

⁷²³ Augustine, *Sermons 230-272b*, trans. Edmund Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* Vol. III/7 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1990). Sermon 254.5, 153.

⁷²⁴ The resonance of my word “sublation” here with Hegel’s *Aufhebung* is intentional.

⁷²⁵ “Crown Him with Many Crowns,” Hymn #295 in *Trinity Hymnal* (Philadelphia: Great Commission Publications, 1990). The text of this verse was written in 1852 by Matthew Bridges (1800–94).

5. CONCLUSION: *Redeeming Beauty*

At this point, I return to these questions: “How can the cross be beautiful?” “How can an act of horrendous evil—the intentional infliction of appalling suffering and ignominious death—be the foremost revelation of divine beauty?” By using insights from Jonathan Edwards, we answer that it is because in the cross an incomparable act of love is revealed. It is the lovely love of the greater giving to the lesser; of divine love given for fallen humanity. While through the cross trinitarian self-giving love is revealed, this love comes into clearest focus in Christ. Christ’s act of sacrificial love went to the furthest extreme to restore and deepen concord between God and humanity. By descending to the depths, Christ raised His people to the heights. By drinking death to the dregs, Christ gave eternal life. Through the most heinous of human acts, Christ achieved the highest good. From the deepest ugliness Christ achieved the greatest beauty. In all of this the cross was uniquely suited to human need. Through the crucifixion, Christ meets human experience in its extremity. Fallen humanity—plagued by evil and wracked with misery—finds no depth to which Christ has not descended.

Divine beauty exists not above or in spite of such ugliness, but also enters it, embracing and incorporating it and transforming it. This sublation of ugliness into beauty, then, is archetypally expressed in the crucifixion of Christ, who retains his wounds in his new body. They become, moreover, not only marks of torture, but ultimately marks of overcoming love.

The conclusion becomes evident: beauty beautifies. Beauty is redemptive for Edwards. Redemption is an aesthetic phenomenon as much as an ontological or moral one. Edwards develops an aesthetic soteriology that fittingly restores harmony through a surprising joining of

human need and divine love in the person and work of Christ. Through this ugliness is overcome and is transformed into beauty. Beauty beautifies.

Though from one perspective the cross was indeed ugly, yet from another, this foulness straightforwardly demonstrates that God is love and therefore beautiful. Ugliness from beneath a grotesque mask reveals a clear and tested revelation of God's beauty. Hence the paradox of the cross: the vilest ugliness bespeaks the most glorious beauty.⁷²⁶

In this chapter I have shown that Jonathan Edwards operates not only from ontological conceptions of beauty (as I show him to do in Chapter Two), nor only from affective models of beauty (as I will show him to do in Chapter Four), but I also show that Edwards makes rich use of time-honored formal categories of beauty, amplifying them and putting them to deeply theological usage. As both heir and innovator, Edwards' formal conceptions of beauty both draw upon and expansively rework the traditional formal notions of fittingness, harmony, and contrast. He absorbs ideas that run deep in Western culture and integrates them into the heart of his theological project.

By augmenting the traditional notion of fittingness to encompass creation, the good, and love (ultimately the love of the cross), Edwards' aesthetics can invest a theology of beauty with the strength to bear the ugliness of the world—neither downplaying its horror nor succumbing to it. Rather, Edwards' view of beauty in a fallen context, archetypically expressed in the crucifixion of Christ, renders a vision in which a loving God ensures that love triumphs over corruption and misery. For Edwards, the defeat of death and the overcoming of the forces of evil in the crucifixion and resurrection redounds to “an ineffable pitch of pleasure and joy” in human

⁷²⁶ Interestingly, Julian of Norwich has a similar notion of sin and shame being the very roots of the human being's glory. See chapter 17 in the short text and chapter 38 in the long text. *The Showings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. Denise N. Baker (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004).

beings,⁷²⁷ to harmonious accord in society and the created order,⁷²⁸ and to participatory union between God and God's people. The highest form of harmonious Beauty is Love. The paradigm for Edwards' aesthetics of harmony is the Trinity—a unity of plurality—*The Supreme Harmony of All*. The lowest depths to which love can go to restore harmony is the cross. So then, this surprising conjunction of opposites, instantiated in the incarnate Christ and exercised in the redemption of humankind, allows us to locate beauty (and to interpret life) through paradox, mystery, and surprise. Finally, in this chapter I have shown that, for Edwards, divine beauty is a saving beauty and that redemption should be conceived in aesthetic (as well as other) terms.

Edwards has accomplished a remarkable feat. He has joined a formal aesthetics conceived in established categories of fittingness, harmony, and *concordia discors* to the central doctrines of Christianity in a way that retains the integrity of each (i.e., he does not resort to procrustean alterations of either in his fusion of them). At the same time, he achieves a rich expansion of both. In all of this he proffers a theological aesthetics that addresses the appalling ugliness of the lapsarian human condition with the hope of Christ's redeeming action in the world—conceived in manifestly aesthetic terms. If Edwards is correct, Beauty is the hope for the suffering of the world. Indeed, Edwards' views simultaneously affirm Prince Myshkin's claim that the world will be saved by beauty⁷²⁹ and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's insight that “only a suffering God can help.”⁷³⁰

⁷²⁷ *WJE* 9, 125. Edwards says, “God designed by [redemption through Christ's work] to complete and perfect the glory of all the elect by Christ. It was a great design of God to advance all the elect to an exceeding pitch of glory, such as eye has not seen. He intended to bring them to perfect excellency and beauty in his image and in holiness which is the proper beauty of spiritual beings, and to advance 'em to a glorious degree of honor and also to an ineffable pitch of pleasure and joy” (*WJE* 9, 125).

⁷²⁸ On Edwards' view of the social effects of redemption see Gerald R. McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society: The Public Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

⁷²⁹ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, David McDuff, and William Mills Todd, *The Idiot* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 446.

⁷³⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers*, 361.

Chapter Four

AFFECTIVE CONCEPTIONS OF BEAUTY

Eros, Disinterest, and Aesthetic Conversion in Jonathan Edwards

What do you feel in the presence of [beauty]?⁷³¹

~Plotinus

This simple question asked by Plotinus will serve one objective of this dissertation: to identify types of thought about beauty. I have identified three categories into which most Western theories of beauty fall. In chapter 2, I explored a species of thinking about beauty that centers in *ontological* conceptions of beauty. In chapter 3, I explicated *formal* conceptions of beauty. In this fourth chapter, I turn my attention to a genre of thinking about beauty that locates the relevant feature of beauty in its *affective* influence on the one encountering it.⁷³² Reflection on the nature of beauty in Western thought has almost always included attention to the affective aspect of the experience of beauty; wonder, amazement, awe, pleasure, wistfulness, and yearning

⁷³¹ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen McKenna (Burdett, NY: Larson, 1992), Ennead I, VI.5. The translation of *πάσχετε* as “feel” here may be a bit infelicitous. “What do you *experience*,” or “how are you *affected*” may be preferable, given that affective experience in most Hellenistic thought was broader than mere “feelings” in a modern (and certainly in a Romantic) sense.

⁷³² For my use of the term “affect,” see chapter 1 of this dissertation.

are commonly associated with the experience of beauty.⁷³³ Plotinus's question about our subjective *experience* of the beautiful evinces this genre of aesthetic theories.

Here I explore the affective aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards. If Edwards is remembered for anything today (aside from his notorious sermon of 1741, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"), it is for the incisive attention he gave to human affective experience.⁷³⁴ As we see in *The Nature of True Virtue*, Edwards develops his theological aesthetics in the context of eighteenth-century British moral philosophy.⁷³⁵ Significantly, however, Edwards' concern with "conversion" (i.e., entering a state of grace, coming to true faith, becoming a "truly gracious person," etc.) and his interest in the phenomenology of piety also shape his affective

⁷³³ Furthermore, as I will show, affective responses that have been reassigned to the sublime since the eighteenth century were, prior to that era of change, often attributed to experiences of the beautiful.

⁷³⁴ Generally, Edwards' most widely read work has been the 1746 *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*. For a time in the nineteenth century, the *Life of David Brainerd* was probably read even more widely than the *Religious Affections*. On the influence of the *Religious Affections*, see Joseph A. Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 32–33, 34, 42, 47, 162, 181. See also David W. Bebbington, "Remembered around the World: The International Scope of Edwards' Legacy"; D. Bruce Hindmarsh, "The Reception of Jonathan Edwards by Early Evangelicals in England"; and Christopher W. Mitchell, "Jonathan Edwards' Scottish Connection," in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons*, ed. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003).

⁷³⁵ British philosophy and theology is Jonathan Edwards' intellectual milieu, and he was a full participant in the transatlantic community of letters. By "British," I mean those thinkers from England and Scotland (these two lands having been united to Great Britain by the Treaty of Union of 1707). I also, however, include the Irishman, Edmund Burke, who moved from Dublin to London in 1750 at the age of twenty-one and remained in England the rest of his life, serving for years in the House of Commons. Edwards consistently stayed abreast of the intellectual trends of his time, engaging many of the thinkers of his day. The influence of John Locke (1632–1704) has been acknowledged and debated since the renaissance of Edwards studies that was inaugurated by Perry Miller in 1949. Edwards' first biographer, Sereno Dwight, tells us, "Edwards read Locke on the Human Understanding with peculiar pleasure," and that he took more pleasure in it "than the most greedy miser finds, when gathering up handfuls of silver and gold, from some newly discovered treasure" (*The Works of President Edwards: with a memoir of his life*, vol. 1, 3 [New York: S. Converse, 1830], accessed March 17, 2012, <http://books.google.com/books?id=k1wPAAAAIAAJ&oe=UTF-8>.) Edwards also expressly refers, *inter alia*, to Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), George Turnbull (1698–1748), John Taylor (1694–1761), Joseph Addison (1672–1719), Thomas Chubb (1679–1747), Daniel Whitby (1638–1726), and Isaac Watts (1674–1748). Norman Fiering has helpfully situated Edwards' moral thought in its eighteenth-century context. (See Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards' Moral Thought and Its British Context*.) Furthermore, Edwards' theological commitments connected him especially to Scottish, i.e., Presbyterian, theology. Edwards had a wide committed readership in Scotland and was in almost continual contact with Scotch clergy, e.g., William McCulloch (1691–1771), Thomas Gillespie (1708–1774), John Gillies (1712–1796), James Robe (1688–1753), and especially John Erskine (1721–1803). For more on Edwards' connection to Scotland, see Kelly Van Andel, Adriaan C. Neele, and Kenneth P. Minkema, eds., *Jonathan Edwards and Scotland* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2011).

aesthetics.⁷³⁶ In this chapter I will show that, while *eros* and *disinterest*—two central aesthetic concepts—were set in opposition to each other in the eighteenth century (largely through Kant), Edwards does not sequester desire from the affective realm of beauty. On the contrary, for him the erotic love of beauty is rooted in both divine and human natures. Indeed, the affections evince one’s *essential* nature. Given the importance of the affections in Edwards’ thought generally,⁷³⁷ and to his aesthetics particularly, I will pay special attention to his 1746 work, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*.

William Danaher has observed that scholars tend to conceive the *Religious Affections* either as an exploration of religious subjectivity, or as an attempt by Edwards as pastor and cultural leader to frame and guide emerging revivalism of the Great Awakening in healthy and productive ways for church and society.⁷³⁸ There is much to commend each of these readings of Edwards’ *Religious Affections*. However, I wish to show that the *Religious Affections* are not only a work of spiritual psychology (as in the first type of interpretations), or of religious sociology (as in the second), but also and equally a work of theological aesthetics. Edwards

⁷³⁶ Edwards examines both his own conversion and piety (in the *Personal Narrative*), and that of others (in the *Religious Affections*).

⁷³⁷ As one of the last Puritans and one of the first Evangelicals, Edwards’ orientation to Christianity is deeply conversionist. (Although Edwards’ understanding of the process of conversion was sometimes at variance with those of his Puritan forebears. See George S. Claghorn, “Introduction,” in Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 16, *Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. George S. Claghorn [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998], 748. Hereafter, *WJE* 16.) For Edwards, humans are born in guilt and alienation from God and liable to his just condemnation. Apart from sovereign grace manifested (in most cases) in personal conversion, humans face a life of sin and misery followed by eternal torment in hell. Those who experience this saving work of God come to know foretastes of true joy in this life that are consummated in eternal bliss. Consequently, Edwards prefaces the *Religious Affections* with the urgent claim that “There is no question whatsoever, that is of greater importance to mankind, and that it more concerns every individual person to be well resolved in, than this, what are the distinguishing qualifications of those that are in favor with God, and entitled to his eternal rewards?” (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, *Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959], 84. Hereafter, *WJE* 2.) Edwards makes the case in *Religious Affections* that the answer to this question is best answered by attending to the affections. Those who are characterized by *religious* affections are those who have undergone true conversion; those marked by natural and unregenerate affections have not.

⁷³⁸ William J. Danaher, Jr., *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 118. Danaher goes on to highlight his own very helpful reading of the trinitarian aspects of the *Religious Affections*.

stresses that true conversion consists in a conversion of aesthetic taste and sensibility born of a new aesthetic *visio* that is able to perceive true beauty. The soul is reoriented aesthetically; conversion consists in an aesthetic reordering of eros and benevolence to true beauty.

In section 1 of this chapter, “Edwards’ Conception of Affections,” I will situate Edwards’ thought in both his social and intellectual contexts and then distinguish his views from common misconceptions of the affections. I will then show that Edwards envisions the affections as cognitive, emotional, and behavioral manifestations of the dispositions of the whole person. For Edwards, the affections govern the loves and hates of the heart, and thereby disclose to us the nature of the true self.

Next, in the section entitled, “Edwards and Eros,” I will demonstrate that Edwards conceives beauty affectively in terms of eros, or desire and delight. I will show that eros is basic to his system of thought. Third, in “Edwards and Disinterestedness,” I establish that Edwards engages the emerging eighteenth-century concept of disinterestedness, but conceives it in marked contrast not only to the notion of “disinterested benevolence” in the *New Divinity*, but also to Kantian (and subsequent Continental) conceptions that conceive disinterest and desire as mutually exclusive, pitting disinterest against eros. In this section I show that Edwards draws on the eighteenth-century British thinkers while also retaining a role for desire in the experience of the beautiful as recognized in the eros tradition of beauty.

Finally, in section 4, “Conversion as an Aesthetic Reordering,” I demonstrate that conversion, for Edwards, is constituted by a new aesthetic *visio* in which eros for true beauty culminates in a participation in True Beauty, that is, participation in the Triune life through union with Christ.

1. EDWARDS' CONCEPTION OF AFFECTIONS

Edwards' conception of the "affections" was misunderstood both in his own time and in ours. John E. Smith, who speaks of Edwards' "subtle—sometimes oversubtle—conception of 'affections,'"⁷³⁹ notes that even eminent Boston divine Charles Chauncy did not grasp the intricacies of Edwards' position. "It must be confessed," admits Edwards regarding the affections, "that language is here somewhat imperfect, and the meaning of words in a considerable measure loose and unfixed, and not precisely limited by custom, which governs the use of language."⁷⁴⁰ Nonetheless, he offers an apparently straightforward definition of the affections as "no other, than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul."⁷⁴¹ The brevity of this definition, however, belies its precision, depth, and elenctic artistry. Some exposition will be in order.

1.1 The Social and Religious Context of Edwards' View of the Affections.

The context of Edwards' 1746 *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* was the 1734 and 1740 revivals in New England that played a leading role in the first Great Awakening.⁷⁴² Edwards proffers this work (and his refined view of the affections) in response both to the experience of the awakenings and to reactions and critiques of them—both theological and cultural. By drawing upon and revising notions from his earlier works, *A Faithful Narrative of*

⁷³⁹ *WJE* 2, 3.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁷⁴² For good overviews of this period of American religious history, see Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989, 1991); Harry Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991); and Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

the Surprising Work of God (1737),⁷⁴³ *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1741),⁷⁴⁴ and *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England* (1743),⁷⁴⁵ Edwards attempts to find safe passage between what he sees as the Scylla of the New Light⁷⁴⁶ “enthusiasts”⁷⁴⁷ and the Charybdis of the Old Light rationalists, refuting both the emotionalism of the former and the reduction of experiential religion to rational doctrine and morality⁷⁴⁸ of the latter.⁷⁴⁹ The thesis of the *Religious Affections* is that “true religion, in great part, consists in holy affections.”⁷⁵⁰ While, for Edwards, an affective reaction to the things of religion is no sure indicator of genuine religious experience (since it may arise from a number of psychological or counterfeit spiritual sources) it is, nonetheless, a sine qua non of authentic

⁷⁴³ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 4, *The Great Awakening*, ed. C. C. Goen (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 97–212. Hereafter, *WJE* 4.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 213–88.

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 289–530.

⁷⁴⁶ These religionists represent the waning of Puritanism and perhaps the first iteration of Evangelicalism in America. The term “New Light” is traceable to Edwards. In his *Faithful Narrative*, he recounted the experience of enlightenment reported by the newly converted. He says, “Persons after their conversion often speak of things of religion as seeming new to them; that preaching is a new thing; that it seems to them they never heard preaching before; that the Bible is a new book: they find there new chapters, new psalms, new histories, because they see them in a *new light*” (*WJE* 4, 181, emphasis added).

⁷⁴⁷ “Enthusiasm” is a pejorative catch-all designation for any fanatical, emotionally overwrought, or anti-establishment forms of religion. It was widely used in the proliferation of religious sects after the English Civil War. Literally meaning “god-inspired” (from *ἐνθεός ἐνθουσιάζειν*), it was often applied to those who thought themselves possessed of direct or new revelation from God. Samuel Johnson defines it as “a vain belief of private revelation; a vain confidence of divine favour or communication” (*A dictionary of the English language: in which the words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers. To which are prefixed, a history of the language, and an English grammar*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. [London, 1755–56]. [Eighteenth Century Collections Online](http://www.eighteenthcenturycollections.com). Gale. University of Virginia Library. <http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.its.virginia.edu/ecco>, 1 May 2013).

⁷⁴⁸ One writer characterized the reduction to moralism in early eighteenth-century New England as “Cotton Mather’s ‘do-good’ piety.” See Robert G. Pope, *The Half-Way Covenant: Church Membership in Puritan New England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969).

⁷⁴⁹ For more on the Old Light/New Light controversy, see C. C. Goen’s introduction to *WJE* 4, especially section 8, “Critics’ Onslaught,” 56–65.

⁷⁵⁰ *WJE* 2, 95.

Christianity. “A man’s having much affection, don’t prove that he has any true religion,” Edwards insists, “but if he has no affections, it proves that he has no true religion.”⁷⁵¹

Against the “Old Light” conservative tendency to emphasize doctrine, intellect, and reason over subjective experience in religion (which was to be tempered by emotional restraint, moderation, and propriety),⁷⁵² Edwards claims, “If the great things of religion are rightly understood, they will affect the heart.”⁷⁵³ True doctrine is, for Edwards, necessary but not sufficient for genuine spirituality. “He that has doctrinal knowledge and speculation only without affection,” he warns, “never is engaged in the business of religion.”⁷⁵⁴ For Edwards, it is simply not possible to experience true conversion and remain unaffected.⁷⁵⁵

As creative and original as Edwards can be, he is always in dialogue with his Reformed heritage. In some ways the *Religious Affections* can be read as an episode in an internecine dispute over emphasis in the elements of *fides salvifica*. In 1559, Lutheran theologian Philip Melancthon distinguished three aspects of faith: *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*.⁷⁵⁶ This

⁷⁵¹ Ibid., 121. Similarly, “For although to true religion, there must indeed be something else besides affection; yet true religion consists so much in the affections, that there can be no true religion without them” (ibid., 120).

⁷⁵² Benjamin Colman, an Old Light Bostonian, smugly wrote to George Whitefield, “The work of God goes on yet calmly at Boston” (Letter to Whitefield, June 3, 1742, cited in *WJE* 4, 62).

⁷⁵³ *WJE* 2, 120.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid., 101.

⁷⁵⁵ For Edwards it is axiomatic: “A fervent, vigorous engagedness of the heart in religion . . . is the fruit of a real circumcision of the heart, or true regeneration” (*WJE* 2, 99). Similarly, he says, “True religion consists, in great measure, in vigorous and lively actings of the inclination and will of the soul, or the fervent exercises of the heart” (ibid., 99).

⁷⁵⁶ Philip Melancthon, *Loci Communes*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1992), 86–91. Melancthon here is supplementing and developing Luther’s emphasis on the role of *fiducia* in saving faith in the *Augsburg Confession* of 1530 and his *Large Catechism*. In so doing, he likely drew upon medieval resources. Peter Lombard, for instance, distinguished *fides informis* (“unformed faith”) and *fides formata* (“faith informed by love”; *Liber Sententiarum*, III. xxiii. C.). (In the polemical context of the reformation, the Roman Catholic Church came to understand *fides informis* as mere faith, or dead faith, i.e., faith devoid of works of love, and *fides formata* or *fides caritate formata* as saving faith.) Thomas Aquinas also distinguished intellectual and volitional aspects of faith. He made the distinction between the faith of the intellect or *credere Deum* (“to believe in a God”) and *credere Deo* (“to believe God”) on one hand, and faith “insofar as the intellect is moved by the will” or *credere in Deum* (“to believe in God”) on the other (*Summa Theologica*, rev. ed, trans. Fathers of

distinction quickly became common coin not only in Lutheran,⁷⁵⁷ but also Reformed theology.⁷⁵⁸ In the course of Protestant polemics against the Roman Catholic notion of a *fides implicita* (which was thought not necessarily to have knowledge of its object),⁷⁵⁹ another distinction dating to Augustine⁷⁶⁰ came to the fore, namely that between *fides qua creditor* (“the faith by which it is believed”), i.e., the subjective believing, and *fides quae creditor* (“the faith which is believed”), i.e., the objective, propositional content of faith.⁷⁶¹ Whereas the role of *fiducia* in faith was stressed in the Reformation, the importance of *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fides quae* became increasingly important in much seventeenth-century Reformed Scholasticism—especially on the continent.⁷⁶² English Puritanism, however, often stressed the trust of the heart in saving faith.

the English Dominican Province [New York: Benziger, 1948; repr. Westminster: Christian Classics, 1981], pt. II-2, Q. 2, Art. 2).

⁷⁵⁷ As in, e.g., Martin Chemnitz (1591), Johann Quenstedt (1676), and David Hollaz (1707).

⁷⁵⁸ E.g., *inter alia*, John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.2.2–7; Zacharius Ursinus, *The Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1991), 108–110; and *The Heidelberg Catechism* of 1563, which in Question 21 asks, “Quid est fides?” The answer mentions all three aspects: “Est non tantum *notitia*, qua firmiter *assentior* omnibus, quae Deus nobis in verbo suo patefecit, sed etiam certa *fiducia*, a Spiritu sancto per Evangelium in corde meo accensa, in qua in Deo acquiesco, certo satuiens, non solum aliis, sed mihi quoque remissionem peccatorum, aeternam iustitiam et vitam donatam esse idque gratis, ex Dei misericordia, propter unius Christi meritum” (emphasis added).

⁷⁵⁹ While it came to the fore in the seventeenth century, this polemic dates to the Reformation as well. Calvin, for instance, called the doctrine of implicit faith a “fiction . . . which not only buries true faith, but entirely destroys it” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.2.2).

⁷⁶⁰ See Augustine, *The Trinity (De Trinitate)*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-first Century* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997), 13.2.5.

⁷⁶¹ Thomas Manton, for instance, says, “Faith sometimes implieth the doctrine which is believed, sometimes the grace by which we do believe” (Observation 2 on James 2:8, in *An Exposition on the Epistle of James* [Orig. published London, 1657, as *A Practical Commentary, Or, An Exposition with Notes on the Epistle of James: Delivered in Sunday Weekly Lectures at Stoke-Newington in Middlesex, Near London*; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983]). For more on this distinction in Protestant Scholasticism, see Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 117.

⁷⁶² See, e.g., Johannes Wollebius (1586–1629), *Christianas Theologiae Compendium* (Basel, 1626), 1.26.1&7, in *Reformed Dogmatics: Seventeenth-Century Reformed Theology through the Writings of Wollebius, Voetius, and Turretin*, ed. John W. Beardslee III (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 139; and Petrus van Mastricht (1630–1706), *Theoretico-practica theologia*, 2 vols. (Utrecht, 1655, 2nd ed. 1715), 2.2–2.3, cited in Petrus Van Mastricht (1630–1706): *Reformed Orthodoxy: Method and Piety*, ed. Adriaan Cornelis Neele (Leiden: Brill Academic, 2009), 92. Wollebius was read at Harvard and assiduously at Yale. At the latter, a translation of Wollebius’s *Christianas Theologiae Compendium* by Alexander Ross in 1660 as *The Abridgement of Christian Divinitie* was studied every Friday afternoon in preparation for the sabbath. (See

John Owen, to whom Edwards is particularly indebted, is representative of this emphasis when he says that in addition to “an assent of the mind,” justifying faith must include an “act of the heart” in “fiducial trust in the grace of God by Christ.”⁷⁶³ Edwards follows this strand, saying that the affections of “truly gracious persons” are “ruled” by a faith that he presents using the traditional triad of *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*. Note, however, that the paragraph describing this is framed in its opening and closing with the notion of *fiducia*. Edwards says,

All those who are truly gracious persons have a solid, full, thorough and effectual conviction of the truth of the great things of the gospel. I mean that they no longer halt between two opinions; the great doctrines of the gospel cease to be any longer doubtful things, or matters of opinion, which, though probable, are yet disputable; but with them, they are points settled and determined, as undoubted and indisputable; so that they are not afraid to venture their all upon their truth [i.e., *fiducia*]. Their conviction is an *effectual* conviction; so that the great, spiritual, mysterious, and invisible things of the gospel have the *influence* of real and certain things upon them; they have the *weight* and *power* of real things in their hearts; and accordingly rule in their affections, and govern them through the course of their lives. With respect to Christ’s being the Son of God, and Savior of the world, and the great things he has revealed concerning himself, and his Father, and another world, they have not only a predominating opinion that these things are true [i.e., *notitia*], and so yield their assent [i.e., *assensus*], as they do in many other matters of doubtful speculation; but they *see that it is really so*: their eyes are opened, so that they see that really Jesus is the Christ,

Brooks Mather Kelley, Yale: A History [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999], 79.) This was presumably true in Edwards’ time at Yale. He matriculated in 1716. Samuel Johnson, Yale Class of 1714, first president of King’s College, later Columbia University, complained that Wollebius’s work was “considered with equal or greater veneration than the Bible itself” (Autobiography and Letters, vol. 1, ed. Herbert & Carol Schneider [New York: Columbia University Press, 1929], 6).

⁷⁶³ John Owen, “On Justification,” in *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 5, ed. William H. Goold (Johnstone and Hunter, 1850–53; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 81–84, emphasis original. See also in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, ch. 14, “Of Saving Faith,” paragraph 2 says, “By this faith, a Christian believes to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word (*notitia*) . . . But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting (*assensus*), receiving, and resting upon (*fiducia*) Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace” (clarification added). Cf., *The Westminster Larger Catechism*, Question 72, and *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Question 86 (*The Westminster Confession of Faith*, in Philip Schaff, *Bibliotheca Symbolica Ecclesiae Universalis: The Creeds of Christendom: The Evangelical Protestant Creeds*, vol. 3, pt. 1 [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877]).

the Son of the living God. And as to the things which Christ has revealed, of God's eternal purposes and designs, concerning fallen man, and the glorious and everlasting things prepared for the saints in another world, they see that they are so indeed: and therefore these things are of great weight with them, and have a mighty power upon their hearts, and influence over their practice, in some measure answerable to their infinite importance [i.e., *fiducia*].⁷⁶⁴

Edwards sees the redeemed *affections of the heart* as evincing saving faith.⁷⁶⁵

One of Edwards' arguments against Old Light rationalism is particularly interesting for his aesthetics: He claims that it is the apprehension of beauty—not truth—that is the mark of true Christianity. Drawing on reasoning from the New Testament,⁷⁶⁶ he insists that even “wicked men and devils” may “see and know” and “be fully convinced” of the veracity of Christian doctrine and that God is “that he is perfectly . . . true.” Similarly, such unregenerate persons can believe in God's “moral perfections” and “moral attributes,” knowing that God is “perfectly just and righteous,” possessed of “infinite goodness.” The difference is they do not find God's *truth* and *goodness* to be *beautiful*.⁷⁶⁷ Edwards says,

Wicked men and devils will see, and have a great sense of everything that appertains to the glory of God, but only the beauty of his moral perfections. They will see his infinite greatness and majesty, his infinite power, and will be fully convinced of his omniscience, and his eternity and immutability; and they will

⁷⁶⁴ *WJE* 2, 291–92, clarification added, italics original.

⁷⁶⁵ Here, Edwards stands with Calvin on the affections. Calvin says, “Christianity is not a matter of the tongue but of the inmost heart. [The gospel] is not apprehended by the understanding and memory alone, as other disciplines are, but it is received only when it possesses the whole soul and finds a seat and resting place in the inmost affection of the heart” (*Institutes* 3.6.4).

⁷⁶⁶ C.f., James 2:19, *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and the New Testaments with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, New Revised Standard ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁷⁶⁷ Following echoes a similar observation from the Westminster divine, Thomas Manton (1620–1677) who had said, “Bare assent to the articles of religion doth not infer true faith. True faith uniteth to Christ, it is conversant about his person. It is not only *assensus axiomati*, an assent to a Gospel maxim or proposition; you are not justified by that, but by being one with Christ” (*Exposition on the Epistle of James*, 240). Edwards owned and, in other places, cited a version of this work, and as Wilson H. Kimnach observes, “Manton appears to have been esteemed by JE, and there are a number of references to his works in JE's notebooks” (Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 10, *Sermons and Discourses, 1720–1723*, ed. Wilson H. Kimnach [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992], 194n8, n9. Hereafter, *WJE* 10). The interesting difference is that, whereas Manton emphasizes *unio cum Christo*, Edwards stresses finding Christ *beautiful*.

see and know everything appertaining to his moral attributes themselves, but only the beauty and amiableness of them; they will see and know that he is perfectly just and righteous and true; and that he is a holy God ... and they will see the wonderful manifestations of his infinite goodness and free grace to the saints; and there is nothing will be hid from their eyes, but only the beauty of these moral attributes, which arises from it. And so natural men in this world are capable of having a very affecting sense of everything else that appertains to God, but only this.⁷⁶⁸

Assent to truth, then, is necessary but not sufficient to be a “truly gracious person,” i.e., genuinely converted. And, beauty, as we shall see, evokes the affections.

While Edwards provides many arguments for the critique of Old Light suspicion of “heart religion,” the bulk of the *Religious Affections* is aimed at the mistaken assumptions and errors of the proponents of the New Light. Edwards, partly due to his eschatology,⁷⁶⁹ saw the revival as a mighty work of the Holy Spirit. Although he was uncomfortable with the preaching style of some of the itinerant preachers—famously, George Whitefield⁷⁷⁰—he nonetheless

⁷⁶⁸ *WJE* 2, 263–64.

⁷⁶⁹ In *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England* (1742), Edwards says, “’Tis not unlikely that this work of God’s Spirit, that is so extraordinary and wonderful, is the dawning, or at least a prelude, of that glorious work of God, so often foretold in Scripture.” Significantly for American religious history, he adds, “And there are many things that make it probable that this work will begin in America” (*WJE* 4, 353). Although the term “postmillennial” is not coined until 1851 (by the English writer George Stanley Faber), and “postmillennialism” until 1879 (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed.), Edwards is usually categorized as a “postmillennialist,” believing that the condition of the world would steadily improve as the Church progressively ushered in the kingdom of God, and culminating in the second coming of Christ. Versions of postmillennial eschatology were common in American Christianity from Edwards’ time until World War I. While Perry Miller had seen Edwards as a chiliast, or premillennialist (*Errand Into The Wilderness* [Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956], 217–39), in 1959, C. C. Goen assigned Edwards the “distinction of being America’s first major postmillennial thinker” (“Jonathan Edwards: A New Departure in Eschatology,” *Church History* 28 [March 1959]: 38). This view was furthered by Alan H. Heimert (*Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966, repr. as part of *The Jonathan Edwards Classic Studies Series*, The Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University and Wipf & Stock, 2006]) and has become the dominant view for the last half century. Recently, however, the anachronism and imprecision of the eschatological categories have led some thinkers to question and revise this understanding. See John F. Wilson, “History, Redemption and the Millennium,” in *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 131–41; and Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 236.

⁷⁷⁰ See George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 212.

welcomed them into his home and pulpit. At first, many of the Congregationalist clergy of New England allowed preaching outside of Sunday services and meeting houses.⁷⁷¹ In the first flowerings of the Great Awakening, these adaptations of form were tolerated largely because the content of the preaching was “orthodox” New English Calvinism. However, by the early 1740s, excesses developed that caused many ecclesiastical and civic leaders concern. Some, like Gilbert Tenant, preached hotly against the dangers of unconverted ministers, thereby undermining the spiritual and social authority of the clergy. Others seem to traffic in emotionalism, often engendering histrionic reactions in their hearers. In the winter of 1742, the Rev. Charles Chauncy⁷⁷² penned the first “establishment” response to revivalism. In the tract “Enthusiasm Defined and Cautioned Against,”⁷⁷³ Chauncy presents enthusiasm as “a kind of religious frenzy,” and casts it as equally pernicious and offensive to Boston propriety as antinomianism, “popery,” communism, and adultery.⁷⁷⁴ Nonetheless, itinerant preachers like James Davenport continued the radical side of revivalism. Davenport was frequently charged with disturbing peace with loud music and by holding spontaneous services with extemporaneous sermons—sometimes late at night. Finally, on March 6, 1743, during a frenzied sermon on burning “idols,” John Davenport apparently removed his pants and cast them into a bonfire, seeing them as evidence of worldly pride. Then, as now, preachers who could not keep their pants on were sources of concern. In

⁷⁷¹ There had been precedent for such things in Reformed Scottish history.

⁷⁷² Charles Chauncy (1705–1787), pastor for six decades at “Old Brick,” i.e., Boston’s First Church, was one of the most influential clergymen of New England in his day. The de facto leader of the Old Light Congregationalists, he has been called the “captain of the antirevival forces” by C. C. Goen (*WJE* 4, 62). For more on Chauncy, see *WJE* 4, 62–64, 80–83.

⁷⁷³ Charles Chauncy, *Enthusiasm Described and Cautioned Against; A Sermon Preached at the Old Brick Meeting House in Boston, the Lord’s Day after Commencement 1742*, repr. in *The Great Awakening, Documents Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences*, ed. Alan Heimert and Perry Miller (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), 228–56.

⁷⁷⁴ See *WJE* 4, 62–63.

that same month, an anonymous⁷⁷⁵ tract was published attacking such “commotions” and also criticizing Edwards by name for his defense of the Great Awakening.⁷⁷⁶ It is in this fraught social and religious context that Edwards refines his conception of affections.

1.2 Conceptions and Misconceptions of the Affections.

En route to an accurate understanding of Edwards’ notion of the affections, I will need to differentiate Edwards’ understanding of the affections from other conceptions and misconceptions of them. Affections cannot be understood as passions, emotions, or feelings. Understandings of affections are often conflated with or subsumed under one or more of these things.

First, Edwards distinguishes the affections from the *passions*. In almost all early modern and premodern thought, the “passions” can sidetrack reason and therefore impede human flourishing.⁷⁷⁷ Unlike many contemporary conceptions of passion,⁷⁷⁸ pre-Romantic understandings followed the etymology of the word more closely, relating it to suffering passively from an external source.⁷⁷⁹ While the concept of passions is in flux at this time, negative associations still often attended the word in Edwards’ time.⁷⁸⁰ Edwards is aware that

⁷⁷⁵ Long assumed to be from the hand of Chauncy himself, more recent scholarship ties this work to William Rand (1700–1779), friend, classmate, and coreligionist of Charles Chauncy (Harvard 1721). See *WJE* 4, 64.

⁷⁷⁶ The tract was entitled *The Late Religious Commotions in New England Considered. An Answer to the Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards’ Sermon Entitled, The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God... In a Letter to a Friend. Together with a Preface, Containing an Examination of the Rev. Mr. William Cooper’s Preface to Mr. Edwards’ Sermon. By a Lover of Truth and Peace.* *WJE* 4, 64n6.

⁷⁷⁷ This is famously inverted in the early, or proto-Romantic, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), for whom reason can distance and distract from the pursuit of passions, the fulfillment of which leads to happiness. (See *Discourse on Inequality* [1754] in ‘The Discourses’ and Other Early Political Writings, vol. 1, ed. Victor Gourevitch [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 111ff).

⁷⁷⁸ More recent conceptions of “passion”—as being intensely, emotionally, and abidingly committed to something, i.e., being “passionate”—were actually *affirmed* in much premodern Christian thought; it was known as “zeal.”

⁷⁷⁹ From the Latin past participial stem of *patī*, “to suffer.” Our word “patient” also come from this root.

⁷⁸⁰ A notable exception is found in David Hume, who in 1739 famously wrote, “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.” That this was a quite uncommon perspective was acknowledged by Hume himself, who notes that “this opinion may appear

“The *affections* and *passions* are frequently spoken of as the same,” yet sees himself as following “the more common use of speech,” in which the passions are sudden, irrational,⁷⁸¹ often overpowering desires whose effects on the “animal spirits” of the body (presumably things like heart rate, adrenaline, respiration, etc.) can be intense.⁷⁸² He sees the human being as a psychosomatic union in which body and soul are mutually interactive. “Such is our nature,” says Edwards, “and such are the laws of union of soul and body, that the mind can have no lively or vigorous exercise, without some effect upon the body.” Conversely, “the constitution of the body, and the motion of the fluids may promote the exercise of the affections.”⁷⁸³ Physiologically induced “exercises” (i.e., excited manifestations) of the affections can be tantamount to an expression of passion. While Edwards believes that the passions can align with bodily, animalistic desires in a way that “overpowers” the mind, leaving it “less in its own command,”⁷⁸⁴ some, like William Danaher, seem to read Edwards as relegating the passions solely to the realm of the bodily.⁷⁸⁵ This is not Edwards’ point. Edwards conceives the passions

somewhat extraordinary” (*A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 2.3.3.4, 266). Here Hume uses the term “passion” without moral evaluation as equivalent to “sentiment,” or what might now be called emotions or feelings. While Edwards had read this work of Hume, he considered it “corrupt,” but written by a man of “considerable genius” (*WJE* 16, 679).

Interestingly, Sereno Dwight (Edwards’ great-grandson and biographer) states that Hume “appears to have read several of the works of Edwards” (*The Life of President Edwards*, in *The Works of President Edwards*, 10 vols. [New York, 1829], cited in Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1, *Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsay [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957], 14. Hereafter, *WJE* 1). For more on Hume’s view of the passions see David Hume, *A Dissertation on the Passions; The Natural History of Religion*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁷⁸¹ Interestingly, in Edmund Burke, a younger contemporary of Edwards, we can detect a shift from premodern views of passions as pernicious to a proto-Romantic conception of passions simply as distinct from reason. Burke uses the word “passion” in this sense 149 times in his 1757 work, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste*, ed. James T. Boulton (London: Routledge, 2008).

⁷⁸² *WJE* 2, 98.

⁷⁸³ *Ibid.* See also 131–32.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁷⁸⁵ William J. Danaher, Jr., *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 121ff.

as *irrational*. The body, Edwards makes clear, is simply nonrational.⁷⁸⁶ Disembodied spirits, Edwards notes, are as capable of passions as are embodied persons.⁷⁸⁷ So then, irrational, often impulsive passions may or may not reflect one's abiding disposition; one may succumb to passions that are at odds with one's affections.

Second, affections must be differentiated from the *emotions*. The word "emotion" not adopt its contemporary psychological valence until the nineteenth century. The closest eighteenth-century approximation of that notion may be "sentiments,"⁷⁸⁸ a word Edwards uses only once in the *Religious Affections*. In eighteenth-century usage, emotion tends to signify mental agitation.⁷⁸⁹ Emotion, then, can be labile, overwhelming, superficial, at odds with one's character, and, as Edwards notes, may also originate in the body as opposed to the affections. He says, "The body may very much contribute to the present emotion of the mind."⁷⁹⁰ One may experience irritability toward another due either to one's affections, or to one's emotions, or to both. Such grumpiness may stem from *emotional* exhaustion rather than from a settled *affection* of dislike. Furthermore, affections entail a cognitive aspect; they respond to stimuli emerging from *understanding*. Affections "arise from some information of the understanding," he says, "some spiritual instruction the mind receives, some light or actual knowledge."⁷⁹¹ Affections also make judgments in concert with understanding. Emotions may or may not interact with

⁷⁸⁶ *WJE* 2, 98.

⁷⁸⁷ Edwards says, "An unbodied spirit may be as capable of love and hatred, joy or sorrow, hope or fear, or other affections, as one that is united to a body" (*WJE* 2, 98).

⁷⁸⁸ Lord Kames, for instance, says, "Every thought prompted by passion, is termed a *sentiment*" (Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, vol. 1 [1762], [Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2002], 1. 2. 16, 149). Kames uses "passion" and "emotion" synonymously.

⁷⁸⁹ As in *Spectator*, no. 432 (1712), "I hope to see the Pope ... without violent Emotions" (Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965], no. 432); Hume (1739), "Thus in sleep, in a fever, in madness, or in any very violent emotions of soul" (*A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1.1); Lord Kames (1762), "The joy of gratification is properly called an emotion" (*Elements of Criticism*, 1.2.66).

⁷⁹⁰ *WJE* 2, 118.

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 266.

understanding, and tend to react, rather than evaluate. Emotions can be fleeting and are much more unstable than are affections.⁷⁹² Affections entail emotions, but not all emotions are affections.

Nor can the affections be equated with *feelings*, which is a particularly imprecise term both then and now. In Edwards' time the word "feeling" did not generally connote *mood*, a temporary emotional state (the expressions "humor"⁷⁹³ or "frame"⁷⁹⁴ would more likely serve that function). Rather, just prior to various forms of Romanticism, the word "feelings" still retains a primary signification in its literal sense of *touch*.⁷⁹⁵ This is not to say that metaphorical usage was unknown, but "feelings" was not commonly synonymous with "emotions." The experimental expansion to more common metaphorical usage (as pertaining to the affective) can be seen in Edwards himself when he feels the need parenthetically to ask permission ("if I may so say") for the new usage of "feels."⁷⁹⁶ Edwards says,

And wherever there are the exercises of love and joy, there is that sensation of the mind, whether it be in the body, or out; and that inward sensation, or kind of spiritual sense, or

⁷⁹² Edwards says, e.g., "But now, when the ill consequences of these false affections appear, and 'tis become very apparent, that some of those **emotions** which made a glaring show, and were by many greatly admired, were in reality nothing" (*Religious Affections*, 120). Elsewhere Edwards says, "There is a sort of high affections that some have from time to time, that leave them without any manner of appearance of an abiding effect. They go off suddenly; so that from the very height of their emotion, and seeming rapture, they pass at once to be quite dead, and void of all sense and activity. It surely is not wont to be thus with high gracious affections" (*WJE* 2, 344).

⁷⁹³ E.g., Edwards can speak of a "a melancholy humor" (*WJE* 4, 162) or of someone being "in good humor" (*WJE* 16, 398).

⁷⁹⁴ E.g., as in a frame of mind.

⁷⁹⁵ Dr. Johnson, in his *Dictionary of 1755*, lists both literal meanings for "feeling" (as "the sense of touch") and for "to feel" (as "to perceive by the touch"), and metaphorical senses drawing on sensibility and knowledge. In only one listing does he link feeling to emotions, defining it as "sensibly felt," and citing Shakespeare's line, "who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows, Am pregnant to good pity." In this case, however, he adds the (vague) qualification that "this sense is not sufficiently analogical."

⁷⁹⁶ The metaphorical use of "feeling" is, of course, not unprecedented. John Flavel, e.g., can speak similarly: "There are enclosed pleasures in religion, which none but renewed spiritual souls do feelingly understand" (*Touchstone of Sincerity* [London, 1679], ch. 2, sec. 2, 21). My point here is simply that the common usage of "feeling" is still more literal at this time.

feeling, and motion of the soul, is what is called affection; the soul when it thus *feels* (if I may so say), and is thus moved, is said to be affected.⁷⁹⁷

As Edwards strives to make his understanding of affections clear, he occasionally uses this new metaphorical sense, but the term is still too vague to do the work Edwards intends for the concept of the affections.⁷⁹⁸ Having considered what the affections are not, I will now show what, for Edwards, the affections are.

⁷⁹⁷ *WJE* 2, 114, emphasis added. Interestingly, Edwards links this new usage of feeling to sensation, using “sensation” or “sense” three times in this sentence—referring to an immaterial sense in each instance. It seems plausible that this is due to his reading of the Moral Sense theorists.

⁷⁹⁸ Even if we anchor our understanding of “feelings” in a particular conception—say that of F. D. E. Schleiermacher, another Reformed theologian, who wrote only a generation or so after Edwards, and like him, was particularly interested in aesthetics—it is clear that the affections for Edwards are not synonymous with Schleiermacher’s conception of feelings. What, precisely, Schleiermacher meant by *das Gefühl* is open to some interpretation, but it certainly is not to be taken as a fleeting emotion or an experience of one’s mood. Rather “feeling” for Schleiermacher seems to involve intuition, self-consciousness, and the imagination. It refers to our direct awareness of and experience of that which transcends us. Ultimately, religious feeling, or “the pious consciousness,” is *das schlechthinige Abhängigkeitsgefühl*, “sense of absolute dependence” or the consciousness of being in relation with the infinite. For Schleiermacher, “feeling” seems often to apply to the noncognitive or the precognitive, and pertains to an innate and direct awareness prior to any ratiocination, particularly in relation to God. (For an exposition of this concept in Schleiermacher, see Julia A. Lamm, “The Early Philosophical Roots of Schleiermacher’s Notion of Gefühl, 1788–1794,” *Harvard Theological Review* 87, no. 1 [1994]: 67–105.) Edwards would likely appreciate much of Schleiermacher, but his notion of affections would have little to do with Schleiermacher’s conception of feelings. Edwards would probably simply have equated that understanding of feelings with the Calvinist notion of the *sensus divinitatis* in human beings. Edwards does not separate the intellect and the affections. His Puritan tradition was committed to envisioning faith, or the apprehension of the divine, as an act of the whole person. Faith, being objective (i.e., faith *in* a particular something), entails knowledge that incorporates cognitive content. Religious affections, for Edwards, are rooted in a saving knowledge of God anchored in the embrace of certain doctrines (e.g., Christ’s atonement), not simply a precognitive awareness of the divine. Following a tenet of some Reformed theology, Edwards sees faith and the Word as inseparable. Further, his generally Lockean epistemology assumes that such *content* to knowledge (what he will call “actual knowledge”) does not come through unmediated intuition, but through *means* such as “instruction” in “information.” Edwards says, “Holy affections are not heat without light; but evermore arise from some information of the understanding, some spiritual instruction the mind receives, some light or actual knowledge” (*WJE* 2, 266). For Edwards, Schleiermacher’s notion of religious feeling would be assumed in genuine religious affections, but would not be adequate indicators of such affections.

1.3 Edwards' Conception of the Affections.

Edwards' definition of the affections as “no other, than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul,”⁷⁹⁹ will now be more perspicacious. The affections could be summarized as the *manifestation of the dispositions of the heart*.

First, the affections are a *manifestation* of the dispositions of the heart. This manifestation entails two aspects: motivation and enactment. For Edwards, affections are energizing and animating motivations—affections are proclivities that differ in degree from mere preferences, faint inclinations or fleeting whims of the soul. These inclinations of the heart and will are “more vigorous and sensible,” i.e., they are energizing (vigorous),⁸⁰⁰ and palpably present to one's conscious awareness (sensible). “There are some exercises of pleasedness or displeasement, inclination or disinclination,” Edwards says,

wherein the soul is carried but a little beyond a state of perfect indifference. And there are other degrees above this, wherein the approbation or dislike, pleasedness or aversion, are stronger; wherein we may rise higher and higher, till the soul comes to act vigorously and sensibly ... And it is to be noted, that they are these more vigorous and sensible exercises of this faculty, that are called the *affections*.⁸⁰¹

The affections are also made manifest in that they are enacted. We read above that the affections are “exercises” in which “the soul comes to act.” As compelling inclinations of the human soul,

⁷⁹⁹ *WJE* 2, 96.

⁸⁰⁰ Here we see some analogy with Hume, who distinguished “impressions” and “ideas.” Edwards' notion of affections, while not a perception but an expression of the self, is similarly a liminal concept that must rise to a certain level of intensity to qualify as an instance of the quality in question. Hume says, “All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call Impressions and Ideas. The 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. Those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name impressions; and under this name I comprehend all our 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; such as, for instance, are all the perceptions excited by the present discourse, excepting only, those which arise from the sight and touch, and excepting the immediate pleasure or uneasiness it may occasion” (*A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1.1).

⁸⁰¹ *WJE* 2, 96–97.

affections initiate and direct human action. “’Tis our inclination that governs us in our actions,”⁸⁰² argues Edwards, who elsewhere says, “The affections we see to be the springs that set men agoing, in all the affairs of life, and engage them in all their pursuits.”⁸⁰³ Indeed, without human affections, not much would happen in the world. Edwards observes, “Take away all love and hatred, all hope and fear, all anger, zeal and affectionate desire, and the world would be, in great measure, motionless and dead: there would be no such thing as activity amongst mankind, or any earnest pursuit whatsoever.”⁸⁰⁴ However, the affections are the fount and motivation of every thought and action of the soul.

Second, affections evince one’s *dispositions*. Edwards reserves the term “affections” to apply to relatively stable inclinations, not anomalous ones. Affections are the perceptible manifestation of the enduring orientation and *habitus*⁸⁰⁵ of the whole person. Paul Ramsey notes that Edwards’ concept of the affections “parallels Stoddard’s concept of a ‘course of life’ as distinct from singular acts taken one at a time.”⁸⁰⁶ Said another way, the affections both determine and evince the nature of the self, ruling and reflecting one’s abiding nature. Biblically, says Edwards, they are equivalent to either the works of the flesh⁸⁰⁷ or the fruit of the Spirit.⁸⁰⁸ In describing the affections, Edwards uses the following rough synonyms (or variations of them): disposition (53 times), temper (37 times), character (35 times), and inclination (27 times) in the *Religious Affections*. However, a lexical review of this work makes clear that, for Edwards, the

⁸⁰² Ibid., 97.

⁸⁰³ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid., 101.

⁸⁰⁵ On the use of the concept *habitus* in Edwards, see ch. 2 of Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 2000.

⁸⁰⁶ *WJE* 2, 59.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid., 385. Galatians 5:19-21: “Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.”

⁸⁰⁸ *WJE* 2, 105, 396. Galatians 5:22-23: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

affections are about the *loves* (739 times, including variations) of the *heart* (572 times, including variations).⁸⁰⁹ He speculates that “the exercises of this faculty, perhaps in all nations and ages, is called the *heart*.”⁸¹⁰

Finally, in Edwards’ usage the “heart” is a *holistic* term for all the faculties of the soul or mind. Edwards’ conception of the affections is at variance with much of the faculty psychology of his day. While Edwards uses the term “faculty” for each of various capacities of the mind, his is not a “faculty psychology” in which each faculty comprises an apparatus of the mind.⁸¹¹ He stresses this point in *Freedom of the Will*, where he insists,

For the will or the will itself is not an agent that has a will; the power of choosing, itself, has not a power of choosing. That which has the power of volition or choice is the man or the soul, and not the power of volition itself.⁸¹²

For Edwards, the affections—like all capacities of the soul—are actions of a unified person; he calls affections exercisings of the *soul*, which is a not comprised of distinct parts.

Following his Reformed Scholastic heritage⁸¹³ (particularly in its Puritan iteration),⁸¹⁴ Edwards conceives the soul, or mind, as “indued” [sic]⁸¹⁵ with two distinguishable capacities, one cognitive and the other conative. Edwards refers to the first as the *understanding*, or “that by which it [the soul] is capable of perception and speculation.”⁸¹⁶ The second is designated the *inclination*. This ability of the mind centers in preference and desire. It “is in some way inclined

⁸⁰⁹ In *Religious Affections*, Edwards uses the words (or variations of them) “love” 739 times and “heart” 572 times.

⁸¹⁰ *WJE* 2, 97.

⁸¹¹ For a good discussion of Early Modern conceptions of faculties and their relation to Edwards, see Danaher, *Trinitarian Ethics*, 121–22. See also Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 177ff, and Daniel Walker Howe, *Making the American Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 33.

⁸¹² *WJE* 1, 63.

⁸¹³ Edwards was particularly influenced by Francis Turretin (1623–1687) and Peter van Mastricht (1630–1706). See *WJE* 8, 742–43.

⁸¹⁴ Here we think of Edwards’ father, Timothy, a Puritan pastor, and his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, as well as the general influence of the English (e.g., John Owen) and New English (e.g., the Mathers) Puritans.

⁸¹⁵ *WJE* 2, 96.

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.*

with respect to the things it views and considers, or is disinclined, and averse from them.”⁸¹⁷

Both aspects of the soul make value judgments. The *understanding* not only “beholds” things but also “discerns and views and judges.”⁸¹⁸ It assesses. The second ability of the mind evaluates as well, adopting a stance “either as liking or disliking, pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting.”⁸¹⁹ Edwards’ Reformed Orthodox forebears were also committed to a unified view of the person, but they struggled to articulate such a view due to their faculty psychology.⁸²⁰

Here Edwards looks not to the faculty psychology of his British contemporaries (e.g., Hume⁸²¹ or Hutcheson⁸²²), but rather to John Locke’s notion of “faculties” advanced in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689).⁸²³ There Locke presents a unified account of the self,

⁸¹⁷ Ibid.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid.

⁸²⁰ John Preston (1587–1628), the English Puritan, says, “The subject of faith, and that is the whole heart of man,— both the mind and the will.” See Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966; repr. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 12–14.

⁸²¹ Hume is fairly loose in his faculty psychology. He operates with two broad faculties, those of reason and sentiment, but is less precise on the subdivisions. In the opening of *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, he famously says, “There has been a controversy started of late, much better worth examination, concerning the general foundation of morals; whether they be derived from reason, or from sentiment; whether we attain the knowledge of them by a chain of argument and induction, or by an immediate feeling and finer internal sense” (*An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals: A Critical Edition*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1751/2006], 1.3, 4).

⁸²² Hutcheson, perhaps to chide Hume, says, “Writers on these Subjects should remember the common Divisions of the Faculties of the Soul. That there is 1. *Reason* presenting the natures and relations of things, antecedently to any Act of *Will* or *Desire*: 2. *The Will*, or *Appetitus Rationalis*, or the disposition of Soul to pursue what is presented as good, and to shun Evil. Were there no other Power in the Soul, than that of mere contemplation, there would be no *Affection*, *Volition*, *Desire*, *Action*. Nay without some motion of *Will* no Man would voluntarily persevere in Contemplation. There must be a *Desire* of Knowledge, and of the Pleasure which attends it: this too is an Act of *Willing*. Both these Powers are by the Antients included under the λογος or λογικὸν μῆρος. Below these they place two other powers dependent on the Body, the *Sensus*, and the *Appetitus Sensitivus*, in which they place the particular Passions: the former answers to the *Understanding* [220], and the latter to the *Will*. But the Will is forgot of late, and some ascribe to the *Intellect*, not only *Contemplation* or Knowledge, but *Choice*, *Desire*, *Prosecuting*, *Loving*. Nay some are grown so ingenious in uniting the Powers of the Soul, that *contemplating with Pleasure*, Symmetry and Proportion, an Act of the *Intellect* as they plead, is the same thing with *Goodwill* or the virtuous *Desire* of publick Happiness” (*An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, ed. Aaron Garrett [Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2002], 219).

⁸²³ The influence of John Locke (1632–1704) has been acknowledged and debated since the renaissance of Edwards studies that was inaugurated by Perry Miller in 1949. Miller, however, seems to have overstated Edwards’ Lockean empirical epistemology, claiming that “Edwards’ fundamental premise was Locke’s”

describing the “understanding” and “will” as faculties of “perceiving” and “preferring,” but is quick to qualify the concept of “faculties” as “powers of the mind”—not as separate, existent components of the mind. The term “faculties” may be used in common parlance, warns Locke, as long as it is not “supposed . . . to stand for some real beings in the soul that performed those actions of understanding and volition.”⁸²⁴ Yet Locke doubts that common usage can avoid the connotation that faculties are separate substances, or “so many distinct agents in us.”⁸²⁵

Likewise, for Edwards: the *understanding* and the *will* overlap and while they are conceptually distinguishable, they are not ontologically discrete. Further, the will and heart “are not two faculties,” for the “affections are not essentially distinct” from “the mere actings of the will and inclination of the soul.”⁸²⁶ John E. Smith summarizes this relation, saying that will is an inclination expressed in action, whereas heart is an inclination expressed in mind.⁸²⁷

The affections then, in Edwards, are distinguished from passions, emotions, and feelings. They are powerful proclivities of the whole heart that are instantiated cognitively, emotively, and behaviorally; they are a *manifestation of the dispositions of the heart*. They reveal who we truly are. Furthermore, Edwards conceives the affections in terms of eros. It is to that concept that I now turn.

(*Jonathan Edwards* [Toronto: William Sloane, 1949], 55). Sereno Dwight tells us, “Edwards read Locke on the Human Understanding with peculiar pleasure,” and that he took more pleasure in it “than the most greedy miser finds, when gathering up handfuls of silver and gold, from some newly discovered treasure” (*The Works of President Edwards: with a memoir of his life, Volume 1, 3*. (New York: S. Converse, 1830).

<http://books.google.com/books?id=k1wPAAAAIAAJ&oe=UTF-8>.

⁸²⁴ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 236–44.

⁸²⁵ Ibid.

⁸²⁶ *WJE* 2, 96–97.

⁸²⁷ Ibid., 104.

2. EDWARDS AND EROS

The concept of eros is a capacious one with a continuous history in Western culture that predates Plato⁸²⁸ and extends to poststructuralism. While there are myriad conceptions of eros in Western culture, I use the term “eros” to describe the affective love of beauty, characterized primarily by an experience of *desire and delight* (or species of them, or emotions closely related to them) in relation to the beautiful.⁸²⁹ Connotations from other conceptions of eros should not be conflated with this usage. Rather than orienting eros to an otherworldly spiritual reality (as in Platonism),⁸³⁰ or to

⁸²⁸“Eros” is the transliteration of the Greek ἔρως (erōs). In ancient Greece there were multiple Erotes. In the early cosmogonies, Eros was a *protogenos*, i.e., a primordial god with no parentage. For example, in Hesiod, Eros comes into being after *Chaos* (Χάος: emptiness, vast void, chasm, abyss), Gaia (Γαῖα: the earth, or land), and Tartarus (Τάρταρος: a pit, abyss, or innermost place of murky depth; *Theogony; and, Works and Days*, trans. Catherine M. Schlegel and Henry Weinfield [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006], 116–20). Parmenides says, “First of all the gods she devised Erōs” (who “she” is, is unclear from the fragment; *Parmenides of Elea: Fragments: A Text and Translation*, trans. David Gallop [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984], fragment 13). In the Orphic Mysteries and Aristophanes, Eros was known as Phanes, who was the child of Night (Νύξ, Nyx), who was hatched from the world egg at creation (Aristophanes, *The Birds*, ed. Nan Dunbar [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994], 685). In the poets and philosophers, he was sometimes known as the “younger Eros,” and was thought of as the son of Aphrodite, e.g., in Apollonius of Rhodes (*Jason and the Golden Fleece [The Argonautica]*, trans. Richard Hunter [New York: Oxford University Press, 2009], bk. 3, 66ff); Nonnos of Panopolis (*Dionysiaca*, vol. 3, bk. 36–48, trans. W. H. D. Rouse [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940–42], bk. 48, 470ff); and as Cupid in Seneca (*Phaedra*, trans. Roland Mayer [London: Duckworth, 2002], 290ff) and Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville [New York: Oxford University Press, 2009], bk. 10, 225ff). Henry Staten interestingly argues that the notion of eros underwent a change that was inaugurated by Plato (and extended in Stoicism and Christianity) that sought to domesticate eros by reframing it within an “economy” of idealization and transcendence. See Staten, *Eros in Mourning: Homer to Lacan* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

⁸²⁹This erotic conception of the experiential aspect of beauty is common in most Classical aesthetics, in which eros for the beautiful is held to be basic to human nature and intimately connected to human flourishing and was bequeathed to Christianity, consequently marking the majority of premodern Christian thought, in both its Eastern and Western forms.

⁸³⁰Eros is a central idea in Plato that pervades his corpus, significantly in the *Lysis* (as it pertains to friendship) and in the *Phaedrus*, in which Socrates describes eros as a type of *mania*, related to poetic inspiration (Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield [New York: Oxford University Press, 2009], 244a–250d). The *locus classicus* for Greek views of eros for beauty itself is, however, Plato’s *Symposium*, a dialogue devoted to that topic. While the subject of the *Symposium* ostensibly is desirous love, Plato also uses this dialogue to advance a number of ideas about beauty, including (1) that eros is intrinsically oriented toward beauty; (2) that the experience of the beautiful is understood to complete us, or fill us; (3) that our desire for true beauty is an essentially spiritual longing, and that the experience of the beautiful can transport us beyond this world; and (4) that beauty is directly associated with the highest end of human existence and should, therefore, be the object of contemplation. (These themes are adapted from John Cunningham and Mark Liederbach, “The Nature of Beauty,” in *God, Meaning and Morality*, 2nd ed., ed. Diana Edelman and Ian S. Maclean [New York: Harcourt Brace, 2000], 385–402.) This dialogue, and the interpretations of it through the ages, has shaped Western philosophies of beauty perhaps as much as any other single text. Contemplation of divine Beauty (Latin:

sexual instincts (as in psychoanalytic conceptions),⁸³¹ or to selfishness (as in some twentieth-century religious ethics),⁸³² I mean simply the experience of desire and delight in the presence of beauty.

contemplatio; Greek: θεωρία, *theoria*), of course, was to significantly inform much Christian spirituality. As in most premodern Christian views, we can detect a general residuum of Platonism in Edwards' thought.

⁸³¹ For Sigmund Freud, *eros* is a "life instinct" (associated with narcissism and object libido) in contradistinction to *thanatos*, the "death instinct." He refers to "Eros, the preserver of all things" and "Eros, the preserver of life" (*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, vol. 18, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [1920; London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955], 52–54). Eros came to supplant Freud's earlier notion of *libido*. He explained, "The libidinal, sexual or life drives ... are best comprised under the name of Eros" (*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, vol. 18, *Two Encyclopedia Articles*, [1923; London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955], 258). Freud claims that "the libido of our sexual instincts would coincide with the Eros of the poets and philosophers which holds all living things together" (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 50). However, his view differs from that of the "poets and philosophers" in that *eros*, for him, is largely a reproductive instinct. While Freud conceives *eros* primarily as sexual desire, the concept is also generalized to insatiable desire and effort. Ultimately, the life instincts "form living substance into ever greater unities, so that life may be prolonged and brought to higher development" (Freud, *Two Encyclopedia Articles*, 258). There is greater plasticity in the aims of *eros*, and greater propensity to sublimation than in its countervailing death drive, *thanatos* (which deploys aggression and destruction in its quest for a return to lifelessness and static lack of conflict). While it can inform striving for individual happiness and personal development, as life and death drives intermingle, *eros* also connotes something of the Tantalus torture found in Schopenhauerian pessimism. For my purposes, I note two differences between Classical and Freudian (and many post-Freudian) conceptions of *eros*. First, even when sublimated, sexual desire is at the root of modern conceptions of *eros* (as evinced by the contemporary valence of the word "erotic"), whereas it was marginal, or considered a lower form of *eros* in Platonic views. Second, the love of *beauty* was fundamental in Classical understandings of *eros*, where it is incidental to many modern conceptions. Sex has supplanted beauty in Freudian *eros*.

⁸³² While its central thesis has been challenged and its influence has waned somewhat in recent decades, one of the most influential works in theological ethics of the twentieth century was Anders Nygren's *Agape and Eros*. In that work, Nygren contends that Christian conceptions of love have been vitiated by the intrusion of Greek philosophical notions. The pernicious effect of such an intrusion has been the conflation of two separate conceptions of love, one Greek (*eros*) and one Christian (*agape*). *Eros*, Nygren contends, is a "natural self-love, which extends its scope to embrace also the benefactors of the self" (*Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953], 97, emphasis added). In other words, the purview of *eros* is always and fundamentally the gratification of the one doing the loving. The beloved may be highly valued, but only insofar as he or she is a means to that end. For Nygren, *eros* reduces to selfishness, which he equates with self-love. This he sees as inherently un-Christian. "Christianity does not recognize self-love as a legitimate form of love," he avers (*ibid.*, 217). Far from being a legitimate form of love, it is the core of human depravity. "Self-love," he explains, "is man's natural condition, and also the reason for the perversity of his will" (*ibid.*, 100). So then, *eros* is not only un-Christian, it is also *anti-Christian*. Christian love (i.e., *agape*), on the other hand, views self-love as "its chief adversary which must be fought and conquered" (*ibid.*, 217). *Agape* is rooted in self-denial. It is "a love that gives itself away, that sacrifices itself, even to the uttermost" (*ibid.*, 118). Rather than having as its primary orientation a selfish gratification of desire, its focus is directed toward God and others. "When love receives this new direction, when it is turned away from one's self and directed to one's neighbor, then the natural perversion of the will is overcome" (*ibid.*, 100). For Nygren, *agape* is the antidote for *eros*. Recognizing that the object of *eros* is beauty, Nygren says, "Eros is of a markedly aesthetic character. It is the beauty of the divine that attracts the eye of the soul and sets its love in motion." But this is illegitimate even when *eros* is directed to the beauty of God. "To speak of the 'beauty' of God in the context of *Agape*," he warns, "sounds very like blasphemy" (*ibid.*, 223–24). *Eros* then is wholly nefarious. It cannot lead us to a proper love of others or of God. While Nygren's forced polarization of the *eros* and *agape* is clearly procrustean and requires the repudiation of vast swaths of the Christian tradition,

Christian affections, for Edwards, are manifestly erotic. As always—but especially in polemical contexts—Edwards seeks to establish his claims from scripture. While he observes, “The holy Scriptures do everywhere place religion very much in the affections; such as fear, hope, love, hatred, desire, joy, sorrow, gratitude, compassion and zeal,”⁸³³ Edwards locates the affective response to true beauty largely in *love*,⁸³⁴ conceived as *desire and delight*. “Holy desire,” he explains, “exercised in longings, hungerings and thirstings after God and holiness, is often mentioned in Scripture as an important part of true religion.”⁸³⁵ Likewise, he adds, “The Scriptures speak of holy *joy*, as a great part of true religion.”⁸³⁶ In the opening pages of the *Religious Affections*, Edwards undertakes a discussion of 1 Peter 1:8—“Whom having not seen,

nonetheless his call to differentiate these two conceptions of love has set the trajectory for much of the theological and ethical thinking regarding love in the twentieth century.

⁸³³ *WJE* 2, 102. He lists many of the same affections earlier, but also includes *complacence* and *grief* (ibid., 98).

⁸³⁴ “The Scriptures,” Edwards says, “do represent true religion, as being summarily comprehended in *love*, the chief of the affections, and fountain of all other affections” (ibid., 106).

⁸³⁵ He continues citing “*Isaiah* 26:8, ‘The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.’ *Psalms* 27:4, ‘One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.’ *Psalms* 42:1–2, ‘As the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?’ *Psalms* 63:1–2, ‘My soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.’ *Psalms* 84:1–2, ‘How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.’ *Psalms* 119:20, ‘My soul breaketh for the longing it hath unto thy judgments, at all times.’ So *Psalms* 73:25 and *Psalms* 143:6–7 and *Psalms* 130:6, *Canticles* 3:1–2 and *Canticles* 6:8. Such a holy desire and thirst of soul is mentioned, as one of those great things which renders or denotes a man truly blessed, in the beginning of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, *Matthew* 5:6. ‘Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.’ And this holy thirst is spoken of, as a great thing in the condition of a participation of the blessings of eternal life, *Revelation* 21:6. ‘I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely.’ (*WJE* 2, 104).

⁸³⁶ Emphasis original. He continues, “So it is represented in the text. And as an important part of religion, it is often exhorted to, and pressed, with great earnestness; *Psalms* 37:4, ‘Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.’ *Psalms* 97:12, ‘Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous.’ So *Psalms* 33:1, ‘Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous.’ *Matthew* 5:12, ‘Rejoice, and be exceeding glad.’ *Philippians* 3:1, ‘Finally brethren, rejoice in the Lord.’ And ch. 4:4, ‘Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.’ *I Thessalonians* 5:16, ‘Rejoice evermore.’ *Psalms* 149:2, ‘Let Israel rejoice in him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.’ This is mentioned among the principal fruits of the spirit of grace, *Galatians* 5:22. ‘The fruit of the spirit is love, joy,’ etc. The Psalmist mentions his holy joy, as an evidence of his sincerity, *Psalms* 119:14, ‘I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.’ (*WJE* 2, 104–5). In the 1731 sermon *Serving God in Heaven*, he sounds one of his consistent themes: “The enjoyment of him is our proper happiness, and is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied” (Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 17, *Sermons and Discourses 1730–1733*, ed. Mark Valeri [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999], 437. Hereafter, *WJE* 17).

ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” In classic Edwardsian fashion, he locates the heart of religious affections in a redeemed eros. “We see that the Apostle . . .” observes Edwards, “singles out the religious affections of love and joy.”⁸³⁷ Edwards’ explication of love and joy makes clear that he conceives them in terms of desire and delight. The affection of love is “the very same” as “the affection of desire,” when the object of that love is absent. When the object is present, love is experienced as “joy or delight.”⁸³⁸ For Edwards, the evidence of regeneration is affective, particularly in a new sense of love and joy, or desire and delight in divine beauty.

So then, Edwards conceives the affective nature of beauty in terms of eros. While he does not use the term *per se*,⁸³⁹ he does employ the Augustinian language of appetite⁸⁴⁰ and his notion of “complacence”⁸⁴¹ nonetheless expresses concept of eros and is used hundreds of time in Edwards’ work. “Love,” Edwards reminds us,⁸⁴² “is commonly distinguished into love of

⁸³⁷ Ibid., 95.

⁸³⁸ Ibid., 97.

⁸³⁹ Edwards was aware of the concept. He habitually copied passages from other authors into his *Miscellanies*, and in a subsection of Miscellany 1352 he copies a section from “Chevalier” Ramsay’s (Andrew Michael Ramsay) *The Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion, unfolded in a geometrical order* (Glasgow, 1748/49). In that section he copies some on *αἶρος Ερος* in Plato’s *Timeus* and some of Ramsay’s interpretation of Plato in which he evidently associates Eros with the Holy Spirit. (Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 23, *Sermons and Discourses, 1730–1733*, ed. Mark Valeri [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003], 561.) Edwards took Ramsay—staunch anti-Calvinist Jesuit that he was—as an authority. In his introduction to the *Catalogues of Books*, Peter Thuesen observes, “Of the thousands of words Edwards penned in his ‘Miscellanies’ in Stock-bridge, fully 10 percent of the material is copied from two of Ramsay’s works: *Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion* (1748–49) and *Travels of Cyrus* (1727)” (Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 26, *Catalogues of Books*, ed. Peter J. Thuesen [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008], 40. Hereafter, *WJE* 26.)

⁸⁴⁰ See Miscellanies 530, 822, and 1205. James Gustafson makes this observation in *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 171.

⁸⁴¹ This word, “complacence,” from the Latin *complacēre*, to please, is now relatively rare. Johnson’s *Dictionary* gives the following entry: “Complacence. Complacency. Pleasure; satisfaction; gratification. 2. The cause of pleasure; joy. 3. Civility; complacence; softness of manners.” Interestingly, Johnson cites Addison as an example three times, including the famous line from the *Spectator*, “Others proclaim the infirmities of a great man with satisfaction and complacency, if they discover none like in themselves.”

⁸⁴² The phrases “love of benevolence” and “love of complacence” were common in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century moral philosophy.

benevolence and love of complacency.”⁸⁴³ His descriptions of the latter are a veritable lexicon of erotic language including: *desire, earnest longing, love of excellence, esteem, approving, gratitude, pleasure, happiness, joy, delight, and relish.*⁸⁴⁴ Furthermore, the object of this erotic love of complacency is always *beauty*. In his early (1738) sermon “Heaven Is a World of Love,” Edwards says simply, “the love of complacency is delighted in viewing the beauty of another.”⁸⁴⁵ Very similarly, in the late (posthumously published) *Nature of True Virtue*, Edwards defines the “love of complacency” as “delight in a being for his beauty.”⁸⁴⁶

For Edwards, the erotic love of complacency marks the divine nature, in God’s inter-trinitarian delight,⁸⁴⁷ animates the creation of the world,⁸⁴⁸ and motivates God’s giving of God’s

⁸⁴³ *WJE* 8, 542. He continues, “Love of *benevolence* is that affection or propensity of the heart to any being, which causes it to incline to its well-being, or disposes it to desire and take pleasure in its happiness.” In *Charity and Its Fruits*, Edwards distinguishes the two types of love as follows: “The main thing in that love, which is the sum of the Christian spirit, is benevolence or good will to others. We have heretofore, in speaking from the former verses of this chapter, shown what Christian love is, and how it is variously denominated according to the various objects and exercises of it; and particularly how that, as it respects the good enjoyed or to be enjoyed *by* the beloved, it is called love of benevolence; and as it respects good to be enjoyed *in* the beloved, it is called *love of complacency*” (*WJE* 8, 212–13.)

⁸⁴⁴ Edwards’ writing is suffused with the concept, but see particularly the opening of *The Nature of True Virtue* (*WJE* 8, 539ff), *Treatise on Grace* (*WJE* 21 and the version of it edited by Paul Helm for his introduction [Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971], 25ff), the *Charity* sermons (*WJE* 8, 125ff), and Miscellany 92, “End of the Creation” (Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13, *The “Miscellanies,”* [Entry Nos. a–z, aa–zz, 1–500], ed. Thomas A. Schafer [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994]. Hereafter, *WJE* 13.) and Miscellany 314, “Free Grace” (*WJE* 13, 395ff).

⁸⁴⁵ Sermon 15 in the *Charity and Its Fruits* series on 1 Corinthians 13. *WJE* 8, 375.

⁸⁴⁶ *WJE* 8, 543.

⁸⁴⁷ This is a major theme of the 1738 sermon 494 on 1 Tim. 6:15 (recently published online in Works of Jonathan Edwards Online, vol. 53, “Sermons, Series II, 1738, and Undated, 1734–1738 [Jonathan Edwards Center, Yale University, 2008], <http://edwards.yale.edu/archive?path=aHR0cDovL2Vkd2FyZHMueWFsZS5lZHUvY2dpLWJpbi9uZXdwGlsby9nZXRvYmplY3QucGw/Yy41MToyMy53amVv> accessed September 18, 2009. In the *Discourse on the Trinity*, Edwards says, “When we speak of God’s happiness, the account that we are wont to give of it is that God is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, in perfectly beholding and infinitely loving, and rejoicing in, his own essence and perfections. And accordingly it must be supposed that God perpetually and eternally has a most perfect idea of himself, as it were an exact image and representation of himself ever before him and in actual view. And from hence arises a most pure and perfect energy in the Godhead, which is the divine love, complacency and joy” (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 21, *Writing on the Trinity, Grace and Faith*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002], 113. Hereafter, *WJE* 21). Similarly, in the *Treatise on Grace*, Edwards says, “Both the holiness and happiness of the Godhead consists in this love. As we have already proved, all creature holiness consists essentially and summarily in love to God and love to other creatures; so does the holiness of God consist in his love, especially in the perfect and intimate union and love there is between the Father and the Son. But the Spirit that proceeds from the Father and the Son is the bond of

grace and rewards.⁸⁴⁹ It also marks human nature;⁸⁵⁰ that all beings are fundamentally oriented to that which they desire and to that in which they delight is a basic premise of Edwards' anthropology⁸⁵¹ and ethics.⁸⁵² The erotic love of beauty is at the heart of Edwards' theological vision. Paula Cooley is surely right when she says, "The responsive, involved, aesthetic aspect manifested as complacency or delight and anchored in universality, is unabashedly sensual, a quality worth recovering and reintroducing in current theoretical discussions of Christian love."⁸⁵³ Unfortunately, the concept of disinterestedness has often been interpreted in ways that exclude the role of eros conceptions of Christian love. Edwards does not fall prey to this, as I show in the following section.

this union, as it is of all holy union between the Father and the Son, and between God and the creature, and between the creatures among themselves. All seems to be signified in Christ's prayer in the *John 17*, from the *John 17:21*. Therefore this Spirit of love is the 'bond of perfectness' (*Colossians 3:14*) throughout the whole blessed society or family in heaven and earth, consisting of the Father, the head of the family, and the Son, and all his saints that are the disciples, seed and spouse of the Son. The happiness of God doth also consist in this love: for doubtless the happiness of God consists in the infinite love he has to and delight he has in himself; or, in other words, in the infinite delight there is between the Father and the Son, spoken of in *Proverbs 8:30*. This delight that the Father and the Son have in each other is not to be distinguished from their love of complacency one in another, wherein love does most essentially consist, as was observed before. The happiness of the Deity, as all other true happiness, consists in love and society" (*WJE* 21, 186–87).

⁸⁴⁸ See Miscellany 92, "End of the Creation" (c. 1723–24): "God takes complacency in communicating felicity, and he made all things for this complacency. His complacency in this, in making happy, was the end of the creation *Revelation 4:11*, "For thy pleasure they are and were created" (*WJE* 13, 256).

⁸⁴⁹ See Miscellany 314, "Free Grace" (c. 1726): "But because God does everything beautifully, he brings about this their happiness which he determined, in an excellent manner; but it would be a grating, dissonant and deformed thing for a sinful creature to be happy in God's love. He therefore gives them holiness, which holiness he really delights in—he has really complacency in them after he has given them beauty, and not before—and so the beauty that he gives, when given, induces God in a certain secondary manner to give them happiness. That is, he wills their happiness antecedently, of himself, and he gives them holiness that he may be induced to confer it; and when it is given by him, then he is induced by another consideration besides his mere propensity to goodness. For there are these two propensities in the divine nature: to communicate goodness absolutely to that which now is nothing, and to communicate goodness to that which is beautiful and holy, and which he has complacency in. He has a propensity to reward holiness, but he gives it on purpose that he may reward it; because he loves the creature, and loves to reward, and therefore gives it something that he may reward" (*WJE* 13, 395–96).

⁸⁵⁰ For instance, Edwards speaks of "the necessary nature of a perceiving and willing being, whereby he loves his own pleasure or delight" (*WJE* 18, 75).

⁸⁵¹ Here Edwards would wholeheartedly agree with Origen, who says, "We ought to understand that it is impossible for human nature not to be always feeling the passion of love for something" (*Commentary on the Song of Songs*, trans. R. P. Lawson [Westminster: Newman, 1957], 36).

⁸⁵² Edwards believes that redeemed eros is necessary for the moral life. It can inspire moral improvement and lead to noble actions, even self-sacrifice. It can develop into agape and is the psycho-spiritual foundation of all love. I will show this when I discuss Edwards' notion of eros in relation to the love of benevolence, below.

⁸⁵³ Paula M. Cooley, "Eros and Intimacy in Edwards," *Journal of Religion* 69 (October 1989): 500.

3. EDWARDS AND DISINTERESTEDNESS⁸⁵⁴

Jerome Stolnitz, the influential twentieth-century aesthetician, musing on the lasting and significant influence of the concept of disinterestedness, once asked “whether any other concept in modern aesthetics has achieved comparable longevity.”⁸⁵⁵ Indeed, as a cornerstone in the edifice of modern aesthetics, few notions have enjoyed equal purchase—not only in theories of art, but also in their effect on the broader culture. Aesthetic experience is now commonly seen to be disinterested, i.e., not motivated by ulterior interests, and standing independently, without need of external justification. Aesthetic experience is now enclosed within a self-contained and distinct realm; its scope is beyond the realm of other human concerns. This accounts, in part, for our notion of the fine arts or *les Beaux Arts*,⁸⁵⁶ and the rise of art museums, concert halls, and the like in the last three centuries.⁸⁵⁷ The cultural influence of the concept of disinterest would be difficult to overstate—extending to art,⁸⁵⁸ education,⁸⁵⁹ and even law.⁸⁶⁰

⁸⁵⁴ In this section, I will use the word “disinterestedness” to refer to the British concept, as that is the noun form they typically used. When referring to the Kantian and post-Kantian notion, I will use the shortened form, “disinterest,” as it is usually used in Kant (for the idea of *ohne Interesse*) and after.

⁸⁵⁵ Jerome Stolnitz, “The Aesthetic Attitude in the Rise of Modern Aesthetics—Again,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43, no. 2 (1984): 205.

⁸⁵⁶ See Paul Oskar Kristeller, “The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics (1)” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12, no. 4 (October 1951): 496–527. Kristeller argues that viewing the fine arts to consist primarily in “painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry” is a view that coalesced in the eighteenth century.

⁸⁵⁷ See Paul Oskar Kristeller, “The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics (2)” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 13, no. 1 (January 1952): 44.

⁸⁵⁸ Ironically, Kant’s influence has been much greater in the world of art than in appreciation of natural beauty. His concerns were precisely the inverse. Regarding art (about which Kant actually knew or had seen little), he was a thorough-going formalist with neoclassical sympathies, seeing the adherent, or dependent, beauty of art to be rule bound. Kant would presumably shudder at the directions taken in modern art.

⁸⁵⁹ Consider the sense of the connotation of German “*Bildung*”—that education has to do with becoming a “cultured,” “polite” (in the sense of “polished”), or “refined” person. The cultural elite came to view the arts and the appreciation of beauty as central to *Bildung*.

⁸⁶⁰ The concept of disinterest has sometimes grounded legal adjudications regarding the line between art and pornography (presumably if one beholds the work in question with only “disinterested” pleasure, then it is art; if prurient desire is stirred, then it is pornographic).

In this section, I will show that Jonathan Edwards, in his eighteenth-century British context, engages the nascent concept of disinterestedness, formulating his views in marked contrast to Kantian (and subsequent Continental) notions that conceive disinterest and *desire* as mutually exclusive, pitting disinterest against eros.⁸⁶¹ Before Immanuel Kant, the experience of beauty was generally assumed to entail desire.⁸⁶² Edwards—a rough contemporary of Kant⁸⁶³—develops an alternative view of disinterestedness that employs the common-sense insights of the eighteenth-century British thinkers while also retaining a role for desire in the experience of the beautiful, as recognized in the eros tradition of beauty.

First, I will consider the roots of the concept of disinterestedness (including the contested genealogies of the concept), situating disinterestedness in relation to the emerging concept of *taste*. Next, I will provide a brief explication of the three main usages of “disinterestedness” in the eighteenth-century British sources, showing that desire was not excluded in the new notion. (Here I will consider the possible exception found in Edmund Burke.) Third, I will differentiate Edwards’ views of disinterest from those of Kant, Kant’s successors, and the *New Divinity*, that followed Edwards’ theology. Finally, I will be in position to expound Edwards’ conceptions of disinterestedness with special attention to its relation to the self, to eros, and to benevolence.

⁸⁶¹ I do not intend to attempt some comprehensive treatment of an idea as broad and deep as the concept of disinterestedness. Rather, I will simply sketch the outlines of this theme enough to situate and clarify the views of Edwards in relation to some other eighteenth-century thinkers with respect to my claim that two central aesthetic concepts (eros and disinterest) were pitted against each other in early modernity, effectively restricting the affective purview of beauty to pleasure and excluding desire. Therefore, I will try (as much as possible, given that the idea of disinterestedness overlaps many related but distinct ideas) to restrict my focus to the role of *desire* in disinterestedness.

⁸⁶² I will discuss Edmund Burke’s seeming separation of beauty and desire below.

⁸⁶³ Edwards lived from 1703 to 1758, dying young; Kant lived into old age, from 1724 to 1804.

3.1 Roots of the Concept of Disinterest.

The eighteenth century was a time of profound change in aesthetic theory.⁸⁶⁴ It was in this era that the concept of disinterestedness emerged as a leading aesthetic idea. Forms of the word “disinterested” appear in English in the early seventeenth century and carry the sense of being “not interested” or “unconcerned.”⁸⁶⁵ In his *Dictionary* of 1755, Dr. Johnson lists meanings for “disinterested,” “disinterestedment,” “disinterest,” “disinterested,” “disinterestedly,” and “disinterestedness.”⁸⁶⁶ The signification of all of these variations centers in an *impartiality* that trumps concerns for private advantage; the semantic valence of the terms concerns *fairness* and *unselfishness*. While the concept certainly had antecedents in premodernity,⁸⁶⁷ a more specific application of the term “disinterestedness” arises in Britain in the context of moral philosophy early in the eighteenth century.

⁸⁶⁴ While this is commonly observed and accepted, the precise nature of that change continues to be debated. The seminal text that sees in the eighteenth century an epochal shift into modernity is Kristeller’s “The Modern System of the Arts.” James I. Porter claims that Kristeller’s view has been so widely and uncritically received that he complains, “We are having to do here no longer with an academic thesis, and not even with an orthodoxy, but with a dogma” (“Is Art Modern? Kristeller’s ‘Modern System of the Arts’ Reconsidered,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 49 [2009]: 1). Recently, Peter Kivy has sought to reestablish what can be salvaged from Kristeller’s original thesis. See Kivy, “What Really Happened in the Eighteenth Century: The ‘Modern System’ Reexamined (Again),” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 52 (2012), 61–74.

⁸⁶⁵ E.g., “disinterested,” 1603; “dis’interest,” 1612; “dis’interested,” 1631; “disinterest,” 1658; “disinterestedness,” 1687; and “dis’interestedly,” 1711 (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. OED Online, s.v. “Disinterestedness,” accessed March 7, 2013, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.its.virginia.edu/view/Entry/54620?redirectedFrom=disinterestedness>).

⁸⁶⁶ Johnson, *A dictionary of the English language*.

⁸⁶⁷ We find iterations and adumbrations of it in both Classical and theological sources, e.g., Augustine’s *uti /frui* distinction, and some have associated it with the Stoic ideal of *apatheia* (Sean Gaston, “Levinas, Disinterest and Enthusiasm,” *Literature and Theology* 17, no. 4 [2003]: 407–421. Aquinas articulates a recognizable concept of disinterest when he distinguishes the pleasure taken in the gratification of the bodily senses, such as hunger from aesthetic pleasure. He says, “The lion is pleased to see the stag, or to hear its voice, in relation to his food. On the other hand man derives pleasure from the other senses, not only for this reason, but also on account of the *becomingness* of the sensible object. Wherefore temperance is about the pleasures of the other senses, in relation to pleasures of touch, not principally but consequently: while in so far as the sensible objects of the other senses are pleasant on account of their becomingness, as when a man is pleased at a well harmonized sound, this pleasure has nothing to do with the preservation of nature” (*Summa Theologica*, II-a II-ae q. 141 a. 4 ad 3).

3.1.a. Contested Genealogies of Disinterestedness. The meaning of “disinterestedness” in this period is contested in contemporary debates about the history of aesthetics. Some, largely following Jerome Stolnitz,⁸⁶⁸ see in the eighteenth-century idea of disinterestedness the roots of the modern notion of an “aesthetic attitude.”⁸⁶⁹ Other aestheticians disagree. In an influential 1964 article, “The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude,”⁸⁷⁰ George Dickie rejects the notion that the eighteenth-century British thinkers proffer something of a proto-aesthetic attitude theory.⁸⁷¹ The

⁸⁶⁸ Originally propounded in his 1961 article, “On the Origins of ‘Aesthetic Disinterestedness,’” [Jerome Stolnitz, “On the Origins of ‘Aesthetic Disinterestedness,’” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 20 [1961]], Stolnitz’s opinions were for decades the standard understanding of the contribution of eighteenth-century British aesthetics. In this article and others (*inter alia*, Jerome Stolnitz, “‘Beauty’: Some Stages in the History of an Idea,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22, no. 2 [April–June, 1961]: 185–204; Stolnitz, “A Third Note on Eighteenth-Century ‘Disinterestedness,’” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 22, no. 1 [Autumn 1963]: 69–70; Stolnitz, “The Rise of Modern Aesthetics,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 36, no. 4 [Summer 1978]: 409–22; Stolnitz, “The Rise of Modern Aesthetics: Again,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43, no. 2 [Winter 1984]: 205–8), Stolnitz advances the claim that the central insight and the primary contribution of these thinkers (beginning with Shaftesbury) was to isolate and develop the concept of *disinterestedness*—particularly as it relates to *perception*—as the relevant feature of aesthetic experience. By so doing, this perspective claims, the British school inaugurated a distinctly new approach to art and beauty: one rooted in an *aesthetic attitude*. Two crucial aspects of the aesthetic attitude—ones that are usually regarded as necessary conditions of it—are prominent in the British moralists, namely, disinterested pleasure and valuing the object for its own sake. These features are therefore interpreted, according to the narrative of the Stolnitz Thesis, as in essential continuity with modern aesthetic attitude theories, notably those of Kant and Schopenhauer, and with twentieth-century aesthetic attitude theories, e.g., those of Edward Bullough, Jerome Stolnitz, Roger Scruton, and Gary Kemp.

⁸⁶⁹ Stolnitz and those following in his wake see this turn in aesthetics as the genesis of what are now commonly referred to as “aesthetic attitude theories,” in which what constitutes something as “aesthetic” is the attitude the perceiver adopts in attending to it. The “aesthetic object” becomes such when attended to with an “aesthetic attitude”; aesthetic objects are distinguished from nonaesthetic objects when a perceiver adopts a special stance toward them. Said another way, an object becomes aesthetic when it is engaged qua aesthetic. Attending to an object aesthetically then yields aesthetic experiences, judgments, and emotions. I must point out here that these kind of encounters are broadly *aesthetic*, and not restricted to apprehensions of the beautiful, or even of the sublime, but can also extend to the spectacular, the ugly, the grotesque, or almost any experience that can be undertaken with an *aesthetic attitude*.

⁸⁷⁰ George Dickie, “The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (1964): 56–66, reprinted in *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology*, eds. George Dickie, Richard Sclafani, and Ronald Roblin (New York: St. Martin’s, 1989), 342–55.

⁸⁷¹ Furthermore, in “The Concept of Disinterestedness in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetics,” Miles Rind advances a thorough reevaluation of Stolnitz’s sources, charging him with a procrustean infusion of his own aesthetic doctrines in his presentation of the eighteenth-century thinkers (“The Concept of Disinterestedness in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetics,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 40, no. 1 [January 2002]: 67–87). Nonetheless, the notion of aesthetic disinterest continues to be assigned to the British aesthetics of this period. “Philosophers and others writing about eighteenth-century aesthetic thought continue to attribute such a concept to Shaftesbury and his successors,” complains Rind, “and continue to cite Stolnitz’s essay as authority for such an attribution” (*ibid.*, 67). Indeed, Peter Kivy expressly defends the Stolnitz Thesis. He says, “Jerome Stolnitz has argued—and rightly, I believe—that ‘it is the British who first conceive of the aesthetic as a unique mode of

emerging notion of disinterestedness is used in a variety of senses by the eighteenth-century British thinkers—it is certainly not yet a term of art for them with a precise, agreed upon meaning. Thus the contemporary debate persists,⁸⁷² and care must be taken to avoid reading eighteenth-century conceptions of disinterestedness through the lens of twentieth-century interpretations. A consideration of the exigencies that gave rise to this new idea will help illuminate what disinterestedness meant in the eighteenth century.

3.1.b. *The Concept of Taste.* Eighteenth-century concern with the concept of disinterestedness was embedded in emerging notions of *taste*, largely in response to two seventeenth-century intellectual trends. The concept of taste was developed not only in response to moral and aesthetic *rationalism* (discussed above), but also to the controversial psychological *egoism* of Thomas Hobbes. That view envisioned all human activity as ultimately and deeply self-interested. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes plainly asserts that, regarding “the voluntary acts of every man, the object is some good to himself.”⁸⁷³ For Hobbes, the “state of nature” is subject to the animal nature of human beings, by which each person is equally in competition with every other person for those things that afford pleasure or mitigate pain. Such a state inevitably leads to self-interested conflict and a “war of all against all” (*bellum omnium contra omnes*). The outcome is

experience and carry out its systematic investigation.’ And it is through the concept of ‘aesthetic disinterestedness,’ he claims, that aesthetics gained its autonomy” (*The Seventh Sense: Francis Hutcheson and Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetics* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2003], 122). Rind notes that to “treat these writers as originators of the concept of ‘aesthetic disinterestedness’ is not only to find in them what is not there, but also to miss most of what is” (“The Concept of Disinterestedness,” 87). He rightly maintains that these thinkers develop not an aesthetic concept of disinterested *perception*, but a moral-aesthetic concept of *taste*.

⁸⁷² I must note that both Stolnitz’s and Dickie’s interest in the history of aesthetics is “interested.” Both are aestheticians, not just historians. Each holds strongly to competing theories of art. Stolnitz is a Kantian, and Dickie is a leading defender of the “institutional theory of art,” which holds that art can only function qua art within an accepted institutional sphere called “The Artworld,” by Arthur Danto in an article by that title in *Journal of Philosophy* 61, no. 19 (October 1964): 571–84.

⁸⁷³ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 14, “Of the First and Second Natural Laws, and of Contracts,” repr. from 1651 ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

“no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”⁸⁷⁴ While Hobbes wrote during the aftermath of the regicide of Charles I, the implications of his egoism were seen to apply not only to political theory, but also—and troublingly—to philosophical anthropology, theology, and moral philosophy.⁸⁷⁵ The desire to counter this bleak view was the intellectual exigency of the increasingly affluent, “polite,”⁸⁷⁶ and high-minded Scottish, Irish, and English thinkers of the century that followed Hobbes. If a moral-aesthetic “sense”—one that was capable of and disposed to disinterested assessments of beauty and acts of morality—is a part of human *nature*, then Hobbesian conceptions of the “state of nature” are debunked. It was in this context that these British moral philosophers deployed the term “disinterestedness.” It is to that usage that I now turn.

3.2 Eighteenth-Century British Formulations of Disinterestedness.

I will provide a brief description of how the new notion of “disinterestedness” was used in eighteenth-century British sources, showing that desire was not excluded in such conceptions. Significantly, the new idea is cast in a privative form, as “dis”interestedness; it can be easier to describe what a thing is not than to offer a definition of what a thing always and only is. This, too, contributes to a certain ambiguity about the term in this context. While “disinterestedness” is

⁸⁷⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pt. 1, ch. 13.

⁸⁷⁵ Both Hobbes and Locke envisioned a natural partiality and self-interest in human nature that required public structures and institutions to guarantee the “disinterest” of the individual.

⁸⁷⁶ Politeness was an important catchword and concept in eighteenth-century Britain. In keeping with its etymology (from the Latin *politus*, “polished” or “made smooth”), “politeness” came to connote being cultured, refined, sociable, and gentle (in the sense of gentility). Joseph Addison, as cofounder (with Richard Steele) of *The Spectator*, was a leading arbiter of courtesy and manners and helped develop this new sense of politeness. The notion spread to Edinburgh, where in the minutes of the “Easy Club,” according to Nicholas Phillipson, “the Addisonian vocabulary” is evident, including (in addition to “politeness”) words such as “conversation,” “friendship,” “moderation,” “easiness,” “improvement,” and, of course, “taste” (“The Scottish Enlightenment,” in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, ed. Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981], 27). For more on politeness in this context, see Lawrence E. Klein, “Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century,” *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 4 (Dec. 2002): 869–98.

employed in a variety of senses, each is simultaneously ethical and aesthetic,⁸⁷⁷ and usage tends to center in three categories: (1) engagement not rooted in or controlled by *selfishness*;⁸⁷⁸ (2) fairness, impartiality, or an *unbiased* orientation;⁸⁷⁹ and (3) an appreciation of something *for its own sake*.

The third general usage of the term or concept “disinterestedness” (conceiving it in contradistinction to instrumental interests apart from inherent value) comes closest to modern notions of aesthetic disinterest. In that sense of the word, idiosyncratic or extraneous concerns or interests that shape one’s views of the good or the beautiful apart from its *inherent* goodness or beauty are not disinterested. On this view, the spot where one fell in love may seem particularly beautiful to a person, aside from its aesthetic merit. If one spent a lovely vacation at the place

⁸⁷⁷ As Stolnitz observes, Lord Shaftesbury (in the *Characteristics*) develops an *ethics* of disinterest that is “indistinguishable from an aesthetic theory” (Stolnitz, “On the Origins of ‘Aesthetic Disinterestedness,’” 133).

⁸⁷⁸ This usage generally assumes that well-ordered human beings, whether by nature (e.g., being possessed of a moral sense) or conditioning (e.g., moral education and refinement) could—Hobbesian egoism notwithstanding—rise above controlling self-interest. Human beings are seen to be capable of acting altruistically, and can recognize the *inherent* value of something apart from an “*interested*” valuation. Desire per se is not eschewed in such a view. Nor is selflessness the aim (as in Schopenhauerian aesthetics, in which the only relief from the burden of desire, or “will,” is in self-forgetfulness). This usage of disinterestedness is often associated with love—the disinterested love of God and neighbor. Ethics are still intimately connected with religion for most of these thinkers. Lord Shaftesbury, who first used the term “moral sense,” is illustrative. His character Eteocles extols a disinterested love of God as superior to a “compulsion” to serve God that was motivated “for interest merely.” Theocles says, “‘Tis a very ill token of sincerity in religion, and in the Christian religion more especially, to reduce it to such a philosophy as will allow no room to that other principle of love [i.e., disinterested love]; but treats all of that kind as enthusiasm for so much as aiming at what is called disinterestedness, or teaching the love of God or virtue for God or virtue’s sake” (clarification mine; *The Moralists*, II.iii, in Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 2:45). Similarly, Hutcheson describes disinterestedness saying the “*Desire* of the Happiness of others which we account virtuous, is not directly excited by prospects of any secular Advantage, Wealth, Power, Pleasure of the external Senses, Reward from the Deity, or future Pleasures of Self-Approbation” (emphasis added; Hutcheson, *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections*, 24–25). For Hutcheson this is rooted in the moral sense with which he believes human beings were endowed, and which he describes as “benevolent Affections . . . toward others, in various Degrees, making us *desire* their Happiness as an ultimate End, without any view to private Happiness” (emphasis added; *ibid.*, 136).

⁸⁷⁹ This rather commonsensical usage was applied in discussions of morality and judgment as in Shaftesbury’s *Characteristics*. For instance, Shaftesbury (a Protestant) refers to “disinterested” “great men” of the Roman Catholic church who could “wisely judge” and “justly observe that their very traditions stand in need of some collateral proof.” Here he attributes to honest men the ability to rise above parochial “interest” (*Characteristics*, 44). In this usage, again, desire is not targeted, rather prejudicial bias.

depicted in a painting, the associations are particular to that person and influence any judgment of taste regarding it. Music can evoke nostalgia, as well as pleasure in the beauty of the piece. Shaftesbury offers some further helpful illustrations: There is a difference, he notes, between a disinterested person “being taken with the beauty of the ocean” and an interested desire “to command it,” he says. There is a similar contrast between delighting in the beauty of a copse of trees and yearning “for nothing so much as to taste some delicious fruit of theirs.”⁸⁸⁰ The former is delight of a disinterested sort; the latter is presumably animated by physical hunger or gustatory pleasure, not beauty per se.⁸⁸¹ Francis Hutcheson agrees, noting that such pleasures arise from “the external senses.” But perceptions of harmonious beauty and morality issue from the “internal sense.”⁸⁸² Further, Hutcheson observes, “receiving impressions of beauty and harmony” has little to do with “the usefulness of the object.”⁸⁸³ Elsewhere he is stronger, claiming, “The sense and desire of beauty of several kinds is entirely abstracted from possession or property.”⁸⁸⁴ Clearly, one who buys a vacation property with a beautiful view because of its investment potential is not concerned with beauty but money. Yet even in this, Hutcheson can speak of the “desire of beauty.” This third use of disinterestedness distinguishes between valuing (and desiring) something *inherently* and valuing it *instrumentally*.

All three of these uses of disinterestedness emphasize a condition free from forms of self-interest that can cloud taste or impair the “sense” from which it issues. In none of these senses,

⁸⁸⁰ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 2:102–3.

⁸⁸¹ Interestingly, Schopenhauer eschewed the Dutch still-life paintings of feast-laden tables on the grounds that such subject matter (so well painted) made him hungry and interfered with his disinterested appreciation. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966), 208.

⁸⁸² Francis Hutcheson, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and the Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (1728), 3rd ed. (London, 1742; repr. Menston, Yorkshire: Scholar Press, 1972), 4.4, 101–2.

⁸⁸³ Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design, Treatise I of An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue in Two Treatises*, ed. Wolfgang Leidhold (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004), I.12, 11.

⁸⁸⁴ Hutcheson, *Essay on the Nature*, 4.4, 103.

however, is desire excluded per se.⁸⁸⁵ For all of the eighteenth-century British moralists of which I am aware, desirous “interest” itself is not seen as problematic. Rather, what is excluded from disinterested judgments of taste is interest of a certain sort—i.e., that which is extraneous, selfish, instrumental, biased, or stemming from ulterior interest.

Edmund Burke, at first glance, seems to provide a counter-example in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. In that work he seems to preclude the role of desire in an affective response to beauty, except coincidentally. He says, “Beauty, and the passion caused by beauty, which I call love, is different from desire, though desire may sometimes operate along with it.”⁸⁸⁶ However, Burke’s conception of *desire* in this context becomes clear when, in the same paragraph, he defines desire by apposition as *lust*. He says, “I likewise distinguish love . . . from *desire or lust*; which is an energy of the mind, that hurries us on to the *possession* of certain objects, that do not affect us as they are beautiful, but by means altogether different.” He then specifically relates this desire to an attraction to women. He says, “We shall have a strong desire for a woman of no remarkable beauty; whilst the greatest beauty in men, or in other animals, though it causes love, yet excites nothing at all of desire.” This sort of “desire” he attributes to “violent and tempestuous passions.” In his “recapitulation” or summary of the work Burke is even clearer. He does not use the word “desire” at all, but says that the passion belonging to “the society of sex” is “called love, and it contains a mixture of

⁸⁸⁵ Indeed, in *Spectator* no. 413, Addison uses the language of erotic desire, deploying words like “relish,” “pursuit,” and “tempted” to describe a response to beauty. The final cause of the pleasures of the imagination, he says, is God, the “First Contriver,” who establishes pleasure in greatness so that we have “a just relish” in the contemplation of God’s being. Similarly, God gives us pleasure in the new or uncommon so that “he might encourage us in the pursuit after knowledge.” Further, conceiving the erotic effect of beauty in sexual terms, Addison says that one of the reasons that God makes beauty pleasant is so that “all creatures might be tempted to multiply their kind” (Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965], no. 413). Thanks to David Vander Meulen for bringing this passage to my attention.

⁸⁸⁶ Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 3.1, “Of Beauty,” 91.

lust; its object is the beauty of women. The other is the great society with man and all other animals. The passion subservient to this is called likewise love, but it has no mixture of lust, and its object is beauty.”⁸⁸⁷ Speaking of “perfectly beautiful bodies,” Burke manifestly eroticizes beauty: “Observe that part of a beautiful woman where she is perhaps the most beautiful, about the neck and breasts; the smoothness, the softness, the easy and insensible swell; the variety of the surface, which is never for the smallest space the same; the deceitful maze through which the unsteady eye slides giddily, without knowing where to fix, or whither it is carried.”⁸⁸⁸ So then, desire, in Burke’s usage, is for an object that enflames in us a vigorous, agitated, unwieldy appetite to possess it; desire is synonymous with lust.

Furthermore, it is notable that Burke cast the affective response to beauty in terms of the passion of love,⁸⁸⁹ which he defines in terms of *satisfaction*⁸⁹⁰—presumably the slaking of *some* form of desire. Furthermore, desire (even in his conception) is seen to be often concomitant or associated with beauty, not utterly excluded from it. Finally, in any case, I must observe that Burke does not relate desire to the notion of disinterestedness—a term he never uses in the *Enquiry*.

It is clear that the impetus for the development of the concept of disinterestedness in its eighteenth-century British context is religio-ethical concerns that touched on philosophical and theological anthropology, i.e., the question of human nature.⁸⁹¹ For these theorists, the same

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid., 1.18, “The Recapitulation,” 51.

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid., 3.15, “On Gradual Variation,” 114.

⁸⁸⁹ He says, “By beauty, I mean that quality, or those qualities in bodies, by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it” (ibid., 3.1, 91). Elsewhere, he says that “the appearance of beauty as effectually causes some degree of love in us, as the application of ice or fire produces the ideas of heat or cold” (ibid., 3.2, 92).

⁸⁹⁰ By love, he says, “I mean that satisfaction which arises to the mind upon contemplating anything beautiful” (ibid., 3.1, 91).

⁸⁹¹ For some of these thinkers, such as Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Reid, the link between religion, ethics, and taste is that they all proceed from an internal “sense” in people. For others, such as Addison, this link resides in the capacity of imagination. “Polite” people, i.e., those with cultured and refined taste, are well “mannered”

capacity in human beings that concerns religion and morality also concerns judgments of taste in matters (anachronistically and misleadingly identified as) “aesthetic,” including but not limited to judgments regarding the beautiful, the sublime, the fair, the charming, and, by the end of the century, the picturesque.⁸⁹² What was not under attack, nor even particularly in view, was the role of *desire* in religion, ethics, or aesthetics. That notion emerges in Edmund Burke and is totalized in Immanuel Kant.

3.3. Edwards’ Conceptions of Disinterestedness & Eros. To elucidate Edwards’ use of the term and concept of disinterestedness, I will distinguish it from (1) Kant’s conception of disinterest, (2) later (post-Kantian) conceptions of it, and (3) from the term as it was understood in the *New Divinity* that began to emerge in New England even during Edwards’ lifetime.

3.3.a. The Exclusion of Desire In Kant’s Conception of Disinterest. “Kant spoke the first rational word on aesthetics.”⁸⁹³ So says G. W. F. Hegel. There are, however, many antecedents, precursors, and influences to Kant’s aesthetic theories. As we have seen, conceptions of disinterest are initially developed in an eighteenth-century British context.⁸⁹⁴

socially, morally, and aesthetically. Addison says, “A man of a polite imagination is let into a great many pleasures, that the vulgar are not capable of receiving. He can converse with a picture, and find an agreeable companion in a statue. He meets with a secret refreshment in a description, and often feels a greater satisfaction in the prospect of fields and meadows, than another does in the possession. It gives him, indeed, a kind of property in everything he sees, and makes the most rude uncultivated parts of nature administer to his pleasures: so that he looks upon the world, as it were, in another light, and discovers in it a multitude of charms, that conceal themselves from the generality of mankind” (Addison and Steele, *Spectator*, no. 411, 3:538).

⁸⁹² William Gilpin (1724–1804) was a key figure in developing the concept of the Picturesque (see Gilpin, 1794, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape* [London: R. Blamire, 1794, originally, 1792]). Similarly, Uvedale Price (1747–1829) was a significant disputant in the “picturesque debate” of the 1790s (see Price, 1796, *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and Beautiful* [London: J. Mawman, 1810, originally, 1796]). Slightly later, Richard Payne Knight (1750–1824) makes much of the concept of the Picturesque (see *An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* [London: T. Payne, 1805]).

⁸⁹³ G. W. F. Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, 25 vols. (Stuttgart, 1927–40), vol. 19, 601. “Geschichte der Philosophie,” III, 3, B, 3.a. Cited in Katherine Everett Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), 321.

⁸⁹⁴ See, for instance, Howard Caygill, *Art of Judgment* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989); Theodore A Gracyk, “Kant’s Shifting Debt to British Aesthetics,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 26, no. 3 (1986): 204–17; Paul

Nonetheless, Immanuel Kant selectively gathered the nascent views of his immediate predecessors (particularly Burke⁸⁹⁵ and Hume⁸⁹⁶), consolidated and systematized them in a way that has had profound influence in aesthetics. Indeed, largely through Kant, the eighteenth century was to mark an epochal shift in Western aesthetics, not least of which is the reallocation to the concept of the sublime much of the affective effect that had previously been conceived as features of beauty.⁸⁹⁷ Arguably, however, Kant's greatest impact on aesthetic theory has centered in the concept of disinterest; the influence has been profound.

Kant says that the notion of disinterest "is of prime importance."⁸⁹⁸ However, precisely what he means by it has generated many interpretations. Kant conceives *disinterest* in terms of interest, as that which is "devoid of all interest."⁸⁹⁹ Robert Clewis' research has revealed five distinct senses in which Kant uses the term "interest,"⁹⁰⁰ and therefore five distinct senses of disinterest.⁹⁰¹ I will focus on *aesthetic* disinterest, and more specifically on disinterest as pertains

Guyer, *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Christian Helmut Wenzel, *An Introduction to Kant's Aesthetics* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005); Paul Guyer, ed., *Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment: Critical Essays* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Anthony Savile, *Kantian Aesthetics Pursued* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993).

⁸⁹⁵ Kant's 1764 treatise on aesthetics, *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime), closely follows Burke's 1757 *Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideal of the Sublime and Beautiful*. For more on Kant's relation to Burke, see Bart Vandenabeele, "Beauty, Disinterested Pleasure, and Universal Communicability: Kant's Response to Burke," *Kant-Studien* 103, no. 2 (2012): 207–233. Mendelssohn published a detailed review of Burke's book in 1758, Gotthold Lessing started but did not complete a German translation, and Christian Garve completed a translation in 1773, which was published by Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, Kant's own publisher in Riga" (207n1). See also Eva-Maria Tschurennev, *Kant und Burke. Kants Ästhetik als Theorie des Gemeinsinns* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1992).

⁸⁹⁶ Especially Hume's essay "On the Standard of Taste" (1757).

⁸⁹⁷ On this, Kant follows Burke, as did Thomas Reid in *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785).

⁸⁹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), §2, 205.

⁸⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁹⁰⁰ They are (1) pleasure in the object's existence; (2) rational or sensory desire, the satisfaction of which is pleasant; (3) self-interest: direct promotion of one's preservation, welfare, or happiness; (4) that by which reason becomes practical or determines the will: the attempt to achieve a moral or prudential end; and (5) active interaction or engagement with an object. Robert Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime and the Revelation of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 146–47.

⁹⁰¹ They are (1) not taking pleasure in the object's existence; (2) not having a rational or sensory desire; (3) not directly promoting one's preservation, welfare, or happiness; (4) not attempting to achieve a moral or prudential end; and (5) not being partial. *Ibid.*, 149.

to beauty, not the sublime. Furthermore, I will restrict my inquiry to the concept of desire in Kant's notion of disinterest.

“Interest,” Kant defines, “is what we call the liking we connect with the presentation of an object's existence. Hence such a liking always refers at once to our power of desire.”⁹⁰² From this, we can deduce the following about interest (*Interesse*):

- 1) Interest is a species of pleasure, satisfaction, or “liking.” (*Wohlgefallen*)
- 2) This pleasure requires the object's existence (*Existenz*), i.e., pleasure that one has when she perceives something that she believes actually exists, not a mere “appearance” of it.⁹⁰³
- 3) It is connected always, immediately, and integrally to the faculty or capacity of *desire* (*Begehrungsvermögen*).⁹⁰⁴

The significance of this definition is in the third aspect that,⁹⁰⁵ as Nick Zangwill summarizes, “interest” is “a pleasure that has some kind of necessary connection with a desire.”⁹⁰⁶ Interest for Kant, is a *desirous* pleasure; it is erotic.

In the “First Moment,” Kant establishes the *beautiful* as the object of *disinterested* (*uninteressiert*) liking, thereby circumscribing beauty from the realm of desire (*Begehr*).

Concluding that moment, he says, “Taste is the ability to judge an object, or a way of presenting

⁹⁰² Kant, Critique of Judgment, §2, 204.

⁹⁰³ Existence, we read later, is necessary for pleasure in the *agreeable*, which is rooted in the “interest in the senses” and for pleasure in the *good*, which is grounded in the “interest of reason.” For an interpretation and defense of this contested idea of Kant's, see Nick Zangwill, “Kant on Pleasure in the Agreeable,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 167–76.

⁹⁰⁴ Zangwill observes that in eighteenth-century German (more than in contemporary German), “*Interesse*” indicates a kind of pleasure that is not connected with desire (“Aesthetic Judgment,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [Summer 2013 Edition], ed. Edward N. Zalta, forthcoming, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/aesthetic-judgment/>).

⁹⁰⁵ The first aspect, that interest is a type of *Wohlgefallen*, is not a new insight. The second aspect is required by how Kant conceives the third.

⁹⁰⁶ Zangwill, “Kant on Pleasure,” 167.

it, by means of a liking or disliking *devoid of all interest*. The object of such a liking is called *beautiful*.”⁹⁰⁷ So then, the beautiful is the object of a disinterested pleasure;⁹⁰⁸ all desire is excluded.⁹⁰⁹

Part of Kant’s rationale for such a claim (the part drawing on his British sources) is fairly straightforward. If one enjoys a particular work of art because it is a sound financial investment, or because she may impress her friends as a cultured person, or because the artist was a dear friend, then such interest will cloud objective judgment through a predisposed bias. That is, if such is the case, one’s pleasure in the work does not stem from taste (*Geschmack*) alone; indeed a pure judgment of taste will be precluded.⁹¹⁰ “Everyone has to admit,” asserts Kant,

⁹⁰⁷ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 211.

⁹⁰⁸ Kant has a peculiar notion of pleasure. He argues that the pleasures enjoyed in *judgments of taste* are based on the experience of the harmony of the cognitive powers of imagination and understanding (see *Critique of Judgment* particularly §9, but also 44, 102, 190, 191, 197, 209, br. n19, 216–19, 244, 289, 292, 306, 223', and 224'). Though seemingly taking pleasure through a judgment concerning an external object, the person is actually taking pleasure through a judgment concerning him or herself. Aesthetic pleasure consists in a peaceful self-satisfaction born of the cooperation of the faculties. When one is aware of such a harmonious interplay, pleasure is experienced. This is recognized by the wish to perpetuate it. Kant explains: “Consciousness of a presentation’s causality directed at the subject’s state so as to *keep* him in that state, may here designate generally what we call pleasure” (*Critique of Judgment*, §10). So, for Kant, an awareness of a proper functioning of one’s faculties that one hopes will continue constitutes aesthetic pleasure. One of the oddities of pleasure is its deep and utterly subjective role in the human experience, which makes it difficult to argue about rationally. Nonetheless, I cannot identify much of what Kant posits in my own experience of pleasure. Having never, even upon reflection, located my own experiences of pleasure in the proper functioning of my faculties, I personally find Kant’s theory implausible, and suspect it is born more of a procrustean desire for systematic consistency in his philosophy than in an accurate phenomenological description of pleasure.

⁹⁰⁹ Almost all aesthetic theories *include* the phenomenon of pleasure. Kant’s innovation and radicality is the *exclusive* status of pleasure in identifying the beautiful and the consequent and systematic dissociation of beauty and desire. Having excluded desire, Kant restricts the affective aspect of aesthetic experience to pleasure. Kant situates his discussion in the Third Critique (from the very first paragraph) in terms of pleasure. While pleasure, says Kant (or any feeling, for that matter) cannot be defined (*Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*, pt. 2 of Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 2nd ed., ed. Mary J. Gregor, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996]), it is clear that his conception of pleasure differs from many others, e.g., Aristotle, in which pleasure is understood as the satisfaction, or coming to rest of the appetite. Significantly, Kant uses the word *Wohlgefallen* for the pleasure or satisfaction we take in the beautiful rather than *Vergnügen* (gratification, enjoyment, or delight) in discussions of aesthetic pleasure, but he does not conceive satisfaction as the slaking or the gratification of desire (c.f., the *Metaphysics of Morals*, in which Kant refers to disinterested pleasure as “passive satisfaction,” 116).

⁹¹⁰ At this point, for most twentieth-century thinkers, objections to the very existence of a faculty of taste emerge. Many eighteenth-century thinkers assumed its existence. Surely it is at least a logical possibility that “taste” is socially constructed, and therefore as “biased” as any other interest. If this is the case, Kant’s theory suffers a

that if a judgment about beauty is mingled with the least bit of interest then it is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste. In order to play the judge in matters of taste, we must not be in the least biased in favor of the thing's existence but must be wholly indifferent about it.⁹¹¹

Kant goes well beyond battling bias here. "It is worth noting," says Bart Vandenabeele, "that Kant's conception of interest is broader than the idea of self-interest that Kant's reference to the capacity of desire [*Begehrungsvermögen*] seems to suggest."⁹¹² Indeed. Kant opposes judgments of beauty not only to prejudice, but to *desire*, and to concern for the *existence* of the object. This leads him to distinguish the realm of beauty from that of the *agreeable* (i.e., that which is sensually pleasing, e.g., the pleasure taken in warmth on a cold day or food when we are hungry), and from that of the *good* (that which is pleasing morally and is discerned through reason). "Both the agreeable and the good refer to our power of desire," he says,

A judgment of taste, on the other hand, is merely *contemplative*, i.e., it is a judgment that is indifferent to the existence of the object: it [considers] the character of the object only by holding it up to our feeling of pleasure and displeasure.⁹¹³

crippling blow. For one thing, if taste does not exist objectively, then his arguments against both interest and universality suffer.

⁹¹¹ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §2, 205. At this point it would seem that Kant has begun with a common-sense observation and then extended it to a radical extreme. Presumably, one might check one's bias in ways that do not require one to be "indifferent" about the object in question. Surely one may be deeply moved by a work of art. Further, it seems counterintuitive to say that the subjective image is all that matters. Kant's doctrine that beauty engenders no interest or desire leads thinkers such as Paul Guyer to pronounce the theory "absurd" (see Guyer, "Disinterestedness and Desire in Kant's Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 36 (Summer 1978), 450.

⁹¹² Vandenabeele, "Beauty, Disinterested Pleasure," 210.

⁹¹³ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §5, 209. Earlier Kant asserts, "If we wish to decide whether something is beautiful or not, we do not use understanding to refer the presentation to the object so as to give rise to cognition; rather, we use imagination (perhaps in connection with understanding) to refer the presentation *to the subject and his feeling of pleasure or displeasure*" (ibid., §1, 204). For Kant, in all judgments of taste (of which the recognition of beauty is a particular case), we consider "the character of the object only by holding it up to our feeling of pleasure and displeasure" (ibid., §5, 209). In this, he is in keeping with both major philosophical strains of influence on his thought: Continental Rationalism and British Empiricism. While the attitude toward reason is different in each of these intellectual orientations, both conceive assessments of the beautiful in terms not of reason, but of pleasure (as opposed to pain). Leibnitz's disciple, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, who coined the term "aesthetic," presents it as appealing to the affective faculty of human psychology, in contradistinction

In other words, the discernment of the beautiful stems not from a desire to possess or consume (in which existence is necessary), but merely to behold (in which only the image is necessary). Oftentimes, Kant observes, we take greater aesthetic pleasure in, say, the reflection in a river of a building than in the building itself. Unlike the case of desire, the object is irrelevant to aesthetic pleasure, which is concerned with a subjective image.

At this point it would seem that Kant has begun with a common-sense observation and then extended it to a radical extreme.⁹¹⁴ He insists that pleasure in the beautiful must be “devoid of *all* interest”;⁹¹⁵ such judgments of taste cannot entail “the *least bit* of interest.”⁹¹⁶ Kant has entirely banished desire from the contemplation of beauty.

3.3.b. Post-Kantian Conceptions of Disinterest. Second, Edwards’ view of disinterest must be distinguished from later Kantian, Romantic, and “aesthetic” conceptions of it. Edwards’ understanding of disinterest bears little resemblance to Schiller’s *Bildung*,⁹¹⁷ Kierkegaard’s duty,⁹¹⁸ Schopenhauer’s will-lessness,⁹¹⁹ or Matthew Arnold’s “keeping aloof from what is

to reason. (For Baumgarten, *aesthetic* images are *clear but confused*; that is, they are immediately present but do not attain to the Cartesian/Leibnizian goal of being *clear and distinct* ideas, i.e., ideas of *reason*.) In so doing, he formulates his conception of affect solely in terms of pleasure and pain, locating aesthetic experience in the realm of pleasure (Baumgarten [1735], *Meditationes Philosophicae de Nonnullis ad Poema Pertinentibus*; published as *Reflections on Poetry* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954], §25). While, from different motivation, as we have seen, the same criteria—that of producing pleasure and pain—was held by many of the eighteenth-century British thinkers for establishing judgments of *taste*.

⁹¹⁴ Presumably, one might check one’s bias in ways that do not require one to be “indifferent” about the object in question. And it seems counterintuitive to say that the subjective image is all that matters. Should we destroy the original, if a good image can be made? Would we not care if the *people* we love and find beautiful did not actually exist?

⁹¹⁵ Kant, Critique of Judgment, §2, 205.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid., 211.

⁹¹⁷ See Friedrich Schiller, *Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1795), in J. C. F. von Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, ed. E. M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

⁹¹⁸ In Kantian fashion, Kierkegaard sees Christian love as essentially *disinterested*. Kierkegaard sees Christian love as “dethroning” erotic love and friendship. In fact, it “thrusts it down” (*Works of Love, Some Christian Reflections in the Form of Discourses*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong [New York: Harper & Row, 1962], 59).

⁹¹⁹ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, *passim*.

called ‘the practical view of things,’⁹²⁰ all of which eschew desire. As the concept of disinterest further developed in twentieth-century aesthetics, it bears even less resemblance to Edwards’ views, which have little to do with those views that follow in the wake of Kierkegaard, e.g., Brunner’s “obligation,”⁹²¹ Nygren’s *agape*,⁹²² and Reinhold Niebuhr’s “impossible possibility.”⁹²³ By the time notions such as Formalism in art⁹²⁴ or aesthetic disinterest emerge (conceived as entailing “aesthetic distance,”⁹²⁵ the “aesthetic attitude,”⁹²⁶ or “aesthetic detachment”⁹²⁷), even distant family resemblances with Edwards’ conception of disinterest cannot be found. Both nondesire and antidesire conceptions of disinterest are generally post-Kantian and entirely unknown to Edwards.

⁹²⁰ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 37. Regarding the rule of good criticism Arnold says, “The rule may be summed up in one word—*disinterestedness*. And how is criticism to show disinterestedness? By keeping aloof from what is called ‘the practical view of things’; by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches.”

⁹²¹ Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), 82.

⁹²² As we saw earlier, Nygren argues in *Agape and Eros* that the pernicious effect of such an intrusion has been the conflation of two separate conceptions of love, one Greek (*eros*) and one Christian (*agape*). Again, Nygren casts *eros* as a malign manifestation of human fallenness. It is irredeemably selfish. *Agape*, then, is tantamount to Kantian disinterest. This Kantian/Kierkegaardian understanding of love, as transmitted through Nygren, held the ascendancy for much of the twentieth century, and likely accounts for much Protestant lack of interest in theological aesthetics.

⁹²³ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1932), 19–25. Niebuhr speaks of *agape* as “the sublimation of egoism and the attainment of the sacrificial passion, the complete disinterestedness which the ethic of Jesus demands” (*An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1935], 19).

⁹²⁴ See Clive Bell, *Art* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1914), 13–37, repr. in *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology*, ed. George Dickie, Richard Sclafani, and Ronald Roblin ((New York: St. Martin’s, 1989).

⁹²⁵ Disinterestedness is often linked to the notion of aesthetic distance, as originally formulated by Edward Bullough, “‘Psychical Distance’ as a Factor in Art and as an Aesthetic Principle,” *British Journal of Psychology* 5 (1912), 87–117.

⁹²⁶ See D. Cooper, “The Aesthetic Attitude,” in *A Companion to Aesthetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). The concept of an “aesthetic attitude” has come under considerable attack in recent years. See, e.g., Dickie, “The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude,” 342–55.

⁹²⁷ Nick Zangwill has rightly observed that these twentieth-century expansions of the concept of disinterest are not (though they are often assumed to be) particularly Kantian. See Zangwill, *UnKantian Notions of Disinterest*, orig. publ. in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 1992, repr. in *Kant’s Critique of the Power of Judgment: Critical Essays*, ed. Paul Guyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

3.3.c. “Disinterested Benevolence” in the New Divinity. Finally, in the quest to gain an understanding of Edwards’ views of disinterest, I will distinguish them from those that emerged in a significant theological development in the congregationalism of New England from *c.* 1740 through the Second Great Awakening in the early decades of the nineteenth century.⁹²⁸ that of the *New Divinity* (sometimes referred to as “Hopkinsianism” or “Hopkintonianism” after Samuel Hopkins).⁹²⁹ Following in the wake of Edwards’ thought, and propounded by many of Edwards’ closest disciples, it was sometimes called the “Edwardean Divinity,” a term that acknowledges Edwards’ paternity while recognizing a difference in emphasis in the new thought that amounts to a significant departure from the “orthodox” Anglo-Calvinism of Edwards.⁹³⁰

“Disinterested benevolence” became a linchpin of the *New Divinity* thought of Joseph Bellamy and Hopkins.⁹³¹ This modification and expansion of a term infrequently used by Edwards came to have a distinctly non-Edwardsian meaning. The new conception banished any form of self-interest from Christian ethics. Sin came to be cast in terms of *selfishness* and conversely, holiness and Christian virtue were rooted in “disinterested benevolence,” construed as a good will to God and people (made in his image) that was exclusive of self-interest. Whereas Edwards, in keeping with Puritan eudaimonism, identified glorifying God with

⁹²⁸ See Joseph A. Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement: Calvinism, the Congregational Ministry, and Reform in New England between the Great Awakenings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian University Press, 1981); Mark Valeri, *Law and Providence in Joseph Bellamy’s New England: The Origins of the New Divinity in Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Douglas A. Sweeney and Allen C. Guelzo, eds., *The New England Theology: From Jonathan Edwards to Edwards Amasa Park* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006); Stephen Post, “Disinterested Benevolence: An American Debate Over the Nature of Christian Love,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 14 (Fall 1986).

⁹²⁹ In addition to Samuel Hopkins (1721–1803), some of its leading proponents were Joseph Bellamy (1719–1790), Jonathan Edwards, Jr. (1745–1801), Timothy Dwight, IV (1752–1817), Nathanael Emmons (1745–1840), Stephen West (1735–1819), and Asahel Nettleton (1783–1844).

⁹³⁰ The *New Divinity* reconceived some of the central tenets of Edwards’ brand of Calvinism that was rooted in Reformed Scholasticism and the Westminster Standards, including original sin, free will, vicarious substitutionary atonement, imputed righteousness, and eudaimonistic ethics.

⁹³¹ Bellamy and Hopkins played a major role in transcribing and publishing some of Edwards’ work posthumously, notably the *Charity* sermons and the two *Dissertations*.

enjoying God,⁹³² the *New Divinity* tended to set God's glory and human interest at odds, in an "either/or" relation. Rather than entertaining the notion that *some* forms of happiness may be the products of a rightly ordered and flourishing soul, human desire and pleasure were relegated to a self-love that was inherently likely to supplant the love of God. For Hopkins, self-love is the root of sin. In general, self-interest must be eradicated if one would have an unvitiated love of God. In an essay, "On Disinterested Affection," Hopkins distinguishes "self-love and a desire or *love of happiness*" from "disinterested benevolence."⁹³³ One *either* does her duty to God and others, *or* she pursues her own interests. In Hopkins, the dichotomy between God's glory and self-interest becomes so pronounced that one should be willing to suffer eternal damnation if it redounded more to God's glory. In *Dialogue between a Calvinist and a Semi-Calvinist*, Hopkins says,

I grant it is impossible to one who values himself and his own personal interest and happiness more than he does the glory of God, and the highest interest of his kingdom. And it is infallibly certain, that every one who lives and dies with such a disposition will and must be damned. But to him who loves God supremely, and desires his glory above all things, it is so far from being impossible to be willing to be damned, on supposition this is most for God's glory, that he could not will or choose any thing else. He must say, "Let God be glorified, let what will become of me." If he cannot say so, it is because his own interest and happiness are of more importance with him than the glory of God; or, in other words, because he is not a true friend, but an enemy, to God.⁹³⁴

As we shall see, "Disinterested benevolence," as conceived in the *New Divinity*, would be inconceivable to Edwards.

⁹³² Cf., the first question of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* of 1647: Q. 1. What is the chief end of man? A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

⁹³³ Samuel Hopkins, *The System of Doctrines, Contained in Divine Revelation, Explained and Defended...* in Two Volumes (Boston, 1811), 52–61 and 465ff.

⁹³⁴ Samuel Hopkins, Edwards Amasa Park, and Sewall Harding, *The Works of Samuel Hopkins, D.D.* (3 vols., Boston: 1854), 3, 143–57, 148.

3.4 Edwards' Conceptions of Disinterestedness.

I am now in position to explain Edwards' conceptions of disinterestedness with special attention to its relation to British views, to the self, to eros, and to benevolence.

3.4.a. Edwards' Conceptions of Disinterestedness and British Views. Edwards' views of disinterestedness are clearly influenced by the British thinkers, with whom he remained *au courant* throughout his life. Like many of them, his concerns are ethical and religious. Like them, Edwards is concerned with human nature as it relates to religion and morality. However, Edwards more commonly uses the term as an adjective than as a noun. Edwards (like the New Divinity theologians, but with quite different meaning) speaks of "disinterested benevolence" more than he does simply of "disinterestedness."⁹³⁵ Furthermore, as I have mentioned, taste is not a major category of thought for Edwards as it was for many of the British moralists. Edwards seems only to engage their notion of taste as a synonym for the moral sense. Consequently, his usage of the new concept of disinterestedness is more ethical than aesthetics; Edwards does not link disinterestedness per se integrally to the perception of beauty. Nonetheless, Edwards' usage of the term "disinterestedness" clearly follows early British moral philosophy—his use of the term can connote (1) the recognition of *inherent* value, not just an *instrumental* interest,⁹³⁶ (2) *fairness*, impartiality, or lack of bias;⁹³⁷ and (3) rising above *selfishness*. Given the equation of

⁹³⁵ Edwards uses the form "disinterestedness" only three times in his entire corpus.

⁹³⁶ Edwards says *disinterested* love "is [in] no way mercenary" (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 25, *Sermons and Discourses, 1743–1758*, ed. Wilson H. Kimnach [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006], 541ff). Edwards also opposes "a man's doing something purely to satisfy some sensitive appetite of his own, or to increase his own worldly profit" and "true *disinterested* benevolence" (*WJE* 21, 270). "A man of *disinterested* friendship," says Edwards, is one "who is a friend not to gain anything, but to benefit the object of his love" (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 24, *The Blank Bible*, ed. Stephen Stein [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006], 566).

⁹³⁷ This sense is usually applied to God. Edwards calls God a "disinterested" judge: "a perfectly wise, holy *disinterested* arbiter whose office it should be to regulate all things within the whole compass of existence according to the most perfect propriety" (cited in *WJE* 8, 8n9). Christ is identified in this sense as "some third being of perfect wisdom and rectitude, neither the Creator nor one of the creatures, that should be perfectly

selfishness and self-interest in the thought of the *New Divinity*, it is this third usage that requires clarification here.

3.4.b. Edwards' Conceptions of Disinterestedness and the Self. As I clarify Edwards' conception of disinterestedness in relation to the self, I note first that Edwards sets disinterestedness and *selfishness* in opposition, saying it is "so much above a selfish principle."⁹³⁸ In Sermon 7 in the *Charity and Its Fruits* series, "Charity Contrary to a Selfish Spirit," he defines selfishness (which he frequently associates with *pride*) as "an inordinate self-love,"⁹³⁹ and goes on to explain that it can be inordinate in two ways: "(1) The degree of self-love may be too great comparatively," i.e., one may love herself more than God and others,⁹⁴⁰ and "(2) A man's love to his own happiness may be inordinate in placing that happiness in things which are confined to himself"—the purview of one's love must not be restricted to one's self.⁹⁴¹ Original sin (resulting from the fall) disordered our loves such that the scope of our love is now often restricted to ourselves. Our problem is petty smallness—that we love little or nothing beyond ourselves, not that we love ourselves. He laments,

Immediately upon the Fall the mind of man shrunk from its primitive greatness and extensiveness into an exceeding diminution and confinedness. As in other respects, so in this, that whereas before his soul was under the government of that noble

indifferent and disinterested (WJE 8, 423). But Edwards also uses the term in this way for impartial human beings. In a letter asking for a neutral party to help with a conflict that emerged in Stockbridge, Edwards says, "What I then had in my mind, which I then supposed might have taken effect, was in being moved to some gentlemen of the best character and wholly impartial and *disinterested* and disengaged in the contention that had subsisted here, to come and settle here—And they should be entrusted in some degree with the care of our affairs" (WJE 16, 606).

⁹³⁸ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 7, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. Norman Pettit (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 264. Hereafter, WJE 7.

⁹³⁹ WJE 8, 255.

⁹⁴⁰ Edwards stresses that he does not mean by this that we love ourselves too much. He says, "That this inordinacy of self-love does not consist in our love of our happiness being absolutely considered in a too high degree. I do not suppose it can be said of any that their love to their own happiness, if we consider their love absolutely and not comparatively, is a thing liable to diminution or increase, as many other principles are." Rather his point is that we must love God and neighbor as ourselves.

⁹⁴¹ WJE 8, 256–57.

principle of divine love whereby it was, as it were, enlarged to a kind of comprehension of all his fellow creatures; and not only so, but was not confined within such strait limits as the bounds of the creation but was extended to the Creator, and dispersed itself abroad in that infinite ocean of good and was, as it were, swallowed up by it, and become one with it. But as soon as he had transgressed, those nobler principles were immediately lost and all this excellent enlargedness of his soul was gone and he thenceforward shrunk into a little point, circumscribed and closely shut up within itself to the exclusion of others. God was forsaken and fellow creatures forsaken, and man retired within himself and became wholly governed by narrow, selfish principles. Self-love became absolute master of his soul, the more noble and spiritual principles having taken warning and fled.⁹⁴²

For Edwards, the problem is not that human nature entails self-interest, but that human nature is fallen. His concern is not that people love themselves per se, but that their love can be “confined and limited to themselves exclusive of others. And this is selfishness. This is the thing most directly intended by that self-love which the Scripture condemns.”⁹⁴³

So then, while Edwards views selfishness as sin, he does not equate it with self-interest, as in the *New Divinity*. Edwards extols “disinterested” love but conceives it fundamentally differently. Edwards sees the desire for joy to be an essential feature of all rational creatures. It is inconceivable to Edwards (because it is incoherent from his perspective) that any sentient being could *will* at all—let alone love—“disinterestedly,” in the Hopkinsian sense, since the will generally (and love *a fortiori*) is always direct by desire, or “inclination.” He says,

A Christian spirit is not contrary to all self-love. It is not a thing contrary to Christianity that a man should love himself; or what is the same thing, that he should love his own happiness. Christianity does not tend to destroy a man’s love to his own happiness; it would therein tend to destroy the humanity. Christianity is not destructive of humanity. That a man should love his own happiness is necessary to his nature, as a faculty of will is;

⁹⁴² Ibid., 253.

⁹⁴³ Ibid., 257.

and it is impossible that it should be destroyed in any other way than by destroying his being. The saints love their own happiness; yea, those that are perfect in holiness.⁹⁴⁴

Beyond being incoherent and foreign to the nature of dispositional creatures, Edwards also found such a view to be inconsistent with the witness of Scripture. Among other passages he cites Matthew 19:19, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”⁹⁴⁵ The desire for happiness and salvation is, for Edwards, appropriate in that it is natural, rational, and scriptural. So then, while the relation of the *New Divinity* to Edwards’ views is clearly one of derivation, it is equally one of deviation. Edwards’ view of “disinterest” must not be confused with those of his disciples.

3.4.c. Edwards’ Conceptions of Disinterestedness and Eros. At the funeral of David Brainerd (the young missionary to the Native American Housatonic and Lenape people), Edwards gives a positive example of disinterested love. Applying the term to the deceased, Edwards says that Brainerd “seem[ed] to be carried beyond all private and selfish views being animated by a pure love to Christ, an earnest desire of his glory, and a disinterested affection to the souls of mankind.”⁹⁴⁶ Edwards frames disinterest in terms of an expansive, self-giving love that does not exclude desire. On the contrary, Edwards’ view of disinterest is *rooted* in eros. That which *grounds* a self-denying other-centeredness, free from partiality, is precisely the erotic love (i.e., the high esteem of the inherent, noninstrumental value) of something else. Edwards conveys that Brainerd’s prayers for his people were “disinterested.” In this journal entry we see that, far from being free of desire, Brainerd’s freedom “from selfish views” stemmed *from* his desires. He was “enlarged” in love (i.e., benevolent desire) for his “poor people.” He says,

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid., 254.

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁶ *WJE* 7, 532. Edwards transcribed and published Brainerd’s diary as *The Life of David Brainerd (WJE 7)*. This work was to have enormous influence on the nineteenth-century American religious imagination. See Joseph Conforti, “Jonathan Edwards’ Most Popular Work: ‘The Life of David Brainerd’ and Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Culture,” *Church History* 54, no. 2 (1985), 188–201.

Friday, August 2. In the evening I retired, and my soul was drawn out in prayer to God; especially for my poor people, to whom I had sent word that they might gather together that I might preach to 'em the next day. *I was much enlarged* in praying for their saving conversion; and scarce ever found *my desires* of anything of this nature so sensibly and clearly (to my own satisfaction) *disinterested, and free from selfish views*.⁹⁴⁷

Edwards says of Brainerd that his “disinterested affection to the souls of mankind” was rooted in “an *earnest desire*” for the glory of Christ,⁹⁴⁸ and at his funeral cast Brainerd’s disinterest in terms of “longing desires.”⁹⁴⁹ Elsewhere, Edwards speaks of a “disinterested Inclination & delight of soul,” expressly framing disinterest in terms of desire and delight.⁹⁵⁰ In the sermon “Christians a Chosen Generation,” Edwards describes “disinterested love and beneficence and Christian charity” in terms of “appetites,” “enjoyments,” “noble ambition,” “noble delights,” and “satisfactions.”⁹⁵¹ Edwards’ concern is not the eradication of selfishness as an *end* in itself but as a *means* of removing obstructions to *other*-centeredness. Selfishness is conceived as an acquisitive grasping at the expense of others rather than involvement of the interests of the self. The goal is *love*, not eradication of the self-interest. Edwards equates “disinterested love” and a “good will,” casting both in terms of “that which seeks the good of another.”⁹⁵² Christ, of course, is his chief model of disinterested love as *self-giving love*, a love that gives *to the point of death*, not seeking eradication of the self but the good of the other.⁹⁵³

3.4.d. Edwards’ Conceptions of Disinterestedness and Benevolence. Edwards’ concern is with *love*, as opposed to disinterested self-denial as an end in itself. Love is the *telos*;

⁹⁴⁷ *WJE* 7, 532.

⁹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 304.

⁹⁴⁹ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Online, Volume 44, Sermons* (Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University, 2008), L. 1v.

⁹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Sermon notes, 130. Eph. 5:1.

⁹⁵¹ *WJE* 17, 289.

⁹⁵² *WJE* 21, 320.

⁹⁵³ See e.g., Sermon notes for *Rev. 19:13* & 1114. *Acts 20:28(b)*, *WJE* 17.

disinterest is a means to that end. Benevolence, defined as “consent, propensity and union of heart,”⁹⁵⁴ is rooted in the nature of God, comprises true virtue, and extends in ever-growing “enlargement” until ultimately it extends to “Being-in-general.”⁹⁵⁵ Disinterested benevolence is simply unconstrained (by selfishness), enlarged, and unbounded love—what Edwards calls love of benevolence.

In Edwards’ formulation of the standard distinction between the love of complacency and love of benevolence,⁹⁵⁶ both forms of love entail *desire and delight* in the lover; however, the object of this desire and delight in the love of complacency is the “qualifications of the beloved,”⁹⁵⁷ or the “excellency” of the beloved,⁹⁵⁸ or as Edwards most frequently puts it, his or her “beauty.”⁹⁵⁹ The object of desire and delight in the love of benevolence, on the other hand, is the “prosperity,”⁹⁶⁰ “happiness,”⁹⁶¹ “well-being,”⁹⁶² or “the good of another”⁹⁶³—prior to any regard for its *beauty*.⁹⁶⁴ Summarizing the difference between the two kinds of love in *Charity*

⁹⁵⁴ *WJE* 8, 540.

⁹⁵⁵ See *The Nature of True Virtue*, in *WJE* 8.

⁹⁵⁶ Edwards addresses his formulation of the standard distinction between the love of complacency and love of benevolence most directly in three locations: the *Charity and Its Fruits* sermons (1738); the *Treatise on Grace* (c. 1739–1743); and *The Nature of True Virtue* (published posthumously in 1765 and, according to Thomas A. Schafer, probably written in 1753–1754. See *WJE* 8, 6).

⁹⁵⁷ *WJE* 21, 174.

⁹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵⁹ Sermon 15 in the *Charity and Its Fruits* series on 1 Corinthians 13 (*WJE* 8, 375ff). In the *Treatise on Grace* (c. 1739–1743), Edwards advances two common descriptions of the love of complacency, approving one and dismissing the other. He affirms that “by love of complacency be meant a relishing a sweetness in the qualifications of the beloved, and being pleased and delighted in his excellency,” but rejects a conception of the love of complacency as “that joy that the soul has in the presence and possession of the beloved,” noting that “The soul may relish the sweetness and the beauty of a beloved object, whether that object be present or absent, whether in possession or not in possession” (*WJE* 21, 174).

⁹⁶⁰ Sermon 15 in the *Charity and Its Fruits* series on 1 Corinthians 13 (*WJE* 8, 375).

⁹⁶¹ *WJE* 8, 542.

⁹⁶² *Ibid.*

⁹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁹⁶⁴ The love of benevolence can precede beauty, or even existence, in the object (in that it is God’s benevolence that bestows both beauty and existence; *ibid.*, 542–43).

and Its Fruits, Edwards says, “The love of benevolence is delighted in beholding the prosperity of another, as the love of complacency is delighted in viewing the beauty of another.”⁹⁶⁵

The love of benevolence, for Edwards, is the highest form of love; it is a *sine qua non* of Christian piety—a sacrificial love that places the good of the other above one’s own pleasure in an emulation of Christ. Edwards says that love of benevolence “is the main thing in Christian love, the most essential thing, and that whereby our love is most of an imitation of the eternal love and grace of God, and the dying love of Christ, which consists in benevolence or good will.”⁹⁶⁶

So Edwards prioritizes benevolence over complacency. Nonetheless, a few clarifications are in order. While Edwards does not equate the two forms of love as does Origen with *agape* and *eros*,⁹⁶⁷ neither does he conceive the two forms of love as mutually exclusive, or set them in opposition to each other as a Kierkegaardian “either/or,” or as does Nygren. On the contrary, Edwards is clear: “But this is to be observed, that there necessarily accompanies a love of benevolence, a love of appetite, or complacency; which is a disposition to desire or delight in beholding the beauty of another, and a relation to or union with him.”⁹⁶⁸ He also describes “true virtue” as entailing both types of love,⁹⁶⁹ and says that it “must necessarily have a supreme love

⁹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 375.

⁹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁹⁶⁷ Origen says, “So you must take whatever Scripture says about charity [*agape*] as if it had been said with reference to passionate love [*eros*], taking no note of the difference of terms; for the same meaning is conveyed by both. . . . So it makes no difference whether we speak of having a passion for God, or of loving Him; and I do not think one could be blamed if one called God passionate Love, just as John calls him Charity” (*Commentary on the Song of Songs*, 34–35). As Bernard McGinn has shown, one of the foundational hermeneutical principles in Origen’s treatise is that, in God, *eros* is inseparable from *agape*. See McGinn, *Foundations of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 44–48. See also McGinn, “God as Eros: Metaphysical Foundations of Christian Mysticism,” in *New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff*, ed. Bradley Nassif (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 189–209.

⁹⁶⁸ Miscellany 530, “Love to God. Self-Love,” *WJE* 18, 75.

⁹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 551. He says that true virtue consists “in benevolence to Being in general, and in that complacency in virtue, or moral beauty, and benevolence to virtuous being, must necessarily have a supreme love to God, both

to God, both of benevolence and complacency.”⁹⁷⁰ As love (i.e., true virtue, love to God and Being in general) grows, the love of benevolence and the love of complacency elide into one glorious form of love that marks the relations of heaven—“A World of Love,”⁹⁷¹ not only of benevolence, but also where, “as they are all lovely, so all see each other’s loveliness with answerable delight and complacency.”⁹⁷² This eschatological reality will then reflect the undivided love of the Trinity, which includes not only benevolence but complacency.⁹⁷³

Furthermore, while for logical and polemical reasons, Edwards stresses the love of benevolence in *The Nature of True Virtue*,⁹⁷⁴ when his focus is on religious psychology,⁹⁷⁵ he notes that the love of benevolence is dependent on a prior love of complacency. In the *Treatise on Grace*, Edwards says,

Love is commonly distinguished into a love of complacency and love of benevolence. Of these two, a love of complacency is first, and is the foundation of the other—i.e. if by a love of complacency be meant a relishing a sweetness in the qualifications of the beloved, and a being pleased and delighted in his excellency. This, in the order of nature, is before benevolence, because it is the foundation and reason of it. A person

of benevolence and complacency.” Elsewhere, Edwards speaks of “holy complacency of a benevolent and truly virtuous heart” (ibid., 614–15).

⁹⁷⁰ *WJE* 8, 551.

⁹⁷¹ Sermon 15 in the *Charity and Its Fruits* series on 1 Corinthians 13, *WJE* 8, 375.

⁹⁷² Ibid., 374.

⁹⁷³ The complacency or delight within Godself is an abiding theme in Edwards’ trinitarian theology. See, e.g., “This delight that the Father and the Son have in each other is not to be distinguished from their love of complacency one in another, wherein love does most essentially consist, as was observed before. The happiness of the Deity, as all other true happiness, consists in love and society” (*WJE* 21, 187); or “It appears that there must be more than a unity in infinite and eternal essence, otherwise the goodness of God can have no perfect exercise . . . Wherefore if this goodness be perfect, this delight must be perfect; because goodness and this delight are the same. But this delight is not perfect, except it be equal to the highest delight of that being; that is, except his inclination to communicate happiness be equal to his inclination to be happy himself . . . Wherefore, God must have a perfect exercise of his goodness, and therefore must have the fellowship of a person equal with himself” (Miscellany 96, “Trinity” [c. 1723–24]).

⁹⁷⁴ This is due, in part, to Edwards’ purposes in *The Nature of True Virtue*, which include the desire (1) to provide a careful, logical analysis of virtue, and (2) to show the necessity of God in true virtue. Both of these concerns lead him to emphasize the love of benevolence.

⁹⁷⁵ As in the *Treatise on Grace* and the “Controversies” notebook.

must first relish that wherein the amiableness of nature consists, before he can wish well to him on the account of that loveliness, or as being worthy to receive good.⁹⁷⁶

So then, without the love of complacency to get the ball rolling, a love of benevolence would never get off the ground.

Second, the love of benevolence is not devoid of desire; it is interested. This should be clear from what has been said above, especially when we recall that Edwards defines “Love of benevolence as that disposition which a man has who desires or delights in the good of another.”⁹⁷⁷

Third, both types of love are oriented toward beauty. While the love of benevolence is not dependent on the prior beauty of the beloved, the final object of the love of benevolence is beauty. This is for two reasons. First, the nature of God’s grace is to beautify that which has no beauty of its own (by means of creation) or that which has lost its beauty (by means of redemption).⁹⁷⁸ Second, Edwards’ point in the first two sections of *The Nature of True Virtue* is that the fundamental nature of true virtue is benevolence (i.e., “consent, propensity and union of heart”⁹⁷⁹) to Being in general (i.e., God and all of God’s rational creatures)—which necessarily includes benevolence to God, in whom being and beauty coincide.

⁹⁷⁶ *WJE* 8, 174.

⁹⁷⁷ *WJE* 8, 213.

⁹⁷⁸ See Miscellany 314, “Free Grace” (c. 1726): “But because God does everything beautifully, he brings about this their happiness which he determined, in an excellent manner; but it would be a grating, dissonant and deformed thing for a sinful creature to be happy in God’s love. He therefore gives them holiness, which holiness he really delights in—he has really complacency in them after he has given them beauty, and not before—and so the beauty that he gives, when given, induces God in a certain secondary manner to give them happiness. That is, he wills their happiness antecedently, of himself, and he gives them holiness that he may be induced to confer it; and when it is given by him, then he is induced by another consideration besides his mere propensity to goodness. For there are these two propensities in the divine nature: to communicate goodness absolutely to that which now is nothing, and to communicate goodness to that which is beautiful and holy, and which he has complacency in. He has a propensity to reward holiness, but he gives it on purpose that he may reward it; because he loves the creature, and loves to reward, and therefore gives it something that he may reward” (*WJE* 13, 395–96).

⁹⁷⁹ *WJE* 8, 540.

For Edwards, the erotic aspects of love may be distinguished but not separated from agapeistic characteristics of love. Rather, both features ground, enable, and strengthen each other in a dialectic fashion. The love of complacency, or eros, motivates us, *drawing us* to other beings as valuable for their own sake. The love of benevolence *obligates us* to seek the good of the other and delight in it. Edwards understands love, including both senses, primarily in terms of interpersonal relationship, rather than an intrapersonal moral commitment. Both aspects of love advance cordial consent, or harmonious relational connection and unity among beings.

In an essay entitled “On Immaculate Perception,” Friedrich Nietzsche unleashes a vitriolic attack on those who see in the experience of the beautiful a disinterested escape from desire. “Oh you besmirchers of noble names!” Zarathustra thunders. These he contemptuously refers to as “pure perceivers.” Interpreting their thoughts, he addresses them as follows:

“For me what is highest”—thus speaks your lying spirit to itself—“would be to look upon life without desire and not like a dog with my tongue hanging out:

To be content in viewing, with dead will ...

To me the dearest thing would be”—thus the seducer seduces himself—“to love the earth as the moon loves it, and to touch its beauty only with the eyes.

And to me the *immaculate* perception of all things would be that I desire nothing from things, except that I might lie there before them like a mirror with a hundred eyes.”⁹⁸⁰

⁹⁸⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, ed. Adrian Del Caro and Robert Pippin, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 96, emphasis original.

Making his point with characteristic flair, Nietzsche insists that aestheticist conceptions of beauty are enticing but deceptive.⁹⁸¹ From a distance they look like a “god’s soul.” In actuality, however, such views are revealed to be nothing other than “snake-filth and foul odor.”⁹⁸²

Before Burke and Kant, the experience of beauty was generally assumed to entail desire. It is only after the revolution of aesthetics in the eighteenth century that the views Nietzsche excoriates could gain plausibility. While Edwards might shrink from Nietzsche’s rancor, he would agree with much of his assessment of aestheticist conceptions of beauty and shares a belief that right conceptions of beauty entail eros. In this section, I have shown that Edwards uses the new concept of disinterestedness, adopting many of the insights of his British interlocutors without the exclusion of desire found in the conceptions of some other eighteenth-century thinkers. Edwards does not pit disinterest against eros. Like Plotinus or Augustine,⁹⁸³ Edwards envisions erotic love as ordering the soul. Captured by a vision of compelling beauty that makes a claim on one’s affections, one finds the self transcended and the affections “enlarged” to a benevolence to Being in general.⁹⁸⁴ For Edwards, the love of beauty is not only permitted in Christianity, it is the very mark of it—for Edwards conceives conversion as an aesthetic reordering to the love of true beauty.

⁹⁸¹ By “aestheticist” conceptions of beauty, I mean those stemming from Kantian notions of disinterested pleasure, including most of the German Idealist tradition and continuing in some significant strands of twentieth-century aesthetics.

⁹⁸² Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 97.

⁹⁸³ In the Sixth *Ennead*, Plotinus speaks of the “delicious trouble” that comes in the apprehension of beauty because of its reordering demands on our lives, and says, “All other loves than this he must despise, and disdain all that once seemed fair.” Cf. Augustine’s notion of the *ordo amoris* or *order caritas*.

⁹⁸⁴ Here I follow the ordering of complacency before benevolence as described in the *Treatise on Grace*, rather than the reverse ordering advanced in *The Nature of True Virtue*.

4. CONVERSION AS AN AESTHETIC REORDERING

As I mention in the opening of this chapter, “conversion” is of paramount concern to Edwards both as theologian and as pastor.⁹⁸⁵ Therefore, clarity on what constitutes conversion was also of fundamental concern. In Edwards’ religious milieu, getting this wrong—and therefore being falsely assured that one is beloved of God—was seen as not only possible, but also a common phenomenon.⁹⁸⁶ At this point in this chapter it is not clear that Edwards conceives conversion as consisting in *an aesthetic reordering of eros to true beauty*. This aesthetic reordering, or conversion to True Beauty, entails at least three aspects: (1) a new *perception* of beauty, (2) a new *prioritizing* of beauty, and (3) a new *participation* in beauty.

4.1 Perceiving Beauty.

Edwards’ epistemology, influenced by Locke and Hutcheson, holds that perception originates in a sense. Therefore, the perception of *beauty* requires a *sense* capable of apprehending it. Edwards develops these notions in dialogue with eighteenth-century British moral philosophy, in which *taste* and *sensibility* were major emerging concepts. By this time, some rationalist aesthetics had departed from its German roots,⁹⁸⁷ coming to view judgments of

⁹⁸⁵ This concern, although in different ways, marked both the Puritans before Edwards and the Evangelicals after him.

⁹⁸⁶ This possibility was seen as common due to self-deception stemming from both the dark blindness of the postlapsarian human condition and the malicious work of the devil.

⁹⁸⁷ Seventeenth-century Continental aesthetics, born in the intellectual context of Enlightenment Rationalism, did not believe that beauty was apprehended rationally. Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646–1716), whom Frederick Beiser calls “the grandfather of German aesthetics” (*Diotima’s Children: German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2011], 31), says, “We have no rational knowledge of beauty” (cited in Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *History of Six Ideas: An Essay in Aesthetics* [Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1980], 150). He claims that we can recognize something as beautiful, but “cannot explain why it is so” (ibid.). Following this, Christian Wolff (1679–1754) observed that our knowledge of *particulars* (actual things, not the mental concept of them) is never clear and distinct. Unlike abstractions, which *are* rational in their origin, particular existing things present themselves *to the senses*. Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–1762), later coined the term “aesthetic” to designate that realm of sense-related human experience that is undeniable, but is not within the grasp of reason. For him, aesthetic images are *clear but confused*; that is, they are immediately self-evident as beautiful, but not clearly explainable by ideas of *reason*

beauty as judgments of reason,⁹⁸⁸ believing that we discern things to be beautiful through the faculty of reason—which typically involves deploying a *method* by which we infer from principles or apply concepts.⁹⁸⁹ Similarly, the ethical rationalism of thinkers like Ralph Cudworth, William Wollaston, Samuel Clarke, and John Balguy sought to locate the ground of morality in reason alone. Mathematics was a favored analogy for moral reasoning among the moral rationalists. Many of the eighteenth-century British thinkers counter this rationalist perspective by arguing that moral and aesthetic judgments are immediate, i.e., not mediated through concepts by the faculty of reason. This sentimentalist moral philosophy locates value judgments concerning the good and the beautiful not in the faculty of reason, but in the “sentiments.”⁹⁹⁰ One impetus to the rise of the notion of taste is rooted in empiricist concerns to attend to experience, as well as reason, in judgments of morality and beauty.

While the notion of taste per se does not play a major role in Edwards’ thought, and while Edwards’ notion of affections shows little influence from theories of taste rooted in

(Reflections on Poetry [Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus], trans. Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954], 42).

⁹⁸⁸ Rationalistic thought tends to make a hard distinction between “understanding” and “sensibility”; sensory perception is held in comparatively low esteem since the senses can err and that which is apprehended by the senses can never yield complete knowledge. When we look at a tree, for instance, we cannot see the back, or the molecules of which it is composed, or what is inside. But a rational concept, like the idea of a circle, is clear and distinct. Everything is understood. Nothing is unclear.

⁹⁸⁹ By the dawn of the eighteenth century, Rationalist aesthetics were pushed to an ideological extreme in France by “les géomètres,” or geometers—literary theorists such as Jean Terrasson and Antoine Houdar de La Motte, who sought to apply to literature the rationalist rigor and methodology that Descartes had brought to physics. In 1715 Terrasson claims, “The geometric approach is certainly quite as valuable as that of literary commentary ... There is no topic or matter that should escape the most rigorous examination: the art of poetry has its own axioms, its own theorems, corollaries, and demonstrations; and though its forms and terms may appear in a different guise, it is always fundamentally the same steps of reasoning, the same method, however adorned they be, that result in true proofs” (Larry Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient: Literature & History in Early Modern France* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011], 156).

⁹⁹⁰ For more on the early modern British debate about the foundation of morality, see Michael B. Gill, “Moral Rationalism vs. Moral Sentimentalism: Is Morality More Like Math or Beauty?” *Philosophy Compass* 2, no. 1 (2007): 16–30.

*imagination*⁹⁹¹ or *association*,⁹⁹² greater influence on Edwards may be found in *internal sense* theories of taste.⁹⁹³ Francis Hutcheson, for instance, locates human moral and aesthetic judgments in a “sense” beyond the five typical senses that operates analogously to them. We perceive both the beauty and the morality of actions *immediately* (i.e., as we perceive color, temperature, texture, etc., not by ratiocination or an act of the will), by *natural* necessity,⁹⁹⁴ and recognize goodness and beauty (or their opposites) according their tendency to produce pleasure (or pain). “Taste,” then, is a *sentiment*, issuing from an innate sense.⁹⁹⁵

⁹⁹¹ Some thinkers, e.g., Joseph Addison and Edmund Burke, ground taste in the *imagination* (as distinct from reason). Edwards makes clear in *Original Sin* that the imagination is a highly fallible “faculty” (see also *WJE* 2, 210ff). Edwards’ view of the “imagination” seems to be somewhat like Hume’s, seeing it as synonymous with “fancy.” For Addison’s theory of taste, see his 1712 “Essay on the Pleasures of the Imagination” in Addison and Steele, *Spectator*, nos. 409 and 421. Addison describes “taste” as “that faculty of soul, which discerns the beauties of an author with pleasure, and the imperfections with dislike” (Addison and Steele, *Spectator*, no. 409). This early definition, while it said little about the *nature* of the faculty of taste, set the ball rolling in British thought concerning taste. In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (published in 1757/1759), Burke adapts Addison’s views of the imagination. There is no evidence Edwards read Burke, and given the dates of publication I find it highly unlikely.

⁹⁹² Other British thinkers, e.g., Alexander Gerard (see Gerard’s 1759 *Essay on Taste*) and Archibald Alison (see Alison’s 1790 *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*) formulate their notion of taste in terms of psychological *association* (also distinct from reason). In *associationist* views, we find those things beautiful and good that we associate with other experiences that promote pleasure or alleviate pain. These views, however, postdate Edwards. Some of Alison’s predecessors are discussed in Steven A. Jauss, “Associationism and Taste Theory in Archibald Alison’s Essays,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64, no. 4 (Autumn 2006): 415–28. Early versions of *associationism* can be found in Hutcheson (see Peter Kivy, *The Seventh Sense*, ch. 10, “The Rise of Association”). While Edwards does not have an *associationist* theory of taste, we can see a Hutchesonian style of *associationist moral reasoning* in *The Nature of True Virtue* when Edwards says, “It has also been observed, how that virtue consisting in benevolence is approved, and vice consisting in ill will is disliked, from the influence of self-love, together with association of ideas, in the same manner as men dislike those qualities in things without life or reason, with which they have always connected the ideas of hurtfulness, malignancy, perniciousness; but like those things with which they habitually connect the ideas of profit, pleasantness, comfortableness, etc. This sort of approbation or liking of virtue, and dislike of vice, is easily mistaken for true virtue, not only because those things are approved by it that have the nature of virtue, and the things disliked have the nature of vice, but because here is much of resemblance of virtuous approbation, it being complacence from love; the difference only lying in this, that it is not from love to Being in general, but from self-love” (*WJE* 8, 613).

⁹⁹³ There is evidence from Edwards’ *Catalogue of Books* and his writings that he read the early Moral Sense theorists, e.g., Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury; Francis Hutcheson; George Turnbull; David Hume; and Henry Home, Lord Kames. The views of both Thomas Reid and Adam Smith (who might be classified as *later* Moral Sense theorists) both postdate Edwards.

⁹⁹⁴ Here Hutcheson, with most of the British moralists (however they conceive taste), follows Shaftesbury, who says, “In the very nature of things there must of necessity be the foundation of . . . taste” (*Characteristics*, 337).

⁹⁹⁵ Hutcheson explains, “This superior Power of Perception is justly called a Sense, because of its Affinity to the other Senses in this, that the Pleasure does not arise from any Knowledge of Principles, Proportions, Causes, or

Edwards was familiar with Hutcheson's moral philosophy⁹⁹⁶ from at least 1738,⁹⁹⁷ and his notion of sensibility adopts the language that was in the air, even if not assigning the same meanings to the words. He speaks of a "moral sense" and grasps the view of "many late writers" that

we are born into the world with principles of virtue; with a natural prevailing relish, approbation, and love of righteousness, truth, and goodness, and of whatever tends to the public welfare; with a prevailing natural disposition to dislike, to resent and condemn what is selfish, unjust, and immoral; a native bent in mankind to mutual benevolence, tender compassion, etc.⁹⁹⁸

Edwards, however, rejects the view of a "moral sense that is so much insisted on in the writings of many of late"⁹⁹⁹ (by which he means at least those of Hutcheson and Shaftesbury), as vitiated by "some confusion in their discourses on the subject."¹⁰⁰⁰ For Edwards the moral sense is *conscience* or a "sense of justice," and a true but secondary good that cannot, however, animate a

the Usefulness of the Object; but strikes us at first with the Idea of Beauty. . . . And further, the ideas of Beauty and Harmony, like other sensible Ideas, are necessarily pleasant to us, as well as immediately so" (*An Inquiry into the Original*, 25). See also Hutcheson, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and the Affections* [1728; Menston, Yorkshire: Scolar Press, 1972], 101–2].

⁹⁹⁶ For more on Hutcheson, see Luigi Turco, "Moral Sense and the Foundations of Morals," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Alexander Broadie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 136–56; David Allen, *Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Longman, 2002), 137–38; and George Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

⁹⁹⁷ Hutcheson advanced his Moral Sense theory chiefly in *An Inquiry Concerning the Original of Our Ideas of Virtue or Moral Good* (1725; Treatise 2 of *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*) and *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations Upon the Moral Sense* (1728). Edwards lists both works in his Catalogue of Books (WJE 26, 258). Paul Ramsey dates the earliest of these references to Hutcheson to autumn 1738 (WJE 8, 703). Edwards also notes that George Turnbull (whom Edwards esteemed highly) frequently cited Hutcheson on the passions "with great approbation" (WJE 26, 289). Edwards also makes significant mention of Hutcheson in *Miscellanies* 1289, 1291, and 1356 (WJE 23, 233, 234, 599).

⁹⁹⁸ WJE 3, 433.

⁹⁹⁹ Edwards, *The Nature of True Virtue*, in WJE 8, 596.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Ibid.* Edwards accepts a "moral sense which is natural to mankind" conceived as "natural conscience," but rejects the idea that conscience is a "disposition to true virtue." For more on Edwards' view of Scottish moral sense philosophy, see Paul Ramsey in WJE 8, appendix 2, "Jonathan Edwards on Moral Sense, and the Sentimentalists," 689–705. See also Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards' Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

love to Being in general.¹⁰⁰¹ Similarly, Edwards can speak of natural moral taste but contrasts it with gracious *spiritual* taste. Whereas most sentimentalist theorists envisioned a faculty of taste that was innate and could be developed, Edwards conceived *spiritual* taste as a gracious work of the Holy Spirit. Edwards' sensibility pertains not to a "moral sense," but a *spiritual sense*. Redeemed *affections*, then, are an expression of this spiritual sense.

Fundamental differences notwithstanding, Edwards' notion of "sense" does bear some affinity with Hutcheson's. First, Edwards understands the purview of this sense to be moral and aesthetic pleasure and pain. He also understands it to be "internal," in that it is perceived by the mind, rather than the external, bodily senses.¹⁰⁰² And, while not unrelated to the intellect and the will (as I showed in my discussion of Edwards' faculty psychology), the spiritual sense does not to issue from discursive reason or moral choice, but is perceived immediately and passively. "It is evident that the way we come by the idea of beauty," says Edwards, "is by immediate sensation ... and not by finding out by argumentation any consequences ... any more than tasting the sweetness of honey, or perceiving the harmony of a tune, is by argumentation on connections and consequences."¹⁰⁰³ Elsewhere Edwards says, "The perceiving of spiritual beauty and excellency no more belongs to reason, than it belongs to the sense of feeling to perceive colors, or to the power of seeing to perceive the sweetness of food."¹⁰⁰⁴

So then, Edwards absorbs and adapts both some of the language and some of the substance of his intellectual context as he develops his conception of sensibility and the

¹⁰⁰¹ See *WJE* 6, 365–66. See also "That moral sense which is natural to mankind, so far as it is disinterested, and not founded in association of ideas, is the same with this natural conscience" (*WJE* 8, 596) and the "Controversies" where Edwards says, "Hence natural conscience, or that moral sense that all intelligent creatures, good and bad, possess, is not the same with a love of true virtue as such" (*WJE* 27, 185).

¹⁰⁰² As Paul Ramsey observes, "The notion of a sense or senses other than the five senses that perceive our physical environment was never absent from Edwards' thought" (*WJE* 8, 697).

¹⁰⁰³ *Ibid.*, 98–99.

¹⁰⁰⁴ *WJE* 17, 422–23.

affections that issue from it. For Edwards, however, the perception of beauty comes neither through reason (as for the rationalists) nor from an innate natural sense (as for the Moral Sense theorists). Rather, the apprehension of spiritual beauty is “given immediately by God, and not be obtained by natural means.”¹⁰⁰⁵ It comes through “an entirely new kind of perception or sensation ... a new spiritual sense ... or a principle of new perception or spiritual sensation, which is in its whole nature different from any former sensation of the mind.”¹⁰⁰⁶ For Edwards, only the regenerate are graced with this new aesthetic *visio*. “Natural men may have conceptions of many things about spiritual affections: but there is something in them which is as it were the nucleus, or kernel of them, that they have no more conceptions of than one born blind has of colors.”¹⁰⁰⁷ This is evident in the 1734 sermon “A Divine and Supernatural Light,” which proffers an Edwardsian take on a basically Augustinian conception of illumination.¹⁰⁰⁸ “The special work of the Spirit of God,” Edwards instructs, “or that which is peculiar to the Saints, consists in giving the sensible knowledge of the things of religion with respect to their spiritual good or evil; which indeed does all originally consist in a sense of the spiritual excellency, beauty, or sweetness, of divine things, which is not by assisting natural principles, but by infusing something supernatural.”¹⁰⁰⁹

It is not that the regenerate are given some new “faculty of understanding” that the unregenerate lack. Rather, the fallen nature of the regenerate is restored. “This new spiritual sense, and the new dispositions that attend it, are no new faculties,” says Edwards, “but are new

¹⁰⁰⁵ *WJE* 2, 421.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *WJE* 2, 205, 206. Edwards uses various synonyms for this “new spiritual sense.” He speaks of “the sense of the heart” (*WJE* 17, 422), and in the *Personal Narrative* he speaks of a “new sense” (*WJE* 4, 792) and “new sort of affection” (*ibid.*, 793), and a “new kind of apprehensions and ideas of Christ, and the work of redemption” (*ibid.*).

¹⁰⁰⁷ *WJE* 2, 208.

¹⁰⁰⁸ *WJE* 17.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Edwards, Miscellany 782, “Ideas. Sense of the Heart. Spiritual Knowledge or Conviction. Faith,” *WJE* 18, 452ff.

principles of nature.”¹⁰¹⁰ Michael McClymond overstates the case when he writes that “the presence or absence of the spiritual sense creates an epistemological cleavage between the regenerate and the unregenerate” such that they “live in two altogether different worlds.”¹⁰¹¹ The “unregenerate” often recognize the beautiful when they see it. To be moved by the glories of the mountains or the ocean, or the splendor of the Renaissance polyphony of Gregorio Allegri’s *Miserere mei, Deus*, or the wondrous beauty of children does not require a new spiritual sense. Recognition of secondary beauty is endemic to human nature, fallen or not. However, to rejoice in these things *and* in God, and to perceive *primary beauty* evinces the reception of a new sense of the heart. All humans can experience the love of complacency in the presence of the beauty they perceive, but to perceive true beauty and respond not only with a love of complacency, but also a love of benevolence, they must be enlivened by this new aesthetic sensibility, and is constitutive of regeneration.¹⁰¹²

Ultimately, he says, “To see the beauty and loveliness of spiritual things ... depends on the sense of the heart.”¹⁰¹³ An understanding of Edwards’ conception of “the new sense” will help elucidate his aesthetics of conversion. For a season in Edwards scholarship, assumptions

¹⁰¹⁰ *WJE* 2, 206. Here we are reminded of a debate that occurs in Plato’s *Symposium*: Pausanias, trying to account for both lofty and degrading experiences of eros, posits that there are two kinds of eros, one for a higher beauty and one for a more base beauty. Edwards would agree with the physician Eryximachus that there are not two kinds of affection and two kinds of beauty, but simply a healthy and a sick form of eros.

¹⁰¹¹ Michael McClymond, *Encounters with God: An Approach to the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 9.

¹⁰¹² Here McClymond summarizes well when he says, “The regenerate and the unregenerate alike have mental notions or ideas of God, conveyed to them through the Word of God or by other means. Yet only the regenerate perceive the divine excellency, and the unregenerate remain wholly insensible to it. The regenerate and the unregenerate alike possess the natural faculty of reason, and both employ their reason with respect to spiritual things. Yet only the regenerate receive that divine and supernatural light that enable their natural reason to see God as God truly is. The regenerate and unregenerate alike receive the influences of the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit does not act only on the elect. Yet only the regenerate have the Spirit communicated in such a way that the Spirit becomes united with them and acts in and through them as a ‘new vital principle.’ The regenerate and the unregenerate alike have affective sensibility, and both experience the “sense of the heart with respect to the objects that engage them. Yet only the regenerate have that ‘spiritual sense’ or ‘new sense’ that consists in ‘delight’ and in a ‘sweet sense’ of God and spiritual things” (ibid., 21).

¹⁰¹³ *WJE* 17, 422.

that “sense” bore unique meaning in Edwards (possibly even presenting a hermeneutical key to his thought) framed understandings of it. We see strands of this in Perry Miller,¹⁰¹⁴ Roland Delattre,¹⁰¹⁵ and Conrad Cherry.¹⁰¹⁶ John E. Smith goes so far as to say,

We shall be in no danger of exaggeration if we say that this new sense represents the unique contribution of the Affections; no idea in all of Edwards’ works is more original and no doctrine was more far reaching in its influence upon the course of Puritan piety.¹⁰¹⁷

Such claims usually emphasize some aspect of Edwards’ appropriation of Lockean epistemological psychology, often in ways that eclipse Edwards’ theological concerns and heritage. While Locke’s sensationalist psychology and British sentimentalist epistemology surely influenced Edwards, Conrad Cherry,¹⁰¹⁸ Terrence Erdt,¹⁰¹⁹ and then William Wainwright¹⁰²⁰ provided a corrective emphasis that recent scholarship has followed by showing that Edwards swims in an Augustinian-Calvinistic-Puritan current, and develops his “sense of the heart” from those resources at least as much as he did from his contemporary philosophical sources.

First, “the heart,” as a biblical trope, became central in much of Christianity, but notably in its Reformed¹⁰²¹ strands. As we have seen, for Edwards and much of this tradition, it is closely associated with *the will*. Norman S. Fiering summarizes well, saying that, from this perspective,

¹⁰¹⁴ Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 252. Perry Miller, *The New England Mind, the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 281–85. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, eds., *The Puritans*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 39. Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*, 179, 181.

¹⁰¹⁵ Roland André Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards; an Essay in Aesthetics and Theological Ethics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968).

¹⁰¹⁶ Cherry, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 2, 98–99.

¹⁰¹⁷ *WJE* 2, 30.

¹⁰¹⁸ Cherry, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*.

¹⁰¹⁹ Terrence Erdt, “The Calvinist Psychology of the Heart and the ‘Sense’ of Jonathan Edwards,” *Early American Literature* 13, no. 2 (Fall 1978): 165–80, accessed March 16, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25070880>.

¹⁰²⁰ See William Wainwright, “Jonathan Edwards and the Sense of the Heart,” *Faith and Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (1990): 43–62. This is an earlier version of Wainwright, *Reason and the Heart: A Prolegomenon to a Critique of Passional Reason* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

¹⁰²¹ Old Light rationalists notwithstanding, the Puritan tradition tends very much to emphasize “the heart.” This is true even in seventeenth-century Reformed Scholasticism, which, more than is sometimes recognized, represents a fusion of rationalism and piety.

“the heart” indicates “the inner essence of the whole man, the battleground of God and the devil.”¹⁰²²

Likewise, both spiritual sensibility and sensate metaphors abound in the Augustinian-Calvinistic-Puritan. Sight (and the light that enables it) are perhaps the primary Augustinian images for spiritual perception.¹⁰²³ In a locution typical of him, Augustine combines aesthetics, the heart, and sight, when he says that beauty “appeals to the eye of the heart.”¹⁰²⁴ Calvin often follows Augustine in these images of spiritual illumination.¹⁰²⁵ However, Calvin’s preferred sensual image for spiritual experience is not visual, but gustatory.¹⁰²⁶ His characteristic term is *suavitas*, or sweetness. The motif of “taste” became standard in both Puritan theology and spirituality.¹⁰²⁷ Edwards draws copiously on both images of illuminated sight (e.g., in the sermon “A Divine and Supernatural Light”)¹⁰²⁸ and taste (e.g., the sweetness of honey as an image of spiritual pleasure in the same sermon). So then, while Edwards incorporates contemporary philosophy in his conception of sensibility, his aims—as always—are religious, and his

¹⁰²² Norman S. Fiering, “Will and Intellect in the New England Mind,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd series, 29, no. 4 (October 1972): 529.

¹⁰²³ Regarding this, Hans Urs von Balthasar observes, “Seeing, wanting to see and being able to see are for Augustine the essence of knowledge” (*The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Volume II: Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989], 95). Likewise, Balthasar argues that in theological aesthetics, *vision* and *faith* are synonymous.

¹⁰²⁴ Psalm 32:6 (exposition 2), in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Expositions of the Psalms 1–32*, pt. 3, vol. 15, trans. Maria Boulding, ed. John E. Rotelle (New York: New City Press, 2000), 32:6.

¹⁰²⁵ E.g., Calvin says, “Indeed, the Word of God is like the sun, shining upon all those to whom it is proclaimed, but with no effect among the blind. Now, all of us are blind by nature in this respect. Accordingly, it cannot penetrate in to our minds unless the Spirit, as the inner teacher, through his illumination makes entry for it” (*Institutes*, 3.2.34).

¹⁰²⁶ Shifting from sight to taste in one sentence Calvin says, “And man’s understanding, thus beamed by the light of the Holy Spirit, then at last truly begins to taste [*gustare incipit*] those things which belong to the Kingdom of God, having formerly been quite foolish and dull in tasting them” (ibid.).

¹⁰²⁷ Examples abound, but even in the most scholastic of the Reformed symbols, the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, prayers are made that it will yield “an inward, a *savoury*, an heart knowledge” (first preface, “To the Christian Reader, Especially Heads of Families”). See Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker, eds., *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001).

¹⁰²⁸ *WJE* 17, 405–26.

conception continues in the trajectory of his own theological tradition. Edwards' contribution consists largely in gathering and developing the often inchoate instincts of his tradition into an *expressly aesthetic* conception of regeneration.

For Edwards, the new sense given by the Holy Spirit in conversion is oriented to the perception of spiritual beauty. Beauty is the horizon of the religious affections. Edwards' work by that name is replete with the language of beauty.¹⁰²⁹ The "immediate object of this spiritual sense," claims Edwards, "is the beauty of holiness."¹⁰³⁰ Earlier he had described it as "spiritual excellency,¹⁰³¹ beauty, or sweetness of divine things."¹⁰³² Conversion then, infuses a new sense that perceives and loves true beauty.

4.2 Prioritizing Beauty.

It is not impossible for us to imagine that a new love could enable new vision. As Iris Murdoch observes, "I can only choose within the world I can see," noting that seeing requires "attention" or "looking."¹⁰³³ Similarly, Martha Nussbaum illustrates in *Love's Knowledge* that love (valuing and desiring something, i.e., seeing it as beautiful) focuses our attention in a new way. Certain truths about human life, she claims, can only fittingly and accurately be apprehended *aesthetically*.¹⁰³⁴ Edwards agrees, but also believes the converse is true.¹⁰³⁵ The new ability to see beauty reorders—through revaluation (an *Umwertung aller Werte*, if we

¹⁰²⁹ Forms of the word "beauty" occur 194 times in the *Religious Affections*; forms of "sweetness" 177 times; "excellency" 113 times; "amiableness" 47 times; "loveliness" 38 times; "pleasing" 11 times; "delightful" 4 times, and "complacence" 4 times.

¹⁰³⁰ *WJE* 2, 260.

¹⁰³¹ "Excellency" is a favorite word of Edwards and usually serves as a general synonym for beauty.

¹⁰³² Miscellany 782. John E. Smith notes that Miller sees Miscellany 782 as an initial attempt to explore the subject matter of the *Religious Affections*. See Smith, Editor's Introduction, *WJE* 2, 52.

¹⁰³³ Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 36–37.

¹⁰³⁴ Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹⁰³⁵ In the language of some Phenomenology, we might say that "intention" and "intuition" join in human perception.

will)—human affections or loves. Here Edwards adapts the basic Augustinian notion of the *ordo amoris*.

The centrality of beauty in true Christianity, for Edwards, is evident in that virtue, holiness, justice, and all human goods are forms of beauty. Conversion is understood in aesthetic terms as a reorientation of tastes to and by beauty. A sense of beauty is a *sine qua non* of holiness, joy, and mystical union with Christ. Further, as Roland Delattre summarizes, “Beauty is for Edwards the key to the structure and dynamics of the moral and religious life.”¹⁰³⁶ For Edwards, following the basic Reformed *ordo salutis* in which justification precedes and enables sanctification, ethical reordering is subsequent to aesthetic reordering.

4.3 Participating in Beauty.

Furthermore, this new ability to receive, recognize, and rejoice in divine beauty entails a *participation* in that very Beauty.¹⁰³⁷ Primary beauty, recall, consists in “that consent, agreement, or union of being to being.”¹⁰³⁸ First, the *perception* of beauty yields a *transformation* into beauty. Edwards says, “Tis by a sight of the beauty and amiableness of God’s holiness that the heart is transformed into the same image and strongly engaged to imitate God.”¹⁰³⁹ Further, God beautifies the beholder of beauty. “Because God does everything beautifully,” says Edwards,

He therefore gives them [regenerate sinners] holiness, which holiness he really delights in—he has really complacence in them after he has given them beauty ... He has a propensity to reward holiness, but he gives it on purpose that he may reward it;

¹⁰³⁶ Roland André Delattre, “Beauty and Theology: A Reappraisal of Jonathan Edwards,” *Soundings* 51 (Spring 1968), 60–79.

¹⁰³⁷ Here we see some of the impetus for Sang Lee’s notion of a dispositional ontology in Edwards. However, it seems that Lee overinterprets Edwards’ stress on the ontological reality of the affections and his identification of the affections as the essence of the soul in a way that equates disposition with being. Edwards, however, claims that the affections “necessarily *belong* to the human nature” and even “are a very great *part* of it” (*WJE* 2, 101). To “belong” to something sounds as if it is a property of some other substance of which it is a “part,” not the thing in itself. See my discussion of Lee in chapter 2 of this dissertation.

¹⁰³⁸ *WJE* 8, 561.

¹⁰³⁹ Miscellany 1127, *WJE* 20, 498.

because he loves the creature, and loves to reward, and therefore gives it something that he may reward.¹⁰⁴⁰

This beautifying participation in Beauty begins in this life but is made perfect in the next through the transformative power of the beatific vision. At David Brainerd's funeral on October 12, 1747, Edwards preached,

The souls of true saints, when absent from the body, go to be with Jesus Christ, as they are brought into a most perfect conformity to, and union with him. Their spiritual conformity is begun while they are in the body; here beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image: but when they come to see him as he is, in heaven, then they become like him, in another manner. That perfect right will abolish all remains of deformity, disagreement and sinful unlikeness; as all darkness is abolished before the full blaze of the sun's meridian light: it is impossible that the least degree of obscurity should remain before such light. So it is impossible the least degree of sin and spiritual deformity should remain, in such a view of the spiritual beauty and glory of Christ, as the saints enjoy in heaven when they see that Sun of righteousness without a cloud; they themselves shine forth as the sun, and shall be as little suns, without a spot.¹⁰⁴¹

Extending his claim that God beautifies people through regeneration, Edwards advances a view of salvation that borders on *theosis*.¹⁰⁴² Edwards envisions conversion as initiating a participation in and through divine beauty. In one of his first sermons to be published, "God Glorified in Man's Dependence" (1731), Edwards says,

The redeemed have all their *inherent* good in God. They have spiritual excellency and joy by a kind of participation of God. They are made excellent by a communication of God's excellency. God puts his own beauty, i.e. his beautiful likeness, upon their souls. They are made partakers of the divine nature, or moral image of God, 2 Pet. i. 4. They are holy by being made partakers of God's holiness. Heb xii. 10. The saints are beautiful and blessed by a communication of God's holiness and joy. ... The saint hath spiritual joy and pleasure by a kind of effusion of God on the

¹⁰⁴⁰ Miscellany 314, *WJE* 13, 395–96.

¹⁰⁴¹ *WJE* 25, 230–31.

¹⁰⁴² I discuss in what sense Edwards believes that Christ "communicates" himself to us in chapter 2.

soul. In these things the redeemed have communion with God; that is, they partake with him and of him.¹⁰⁴³

Drawing on a robust form of the Calvinist theme of *unio cum Christo*, Edwards envisions this participation in divine beauty as grounded in union with Christ that is initiated by a vision of the beauty (or excellency) of Christ. “The union of the heart of a believer to Christ is begun when his heart is drawn to Christ,” Edwards says, “by the first discovery of divine excellency, at conversion; and consequent on this drawing and closing of his heart with Christ, is established a vital union with Christ.”¹⁰⁴⁴ This union with Christ animates the restoration of the image of God in the believer—an image modeled on the beauty of Christ and wrought by Him. Edwards says, “The image is a true image; and there is something of the same beautiful proportion in the image, which is in the original . . . there is symmetry and beauty in the workmanship of Christ.”¹⁰⁴⁵ Furthermore, union with Christ is accomplished through the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ, i.e., the Holy Spirit, whom Edwards says “is the harmony and excellency and beauty of the Deity.”³³

Through union with Christ in the Holy Spirit, the believer participates in Ultimate Beauty in the very life of the Trinity, “the supreme Harmony of all.”¹⁰⁴⁶ Edwards says,

The Spirit of God so dwells in the hearts of the saints, that he there, as a seed or spring of life, exerts and communicates himself, in this his sweet and divine nature, making the soul a partaker of God’s beauty and Christ’s joy, so that the saint has truly fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, in thus having communion or participation of the Holy Ghost.¹⁰⁴⁷

¹⁰⁴³ Jonathan Edwards, “God Glorified in Man’s Dependence,” in *WJE* 17, 208.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *WJE* 25.

¹⁰⁴⁵ *WJE* 2, 365.

³³ Miscellany 293, *WJE* 13, 384.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Miscellany 182, *WJE* 13, 329.

¹⁰⁴⁷ *WJE* 2, 201. Elsewhere he says, “Tis in our partaking of the Holy Ghost that we have communion with the Father and Son” (Miscellany 376, in *WJE* 13, 448).

In the end, Jonathan Edwards envisions conversion as inaugurating a new and beautiful participation in beautifying Beauty.

An illuminating example of Edwards' aesthetic conception of salvation is found in his account of his own conversion¹⁰⁴⁸ in the "Personal Narrative."¹⁰⁴⁹ In that work, which in significant ways prefigures the *Religious Affections*,¹⁰⁵⁰ he recounts "that change by which I was brought to those new dispositions, and that new sense of things, that I have since had."¹⁰⁵¹ His narration of his own experience evinces that he saw his conversion in patently aesthetic terms.¹⁰⁵² Three incidents from that work will suffice to make this clear.¹⁰⁵³

The first is Edwards' change of disposition toward God's sovereignty, particularly as it is manifested in predestination and reprobation. He recalls,

From my childhood up, my mind had been want to be full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell. It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me. But I remember the time very well

¹⁰⁴⁸ Wilson Brissett notices a helpful distinction in Edwards' work between two terms that are often seen as synonymous, viz., "conversion" and "redemption." He observes that the latter usually refers to cosmic and historical dimensions of God's salvific work of which we are only partially and episodically aware as creatures, whereas the former usually has in view a conscious awakening to that work for one in a personal way. Conversion, then, is an opening onto redemption. See Brissett, "Beauty among the Puritans: Aesthetics and Subjectivity in Early New England" (PhD dissertation, University of Virginia, 2006).

¹⁰⁴⁹ The "Personal Narrative" was possibly at the request of his future son-in-law, Aaron Burr.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Avihu Zakai argues that Edwards' own conversion, recounted in the *Personal Narrative*, shapes the direction of Edwards' subsequent theological pursuits. See Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards' Philosophy of History: The Reenchantment of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

¹⁰⁵¹ *WJE* 16, 790.

¹⁰⁵² Wilson Brissett accurately cautions, however: "This willingness to trace the root of true religious experience to an origin of personal taste, however, does not necessarily implicate Edwards in the kind of individualism and relativism we have come to expect from modern aesthetics more generally. While Edwards' legacy in aesthetics, as in all areas, is paradoxical, there is a danger that we will go too far in attributing to him the kind of romantic sensibilities he would have overtly opposed" (Brissett, "Beauty among the Puritans," 13).

¹⁰⁵³ Interestingly, while Edwards conceives these as experiences of beauty, Kant (following Burke) would reassign each as an experience of the sublime. In his 1764 work, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, trans. John T. Goldthwait (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961, 2003), Kant says feelings of the beautiful "occasion a pleasant sensation but one that is joyous and smiling." On the other hand, feelings of the sublime "arouse enjoyment but with horror." In that work, he enumerates three kinds of sublimity: the noble, the splendid, and the terrifying. By the time of the *Third Critique*, he has removed the "noble sublime."

when I seemed to be convinced, and fully satisfied, as to this sovereignty of God, and his justice in thus disposing of men, according to his sovereign pleasure ... my mind rested in it; and it put an end to all those cavils and objections, that had till then abode with me all the preceding part of my life. And there has been a wonderful alteration in my mind, with respect to the doctrine of God's sovereignty, from that day to this. ... I have often since, not only had a conviction, but a *delightful* conviction. The doctrine of God's sovereignty has very often appeared, an exceeding *pleasant, bright and sweet* doctrine to me: and absolute sovereignty is what I *love* to ascribe to God.¹⁰⁵⁴

Here, in the aesthetic and affectional language of eros, Edwards recounts his change from repugnance to delight in God's absolute sovereignty.

Our second example applies to the "secondary beauty" of nature. Edwards give a succinct account of aesthetic revaluation in his orientation toward thunderstorms. After his conversion, he says,

And scarce anything, among all the works of nature, was so sweet to me as thunder and lightning. Formerly, nothing had been so terrible to me. I used to be a person uncommonly terrified with thunder: and it used to strike me with terror, when I saw a thunderstorm rising. But now, on the contrary, it rejoiced me. I felt God at the first appearance of a thunderstorm. And used to take the first opportunity at such times, to fix myself to view the clouds, and see the lightnings play, and hear the majestic and awful voice of God's thunder: which often times was exceeding entertaining, leading me to sweet contemplations of my great and glorious God. And while I viewed, used to spend my time, as it always seemed natural to me, to sing or chant forth my meditations; to speak my thoughts in soliloquies, and speak with a singing voice.¹⁰⁵⁵

Perhaps the paradigmatic example of conversion to erotic delight in God, however, may be found in the following. Edwards reminisces,

¹⁰⁵⁴ *WJE* 16, 791–92.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 794.

The first instance that I remember of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things that I have lived in much since, was on reading those words, I Tim. i. 17. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever, Amen.* As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before. Never any words of scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in him for ever!¹⁰⁵⁶

For Edwards, conversion consists in a new aesthetic *visio* in which eros for true beauty serves a transcendence of the self that does not diminish the self, but enlarges it by expanding its concerns beyond itself. Redeemed eros leads us to that which is beyond us. Ultimately, this enlargement extends to a union with God's trinitarian love, and continues in an eternal *epekstacy*¹⁰⁵⁷ of desire and delight in an infinite God and all he has made. *Deus semper maior.*

¹⁰⁵⁶ Ibid., 59.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Edwards' view of heaven is remarkably similar to the idea of *epekstacy* that was developed by Gregory of Nyssa, and is articulated most fully in his *Life of Moses* (Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, trans. Everett Ferguson and Abraham J. Malherbe [New York: Paulist Press, 1978]). He teaches that desire for and delight in divine beauty never ends. Each satisfying apprehension of Beauty only kindles more desire. Each instance of the *visio Dei* is something like a soft drink loaded with sodium, which quenches thirst while making the drinker even thirstier. Never do we reach a state of static satisfaction. Moses saw God's back he says, because he was following him. And we will follow him for eternity. The succession of satisfaction and increasing desire will continue eternally. Never will the beauty of God be exhausted. Always there will be something new to discover. The infinite God is infinitely beautiful; and our desire will continue for eternity. Eternity will move "from Glory to Glory." In his commentary on the Song of Songs, Nyssen says, "The person looking at the divine, invisible beauty will always discover it anew since he will see it as something new and more wondrous in comparison to what he has already comprehended. He continues to wonder at God's continuous revelation; he never exhausts his desire to see more because what he awaits is always more magnificent and more divine than anything else he has seen" (*Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Commentary on the Song of Songs*, trans. C. McCambley [Brookline, MA: Hellenic College Press, 1987]).

5. CONCLUSION: *Erotic Beauty*

In this chapter, I have engaged my third category of thinking about beauty—affective conceptions of beauty—by exploring the affective aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards, who develops his theological aesthetics not just in relation to ethics (as in *The Nature of True Virtue*), but also as he wrestled with the phenomenology of conversion and spirituality (both his own, in the *Personal Narrative*, and more generally in the *Religious Affections*).

Here I show that, while two central aesthetic concepts—eros and disinterest—were pitted against each other in modernity (largely through Kant), Edwards—for whom beauty has to do with *love*—does not proscribe desire from the affective nature of beauty. On the contrary, for him the erotic love of beauty is rooted in the trinitarian life, both *ad intra* (in perichoretic desire and delight) and *ad extra*, in the creation and redemption of the world.

First I delineated Edwards' conception of the affections—a notion of critical importance to Edwards, but one that is frequently misunderstood. By situating Edwards' development of this idea in the context of the social and religious tumult of the first Great Awakening, I showed Edwards' conception of the affections as defending the “heart religion” of the New Light Congregationalists against Old Light conservatives. I then situated Edwards' thought in its intellectual context, highlighting the influence of Reformed theology and eighteenth-century British moral philosophy. After distinguishing Edwards' conception of the affections from the passions, emotions, and feelings, I showed that he envisions the affections as manifestations of the dispositions of the heart, noting that the “heart,” for Edwards, is a holistic term that transcends much of the faculty psychology of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For Edwards, the affections are the governing predilections and propensities of the whole person that

are manifested cognitively, emotively, and behaviorally; they are the loves and hates of the heart. They disclose to us our natures.

Next, I showed that Edwards conceives the affective effect of beauty in terms of eros, or desire and delight. While he does not use the term “eros,” his notion of the love of complacency is indistinguishable from a notion of eros. Eros is understood to be inherent to humanness. Unlike Anders Nygren, Edwards believes that redeemed eros can inspire moral improvement and lead to noble actions, even self-sacrifice. It can develop into agape and is the psycho-spiritual foundation of all love. Eros is an integral feature of his system of thought and an interpretive key to his work.

Third, I established that Edwards engages the nascent eighteenth-century concept of disinterestedness, formulating his views in marked contrast not only to the notion of “disinterested benevolence” in the *New Divinity*, but also to Kantian (and subsequent Continental) conceptions that conceive disinterest and desire as mutually exclusive, pitting disinterest against eros. I situated the discussion of disinterestedness in the emerging notion of taste, showing that the three main usages of disinterestedness in British thought did not exclude desire, even in Edmund Burke. I showed that Edwards’ understanding was very much like those of his British interlocutors. Further, I show that Edwards excludes neither self-love nor human eros from his notion of disinterestedness. Rather, disinterested benevolence is not opposed to a love of complacency, is not devoid of desire, and is ultimately oriented toward beauty. Erotic aspects of love may be distinguished but not separated from agapeistic characteristics of love. Both strengthen and support each other. Both are integral to the nature of loving beings. In Edwards, morality concerns relationships, not simply the rectitude of the individual. Both aspects of love serve to advance cordial consent, or harmonious relational connection and unity among

beings. In this section I show that Edwards' alternative view employs the common-sense insights of the eighteenth-century British thinkers while also retaining a role for desire in the experience of the beautiful as recognized in the eros tradition of beauty.

Finally, I demonstrate that conversion, for Edwards, is constituted by a new perception of beauty that begins in eros, becomes fused with agape, and expands the soul by union with Christ to participate in the very love of the Trinity.

I opened this chapter with Plotinus's question, "What do you feel in the presence of [beauty]?" Plotinus's own answer includes phrases like "Dionysian exultation" and "pangs of desire."¹⁰⁵⁸ While Edwards, I suspect, might temper the rhetoric slightly (lest he be labeled an "enthusiast"), he would certainly agree with the substance of Plotinus's affective response to beauty.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Observe the many (italicized) references to affect in the following citation from Plotinus's Sixth *Ennead*: "And one that shall know this vision [of the beautiful]—with what *passion of love* shall he not *be seized*, with *pang of desire*, what *longing* to be molten into one with This, what *wondering delight*! If he that has never seen this Being must *hunger for it with all his welfare*, he that has known must *love and reverence* It as the very Beauty; he will be flooded with *awe and gladness*, *stricken by a salutary terror*; he *loves with a veritable love*, with *sharp desire*; all other loves than this he must *despise*, and *disdain* all that once seemed fair" (*The Enneads*, *Ennead I*, VI.5. Affective language is employed in discussing the beautiful throughout this *Ennead* [e.g., "attracts," "calls," "allures," "desire," "longing," "hunger"]).

Chapter Five

CONCLUSION

Suggestions for an Edwardsian Trinitarian Aesthetics

*God's beauty is the actual living exchange between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as this exchange is perfect simply as exchange, as it sings ... God is a great fugue. There is nothing so capacious as a fugue.*¹⁰⁵⁹

~Robert Jenson

This dissertation opened with two questions: Why beauty (i.e., is it legitimate to utilize beauty as a central and seminal theological idea)? And why Jonathan Edwards (i.e., what does Edwards contribute to the field of theological aesthetics)? In the course of this work, I show that, far from being a frivolous, precious, or elitist concern, beauty, for Edwards, is the *summum bonum* of all that exists. Edwards is no effete aesthete. Rather he turns his prodigious mind to the concept of beauty, remarkably reframing the traditional loci of theology in aesthetic terms. This is even more significant given that Edwards is situated in the midst of the climacteric shift in

¹⁰⁵⁹ Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology: The Triune God*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 235–36.

Western aesthetics of the eighteenth century. In Edwards we find a theorist who consolidates many pre-modern views while reinscribing them in conscious dialogue with Enlightenment thought. The fruits of his efforts are remarkably pertinent to the concerns of the twenty-first century. “Time and again,” confesses Rian Venter (speaking of Edwards’ focus on beauty), “a student of Edwards is surprised by his relevance for our day.”¹⁰⁶⁰ Edwards’ focus on beauty, desire, and consent has been seen as a fund for feminist thought,¹⁰⁶¹ and his rapturous exultation in the beauty of nature has been seen as a resource for environmental ethics.¹⁰⁶² Edwards, it turns out, is a proponent for theological beauty on par with von Balthasar. As a thinker in the Reformed tradition, however, Edwards may energize incipient Protestant forays into theological aesthetics. “Edwards’ spirit of theological adventure,” exhorts Amy Plantinga Pauw, “is one Reformed Christians would do well to imitate.”¹⁰⁶³ So then, one contribution of this dissertation has been to highlight the profundity of Edwards’ theological aesthetics, commending his thought

¹⁰⁶⁰ Rian Venter, “Trinity and Beauty: The Theological Contribution of Jonathan Edwards,” *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal* 51, nos. 3–4 (September–December 2010): 189. This is also a central claim of Robert W. Jenson’s *America’s Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

¹⁰⁶¹ E.g., Sallie McFague, who sees in Edwards’ notion of consent a model of Christian love (*Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982], 14–29). See also Carol J. Adams, ed., *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (New York: Continuum, 1993), 84–98; Paula M. Coe, “Eros and Intimacy in Edwards,” *Journal of Religion* 69 (October 1989): 484–501; and Zachary Hutchins, “Edwards and Eve: Finding Feminist Strains in the Great Awakening’s Patriarch,” *Early American Literature* 43, no. 3 (November 2008): 671–86.

¹⁰⁶² See, e.g., Belden C. Lane, “Jonathan Edwards on Beauty, Desire and the Sensory World,” *Theological Studies* 65, no. 1 (March 2004): 44–72; Nicola Hoggard Creegan, “Jonathan Edwards’ Ecological and Ethical Vision of Nature,” *Stimulus: The New Zealand Journal of Christian Thought & Practice* 15, no. 4 (November 2007): 49–51; and Scott R. Paeth, “‘You Make All Things New’: Jonathan Edwards and a Christian Environmental Ethic,” *International Journal of Public Theology* 5, no. 2 (2011): 209–32. Edwards is sometimes styled as a proto-Transcendentalist (*à la* Ralph Waldo Emerson or Henry David Thoreau). See J. Baird Callicott, “What ‘Wilderness’ in Frontier Ecosystems?” *Environmental Ethics* 30, no. 3 (2008): 235–49. Edwards’ attitude toward nature is seen as a “variation of Virgilian pastoralism” in Moon-ju Shin, “Emily Dickinson’s Ecocentric Pastoralism” (PhD dissertation, Marquette University, 2007).

¹⁰⁶³ Amy Plantinga Pauw, “The Future of Reformed Theology: Some Lessons from Jonathan Edwards,” in *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions*, ed. David Willis and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 459.

as a generative and fertile trove for the field of Edwards scholarship, to the discipline of theological aesthetics.

In this closing chapter I will first present a *recapitulation* of the dissertation, summarizing the key arguments and contributions of each chapter. This will reinforce my central objective in recommending Jonathan Edwards as both an exemplum and an endowment for theological aesthetics. Secondly, I will observe an *implication* of the dissertation: that Edwards' conception of beauty bears a trinitarian shape and structure. Finally, I will advance a *recommendation* from the dissertation, limning directions for further study.

1. A RECAPITULATION of the Dissertation

Jonathan Edwards as Exemplum and Endowment for Theological Aesthetics.

Chapter One (among other aims) sets forth a typology of theories of beauty. While the primary focus of this project has been the thought of Jonathan Edwards, the proffering of a much-needed typology of aesthetic theories provides clear and simple conceptual schemata for theories of beauty, which, as one of the grand ideas of Western culture as well as the Christian tradition, is an idea that is eminently capacious, polysemous, and multivalent.¹⁰⁶⁴

This typology stems from an observation that most of the myriad theories of beauty in Western culture may, without undue procrustean violence, be assigned to one of three classes: Ontological, Formal, and Affective. By attending to repeated themes, patterns, and assumptions about beauty, various strands of thought regarding that which is deemed to be pertinent about beauty can be identified. While *particular* aesthetic theories are framed and expressed in very

¹⁰⁶⁴ In Chapter One, I stressed that the purview of this typology does not extend to other areas of aesthetics, particularly theories of art, which may or may not concern beauty. Beauty is integral to some art, while the concern of other works and practices of art may have little to do with beauty or even be intentionally anti-beauty. Art and beauty must be conceptually disaggregated. For a fuller explanation of this, see that chapter.

different contexts and emerge from disparate disciplines and discursive contexts (and therefore exhibit both synchronic particularity and diachronic development), certain types of thought are perennially deployed in the development and enactment of particular aesthetic theories. Whether in Golden Age Athens, high-medieval Paris, or late-modern New York, some aesthetic theories may be recognized by a certain “family resemblance.” Even though many discrete species of the notion of beauty can be identified, they tend to fall into three *genuses* and may be grouped according to these three *kinds* of thought about beauty.

By identifying categories, modalities, or paradigms in which particular theological aesthetics tend to be developed, and by classifying these species according to genus, so to speak, this typology clarifies conceptions of beauty and provides a grammar to discuss specific theories of beauty. This may mitigate some confusion engendered by the attending presuppositions embedded in the various discursive contexts of particular theories of beauty. Furthermore, constructive theological aesthetics may be aided by the utilization of the typology, as I will suggest later in this chapter. This typology provides the structure of the next three chapters of the dissertation in which I examine Edwards’ particular usages of ontological, formal, and affective conceptions of beauty.

Chapter Two treats Edwards’ ontological conceptions of beauty by showing that he develops an aesthetics that places beauty at the center of theology. For Edwards, beauty is the essence of the divine nature. It is also ontologically embedded in the created order, whereby it yields a phainesthetic, ectypal, analogical semiosis toward divine beauty. God, on this view, is eminently communicative. Edwards establishes an *analogia pulchritudinis* that functions semiotically. He envisions secondary beauty as *analogously* related to primary beauty. I show that ultimately, for Edwards, God’s ectypal self-communication is Christological. Edwards

builds his ontological aesthetics on analogy—not an *analogia entis* (as some claim), but an *analogia pulchritudinis*, in which the spiritual beauties of God are “communicated” *ectypally* into created forms of beauty, including the beauty of nature. Therefore, Edwards envisions a substantial and constructive role for *created* beauty, including the beauty of nature, in Christian theology and experience. In my opinion, Edwards’ ontological aesthetics are particularly salutary in that, by firmly establishing beauty as ontologically rooted in the divine nature and as perfused through created reality, he obviates the reduction of beauty either to irrelevance or to private subjectivity—as was the case in much of modernity.

Chapter Three treats Edwards’ formal aesthetics, worked out in a wide-ranging expansion of the overlapping categories of *fittingness*, *harmony*, and the *conjunction of opposites*. I demonstrate that Edwards’ formal aesthetics yields a conception of beauty that not only makes an emphasis on beauty warrantable in a fallen world, but also provides rich resources for grappling with the lapsarian horrors of the world. For Edwards, beauty, in its truest form, is redemptive, as illustrated by the achievement in the crucifixion of a sublation of ugliness into beauty.

I argue that Edwards, whose work is replete with a notion of fittingness, is both heir and innovator in his aesthetics of fittingness. He consolidates and amplifies the insights of the aesthetics of fittingness, absorbing many ideas from the long history of the idea while stressing that beauty is context dependent and expanding the traditional notion of it to encompass creation, the good, and love. Likewise, beginning from a traditional aesthetic of harmony, Edwards enlarges the notion, conceiving it as informing a rich conception of love and extending to metaphysical intersubjectivity. Edwards’ conception of harmony is an extended version of a major strand of thought in Western aesthetics that conceives beauty in terms of proportion. By

conceiving beauty as harmonious consent and agreement, Edwards highlights the *relational* nature of beauty. Aesthetic theories of harmony concern relationships, i.e., the relation of how one entity is arranged vis-à-vis another. For Edwards, beauty obtains whenever some wholeness, integrity, or unity emerges from various differing elements that are harmoniously related. Since, for Edwards, the highest forms of harmonious relations are enacted by *persons*, the highest form of harmonious beauty is love. The paradigm for Edwards' aesthetics of harmony is the Trinity, a unity of plurality, and *the supreme harmony of all*.¹⁰⁶⁵ Finally, while the notion of the coincidence of opposites bears a long lineage in Western culture, the immediate context of Edwards' usage of this idea can be found in its eighteenth-century formulation as *discordia concors*. Edwards utilizes the concept of *discordia concors* in his conception of the beauty of nature, in reporting his own mystical apprehension of God. However, the joining of contraries is chiefly a *Christological* notion for Edwards; he almost invariably uses the language of a fusion of disparates in reference to the *Incarnate Christ*. I show how he applies a Christological formulation of *discordia concors* pastorally, hermeneutically, and homiletically.

Lastly, I illustrate that Edwards' formal conceptions of beauty culminate in an aesthetics of redemption. Edwards' enlargement of formal aesthetics conceives fittingness, harmony, and the conjunction of opposites in terms of *love* leads him to see Christ's work on the cross as the "most wonderful act of love that ever was."¹⁰⁶⁶ Therefore, for Edwards, it was beautiful. He interprets the cross according to the aesthetics of *fittingness*. First, the cross—ugly as it is—befits human need and, second, it does so in the context of the ugliness of the world. Rather than an

¹⁰⁶⁵ Here I use the phrase from Edwards' Miscellany no. 182, "Heaven" (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13, *The "Miscellanies," Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500*, ed. Thomas A. Schafer [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994], 163; hereafter *WJE* 13) made famous by Amy Plantinga Pauw in her aptly titled 2002 work on Edwards' Trinitarianism. See Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All: The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002).

¹⁰⁶⁶ Jonathan Edwards, Miscellany no. 304, "Crucifixion," *WJE* 13, 390.

ignoring or minimizing of ugliness, Edwards' vision of the cross is an entering and transformation of ugliness. Through the reconciliation of the cross, humans are restored to *harmonious* relations with God, themselves, others, and the world. Edwards' aesthetic of *conjunctio oppositorum* allows us to locate beauty in paradox, mystery, and surprise. Edwards, then, develops an aesthetic soteriology that fittingly restores harmony through a surprising joining of human need and divine love in the person and work of Christ. To my mind, any putative aesthetics that cannot account for and answer deep ugliness (in all its forms) will end in escapism or irrelevance. I show Edwards' thought to be both realistic and hopeful about human evil and suffering.

Chapter Four establishes that Edwards' affective aesthetics are fundamentally erotic, and that his soteriology is fundamentally aesthetic. As the affections evince the desires and delights of "the heart," they are the only reliable mark of conversion. Salvation, then, consists in a reordering of eros to true beauty by means of a divinely given new aesthetic sense that engenders a participation in divine beauty.

Edwards' mature views of aesthetic conversion are set forth most clearly in his treatise on the *Religious Affections*. In this chapter, I point out that this influential work, which is usually read either as a work of spiritual psychology or as one of religious sociology, is also (and importantly) a work of theological aesthetics. Edwards' formulation of the "affections" is subtle and often misunderstood. After situating the development of Edwards' theory of the affections in the context of the first Great Awakening, and distinguishing his understanding of affections from the passions, emotions, or feelings, I summarize Edwards' conception of them as the governing predilections and propensities of the whole person that are manifested cognitively, emotively,

and behaviorally; they are the loves and hates of the heart. The affections disclose to us our natures.

I then establish that a key to Edwards' affective aesthetics—and one that distinguishes him from the direction taken by Kant and others in the eighteenth century—is his retention and integral usage of the aesthetics of eros. I show that, while Edwards does not use the term “eros,” his notion of the “love of complacency” is indistinguishable from it, and he conceives the affective effect of beauty in terms of eros, or desire and delight. I then establish that Edwards, in his eighteenth-century British context, engages the nascent concept of disinterestedness, formulating his views in marked contrast both to Kantian (and subsequent Continental) conceptions that conceive disinterest and desire as mutually exclusive, pitting disinterest against eros. I also distinguish Edwards' understanding of disinterestedness from views of “disinterested benevolence” in the *New Divinity*—which is not only non-Edwardsian, but anti-Edwardsian.

The penultimate section of Chapter Four is the culmination of the chapter, in which the significance of Edwards' erotic aesthetics for his soteriology is highlighted. I demonstrate the fundamentally aesthetic nature of Edwards' view of salvation. For him, conversion consists in an aesthetic reordering of eros to true beauty by God's simultaneous granting of a new *perception* of beauty, a new *prioritization* of beauty, and a new *participation* in beauty. The perception of beauty comes neither through reason (as for the rationalists) nor from an innate natural sense (as for the Moral Sense theorists). Rather, the apprehension of spiritual beauty is “given immediately by God, and not be obtained by natural means.”¹⁰⁶⁷ It comes through “a new spiritual sense.”¹⁰⁶⁸ This yields a reevaluation of all values according to new priorities; conversion is understood in

¹⁰⁶⁷ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, *Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), 421.

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 205-206. See Chapter Four for an explication of Edwards' ideas of sensibility.

aesthetic terms as a reorientation of tastes to and by beauty in a reordering of the *ordo amoris*. The reconstituted perception and prioritization of beauty is effected by a new participation in beauty through union with Christ.

I conclude this chapter showing (as I will suggest further below) that while two central aesthetic concepts—eros and disinterest—were pitted against each other in the eighteenth century (effectively restricting the affective purview of beauty to pleasure), for Edwards, beauty has to do with *love*. The affective nature of beauty must include desire, or we lose love.

So then, this dissertation analyses the role of beauty in Edwards' thought. It honors his innovative brilliance and also his commitment to Calvinist orthodoxy as he understood it. And it attends Edwards' transatlantic intellectual milieu. Furthermore, it frames Edwards' aesthetics in terms of three time-honored types of thinking about beauty in Western culture. This analysis of Edwards' views of beauty reveals a striking implication, to which I now turn.

2. An IMPLICATION of the Dissertation

The Trinitarian Shape of Beauty

The three types of approaches to beauty (ontology, form, and the affections)—so apparent in Edwards—analogueously correspond to the persons of the Trinity: Ontology analogueously corresponds to the Father, who is traditionally understood as the source of “being.” There is a homologous relation between the “form” and the Son who, as incarnate, took visible and palpable concreteness. Affective conceptions of beauty can be attributed to the Holy Spirit, who is the love between the Father and Son. By drawing on Edwards' theological aesthetics and applying the principles of the trinitarian doctrine of appropriation to the three categories of beauty, we can see how they “map onto” the persons of the Trinity. This observation yields an

implication freighted with potential for theological aesthetics: *Beauty reflects a trinitarian structure.*

2.1 The Doctrine of Appropriation.¹⁰⁶⁹

While the undivided triune God is present in each of God's acts, and while each person of the Trinity is involved in every outward action of the Godhead, the doctrine of appropriation teaches us that (following the language of scripture) we may appropriate to each person of the Trinity a particular focus of God's economic activity. Common applications of this doctrine appropriate *creation* to the Father, *redemption* to the Son, and *sanctification* to the Holy Spirit; or *initiation* to the first person of the Trinity, *redemption* to the second, and *application* of salvation to the third. Many examples from scripture and theology could be adduced, but for our purposes I would like to show how the three key categories of theological aesthetics developed in this dissertation (i.e., the ontological, the formal, and the affective) might be appropriated to each person of the Trinity.

2.2 The Father.

Ontological approaches to beauty fittingly correspond to the Father, who is commonly seen as the generative source of all that is. The Apostles' Creed puts it, "I believe in God, the

¹⁰⁶⁹ The doctrine of appropriation is central to a trinitarian theology. The "doctrine of appropriation" refers to that approach to the unity and diversity of divine actions that was developed in Latin theology following Augustine (see *De Trinitate* 7.3-4 and *passim*) to whom the term may be retroactively applied. (Similar conclusions may be reached in Eastern theology through the concept of unified *energia*.) It provides a conceptual framework within trinitarian theology, affirming that the works of the Trinity, *ad extra*, are done in unity, while still allowing the appropriation of particular activity to each person of the Trinity. Scripture insists that there is one God, and yet attributes some actions primarily to the Father, others primarily to the Son, and still others primarily to the Holy Spirit. It is an antimodalist doctrine, in that it affirms the simultaneous (not sequential) action of the Persons of the Trinity in the world. And yet it allows for distinction (*distinctio non sed separatio*) between the acts of the three persons.

Father almighty, *creator of heaven and earth*,¹⁰⁷⁰ and to this the two fourth-century ecumenical councils append the phrase “of all things visible and invisible”¹⁰⁷¹ to emphasize the role of the Father as the *fons creationis*. Both a unity of substance and a distinction of persons are affirmed in post-Nicene theology. The Father is seen not only as the *fons vitae*, but even the *fons deitatis*,¹⁰⁷²—or better (since it acknowledges the Father as a *person* of the Trinity), the *fons trinitatis*¹⁰⁷³—from whom both the Son and the Spirit are derived.¹⁰⁷⁴ As both innascible (i.e., unbegotten, or unoriginate) and fecund, the Father is seen as the source (Greek: ἀρχή, archē; Latin: *fons*) of being.¹⁰⁷⁵

¹⁰⁷⁰ The Apostles’ Creed, or *Symbolum Apostolicum* (sometimes *Symbolum Apostolorum*) says, “*Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem, Creatorem caeli et terrae.*” Accessed August 1, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism_lt/p1s1c3a2_lt.htm.

¹⁰⁷¹ The original (325) version of the Nicene Creed (Σύμβολον τῆς Νίκαιας) says, “Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα Θεόν, Πατέρα παντοκράτορα, πάντων ὁρατῶν τε καὶ ἀοράτῶν ποιητὴν” (“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible, and invisible”), while the revised version of 381 (i.e., the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed) says, “Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα Θεόν, Πατέρα παντοκράτορα, ποιητὴν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς, ὁρατῶν τε πάντων καὶ ἀορατῶν” (“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible”; Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Volume 3: Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002], § 129, 667).

¹⁰⁷² This idea is found in Tertullian (*Adv. Prax.* 8), Basil of Caesarea (C. Sabellianos et Arium et Anomaeos 4), Augustine (*De trin.* IV XX, 29), and Isidore of Seville (*De ord. creaturarum* I 3.). The formulation “*fons et origo divinitatis*” is used at the Sixth Council of Toledo in 638, and the Father is described as “*fons ergo ipse et origo est totius divinitatis*” at Toledo XI in 675 (Theresia Hainthaler, “God the Father in the Symbols of Toledo,” *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 1, no. 1 [2010]: 128–30). On this phrase, see also Catherine LaCugna, “The Trinitarian Mystery of God,” *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, ed. F. Schussler Fiorenza and J. Galvin (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992), 168.

¹⁰⁷³ In *de Trinitate* 4:29 Augustine speaks of the Father as “the source of all godhead, or if you prefer it, of all deity.” Here he uses the word *principium* for source (*The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle, vol. 1/5 in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997], 174). The symbol of Toledo uses *fons et origo totius trinitatis*. (See, e.g., Hainthaler, “God the Father,” 125–36.)

¹⁰⁷⁴ Almost all forms of Christianity hold to *some* type of *Monarchia* of the Father (while rejecting Patripassian Monarchianism), understanding of the *monarchia* of the Father has been a source of contention between the East and West due to its implications for the *filioque* controversy. Obviously, all this is beyond the scope of this paper.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Sometimes the word “fountain” (πηγή, pēgē) or “root” (ρίζα, rhiza) is used. The Father is referred to as the source of being in Hilary, *On the Trinity* (Book XII), 21; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Question 34, Article 1, Reply to Objection 3; and Cajetan, *Commentary on Gen. 6:8*.

Sang Lee rightly notes, “Edwards wished to—and did—stay faithfully within the orthodoxy of the councils of Nicea and Constantinople.”¹⁰⁷⁶ Following Reformed versions of this principle in, *inter alia*, Turretin¹⁰⁷⁷ and John Owen,¹⁰⁷⁸ Edwards says, “The Father is the Deity subsisting in the prime, unoriginate and most absolute manner, or the Deity in its direct existence,”¹⁰⁷⁹ and “the Father is the fountain of the Godhead.”¹⁰⁸⁰ Edwards stresses the equality of the persons of the Trinity but claims each has a particular “honor.”¹⁰⁸¹ He says that we should “understand the equality of the persons among themselves, and that they are every way equal in the society or family of the three. They are equal in honor besides the honor which is common to ’em all, viz. that they are all God.” He goes on, however, to clarify that “each has his peculiar honor in the society or family,”¹⁰⁸² and specifies that, “The honor of the Father is that he is the fountain of the Deity.”¹⁰⁸³ Indeed, *everything* originates with the Father or, as Edwards puts it, “’tis a peculiar honor that all should be firstly from the Father.”¹⁰⁸⁴ This includes the origin of divine beauty. “The beauty and excellency and loveliness of the divine nature,” says Edwards, is

¹⁰⁷⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 21, *Writing on the Trinity, Grace and Faith*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 4. Hereafter, *WJE* 21.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Turretin says that the Father is the “*fons deitatis, si modus subsistendi spectatur*” (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3.30.8).

¹⁰⁷⁸ Owen refers to the Father as the “*fons deitatis*” in John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 2, *Communion With God*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), ch. 3.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Edwards, “Discourse on the Trinity,” *WJE* 21, 131.

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 135. Sang Lee notes, “Edwards was well-versed in the Western church’s teachings on the Trinity through the writings of Reformed scholastics such as Francis Turretin and Peter van Mastricht and Puritan writers like William Ames. But Edwards was also acquainted with the Eastern tradition through the writings of the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth and, indirectly, Gregory of Nyssa himself” (*WJE* 21, 3). For a discussion of the background of Edwards’ doctrine of the Trinity, see Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All*.

¹⁰⁸¹ On Edwards’ view of the equality of the persons of the Trinity see the fragment, “On the Equality of the Persons of the Trinity,” *WJE* 21, 145–49.

¹⁰⁸² Edwards, “Discourse on the Trinity,” *WJE* 21, 135.

¹⁰⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 143.

“from the Father first and originally.”¹⁰⁸⁵ My suggestion follows, then, that ontological conceptions of beauty correspond to that which is appropriated to the Father.

2.3 The Son.

My second category of theological aesthetics, concerning *form*, may be appropriated to the Son. As I explained in Chapter Three, the term “form” has wide semantic range. However, with von Balthasar, I see “form” as ultimately referring to the incarnate Christ.¹⁰⁸⁶ Form is about *instantiated* beauty—“what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands.”¹⁰⁸⁷ The Son, the Mediator, is the *deus pro nobis*, i.e., our primary knowledge of God is accessed in the givenness of the Incarnation. In Him we apprehend the intuition of transcendent beauty from our subjective intentional state through the phenomenological givenness of the aesthetic object in “material” form (as in Dufrenne’s idea of *le sensible*,¹⁰⁸⁸ or Merleau-Ponty’s notion of “the body”).¹⁰⁸⁹

Edwards would concur with much of this. As Chapter Two argues, the (ectypal) communication of divine beauty is Christological. While the Father is the origin of all beauty, it is “repeated” in the Son. “The beauty and excellency and loveliness of the divine nature,” Edwards says, is “though from the Father first and originally, yet is by the Son and nextly from him.”¹⁰⁹⁰ Edwards does not mean that the divine beauty of the Father is subordinately or

¹⁰⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸⁶ My association of form in this work is at variance with von Balthasar’s. For his view see, Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1, *Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), particularly section 3, 429ff. For my usage of the concept of form in this dissertation see Chapter One.

¹⁰⁸⁷ 1 John 1:1, *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and the New Testaments with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. New Revised Standard Version (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹⁰⁸⁸ See Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, trans. Edward S. Casey (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 11 and *passim*.

¹⁰⁸⁹ See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962), 146. and *passim*.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Edwards, “Discourse on the Trinity,” *WJE* 21, 143.

inferiorly manifest in the Son. Rather, it is repeated *exactly, substantially* (in the metaphysical sense),¹⁰⁹¹ and *eternally* in the Son. Edwards opens his (unpublished) “Discourse on the Trinity,” saying,

God is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, in perfectly beholding and infinitely loving, and rejoicing in, his own essence and perfections. And accordingly it must be supposed that God perpetually and eternally has a most perfect idea of himself, as it were an exact image and representation of himself ever before him and in actual view. And from hence arises a most pure and perfect energy in the Godhead, which is the divine love, complacence and joy.¹⁰⁹²

The Father’s “perfect idea of himself” is the Son. “This person is the second person in the Trinity,” says Edwards, “the only begotten and dearly beloved Son of God. He is the eternal, necessary, perfect, substantial and personal idea which God hath of himself.”¹⁰⁹³ Christ then *is* divine beauty—the “brightness, effulgence and shining forth of God’s glory.”¹⁰⁹⁴

For Edwards, “Christ is this most immediate representation of the Godhead.”¹⁰⁹⁵ It is in Christ that God becomes *perceptible*; in Christ we *see* God. The Son is the Father’s perfect idea of himself such that to behold the idea is to behold the Father. Citing John 12:45, John 14:7–9, and John 15:22–24, “Seeing the perfect idea of a thing is to all intents and purposes the same as seeing the thing; it is not only equivalent to the seeing of it, but it is the seeing it: for there is no

¹⁰⁹¹ Edwards says, “This idea of God is a substantial idea and has the very essence of God, is truly God, to all intents and purposes, and that by this means the Godhead is really generated and repeated” (ibid., 114).

¹⁰⁹² Ibid., 113.

¹⁰⁹³ Ibid., 117. Earlier Edwards says, “That idea which God hath of himself is absolutely himself. This representation of the divine nature and essence is the divine nature and essence again. So that by God’s thinking of the Deity, [the Deity] must certainly be generated. Hereby there is another person begotten; there is another infinite, eternal, almighty, and most holy and the same God, the very same divine nature.” In the same section he clarifies, “By having a reflex or contemplative idea of what passes in our own minds, I don’t mean consciousness only. There is a great difference between a man’s having a view of himself so as to delight in his own beauty or excellency, and a mere direct consciousness. Or if we mean by consciousness of what is in our own minds, anything besides the mere simple existence in our minds of what is there, it is nothing but a power by reflection to view or contemplate what passes” (ibid., 116).

¹⁰⁹⁴ Ibid., 119.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Ibid., 117.

other seeing but having the idea.”¹⁰⁹⁶ Edwards, who understands the Scriptural phrase the “face of God”¹⁰⁹⁷ to refer to Christ, envisions the Christ as God made perceptible. While we might wish that Edwards laid more stress on the *Incarnation*—that in the *assumptio carnis* beauty becomes *perceptible* to us—nonetheless, the category of form may aptly be applied to the second person of the Trinity.

2.4 The Holy Spirit.

The application of the work of God to human affective experience is commonly appropriated to the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁹⁸ Conversely, the affective nature of beauty concerns the reorienting of subjective human experience. Affective conceptions of beauty, then, can be identified with the Holy Spirit.

As I show in Chapter Four (on Affective Views), Edwards conceives beauty in affective terms, and associates the conversion and reordering of the affections with the work of the Holy

¹⁰⁹⁶ Ibid., 118.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Ibid., 118–19.

¹⁰⁹⁸ E.g., in *De Trinitate* (15.31) Augustine concludes, “So it is God the Holy Spirit proceeding from God who fires man to the love of God and neighbor when he has been given to him, and he himself is love” (*The Trinity*, 421). Similarly, Aquinas states that “the Holy Spirit stirs up (*instigare*) and turns (*inclinare*) the affections to right willing” (*Commentary on Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, trans. F. R. Larcher [Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1966], ch. 5, lecture 4, paragraph 308). Calvin, who emphasizes the role of the *affectus* in Christian experience, says, “Persistently boiling away and burning up our vicious and inordinate desires, he [the Holy Spirit] enflames our hearts with the love of God and with zealous devotion. From this effect upon us he is justly called ‘fire.’” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960], 3.1.3., 540). Commenting on Ephesians 5:18 he says, “The Spirit of God gladdens us” (Calvin, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 11, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, trans. T. H. L. Parker, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1965], 203). C.f. his comments on Galatians 5:18 (ibid., 103). The theme that the human affections are the purview of the Third Person of the Trinity is particularly clear in John Owen, who, as I have observed, was held in high regard by Edwards. Owen says, “We have this, then, by the Spirit:—he teaches us of the love of God in Christ; he makes every gospel truth as wine well refined to our souls, and the good things of it to be a feast of fat things;—gives us joy and gladness of heart with all that we know of God; which is the great preservative of the soul to keep it close to truth” (*Works of John Owen*, vol. 2, 248). Owen also says, “Whenever there is mention made of comfort and consolation in the Scripture given to the saints (as there is most frequently), it is the proper consequent of the work of the Holy Ghost towards them” (ibid., 250). In his *Pneumatologia* (published by Banner of Truth Trust as volumes 3 and 4 in the 16-volume *Works*), Owen further attributes “illumination” and the “conviction of sin” to the Holy Spirit (*The Works of John Owen*, vol. 3, *The Holy* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1966], bk. 3, ch. 2). The Holy Spirit as comforter is the subject of book 8, chapter 2, *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 4, *Of the Work of the Spirit*.

Spirit. Edwards asks, “And whose office can it be so properly to give all things their sweetness and beauty, as he who is himself the beauty and joy of the Creator?”¹⁰⁹⁹ i.e., the Holy Spirit. He says, “The office of the Holy Ghost, or his work with respect to creatures, which is threefold: viz. to quicken, enliven and beautify all things; to sanctify intelligent [creatures]; and to comfort and delight them.”¹¹⁰⁰

Further, Edwards follows that stream of Western theology that conceives the Holy Spirit as the *vinculum amoris*, i.e., the bond of love between the Father and Son.¹¹⁰¹ He says, “The Holy Ghost is Himself love and grace of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹¹⁰² “God is love,” notes Edwards (citing 1 John 4:8, 16). He then infers that this “shows that there are more persons than one in the Deity: for it shows love to be essential and necessary to the Deity, so that his nature consists in it.”¹¹⁰³ Since God is eternal, he must have an eternal object of love, argues Edwards: “And this supposes that there is an eternal and necessary object, because all love respects another, that is, the beloved.”¹¹⁰⁴ That object of God’s love is God’s self in the second person of the Trinity and the love itself is the Holy Spirit. The bond of love between the Father and Son yields the procession of the Holy Spirit in “pure act.” Edwards says,

The Godhead being thus begotten by God’s having an idea of himself and standing forth in a direct subsistence or person in that idea, there proceeds a most pure act, and an infinitely holy and sweet energy arises between the Father and the Son: for their love and joy is mutual, in mutually loving and delighting in each other.¹¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁹⁹ Edwards, “Discourse on the Trinity,” *WJE* 21, 123.

¹¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰¹ The origin of the concept is usually associated with Augustine, although adumbrations of the notion may be found in early Greek-speaking sources, e.g., Athenagoras of Athens (ca. 133–190; Thomas F. Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996], 167). Athanasius and Basil saw the Holy Spirit as *koinonia* between the Father and Son, and Gregory of Nazianzus, as intermediate between them.

¹¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 130.

¹¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 113–14.

¹¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 121.

Significantly, Edwards casts the *vinculum caritatis* in terms of erotic affect as mutual love,¹¹⁰⁶ joy, and delight. He defines the Holy Ghost as “God’s love and delight,”¹¹⁰⁷ and “the love and joy of God is His beauty and happiness.”¹¹⁰⁸

As the harmonious, cordial “consent” between the Father and Son, Edwards associates beauty most directly with the Holy Spirit. The last paragraph of the “Discourse on the Trinity” is headed: “HOLY GHOST is DIVINE BEAUTY, love and joy.”¹¹⁰⁹ He calls the Spirit “the beauty, the loveliness and joy of the Deity,”¹¹¹⁰ saying that “he is the beauty and happiness of both the other persons.”¹¹¹¹ Edwards says, “The honor of the Father and the Son is that they are infinitely excellent, or that from them infinite excellency proceeds, but the honor of the Holy Ghost is equal, for he is that divine excellency and beauty itself.”¹¹¹²

I do not assert that Edwards self-consciously offered such a trinitarian theology of beauty. Rather, here I have simply observed that my typology of beauty is trinitarian in nature; the three categories (ontological, formal, and affectional) correspond to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit respectively. Furthermore, Edwards’ aesthetics seem eminently consonant with such an approach. The observation that beauty analogically reflects a trinitarian shape could be utilized in the construction of future theological aesthetics. It would be interesting and fruitful to explore whether theological aesthetics could engage all three categories and could be modeled on the Trinity. That is a direction for further study I would now like to recommend.

¹¹⁰⁶ In the “Discourse on the Trinity,” Edwards uses the word “complacence” to describe this love (*WJE* 21, 114).

¹¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹¹¹² *Ibid.*

3. A RECOMMENDATION from the Dissertation

Directions for Further Study

Edwards' aesthetics offer the latent rudiments of a trinitarian grammar of beauty that, while Edwards does not develop, might nonetheless be explored in fascinating and productive ways. Here I recommend that a future theological aesthetics be developed in light of the trinitarian shape of beauty, and that certain trinitarian doctrines might be analogously applied to a theology of beauty. Finally, I explore what I believe to be at stake with such moves.

3.1 The Development of an Edwardsian Trinitarian Theological Aesthetics.

Following from the recognition of the trinitarian shape of beauty, I now wish to recommend a reappropriation and extension of Edwards' aesthetics. This would be both a *ressourcement*—that is a retrieval and reinscription—of Jonathan Edwards' aesthetics and a further development of them.

The claim that there is a trinitarian shape to beauty, or that beauty is trinitarian in nature, is an *argumentum ex convenientia*. I cannot imagine how such a claim could be “proved.” Nonetheless, it is not a groundless fancy or a mere theologoumenon. Some of the richest theological ideas are *argumenta ex convenientia*.¹¹¹³ The claim would center in the *fittingness* of developing theological aesthetics in light of the trinitarian nature of beauty.

Furthermore, if we follow Edwards, we may establish such an approach to beauty due to the vestiges of the Trinity that perfuse all that is created. John Donne once asserted, “It is a lovely and a religious thing, to find out *vestigia Trinitatis*, impressions of the Trinity, in as many things as we can.”¹¹¹⁴ The notion of *vestigia trinitatis in creatura*—that the created order reveals

¹¹¹³ Here one thinks, e.g., of Athanasius' and Aquinas' claim that the incarnation was *fitting*.

¹¹¹⁴ John Donne, “Sermon 40” (1620) in *The Collected Sermons of John Donne*, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/JohnDonne/id/3155>. Accessed 8.1.2013.

traces of the Trinity—was notably expressed in St. Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, and further developed in medieval and Protestant Scholastic theology.¹¹¹⁵

My recommendation (“a lovely and religious one,” according to Donne) is for theological aesthetics to explore what trinitarian vestiges may be found in beauty. As Augustine says,

When therefore we regard the Creator, who is understood by the things that are made we must needs understand the Trinity of whom there appear traces (*vestigia*) in the creature, as is fitting. For in that Trinity is the supreme source of all things, and the most perfect beauty, and the most blessed delight.¹¹¹⁶

If beauty entails an ontological aspect, then beauty reflects the trinitarian nature of reality. Two caveats must append this claim. First, vestiges of the Trinity were usually explored hermeneutically as analogies. Due to the trinitarian nature of reality, analogical traces can be discerned in creation; human beings can observe similarities between features of the created order and the divine nature. This endeavor is creative, even poetic, rather than purely deductive. The claim was not that anyone who applied the same method would deduce the same *vestigia*, but rather that the vestiges could be found in almost anything that exists. This clarification leads us to a second and related one. Vestiges are not “proofs” of the Trinity that may stand apart from special revelation. The claim was not that vestiges of the Trinity are first-order revelation—sort of a natural trinitarian theology. Like Karl Barth, whom he is expounding, Eberhard Jüngel has misconstrued the doctrine when he says, “It was thought that it was possible to discover ‘an essential trinitarian disposition supposedly immanent in some created realities quite apart from their possible conscription by God’s revelation’ as ‘traces of the Trinitarian Creator God in being as such.’”¹¹¹⁷ Augustine simply does not explore the *vestigia* to establish an alternate root in

¹¹¹⁵ Although there exists an ambivalence in Reformed Scholasticism regarding putative *vestigia trinitatis*.

¹¹¹⁶ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, VI.10.12. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3*. Ed. Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1897.)

¹¹¹⁷ Eberhard Jüngel, *God’s Being Is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 17. Jüngel is referring to Barth’s *CD I/1*, 334.

addition to the economic revelation of the Trinity. His aim is simply *fides quaerens intellectum*. Beginning in faith (i.e., that which is taught by the Church and grounded in scripture), he would be nonplussed by Jüngel's claim that "if one accepts that there are such *vestigia trinitatis* and that they can be identified as such, the problem arises whether these are not to be regarded as the root of the doctrine of the Trinity."¹¹¹⁸ Peter Lombard is typical in his views of trinitarian traces when he says, "It has been shown, how among creatures to some extent the image of the Trinity is indicated; for through the contemplation of creatures a sufficient knowledge [*notitia*] of the Trinity cannot be had nor [*vel*] could it without the revelation of doctrine and/or of interior inspiration." He goes on to note, "We, however, are helped to believe invisible things [*in fide invisibilium*] through those (things), which have been made."¹¹¹⁹ Similarly, Aquinas asks "whether by natural philosophy one could come to know the Trinity from creatures?" He answers with an unequivocal no.¹¹²⁰ So then, using the notion of *vestigia trinitatis* is rooted not in a methodology based on the *analogia entis*, but an analogical exploration of beauty in light of the trinitarian nature of reality. It is closer to John Donne's poetic orientation than Przywara's philosophical one. Edwards believes (as we have seen in Chapter Two) that the created order was intentionally designed to reflect God's beauty and nature. Therefore nature manifests vestigial reflections of the Trinity. Edwards identifies two "eminent and remarkable images of the Trinity among the creatures: the "soul of man" and the sun."¹¹²¹ Again, Edwards believes that God so

¹¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹¹⁹ Peter Lombard, I Sent d. III, 1, p. 63. <http://www.franciscan-archive.org/lombardus/opera/ls1-03.html>.

¹¹²⁰ Thomas Aquinas, in I Sent d. III, q. 1, a. 4

¹¹²¹ Regarding the soul, Edwards use a psychological analogy of the Trinity, relating the mind to the Father, "the understanding or idea" to the Son, "and the spirit of the mind ... i.e. the disposition, the will or affection" to the Holy Spirit. Regarding the sun Edwards says, "The Father is as the substance of the sun (by substance I don't mean in a philosophical sense, but the sun as to its internal constitution). The Son is as the brightness and glory of the disk of the sun, or that bright and glorious form under which it appears to our eyes. The Holy Ghost is as the action of the sun, which is within the sun, in its intestine heat, and being diffusive, enlightens, warms, enlivens and comforts the world. The Spirit, as it is God's infinite love to himself and happiness in himself, is as the internal heat of the sun; but as it is that by which God communicates himself, is as the emanation of the sun's action, or the emitted beams of the sun. They well represent the love and grace of God, and were made

constituted the created order that it is an ectypal, analogical sign. He also believes that a proper biblical hermeneutic will establish these *vestigia*. “I don’t propose this merely as an hypothesis,” he insists, “but as a part of divine truth sufficiently and fully ascertained by the revelation God has made in the holy Scriptures.”¹¹²² So then, might not a trinitarian Edwardsian theological aesthetics be warranted?

3.2 The Principle of Indivisibility.

A widely held principle of trinitarian theology is that *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*. According to this maxim, the *one* triune God is indivisible, or inseparable (*inseparabilis*), not only in God’s being (*ad intra*), but also in God’s acts (*ad extra*). The precept that the external acts of the Trinity are indivisible has framed the question of the unity of God in much Western theology. Augustine’s classic statement of the dictum is expressed in a letter to Nebridius:

For the Catholic faith teaches and believes that this Trinity is so inseparable—and a few holy and blessed men also understand that whatever this Trinity does must be thought to be done at the same time by the Father and by the Son and by the Holy Spirit. The Father does not do anything that the Son and the Holy Spirit do not do, nor does the Son do anything that the Father and the Holy Spirit do not do, nor does the Holy Spirit do anything that the Father and the Son do not do.¹¹²³

use of for this purpose in the rainbow after the flood; and I suppose also in those rainbows that were seen round about the throne by Ezekiel (*Ezekiel 1:28, Revelation 4:3*), and round the head of Christ by John (*Revelation 10:1*). The various sorts of the rays of the sun and their beautiful colors do well represent the Spirit, or the amiable excellency of God, and the various beautiful graces and virtues of the Spirit. These beautiful colors of the sun beams we find made use in Scripture for this purpose, viz. to represent the graces of the Spirit; as *Psalms 68:13*, “Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold,” i.e. like the light reflected in various beautiful colors from the feathers of a dove, which colors represent the graces of the heavenly dove. The same I suppose is signified by the various beautiful colors reflected from the precious stones of the breastplate. And that those spiritual ornaments of the church are what are represented by the various colors of the foundation and gates of the new Jerusalem (*Revelation 21* and *Isaiah 54:11–12*), and the stones of the temple (*1 Chronicles 29:2*). And I believe the variety there is in the rays of the sun and their beautiful colors was designed by the Creator for this very purpose, and indeed, that the whole visible creation, which is but the shadow of being, is so made and ordered by God as to typify and represent spiritual things, for which I could give many reasons” (“Discourse on the Trinity,” *WJE* 21, 138–39).

¹¹²² Edwards, “Discourse on the Trinity,” *WJE* 21, 139.

¹¹²³ Augustine, Letter 11.2 (to Nebridius), in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Letters 1–99*, pt. 2, vol. 1, trans. Roland Teske, ed. John E. Rotelle (New York: New City Press, 2001), 36. He

This has sometimes been applied to mean that no distinctions other than processional relations obtain in the Trinity. This is an overstatement that leads some, like Colin Gunton, to challenge the Augustinian tenet itself: “If it is taken to mean, as it sometimes appears to be, that no characteristic and distinctive forms of action can be ascribed to Father, Son and Spirit, there appears to be no point in distinguishing between them.”¹¹²⁴ A more modest interpretation of this principle does not deny distinction among the actions of the persons, but simply affirms that, in all that God does, he acts in unity; each person is present in the action appropriated to the other two.¹¹²⁵ Gunton affirms that “no objection can be taken to this principle”¹¹²⁶ if understood this way. A proper understanding of this doctrine simply extends the principle applied to the persons—that they are distinct, but not separate (expressed variously *distinctio sed non separate, distincti non divisi, discreti non separate*, etc.)—to the actions of the Trinity as well. Rather than a “single action,”¹¹²⁷ this doctrine affirms a *unified* action of the Trinity. All three persons act in concerted unity toward the world. While we cannot conceptualize the Trinity or its acts, Gregory Nazianzen’s dictum serves as a guide: “No sooner do I conceive of the one than I am illumined by the splendor of the three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the one.”¹¹²⁸

continues with an application to soteriology: “From this it seems to follow that the whole Trinity assumed the man. For, if the Son assumed the man and the Father and the Holy Spirit did not, they do something apart from one another.”

¹¹²⁴ Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003), 4.

¹¹²⁵ Indeed, Emil Brunner reminds us that one fuller version of this axiom reads, “Opera trinitatis ad intra sunt divisa, servato *discrimine et ordine personarum*. (“the distinction and order of the persons being preserved (*Dogmatique tome I. La doctrine chrétienne de Dieu*, p. 253, cited in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.), 4.

¹¹²⁶ Gunton, *Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 4.

¹¹²⁷ It does seem single-action theories evince an implicit Unitarianism.

¹¹²⁸ Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 40.41, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 7, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1894).

3.3 The Need for a Holistic Conception of Beauty.

Modernity has been marked by fragmentation, by the splintering of reality.¹¹²⁹ Not only has this been characterized by the breakdown of pre-modern cultural authority and tradition, but also the rise of specialization. Indeed, according to Max Weber's analysis of "modernity" (understood as that epoch that was inaugurated by the Enlightenment), one defining feature of modernity is the coming-into-its-own of distinct disciplines (*Wissenschaften*) within the realm of human knowledge.

This is eminently true as regards the experience of beauty, as has been conceived as an *aesthetic* experience distinct and separate from other experiences. Since the eighteenth century (during which "aesthetics" was established as a distinct intellectual discipline¹¹³⁰), beauty has been seen to have been emancipated from the thrall of other interests (e.g., theology, metaphysics, and ethics), and beauty could be conceived on its own terms rather than as a figure for the good or for divinity, etc. Aesthetic experience was seen to be *disinterested*, i.e., not motivated by ulterior interests, and stands independently, without need of external justification.¹¹³¹ However, in the process, the once grand idea of "beauty" began to disintegrate.

One striking instance of fragmentation was the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime (which, in my opinion, enervated the idea of beauty of its awe and mystery). By the end

¹¹²⁹ By the late middle ages, stress fractures began to appear in the slowly rolling boulder of Western culture. Rolling ever faster with the rise of international commerce, advances in philology, radical reorientations in the sciences, and religious reform and conflict,¹¹²⁹ the once-mighty boulder of unifying authority eventually crumbled, giving way to a progressive process of disintegration. What had subsisted for a millennium as a generally unified culture in pre-Enlightenment Europe shattered into the fragmentation of Modernity.

¹¹³⁰ The locution "aesthetic" emerged in the eighteenth century, being coined and initially formulated by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–1762). The term was readily absorbed in the foment of the cultural shifts of the eighteenth century, and the trajectory of the concept was aimed largely by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804).

¹¹³¹ This is the philosophical ground of the maxim "Art for art's sake," which splits art from any other concerns; i.e., it divorces art from the rest of life. Aesthetic experience is conceived as being enclosed within a self-contained otherworldly realm. In the experience of the beautiful, so the thinking goes, we are drawn to something that cannot *do* anything for us. We can neither sell nor eat beauty. Its ken is seen to be beyond the realm of other human concerns. It is divorced from the common, grubby world of interests.

of the eighteenth century, the beautiful was further distinguished as the fair, the charming, and the picturesque.¹¹³² Simultaneously, as von Balthasar famously laments,¹¹³³ the purchase of beauty shrank, as it became increasingly irrelevant, being reduced finally to the notion of *prettiness*. “One of the central concepts in the history of European culture and philosophy,” observes Tatarkiewicz, has “been reduced to the status of a mere colloquialism.”

A trinitarian theological aesthetics could benefit from the same principle. Accordingly, the three types of thought should be regarded as *distinctio non separatio*. The *ontological* nature of beauty, experienced *formally* in relations, always has an *affective* effect. A theological aesthetics that takes into consideration each aspect of beauty (i.e., its ontological, formal, and affective elements) will avoid reductive, thin, and incomplete views of beauty.

3.4 Consequences of a Non-Trinitarian Aesthetics.

The drive to isolate the essence of aesthetic experience led to reduced, indeed reductive, conceptions of beauty. Modern aesthetic theories have tended to highlight one or two categories of aesthetic thought (the ontological, formal, or affective) but could not hold all three in a perichoretic, trinitarian unity. In what follows I will explore the consequences of ignoring any of the three categories of beauty. Admittedly, in this closing section of the dissertation, I offer my *opinion*, more than develop sustained arguments. I will begin by considering the results of excluding the ontological in aesthetics, move to considering the effects of deemphasizing the formal, and then turn to the aftermath of barring affective conceptions of beauty.

3.4.a. *Minimizing the Ontological Aspect of Beauty.* Ignoring or minimizing ontological beauty, even while retaining the affective and formal aspects, yields a purely subjective, and

¹¹³² As I mention in Chapter Four.

¹¹³³ See Chapter Two.

therefore privatized, aesthetics with little to say to culture at large. The exclusion of ontological features of beauty in Modernity has taken many forms. I will illustrate three: Beauty has been divorced from reality, from truth, and from meaning. Let us consider these separations in turn.

The Divorce of Beauty from Reality. Beauty, as is commonly attested, seems to confront us with some sort of *presence* (or an absence that bespeaks presence semiotically), or transcendent truth, that is simply given in the experience. In either case, beauty is understood to connect us—in some way (whether by participation, analogically, or semiotically)—to *reality*.

In the eighteenth century, however, this was largely abandoned. Kant is paradigmatic. He says,

A judgment of taste ... is merely *contemplative*, i.e., it is a judgment that is indifferent to the existence of the object: it [considers] the character of the object only by holding it up to our feeling of pleasure and displeasure.¹¹³⁴

Aesthetic pleasure, which is a disinterested pleasure, stems not from a desire to possess or consume (in which case existence is necessary), but merely to behold (in which case only the image is necessary). Oftentimes, Kant observes, we take greater aesthetic pleasure in, say, the reflection in a river of a building than in the building itself. The object is seen to be irrelevant to aesthetic pleasure, which is concerned with a subjective image. We may grant that in some situations we care little about the actuality of an object when appreciating its beauty. However, it is another thing altogether to insist that “in order to play the judge in matters of taste, we must not be in the least biased in favor of the thing’s existence but must be *wholly indifferent about it.*”¹¹³⁵ The experience of being deeply moved by beauty is a common one. It seems counterintuitive to say that the subjective image is all that matters. Who would truck the

¹¹³⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), § 5, 209. (Hereafter *Critique of Judgment*. Akademie pagination.)

¹¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, § 2, 205.

destruction of *the actual beautiful object* (an objet d'art, say, a Rembrandt, or even a flower)?
Few, we suspect.

Furthermore, the establishment of aesthetics as a self-sufficient domain shifted the focus from beauty as an *existent property* of things, to aesthetics as a *domain*, or *realm*, of experience; beauty is split from existence, or reality. The experience of the beautiful came to be understood as relating integrally to the faculty of *taste*, and was cast largely as a means of becoming a “cultured,” “polite,” or refined person. A person of good taste takes pleasure in beauty, it was assumed. But this relocated experiences of beauty out of daily life, repatriating them to museums and concert halls.

This split was reinforced rather than challenged in the Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment. The realm of the aesthetic is seen to differ from the world of *Zwechrationalitat* and interested cares,¹¹³⁶ and separated from daily life. As Romanticism develops, the accent shifts. Beauty is still viewed as separate from the pedestrian concerns of life, but is also seen to offer a salvific escape from the mean existence of interest and those concerns. The experience of the beautiful delivers us, at least for a moment, from care, from the rule of reason and will, from *Zwechrationalitat*. Schopenhauer is paradigmatic at this point. In the presence of the beautiful, he proclaims, we find release from care and worry.

Then all at once the peace, always sought but always escaping us on that first path of willing, comes to us of its own accord, and all is well with us. It is the painless state, prized by Epicurus

¹¹³⁶ Kantian notions of disinterest were extended in some forms of Romanticism. Weber, for instance, critiques modernity—characterized by interests. Modernity, he says, is driven by *Zwechrationalitat*, or a goal-oriented rationality that aims to control and manage reality in an attempt to harness it for practical gain. This attitude, grounded in Promethean hubris and a basically violent stance toward reality, privileges the rational side of humanness, since it is through reason that we analyze and control the world in our quest to “build a better mousetrap.” But the woeful result of such small-mindedness is the alienation of the human being from world, from him- or herself, and from others. Again, fragmentation comes to characterize modern society.

as the highest good and as the state of the gods; for that moment we are delivered from the miserable pressure of the will. We celebrate the Sabbath of the penal servitude of willing.¹¹³⁷

Schopenhauerian pessimism, which was very fashionable in nineteenth-century Europe, saw *reality* as the realm in which we experience nothing but unrequited neediness. Beauty is cast as a self-sufficient plenitude, something that knows no need, lack, or care, and we, when we experience it (so the theory goes) regain something like an essential integration, or at least a temporary respite from the cares that are ours under the tyranny of finitude.

The view of the aesthetic as an independent and “socially other” realm, inaugurated in the eighteenth century and both broadened and deepened in Romanticism, tended to equate the aesthetic with escape from the “real” world. The proper response to beauty was seen to be a surrender to it or an absorption by it. In either case, the beholder escapes or leaves the world. Whether beauty is relegated to subjective experience, the purview of which is the cultural development of the elite, or whether the experience of the beautiful is seen to provide a momentary release from the cares of the world, in either case it is banished from the core of objective reality.

The Divorce of Beauty from Truth. So then when beauty is conceived in non-ontological ways (as sometimes occurred in Modernity), it is separated from reality. But it also split beauty from truth. The Cartesian project insists that what is truly important can be comprehended (God, it was presumed, would not have let it be otherwise). Descartes asserts that only “clear and distinct ideas” give access to truth. Truth is, therefore, in some sense, restricted to what we can comprehend.

¹¹³⁷ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, trans. E. F. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966), 196.

Beauty, however, as we have seen earlier, is not essentially a rational phenomenon. As Leibnitz says, “We have no *rational* knowledge of beauty.”¹¹³⁸ Christian Wolff (1679–1754) observed that our knowledge of *particulars* is never clear and distinct. Unlike abstractions, which *are* rational in their origin, particularities present themselves *to the senses*. Baumgarten, following Wolff, Leibnitz, and Descartes, establishes the new discipline of aesthetics in large measure on this Wolffian distinction. Baumgarten coined the term “aesthetic” to designate that realm of sensible human experience that is undeniable, but that does not fall under auspices of reason. He says, “Distinct representations, complete, adequate, profound through every degree, are not sensate, and, therefore, not *poetic*.”¹¹³⁹ Here “poetic” stands for all art, which (at least since the Renaissance) was conflated with beauty. For him, aesthetic images are *clear but confused*; that is, they are immediately present but do not attain to the Cartesian/Leibnitzian goal of being *clear and distinct* ideas, i.e., ideas of *reason*. So then, *beauty is aligned with sense perception*. Indeed, the etymology of the word “aesthetic” links it to the senses.

In Rationalistic thought, which makes a hard distinction between “understanding” and “sensitivity,” sensory perception is held in low epistemic esteem. Sense perceptions are seen to be fundamentally subjective and often in error. What is apprehended by the senses can never be distinct. There is always more than can be apprehended in any particularity, say a tree—which can never be *fully* comprehended (we cannot see the back, or its constitutive molecules, or what is inside, or hidden from view)—than in a rational concept, say a circle—the idea of which is

¹¹³⁸ Cited in Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas: An Essay in Aesthetics* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980), 150.

¹¹³⁹ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Reflections on Poetry (Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus)*, trans. Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 42.

clear and distinct. By aligning beauty with sense perception, beauty is separated from reason *and from truth*.

Furthermore, Baumgarten sees us as finite knowers. In the apprehension of the aesthetic, he says, we aim for intensive knowledge (i.e., a knowledge focused—for the purpose of clarity—on one aspect of something, abstracted from the rest), and we sacrifice extensive knowledge (i.e., knowledge of a thing’s extensive *actuality*). In the aesthetic, then, we gain a pleasurable clarity and distinctness while losing the infinite texture of reality. Truth is surrendered, we settle for fictive pleasures. Once again, beauty is dissociated from truth.

By splitting human psychology into various faculties, and then limiting the scope of human inquiry to the rational, beauty was ultimately reductively redefined beyond recognition. The thin and paltry views that characterize most contemporary conceptions of beauty may be traced, in part, to the separation of reason from other aspects of human knowing or being. Given that faculty psychology is of dubious validity, and given that significant aspects of humans’ experience are not primarily apprehended rationally (or at least rationalistically), Enlightenment conceptions of beauty turn out to be inadequate, reductionist, and thin. Art can be reduced to entertainment, and beauty to prettiness.

The Divorce of Beauty from Meaning. “The poem should not mean, but be,” says poet and critic Archibald MacLeish (1892–1982) in a now famous epithet. The roots of such a claim lie in the aestheticist understanding of art. Baumgarten had defined art as “*perfect sensate discourse*.” I have mentioned the significance of aligning the beautiful in art with the senses.¹¹⁴⁰ Now we must turn our attention to the notion of perfection. While Kant rejected the move to

¹¹⁴⁰ Again, the conflation of art and beauty is unwarranted. However, this conflation has been more or less the accepted view between the Renaissance and this century.

identify *free* (i.e., non-conceptual) beauty as perfection, as concerns *dependent* (i.e., conceptual) beauty—such as the beauty inhering in good art—Kant follows his predecessor. Baumgarten saw art as a perfection to be achieved as a *unity* of the parts, e.g., as the *theme* of a poem unifies all the lines. As a unity, a work of art *does not point beyond itself*. It is seen as needing no reference to anything external.¹¹⁴¹ It is complete in itself; it is a self-sufficient whole. So then the aesthetic pleasure taken in beauty is disinterested (i.e., not related to anything else), and beauty itself is not related to anything else. Beauty does not have a meaning regarding anything outside itself. It does not refer to something “out there.” The step is short to Gertrude Stein’s quip, “There *is no* there, there.” Meaning is eclipsed, divorced from art and beauty.

In art, such views beg a *reductio ad absurdum*. Michael Fried saw any art not immediately perceivable *en toto* as reprehensibly “theatrical.” Any art that so much as invited the viewer to walk around it (in order to experience it more fully) was rejected. All meaning was to be had at a single glance. No reference to anything else was to be made, be it an idea, an emotion, or even another side of a sculpture or another section of a painting. The work of art should not even acknowledge the viewer. Fried deplores work of one particular artist because it “is always of further interest; one never feels that one has come to an end of it, it is inexhaustible.”¹¹⁴² In contradistinction, he lauds the work of Jules Olitski or David Smith because “at every moment the work is wholly manifest.”¹¹⁴³ In Baumgarten’s parlance, the work is *perfect*. Clearly, the art world has shaken off such views. Aestheticist art theory is dead, having destroyed itself. But while the progenitor has died, the progeny lives on in corrupted views of beauty. Beauty is no longer conceived as relating to meaning, being now merely the

¹¹⁴¹ This is highly debatable and debated.

¹¹⁴² Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 143.

¹¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 145.

object of subjective fancy. That which is understood to subsist in isolation, utterly fragmented, and unconnected to anything else, clearly can ground no meaning.

In the end, Edwards, however, standing squarely in Modernity (indeed on the hinge between the Enlightenment and Romanticism) avoids the exclusion of ontological conceptions of beauty that eviscerated the very notion. While other modern conceptions of beauty have isolated it from reality, truth, and meaning, Edwards' views ground his theory of beauty in being. His analogical realism is no naïve ontological realism (*à la* much Romanticism)¹¹⁴⁴ in which a reality presents itself in a fairly unmediated way in the beautiful, nor does it collapse in the face of semiological antirealism, which tends to view the aesthetic object as a sign only. Semiology¹¹⁴⁵ adopts a nonrealist view of the meaning of signs. First, meaning is understood to subsist only in the mind of the interpreter, not “out there” in reality. And second, the meaning of signs is understood to have no necessary or inherent connection to reality, but only an arbitrary, conventionally agreed-upon signification.¹¹⁴⁶

¹¹⁴⁴ In the wake of Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx, our conflicted values, repressed desires, and the self-interested agon of social structures make the aim of dispassionate, disinterested access to “Reality” seem woefully untenable.

¹¹⁴⁵ The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure coined the term *sémiologie* in 1894. I employ the term “semiology” to refer to the theories of signification of Saussure and those continuing in his trajectory. A great deal of contemporary thinking about signs has been shaped by the structuralist Saussure, and his poststructuralist descendants such as (the later) Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Lacan, Umberto Eco, and Jacques Derrida (to name but a few).

¹¹⁴⁶ The semiological tradition conceives of a sign as a “self-contained dyad.” As a “dyad,” the sign is understood to be constituted by two inseparable but discrete parts (for Saussure) or two interrelated aspects (for many poststructuralists). This tradition typically follows Saussure in designating the two features of the sign under the appellations “signifier” (*signifiant*) and “signified” (*signifié*).

For Saussure, the *signifiant* is the psychological impression of some entity. It might be the mental image of particular black squiggles of ink on a piece of paper or the visual image of a friend's gesture, etc. Quintessentially, a signifier can be the *perception* of the sound waves of a spoken word. (For Saussure the signified and the signifier are as inseparable as the two sides of a piece of paper [Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris {London: Duckworth, 1983}, 111]), being “intimately linked” in the mind—“each trigger[ing] the other” (ibid., 66); They are nonetheless, discrete phenomena (ibid., 67) as is graphically illustrated in Saussure by a “bar” separating the *signifiant* and the *signifié*. Interplay between the two aspects of the sign is indicated by the bidirectional arrows. Many later poststructuralists amplify this notion to the point of questioning the distinctiveness of the counterparts of the sign, seeing them as permeating each other. The later Saussurean tradition tends to reduce the conception of the signifier to the material object itself, i.e., the letters on the page, the smirk on the face, or the acoustic word *in se*—in which case the signifier is

Following Edwards' participatory and analogical ontological realism, we can offer a *tertium quid*. The ontological status of beauty is *ideal* in contradistinction to the psychological or mystical. Beauty then is not merely a subjective psychological experience or a direct apprehension of transcendent reality, but an ideal object. Its ideal nature means it is approached through the mind. Therefore, while we can in fact participate in ontological beauty, this participation is mediated through finite and fallible human analogical interpretation. While not all people experience beauty identically (or "universally" as Kant would have it), beauty is nonetheless not simply "in the eye of the beholder." Because it *exists* (in the full ontological sense), it has an objective quality that cannot be fully accounted for by means of a subjective mentalism. While *analogia pulchritudo* are culturally conditioned, aspects of beauty will obtain diachronically and across cultures.

3.4.b. Minimizing the Formal Aspect of Beauty. Emphasizing the affective and ontological aspects while ignoring or minimizing the formal yields an equally negative outcome for theological aesthetics, one that has perennially dogged Christian thinking about beauty. This has been most acutely expressed in Christian Platonism. Neoplatonic aesthetics has tended to produce mystical, world-denying, dualistic conceptions of beauty.

Edwards and most Christians can affirm the existence and importance of immaterial, invisible beauty. Most of the Church Fathers and Mothers, standing within a Pythagorean/Platonic vein of aesthetics, look beyond the material. Such beauty, of course, is not beheld with physical eyes. "Let us love beauty," says Augustine, "but let it be the beauty that

roughly equivalent to what is sometimes referred to as a "sign vehicle." But even in this case, the totality of the sign is psychological, not external to the mind. The analytical counterpart to the "signifier" is the "signified"—which, for Saussure, is the psychological concept to which the signifier refers. It is the idea that emerges in our minds that is habitually connected "by an associative link" (*ibid.*) with a particular signifier. So then, the meaning generated by a sign is wholly—from impression to concept, from "signifier" to "signified"—a psychic phenomenon without necessary connection to external reality.

appeals to the eye of the heart.”¹¹⁴⁷ Here we see an instance of Augustine’s extensive employment of the metaphor of the “inner eye.”¹¹⁴⁸ He refers to the concept variously as “a different kind of eyes,”¹¹⁴⁹ “the eye of the heart,”¹¹⁵⁰ “the eyes of our minds,”¹¹⁵¹ and “the eyes of our spirit.”¹¹⁵² For Augustine, a number of incorporeal beauties are celebrated. He lauds the immaterial beauty of the truths of scripture.¹¹⁵³ He also acclaims a particular incorporeal beauty, viz., the beauty of righteousness (*iustitia*).¹¹⁵⁴ He reminds his hearers, “You have external eyes with which to appreciate marble and gold, but within you is an eye which enables you to see the beauty of righteousness.”¹¹⁵⁵ “There is beauty in righteousness,” he asserts elsewhere, “righteousness has its own fair character.”¹¹⁵⁶ Augustine continues,

¹¹⁴⁷ Augustine, “Enarrationes in Psalmos,” in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Expositions of the Psalms 1–32*, pt. 3, vol. 15, trans. Maria Boulding, ed. John E. Rotelle (New York: New City Press, 2000), 32:6.

¹¹⁴⁸ This, of course, is not exclusive to Augustine, but is common in Platonic thinking. Gregory of Nyssa, to cite just one example, refers to one “whose mind’s eye is clear.” Gregory of Nyssa, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 5, *Select Writings and Letters of Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa*, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wallace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1894).

¹¹⁴⁹ Augustine, “Enarrationes in Psalmos,” 44:3 in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Expositions of the Psalms 33–50*, pt. 3, vol. 16, trans. Maria Boulding, ed. John E. Rotelle (New York: New City Press, 2000).

¹¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 32:6.

¹¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 32:25.

¹¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 44:3.

¹¹⁵³ “Let us keep our eyes on beautiful things,” he says, “let us gaze with the eyes of our minds at what is conveyed by the various senses of the divine scriptures, and rejoice at the sight” (Augustine, “Enarrationes in Psalmos,” 32:25).

¹¹⁵⁴ For the ancients, the good and the beautiful are merely different perspectives on the same reality, at points indistinguishable or interchangeable. As Nussbaum notes regarding the Greek word for beauty, “*Kalon* is a word that signifies at once beauty and nobility. It can be either aesthetic or ethical and is usually both at once, showing how hard it is to distinguish these spheres in Greek thought” (introduction to *The Bacchae of Euripides: A New Version*, trans. C. K. Williams [New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1990], xiii). Tatarkiewicz concurs, noting that originally the concept of beauty was much more capacious than in modern times. He says, “This [beauty in the broadest sense] was the original Greek concept of beauty, which included moral beauty and thus included ethics as well as aesthetics” (*History of Six Ideas*, 123). Indeed, in referring to the Divinity, Augustine uses “the Good” and “the Beautiful” almost interchangeably, e.g., “I call upon you, God ... goodness and beauty” (*The Soliloquies: Augustine’s Inner Dialogue*, trans. Kim Paffenroth, ed. John E. Rotelle, vol. 2 in *The Augustine Series: The Works of Saint Augustine—A Translation for the 21st Century* [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000], 21).

¹¹⁵⁵ Augustine, “Enarrationes in Psalmos,” 64:8, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: Expositions of the Psalms 51–72*, pt. 3, vol. 17 (New York: New City Press, 2001).

¹¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 32:6.

Let us love beauty, but let it be worthwhile, praiseworthy loveliness. Righteousness kindles our minds; people inflamed with righteousness are stimulated to speak, to shout aloud the beauty of it, to tell everyone within earshot, “It’s lovely, it’s splendid!” What have they seen? In what sense is an old bent person beautiful? Put a righteous old man on show: there is nothing lovable in his bodily appearance, yet everyone loves him. He is loved for that part of his being that we cannot see; or rather, he is loved for that part of him where he is seen only by our hearts.¹¹⁵⁷

Furthermore, many have affirmed that Ultimate Beauty is God Himself, who existed in eternity past in immaterial form. However, much Christian Platonism—particularly in its Neoplatonic and medieval mystical forms—went beyond this to seek Beauty that was understood to be *formless*.

Gregory of Nyssa is representative of this Patristic perspective regarding beauty. While he occasionally uses the term “the Form of Beauty”¹¹⁵⁸ simply to indicate that material beauty is a reflection of an archetypal Divine Beauty, it is nonetheless clear that the ultimate goal is “the Beauty which is invisible and *formless*,”¹¹⁵⁹ which he describes as “destitute of qualities.”¹¹⁶⁰ Apophatic language abounds for the “height and mystery” of this kind of beauty. Nyssen refers to it as “incomprehensible,” “ineffable,” and “too high for our comprehension.”¹¹⁶¹ This kind of Beauty cannot be comprehended, only apprehended mystically—what Gregory of Nyssa (and others) refer to this as *theoria*. He says that David experienced this when he was “lifted by the

¹¹⁵⁷ Ibid. Furthermore, Job’s wife, repulsed at the hideous physical condition of her husband, would have done better to recognize the incorporeal beauty of her husband’s *character*. Augustine claims, “She would have been able to love her husband all the more tenderly if she had been aware of his inward beauty” (“Enarrationes in Psalmos,” 55:20).

¹¹⁵⁸ He says the one “whose mind’s eye is clear, and who can inspect such appearances, will neglect the elements which are the material only upon which the Form of Beauty works.” Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*, XI, 355.

¹¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹¹⁶¹ Ibid.

power of the Spirit out of himself,” and sees “in a blessed state of ecstasy the boundless and incomprehensible Beauty.”¹¹⁶²

I have no argument with mystical experience. However, by eliminating form (i.e., the instantiated and perceptible) from beauty, an anticreational dualism often ensues. Following Plato’s *Symposium*, Christian Platonism tended to see the ascent to the spiritual as an ascetical purification and detachment from “lower,” i.e., material, forms of beauty. The *Symposium*, as a late middle dialogue, can be read ironically as a critique of Socrates’ otherworldly spirituality; in the end, Alcibiades’ earthy humanity trumps Socrates’ godlike detachment. But the Fathers read the Dialogue straightforwardly with Socrates as the hero, and the Diotima speech as advancing the highest form of philosophical spirituality—one of systematic ascent through the beauties of the lower world, which are not found to yield satisfaction to human *eros* so that we are compelled to seek that which is common in all beautiful bodies, which likewise provides no slaking of the desire of the soul, so that we look to higher, more eternal and immutable beauties such as laws, art, and culture. But even these beauties direct us beyond themselves, eventually and ultimately to contemplation of the very Form of the beautiful, which is also the Form of the good. Reinterpreted in late-Middle Platonism and then Neoplatonism, eventually the goal became to ascend into mystical union with the One, or God.

Gregory sees this-worldly beauty as a dispensable tool for the one seeking higher beauty; it is, he says, “but the ladder by which he climbs to the prospect of that Intellectual Beauty, in accordance with their share in which all other beauties get their existence and their name.”¹¹⁶³ Worldly beauty is a “material vehicle” for spiritual ascent. It is merely instrumental and “must be

¹¹⁶² Ibid.

¹¹⁶³ Ibid.

left below us,” as admiration of it will eventually “cease.” It cannot satisfy, and simply serves as an appetizer for a greater banquet. He says,

All other objects that attract men’s love, be they never so fashionable, be they prized never so much and embraced never so eagerly, must be left below us, as too low, too fleeting, to employ the powers of loving which we possess; not indeed that those powers are to be locked up within us unused and motionless; but only that they must first be cleansed from all lower longings; then we must lift them to that height to which sense can never reach. Admiration even of the beauty of the heavens, and of the dazzling sunbeams, and, indeed, of any fair phenomenon, will then cease. The beauty noticed there will be but as the hand to lead us to the love of the supernal Beauty whose glory the heavens and the firmament declare, and whose secret the whole creation sings. The climbing soul, leaving all that she has grasped already as too narrow for her needs, will thus grasp the idea of that magnificence which is exalted far above the heavens.¹¹⁶⁴

This kind of aesthetics fosters a dualism that devalues material and this-worldly beauty, seeing it as merely an instrumental good. Such views, Platonist as they are, simply will not stand up to a Hebraic and Christian worldview that affirms creation as good and insists on the resurrection of the body and the restoration of a New (material) Heavens and New Earth.

3.4.c. *Limiting the Affective Aspect of Beauty.* Affective thinking regarding beauty was profoundly altered in the eighteenth century. At the heart of the “aesthetic” understanding of beauty is a conception of it as inducing an entirely *disinterested* pleasure. It is this concept that links and undergirds the various changes effected in the conception of beauty in modernity. In large measure, the move to locate aesthetic experience in pleasure was required by having divorced beauty from *desire*.

Indubitably, the greatest impact on modern aesthetic theory has centered in the conception of aesthetic experience in terms of disinterested pleasure. The influence has been enormous; so much so that its impact would be difficult to overstate. Aesthetic experience is now *commonly* seen to be disinterested, i.e., not motivated by, or even connected to, ulterior interests.

¹¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

The aesthetic realm is viewed as standing independently, without need of external justification. This is the philosophical ground of the maxim “Art for art’s sake.” Aesthetic experience is now conceived as being enclosed within a self-contained and distinct realm, its ken being seen to be beyond the realm of other human concerns. This accounts in part for the rise of art museums, concert halls, and the like in the last two centuries. Now we commonly view the proper function of art to be aesthetic, and feel that religious, propagandistic, or advertising art is somehow *less* because it serves something beyond the aesthetic. Now we distinguish the fine arts¹¹⁶⁵ from crafts and other creative undertakings. Crafts (e.g., pottery, textile weaving) are seen as less significant than painting or sculpture, presumably because they often yield a product that is *functional*. The concept of disinterest has been so widely disseminated that it even grounds legal adjudications regarding the line between art and pornography (presumably if one beholds the work in question with only “disinterested” pleasure then it is art; if prurient desire is stirred then it is pornographic).¹¹⁶⁶ The concept of disinterest has enjoyed far-reaching influence indeed. Let us now turn to the development of the concept.

While Kant decisively shaped the trajectory of “aesthetics,” his doctrine that beauty engenders no interest or desire runs counter to common experience. It has led even Kant scholars such as Paul Guyer to pronounce the theory “absurd.”¹¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, such a conception of beauty represents a climacteric departure from established views. Far from *separating* beauty and desire, from the beginning major strands of Greek thinking place the *accent on desire* when

¹¹⁶⁵ It should be noted that the distinction between fine art and the crafts (e.g., pottery, woodcarving, jewelry making, etc.) is a modern one. See Paul Oskar Kristeller, “The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics (1),” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12 no. 4 (October 1951): 496–527; and Kristeller, “The Modern System of The Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics (2),” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 13 no. 1 (1952): 17–46.

¹¹⁶⁶ Incidentally, Nietzsche mocked such a distinction, and its attending assumption that one might view an artistic depiction of a voluptuous nude without any desire, as either naive or disingenuous. One might agree, especially when one considers that the portrayal of sensually desirable beauty was often the very point of the artist, as in the case of Titian or Michelangelo, for whom physical beauty represented the image of God.

¹¹⁶⁷ See Paul Guyer, “Disinterestedness and Desire in Kant’s Aesthetics,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 36 (Summer 1978): 450.

considering the affective nature of beauty. While such views are evident in Homer and other early Greek thinkers, Plato's *Symposium* represents the *locus classicus* for pre-modern reflections on beauty. This dialogue (particularly the speeches by Aristophanes and Socrates) was seminal for Neoplatonism, patristic theology in both the East (*à la* Origen and Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite) and the West (*à la* Ambrose and Augustine), and for the medieval tradition (notably, Eriugena, Suger, the Victorines, the Cistercians, and to varying degrees most of the Scholastics before Albertus Magnus and including Bonaventure). In the *Symposium* the notion that beauty is the object of eros (or desirous love) is set forth as the accepted view.

While Xenophon's account of the *Symposium* is significantly different from Plato's, they agree in conceiving beauty as the object of *eros*, and the definition of beauty proffered by the Stoics is "that which has fit proportion and *alluring* color."¹¹⁶⁸ In Neoplatonism, affect becomes a primary focus in discussions of beauty. Plotinus asks the simple question, "What do you feel in the presence of ... [beauty]?"¹¹⁶⁹ and in the following passage, which is representative of Neoplatonic understandings of beauty, Plotinus answers his own question in terms not only of *delight* (which does bear affinity to the notion of pleasure but, as I will discuss later, is also distinguished from it), but also in terms of *desire*:

And one that shall know this vision [of the beautiful]—with what passion of love shall he not be seized, with pang of desire, what longing to be molten into one with This, what wondering delight! If he that has never seen this Being must hunger for it with all his welfare, he that has known must love and reverence It as the very Beauty; he will be flooded with awe and gladness, stricken by a salutary terror; he loves with a veritable love, with sharp desire; all other loves than this he must despise, and disdain all that once seemed fair.¹¹⁷⁰

Plotinus refers to "Dionysiac exultation" and "wondering delight" (which are pleasurable), but he also speaks of "pangs of desire," "longing," "hunger," and "sharp desire." Significantly, he does not exclude "unpleasant" affects. He speaks of being "stricken by a

¹¹⁶⁸ Cited in Tatarkiewicz, *History of Six Ideas*, 122.

¹¹⁶⁹ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen McKenna (Burdett, NY: Larson, 1992), *Ennead I*, VI.5.

¹¹⁷⁰ Plotinus, *Ennead VI*.

salutary *terror*,” of a “*pang* of desire,” of “*sharp* desire.” He speaks of “longing,” the experience of which, clearly, can be unpleasant—ranging from the bittersweet to the torturous.

My intention is not to laud particular philosophical systems, it is merely to illustrate that for millennia philosophical reflection conceived the experience of the beautiful in much broader categories than pleasure. The tradition neither established the experience of the beautiful in terms of pleasure, nor divorced it from desire.

The reason they did not becomes clear when we examine the phenomenon of the aesthetic experience of the beautiful. What we are most aware of in such experience is that of *being drawn*. When we see something beautiful we feel compelled to look. A beautiful face in a crowd draws our attention, reducing all other faces to background images; we don’t notice the others, and cannot help but notice the beautiful one. When we are struck by a beautiful scene, we feel compelled to stop and take notice. A beautiful work of art (and it must be noted that not all good art is beautiful, nor is all good art intended to be) induces us to perceive it. The Greeks were clearly aware of this: the word *kalon* (beauty) comes from *kalein* (to call). Beauty calls to us, piques our desire, stirs our longing. The beautiful draws our attention like a candle lit in a dark room draws our eyes.

Obviously, beauty “drawing” us is a metaphor. We are “drawn” to what we *want*. We *like* to behold beauty, i.e., we *desire* to do so. Desire is simply the future orientation of liking, i.e., the phenomenon of liking something we do not possess. In what way do we *possess* the beautiful? It must be admitted that we do not possess it, but that rather it appeals to us. Our experience of the beautiful is overwhelmingly one of longing and pursuit. When we are satisfied, we move on; it is our lack that occupies our attention. The object of desire is always something we have not obtained, rather than what we possess. Furthermore, desire is *necessarily* prior to pleasure. There can be no satisfaction without a desire to be satisfied. Aesthetic experience is both affective and conative, and the nexus between these aspects is desire. From every angle, desire inheres in the experience of the beautiful, and it is precisely at this point that some modern conceptions of beauty fail.

Robert Jenson observes, “there is nothing so capacious as a fugue.”¹¹⁷¹ While he applies this metaphor to God in his trinitarian nature, the same might be said of Edwards’ aesthetics that articulate such a conception of God. Edwards’ views of beauty are a contrapuntal composition incorporating themes of being, consent, desire, delight, fittingness, harmony, the surprising counterpoint of the conjunction of opposites. These themes interweave and successively come to the fore carrying the melody of trinitarian joy.

This dissertation has sought to expound Edwards’ views of beauty with a view toward recommending him as fruitful source and guide (on some issues) in the contemporary resurgence of interest in theological aesthetics. Furthermore, it has established a heuristic typology of conceptual categories in which conceptions of beauty may be perspicaciously discussed and developed. Finally, it has suggested that Edwards’ aesthetics offer a nascent schema for a trinitarian grammar of beauty that may contribute to future discussions of beauty in stimulating and constructive ways.

¹¹⁷¹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 235–36.

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