THE TRINITARIAN PHILOSOPHY OF JONATHAN EDWARDS: AN ONTOLOGICAL AND TYPOLOGICAL EXPOSITION

by

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(Under the Direction of ELIZABETH BRIENT)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation considers the relationship between two of the more historically peculiar features of Jonathan Edwards' thought. Edwards advocates a non-Aristotelian ontology in which inter-relations among created things are significantly constitutive of their being. He also extends a typological interpretation of Scripture to the entire cosmos by arguing that all material things are somehow patterned after moral and spiritual principles and entities. This study suggests that the doctrine of the Trinity is the primary underlying philosophical motivation for both of these intriguing moves by Edwards. In Chapter 1, I construct Edwards' understanding of the Trinity from his writings and place it in its historical context as a re-appropriation of patristic sources, particularly of Cappadocian and Augustinian notions of *perichoresis* or mutual indwelling. In Chapter 2, I examine how the status of created being as a reflection of the perichoretic (Trinitarian) union of the divine being sets the stage for Edwards' relational insights into the ontology of creation. In Chapter 3, I explain Edwards' fascination with types as a particular way of working out the relational ontology that the Trinity has led him to establish.

INDEX WORDS: JONATHAN EDWARDS, PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION, TRINITY, SUBSTANCE, RELATION, TYPOLOGY, HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY, EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY

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B.A., Asbury College, 2000

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2008

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December 2008

DEDICATION

“You do see the Trinity if you see love.” –St. Augustine

To Sarah Kathryn Hostetter, my wife and my always only. Who has shown me love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Economic shifts of modernity have perhaps tempered the classical reputation of philosophy as a pursuit of leisure only possible for a lucky few who either possess great wealth or are beneficiaries of support from others. Be that as it may, I am deeply aware that at least in my own case, philosophy is not possible without an astounding amount of support from benefactors. Chief among these benefactors, of course, is my beautiful wife Katie. Her patience, her willingness to move several states away from the home and family she loved, and her unflagging selflessness in holding so many household affairs together while her husband pursued his academic interests, all combine to make her a model of a companion for which only a very foolish man would ever dare to hope. I am such a fool, but it turns out that I am also very lucky. Words fail to properly estimate her value.

I am grateful also to others in my extended family. I thank my brother- and sister-in-law, who each assisted me in some modest research assignments along the way. I thank my mother- and father-in-law, whose support in the form of visits to Georgia (often to help with household projects that would not have been completed otherwise) and verbal encouragement can never be repaid. I also thank my own parents. My father and I have always enjoyed the pleasure of incisive conversation on a wide variety of subjects, and these conversations carried an added benefit to sharpen my mind during the years that I was writing this dissertation. My mother, for her part, raised me and encouraged me in the pursuit of my natural abilities as a scholar (such as they are) from my earliest days.

Finally, I offer my sincerest gratitude to Dr. Elizabeth Brient, my advisor for the duration of production on this dissertation, whose advice proved valuable time and time again both as an editor and as a philosophical testing ground. I also thank the other members of my final committee, Drs. Frank Harrison, O.B. Bassler, and William Power, and also Dr. Edward Halper, for their critical questions and guidance along the way.

EXPLANATORY NOTE ABOUT EDWARDS CITATIONS

The vast majority of citations from Edwards's writings are from the Yale collection of his works, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards,* Volumes 1-26, John E. Smith and Harry Stout, general eds., *(*New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957 - 2008). Citations from that collection will reference Edwards's own title, or, if he did not give the particular work a title, the title assigned to it in the Yale collection, followed by the Yale volume (in the form "*Works* 1," "*Works* 2," etc.) and pagination. The exception to this rule is that citations from the *Miscellanies* journals will simply reference the entry number in Edwards's journal and the date it was written (using the dates determined by Thomas Schafer in his editor's introduction to volume 13 of the Yale collection). Publication and editorial information about particular volumes from the Yale collection will not be included in the citation. That information is found below:

> "The Freedom of the Will" is in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 1: The Freedom of the Will*, Paul Ramsay, ed., (1957).
>
> "On the Religious Affections" is in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 2: Religious Affections,* John E. Smith, ed., (1959).
>
> "Original Sin" is in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 3: Original Sin*, Clyde Holbrook, ed., (1970).
>
> "Of Insects," "The 'Spider' Letter," "Natural Philosophy," "Of Being," "Of Atoms" (untitled in Edwards), "Things to be Considered an[d] Written fully about" (Long Series (LS) and Short Series (SS)), "Beauty of the World," "Wisdom in the Contrivance of the World," and "The Mind" are all in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 6: Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, Wallace E. Anderson, ed., (1980).
>
> "Charity and its Fruits," "The End for Which God Created the World" and "The Nature of True Virtue" are in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 8: Ethical Writings*, Paul Ramsay, ed., (1989).
>
> "A History of the Work of Redemption" is in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 9: A History of the Work of Redemption*, John F. Wilson, ed., (1989).
>
> The "Types" Notebook, "Images of Divine Things" and "Types of the Messiah" are in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 11: Typological Writings*, Wallace E. Anderson and Mason I. Lowance, Jr., eds., (1993).

"Miscellanies" are published in four separate volumes of the Yale collection: *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 13: Miscellanies a-z, aa-zz, 1-500,* Thomas Schafer, ed., (1994); *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 18: Miscellanies 501-832,* Eva Chamberlain, ed., (2000); *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 20: Miscellanies 833-1152,* Amy Plantinga-Pauw, ed., (2002); and *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 23: Miscellanies 1153-136,* Douglas A. Sweeney, ed., (2004).

The sermon "The Excellency of Christ" is in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 19: Sermons and Discourses, 1734-8, ,* M.X. Lesser, ed., (2001).

"The Discourse on the Trinity" and "On the Equality of the Three Persons of the Trinity" are in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 21: Writings on Trinity, Grace, and Faith*, Sang Hyun Lee, ed., (2003).

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INTRODUCTION

THE TRINITARIAN VISION OF JONATHAN EDWARDS

I

To almost all of his commentators, Jonathan Edwards (1703 - 1758) displays the signs of a thinker who is following some sort of comprehensive project, and yet philosophically these same commentators find it difficult to pinpoint the nature of that project.[1] Perry Miller famously opined that Edwards was "so much ahead of his time that our own can hardly be said to have caught up with him,"[2] and the renaissance in Edwards studies over the past half century in history, theology, philosophy, and literature gives a confirming testimony. Many of these scholars are drawn to Edwards as a visionary who somehow anticipates later intellectual developments, yet there are many interpretations of what precisely this vision is. Indeed, there remains no widespread agreement among these scholars as to how to interpret many of Edwards' most important ideas and arguments, what the most important features of Edwards' thought even are, or even who have been the major influences upon his thought. For some Edwards is a neo-Platonist, following either Malebranche or Cambridge Platonism. For others he is a close follower of British contemporaries, particularly Locke but perhaps also Berkeley, and is even a possible precursor to philosophical turns that find a fuller expression in Hume. To still others he is

[1] The apparent unity of Edwards' thought is seen, first and foremost, in his methodical approach to his intellectual labors. In addition to his published works Edwards left behind a vast collection of unpublished writings that included copious notes on the entire Bible, an intellectual journal of thoughtful explorations on various topics, and a chart of spiritual resolutions. Each of these unpublished efforts was composed over three decades of his life and each runs for thousands of pages. Then there are other unpublished works which were meant to be published but were simply not completed during his lifetime. Yet in all of these efforts there is a nearly systematic attempt to cross-reference and unite different entries into new projects. For example, decades after they were originally written, Edwards ties together notes from his 'blank Bible' with various entries in the 'Miscellanies' journal and uses them as the basis of an outline to chart a course in a new work. And yet the expected work (which was in fact not completed at his death), which is to be a 'complete history of redemption', seems to bear an uncertain connection to the earlier entries from his journals. Yet for Edwards somehow the earlier seemingly disparate entries are part of a cohesive project.

[2] Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1959) vi, 305

some sort of American Augustine.[3] Our interest here is to look more closely at Edwards' anticipatory vision as it is understood by philosophical and theological commentators.[4] In particular, many philosophers have focused on his visionary use of typology while theologians have focused on his prescient use of a relational ontology. We shall examine each in turn.

Let us first consider his typological program.[5] In historical Biblical studies typology is the attempt to understand a character or occurrence in the Old Testament (the type) as a pre-figuring anticipation of the Christian realities of the New Testament (the antitype).[6] The patterned understanding of the relationship between the two things is not understood by typological interpreters to be merely an arbitrary construction of the poetic human imagination (which would make the connection merely tropic), but a real connection between the type and antitype; it is a divinely-ordained connection.[7] Interestingly, Edwards wrote, extensively, about the way in which Old Testament elements figured not only New Testament principals, but moral and spiritual realities in general. Furthermore, Edwards was not content to find typological figures for these moral and spiritual realities only in the text of the Old Testament itself, but extended his search into the natural world apart from explicit Scriptural guidance. Edwards holds that all objects in nature are symbols of moral and spiritual truths, and that many may be known to be such apart from any Biblical revelation. The way in which this anticipated later intellectual developments is a matter of some dispute. Miller thought these moves showed Edwards to be an advocate for Enlightenment science, as he extended his domain of investigation away from revelation and into nature as uncovered by reason and

[3] Avihu Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History: The Reenchantment of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).
[4] Which is not to say that historical and literary scholars of Edwards will have nothing to offer in our discussion.
[5] Indeed, it was Edwards' "strange" use of typology that seemed to be the primary motivation of Miller's "ahead of his time" evaluation. Miller re-published Edwards' *Images of Divine Things* in 1949.
[6] Theologically speaking, a type may be defined as "a figure or ensample of something future and more or less prophetic, called the 'Antitype.'" E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible***,** (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 768.
[7] Wallace Anderson gives a nice brief history of this, including the difference between tropes and types, in "Editor's Introduction," *Works* 6, 15-25. See also M. S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics***,** (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 246.

experience. Most others have found Miller's interpretation difficult to swallow, while still recognizing something prescient in Edwards' typological program.[8]

It is far more likely, against Miller, that Edwards' move towards the whole realm of nature as a source of revelation is not primarily a move towards the Enlightenment but one back towards the fuller appreciation of divine revelation of the medievals that was being challenged by Enlightenment reconstructions of human rationality. Edwards clearly affirms the classic distinction of the Puritans between special (Scripture) and natural (God-aided reason) revelation. In an age when philosophers were boldly challenging the legitimacy of revelation as a source for understanding the world in favor of sourcing such understanding in the power of human reason, Edwards marks a return to this Puritan and medieval harmony between reason and revelation. Scripture (often) reveals God's will to us concerning things that we would not be able to otherwise know. But our ordinary way of knowing things in the natural world is through the use of our rational faculties as given by God, and these themselves constitute a sort of "natural" revelation. What makes Edwards peculiar from his Puritan forbears is that he approaches natural revelation in a typological way. If, as Edwards says, the elements of nature are reflections of moral and spiritual (i.e., divine) things, then all the world is the revelation of God; nature is itself a "book" of God. But a book of nature need not be a book of *types*. So the question is why does Edwards take a specifically typological approach to understanding the natural world? William Wainwright constructs Edwards' typological program as a conclusion drawn from the (indisputably Edwardsian) premise that the world is a reflection of divine beauty: "Because our world is a world of resemblances and imitations, because spiritual things are its 'alpha and omega,' and because its beauty is a reflection of God's beauty, our world can be expected to contain images or shadows of divine things."[9] Stephen Daniel, on the other hand, attempts to situate Edwards' typological writings within a larger "semiotic" philosophy.[10] Daniel's Edwards is a postmodern prototype who deconstructs the entire web of modern conceptions of language and thought itself. On this

[8] It is difficult to find many today who agree with Miller's reading. But to some extent, an example can be found in Leon Chai, *Jonathan Edwards and the Limits of Enlightenment Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[9] William Wainwright, "Jonathan Edwards and the Language of God," *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48 (1980): 519-530. The citation is from Wainwright's abstract, 519.
[10] Stephen Daniel, *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards*: *A Study in Divine Semiotics*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

reading Edwards rejects "classical-modernist" approaches to logic and thought (approaches which are predicative) and instead appropriates a "Stoic-Ramist" mentality (which is propositional) that makes the activity of signification fundamental to understanding the world. Edwards does this by seeing all of reality as essentially communicative, as a "divine discourse" holds all things together and gives to all things their place.[11] In this alternative logic, the identity of a thing is its discursive location within a displacement relationship such as that between signifier and signified (as is seen in propositions). Daniel's Edwards thus gives us a semiotic ontology in which being amounts to these kinds of representative relationships between things.

Both Daniel and Wainwright find within Edwards' typological project a key to understanding underlying principles which "would account for how disparate elements of his thought are integrated."[12] Daniel sees this project within a larger program of semiotic reevaluation, while Wainwright sees it as an inferential outgrowth of Edwards' theism and his moral aesthetic.[13] The different portrayals provided by these two accounts of Edwardsian typology underscore the failure of scholars to arrive at a consensus regarding Edwards' philosophical thought. There is often no discernible common discussion in the literature within which the different interpretations can be readily located. The different interpretations often bear no obvious relation to one another nor are they presented by their principals as interactions with one another. There is no sense of any common underlying principles, arguments, or problems that the two approaches are trying to harmonize or address. There is no logical reason why the theocentric approach of Wainwright and the semiotic reconstruction of Daniel should be taken as exclusive of one another, but neither is there any discussion of how they are compatible. This dissertation will argue that they are broadly compatible in that they both are tapping into the same source of philosophical inspiration that Edwards took as basic. At the same time their

[11] Daniel, 6: "In Edwards's appropriation of this Renaissance mentality, reality is understood as essentially communicative, a system of signification in which everything is united as signifier to signified, type to antitype."
[12] Ibid.
[13] Wainwright is thus working in his explanation of Edwards' typology with fairly standard interpretations of some of the most well-known elements of Edwards' thought, as that thought is represented in Edwards' relatively late publications of complementary moral dissertations (*The End for Which God Created the World, The Nature of True Virtue*) and two sermon series (*Charity and its Fruits, The History of Redemption*). Daniel's analysis, by contrast, attempts a radical reconstitution of even those better-known elements of Edwards' thought.

failure to recognize properly this source requires some modification of the accounts of Edwards' typology that they offer.

The second element of Edwards' thought in which scholars have seen a genuine anticipation of modern developments is in his relational reconception of ontology. This reconception has been the focus more so of theologians who interpret Edwards than philosophers, a fact that is no doubt attributable to the widespread interest in relational ontologies in general that has arisen in contemporary theological studies. These theologians have come to see in Edwards a nascent form of the same ontological insights that have centered their own research. They see in him the beginning of a rejection of the more rigid separation found in classical sources such as (especially) Aristotle between the essential and relational properties of a thing.[14] In such classical ontologies, other entities play no role in defining or constituting the being of a particular entity, because entities must be defined without reference to any others external to themselves. In alternative ontologies that emphasize relationality, what it means to be is largely dependent upon the kinds of relations a thing bears to other things.

The similarity in these theological accounts of Edwards is that they draw largely from Edwards' writings about the Trinity to reach many of their conclusions. In this dissertation We shall see that they are right to ground his relational ontology in the doctrine of the Trinity, but these thinkers do not always do so in a philosophically rigorous way that makes clear what the principles are which the Trinity provides that then allow Edwards to make these extrapolations into ontology. What precisely Edwards' doctrine of the Trinity is, and how precisely it grounds a relational ontology, and even the nature of that relational ontology, are subject to divergent opinion among these theologians.

For instance, the most influential view of Edwards' theological ontology is that put forward by Sang Hyun Lee, who takes Edwards as a forerunner to a kind of process theology for whom God is fundamentally a disposition (*habitus*) always prone to self-

[14] For one summation of Edwards to this effect among many, see Sang Hyun Lee, "Editor's Introduction," *Works* 21, 6: "For Edwards the being of God as well as the essential nature of things in general was no longer articulated in terms of self-contained substances but rather in terms of dispositions, activities, and relations."

expansion.[15] This self-expansionary nature of God is what accounts for the relations within the Godhead (for a dispositional nature implies "the inherent relationality of the divine being"[16]), and accounts for the creation of the world (an act of divine self-expansion) as well as for the particular character of the inter-relations of that creation (things are themselves dispositions prone to self-expansion and are part of a worldwide inter-related matrix of dispositions—including God Himself).

Stephen Holmes concedes that Edwards likely does conceive of God as pure activity and that he emphasizes the relationality of the Trinity, but Holmes takes issue with Lee's claim that Edwards puts forth a dispositional ontology.[17] Holmes argues that this sort of dispositional self-enlargement would undercut the classical Christian distinction between God's activity *ad extra* and his acts *ad intra*, a distinction that falls under a larger differentiation that has been more popularly expressed in the modern Protestant tradition as the "creator/creature distinction." This is a distinction to which Edwards also is unquestionably committed. This roughly frames the problem with identifying the principles that underlie Edwards' "relational ontology": on the one hand, he clearly draws it from his reflections upon the Trinity; but on the other, he clearly intends to do so in a way that maintains a traditional ontological separation between God and His creation, and commentators such as Lee have had trouble elucidating how he does so.

This dissertation offers a unified account that attempts to make sense not only of how for Edwards the ontological features of the creation are grounded in the Trinity in such a way that does not compromise his location within historical Christian orthodoxy, but also of how Edwards' typological project is grounded in the same core of philosophical extrapolations upon the Trinity. Despite the extensive treatment they have

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[15] Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).
[16] Ibid., 184.
[17] Stephen R. Holmes, "Does Jonathan Edwards Use a Dispositional Ontology? A Response to Sang Hyun Lee," in Paul Helm and Oliver Crisp, eds., *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian* (Aldershot, Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 99-114. One of Holmes' primary reasons for taking issue with Lee's dispositional ontology is that such an interpretation requires Edwards to deliberately depart in a radical way from the theological orthodoxy of New England Puritanism (something which Edwards, who was constantly engaged in polemics against others who did likewise, would have been loathe to do). But this rejection of *dispositional* ontology as propagated by Lee leaves plenty of room for other ontologies that are still relational.

given to Edwards' writings about the Trinity,[18] theologians have generally had little if anything to say about the way the Trinity affects his typological project. I shall argue that the Trinity grounds Edwards' ontology, and his ontology grounds his typology. These connections have prima facie plausibility. For a heavily typological view of the world in which even common objects in nature are designed to figure moral and spiritual realities would make sense in a larger view of the world shaped by a relational ontology in which things are seen *to be* significantly according to their relations to other things. And it is intuitive to think that a reworking of ontology could be an implication of thorough reflection upon the (Trinitarian) nature of the God who created all things. One aim of this dissertation, then, is to show precisely why such a relational ontology could lead to a *typological* account of those relations, as well as how exactly these projects are grounded in Edwards' historically orthodox Trinitarian reflections.

While theologians have made connections between Edwards' doctrine of the Trinity and his relational ontology but have largely ignored his typology, philosophers have discussed his typology but have generally ignored the role of the Trinity in Edwards' thought, including its implications for ontology. In fact philosophical accounts of Edwards have tended to neglect the central role of theology in general.[19] Edwards, however, provides the basic contours for a theological grounding of his philosophical projects explicitly in his own writings, where he makes it abundantly clear that he gives a special pride of place in his thinking to the doctrine of the Trinity. Edwards makes this clear in a number of ways. First it should be noted that reflections upon the Trinity played a formative role in his struggles as a young man with the classic problem of "practical Calvinism," knowing that you are among God's predestined. In his mature autobiographical reflections on this period of his life, Edwards says that it was reflecting

[18] "All theological reflection," says Catherine LaCugna, is "potentially a mode of Trinitarian theology." Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993), 380.

[19] In particular, there are the two very different approaches of John Smith, *Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), and Stephen Daniel's aforementioned work *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards: A Study in Divine Semiotics*. Smith's work deals with a wide range of Edwardsian topics, but does so by his own admission in a rather episodic (hence non-comprehensive) way. Further, Smith's philosophical explanations of Edwards hardly touch on overtly theological matters at all, instead giving these more of a brief summary treatment. Daniel, meanwhile, makes a much more concerted effort to tie all of Edwards' thought together (in a manner of speaking), but his account centers on Edwards' semiotic orientation, not on his theology. That these are not necessarily opposed does not alter the basic point that Daniel does not offer a treatment of Edwards' thought that is appropriately sensitive to his theology per se.

upon the Trinitarian nature of God that finally soothed his troubled soul and allowed him to rest in the assurance that God's plan of redemption was particularly intended for him, and thus enabled him to pursue the rest of his academic and pastoral career with confidence. Given this central importance of the Trinity to Edwards' personal and devotional life, we should not be surprised that the Trinity plays a central role in his theoretical writings as well. This is made clear by Edwards himself in the extended project he made of *The Discourse on the Trinity*, assembling it first around 1730 (at the age of 25) from various even earlier writings from his *Miscellanies* journal, and then returning to it throughout his life to make revisions. This work is also related to Edwards' obsession with compiling a complete "History of Redemption," in which he intended to dissertate fully upon all the works of God on behalf of man and particularly for man's salvation in the history of the created order. When combined with Edwards' Calvinist background which made the history of redemption an outworking of an inter-Trinitarian covenant from before the foundation of the world (the *pactum salutis*), it is clear that Edwards considered the Trinity of central importance to this project. For Edwards, it would be necessary to understand the Trinity before one could understand the redemptive actions of God within the created order.[20] Finally and most suggestively, Edwards clearly construes both God's creation of the world and His commands as activities reflective of His inter-triune nature. In both his writings on creation and in his treatises on ethics and virtue, Edwards clearly grounds both subjects ultimately in the Trinity.

As we mentioned above, the problem with theological accounts that recognize the importance of Edwards' Trinitarian writings is that these do not generally provide the philosophical connection between the interesting implications they draw out of those writings and the doctrine of the Trinity itself. The central philosophical claim of this dissertation is that this philosophical connection is important not only to reaching a fuller understanding of those interesting implications themselves, but also to understanding

[20] Zakai makes it clear that this is expressed in Edwards' explanation of the five goals that God has designed to accomplish through redemptive history. The fifth of those goals is that God "designed to accomplish the glory of the blessed Trinity," and thereby "to glorify each person in the Godhead." Zakai 247; citation of Edwards is from his sermon series on the *History of the Work of Redemption*, 124-5. Edwards also makes this clear in Misc. 1062, where he says that "This order [or] economy of the persons of the Trinity with respect to their actions *ad extra* is to be conceived of as prior to the covenant of redemption, as we must conceive of God's determination to glorify and communicate himself as prior to the method that his wisdom pitches upon as tending best to effect this."

other disparate elements of Edwards' thought. In explaining this connection, it becomes clear that the Trinity is the source of Edwards' central philosophical presuppositions and is the best hope for providing an integrated account of his thought. The Trinity does not bear an accidental relation to Edwards' insights into ontology; it is rather *through* his reflections upon the Trinity that Edwards comes to those insights as well as others.

Because Edwards attempts (more or less successfully) to toe an orthodox theological line in his Trinitarian formulations, he offers a window of insight into the potential implications of Trinitarian worldviews in general. He does so most poignantly in these ontological (relational) and cosmological (typological) aspects of his thought that have already impressed themselves upon scholars, though the import of the Trinity in coming to these conclusions is not always appreciated by scholars. This is a philosophical study of these ontological and cosmological implications of Trinitarianism as found in Edwards.

II

The first chapter of this dissertation explores Edwards' doctrine of the Trinity in more detail and considers the ways in which it structures Edwards' understanding of the purpose of creation. The central importance of the Trinity to Christian reflection has been recognized since the earliest days of Christianity,[21] and many historians of religion see in this reflection the similar strains of a classical philosophical problem that predates Christianity itself. For it is one of the most ancient problems of philosophy to note that both unity and plurality seem to be indispensable elements of the cosmos, and to try and understand if and how these two fundamental elements relate. But at its most basic level, the doctrine of the Trinity asserts that God is, in some sense, both one and many, and so the Christian faith has practically codified this ancient problem of the "one and the many" into its own intellectual identity. Some historians also see in this problem a major source

[21] The Trinitarian formula (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) for speaking about God is found in many of the oldest known hymns and sermons of the Church, as well as in several places in the New Testament itself. Furthermore, the three most well-known confessional documents of the early church, the canons produced by the Councils of Nicea and Chalcedon as well as the mysteriously-produced "Apostle's Creed," are all concerned to some extent or another with elucidating the Trinitarian nature of God. These confessional documents are all taken as constitutive parts of historical orthodox Christianity. It isn't surprising, then, that theological interpreters of Edwards who are familiar with this history and who approach Edwards first and foremost as a fellow theologian already see his Trinitarianism as playing an integral role in shaping his entire system of thought.

for the lack of unity between the Eastern and Western communions that has vexed ecumenists for over a millennium.

For instance, it has been argued by many commentators that the West has traditionally emphasized God's oneness to the neglect of His plurality, while at the same time the East has tended to over-emphasize the plurality in the Godhead to the neglect of divine unity.[22] This disagreement is often seen as being reflected with particular clarity in two different analogies for understanding the nature of the Trinity that allegedly characterize the two traditions—the West favoring a "substantival" analogy in which the three Persons are like the three different "aspects" of the same substance (often the human soul or *psyche*[23]), and the East favoring a "social" analogy in which the three Persons are like individuals joined together in a community.[24] Charges of heresy or near-heresy can and have been launched against each side, with the typical "Western" account accused of constituting a quasi-modalism (or Arianism) while its "Eastern" counterpart might be accused of approaching tri-theism. But even on this sort of account, the disagreement is over what quantity of respective emphases to give to God's unity and to His plurality, and not over whether each of these must be affirmed.

Much scholarship in the last few decades has begun to question this sharp division of Eastern and Western Christianities.[25] Edwards' relational perspective is interesting because it allows both of these historical approaches to stand in an interesting way and

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[22] An interpretation which has become very popular since the 20th century, based largely on the late 19th century work of Theodore de Regnon. Cf. Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, (Boston, MA: Herder & Herder, 1997), *passim.*

[23] Hence the term that is often used in the literature for this sort of analogy is "psychological," but I shall retain the more generally-applicable descriptor "substantival." I am speaking of any analogy as "substantival" which describes the Trinity in terms of three "aspects" of an underlying reality. This is the real upshot of such analogies, and so the type does not need to be restricted to Augustine's classical version in which the three persons are compared to the three "parts" of the human soul.

[24] This perspective is nearly ubiquitous in 20th century historical theologians. For a view of how it might contextualize what Edwards is doing see Lee, "Editor's Introduction," *Works*. 21, 19.

[25] See Michel Renee, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," in *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 237-51, and also Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For a critique of the alleged East-West dichotomy as it relates to Edwards specifically, see Steven Studebaker, "Jonathan Edwards' Social *Augustinian* Trinitarianism: An Alternative to a Recent Trend," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56 (2003): 268-85. For a defense of the dichotomy (to a large extent) and of readings that try to locate Edwards on either side (or as waffling between both sides), see Lee, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 21; also Amy Plantinga-Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony Of All: The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), as well as the latter's response to Studebaker, "A Response from Amy Plantinga-Pauw," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 57, no. 4 (2004): 486-9.

thus suggests the deeper unity between East and West that these recent scholars have begun to advocate. By emphasizing the active inter-relations among the three persons of the Trinity, Edwards is able to use the substantival analogy in such a way that "clearly emphasizes the threeness of the Trinitarian persons" and thus in turn ends up reinforcing the social analogy as well.[26]

Broadly, the first chapter focuses on two interesting elements of his writings which each represent a certain return to patristic and medieval sources in formulating his doctrine of the Trinity. These two elements are closely related in such a way that sometimes the very same passages of Edwards' writings can be taken as examples of both, but nonetheless they represent two logically distinguishable features of his thought. The first is Edwards' willingness, already mentioned, to use both substantival and social analogies for the Trinity. The second is the way he incorporates two particular patristic Trinitarian doctrines into his own reflections: generation and perichoresis.[27]

To take the second first, the Church fathers do more in their reflections on the Trinity than represent God as being fundamentally both one and many. Additionally, they specify some of the *sense* in which God is both one and many. For instance, many patristic sources speak of God as an *eternal* community of divine persons bonded together in love—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit co-exist eternally in relationship with one another. This community is one in which the Father is treated as "logically" more fundamental; the other two persons somehow "come from" the Father. But the way in which they come from Him is a way which is original, eternal, and necessary. All three persons have existed always as already in relation to one another. There was never a time, for instance, when the Son did not yet exist, despite whatever sense in which we might try to say that the Father is "first." It is not that the Father existed first, and then at some later time produced the Son. Rather, the Son is and was always already there with the Father. The Father cannot exist, at any time, without the Son. And yet the Son is still described in some sense as coming "from" the Father, but this coming-from is eternal and in fact constitutes the very essence of the Son. The three

[26] Lee, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 21, 19. See also Pauw, 57.
[27] Edwards seems to have gained most of his knowledge of the church fathers, and particularly the Cappadocians, through his own direct readings of Gregory of Nyssa and through his reading of the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth. See Lee, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 21, 25.

persons have their very essence in their relationality to one another, and they are all necessary and eternal beings. The early church generally described these inter-Trinitarian coming-from relations in terms of "eternal generation" in the case of the Son and "eternal procession" in that of the Holy Spirit.[28]

In addition to this, the Church fathers also understood the three persons to mutually indwell one another in what the early church described as *perichoresis*. The Father is *in* the Son and *in* the Holy Spirit in such a way that he cannot be separated from them (though He can be distinguished logically). The three all penetrate one another inextricably, so that likewise the Son is in the Father and in the Holy Spirit (and also with the Holy Spirit in the other two).[29] All of this makes up nearly two millennia of theological background from which Edwards is able to draw. He makes heavy use of this reservoir of historical Trinitarian reflection in assembling and arguing for his own view of the world. For instance, in his *Discourse on the Trinity*, Edwards speaks of the "whole divine essence" as subsisting in each of the divine persons:

> that there is such a wonderful union between them that they are after an ineffable and inconceivable manner one in another; so that one hath another, and they have communion in one another, and are as it were predicable one of another…so may it be said concerning all the persons of the Trinity: the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father; the Holy Ghost is in the Father, and the Father in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost is in the Son, and the Son in the Holy Ghost.[30]

Furthermore, Edwards borrows the perichoretic and originative concepts of the Church Fathers in many of his arguments which are often interpreted as "idealist" in the secondary literature. Both in *The Discourse* and in his treatise *The Mind*, Edwards argues that for God to have a perfect idea of Himself would, as it were, "generate Himself." As he puts it in the Discourse:

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[28] Much of the dispute between Eastern and Western Christianity that culminates in the Great Schism of the 11th century pertains to the manner of the Spirit's eternal procession: Does the Spirit proceed eternally from the Father only (the Eastern view) or from both the Father and the Son (the Western view)? The general doctrine that the Spirit "proceeds" while the Son is "generated", though, is held in common by both major branches.

[29] The role that love plays in these formulations has been enormous, and had been a part of the received Christian interpretation since at least the Cappadocians in the 4th century in the East and Augustine in the 5th century in the West. Edwards continues this tradition here, but also adds to it. For an interpretation of the Greek Fathers that finds a central role for love in explanations of perichoresis that even precede Augustine, see Verna E. F. Harrison, "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 35 no. 1 (1991), 53-65.

[30] Edwards, *Discourse on the Trinity*, 133.

> And I do suppose the Deity to be truly and properly repeated by God's thus having an idea of himself; and that 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.[31]

There is an understandable impetus in Edwards studies to jump upon the apparently idealist structure of these comments and to read them in a particularly Berkeleyan fashion. What is often overlooked, however, is Edwards' use of that word "generated." Edwards is not simply finding a word that will fit his purpose to explain his argument; he is choosing such an ancient Trinitarian term while discussing the Trinity for a reason. Following the Church fathers who first spoke of "eternal generation", Edwards is using the concept of generation to separate God from the rest of creation. "Generation" is a technical term in Christian theology; as those patristic sources would say, only God (the Father) generates and (in the Son) is generated. Edwards is creating space for a different sort of discourse about God than that which applies to human beings or to creation. He is illustrating with this argument for God's "repetition" a unique aspect of the inter-relations of the Godhead, but is at the same time laying the groundwork for this inter-relation to be reflected in the creation. Generation is an activity that occurs only within God, but creation mirrors this unique activity in its own way. This hardly precludes Edwards from also being counted among "idealists." But too often passages like the above are categorized as "idealism" and then forgotten, as though Edwards here gives us a glimpse of his influences (i.e., Berkeley) but is not making any real progress towards his own philosophical goals which might be unique.

The other major strain of Edwards' thought which makes apparent his emphasis on a relational solution to the traditional impasse between Eastern and Western Trinitarian theologies is the way in which he advances *both* substantival-psychological and social analogies in his writings. Concerning substantival analogies, Edwards follows Augustine's enormously influential approach and speaks of the Spirit as the mutual love between the Father and the Son.[32] Edwards also follows an "idealist" path and defines the Son and the Spirit in terms of the activity of the Father when he formulates the Son as

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[31] Ibid., 114 . Also Edwards, *The Mind*, 234. Cf. *Discourse on the Trinity*, 116, where Edwards says that by having a perfect understanding of Himself God is indeed "double." Cf. *Misc.* 94 (1723).

[32] Augustine's formulation compares the Father, Son and Spirit to the will, understanding, and love of the soul respectively. Edwards seems to follow this formulation almost to the letter early in his *Discourse on the Trinity*, but makes some modifications as he comes back to it throughout his life.

the Father's self-understanding (a self-understanding which, because it is a perfect idea of divinity, "generates" divinity again) and the Spirit as the Father's self-love (which, again, because it is a perfect love between the Father and the Son, generates divinity yet again resulting in a "triplicity.")[33] In this sense, then, the Trinity is like a soul which manages to have perfect understanding and appreciation of itself, and thus (in some broadly "idealist" fashion) ends up "generating" itself twice over and the three together end up constituting the "parts" of the newly-formed whole.[34] Taken by itself, this picture seems to have the marks of the "Western" shortcoming which makes the Spirit a depersonalized abstraction[35] and thus falls into some form of the modalist heresy whereby God is simply seen as acting in different ways at different times or in different respects to the detriment of seeing the individuality of the three persons within the Godhead.

But Edwards also advances "social" analogies for the Trinity in a variety of ways. This is reflected in what we have seen already in Edwards' invocations of the patristic notions of perichoresis and eternal generation discussed above. But it is also found explicitly in other places which are not as obviously related to these patristic doctrines. In *The End for Which God Created the World*, for example, Edwards famously argues that God is a "perfect happy society."[36] Such explicitly social language is further supplemented by Edwards' discussion of equality in his brief companion treatise to *The Discourse on the Trinity* bearing the name *On the Equality of the Persons of the Trinity*. There Edwards explicitly assigns activity to all three members of the Trinity, making each of them equally agents within the divine economy. So the Spirit is not simply "love" as some abstract bond shared between the Father and the Son, but is in fact Himself a Person actively and dynamically engaged in the triune life and is Himself a part of the constituting essence of that life. Just as the Spirit is defined in terms of its relation to activities of the Father and the Son (as the mutual love between them, for instance), so also the Father and the Son are clearly defined in terms of their relations to the activity of the Spirit: "In another respect the Holy Ghost, that is, divine love, has the superiority, as

[33] Edwards, *Misc.* 94 (1723), 262. Cited in Lee, "Editor's Introduction," *Works* 21, 19.
[34] The human soul is then created with three parts as *vestigias trinitatis*.
[35] Lee, "Editor's Introduction," *Works* 21, 18.
[36] For a full interpretation of the "social" dimensions of Edwards' thought that result from this and other of his works, see Gerald R. McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society: the Public Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1992).

that is the principle that as it were *reigns* over the Godhead and *governs* his heart, and *wholly influences* both the Father and the Son in all they do."[37] Three persons are individually active within this one "society" of love. This might seem to indicate the "Eastern" problem of emphasizing the individuality of the divine Persons to such an extent that we end up with three gods rather than only one.

Another analogy Edwards uses, that of the sun, helps clear up the difficulty and indicates that Edwards is doing something peculiar with regard to the traditional distinction between substantival and social analogies. Edwards speaks of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the "substance," "brightness and glory," and "heat" of the sun, respectively. It seems this should be classified as a "substantival" analogy for the Trinity, then, because the brightness and heat of the sun are only aspects or parts of the sun itself, and we do not generally think or speak of them as having an activity in themselves (Rather, "brightness" is thought of simply as an aspect of the sun itself, which is the only active thing in the picture.). But Edwards talks about them as though they *do* have such agency. For instance, he says specifically that the Spirit has such agency as "the heat and powerful influence *which acts upon the sun itself* and, being diffusive, enlightens, warms, enlivens and comforts the world."[38] We might be tempted, given a traditional understanding of what a substance is, to say that this is a poor analogy. If this is what the Spirit and the Son are like, active upon the whole in this way, then the Trinity is not like the sun at all! Such a pattern of thinking is what normally generates the traditional apparent impasse between substantival and social analogies of the Trinity.

So, a peculiarity of Edwards is this. On the one hand, He speaks of the three persons as different aspects of one substance, as when he makes the Son and Spirit the self-understanding and self-love of God, respectively, or as when he speaks of the Son and the Spirit as the "brightness" and "heat" of the sun. This seems like standard substantival analogy fare. But then, in the very midst of such an analogy, he changes the "rules" of typical aspectual-substantive ontology and makes the aspects of the substance themselves active agents which themselves exert an influence *upon the substance itself.* We notice that Edwards explicitly declares the "substance of the sun" as the analogue to

[37] *On the Equality of the Persons of the Trinity*, 147. Emphases added. Also cited by Lee in "Editor's Introduction," *Works* 21, 19.
[38] *Misc.* 370 (1728). Emphasis added.

the Father. But this substance is itself influenced, defined, and *made the kind of thing that it is* by its "aspects" to which it is related. The sun cannot be the kind of thing it is, bright and hot, if not for these aspects of it which themselves exercise a kind of activity upon it.

There is a tendency among modern philosophers to treat the Trinity as a dogmatic oddity that either can or (more likely) cannot be defended against claims that it is fundamentally irrational, but which bears no real implications for a philosopher's examination of the world in either case. While this is arguably a mistake particular to modernity, it at least raises the question of how exactly Edwards treats the Trinity in a way that is *philosophically* interesting. What real philosophical work does his Trinitarian doctrine do? As we have seen, Edwards makes much of the inter-relatedness of the various aspects of the Trinity, and it is this relational emphasis that then grounds Edwards' philosophical reflections on ontology and cosmology. In the triune God, we find any distinction between substance and relation dissolved. The kinds of relations a thing bears to other things ends up determining the very kind of thing it is. When you come to understand the relations that exist between things (or between "aspects" of the same thing), you are in fact coming to understand something about the substance of the things themselves. This is the foundation of a relational ontology.

For Edwards, then, following an understanding held by some of the Church fathers and applying it through analogies that contain both substantival and social (relational) features, the three divine persons bear very particular and peculiar kinds of relationships to one another. What is particularly interesting about this is the bearing these relationships in the Godhead have on the created world. Because the created world is full of complex inter-relations, we should expect that Edwards will see the relationality of this world as a reflection of the divine inter-relations. At least, we should expect this on the additional premise that God creates the world to reflect Himself, but such a premise is thoroughly Edwardsian.

This is revealed from a further exploration of *The End for Which God Created the World*, in which Edwards not only argues that God is a perfectly happy society (as we have already seen) but chooses to formulate this social reality aesthetically as a kind of harmony (or beauty). God creates the world in order to see this beauty within Himself

reflected in the world.[39] Thus, the world created by this harmonious divine society must itself be a harmonious society.

The End of Creation thus provides the needed premise that connects God's inter-sociality and the created world. It allows Edwards to argue that the Trinitarian nature of God which is the very source of the harmony Edwards sees in God must be reflected in the created world. One of Edwards' insights, not unique to him but hardly pedestrian either, is that Christian theology offers a unique answer to the classic problem of unity and plurality by making God out to be a fundamentally plural unity/united plurality that serves as the transcendental grounding for the unity and plurality found in the world. The particular application Edwards gives to this insight is by placing an emphasis on relationality in his analysis of worldly things. The created world is the way it is, in terms of its complex matrix of interrelations between things, *because* it is a world made by a God that is a united plurality/plural unity (i.e., a Trinitarian God). In Edwards' hands, the Trinity is thus no theological oddity, nor merely an attempt by the faithful to reconcile disparate Scriptural passages, but an acute effort to make the complex realities of the world somehow explicable in terms of the most fundamental reality of all (God). In addition to reflecting the more patristic elements of Trinitarian theology mentioned above, this also represents a clear reiteration of the ancient and medieval emphases on a beautiful and interconnected cosmos in the face of a growing tendency to lose this emphasis in the modern (especially Anglophile) philosophy of Edwards' day.

But this is not to say that Edwards' relational emphasis is merely a repetition of arguments that have been made before. Rather, he is putting these pre-modern emphases on relationality and beauty in a new way that is clearly informed by his own philosophical interests. And these interests of Edwards are not developed from a nostalgic desire for older modes of thought, but are the result of an education that is in many ways thoroughly modern. This is an interesting double emphasis of the Puritans in general which carries on in Edwards, which as Christian wishes to preserve many ideas from the pre-modern age and yet at the same time hails mankind's emergence from the

[39] That God's creating act (or acts) is gratuitous is crucial to the Edwardsian system, though this has not been clearly seen by all interpreters of *The End*. Pauw, for instance, actually argues that for Edwards it is necessary that God create. But this claim is based on a misunderstanding of the text, as We shall see under our analysis of Lee in Chapter 2, § II.D.

Middle Ages as the new opportunity for those ideas to be leavened into the cultures of the world by God's Spirit. In many ways the Puritans were themselves builders of the modern world, as indicated by their rejection of Aristotelian logic in favor of a Ramist scholasticism and by their enthusiasm for the new scientific method.[40] Yet the modern world they intended to build was to be one that operated more as a continuation and fulfillment of the earlier Christian era, rather than the secularized one that actually developed. Edwards is a flag bearer for this general Puritan project, and so there is something distinctly new and different about the way he applies his Trinitarianism to his understanding of the created world.[41]

More specifically, then, Edwards develops his relational outlook into two novel conceptions: one of being-as-such (*ontos*), and one of the particular patterns of relationality among all things (*cosmos*). Thus, we speak of Edwards' Trinitarianism as having both ontological and cosmological implications.

III

The second chapter of this dissertation explores in more detail how these Trinitarian formulations of relationality underpin Edwards' relational ontology. Ontologically, Edwards wants to show that the properties of things and their relations can no longer be given the rigid separation that has characterized their treatment in much of the Western tradition, particularly that part of the tradition influenced by Lockean empiricism. For Edwards the "essence" of a thing is in some way determined by its relations, and it is impossible for a thing to exist without being in relation to other things. After all, the Father cannot exist without *being Father*, without being in a particular relationship of love with the Son and the Holy Spirit—if essence and relation are connected in God, then how could they not also be connected in the world God created to reflect himself? Being-in-relation is not some merely accidental quality of a thing that can be shaved off through rational reflection on its essential properties. Rather, things are

[40] It should also be noted that the often virulent anti-Catholicism of the Puritans prevented them from romanticizing the pre-Reformation eras of Christianity!

[41] See Zakai, 334: "..the creation of [a distinct Protestant culture in America] was not unrelated to the wider intellectual context of the early modern era. On the contrary, it was essentially a reaction to the Enlightenment's new science of ethics and history. Edwards' genius enabled him to forge, out of his criticism of the Enlightenment project, a novel tradition most adapted to the American mind."

essentially in relation. To be-in-relation is simply part of what it means *to be.* Theologians since the 20th century have emphasized more and more some of these relational implications of the Trinity for ontology, but this perspective was virtually unheard of in the West of Edwards' time.[42] Thus, Edwards utilizes his reflections upon the Trinity to establish and develop a sort of "relational ontology."

In Western discourse, the attempt to find the "unity" of a thing (or the *ousia*, or the substance, or the "being") often involves the effort to treat that thing as atomistically definable, as an isolatable individual that derives its essential definition from factors wholly internal to the thing itself and regardless of any other goings-on around it. This is seen in the way that discussions of substance have often proceeded in the philosophical tradition, as the various "accidental properties" are stripped away to somehow find the "essence" of the thing, with this essence being usually located "within" the thing itself.

Motivated by his reflections on the world as the gracious creation of a triune God, Edwards is led to question this entire metaphysical edifice. He wants to make *relations* fundamental to the "being" of a thing. What makes a thing the kind of thing it is, is at least in large part the relations that thing bears to other things. This is a clean break with the empiricism of Locke with which Edwards was familiar and which has come to dominate much thinking in the analytic tradition. It is at least here, then, that Edwards is resisting modernity's tendency to break apart the harmonious cosmos that characterized philosophical reflection in the pre-modern world, but it is also here that Edwards shows his own independence from that pre-modern tradition as well. For Edwards is deriving his conception of a harmonious universe not from Aristotle or Aquinas, who for all their talk of harmony still held relational and substantial properties at an ontological distance from one another, but from his reflections upon the Trinity directly. Not the metaphysical discourses of the philosophers, but the ancient Christian doctrine, and to some extent the reflection on that doctrine by the Church fathers (and for Edwards Augustine is a Church father before he is a philosopher), is the source of Edwards' inspiration. This "method" of

[42] This modern theological emphasis on relationality can be seen across the universal Christian communion. For but a few of the most notable examples, see (Eastern orthodox) John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Theological Press, 1985); (liberal protestant) Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and (Lutheran) Jenson, *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982) and *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

building a modern philosophy upon the ideas of patristic theology leads Edwards to present a remarkably *different* conception of the harmonious universe than that which had been presented by many of the pre-moderns.

IV

This brings us to the cosmological implications that Edwards draws from his reflections on the Trinity, which is the subject of the third chapter of this dissertation. Following the same teleological reasoning of *The End* sketched earlier in our discussion of his ontology, Edwards applies the perichoretic nature of the inter-Trinitarian relations to the world's relations in a more particular way. He does not limit his Trinitarian application simply to the claim that things must exist in relation to other things; that is the primary ontological implication of the Trinity that Edwards draws, but it is not the only application of Trinitarian dogma he makes. As we have seen in the discussion of eternal generation/procession and perichoresis above, the relations within the Godhead are eternal and necessary. The Father, Son, and Spirit eternally indwell one another in a community of love. Nothing in the world can be eternal, of course, but still the world can reflect the eternal relations of the Godhead by containing inter-relations of its own that are structural—i.e. built into the world in such a way as to last throughout the duration of its existence. The issue is not simply the fact *that* things are essentially related (which is the rub of the ontological implications of the Trinity discussed above), but also that (at least some of) the particular relations that exist in the world are a part of the divine design to create a world that reflects Trinitarian inter-relations. And these relations are mutually indwelling because the one cannot exist or be understood properly without the other (one of the implications of perichoresis we saw above). Edwards sees these sorts of relations among the types that exist in the world; thus, the world contains, for Edwards, a structural nexus of relations between *types* of things. The ontological implications of Trinitarianism ground these cosmological implications, to be sure, but they do not exhaust them. Rather, as the Father is eternally and necessarily related to the Son, and thus cannot exist as the Father without the Son and without that *particular* patrifilial relationship, so (at least certain of) the types of things in the world necessarily must exist, not only as things-in-relation, but as things-in-relation-to-such-and-such.

Thus is Edwards' application of the cosmological implications of thinking about the world in a self-consciously Trinitarian way given clear expression in his typological methodology. The use Edwards makes of typology is at the same time one of the most enigmatic and attractive elements of Edwards' thought. Typological interpretation of Old Testament textual elements was a commonplace of Puritan exegesis, but Edwards goes even further than his Puritan forbears. Edwards seeks to give typological interpretations not only of various Scriptural passages but of the created world as well; he makes not only a historical or chronological connection between events that occur earlier and later in the story of redemptive history presented in the Scriptures, but an *ontological* connection between simultaneously co-existing things. This is surprisingly different. To say that the Old Testament Temple provides a divinely-revealed pattern for understanding the New Testament church, for instance, is standard Puritan hermeneutics. To say that snakes provide a pattern for understanding the devil, however, or that rocks bear a real (divinely designed) connection to some spiritual reality, such that anyone who does not see this connection does not understand the world *rightly*, is something else entirely. Edwards is here elevating the revelation of God in the natural world to a level that, while still not on par with the revelation of God in the Scriptures, had not been granted by his Calvinist tradition. That tradition speaks of two "books" that contain revelation from God—the book of nature, and the inspired Scriptures themselves; but the book of nature is generally seen as impotent to furnish us with knowledge of God, due to humanity's fallen nature and its attendant corruptions. Edwards continues within the "two books" dynamic of Calvinism, but modifies it to give the book of nature a more prominent place closer to the role that "natural revelation" played in the Middle Ages.[43] Yet Edwards' account remains Calvinistic, for he makes it clear that it is only the redeemed person who can properly understand the natural types. The "noetic effects of sin"[44] have made human beings unable to see the connections that are clearly there, which is why it has been necessary for God to reveal more connections through the medium of Scripture. But this fact should not cause us (or, more properly, those who

[43] Speaking of "natural revelation" as a "book" was not an uncommon occurrence during the Medieval period, either; the move is not unique to post-Reformation Calvinism.
[44] A particular turn of phrase introduced by Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press , 1979).

have eyes to see) to doubt the original, more structural connections. In any case, Edwards has no doubt of them, and explores them in astonishing detail in his typological writings.

What we see in these typological explorations is a union of the seemingly independent features of Edwards' thought highlighted earlier by the interpretations of Wainwright and Daniel. Edwards' theocentric vision of a harmonious universe and his communicative (semiotic) restructuring of the order of the cosmos both find expression in his typological methodology. For typology is properly a tool of literary analysis that allows the reader to discern an underlying harmony in the text between events that are separated chronologically (earlier happenings in the plot foreshadow later happenings) and between characters, objects, and concepts that are separated thematically (elements of the plot are used by the author for their symbolic value as suggestive representations of an underlying theme, such as when an author uses a doorway to symbolize a character's new birth into a new way of life.) To analyze a text typologically by looking for such underlying harmonies is to assume that the author has deliberately built them into the text. These literary features of typological analysis are an inherent part of Edwards' program. His typology is the outworking of a harmonious vision that reflects the sort of harmony and beauty found among the Trinitarian persons.

That God acts deliberately and with intention has historically been attributed to His personal nature. A triune God is *fundamentally* personal: He is, literally, a multiplicity of *persons.* For Edwards, the typological interconnections of the world are a design feature of the cosmos *because* the world is meant to represent a God who is, in His essence, an interconnected triplicity of persons. This means that the typological interconnections for Edwards are taken to be constitutive of the essence of the interconnected things. Furthermore, because the typological approach to the cosmos that Edwards employs is rooted in the very *purpose* of creation itself as a reflection of this divine essence of interconnected communication, he extends the approach to the entire cosmos. The world is as full of such types as "a language is full of words."[45]

Edwards' typological approach to the world thus highlights the deliberate intentionality of the divine Author of the world. There are other ways in which the objects in the world could be conceived of as interconnected that would not entail this

[45] *Types Notebook,* 152.

sort of intentionality.[46] Neo-Platonic emanation, for instance, does not entail any self-consciousness on the part of the One from which all (other) being emanates.[47] Edwards' God is personal in the sense that He is intimately concerned with the goings-on within the creation. This differs starkly with deistic conceptions of God that were becoming vogue in Edwards' day, in which God's creative activity was seen as terminating after an initial act of creation whereby God also establishes self-maintaining physical (and even moral) laws for the governance of the universe. Edwards defends instead, along lines that resemble the "occasionalisms" of Malebranche or Berkeley, a God who is always deliberately present and involved in the moment-by-moment endurance of the universe.[48] Thus, chronology and history become essential to God's self-reflection of His own Trinitarian harmony in the world, and Edwards' typological analysis allows him to understand this history much as any student of literature would be able to understand a novel: by analyzing the thematic and symbolic relationships between different events, objects, and characters in the plot. For Edwards this intricate design and constant maintenance of a typological cosmos aims at the revelation of God's *triune* glory through the redemption of fallen humanity.

So, it is not simply that Edwards reconstructs a pre-modern episteme by conceiving the world as a matrix of communicative inter-relations (i.e., *semiosis*). It is that he chooses a literary mode for doing so. The sort of *semiosis* Edwards envisions is narrative and symbolic. Thus, Edwards' interest in typology is not suggestive of the larger structure of his thought simply in virtue of its being a semiotic method for understanding the world. Rather, it represents an awareness of a particular *kind* of semiotic exchange that is literary in nature. The type of communicative structure is important, and for Edwards that structure is grounded in his revival of patristic Trinitarian dogmas. His reception of patristic Trinitarian dogmas allows Edwards to sketch a new

[46] This relates to a distinction Anderson makes between Edwards' typological view of the world (where all physical/natural things stand for spiritual/moral realities) and the view taken by proponents of "natural theology" that the physical world is "dependent" upon God (or upon some "spiritual world"). See Wallace E. Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 15.

[47] Of course, Christian philosophers who appropriate neo-Platonism for their own use and identify the One with God will allow it self-consciousness; but this quality is not required by the neo-Platonic theory of emanation which grounds the inter-relatedness of all things.

[48] Edwards' arguments here *resemble* the occasionalism of these other philosophers, but also represent a different approach, as we shall see.

typological episteme in which the divine beauty is expressed and reflected in the narrative and symbolic connections that exist between the things in the cosmos.

On the other hand, for Edwards it is not just that "the investigation of types is reasonable given the assumption that classical theism is true and Scripture accurate."[49] It is that the investigation of types is *required*, logically necessitated, by the assumption that classical *Trinitarian* theism is true. His typological method for understanding the world is, indeed, an implication of his theocentric aesthetic vision, but the implication is located in the particularities of the Trinitarian nature of that theocentric vision.

Some of the more striking of these typological lessons come to bear on the way we think about history and the task of a historian. For a typological world—a world as full of figuring types as a book is full of words—is a world in which we cannot avoid a moral obligation not only to believe in an *arché* of history, but to seek out what it is and to communicate it in our scholarly reconstructions of the past. Part of the function of human historical awareness becomes encouragement and aid towards the fulfillment of a greater function, that we glorify God and enjoy Him forever. For we are all types and the historical events we as a species have interacted with and continue to interact with are designed plot devices in a great "morality play." History for Edwards becomes a great re-telling of a true life drama; our science of understanding history must be dramatic because reality itself is dramatic. On such a conception modern specializations such as "history" and "literary criticism" and "political studies" become blurred, as we return to the more ancient notion of a harmonious universe in which we all have a part to play on an individual and a corporate level and in which individuals and societies are judged first and foremost by whether or not they play their part well. Clearly, then, the typological project of Edwards also has implications for areas beyond theology proper or Scriptural hermeneutics.

V

Finally, if the Trinity truly serves as the centerpiece of Edwards' philosophical understanding of the world, then understanding this should provide a hermeneutical key for understanding much of the larger Edwardsian corpus. We should be able to profitably

[49] William Wainwright, "Jonathan Edwards and the Language of God," 520.

read at least some of Edwards' works that are not explicitly about the Trinity in a Trinitarian light.[50] Indeed, the conclusion of this dissertation will briefly indicate the ways in which Edwards' relational and typological insights, drawn from his doctrine of the Trinity, lead to some of the insights found in his more widely read ethical and historical treatises (*The Nature of True Virtue, The History of Redemption,* etc.).

For instance, regarding ethics, a relational ontology affects the way we think about our own identities and goals as individuals and as human communities. In Edwards' construction especially, the human virtues (what Edwards also calls "graces") are understood quasi-perichoretically, as (for the most part) each contains the essence of the others so that there is (as with the Trinity) one true virtue, yet many virtues. Charity, or love, is the one true virtue in which all other virtues are found. Furthermore, Edwards construes the purpose of human life as being inextricably other-centered. We are created to be in community with other created things, most particularly other human beings. In so existing, our social nature as human beings mirrors the social nature of the Trinitarian Persons.

Regarding history, in addition to the implications sketched in chapter three regarding typology, Edwards sets out to develop a new historical method of representing theology, one in which the explicitly Trinitarian themes of his broader thought come to the foreground. Edwards holds that all the truths of theology can be found expressed most clearly in the history of redemption in which all three Persons of the Trinity cooperate perfectly to effect salvation for the elect. The conclusion will consider these connections between Edwards' relational re-evaluation of ontology and his writings on history and ethics.

[50] See, for instance, William Danaher, *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2004).

CHAPTER 1

JONATHAN EDWARDS' DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

I. **A Glorious Inlet into Knowledge**

The history of Edwards' writings on the Trinity shows the importance it held for him throughout his intellectual career. Almost immediately the doctrine comes up both as a source of wonder and admiration[1] as well as in the context of ongoing polemical exchanges. We see the latter in his very first writings on the Trinity (in 1723),[2] where Edwards defends the Reformed-Calvinistic view of the relationship between reason and revelation against those who would not allow any combination of reason with Scriptural revelation.[3] "There may be deductions of reason from what has been said [in Scripture] of the most mysterious matters, besides what has been said (and safe and certain deductions too), as well as about the most obvious and easy matters."[4] Edwards then turns to the "mysterious matter" of the Trinity in particular and ponders at length the ways in which

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[1] As when he writes in *Personal Narrative* that "God has appeared glorious to me, on account of the Trinity. It has made me have exalting thoughts of God that he subsists in three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." *Personal Narrative*, http://edwards.yale.edu/images/pdf/personal.pdf, 12 (accessed January 2008). This is also cited in Pauw, *Supreme Harmony Of All*, 5.

[2] The *Miscellanies* entries 94 – 151 contain 9 entries that are titled "Trinity." The first two of these (94 and 96) were written in 1723, when Edwards would have been 20 years old and working in his brief pastorate in New York City, having already graduated twice over from Yale. The next seven entries with this label are more difficult to date, but all were written some time from 1723-1725. For a thorough study and reconstruction of the dates and occasions of all the entries in the *Miscellanies* journals, see Thomas A. Schafer, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 13.

[3] The Reformed-Calvinistic tradition in both its English and Continental expressions had always taken as basic the primacy of revelation over reason, both as a way of discovering truths about God (there are things we cannot know without the aid of revelation) and as a criterion of selection when revealed truths seemed to conflict with deliverances of reason. But its representatives also firmly maintained that reason was to be used to understand revelation in a systematic and elaborative way. The Puritans interpreted such rational derivations from Scripture as inspired in their own right. On the one hand are the explicit statements of Scripture, which carry the authority of God's own voice speaking directly to human beings. On the other hand are those doctrines and practices that are derived "by good and necessary consequence" from explicit statements in Scripture, and these inferences are just as authoritative as the explicit words of Scripture, assuming the reasoning that derives them is valid. This understanding is codified in the Westminster Confession of Faith 1.VI: "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture."

[4] *Misc.* 94 (1723).

reason (as aided by Scripture) reveals there to be a "multiplicity" in God.[5] In another early entry Edwards writes that doctrines such as the Trinity "are glorious inlets into the knowledge and view of the spiritual world."[6] The "spiritual" world for Edwards encapsulates every imaginable topic (including, it turns out, those studied under the natural sciences), and so throughout his many writings Edwards takes the Trinity as a source of insight into a wide variety of *other* subjects.[7] The focus of this dissertation is the interesting deductions Edwards makes from this mysterious doctrine of the Trinity into ontology and typological cosmology.

In order to understand these deductions, we first have to understand what his doctrine of the Trinity is. In order to properly understand this, we must first examine the doctrine as it was found in early Christian reflections, especially as codified in the two ecumenical councils held at Nicea in the 4th century. According to most standard historical treatments, these patristic sources represent Christian Trinitarian theology before the major differences between the Eastern and Western branches of the Church had become explicit.[8] For instance, these accounts see a large rift between substantival analogies for the Trinity allegedly favored by the Latin Church and social analogies advanced by the East. As noted in the Introduction, Edwards makes use of both kinds of analogy in such a way that renders them ultimately compatible by treating relational properties (the only differences between the three persons of the Trinity) as essential.[9] Such a relational treatment of the divine essence immediately highlights ways in which Edwards' doctrine of the Trinity differs with his own Calvinist tradition (at least as a

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[5] Ibid.

[6] *Misc.* 181 (1725). Cited by William Danaher, *Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards*, 4.

[7] Many studies of these various areas are referenced in the introduction. Zakai (*Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History)* discusses Edwards' philosophy of history as one in which the activity of God in human history is grounded in an eternal inter-Trinitarian covenant; cf. *Misc.* 1062 (1742-3). William Danaher (*The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards)* and Norman Fiering (*The Moral Thought of Jonathan Edwards and its British Context*, (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1981)) have each provided studies that explore the Trinitarian nature of Edwards' ethics. Roland A. Delattre (*Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards: An Essay in Aesthetics and Theological Ethics*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968)) has written on the Trinitarian roots of Edwards' aesthetic vision. Gerald McDermott (*One Holy and Happy Society*) has provided a Trinitarian account of Edwards' political theology.

[8] Of course, these historical treatments usually find *implicit* hints of the impending split between East and West much earlier.

[9] We note here that this is also the fundamental thrust of Lee's interpretation of Edwards' theology. The problems with Lee's account which will receive discussion in Chapter 2 are centered on his reading a *disposition* to self-expansion into Edwards' account. The problems with this interpretation do not undo the fact that Edwards does make essence relational in another way.

matter of emphasis) and motivates a search for other sources of influence.[10] The Cappadocian Fathers of the Nicene era, as well as Augustine (the patristic saint of Calvinists) in the next century, stand out especially as theologians who also sought a way of compatibility between the two kinds of analogies for God. As Amy Plantinga-Pauw has argued, the Cappadocian Fathers use both kinds of analogy in ways that are not only compatible but mutually-reinforcing.[11] Edwards was familiar with the writings of the Cappadocians both indirectly and directly, and their influence on his thinking is evident.[12] We now turn, therefore, to Nicene-era orthodoxy (as well as to the better-known theology of Augustine) in order to better understand Edwards' doctrine.

II. **Patristic Conceptions of the Trinity**

A. Trinitarian Dialectic: Unity and Multiplicity

The doctrine of the Trinity bears a certain obvious parallel to the drive in classical philosophy to understand the economy and hierarchy of unity and plurality (what is frequently referred to by historians of ancient philosophy as the "problem of the one and the many").[13] Yet the early propagators of the doctrine came to focus more on characterizing the internal relationship between unity and plurality within the Godhead rather than the usefulness for such a doctrine in understanding the underlying principles of the world at large.[14] One of the major motivations of this intensely theological project

[10] For example, Calvin, as we shall see, has been read as denying that God is essentially relational. See below, §III.C.

[11] Pauw, *Supreme Harmony of All,* 57. For others who have argued for a close connection between Edwards' theology and the Cappadocian/Eastern tradition, see Michael Gibson, "The Beauty of the Redemption of the World: The Theological Aesthetics of Maximus the Confessor and Jonathan Edwards," in *Harvard Theological Review* (2008), 101:45-76; also Michael McClymond, in "Salvation as Divinization: Jonathan Edwards, Gregory Palamas and the Theological Uses of Neoplatonism," in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian,* Paul Helm and Oliver Crisp, eds., (Aldershot, Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 139-60.

[12] Pauw, 57.

[13] E.g.: "The constant and profound contact…between Christianity and Greek philosophy sharpened the problem of the interpretation of this faith in a manner which would satisfy Greek thought. What does it mean to say that God is Father, Son and Spirit without ceasing to be *one* God?" Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 36.

[14] Though, as this dissertation argues, these two inquiries need not be rigidly separated. The relationship between unity and plurality within the Godhead may reveal something of their relationship in the created world. The questions are at least logically distinct, though, and the focus of the early Church was clearly on the former.

was the battle over orthodoxy that characterized the Church through its creedal period.[15] As the period of official illegitimacy and persecution that characterized the earliest days of the Church gave way into the post-Constantinian era of mutual church-empire cooperation and support, the Church became entangled in a series of theological controversies that threatened its unity (and, implicitly, the political unity of the empire). At the center of most of these controversies were two major issues: how to understand the ontological status of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in relation to one another; and, once His divinity was established, how to understand the relationship between the divine and human natures of the Son. It is the former struggle that characterizes patristic Trinitarian theology (the latter is a struggle carried on under the label of "Christology"), and this search for the proper boundaries of confession about the Godhead provide the context for understanding the concepts of generation, procession, and perichoresis.

We can provide ourselves with a guide through this discussion by focusing on the original contributions to Trinitarian formulation provided by the theology of the Cappadocian Fathers.[16] Those contributions consist of two general sorts. The first is the Cappadocians' clear and explicit extension, for theologically-rigorous reasons, of divinity to the Holy Spirit.[17] The second sort of contribution involves a cluster of difficulties associated with "one-many" puzzles that necessarily characterize a doctrine like the Trinity. The Cappadocian contribution on this score was its (more or less, arguably) successful navigation of several layers of these dialectical difficulties. Both types of contributions quickly become entangled as soon as we try to discuss them separately. Just the same, we shall make a start.

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[15] While there were many smaller synods that met throughout this period, the five centuries spanning roughly AD 300 – 800 saw the Church produce seven Ecumenical Creeds. These are still taken to be the entire doctrinal deposit for orthodox faith and practice by the Eastern church.

[16] The three Cappadocian Fathers are Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian (sometimes called Gregory Nazianzus), and Gregory of Nyssa, all of whose theologies are considered to have played a formative role in the development of orthodox theology at the time of the two Councils of Nicea ($_{AD}$ 325 and 381).

[17] The orthodox had maintained the Spirit's divinity long before the Cappadocians, but the Cappadocians are rightfully credited with being the first to ground His divinity alongside the Son's in theological argument from orthodox principles. Our goal here is not to focus on the details of the theological argument they provided, but simply to acknowledge that in the provision of such an argument the Cappadocians distinguished for themselves a clear place in the history of orthodox theology on the Trinity.

1. *The Spirit of Love and East-West Division*

Regarding the divinity of the Holy Spirit, an ambiguity arises because, compared to its treatment of the Son, the Christian tradition has often been somewhat neglectful of the Holy Spirit except to affirm that He is coequal with the other two persons. Indeed His divinity was well established among the orthodox at the synod of Constantinople (AD 381), yet still at around the same time Gregory the Theologian coined the term *theos agraptos* for the third person of the Trinity: the God about whom nobody writes.[18] The *filioque* controversy between the Greek and Latin churches further complicates whatever discussion has taken place concerning the Holy Spirit's eternal procession.[19] That controversy is motivated by Western Church's decision to add to the line of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed that speaks of the Spirit's procession so that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son* (hence, *filioque*).[20] The phrase finds strong precedent in Augustine (though the Western Church did not add it to the creed until long after his death), which causes many in the East to locate him as a chief source of what they regard as Western errors. The Eastern Church, despite many in its ranks who supported the orthodoxy of the doctrine, took issue with the West's unilateral addition to a creed that is supposed to be ecumenical. Later efforts to repair the breach failed and the controversy over *filioque* was still prominent when the Church eventually suffered schism in the 11th century. The history of the dispute is immensely complex, and it collides immediately (on almost any account) into the same one-many puzzles that we mentioned above. We seek a number of fairly broad observations so as to provide ourselves with sufficient background for understanding Edwards' doctrine of the Trinity.

First, the standard histories mentioned in the opening section of this chapter hold that the difference between East and West on the procession of the Holy Spirit revolves around their respective views of the unity of God. It is claimed that the East locates divine "unity" in the essence of the Father, which is then "repeated" in the Son and the

[18] Gregory's quotation is reported by Molly T. Marshall, in "Participating in the Life of God: A Trinitarian Pneumatology", *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30 no. 2 (2003): 141. Henceforth Gregory the Theologian shall be referred to simply as "Gregory," as is customary.
[19] See Introduction, §II.
[20] The original Nicene Creed (AD 325) said nothing of the Spirit's procession. The topic is included in the Eastern Church's addition to the Nicene Creed, enacted at the first Council of Constantinople (AD 381). This was only a regional council, but its addition to Nicea was ratified by Rome and the Western Church as a whole eventually (in 451) adopted the amendment.

Holy Spirit, while the West locates it in a generic "essence" shared by all three Persons. Polemically, the Western view is often characterized as an overemphasis that gives improper priority to unity over against multiplicity when discussing God.[21] On the other side, many have accused Eastern theology of tri-theism.[22] This account of East-West difference regarding unity, in turn, depends heavily on an assumption about the development of doctrine in the early Church. It is assumed that the early Church struggled through the task it faced of reconciling multiplicity and unity by working self-consciously (at least in general, more or less, in most cases) from Aristotle's taxonomy of unities. Starting with the notion that unity is indivisibility, Aristotle delineates five different kinds of unities: continuity, accident, substance, genus, and species.[23] The story goes that unities of accident[24] (e.g., the sort of unity that whiteness and graininess share in a particular piece of white paper) and of continuity (e.g., as in rivers) are discarded by the early Church as clearly unworthy of describing the divine unity.[25] Then, among the three options that remain, it appears that the Eastern Church has opted for a "generic" (or "specific;" it matters not, for here the two are functionally the same) theory of Trinitarian unity, by which the three Persons are like three men who all share the same "human" nature.[26] This is the "social" analogy. On the other hand, it is said that the West opts for unity of substance as their chosen analogue for understanding how God is one. In this sort of unity, the unity of God is analogous to the unity shared by (to use an Aristotelian example) the three necessary qualities of featherlessness, bipedality, and rationality when

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[21] As indicated in the Introduction, the examples of theologians who make this claim about the Western view are legion. Many are cited in M.R. Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," in *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 237-250, as well as in Ayres, *Nicea and Its Legacy*. Those who analyze the Western view in this way, particularly those who are proselytes for the Eastern Church, often find evidence of the Western "overemphasis" even in the way its theological texts are arranged. See Zizioulas, 40.

[22] Brian Leftow, "Anti Social Trinitarianism," in *The Trinity*, Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, Gerald O'Collins, eds., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 203-249.

[23] Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, vol. 1 (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1970), 314f is probably the most definitive (and widely influential) discussion of Aristotle's five unities as they *might* relate to the philosophy of the Church Fathers. See also Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). For a discussion of Aristotle's analysis of unity that does not consider the question in terms of the Church Fathers, see Michael C. Stokes, *One and the Many in Presocratic Philosophy* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1971), 12f.

[24] Stokes, 13, says that Aristotle himself chooses to "ignore" unities of accident, and thus so do these standard accounts of Eastern and Western difference.

[25] So again we get the picture on this account that the Church Fathers are sitting down with a list of Aristotle's five unities and trying to find the "right" one to express the kind of unity that they already "want."

[26] In this case, the unity would be specific and not generic.

all three subsist in a particular human form. (Humans are rational animals, and featherless bipeds.) Such "substantival" models for analogizing the Trinity are usually called "psychological" thanks largely to Augustine's dominant version which makes the oneness of the Trinity analogous to a human mind-soul (psyche) that has consciousness, understanding, and will. We shall maintain the terminology suggested by this historical analysis (i.e., "social" and "substantival" analogies[27]).

This standard account, however, gives rise to critical questions. It is not clear, and the inference is at best underdetermined by the evidence, that the early Church's reflections about the unity and multiplicity in the Godhead would have been based off of Aristotle's unities. It simply isn't clear to what extent Aristotle was even available to the Church Fathers, much less that they would have been taken with his approach to the topic.[28] In any case, there is no presumptive reason to think that these five unities exhaust the available options,[29] nor that divine unity is really the kind of thing that is best understood by first attempting an a priori definition or range of definitions, based on observations in the world, that thereafter limit the "live" range of options of what can be thought about it.[30] Furthermore, the early Church is just as concerned to maintain God's differentiation into three (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) as it is to uphold divine unity. We shall see that the Church Fathers do assert that God is indivisible (Aristotle's *sine qua non* for unity), yet also that he must be distinguished (or differentiated). The goal of their theological formulations is not simply to pick out the proper unity from a supplied list, but to understand the nature of God's unity as it is revealed in conjunction with His differentiation. This task does not necessarily conflict with Aristotle's taxonomy of unities, but it does not necessarily start from or work within that taxonomy either. In any case, the standard analysis sees Eastern and Western theologies as representatives of a

[27] The more common convention is to speak of "psychological" analogies rather than "substantival," as we have seen. Yet the psychological analogy is understood as an analogy to a substance.
[28] Certainly, the influence of Stoic (not to mention Platonic) conceptions of unity need to be taken into account as well. Wolfson does so in his philosophical history of the Church Fathers, arguing that Stoic conceptions of unity are assimilated into the early Church's understanding of Aristotle's five unities. See Wolfson, 301f.
[29] In fact, Aristotle himself does not clearly list out these five as the only kinds of unities. The entire taxonomy is a fairly gross simplification of the many discussions Aristotle gives of unity in the *Metaphysics.*
[30] For instance, the earliest Christian reflections conceived of God's unity in terms of "monarchy." God is the one and only ruler of the entire realm of existence. This sort of unity isn't in view in Aristotle's five-part taxonomy (which is not to say that it doesn't fit in one or more of his categories of unity).

choice between two incompatible conceptions of God's unity, but the alleged incompatibility remains to be seen.

2. *One God, Three Who are God, One God*

At this point, to understand properly the difference between Eastern and Western views of the procession of the Holy Spirit (assuming genuine difference, that the Great Schism was not *just* a "big misunderstanding," etc.), it is necessary to take up the second kind of contributions that Cappadocian theology has made to Trinitarian theology. Those contributions are found in several levels of the dialectical puzzles present in the Christian attempt to understand unity and multiplicity in God. J.A. McGuckin summarizes the Cappadocian contributions to this dialectic as follows:

> Firstly, the completion of Athanasios' argument that generic or qualitative similarity in the persons of the Godhead had perforce to give way to the affirmation of absolute identity of essence; secondly, the elaboration of what was the basis of differentiation within that identical essence so as to constitute a recognizable and hypostatically distinct Triad wherein the distinctions were posited as relations; thirdly, the explanation of how the unity was preserved in the distinctions; and fourthly…the setting out of a clearly defined terminology…"[31]

The particulars of the Cappadocians' carefully defined terminology (the fourth contribution) is of little interest to us here. Their other three contributions cited by McGuckin, however, are each highly significant accomplishments that climax in the orthodoxy of the Nicene Creed, an orthodoxy which, when sketched, provides an outline of a structure of thinking that Edwards will remodel in his own idiom. They mark a dialectical dance in three steps that the Trinitarian must perform without losing her balance: (1) demonstrate the identity (coequality) in essence of all three Persons, that all three are indeed God; (2) explain somehow how an identity of essence among the three Persons allows for differentiation between the three Persons, i.e., how they maintain their integrity as individuals; (3) retain the unity in light of these differentiations, i.e., show that three are God, yet not three gods, but one God.

[31] J.A. McGuckin, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light (*Oration 31.3)*: The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Gregory the Theologian," in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39 (1994), no. 1: 10. McGuckin's article is a penetrating and clear introduction to Cappadocian Trinitarianism.

The basic perspective provided by the Nicene Creed is clear: the unity of the three is in their mutual divinity, or what the Creed calls a oneness of "substance" or "essence" (ουσια) (i.e., satisfying (1) above). But this raises two questions, both of which fall under (2) above (the first directly, the second less so). The first question is how the three Persons can be different from one another, and the second is how the "essence" of divinity that is shared between the three persons can avoid being treated as a separate distinction within the Godhead (i.e., a quaternity rather than a Trinity). The former is a question addressed to the substance of (2) directly; the latter addresses a potential pitfall that has been alleged against certain versions of Trinitarianism (that their peculiar way of reckoning the unity among the three ends up producing a fourth). Once these questions are cleared away, then it remains to be seen how a God that has just been differentiated into three can again be brought back into one (i.e., (3) above). The quest is for a monotheism that allows for differentiation, and a differentiation that doesn't become polytheism.

The answers offered by the Cappadocians to these three propositions also contain the major patristic doctrines we have set out to explore from the beginning. We shall see in a moment that (1) is an answer that the Cappadocians give to respond to the Arians once and for all regarding the full divinity of both the Son and the Holy Spirit. With this answer given, the Cappadocian answer to (2) is in terms of eternal generation and procession (and thus We shall return to the discussion of the Holy Spirit that we began above). Likewise, their solution to (3) is the earliest sketch of what the Church came to call "perichoresis" (mutual indwelling). These answers together become what can be called the Nicene-Cappadocian solutions to the basic Trinitarian puzzles, and which give expression to the basic orthodox Trinitarian theology which remains the bedrock of Christian theology today in both its Eastern and Western varieties.

B. Generation and Procession

1. *Similar to Same to Identical*

Taking up the first issue of the tripartite dialectic above, we consider the Cappadocian insistence that the Son (and also the Holy Spirit) is identical in essence to the Father. Here we are less concerned with a philosophical defense of that view as with a

history of how it came about.[32] The Church from its earliest days followed the opening passage from John's Gospel and took the Son to be the living Word of God who is also identified with God. As heretical pressures came upon the Church with greater frequency (and greater political weight), more and more the Church found herself with an apologetic need to defend Christ's divinity with arguments. One of the dominant angles that were taken as those arguments developed was to focus on Christ as an eternal being. Thus, His apparent "subordination" (inferiority) to the Father (as alleged by heretical schools such as the Arians) was actually an *eternal* relation by which the Son subsists in connection with the Father. That He is begotten (generated) from the Father thus cannot entail any sort of ontological subordination on His part, for He too is an eternal being. The church continued to construe the manner of this origination of the Son (as well as of the Holy Spirit, who came into the conversation eventually) as fundamentally mysterious, approachable in thought only by analogy. Some were more enthusiastic about constructing actual analogies than others, however. Gregory, for instance, expresses dissatisfaction with all analogies as inherently misleading, yet he also uses them out of necessity. Still, he would prefer that theological speculators learn to hold their tongues:

> The generation of God (the Son) must be honored by silence. It is a great thing for you to learn that he was begotten, but the manner of his generation We shall not admit that even angels can conceive, much less you. Shall I tell you how it was? It was in a manner known to the Father who begot and the Son who was begotten. Anything more than this is hidden by a cloud and escapes your dim sight.[33]

Still, certain analogies came to favor among the Church Fathers for expressing these mysteries. A favored analogy to express God's "natural" and always actual activity as *Father* which generates the Son pertains to light from the sun. As the effulgence of God's glory, the Son is continuously generated just as rays from the sun perpetually radiate from their source. As Athanasius put it, "just as the Father is always good by nature, so he is by nature always generative."[34] And so the Son is by nature *always*

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[32] By Edwards' time it was simply the accepted view (among the orthodox) that the three Persons were identical in essence.

[33] McGuckin, 31. All statements from Gregory, except when otherwise noted, are cited as found in McGuckin's article. The primary texts (especially Gregory's *Five Theological Orations*) can be found in English translation in *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: the Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*, F.W. Norris, ed., (New York: EJ Brill, 1991).

[34] Cited by M.F. Wiles, "Eternal Generation," in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 12 (1961): 290.

generated. The error of the subordinationists is thus not that they insist that the Son is generated, but that they miss the import of the eternal nature of that generation.

It should be noted that the Arians (the chief heretics eventually condemned by Nicea) were willing, in light of these developments, to move to affirm the Son's eternality while still denying His full divinity. It appeared to many of them that they had the resources to do so within the light analogy itself, which they turned to a Neoplatonic interpretation. In the Neoplatonic system the efflux is a *deficient* image of the source, not a precise replica of the same.[35] Thus the Arians (and other subordinationists) came to be willing to affirm that Christ related to God as rays of light relate to the sun, a relation that required co-temporal existence (or, in the case of an eternal sun, co-eternality) for both relata. In the end, the controversy led to Edward Gibbon's "furious contest" at Nicea which came to be "settled by a single diphthong" (ι).[36] The debate between the orthodox "*homoousions*" and the semi-Arian "*homoiousions*" (note the diphthong) was over whether the Son was of a merely "similar substance" to the Father, or the "same substance." In the end Nicea opted to codify the latter into the Creed, while also maintaining the light analogy for the Son in relation to the Father.[37] Therefore, for the orthodox the co-eternality of the light source and its rays is clarified as proceeding from their consubstantiality, rather than from an emanation of being from superior source to inferior image.

Perhaps not surprisingly, this still proved to be insufficient to end the Arian controversy, as the "residual body of Arians"[38] became more sophisticated at using

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[35] For example, we find the Cambridge Neoplatonist Ralph Cudworth expressing this doctrine by commenting on Plotinus: "In the things Generated from Eternity, or Produced by way of natural Emanation, there is no progress upwards, but all Downwards, and still a Gradual Descent into Greater Multiplicity… 'That which is Generated or Emaneth, immediately from the First and Highest Being, is not the very same thing with it, as if it were nothing but that Repeated again and Ingeminated; and as it is not the same, so neither can it be Better than it.' (Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5, Bk. 3, Ch. 15). From whence it follows, that it must needs be Gradually Subordinate and Inferiour to it." Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London, 1678); facsimile reprint (1964), 581. Cited in Eileen O'Neill, "*Influxus Physicus*," in *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy*, 34.

[36] The quote, of course, is from Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

[37] Thus the Nicene Council codifies that the Son is "God of God, *light of light*, very God from very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father." (Emphasis added)

[38] McGuckin, 8. The problem seems to be that "same substance" (*homoousios*) still seemed to imply a materialist interpretation whereby the identity is generic, much as two dogs are of the same (and not merely "similar") substance. Thus the attribution of "same substance" with God to the Son is still, in the end, an analogy comparing a material person (the Son, Christ) to the divine. McGuckin cites in particular Eunomios and Aetios as "semi-Arians" who, even after Nicea, attempted to remain within the orthodox

orthodox words in unorthodox ways. It is here that the Cappadocians enter the battle in the generation after Nicea and argue that the "true meaning of the homoousion was not merely generic identity, or even 'likeness of being'…but rather very identity of being."[39] By dropping language of similarity altogether, or by insisting that such language be interpreted as strict identity, the Cappadocians finally provided the Church (when the doctrine stuck) with a formulation that could flush out even the most subtle Arian. This is the first step of the dialectic: the Son and the Holy Spirit are each fully divine because they share, in fact, an identical divine nature with the Father.

Interestingly, Gregory's argument here (as summarized by McGuckin) has strong parallels to Edwards:

> The Son in his origination from the Father is not a 'decession' from the Father's glory but an 'accession.' By this he does not mean that the Son completes anything that is lacking to the Godhead, since the perfect cannot be improved, but that a direct and natural origination from such an Absolute is no diminution, despite what the Arians had argued, precisely because it must be absolute itself.[40]

The Son (and the Spirit) must be absolute deity themselves, because they are "direct and natural" originations from the Absolute. We shall see that Edwards provides an account with precisely the same form through his appropriation of Augustine's psychological (substantival) analogy.

2. *Relations of Origin*

We saw earlier that there were two questions to ask at this second step of the dialectic. The first is how the three Persons can be different from one another, given the identity of essence the Cappadocians have just posited? The second question is aimed proactively at particular kinds of answers that might be given to the first question: depending on how the differentiations among the Persons are established, how is it that the divine "essence" that is shared between the three persons can avoid being treated as a

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formulations (affirming the language of Nicea itself) while continuing to deny the full divinity of the Son. Understandably, these issues are not fully sorted out by the orthodox (if they ever are), until the Council of Chalcedon which deals explicitly with the Incarnation and the manner in which the divine and the material can find union in Christ.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 29.

separate distinction within the Godhead (i.e., rendering a "quaternity" rather than a Trinity)? This second question is aimed especially at Western accounts of the Trinity.

To the first question, how can there be difference between the persons if all three possess the essence of God? "This progression from generic sameness of quality to absolute identity of being was bound to reopen the great questions about particular differentiation within the Godhead."[41] Ontologically, there is nothing "missing" in God, but if this is the case then how can three beings who are all God have any differences at all? Would not any point of difference between two of the Persons imply that at least one of them lacked something necessary to "Godness?" The answer the orthodox Church provided through the Cappadocian theologians was that the differences lie *entirely* in these relations of origin, where the Son iseternally *generated* by the Father and the Holy Spirit eternally *processes* from the Father (and, in the West, from the Son also). A succinct statement that Gregory repeats in several of his orations goes thus: "there is complete identity in all things within the Trinity except for the relations of origin."[42] To the Arians who regarded the Son's "generateness" (Γεννησια) as evidence that He lacked the *sine qua non* of deity, Gregory responded that ingenerateness does not describe essence or nature, but relation.[43] The term "ingenerateness" is thus "a particular qualification of God's essence" as it is expressed (subsists) in the Father, not "its determinant and constituent."[44] It is a negative modal descriptor that tells *how* a thing is *not* rather than *what* it is.[45] These relations of origin as such do not constitute a multiplication of the divine essence (which is impossible), but rather an explication of the nature of that essence. The nature of God is to *be* all three of these persons in community together with one another. None of the three lacks anything pertaining to divinity, and

[41] Ibid. "Reopened" because in the second and third centuries the Church had come to a consensus framework which stressed God's unity as that of power. This "monarchy" was a unity which allowed easy distinctions. (One being can remain a united whole who rules as one entity and still be distinguished into a million parts). When it turned out, as it had to, that distinctions were coming a little too easily, the Church (again, with Arius in the role of central villain) found itself battling the heresy of subordinationism (i.e., the view that even though the Son rules the world with the Father as a kind of coregent, He is ontologically inferior). There also arose various subgroups of the Arian threat who would accept the new creedal statements about the divinity of Christ, but who would not apply those statements to the Spirit.
[42] Ibid., 25n.81. The translation is McGuckin's.
[43] Ibid., 19. McGuckin traces this argument to a few Fathers who predate the Cappadocians. See McGuckin, 19n.44.
[44] Ibid., 20.
[45] Ibid., 19.

thus all three are divine. At the same time, each of the three reveals divinity in a different way according to the particularities of their relations. These relational differences, therefore, are an inherent part of the Godhead or the divine essence itself.

This requires us to re-consider the way the Cappadocian theology (and the "Eastern" theology in general that has followed it on this point) conceives of the identical divine essence that is differentiated only in the relations of origin of the Three Persons. The "Eastern" approach locates the unity (the one identical essence) of the Godhead in the Person of the Father as origin/source (ʼαρχη) and cause (αιτια) of the other two persons.[46] The Father, as fountainhead of all divinity, is the "essence" that is shared by the other two persons. "The three have one nature, viz. God, the ground of unity being the Father, out of Whom and towards Whom the subsequent persons are reckoned."[47] As McGuckin articulates it:

> If, in Gregory's thought, the commonality of nature is the ground of Trinitarian unity, the Father's personal communication of his essence, entirely and without reserve, to the Son and Spirit, must be seen as the origin and principle of that unity, and the timeless initiation of those mutual relations which constitute it. This act of the Father's self-communication specifies who the Father is; in other words, it specifies or hypostasizes the Godhead (divine *ousia*) as Father in the act or relation of fathering; just as the Son and Holy Spirit are hypostasized in Godhead in turn by being begotten and by being sent from the Father. The Father, then, in the very particularization of Himself (his individual expression of his own being) originates the very particularizations of his Son and Spirit, and thereby unfolds the whole Trinity, for the other two hypostases each concretize that being which is from him—his being and theirs—by returning that relation of generation and procession, being his Son and his Spirit respectively.[48]

The Father gives (communicates) His own individuated being (i.e., His own hypostatic, relative, personal subsistence) to the Son and the Spirit. Both the Son and the Spirit receive their being from the Father, and in that reception each is individuated (hypostasized, personalized) as Son and Spirit respectively. In communicating His own personalized being, the Father generates and processes two distinct Persons who are

[46] Again and again, Gregory speaks of the Father as the "fountain" of the Godhead in this double sense (origin and cause).
[47] Gregory, cited in J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (5th ed., London: A. & C. Black, 1977), 265.
[48] McGuckin, 27.

identical to Him in every sense except their relational subsistence (the Son is generated, the Spirit is processed).

This comes to be the view of the Eastern Church and has been characterized as a "personalist" ontology in which "person is irreducible to nature."[49] Being is not a more fundamental (universal) category to which another category of "person" may be added. Rather, "entities no longer trace their being to being itself—that is, being is not an absolute category in itself—but to the person, to precisely that which *constitutes* being, that is, enables entities to be entities."[50] In other words, entities are persons (particular relational modes of existence) before they are "beings": it is only "persons" that are able to "be" in the first place.[51] Thus the Cappadocian theology asserts that each person/hypostasis of the Trinity "is the divine ousia; the divine ousia exists hypostatically, and there is no ousia apart from the hypostases. To exist as God is to be the Father who begets the Son and breathes forth the Spirit."[52] The divine Persons are defined in the Cappadocian theology by their respective relations of origin, the Father being the unoriginated of the three. Thus, the broad picture regarding God is one in which the "unity" of God is located in a particular divine personality (the person of the Father) rather than in some "divinity" that is more fundamental to the persons themselves.[53]

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[49] See, for instance, John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, (Fordham, NY: Fordham University Press, 1987), 142f and David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 12.

[50] Zizioulas, 39.

[51] Thus Zizioulas (42n.37) sums up the theological ontology of the Greek Fathers as follows: "No substance or nature exists without person or hypostasis or *mode of existence*. No person exists without substance or nature, *but* the ontological 'principle' or 'cause' of being—i.e. that which makes a thing to exist—is not the substance or nature but the *person* or hypostasis. Therefore being is traced back not to substance [i.e., nature] but to person." Emphasis added.

[52] This is Catherine M. LaCugna's summation of Cappadocian theology, cited in Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity* (Philadelphia, PA: P & R Publishing, 2004), 165.

[53] This, combined with its "apophatic" approach to theology in which the "being" of God is ineffable and utterly transcends (i.e. is rendered beyond comparison in either positive or negative terms) created being, demonstrates the manner in which the East has maintained a rigid ontological distinction between Creator and creation. It is impossible even to discuss the "being" or "essence" of God (or of any of the three persons individually). The "unity" of God is located in the person of the Father, not in the ineffable "essence" or "being." The Father is intelligible only as a hypostatic (relational-personal) differentiation of that essence: He may be discussed as He relates to the other two persons, even though the essence they all share remains inscrutable.

The "unity" of created things can be understood in similar terms as fundamentally personal even though created being is intelligible. Despite the ontological chasm that exists between God as uncreated "being" who is wholly other from all created (and in principle intelligible) being, there is also a fundamental similarity in personhood that allows creation (and especially humanity) to image—to become like—its creator. The particulars of this theotic vision for human (created) existence are subject to

More properly, the principle of divine unity is the Father's "personal communication of the divine nature to the Son and Spirit, timeless, immaterial, and incomprehensible."[54]

We can now return to the difference between Eastern and Western formulations regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit. On the Eastern view, the distinction between generation and procession, is a distinction of two numerically different originations from the Father. One of these originations (the Son) is direct from the Father and the other (the Spirit) is somehow mediated, but both originate ultimately from the Father as the fountain who communicates His being to the other two in different relational combinations. The preference in Western formulations, on the other hand, is to identify the Holy Spirit with the eternally active Love of God, proceeding equally from the eternal lover-beloved relation of the Father and the Son. Thus, the West says that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *and* the Son (*filioque*), whereas the East says only that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *through* the Son.

Of course, these two positions do not need to be construed as mutually incompatible. The Father is the fountain of the Godhead, but the Son's generation is also "prior" to the Spirit's procession. Given that the Son is "already" there, therefore, certainly He would have something to do with the Spirit's procession (which is, after all, a divine operation during which the Son, as a divine Person, exists). And indeed, the East acknowledges some role for the Son, saying that He is the medium of the Spirit's

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interpretation. A number of contemporary apologists for Eastern theology construe this "personalist" ontology of patristic theology as one in which individual particularity (the *definiendum* of "person" on these accounts) is rendered a product of freedom rather than necessity. E.g., Zizioulas characterizes ancient Greek philosophy of all stripes as "ontological monism" in which "existent things finally trace their being back to their *necessary* relationship and 'kinship' with the 'one' being" (29, emphasis added), against which Christianity arises as a fundamental reappraisal which made created being in its particularities "a product of freedom." (39) Similarly, D.B. Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), argues that Christianity is fundamentally a "story of beauty" that stands opposed to all pagan "stories of necessity" (*passim*). These accounts see a "personalist" ontology as being primarily about providing a grounds for both God and human beings to break free from necessity (God in an absolute sense; finite creatures in a more limited sense). As a Calvinist, Edwards believes that true freedom is grounded *in* necessity not in the transcendence of it. Yet Edwards still gives an account of being and personhood that meshes in interesting ways with these "Eastern" accounts, in that he also takes the personal relations to be necessary to deity.

Also, it is in this vein that Eastern theology distinguishes between God's essence and His energies (attributes), saying that the latter are knowable even as the former is completely inscrutable and thus unapproachable by finite minds. We shall see that this distinction is unacceptable to Edwards because it diminishes God's divine prerogative to reveal Himself to human minds in an intelligible way. For a contemporary criticism of the essence/energy distinction, see Letham, 152f.

[54] McGuckin, 27.

procession from the Father (the Spirit proceeds from the Father, *through* the Son). This only raises again the question, though: how are the Eastern and Western views really so different? Certainly when the Western tendency to associate the Spirit with the love between the Father and the Son is remembered, the alleged incompatibility disappears. Depending on one's perspective, the beloved (the Son) is both the origin and the medium of love. The initiating lover (the Father) gives existence to a love that exists *through* the beloved (the Son) as the locus and channel of its expression. However, love in God is necessarily mutual. The Father's love for the Son is reciprocated by the Son as love for the Father. The Father and the Son are each loving subject and beloved object, in one relationship of mutuality. Viewed in this line, the mutual love proceeds from both the Father and the Son. It therefore seems there is room to read the two approaches to the Trinity as compatible with one another.

The second question that arises from locating the unity of the Godhead in a shared essence is how it is that this essence does not constitute a fourth distinction in the Triune community. To be clear: this is thought to be a problem with "Western" Trinitarianism in particular. The standard account of Eastern and Western difference, at least as expressed by polemicists for the East, holds that there is a solution to this problem already in place at the time of Nicea, again inspired directly by the Cappadocian Fathers, but that the West departs almost immediately (albeit inadvertently) from this Cappadocian-Nicene solution. That solution is to identify the essence of the Godhead with the Father. The Father, as fountainhead of all divinity, is the "essence" that is shared by the other two persons. "The three have one nature, viz. God, the ground of unity being the Father, out of Whom and towards Whom the subsequent persons are reckoned."[55] This identifies the "essence" of God with a particular person of the Godhead, thus allowing all three persons to share in the same essence without rendering a quaternity because the Son and Spirit are hypostatic "concretizations" of the being of the Father (rather than of some generic being of which all three partake in an equal way). It is alleged that the West, especially when understood through the lens of the substantival analogy, doesn't have access to this solution.

[55] Gregory, cited in Kelly, 265.

This criticism badly misunderstands the purpose of the substantival analogy, though. The Father as fountain of the Godhead is perfectly consistent with Augustine's substantival (psychological) analogy because the consciousness "gives rise" to the understanding and the will. There are no understanding or will without consciousness, which serves as both origin and cause of the integrated human psyche. It is the modality of existence that "fills" them in their own exercise (i.e., contents of understanding and acts of will occur only as exercises of an understanding and willing consciousness, of a consciousness *that* understands *and* wills). Here we sketch what Edwards will make clear: that the human soul provides an analogy for the Trinity that is both substantival (i.e., the three Persons are all divine, of the same essence or substance) and social (i.e., the three Persons remain distinct individual entities (what Aristotle would call "primary substances") whose existence is not posterior to some underlying substance that "holds" them all together in the way that three qualities of "catness" are held together by a particular cat).[56]

C. Perichoresis as Communion

In his assertion that the three Persons all share an identical essence, Gregory does not deny the distinction within the Godhead (as is apparent from his mentioning of the Son and the Spirit as separate from the Father). Rather, he insists that it is a distinction that somehow does not amount to division. The Godhead exists "undivided in separate beings," and "you cannot find there any of the properties inherent in things divisible."[57] Perichoresis represents a move to clarify how this can be. How can the three Persons, differentiated according to three subsistent relations of origin, be understood to be the one identical divine essence? How, precisely, can one identical essence subsist in

[56] In fact, Augustine explicitly denies the charge of "quaternity." In *Epistle* 120, for instance, he writes: "The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the Trinity, but they are only one God; *not that the divinity, which they have in common, is a sort of fourth person*, but that the Godhead is ineffably and inseparably a Trinity….You know that in the Catholic faith it is the true and firm belief that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God, while remaining a Trinity . . . the Trinity is of one substance and [the] essence is nothing else than the Trinity itself (*ut ipsa essential non aliud sit quam ipsa trinitas*)." (Emphasis added) Cited by Leithart, http://www.leithart.com/archives/003378.php (accessed January 2008).

[57] Gregory, *Orations 27-31*, SC 250, ed. and trans. Paul Gallay, (Paris: 1978), 302: "We have one God because there is a single Godhead. Though there are three objects of belief, they derive from the single whole and have reference to it. They do not have degrees of being God or degrees of priority over against one another. They are not sundered in will or divided in power. You cannot find there any of the properties inherent in things divisible. In a nutshell, the Godhead exists undivided in separate beings."

differentiations at all (and still remain one)? This is the third step of the Trinitarian dialectic addressed by the Cappadocians. It is in this context (that of preserving God's unity despite the distinction of persons) that Gregory's seventh century commentator Pseudo-Cyril of Alexandria elaborates on one of the former's orations:

> For the deity is undivided amongst things divided, to put it concisely: and it is just like three suns cleaving to each other without separation and giving out light mingled and conjoined into one. When, then, we turn our eyes to the Divinity, and the first cause and the sovereignty and the oneness and sameness, so to speak, of the movement and will of the Divinity, and the identity in essence and power and energy and lordship, what is seen by us is unity. But when we look to those things which the Divinity is, or to put it more accurately, which are the Divinity, and those things which are in it through the first cause without time or distinction in glory or separation, that is to say, the subsistences of the Son and the Spirit, it seems to us as a Trinity that we adore.[58]

That God is one is apparent to reason when it reflects upon the nature of Divinity. That He also contains a multiplicity is evident by Scripture, which answers for us the question of "Who is God?" by presenting all three Persons as divine. Yet, the manners in which the distinctions are produced are shrouded in mystery.[59] Yet that they *are* produced is the received confession of the orthodox, and the Cappadocian contribution is to attempt an account of how these distinctions come to constitute again the unity of the Godhead as a perichoretic communion of mutual containment or coinherence.

The usefulness of the term "perichoresis" (mutual indwelling, coinherence) is derived from its ability to stand in as a shorthand for the Cappadocian move to find unity in the differentiation among the three Persons. The first to use the *term* itself (περιχωρησις) is not Gregory but Ps.-Cyril, whose commentary on Gregory was passed on to the entire Christian world via the efforts of John Damascene.[60] The Cappadocian move which Ps.-Cyril attempts to faithfully reconstruct is that there is an inextricable

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[58] Cited in J.P. Egan, "Toward Trinitarian Perichoresis," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review:* 39 (1994) vol. 1, 83-93.

[59] The Scriptures are where we go to "look to those things which the Divinity is." As McGuckin summarizes, Gregory culminates his "entire Trinitarian exposition" in "a refusal to go further" than "the theophany narratives of the scriptures." See McGuckin, 31. God appears in the Scriptures as Son and as Spirit, and so Christians must affirm the divinity of each alongside the Father. But after this there is no more that human reason can enable us to say.

[60] A further discussion of this history, as well as of the relationship between Gregory's formulations and those of Ps.-Cyril, can be found in Egan, "Toward Trinitarian Perichoresis." See also Harrison, "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers," passim.

inter-penetration that renders the activities (or 'energies') of the three Persons into one common energy:

> [The monarchy of God] is, however, a monarchy that is not limited to one person for it is possible for unity if at variance with itself to come into a condition of plurality; but it is a unity that is made of an equal dignity of nature and a union of mind and identity of movement and a convergence of its elements to unity (a thing which is impossible to a created nature), so that even if they are distinct in number they are not divided in being.[61]

The identity of being for the three Persons, though they are differentiated according to their relations of origin, demands that they be coequal in "power, glory, honor, commonality of will, and identity of movement in all God's external dealings."[62] The Trinity is a "comprehension (συλληψις) of the coequal and the equally-honored, and as they are united by nature (ψυσις) they are named as a union."[63] The union of the three is in their union as mutual coequality, all comprehended as one.

In fact, the more common illustrations of these mutual indwellings between the three Persons involve light. As perichoresis is incorporated into the Church's doctrine, often the older analogies that associate the Son's generation by the Father with rays from the sun are appropriated for the more general purpose of showing how it is that all three persons can be coequal. The sun shifts from an analogy about the Son's generation from the Father specifically to one about the eternal cooperative activity of all three persons together. While we can distinguish conceptually between the individual Persons plugging away, the net effect is that they in fact all glow simultaneously as if the same source. Gregory speaks in one place of "three infinities comprising one infinite conjunction, where three can be discerned in 'theoria' [in thought] but in effect only one shines out, in just the same way that a threefold light forms one single radiance."[64] To be God is to be a communion of three personalities, intermingled together in such a way as not to entail any "mixing" of their individuation, as if three suns could somehow retain their own integrity while also overlapping into one radiance.[65] From this intermingling of light in

[61] Gregory, cited in McGuckin, 22.
[62] McGuckin, 23. This is McGuckin's gloss on the passage from Gregory just cited.
[63] Gregory, cited in ibid., 22.
[64] Ibid., 23. This is McGuckin's summation of an argument Gregory expresses in many places. Several instances in Gregory are provided by McGuckin, 23n.69.
[65] The physical impossibility of this does not diminish the mind's ability to contemplate it and in so doing to be enlightened as to the nature of God's tri-unity. Furthermore, in the realm of phenomenal appearance,

light, we perceive only one light which nonetheless we know from revelation to be in fact three separate lights. Thus we perceive "light from light in light."[66]

The notion of perichoresis in Trinitarian theology, then, is that the three Persons of the Trinity are each fully divine, and yet so closely joined in an eternal fellowship that their combination constitutes the essence of their divinity.[67] God is this community of persons acting always together in perfect harmony. This is the thrust of the passage in which Ps.-Cyril first coins the term "perichoresis:"

> Wherefore we do not speak of three Gods, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but rather of *one God, the holy Trinity*, the Son and Spirit being referred to one cause, and not compounded or coalesced…For, as we said, they are one not so as to be confounded but so as to cleave to one another and they possess coinherence [περιχωρησιν] in one another without any coalescence or confusion.[68]

The Trinity *is* the one God. The communion of three mutually interpenetrating persons is what comprises the one essence or "substance" of God confessed in the Nicene Creed.

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which is plainly the context for the analogy's generation, the image is more vivid than at first might appear. Modern conceptions of solar molecules banging into one another are not present to gum up the picture. Instead, a sun as a source of light is at once both a "physical" object (subject to sensory observation) and yet also of a completely different sort than typical matter. (Light cannot be physically grabbed or diminished in the way that, say, a pile of sand can be incrementally transported from one location to another). Light appears to have no affect on the "matter" it comes into contact with (i.e., it does not add to an object's mass when it absorbs rays of lights), etc. It seems at least possible that one could conceive of three separate suns coming together into the same physical space without displacing one another's internal constitutions. The three would not melt together into one but would instead all be present in one intense ball of sun-sun-sun radiation. Of course, this remains an imperfect analogy since it still deals with material differentiation (we still speak of this physical sun and that physical sun and that other physical sun, all of which remain numerically distinct *suns* and not simply distinct relational subsistencies of one sun).

[66] This famous formulation is found in Gregory's 3rd *Oration,* cited in McGuckin, 31.McGuckin helpfully interprets Gregory's dictum as pertaining to the experience of Christian worship: "Gregory intends to suggest that the next appropriate stage of the theophany is not further articulations and more analyses, but the silence of worship and communion that transcends speech…which as Paul says is that communion with the Spirit reveals for us the regenerative power of the Son, the true image of the unseen Father. This is what Gregory means by his succinct phrase, 'Perceiving light (the Son) from light (the Father) in light (the Holy Spirit).'"

[67] Because God is eternal, the problems we might have conceiving of this (i.e., how it is that the three Persons exist in a combination which itself constitutes their essence, even though the latter two Persons are each originations from the person of the Father; and so we might conclude that the Father's personality is not defined by the community of which He is a part that is only formed by His originating activity in the first place) are reflections of our limitations as finite and temporal creatures, not of any inherent "logical" problem with the Cappadocian position. See Gregory's comment from his second *Oration* cited in McGuckin, 28: "Therefore, in respect to cause [the Son and the Spirit] are not unoriginate; but it is evident that the cause is not necessarily prior to its effects, just as the sun is not prior to its light. Nonetheless [the Son and the Spirit] are in some sense unoriginate in respect of time, even though you [the Arians] would scare the simple-minded with your quibbles; for they are not subject to time from whom time came to be."

[68] Cited in Egan, 87. Emphasis added.

The Father is the fountain of this essence, as its unoriginated possessor who communicates Himself to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.[69] The Father cannot exist without being also in relation to the Son and the Holy Spirit. As we have seen above, this Cappadocian view thus locates the unity of the Godhead not in substance (ουσια) but in person or hypostasis (i.e., the *Father* begetting the Son and breathing forth the Spirit). The persons cannot be thought apart from their "essence" as perichoretically-connected community, and likewise that essence cannot be conceived as anything other than the persons themselves: it is "impossible to think of a divine person 'unto itself,' disconnected either from other persons or from the divine essence. . . . it is impossible to think of the divine essence in itself or by itself."[70] Each Person "contains" the full communion of which it is a part. The three Persons each coinhere in one another in such a way that their communion is their essence as individuals and the communion is constituted in each of its members. Hence "the threefold relations which exist within that oneness of being" are not "antagonistic to the unity but actually express it as well as qualify it."[71]

A concept of mutual indwelling has a conventional history in classical (Platonic, Neoplatonic, Stoic) thought.[72] Still, in the writings of the Cappadocians the picture remains somewhat opaque. Unless one is willing to make more of the analogy from three suns or radiances than Gregory himself ever spells out, the Cappadocian language does little to illustrate to the finite mind how its terminology can apply. Even if Gregory is on firm logical ground, in that God's infinite nature renders Him simply unknowable to finite created minds and thus the absence of any clear analogue to express the distinction without division within the Godhead is simply to be expected, it remains a fairly

[69] McGuckin uses the term "communication" to describe the Father's generation of the Son and procession of the Holy Spirit. See McGuckin, 27.
[70] LaCugna, cited in Letham, 165.
[71] McGuckin, 23
[72] For instance, in *The Sophist* Plato rejects the argument that "no Forms participate in others" (251e). He also goes on to speak of the "weaving together of Forms." (259e5-6). Plotinus speaks of Nous as a "boiling" in which all the forms are everywhere at once and in which "everything is clear, altogether and to its inmost part, to everything, for light is transparent to light. Each There has everything in itself and sees all things in every other, for all are everywhere and each and every one is all, and the glory is unbounded…One particular kind of being stands out in each, but in each all are manifest." See *Enneads*, V.8.3-4. Randall Otto traces a direct connection between *περιχορειν* and the "Stoic concept of mixture, *krasis di'holon*, which means a complete mutual interpenetration of two substances that preserves the identity and properties of each intact." See Otto, "The Use and Abuse of Perichoresis," in *The Scottish Journal of Theology*, 54 (2001) no. 3: 368.

unphilosophical picture to the extent that the nature of the three Persons' mutual "containment" of one another is left unexplained.[73] If Gregory would forgive us for saying so, this is a discussion in search of another analogy. Augustine and the West in general, and Edwards in particular as a representative of the Western tradition, show a greater willingness to seek such an analogy.

D. Prospects for a Social-Substantival Analogy

Of course, polemicists operating under the standard histories of East-West difference will accuse the West of departing from the Nicene-Cappadocian solution to the unity and multiplicity of God outlined above. Yet many today are of the opinion that the differences attributed to Eastern and Western Christian Trinitarianism are overblown. For instance, many patristic sources speak of God as an eternal *community* of divine persons bonded together in love. It is possible to see in such "social" statements the promise of the ultimate compatibility of Eastern and Western formulations, since love is also an inherent feature of the substantival (psychological) analogy of the post-Augustinian West. For, if the three persons are bonded together in love, and if this love is clearly articulated as an activity in which the whole Godhead shares equally, then for the West to identify the Spirit with the love of God (the mutual love between the Father and the Son) would not suggest a different essence, but the same essence as the entire Godhead. Love thus becomes God's essence expressed in a particular way in the person of the Holy Spirit, just as the wisdom of God is specially associated with the Son. A further move needed for reconciliation would be the clear affirmation by Western theology that the Love that is the Holy Spirit is somehow personal, not a mere abstraction or "affection" between the Father and the Son. We shall see that Edwards provides this affirmation clearly and unequivocally.[74]

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[73] Again, McGuckin clearly explains Gregory's view as on in which the three Persons not only are "contained" within the (comm)unity of the Trinity but actually give that community full expression. But he makes no effort to show how Gregory elucidates a way in which this can be so, except for the analogy to which Gregory is clearly not committed. This is not the case throughout Gregory's discussion, as we have seen him give a moderately philosophical explanation to Gregory's assertion of the deity of the Son (i.e., the Son, as direct origination from the Absolute, must also be absolute.)

[74] Lee claims that Edwards' affirmation of the active agency of the Holy Spirit within the Godhead represents a unique move beyond the standard Western treatments. See Lee, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 21, 19. Some might be skeptical of Lee's claim that the Western tradition has failed to articulate this, but in any case Edwards does stand out for doing so with such clarity.

Unfortunately, many Eastern theologians will continue to shy away (or recoil) from this, alleging that it denies the Father His proper existence as fountain of the Godhead. They allege that the Western church, by maintaining Augustine's "psychological" (substantival) analogy for the Trinity, disestablishes the Cappadocian-Nicene identity between the Father and the divine essence and in so doing inadvertently undercuts the full divinity of the three persons.[75] It allegedly does this in two ways. One is that it explicitly models the three persons as functions or qualities of one underlying substance. By making the human mind (which is, after all, only *one* mind) and its three sub-functions (consciousness, understanding, and will) the analogue for the divine operations within the Trinity, the three persons do not appear to be fully divine in themselves, but rather only qualities of the one Deity. The second way in which the Western usage of such analogies allegedly undercuts the divinity of the three persons is by distorting the proper notion of divinity itself. By making God directly analogous to human minds, it is argued, Augustine and his theological progeny blur the distinction between Creator and creature and, more particularly, construe God in subjectivist terms pertaining to human psychology. Postmodern histories especially see in the Augustinian psychological (substantive) analogy for God the foundation for the subjectivism of Descartes' *cogito* and the modern descent into nihilistic skepticism that follows.[76] Furthermore, the charge goes, this blurring of Creator and creature through a psychological analogy undermines the proper notion of God's unity by locating God's "essence" in a shared quality between the three persons.

Edwards is drawing on the Cappadocians, whose reflections originate before the alleged divergence of East from West.[77] Still, since Edwards' own thinking is also

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[75] This criticism is especially popular among Eastern theologians who polemicize against the Western Church. In recent decades similar disavowals of Augustine have begun to appear among Western theologians as well; see Colin Gunton, "Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West," in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990): 31-58**.** A philosopher who presents this criticism (and others) of Augustine is Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*.

[76] A thorough and cogent refutation of this postmodern account, and one which locates Augustine in an anti-modern line of thought in opposition to Descartes, is found in Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*, (New York: Routledge, 2003). Hanby's work also contains multiple references to examples of the standard anti-Augustinian postmodernist intellectual histories.

[77] Although some accounts of Eastern and Western difference locate the initial problem with "Western" theology in Tertullian, who predates Nicea by a century. Still, Nicea is an ecumenical council that represents a meeting of both the Eastern and Western minds. If the West already had seeds planted for its departure from the Nicene solution, it resisted them long enough to help forge Nicea. Fundamentally, the

heavily influenced by Augustine and the substantival analogy in particular, we should say a bit more about how the two kinds of analogies for the Trinity can potentially relate. Substantival-psychological analogies only succumb to the problems listed above if they fail in two separate respects. The first failure is that their proponents assume a standard Aristotelian account of substance and relation in which relational properties are always accidental and have no bearing upon the definition of substance. As we shall see, claims of stark opposition between the substantival and social analogies assume this sort of account of ontology. Thus, to whatever extent a theologian rejects that standard account, the two analogies will be relocated into a structure of thought in which they can be compatible. Whether or not the common criticisms of Augustine and the Latin Church regarding substantival-psychological analogies are fair, therefore, they do not hold for Edwards, for Edwards rejects the Aristotelian ontology. So, for instance, there is no implied quaternity on Edwards' account, for the shared essence of the three persons is not something that is prior to the persons themselves. Rather, the second and third persons are essentially "repetitions" of the first. In Augustine's language, the consciousness of God is what is repeated to originate the understanding and will, not some abstracted "essence" of which all three together partake as a "source" outside of each. Edwards can construe the inter-relations in this way because for him there is no need to find the "essence" of a thing outside of its relations. The Father, therefore, even though he is an essentially inter-related being, can serve as the "essence" of the Godhead.[78]

The second potential pitfall for such analogies is that they fail to establish the personhood of the three "functions" or qualities of the analogy (so, in the case of Augustine's psychological analogy, consciousness, understanding and will must each be personified somehow if this pitfall is to be avoided). The ability of proponents of substantival analogies to establish this sufficiently will likely be a function of how firm a distinction they draw between Creator and creature. Certainly, for example, the three modes of the finite human soul cannot be made precisely analogous to the infinite

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present writer sides with those who think the differential accounts overplay the actual evidence. These accounts of difference almost all come down in favor of the allegedly "Eastern" approach to the Trinity, and they offer such a variety of different explanations as to where Western theology goes wrong that they are mutually contradictory. Quickly, the "substantive" terminology to which many Eastern thinkers object is found in the Nicene Creed itself which the Eastern church takes as authoritative, and the Cappadocians anticipate Augustine's move to identify the Holy Spirit with the love of God.

[78] We recall also that Augustine can be similarly vindicated of the charge of "quaternity." See above, §II.B.

perfection of God. What is needed is an account of how these mental functions used for the analogy become different when applied to God. Edwards will again provide such an account in his immaterialist philosophy of mind in which a perfect idea of a thing becomes a "repetition" of the thing itself, and in which such perfect ideas are possible only for God.

Assuming the difficulties are avoided, then, substantival analogies can be seen in a more sympathetic light as aids that *bolster* the Cappadocian account of perichoresis rather than as deviations from it. By explaining the Trinity in psychological (or mentalist) terms, the substantival analogy provides the resources for clarifying the manner in which the three persons "indwell" one another even as it highlights that God is *not* essentially the same as the human mind which serves as His analogue. In one whose understanding ftand will are *perfect* (God), there are no "unconscious" ideas (i.e., there are no ideas *in which* consciousness is not present). Similarly, in such a being there can be no irrational or extra-rational acts of will (i.e., there are no actions in which ideas producing the action are not present). This will be made especially clear in the way Edwards takes the analogy beyond the explicit statements of Augustine into a full-orbed "idealist" (mentalist) presentation.

III. **Edwards' Doctrine of the Trinity**

A. Main Features

An impressive feature of Edwards' reflections on the Trinity is their consistency through the various stages of his intellectual career. This is seen perhaps most clearly of all when he quotes approvingly from another work which he discovers arguing eloquently for the same concepts. In *Misc.* 1253, with over 3 decades of thought and elaboration upon the doctrine of the Trinity already behind him, Edwards sums up the Chevalier Ramsay's comments on the Trinity extensively:

> Therefore we may represent the divine essence under these three notions as an infinitely ACTIVE MIND that conceives, or as an infinite IDEA that is the object of this conception or as an infinite LOVE that proceeds from this idea. - There are three, there can be but three and all that we can conceive of in the infinite mind may be reduced to these three infinite LIFE LIGHT & LOVE. - Ibid p. 88. They are not three simple attributes or modalities because they are distinct intelligent principles & self-

> conscious agents. They must therefore be three distinct beings, realities, somethings, or persons, because the idea of personality includes that of an intelligent self-conscious agent. Ibid. p. 91. Hence we may conceive in the divine nature three real distinctions and we can conceive of no more since all we can comprehend of absolute infinite i.e. either MIND conceiving, IDEA conceived, or LOVE proceeding from both GOD self-existent, GOD OF GOD, & GOD THE HOLY GHOST. these three distinctions in the Deity are neither three distinct independent minds, as the Tritheis[ts] alledged nor three attributes of the same substance, represented as persons as the [Sa]bellians affirmed, nor one supream & two subordinate intellectual agents as some [re]fined Arians maintain. But three coeternal, consubstantial, coordinate persons c[oe]qual in all things self-origination only excepted." Ibid. p. 97 "This eternal commerce of the coeternal three is the secret fund of the Deity." All those who are ignorant of the doctrine of the Trinity of the gene[ra]tion of the Logos of the procession of the eternal Spirit and of the everlasting commerce among the sacred three look upon God's still eternity, and solitude, as a state of inaction and indolence. Ibid. p. 100.[79]

The similarity between Edwards' account and Ramsay's is remarkable, which is no doubt why Edwards chose to cite Ramsay's work at such length in his *Miscellanies* journal (which was not normally used as a repository for secondary source material).[80] We note five features of Edwards' summation of Ramsay's doctrine:

> (1) God is referred to as "infinite activity." God is "pure act;" there is no distinction between God's essence and His activity.
> (2) The personhood of each of the three members of the Godhead is understood to involve an intelligent self-consciousness.[81]

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[79] *Misc.* 1253 (1753). All edits contained in brackets are as found in the version of the entry accessed online at the Jonathan Edwards Center, http://edwards.yale.edu/archive/documents/?document_id=9737 (accessed December 2007 – April 2008), a truly excellent resource maintained by Yale University. Interestingly, this entry contains the longest citation of an external source to be found anywhere in Edwards' *Miscellanies* journals, as the roughly 1400 words that precede this summary are a direct quote of Ramsay's *Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion* (1748-9).

[80] In *Misc.* 1180 (1751) Edwards first cites Ramsay's work as he finds it in the March 1751 publication of the colonial intellectual journal "The Monthly Review," which serialized Ramsay's *Philosophical Principles.* Coming to Edwards' attention as late as it does, Ramsay's approach to the Trinity could hardly have played much of a role in Edwards' own reflections, for the vast majority of his writings on the doctrine had already been completed at this point in his life. Nor did Edwards go back and edit his older Trinitarian writings to make them align more with Ramsay. There is no sign of him going back to any of the early Trinitarian entries of the *Miscellanies* or to the *Discourse on the Trinity* and grafting in Ramsay's insights. His most common method is to place the revision in a new entry that cross-references the earlier, and then to go back and add a cross-reference to the newer entry in the original. But again there are no post-Ramsay entries in his Miscellanies journals containing any such instructions for revisions. Edwards' citation of Ramsay therefore appears to be intended simply to provide further support and credibility to his own position, and perhaps to take note of Ramsay's felicitous use of language.

[81] And we note also that this is an explicit rejection of the claim leveled at Augustine and the West that the substantival (psychological) analogy diminishes the deity of the three Persons. See above, §II.D.

(3) The divine replication of the Son and Holy Spirit are presented in "idealist" or "mentalist" terms. I.e., the perfect and infinite nature of certain "mental" activities of God (e.g., God's self-understanding) renders the object of that activity (the idea God has of Himself) divine. In the summary Edwards glosses these relations as "MIND conceiving, IDEA conceived, or LOVE proceeding from both."
(4) This "idealist" account of how these relations of origin in the Trinity come about gives way to identifications of the persons that are explicitly patristic: the Son as wisdom (light) and the Spirit as love.
(5) Aside from these differences among the persons (the "relations of origin"), the three are otherwise coequal and coordinate to one another, engaged in an "eternal commerce."

All of these features are present in Edwards' much earlier writings on the Trinity. We turn now to examine these writings in more detail as they relate to the patristic conceptions from which Edwards is borrowing. In so doing We shall find Edwards advocating all five of the features from his summary of Ramsay above, though in particular the general shape of his direct thinking on the Trinity involves two major elements.[82] The first is that he views the Son and the Holy Spirit as being divine "replications" that are necessary implications of God's own eternal perfect activity as God. The second is that he conceives of that process of perfect divine replication as an eternal communication. As we shall see, the five features listed above all play a role in elucidating these two major elements, and both elements figure prominently in the patristic (Cappadocian) formulations we have already examined. In its "mentalist" imagery Edwards' view will be seen to appropriate patristic analogies of the Son as light (and wisdom) and the Spirit as the mutual love between the Father and the Son to illustrate the same fundamental assertion as the early Church—that the only distinction in the Godhead is in the different relations of origin of the three Persons. In so doing he also illustrates the second major element of his Trinitarian thought that the three persons of the Trinity are engaged in an eternal activity of communication among coequals. "Eternal commerce" is Ramsay's phrase for speaking of this communicative communion. In the history of the Church, the dominant way to speak of this communicative activity was with the language of perichoresis that we have already examined. Edwards is more partial

[82] By "direct" thinking I refer to theological reflection upon the Trinity itself, and not to reflection on other issues which are heavily influenced *by* his understanding of the Trinity: such as his ethics, his work on the history of redemption, or his relational ontology. Interestingly, the Eastern Church has always restricted the term "theology" to these direct reflections upon the Trinity itself.

to speaking of it directly as the three persons being "in" one another and to using illustrations to approximate his meaning.

B. Multiplicity in God

Edwards' earliest writings about the doctrine of the Trinity are found in entries entered into his *Miscellanies* journal in 1723.[83] Much of the content from these and later entries are then reworked and combined into the *Discourse on the Trinity* (1730-5).[84] In *Miscellany* 94 Edwards writes that the Trinity itself (i.e., that God is triune) is among the things that can be known through reasoned reflection on the Scriptures:

> I think that it is within the reach of naked reason to perceive certainly that there are three distinct [persons] in God, each of which is the same [God], three that must be distinct; and that there are not nor can be any more distinct, really and truly distinct, but three, either distinct persons or properties or anything else; and that of these three, one is (more properly than anything else) begotten of the other, and that the third proceeds alike from both, and that the first neither is begotten nor proceeds.[85]

Already in these earliest writings we see Edwards making use of the classic patristic language of "generation"/"begotten" and "procession" to explain the relational distinctions between the three persons.[86] If there is a point of divergence that may be uncontroversially ascribed to Eastern and Western conceptions of these doctrines, it is in the respective willingness each show to speculate by analogy into the manner of these distinctions of relation within the Trinity. The West follows Augustine in his willingness to speculate in such a way, and Edwards for his part shows no squeamishness about

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[83] Some of these entries are extensions of even earlier entries from his collection of papers on "Natural Philosophy" begun in his teens while he was still a student at Yale.

[84] Edwards wrote the *Discourse* slowly, returning to it after long periods of inactivity. He also made a few additions as late as the 1740s. The language and argumentative structure of the *Discourse* and the earlier *Miscellany* entries are at times almost identical. At other times they are different, and differences will be noted in the citations.

[85] *Misc.* 94 (1723).

[86] Edwards uses "begotten" and "generation" interchangeably, as in *Misc.* 143 (1724): "Hence we see how generation by the Father and yet coeternity with the Father, or being begotten and yet being eternal, are consistent." "Begotten" and "generation" are each an acceptable translation of the Greek word group γεναω that is used by the Church Fathers to describe the eternal "production" of the Son from the Father. The word group itself is used in Scripture for all creative reproduction including biological. (And thus the King James translators use "beget" to render the genealogies in Scripture, for instance.) One of the earliest apologetic moves the Christian Church made was to distinguish the different senses of this word so as not to confuse the generation of the Son with creaturely reproduction. However, creaturely biological reproduction came to be seen as analogous to and reflective of the divine generation of the Son, and so as such similar words may be used despite the conceptual distinction.

following the Bishop of Hippo. Whereas Gregory had said that the manner of the Son's generation was something that not even angels can conceive, Edwards thinks that more can be said of these distinctions than simply asserting their bare factuality on Scriptural authority.[87]

There are two fundamental questions to answer when one advocates such a Trinitarian conception of God, though: why (or how) is there a multiplicity within God in the first place, and why is it that there are three persons specifically? The early Church answered both of these questions by appealing to the theophanies in Scripture. The Scriptural narrative shows God revealing Himself to His people as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, and so these must all be divine together. Scripture provides the assertion of coequality with God for the persons of the Son and the Spirit and it also limits such an assertion to *only* these two. With these established as facts via the authority of revelation, generation and procession then serve as ways of protecting the unity of God against any apparent encroachment that a multitude of divine persons might represent by advancing the co-eternality of all three persons. This co-eternality then allows the unity of God to be understood in terms of the perichoretic communion among equals that we have outlined above.

For his part, Edwards does not alter this tradition significantly. Yet his favorite answers to these two fundamental questions explain the three persons in mentalist terms. He sketches this structure of reasoning in *Miscellany* 94 and returns to it in numerous reiterations throughout his career. The sketch is as follows. God has an idea of Himself, and in having that idea God is, as it were, repeated.[88] And likewise when God loves or delights in this perfect idea of Himself, this activity produces a second repetition, so that there are three in the Godhead:

> I think it really evident from the light of reason that there are these three distinct in God. If God has an idea of himself, there is really a duplicity; because [if] there is no duplicity, it will follow that Jehovah thinks of

[87] Again, we note that for Edwards Scripture was the ultimate authority, and his motivations for speculating about the nature of the Trinity are grounded on the fact that he already accepts it as a Biblical doctrine. He does not differ from Eastern Fathers such as Gregory in his acceptance of the divine revelation of the Trinity as something that does not require philosophical justification. He differs only in his willingness, the authority of the Scriptural revelation having been granted, to apply his reason to seeking an understanding of the manner in which these revealed things are true.

[88] *Discourse on the Trinity*, 114. See Introduction, §II.

> himself no more than a stone. And if God loves himself and delights in himself, there is really a triplicity, three that cannot be confounded, each of which are the Deity substantially. And this is the only distinction that can be found or thought of in God.[89]

Here Edwards suggests the analogy that he makes explicit elsewhere: the substantival analogy bequeathed to the Western Church by Augustine in which the Triune operations are compared to the three "parts" of the human soul: consciousness, understanding, and will.[90] When God thinks of Himself, Edwards maintains, there really is a "duplicity" because God takes Himself as His own object of thought. These two must be really distinct from one another (the thinker and the object of thought), or else there will be nothing that "answers to the reflection" of our own created minds:

> The knowledge or view which God has of Himself must necessarily be conceived to be something distinct from His mere direct existence. There must be something that answers to our reflection. The reflection, as we reflect on our own minds, carries something of imperfection in it. However, if God beholds himself so as thence to have delight and joy in himself, he must become his own object: there must be a duplicity. There is God and the idea of God.[91]

This is dialectically a vitally important point in Edwards' Trinitarian system, and even in the sketch we must say more about it. We shall see below that Edwards denies that the Son's idea of Himself generates another divine Person besides the Son. Rather, the perfect idea of a perfect idea simply is the same (numerically identical) idea. Yet when the Father thinks of Himself, Edwards says, He generates the Son as a distinct divine Person. What is the difference? The difference is that the Father is not an idea, but the consciousness that has the idea. The Father is God in His "mere direct existence."[92] The Son is God as a perfect Idea of Himself. When the Father reflects upon Himself, it is the archetype for creaturely self-consciousness (as found in all persons, whether human

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[89] *Misc.* 94 (1723).

[90] Though we have focused on Augustine as primary originator of this analogy, it is clearly maintained also by medievals such as Bonaventure and Richard of St.-Victor. Both argue that God is triune *because* He is love, which is an activity that necessarily involves three relata: lover, beloved, and the love itself. Bonaventure (who, despite being a medieval Catholic, has been called "the last Greek Father") is clear that the beloved (the Son) is also the perfect "image" or exemplar of the Father, and that as the divine Logos He contains all that the Father "thinks." See Bonaventure, *Disputed Questions On the Mystery of the Trinity*, Zachary Hayes, tr. and ed., (New York, 1979). Cf. Richard of St.-Victor, *De Trinitate*, in *Textes philosophiques du Moyen Age*, volume 6, ed. J. Ribailer (Paris: Vrin, 1958).

[91] *Discourse on the Trinity*, 114.

[92] Ibid., 131.

beings or, presumably, angels), wherein we are both conscious of ourselves as conscious and we are conscious of our own idea of ourselves. If this conscious distinction between consciousness as such and an idea of the self is not taken as a reflection of the divine archetype, but instead as an inherent limitation of creaturely finitude (or some other sort of creaturely limitation), then God cannot intelligibly be conceptualized as self-conscious. This is Edwards' meaning when he says in *Misc.* 94 that if there is no "duplicity" between God's consciousness as such and His idea of Himself, then "Jehovah would think of himself [i.e., would be self-conscious] no more than a stone."[93] If His own mere direct existence and the ideas He has of Himself are one and the same, if there is no distinction, then there is no way for God's consciousness to "pick out" an idea of Himself for reflection. Thus, God would not be the archetype of human self-consciousness but rather simply would not be self-conscious at all.

This is not an *ad hoc* argument that Edwards throws out when dealing with the Trinity. It reflects a metaphysical axiom that he lays down early in his notebooks on natural philosophy and which predates even these early *Miscellanies* entries about the Trinity. "Yea, it is really impossible it should be, that anything should be, and nothing know it. Then you'll say, if it be so, it is because nothing has any existence anywhere else but in consciousness. No, certainly nowhere else, but either in created or uncreated consciousness."[94] Consciousness, for Edwards, is a necessary condition for the existence of anything at all, and is fundamental to God's existence as a personal being. God is the uncreated consciousness in which things find their existence. God's existence must also be in consciousness, however; thus God is conscious of Himself.

Edwards also describes the creaturely consciousness that reflects the divine self-consciousness at some length:

> There is very much of [an] image of this in ourselves. Man is as if he were two, as some of the great wits of this age have observed. A sort of genius is with man, that accompanies him and attends wherever he goes; so that a man has a conversation with himself, that is, he has a conversation with

[93] *Misc.* 94 (1723) (cit. supra.).
[94] *Of Being*, 204. See the full passage that begins just before this statement, where Edwards says provocatively in a passage he later redacted that "consciousness and being are the same thing exactly." The passage was not redacted because Edwards came to repudiate it so much as that it was a stand-in for a fuller exposition that Edwards came back and added later. His fuller treatment never puts things quite so bluntly, however.

> his own idea. So that if his idea be excellent, he will take great delight and happiness in conferring and communing with it; he takes complacency in himself, he applauds himself; and wicked men accuse themselves and fight with themselves, as if they were two. And man is truly happy then, and only then, when these two agree, and they delight in themselves, and in their own idea and image, as God delights in his.[95]

Thus, human minds have been created as imperfect (i.e., finite) reflections of God's own existence. As such, the fact that in our own human minds there is a distinction between our self-conscious selves and the ideas of which we are self-conscious indicates that there must also be a similar distinction in the "mind" of God. If our apparatus for thinking is a designed reflection of God's thinking, then God in His consciousness (i.e., His "mere direct existence") must be different from an idea that passes before His consciousness. Similarly, when God delights in this idea He has of Himself in a mutual activity of reciprocal love (the Father delights in the Son, and the Son delights in the Father), this entails a "triplicity." This also is the archetypical basis that is reflected in human consciousness: self-conscious creatures clearly perceive their delight in an idea as distinct from the idea (and from themselves directly as possessors of the idea in which they delight). These three things are really and genuinely distinct in God just as they are in the human minds that are made as His reflections.

This, though, is just the sketch. Why are each of the members of this triplicity "the Deity substantially"? The reason is because they are each, as ideal products of the perfect divine mind, perfect representations of the Deity that produces them:

> God's idea of Himself is absolutely perfect, and therefore is an express and perfect image of Him, exactly like Him in every respect. There is nothing in the pattern but what is in the representation—substance, life, power, nor anything else—and that in a most absolute perfection of similitude; otherwise it is not a perfect idea. But that which is the express and perfect image of God, and in every respect like Him, is God to all intents and purposes…there is nothing in the Deity that renders it the Deity but what has something exactly answering of it in this image, which will therefore also render that the Deity.[96]

[95] *Misc.* 94 (1723).
[96] Ibid.

Edwards writes later that this same sort of reasoning applies to God's delight or love for Himself, or more precisely to the mutual love between God and His perfect idea of Himself.[97] The argument here is less explicit:

> The Godhead being thus begotten by God's having an idea of himself and standing forth in a distinct subsistence or person in that idea, there proceeds a most pure act, and an infinitely holy and sweet energy arises between the Father and Son: for their love and joy is mutual, in mutually loving and delighting in each other… So that the Godhead therein stands forth in yet another manner of subsistence, and there proceeds the third person of the Trinity…viz. the Deity in act.[98]

Here Edwards traces the well-established Western identification of this *mutual* love *between* the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the "infinite love that is between the Father and the Son,"[99] and as such, He like the Son is also a perfect representation of the Deity.[100] The argument here is less clear: why must the love between the Father and the Son also be Deity repeated? Lee says that Edwards' argument for the real distinctions within God "falls short of completion" at this point of explaining

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[97] Edwards always speaks of God's love as mutual between the Father and the Son. This follows necessarily from Edwards' other premises about the Son. Since the Son is God just as the Father is, it is not as though the two of them can disagree as to the loveliness of the other. The Son must find the Father to be lovely for the same reason that the Father finds the Son to be lovely.

[98] *Discourse on the Trinity*, 121. Cf. *Miscs.* 94 (1723), 98 (1723), 117 (1723-4). It is clear in context that in these passages Edwards uses "Godhead" to refer to the divine nature, as in "Godness" or deity itself, not to the Trinity-as-a-whole.

[99] *Misc.* 98 (1723).

[100] Interestingly, the first major use Edwards makes of this mutual love between the Father and the Son is to reinforce his argument for the deity of the Son. God loves infinitely and perfectly, which means that the object of His eternal love must itself be infinitely and perfectly worthy of that love (otherwise God would not love perfectly, for His love would be out of proportion to the loveliness of its object). See *Misc.* 117 (1723-4), where Edwards argues that for something to be lovely it must either be perceived to "consent to being in general" or to "consent to that being that perceives" it as lovely, and since in God's case the perceiver of loveliness and being in general are one and the same, it must follow that the one whom God loves *infinitely* from all eternity is himself God. Thus, "'tis necessary that that object which God infinitely loves must be infinitely and perfectly consenting and agreeable to him; but that which infinitely and perfectly agrees is the very same essence, for if it be different it don't infinitely consent. Again, we have shown that one alone cannot be excellent, inasmuch as, in such case, there can be no consent. Therefore, if God is excellent, there must be a plurality in God; otherwise, there can be no consent in him." This argument is problematic, as it implies either that God does not perfectly love creation or else that creation is itself divine (both unacceptable conclusions for Edwards). In fact, Edwards never repeats this argument anywhere else in his writings. Still, it is possible to read Edwards charitably by focusing on his emphasis on God's love for the Son being eternal. That which is loved infinitely by God from *all eternity* must be God. But the created world is not loved infinitely from all eternity.
The notion that being in general is the standard for loveliness, or that being simply is loveliness (beauty), as well as Edwards' definition of beauty as "consent to being," is taken up in more detail in chapter 2.

the deity of the Holy Spirit.[101] In this Lee goes too far, for while Edwards does not spell out the argument as explicitly as he does the argument for the Deity of the Son, it is discernible. The answer seems to lie in the fact that Edwards is clearly drawing on the medieval notion that God is *actus purus*:

> This is the most perfect and essential act of the divine nature, wherein the Godhead acts to an infinite degree in the most perfect manner possible. The Deity becomes all act; the divine essence itself flows out and is as it were breathed forth in love and joy….there proceeds the third person in the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, viz. the Deity in act: for there is no other act but the act of the will.[102]

For God to be *actus purus* means that there is no unexercised ability or unfulfilled capacity in God. God has no mere potentialities, but rather all that He is able to do He does.[103] For God, to exist *is* to act, and to act in such a way that gives complete exercise to all of His capacities. The analogy compares the Son to the understanding of God and the Holy Spirit to the divine will, or love. In the human soul, the will is the active aspect of an agent, but in God there is no qualitative distinction between will and understanding as there is in created human beings.[104] God's understanding is an active principle in its own right; it always gives rise to His acting in the way that He does (the will proceeds from the understanding and the consciousness together). Thus, if God's understanding is Deity repeated, then it must give rise to an active will that is also. The will of God is the pure activity of God; in its procession from the understanding (and the consciousness) "the Deity becomes all act." It is the love which God exercises perfectly and eternally within Himself.

Love refers not to a "feeling" or an "emotion" in God, but to a deliberate activity. Even more, it refers to a deliberate activity whereby an infinite and perfect being acts to engage His own perfect repetition, which is also infinite and perfect (necessarily), and the repetition reciprocates the same active engagement back to the original. Thus this

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[101] Lee, "Editor's Introduction," *Works* 21, 12. Robert W. Jenson, *America's Theologian*, 57, offers a similar criticism. Lee thinks his dispositional interpretation of Edwards' theology allows the argument for real distinctions to take "a more consistent form." We shall examine this claim in more detail in chapter 2.
[102] *Discourse on the Trinity*, 121.
[103] This applies to God's powers or energies as such, not to their exercise as aimed at specific objects. So, for instance, it is not as though every possible object must be created, since God has the power to make it. But God's power, as one of His fundamental attributes, must be eternally and perfectly exercised.
[104] Edwards says in *Misc.*94 (1723) that the human mind is completely passive in forming its ideas. In *The Mind* no. 59, 374, he says that the human *will* is active.

reciprocating engagement from delight between the Father and the Son is an eternal, infinite, and perfect activity. The question that remains is why must this eternal perfect activity be personified into a coequal member of the Godhead? If Edwards offered no argument for this whatsoever, he would be firmly within his larger Western tradition.[105] As it is, however, Edwards does offer a discernible argument in two statements from the *Discourse on the Trinity* and the very short treatise *On the Equality of the Persons of the Trinity.* In the latter he asserts that the Spirit is an active principle that exerts influence upon the other two persons and thus is a person as much as are the Father and Son: "in another respect the Holy Ghost, that is, divine love, has the superiority, as that is the principle that as it were reigns over the Godhead and governs his heart, and wholly influences both the Father and the Son in all they do."[106] This can be combined with his argument in the *Discourse* that due to the peculiarities of the case (i.e. the love of *God* for Himself), this loving activity necessarily involves *consciousness*:

> It is not a blind love. Even in creatures there is consciousness included in the very nature of the will or act of the soul; and though perhaps not so that it can be properly be said that it is a seeing or understanding will, yet it may truly and properly [be] said so in God by reason of God's infinitely more perfect manner of acting, so that the whole divine essence flows out and subsists in this act.[107]

Edwards is claiming here that the will, even in creatures, includes in its very nature as will a kind of consciousness or awareness. He is not simply saying that anything that has a will must also have a consciousness (i.e., that consciousness always accompanies will), but that the will itself, as a separate aspect of the soul from the consciousness, contains consciousness. When God acts in His infinitely perfect manner, consciousness is necessarily included in the very nature of the will itself by which God acts.

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[105] We mentioned medieval predecessors such as Bonaventure and Richard of St.-Victor above. On their arguments, God is three because God is love, and love requires lover, beloved, and the love between them. Here too, though, it is simply asserted that love is personifiable (on the basis of Scriptural revelation, which is where the simple assertion that "God is love" is found), not demonstrated. Love is taken to be the Person of the Holy Spirit, but no effort is made to establish how that can be so.

[106] *On the Equality of the Persons of the Trinity* (1740-2), 146. This superiority of the Holy Spirit is "relative," however; in other respects the Father and the Son are superior and the fount of the other two: "In one respect the Father has the superiority: he is the fountain of Deity, and he begets the beloved Son. In another respect the Son has the superiority, as he is the great and first object of divine love. The beloved has as it were the superiority over the lover, and reigns over him."

[107] *Discourse on the Trinity,* 133-4.

Admittedly, this is obscure. It is hard to estimate what precisely Edwards has in mind by a "conscious" will here. The best hint is provided in a brief passage from *The Mind:* "Consciousness is the mind's perceiving what is in itself—its ideas, actions, passions, and everything that is there perceivable. It is a sort of feeling within itself. The mind feels when it thinks, so it feels when it desires, feels when it loves, feels itself hate, etc."[108] In the act of love, which we now know to be the pure and perfect activity of God's will, the mind "feels itself" as present in the will's action. At the very least, this notion (that consciousness indwells will in its distinct identity as will) will be seen to "fit" tightly within Edwards' overall Trinitarian system. For instance, this argument clearly foreshadows the mentalist reconstruction of perichoresis which Edwards will offer later.

For Edwards, then, God's will itself is conscious, as the archetype of creaturely wills. The Holy Spirit, then, is a person (a self-conscious intentional intelligence) distinct from the Father and the Son. He is the personified "act of God between the Father and the Son infinitely loving and delighting in each other."[109] Thus the "pure and perfect act of God is God, because God is a pure act."[110] In so acting the Godhead "stands forth in yet another manner of subsistence."[111]

This raises the second question for Trinitarian accounts and the one that such accounts must answer once they have established distinction in God: why are there three distinct persons rather than some other number? Edwards' answer to this question is also provided at least in part by God's existence as pure act. The "mind" (Father) having an idea of itself (the Son) and the reciprocated love or delight (the Holy Spirit) that it has for and in that idea constitute together somehow the essence of God, to which nothing more can be added.[112] Once the perfect activity of God has been properly described as eternal love or delight which God takes in His own self-understanding, there is no other quality, attribute or activity that can be added as the basis for any further distinction. Edwards considers the objection that an infinite regress results from his view because the Son must

[108] *The Mind*, no. 16, 345.
[109] *Misc.* 94 (1723). As usual, Edwards takes his cue from Scripture: "It appears by the holy Scriptures, that the Holy Spirit is the perfect act of God."
[110] Ibid.
[111] *Discourse on the Trinity*, 121.
[112] We take up the question of *how* all three together can be the *essence* of God below.

also have an idea of the Father, which then must be divine, etc. His response is that this objection is improper because it makes the Son and the idea the Father has of the Son somehow to be separate entities:

> The Son himself is the Father's idea, himself; and if he has an idea of this Idea, 'tis yet the same Idea: a perfect idea of an idea is the same idea still, to all intents and purposes. Thus, when I have a perfect idea of my idea of an equilateral triangle, it is an idea of the same equilateral triangle, to all intents and purposes.[113]

In other words, to speak of the Son as "having" an idea of the Father is misleading if we think of ideas as they occur in human reason. For one thing, in the human mind there are no perfect ideas (i.e., no ideas in human minds are perfect representations of their object), and so in such minds we can separate (both logically and ontologically) an idea of an object from an idea of that idea.[114]

> 'Tis this perfection of God's idea that makes all things truly and properly present to him from all eternity, and is the reason why God has no succession. For everything that is, has been, or shall be, having been perfectly in God's idea from all eternity, and a perfect idea (which yet no finite being can have of anything) being the very thing; therefore, all things from eternity were equally present with God, and there is no alteration made in [his] idea by presence and absence, as there is in us.[115]

Because God's ideas are perfect representations, there is no distinction in God between an idea and an idea of that idea. The latter would be a perfect representation of the original representation, which means that it would be the same original representation.

So far this explanation might seem only to highlight the infinite regress problem, rather than to answer it. The perfect representation found in the Father's idea of Himself is what "generated" the Son in the first place, so a similarly perfect representation found in the Son's idea of the Father should "generate" again. The complete solution is provided again by God's existence as pure act (*actus purus*). Unlike in human beings, in

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[113] *Misc*. 94 (1723). The phrase "intents and purposes" here indicates that there is still something about the triangle example which is transcended in the case of God. For when God has a perfect idea of something it is not simply for all intents and purposes the same as its object, it is the same absolutely. Elsewhere in the entry Edwards holds out that his discussion really only applies to God: "So if you say, that God the Father or Son may have an idea of their own delight in each other; but I say, a perfect idea or perception of one's own perfect delight cannot be different, *at least in God*, from the delight itself."

[114] Earlier Edwards had written in *The Mind* no. 21, 347, no doubt in conjunction with a close reading of Locke (whose influence is most pronounced in Edwards' natural philosophy notebooks), that the human mind can have a "perfect" view of simple ideas. But here Edwards seems to correct this former view.

[115] *Misc.* 94 (1723).

God there is no distinction between essence and activity. This applies to each of the individual persons of the Trinity, since each are fully divine. It is not as though the Son comes into existence, and then subsequently (logically or chronologically) forms an idea of the Father. Rather, the Son *is* the idea of the Father already; eternally, constantly and perfectly. The essence of the Son is to *be* the idea of the Father. It is not to be some other sort of being who then "has" or forms an idea of the Father. Rather, to be the idea of the Father is to be an ongoing activity. Here English grammar fails us and gives an inaccurate picture. For passivity is perhaps implied by the formulation: the essence of the Son is *to be* the idea of the Father. Edwards' discussion requires "to be the idea" to carry a more active connotation. The essence of the Son is the Father *thinking* Himself.

The Son is the divine Idea personified; He is Understanding personified. God's idea has, as it were, developed personal characteristics of self-consciousness and intentionality, as well as all the attributes proper to God. Yet the characteristics of personhood that He possesses (self-consciousness, intentionality, etc.) do not alter his essential activity with regard to the Father. Though He is a person, then, and thus is able to conceive ideas of His own and to recognize that they are separate from Himself just as any other 'spirit' can do, when it comes to the one particular idea of *God* the Son does not know of any distinction between His idea and Himself. The Son simply is always already "ideaing" God, as it is His nature to do. He does not form a conception of the Father separate from Himself which is His "idea of God." Rather, He *is* that idea of God, eternally and necessarily. For the Son, to 'idea' God is simply *to be*. This sets that particular idea off from any other that He conceives, in that it is not distinguishable (in any sense) from Himself as other ideas always are.

A similar argument can be offered regarding the Holy Spirit. The essence of the Spirit is to be the love between the Father and the Son. Again, this denotes perpetual and essential activity: the Spirit's essence *is* to delight the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father. Similarly, there is no eternal regress on this score either, for when the Holy Spirit loves the Father and the Son this does not generate another divine love and a fourth person of the Godhead. Rather, the Holy Spirit is the one eternal divine Love personified. He is Act personified. The mutual love of the Father and of the Son are the essential activity that defines the being of the Holy Spirit. There is no activity that the Spirit can

do, conceived as a separate thing from Himself, that can be called "loving the Father and the Son". Rather, that activity of mutual love is what the Holy Spirit already is, eternally and unchangeably.

The threefold eternal relationship of Ungenerated Mind (Father), Generated Idea (Son), and Proceeding Love (Holy Spirit) exhausts the *actus purus* of God. "So that, if we turn it all the ways in the world, we shall never be able to make more than these three."[116] All other qualities or attributes that are assigned to God are merely "modal": they either describe God's pure activity as it is exercised relative to some contingent state of affairs in the created world or they describe God's pure activity with different terms in regard to Himself. For an example of the former, God's power or strength simply refers to the fact that in the operation of His eternal and essential activity God can accomplish any logically-possible change within the created world: "'tis only a relation of adequateness and sufficiency of the essence to everything."[117] The attribute of God's power, then, is simply a way of speaking of His pure activity as it contacts and is capable of contacting the world. For an example of the latter, God's aseity is an attribute that is "internal" to Himself, and as such it is ultimately reducible to God's understanding and love. (Thus, for God to be self-existent is simply for Him to think actively and to delight in Himself in perpetuity.) In the final analysis all attributes reduce in a similar way to God's activity of loving communion with Himself, and are simply "modes or relations of existence" of that essential activity.[118]

Despite Edwards' Augustinian brashness in speculating into the manner of the generation and procession of the Son and the Holy Spirit respectively, the concepts with which Edwards is working are thoroughly patristic (and, even more particularly, Cappadocian). Firstly, Edwards clearly is working with an analogy for the Trinity that allows God to stand apart as wholly other from His creatures. Humans are not purely spiritual beings in the way that God is, and so when Edwards discusses God in such

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[116] *Misc.* 94 (1723).
[117] Ibid.
[118] *Discourse*, 131. Cf. *Misc.* 94 (1723) and *Misc.* ww (1723). In the latter Edwards distinguishes between God's attributes of power, wisdom, goodness, and holiness—which "have to do with the world"—and all others (such as aseity, simplicity, or infinitude) which have to do with God Himself. The traditional terminology in Christian systematic theology is that the former are "communicable" attributes and the latter are "incommunicable." But even these incommunicable attributes of God are reducible ultimately to modes of His one essential activity of eternal loving communion.

explicitly mentalist terms as he does there are still clear distinctions that he must and does draw between the divine operations and its human analogue. We have already seen such distinctions above: in God act and essence are not distinct, though they are in finite creatures. Furthermore, in God understanding and will are not qualitatively different things, but simply different 'instances' of the perfect divine activity. In these respects, the divine nature remains mysteriously unlike anything in its created reflection.

Secondly, Edwards is careful to isolate these distinctions among the persons as the *only* distinction between the three persons of the Trinity, and thus the only distinctions in God. The Father who has the perfect idea of Himself, the Son who is that perfect Idea, and the Holy Spirit who is the mutual love between the Father and His perfect idea, are the only legitimate distinctions that can ground a multiplicity in God. Put into the more patristic and Cappadocian language which Edwards also uses at times, these distinctions amount to what have historically been called the "relations of origin": the Father is eternally ungenerated, the Son is eternally generated (or begotten), and the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the other two.[119] Apart from these distinctions of origin there are no real distinctions in God.

The mentalist language in which Edwards couches his assertion of the patristic doctrines of generation and procession does not alter the thrust of those doctrines, because for Edwards ideas (as well as love) are inherently active, not passive.[120] Thus they comport with and provide a fitting illustration of the notion that God is an eternal and pure act and that it is by such eternal activity that the multiplicity of divine persons come about. The essence of God, which is to engage eternally in His own perfect activity, involves this activity of forming ideas. In God idea formation is not something that just "happens" to His mind, as it does for human beings whether in a random (Humean) or a coordinated (Lockean-Berkeleyan) succession. It is rather the most active process a mind can undergo, the "highest act of the understanding." To create new ideas in the mind (as opposed to simply receiving ideas through the influence of external objects) "is a real

[119] Again, this is the Western position on the Holy Spirit's procession.
[120] In fact, in what probably ought to be the final nail in the coffin for the East-West incompatibility thesis, Gregory occasionally suggests (decades before Augustine) that the divine unity is "like that of Nous, Logos, and Pneuma that constitute our human consciousness." See McGuckin, 23.

production."[121] In Edwards' mentalist imagery, God is perfect mind, which means He is the perfect and eternal operation of mental activity (i.e., idea formation).[122] The idea He forms is of Himself, and this idea is so perfect that it renders itself a repetition of Deity—the Son. Likewise, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as the (mutual, reciprocated) love that God has for His perfect idea of Himself. This love is also active: in fact, it is the very act of God properly considered.

C. Unity in God as Perichoretic Communication

We have already seen in Edwards' formulations that God is a personal being who exhibits intelligent self-awareness.[123] The relation of God's personhood to the Trinity is interesting. In Eastern Christian estimations, personality entails deliberative activity and purposeful interaction in the affairs of another.[124] It thus gives rise naturally to the idea that there is a multiplicity in God, for if God is a being who necessarily engages in this kind of purposeful interaction with another, there must be another with whom God can so interact. The importance Edwards places on this idea that the divine persons are purposefully interactive via their personality is seen in the communicative nature of

[121] *Misc.* 1253 (1753). Here Edwards is quoting verbatim from another work. See the more detailed discussion below of this entry from the *Miscellanies* journal. See also *The Mind* no. 59, 374, where Edwards says that even human beings have an activity when it comes to ideas. That activity is found not in their formation of ideas but in the ability of the will to contemplate them once formed. Reasoning "is the *act* of the will in bringing its ideas into contemplation…the minds of men are not only passive, but abundantly active….[human will] is a will that is active about its own ideas." (Emphasis added)

[122] *The Mind* nos. 10, 13; 341-2, 343-4.

[123] "The main difference between men and beasts is that men are capable of reflecting upon what passes in their own minds; beasts have nothing but direct consciousness. Men are capable of viewing what is in themselves contemplatively." *The Mind* no. 59, 374. This self-conscious quality of humanity is for Edwards an essential part of what it means for man to be *imago Dei*.

[124] Eastern Christian theologians argue polemically that this is not the understanding of personhood received in the West. These thinkers would take issue with the basic definition of personhood as intelligent self-awareness given above. They take the term as inherently relational: to be a person (a moral agent) is to be in community with other persons. See Zizioulas, *passim*, and Harold H. Oliver, "Relational Personalism," in *The Personalist Forum* 5 no. 1 (1989): 27-42. Here again we can see that the supposed gap between Western and Eastern Christianity is not as wide as is often alleged, for intelligent self-awareness need not exclude the inherent relationality sought by the Eastern theologians. Rather, perhaps part of Edwards' genius lies precisely in that he manages to merge the two into one: Edwards views persons as inherently relational despite his "Western" starting point of self-consciousness. In fact, as we have seen, Edwards offers a way of seeing self-consciousness as inherently relational, as God must relate to a perfect Idea of Himself, which is taken as separate from Himself in order to be conscious of it. Whether Edwards' view illustrates that the Western concept of personhood is not as inherently individualistic (non-relational) as Eastern critics say, or simply that Edwards is transcending his tradition on this point, is hard to say. The present author takes it at least as an indication that, to whatever extent typical Western accounts really do succumb to the charge of individualism, Edwards can be seen as one who draws on patristic sources of Trinitarian reflection rather than on those later Western conceptions.

Edwards' characterization of the Trinitarian relations. Though it is discernible in his account already, he makes this characterization explicit in the early entries of the *Miscellanies* journal that discuss the Holy Spirit as God's love. We have already seen that Edwards takes the Holy Spirit to be the very act of God personified. Thus when we describe the distinctness of the third Person of the Trinity, we end up describing the essence of the Godhead itself. The loving communion between the Father and the Son ends up constituting the very essence of God. Thus, Edwards rejects Unitarian conceptions of God because under their speculations "the goodness of God can have no perfect exercise." This perfect exercise requires that God communicate His "happiness" (His delight in being Himself) to another:

> To be perfectly good, is to incline to and delight in making another happy in the same proportion as it is happy itself, that is, to delight as much in communicating happiness to another as in enjoying of it himself, and an inclination to communicate all his happiness; it appears that this is perfect goodness, because goodness is delight in communicating happiness.[125]

But the only other with whom this sort of perfect communication can occur must also be God. God must be able to perfectly exercise His goodness, and therefore "must have the fellowship of a person equal with himself."[126] Here Edwards speaks in a way that is very similar to Gregory, as the multiplicity in the Godhead results from the Father communicating His being (which Edwards here characterizes as happiness: the mutual delight the three Persons take in one another) to the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Godhead thus exists as an eternal communication of happiness or delight between the persons of the Godhead.[127] Furthermore, this identifies the communicative process by which the Son is eternally generated from the Father as an exercise of love: "Then there must have been an object from all eternity which God infinitely loves."[128] Edwards speaks of love and delight interchangeably, and so on his conception it is the Holy Spirit which is most properly the "delight" of God spoken of above.

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[125] *Misc.* 96 (1723).
[126] Ibid.
[127] See also Edwards' even earlier argument in *The Mind* no. 1, 337: "One alone, without any reference to any more, cannot be excellent; for in such a case there can be no manner of relation no way, and therefore, no such thing as consent….in a being that is absolutely without any plurality there cannot be excellency, for there can be no such thing as consent or agreement."
[128] *Misc.* 117 (1723-4).

This communicative relationship between the three persons of the Godhead represents Edwards' appropriation of the patristic doctrine of perichoresis. The co-eternality of both the Son and the Holy Spirit is evident in the way that each of their respective "productions" are contained "within" the other. The Father has an idea of Himself, which generates the Son. The Father necessarily loves this idea of Himself, a love which is necessarily reciprocated, and thus proceeds the Holy Spirit. Somehow these three persons, in their own "relative" distinctions which make them separate persons, contain and are contained in the other two persons. This is the point at which Edwards' mentalist imagery clearly offers an analogy for Gregory's perichoretic vision of the "inner unifying dynamic" of the Godhead.[129]

Edwards' clearest expression of this perichoretic conception of divine unity is found in a passage in the *Discourse on the Trinity* in which he seeks to explain how it is that the Holy Spirit, if He is God's act of love, can also be a personal being with its own will and consciousness. Edwards points out that those who raise this objection are in fact running aground on a deeper problem, which is that the orthodox have traditionally held that there is in fact only one understanding and will in the Godhead, not three separate understandings and wills. So the problem seemingly is quite acute: how is it that all three persons have understanding, and will, and yet there is only one understanding and will in God?[130] The answer is that the Son, who is the Understanding of God personified, is "in" the Holy Spirit, and likewise the Spirit, who is the Love of God personified, is "in" the Son:

> The whole divine essence is supposed truly and properly to subsist in each of these three—viz. God, and his understanding, and love—and …there is such a wonderful union between them that they are after an ineffable and inconceivable manner one in another; so that one hath another, and they have communion in one another, and are as it were predicable one of another…The Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father; the Holy Ghost is in the Father, and the Father in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost is in the Son, and the Son in the Holy Ghost. And the Father understands *because* the Son, who is the divine understanding, is in him. The Father loves because the Holy Ghost is in him. So the Son loves because the Holy

[129] McGuckin, 22.
[130] We note that this is a just as much a problem for an Eastern theology which self-consciously rejects Augustine's substantival (psychological) analogy for the Trinity. All orthodox Christians agree that each of the divine Persons possess understanding and will.

> Spirit is in him and proceeds from him. So the Holy Ghost, or the divine essence subsisting in divine love, understands because the Son, the divine idea, is in Him. Understanding may be predicated of this love, because it is the love of the understanding both objectively and subjectively. God loves the understanding and the understanding also flows out in love, so that the divine understanding is in the Deity subsisting in love.[131]

Thus we see how it is that God is one not only despite His multiplicity, but how His multiplicity in fact *grounds* the sort of unity that He has. For the very essence of God is to be engaged in the eternal activity of loving communion within Himself, an activity that is only possible because of the distinctions.

> All the three are persons, for they all have understanding and will. There is understanding and will in the Father, as the Son and the Holy Ghost are in him and proceed from [him]. There is understanding and will in the Son, as he *is* understanding and as the Holy Ghost is in him and proceeds from him. There is understanding and will in the Holy Ghost, as he is the divine will and as the Son is in him.[132]

Again, these distinctions are coequal and co-eternal; just as it is not the case that there was only the Father, who then produced the Son, who together then processed the Holy Spirit, so also it is not the case that three pre-existing persons came together into a loving community of persons. For God to exist at all as the kind of being that He is, He must exist as a perfect activity of intertwined and mutually indwelling triplicity. There is no unity without the triplicity, and the triplicity exists only because there is in fact unity.

It is here, then, that Edwards delivers on the promise of the substantival analogy as first expressed by Augustine and demonstrates in a way that even the Cappadocian tradition could not show how it is that the three Persons mutually indwell one another. They do so because the nature of their respective identities as a relational subsistence of the one identical divine substance is such that each of the other subsistences is necessarily included. Consciousness ("mere direct existence"), understanding, and will are not, in fact, ontologically separate qualities of mind (at least they are not in the case of God), but the same mind subsisting in three different relational associations. In any of the three, the unity (the essence, the unity of all three) is present. The one divine essence is differentiated only in terms of these relations (of origin), and these relations do not constitute any sort of addition to that divine essence. (Having a will does not "add" to the

[131] *Discourse on the Trinity*, 133-4.
[132] Ibid., 134.

mind, but rather it is already a necessary characteristic of mind to have a will; etc.) The relations themselves are fundamental to the divine essence. There is no divine essence, no God, even in concept, except the essence that exists in Trinitarian differentiation: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each subsisting within one another. There is no God but the Trinity.[133]

If forced to locate Edwards within the usual dialectic between social and Latin Trinitarianisms, therefore, Edwards certainly looks like a social Trinitarian against the so-called "Latin" views that allegedly subordinate the relationality of the Persons to their essence. Indeed, Edwards explicitly uses social analogies to speak of the Trinity. As we have seen, one alone cannot be excellent, which is why there is multiplicity in God in the first place. Still, the three persons are "in every way equal in the *society* or *family* of the three," and each has "his peculiar honor" within that "society or family."[134] Edwards speaks of the three as belonging to a "mutual love and friendship which subsists eternally and necessarily."[135] Within this society all three are superior in their own way, and Edwards expresses the superiority of the Father and the Son in social terms: "the Father and the Son principally stand in the place of lords, and the Holy Ghost is servant to them both."[136] Furthermore, Edwards clearly rejects the sentiment expressed in a recent defense of "Latin" Trinitarianism that "were there no processions, there would be no Persons, but simply God. The Persons are wholly equal: as ought to be so if they are

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[133] Interestingly, here Edwards might break with his own Puritan-Reformed tradition as represented by Calvin. Calvin seems to take the relational qualities of the divine persons to be non-essential: "Therefore we say that deity in an absolute sense exists of itself; whence likewise we confess that the Son since he is God, exists of himself, but not in respect of his Person; indeed, since he is the Son, we say that he exists from the Father. Thus his essence is without beginning; while the beginning of his person is God himself." (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* I.13.25, in John T. McNeill, ed., Ford Lewis Battles, tr., (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), vol. 1: 125. Also cited in Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 53.) The line Calvin is walking is a standard one that all Nicene accounts of the Trinity have had to walk: to maintain that the Son is from the Father, and yet also is wholly divine in Himself and without beginning. The issue of controversy here is the way in which Calvin attempts to maintain both the eternality and the generatedness of the Son by distinguishing between the Son's "essence" on the one hand and His relational characteristics on the other. This is likely an innocent move on Calvin's part, borne out of the inherent difficulties involved in describing the Trinity with clarity and not representative of any great rift between his view and that of Edwards or between "West" and "East" generally. In any case, a distinction between relation and essence in the divine Persons is one that Edwards, Augustine, and the Cappadocians for their part oppose with clarity.

[134] *Discourse on the Trinity*, 135.

[135] *Nature of True Virtue*, 557. Cited in Lee, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 21, 19-20.

[136] *Equality of the Persons*, 147. Edwards goes on to describe the Spirit's own sort of superiority among the three.

equally divine. And yet…given that there *are* persons, the others exist because the Father does."[137] Edwards would reject such a claim as absurd: it is impossible to speak of God without the three Persons. There simply is no "simply God" that exists, even conceptually, apart from the three-in-communion. There is, perhaps, simply the Father as divine Consciousness, who can be conceived as generating the Son through His perfect understanding (idea) of Himself, etc. Even here, though, Edwards is not thinking of some un-related divine essence that is repeated, but rather of the specific person of the Father, who exists eternally *as* one who is repeated twice over in the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit.[138] Finally, Edwards even speaks of the Father as the Cappadocians do, calling him the "fountain of Deity."[139]

Yet Edwards makes heaviest use of a substantival analogy. In fact, he essentially retains Augustine's psychological version by conceptualizing God as Consciousness (the 'mere direct existence' of the Father), Understanding (the idea Consciousness has of itself; i.e., the perfect Idea of God that is the Son, in which God is His own object of thought), and Will (the mutual love or delight between Consciousness and its Idea of itself; i.e., the perfect activity of God that is the Holy Spirit, in which God delights in His own perfections). As we can now see, however, this does not represent any fundamental or "logical" problem with Edwards' view. The Western Trinitarianism that Edwards represents with this analogy need not be, and historically it has not been, understood as Eastern polemicists insist. (This is so despite the existence of contemporary theologians and philosophers of religion who have accepted the false choice and opted to argue for the "Western" option). The two analogies need not be contradictory.

That Edwards uses both kinds of analogy and that this points to a workable reconciliation in His own Trinitarian thought is held by several of his theological

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[137] Leftow, 244. Cited in Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas*, 54.

[138] Edwards' willingness to break with Calvin on this point (at least arguably, if Calvin's view were really as "Latin" as many maintain) anticipates later developments in Western and even Reformed-Calvinistic theology. For instance, Letham (*The Holy Trinity*, 397) traces an argument originally found in Barth to the effect that the Son's personal subordination to the Father is immanent in His deity, that "even in the form of a servant, which is the form of his presence and action in Jesus Christ, we have to do with God himself in his true deity." Indeed, "if in his proper being as God God can only be unworldly, if he can be the humiliated and lowly and obedient One only in a mode of appearance and not in his proper being, what is the value of the true deity of Christ, what is its value for us?"

[139] *On the Equality of the Persons*, 146 (cit. supra.).

commentators.[140] The value of our study here is that it presents the reconciliation in a clearer philosophical light. The choice between Aristotle's unities of "grouping" (generic, specific) and his unity of substance is rendered false if the three Persons are a perichoretic communion. Perichoresis calls into question certain ontological assumptions upon which the alleged incompatibility of the social and substantival analogies rests. Particularly, the assertion of their incompatibility assumes that relational properties are non-essential, or accidental. So, for instance, those who advocate "social" Trinitarianism are often accused of tri-theism: the three persons are logically prior to their joining together in community, thus in fact there are three gods.[141] Likewise substantival analogies are accused of locating proper divinity in some common "essence" shared by the three inter-related Persons, whose respective Personalities are features "added on" to that essence. Edwards' use of the substantival analogy does not fall to this criticism, though, for he does not say that the divine Consciousness, Understanding, and Will are three modes,[142] qualities or (most crudely) compartments of one underlying essence. For Edwards the essence of God is consciousness-understanding-will in union. Yet at the same time each of the united relata individually fully contain deity, for the consciousness of God has understanding and will within it, the understanding of God has consciousness and will within it, etc. Each one may be viewed individually in terms of how it relates to the others, and yet it contains all the features of the Godhead in itself (for each of the other persons is contained within it). Stepping back from the persons in their individuality, the divinity itself which they all share is seen to be this very communion of

[140] For examples, see Lee, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 21, 19f; also Pauw, *Supreme Harmony of All*, 57f.

[141] Though, given the "Eastern" emphasis that the three Persons are all hypostasized communications of the essence of the Father specifically, we see that this charge is confused. The East clearly asserts that the Father is logically "prior" as originating cause of the other two, and that the community is the instantaneous and eternal result of the Father's origination of the Son and the Spirit. So there are no individual Persons that are "prior" to the community on the Eastern view. The community emerges coeternally with the Persons themselves. God *is* the Father-communicating-Himself-to-Son-and-to-Spirit. That perichoretic communion is the one God. Thus, clearly the Eastern view is not tri-theism.

[142] "Mode" here carries the same double meaning Edwards gives it when speaking of the divine attributes in the *Discourse* (131, cit. supra.). It refers either to the way an activity remains the same activity even when it operates upon a contingent entity (such as when God moves a rock, His action upon the rock is not essentialized into a new divine attribute such as a "power to move rocks"); or it refers to the way that God's activity can be described in various ways in relation to Himself without thereby necessitating another divine Person (such as God's aseity: nothing new is added to the essential relationship of Father thinking and delighting in Himself when we say that He is the source of His own existence. Rather, we simply describe that activity in different terms.)

three-in-one. Each distinct person fully represents and comprises the Father-Son-Spirit union, though from different perspectives. The Father is the Father-Son-Spirit union as Father indwelled by Son and Spirit; the Son is the Father-Son-Spirit union as Son indwelled by Father and Spirit; and the Spirit is the Father-Son-Spirit union as Spirit indwelled by Father and Son.

Edwards is synthesizing the two approaches into one in which the distinct persons within the Godhead are themselves the "fullness" of the entire Godhead. [143] His mentalist picture of God's own activity, and his elaborations on the perfections of that activity, make this clear. In terms of the Augustinian-Edwardsian analogy, the understanding (Son) and the will (Holy Spirit) of God are not separate "compartments" within the "soul" of the Deity, as they are so often pictured in the soul of humanity. Rather, they are each fully the "soul" itself. The soul *is* consciousness-understanding-will in a mutually interpenetrating complete activity of each.

Edwards thinks this can be demonstrated on the basis of straightforward reflection about the nature of ideas. To have a perfect idea is to "repeat" the object of the idea. Likewise, to engage in a perfect and complete activity on the basis of there being a mutual delight between the idea and the mind that possesses it is to repeat the object yet again. Thus the substantive-psychological analogy of Augustine is clearly made to be something which supports and is supported by the social analogy of the East. As Lee puts it:

> The picture of the Trinity as God, God's self-knowledge, and God's love has become, in Edwards' vision, God, God all over again as self-knowledge, and God all over again as self-love. The self's faculties and their functions in the psychological analogy are now the self and its two repetitions or self-communications. There clearly is now a 'triplicity' within God.[144]

This triplicity in turn grounds the proper sense of God's unity. The unity of the Godhead is seen in the distinct expressions of the three persons. The divine essence is not

[143] Yet again the entire discussion is colored by its polemical nature and the distance between East and West is not so great. Augustine himself, by conceiving of the Holy Spirit as the mutual love (will-to-delight) between the Father and the Son, would seem to have avoided the "Western" error that is so often foisted upon him. Implicit in Augustine's own use of the substantival analogy (i.e., the 'psychological' analogy), in which one Person is love in which the other two Persons equally participate, is the loving society of the three Persons.

[144] Lee, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 21, 19.

dependent on any "arbitrariment or voluntary communication," but on a "necessary, essential, and so an independent, communication." This necessary communication is "essential to the Godhead."[145] The essence of God is to communicate Himself to Himself in an eternal community of love. The three persons each participate in and are dependent upon this communication,[146] and in each of them the entire communication can be understood. The divine essence is not divided among the three persons, but rather is seen fully in each of them.[147]

It is this communicative characterization of the Trinity that serves as the foundation of Edwards' relational ontology as well as of his establishment of a typological approach to understanding objects and events in the cosmos. That is, it does so under the premise that God creates the world to reflect His glory.[148] But this thoroughly Edwardsian premise raises a further question that has puzzled many in the Western monotheistic traditions. How can God be motivated to create at all, for any reason? This is a difficult question to answer without blurring the *ad intra/ad extra* distinction. On the other hand, if the distinction remains clear, then it is difficult to explain why God would bother to engage in any *ad extra* activity at all. God is perfect in His own essence and lacks nothing. Seeing reflections of his glory in the creation—which is Edwards' explicit answer to the question of "why" God creates—or any other purpose that might be proposed are unnecessary to God's proper enjoyment of His own existence, so why does He create such reflections in the first place? Edwards makes the puzzle a bit more acute still by rendering God's creative activity as a communication of His own glorious harmony, and he makes harmonious communication the very essence of God. So what is the difference between God's communicative *ad intra* operations (that produced the Son and the Holy Spirit in an eternal act) and His communicative *ad extra* operations

[145] *Equality of the Persons*, 148.
[146] *Equality of the Persons*, 147: "That there is a dependence in the Godhead of one person on another—if we don't understand it of an arbitrary [nature] or a depending on another's will—is not at all inconsistent with a perfect equality in glory. There is a dependence every one has on another, though necessary and of different kinds."
[147] Ibid.
[148] This premise, of course, is nearly universal in the Christian tradition, generally stated. The creation is a "vestige" of God, while human beings as "images" are even more similar to Him. The physical world is, at the very least, designed to be a place where human beings can know and love God by having this similarity expressed to them. See Bonaventure, *2 Sent*., d. 16, a. 1, q. 1, resp.: "…quod homo est imago Dei, quia est eius expressa similitudo."

(that create and preserve the world)? The next chapter will begin with an examination of the answers to these questions that he provides in *Concerning the End for Which God Created the World* and elsewhere. Taking account of how Edwards understands God's purpose in creating while also managing to avoid blurring the distinction between God's creative and His inter-Trinitarian activity will allow us to appreciate key elements of his argument for a relational ontology.

CHAPTER 2
EDWARDS' RELATIONAL ONTOLOGY

Many of Edwards' commentators claim that his is a radical approach to ontology, especially in juxtaposition to more classical Aristotelian conceptions that played a dominant role in western thinking about being throughout the medieval and into the early modern period. Daniel points out that "Edwards' detour into the Trinity to account for the world upends modernist attempts to explain God in substantialist terms," and because creation (in its being) is a reflection of God it upends attempts to explain the cosmos in substantialist terms as well.[1] But how precisely does Edwards' perichoretic reorganization of created being as communicated reflection of the Trinity represent a break from such an ontology? That is the subject of the second part of this chapter. There We shall critically interact with contemporary theological interpreters who attribute a "dispositional" ontology to Edwards. The third part of this chapter takes up the question of the philosophical implications of this Edwardsian ontology within the early modern context in which Edwards lived. Before engaging these two considerations, first we must consider Edwards' doctrine of creation itself, particularly his understanding of why God creates in the first place.

I. **Creation as Communication**

A. Creation and Communication

In the same early phase of his writings as that in which he first starts to reflect extensively on the doctrine of the Trinity, Edwards also begins to reflect upon the purpose of God's action in creating the world. Though he treats it logically as a distinct

[1] Daniel, 106. We take "substantialist" (in line with Daniel's intention) as a shorthand for Aristotle's view in which substances are defined in self-contained terms (see below, §II.C), not as a way of saying that Edwards rejects any notion of "substance" whatsoever. Edwards clearly asserts, in precisely so many words, that God *is* the "substance" of the created world. (See below, §I.B) We also note that Daniel's characterization of Edwards' Trinitarianism as a "detour" is rather unfortunate.

subject, its connection to Trinitarian formulations is explicit.[2] Abundant in these writings are references to God communicating Himself, His beauty, His glory, and His happiness, to creatures.[3] In the *End for Which God Created the World*, for instance, Edwards says that "if any created existence is in itself worthy to be, or anything that ever was future is worthy of existence, such a communication of divine glory is worthy of existence."[4] In the human soul, this communication occurs as an operation upon the understanding—giving knowledge of God—but also upon the will. The most excellent exercise of creaturely will "consists in esteem and love and a delight in his glory."[5] To say that God creates the world as a kind of self-communication is fairly commonplace. It was certainly emphasized in Edwards' own theological tradition, as it was Calvin himself who framed his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* as a response to his dictum that *finitum non capax infinitum*. Indeed, the finite cannot grasp the infinite—unless the infinite reveals itself. In addition to its obvious notional connection with communication, the very conception of *revelation* that is fundamental to Christianity (and other religions, certainly) is a claim that somehow the Infinite can indeed talk to the finite, and the finite can hear Him. Within the Reformed tradition, the revelation was frequently grounded in a doctrine of accommodating condescension. Calvin writes that God deigns to stoop down and babble at us in language we can understand: "…as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a 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."[6] This accommodating revelatory communication applies most directly to

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[2] In Edwards' own index of his *Miscellanies* journals, composed near the end of his life, he does not place the label "Trinity" on these entries concerning the creation of the world. So it is clear that he takes the subjects as discursively distinct, at least in principle. As we shall see, though, for Edwards what at first seems to be a distinct issue from the Trinity can, upon reflection, fast become a necessary and unavoidable implication, not only as a logical consequence (which would still allow for treating the subjects as logically distinct), but as a transcendentally-grounded feature of Trinitarian thinking itself. To speak of creation is already to presuppose the triune Creator, without whom there would be no creation of which to speak in the first place and even if there were there would be no way to account for creation's existence.

[3] See, for instance, *Misc.* 104 (1723).

[4] *End of Creation*, 454.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.13.1 (1: 121). It has been noted that on Calvin's understanding it seems that God has to remove Himself somehow from His own glorious state in order to communicate to His creatures. Some more recent Reformed scholars have preferred a higher view of humanity's fundamental ability to understand "what God is like" when He speaks than that taken by Calvin. In any case, though, the Reformed tradition, and Christianity generally, has understood creation as a kind of divine self-communication.

Scripture, of course, but it also applies metaphorically to creation itself. The "lisping" is not simply a verbal deposit from the infinite God to a finite creation that already exists (as is the case with Scriptural revelation), or an informational transfer between minds as when a general "communicates" with a subordinate on the battlefield, but constitutes God's act in creating the world itself. When God creates, when He gives being to the world, He is communicating.[7] Of course, the devil is in the details: communication is a multifaceted and ambivalent term in its own right. What *kind* of communication does the creation represent for Edwards?

There are several main contenders among Edwards' interpreters. Daniel takes Edwards as offering a fundamentally communicative vision of the world, but he opposes his own semiotic interpretation of that vision to two others. According to Daniel's interpretation, communication for Edwards is not merely "humanistic" ("individual selves sharing ideas"), nor is it "Neoplatonic" ("God as a subject emanates his being in creation"), in both of which cases communication is something "subsequent to being."[8] In contrast, Daniel sets forth his "semiotic" interpretation of Edwards as one in which communication is "that which constitutes the very possibility" of being.[9] On Daniel's view Edwards locates the being of things in the place they fill within a vast semiotic matrix: a worldwide communicative structure in which all things are related to other things as signs and things signified. This structure pre-exists God's activity in creating the world, because God Himself is the semiotic structure in which all things find their place (and thus why that structure "constitutes the very possibility" of being). Things do not exist at all except as placeholders in this vast system of communicative exchange.

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[7] This really is a much wider claim throughout the Christian tradition, that God somehow "communicates" Himself to human beings in constituting (creating) them as *imago Dei.* This image involves, at the very least, an innate ability on the part of human beings to exist in a manner similar to God's existence in kind (though infinitely less in degree). Thus the "communicable" attributes of God are those which are able to be imitated by human creatures (such as God's power, goodness, etc.). Edwards himself speaks in this language in a variety of places. E.g., *Discourse on the Trinity,* 113: "Though the divine nature be vastly different from that of created spirits, yet our souls are made in the image of God: we have understanding and will, idea and love, as God hath, and the difference is only in the perfection of degree and manner." Our souls are *made*—created—images of these communicable divine attributes. The attributes are communicated in the act of creation.

[8] Daniel, *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards,* 2. In reality, Edwards' view has much in common with Neoplatonism, particularly in its Christian representations. Still, Daniel uses the term "Neoplatonic" to refer to an emanationist account of being that he thinks Edwards rejects.

[9] Ibid.

Fuller interaction with Daniel's view is found in the third chapter, but here we simply pause to take note of the various directions that a communicative understanding of creation can go. In broad terms, Daniel's interpretation commends itself because it is true that Edwards not only conceives of creation as the self-communicating act of God, but also sees the inter-relations among the persons of the Trinity themselves as communicative. It is his doctrine of the Trinity, and the sort of communicative activity that the divine persons engage in *ad intra*, that grounds Edwards' doctrine of creation which sees the cosmos as an *ad extra* reflection of the same communicative activity. God is Himself the communicative one in whom the communications of the world subsist. We should also note here a way in which Daniel's interpretation, even insofar as we have examined it already, frames a problem that is found in many places in the secondary literature, namely how does Edwards distinguish between Creator and creature. Daniel's answer to this question is that Edwards distinguishes them in virtue of the very nature of *semiosis* itself. Since a semiotic (communicative) structure of sign-signified relations is the necessary precondition for thought itself, it remains something distinct from the thought whose possibility it grounds. Likewise, the Creator is distinguished from His creation as the always prior necessity upon which that creation utterly depends. On "emanationist" ontologies (Daniel's "Neoplatonism"), the prior necessity of the One for all subsequent being is grounded in the constitution of subsequent being as participation in the One. On Daniel's semiotic reading of Edwards, the prior necessity of God for creation is based upon God's role as structuring context that holds creation together in its given order. This context does not confer "being" or a mode of existence from itself to another, but is rather a preconditioning space into which the other is fitted. It differs ontologically from the other as the English language (the complete network of terms, definitions, grammatical rules, etc.) differs from the word "man."

There are also difficulties with Daniel's reading, however. In a phrase which is understandably taken as highly significant for Daniel's reading, Edwards proclaims that the world is as full of types as "a language is full of words."[10] Yet this statement, while significant, does not properly identify *God* with the communicative structure in which created things find their being, but creation. Further, Edwards' preference for speaking of

[10] *Types*, 152 (cit. supra.: Introduction, n.45).

creation in terms of image, likeness, and reflection is puzzling if Daniel's account is true. The individual words in a language do not seem to "reflect" the broader linguistic structure in which they subsist so much as they, taken all together, constitute (a significant portion of) the contents of that language. The question is not whether a communicative understanding of creation is consistent with both linguistic and imagistic (representative) analogies, for clearly the three concepts of communication, representation and language are closely related and clearly Daniel is not wrong to construe an account of the world that centralizes such concepts as "semiotic." The question, rather, is how precisely these fit together in Edwards' view in a way that allows him both to account for why God decides to create the world at all while at the same time to maintain an ontological distinction between Creator and creature, or between the *ad intra* communicative activity of the Trinity and the *ad extra* communicative activity by which God creates the world.[11]

B. The Creator-Creature Distinction

Many have seen a tension in Edwards regarding the Creator-creature distinction. Most simply, the apparent tension lies in the fact that Edwards characterizes both creation and the inter-triune operations between the three divine persons as self-communicative activity. This raises the question of how God's creative activity differs from the eternal activity within the communion of the Godhead. Indeed, Edwards has been accused of pantheism: the charge that he ends up equating (or, for a more modest prosecutor, he fails to distinguish sufficiently between) creation and God.[12] The alleged tension arises in spite of Edwards' explicit statements of a distinction between Creator and creature, such as his argument in *Of Being* in which he considers the question of whether there can be nothing at all:

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[11] This distinction has been mentioned several times already in this dissertation. Steven Holmes ("Does Edwards Use a Dispositional Ontology?") characterizes it as a distinction between the "internal dynamic of God's life" via eternal generation (of the Son) and procession (of the Spirit) and the perichoretic communion between the three Persons that results on the one hand, and the "external dynamic, in the creation and preservation of the world" on the other. See Holmes, 106.

[12] "Pantheism" is also the word of choice among many of Edwards' skeptics within his own tradition. For example, see the 19th-century Princetonian Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) I:461. A number of Reformed systematicians since Edwards have expressed concerns that his understanding of the distinction between Creator and creature is inadequate even if they stop short of Hodge's accusation.

> When we go to inquire whether or no there can be absolutely nothing we speak nonsense. In inquiring, the stating of the question is nonsense, because we make a disjunction where there is none. 'Either being or absolute nothing' is no disjunction, no more than whether a triangle is a triangle or not a triangle. There is no other way, but only for there to be existence; there is no such thing as absolute nothing…There is such a thing as nothing with respect to this globe of earth, and with respect to this created universe. There is another way besides these things having existence. But there is no such thing as nothing with respect to entity or being, absolutely considered.[13]

In this "ontological" argument, Edwards clearly takes God to be necessary and the creation to be contingent, a basic ontological separation.

Yet, despite clear assertions here and elsewhere of an ontological distinction, Edwards issues other statements that might seem to contradict it (thus the alleged tension). These statements have led many commentators to conclude that Edwards takes creation to be divine, or that he makes God's activity of creation (*ad extra* divine operations) ontologically equal to the perfect communicative activity among the Persons of the Trinity (*ad intra* divine operations). For instance, Edwards claims that the respective roles played by the three persons of the Trinity in the history of redemption are rooted in the inter-Trinitarian relations themselves: "And as 'tis in their personal [*ad intra*] glory, so it is in their economical [*ad extra*] glory."[14] Some might see a resemblance between statements such as this and what is likely the most widely discussed dictum of 20th century Trinitarian theology--Karl Rahner's "the economic Trinity *is* the immanent Trinity, and the immanent Trinity *is* the economic Trinity."[15] Rahner's view generally comes under criticism as tending towards either modalism on the one hand (the heresy that holds that the three persons are simply alternative "modes" of existence of the one God) or the deification of creation on the other.[16] The latter concern especially

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[13] *Of Being*, 207. Cf. *Misc.* 94 (1723): "the perfect energy of God with respect to himself is the most perfect exertion of himself, of which the creation of the world is but a shadow."
[14] E.g., *Equality of the Persons*, 147. Cf. *Misc.* 1062 (1742-3).
[15] Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, 23. Italics in original.
[16] David Hart, in *The Beauty of the Infinite*, argues that Rahner's Rule leads to these different but equally unorthodox conclusions depending on the direction in which one reads the equivalency. If one takes the economic Trinity as defining the immanent, then God must create and is somehow "completed" by the created world. On the other hand, if one takes the immanent Trinity as defining the economic, then the historical experience finite minds have of God (the economic Trinity) reveals very little about what God is actually like. The Trinity ends up being one substance in three persons, where "persons" are defined only in a vague sense as "modes of being" (thus tending towards modalism). Hart's discussion is also summed up

parallels similar concerns that have been leveled against Edwards' doctrine of creation. As David Hart expresses the problem:

> If the identity of the immanent Trinity with the economic is taken to mean that history is the theater within which God … finds or determines himself as God, there can be no way of convincingly avoiding the conclusion (however vigorously the theologian might deny the implication) that God depends upon creation to be God and that creation exists by necessity (because of some lack in God), so that God is robbed of his true transcendence and creation of its true gratuity.[17]

If applied to Edwards, this criticism would be misguided. Rahner's Rule is capable of being taken in a "loose realist" sense in which it asserts simply that "what we know about God is not misleading…what we know about God is a reliable guide to the divine nature."[18] We see in Edwards' statement above this same traditional spirit: it is not that the economic Trinity *is* the immanent Trinity, but that the economic Trinity *reveals* the immanent Trinity. We learn truly of the immanent Trinity when we observe its *ad extra* operations. Thus Edwards can say that "as 'tis in their personal glory, so it is in their

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by the Reformed author Ralph Smith, "Against Karl Rahner's Rule," http://www.berith.org/pdf/against-karl-rahner-s-rule.pdf (accessed February 2008).

"Mode" allows a broad enough range of meaning to be applied to the three Persons without falling into the heresy of "modalism." Modalism sees the three Persons as different modes of *existence* of the one God and is distinguished from the Cappadocian portrayal of the divine Persons as relative modes of *subsistence*. As we saw in the previous chapter, in the ante-Nicene era, Arians and other subordinationists argued that the Son was not divine because He was not eternal. In Christ God took on a certain "mask" or persona for a time, and then went back to His "proper" heavenly existence at Christ's ascension. A common argument of the modalists was that Christ was simply the one God (the Father) temporarily taking human form, which rendered the passages of Scripture in which Christ speaks of the Father as a separate entity from himself and even prays to the Father as anthropomorphic figures that did not reflect the reality of things. The Father and the Son (and the Holy Spirit) are not simply three "states" in which God can *exist* at one time or another, but are each eternal *subsistences* in their own right. In other words, the heresy of "modalism" was a heresy that asserted (sometimes with great sophistication) that if Christ was God, then God was at that time fully localized to the person of Christ. This is not the Cappadocian or Edwardsian position at all. God as Father and as Spirit was never localized to the person of Christ; all three Persons exist at the same time, at all times. There is not one God who exists in three different "modes," but one God who subsists in three differentiated existing divine beings perichoretically united to one another in love.

[17] Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 157.

[18] This gloss is John Polkinghorne, *Science and the Trinity: The Christian Encounter with Reality* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), as cited in Randal Rauser, "Rahner's Rule: An Emperor without Clothes?" *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, vol. 7, no. 1 (Jan. 2005): 86. Such an interpretation entirely removes all novelty from Rahner's dictum and makes it merely an iteration of traditional Christian theology which holds that God truly reveals Himself to His creation. Whether Rahner would have been content to be read in so un-radical a way is something no one can know.

economical glory," for their "personal" glory (immanent Trinity) is revealed in their economic.[19]

Those who argue for pantheism in Edwards appeal to two other classes of statements found in his writings. One is those statements where he argues that God "comprehends in himself all being" or words to that effect. A chief example is found in *Miscellany* 697, where Edwards bases his argument for God's unity upon the infinitude of God:

> The unity of the Godhead will necessarily follow from God's being infinite: for to be infinite is to be all, and it would be a contradiction to suppose two ALLS, because if there be two or more, one alone is not all, but the sum of them put together are all. Infinity and omneity, if I may so speak, must go together, because if any being falls short of omneity, then it is not infinite therein; it is limited therein; there is something that it don't extend to, or that it don't comprehend. If there be something more, then there is something beyond; and wherein this being don't reach and include that which is beyond, therein it is limited. Its bounds stop short of this that is not comprehended. An infinite being, therefore, must be an all-comprehending being. He must comprehend in himself all being.[20]

Writing at the turn of the twentieth century, Reformed theologian A.A. Hodge associates this sentiment of "omneity" with "pantheism."[21] This charge is odd both historically and logically, though, given the close association Edwards draws between omneity and infinity. The claim that God is infinite goes back to the early Church, where it is taken as a necessary entailment of God's being perfect. The history of how this association comes

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[19] Later Reformed theologians explicitly formulate things in this way. Twentieth century Dutch Reformed systematician Herman Bavinck offers a dictum that is arguably as probing as Rahner's while also having the virtue of being more clear: "The ontological Trinity is reflected in the economic Trinity." See Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God* (Edingurgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), passim.

[20] *Misc.* 697 (1734).

[21] See A.A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith* (Edingurgh: Banner of Truth, 1983), 92f., where he argues that some Christian thinkers such as Edwards "have taken a view of the relation of God to the world which comes perilously near, if it does not coincide with, this great Pantheistic heresy." Hodge says that this perilously pantheistic view is that "created things have no real being of their own," and thus that "it is plain that God is the only real agent in the universe." See also the criticisms of recent Reformed scholar John Gerstner, "Jonathan Edwards and God," *Tenth: An Evangelical Quarterly* 10 no. 1 (Jan 1980): 7f., where Gerstner argues that Edwards was "pantheistic by implication and pantheistic by intention." Criticisms such as those of Hodge and Gerstner also rely heavily on Edwards' doctrine of continuous creation as the particular mode through which Edwards' notion of divine "omneity" leads him to his allegedly pantheistic tendencies. This is the more peculiar element of such critiques, given the popularity of doctrines of continuous creation among Christian thinkers since at least the medieval period. Edwards' own doctrine of continuous creation is discussed below (see §III.A). Here we note simply that Edwards does not say that created things have no *being* of their own, but rather that they are not substances in the sense that they do not uphold their own existence through time and are entirely dependent upon another.

about is interesting in its own right,[22] but in any case it has not usually been viewed as a problem for the ontological distinction between Creator and creature to say that God is infinite, for assertions of God's infinity are always followed by assertions that creation is finite. The problem is how to understand the notion of "comprehension" that Edwards uses: in what sense does God "comprehend all being?" If this is taken to mean that somehow the "being" of created things, taken together, just *is* the divine being, then the problem of pantheism would certainly arise.[23] This brings us to the second sort of statement Edwards issues on occasion that leads some to find his distinction between Creation and creature inadequate. In *Of Atoms* Edwards claims that God is the "substance" of all things:

> If [philosophers] must needs supply that word ['substance'] to something else that does really and properly subsist by itself and support all properties, they must apply it to the divine Being or power itself. And here I believe all those philosophers would apply it, if they knew what they meant themselves. So 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…How truly, then, is he said to be *ens entium.*[24]

In statements such as these are found the strongest evidence that Edwards blurs the Creator-creature distinction in spite of his explicit articulations of it elsewhere. As these statements are also integral to Edwards' metaphysics, a fuller consideration of their import is required to understand properly the relational re-evaluation of ontology which Edwards develops from his reflections on the Trinity.

This consideration is perhaps further complicated by the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. That classical doctrine, which Edwards also expresses clearly in various places in his writings, might seem to contradict Edwards' claim that the "proper substance" of created things is God himself. Contrary to pantheistic monism, in which all being is one

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[22] Classical Greek thought had held that that which was infinite cannot be perfect, because infinitude precludes completion. See Leo Sweeney, *Divine Infinity in Greek and Medieval Thought* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992).

[23] The "problem" of pantheism, here, would be that it does not comport with the orthodox Christianity to which Edwards clearly desires to remain faithful. The philosophical merits or demerits of pantheism as a system independent from orthodox Christianity is well beyond the scope of this dissertation.

[24] *Of Atoms,* Prop. 2, corol. 11, 215.

(because all being is The One),[25] on *ex nihilo* accounts the Creator makes all things other than the eternal divine Persons out of nothing. Thus created being is utterly dependent upon the Creator for its existence, but is utterly different in "being" from the Creator. Created being is not made out of any antecedent being; therefore, created being is not made from the same being as God. An *ex nihilo* creation thus entails ontological separation between Creator and creature. Some commentators thus cite Edwards' assertion of creation *ex nihilo* as proof that he is neither a pantheist nor a "Neoplatonic emanationist."[26] This is inadequate because part of the question is whether Edwards is *consistent* on this point. The claim of those who see a pantheistic tendency in Edwards is not that he explicitly offers an alternative to orthodox views of creation, but rather that there is a discernible tension in his writings in which he appears to contradict himself. It is true that he affirms creation *ex nihilo*, but this affirmation seems to be (or at least so the charge may go) in conflict with his claims that God comprehends all being in Himself and that the substance of created things is God Himself. Furthermore, while he acknowledges that creation is brought forth out of no prior "being" or essence, Edwards clearly construes it as brought about by an exercise of divine activity (creation is an act by the Creator, after all), and God's essence and His activity are not distinct, as we saw in the previous chapter.

For a resolution to the tension we must turn again to the communicative nature of Edwards' characterization of the act of creation. Communication as inter-relation creates logical and conceptual room for a distinction between the way in which the Creative inter-relations (the perichoretic community of the Godhead) and the created inter-relations exist and function. The communicative essence of the created relata need not be

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[25] Again, some blur the issue from pantheism to Neoplatonism, which is not properly pantheistic or monistic but sees all being as *derived* from the One (or, more properly, from Being which is itself an emanation from the One). The notions of derivation, emanation, and participation so common to Neoplatonism leave plenty of room for ontological distinction between the One and all subsequent Being. In fact, they require it, as Neoplatonists always take the efflux as an inferior *likeness* of its source. See chapter 1, §I.B.1.

[26] See Walter Schultz, "Jonathan Edwards's End of Creation: An Exposition and Defense," in *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 49 (2006): 6; Paul Ramsey, *Works* vol. 8, 433 n5; George Claghorn, "Introduction to Edwards' 'Related Correspondence,'" in *Works* vol. 8, 633. Again, the introduction of "Neoplatonism" into the discussion is the decision of these commentators. Claghorn and Schultz both provide examples of the aforementioned blurring between pantheism and Neoplatonism, taking Edwards' clear denials of the former as working equally against the latter without providing any discussion of the distinction between the two.

identical to, nor even an emanation from or participation in, the communicative essence that created them. For instance, we have seen that on Daniel's account this distinction is akin to the distinction between communicative tokens and the larger structure of communicability that makes such tokens possible in the first place. We shall explore in more detail what Edwards means by communication, and how his definition differs from that offered by Daniel's reading, below.[27] Here we simply note that Daniel's communicative account provides prima facie grounds for seeing in Edwards a distinction between Creator and creature.

Another way in which Edwards clearly distinguishes between the Creator and the creation is seen in his location of the continuing existence and identity of created things (and of the entire cosmos in general) in a continuous creative act of God. This doctrine of continuous creation is not unique in the western philosophical tradition,[28] especially among early modern thinkers, and Edwards certainly relies heavily upon Malebranche in his own exposition. What matters most for our discussion here is that Edwards uses the doctrine to emphasize the complete dependence of the creation upon God. But Edwards does not do this in a way that identifies the essence of created things with God's essence. This allows us to take a closer look at what Edwards means in those passages where he claims that the substance of created things is God Himself. He does not claim in those passages that the substance of all things is God's being. Rather, he claims that God is the only true substance, and that all other things find their essence in an *effect* of His *power*:

> Since, as has been shewn [in *Of Atoms*], body is nothing but an infinite resistance in some part of space caused by the immediate exercise of divine *power*, it follows that as great and as wonderful a power is every moment exerted to the upholding of the world, as at first was to the creation of it; the first creation being only the first exertion of this power to cause such resistance, the preservation only the continuation or the repetition of this power every moment to cause this resistance. So that the universe is created out of nothing every moment; and if it were not for our imaginations, which hinder us, we might see that wonderful work

[27] See below, §II.A, where we see that Edwards understands communication primarily as beauty. Also see Chapter 3, §IV, where we interact more extensively with Daniel's account.

[28] In fact, more than simply having a precedent in the western tradition, continuous creation is closer to being the standard view of the medievals.

> performed continually, which was seen by the morning stars when they sang together.[29]

Edwards is using "substance" here in its literal and etymological sense: that which "stands under" a thing and holds it together through time. In this sense the substance of a thing is not necessarily the same as its individual integrity as a particular thing. Edwards' discussion presupposes individuality—there is a "thing" that is preserved and that has its properties "kept up." Edwards is denying the requisite power for such "upkeep" to the thing itself—but he is not dissolving the thing into monistic indistinguishability.[30] The "substance" of created things, then—that which stands under them holding their identity together over time—is this power of God, "or rather the exertion of it."[31] Edwards is not saying that created things simply *are* God's power. Rather, he is saying that created things are *held together* by God's power as an effect thereof.[32]

Similarly, Edwards' claim that God "comprehends" all being in Himself does not entail ontological monism. Rather, God serves as the ontological ground for all created being, but the two remain distinct. Edwards' characterization of created being as divine communications illustrates this point (and shows Edwards is not a pantheist), for individual acts of finite communication are not ontologically similar to the structure that makes them possible. In fact Edwards explicitly ties his comments on the all-comprehensibility of God in *Misc*. 697 to his conception of created being as communication:

> God-as he is infinite, and the being whence all are derived, and from whom every thing is given-does comprehend the entity of all his creatures; and their entity is not to be added to his, as not comprehended in it, for they are *but communications from him*. Communications of being ben't additions of being. The reflections of the sun's light don't add at all to the sum total of the light. 'Tis true, mathematicians conceive of greater than

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[29] *Things to be Considered,* no. 47, 241-2. Emphasis added. See also *Of Atoms*, 215: "…it follows that the certain unknown substance, which philosophers used to think subsisted by itself, and stood underneath and kept up solidity and all other properties, which they used to say it was impossible for a man to have an idea of, is nothing at all distinct from solidity itself; or, if they must needs apply that word to something else that does really and properly subsist by itself and support all properties, they must apply it to the divine Being or power itself." Also see Anderson's discussion, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 6, 54.

[30] E.g., see *The Mind,* no. 61, 380: "…the properties of bodies are such as need some cause that shall every moment have influence to their continuance, as well as a cause of their first existence." This is a statement, at least on its most intuitive reading, *about* distinguishably separate bodies in the cosmos, not a denial that there are such things. See below, §II.C.

[31] *The Mind,* no. 27, 351.

[32] We make a fuller examination of the subsistence of things in God below; see §II.A, §III.B.1

> infinite in some respects, and of several infinites being added one to another; but 'tis because they are in some respect finite: as a thing conceived infinitely long may not be infinitely thick, and so its thickness may be added to; or if it be conceived infinitely long one way, yet it may be conceived having bounds, or an end, another. But God is in no respect limited, and therefore can in no respect be added to.[33]

Since God is infinite in every respect, there can be nothing that exists as any kind of addition to Him. Created being is not an "addition" of God's being; the two kinds of being are distinct from one another. The only alternative is that created things exist as a finite exercise of God's already infinite power. This is the sense in which God "contains" or comprehends all existence, being, power, etc., within Himself.

Edwards' early notebooks of natural philosophy can be read as Edwards' progressive search for a metaphor to best express the way in which the infinite comprehends the finite. In early entries of those notebooks he defines body as "infinite resistance" in some part of space. In *Of Being* (1721) Edwards had written that space is absolute and necessary, without the concept of which it would be impossible to conceive of anything at all. He then draws a startling conclusion: "space is God."[34] Further, in *Of Atoms* (1720-1) Edwards defines all bodies as an infinite resistance to being broken apart that is located somewhere within this space, and attributes the infinite power behind such resistance to God.[35] So the substance of bodies is found in God, who is represented as the larger "context" in which those bodies are located (space) and as the power that holds them together. Anderson convincingly shows that Edwards came back two years later and amended this thesis into an explicit immaterialist idealism in which things are only "as they are actually perceived or known, either in the experiences of finite minds, or as they are known by God."[36] Still, it remains the same kind of theory about the substance of

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[33] *Misc.* 697 (1734). Emphasis added. This is generally how Edwards uses the metaphor of sunlight, which sets him apart from the way the early Church had used it to show the co-equality of the Son with the Father. Edwards agrees with a "Neoplatonic" usage of the analogy (see Chapter 1, §II.B.1)—reflected light is not of the same essence as the source—and so he uses the analogy to illustrate distinction with similarity. Of course, Edwards argues for the co-equality of the Son and the Father with other analogies, as we have seen: the Son is the "perfect" image or idea of the Father, etc.

[34] *Of Being*, 203.

[35] *Of Atoms*, 208, 215.

[36] Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 6, 74-5. Anderson hypothesizes that the shift in metaphor is a result of Edwards' studies of Newton's *Optics*, in which Newton describes both absolute ("real") and relative space in terms of the perceptions of an observer. Relative space involves the "point of view" of finite observers, while absolute space involves the "point of view" of an infinite observer, God. Absolute space is rendered intelligible as the perspective by which God "sees" or knows the world.

bodies. Instead of locating such substance in an absolute real space, it is now located in the ideal space of the all-comprehending *mind* of God. Likewise Edwards never wavers from the claim that it is the power of God that upholds the being of bodies: but this power is now understood in explicitly mentalist terms rather than in the phenomenal terms of space and matter.[37]

So the omni-comprehension of God is now expressed with analogical language in terms of the human mind (or soul). God comprehends all existing things by *knowing* them and by delighting in them in accordance with that knowledge. This is made clearer in passages where Edwards appropriates terminology from Malebranche and identifies God with "being in general:"

> But now, with respect to the Divine Being, there is no such thing as confined selfishness in him, or a love to himself opposite to general benevolence. It is impossible, because he comprehends all entity, and all excellence, in his own essence. The eternal and infinite Being, is in effect, being in general; and comprehends universal existence.[38]

Edwards does not say that God is *in effect* "being in general" in order to set up an ontological identification between God and all created being. It is rather a way of distinguishing God from all created things even as He is their ground. God's creative and sustaining power is that which all created things have in common as the underlying support of their existence. For all creatures, *to be* is to be *upheld* by the constant sustaining power of God. This is the nature of existence, and so God is in this sense "being in general."

Ad extra communication is ontologically different from communication *ad intra* because the two are effects of different sorts of ideas in God. The intra-Trinitarian communication that defines the essence of God is the effect of an idea God has of Himself. But creation is the result of a different kind of idea whose object is something other than God. Otherness is a fundamental aspect of God's creative idea. Furthermore,

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[37] It is more probable that Edwards' revision of his earlier equation of space with God was an aspectual shift in description, rather than an abandonment of the position altogether. As is made clear by Berkeley, immaterialist idealism does not undermine the physical sciences. (See below, Chapter 3, §II.) Rather, it provides a philosophical context in which the phenomena which are the subject of those sciences can be understood. Thus, Edwards would likely not regard his earlier description of God as space as wrong, but rather as the phenomenal manifestation of the deeper metaphysical reality (mind and idea). Cf. *The Mind,* no. 34, 353.

[38] *End of Creation,* 462.

as other this idea also includes finitude (as other than that which is infinite): the thing God *ideas* when He creates is a *finite* world in which His own infinite glory can shine.[39] Far from committing some accidental contradiction regarding the distinction between Creator and creature or between the *ad extra* and *ad intra* activity of God, Edwards uses his strongest language to condemn the view that any created thing (even the saints who are the apex of God's created purpose) could partake of the essence of God:

> Not that the saints are made partakers of the essence of God, and so "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), that is, of God's spiritual beauty and happiness.[40]

These are the raw materials of Edwards' creational ontology: things subsist by the power of God and in so doing partake of His fullness or beauty, yet also remain distinct from God. We turn now to a fuller examination of the relational ontology that Edwards constructs out of these materials.

II. **Relational Ontology**

A. Being and Beauty

The connection between God's fullness (infinitude) and beauty is most interesting and suggestive, and it enables Edwards to tie together the other metaphors for the communicative activity of the Trinity. The perichoretic inter-communication within the triune Godhead is God's "beauty and happiness." As such, it is *the* underlying principle of the world not only in the sense that it is through an exercise of this beautiful inter-communication that the world comes to be. Rather, it is also an activity that is communicated *to* the world in the act of creation. As the Father communicates His own being to the Son and Holy Spirit, so also the Trinity communicates its own infinite *beauty* to the world by making the world a place that is vested with a similar beauty (insofar as it is possible for that which is finite to be so vested). This divine investiture of beauty upon the world constitutes the *ad extra* activity of God, and it is manifested in two ways. One is that the things in the world are themselves designed to be in communication with other

[39] *Misc.* 697 (1734) (cit. supra.).
[40] *Religious Affections,* 203, cited by Claghorn, 633 and Schultz, 22.

things. Things are designed to communicate themselves somehow to other things. The second way that God's *ad extra* activity is manifested in the world is by His upholding the world as a whole, in its structure, as a communicative matrix in which these communicated inter-relations between individual created things subsist. In other words, God is constantly active in the world upholding its general existence as a place in which these individual communications take place. This upholding activity of God is the "substance" that underlies all the created objects in the cosmos: the *ad extra* activity of God that maintains the world in a structure of communicative inter-relation. It is an "effect" and a reflection of God's power *ad intra*. It upholds all created things in communication with each other, and thereby renders them reflections of that power as well.

Thus, Edwards conceives of the relation between Creator and creation in a three-part structure of beauty. First there is the intra-Triune communication; second is the communicative structure (itself a reflection of the intra-Triune communication) that holds the world together; third are individual things in the world communicating about and to one another (as the components that find a place in the structure that comprises the second rung), considered as individuals. In this structure, the second part is the "substance" of individual created things, the *ad extra* exercise of God's power (i.e., of His intra-Triune communication) that creates the world and sustains it in its endurance as the kind of world it is. The overall communicative structure of the world *is* God constantly exercising His power (in what many have called "continuous creation").[41] God's power *in se* is His inner Triune communication with Himself.

The question all *ex nihilo* accounts of creation must answer is what the purpose of God's creative act is, since the created world is now deprived of the ontological necessity provided on emanationist accounts. Since there is no necessary reason for God to engage in *ad extra* activity to produce and sustain the second and third "rungs" of beauty, then why does He do so? Why does God not continue existing forever in the enjoyment of the

[41] The act by which God upholds the world is the same sort of act as that by which He creates the world originally. See *Misc.* 346 (1731): "It [is] most agreeable to the Scripture, to suppose creation to be performed new every moment;" also *Things to be Considered*, no. 47, 241-2 (cit. supra.): "the first creation being *only the first exertion of this power* to cause such resistance, the preservation only the continuation or the repetition of this power every moment to cause this resistance." (Emphases added) Cf. *Original Sin*, in *Works* 3, 401-2.

wholly sufficient beauty of the "first" rung, namely, His own perfect *ad intra* activity within the Trinity? Edwards devotes an entire dissertation to answering this very question. In that dissertation he sets up the discussion by first stating that creation is *ex nihilo*:

> The notion of God's creating the world in order to receive anything properly from the creature is not only contrary to the nature of God, but inconsistent with the notion of creation; which implies a being's receiving its existence, and all that belongs to its being, out of nothing. And this implies the most perfect, absolute and universal derivation and dependence. Now, if the creature receives its all from God entirely and perfectly, how is it possible that it should have anything to add to God, to make him in any respect more than he was before, and so the Creator become dependent upon the creature?[42]

Expositions such as these raise the question of why God creates at all. Edwards' basic position is that creation is a divine activity where God deliberately sets out to communicate Himself reflectively in a world outside of Himself. Why or how precisely God decides to do this without thereby making God somehow "dependent" upon the creature is the subject of *The End for Which God Created the World.*

As we have just seen, Edwards renders this discussion as one about beauty, or excellence.[43] In *The Mind* Edwards discusses the nature of excellence (which is first and foremost an attribute of God), and treats it as synonymous with beauty: "But what is this excellency? Wherein is one thing excellent and another evil, one beautiful and another deformed?"[44] This beauty is characterized by Edwards as a kind of harmony, "and harmony is proportion."[45] Wherever there is harmony or proportion between individuals, there is beauty/excellence. Thus, the perichoretic harmony between the three Persons of the Trinity serves as the archetype for all created beauty (all harmonies between created

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[42] *End of Creation,* 420.
[43] The citation above does not represent a passing allusion. Excellence as beauty or harmony is a repeated theme in Edwards' writings, from his early reflections on the nature of mind to his dissertation on true virtue which he completed at the end of his life.
[44] *The Mind,* no. 1, 332f.
[45] Ibid. Edwards essentially takes it for granted that others have already defined beauty/excellency properly by making it out to be "harmony, symmetry or proportion," but complains that these thinkers "have not yet explained it" because the definition of harmony itself requires an examination. (Ibid., 331) He seems to have in mind certain contemporaries, though an association between harmony and proportion goes back to Plato.

things): beauty in its truest form is an "infinitely exact and precise divine idea."[46] This archetypal beauty then communicates (gives being) in a coordinated and "stable" way to created minds, which establishes creation's status as a reflection of the "truest" beauty found in the Trinity.[47] This brings us back full circle to Edwards' earliest writings on the Trinity in which he insists that there must be a multiplicity in God:

> One alone, without any reference to any more, cannot be excellent; for in such a case there can be no manner of relation no way, and therefore, no such thing as consent….in a being that is absolutely without any plurality there cannot be excellency, for there can be no such thing as consent or agreement.[48]

In light of our examination of Edwards' Trinitarian doctrine in the previous chapter, we note the perichoretic implications of Edwards' language here regarding divine beauty. True beauty is a divine *idea*, a singular noun, yet beauty is defined as harmony between multiple individuals. Surely Edwards' Trinitarian formulation is lurking not too distantly in the background here. The Idea of God is the Son, in whom the fullness of the Triune communion dwells. All three Persons are seen "in" the Son, because the Father and the Spirit are both in the Son (just as the Father and Son are both in the Spirit and the Son and Spirit are both in the Father). So the *one* "divine idea" which Edwards says constitutes true beauty is in fact the Son who contains the fullness of deity (which includes the Father and the Spirit) within Himself, just as He also is contained in both the Father and the Spirit. The full beauty of the intra-Trinitarian harmony is contained in the divine idea of the Son.

This suggests a close association, if not an identification, between beauty and communication as together constituting the essence of the Godhead. The excellences of the divine nature amount to a proportional beauty within the Godhead. God's essence is to be proportioned in harmony with Himself, which requires multiplicity.[49] In his early explicitly Trinitarian writings Edwards had defined excellence in terms of the communicative exercise of God's own attributes. One alone cannot be excellent, because

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[46] *The Mind*, no. 1, 336.
[47] Ibid., nos. 13, 14; 343-4.
[48] *The Mind*, no. 1, 337 (cit. supra.: Chapter 1, §III.C). See also *Misc.* 117 (1723-4). Edwards uses "consent" and "agreement" as synonyms for beauty and proportionality, as he makes clear in the same section of *The Mind*.
[49] Of course, this multiplicity is of differentiated subsistences of the numerically one divine essence, not a plurality of deities.

excellence requires another to love excellently (and to reciprocate that love just as excellently); it requires another to whom the divine essence can be perfectly communicated.[50] Now we see in *The Mind* that excellence is beauty and proportion. The Father gives Himself completely to the Son and to the Spirit, constituting their own being as subsistent hypostases of the same numerical essence of the Father. This eternal constitution of the Son and the Spirit (i.e., eternal generation and eternal procession), and the accompanying communion of mutual indwelling of the three in one another, is a perfect activity of communication (deriving and giving being). Thus God's essence is to communicate beautifully, and the kind of beauty that comprises God's essence is a communicative beauty. One alone cannot be excellent, because excellence requires individuals existing together in a proportional harmony. To exist within such a harmonious arrangement is to communicate with the rest of its members.

This sort of harmonious existence, insofar as it is able to be replicated by finite creatures, is the divine purpose of the creation of the world, as God seeks to see His own glory or beauty reflected outside of Himself (*ad extra*). Thus, the Triune harmony is communicated to the creation, and so the creation is full of harmony in its own right. For Edwards, then, creational communication is neither emanation of being[51] nor is it a mere

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[50] *Misc.* 96 (1723; cit. supra.: Chapter 1, §III.C): "To be perfectly good, is to incline to and delight in making another happy in the same proportion as it is happy itself, that is, to delight as much in communicating happiness to another as in enjoying of it himself, and an inclination to communicate all his happiness… But no absolutely perfect being can be without absolutely perfect goodness, and no being can be perfectly happy which has not the exercise of that which he perfectly inclines to exercise; wherefore, God must have a perfect exercise of his goodness, and therefore must have the fellowship of a person equal with himself." Cf. *Misc.* 117 (1723-4; cit. supra.: Chapter 1, §III.C): "Then there must have been an object from all eternity which God infinitely loves." As we saw in the previous chapter, for Edwards this perfect communication of the divine essence in love in fact requires *two* others: the Son (the one loved) and the Spirit (the personification of the act of love itself).

[51] Edwards occasionally uses terms such as "emanation" (or, more rarely, "participation") alongside "communication" to describe various aspects of God's interaction with the created world. The question arises of which term(s) contextualizes the understanding of the others. For his part Ramsey goes on to weigh in with his own opinion that emanation is always "in the context of 'communication'" for Edwards (Ramsey, *End of Creation*, 433n.5), and the present author also finds this evaluation compelling. First, it is at least suggestive that Edwards uses "communication" far more frequently than "emanation" or "participation," especially when the variations are considered in context. Edwards almost always uses "communication" to describe the divine activity which creates the world itself. He occasionally describes creation as an emanation, but he never says that in creating God emanates.

Further, Edwards is clear (as we have seen) that no divine act towards the finite created world (including the original creation of that world itself) renders the world an extension of God's own essence, and he spells this out explicitly in the face of questions about his usage of "participation" terminology. A notable example is found in a letter in which Edwards responds to a person who was concerned about Edwards' interchangeable use of "communication" and "participation" in his work *On the Religious*

transfer of information between minds. It involves rather a kind of fundamental beauty or harmony; an inter-relationship between individual things that ends up constituting their essence. Communication is not a mere transfer of information because it is the very contextualizing structure in which such mental acts of transference can occur in the first place. To communicate with another is to be arranged in a proportional harmony with that other. This is what it means for God to be a communicative being, and it is why God in His excellence must contain multiplicity. He must know and be known by another, must love and be loved by another.

Creation is an act whereby God makes the world a reflection of His own nature, *in so far as that is possible*. The nature of God differs from created spirits in greatness of degree: "If we should suppose the faculties of a created spirit to be enlarged infinitely, there would be the Deity to all intents and purposes, the same simplicity, immutability, etc."[52] God's understanding, will, love, etc., exceed ours "in the perfection of degree and manner."[53] Even the grace that God infuses into His chosen people as a part of His redemptive activity in the world (a supernatural and "miraculous" work of divine action upon what are already the most glorified and beautiful of His creatures) is similar to God's holiness only "as much as it is possible for that to be, which is infinitely less in degree."[54] Still, Edwards speaks of this similarity as a similarity of "nature."[55] Interestingly (in light of our earlier examination of patristic formulations of the Trinity), Edwards uses sun and heat analogies to illustrate this similarity of nature, remarking that when the sun shines into a crystal, the crystal reflects light but does not itself become the sun:

Affections. The correspondent claims that Edwards thereby teaches that God communicates His "essence" to certain creatures (namely, the elect through the process of regeneration). Edwards responds that while God communicates His "nature" to the saints, this is not identical to His "essence." With the aid of the dictionary entry for "nature" as evidence that his usage of the term is allowable, Edwards clarifies that "by the Spirit of God's communicating himself in his proper nature, I mean communicating something of his holiness." ("Related Correspondence," 638) Edwards clarifies further by gently reminding his objector of something he had written in the very work that prompted the objector's concern: "And this explanation I am careful to give immediately in the place where I first use the expression. And then, further to explain myself, say that 'the grace which is in the hearts of the saints, is of the same nature with the divine holiness, *as much as it is possible for that to be, which is infinitely less in degree.*'"(Ibid., 638-9; emphasis added) Such language is entirely consistent with "emanation," understood as one being deriving its being from another. But the preferred language for this relationship remains language of "communication" in Edwards.

[52] *Misc.* 150 (1725).

[53] *Discourse on the Trinity,* 113.

[54] *On the Religious Affections,* 202**.**

[55] Ibid.

> Light and heat may in a special manner be said to be the proper nature of the sun; and yet none will say that everything to which the sun communicates a little of its light and heat has therefore communicated to it the essence of the sun, and is sunned with the sun, or becomes the same being with the sun, or becomes equal to that immense fountain of light and heat. A diamond or crystal that is held forth in the sun's beams may properly be said to have some of the suns' brightness communicated to it; for though it hasn't the same individual brightness with that which is inherent in the sun, and be immensely less in degree, yet it is something of the same nature.[56]

Here Edwards uses "same nature" in a generic way to describe two things whose essence or operations are similar but not identical (i.e., both the crystal and the sun give off light). This provides an important insight into what he means by "communication." Theologians have traditionally spoken of the communicable and the incommunicable attributes of God. Those attributes which are communicable are capable of being mirrored in human beings. So God's goodness is communicable, for instance, because human beings are moral creatures capable of living in a way that is also "good," though "infinitely less in degree."[57] Human beings are able to attain a certain kind of activity which is analogously similar to God's activity when it comes to "goodness." The two activities are of the "same nature," despite the infinite difference in degree of perfection between them. God's aseity, on the other hand, is an incommunicable attribute, in that there is *no* degree in which human (or any other) creatures are self-existing. Thus, communication is a process by which one thing is made to be a "similar nature" to something else. It is, again, not a mere transfer of information between minds, but a similarity of kind or type that holds between things.

All this seems sufficient to conclude that Edwards' creational communication is not emanation in the sense of an ontological repetition of the divine substance. Creation does not proceed "from" God in the way that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, for instance, an important point already entailed by Edwards' affirmation of *ex nihilo* creation. The Father's complete giving of His essence to the Son and to the Holy Spirit is the archetype of communication, but created communications reflect this only "as much as it is possible" to do so, which is "infinitely less in degree." Furthermore, that God is

[56] "Related Correspondence," 640. Cf. Claghorn, "Introduction to the 'Related Correspondence,'" in *Works* 8, 631-5.
[57] This clearly is the distinction Edwards has in mind in *Misc.* ww (1723) (cit. supra.: Chapter 1, §III.B).

infinitely harmonious (beautiful) and happy within Himself means that His decision to create cannot be done out of any need or necessity. Thus, the reflective beauty of the creation does not add to God's beauty or happiness in any sense. It is a creation out of nothing by which God acts to see His own already perfect and infinite beauty and happiness reflected outside of Himself. Since this is not necessary, it can only be gratuitous. Creation *ex nihilo*, as Augustine recognized, makes the cosmos always already a product of divine grace or gift.

Conceiving of God's end in creating the world as the result of His delight in seeing his own glory communicated resolves the logical problem that has vexed some theologians regarding why God would create when He is already perfectly glorious and happy in Himself (i.e., in His own *ad intra* Trinitarian existence and activity). The problem has been to explain somehow how a God who is already "infinite in perfection"[58] can come to create the world. Edwards' decision to frame the creation as an activity done out of delight provides the needed explanation because delight is a motivation removed from typical means-end interaction that characterizes other motivations. To delight in an end is to want to do that end gratuitously; it is to seek it as an end in itself but also one that does not need to be fulfilled. The gratuitous nature of delight is precisely what accounts for an infinitely perfect God choosing to create. (It also helps resolve some simple mistakes that are sometimes glossed over in discussions of whether or not it was "necessary" for God to create. God creates gratuitously; it is not something He needs to do. There is no necessity that attaches to God and forces Him to create. Yet God is, in His very nature, the kind of being who "does" things which are not necessary.[59] God is a God who does things that do not need to be done, simply out of delight. But this delight is of God's very nature, and so it is necessary. So God necessarily does what is not necessary.)[60]

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[58] *End of Creation,* 421.

[59] Of course, this is a vulgar manner of speaking, as truthfully God does not "do" anything at all distinct from being what He is. See below, §III.B.1.

[60] This might also be profitably construed as a demurral from dominant patterns of thinking about modalities. Rather than pinpointing a foundational metaphysical dichotomy between necessity and freedom (or necessity and gratuity, etc.), Augustinian-Edwardsian accounts of creation *ex nihilo* posit a compatibility or even similarity between the alleged antipodes. In God, we see that true freedom, true spontaneity of existence, is found only as an accompaniment to necessity/nature.

That creation must be gratuitous is a standard understanding of western theology, but Edwards helps support that understanding through his construal of the divine essence as a pure activity of delight. Delight makes sense of creation as an overflow out of the infinitude (fullness) of God. The fact that one's delight is already complete (full) is no impediment to a desire for repetition of the delight. Such is the nature of delight. Delight makes God one who acts spontaneously in the pursuit of that which delights Him.[61] When the perfect existence of God is so understood as delight, perfection and completeness no longer entail static existence, but a further exercise of that which is already perfect.[62]

B. Created Being as Beauty

Created being is the spontaneous and gratuitous reflection of God's being into a finite form. The divine being is the perichoretic beauty (inter-connection) of the Trinity, and so created being is likewise beautiful; it is a reflection in its own finite manner of the perfect and infinite divine beauty.[63] When seeking to understand the nature of created being, therefore, Edwards understands there to be two sorts of beautiful inter-connection that correspond to the second and third parts of beauty described above. (The first part of his theory of beauty, we recall, is the intra-Trinitarian beauty that serves as the archetype for all created being/beauty.) The world is a reflection of the harmony inherent to the

[61] It is impossible to pass up the opportunity to cite the literary expression of G.K. Chesterton here: "The sun rises every morning. I do not rise every morning; but the variation is due not to my activity, but to my inaction. Now, to put the matter in a popular phrase, it might be true that the sun rises regularly because he never gets tired of rising. His routine might be due, not to a lifelessness, but to a rush of life. The thing I mean can be seen, for instance, in children, when they find some game or joke that they specially enjoy. A child kicks his legs rhythmically through excess, not absence, of life. Because children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, "Do it again"; and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, 'Do it again' to the sun; and every evening, 'Do it again' to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we. The repetition in Nature may not be a mere recurrence; it may be a theatrical *encore*." See Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, (New York: Image Books, 1959), 60-1. (Emphasis in original)

[62] Creation is a further exercise of the perfect existence/activity of God, but not an expansion of it, as We shall see below, §II.D.

[63] A question that requires further discussion is why the created world *must* be finite. Given that it is ontologically distinct from and a gratuitous reflection of its Creator, why could it not still be co-eternal (even though wholly contingent)? This seems to be precluded by affirming that creation is *ex nihilo*, but how precisely that it is so for Edwards (or for others in the western tradition) demands greater examination.

Trinity, in which the three Persons exist within a communicative context (deriving and giving being) in which they are seen to exist in a proportional unity that involves their mutual inter-penetration. Thus, the entire created order is likewise (at least by design) a well-proportioned harmony of multiple things essentially related to one another (the second part of Edwards' aesthetic theory), and individual created things find their being in being located within this harmony (the third part of Edwards' theory).

We have just seen that this inter-relational beauty is one in which things are made to be *similar* to one another. Edwards asserts this explicitly in *The Mind*: "All beauty consists in similarness, or identity of relation…In identity of relation consists all likeness, and all identity between two consists in identity of relation."[64] To speak of excellence is to speak of beauty, or proportion; to speak of beauty is to speak of similarity; and to speak of similarity is to speak of a *relational* identity between things. Edwards' aesthetical ontology thus entails a relational ontology. (The being of created things consists at least partly in the relations they bear to other things.)

But why does "similarness" consist in identity of relation? Edwards argues that this sort of identity is the only way that the two things can maintain the duality that makes their comparison along with the accompanying verdict of similarity possible in the first place: "Two things can agree one with another in nothing else but relation; because otherwise the notion of their twoness (duality) is destroyed and they become one."[65] Edwards' claim seems to be as follows: beauty in the world cannot be explained by appealing to some property that is identifiable with a particular thing or things independently of any other kinds of things. If a triangle is a three-sided object, for instance, and this definition requires no reference to any non-triangles, then there is nothing beautiful about there being *two* triangles on a piece of paper, per se. There is only the *one* property or quality which both triangles possess (three-sidedness). This in itself does not provide the sort of beauty Edwards is interested in finding, as quotes such as that above indicate. For Edwards, beauty is more than countably distinct instantiations of a particular kind or quality. It is not beautiful per se to have two dogs sitting side by side. Beauty is, rather, a further sort of similarity between *multiple* things. To say that Rover

[64] *The Mind*, no. 1, 334.
[65] Ibid., 335.

and Ranger are both dogs is to name a similarity that grounds their multiplicity: they are each numerically distinct instantiations of the qualities or definition belonging to dogs. But for there to be any beauty between them they must not only be separate instantiations of "dogness" (to speak in an Aristotelian manner), but must then, in their separation, find a further sort of unity. The oneness provided by an entirely internally-referenced definition of "dog" is non-beautiful because there is, by definition, only one numerically referencable thing that fits that definition. There may be many dogs, but there is only one "dogness," and one alone cannot be excellent.

The identity between them that makes them similar, therefore, must lie in a relation they share. "Thus, when the distance between two is exactly equal, their distance is their relation one to another; *the distance* is the same, *the bodies* are two, wherefore this is their correspondency and beauty."[66] The "identity of relation" Edwards refers to is the one relation in which both the relata participate. He is not saying that the relations are identical in the sense that both relata are in the relation in precisely the same way. For instance, modern predicate logicians would not say that Barbara and Bob each possess an identical relational *property* when they are six feet from one another, because the relational property of each differs with respect to the other. Bob possesses the relational property of "being six feet from *Barbara*," while the relational property possessed by Barbara is "being six feet from *Bob*." But despite this difference in relational properties, there is *one* relation (not "relational property") that holds between Bob and Barbara.[67] This relation denotes a connection between two or more distinct entities.

That Edwards uses *distance* as an example indicates the ubiquitous nature of beauty for his cosmology (and thus its determinative role for being as such). If distance qualifies as an "identity of relation" between two things, then any two bodies are, by definition, in harmony with one another at least in this sense. And thus it would seem that any inter-relationality is beauty; any arrangement in which multiple things are included is beauty. More specifically, beauty becomes a category that overlaps precisely with

[66] Ibid., 334-5. (Emphases added)

[67] Predicate logic illustrates this by capitalizing the relation and syntactically allowing one capital letter per predicative unit: i.e., Sbb (Barbara is six feet from Bob), Tpj (Peter is taller than James), etc. There is one relation—six feet from, __ is taller than __, etc.—in which each of its constants (Barbara, Bob, Peter, James, etc.) participates. But this does not mean that each of the constants has an identical relational "property" with respect to their involvement in the one relation. Peter's role in the relationship means that he is taller than James, for instance, but James's role means that he is actually *shorter* than Peter.

relation itself. If beauty is similarity, and all similarity consists in an identity of relation as we have just described, then beauty simply *is* relation.

Not all such connections between entities are *essential*, though. Presumably, for instance, Barbara is not essentially six feet from Bob in Calculus. Yet the relation of distance does constitute a kind of beauty for Edwards, as the preceding quotation makes clear. How then is it not he case that all harmonies are not essential to the things included in their arrangements? How can we say that Barbara is *not* essentially six feet from Bob in Calculus? Similarity remains a complex subject in its own right. Edwards sees the need to elaborate on both "simple" and "complex" beauty, and this hierarchical structure provides the key to clarifying the relationship that he sees between being and beauty that we have discussed above, and thus to understanding his relational ontology.

Beauty is, most strictly, *equality* rather than proportion. "This simple equality, without proportion, is the lowest kind of beauty, and may be called simple beauty. All other beauties and excellencies may be resolved into it."[68] So then, beauty consists in any similarity/equality between things, but *being* consists in a particular *kind* of beauty that is more complex—proportion: "Being, if we examine narrowly, is *nothing else but proportion*."[69] Proportion consists in an "equality of ratios" and is thus "complex beauty."[70] If there are only two points of comparison, as in a simple relation of distance in which two objects (or two parts of an object) are a certain distance from one another, then there is not technically "proportion" between them (because there is not enough complexity in the comparison to make possible an equality of ratios), but only equality. This is simple beauty, and is the basic unit into which all complex beauty (proportion) is reducible.[71] Complex beauty, proportion (equality of ratios), requires an arrangement in which *more than two* distinct elements are arranged in some ordered way such that there is similarity. The first examples Edwards uses are materialistic and geometric.[72] He first uses the illustration of two line segments with proportional lengths; each segment has both a starting and an ending point, and so there are at least three elements in the arrangement (if the same point is the terminus of one segment and the genesis of the

[68] Ibid., 333.
[69] Ibid., 336. Emphasis added.
[70] Ibid., 334-5.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.

other, then there are three points A, B, C; if the segments do not connect in this way, then there are four points A, B, C, D). This is why the identity of relation in this case can move beyond a mere equality (as in the distance between A and B) into an equality of ratios, (the distance between A and B and between B and C, etc.) i.e., a proportion. He then uses an illustration based on shape; here the multiplicity that matters for classifying the beauty as simple or complex lies in the parts. The many parts of the two objects are arranged in an equal ratio of distance relative to one another. So, for example, the "corners" of two pentagons might be different distances from their respective centers because the two pentagons are different sizes, but each distance from center to corner is an equal ratio of the total distance around the pentagon. The ratio of center-corner distance to the perimeter is equal in both pentagons. Likewise, the ratio of the distance between two corners to the perimeter is equal in the two pentagons, etc. This is the first major division in Edwards' hierarchy of inter-relationality. *All* identities of relation, whether generic equalities or complex proportions, are genuine connections that create beauty. But only the complex form of such identity, namely proportion, is constitutive of being.

There is, however, an even more important level in Edwards' hierarchy of beauty. So far all the beauties, whether simple or complex, have involved identical relations between physical objects. This "material" beauty is only a shadow of the true beauty that exists in the world, which is "spiritual." It is the latter sort of proportion that constitutes the essence of all created things and finally provides the full explanation of Edwards' claim that being consists in "proportion." Only spirits have "being" in the most proper sense, and the source of their being is in their own identities of relation with other spirits that are themselves "shadowed" by the identities of relation that exist among material things.[73] It is the latter sort of beauty that is the entity-defining proportionality that marks Edwards' full-blown ontology.[74]

Beauty, again, requires multiplicity—it requires a *plurality* of things participating together in a relational connection. If such a relation is both complex (involving proportion and not merely equality) and spiritual (involving a relationship between non-

[73] *The Mind*, no. 1, no. 42; 333, 360.
[74] For a largely parallel discussion of Edwards' understanding of beauty and being, see Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 6, 81f.

material things) in nature, it ends up serving as one of the defining elements of individual entities and their kinds. Thus Edwards' ontology is best understood in light of the way in which *spiritual/ideal* entities (which are the only true entities, as bodies also are ideal in nature) exist in relational dependence upon one another.[75]

Edwards thus brings together his Trinitarian and his ontological reflections by rendering the relational nature of created being not only as a matter of aesthetics but of communication. His aesthetic-relational ontology is also a communicative ontology. Communication (as we have seen) is that act motivated by delight in another (at least in the case of the ultimate source of the communication, if not necessarily in the recipients) whereby seemingly disparate things are made to exist as similar natures as one thing communicates its nature to another.[76] It is an archetypal form of this communication that constitutes the essence of the triune God of Christianity, as the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit are understood under a psychological analogy in which all three of the soul's "faculties" interpenetrate and mutually constitute the being of the other. In giving a reflection of His being to the world, God "knows" the

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[75] It is not altogether clear what is the precise relationship between this relational inter-dependence of spiritual/ideal entities and Edwards' early axiom recorded in his natural philosophy notebooks that to be is to be known. He expresses that axiom, for instance, in *Of Being*, 204:

> Yea, it is really impossible it should be, that anything should be, and nothing know it. Then you'll say, if it be so, it is because nothing has any existence anywhere else but in consciousness. No, certainly nowhere else, but either in created or uncreated consciousness….Let us suppose for illustration this impossibility, that all the spirits in the universe to be for a time deprived of their consciousness, and God's consciousness at the same time to be intermitted. I say, the universe for that time would cease to be, of itself; and not only, as we speak, because the Almighty could not attend to uphold the world, but because God knew nothing of it.

Clearly the direct context here indicates that created things exist only as known by *God*. Yet formulating the being of things in terms of a mental operation (knowing) is at least suggestive of the Idea/Knowledge language he uses to describe the Son within the Intra-Trinitarian relations and of the communicative language he uses to describe all being generally. Things exist *as known* by other things (God first and foremost) because things are situated within a larger communicative structure in which they have their own being communicated to them by God and by their relational inter-dependence on other created things. Thus, we might reason (and other commentators such as Anderson have indeed made much of the knowledge axiom), Edwards uses similar language as that found in the psychological analogy for the Triune intra-relations to describe created being: created being is a kind of knowledge. To be is to be known. Just as the Son is the perfect Idea of the Father, the Father's communication of Himself to another (and also by a similar extension the Holy Spirit is the mutual love of Father and Son), so the created world is constituted by its being known by God, by its being a (finite) self-communication of God.

[76] "Not necessarily in the recipients" because the recipients of God's communicative creational activity are corrupted from their original purpose due to sin, and thus can only be brought back to a delightful existence focused on an Other (Creator) through a restoration and redemption. It remains the ultimate *telos* of cosmological history that this redemption will occur, however, and thus eventually the entire created order will be brought back into its proper existence as full delight in harmonious inter-relation with another.

world and the world comes into being *as* a reflection of God's being. Created being is always dependent on this reflective aspect of its existence as part of its constitution as entity. It is this emphasis on inter-dependence among created things, rather than on an alleged independence, that most starkly separates Edwards from more Aristotelian notions of being.

C. New Content for Old Categories: Edwards, Aristotle, and Descartes

It is common for interpreters of early modern philosophy to say that the thought of this period is characterized in large measure by a self-conscious rejection of Aristotelian (and, via Aristotle, Scholastic) metaphysics. In particular, with few exceptions early modern philosophers from Descartes to Hume sought to rid the world of any "occult" powers or properties within material bodies that account for the changes they undergo and for their observed behavior in the world.[77] Although these philosophers retained the Aristotelian notion of an internal substance that constitutes the ontological identity of a thing (i.e., that by which a thing exists as the kind of thing that it is), they deemed (again, with a few exceptions) this substance to be entirely passive. On this basis these philosophers advocated a new science in which matter moves only when influenced from without, either when contacted directly by other matter (e.g., Descartes, Malebranche) or under the influence of gravitational forces (e.g., Newton). This mechanistic physics was accepted as being at the very least instrumentally useful for predicting and explaining the physical phenomena of the universe,[78] even if the true nature of those phenomena were not available to human understanding. In fact most early modern philosophers (especially those on the Continent who followed Descartes in one way or another) used God to account for the way entities (both bodies and minds) interact with one another, as it seemed impossible (due to their inherent passivity) that they could do so on their own. Still, God acts in a patterned and predictable way when He causes these interactions, which is why the mechanistic physics remains useful for understanding and predicting those interactions. Much of the philosophy of the early modern period thus

[77] In fact this exorcism was often extended beyond material bodies to all finite substances, whether material or immaterial (as in Malebranche, for instance).

[78] Or, as Richard Watson puts it, the new physics was instrumental for "prediction and postdiction" of those phenomena. Watson, "Malebranche, Models, and Causation," in *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy*, (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1993), 87.

comes to be dominated by puzzles related to (efficient) causation as it pertains to interaction between individual things (body-body interaction, mind-body interaction, mind-mind interaction).[79]

Edwards does not properly fit into this characterization at all. He is not preoccupied with questions about interaction between things. Like his peers he takes the new scientific methods for understanding and predicting the observed interactions among physical bodies as instrumentally useful and he enthusiastically tries his hand at various scientific projects.[80] Unlike most of his contemporaries, though, Edwards seems almost to take the legitimacy of the new scientific understanding for granted, as something settled for him by early reflections on first principles.[81] Furthermore, Edwards devotes no time whatsoever to any sort of discussion of causal interaction as a problem that needs to be solved. He spends no energy at all trying to explain how these observed interactions between bodies carry over to interactions between bodies and non-material things like minds, or to interactions entirely between minds. Edwards has no need to reflect on such alleged problems because his own metaphysical preoccupations render moot the early modern discursive practices that created the problems in the first place.

To understand what those metaphysical preoccupations are, we have to look not only at the early modern thinkers with whose legacy Edwards was most directly interacting (such as Descartes), but at the original source against whom those thinkers are reacting. Therefore, we must look at Aristotle, whose own approach to understanding the essences of things must be understood in order to grasp the way in which early moderns modified that approach, and in order to grasp the way in which Edwards differs radically from both the original view and the modification.

In the *Categories*, Aristotle seeks to taxonomize predication as a means of understanding ontology. The ten categories are categories of "being," of ways in which things may be *said* "to be" via predication (i.e., statements in which Y is predicated of X: the ten categories are the ten kinds of things that can stand in for "X"). Individuals or things that have "the character of a unity" can only be subjects of predication, never

[79] See Garber's discussion in "Introduction" to *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy*, passim.
[80] See the scientific papers and reflections of Edwards found in *Works* 6 ("Scientific and Philosophical Writings"), particularly his "Spider Paper" and "On the Rainbow."
[81] See Anderson's discussion, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works 6*, 37-52.

predicates. So Aristotle's examples of an individual man or horse, or a particular point of grammatical knowledge or a particular shade of whiteness, are things which can never serve as predicates but only as subjects of predication.[82] When these subjects are also incapable of being "in a subject"—i.e., they can exist "apart from the said subject"—then they are said to be "substances."[83] So, in the examples above, an individual horse or man is a substance, but this is not true of a particular point of grammatical knowledge (as mind is a necessary condition for any particular point of knowledge to exist) or of a particular shade of whiteness (as body is a necessary condition for any particular shade of color to exist). In addition to these substances, other terms may also be said to refer to "secondary substances" because they "appropriately define" the primary substance.[84] For instance, in the statement "Aristotle is a man," "man" refers to a secondary substance which defines the primary substance "Aristotle" in virtue of the latter being a member of the class represented by the former. For Aristotle, only these classifications according to genera and species can serve as such "secondary substances" and define a primary substance. The things denoted by the other nine categories—including quality, quantity, location, time, and *relation*—are "*irrelevant* to the definition."[85]

After discussing several of these non-substantial categories as subclasses of quantity, Aristotle considers relation at length.[86] He is unequivocal that substances receive nothing of their constitution or definition from relation:

> With regard to primary substances, it is quite true that there is no such possibility [of the substance being relative], for neither wholes nor parts of

[82] Aristotle, *Categories*, § I Pt. 2, 1a16-18.
[83] Ibid., also § I Pt. 5, 2a13f.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid. Emphasis added. The full list of categories are substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state, action, or affection. See *Categories*, § I Pt. 4, 1b25-27. "Position" seems to refer to any particular arrangement of a thing's parts (Aristotle's examples are "lying" and "sitting"), and so would include what modern philosophers refer to as shape. "State" refers to things signified by past participles, such as "armed." "Affection" refers to states of affairs signified by passive voice verbs in the present tense, such as "to be cauterized."
[86] Aristotle includes relation as a category of quantity, and he subordinates quantity to quality ontologically. Some contemporary thinkers (such as F. LeRon Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn in Relationality*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 12-15) make much of this in constructing an intellectual history of the alleged contemporary "turn" towards relationality. Shults, for instance, stresses the Enlightenment's elevation of the particular and quantitative over the general and qualitative as a key aspect of a turn towards relationality based on Aristotle's association of relation with quantity. Whether or not this history of relationality is accurate, Edwards' move towards a relational ontology has little to do with a quality/quantity distinction.

> primary substances are relative. The individual man or ox is not *defined with reference to something external*. Similarly with the parts: a particular hand or head is not defined as a particular hand or head of a particular person, but as the hand or head of a particular person.[87]

So the distinction is fine enough to hang on whether a description is definite or indefinite (i.e., "the head of Aristotle" is not relative but "a head of Aristotle" or "a head of someone" would be).[88] Still, the definition is clear: substances are not defined with reference to anything that is "external" to the thing itself.[89] This remains just as true for secondary substances as well: "the species 'man' and the species 'ox' are not defined with reference to anything outside themselves. Wood, again, is only relative in so far as it is some one's property, not in so far as it is wood."[90] The definition of "wood," thus, has nothing to do with any of its relational properties, such as its being owned by so-and-so. The complete definition of a relational property, therefore, is those properties for which "relation to an external object is a necessary condition of existence."[91] Thus, Aristotle re-affirms that "no substance is relative in character."[92] Substances are defined by that which is "internal" to them, not that which is external; but relations are necessarily associated with some object external to the substance. So, it is clear that for Aristotle the substance (and definition) of a thing makes no use of *any* of its relational properties.

Aristotle treats ontology, then, as a study of substances and their properties. The "things" or entities with "the character of unity" that exist in the world—horses, men, heavenly spheres—are substances and the properties of substances, and the fundamental question involved in understanding the natures of substances is to find the way that they are independent from other things. The fundamental question of ontology is the elucidation of the principle and degree of independence that is possessed by various things. If a thing is independent of all other things, if it is capable of existence "apart

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[87] *Categories*, § II Pt. 7, 8a16f. Emphasis added.
[88] The property of being "a 4th item in a row" is a relative property, but "the 4th duck from the left" refers to a particular duck in the row of ducks that is swimming by at this very moment. It thus refers to a primary substance on Aristotle's terminology.
[89] This same sentiment is also found in Locke, who says that real Essences are "that particular constitution, which every Thing has within it self, *without any relation to any thing without it*." See Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. III, Chap. VI, §6: in *Essay*, Peter H. Niddich, ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 442 (Emphasis added).
[90] *Categories*, § II Pt. 7, 8a33-36.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., 8a80.

from the existence of" any other subject of predication, then it is a substance. If a thing is instead dependent upon something else for its existence, if it is "in" a subject, then it is a property of some other thing that is a substance. For example, Plato is a substance and so he is capable of existence apart from Ariston, and likewise the quality of "being a man" is capable of existence apart from Ariston. But the quality of "being the son of Ariston" is not capable of existence without Ariston also existing, and so therefore, for Aristotle, being a man is a substantive property of Plato, while being the son of Ariston is only a relational (non-substantive) property.

Edwards offers a radically different picture of being than that presented in this Aristotelian picture. For Edwards, being is beauty, and beauty is any harmony or proportion that exists between individuals. The proportionality among created things is a reflection of the harmony in the Godhead in the double sense that the entire creation is possessed with a structure of communication in which things inter-relate in a way that is harmonious and proportional and each individual thing consists of a place in this structure (all things that have being, all entities, are in a beautiful arrangement with other things). This is what it means to be, for being is beauty. Thus, Edwards thinks that the nature of things is discovered not by figuring out what is independent from what, but rather from reflection and elucidation of the principle and degree of inter-relational *dependence* of things. Relational *inter*-dependence, not substantial *independence*, is the fundamental question of ontology for Edwards.

In fact, Edwards rarely speaks of "substances" at all, preferring to use the language more directly (and etymologically) related to being: "being," "entity," etc. When he does use the term "substance," it is usually in a small but famous group of passages (that we have already seen) in which he *denies* that creatures are substances. This denial builds off of an earlier modification of Aristotle that is very common in western thought, but also goes beyond it. Certainly the entire Christian tradition (and western monotheism in general) holds that God alone has the property of aseity (self-existence), and so under Aristotle's definition none of his Scholastic interpreters could agree that anything other than God is, strictly speaking, a substance. Descartes continues the pattern, arguing that only God is "true substance" but that there are also "finite substances" which exist independently of anything other than God:

> By substance we can understand nothing other than a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence. And there is only one substance, which can be understood to depend on no other thing whatsoever, namely God. In the case of all other substances, we perceive that they can exist only with the help of God's concurrence.[93]

This modification remains part of an ontology that is broadly "Aristotelian," though: things in the created world are substances with respect to other created substances if they are capable of existing without any other of the created substances. Independence remains the object of investigation into the nature of created things and the guide to their classification. Whereas Aristotle insists that entities be defined without reference to any relational properties (i.e., properties whose existence necessarily depends on something external to the substance), Edwards makes "properties" of just this sort—qualities of an entity whose existence *depends* on something other than the entity—constitutive of being itself. (For what is beauty but an arrangement which confers such qualities upon its relata?)

What is intriguing and surprising about Edwards' ontology, then, is that he locates the essential being of things in their relations to other things.[94] He would challenge not only Aristotle's substantialist account but even Descartes' modified notion of "finite" substance, for the dependence of created things is not simply on God but on *other* created things. Created things cannot be substances even in the finite sense spoken of by Descartes and others, because all created things are dependent upon other created things for their existence (via their harmonious interconnections with those other things). Therefore, created things or entities are not substances *at all.* But this is not to deny that there is such a thing as substance, but to assert that the only being who can be such a thing is God. We look again at one of the passages in which Edwards asserts this explicitly:

> The reason why it is so exceedingly natural to me to suppose that there is some latent substance, or something that is altogether hid, that upholds the properties of bodies, is because all see at first sight that the properties of

[93] See Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, Pt. I art. 51, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. I, John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dougald Murdoch, trs., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 210.

[94] This is "intriguing and surprising" when Aristotle is taken to be the dominant figure determining early modern modes of thinking about substance, unity, etc. This is not to deny that an inherent inter-relationality among created things can be found in other major classical sources such as Plato.

> bodies are such as need some cause that shall every moment have influence to their continuance, as well as a cause of their first existence. All therefore agree that there is something that is there, and upholds these properties; and it is most true, there undoubtedly is. But men are wont to content themselves in saying merely that it is something; but that "something" is he by whom all things consist.[95]

Here Edwards restricts these comments to bodies, but elsewhere expands the notion to all created things, as bodies and minds alike are all "comprehended" in God[96] and thus God is the "only" true substance, and this is why theologians and philosophers have called Him *ens entium*.[97] With Descartes, then, Edwards holds that God is the only true substance. Against Descartes, though, Edwards holds that God is the only substance in *any* proper sense. Created things are not substances because they are in no way independent of other things, not even of other created things.

There are individual entities in the created world. Those entities cannot exist without other created entities (nor can they do so, of course, without God), but this does not preclude them from being entities that can be discerned and analyzed in distinction from other things. Ontology seeks understanding of the nature of these entities. The Edwardsian move away from Aristotle is that these entities are not definable in a way that takes no account of connections to other entities. Entities are essentially relational—they include relational properties (to speak in traditional language that Edwards sometimes but rarely uses) which cannot exist apart from "an external object."[98]

Edwards takes the desk in front of him as a genuine individual, or as a thing that has "the character of unity." In the language with which Aristotle opens in the *Categories,* the desk is not predicable of a subject—i.e., there is no meaningful and syntactically correct sentence we can utter of the form "X is the desk" where the copula is used to predicate (rather than to identify as it does in "The closest object to my window is the desk.") However, the desk does not maintain its own existence—it does not possess a principle that "subsist[s] by itself, and [stands] underneath and [keeps] up solidity and all other properties" of the desk. That power to subsist comes only and directly from God. Thus, Edwards denies that the desk is a substance because it is not relationally

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[95] *The Mind,* no. 61, 380. Cf. *Of Atoms,* 215 (cit. supra.).
[96] *Misc.* 697 (1734; cit. supra.).
[97] *Of Atoms,* 215 (cit. supra.).
[98] Aristotle, *Categories,* §II. 7 (cit. supra.).

independent of either God or other created entities. Yet the desk is not an arbitrary construction of the mind, either—the properties that are perceived to go together when we see the desk are closely connected in the very nature of things.

The world is still full of individual things, or things that "have the character of a unity" as entities distinct from other entities. However, their characterization as substances, and the historical task of the metaphysician as one who seeks out the principle of independence that sets them apart as such, receives a complete overhaul. It is no longer possible to define entities chiefly in terms of "internal" properties or as independent things. Instead, to understand properly the existence of individual things and their various kinds, the metaphysician must consider their relational dependence on other entities.

D. Reflection Not Expansion

Before turning to a fuller discussion of how Edwards should be located within early modern thought, we now have all the pieces in place that we need to examine a widely influential interpretation given to Edwards by several theological commentators. Following the foundational work of Sang Hyun Lee, this reading argues that Edwards construes God's essence as a disposition (*habitus*) always prone to self-expansion. This construction of Edwards' philosophical theology thus recognizes that Edwards re-evaluates ontology in a way that elevates relationality to a new position it had generally not seen in Aristotelian philosophy, and it represents a particular characterization of the nature of that relational ontology as dispositional. Lee develops three implications of claiming that God is dispositional, which are summed up by Stephen Holmes as follows:

> First it means that God's existence is pure activity: 'God…does not first exist and then know and love, but rather he exists in and through knowing and loving' (183). Second, in that disposition is 'a law of relations', for God to be dispositional implies 'the inherent relationality of the divine being' (184). Finally, for God to be dispositional demands that 'God is inherently a tendency towards an increase or enlargement of God's own being' (184). [99]

[99] Holmes, "Does Jonathan Edwards Use a Dispositional Ontology?," 106. The parenthetical citations are to page numbers in Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards.*

Holmes points out correctly that classical Christian theism has "no real problems in affirming the first two of these points…while the third is the crux of the matter."[100] We have already seen ample evidence that Edwards affirms the first two points. Certainly and undeniably, Edwards takes God to be *actus purus* and he construes the divine being as inherently relational (via his appropriation of the patristic doctrine of the perichoretic communion of the three Persons). It is the third point that makes Lee's interpretation of Edwards' relational ontology a *dispositional* one. Holmes criticizes Lee's position at this point primarily for failing (and being unable) to account for the historically non-negotiable orthodox Christian distinction between God's activity *ad intra* and His activity *ad extra* (a distinction which, we remind the reader, is a subset of the larger distinction between Creator and creature). We have already discussed at some length Edwards' unequivocal affirmation of this distinction, despite the concerns and hedges of some who have read him. It bears mentioning again here, though, for it reveals a fundamental problem with Lee's interpretation that Edwards renders God a disposition to self-expansion. In the opening chapter of *The End for Which God Created the World,* Edwards explicitly denies any change in God*:*

> No notion of God's last end in the creation of the world is agreeable to reason which would truly imply or infer any indigence, insufficiency and mutability in God; or any dependence of the Creator on the creature, for any part of his perfection or happiness. Because…God is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably, and independently glorious and happy… he stands in no need of, cannot be profited by, or receive anything from the creature; or be truly hurt, or be the subject of any sufferings or *impair* of his glory and felicity from any other being.[101]

For Edwards such dependence of the Creator on the creation for being, perfection, or happiness would undermine the very doctrine of creation itself, which "implies a being's receiving its existence, and all that belongs to its being, out of nothing." Therefore "how is it possible that it should have anything to add to God, to make him in any respect more than he was before, and so the Creator become dependent upon the creature?"[102]

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[100] Ibid.
[101] *The End for Which God Created the World*, 420. Hereafter this work will be referenced simply as "End of Creation."
[102] Ibid.

We must side with Holmes against Lee regarding these textual and historical difficulties, but we can also take the criticism further. It is not simply that Lee's interpretation is implausible because it would—if accurate—require Edwards to depart radically from traditional orthodoxy concerning the doctrine of creation, which we know for other reasons that he would be loathe to do. That is certainly true, but we are not left (in this case) to resort to such probabilistic arguments only. Nor are we limited to arguing that Edwards never explicitly affirms Lee's thesis (an argument from silence). Rather, Edwards explicitly *rejects* Lee's interpretation of God as a disposition towards self-expansion. He does so, in fact, while reflecting on the very distinction between Creator and creature cited above from *End of Creation.* In the next passage, he points out that an implication of God's independence from the creation is that God can never act with the end of creating, enhancing, or otherwise changing his existence or his infinite perfection:

> For it may be supposed that some things, which are valuable and excellent in themselves, are not properly capable of being attained in any divine operation; because they do not remain to be attained; but their existence in all possible respects must be conceived of as prior to any divine operation. Thus God's existence and infinite perfection, though infinitely valuable in themselves, and infinitely valued by God, yet can't be supposed to be the end of any divine operation. For we can't conceive of them as in any respect consequent on any works of God.[103]

God's being and his character are already infinitely perfect and He is already "independently glorious and happy."[104] So, there can be no change in these things as a result of *anything* that God does ("any divine operation"), and this would include His creative operations.[105] Thus, there can be no "self-enlargement" of God through His operations (acts), for there is no change to God's being that is possible. His operations can neither aim towards nor accomplish such an end.[106] God may be a disposition to act in some other way, but self-enlargement is the wrong characterization of that activity. Yet, that is the characterization that is central to Lee's thesis.

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[103] *End of Creation*, 421.
[104] Ibid.
[105] See *Misc*. 94 (1723) (cit. supra.), where Edwards argues that God has no succession. See also *The Mind*, no. 40, 356-7, where he argues that all ideas (even uncreated ideas: ideas that do not exist in any finite minds) are present in God equally before and after He creates.
[106] That the latter is the case is not spelled out by Edwards in this passage, probably because the argument is so straightforward that he doesn't deem it worth mentioning. Clearly, since God is both all-knowing and all-powerful, then nothing will result from His creative act that He does not Himself pursue as an ultimate end.

Furthermore, Lee's characterization also clashes with Edwards' own way of speaking about the creational reflection of God's glory. Even if we limit those reflections of God's dispositional nature to human wills as the apex of creation that mirror God's own being in a special way, human beings are not created to be "self-expansive." For Lee, God is a disposition to self-expansion, and therefore so are human beings as created dispositions that reflect the divine disposition. This is not the goal of human will for Edwards. Rather, human beings are (if elect) dispositions to delight in the chief and ultimate good of the cosmos. (If not elect, they are dispositions to botch this setup by delighting in lesser things.) The purpose of human will is benevolence: to delight in ends other than one's own well-being and to cultivate a disposition that acts as and "is becoming of" those who so delight.[107] The net result of this delight is that we end up becoming happy because we serve our own ultimate best interest, of course; and it brings us happiness to serve other ends than our own well-being since we delight to do so.[108] But the fact remains that for a good human will disposition is not a lawlike tendency towards *self*-expansion but towards the fulfillment of an end that is necessarily *other* than itself. Whether taken as ontological or ethical in nature, this is not a self-expansionist activity.[109] The commonality between the dispositional nature of the good human will and the dispositional nature of God's will which it is created to reflect is two-fold: it is characterized by delight, and that in which it delights is the highest end of creation. Further, this commonality still allows for a clear distinction between Creator and creature, or between *ad intra* and *ad extra* divine activity. For when God delights in fulfilling the highest end for which He created the world, He is delighting in the communication of His own glory and derivatively is delighting in the good of another. When a human will so delights, though, it is delighting in seeing God's glory (the glory of another) communicated, and is delighting in its own glory that results from such

[107] This is a gloss on Edwards' main argument in *The Nature of True Virtue.* "As it becomes" is a common expression Edwards uses to describe dispositions. See for example his sermon series *Charity and Its Fruits: Sermon Six*, 232-251.
[108] *Charity and Its Fruits*, 254; *End of Creation*, 412; *Nature of True Virtue*, 550-60, 575-588.
[109] Just the opposite, in fact. As the New Testament says, he who would be great must become a servant (Matthew 23:11).

communication only derivatively.[110] Thus, the distinction between the Creator and the creature is maintained.

Lee is right to see "disposition" in Edwards; he misconstrues the nature of disposition as Edwards conceives it. The source of the trouble seems to be that Lee focuses without sufficient warrant on a particular subset of terms that Edwards uses in his reconstruction of ontology: "disposition" and "habit." Why read so much into those particular terms? What about the other concepts Edwards invokes in his writings, such as communication, emanation, reflection, imaging, etc? Of course, Lee does not ignore this language; he impressively attempts an integration of all of it under the more fundamental category of habit or disposition. But that is the question we are trying to answer: is disposition fundamental for Edwards? Does his disposition language control the meaning of his communicative, emanative, and reflective language, or is it the other way around?

For instance, why not classify Edwards' relational ontology as perichoretic? This would allow Edwards' use of terms like "communication" to contextualize his use of "disposition" or "habit." Perichoresis, as we have seen, is an inter-communicating activity (i.e., mutually indwelling inter-communication of being from one to another) that contextualizes the concept of disposition, rendering it not self-expansion but as a self-giving. Things are disposed (they contain certain lawlike powers or habits) to communicate their being to other things, finding their own substance in their power to communicate in that way and thus placing them in a necessary relation of similarity to that to which they have communicated. This way of understanding "disposition" does not require any sort of self-expansion regarding the divine activity *ad extra*. In fact, even *ad intra*, the divine activity *can* be understood as a self-expansion on the part of the Father (who generates a repetition of Himself in the Son and processes the same in the Spirit). But this is a *personal* relation pertaining only to the Father, not to deity *in se* (for the Father alone is unoriginated and communicates His being to the Son and to the Spirit). Even in the Godhead, the communication of being does not "self-expand" the Father, but rather produces repetitions (the Son and the Holy Spirit) who are distinct personal

[110] By "derivatively" I refer to a logical distinction only. With God, the end of human happiness and the end of seeing His own glory reflected are justly "esteemed as so much one that it may be supposed to be aimed at and sought, not with a distinct and separate, but an undivided respect." (*End of Creation,* 535). Yet it is also the case that God does not make the creature his ultimate end, despite this confluence. (Ibid, cf. *End of Creation,* 458f.)

subsistences. When the Father generates the Son, the Father does not change nor is the "result" two Fathers. Instead, there is another divine Person, who shares the same identical essence of the Father but with a different relational subsistence. The Father gives Himself to the Son; He does not "expand" (as Father). The Son is distinct from the Father; they are two separate individuals who exist together in a relationship of love from all eternity.

This brings us back to the problem discussed above with Lee's account, that it collapses the distinction between *ad intra* and *ad extra* divine activities. By construing the nature of divinity as a disposition to self-expansion rather than as a disposition to mutual inter-relationality (and self giving via communication of being), Lee certainly gives a sufficient reason for God to create the world, but undercuts our ability to distinguish that creation from the *ad intra* acts of the Triune persons. Again, a close account of Edwards' usage of words is the remedy. Lee is right to say in commenting on the end of the first chapter of *End of Creation* that "Edwards tells us that the same divine disposition that is fully exercised within God's internal actuality was disposed to be exercised also *ad extra*…in the creation of the world."[111] But this does not tell us how God's internal activity is different from His external activity, how the creature is different from the Creator. Let us consider that passage from *Concerning the End* more closely. Answering the objection that for God to take Himself as the highest end of creation is an ignoble and selfish picture of God's character, Edwards writes that:

> It is a regard to himself that disposes him to diffuse and communicate himself. It is such a delight in his own internal fullness and glory, that disposes him to an abundant effusion and emanation of that glory. The same disposition that inclines him to delight in his glory causes him to delight in the exhibitions, expressions and communications of it.[112]

Again we remind ourselves of the earlier discussion of Edwards' use of the terms "emanation" and "communication."[113] The former term is always contextualized by the latter. Out of sheer delight God spontaneously and gratuitously decides to create a world external to Himself which reflects His communicable attributes, in particular His perfect beauty and happiness. These communicable attributes of God are communicated into

[111] Ibid., 9.
[112] *End of Creation*, 452.
[113] See above, §II.A.

created things so that the cosmos can also be a harmonious proportion of seemingly disparate things that turn out to exist in relations of similitude.

So Edwards conceives of the communication that constitutes the universe as diffusive and reflectionary rather than as self-enlargement. The communication of God's glory that takes place in the created world is a "diffusion" of the glory that is in the Godhead.[114] "Diffusion" is the language the Church Fathers used to describe the theotic transformation of redeemed humanity into a divine image. It does not make a person divine, but makes them as much like God as a creature can possibly be.[115] The distinction between Creator and Creature, between God's works *ad intra* and *ad extra*, is historically frontloaded into the term "diffusion" that Edwards uses. More conclusively, we have seen above that Edwards does in fact maintain the historical view implied by his use of this term and explicitly rejects any notion that God is a disposition towards acts of self-enlargement.

III. **Philosophical Implications of Relational Ontology**

A. Relational Ontology and Early Modern Philosophy

In contemporary theology the Trinity's ability to ground a relational ontology is seen clearly and discussed. It is the basis upon which Reformed-Calvinistic theologians such as Peter Leithart can now say more explicitly things like the following:

> If we are hard atoms of human stuff, then changing the network of relations in which we live has little effect on us. We still are what we are what we are. But if we are open-ended beings, incomplete in ourselves and complete only in fellowship with others (and ultimately Others), then changing our network of connections and becoming part of a new network is a radical change in identity, character, person. If our being is communion, then extraction from one communion and insertion into another is a change in our being. It is a new birth.[116]

Edwards stands in the early modern period as one of the first, not only in the Reformed tradition but in the western philosophical tradition generally, to offer such an ontology as

[114] Ibid.
[115] Though even this level of similarity is interrupted and corrupted by sin, again pointing to the necessity of redemption.
[116] Peter Leithart, *The Baptized Body* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2007), 80.

an alternative to Aristotle.[117] Even among contemporaries who were launching zealous assaults on Aristotelian and Scholastic philosophy, Edwards' relational reconstruction of ontology stands out as unique. Some might challenge this claim of uniqueness, however; let us consider it further.

For instance, Miller and others have understood the extent of Edwards' genius to be his ability to utilize older modes of thought (e.g., biblical theology) as buttresses for Enlightenment philosophical developments that were producing this new science.[118] But this view is largely in disrepute today, as it seems to fail to do dialectical justice to Edwards' clear emphasis on metaphysics and ontology in his writings.[119] Lee resurrects a Lockean-Newtonian[120] influence thesis by arguing that the new science represents a shift towards relational ontology in its own right. According to Lee's reading of the history,

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[117] Again, many see fundamental relationality in Plato's conception of ontology. To the extent that this is a proper reading of Plato, Edwards becomes more of a repristinator of this "Platonic" tradition than a pioneer of a new approach. He remains unique for incorporating relational insights so early compared to others of his era.

[118] See Perry Miller, "Edwards, Locke, and the Rhetoric of Sensation," in William J. Scheick, ed., *Critical Essays on Jonathan Edwards* (Boston: GK Hall, 1981), 120-135; also Miller's editorial introduction to *Images or Shadows of Divine Things*. Also see Michael Colacurcio, "The Example of Edwards: Idealist Imagination and the Metaphysics of Sovereignty", in Emory Elliot, ed., *Puritan Influences in American Literature* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 55-106; Leon Chai, *Jonathan Edwards and the Limits of Enlightenment Philosophy*.

[119] For instance, David Brand, *Profile of the Last Puritan: Jonathan Edwards, Self-Love, and the Dawn of the Beatific*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 43, characterizes Perry Miller's Lockean-influence hypothesis as a "gross distortion." Miller, he claims, "let his imagination run wildly, depicting Edwards as a sensationist who was thoroughly committed to Lockean principles of empirical psychology." And Fiering is equally declamatory of any substantive Lockean influence upon Edwards: "That Edwards studied Locke's *Essay* closely, was stimulated by it, and learned from it is not at issue. But the notion that the *Essay* played a key functional role in the development of Edwards's metaphysics is not sustainable." See Fiering, "The Rationalist Foundations of Jonathan Edwards's Metaphysics," in Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout, eds., *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 92. Cf. Paul Copan, "Edwards' Influences: Lockean or Malebranchean?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44 (March 2001): 123.

Other more recent scholars have posited Locke and Newton as heavy "influences" upon Edwards' thought who are always present even when he deviates from their postulations. See Paul Helm, "John Locke and Jonathan Edwards: A Reconsideration," in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 7 (1969): 51. Helm qualifies the connection between Locke and Edwards substantially: "…this undoubted influence is subject to important qualifications. Edwards was not an empiricist, and it is too much to say that his philosophy was Locke-inspired; he draws on arguments from 'the new way of ideas' only when these serve his wider aims." If Edwards only draws on Locke when he serves some wider aim that Edwards has, then the question is entirely open as to how often that correspondence between Locke and his wider aims actually occurs. Clearly Edwards might hardly be a Lockean at all, yet still draw on Locke in just this way depending on the circumstances. Also see Stephen J. Yarbrough, "Jonathan Edwards on Rhetorical Authority," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47(1986): 395-408.

[120] Locke and Newton are here grouped together as co-agitators for a view of the world which includes corpuscular interaction between bodies, a representationalist understanding of ideas of those bodies, and an "empiricist" rejection of innate ideas in the mind.

this new physics was already challenging Aristotelian notions of substance and was replacing them with a relational universe in which all bodies exert influence on all other bodies according to the universal law of gravity. The Newtonian scheme was "relational" according to Lee because it tended "to see the nature of things as a network of relational laws and active forces rather than a system of individual and self-contained substances and forms."[121] Edwards' Trinitarian grounding of a relational ontology thereby represents a particularly ingenious theological project which aimed at confirming the view of the world already coming to life under the influence of this new physics.

There are critical questions that can be raised to this close association between the shift of the new science and Edwards' project. Firstly, the Newtonian physics is not properly a view of the cosmos that is *ontologically* relational, but one in which bodies operate within a system of laws that are fundamentally relational. This represents a relational re-evaluation of ontology only to whatever extent that these physical laws are thought of as entities in their own right (though that isn't necessary to the Newtonian picture). Yet even then it is not a re-evaluation of what it means *to be* simpliciter, but a claim about a certain kind of being (the lawlike structure in which other beings operate). Secondly, drawing on this same point, the new science and the Lockean empiricist philosophy did not jettison finite independent substances *per se*, but only the Aristotelian-medieval conception of what such substances actually are. Locke's famous statement that substance is a "Supposition of he knows not what"[122] is often read as having nearly sarcastic overtones, but Locke is quite serious and sees no problem with making such a supposition at all. Quite the contrary, it is a proper and necessary operation of the mind to form such a supposition:

> Sensation convinces us, that there are solid extended Substances; and Reflection, that there are thinking ones: Experience assures us of the Existence of such Beings; and that the one hath a power to move Body by

[121] Lee, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 21, 5. Here is Lee's full paragraph: "The nature of learned discourse was clearly shifting in the age of Enlightenment. Beginning in the seventeenth century, the old idea of substance—the technical language of the traditional Trinity doctrine—became problematic because of the Lockean empiricist dictum that one should not talk about what one cannot experience, and also because of the tendency of Newtonian science to see the nature of things as a network of relational laws and active forces rather than a system of individual and self-contained substances and forms. It was clear that if seventeenth- and eighteenth-century divines were to defend orthodoxy meaningfully, they would have to address this shift of language, which was occurring whether anyone wished it or not."
[122] Locke, *Essay*, Bk. II, ch. xxiii, §2.

> impulse, the other by thought; this we cannot doubt of. Experience, I say, every moment furnishes us with the clear *Ideas*, both of the one, and the other. But beyond these *Ideas*, as received from their proper Sources, our Faculties will not reach…From whence it seems probable to me, that the simple *Ideas* we receive from Sensation and Reflection, are the Boundaries of our Thoughts; beyond which, the Mind, whatever efforts it would make, is not able to advance one jot; nor can it make any discoveries, when it would prie into the Nature of the hidden Causes of those *Ideas*.[123]

Furthermore, Locke explicitly says that these substances, whatever they are, are constituted "without any relation to any thing without."[124] So, while he deprives them of certain Aristotelian particulars, he still sees (contra Lee's claim) substances as "self-contained" in terms of their ontological definition. The mystery of understanding substance is not a question of ontology for Locke, but of epistemology. Our ideas of substance are necessary suppositions that allow us to keep track of several simple ideas that always occur in conjunction, but we are incapable of inquiring into the precise nature of that something that stands under those qualities. This does not mean that such substances do not exist, but only that their natures are unknowable to the human mind. This substance remains for Locke something in which the various qualities inhere, and relational properties are not included among such qualities.[125] Relatives for Locke are denominations given to things which serve "as Marks to lead the Thoughts beyond the Subject it self denominated, to something distinct from it."[126]

If the mechanical laws of a Newtonian cosmos do not properly capture the relational ontology of Edwards, some have suggested the monadology of Leibniz or the occasionalism of Malebranche and others as alternatives. The temptation to read Edwards as a sort of Leibnizian is understandable, for Leibniz's monadology stands tall in the early modern period as a metaphysical system in which all substances are inherently and

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[123] Ibid., Bk. II, ch. xxiii, §29.
[124] See ibid., Bk. III, Chap. VI, §6 (cit. supra.).
[125] In addition to his denial that there is any constituent of substance "from without," Locke treats ideas of substance and ideas of relation as separate topics, taking up the latter in chapter 25 of Book II of the *Essay* after having dealt extensively with substances three chapters earlier. On ideas of relation he says: "Besides the *Ideas*, whether simple or complex, that the Mind has of Things, as they are *in themselves*, there are others it gets from their comparison one with another. The Understanding, in the consideration of any thing, is not confined to that precise Object: It can carry any *Idea*, as it were, beyond it self, or, at least, look beyond it, to see how it stands in conformity to any other." Ibid., Bk. II, ch. xxv, §1 (emphases added). For Locke, then, to study a thing's relational properties is to already have an idea of the thing itself, independent of those relations.
[126] Ibid., Bk. II, ch. xxv, §1.

irrevocably related to all other substances.[127] If Edwards is truly advocating a relational ontology, then Leibniz is one of the few people who arguably does so along with him. But there are large and obvious differences between Edwards' relational view and that of Leibniz. Most importantly for our purposes, Edwards does not compose a system in which every thing is inherently related to *every other* thing. For Edwards, every thing finds its essence at least in part from some of its relational properties (to speak in Aristotelian terminology), but these essence-defining relational properties do not extend to all other things; every thing is inherently related to *some* other things, but not to *every* other thing.

For Edwards this is not an example of that notorious pattern of thinking which explains everything with an appeal to God and thus explains nothing. He does not claim simply that all things are created with some undefined or inscrutable connection to other things. Rather, Edwards believes the particular purposes of various created things, both in their direct relation to God and in their relations to other created things, can be discerned and explicated. It is one of the primary purposes of his typology to do precisely this. We explore his typological methodology in greater detail in the next chapter.

B. Relation and Causation

1. *The False Dichotomy of Pre-established Harmony or Occasionalism*

Much of early modern philosophy is characterized by a concern with questions pertaining to understanding causation.[128] The Aristotelian obsession with independence as a foundational ontological principle continues among most of the early moderns who would challenge the former's view of the world. Despite these challenges, a broadly Aristotelian ontology remains in place in which the essence of a thing is properly understood without reference to anything external (i.e., in which the essence of a thing is expected to be sufficiently describable without referring to anything other than itself).

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[127] Leibniz claims that all things are inherently related to all other things in the *Monadology:* "This interconnection or accommodation of all created things to each other, and each to all the others, brings it about that each simple substance has relations that express all the others, and consequently, that each simple substance is a perpetual, living mirror of the universe." See *Monadology,* no. 56, in *Discourse on Metaphysics and Other Essays,* Daniel Garber and Roger Ariew, trs., (Annapolis, MD: Hackett, 1991), 76.
[128] See Garber's editor's introduction in *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy,* as well as most of the essays in that volume. Detailed accounts of the early modern fixation on causation are also ubiquitous in editorial introductions to primary texts from the principals of the era.

And so one of the primary focuses of early modern philosophy becomes that of understanding how created things, existing independently of other created things, are able to interact causally with one another. With no "occult" power in the things themselves to cause change (for the assertion of such is part of the Scholasticism the early moderns reject), it becomes centrally important to explain precisely how independent entities can interact at all.

Key to understanding the significance and uniqueness of Edwards' philosophy is the recognition that in his appropriation of Trinitarian dogma for his reflections on ontology he essentially brackets these sorts of questions, giving priority instead to questions about teleology. In particular, Edwards attempts a teleological understanding of the world in which things are seen to be designed to inter-relate to one another and in which their proper function in accordance with their design constitutes the harmony of the world. To construe that question of harmonious inter-relationality according to purpose as one of (material and efficient) causation as it applies to the interactions between entities (or "substances" as the literature usually refers to them) is to limit arbitrarily any possible construction to particular channels that do not exhaust the initial terrain.[129] Causal interaction covers only a very small range of discursive possibilities for understanding inter-relationality, and there is no reason it should be seen as a particularly urgent problem to understand such causal interactions if a philosopher is open to inter-relationality as essential for properly understanding ontology. Causation is simply one way in which the inter-relations between things might be brought to light; it is perfectly consistent with a relational ontology, and so its treatment as a philosophical subject of interest is free to be taken up, or left to the side, as a thinker should wish. A commitment to ontological independence among created things, on the other hand, produces significant pull then to explain whether and how causation between these independent things is even possible.

[129] Of course, teleology involves a kind of causality of its own on classical definitions of "cause" in which the end or purpose of a thing or event is its "final" cause. But much of early modern philosophy represents a rejection of final causation (as has been argued by many) in favor of accounting for a mechanistic physics in which causation is understood only in its "efficient" sense (not even in its "material" sense, as matter is inert and can cause no change in itself). This is another sense in which Edwards' philosophy is closer to medieval conceptions than to the early modern context in which he lived.

But to the extent that this is not Edwards' central concern, many readings of his philosophy that try to locate him within early modern thought misunderstand the proper import of what he writes regarding the ontological status of created things. For example, it is widely agreed among his interpreters that Edwards holds with Malebranche to "occasionalism," the thesis that God is the only real cause in the universe and that finite things and events can serve only as "occasions" for the operation of God's causative activity.[130] However, such interpretations have strong textual support only when the interpreter is allowed to assume that questions about causation play a central role in Edwards' writings on these matters.[131] A critical examination of the occasionalist interpretation sheds light on how those things that Edwards does in fact write regarding causation fit into his overall thought.

Occasionalism is often taken to be the main competition among early modern philosophers to Leibniz's pre-established harmony.[132] Whether that is really the only viable choice, such that Edwards must be an occasionalist if he is not a Leibnizian, is precisely the sort of question that is contrived on the basis of the assumption that "causal" explanations are the primary questions Edwards is trying to answer. The disagreement between occasionalism and Leibnizian preestablished harmony is generally viewed as a

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[130] Philip Quinn defines occasionalism as the view that God "brings about" every temporal event, by which Quinn clearly means at least that God is the total and *exclusive* cause of each event. See Philip L. Quinn, "Divine Causation, Secondary Causation, and Occasionalism," in D*ivine and Human Action*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988), 50-73.There are also somewhat "weaker" definitions of occasionalism, such as that offered by Alfred Freddoso, who says that occasionalism is fundamentally a commitment to the thesis that God is the "sole efficient cause" of all states of affairs not caused by any freely acting created substance. See Freddoso, "God's General Concurrence with Secondary Causes; Why Conservation in Not Enough," in *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 5, Philosophy of Religion (1991), 553-585. In his allowance that created substances can be "free" causes of states of affairs in the world, Freddoso seems to mean libertarian or incompatibilist freedom. Since Edwards is a compatibilist, there are for him no temporal states of affairs of which a created substance is a "free" cause (though Edwards holds that there are many states of affairs in the world of which a created substance is a free cause in the compatibilist, not Freddoso's, sense of freedom). Thus on Freddoso's definition of occasionalism, the question of whether or not Edwards holds to such a thesis hinges entirely on whether Edwards believes that God is the "sole efficient cause" of all states of affairs.

[131] Most interpreters of Edwards' metaphysics take him to be an occasionalist. See, e.g., Oliver D. Crisp, "How 'Occasional' Was Edwards's Occasionalism?" in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian*, 51-68. Edwards' indisputable use of Malebranche, especially when talking about being, lends further credence to this explanation, though in the end it is misguided.

[132] Steven Nadler, "Introduction," in *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy*, 1-8. Of course, occasionalism (God is the only genuine cause of anything) is also found in the philosophy of a number of Islamic philosophers in the Middle Ages, or at least that is how the view of those philosophers was often reported by Christian and Jewish Scholastics. See Aquinas, *De Potentia*, 3, 7, where Aquinas reports that Maimonides reports that certain Moorish sages held this position.

disagreement over how to make causation intelligible when entities (both mental and material) are existentially remote from one another.[133] The entire discussion of occasionalism in relation to preestablished harmony, including the claim by Edwards scholars that Edwards is an occasionalist, stems from a standard assumption regarding the correlation of changes among entities in the world, an assumption that goes back at least to Leibniz himself. The assumption is that there are only three ways to account for the agreement of the soul and the body (or the agreement in the changes undergone by *any* two entities, whether material or immaterial): interactionism, occasionalism, and preestablished harmony. Leibniz argues by elimination for preestablished harmony as the only view of the three that is even possibly true.[134] Almost all early modern accounts that allow for immaterial entities (i.e., all accounts that are not materialistic/atheistic), remove interactionism as a possibility, because following Descartes they wish to remove any "occult" powers from matter that are perceived to plague Scholastic and Aristotelian accounts.[135] Instead matter (and all created substances, really) must be wholly passive.[136]

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[133] Again, for Leibniz, monads are separate from and have no direct effect upon one another. He grounds the phenomenal interplay seen in nature by arguing that every monad (every essence) contains all of its future actions and permutations within it by God's design. God has designed each essence with all future permutations of all other essences in mind, and so the result is a preestablished harmony of a compossible network of isolated monads whose changes and activities will correspond in time in a rational, patterned, and predictable way. On the other side, Malebranche follows Descartes more explicitly and views matter as mere extension, passive and inert; there is no underlying substantive power in matter that generates a body's various states. Thus, like Leibniz after him but for different reasons, Malebranche must somehow account for the observed phenomena of mechanistic physics in which bodies appear to causally interact with one another. Malebranche's occasionalist solution is that God is the only cause and that He through a continuous act of creation sustains all the objects in the world as well as the ordered correspondence of all their motions. The general consensus on Edwards is that he sides with Malebranche in this debate, but this presupposes that the debate makes sense within Edwards' system. Edwards' Trinitarianism and his doctrine of creation show that this is not the case, as we shall see.

[134] Leibniz uses this argument by "elimination" in at least two places, as cited by Rutherford, 137n.5: in his "New System of the Nature and Communication of Substances," in *Philosophical Essays*, R. Ariew and D. Garber, trs., (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1989), 138-45; also in a letter to Basnage de Beauval, in ibid., 147-9. Leibniz refers specifically to mind-body agreement, but the problem he is considering applies to all substance-substance agreement, which includes body-body agreement and spirit-spirit agreement.

[135] Descartes himself appears to hold to a form of interactionism (at least regarding mind and body), although some interpret him as actually advocating a subtle form of occasionalism, e.g., Daniel Garber, "Descartes and Occasionalism," in *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy*, 9-26.

[136] For Leibniz, there are not material substances (monads are not material), and while monads are not passive, they are non-interactive. Each substance has the power to cause all of its own subsequent changes throughout the duration of its existence. So in this sense substances are active, but they have no ability to act on anything other than themselves. The "individuality of each particular substance" is constituted by an immanent law of succession, such that "it is in the nature of created substance to change continually following a certain order which leads it spontaneously…through all the states it encounters." See Leibniz, "Clarification of the Difficulties which M. Bayle has found in the New System of the Union of Soul and

On such a view, having rejected interactionism, philosophers saw their options as limited to only occasionalism and preestablished harmony to account for agreement between the changes undergone by different things. Thus, the debate among early modern non-materialists is characterized as one exhausted by the two poles of Malebranche on the one end and Leibniz on the other.

When the disagreement is understood in this way, however, we see immediately that it is a spectrum into which Edwards is not an easy fit. For Edwards individual entities are *not* existentially remote from one another—they are necessarily (essentially) related to things external to themselves. That objects are interactive with other objects is built in to Edwards' understanding of their essence, because he takes the world as a whole and all the objects within it as reflections of God's own interactive essence as perichoretic community. Thus, the objects of the world may be expected to interact in a wide variety of ways, and the physical mechanics of Edwards' day is simply a promising avenue for understanding those interactions rather than a puzzling assertion of causal interplay between fundamentally isolated and independent things. The inter-relationality of created things, and the status of that inter-relationality as a reflection of the divine (Trinitarian) archetype, renders moot puzzles about how various things are able to inter-relate in a causal way, for inter-relationality is essential to all entities as such. Edwards' exposition of relations as constitutive of essence or being in turn sheds light on certain questions about causation, but this is not the primary intent of that exposition and in a certain sense the two questions reveal fundamentally different approaches to understanding the world.

That said, there is no doubt that Edwards is a theological determinist. As a Calvinist he holds to a complete divine sovereignty such that God constitutes all created being "according to his pleasure, and for what purposes, communications, and effects he pleases."[137] Furthermore, Edwards does more than simply hold to determinism. As we

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Body," *Die philosophischen Schriften von G. W. Leibniz*, vol. IV, C.I. Gerhardt (Berlin, 1875-90; reprint, Hiddesheim: Georg Olms, 1962); translated by Steven Nadler in "Introduction," *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy*, 5-6. Thus we have a "basis for saying that no particular substance ever acts on or is acted on by another particular substance," and thus should we "bear in mind that what happens to each substance is a consequence of its idea or complete notion and of nothing else, because that idea already involves all the substance's predicates or events, and expresses the whole universe." See Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §14, http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdf/leibdm.pdf (accessed January 2008).

[137] *Original Sin*, http://edwards.yale.edu/images/pdf/originalsin.pdf, 27 (accessed February 2008). Fiering defines Edwards' determinism as the view that "events in the universe are entirely free from any contingency." See Fiering, "The Rationalistic Foundations of Jonathan Edwards's Metaphysics," 77-78.

have seen, he also holds to a doctrine of constant "repeated" creation (what Descartes referred to as *concursus*). The question, though, is does even this doctrine, when combined with determinism, amount to occasionalism? Paul Copan appears to think so:

> Perhaps the clearest passage describing Edwards' occasionalistic views is No. 47 of his "Things to be Considered." Edwards speaks of a body's being caused "by the immediate exercise of divine power." He sees God's wonderful power upholding the world at "every moment" just as at first, at the "creation of it." As the preservation of the universe is only a continuation of creation, "the universe is created out of nothing every moment."[138]

At the very least, theological determinism and continuous creation together entail that God brings about all events in the world *as they happen in time,* as opposed to simply guaranteeing their occurrence through the ingeniousness of His original design. As Donald Rutherford has characterized the disagreement between occasionalism and preestablished harmony as one over whether God "actually deals the cards" or simply "stacks the deck,"[139] we can certainly say that for Edwards God is always dealing cards.[140]

Even when this sort of continuous creation is added to the mix, however, Edwards' view does not entail occasionalism despite Copan's claim. The views that God is the ultimate cause of all things and that He upholds creation by a continuous act of His power (both of which Edwards certainly held) lend themselves easily to an occasionalist interpretation only when causation is conflated into efficient material causation and is

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[138] Copan, 115-6. All the citations are from *Things to be Considered* #47, 241.
[139] Donald P. Rutherford, "Natures, Laws, and Miracles," in *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy*, 136.
[140] Whether Leibniz himself can be said to hold that God simply "stacks the deck," as it is the intention of Rutherford's distinction to affirm, is doubtful. Certainly for Leibniz every created substance at every moment of its existence is entirely dependent upon God for its existence. Yet Leibniz is at least clear that the changes created substances undergo are entirely the result of an immanent law of order within the substance itself: that is the means by which God upholds its being moment by moment. In this sense God "stacks the deck" in that He imparts *originally* to created substances this principle of ordered change which he *then* upholds in each moment of their existence. But in *this* sense Edwards could also be said to hold that God "stacks the deck," in that God imparts to things a causal power of their own which He then upholds throughout their existence. (See above, §II.C.) E.g.: "When God made man *at first*, he *implanted in him* two kinds of principles…," *Original Sin*, http://edwards.yale.edu/images/pdf/originalsin.pdf, 12 (accessed February 2008); "If we ought ever to exercise our affections at all, and if the Creator has not unwisely constituted the human nature in making these principles a part of it…," *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/affections.pdf, 27 (accessed March 2008). The difference between Edwards and Leibniz, then, is over the possibility of interaction between substances (i.e., Does the immanent principle of change or action which created things possess allow for *interaction* with other things, or simply for changes within the individual substance itself?), not over whether substances have their own immanent principle of change *per se*.

allowed to stand as a dominant problem that drives all philosophical inquiry. For Edwards, causation operates teleologically as created things act according to the function for which they were designed (or, in the case of unredeemed fallen creatures, they act according to a principle that violates that function, by the sovereign permission of God). Thus causation is not simply a matter of one entity imparting a change to another, as when one billiard ball transfers motion into another. Rather, as We shall see below, causation includes processes by which one entity causes the existence of another as a certain kind of thing (as a thing with a certain kind of function, purpose, or essence), and the latter acts in accordance with its kind which includes the exercise of certain causal powers.

As we have already acknowledged, this is not to say that there are no passages in Edwards' writings which might seem to indicate an occasionalist thesis. We consider now the most compelling citation from Edwards for the occasionalist interpretation.[141] In *Original Sin* Edwards writes:

> All dependent existence is in a constant flux, ever passing and returning; renewed every moment, as the colour of bodies are every moment renewed by the light that shines upon them; and all is constantly proceeding from God, as light from the sun…It appears, if we consider matters strictly, there is no such thing as any identity or oneness in created objects, existing at different times, but what depends on God's *sovereign constitution*…for it appears, that a divine constitution is the thing which *makes truth*, in affairs of this nature.[142]

The problematic phrase here for a non-occasionalist reading of Edwards is his description of all created existence as "ever passing and returning." Despite the prima facie plausibility of the occasionalist reading of this phrase, we can offer some further considerations that render such a reading mistaken.[143]

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[141] Crisp, for instance, makes the most of this passage in his argument that Edwards is an occasionalist. See Crisp, 71-2.

[142] *Original Sin,* in *Works* 3, 404.

[143] In any in-depth study of a particular thinker, there are typical complications associated with the "hermeneutical spiral" in which different commentators (present author included, of course) will find it hard even to agree as to whose reading of a particular passage is more plausible because the identification and interpretation of other more "fundamental" passages are also in dispute. I recognize that inherent difficulty, yet I remain unconvinced that Edwards is an occasionalist (due to readings of other passages I find more clear). Thus, my nod to the superficial plausibility of the occasionalist reading of this particular passage. Still, there are reasons to doubt that Edwards advocates anything like a literal moment-by-moment repetition of annihilation and re-constitution of created being.

First, a disappearance-reappearance thesis is an unnecessary and incoherent addition to the view we already know Edwards to hold that God is the "substance" of all created beings. The thesis is incoherent because it has no place it "fits" within Edwards' ontology. It is a sort of cosmological magic show that goes unperceived by anyone phenomenally, and thus has nothing to do with the observed laws of nature; it also *cannot* convey any true information about how God "does" things as an eternal being (per comments above). So there is no vantage from which the thesis is correct on Edwards' view of the world. It also contradicts the things he says about created dispositions and powers and about the distinction between original creation and conservation elsewhere (such as, "I would observe that creation out of nothing seems to be the *only* divine operation that [is] absolutely arbitrary, without any kind of use made of any such antecedently," cit. supra.). Further, it is also an unnecessary addition to Edwards' thought because there is no vantage from which the thesis serves a philosophical purpose. The usual construction is that Edwards is trying to preserve the utter dependence of all things on God (which is certainly an accurate appraisal of his goal in *Original Sin*). But the decompose-reconstruct cycle does nothing to preserve this that God as the sustaining "substance" of all things did not do already.

Second, it is a fundamental mistake to read Edwards as asserting any sort of temporal succession in God. Edwards nowhere indicates that he is committed to any particular view of continuity through time, or of temporal succession itself (yet trying to figure out whether he held this or that view of these things usually features prominently into the arguments that he is an occasionalist[144]). The question is simply "*How* are created things able to exist through time?" and not "What is the nature of time and continuous identity?" Further, Edwards had the vocabulary and the background of reading (in Malebranche especially) to express clearly an occasionalist thesis, and he did not do so. This is at least suggestive that he did not see himself as advancing such a thesis.

[144] Crisp is hardly unique in this regard. Contemporary understandings of the basic options for temporal continuity (i.e., perdurance vs. endurance, A-theory vs. B-theory of time, etc.) lurk in the background (if not the foreground) of discussions of continuous creation, occasionalism, etc., and are often foisted anachronistically upon earlier thinkers (Descartes, Malebranche, Edwards, etc.).

Third, Edwards' true intention is apparent enough in his use of his favorite analogies of color and light. The rays from the sun do not "pass and return" in the sense that they cease existing, then reappear. The sun's rays are always irradiated, as long as the sun exists. They derive their being completely from the sun and they depend wholly upon the sun for continued existence. This is a use both Edwards and the Church Fathers whom he follows make of the analogy, as we have seen. This means that, at each moment, it is *as though* God creates the world all over again from nothing in the sense that there is nothing in the universe that upholds its own existence. In each new moment, the universe is again full of nothing that is capable of sustaining its own continued existence. If the universe is to be here in the next moment; God will have to do it. The same activity by which He creates is the activity by which He sustains His creation. It is all an act of His power upholding that which cannot uphold itself.

That God recreates the world every moment out of nothing means that it is His *power* alone that upholds the world. To interpret Edwards' claim in an even "stronger" sense—that each thing literally exists only for a moment when God creates it and that the universe then reverts back to nothingness, which God then re-fills with (mostly) the same things again, and that this process repeats itself for every successive moment in which the universe exists—is to attribute to Edwards what he would regard to be a crass error based on an under-appreciation of human finitude and divine eternality. That God is eternal means that He does not in any literal sense "create" (or do anything else) in a temporal succession.[145] To refer to His constant "upholding" of the universe moment-by-moment is a (perfectly reasonable and necessary) way of speaking from the vantage of the temporally-bound creature. But God is not so bound. He does not "respond" to a universe that keeps falling out of existence without His help. Rather, He simply acts as Himself perfectly, eternally, and unchangeably, but this eternal and perfect activity is perceived,

[145] *Misc.* 94 (1723) (cit. supra., Chapter 1, §III.B): "'Tis this perfection of God's idea that makes all things truly and properly present to him from all eternity, and is the reason why God has no succession. For everything that is, has been, or shall be, having been perfectly in God's idea from all eternity, and a perfect idea (which yet no finite being can have of anything) being the very thing; therefore, all things from eternity were equally present with God, and there is no alteration made in [his] idea by presence and absence, as there is in us." Cf. *The Mind*, no. 36, 355: "Things as to God exist from all eternity alike. That is, the idea is always the same, and after the same mode." Cf. *Misc.* 1180 (1751) (citing Chevalier Ramsey): "The eternal self-existent, infinite Being presents himself to the mind under the notion of a simple uncompounded indivisible Essence without distinction of parts without succession of thoughts, and without division of substance."

from the perspective of space-time-bound creatures, as a "succession" in which God constantly upholds the world moment-by-moment. More properly, what is perceived by finite creatures is a world which exists in a succession of moments, and it is then attributed (reasonably, necessarily, correctly) to God as the creator and sustainer of that world that He is the primary cause of all that is comprehended in each of those successive moments. This ends up "looking" to the finite mind like God "does" things moment-by-moment. But a more accurate formulation is that in each moment, God is already there, sourcing the moment's "being" through His own eternal activity. Each moment of space-time is really the universe "coming into" God's eternal activity in a new way, rather than God "doing" something new in that moment.[146] Speaking of "continuous creation" as a temporal succession, in which the world recedes to nothing and then God re-creates every individual thing as a replica of what was, fundamentally misrepresents God's eternal nature as something on the model of a finite creature.[147] It moves beyond anthropomorphic colloquialism and simply botches theology proper.

2. *Conclusion*

The most fundamental difference between Edwards and other early modern philosophers is that the accounts offered by the latter do not bear any necessary relation to the Trinity. The concursive correspondence of physical phenomena in accordance with discernible patterns (as studied by Newtonian natural philosophers) requires only a Creator who is omnipotent and omniscient and who wishes to exercise those qualities in

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[146] Presumably, this is the same line Leibniz would take on such questions, which again indicates the error in thinking of the difference between Leibniz and Edwards as one of "pre"-established harmony versus constant recreation. An overly-literal reading of Leibniz's term "preestablished harmony" is as much a part of the problem as is the same hyper-literalism applied to Edwards' use of "recreation *ex nihilo*." It makes it out, in Leibniz's case, as though God *first* established all the monads with their own immanent principles of change (which correspond with all the principles of change in all the other monads, when viewed temporally), and *then* simply left these monads to operate on their own apart from His own sustaining power (a power of which they allegedly had no need, having already been established with their own fully operational immanent principles). It treats Leibniz as some sort of Deist. This whole way of speaking and thinking about Leibniz's position construes God as a creature, bound to temporality.

[147] *Misc.* 1263 (1753): "And here, by the way, I would observe that creation out of nothing seems to be the *only* divine operation that [is] absolutely arbitrary, without any kind of use made of any such antecedently." (Emphasis added) Edwards here distinguishes *original* creation ("if we ascend with respect to time and go back … to the beginning of the creation") from conservation, in that it is only *original* creation that is most properly "absolutely arbitrary," carried out without using any antecedent stuff or conforming to antecedent laws about that stuff. This tempers his claim elsewhere that God preserves the world in a way that is "perfectly equivalent to" His creation of it.

creating a world that is rationally discernible by the creatures in that world. The triply substantiated essence of that Creator (i.e., Trinitarianism) is in no way prerequisite. By making the Trinity central to his philosophical project, Edwards moves beyond the focus on (efficient) causation that characterizes other early modern accounts into a study of the underlying or overarching fabric of reality itself. This fabric grounds (efficient, material) causation and the new physics and allows them to flourish, but it is not primarily concerned with them. In this sense Edwards represents a move back to pre-modern philosophies which pursued an understanding of the world in terms of a metaphysical harmony. Questions about the way in which objects in the physical world, or even non-physical created entities like minds, are able to influence one another are deprioritized in Edwards' system in favor of an exploration into the structure that underlies all created objects as such. While other early modern accounts also attempted such explorations, they tended inevitably to reduce that structure to an explanation of the apparent material interactions and to flatten causation into its efficient variety. For Edwards an explanation of those apparent interactions is not even the beginning of an explanation of the world's overarching structure, which is primarily teleological. The view of the world with which Edwards is enamored, despite his interesting break with Aristotle on essence and relation, remains one of final causes.[148]

One broad implication of Edwards' position is that it again returns to the patristic theological ontology (particularly that of the Cappadocians) in which a particular mode of being in which a thing exists (in the case of the Godhead, the relational particularities that constitute the three Persons) is not reducible to being simpliciter.[149] It is necessary that every entity exist in a particular mode: it is not possible to be without being a certain way. It is also not possible to be a certain way without being (simpliciter), of course; each is mutually necessary and sufficient for the other. However, the interesting upshot of this position is that it no longer makes being "prior" to the mode in which it exists. The mere

[148] Edwards' writings contain many references to final causes. For instance, in *Misc.* 896 (1741) he writes: "That among the creatures that we see that does most like the Being that disposed and ordered the world, we may suppose to be most like him. We observe that the First Cause of things that has disposed the world, in disposing one thing, has respect to another that is distant in place and also time-does things for final causes. Things that are future are some way present with it. There is, in its disposition of things, respect to something else in another place: that the state of one thing may be conformed to, and in harmony with, the state of another, and also to something to come, [to] some end to be obtained."
[149] See above, Chapter 1, §II.B.2.

fact of existence does not constitute some common "property" (i.e., being or having being) that can be intelligibly discussed as shared with all other things that also exist.[150] For Edwards, the divine gift of being is not simply existence, but a certain kind of existence.[151] The kind of existence by which we are able to attain well-being is by having the divine happiness/beauty communicated to us. This is communicated to us by our being created as beings who exist in inter-relations with God and other created beings. In virtue of these inter-relations the creation finds itself subsisting in a proportional harmony (beauty), and thus representing the intra-Trinitarian harmony. In recognizing this reflected harmony that exists in creation, human beings are able to fulfill their highest function which is to live in the enjoyment of God.

Thus, when Edwards speaks of the substance of created objects as God, he is not merely providing a structure *into which* individual objects must be located. He is making the essence of those objects their location within that structure. The structure is not merely an arrangement of pre-existing stuff; it is the substantive power of the existence of that stuff. Without the structure, there is no stuff in the first place. Through his Trinitarian reflections Edwards establishes communicated similarity between things as the structure of being.[152] We turn to the precise nature of that significatory structure in the next

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[150] This would be akin to saying that because both serial murderers and pious Mennonites live in ways that can be compared against an overarching ethical standard (one as a moral monster, the other as a conscientious neighbor who attempts to apply a scrupulous moral standard to himself), that both the murderer and the Mennonite share some common "ethical" nature (or some "prone-to-being-discussed-in-ethical-terms" nature) or that they both exercise a similar power to "act in a way that can be described as ethical." The better way to think about them is that one of them has a power the other does not, or that only one of them successfully exercises a power that both of them possess. It is not the case that they each exercise the same power, but in different ways. Rather, the power the Mennonite is exercising is of an entirely different nature than that exercised by the serial murderer.

[151] In terms of the example of the Mennonite and the murderer in the previous note, freedom is not simply an ability to act with willful intention, but an ability to act *well*. Generalized to being in general, the manner of existence things enjoy is important to the kind of things they are. Two things are not significantly similar simply in virtue of their both existing.

[152] Interestingly, looking back from our own time in which semiotic awareness has become ingrained in our philosophical consciousness, Michael Hanby construes an "implicit" Augustinian ontology along semiotic lines:

> What is this implicit ontology? To say that the plenitude and finis of the law and the end and principle of all the requisite significations are charity or dilectio, specifically 'the love of a Being which is to be enjoyed and can share that enjoyment with us' is to say that signification has its origin and end in the gift and delight between Father and Son. Furthermore, to say that God uses us is to suggest that things are finally things precisely in the degree to which they participate in the doxological beauty of God, in short, in the degree to which they become 'signs' signifying and manifesting this beauty—which also means that they 'are' only in and as relations, both to God and other signa. (Hanby, 34)

chapter, in which we explore the way in which Edwards elaborates the relational (beautiful, harmonious) essence of created entities as a system of types and antitypes.

CHAPTER 3

EDWARDS' TYPOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

I. **Typology and Theology**

Edwards' typology is a peculiar move beyond both the standard natural theologies that held sway in his day as well as the received Puritan approach to typological interpretation of the Scriptures.[1] In the case of the latter, Edwards applies typological interpretative methods far beyond the Puritan exposition of Old Testament characters, events, and symbols as prefiguring representations of Christ. Edwards extends the franchise in two directions, finding types in the things of nature (not simply in Old Testament Scriptures) and finding figured antitypes in "spiritual and moral" truths in general (not simply truths that pertain explicitly to Christ).[2] Objects and processes found in nature somehow represent (i.e., communicate through a relation of similitude) spiritual and moral realities:

> For indeed the whole outward creation, which is but the shadows of beings, is so made as to represent spiritual things. It might be demonstrated by the wonderful agreement in thousands of things, much of the same kind as is between the types of the Old Testament and their antitypes, and by spiritual things being so often and continually compared with them in the Word of God.[3]

It is significant that Edwards extends these connections to "*the whole* outward creation." This hints that his relational ontology is lurking in the vicinity. *Every* created thing is created to be a type. So when we discuss typology we are discussing inter-relations of similarity that are properties of *all* created things, not of a mere subset of

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[1] See Anderson's discussion, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 11f.

[2] For one example of many, with no explicit Scriptural warrant for doing so Edwards connects lightning and the "moral" or "spiritual" truth that the pride is a grave sin (with no direct connection to Christ or any New Testament revelation whatsoever): "Lightning more commonly strikes high things such as high towers, spires and pinnacles, and high trees, and is observed to be most terrible in mountainous places; which may signify that heaven is an enemy to all proud persons, and that especially makes such the marks of his vengeance." See *Images of Divine Things* no. 74, 76. Edwards' use of the word "may" is indicative that Edwards wishes to give this connection more thought, not that he thinks the connection to be only a product of poetic imagination.

[3] *Misc*. 362 (1728)

them.[4] The universal distribution of the subject matter suggests ontology. Further, Edwards' typology must have something to do with his ontology because he clearly presents his typological notebooks as studies of fact, as opposed to mere flights of his own "fruitful brain and copious fancy."[5] To do the latter is to engage in a merely tropological, rather than typological, analysis of the cosmos.[6] Edwards holds that the whole outward creation "is so *made*" as to represent spiritual things.

Edwards explicitly envisions this typological methodology as one which seeks a middle ground between those who reject types altogether on the one hand and those who use typological (or "allegorical," or "symbolic") interpretations to reject the literal or historical sense of Scripture. "To show how there is a medium between those that cry down all types, and those that are for turning all into nothing but allegory and not having it to be true history; and also the way of the rabbis that find so many mysteries in letters, etc."[7] These two groups that make the poles between which Edwards intends his view to serve as a medium are two different sorts of opponents. One group of opponents is primarily theological: the Roman Catholic and Anglican allegorists (and, less contemporarily, Jewish cabalists) who, according to Protestant polemicists at least, tended to interpret Scripture as "mere divine pedagogy"[8] and thus were "for turning all into nothing but allegory and not having it to be true history." The second group of opponents is primarily philosophical: the various rationalists and Deists and others who advocated a natural theology on the basis of reason alone. Some of these rejected revelation almost completely ("freethinkers," Deists), and others (such as Locke and the Latitudinarians) held that it was reasonable to accept Christian revelation as true

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[4] Anderson summarizes the wide variety of types in Edwards' notebooks: "…he includes the entire fabric of history as recorded in the Old Testament, at least some of the things recorded in the New Testament, and beyond this the order and constitution of the physical world. This also includes the kind of objects the physical world contains, the laws that govern them, and the regular and recurrent phenomena they exhibit. Human arts and established institutions, as varied as husbandry and the Olympic games, common human experiences such as scaling a hill, and natural human affections and dispositions, as of a man's strong love for a woman, are claimed to represent spiritual truths." Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in Works 11, 8.
[5] See *Types*, 152 (cit. supra.: Introduction, n.45; Chapter 2, §I.A), quoted at length below. Also see Anderson's discussion, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 6.
[6] See Albert Gelpi, *The Tenth Muse: The Psyche of the American Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 49-51, for a discussion of the trope/type distinction as exemplified in both the Puritan poet Edward Taylor and Edwards. Cf. the discussions in Mason I. Lowance, "Introduction" to *Types of the Messiah*, in *Works* 11, 165f; as well as in M. S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 246.
[7] *Types*, 151.
[8] Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 20.

alongside the deliverances of reason so long as it was remembered that faith and reason are entirely separate modes of cognitive activity.[9] In any case, though, these thinkers generally called for a rejection of any Scriptures which were deemed mystical or irrational. These generally included many historical and literal senses contained in Scripture, particularly when prophecies or miracles were involved,[10] and all allegorical senses. At best, allegorical interpretations of Scripture (of which typology is a subset) are simply arbitrary associations of the human mind that offers them and are not rooted in the true nature of things (i.e., not rooted even in the divine intention behind the Scriptures).

Edwards is not unique for seeking this "medium" in his typological methodology; it was already the goal of his Puritan tradition to blaze a trail between those who "cry down all types" on the one hand and those who turn "all into nothing but allegory" on the other. Puritan hermeneutics followed closely in the classical Protestant tradition (i.e., Lutheran and Reformed) that found its origins in the Reformation itself, a tradition which saw the allegorical hermeneutical method that had become common in the late medieval Catholic Church as a danger because it potentially removed (by neglect) the veracity of Scripture in its other senses. The Reformers insisted on upholding the literal and historical senses of the Scriptures as a necessary component of the simple Gospel of salvation which was intended for all people, noble or common.[11] At the same time an

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[9] Locke speaks of faith and reason as "distinct Provinces" that must remain within their appropriate "boundaries." *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk. IV, ch. XVIII. Locke depicts faith as reasonable (in the negatively defined sense that it is "not unreasonable"), so long as it remains within its proper bounds. "Because the Mind, not being certain of the Truth of that it does not evidently know, but only yielding to the Truth of that it does not evidently know, but only yielding to the Probability that appears in it, is bound to give up its Assent to such a Testimony, which, it is satisfied, comes from one, who cannot err, and will not deceive. But yet, it still belongs to Reason, to judge of the Truth of its being a Revelation, and of the signification of the Words, wherein it is delivered." See ibid., § 8.

[10] It is interesting that both views Edwards opposes reject significant portions of the historical and literal senses of Scripture. Edwards' focus is on finding the appropriate position between the extremes regarding typology (i.e., none at all or way too much), which touches on the allegorical sense of Scripture, but in articulating his position on typology he also comes to the aid of the non-allegorical senses.

[11] The medieval hermeneutic was claimed to uphold all "four" senses of Scripture: literal, historical, moral, and allegorical. The early Protestants complained, not without reason, that this theoretical affirmation of all four senses had become a denial of the first two in practice. One account of how the corruption of the tradition occurred is that the hermeneutic came to err (at least in the generation before Dante in the 14th century) when it became entrenched in the expectation that *every* Scripture had a proper interpretation in all four senses. From this point various tendencies endemic to the late medieval consciousness, such as an inclination towards philosophical and theological speculation, a legal culture that elevated casuistry and natural law over plain intuition, and a marginalization of the vulgar population by the elites that eventually alienated the latter from the simple taste of the former for straightforward narratives, came eventually to emphasize the allegorical and moral senses over the literal and historical. Since every passage of Scripture

"allegorical" sense was not denied to Scripture altogether, which to the Reformers would have been an equally grievous mistake. Typology was necessary because without it the veracity of the Old Testament was jeopardized as many of the promises made to Israel could only be understood as finding their fulfillment typologically in Christ.[12] The Puritans continued this tradition of embracing Old Testament types of Christ while also viewing with skepticism those who would read typological interpretations from Scripture beyond these explicitly Christological connections.

Edwards attempts to push beyond his tradition in the direction of a further expansion of typological awareness, yet without completely unbalancing the established Puritan *via tertia*. Edwards anticipates and tries to defuse objections from his tradition regarding the success of this effort:

> I expect by very ridicule and contempt to be called a man of a very fruitful brain and copious fancy, but they are welcome to it. I am not ashamed to own that I believe that the whole universe, heaven and earth, air and seas, and the divine constitution and history of the holy Scriptures, be full of images of divine things, as full as a language is of words; and that the multitude of those things that I have mentioned are but a very small part of what is really intended to be signified and typified by these things: but that there is room for persons to be learning more and more of this language and seeing more of that which is declared in it to the end of the world without discovering all.[13]

Edwards does not identify who he thinks would be the source of this expected "ridicule," and it is likely he is thinking of both groups (both those who "cry down all types" and those who "turn all into allegory"). It is certain that he has at least his fellow Puritan clergymen in mind, though, because in the next paragraph he directly addresses the Puritan view that "we must not say that such things are types of these and those things unless the Scripture has expressly taught us that they are so." Edwards calls this view unreasonable because it, ironically, violates the plain teaching of Scripture itself:

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was alleged to have an allegorical and moral sense, this method did not leave (in principle) any Scriptural revelation unaccounted for. Thus the literal and historical senses no longer seemed necessary.

[12] Thus Calvin spoke of the Old Testament as a "book of promises" and one which "in the absence of the reality, it showed but an image and shadow in place of the substance; the New Testament reveals the very substance of the truth as present." See *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* II, 11, 4. Arguably, Calvin and the other Reformers are simply reiterating Augustine's dictum (that preceded the formalized "four senses" of the high Middle Ages) that "In the Old Testament the New lies hid; in the New Testament the meaning of the Old becomes clear." Cited by G.W.H. Lampe, "The Reasonableness of Typology," in *Essays On Typology,* Lampe, G.W.H., and Woollcombe, K.J., eds., (Naperville: Allenson, Inc.; 1957), 13.

[13] *Types,* 152.

> For by the Scripture it is plain that innumerable other things are types that are not interpreted in Scripture (all the ordinance of the Law are all shadows of good things to come), in like manner as it is plain by Scripture that these and those passages that are not actually interpreted are yet predictions of future events.[14]

Against those who would worry that his fanciful brain has led him into hyper-allegoricalism, Edwards does not render the Scriptures mere allegory, "nothing but allegory." He clearly and zealously affirms the historical and literal senses of Scripture. In fact, it is his use of the grammatical-historical method[15] of interpreting Scripture that in part leads him to embrace a naturalized typology: "for by Scripture it is plain," i.e., it is a literal meaning exegeted by grammatical analysis, that "innumerable" things that Scripture does not bother to explain to us are nonetheless types.[16] Scripture itself, when read for its literal and historical sense, indicates "a typical world."[17] Plain statements of Scripture, taken literally, declare that various things in the world are types. Thus, for Edwards the "allegorical" interpretations that typology involves are themselves grounded in the literal and historical senses of the text.

Many historico-literalists worry that typology and allegorical interpretations will obscure (or even abolish) the literal meaning of the text. Allegorical interpreters often

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[14] Ibid.

[15] The "grammatical-historical method" of Scripture interpretation is generally regarded as the classic hermeneutic employed by Protestants from the time of the magisterial Reformation (Lutherans and Calvinists alike) until the advent of theological "liberalism" in the 19th century. It is a hermeneutic that seeks to explain the meaning of Scripture by reconstructing as faithfully as possible the original-language wording of the *autographa* and then appealing primarily to the meaning and function of the words in the context of the grammar of those original languages and of the surrounding historical or cultural issues that were known to be present at the time the originals were written.

[16] See Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 29: "The literal sense itself comprehended a variety of meanings, most important of which was the 'spiritual.'"

[17] *Types,* 146: "Types. Texts of Scripture that seem to justify our supposing the Old Testament state of things was a typical state of things, and that not only the ceremonies of the Law were typical, but that their history and constitution of the nation and their state and circumstances were typical. It was, as it were, a typical world." Edwards then runs through several texts of Scripture which, read literally, use a typological method of argument or make typological associations. So this is not an "allegorical" sense of these passages, but rather the "literal" sense is that Scripture is authorizing particular typical connections.

See, for just one example, Edwards' comment in his *Blank Bible* note on Deuteronomy 20:19 (to which he refers in a short entry in *Images of Divine Things* (no. 135, 98) about trees representing men in the law of Moses). "It was God's will that a fruitful tree should not be cut down, but only trees that yielded no meat; because trees, with respect to their barrenness or fruitfulness, represented man, and therefore he would men deal with them as he deals with man. This is an argument in the law of Moses itself that its commands were given from some typical respect." This entry from Edwards' "Blank Bible" is cited in *Images of Divine Things,* 98n.6.

speak as though this is exactly what they should hope to do.[18] The aim of Edwards' *via media* is to expose this as false choice by making a typological connection between the "outward creation" and the "spiritual things" it represents that causes the literal and historical sense of Scripture to "contain" the moral and spiritual sense. These are not like two (or four, depending on how tightly the commentator chooses to group them) independent expressions of meaning, each of which might stand or fall on its own and all of which might be inconsistent when taken together. Instead, they are intertwined together into (often) a single expression such that in the process of expressing a literal and (or) historical meaning they end up also expressing a spiritual and (or) moral meaning. God Himself has made the world this way, so that physical objects and processes in the world (and the structure of the world itself) signify spiritual and moral realities. Thus, when Moses strikes the rock in the wilderness (and thereby produces water for the Israelites to drink), the natural objects (the rock, the water) are also things pregnant with symbolic meaning because they are designed by God to be types. In other words, a rock is more than a rock (and water is more than water), and so in this same expression about an actual rock and actual water the Scriptures reveal things about Christ. For instance, they reveal that He is a strong protector like a rock (as rocks are described by the Psalmist), that He is a secure foundation upon which a new human community can be built and sustained (also true of rocks according to the Psalmist), that He sustains that community by providing it with a new kind of life (which is symbolized by water), and that He is the one from whose side water will flow on the cross (as is recorded in the New Testament). Therefore, when Scripture reports on Moses striking the rock, it is speaking already in a literal and spiritual (typological) sense all at once. The Scriptures are making "truth" claims about certain physical objects and processes in the cosmos—namely, the particular rock Moses struck, the flowing of water from it, and the particular series of moments at which it all happened. Yet, they are also speaking of the spiritual and moral symbolism those objects and events typify by God's design. By making all the world typological, Edwards reinforces the literal truth of the Scriptures when they talk about

[18] At the very least the historical sense is "for the nourishment of babes," while allegory is for "apter wits." This particular expression of the distinction is attributed to John Langland, Bishop of Lincoln, as an exemplar of high medieval attitudes towards Biblical hermeneutics, in J.W. Blench, *Preaching in England in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1964), p.22. Blench's work is cited in Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 5.

that world, even if one tries to read Scripture in an allegorical sense, because that allegorical sense (the moral or spiritual meaning) is "hidden" within a literal or historical description of created objects or processes. This latter description is not a fantasy of a pre-scientific population.[19] Yet the allegorists are satisfied as well, because the idea of a "deeper" spiritual meaning is still available to them in so many Biblical texts, and, indeed, has become (in Edwards' thought) available throughout the creation.

II. **Typology and Philosophy**

Thus, his anticipated Puritan objectors miss the point: Edwards' scandal is not theological, but philosophical. He does not reject the historical or literal veracity of Scripture, but rather he finds typological connections built into the natural order. It turns out that what God does with the Old Testament symbols and events in order to represent Christ to His people, He also does with the entire created order, both in its structure and with the individual things that it contains.

This naturalized typology represents the fullness of Edwards' departure from that first group who would "cry down all types," by which he intends to refer to the natural theologies of early modern philosophers such as Descartes, Newton, and Locke and the many who follow in their wake. His philosophical peculiarity against the backdrop of these thinkers needs to be properly understood. The peculiarity is not in his belief that the creation wholly depends upon God, for instance. In the case of 18th century natural theology, as characterized by both theists and deists and the aforementioned philosophers, it is not only the existence of a supreme being that is rationally demonstrable but also the constant dependence of the physical world upon God.[20] Furthermore, the natural theology of these thinkers generally extended to a willingness to take certain features of the orderliness of the world as sufficient evidence for various qualities in God. As Anderson explains:

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[19] Much to the contrary, the "phenomenal" appearance of things often described by the literal and historical senses of Scripture is the touchstone for their typical representation of spiritual and moral things. Rocks "appear" hard and so forth, despite whatever explanation may be provided of their imperceptible micro-matter (a dimension of existence at which, if we were able to see it, would seem to contradict the appearance of things as we perceive them now; if we saw the rock as an electron cloud, it would no longer appear to be hard, solid, etc., and its function as a type for Christ as the foundation of the Church would fall through).

[20] See Anderson's discussion, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 15f.

> …from the properties and constitution of the physical world we may derive further knowledge concerning the nature and attributes of the Creator. From the immeasurable vastness and complexity of the entire system of bodies, for example, we may conclude that God's power is inconceivably immense. The orderliness of the system in accordance with general laws of nature showed the perfection of God's wisdom, and the special contrivance of certain parts of the system to fit them for particular ends gave evidence of God's purposefulness and beneficence towards humanity in ordering the works of creation.[21]

While he clearly affirms similar sorts of arguments,[22] Edwards goes beyond them and uses God's Trinitarian nature as a perichoretic communion of three divine Persons to justify a cosmology that is specifically typological in nature. The peculiarity of this form of cosmology would not have escaped natural theologians of Edwards' day,[23] who would have concurred that the entire physical world indicates truths about spiritual things (in particular, that the world has a Designer and that certain of the Designer's attributes can be understood by examining His creational handiwork in much the same way that a bench tells us something of the carpenter who made it: i.e., that he is careful (or not), that he is detailed (or not), etc.) but would have chafed at the idea that *all* the objects of the natural world signify other things. What is more, Edwards goes further still in that he takes these significations not as mere literary fancies but as divinely-designed instructions which can serve as stand-alone source material for the discovery of spiritual and moral truths (i.e., we can come to understand these moral and spiritual realities from an examination of their representation in these observable things studied in their own right). The *typological* interpretation of the world put forth by Edwards requires a particular kind of dependence of the universe on God, and it involves a particular sort of reflection of spiritual things.[24]

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[21] Ibid., 15.

[22] For example, Edwards provides a sort of ontological argument for God's existence in *Of Being* (cit. supra.; Chapter. 2, §I.B) when he argues that non-being is impossible in the very nature of the case and that it is impossible to have any being without any to be conscious of it, and therefore there is an eternal and necessary conscious Being. He also collects a small notebook of what we might today call "evidences of design" in the world that could serve as the basis of a teleological argument for God's existence; see *Wisdom in the Contrivance of the World*, 307-10.

[23] Remember that Edwards' typological writings were never published during his lifetime, but were contained within private notebooks that he appears to have used largely to gather material for illustrations in sermons and other writings. Still, Edwards clearly intended to write up a fuller defense of his typological method, and it even appears likely that he intended to put together something for publication. See Anderson's discussion, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 7f.

[24] See Anderson's discussion, ibid., 7f. and 15f.; e.g.: "But the arguments [natural philosophers] offered…hardly would have confirmed the particular instances of *typical* representation that Edwards claimed to find…that the serpent's art of luring prey was a shadow of Satan's wiles, that the invention of

We find three different propositions at play in Edwards' discussion with 18th century natural theology, each progressively more provocative than the previous:

1. The physical world depends upon God for its existence.
2. The entire collection of created physical objects—the cosmos—subsists only in immediate and continuous dependence upon God's power.[25] The "divine Being or power itself" is that something which "subsist[s] by itself and support[s] all properties" of created things.[26]
3. Everything in the physical world is a type of some spiritual or moral reality. Every physical object "shadows forth" a typological representation of something spiritual/moral. "The whole outward creation…is so made as to represent spiritual things."[27]

(1) is a simple entailment of theism, including its Deistic variety. It is affirmed by Edwards, Locke, Newton, et. al. (2) is Edwards' view that there are no substances (i.e., no things that uphold their own identities over time as a collection of various properties) in the physical world itself; the substance of all bodies that holds their various properties "together" is God.[28] This is a particular way that the world depends upon God, with which many but not all contemporary theists/deists would agree.[29] (3) is the basic supposition of Edwards' typology, in the assertion of which he apparently stands alone among his philosophical contemporaries.[30] (2) is a central support for (3),[31] but it requires further examination to understand how this is so. The nature of this subsistence is important for understanding Edwards' typology just as it is for understanding his ontology, because his typology is grounded in his ontology.

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the telescope predicted the approach of a general spiritual enlightenment, or that the principles of hydrostatics revealed truths about human moral powers." Ibid., 15. Here again Edwards reflects Augustine in ways beyond what he was likely able to recognize. On Augustine's own form of a "semiotic ontology" in which all things find their being in their function as signs, see Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*, 30-5.

[25] Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 14.

[26] *Of Atoms,* Prop. 2, corol. 11, 215 (cit. supra.; Chapter 2 §I.B)

[27] *Misc.* 362 (1728) (cit. supra.).

[28] More properly, things subsist in an exercise of God's power, or as Edwards also puts it, a "perfectly stable idea in God's mind."

[29] Descartes and the legions that follow him, both in England and on the Continent, can and often are interpreted as denying to matter any ability to "subsist" in itself. Matter is wholly passive for many early modern thinkers, especially when it comes to its ability to causally effect change outside of itself (by this specification we include Leibniz as one who makes matter wholly passive). As such, all bodies are dependent upon a divine activity (often referred to by Descartes and others as *concursus*) by which they exist through time and in which the various changes they undergo are coordinated with changes in other bodies. This divine activity is the ground of the continuous existence of all created substances. They do not subsist in themselves.

[30] It should be noted that Edwards does borrow (and even quotes occasionally) from a few contemporary English *theologians*, especially George Turnbull and Andrew Ramsey. See "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 8.

[31] Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 14.

Edwards adjusts the "standard Newtonian view" of bodies by concluding that the solidity (an infinite power of resistance[32] which was generally understood to be a universal and essential property of matter[33]) does not reside in an underlying substance, "but must be a constant exercise of the infinite power of God," so that:

> …it follows that the certain unknown substance, which philosophers used to think subsisted by itself, and stood underneath and kept up solidity and all other properties, and which they used to say it was impossible for a man to have an idea of, is nothing at all distinct from solidity itself; or, if they must needs apply that word to something else that does really and properly subsist by itself and support all properties, they must apply it to the divine Being or power itself. And here I believe all those philosophers would apply it, if they knew what they meant themselves.[34]

Thus, Edwards provides what Anderson calls a "phenomenalistic" adjustment to the Newtonian view of the physical universe.[35] It retains its character as a Newtonian system because Edwards, in addition to enthusiastically embracing the methods of the new science, holds that God orders the physical universe according to fixed laws:

> That which truly is the substance of all bodies is the infinitely exact and precise and perfectly stable idea in God's mind, together with his stable will that the same shall gradually be communicated to us, and to other minds, according to certain fixed and exact established methods and laws: or in somewhat different language, the infinitely exact and precise divine idea, together with an answerable, perfectly exact, precise and stable will with respect to correspondent communications to created minds, and effects on their minds.[36]

Statements such as these (and this is probably his most masterful) show that Edwards sees clearly that God's ideal substantiation of created things ("All material existence is only idea"[37]) is consistent with regular and harmonious relations among

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[32] *Of Atoms,* Prop. 2, corol. 2, 214: "…it must needs be an infinite power that keeps the parts of atoms together, or, which with us is the same, that keeps two bodies touching by surfaces in being. For it must be an infinite power, or bigger than any finite, that resists all finite, how big soever; as we have proved these bodies to do."

[33] Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 16. Cf. *Of Atoms,* Prop. 1, Corol. 4, 211: "Since that, by the preceding corollary, solidity is the resisting to be annihilated, or the persevering to be of a body, or, to speak plain, the being of it—for being and persevering to be are the same thing, looked upon two a little different ways—if follows that the very essence and being of bodies is solidity; or rather, that body and solidity are the same."

[34] *Of Atoms,* Prop 2., corol. 11, 215 (cit. supra.). Cited by Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 16.

[35] Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 16.

[36] *The Mind,* no. 13, 344.

[37] Ibid., no. 40, 356.

those created things. On its face, this consistency might seem too obvious to mention, but it was a stumbling block for many in Edwards' time, who struggled to see how (idealist) immaterialism could do other than render the new science and all its discoveries mere fantasies.[38] As was argued most famously by Berkeley, though, immaterialist idealism entails no rejection of the observed phenomena of nature, including the regular and lawlike interactions between bodies. These phenomena are accounted for by "discovering the laws of nature, and reducing particular appearances to them."[39] This requires the rejection of matter, or more properly material substances, not the rejection of the phenomena (matter *is real* for Berkeley, in the only way that anything is real, as either

[38] We might think of the famous example of Samuel Johnson, who despite his being the best known disciple of Berkeley in the colonies nonetheless could not get past the "fact" that he kicked a rock on a path, not an idea of a rock. This misses the immaterial idealist's point, though: there is no distinction between the rock and ideas of a rock, in the sense of it being possible to kick one but not the other. To posit the distinction as Johnson does is simply to beg the question against the idealist's thesis: to exist at all is to be a perceptual content of a mind. It is not that we are somehow "stuck" with our phenomenal experiences of rocks, and now faced with the impossible task of slaying the twin dragons of skepticism about the "real" existence of the rock (because we cannot know that our phenomenal experience corresponds to anything in the allegedly more "real" world) and about the regulating matrix of interactions in which the rock seems to be located (same reason). Rather, the phenomena we experience are entirely real precisely *because* they are ideal contents of our minds. This includes Mr. Johnson's foot with which he kicked the rock, the motion of kicking itself, and the structure of laws according to which the rock moves so many feet when it is kicked. Differences between Edwards and Berkeley aside (e.g., Berkeley says that to be is to be *perceived* by *any* mind while Edwards says that to be is to be *known* by *God's* mind), they never saw their approaches as some sort of skepticism or as some accidental "reductio" from Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities, as the canonical accounts would have it. This is not the place to philosophically defend their shrug; we simply note their similarity in seeing that nothing in the logic of the ideas demands that idealism lead to skepticism about the reality of our perceptions.

[39] In one of Berkeley's letters to Samuel Johnson he writes: "The true use and end of Natural Philosophy is to explain the phenomena of nature; which is done by discovering the laws of nature, and reducing particular appearances to them. This is Sir Isaac Newton's method; and such method or design is not in the least inconsistent with the principles I lay down. This mechanical philosophy doth not assign or suppose any one natural efficient cause in the strict and proper sense; nor is it, as to its use, concerned about matter; nor is matter connected therewith; nor doth it infer the being of matter. It must be owned, indeed, that the mechanical philosophers do suppose (though unnecessarily) the being of matter. They do even pretend to demonstrate that matter is proportional to gravity, which, if they could, this indeed would furnish an unanswerable objection. But let us examine their demonstration. It is laid down in the first place, that the momentum of any body is the product of its quantity by its velocity, *moles in celeritatem ducta*. If, therefore, the velocity is given, the momentum will be as its quantity. But it is observed that bodies of all kinds descend in vacuo with the same velocity; therefore the momentum of descending bodies is as the quantity or moles, i.e. gravity is as matter. But this argument concludes nothing, and is a mere circle. For, I ask, when it is premised that the momentum is equal to the *moles in celeritatem ducta*, how the moles or quantity of matter is estimated? If you say, by extent, the proposition is not true; if by weight, then you suppose that the quantity of matter is proportional to matter; i.e. the conclusion is taken for granted in one of the premises." See Berkeley, "Letter to Samuel Johnson (11/25/1729)," in *The Works of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne*, A.A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, eds, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1949 and 1950), vol. 2, 289-90.

mental or ideal).[40] For Newton and Locke the precise nature of the substances in the cosmos are unknowable;[41] to a large extent immaterialist idealism demystifies them by associating them closely with the intelligible context in which they are observed.[42] It is at least of historical interest that Edwards was one who saw this possible avenue for early modern thought and took it.

For Edwards this immaterialist thesis serves another purpose as well: the identification of all substances with an exercise of God's power. We recall from our explorations in the previous chapter that this identification is grounded on his doctrine of the Trinity; we retrace our steps here. First, we note that in the above citation Edwards describes the creative and conserving power of God upon the world with an invocation of his Augustinian mentalist language for the Trinity. He says that the substance of bodies is both the infinitely perfect divine idea (the Son, for Edwards) and the comparable (i.e., also infinitely perfect) will (the Spirit) *together*. Therefore, the Son and Spirit together

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[40] This seems to be what Edwards is driving at in *The Mind*, no. 34, 353: "When we say that the world, i.e., the material universe, exists nowhere but in the mind…we must be exceedingly careful that we do not confound and lose ourselves by misapprehension…For we are to remember that the human body and the brain itself exist only mentally, in the same sense that other things do. And so that which we call place is an idea too. Therefore things are truly in those places, for what we mean when we say so is only that this mode of our idea of place appertains to such an idea. We would not, therefore, be understood to deny that things are where they seem to be, for the principles we lay down, if they are narrowly looked into, do not infer that. Nor will it be found that they at all make void natural philosophy, or the science of the causes or reasons of corporeal changes; for to find out the reasons of things in natural philosophy is only to find out the proportion of god's acting. And the case is the same, as to such proportions, whether we suppose the world is only mental in our sense, or no."

[41] Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 15-16: "In the standard Newtonian view, bodies—the basic furniture of the physical world—were individual substances or combinations of individual substances, each endowed with certain properties, both common and special, and each exerting various attractive and repulsive forces upon the others so as to determine the exact manner in which they moved and changed their motions. The substances themselves, Newton maintained, and their essences and real properties, even the real nature and foundation of the forces they exerted upon each other, could not be discerned by our senses nor discovered by logical analysis or intuitive insight. But the actual existence of bodies was an obvious implication of ordinary sense experience; and the existence of forces and the manner in which they acted upon bodies was discoverable by careful observation and measurement of the phenomena that bodies exhibited to the senses. The order and operations of the laws of nature were thus taken to be true descriptions of the effects of those forces that were universally present in material substances." What Anderson reports in Newton is also found in Locke, who says that our experience provides us with the clear and distinct idea *that* substances (both material/ and immaterial/thinking) exist, but beyond this "our Faculties will not reach." See Locke, *Essay*, Bk. II, ch. xxiii, no. 29 (cit. supra.; Chapter 2 §III.A)

[42] See *The Mind*, no. 61, 380: "The reason why it is so exceedingly natural to me to suppose that there is some latent substance, or something that is altogether hid, that upholds the properties of bodies, is because all see at first sight that the properties of bodies are such as need some cause that shall every moment have influence to their continuance, as well as a cause of their first existence. All therefore agree that there is *something* that is there, and upholds these properties; and it is most true, there undoubtedly is. But men are wont to content themselves in saying merely that it is something; but that "something" is he by whom all things consist." (Emphasis added)

uphold the furniture of the cosmos in its continuing existence. The association of the Spirit and the Son together in the same perfect divine work is a standard move we have come to expect from Edwards, and it nudges us back to Edwards' central model for the doctrine of the Trinity, as revealed in the *Discourse* and elsewhere, that God is a perichoretic (mutually indwelling) communion of Persons. The divine (comm)union is an infinite activity of self-communication; God is beautiful communication with Himself. This self-communication is perichoretic because each Person is fully "in" the other two, a notion whose explanation has always been a challenge for the Church but which Edwards illustrates in an interesting way via his favorite mentalist analogy.[43] God is a proportional arrangement of multiplicity, a harmony, in which the Persons each communicate their respective beauty, or harmony, to one another. This God of harmonious self-communication communicates Himself—His beauty, happiness, glory, love (for these are all one)—to a finite order. It is not simply that He creates such an order so that He can then communicate with it (though that is true), but that in His act of creation (and conservation) of the cosmos He *is* communicating Himself. The act of creation is not simply a precondition that makes an overflow of divine happiness and beauty possible, it is, in its own right, such an overflow. Finally, this creative activity of God is intended not only to provide God with opportunity to communicate (by sheer delight) *with* a finite order (a harmonious relationship between God and creature), but to communicate His own beautiful essence (for Edwards, a redundancy) *to* that finite world (a harmonious inter-relational structure is embedded among creatures). Thus, the finite world itself receives, in its own form and structure, a harmonious inter-communicative existence that reflects (finitely, such as it can) the glorious happiness of God. God's harmonious communicative love for Himself, the perfection of which is so infinite that He spontaneously (not out of any necessity) delights in its overflow, is itself one of His *communicable* attributes. Thus, it *is* communicated.[44] For all created things, to be is to be communicated to, to be communicated, and to communicate.

Thus, we see Edwards taking all of his favorite terms and categories for describing being, the inherent relationality of existence, etc., even the terms and

[43] Thus forming a kind of circle, though hopefully not the 'vicious' kind that worries some logicians.
[44] This seems to be an application of divine *actus purus* that makes a play on Kant: can implies will. For God, that which *can* be communicated (i.e., that which is communicable), *will* be communicated.

categories he employed in much earlier writings, and showering them into his writings about types. A particularly striking case in point is in *Images of Divine Things*, no. 8:

> Again, it is 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. It is very observable in the visible world. Therefore 'tis allowed that God does purposely make and order one thing to be in an agreeableness with another. And if so, why should not we suppose that he makes inferior in imitation of the superior, the material of the spiritual, on purpose to have a resemblance and shadow of them? We see that even in the material world God makes one part of it strangely to agree with another; and why is it not reasonable to suppose he makes the whole as a shadow of the spiritual world?[45]

The Enlightenment philosophers who advocated a kind of natural theology agreed that the physical world "shadows forth" (taken loosely as "represents" or "transmits information about") spiritual things. But (as already said) the kind of "shadowing forth" they would affirm is nothing like the typological representation that Edwards wants to affirm. Rather, it is little more than an affirmation that we can derive some knowledge about the nature and attributes of the Creator from the "properties and constitution of the physical world."[46] In other words, learning about the creation can teach us *something* about the Creator. Edwards' view goes well beyond this. For Edwards it is not just that natural science can reveal *some* things about God in the way that the workmanship of a table tells us something of the carpenter who made it; it's that *every* created object has been designed by God to represent something spiritual. It is not simply that the carpenter is inferred from the table, nor even that his basic skill as a Craftsman can be inferred from its smooth top and intricate corners; it is that each element of the table and its surrounding context are structured in a particular way in order to show forth regarding spiritual and moral things. Something about the carpenter (or something about a non-apparent order of being in which the carpenter exists; i.e., moral and spiritual things in general) is inferred by looking at the splinters of wood, the price tag, the store shelves, etc.

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[45] *Images of Divine Things*, no. 8, 53. Note the use of "consentaneity" and "agreeableness," which are Edwards' primary terms for defining beauty/excellence/happiness in *The Mind* no. 1, 334-8.
[46] Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 15.

The belief of the Deistic philosophers, and of Newton, Locke, et. al., that the dependence of the physical world upon God is rationally demonstrable is not the same as Edwards' belief that it is immediately and continuously dependent upon God. The former is mere creationism, the view that the creation would not exist if not for the Creator. Certainly, any Deist would affirm this. But the latter view that Edwards espouses is that the creation is continually "held together" directly by God Himself. This difference leads to a disagreement about the physical sciences (or natural philosophy in general) before it generates a disagreement about typology. Edwards' natural philosophy, while it maintains the basics of a Newtonian picture (and other representative understandings of the "New Science") in terms of its understanding of the patterned phenomena observed in nature, claims that these patterns are not the result of some sort of independent "natural laws" which God put into motion at the time of creation, but are rather the result of the regular way in which God Himself governs the universe. As we saw in the previous chapter, for Edwards rocks fall because God, as primary cause, regularly "drops" them, and not only because of some inherent property in rocks (contra Aristotle) or some force in the universe external to the object (contra Newton and the scientific Enlightenment in general). For Edwards God is always "present" as primary cause in the rock's falling. God creates the rock as a such-and-such acting thing (to modify Aristotle's natural forms) or He creates the entire universe as a place which acts so-and-so upon rocks (to modify Newton's gravitational forces). The created entity (as a "secondary cause") has an activity of its own in this, but it is an activity that is continuously "indwelled" by the presence of its primary cause who makes the thing to be a thing that so acts.

Given that material things subsist in this sense in the spiritual world, Edwards' typology is seen more clearly to be an accompaniment to his rejection of materialism.[47] Against the view that all that exists is matter in motion, Edwards holds that material things not only subsist in an immaterial principle of being (God) but that they continuously exist in a necessary (substance-defining) relation of similarity (as types)

[47] See Anderson, ibid., 14: "[Edwards] had launched a philosophical attack upon materialism, and had proved to his own satisfaction that, so far from [bodies] being the only substances that exist, only God was 'properly substance.'…That outward and created things were only 'shadows' of other beings may be understood in part as reaffirming that the entire system of physical objects subsisted only in immediate and continual dependence on God. And this claim in turn was a central support for Edwards' belief that everything in nature represented spiritual things."

with immaterial things. To hold that material objects depend for their existence upon an immaterial realm is one thing (all natural theologians do so); to make all material objects continuously subsist in the immaterial realm is another (many early modern philosophers hold this with Edwards); to see that subsistence as substantial relations (relations that in part define the substance of the thing) of similarity between material and immaterial things (typology) is Edwards' unique contribution. The question, though, is how precisely does Edwards' location of the substance of all created things in God lead to his typology specifically?

III. **The World as Language**

This reiterates an issue mentioned in the previous chapter: what is the logical connection between Edwards' relational ontology and his saying that the world is as full of types as "a language is full of words?" How does Edwards progress from the view that created things are necessarily (substantively) relationally dependent upon God and upon other created things to his claim that "the whole outward creation, which is but shadows of beings, is so made as to represent spiritual things?"[48]

We are ready to reconstruct how it is that these various ideas in the text hang together. First, we must be careful when selecting analogies with which to understand the communication fundamental to the world because it is impossible for our understanding to transcend its own limitations. Edwards' ontological and cosmological readings extend, as they must, to the entire cosmos. Thus, human language and semiotic practice are bound up already in his understanding of nature. Daniel is (rightfully) suspicious on Edwards' behalf of any analogy for understanding God that models God after the pattern/conception of fallen humanity.[49] But what Daniel never escapes in his own analysis is that our understanding of signification and the basic semiotic conditions for discursive exchange are as affected by the fall of humanity (and, pre-fall, by the limitations of intelligibility inherent to the ontological divide between infinite Creator

[48] *Misc*. 362 (1730) (cit. supra.).
[49] Daniel, 2 (the dominant logic that Daniel has Edwards rejecting is one that "characterizes the cognitive procedures of sinful humanity"); 3 (the mentality Daniel sees Edwards as advocating is one that is part of a "new creation" and represents an "ontology of salvation" that displaces (for the elect) the perverted assumptions of the dominant mentality); 103 (the very question of why God creates is a "humanistic imposition" because "choice makes sense only in terms of fallen intelligibility"); etc.

and finite creature) as anything else. Because God is an ontologically inter-related Trinity of Persons, He creates a world modeled after this ontological inter-relatedness. This certainly makes "relational ontology" central to Edwards' understanding of the world, and it seems to give his typological explanations an important role in that center (since typological relations are after all a kind of relation, and since Edwards emphasizes these explanations himself). And, certainly, typology is an inherently semiotic phenomenon, and so any typologically inter-related world will be an inherently semiotic world. (Indeed, any inter-related world at all, whether or not it is understood as solely or primarily typological, will be inherently semiotic.)[50] Still, though, even this semiotic character of the universe is but a "representation or shadow," not an exact replica, of the divine archetype. The reflection is limited due to both the inherent mysteries involved in attempting to understand the infinite and due to the noetic effects of sin on fallen humanity. As such, Edwards would insist that any conclusions we draw about "divine semiotics" must be drawn carefully and conservatively.

For instance, just one obvious way in which any divine semiotic must transcend intelligibility when compared to our own is the fact that typological relationships, as understood in the *world,* establish the type as inferior to the antitype it figures in several senses.[51] But the perichoretic inter-relatedness within the Trinity (a communion of inter-relationality among *co-equals*), which serves as the ontological ground for the inter-relations in the created world, cannot be subject to such relations of inferiority-superiority. In other words, there is an important feature which is fundamental to the created system but which the system of divine semiotics cannot contain. Indeed, Edwards is explicit that he never intends to remove all mystery from the doctrine of the Trinity. Daniel asserts that for Edwards the Trinity is only mysterious for those still caught up in a "fallen" logic, but that the doctrine "is a mystery only insofar as attempts to understand

[50] Daniel, *passim*. He offers arguments to this effect throughout his book. The engine of the argument seems to be a fairly typical "postmodern" understanding of language, in which all is "text" because nothing is intelligible unmediated by contextual considerations. The postmodern terminology involved in making such arguments can only be attributed to Edwards anachronistically, but the fundamental structure of the argument seems Edwardsian.

[51] Daniel discusses the inferiority of the type briefly, 44-5. Edwards himself says that the type is inferior to the antitype at least implicitly in passages such as *Images of Divine Things,* no. 8, 53 (cit. supra.), where he says that just as God makes material things inferior to the spiritual, so also He makes the material world to be an image (and here the kind of image he has in mind is plainly a type) of the spiritual.

the nature of God insist on a non-communicative notion of persons to describe divine existence."[52] But in truth the Trinity remains mysterious for Edwards—even to the elect—which he acknowledges even after he has just given his most sustained effort in the *Discourse* to explain the Persons in communicative terms:

> But I don't pretend fully to explain how these things are, and I am sensible a hundred other objections may be made, and puzzling doubts and questions raised, that I can't solve. I am far from pretending to explaining the Trinity so as to render it no longer a mystery. I think it to be the highest and deepest of all divine mysteries still, notwithstanding anything that I have said or conceived about it. I don't pretend to explain the Trinity, but in time, with reason, may [be] led to say something further of it than has been wont to be said, though there are still left many things pertaining to it incomprehensible.[53]

With appropriate respect for the inherent limitations of all analogies for understanding the Trinity, then, we return to the thought structure of Edwards' typological methodology. Edwards' tendency to speak of types as both images and as language (as indicated even in his waffling titles for his typological notebooks)[54] indicates that he is searching for some principle of unity between "word and image."[55] Thus he says that the world is as full of types (which are a kind of image) as a language is full of words. But what are Edwards' reasons for thinking that the world should be full of things that are images of other things (a fundamental characteristic of any system of types)? This may be distinguished from two other positions which do not properly express Edwards' typology, though Edwards does hold to one of them. The three distinct propositions are as follows:

(A) The world itself, in its general structure, is an image or reflection of God.
(B) The particular objects in the world are images or reflections of God.
(C) The particular objects in the world are images or reflections of other things.

We have already confirmed throughout this study that Edwards affirms (A). For instance, his imagistic language for the Trinity in the *Discourse* represents a first move in

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[52] Daniel, 106.
[53] *Discourse,* 134.
[54] *Images of Divine Things* contained all of the following titles and subtitles: "Images of Divine Things," "The Book of Nature and Common Providence," "The Language and Lessons of Nature," "Shadows of Divine Things."
[55] Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11, 26.

a (potentially) typological direction. God is a perichoretic communion of love between the three Persons, an eternal and perfect activity of Father, Son, and Spirit together communicating their essence to one another by each being "in" the others. First, the Son is the perfect idea (image) of the Father. In knowing Himself perfectly, the Father communicates His own being to a "new" being, the Son. Second, the Holy Spirit is the mutual love between the Father and His perfect self-image (the Son). To this can be added the supposition that we explored at some length in the previous chapter that God creates the world out of delight to see His own Trinitarian glory *reflected* finitely (ad extra). Thus, the world is a finite (imperfect) image, or reflection, of God. This in and of itself does not represent a typological thesis, however, for the main contention of such a thesis is that there is an extensive network of interconnections between things within the world itself. A typological thesis is represented by (C), not (A). Of course, these imaging interconnections between particular created things can themselves serve as a support for (A). For Edwards, one way in which the world is seen to be an image of God in its general structure is because it is full of these images. A world full of inter-communicative images is an inter-communicative world, and so it resembles the inter-communicative (Trinitarian) God. It images God in a way beyond that in which a self-portrait images its artist (the smaller constituent parts of the *Mona Lisa* are not themselves images of the whole). The world images God because it is itself a world in which its various members are interconnected with one another, just as God is a Trinity in which the various Persons are interconnected. Thus, the general structure of the world reflects the Trinity *because* the world is full of types (i.e., full of things that image other things); the structure of the world is a typological structure.[56]

[56] Viewing his typological thought in this way allows us to bring out some interesting structural inter-connections. For instance, Edwards' thought structure can be looked at as a chiasm (a favorite device of Biblical poetry) in which a Trinitarian structure becomes glaringly obvious. Using the basic assertions we have traced above, and presenting them in their "logical" order (the eternal generation and spiration that "result" in the Trinity, then the creation of the world as a reflection of the Trinity, then the particular character of that created reflection) the chiasm would run like this:

(C) The Son is the perfect idea (image) of the Father.
(A) The Holy Spirit is the mutual love between the Father and His perfect self-image (the Son).
(0) God creates the world out of delight to see His own glory reflected finitely (ad extra).
(A') The world is a finite image of God.
(C') The world is full of things that image other things (types, in particular).

The centerpiece of a typological understanding of the world is that (0) God creates the world to reflect His glory. The top and bottom then resemble one another in reverse order. Mainly, an item below the center

Therefore, (B) (that particular created things all image God specifically) is well beyond anything Edwards ever claims. Some created things do image God specifically—human beings (as *imagiones Dei),* most obviously[57]—but many image other "moral and spiritual truths." The characteristic of the world's structure which makes it a reflection of the Trinity is that individual things communicate themselves to one another, not that they all as individual things image God. Of course, we are allowed at this point to infuse "images" with the full range of meaning that Edwards intends for the term. For a thing to be an image of something else is to have its substance defined (in part) by a relation of similitude to that thing it images. This results in beauty—in a harmony or proportion, or a "consent of being to being"—which is the fundamental ontological principle (to be is to be in harmonious similitude with other things).

But why types as opposed to some other sort of images? Edwards provides no explicit philosophical argument for this conclusion, though we can offer a few speculations into how an argument might go. First, given his background, Edwards is already committed to typology in a traditional (Puritan) sense, and so it is not surprising that he might then extend that in other ways. His tradition gives him the resources to make this sort of move, once he understands the creation as a reflection of the Trinity. Edwards saw his chief goal to be living his life (which includes intellectual virtue) according to the deposit of divine self-revelation found in the Scriptures. The Christian Scriptures turn out to be highly oriented towards narrative and history, in particular what theologians tend to call *redemptive* history. The Scriptures tell the story of God's covenantal interactions with His people, through their fall into sin and death and all the trials and turmoils of the Old Testament, and climaxing with the rebuilding of the world and the redemption of a people for Himself through the salvific works of Christ (who is the divine Person of the Son incarnate in human flesh). There are tightly theological

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(A') will "reiterate" or enhance the corresponding item above the center. So, for instance, the final assertion (C') images the first (C). Christ as the perfect image of the Father is the archetype of the individual images of spiritual things that exist in the world. Both involve individuals that do the imaging. Notice also that (A') images (A), as both speak of structures or communions. The whole world is put together/structured in such a way ((A')) that it images the Trinitarian community ((A): three Persons bound together in love, a "structure" in its own right). This structure is admittedly speculative, but nonetheless illuminating.

[57] As we recall, this is the basis for the substantival (psychological) analogy. The Trinity is understood as analogous to the tripartite human psyche (consciousness, idea/understanding, and will/love).

reasons why Edwards was especially keen on this historical element of Scripture.[58] The relevant point for our discussion is simply this: Scriptural history, as interpreted by Christians from the early days of the Church, is a history that is full of types. Thus, it is not surprising that a Scripturalist like Edwards, as one who is already committed to the notion that the world is full of complex and non-apparent inter-relations between things, should latch on to the types found in the Scriptural revelation of salvation history as the source for understanding those inter-relations. The way Old Testament "story elements" prefigure New Testament blessings (the greatest of these being the incarnate Son), as well as the patterning of certain physical realities (such as the Old Testament tabernacle and Temple) after a heavenly template made it difficult for Edwards to miss this source of the relations of similitude that he was looking for (because of his relational ontology) in the world.

So, given that Edwards clearly had types available to use for understanding worldwide inter-relationality, the question is how might this move be justified philosophically (remembering that at this point Edwards himself offers no explicit argument)? Perhaps it is suggestive that Edwards' notion of harmony as similarity between things is similar to Leibniz's view of harmony:

> It must not be thought that ideas…are arbitrary and that between them and their causes there is no relation of natural connection: it is not God's way to act in such an unruly and unreasoned fashion. I would say, rather, that *there is a resemblance of a kind*—not a perfect one which holds all the way through, but a resemblance *in which one thing expresses another through some orderly relationship between them*. Thus an ellipse, and even a parabola or hyperbola, has some resemblance to the circle of which it is a projection on a plane, since there is a certain precise and natural relationship between what is projected and the projection which is made from it.[59]

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[58] For instance, as a Protestant or "evangelical" Edwards viewed the human race as a collection of individuals who each stand in need of redemption; as a Calvinist he believed that such redemption only comes through God's gracious ordering of the entire cosmos, directed towards those specific souls God has elected to save; and as a covenant theologian (standard for Calvinism, but not limited to Calvinism) Edwards was prone to dwell on the historical and quasi-contractual aspects (His dealings with people on the basis of promises and curses, renewed at precise moments in history) of God's relationship to humanity throughout the Scriptural narrative.

[59] Leibniz, *New Essays* II.viii.13, in *New Essays on Human Understanding,* tr. P. Remnant and J. Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 131. Cited in Lois Frankel, "The Value of Harmony," in *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy,* 203.

For Leibniz, as with Edwards, the harmony of the world is that which "allows apparently diverse elements to be integrated."[60] Thus Leibniz says he strongly favors "inquiry into analogies," for the observed similarities between things in the world lay the foundation for his own metaphysical principles that extend to all things:

> It will be found, I claim, that all these views are in complete conformity with the analogies amongst things which come to our notice; that I am merely going on beyond our observations, not restricting them to certain portions of matter or to certain kinds of action; and that the only difference is that between large and small, between sensible and insensible"[61]

In this way Leibniz comes to say that "all bodies of the universe are in sympathy with each other."[62]

Edwards, as we have seen, does not extend the sympathy or "analogy"[63] between things to all things in the universe in relation to all other things. But like Leibniz he wishes to see all things as participating in a larger harmony; he constructs such a harmony by having all created things stand in relationships of similarity to other things (but not to *all* other things). Given Edwards' aesthetics and what we know about his view of the end for which God created the world (to be a beautiful reflection of intra-Trinitarian beauty), the harmony of a specifically typological world certainly "fits" with this overall project of understanding the world as the reflective communication of the Trinity. The harmony of the world is that apparently diverse elements are seen to be integrated. A personal (intentional, rational, loving) God who decides to create the universe as a communicative reflection of His own perfect happiness as a communion of Persons would structure things so that the created order also can be "happy" as a communion of inter-related differentiations. These differentiations must appear to be different from one another in some significant sense, so as to have the variety in the world which can then be arranged harmoniously. It seems reasonable to expect, therefore, that the world such a God would make, for such reasons, would be one in which seemingly disparate elements turn out to be similar, and do so with great frequency and

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[60] Frankel, 207-8. Frankel offers this assessment of Leibniz while commenting upon the same passage from *New Essays* cited just above.
[61] Leibniz, *New Essays* IV.xvi.12: Remnant and Bennett, 473f. Cited in Frankel, 208.
[62] Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, 33, in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, L. Loemker, ed. and tr. (Dordrecth: D. Reidel, 1969), 325. Cited in Frankel, 200.
[63] Edwards also uses the term "analogy" to describe the relations of similarity between things. E.g.: "There is a great and remarkable analogy in God's works," in *Images of Divine Things*, no. 8, 53 (cit. supra.).

even predictability (predictable, that is, if someone has access to the key). Furthermore, it is difficult to imagine a more drastic apparent difference than that between "natural" or "material" things (the physical furniture of the cosmos and the structure and laws through which that furniture interacts) and "spiritual" or "moral" things (assuming one is not a materialist who denies the existence of the latter). But typology is precisely the claim that those seemingly disparate things—physical objects and processes in the cosmos and spiritual realities—are not really as disparate as they at first seem. Thus, typology is, for Edwards, a particularly fitting way in which to understand the communication in the world by which things are seen to stand together through a similarity that often is not apparent on certain forms of analysis. Thus, Edwards' relational ontology is allowed to shine forth in the typological inter-connections among things.

Furthermore, these typological inter-relations reflect the perichoretic communion of the Trinity as well, in the sense that images "contain" that of which they are an image and at the same time the thing reflected contains its image. (Everything I see when I look at a picture of my wife is found in my wife; my wife also "indwells" her picture as the archetypal source of its being.) Taking these perichoretic qualities of images as the basic blueprint for the structure of the world as an inter-related matrix of things existing in relations of similarity is entirely novel among early modern philosophers. It is the clearest way in which Edwards' Trinitarianism enlightens him to see an alternative conception of reality to those on offer by the thinkers with whom he interacts.

IV. **Typology, Semiotics, and Trinity**

Having already discussed creational communication at length in Chapter 2, and remembering what we have said here about it representing an effort by Edwards to unite word and image together under a single analogy, we now take a closer look at Stephen Daniel's provocative interpretation of Edwards as working out a divine semiotics. Daniel correctly locates Edwards against the grain of other early modern thinkers by focusing on the communicative structure of the created world that is so central to Edwards' thought.[64]

[64] See Daniel, 6: "Edwards' extension of typology to all relations in the universe transforms what otherwise could be considered one facet of his thought into a key for his work at large. By means of his typology, Edwards supplies the clues for understanding why his strategies of argumentation hold together. As that which discloses his semiotics, therefore, Edwards' typology indicates how he is able to give an account of thought itself." Cf. ibid., 107: "…supposition becomes the hallmark of communication, and

However, he fails to recognize fully the way in which that communicative structure is for Edwards an implication of the world's creation as a reflection of the Trinity.[65]

Daniel sees in Edwards' typological thought a re-evaluation of the structures of thought themselves which, in a way not unlike some of the analysis we have done here, strikes at the heart of substantialist ontology and rationalist-empiricist ways of understanding the world. While others have taken up the question of Edwards' typological thought before,[66] Daniel argues that they have not fully seen the fundamentally *semiotic* nature of what Edwards is proposing. Edwards is, on Daniel's reading, taking up (perhaps unconsciously) Locke's provocative but largely unelaborated coinage of a new science of signs—σεμιοτικη—as the proper basis for understanding thought.[67] In so doing Daniel's Edwards ends up highlighting "differences in whole networks of discursive practices" and in so doing offers a semiotic episteme[68] based around the relations of signification (i.e., sign-signified) that replaces the "classical-modernist" way of thinking. In the classical-modernist episteme that Edwards allegedly replaces, thought and the reality about which thought performs its operations are governed by a "logic of predication." In such a logic, it is assumed that the world consists of substances and the attributes or properties that can be predicated of those substances.[69] This entire "Platonic-Aristotelian-Lockean" logic is endemic to the rational faculties of fallen humanity.[70] By contrast, the alternative offered by Edwards' semiotic commitment represents a "Stoic-Ramist" logic and ontology or a "logic of proposition/supposition,"[71] which sees the world as essentially communicative, "a system of signification in which

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communication the hallmark of being." Most citations of Daniel are taken from two of his chapters: the Introduction and the chapter in which he deals specifically with Edwards' doctrines of the Trinity and creation. In both Daniel repeatedly expresses his thesis and main argumentation in ways that are most relevant to our discussion here.

[65] As We shall see, Daniel makes Edwards' argumentation about the Trinity a function of his larger semiotic project, whereas this study argues that this reverses the true logical order of his thought.

[66] In particular, Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works* 11; and William Wainwright, "Jonathan Edwards and the Language of God," *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 48 (1980): 519-530.

[67] The famous passage where Locke coins the term "semiotics" is in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. IV, Ch. 21, §4, 720.

[68] Daniel, 11. Daniel uses the word "episteme" to describe this new way of thinking and acknowledges his debt to Foucault in so doing.

[69] Ibid., 2.

[70] See Daniel's discussions, 2, 104, 111, etc.

[71] Ibid., *passim*.

everything is united as signifier to signified, type to antitype."[72] This logic of proposition is a way of seeing the world as fundamentally made up, not of substances and their properties, but of linguistic-discursive-semiotic acts.[73] Instead of seeking the intelligibility of the cosmos in an ability to predicate of substances, the Stoic-Ramist logic Edwards employs seeks it by understanding the furniture of the cosmos as the result of discursive acts of supposition, proposition, and presupposition. These semiotic/discursive acts involve displacement: one thing is made to stand in for another and in turn grounds that which it displaces. Thus, "communication, for Edwards, is the positing of a thing as meaningful relative to that which it displaces and to which it points as its ground."[74]

This alternative perspective preempts entirely the typical modernist (i.e., foundationalist) conceptions of philosophical issues (and the continuum that these conceptions spawned among historiographers, with empiricism on the one hand and rationalism on the other). It achieves this preemption by uniting rhetoric and ontology and recognizing that all of reality (discourse) is permeated and generated by particular strategies of exchange: "Things come to be as a result of the suppositional activity of communicative exchange."[75] When engaging in signification the typical distinction between thing, idea, and word is undermined,[76] as instead things are seen to subsist in

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[72] Ibid., 2. Cf. ibid., 107 (cit. supra.): "…supposition becomes the hallmark of communication, and communication the hallmark of being."

[73] These three (linguistic, discursive, semiotic) are not equivalent, of course. Daniel uses all of them throughout his work, though, and the different ranges of meaning they are each made to carry sometimes differ only subtly. In any case, it is beyond the scope of our project here to delineate the precise meanings of these three terms in Daniel's account.

[74] Ibid., 107. Cf. ibid., 105-6, where Daniel says that all things "have significance in virtue of their displacement of one another in and as the divine discursus;" 108: "In contrast to the logic of predication—a logic that presumes the existence of things in terms of some relative place, even if only in the mind—suppositional logic defines existence in terms of the displacement of the very places that would withdraw a thing from all communicative exchange. In the logic of supposition, a thing exists insofar as it is put "into play," inscribed in and as the supposition of meaning."

[75] Ibid., 106. Cf. ibid., 2: "…performative, rhetorical practices constitute the network of discriminating behaviors by which the distinction of thing, idea, and word is first made intelligible. Magical incantations can thus bite into the world precisely because every speech is part of a network of practices awaiting social adjudication. As Foucault and Julia Kristeva point out, this way of thinking—common in the Renaissance theory of signatures—unites rhetoric and ontology in a way that is ignored in classical modernity.;" ibid., 106: "Rather than being mere metaphors, expressions about the Book of Nature and about the world as God's communication signal strategies of exchange that permeate and generate discourse;" ibid., 106: "By showing how the Trinity exemplifies the impulse to signification as communication, Edwards transforms intentionality from something that a mind or being has to what a being is."

[76] Ibid., 2.

their status as ideas and words (i.e., as particles of discursive exchange). By undercutting the distinction between rhetoric and ontology (because reality is itself discourse, a matrix of semiotic exchange), Daniel's Edwards enables us to see all of reality as essentially communicative, as there is a "divine discourse" that holds all things together and gives to all things their place. In this alternative logic, the "substance" of a thing (to speak as we have been speaking, and not as Daniel would have us speak) is defined by its locus within a divinely-ordained relationship of signification:

> In Edwards' use of such a logic, the notion of communication is expanded to include not only the procedures for guiding thought, but also 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 about God, the Trinity, creation, freedom, knowledge, and beauty.[77]

Thus, we see that Daniel reads Edwards as making the semiotic relationships of communicative discourse the context in terms of which all his other major writings and arguments are presented. Daniel has Edwards as one who thinks of communication not merely "humanistically" ("individual selves sharing ideas") or "Neo-Platonically" ("God as a subject emanates his being in creation"), in both of which cases communication is something "subsequent to being", but as "that which constitutes the very possibility" of being.[78]

Daniel provokes genuine insights into Edwards' thought insofar as he presents an Edwards for whom communication is prior to (and constitutive of) substance, a communication in which the very structure of thought itself is affected by a transformative encounter of the human creature with his Creator.[79] To lack this encounter is, indeed. to remain in a "fallen logic," and perhaps even (*per arguendo*) to remain in

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[77] Ibid., 2-3. Cf. ibid., 106 (cit. supra.): "Expressions such as 'it must be supposed' indicate less a stylistic preference than an ontological requirement. Things come to be as a result of the suppositional activity of communicative exchange."

[78] Ibid., 2. Cf. ibid., 108: "In virtue of its presupposition of God, the world has meaning and being. Indeed, the possibility that the world is intelligible at all implies its supposition of something other than itself as the ground for its rationality."

[79] Ibid., 109. "In other words, the existence of God is the requirement that all existence be communicative, intentionally disposed to and grounded in that which gives meaning in virtue of being other. To say that the world exists means that it points to its displacement as that which gives it meaning." Cf. ibid., 107: "In discerning this new meaning of person, he displays the kind of being capable of participating in the process of redemption. "Putting on the new man" requires a radical change not only in one's personality, but also in what personhood itself is. By clarifying the notion of personhood in the Trinity, Edwards provides the model to be emulated by those aspiring to salvation."

something very close to what Daniel calls the Classical-Modernist "logic of predication." Furthermore, the influence of Peter Ramus and his attempt to craft a non-Aristotelian logic was certainly influential among the Puritans, and thus Edwards would have been influenced by Ramus through his studies of logic both as a student and later a tutor at Yale.

Nevertheless, critical questions concerning Daniel's reading of Edwards arise in a number of places. These have mostly to do with the logical order of Daniel's account. The major inspiration of Edwards' reappraisal of ontology along relational lines and his application of such an ontology to the entire world as a world full of types is his reliance upon the Trinity as a source of philosophical exploration. This Trinitarian inspiration may take him in a "semiotic" direction, properly conceived, but this direction is a result of other commitments for Edwards, rather than the source of those other commitments. But Daniel subordinates the Trinity, logically, to the semiotic project. Daniel inverts the order of Edwards' thought, taking Edwards' semiotic reconstruction of reality as the key to reading his writings and arguments in other areas: an ontology of signs or semiotics "justifies his arguments about God, the Trinity, creation, freedom, knowledge, and beauty,"[80] and the Persons of the Trinity are just "like all other persons," having their significance "in virtue of their displacement of one another in and as the divine discursus."[81] The difference here may appear subtle, but this does not diminish its importance. For instance, it is hard not to read these comments from Daniel monistically, as the one divine discursus underlies all reality, divine and created, and is simply "exemplified" in an internal way and an external way.[82] The problem is not with the distinction between "internal" and "external" exemplification: we have seen Edwards use the traditional language of *ad extra/ad intra* to characterize the communicative inter-relations within the Trinity and the communicative inter-relations in the created world. The problem remains for Daniel because as he goes on to say, "The distinction of internal and external, though, itself relies on the activity of supposition. Therefore, the logic to which it appeals frustrates attempts to speak of God or creation other than in terms of the

[80] Ibid., 3 (cit. supra.)
[81] Ibid., 105-6 (cit. supra.).
[82] Ibid., 107.

very pronouncements in which they are embedded."[83] God and creation are together equally embedded within a larger context that unites them both and defines each of their existences. This is so despite Daniel's aside in the next paragraph that "of course" the two logics are as different as are "God and the world."[84] The question, though, is not whether Edwards thinks that God and the world are different (we have seen that he certainly does think so), but how it is that he justifies that claim within the semiotic structure of his thought.[85] For Edwards semiotic activity and communication underlie all created reality because the triune God underlies all reality, and God is inherently communicative. The semiotic structure is not something which then guides our reading of Edwards' writings on the Trinity; his doctrine of the Trinity (perichoretic communion of loving inter-relationality) guides our understanding of the semiotic structure.

Daniel would seem to want to write off this notion of God underlying reality as a vestige of the "logic of predication" that he claims Edwards rejects: it conceives of God

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[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., 6. This is a major way that Daniel couches his own project in the book. The upshot of a semiotic analysis is that it enables us to understand how systems of signs function efficaciously "in permitting claims of argumentation to proceed;" ibid. Daniel is not interested in explaining what Edwards' view is, so much as in understanding how he looks at the world in such a way that justifies that view. "Accordingly, without denying that an understanding of Edwards' thought benefits from references to his predecessors, I focus on the conditions of communicative exchange that make both his thought and theirs intelligible;" ibid., 9. In his chapter on the Trinity, Daniel applies this method with rigor against other commentators:

> When Paula Cooey writes that, for Edwards, "Divine creativity is the process by which divine being enlarges itself by communicating its own fullness," she certainly captures Edwards' mood of expansive profusion. But what does it mean to say that being enlarges itself by communicating fullness? When Robert Jenson says of Edwards' natural philosophy, "The world of bodies is the *between* of their communication," he invokes the imagery of spatial distance overcome by the meeting of minds. But why does Edwards' doctrine of communication require that he treat bodies this way? When Thomas Schafer reports that the doctrine of excellency at the heart of Edwards' concept of being presumes the inherent multiplicity of being, he suggests that "consent to being" is the communication of harmony. But why does Edwards assume that the excellency of being requires multiplicity? And when Delattre approvingly quote[s] Edwards' circular remark that God's goodness is the disposition to communicate good, he grants Edwards the latitude of a preacher less concerned with philosophical clarity than with edification. But how is communication always already dispositional? Without answering such questions, we allow the central concept of communication to slip by without seeing how Edwards' use of it thoroughly undermines the classical-modernist dogmas in terms of which it continues to be misunderstood and in terms of which his pronouncements can be dismissed all too easily as rhetorical embellishments. (ibid., 104-5)

Daniel is looking for an interpretation of Edwards' thought that does not merely describe Edwards' view, but which enlightens the context of underlying assumptions that make such a view possible in the first place. This is a worthwhile goal. When it comes to explaining how Edwards can distinguish God and the creation, Daniel's own account runs out of runway and he retreats to simply describing Edwards' view.

as a "subject" causing the existence of other things and it posits a foundation in terms of which all other things can be understood.[86] Perhaps the radical nature of Edwards' ontology does require a reevaluation of what it means to be a "subject" just as it does for what it means to be a "person." But to affirm God as the underlying cause of all other things is not a mistake of "classical-modernist" ontology, according to Edwards: rather, it is the old-time religion. As we have seen in many places within Edwards' writings, it is as things are.[87]

There are occasions in his analysis in which Daniel almost makes the Trinity fundamental. One such place is when he discusses the basic relationship between the activity of God and the intelligibility of concepts such as being and subjectivity (or what Daniel generally refers to as "intention"):

> In the propositional logic of semiotics, on the other hand, there is no way to consider the subject meaningfully apart from its participation in an activity (e.g., of being related as a trinity, of creating a world). To ask why God creates can miss the point that God is intelligible only in his Trinitarian relations or creative acts. Because intelligible being and intention emerge in Trinitarian distinction and creation, being and intention can occupy no logical place prior to such emergence.[88]

So here we seem to have God-as-Trinity as the contextualizing wellspring for the intelligibility of all subsequent thought about being and subjectivity. Furthermore, Daniel acknowledges Edwards' very real concern (and one common among Calvinists) not to subordinate God to any other 'external' standard:

> To attempt to justify creation would be to attempt to justify or give a reason for supposition. Since supposition is the communicative procedure by which the strategy of giving reasons is established, supposition cannot itself be supposed by a standard of justification without immediately being

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[86] Ibid., 1: "From the perspective of Stoic-Ramist ontology, the classical-modern problems of epistemology and metaphysics are born out of a misdirected search for some ultimate foundation in terms of which everything else can be understood." Cf. 102: "Because discourse itself (in such an account) is about things in relation to one another, it cannot challenge the assumption that the world is populated by substances whose objects and objectives have meaning in terms of their relation to some subject. Like all other substances, God must accordingly be related intentionally to other things, either as the object or objective of their actions or as an underlying subject causing their existence."

[87] God is the Creator of all things. God sustains all things (and actually constitutes their substance) by a continuous act of His power. God designed the world to reflect His own beauty, happiness, and glory. The Trinity is the archetype of which finite creatures (especially human) are reflections. As a minister Edwards subscribed to the Westminster Confession of Faith, which clearly asserts that God unchangeably ordains "whatsoever comes to pass." (*WCF* III.1; cit. supra.)

[88] Ibid., 103.

> reinstated as the procedure by which justice is first enacted. Though the fitness or harmony of things in creation exhibits the operation of divine justice, there is no obligation to be just that induces God to create. For if it is fit, right, or just for God to create, then the standard for what God must or ought to do is somehow prior to him.[89]

And so Daniel correctly sees that for Edwards there can be no "standard" that is prior to God. God would seem to be the one who is "prior" to all other things, which would include any human discursive practices about justification and the rules that govern those practices. This would appear to make God, then, the fundamental principle or ground in terms of which all other things can be understood. Yet, even here Daniel's expression of what Edwards would take as a basic truth is also couched in error, as it denies the coherence of the very attempt to justify creation. Edwards, however, devotes a dissertation to this very subject—*The End for which God Created the World*. Daniel seems to be substituting "supposition" when "God" will do quite well for the Calvinistic-Edwardsian conception of a being (activity) who is not governed by any prior standard. God is not supposition itself, and thus there is no *in se* problem with the "attempt to justify or give a reason for supposition." Trying to give such a reason for God causes some serious epistemological and metaphysical problems. God is the infinite community of Persons who comprehends all being, and thus all communicative human activity, in Himself. Edwards sees God as the ultimate who cannot be justified or explained but must simply be accepted as the source of all other things.

Contrary to Daniel, though, Edwards' devotion to God as the one beyond all standards is not just a philosophical devotion to an idea or to a "network of discursive practices" (i.e., to a logic of supposition in which God is a necessary object of displacement). It is rather a personal (intentional, loving) devotion to a God who, in Edwards' mind, is a person (intentional love). To risk another humanistic analogy, Edwards' understanding of God as prior to any other standard is not meant to make God out to be a standard (abstract and impersonal), but to acknowledge that God is the one in Whom all standards consist. It is not that God *is* a standard, but that He is the one Who *sets* all standards. These standards are what set out the boundaries of our own existence, however. Our existence as finite reflections of the perfect harmonious inter-

[89] Ibid., 111.

communication within the Trinity sets the limits for our understanding that cannot be transgressed. We are communicative beings, and we find ourselves living in a communicative universe. But, we cannot get behind the "veil" of our own finitude-bound creaturely expressions of that communication to the "nature" of the divine communication itself. Despite all that Edwards is willing to say about that communication—that is the essential activity of the Godhead by which the three Persons mutually interpenetrate and communicate themselves to one another—this is a creaturely pass at understanding (through high-powered reason) the revelations of God about Himself, and it is never thought by Edwards to exhaust the truth of God's perfect existence.

A further problem, again related to the previous issues, is that Daniel overplays the purpose of Edwards' distinction between elect and reprobate reason and logic. Certainly, Edwards defends the Calvinist doctrine of "double predestination"[90] repeatedly in his writings, and this doctrine is a theme of major importance to him. But the failure in Daniel's analysis is that he mistakes the use and function of this doctrine for Edwards. It is standard-issue Calvinism to hold that the sinful nature into which every postlapsarian human being is born effects the entire person, including their mind. The "noetic" effects of sin are such that non-redeemed people, people who have not been regenerated by the Holy Spirit so that they may enjoy the benefits of their election, quite literally think differently than do the elect. That Edwards defends this notion is, thus, no surprise, and the particular arguments and rhetorical strategies he employs in doing so are of interest to many scholars who have studied his thought. But this doctrine deals with a person's ability, or lack thereof, to understand the world rightly. The presupposition for such a

[90] "Double predestination" is the doctrine that holds that the eternal destiny of all people—both those who go to Heaven *and* those who go to Hell—is settled in a pre-historical decree of God which is based on God's own inscrutable reasons and not on any merit or demerit, or worthiness or lack thereof, in the person whose destiny is decreed. Other Christian determinists in the Augustinian tradition, such as Augustine and Luther, argued for a divine decree to save all those who shall receive eternal salvation—but for the non-elect there simply is no decree at all. The non-elect go to Hell under the weight of their own wills, and require no predestinating decree from God. Calvinists generally wanted to assert a decree for both elect and non-elect. However, in the case of (the majority) those who rejected "high" Calvinism (i.e., who rejected supralapsarianism: the doctrine that God's decree to damn is prior to His decree to allow the fall; under this doctrine, God damns a reprobate person for all eternity while considering them as not (yet) fallen), the substantive distinction between "double" and "single" predestination becomes a matter of some doubt. For "soft" Calvinists (in terms of the late 16th and early 17th century internecine debates, these were called "infralapsarians"), God's decree to damn is wholly "passive." That is, God considers the direction a person will take on their own and simply "decrees" to allow that outcome to come to pass.

doctrine would seem to be that some perspectives through which the world is understood are more accurate than others, but this presupposition is entirely undercut by Daniel's anti-foundationalist analysis of Edwards. The problem is not anti-foundationalism per se, and, indeed, Daniel is probably correct when he says that Edwards' way of understanding the world renders the typical modern debates over foundationalism moot. However, this is not because Edwards rejects, as Daniel says he does, that "there is some ultimate foundation in terms of which everything else can be understood."[91] For the triune God is precisely such a foundation for Edwards. Modern disputes about foundationalism arise because philosophers improperly try to work within the confines of a spectrum of belief about knowledge of such a foundation in which the options range from a "realist" or "foundationalist" affirmation that human beings can have such knowledge to "anti-realist" or "coherentist" denials that such knowledge is ever possible. But the position of Edwards (and here he is hardly unique) is that such knowledge is impossible for human beings, but is part and parcel of God's self-understanding. God is the foundation in which all other things are set and understood, and God knows Himself. So God has "foundational" knowledge. God sees things from the perspective of eternity (*in specie aeternitatis)*. Human beings can have no such certainty for themselves, though they can rest (if elect) in their communion with the one Who can.

For Edwards, the ways of thinking employed by human beings, even those who are elect, can never define the structure of the world in anything but a derivative sense, because it is *God's* thinking and activity that structures the world, not that of any creature. It is true that the structure through which we think about the world effects what the world is like *for us*—and thus the import of the two very different psychologies and logics of the elect and the non-elect—but this does not in any way necessitate that the fundamental structure of the world changes. That fundamental structure is sustained by God, who is unchanging (as we have already discussed in the previous chapter). This underlying structure is communicative, as Daniel contends, but it is not communicative in such a way that even God is somehow bound up in a process of communicative exchange with humans, unintelligible apart from the concept of such an exchange, etc. The communicative process that underlies the world is the eternal communication between

[91] Daniel, 1.

the three persons of the Trinity. The world is a created reflection of that communicative process, but it does not effect it. This means that Daniel's particular notion of communication that he wants to assign to Edwards' ontology is inaccurate.

Daniel would likely dismiss this analysis as more of the same classical-modernist malaise that keeps Edwards trapped in a logic of predication and a substantialist ontology. Perhaps he would apply to it a similar analysis as that which he provided to those who describe the relations of the persons of the Trinity "by using the derivative vocabulary of humanist subjectivity":

> Instead of following Edwards' clue that something very different from our ordinary understanding of the integrity of human functions characterized moral selfhood, this approach legitimates fallen, human subjectivity by transposing it onto the Trinity. By beginning with the self as a subject, it subordinates the communication of the Trinity to a series of relations among the three persons of the Trinity, without questioning how the concept of person itself relies on God's being essentially communicative.[92]

Of course, as we have already seen, it is a misunderstanding of the psychological analogies, in both Augustine's use of them as well as in that of Edwards, to read them as an imposition of human subjectivity onto the Trinity. Rather, they represent an acknowledgment of the inherent gratuity of God's activities in the world and view human activity (including human psychology) as always already a gift from God that is meant to reflect the activities within the Trinity. Daniel performs a great service by questioning the validity of overlaying such a humanistic approach onto Edwards, and it is true that the Trinity allows him to escape it. Edwards does indeed seem to advance an altogether different episteme than that of the classical-modernist perspective. But it is not primarily an episteme of semiotic exchange, but an episteme of created cosmological reflection of Trinitarian beauty. That beauty can be characterized as semiotic, but more specifically it is typological in nature. This is a particular kind of communicative exchange of signification that, in Edwards' mind, is a natural result of his perichoretic understanding of the Trinity and of the relational ontology by which created things are substantively defined in part by relations of similarity with other things. These specifics of Edwards' account are blurred or fade into obscurity on Daniel's account, despite its general

[92] Daniel, 104.

helpfulness in pointing the way to a communicative understanding of Edwards' philosophy.

Again, the importance of the Trinity as the source of all these formulations cannot be overstated. William Wainwright, like Daniel, is another who correctly constructs Edwards' argument for a typological world on the basis of the world's status as a reflection of divine beauty: "Because our world is a world of resemblances and imitations, because spiritual things are its 'alpha and omega,' and *because* its beauty is a reflection of God's beauty, our world can be expected to contain images or shadows of divine things."[93] Wainwright reconstructs Edwards as offering three separate arguments that it is reasonable to believe in a typological world; i.e., Edwards does not offer a deductive argument that proves the world is in fact typological, but rather aims to show that a typological world *coheres* with other things we know about the world.[94] According to Wainwright's reconstruction, Edwards thinks it is reasonable to believe in a typological world for the following reasons:

(1) "God's visible works evince a delight in analogy, similarity, agreement, and harmony." Thus, given a world in which things resemble one another, "types and emblems are to be expected."[95]

(2) Because it is an "axiological" fact that governs the world that spiritual things are the apex of God's works, we should expect it to be a world full of natural types and emblems that connect to those things.[96]

(3) The world is created to be a reflection of the divine beauty. "Secondary, or natural, beauty is an image of primary, or spiritual, beauty."[97]

From these, Wainwright then argues that the fact of a typological world, once accepted, provides us with resources for an implicit teleological argument for theism. Because emblems and allegories are "decipherable messages," their existence "presupposes the

[93] Wainwright, 519 (abstract; emphasis added).
[94] Ibid., 522-3. The first two arguments are culled exclusively from comments Edwards makes in *Images of Divine Things*. The last argument is rooted in comments from *The Nature of True Virtue*. Wainwright then goes on to argue that the reasons Edwards has for thinking that the world is *in fact* typological (not simply that it is reasonable to think that it is so) come from Scripture. Wainwright compartmentalizes these Scriptural reasons from the more "philosophical" reasons for thinking that it is reasonable to believe in types.
[95] Ibid., 522.
[96] Ibid., 523.
[97] Ibid.

existence of an intelligent mind which invents them. An emblematic world is thus a theistic (or at least polytheistic) world."[98]

The shortcoming of Wainwright's reconstruction is only that he does not properly acknowledge the place of the Trinity, which seems (as Wainwright states the matter) to have no logical place in Edwards' typological thought structure. It must be acknowledged, rather, that for Edwards typology is a method for understanding the world that does more than simply cohere with some generic "theism." Rather, the Trinity specifically is what fundamentally holds Edwards' thinking about typological reflections of beauty together.[99] The beauty of God which the created world is supposedly imaging is the beauty of three Divine persons existing in an eternal perichoretic harmony. This is the "primary beauty" of which all other beauty is a shadow. This is the harmony which God pours out into the creation of the world, and which necessitates a world that images the perichoretic God by harmonizing with itself in a matrix of symbolically interrelated parts. Thus, Wainwright's construction is not incorrect as far as it goes so much as it simply does not go far enough. Wainwright's account has Edwards looking at the world typologically because the beauty of God is reflected in the world, but the typological account of the world Edwards is giving is fuller than this with respect to the *sort* of beauty it postulates. It is not beauty per se, or beauty simpliciter, or beauty in general, that the world is reflecting, but the particular sort of inter-related beauty of harmonious similarity that Trinitarianism (on Edwards' reading) attributes to God, the perichoretic unity of seemingly disparate elements into a community of eternal love and inter-relation. It is specifically *Trinitarian* beauty that the world mimics, and which thus brings Edwards (and any who would follow him) to expect a typological sort of world.

Thus, without Edwards' doctrine of the Trinity, Wainwright's account of Edwards' view does not explain: why there should be a creation at all; why the world that *is* created should feature spiritual things as its apex; or, most importantly, why it should be a world in which natural beauty resembles spiritual beauty. In other words, the three premises in Wainwright's cumulative construction of three separate arguments for a

[98] Ibid., 525.

[99] Like Wainwright, I do not mean to say that the Trinity proves the world is typological in a deductive sense. Framing the issue as one of coherence with underlying principles is a wiser move. The disagreement between my interpretation and Wainwright's is over the source of the underlying principles with which a typological world coheres (a general theism or a specifically Trinitarian theism).

typological world are not simply givens, but are rooted already in Edwards' Trinitarian way of looking at the world. Given that the these three things obtain, a typological world might be coherent with their obtaining, but *why* do they obtain? For Edwards, God creates as a spontaneous and gracious overflow of His own perfect divine activity, motivated by sheer delight, in which overflow He seeks to see His own intra-Trinitarian beauty/harmony reflected in the created world. Thus, the very expression of the doctrine of creation (in Edwards' version) already contains a commitment to the world as designed for the purpose of reflecting the divine beauty. But the divine beauty, as we have seen, consists for Edwards in the perichoretic inter-connection of seemingly disparate Persons. Therefore, it is coherent to expect the world to be full of typological connections between natural and spiritual things (which also seem quite disparate on first analysis).

V. **World as Literature**

Given the elements (word and image) that Edwards is trying to bring together into unity through his understanding of relational ontology and typological communication, there is another analogy that might suggest itself to those who wish to understand Edwards' view of the world in its relationship to God. Typology, after all, is an analytical structure used by those who study literature. Thinking of God as an author and the world as His carefully and lovingly crafted story arc also helps explain Calvinist "secondary" causation. It is an implication of Edwards' determinism (his Calvinistic belief in plenary divine providence that somehow coexists alongside secondary causes) combined with his doctrine of perpetual creation (that makes the world "tightly" controlled by God such that every moment is subject to divine prerogative and is a unique fulfillment of the divine plan for history). Yet, all of these unique events also hold together with a proportional beauty. Thus, an analogy to authorship seems very close; the sort of control God has over the world is similar to the sort of control that is possessed by an author over his story. At every moment in the story, the author recreates the world and the characters anew, always working the plot towards his overarching purpose and always providing new opportunities for the principals of the story to reveal their characters. Within the story we never think of the characters as anything but free as they accomplish such revelations

(unless, perhaps, the author deliberately makes questions about fatalism a part of the plot). The author of the story exerts a full but atemporal (from the perspective of anyone "in" the story) control over the story and the characters.[100] He acts as the ultimate, primary, and complete cause of all the events that happen in the story, and yet the characters are not automata. The author writes his characters as such-and-such, he creates so-and-so acting characters. It is not that (in a story) Bob cheats on his wife because the storywriter "made" him cheat (as an immediate efficient cause at that moment), but rather Bob cheats on his wife because the storywriter made him the sort of character who performs cheating actions. Bob is very much the "secondary" cause of his own actions.

This suggests an interesting correspondence between Edwards' typological project and the approach taken by the dictionarian Peter Bayle. Thomas Lennon sketches an exchange between Leibniz and Bayle in which Lennon characterizes Bayle's occasionalist opposition to Leibniz's preestablished harmony as providing the foundation for a "narratological" approach to God's activity within the world.[101] The necessity with which God acts in the world as the only real cause is for Bayle a "narratological" necessity, as Lennon explains:[102]

> [Occasionalism provides us with] a God who acts, not mechanically, but as a character does in a story. What the appeal to God provides, according to occasionalism, is not the logical necessity that Hume failed to find between finite events (or anywhere else) but what might be called *narrative necessity*. 'God said, let there be light: and there was light.' Had there not been light, God would have been acting out of character, not violating the law of noncontradiction. Had the darkness prevailed, the puzzle would have been, not logical, but narratological.[103]

[100] "Atemporal" because, from the perspective of Hamlet, there is no way of knowing whether the event that just happened was written into the story from the beginning or whether it was added later as a modification of a previous plot outline. In other words, the author and his story operate on two entirely different timelines, just as do creatures and their God (with the difference being that God is on a "different" timeline than His creatures because He is not on a timeline at all).
[101] Thomas M. Lennon, "Mechanism as a Silly Mouse: Bayle's Defense of Occasionalism Against the Preestablished Harmony," in *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy*, 179-196.
[102] Lennon, 190f.
[103] Lennon, 190.

Narrative is "time in which novel events take place."[104] But what is the key value of viewing "divine interventions in human history" as narratological? It is that viewing them in this way makes such interventions "unique events not open to generalization:"

> Bayle's interest was not in exploring the mechanical explanations offered by physical astronomy, but in safeguarding the explanations offered by the Bible…It is a story that perforce involves unique events like the incarnation of the only begotten Word of God….Occasionalism, then, is the view that best shows God to act meaningfully in the divine drama that is human history.[105]

If we read Edwards along similar lines as Lennon reads Bayle (not delaying any longer over the question of "occasionalism"),[106] then, we can see in this "narratological" approach to the world not only a good "fit" with Edwards' typological methodology (which makes the world literary and symbolic) but with his interest in the world as the stage of God's unfolding plan in (redemptive) *history*. Habits and dispositions are lawlike because an all-powerful God runs the universe, yet He wishes to do so in a way that reflects His own inter-related glory (so things are inherently related to other things) and also in a way that dramatically unfolds the redemption and restoration of the elect to the way of existence consisting in enjoyment of the divine harmony. So, God creates the world as an unfolding drama that can be interpreted and understood much as a student of literature analyzes a novel. When Edwards makes the world out to be as full of symbols as a language is full of words, and when he emphasizes this "narratological" unifying structure to the apparently diverse elements in the world, he is constructing a literary cosmology.

For Edwards, the history of the world is a story with a discernible plot structure (at least for the elect who have eyes to see and ears to hear); what happens at the beginning of the story foreshadows what happens at the end, and just as students of

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[104] Lennon, 193. An arguably rare occurrence in which a philosopher's definition is far more useful than the dictionary's!

[105] Lennon, 191-2.

[106] In addition to their difference over occasionalism, there is also a significant difference in the way Edwards' narratological approach would have to be understood in relation to Bayle's. Whereas Bayle speaks of God as a character in the story ("narratological necessity" is the necessity of God to act in character), Edwards speaks of God as the author of the story. Edwards is more concerned to speak of God as the one who gratuitously establishes the narratological context in which all the things in the world inter-relate. It is worth pointing out as well, though, that the two accounts, though different, are obviously not mutually exclusive. God as author of the story can also act within the story as a character, and for Edwards God certainly does just this.

literature can discuss such foreshadowing in any other well-composed novel so can the elect discern them in the flow of real-world history. But furthermore, as in any other well-crafted narrative, there is also beauty (i.e., proportional harmony) beyond the chronological proportion (where beginning foreshadows end) among the elements of the story itself. The characters, plot devices, and symbols also inter-relate in a matrix of representation.

This has potentially some far-reaching effects in the way those who study history should view their task. If history has essentially become a literary realm made real (so that quite literally we can say the truth is more real than fiction), then the historian can no longer avoid ascribing an *arché* to history. The only question is whether he ascribes it rightly or wrongly. Thus, the realm of history becomes a true-life "morality play;" we are all types and thus characters on the stage, speaking and communicating information about our Playwright whether we intend to do so or not, either telling the truth about Him or lying about Him. We cannot simply "unplug" ourselves from social connection and moral obligation to others, because we are created to reflect the harmony of God. Thus, history for Edwards becomes the accurate re-telling of the past characters and how they fit into the story and shaped it in ways that were noble or less so. The historian becomes a dramatist. It becomes unavoidable that we live in a universe in which everyone has a part to play.

CONCLUSION

Historically, the most discussed of Edwards' writings have been his ethical treatises and the view of history that is evident in such accounts as *The History of Redemption*. Along with certain of his theological commentators, this dissertation has focused instead on Edwards' Trinitarian formulations and how those influence his ontological and cosmological insights into the world. It was maintained in the Introduction that these Trinitarian commitments also shed light on Edwards' other major works. The purpose of this conclusion is to offer a brief sketch of how Edwards' ethical and historical writings are influenced by his Trinitarianism.

I. **History as Trinitarian Narrative**

From the beginning the orthodox traditions in Christianity claimed historical veracity for central redemptive events in the Scriptures, and Edwards' own Calvinistic tradition with its emphasis on "covenant theology" brought this concern for historicity into still deeper focus.[1] But Edwards goes further still, setting aside historiography as a bold new method of doing *theology* itself:

> I have had on my mind and heart, (which I long ago began, not with any view to publication,) a great work, which I call a History of the Work of Redemption, *a body of divinity in an entire new method, being thrown into the form of a history*; considering the affair of Christian Theology, as the whole of it, in each part, stands in reference to the great work of redemption by Jesus Christ; which I suppose to be, of all others, the grand design of God, and the *summum* and *ultimum* of all the divine operations and decrees; particularly considering all parts of the grand scheme, in their historical order.[2]

The redemptive work of Christ in created history is the greatest and highest of *all* the divine operations and decrees. Thus, Edwards makes historical events in the creation central to understanding God (the Trinity) Himself. The *ad extra* reflections/operations of

[1] Thomas Schafer, "Editor's Introduction," *Works* 9, 41f.
[2] Letter to Trustees of the College of New Jersey (Princeton), cited in *Works* 9, 62. Emphasis added.

the inter-Triune harmony, the understanding of which has usually been labeled "theology proper" by theologians and Christian philosophers, are summed up in this particular series of historical events. The dogmas of orthodox theology are intractably connected to a proper understanding of a succession of historical occurrences in the created order:

> The order of their existence, or their being brought forth to view, in the course of divine dispensations, or the wonderful series of successive acts and events; beginning from eternity, and descending from thence to the great work and successive dispensations of the infinitely wise God, in time, considering the chief events coming to pass in the church of God, and revolutions in the world of mankind, affecting the state of the church and the affair of redemption, which we have an account of in history or prophecy; till at last, we come to the general resurrection, last judgment, and consummation of all things; when it shall be said, *It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End*.—Concluding my work, with the consideration of that perfect state of things, which shall be finally settled, to last for eternity.[3]

We notice that even the eternal perfect existence of the inter-Trinitarian harmony itself is somehow included in this history, which begins with "eternity" before moving into a discussion of the "successive dispensations" of God "in time." The historical theology Edwards envisions charts a course from the perfect Trinitarian harmony to the various *ad extra* reflections of that harmony in the creation, which combine to tell a particular kind of story about the redemption of the created world from its bondage to sin and death, including both the Scriptural narratives of the lives of the Old Testament saints which climax in the story of Christ and the post-revelation history of the Christian Church and its many struggles and triumphs amidst human culture. The historical study then re-ascends to the everlasting state of the world after the final consummation of Christ's rule (what Christians have often referred to as the "last judgment").

Thus, historiography is the medium, according to Edwards, that allows "all parts of divinity" to be presented in the most "scriptural" as well as "natural" way; it represents a method of understanding God and the world which shows the "harmony of the whole."[4]

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[3] Ibid, 62-3.

[4] Ibid., 63: "This history will be carried on with regard to all three worlds, heaven, earth and hell; considering the connected, successive events and alterations in each, so far as the scriptures give any light; introducing all parts of divinity in that order which is most scriptural and most natural; a method which appears to me the most beautiful and entertaining, wherein every divine doctrine will appear to the greatest advantage, in the brightest light, in the most striking manner, showing the admirable contexture and harmony of the whole."

Every divine doctrine (i.e., theology) is allowed to hold together in an integrated and beautiful manner through the task of organizing such a historical account. This integration of the entire "grand scheme" God has put in place in His interaction with the world is the task of the historian, or at least the task of the historian pursuing the highest possible ends. For Edwards the theologians' task is to write such a history in which the eternal harmony of the Trinity is shown to operate within the temporal world it creates in order to establish and maintain that world as an everlasting harmony in its own right.

It is also significantly Trinitarian of Edwards that he discusses the redemptive work of Christ as the center of this historiographic project. Edwards regards Christ in explicitly Trinitarian terms throughout his *History of Redemption.* As Thomas Schafer has written, "Unlike the preoccupation with the human Jesus as a historical figure which developed in the nineteenth century, culminating in sentimental portrayals of Jesus as an everlasting contemporary and a moral exemplar, Edwards' interest was in the second person of the Trinity and the central salvific exchange attributed to Christ."[5] In his history of redemption, Edwards does not speak of Christ primarily as a great human leader (though certainly Edwards affirms the orthodox position that Christ is fully human), but rather emphasizes His status as the second person of the Trinity. It is the eternal image of the Father and the perfect Idea of the divine communication, who serves as the centerpiece of Edwards' historical project. History, therefore, is the study of the organization and revealed progression of the *ad extra* reflection of the Trinity in the world. Christ is the one in whom the eternal *ad intra* Trinitarian perfection is revealed most clearly to the *ad extra* creation. This is why, in telling the story of created (human) history with Christ's redemptive work as the central series of events, the historian is enabled to bring all the doctrines of theology into harmony. Christ is the perfect image of the Trinitarian harmony who harmonizes the events of the created order that reflects that Trinitarian harmony. It is thus as a historian, as an accurate story-teller of Christ's work

[5] *Works* 9, 41-42. The same passage continues: "…That this Christ became human, and radically enough human to achieve the salvation intended, was the important point. It was the actuality of the incarnation—the reality as God-man—that mattered, not the details of the life, or even, for that matter, its integrity as a human life, except insofar as that was required for the incarnation to be genuine. In this respect also he was arguing from a very traditional perspective."

on earth as it fits within the broader context of the whole of human history, that the theologian best pinpoints creation's status as the reflection of Trinitarian harmony.[6]

Edwards' interest in typology also reinforces this historical project. This is so because, while we have seen that Edwards moves beyond the chronological use of Scriptural types that characterized most Puritan exegesis into a metaphysical use that sees the inter-relations implied by many Scriptural types as constitutive of created being itself, we have also seen that he does not reject the characteristic Puritan usage of types. The types of the Old Testament are most simply understood as prefiguring images of the greater revelation that shines forth in the era inaugurated by Christ, and this chronological and narratival use of typology was at the core of Edwards' theological training under Puritan masters in his childhood household and at Yale. His Trinitarian reflections allow Edwards to tie the metaphysical and historical elements of typology together, as we saw in Chapter 3. Edwards' ability to envision a new theological method that is historical at its core also hints suggestively at this union between ontological reflection of "higher" truths and narratival precursors to "later" events that are both found in his treatment of types.

The purpose of Edwards' historical project is to secure the course of human events in time and space as the stage on which a divine drama is unfolding in accordance with a script that was written by the three Persons of the Trinity from eternity. An eternal plan is being worked out in the temporal world of human history. That plan is one of redemption, and in it Edwards sees God manifesting His glory and beauty to the world as a God who is always gracious and loving (harmoniously inter-related and inter-penetrated). Edwards seeks to show meticulously from Scripture that all three Persons of the Trinity are engaged eternally in an act of guiding the events of the world towards its redemption into a complete glory and maturity the hope of obtaining which was obscured at the Fall. Humanity and the entire creation is being restored to its proper state of harmonious reflection of the eternal and infinite harmony of the Trinity. Sufficiently establishing this broad vision of history requires Edwards to take on a number of polemical, philosophical, and hermeneutical-exegetical projects that serve to bolster the

[6] Another commentator who has also advocated a strong connection between Edwards' historical project and his Trinitarianism is Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards' Philosophy of History*, passim. See Introduction, §I, §II.

main picture. In fact, all of Edwards' major published works at the end of his life and after his death can be seen as revolving around the central project found in *A History of Redemption*: *On Freedom of the Will* (1754), *Original Sin* (1758), *The End for Which God Created the World* (1765), *The Nature of True Virtue* (1765). These projects all stand on their own as particular discourses aimed precisely at their own topics, yet they also are aimed together at a larger goal of establishing the Trinitarian shape of history.

For instance, Edwards' Calvinist polemical works, *Freedom of the Will* and *Original Sin*, are both situated in this historical project. Each of these works has a parallel double goal: to uphold the sovereign authority of God over every event that takes place in history, and to maintain human moral responsibility in the face of this theological determinism. The connection to the project of *History of Redemption* is clear: the historical ebb and flow of human events over which God is sovereign (per the arguments of *Original Sin* and *Freedom of the Will*) is the same ebb and flow that the three Persons are all together guiding towards its final redemptive purpose (per the argument of *History of Redemption*), and without attributing to God an omnipotent sovereignty over those events Edwards cannot see any way to have faith in the veracity of God's redemptive plan for history. Edwards thinks the non-Calvinistic alternatives for thinking about human will are subject to various intractable logical difficulties, which he attempts with great relish to demonstrate. Yet, his advocacy for a compatibilist view of human freedom is not based so much on these logical difficulties of the non-compatibilist (i.e. libertarian) alternatives, but rather as an implication of the Trinitarian principles to which he is already committed. Given that the world is designed by God to reflect His own perfect happiness as harmonious inter-related existence, Edwards thinks that only anthropologies that genuinely presuppose the human will to be compatible with that design will be able to remain logically coherent. He therefore expects to find, and arguably does meet with some success in his search, that there are severe logical difficulties with libertarian notions of freedom that are popular during his lifetime.

II. **Virtue as Perichoresis**

History is a story with a divine author who organizes all the characters and events in order to narrate a tale of eternal perfection reflecting itself in the world and redeeming

that world when it goes awry. Inquiring into the standard for performing an analysis of people's behavior as characters in this divinely-orchestrated drama points us to Edwards' ethical writings (*Charity and its Fruits*, *The End for Which God Created the World,*[7] *The Nature of True Virtue*). The entire created order is full of harmonious similarities between things, as Edwards expresses most provocatively in his typology, and human beings especially are meant to bear a particularly acute similarity with their Creator. As the "apex" and most glorious adornment of God's creation, humanity is capable of a fellowship and communion with God through his own moral life (since morality is the domain of "love lived out/active love," and God's essence is love) that is closer than anything attainable by any other creature, spiritual or physical, in Heaven or Earth:

> Whatever controversies and variety 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. 'Tis not *all* beauty that is called virtue; for instance, not the beauty of a building, of a flower, or of the rainbow: but some beauty belonging to beings that have *perception* and *will.*…But yet perhaps not *everything* that may be called a beauty of mind…But virtue is the beauty of those qualities and acts of the mind that are of a *moral* nature, i.e., such as are attended with the desert or worthiness of *praise* or *blame*.[8]

Edwards focuses especially on the affections as that aspect of human being that is meant to bear this spiritual similarity to God: The affections are those "breathings" of the soul by which the person is seen to be similar to the divine affection of the Person of the Holy Spirit, or Love.[9] The life to which human beings are called is therefore a life in which their affections (their "spirits") are rendered similar to the divine Love found in the Trinity. Of course, the Fall has rendered humanity incapable of fulfilling this calling, which prompts the great work (discussed above) by God in history to redeem humanity (and the whole world) for its proper function. This history of redemption is carried out by all three persons of the Trinity acting equally, but centers on the events in the life of Christ, who is the perfect Image/Idea of the Father and co-originator with the Father of

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7 *The End,* of course, is not properly an "ethical" work, but a work that establishes the basic cosmic teleology upon which Edwards builds his argument in *True Virtue*. The two works, as we recall, were companion essays ("*Two Dissertations"*); Edwards wrote them with the intention that they be published together.

8 *The Nature of True Virtue,* Chapter 1, 539.

9 *Miscellany* 157 (1725).

the mutual love that is the Holy Spirit. In the Son (as in the other two Persons) is found the fullness of the Trinitarian community of perichoretic love, as the Father and the Spirit are both "in" the Son, each communicating being to the other two. The Son is the incarnate One who models for humanity the divine love and who (with the Father and the Spirit) in His being is constituted by the full activity of that love. The end result is that the Church now constitutes the special community within the larger human race of those whose affections are being restored to their proper state as "breathings" of the soul that resemble the divine love that is the Holy Spirit (Breath):

> Christ has brought it to pass, that those whom the Father has given him should be brought into the household of God, that he and his Father, and his people, should be as one society, one family; that the church should be as it were admitted into the society of the blessed Trinity."[10]

This "admittance" to the society of the Trinity constitutes a communication of nature from the Trinity to believers. Because "the nature of the Holy Spirit is love," it is by "communicating himself, or his own nature, that the hearts of the saints are filled with love or charity:"[11]

> The light of the Sun of righteousness does not only shine upon them, but is so communicated to them that they shine also, and become little images of that Sun which shines upon them; the sap of the true vine is not only conveyed into them, as the sap of a tree may be conveyed into a vessel, but is conveyed as sap is from a tree into one of its living branches, where it becomes a principle of life. The Spirit of God being thus communicated and united to the saints, they are from thence properly denominated from it, and are called *spiritual*.[12]

This spirituality makes 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 the communion or participation of the Holy Ghost."[13] The resultant beauty in the hearts of the saints is of the same sort as the beauty of God, "as much as it is possible for that [created] holiness to be."[14]

The precise nature of this holiness and beauty which constitutes human fulfillment is the subject of Edwards' dissertation *The Nature of True Virtue* and of his

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[10] "The Excellency of Christ," in *Works* 19, 594.
[11] *Charity and Its Fruits*, "The Sum of All Virtue," in *Works* 8, 132.
[12] *About the Religious Affections*, in *Works* 2, 200.
[13] Ibid., 202.
[14] Ibid.

published series of sermons entitled "Charity and Its Fruits."[15] The title of the latter indicates that Edwards' treatment comports with what we should by now expect: he takes love, or charity, as the proper end of human morality and as the constitutive activity of the soul in which "true virtue" genuinely consists. Interestingly, Edwards imbues his discussion of love in the *Charity* sermons with Trinitarian vocabulary found elsewhere only in the *Discourse on the Trinity.* Edwards argues in the *Charity* sermons that the virtues all coincide with one another, so that in truth there is only "one" virtue (love):

> There is not only a conjunction whereby [the virtues] are always joined together, but there is a mutual dependence of one grace [virtue] and another, so that one cannot be without the other…They are not only always together, and do arise from one another; but one is, in some respects, implied in the very nature of another. In many of them one is essential to another, and belongs to the essence of it.[16]

Virtue, therefore, is at least quasi-perichoretic. Love is the "ingredient" that indwells all the other virtues (or what Edwards calls "Christian graces"). It is also the "working" and "operative" principle in the soul of the redeemed.[17] True virtue is a communion of Christian graces that together are infused by and constitute the chief virtue of love. In their mutual implication "in the very nature of one another," the virtues form one virtuous interpenetration that reflects the communion of the divine essence (love).[18]

This perichoretic notion of virtue also figures, unsurprisingly, into Edwards' political thought. Through the gracious gift of love that He bestows upon the elect, God

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[15] As we have observed in earlier chapters, Edwards' moral thought is already the most well-traversed ground in the secondary literature for connecting Edwards' Trinitarianism to other elements of his thought. See Danaher, *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards;* Fiering, *The Moral Thought of Jonathan Edwards and Its British Context*, and Roland Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards*.

[16] *Charity*, "Christian Graces Concatenated Together," 329, 330. See also Paul Ramsey's comment on *The End of Creation*, in *Works* 8, 436 fn.2: "In the final section of this dissertation, JE's [sic] theme is that the various names in Scripture for God's end in creation are but different denominations 'involving each other in their meaning'; so there is 'but one' end."

[17] Ibid.

[18] Here again, perhaps, Edwards' patristic inspiration can be seen in sources such as Ambrose of Milan (mentor to Augustine who is traditionally credited with the latter's conversion to Christian faith), who portrays all virtues as co-inhering in Christ: "When we speak about wisdom, we are speaking of Christ. When we speak about virtue, we are speaking of Christ. When we speak about justice, we are speaking of Christ. When we speak about peace, we are speaking of Christ. When we speak about truth and life and redemption, we are speaking of Christ." Ambrose of Milan, quoted in Jill Haak Adels, *The Wisdom of the Saints: An Anthology* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1989), 14.

enables the saints to enjoy the "sum" and the coinherence of all virtues.[19] This love, Edwards says, always aims at living well in community with others. Though he never writes anything resembling a full political treatise, this is a clear political implication of his Trinitarian reevaluation of ontology. For instance, in *Misc.* 96 (1723) he argues that human beings cannot be happy without living in society, and he bases his argument on the image of God in human beings:

> "No reasonable creature can be happy, we find, without society and communion; not only because he finds something in others that is not in himself, but because he delights to communicate himself to another. This cannot be because of our imperfection, but because we are made in the image of God; for the more perfect any creature is, the more strong this inclination."[20]

Divine love is the delightful communication of being between the three Persons of the Trinity. The Father and the Son love and delight in one another, and that love personified is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the divine delight in Himself (exemplified in the mutual love between the Father and the Son as perfect idea/image of the Father). As images of this divine love, therefore, human beings also seek to pour themselves out in delightful communication (proportional similarity) with other people. The ultimate fulfillment of this desire to communicate with others can only be met through Christ's redemptive work that gains the Church admission "into the society of the blessed Trinity," but it is typologically reflected in a capacity for this-worldly fulfillment through communication with other human beings. All people, therefore, even those outside of redemption, find some measure of happiness in living in the "society and communion" of humanity. For just as the essence of the Son is found in the essence of the Father, and vice versa, so that neither can exist without the other, so also one human being cannot live (and has not been designed to live) without other human beings. All persons of the human race represent one another and communicate one another to each other.

[19] Note the titles of the two sermons from the *Charity* series cited earlier. Love is "The Sum of All Virtues," as well as the way in which we see the "Christian Graces Concatenated Together."
[20] *Misc*. 96 (1723)

III. **Conclusion**

The Triune God is for Edwards not only the Creator, but the end for which He created. The entire creation, but human beings most clearly, are created in order "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."[21] This enjoyment is realized both in history and in anticipation of future beatitude as a delight in and love for the Creator and for His created cosmological structure in which the divine love is reflected. As God unfolds a grand plan of redemption within the created order, redeemed people are enabled both to see and to live out the interconnectedness that God has built into the world. To see these interconnections is to behold the Triune God of Scripture in vestigial reflection in such a way that also allows the philosopher to gain key insights into the operations of nature. To live out these interconnections is nothing other than to love by being and delighting in them. Humans live out this love, as St. John wrote in the New Testament and as Edwards references a number of times in the *Charity* series of sermons, "because God first loved us."[22] As God first loved Himself in inter-Triune communion, and as God first loved His people by creating a world in which similar love is possible, so are redeemed people enabled to love and to experience communi(cati)on with God as He is reflected in that love.

In light of such predestinarian assertions, some might be tempted to say that in Jonathan Edwards, sometimes called "the last Puritan,"[23] the Puritans finally find their philosopher. But Edwards also represents a late resuscitation of an Augustinian, or even patristic, philosopher, as the formulation of the Trinity that he makes central to so many of his philosophical reflections on the world owes its pedigree to these sources much more ancient than his own Puritan tradition. Whatever the ancients might have thought of Edwards' particular appropriation of their perichoretic formulations of Trinitarian theology, it is clear that he does appropriate those formulations. The love of God as the pre-existing and structuring foundation of all human (and created) activity, articulated so clearly by Augustine and the Cappadocians, is held in no less esteem as a philosophical principle by Edwards. In his hands the Trinity becomes not merely an esoteric doctrine to

[21] So says the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q.1., to which Edwards subscribed as the best summary of the Christian faith.
[22] 1 John 4:19.
[23] Brand, *Profile of the Last Puritan*.

be defended by theologians, but the model (archetype) on which created life is patterned and thus a key to understanding the world at large.

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