The Trinitarian Ontology of Jonathan Edwards: Glory, Beauty, Love, and Happiness in the Dispositional Space of Creation

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GLORY, BEAUTY, LOVE, AND HAPPINESS
IN THE DISPOSITIONAL SPACE OF CREATION

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores Jonathan Edwards’ trinitarian logic and ontology of God’s glory which integrate the innovative facets of his thoughts that previous studies have only partially articulated. Edwards’ trinitarian framework overarching his doctrines of God, creation, and being provides an alternative ontological foundation which validates the actual reality of Christian faith and experience and reconstructs Christian theology and life.

Edwards’ trinitarian logic dialectically integrates the opposing poles of God’s perfection in being and in personhood, God’s creation out of nothing and through emanation, and God’s transcendence and immanence. Preliminarily, chapter two examines how in Edwards’ theocentric thought the Christian experience of divine revelation and salvation constitutes the two poles of God’s perfection in being and personhood. Chapters three through five elaborate Edwards’ synthesis of the polarity of God’s existence. By virtue of the biblical idea of God’s glory, Edwards defines the perfection of God’s existence as the spiritual space of the Trinity, that is, the dispositional ground of being to communicate the divine self. The trinitarian being of God
incorporates the christological, soteriological, and pneumatological structure of God’s trinitarian presence in relation to the world. The trinitarian being of God determines the divine act of creation out of nothing as the communication of divine ideas by the Son through the emanation of the Spirit.

By way of conclusion, chapter seven demonstrates that Edwards’ trinitarian structure of God’s being and act constructs a trinitarian immaterialism of dispositional ontology that integrates the semiotic, aesthetic, affectional, rhetorical, axiological, and ethical aspects of being; chapter eight argues that the trinitarian ontology proposes a soteriological, trinitarian, and asymmetrically perichoretic panentheism of non-dualistic personal theism. Edwards’ trinitarian dialectics specifies the perfection of being as the glorious beauty of happy life in the communion of love that constitutes the relation of asymmetrical union with distinction. The trinitarian logic and ontology propose a worldview of the regenerated that is derived from the singular Christian experience of God’s salvation and revelation through Jesus Christ and his Spirit and integrates the Christian faith with life in the world by framing harmonious relations between God, humanity, and nature.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Jonathan Edwards’ Trinitarian Logic and Ontology

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) stood in the upheaval of the Enlightenment era and the scientific revolution. Particularly, his time was a turning point toward the emergence of the skepticism of David Hume (1711-1776), the critique of rational theology by Kant (1724-1804), the atheistic and anti-clerical attack against the Christian church by the French Enlightenment in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and at last the overt philosophical and reductionistic atheism of the nineteenth century. Until Edwards’ age, mainstream thought was still apologetic for Christianity, trying to reconcile Christian faith with reason and natural science. However, the seeds of modern challenges against Christian faith had already been planted and were growing to be serious threats to traditional Christian faith and theology such that materialism, deism, and scientific cosmology soon confronted the church. As Perry Miller expressed it, Edwards was “the last great American, perhaps the last European, for whom there could be no warfare between religion and science, or between ethics and nature.”¹ In a word, Edwards’ thoughts can be delineated as an asymmetrical integration in tension between Christian faith and tradition and the culture of the Enlightenment, centering on his theocentric motif. Peter J. Thuesen states that “the fruitful tension between Enlightenment ‘latitude’ and Reformed traditionalism animated Edwards’ entire career, immersing him in a culture that was increasingly dispassionate toward old

orthodoxies even as he remained firmly rooted in a religious system that presupposed the existence of only one truth.”

Edwards grew up in a cosmopolitan intellectual milieu Norman Fiering called “a remarkably well-integrated republic of letters,” and he “thoroughly grounded his early thought . . . in the international trends of the era.” Throughout his life Edwards endeavored to catch up with the vanguard of contemporary intellectual progress. The main sources of Edwards’ thoughts can be summarized as follows: the Protestant Scholastics of Calvinism, the Protestant Platonic logics and philosophy of Ramism and the Cambridge Platonism, and the modern philosophy and natural science of René Descartes, Nicolas Malebranche, Gottfried W. Leibniz, John Locke, and Isaac Newton.

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4 Edwards’ “Catalogue” and “Account Book” demonstrate his interests and readings of a remarkably expansive spectrum. For a detail bibliographical information of Edwards, see Thuesen’s “Editor’s Introduction” (26:1-87).

In interaction with these intellectual contexts he apprehended the world as a teleological cosmos disposed by God to manifest divine glory. The overarching frame of Edwards’ ideas was a theocentric motif in accord with Calvinistic tradition. As Marsden states, instead of rational deduction, “he was developing his thought in rigorous Calvinist fashion, from the top down, starting with an absolutely sovereign triune Creator who was in control of all things.” In the intellectual life of New Englanders in Edwards’ times, the Calvinistic framework was incorporated in terms of a “holistic way” of “an ontology of universal relations” according to “the old logic of Ramism,” in which all things in the universe were related in ultimate relationship with God and “the goal of learning was to recognize the circle of relationships.”

According to theocentric, holistic, and relational logic Edwards pursued reality in relation with God: “The very thing I now want, to give me a clearer and more immediate view of the perfections and glory of God, is as clear a knowledge of the manner of God’s exerting himself, with respect to spirits and mind, as I have, of his operations concerning matter and bodies.” As a result, Edwards belongs with the “theocentric metaphysicians” like John Norris, Bishop Berkeley, and Malebranche.

Although Edwards was located in his contemporary intellectual contexts, he eclectically gathered together the sources and creatively incorporated them into his own innovative

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6 Marsden, 76.


framework to found an extraordinary and outstanding edifice embossed on the intellectual contours of his time. Edwards unfolded the ontological implication of the Ramist holistic logic of proposition into the deconstruction of substantial ontology as well as the substantial logic of predication. He reconstructed a new concept of being according to a trinitarian logic of God’s glory that was deduced from his rational and systematic interpretation of biblical revelation and Christian experience. On this point he is more theocentric than others, and his theocentric thought is biblical, trinitarian, and Calvinistic. His greater faithfulness to the Christian tradition rather than its philosophical forms set him relatively free from contemporary philosophical presuppositions and oriented him to a way of trinitarian immaterialism distinguished from other Scholastic Calvinists.

In conclusion, the crucial significance of Edwards’ work against modern challenges consists in that he presented a novel logic and ontology based on Christian revelation and experience that deconstructs those of modernism and functions as an alternative foundation for the reconstruction of Christian theology and life in the present problematic situation. In this sense, Edwards’ theological and philosophical thoughts are still relevant to contemporary contexts, because his unique ontological strategy was a philosophical alternative designed to

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10 The logic of proposition derives from the Stoic. Tzvetan Todorov explains the feature of the Stoic logic of proposition contrasted with the Aristotelian logic of predication: “Aristotle’s logic of classes ‘is suited to a philosophy of substance and of essence’; propositional logic, for its part, grasps facts in their becoming, facts as events. Now it is precisely events (and not substances) that come to be treated as signs” (Tzvetan Todorov, Theories of the Symbol, trans. Catherine Porter [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982], 23). The Stoic logic of proposition was retrieved by Peter Ramus in the Renaissance times and prevailed in the intellectual milieu of New England Puritans in Edwards’ times (see 3, n. 7 above). Daniel interprets Edwards’ thought that it is framed by the Stoic-Ramist-Renaissance logic of proposition, which is “the logic of the elect” or “the regenerated” and “the ontology of salvation.” The logic is “an antidote to the Platonic-Aristotelian-Lockean logic of predication that characterizes the cognitive procedures of sinful humanity.” The Stoic-Ramist ontology understands reality as “essentially communicative, a system of signification” and a subject as a function that emerges from a communicative matrix rather than “an intelligible self” behind or before communications (Daniel, The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards, 2-4, 26, 68-82).
meet the modernist charges leveled against the Christian faith in his own time. Even though we suppose that the modern presuppositions with which Edwards struggled have been already deconstructed by postmodernism, a substitutive ontological framework is still needed for Christian theology and life.

Scholars have already taken notice of how Edwards’ innovative thought is significant for the reconstruction of Christian theology in late modern or postmodern contexts. The primary reason for their interest is that Edwards’ ideas are consonant with the recent resurgence of relational and communal themes in Christian theology that attempt to overcome the modern substantial and individualistic framework. Edwards treated motifs such as glory, beauty, love, and affection which were largely ignored in the intellectualistic and rationalistic milieu of modern era. Studies on these themes within Edwards’ theology have revealed that his ontological view of being is dispositional, relational, axiological, and aesthetical. Edwards’ novel ontological vision of God’s being and relation with the world has been variously defined as a dispositional ontology, a divine semiotics akin to postmodern logic, a trinitarian vision of harmony in plurality, and a relational metaphysics of love. Studies comparing Edwards’ philosophical theology with process philosophy and theology have focused on the fact that both attempt to

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furnish an alternative ontological framework for Christian theology against traditional Western
metaphysics.\textsuperscript{15}

With regard to studies of Edwards’ philosophical theology, the uniqueness of my project
is to illuminate the significance of his theology and philosophy by the light of the polarity
problems of divine being and act and relation with the world. Particularly, I give attention to his
doctrine of creation that evinces the polarities, for divine creation mediates God’s being and
created beings, reveals the nature of God’s being, and establishes their relationship
fundamentally. Previous studies have dealt with Edwards’ doctrine of creation and his
understanding of the divine-human relationship, as well as his philosophy and theology. The
neglected puzzle is that Edwards explained creation out of nothing in terms of emanation though
the two concepts were considered incompatible. He asserted that the world was created out of
nothing, emphasizing God’s aseity, transcendence and omnipotence, but he also explained
creation as emanation, as the divine communication of Godself. Some scholars have conceived
of these two motifs as merely coexisting in Edwards’ writings such that they hastily regarded him
as inconsistent.\textsuperscript{16} Particularly, Charles Hodge criticized Edwards on this point and mistook him
for a pantheist.\textsuperscript{17} Others have defined Edwards’ system as a kind of panentheism.\textsuperscript{18} However,

\textsuperscript{15} Edward S. Babcock, Jr., “A Comparison of the Divine-Human Relationship in the Writings of Jonathan
Edwards and Charles Hartshorne” (Ph. D. diss., Baylor University, 1983); Jeffrey A. McPherson, “Jonathan
Edwards and Alfred North Whitehead: The possibility of a constructive dialogue in metaphysics” (Ph. D. diss.,
McMaster University, 2006).

\textsuperscript{16} Woodbridge Riley, \textit{American Philosophy: The Early Schools} (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958), 126;
B. Edwards, \textit{A Return to Moral and Religious Philosophy in Early America} (Washington: University Press of
America, 1982), 65.

\textsuperscript{17} Charles Hodge, \textit{Systematic Theology}, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 220.
they have neither taken notice of Edwards’ integration of the two motifs nor offered more than passing illustrations of the panentheistic elements in Edwards’ thought. They have not delved into the philosophical strategy that enabled Edwards to integrate the two paradigms. It is precisely this synthesis that differentiates Edwards from the panentheism of process philosophy and theology. Although scholars have recognized that Edwards’ emphasis on divine sovereignty and transcendent creation out of nothing diverges from process theology, they have not considered what made it possible for him to reconcile these two motifs. Others have systematically articulated the unique ontology and logic of Edwards as an alternative to the metaphysics of substance and the logic of predication in the subject-object scheme, but they have not explicitly identified Edwards’ synthesis of creation out of nothing and emanation or drawn out its theological and ontological significance.

The particular contribution of my study is that I unfold the implication of Edwards’ synthesis of creation out of nothing and emanation in a much broader context of the polarities in God’s being, act, and relation with the creature. The polarity of divine creation reflects and originates from that of God’s existence and is incorporated into God’s relationship with the world. The coexistence of two poles in Edwards’ idea of divine creation does not signify incoherence in


Edwards’ thought, but it should be interpreted as a synthesis of them which connotes his innovative logic and ontology that dialectically integrates the poles of God’s being and act and relation. Emanationism is a way of interpreting emanation within a pantheistic framework, but Edwards’ emanation is consistent with the personal theism of Christian faith and theology. His novel ontology enables the integration of creation out of nothing and emanation. It is derived from his doctrine of God that incorporates the two poles of divine perfection, in being and personhood, by the logic of God’s glory of the Trinity.

Examining Edwards’ synthesis of the polarities of God and creation, I will explore the fundamental logic, structure, and ontology that penetrate Edwards’ synthesis of the whole polarities and fabricate his thought as a systematic edifice. Through this systematic work I will imaginatively reconstruct Edwards’ philosophical theology that functions as a fundamental ontological structure for Christian faith, doctrines, and life. It will demonstrate Edwards’ trinitarian logic and ontology which comprehend integratively the innovative aspects that previous studies already articulated but only partially. It is the logic and worldview of the

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21 Edwards’ term of “emanation” signifies the Christian motif of creation from God (ex Deo). This term should be distinguished from the term “emanationism,” which evokes Neoplatonic pantheism. With no intention of pantheism, Christian theologians like Thomas Aquinas used the term “emanation” to express the idea that the world comes from God. The Christian tradition adopted the Neoplatonic framework of procession (emanation) and return (remanation) in order to explain the whole history of the world – from creation from God to salvation toward God. It did not simply accept Neoplatonic pantheism but rather adapted the Neoplatonic framework to Christian personal theism.

regenerated, derived from the singular Christian experience of God’s salvation and revelation through Jesus Christ and his Spirit and integrating Christian faith and life by framing the relationship between God, humanity, and nature.

Preliminarily, in chapter two I will examine how in Edwards’ theocentric thinking the religious experience of divine revelation and salvation constitutes two poles of God’s perfection, in being and personhood.

Then, in three chapters from three to five I will elaborate Edwards’ synthesis of the poles of God’s existence. The reason for this apportioning of almost half of this dissertation lies in the idea that the integration establishes the logical, theological, and ontological foundation for the dialectics of God’s creating act and relation with the world. Edwards dialectically incorporated God’s perfection in being and personhood such that God’s ground of being and God’s spiritual being of personal existence qualify and redefine each other.

Chapter three will look historically through how the concept of space as the matrix of the world has been understood in relation with God’s existence and the divine act of creation. Then, I will demonstrate that in continuity and discontinuity with historical contexts Edwards defined God’s perfection in being as the ground of being in terms of the notion of space and qualified it as the spiritual omnipresence of infinity, which is distinguished from the dimensional extension of Newtonian absolute space and from the finite presence of an individual human soul in a body.

Daniel, The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards, 102-18; idem, “Postmodern Concepts of God and Edwards’s Trinitarian Ontology,” 45-64). Like Sairsingh, I examine the trinitarian logic revealed in the glory of God. With Daniel, I ground Edwards’ trinitarian logic and ontology on the idea of the Trinity as the space and ground of being. I specify and unfold the significance of pneumatological feature of Edwards’ trinitarian ontology that Reid mentions and Richardson argues briefly, and reconceive the trinitarian logic in the light of Lee’s dispositional ontology. Differently from those students, I articulate the biblical, christological, and soteriological framework of Edwards’ logic of divine glory and trinitarian ontology and begin with his theocentric motif and doctrine of God instead of his philosophical and scientific ideas (Sairsingh), typology (Daniel), or new logic (Richardson).
Chapter four will exhibit how Edwards integrated God’s perfection in being as the divine space with God’s perfection in personhood by virtue of his theological and philosophical interpretation of the biblical idea of glory, which reveals God’s trinitarian presence in relation with the world, particularly in divine salvation through Christ’s person and work. Consequently, Edwards redefined the perfection of divine personhood: it transcends the dichotomous disjunction between human psychological individuals and communal relationship; thereby, he specified the perfection of God’s being as the spiritual existence of the moral excellence of love in the beauty of happy life.

Chapter five will explore the trinitarian structure of divine being by which Edwards integrated the two poles of divine perfection in being and personhood. God is defined as the spiritual space of the trinitarian life represented by the Spirit, the life of love in communion with happiness. In this sense the trinitarian being of God has essentially the pneumatological fabric of dispositional ontology which constitutes the pure act of love, a communicative being of disposition. The ontological frame of the Trinity incorporates the soteriological and christological frame of being revealed in the divine glory. The trinitarian structure of being forms the beauty of simplicity in plurality. God’s trinitarian being manifests the singularity of God’s disposition and personhood in divine spiritual existence that is irreducible to anthropomorphism and the projection of human personality but, nevertheless, that humans reflect analogically as the finite images of God.

Chapter six will examine Edwards’ synthesis of creation out of nothing and emanation from God. He reinterprets the divine act of creation according to his ontological structure of God’s trinitarian being. God’s creation is out of nothing but is emanation from God’s dispositional space. The emanation is God’s personal act to actualize the divine disposition to
communicate Godself for the end of creation, the glorification of Godself. The divine creation communicates divine ideas by the Son, the Word, through the emanation of the Spirit.

Consequently, as chapter seven will demonstrate, created beings are not independent substances but relational beings of ideas in the divine mind, the existence of which depends upon their relationship with God the trinitarian ground of being that is established by God’s act of creation. Created ideas are dispositional beings disposed in the dispositional space of the Trinity. In other words, they are aesthetic signs disposed in the semiotic matrix of the Logos and the aesthetic ground of the Spirit of love. The end of creation, the meaning and value of all beings are realized by human glorification of God through the knowledge and love of God, which is elicited from the aesthetic sensation of divine beauty that semiotic and aesthetic beings signify.

Accordingly, Edwards denies the substantial ontology of predication logic, modern dualism, and the reductionisms of materialism and humanistic idealism. Instead he presents a theocentric immaterialism grounded on God’s spiritual being and act, differentiated from humanistic and rationalistic idealism based on the perception and rational thought of the human soul. It is the trinitarian ontology of disposition that integrates the semiotic, aesthetic, affectional, rhetorical, axiological, and ethical aspects of being by the ontological foundation of the trinitarian ground of being.

In conclusion, chapter eight will exhibit how Edwards’ trinitarian ontology enables the relation of asymmetrical union in distinction between God and the world like the trinitarian relation of divine life. All beings created out of nothing by divine emanation are united by the dynamic and beautiful life of remanation, which returns to God by their mutual interrelation of signification and love in the difference of ontological degree. Conclusively, Edwards proposes an alternative paradigm of soteriological, trinitarian, and asymmetrically perichoretic panentheism, superseding the two poles of dualistic theism and monistic pantheism. Edwards’ panentheism is a
personal theism in which God and the word are united with the distinction of asymmetrical relation and without dualistic disjunction between God and the world.

**The Methodology and Scope of the Dissertation**

**Method of Investigation**

Previous historical and systematic descriptions of theological themes in Edwards’ thought offer basic resources for the investigation, but they are not enough to uncover the deep structure of the divine-human relationship in Edwards’ works that is constituted by the two foci of creation and salvation. All of his writings must be examined systematically in the light of the subject of my dissertation, though the interpretation of Edwards’ writings on philosophy, creation, and the Trinity will be the primary resources for the thesis. The required methodology is a hermeneutics of correlation that goes from the theological description of Edwards’ doctrines of God and creation and divine relationship with the world to the philosophical analysis of the foundational logic and structure of his thoughts, and vice versa.

My thesis presupposes the deconstruction of the categories and frameworks of philosophy and theology that have formerly been employed for expounding Edwards’ thought. Many previous studies have overlooked Edwards’ alternative logic and ontology that enabled his integration of incompatible poles in divine being, act, and relation with creatures. The reason derives from the fact that those studies approached Edwards’ work with the prejudice of existing philosophical frameworks. Philosophical schemes alien to Edwards’ own logic have been deductively imposed on his texts without considering his singular framework. This explains why scholars involved in the debate have ended up at various points along a wide spectrum between diametrically opposed polarities: from premodernism through modernism to postmodernism, and from Calvinistic theocentrism to Neoplatonic pantheism. Although the innovative features of
Edwards’ scheme served to sharpen those disagreements, his greatness consists precisely in development of a novel ontological framework that weaves abundant and otherwise conflicting resources into his own coherent and harmonious fabric.

My reconstruction of Edwards’ philosophical theology will reveal how concepts and ideas drawn from other thinkers are reinvested with new meaning in Edwards’ own peculiar ontological structure. This will be carried out through a hermeneutical circulation between exegesis of Edwards’ theological writings and reconstruction of his philosophical framework. In my own dialectical interpretation, the methods of theological exegesis, systematic reconstruction, and philosophical analysis all will be interwoven.

The Scope and Limitations

Firstly, this dissertation is neither a historical analysis that traces the development of Edwards’ ideas nor a historiographical study of his writings. The purpose of this study is a systematic reconstruction of Edwards’ theological framework and ontological logic that consistently permeates his thoughts. Therefore, the discussion must be not only descriptive but also constructive in nature. Particularly, Edwards did not have sufficient time to elaborate his philosophical theology that would have incorporated his early philosophical writings with his later theological works. For that reason Edwards’ philosophical theology can be exhibited only by reconstructive and systematic interpretation of his dispersed writings and miscellanies. Such work requires a hermeneutic imagination to fill the gaps that now exist between his theological documents on particular topics and the coherent philosophical structure beneath them. I will treat Edwards’ ideas and writings as a structured whole for the sake of identifying a consistent orientation amidst and across the diverse intellectual endeavors of his corpus. The study will illuminate a broad picture of his thought rather than specific features of particular historical
stages of his life. However, this does never mean an eisegesis reading my views into Edwards’ texts or a disregard of historical development in his thoughts. This study will expound Edwards’ philosophy and theology to the degree permitted by a careful interpretation of his writings. Also I will elaborate the cases in which there is a significant change of position according to the maturation of his thoughts that makes the whole picture different, or in which there is discord in the interpretation as to whether a point is consistent throughout his life.

Secondly, it would require an additional work to unfold fully the philosophical and theological implications of Edwards’ ontological categories and schemes for the present situation, comparing them with other philosophies contemporary with or after him. I will confine my own work to presenting Edwards’ own thoughts.
CHAPTER TWO
GOD BEING IN GENERAL AND PERSONAL BEING

Hence we learn how properly it may be said that God is, and that there is none else, and how proper are these names of the Deity: “Jehovah” and “I Am That I Am.”

Edwards, “The Mind,” no. 15\(^1\)

As the Supreme Being has made the world, so he has made us. As he is the author of the whole system of the visible universe, so [he] is our author . . . . And he is our preserver and governor, and we live, move and have our being in him. And he is evidently our moral governor, as reason plainly teaches.

Edwards, “Miscellaneis,” no. 1156\(^2\)

Jonathan Edwards’ thought is theocentric. The doctrine of God is at the center of his philosophy as well as his theology. As William H. Squires says, “God is the starting point and the return of Edwards’ philosophizing” and “God is his starting point, and the goal of all his thinking.”\(^3\) The theocentric motif predominates over the contents and sources of Edwards’ theology and philosophy. Edwards argues that religion or moral philosophy “in which God is not the first and the last” and “the supreme end” has nothing of the nature of religion or true virtue.\(^4\) His theocentric thought is structured by two main subjects of the reality of God and the relation of created beings with God. The frame of God’s being determines the divine action of creation and then through creation the ontological structure of created beings. For their being and well-being creatures depend upon the reality and action of God and their relation with God.

\(^1\) 6:345.

\(^2\) 23:64.


\(^4\) 8:560.
Considering the theocentric structure of Edwards’ thought, I begin with Edwards’ doctrine of God and on this basis I will examine his idea of creation and ontology.

Edwards’ theocentrism presupposes the absolute and infinite perfection of God as the foundation of religion and theology. He insists that the true knowledge of God’s perfection is “the very foundation of all religion, both doctrinal and practical.”

“...infinite excellency, infinite glory, and beauty itself; he is an infinite, eternal, and immutable excellency; he is not only an infinitely excellent being, but a being that is infinite excellency, beauty, and loveliness.”

The divine perfection has two poles, the ontological perfection of God’s reality and the personal perfection of God’s relation with created beings. Edwards defines the divine ontological perfection as Being in general and the personal perfection as the best moral governor of love, and conjoins both perfections:

Many have wrong conceptions of the difference between the nature of the Deity and created spirits. The difference is no contrariety, but what naturally results from his greatness and nothing else, such as created spirits come nearer to, or more imitate, the greater they are in their powers and faculties. So that 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.

By the conjunction the analogy of being (analogia entis) is associated with the analogy of faith (analogia fidei); the excellency of being is constitutive of the excellency of good, beauty, morality, and Christ’s salvation; God the ground of being is revealed as the creator, preserver, moral governor, savior, and the ultimate end of creation. Although these associations present many difficulties in establishing a consistent philosophical and theological structure, they reflect

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27 10:416, 425.

28 10:421.

29 13:295.
the revelation and experience of Christianity, including Edwards’ personal experience, and are required in order to cope with modern challenges against Christian religion and morality.

The significance of Edwards’ theology of God consists in that it is grounded on an ontological reconstruction based on his reinterpretation of God’s being. He associates the greatness and goodness of being, and personalizes the goodness of being into virtue and love by the relational and aesthetical concept of being and the superiority of spiritual reality. The ontological reconstruction draws on his reconceiving the reality of God. He reinterprets and analyzes the ontological meaning of the biblical and traditional doctrine that God who saves us through Christ is Love, the Trinity, and the Creator; and applies it to his redefinition of ontological ground against modern challenges. As a result, Edwards’ God Being in general is the spiritual space of a disposition to communicate which embraces physical space and the impersonal law of nature.

In this chapter, preliminarily, I will examine how in Edwards’ theocentric thought the Christian experience of divine revelation and salvation constitutes the two poles of God’s perfection in being and personhood. The following chapters will elaborate his synthesis of the opposing poles and will trace back its dialectical logic in order to analyze his ontology based on the divine reality. The logic and ontology integrate two models of creation, viz., creation out of nothing and emanation, and regulate the ontological framework of created beings in relation with God.

**God Being in General**

Edwards’ theocentric mind begins with the existence of God and grounds all his thoughts on the ontological ground of divine reality. Following traditional philosophical theology, Edwards defines the ontological reality of God as Being itself (*ipsum esse*), Being in general (*ens*...
commune), or the Being of beings (ens entium). For instance, he states, “God is proper entity itself, and these two therefore in him become the same; for so far as a thing consents to being in general, so far it consents to him” (emphasis mine). Among those terms Edwards utilizes “Being in general” most often to identify the ontological particularity of God. The concept of God as Being in general provides a fundamental basis for Edwards’ philosophical theology centering around the reality of God. God Being in general is not a particular being in disjunction with other beings but the ground of being beyond all determinations of created beings. It radicalizes the ontological absoluteness of God and establishes the dialectic of infinity and finitude in asymmetric relation between God and created beings.

Edwards’ usage of the word “Being in general” is a singular feature of his doctrine of God. In the tradition of philosophical theology, Avicenna’s idea of ens commune is “one positive thing which God and creatures seem to share univocally,” while Thomas Aquinas reduces it to created beings.

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30 15:418; 8:571, 595.

31 6:337.

32 In Edwards’ works the term “being in general” appears more than two hundred times while Being of beings eight times and being itself five times. The usages of being in general and being itself are not confined to designate proper noun God but Being of beings is appropriated to God. To demark the usage of “Being in general” designating God from other instances, it will be capitalized. For the capitalization of the terms, refer to Paul Ramsey’s argument in his “Editor’s Introduction” (8:116-18).

33 Clyde A. Holbrook explains the meaning of Being in general, “Being in general was not merely the sum of particular beings at a given time, but an ontological concept referring to the power of being in whatsoever may be said to exist” (The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: Morality and Aesthetics [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973], 136).

34 Allyn L. Ricketts writes that Edwards uses the term Being in general to guard the infinity and uniqueness of God as the Creator, the only one who has the power to be, in a way clearly opposite of the usual use of the term for pantheistic fashion in “The Primacy of Revelation in the Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards” (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1995), 49-50.
beings: “God is not contained in *ens commune* (being in general), but transcends it.”\(^{35}\) Following

Avicenna, Edwards’ system of being in general comprehends “the sum total of universal existence, both Creator and creature.”\(^{36}\) But in effect he reduces it to God since God as an infinite being comprehends all beings. Edwards explains the meaning of being in general:

But now, with respect to the Divine Being, there is no such thing as such 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 first Being, the eternal and infinite Being, is in effect, *Being in general*; and comprehends universal existence, as was observed before.\(^{37}\)

When we speak of being in general, we may be understood [to speak] of the divine Being, for he is an infinite being. Therefore all others must necessarily be considered as nothing. As to bodies, we have shewn in another place that they have no proper being of their own; and as to spirits, they are the communications of the great original spirit. And doubtless, in metaphysical strictness and propriety, he is, there is none else.\(^{38}\)

God is the greatest of universal system of existence as a whole. This does not mean that God is merely the largest *part* of the system. God is infinite and thus the *whole* of the system. Edwards argues the point more explicitly, “But God has infinitely the greatest share of existence, or is infinitely the greatest being. So that all other being, even that of all created things whatsoever,

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\(^{36}\) 8:423.

\(^{37}\) 8:461.

\(^{38}\) 6:363-64.
throughout the whole universe, is as nothing in comparison of the Divine Being.” Edwards defines God being itself as “being in general, to which everything that partakes of entity.”

Edwards’ idea of God Being in general establishes a dialectic of infinity and finitude which constitutes an analogy between God and creature. It oscillates between two poles of univocal continuity and equivocal discontinuity. On the one hand Edwards positively maintains univocal continuity between deity and created spirits in that their difference is in degree of the same kind. On the other hand he avers equivocal discontinuity in that there is no proportion at all between finite beings and the universal and infinite being. God’s being is “an infinite quantity of existence.” A creature’s participation in God is “a participation of the same: ’tis as much the same as ’tis possible for that to be, which is infinitely less in degree: as particular beams of the sun communicated, are the light and glory of the sun in part.” The being of God and the being of a creature are univocal, and their difference is quantitative in degree of the same kind, like that of the whole and parts of the same thing. In fact, however, the infinity of distance makes it a qualitative difference in kind. Edwards articulates the unsurpassable difference between the divine infinity and finitude of creatures in his sermon on Ps. 139:7-10: “Infinite thing can’t be made up of finite things, and however large it is it don’t come at all the nearer to

39 8:550.
40 6:335.
41 13:295.
42 2:327, 6:381.
43 6:381.
44 8:441, 10:420.
infinite for that a pebble or a grain of sand is as near infinite as the world is but God is infinite.”  

The dialectic of continuity and discontinuity is incorporated into that of transcendence and presence in the personal relationship of God and created beings. God loves the saints and they have friendship with mutual love, but God’s love is “transcendently greater love.”  

God’s love through Christ’s work and suffering is personal and at the same time “eternal and transcendent.”

The continuity of being between God and creature connotes the discontinuity between infinity and finitude. For Edwards there is a chain of being between God and beings, but the chain is infinite in that finite creatures, themselves without grace from God above, never can reach God by ascending the scales. Edwards explains that God is like a cause that exists out of a chain and supports the suspension of all the links of the chain in the air. God Being in general is the cause of the entire chain of beings “without whole succession” of created causes and effects.  

God the cause of the world does not belong to a part of the link of cause and effect. God is an external cause that transcends the whole series of causal concatenation itself. God is present in the world and at the same time God is out of the world. God’s mode of presence is transcendent. The radicalness of God’s ontological transcendence is revealed in God’s intense immanence as omnipresent. Douglas Elwood appropriately points out that God being itself is “the reality that underlies and penetrates all levels.” He interprets Edwards’ God in terms of Paul Tillich’s concept of the ground of being: “Being itself [is] presupposed as the creative

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45 42.44, L. 2v.

46 10:429.


48 20:120-127.
power-to-be that is present in every particular being, the power that resists and conquers nonbeing.”

Tillich’s term of “the ground of being” has the same meaning as Edwards’ concept of Being in general that stands in the dialectic relation of infinite being-itself and finite beings. Tillich elucidates the meaning of the ground of being as follows: “‘Ground’ is such a term” that “oscillates between cause and substance and transcends both of them.” It designates the dialectic of God’s transcendence and immanence and of the discontinuity and continuity between being-itself and created beings. The ground of being “appears as the power of being, conquering nonbeing.” The ground of being is creative in the sense that “everything participates in the infinite power of being,” and abysmal in the sense that “everything participates in the power of being in a finite way.” “As the power of being, God transcends every being and also the totality of beings—the world. . . . There is no proportion or gradation between the finite and the infinite.” The ground of being is “the absolute, as that which is on a level qualitatively different from the level of any being—even the highest being.” Therefore the divine cause is disengaged “from the series of causes and effects.” The ground of being “is the power of being

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51 Ibid., 1:110.

52 Ibid., 1:237.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid., 1:235.

55 Ibid., 1:236.
in everything and above everything, the infinite power of being” (emphasis mine).  

God being-itself is the creative and abysmal ground of being.

The comparison of Edwards’ idea to Tillich’s clarifies the feature of Edwards’ Being in general as the ground of being. Edwards conceived the perfection of God’s infinite being as the ground of being as Tillich did two centuries after him. The point is more explicitly exhibited by the fact that, like Tillich, Edwards specified God Being in general as the ground of being transcending the determinate disjunction of finite beings and thoughts.

For Tillich, in the ground of being “the polarities of being disappear.” Being-itself embraces and conquers nonbeing. “Being-itself does not participate in nonbeing. In this it stands in contrast to every being. As classical theology has emphasized, God is beyond essence and existence. Logically, being-itself is ‘before,’ ‘prior to,’ the split which characterizes finite being.” In other words, being-itself is the ground of being which does not exist in disjunction with nonbeing but transcends the determinate existence by disjunction of being and nonbeing. Hence the ground of being is “not a being, subject to the categories of finitude, especially to space and substance.” It “transcends finitude and categories.” God’s unconditional ultimacy of being itself “transcends the basic condition of finite rationality, the subject-object structure.”

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56 Ibid.
57 Ibid., 1:244.
58 Ibid., 1:209.
59 Ibid., 1:236.
60 Ibid., 1:235.
61 Ibid., 1:209.
62 Ibid., 1:112.
Like Tillich’s idea of ground of being, Edwards’ concept of God Being in general designates the perfection of divine being, in that God being itself is not a particular or determinate being of created beings but the ground of being beyond the disjunctive relations of created beings. Tillich reinterprets the traditional argument for God’s existence that the ontological, cosmological, and teleological proofs implicate God’s unconditional ultimacy as the ground of being and meaning.\textsuperscript{63} Likewise Edwards proves the necessary existence of God by arguing that God is the ground of being which excludes the possibility of absolute nothing in disjunction with God being itself in his “Miscellanies,” no. 880:

A supposition of something is a supposition of the being of God; it don’t only presuppose it, but it implies it; it implies it [not] only consequentially, but immediately. \textit{God is the sum of all being, and there is no being without his being; all things are in him, and he in all.} But there is no such thing supposable, as an absolute, universal nothing: we talk nonsense when we suppose any such thing. We deceive ourselves when we think we do in our minds suppose it, or when we imagine we suppose it to be possible. What we do when we go to think of absolute nihility (if! may so speak) is only to remove one thing to make way for and suppose another. In this case, there is no such thing as two parts of a disjunction; when we are come to \textit{Being in general}, we are come to one single point, \textit{without a disjunction}. Therefore, God is, because there is no other way; God therefore is, because there is nothing else to make a supposition of. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{64}

Here Edwards explicitly manifests the idea that God Being in general is the ground of being of all beings. The crucial feature of God’s absolute being is that God being itself exists in no disjunction with anything. God does not presuppose any other being but is supposed by all beings. God Being in general transcends all determination by the disjunction of being and non-being or of presence and absence. There is no absolute and universal nothing in disjunction

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 1:204-10.

\textsuperscript{64} 18:122.
with Being in general, universal infinite entity.\textsuperscript{65} Being itself, not nothingness, is absolute ground of being. All created beings of spiritual and corporeal realities exist through the identity determined by the relation of disjunction with other determinate beings which are non-being of their identities. The mind can never conceive of a state of perfect nothing, and the words of absolute nothing are a contradiction. The existence of our consciousness and language already affirms that there is always a being not absolute nothing since it always presupposes determination by referring to something. Corporeal matters always stand in disjunctive relation with other beings since they are posed in determinate situation and are moved by other beings.\textsuperscript{66} The essence of matter is the motion of resistance to other solidities.\textsuperscript{67} The disjunctive relations that determine the identity of spiritual and corporeal beings are constituted on God as their ground of being. God gives the being and meaning of existence to creatures. In terms of Tillich, God Being in general is “the ground of being and meaning.”\textsuperscript{68}

In “Miscellanies” no. 650, Edwards contrasts the perfection of divine aseity with the imperfect limitation of determinate beings, that is, human thinking by successive durations and matters composed of disjunctive parts:

'Tis from the exceeding imperfect notions that we have of the nature or essence of God, and because we can’t think of it but we must think of it far otherwise than it is, that arises

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{65} Edwards argues and stresses this point repeatedly in his works. Being in general is incompatible with absolute nothing: “I do suppose there is a great absurdity, in the nature of things simply considered, in supposing that there should be no God, or in denying being in general, and supposing an eternal, absolute, universal nothing: and therefore that here would be foundation of intuitive evidence that it cannot be, and that eternal, infinite, most perfect Being must be; if we had strength and comprehension of mind sufficient, to have a clear idea of general and universal being, or, which is the same thing, of the infinite, eternal, most perfect divine Nature and Essence” (1:182). For other instances, see 1:152, 6:206-7.

\textsuperscript{66} 20:123.

\textsuperscript{67} 6:205, 351.

\textsuperscript{68} 1:112, 208-10.
\end{footnotesize}
the difficulty in our mind of conceiving of God's existing without a cause. 'Tis repugnant to the nature of our souls, and what our faculties utterly refuse to admit, that anything that is capable of being one part of a proper disjunction should exist and be as it is, rather than not exist or exist otherwise without causes. Our notions we have of the divine nature are so imperfect that our imperfect idea admits of a disjunction, for whatsoever is not absolutely perfect doth so. [In] everything that is imperfect there is dependence, or contingent existence implied in the nature of it, or we can conceive of its being a part of a disjunction. There is a THUS and an OTHERWISE in the case. As soon as ever we have descended one step below absolute perfection, possibility ceases to be simple; it divides and becomes manifold. Thus for instance, we can't conceive of God without attributing succession to him; but that notion brings along with it contingent existence, and introduces with it a manifold possibility. There is nothing that exists in a successive duration, but it will necessarily follow from thence that it is simply possible that it might exist infinite other ways than it doth; and that it might not exist at all.

It is a contradiction to suppose that being itself should not be. If anyone says, no, there may be nothing, he supposes at the same time nothing has a being; and indeed nothing— when we speak properly or when the word has any meaning, i.e. when we speak of nothing in contradiction [to] some particular being— has truly a being. (Italics mine)\(^69\)

The absolute perfections of God’s being, such as aseity, self-sufficient independence, and simplicity, signify the transcendence of being itself which comprehends manifold parts dependent on others by disjunction. There is nothing in disjunction with the absolute being of God. Even nothing itself is a determinate being that exists only in disjunction with being of something. The gist of God’s ontological nature is that God is the ground of being which transcends all disjunction and succession of determinate beings. The ontological transcendence of God surpasses human epistemic ability that is able to cognize only determinate beings by disjunction of being and non-being.

\(^69\) 18:190-91.
The Dialectic Relationship Between God Being in General and Created Beings

On the foundation of God’s absolute reality as Being in general, Edwards establishes the relationship between God and creatures. God’s ontological absoluteness is revealed by sovereignty in God’s operation, and the identities and relations of all beings are determined on the horizon of God Being the ground of being. The substance of created beings is constituted by relation with God such that the existence of created beings is fundamentally relational. The truth of our being is illuminated in the light of relation with God Being in general. In a sermon on a virtue of humility as the fruits of charity, Edwards claims,

For that which above all other things concerns us to know of ourselves is what we are before God, and in comparison with him who is our Creator, and the Being in whom we live, move and have our being, who is the first Being and the Being of beings. . . .

. . . He who has a right sense of himself with respect to God will open his eyes to see himself aright in all respects. If a person sees how he stands with respect to the first Being, the Head of all beings, it will tend greatly to help him to a just apprehension of the place in which he stands among his creatures. He who does not know the first Being and the Fountain of being cannot know anything aright. But so far as he is come to a knowledge of him, so far is he let into the knowledge of other things, and so of himself as related to others and as standing among them.

God the creator is not only “the first Being, the Head of all beings” but also the fountain and the Being of beings. Beside God and the created system there is no third being that could be an arbiter or judge to consider the system of being in general which is composed of God and creature. This means that there is no ontological ground beside God that embraces God and creature. Godself is Being in general and the ground of being. God is one party of the relation

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70 I omitted “s” in “Beings” because it seems to be a misprint, seen from the fact that the editor writes the same word as “the Being of beings” in n. 3 in the same page.

71 8:235.

72 8:425.
and at the same time God is the ground of created beings. Therefore human relation to God
cannot be merely that between two beings in disjunction with each other on the same
ontological levels. God and created beings stand in a mutual but asymmetrical relationship
between different ontological levels, which is distinguished from personal relations between
human beings. Therefore the dialectic of infinity and finitude features the personal relation
between God and creatures without reduction to anthropomorphism.

First of all, Edwards in his work incessantly asserts the infinite distance between God
and creature and the nothingness of created beings in comparison with God. God is all, all in
all, and full but a creature is nothing and empty before God.73 For example, “the infinite
greatness of God in general and the infinite distance there is between God and men all the
inhabitants of the earth [is] expressed by their being as nothing, that is, God is infinite above
them.”74 Even further, he describes human status after the fall as “a state infinitely worse than
nothing.”75 Explaining the virtue of humility, Edwards says, “It does primarily consist in a
sense of his own meanness as compared with God or a sense of the infinite distance between
God and us. We are little, despicable creatures, and mean worms of the dust, as nothing and
less than nothing before God” (emphasis mine).76 The infinite distance between God and
creatures contrasts divine aseity with the absolute dependence of created beings upon God for
their existence. It sharpens the relational essence of created beings, rather than denying the

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74 43.68, L. 2v. In his sermon on Ex, 33:18-19 Edwards qualifies almost all God’s attributes with the
adjective “infinite” and stresses the infinite distance between God and humans (46.202).
75 18:54. For other examples, 25:634; 32.C38, 2.
76 8:234.
reality of created beings. There is no self-contained substance of created being that could 
 subsist in itself.

The infinite ontological distance between God and creature marks the relation between 
them as an asymmetrical thing such that God has sovereign prerogative in the relation. The 
ground of being is revealed as the absolute governor of the world. “God rules most absolutely the 
whole universe by himself.”77 “He [God] that made us for his own glory, and in whom we live, 
move and have our being, and wholly depend upon in everything, certainly might order that 
matter according as he pleased.”78 God “must have in all respects the supreme regard. And as he 
is God over all, to whom all are properly subordinate, and on whom all depend, worthy to reign 
as supreme head with absolute and universal dominion.”79 Edwards’ sermon on Dan. 4:35 is 
representative of his thought on divine sovereignty throughout his works. In the sermon he 
argues and elaborates concretely from things in heaven and earth to God’s dealings toward 
angels and humans. According to the sermon, God has the absolute sovereignty above all beings 
in that God is able to do as he pleases, has a right so to do, and actually does order all things 
according to the divine will. God predetermines and orders all things. The infinite distance 
between God and humans makes it impossible that God should lie under any obligation, since 
obligation always supposes an equality in some respect or an inferiority but God is absolutely 
independent and infinitely superior. Edwards grounds the divine sovereignty on the reason that

77 10:422.
78 14:177.
79 8:424.
everything is wholly and absolutely derived from God and thus God’s own, and all things are dependent on God in the most absolute manner.\textsuperscript{80}

Referring to Dan. 4:35 in \textit{Freedom of the Will}, Edwards reiterates God’s sovereignty in the divine power, authority, will, and wisdom, as he does in his sermon on the same passage.\textsuperscript{81} Moreover, he finds the ground of the divine sovereignty from the self-sufficiency of God’s will and wisdom which is not derived from or influenced by other beings. The divine aseity reveals God’s personhood as self-determining spontaneity that is not restricted by external rule or duty. Although God is necessarily “influenced in the highest degree” by proper moral inducement,\textsuperscript{82} the motivation of moral necessity derives from God’s own nature of moral excellency. God the ground of being is not merely a moral agent but also the fountain of moral good, such that God stands as a moral governor in relation with creatures as his moral subjects: “He [God] is, in the most proper sense, a moral agent, the source of all moral ability and agency, the fountain and rule of all virtue and moral good.”\textsuperscript{83}

In the asymmetrical relation there is no real mutual relation of give-and-take. God is self-sufficient, all-sufficient, immutable, and independent such that God cannot stand in need of anything and nothing can be added to God. God “can’t be in the least dependent on us.” Humans receive all from God but God does not receive anything from creatures.\textsuperscript{84} Like his sermon on

\textsuperscript{80} 43.68.
\textsuperscript{81} 1:377-83.
\textsuperscript{82} 1:166.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
Dan. 4:35 quoted above, Edwards finds the reason of divine self-sufficiency in God’s nature and creation:

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 on the creature?85

Ontologically the divine nature of perfection is revealed as the ground of being, and the ground of being is manifested as God the Creator. God’s sovereignty in the divine work is based on the creature’s absolute and infinite dependence for its being on the Creator. Since the degree of regard should be in proportion according to the degree of greatness of existence and goodness of excellence, Being in general as the fountain of all being and good becomes the ultimate end of beings.86 “He [God] is the first efficient cause and fountain from whence all things originate, so he is the last final cause for which they are made; the final term to which they all tend in their ultimate issue.”87 For the same reason God is in Godself, infinitely loves Godself, and makes Godself God’s last end.88 God’s self-love and self-aim are not selfish but genuine love and virtue for being in general according to truth and justice. “In God the love of himself, and the love of the public are not to be distinguished, as in man, because God's being as it were comprehends all.

85 8:420.
86 8:423-24.
87 8:467.
88 6:381, 8:436, 441.
His existence, being infinite, must be equivalent to universal existence.”89 God is the Creator, and also Godself becomes the ultimate end of creation. God’s aseity in the divine existence is revealed as God’s absoluteness, sovereignty, and self-sufficiency in the divine work. The ground of being is revealed as the Creator in creation, sovereign ruler in providence, and the end of creation. The end of creation is the glory of God. “The beams of glory come from God, and are something of God, and are refunded back again to their original. So that the whole is of God, and in God, and to God; and God is the beginning, middle and end in this affair.”90 Edwards’ theocentrism begins with God as the ground of being and ends with God as the end of creation.

A Personal God for Religion and Morality

Edwards’ ontological concept of God and the divine absoluteness based on it raise many conundrums about the relation between God Being in general and created beings. Firstly, concerning the divine ontological absoluteness, if God is Being in general, how can we distinguish created beings from God? How can we preserve the identity and reality of individual beings? Is there any meaning of creature’s existence in the self-sufficient ground of being? Or are they mere meaningless illusions or shadows? Is pantheism the only answer we can reach?

Secondly, on the sovereignty of God in divine work, if God determines all things, where is the room for human freedom, morality, and responsible response to God that religion demands? Could the ground of being be a sovereign ruler like a human king? How could an arbitrary sovereign ruler love a particular creature personally? Is not the ground of being indeterminate, indifferent, and impersonal like inanimate nature? If God is the ground of being, how could finite

89 8:455.
90 8:531.
human beings have personal relations with infinite God as we do in religious experience? Are religious language and relations only merely projections of the human self into Being in general?

We can sum up the questions: before the absolute ground of being what meaning and value could the existence of created beings in their relation with God have? What is the end of creation by God, Being in general, who is already self-sufficient? The first asks the theological meaning of being that creatures have in relation to God. The second paraphrases the first with theological terms to align it with the doctrine of creation. In a word, the crucial point is how to reconcile the ground of being as ontological foundation with a personal God for religion and morality, the God of philosophers with the God of theologians, and the ground of being with the ground of meaning. The task is to elaborate the significance of the doctrine of creation as a contact point for both.

These problems were sharpened and came to the front with the emergence of modern natural science and philosophy in Edwards’ times, the early modern era of the eighteenth century. The challenge drastically threatened the absoluteness of God’s being and work, and heightened the impersonal nature of reality. Thus it jeopardized the foundation of religion and theology, which were based on a relation with divine reality and operation. Modern science described being in general as a mechanic system of nature which is structured according to the deterministic laws of nature in void and indifferent space. The laws of nature are discovered and proved by human reason without the help of supernatural revelation. In a mechanical cosmology the impersonal absolute space of Newton seemed to substitute for a personal God, laws of nature for God’s personal providence, and human reason and mind for divine revelation and the Spirit. While before modern times the ontological superiority of spiritual reality had generally been preserved, modern science shook the ontological foundation of spiritual reality for religion and morality. Because the visible and corporeal world of nature, indifferent to the divine and human
personal involvement, seemed to prevail over the invisible spiritual reality of God and human mind, the reality of personal humans looked to be swallowed up in the impersonal nature. How to reconcile the spiritual reality of God and humans with material nature appeared as the conundrum of philosophy. The task was to preserve room for human morality and religion. Particularly, inanimate nature cast doubt on the ontological status of the spiritual reality of God as the ground of being that embraces both spiritual and material realities. God’s arbitrary sovereign work and personal involvement in the world contradicted the reasonable and impersonal laws of nature, or were interpreted in deterministic framework as the mechanical system of nature. In order to affirm both the mechanical system of nature and the reality of God, there seemed to be no option except to limit or give up God’s personal nature and to adapt the ontological nature of the ground being to impersonal nature or materiality. Deism confined God’s personal absoluteness to creation and denied God’s providence of personal involvement. While René Descartes’ dualism tried to keep both spiritual and corporeal reality in spite of some ambivalence, Thomas Hobbes’ materialism reduced the divine reality to corporeality and Baruch Spinoza identified God with the deterministic system of nature.

Edwards realized keenly those problems in the context of modern challenges:

Yea, without a revelation, men would be greatly at a loss concerning God, what he is, what manner of being, whether properly intelligent and willing, a being that has will and design, maintaining a proper, intelligent, voluntary dominion over the world. Notions of the First Being like those of Hobbes and Spinoza would prevail. Especially would they be at a loss [as to] those perfections of God which he exercises as a moral governor. For we find that some of the Deists, though they from revelation have been taught these, yet having cast off revelation, they apparently doubt of them all. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{91} 23:347.
Against deists, Hobbes, and Spinoza, Edwards asserts that God the ground of being is a personal and moral governor: “As the Supreme Being has made the world, so he has made us. As he is the author of the whole system of the visible universe, so [he] is our author . . . . And he is our preserver and governor, and we live, move and have our being in him. And he is evidently our moral governor” (emphasis mine).92 As already exhibited above, God the ground of being is “the fountain of all virtue and moral good”, which makes God the moral governor of created beings.93

Moreover, Edwards acutely grasps the substantial issues behind the modern threats against religion and morality, as he points them out in a personal letter: “I have also written two other discourses, one on God’s End in Creating the World; the other concerning The Nature of True Virtue. As it appeared to me, the modern opinions which prevail concerning these two things, stand very much as foundations of that fashionable scheme of divinity, which seems to have become almost universal” (emphasis mine).94 Here Edwards points out two fundamental problems that constitute the framework of theology: God the creator became indifferent or impersonal with a mechanicistic world, so that there is no notion of God’s personal end of creation and involvement in the world for the completion of the purpose; thus, morality lost and was divorced from the theological foundation of a personal God as moral governor. In two dissertations Edwards provides an alternative to the topic: the meaning of a creature’s being in relation with God Being in general established by creation, the actualization of the meaning of

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92 23:64.
93 1:166.
94 16:696.
being as the end of creation, and religion and morality grounded on the ontological foundation of God’s reality. In these dissertations Edwards argues that God the creator, the ground of being, is a moral governor who created the universe for an end and acts by providence and salvation in the world to accomplish the purpose of creation. The end of creation is the moral good of God’s holiness to glorify Godself by the communication of Godself as being and good; true virtue consists in the pursuit of God’s end of creation by love toward Being in general, which entails love toward creatures. Edwards’ true virtue unites religious and ethical virtues through love toward Being in general. God as the ground of being provides an ontological foundation on which moral philosophy can be grounded and conjoined with theology.

Edwards’ arguments in the two treatises manifest how through the doctrine of creation the ground of being is revealed as personal God for the meaning of being, i.e., religion and morality. God, who can be the object of love and can stand in religious and moral relation with humans, should be a personal being who is lovable and conversible.

First, God should be a lovable being as the object of love. For Edwards the ontological greatness of Being in general is not enough for religion and morality. Impersonal greatness does not evoke the love that provides meaning of being, well-being, and happiness of life. For philosophy an abstract concept of the ground of being is enough, but for religion and morality love is essential for the spontaneous response and genuine worship of the whole self that originates from the depth of the inner heart beyond heteronomy and hypocrisy. Ontological

95 8:399-627.

96 In contrast with Edwards, Immanuel Kant views the essence of morality as duty rather than love and denies God as ontological foundation for morality, though he affirms God as a postulate for morality.
greatness without loveliness and excellency does not warrant religious worship and morality.

Edwards points it out in his sermon on the virtue of humility as a fruit of charity:

> There can be no true humility in any without the creature's seeing his distance from God, not only with respect to greatness but also loveliness. . . .
> . . . the devils and damned . . . know that God is infinitely above them in power and awful majesty; and yet not knowing his loveliness and excellency, their wills and dispositions by no means comply with what becomes their meanness; and so they have no humility, but are full of pride. . . .
> . . . because he [devil] has no love to God.\(^97\)

True religious worship is caused by the evangelical humility of love, which is derived from the knowledge and sense of infinite loveliness and excellency of God.\(^98\) Worship is love.\(^99\) Love of God is “respect towards God as lovely” and “the knowledge of God as lovely causes humility,” i.e., humble love:

> True love to God is not love to him as an equal; for everyone who truly loves God loves him as God, that is, as a Being infinitely superior in greatness and excellence; it is love to a superior Lord, and absolute sovereign. But if we love God as infinitely superior to us, then love is exercised in us as infinite inferiors and therefore is an humble love.\(^100\)

Since infinite distance between God and creature is revealed not only in the degree of greatness of being but in that of loveliness,\(^101\) Being in general is manifested as a personal God to be worshiped by humble love:

\(^{97}\) 8:237, 238, 246.

\(^{98}\) Edwards distinguishes evangelical humility, the sixth sign of gracious affections, from legal humility, which has only the sense of God’s greatness without that of the transcendent beauty of God’s moral qualities (2:311-40).

\(^{99}\) Edwards makes worship and love synonymous in 10:425.

\(^{100}\) 8:245.

\(^{101}\) 8:244.
And perhaps it is needless for me to give notice to my readers that when I speak of an intelligent being's having a heart united and benevolently disposed to Being in general, I thereby mean *intelligent Being in general*. Not inanimate things, or beings that have no perception or will, which are not properly capable objects of benevolence.\(^{102}\) (emphasis mine)

Being in general as the object of human love is a personal God who, from love of benevolence, gives created beings not only being but also beauty, well-being, and happiness. God is “the ground both of their [created beings] existence and their beauty.”\(^{103}\) Humble human love is the response to the divine benevolence. Being in general as the ground of being becomes an infinite fountain of love which stands in a personal relationship of love with humans.

Second, for the moral relation of religion, God should be not only an object of love but also a conversable agent who can stand in a relation of communication and intercourse. As shown above, for Edwards Being in general is not an amoral sovereign ruler but a moral governor of the world. “The moral part is the end of all the rest of the creation” and God’s providence proceeds “towards the moral world.”\(^{104}\) In “Miscellany” no. 1338 on “Necessity of Revelation,” Edwards argues that for God’s moral government there should be voluntary conversation for communication, mutual intercourse, union, communion, and friendship between conversable agents who have understanding and will.

’Tis needful in order to a proper maintaining of moral government in a moral kingdom, not in a ruined, deserted state, the union between the head and members remaining, that there should be conversation between the governor and governed. . . .

And *as we rise higher in the scale of beings*, we don't see that an increase of perfection diminishes the need or propriety of communication and intercourse of this

\(^{102}\) 8:542.

\(^{103}\) 8:542.

\(^{104}\) 8:470-71.
kind, but increases it. And, accordingly, we see most of it among the most perfect beings. . . .

The ground of moral behavior and all moral government and regulation is society, or mutual intercourse and social regards. The special medium of union and communication of the members of the society, and the being of society as such, is conversation. And the well-being and happiness of society is friendship. "Tis the highest happiness of all moral agents. But friendship, above all other things that belong to society, requires conversation. "Tis what friendship most naturally and directly desires. "Tis maintained and nourished by that, and the felicity of friendship is tasted and enjoyed by that. The happiness of God's moral kingdom consists, in an inferior degree, in the members' enjoyment of each others' friendship, but infinitely more in the enjoyment of the friendship of their head. Therefore, here especially, and above all, is conversation requisite.

Conversation between God and mankind in this world is maintained by God's word on his part, and prayer on ours. By the former he speaks to us and expresses his mind to us; by the latter we speak to him and express our minds to him. Sincere and a suitable high friendship towards God, in all that believe God to be properly an intelligent, willing being, does most apparently, directly and strongly incline to pray. (emphasis mine)\footnote{23:346, 348, 350.}

The perfection of being is not an abstraction from personal nature but the increase of communication and intercourse for moral society. God is a personal being, as the governor and head of society, with whom we can have conversation and friendship. The true virtue of humble love to Being in general is not a monologic worship or a dry moral duty to the impersonal ground of being, but the mutual intercourse of personal relationship which furnishes the meaning of being, that is, the well-being and happiness of friendship.

**A Personal God as the Ground of Being in the Revelation of Salvation**

Edwards' association of the ground of being and personhood in God presupposes the fact that God's ontological perfection in greatness of being and existence is revealed as the
The excellency of goodness, beauty, and virtue.\textsuperscript{106} The integration of being with goodness, meaning, and value in the ground of being is achieved through religious revelation of a savior in the experience of salvation. The ontological concept of the ground of being is represented as God the creator, and the revelation of the creator is founded upon the divine epiphany of saving power in human existence. For this reason Edwards distinguishes the God of revealed theology from the God of natural theology. Through reason and natural principles of general grace, we can grasp only the natural perfection of God, the greatness of Being in general; only through special grace can we have the sense of God’s beauty of moral perfection that leads us to love God.\textsuperscript{107} As I have already quoted above, Edwards points out that without revelation we cannot sense the loveliness of a personal God as a moral governor and savior, though we can gain an ontological concept of God as the ground of being that is absolute but impersonal.\textsuperscript{108}

The ontological concept of God is derived not only from philosophical reasoning but also from the biblical revelation of God. In contrast with the philosophical concept of God, however, revelation associates the ground of being with a personal savior. Exo. 3:14, which Edwards quoted and commented on to insist the ontological absoluteness of God as Being itself,\textsuperscript{109} exhibits this fact obviously. In Exo. ch. 3, God who proclaimed the divine aseity, “I AM WHO I AM,” came down to rescue the Israelites. God being itself was not indifferent to the misery of the people but took notice of, observed, heard, and knew the cry of the people. The ground of being is identified with the personal God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exo. 2:23-3:14). The

\textsuperscript{106} For Edwards’ conjunction of being and goodness, see 8:423, 496, 550-51, 553, 548, 246 n. 6.

\textsuperscript{107} 2:311.

\textsuperscript{108} 23:347.

\textsuperscript{109} 6:345, 13:211, 15:418.
proclamation of God as the Creator manifests God being itself, and God is revealed as the Creator by being present in us as our savior. Our humble love to the infinite loveliness of God Being in general, which we have seen above from Edwards’ sermon on humility, is love to Christ as “an infinitely condescending God,” “an humble person,” and “a Savior.”

In the aspect of religious experience, Edwards himself experienced the absolute sovereignty of God coming to him as loveliness and sweetness. I make a long quotation of excerpts from his Personal Narrative to show that the elements of Edwards’ view on God I have argued above are involved, interrelated, and integrated with the development of his religious experience:

From my childhood up, my mind had been wont to be full of objections against the doctrine of God’s sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell. It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me. But I remember the time very well, when I seemed to be convinced, and fully satisfied, as to this sovereignty of God, and his justice in thus eternally disposing of men, according to his sovereign pleasure. . . . I have often since, not only had a conviction, but a delightful [Italics Edwards’] conviction. The doctrine of God’s sovereignty has very often appeared, an exceeding pleasant, bright and sweet doctrine to me: and absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God. . . .

I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was; and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be wrapt up to God in heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in him. . . .

From about that time, I began to have a new kind of apprehensions and ideas of Christ, and the work of redemption, and the glorious way of salvation by him. I had an inward, sweet sense of these things, that at times came into my heart; and my soul was led away in pleasant views and contemplations of them. . . .

After this my sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more and more lively, and had more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of everything was altered: there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost everything. God’s excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, moon and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water, and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind. . . .

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110 8:247-49.
My sense of divine things seemed gradually to increase . . . My longings after God and holiness, were much increased. . . .

. . . My heart as it were panted after this, to lie low before GOD, and in the dust; that I might be nothing, and that God might be all; that I might become as a little child . . .

I had great longings for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world. . . .

. . . 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. . . .

. . . of late years, I have had a more full and constant sense of the absolute sovereignty of God, and a delight in that sovereignty; and have had more of a sense of the glory of Christ, as a mediator, as revealed in the gospel. . . .

. . . I could not but as it were cry out, “How happy are they which do that which is right in the sight of God! They are blessed indeed, they are the happy ones!” I had at the same time, a very affecting sense, how meet and suitable it was that God should govern the world, and order all things according to his own pleasure; and I rejoiced in it, that God reigned, and that his will was done. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{111}

Edwards’ experience conjoined the absolute sovereignty in God’s work with loveliness of God’s goodness in salvation, and proceeded to sense and love and pursue the excellence of salvation through Christ and the beauty of divine holiness. The experience was expanded to a sense of the loveliness of all beings in nature. God’s prerogative in the divine work reveals God as the creator and the ground of being which comprehends all beings. All beings present delight and happiness to Edwards, and thus come to him as meaningful. The lovely goodness of God’s dominance confers not only being but also meaning and beauty on all beings. Edwards desired to participate in God’s work to fulfill the meaning of created beings through the kingdom of God in the world. The God who is absolute in being and work is revealed as the Trinity, the lovely union of three persons through the salvation of Christ.

Edwards’ personal experience epitomized the vital and experimental character of religion in the Great Awakening movement\textsuperscript{112} of which he was a main leader. The experimental character

\textsuperscript{111} 16:791-97, 800, 803, 804.

\textsuperscript{112} 4:101, 150, 511.
of religion consists in a personal experience of God, a strong act of love to God, and, as its effect, the holy practice of love. The vitality and power of experimental religion originate from a reality in religion that passes the test of fact: "experimental and powerful religion . . . would be declared and manifested in such a way, that instead of hardening spectators, and exceedingly promoting infidelity and atheism, would above all things tend to convince men that there is a reality in religion, and greatly awaken them, and win them, by convincing their consciences of the importance and excellency of religion" (emphasis mine). Experimental religion presupposes two certain realities, of God as Being in general and of a personal relation with the God.

Although the conjunction of divine greatness and goodness addresses many elusive riddles as illustrated above, it is an evident religious phenomenon that people experience. Unless we evade the questions by reducing them to mere human experience without divine reality, we have to cope with them in philosophical and theological struggles. The fundamental cause of the conundrums lies in that religious phenomena stretch over different ontological levels, as the dialectic of infinity and finitude shown above represents. Logics of different dimensions are as incommensurate as the axioms of Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometry are. Even if there could be a logic of divine aspect that is consistent throughout the different ontological levels between beings and the ground of being, it is not graspable by finite humans. For that reason philosophy of religion and theology inevitably are based on a sort of dialectics that is hypothetical. This tentativeness, however, might be enough for human practice in finite spatio-

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113 2:450-53.

114 2:461.
temporal contexts, but it should undergo the test of fact for continuing revisions like Edwards’ experimental religion.

The importance of Edwards’ thought consists in that he does not only describe the dialectic theologically but also provides an alternative ontological strategy for the dialectical logic. Edwards derives his revision from the reconstruction of ontological foundation itself, which is grounded on his reconceiving the reality of Godself: the personal God is the Trinity who is the creator and love, and the Trinity is the ground of being as the spiritual space of a disposition to communicate which embraces and transcends physical space and impersonal law of nature.
Edwards extends his concept of God Being in general to God as space in order to preserve the absoluteness of God’s being and work over the world, reacting against the alienation of God from the world by modern philosophy and natural science. The modern emancipation of the natural world from God’s reality and involvement derives from the notion of a self-sufficient mechanical system independent from God, which is constructed on the foundation of infinite and void space. The emergence of infinite space as the ground of the world goes along with medieval and modern development of theology, philosophy, and natural science. The space that receives and contains bodies functions as a sort of matrix of existence and the motion of beings, and in that sense as a field for divine creation and operation. The role and ontological status of space as the ontological ground of the world are overlapped with those of God. The transcendent God meets the world through divine omnipresence in space. Accordingly, the definition of the relation of God and space becomes the fundamental framework of relationship between God and the world. By its mediating status the concept of space is a crossroad at which ontology and the doctrines of God and creation intersect with each other, and a touchstone in which the issues of ontology, theology, and natural philosophy, and science are intricately entangled. Therefore, Edwards’ designation of God as space provides a ground for his doctrine of God and creation and ontology that will be elaborated in this dissertation. I will locate Edwards’ idea of God as space in a long tradition and broad contexts that conflated God with space, in order to grasp clearly the innovative aspects of Edwards’ concept of God as space.
Judeo-Christian Tradition on God and Space

From ancient times space has been conceived of as a sort of extramundane ground of being, like a receptacle of the world, such that it was associated with God or primordial matter. Although Aristotle reduced extramundane space into internal space subjected to material bodies, late-scholastic and modern reaction to Aristotelianism reintroduced the concept of extracosmic space and developed it into the idea of infinite void space.

The sources that implicate the association of God with space are found in Judaism, Christianity, Hermeticism, Stoicism, and Neoplatonism. However, the explicit connection of space with God is the perspicuous feature of Judeo-Christian tradition, which is distinguished from polytheism and Greek philosophy.¹ The designation of God as place is “congenial only to a monotheistic religion.” Space, the name of God, represents the divine omnipresence² since it presupposes the absoluteness of God as the only ontological foundation of being as we have seen in the case of Edwards’ Being in general. Although the Old Testament and New Testament do not directly name God as space, they contain numerous passages that manifest divine omnipresence and connote the link between God and space.³ The appellation of God as space begins with the rabbinic tradition in the earliest post-biblical literature that interpreted a Hebrew word, *maqom* (place) in the Old Testament (e.g., Genesis 22:14; 28:16-19; Exodus 33:21; Jeremiah 23:24; Ezekiel 3:12).⁴ Representatively, *Midrash Rabbah* says, in the name of R. Ammi, “The Lord is

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² Jammer, 31.

³ For examples, see ibid., 30, 113.

⁴ On the earliest designation of God as *maqom*, Jammer dates it as the first century but Copenhaver as Simeon the Righteous in the third century BCE (Jammer, 28; Brian P. Copenhaver, “Jewish Theologies of Space in
the place of His world, but His world is not His place.” The reason for this is because God is everywhere, fills all things as the soul fills the body, and contains things without being contained by anything. God is the space of Godself. Particularly, post-Talmudic-Midrashic literature like Zohar frequently identifies God as space, in the influence of cabalistic tradition of Jewish mysticism.

Christian tradition goes along with the Jewish theology of maqom. One of the most cited passages in the New Testament for the conflation of God and space is Acts 17:28 (NRS): “For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’” The Patristic tradition has held that God is omnipresent, is the place of the world, and exists in Godself. God’s omnipresent immensity is infinite and contains the finite cosmos. Augustine describes God’s infinite immensity as the place of the finite world,

But thou, O Lord, I imagined as environing the mass on every side and penetrating it, still infinite in every direction—as if there were a sea everywhere, and everywhere through measureless space nothing but an infinite sea; and it contained within itself some sort of sponge, huge but still finite, so that the sponge would in all its parts be filled from the immeasurable sea. Thus I conceived thy creation itself to be finite, and filled by thee, the infinite.

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6 Copenhaver, 493-94 n.23, 495 n.30, 32.

7 For Christian thoughts on the relation of God and space in ancient times, see Copenhaver, 497-98 and Grant, 112-15.

8 St. Augustine Confessions 7.5.7. The translation is by Albert C. Outler, Confessions and Enchiridion (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 100-1, accessed October 1, 2012, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/augustine/confessions.html. The passage is one of the most popular quotations which the
The most striking identification of God with space is Arnobius of Sicca’s (c. 260 - c. 327) prayer praising God in his apologetic work: “Thou art the first cause, the place and space of things created, the basis of all things whatsoever they be. Infinite, unbegotten, everlasting, eternal alone art Thou, whom no shape may represent, no outline of body define; unlimited in nature and in magnitude unlimited.”

The theological conflation of God with space in Jewish and Christian traditions had been accepted conventionally to signify these points: God is the single ontological foundation which contains all beings, and is present everywhere to preserve and govern the world. However, the association of God with space came to the fore as a thorny issue when Christian theology encountered Aristotelian natural philosophy in the middle ages, and with the emergence of new natural science in modern times. The problem was caused from the fact that space gradually gained an independent ontological status through its emancipation from matter; as a result, it appeared as infinite void to become an absolute reality coequal with God. The development of the concept of infinite void space from the fourteenth century to the seventeenth century culminated in Newtonian absolute space. It proceeded through two main tracks: the Scholastic introduction of a non-dimensional imaginary space and the modern scientific invention of three-dimensional space. Although their main concerns diverged, as the former is theological and the latter is natural philosophical, both were initiated by a reaction to Aristotelianism and coped with the same question, the relation of God and infinite void space.

Scholastics cited to support their concept of extracosmic infinite void space equated with God’s immensity (Grant, 140-1, 172).

God and the Scholastic Extracomic Space

The movement toward infinite space started from the medieval Scholastic reaction to Aristotelianism. The natural philosophy of Aristotle endangered the Christian doctrine of creation out of nothing and the ontological singularity of God beyond creation by its denial of actual infinity and infinite void space. Aristotle maintained the eternity of the world and the creation of the world and posed it as incompatible with pre-creation void space which is a precondition of creation out of nothing.\(^{10}\) For him the generation of anybody presupposes a void free of body but “from no existing magnitude of void nothing can be generated.”\(^{11}\) In addition he denied the existence itself of infinity and vacuum. For Aristotle space is the adjacent boundary of the containing body that is subjected to the substance of body as its accident. There is no infinite and void space since there is no body beyond the finite world. “The finite space of the universe [is] limited by the interior boundary of the outermost sphere, which itself is not contained in any further receptacle.”\(^{12}\) Beyond the finite universe there is absolutely nothing without place, void, time, and body.\(^{13}\) Therefore a void space for generation or infinite space beyond the finite universe cannot exist such that the finite world is uncreated and eternal. The Aristotelian cosmology is constructed around the finite world such that there is no room for the divine transcendence of infinity beyond the world. It encroaches upon the Christian teaching of creation. As a result, it threatens the ontological status of God as the ground of being and the divine right and dominion over the world based on the absolute infinite being of God. For that reason, against

\(^{10}\) On the Aristotelian dilemma, see Grant, 110-112.

\(^{11}\) Aristotle De caelo 3.2.301b.31-302a.9.

\(^{12}\) Jammer, 19.

\(^{13}\) Aristotle De caelo 1.9.279a.12-18.
the Aristotelian eternity of the world, the remaining option for Christian doctrine of creation is to
defend a pre-creation void space that is implausible to Aristotelian system.

A turning point toward an infinite and void space beyond the finite world (extracosmic),
came from the Condemnation of 1277 on 219 philosophical and theological theses by the Bishop
of Paris, Stephen Tempier. The Condemnation prohibited the Aristotelian teaching on the eternity
of the world and asserted God’s infinite and absolute power of creation and causation that
surpasses the limits posed by natural philosophy like Aristotelianism. Particularly among them,
articles 34 and 49 of the Condemnation played a crucial role in affirming the feasibility of a
divine omnipotence that presupposes the possibility of infinite and void space beyond the world:
God could create many worlds and could move the world rectilinearly left behind a vacuum; thus,
there should be an infinite space beyond one finite world on which the worlds other than this
world could exist and the world is able to be moved.\footnote{Grant, 108-10.}

As the result of the Condemnation, Christian scholars were released from the bondage of
Aristotelian natural philosophy to be allowed to hold onto another horn of the Aristotelian
dilemma, a pre-creation void space for creation. Aristotelian pre-creation void space, however,
has two problems repugnant to Christian theology that it is a finite size conformed to the created
world and is independent from God as in the case of Aristotelian eternal world. First, the fixed
size of finite void space denies God’s existence beyond the world and confines the divine
omnipotence to create the world other than this world and to move the world.\footnote{Ibid., 137.} Second, the pre-
creation void space independent from God that Aristotle presupposed for creation plays the role
of ontological ground for creation instead of God, and would be the place of God on which God depends for the divine existence. But Christian answer to the question “where was God before creation?” has been “in Godself”: there is no pre-creation void space independent from God. To solve the problem, Christian Scholastics extended Aristotelian pre-creation space to infinite void space beyond the world and took up two strategies for this space to avoid diminishing divine omnipotence and ontological absoluteness: those who affirmed that God could create actual infinity conceived the extramundane void space as a separate thing that is created and circumscribed by God; those who negated the divine ability to create infinity identified the vacuum as an uncreated thing with God’s immensity.\textsuperscript{16}

The extracosmic space dependent on God but beyond the world has ambivalent ontological features in relation to the two poles of the spiritual reality of God and the corporeal reality of the world: existent but not positive, diffused but not extended, neither substance nor accident, and neither spiritual nor corporeal.\textsuperscript{17} The elusive chimera of infinite space void of body goes beyond the ken of substance-accident categories of Aristotelianism that do not concede infinity and vacuum. For that reason, the empty space has been called an “imaginary space”\textsuperscript{18} in the sense that: first, the void is not a perceivable extension like the magnitude of real body; second, its invisibility does not mean a fiction of mind but something of real existence;

\textsuperscript{16} For the classification, see ibid., 116-17. The divine omnipotence does not provide a definite answer to the question of whether God could create actual infinities or not, since God’s absolute power does not guarantee that God could create an actual infinity greater than God beyond the limit of God’s perfection of infinity (idem, 127-29).

\textsuperscript{17} For illustrations of the ambiguity, see ibid., 141, 158, 166.

\textsuperscript{18} Defending the concept of absolute space, Samuel Clarke defines the word ‘imaginary,’ writing that “the meaning of which, is not, that such space is not real; but we are wholly ignorant what kinds of things are in that space” (Samuel Clarke, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, and Isaac Newton, ed., Henry Gavin Alexander,\textit{ The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence: Together with Extracts from Newton’s Principia and Opticks} [New York: Philosophical Library, 1956], 31). For a detailed explanation of the term, see ibid., 117-21.
third, it has not a self-sufficient reality independent from God. The Scholastics hesitated to confer a positive nature on the infinite void space for fear of making it a substance independent from God, since its infinity and eternity of pre-creation nature are the same as the attributes of God. Moreover, too close association of the vacuum with God might reduce the divine reality to a divisible extension of material body. The extracosmic infinite space stands in the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity with both God and the world. As a place for dimensional bodies the extramundane space is an imaginary or virtual vacuum, but as a space for divine omnipresence it is diffused infinitely through the world without extension or dimension. The extramundane space is an aspect or mode of the spiritual presence of God’s being in relation with corporeal space. The immensity of God’s substance is omnipresent in the mode of dimension as if it were extended in relation to corporeal spaces. God is present in the extracosmic void space and at the same time God is in Godself. Corporeally God is revealed as a vacuum in relation to creatures, but spiritually God fills the world by divine omnipresence.

The introduction of extracosmic void space had the theological intention to protect God’s transcendence of infinite perfection and power against Aristotelian cosmology domesticating God to the finite world. God’s immensity in an infinite imaginary space is a divine perfection in respect to place, as the divine eternity is that in respect to time. It premises Thomas Aquinas’ denial of action at a distance that “all actions, even God’s, occur in the place where the effect is

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19 Grant, 111, 143.

20 Ibid., 154-55.

21 For the rationales of extramundane infinite void space the Scholastic thinkers provided, see ibid., 136-38, 156-67, 161-62. For those of objections to it, see idem, 144-47, 160.
produced or through the mediation of some agent or medium.” According to Thomas’ principle, divine immutability and omnipresence postulates that God has been present where the world exists now without moving to create and preserve the world. The space where God has been present before creation is an imaginary space of infinity. The extramundane void plays a role of spatial medium for the divine work between God’s spiritual reality and corporeal world. It provides room in which, as God creates the world out of nothing with immutability, God’s omnipotent power could be exercised through and beyond the finite universe by divine omnipresence.

God and the Absolute Space of Modern Natural Science

The second track towards infinite void space derived from physical concerns was inaugurated by Italian natural philosophers in the sixteenth century such as Bernardino Telesio (1509-1588), Thommaso Campanella (1586-1639), Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), and Francesco Patrizi (1529-1597). It culminated in Isaac Newton’s (1642-1727) absolute space through the synthesis of Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655). Telesio and Campanella affirmed a finite void space separate from bodies, accepting John Philoponus’ immaterial extension of three dimensional space that is distinguished from material extension of bodies. Bruno went further to introduce an infinite void space according to Greek atomistic cosmology, and Patrizi did so also according to Stoicism. Gassendi presented a pure extension of infinite void space by synthesizing the models of Greek atomism and Stoicism and adapting both to a Christian framework. At last Newton proposed an absolute space by geometrizing Gassendi’s infinite void space of three dimensional

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22 Ibid., 146. In opposition to Thomists, Duns Scotus claims that God’s omnipotence for its exercise does not need divine omnipresence except divine will.
extension. The development drew the infinity in extramundane and divine domain down into the space of the universe and conferred on it an actual reality of three dimensions, in contrast with the Scholastic imaginary space that is extracosmic and without dimension. The concept of infinite space was devised from the concerns of natural science and philosophy in reaction to Scholastic Aristotelianism rather than theological interests. Nevertheless, the infinity and absoluteness of space that is tantamount to God inevitably raised vexing questions about its relation with divine infinity and immensity.

The precursors of the modern concept of infinite space were Nicholas of Cusa and Hasdai Crescas. Cusa attributed infinity to the world metaphorically and rejected the Aristotelian hierarchy of values in space. Hasdai Crescas proposed, firstly in Western Europe since Greek antiquity, an infinite homogenous three-dimensional void space, refuting Aristotelian physics. However, the critical evolution toward Newtonian absolute space was catalyzed by the eclectic adaptation of ancient cosmologies other than Aristotelianism in the scientific revolution from the sixteenth century. As mentioned above, the natural philosophy of Aristotle, centering around bodily entities and substance-accident categories, denigrated the reality of space into an accident dependent on bodily substance such that it denied infinite vacuum without body. Space subjected to finite bodies is not homogenous, but has qualitative differences that cause natural motion inherent in spatial conditions such that things move towards their own places according to their natural tendency. By contrast, other ancient natural philosophies such as Pythagoreanism,

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23 Ibid., 138-40; Jammer, 82-84.

24 Grant, 332 n. 20; Jammer, 81.

25 Jammer, 18-19.
Platonism, Greek atomism, and Stoicism abstracted space as an independent reality from bodies in that space functions as a receptacle or ground for the existence and motion of bodies.

First, the modern geometrized concept of absolute space is based on the idea of space as a sort of receptacle that constitutes a ground of being and motion independent from material entities. This view is in line with Platonic mathematical realism and its conception of space as a primordial receptacle. Plato proposed that the world is geometric forms assigned to space, which is an indeterminate receptacle like a matrix of beings. For Plato “as much as matter is reduced to space, physics is reduced to geometry.” The Platonic myth of creation in his *Timaeus* manifests space as an ontological matrix of beings that holds a more fundamental ontological status than bodies. Platonic metaphysics of Forms advances a mathematical realism in which geometrical forms of space gain an ideal reality higher than an imaginary material world. The indeterminate substratum without determinate forms is ungraspable in terms of Aristotelian substance-accident categories of matters. In the Platonic mood of the Italian Renaissance, the Italian natural philosophy of Bernardino Telesio, Thommaso Campanella, and Francesco Patrizi released the concept of space from the Aristotelian-Scholastic scheme, and grasped space as “the necessary substratum of all physical processes.” In addition, through mathematical realism like Plato’s Newton was able to assign an independent ontological existence to absolute space that is a reference system of geometrical structure for a mechanical system.

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26 Ibid., 16.

27 Ibid., 90. Jammer traces the influence of Jewish Cabalism and Platonism on modern concepts of space from Newton and Locke through Pierre Gassendi to Italian natural philosophers (idem, 33-36).

28 Ibid., 102.
Second, Stoicism and Greek atomism played a crucial role for Patrizi and Gassendi to expand the idea of space as a receptacle of universe to an infinite void. A Pythagorean, Archytas of Tarentum, proposed a receptacle that is independent from matter, is not pure with pressure and tension, and has an infinite void of extension without limit of its surroundings.\(^\text{29}\) Similarly to Archytas, the Stoic puts forward a universe of the All (\textit{pan}) in which an infinite void space surrounds an Aristotelian finite cosmos of the Whole (\textit{holon}) that is constituted by material bodies and is filled with \textit{pneuma} without any vacuum.\(^\text{30}\) The stoic void is a three-dimensional and infinite receptacle. Since the void is outside of the world of material bodies, it never requires a possibility of an actual body that Aristotle’s concept of void requires. Therefore the stoic void is completely independent from bodies, indeterminate, and isotropic without any differentiations.\(^\text{31}\) Infinite space, however, is incompletely extended since it has an inner limit of the material cosmos which the void space surrounds and does not coexist with. The vacuum exists within the infinite universe but still beyond the whole of finite world. Greek atomism radically converted space into an infinite voidness and infused it into the world. The atomistic cosmology describes the universe as that in which infinite numbers of world are distributed through an infinite void space. The early atomism of Democritus and Epicurus introduced an infinite and void extension for a field of an infinite number of atoms and their motions. Their infinite vacuum is pure, without any influence on the motion of matter. However, the void space was still unoccupied by bodies in disjunction with them. With later the Greek atomist Lucretius

\(^{29}\) Grant, 106; Jammer, 10.

\(^{30}\) For the Stoic distinction between the finite world and infinite universe, see Grant, 376 n. 21.

\(^{31}\) Jammer, 24-25.
emerged pure, infinite, void, and homogeneous (yet not isotropic) extension of a receptacle that coexists with and contains bodies.  

Third, the introduction of John Philoponus’ works and Gassendi’s adaptation of the Stoic and Greek atomistic cosmologies to Christian frame removed serious obstacles to the void space of three dimensional extension distinguished from bodily extension. Although the Stoics and Greek atomists proposed a three dimensional infinite void, it had gained little acceptance before the sixteenth century. The formidable Aristotelian rebuttal against the Platonic corporeal receptacle and a separate void space had prevailed. The void space separated from bodies is imperceptible and cannot have any corporeal dimension. The bodily extension is impenetrable such that another dimension cannot coexist with the dimension of bodily entities occupying the space. Therefore a separate dimension of space is superfluous. Moreover the separate void space of extension was offensive to Christian scholars because it was derived from the cosmologies of Stoic materialism and Greek atomistic atheism, which were unacceptable to Christian thought.

Firstly, to meet the Aristotelian critique against the separate dimension of space, Philoponus proved an immaterial and three dimensional extension of void space which is independent from corporeal magnitude. The incorporeality of the extended void enables its space to interpenetrate, coexist with, and contain bodily extensions. “Although bodies occupy and then depart from successive parts of an absolute void space, the latter remains immobile.” The incorporeal extension is an absolute and immobile space that constitutes a volumetric measure of successive and different material bodies. Philoponus’ dimensional space neither stands in itself

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32 Ibid., 10-13.

33 Grant, 20.
separately from bodies nor is infinite, but it is finite, coextensive with the world, and filled with
matter. While not going further to recognize the infinite space of pure extension, Philoponus’
invention of immaterial and void extension provided a crucial category singular to space such
that it may be a positive and actual existence of physical quantity and be extended to infinite
space beyond the constraints of Aristotelian ontology. Moreover, this incorporeal extension
paved an innovative way to define a new relation between God and space since it removed the
Scholastic and Aristotelian restrictions that extension is material substance and a vacuum is a
negative thing which cannot be created by God. To put it in another way, going around
ambivalent nature of space between the spiritual reality of God and physical reality of the world,
one could choose a new option among two ways: immaterial extension might be a spiritual
existence that is able to associate with God, and void space might remain as a created being of
independent reality without being absorbed into God and matter.

Secondly, Bruno introduced an infinite void space according to Greek atomistic
cosmology. Patrizi did the same according to Stoicism, and Gassendi synthesized both models
and adapted them to Christian worldview. As a result, Gassendi formulated a modern cosmology
in which an infinite space could be acceptable to Christianity. First, Gassendi rejected Bruno’s
unconditional acceptance of Greek atomism in which the universe is constituted by infinite
numbers of atoms and the world is eternal and uncreated. His modified frame presented the
hypothesis that God created a finite number of atoms and a single and finite world out of atoms

34 On the Scholastic argument against separate extended void space following Aristotle and Philoponus’
argument for the incorporeal dimension of void space and its finiteness, see ibid., 17-21, 152, 192, 210.
35 Ibid., 199.
36 Ibid., 184.
and placed it in an infinite three-dimensional void space. Although Gassendi’s finite universe follows a sort of Stoic system in which “a finite world is surrounded by an infinite three-dimensional void space,” it was “not, however, a Stoic plenum but consisted of atoms and microvaua” like Greek atomism. In the Stoic cosmology a pure extension void of bodies was still extracosmic and according to its materialism the world was filled with a kind of material *pneuma* without interstitial vacuum. In contrast, following Philoponus, Bruno and Patrizi affirmed the existence of interstitial void. While Philoponus’ void must always be occupied with matter, Bruno’s was filled with material ether and Patrizi’s with light. Ether or light is a body, but incorporeal and resistanceless like space. However, Gassendi, adopting Greek atomism, defined space within the world as a pure extension void of all created beings. As the Scholastic Christian theology did against Stoic *pneuma* of materialism, he “filled it with God, the uncreated divine spirit.” By presenting the pure extension of void, Gassendi achieved complete independence of space from material bodies.

Refuting the Scholastic-Aristotelian concept of space, Bruno, Patrizi and Gassendi interpreted the infinite void space of Stoicism and Greek atomism in light of Philoponus’ concept of incorporeal extension. Consequently, space gained a real and actual entity of three dimensions. Infinite space became an ontological reality that is more substantial than material bodies and their substance-accidents categories, because in space they exist and move and space remains even after the removal or annihilation of all matters. The natures of infinite void space are specified as incorporeality, immutability, penetrability, indivisibility, resistanceless, homogeneity,

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37 Ibid., 207-8.

and three-dimensional extension. Gassendi’s theory of space and cosmology, which integrated the fruits of development of natural philosophy in the sixteenth century, was widely disseminated and won steady and growing support during the seventeenth century, since it furnished a suitable framework for the emerging natural science. It was absorbed into Newtonian mechanical cosmology and physics based on absolute space.\textsuperscript{39} Newton geometrized Gassendi’s infinite space and postulated an absolute space for the absolute motion of inertia. “Prior to Newton, the doctrine of infinite void space played little role in science proper. . . . Newton would construct his new physics and cosmology within the frame of an infinite, absolute space.”\textsuperscript{40} “All Newton’s achievements and discoveries in the realm of physics are in his view subordinate to the philosophical conception of absolute space.”\textsuperscript{41} The modern evolution of Newtonian absolute space emancipated the concept of space from the Aristotelian subjection of space to material bodies, such that it acquired an actual being of incorporeal extension separated from material entities, and eventually became a fundamental logical and ontological necessity for beings and motions. Absolute space is a ground of being that exists before the creation of material bodies and remains after their annihilation, and a ground of motion that functions as an absolute reference frame for mechanical system.

\textsuperscript{39} For the influence of Gassendi on Newton, see ibid., 207, 210; Jammer, 94.

\textsuperscript{40} Grant, 240.

\textsuperscript{41} Jammer, 116.
Newtonian Absolute Space as an Attribute of God

The association of three dimensional extension with the ontological and physical absoluteness of infinity posed a new dilemma in the relation between absolute space and God, which the Scholastic extracosmic space had not posed since it was an imaginary thing that has not an actual reality of extension. Rejecting the concept of Newtonian absolute space, Berkeley expresses the predicament: the chief advantage of conceiving space as relative is that “we are freed from that dangerous dilemma, to which several who have employed their thoughts on that subject imagine themselves reduced, to wit, of thinking either that Real Space is God, or else that there is something beside God which is eternal, uncreated, infinite, indivisible, immutable.”

On the one hand, the absolute infinity of space might be exalted to an uncreated and eternal ground of physical beings and motion which is separate from God, but on the other hand, assigning three dimensionality of space to God might make God a divisible extension like matter.

Gassendi showed the puzzle by holding one horn of the dilemma, in that he defines three dimensional space as an independent and uncreated existence. Infinite space is not created since it is the place in which God is omnipresent prior to creation of the world. He, however, cannot associate the extension of space with God’s immensity directly for he conceived that the divine substance is not an actually extended magnitude but is omnipresent indivisibly and wholly. Therefore dimensional space is uncreated and separate from God. He tries to justify the uncreated independency of space by characterizing the space as imaginary that has nothing positive, following the Scholastics. It, however, does not weaken the difficulty because

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43 Grant, 210-12.
Gassendi’s space has an actual reality of extension unlike the Scholastic non-dimensional imaginary space. The uncreatedness and independence of actual extension exalted space to an ontological level tantamount to God. Regardless of his intention, it encroaches upon the basic frame of monotheistic Christianity just as the Platonic uncreated primordial matter that coexists eternally with the Demiurge. It results in the same effect as Aristotelian eternity of the world and the uncreated atoms of Greek atheistic atomism that he wanted to avoid in his formulation of a cosmology.

To shun the problem with which Gassendi was confronted, one might choose the Scholastic strategy of conjoining space with God. However, the dimensional magnitude of infinite space makes the conjunction impossible for extension is material. Although Philoponus suggested an incorporeal dimension of space separated from the corporeal dimension of bodies, this immateriality does not necessarily mean spirituality. Philoponus argued that the prime matter and the substance of a corporeal entity is three-dimensional extension, opposing the Aristotelian concept of matter that has no definite property and is paralleled with form.  

Extension was conceived essentially as a material attribute that is divisible or at least distinguishable into parts in contrast to the indivisibility of spiritual being.

The specification of extension as material was expressed clearly by Descartes’ metaphysical claim that extension is an essential nature of material substance. From this principle, Descartes identified extended space with matter and reasoned as follows: “Only God is infinite; extended space . . . is separate and independent of God and cannot therefore be infinite; however, because it is unlimited, it functions as an infinite space.”

\[44\] Ibid., 15, 272 n. 39-40.

\[45\] Ibid., 398 n. 233.
space with matter separated space from the spiritual reality of God and created a deep chasm between God and the world. Descartes retained divine absoluteness by subjecting space to matter as an internal space of bodily dimensions and differentiating indefinitely extended space from divine actual infinity. This Cartesian concept of space, however, did not reflect modern development toward Newtonian absolute space. The Cartesian concept of material extension widened the distance between God and the void space of infinite extension that Gassendi and Newton presented. Conjoined with the Cartesian dualism of spiritual and material substances, absolute space divorced from divine reality constituted an ontological ground on which the mechanical system of material substance could be compartmentalized apart from spiritual substance and severed from divine involvement and interaction with the spiritual world. The uncreated and separated space would infringe on the providence and ontological singularity of God and at last on the divine existence, as modern deism, materialistic reductionism, and atheism did so.

To resolve the problem of uncreated infinite extension in relation with God, Henry More launched a bold scheme in that he redefines extension not as specific to material substance but as the essence of all beings, including spiritual substance. More positively reinterpreted as “spiritual” the extension of tridimensional space that Philoponus had defined by the negative term “incorporeal.” For More spiritual substance is also essentially extension and is distinguished from material substance by its spiritual features which are penetrable, indiscernible, and conferred with life and motion. Because spatial extension has the same nature as the extension of spiritual beings, a spiritual God could have spiritual extension. Accordingly God could be an

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46 For Descartes’ notion of internal space and his position on an external space of vacuum separated from bodies and infinity, see ibid., 15-17, 341 n. 49.
extended being of space. Infinite space has a reality independent of our imagination and the extension of space is a real attribute of some subject. Since extension can exist without matter, bodies cannot be a subject of space. Hence spirit other than matter should be the subject of spatial extension, and only infinite spirit is eligible to be a subject of infinite extension. Consequently, infinite space is an attribute of God who is singular infinite spirit. To buttress his reasoning More articulates the idea that the attributes of absolute infinite space correspond to God’s names and attributes. Actually God is space, though God has divine life and activity in addition to the attributes of space as bare divine essence and existence. Further, More explained divine providence by a pervasive spirit of nature that, as an immaterial ether, fills the material world, as the spiritual extension of space contains the world as a divine ground of being.

More’s divinization of space by his attribution of immaterial extension to God acquired wide acceptance in England and exerted a great influence on Joseph Raphson, Isaac Barrow, John Locke, Isaac Newton, and Samuel Clarke and through them on eighteenth century philosophy. More’s concept of spiritual extension enabled Newton to explain and reconcile his mechanics of gravity with absolute space and a Christian worldview. Newton “accepted More’s interpretation because it was more compatible with an infinite, extended void space than was its potential rivals.” Newton revised the mechanical cosmology of Descartes and Gassendi with the idea of gravity, which operates according to mathematical laws on the field of absolute space.

47 Ibid., 227.

48 Henry More, Immortality of the Soul, 193-204; ibid., 225, 400 n. 249.

49 Grant, 254.
The Newtonian mechanical world is not a self-sufficient system but depends on gravity, that is, the immaterial and non-mechanical cause of God’s intervention. For Newton “the main Business of natural Philosophy is to argue form Phaenomena without feigning Hypotheses, and to deduce Causes from Effects, till we come to the very first Cause, which certainly is not mechanical.”\(^50\) Newtonian natural philosophy traces back from physical phenomena through the immaterial and mathematical causes of the laws of nature to the spiritual cause of God. As Clarke states, mathematical principles show that the frame of nature arises from an intelligent and free cause rather than from a mechanical or material cause. “Metaphysical consequences follow demonstratively from mathematical principles,” and “the mathematical principles may . . . be called metaphysical principles.”\(^51\)

The Newtonian universe is composed of absolute space, atoms, and attractive powers. Absolute space is attributed to God’s omnipresence, atoms to God’s power, powers to the mathematical laws of nature, which are reduced to God’s action according to divine wisdom and will. Ultimately divine power and wisdom are ascribed to the divine will, which is free from the restriction of sufficient reason of Cartesian rationalism.\(^52\) In this Newtonian natural philosophy, absolute space as More’s incorporeal extension functions as a mediatory field of divine omnipresence in which God’s spiritual cause operates on matter. Newtonian absolute space furnishes God infinite room for the divine sovereignty of voluntary freedom, and impersonal space as the ground of being and motion is spiritualized into the sensorium of a personal God.

\(^{50}\) Isaac Newton, *Opticks* (New York: Dover, 1952), 369.

\(^{51}\) Clarke, 20.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 30.
Newton required God not only for his religious belief but also for his mechanical system itself. According to Samuel Clarke, Newton opposed the notion of a deistic God and the concept of the world as a self-sufficient machine which goes on “without the interposition of God, as a clock continues to go without the assistance of a clockmaker; is the notion of materialism and fate, and tends . . . to exclude providence and God’s government in reality out of the world.”

The Newtonian God is not only the transcendent creator but also a living and intelligent being who by wisdom originally frames the perfect and complete idea of a work, and according to this idea exercises his power through omnipresence in absolute space. The Newtonian machine of the world needs continuous divine interposition of choice and reform and renovation for its conservation. As Alexandre Koyré explained, “Newton’s God is not merely a ‘philosophical’ God, the person impersonal and uninterested First Cause of the Aristotelians, or the—for Newton—utterly indifferent and world-absent God of Descartes. He is . . . the Biblical God, the effective Master and Ruler of the world created by him.”

From his belief in God, Newton wanted to explain by God’s existence and action of creation and providence the initial conditions of a mechanical system and its operation by gravity that mere material or mechanical causes cannot bring about.

Newtonian experimental philosophy rejects the hypothesis of Cartesian metaphysics and mechanism and analyzes the phenomena of attractive powers of gravity, magnetism, and electricity in a mathematical method. For Descartes, material extension is separated from

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53 Ibid., 14.

54 Ibid., 22.

55 Clarke, 11, 13-14, 22-24; Newton, Opticks, 399, 402.

spiritual substance and the motion of matter is completely explained only by material causes within a perfect mechanical system. Without the involvement of immaterial or spiritual causes, Cartesian motion is communicated according to a law of conservation in terms of the collisions of material particles and the contact of their surfaces. In contradistinction to Cartesian mechanical and material causes, the forces of attraction are “immaterial” and “transphysical” causes other than matter, since they affect material entities at a distance of void space by penetrating matter without the least diminution of their force through impenetrable bodies. As a result, Newtonian nature is structured by immaterial powers and space as well as by material bodies. Furthermore, the incorporeal force of attraction dominates the existence and motion of finite matters on the field of infinite void space. It constitutes bodies by sticking together particles and mediates the interaction between particles and bodies at distance. Ultimately, Newton attributes the cause of gravity to the action of God’s spirit, which is an immaterial ether filling the infinite space like More’s spirit of nature. Newton argues that God causes physical phenomena by attractive powers operating at distance through the omnipresence of the divine spirit in the absolute space: it appears “from Phaenomena that there is a Being incorporeal, living, intelligent, omnipresent, who in infinite Space, as it were in his Sensory, sees the things themselves intimately, and thoroughly perceives them, and comprehends them wholly by their

57 Ibid., 213.


59 Newton, Opticks, 388-95, 400-1.

60 Newton, Principles, 534; Grant, 247, 411 n. 377.
immediate presence to himself” (Italics mine).\textsuperscript{61} Gravity is an inexplicable action at distance which has no material medium, but it is explicable in the respect that the divine spirit is the mediator communicating the power. Since God is omnipresent wherever there is the divine operation, there is no action at distance for God. The physical puzzle of the action at distance of gravity is resolved by a theological explanation of God’s action through the work of divine spirit and its omnipresence in divine space.

In addition to the continuous operation of a mechanical system, he explains the preconditions of the system that laws of nature and mechanical physics cannot account for in terms of divine power and action in infinite space: God creates indivisible atoms, associates them into matters, sets them in order at their first positions, and gives them many regular motions.\textsuperscript{62} As is the case for divine action by gravity, Newton states that an infinite void space furnishes a ground for God’s creation of atoms and matter by divine free will and choice: “since Space is divisible \textit{in infinitum}, and Matter is not necessarily in all places, it may be also allow’d that God is able to create Particles of Matter of several Sizes and Figures, and in several Proportions to Space, and perhaps of different Densities and Forces, and thereby to vary Laws of Nature, and make Worlds of several sorts in several Parts of the Universe.”\textsuperscript{63}

To sum up, unlike Cartesian mechanics the Newtonian system requires the spiritual cause of God’s intervention for the continuous operation of the world, according to laws of nature as well as for its creation, and an infinite space in which God is omnipresent for divine creation and

\textsuperscript{61} Newton, \textit{Opticks}, 370.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 402; idem, \textit{Principles}, 543.

\textsuperscript{63} Newton, \textit{Opticks}, 403-4.
providence. All existence and phenomena in the world are “the effect of nothing else than the Wisdom and Skill of a powerful ever-living Agent, who being in all Places, is more able by his Will to move the Bodies within his boundless uniform Sensorium, and thereby to form and reform the Parts of the Universe, than we are by our Will to move the Parts of our own Bodies” (Italics mine).\textsuperscript{64}

Accepting More’s idea of spiritual extension, Newton identified space with a divine attribute such that he was able to reconcile and associate his mechanical system with the spiritual cause of God’s existence and action. Newtonian absolute space, compared to the divine sensory, is not an organ for divine sensation but is a mediatory being distinct from God and in which God is omnipresent. The space denotes divine “immediate Presence . . . being everywhere present in the Things themselves” “without the Intervention of any third thing” since God is “an uniform Being, void of Organs, Members or Parts” and “has no need of such Organs.”\textsuperscript{65} Consequently, absolute space is God’s attribute of omnipresence. Clarke elucidates Newton’s intention: “The word sensory does not properly signify the organ, but the place of sensation. . . . Sir Isaac Newton does not say, that space is the sensory; but that it is, by way of similitude only, as it were the sensory, &c.” The figure of the sensory means that God perceives things through the divine immediate presence of a living and intelligent being without mediation as a human soul is present in its sensory.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 403.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{66} Clarke, 13, 21-22.
Newton avoided direct identification of God with space because it might implicate that God is merely an impersonal and indifferent first cause or ground of being. God is “not eternity or infinity . . . not duration or space.” Newton’s God is “a living, intelligent, and powerful Being” who governs the world by free will with purpose. For “the dominion of a spiritual being” God is “eternal and infinite . . . endures and is present. . . . he constitutes duration and space. . . . He is omnipresent not virtually only, but also substantially. . . . In him are all things contained and moved.”

“Thus ‘in Him we live, we move and we are,’ not metaphorically or metaphysically as St. Paul meant it, but in the most proper and literal meaning of these words.” God’s literal omnipresence is required for the creation and maintenance of the universe, its mathematical laws, and its lawful cosmic operation. For Newton, “God is literally an incorporeal, three-dimensional being actually possessed of length, breadth, and width,” and “his dimensionality is our absolute, three-dimensional, infinite space.”

**The Critique and Defense of Absolute Space for God**

More’s reconception of incorporeal extension as spiritual was an innovative strategy to solve the dilemma of the relation between God and space and provided a philosophical tool by which Newton reconciled mechanical cosmology with Christian theology. But there was still doubt about the feasibility of More’s solution and Newtonian absolute space, and eventually both came to be temporary and partial successes. Despite More’s spiritualization of extension, a tint of material nature could not be completely removed from dimensional space in its intimate

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68 Koyré, 227.

69 Grant, 245.
relationship with bodily magnitude. Because of the material implications of absolute space, its
divinization seemed to be an idolization or a derogation of a personal God to an impersonal
existence. For example, Leibniz criticized Newtonian absolute space as *idola tribus, idola specus*,
that is “an idol of some modern Englishmen” and a philosophical idol.\textsuperscript{70}

In origin the concept of infinite space is derived from the abstraction from physical
phenomena of bodily extensions. Essentially both the Scholastic imaginary space and Newtonian
absolute space begin with the premise of a physical image of place in which God and the world
are commonly located. The extramundane space is paralleled to the place of material entities and
is not required except for the existence of the world. To avoid a mere material image of space,
traditional theology suggested that God operates by divine will without direct presence
(nullibism) or that God is present wholly in every part (holenmerism), thereby denying a
dimensional extension of divine presence.\textsuperscript{71} Following this traditional position, the Scholastics
conceived of the extramundane space as an imaginary thing in the sense that it does not have a
dimensional extension. By contrast, More did not take this detour but redefined space as a
spiritual magnitude. While this dared to reengage God in the mechanical world, it associated God
too closely with matter. Grant states the problem of More’s conception of a three-dimensional
God: “No longer was God wholly in every part. Was He then less than wholly in every part? It
certainly appeared so. But what interpretation could be attributed to such an omnipresence? . . .
More’s extended God . . . assumed the characteristics of an infinite body stripped of matter.”\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{70} Clarke, 23, 29.

\textsuperscript{71} Nullibism and holenmerism are the terms coined by More. Duns Scotus and Descartes represent the
former and St. Augustine, St. John of Damascus, Richard Fishacre and Thomas Aquinas the latter. The Scholastic
extramundane space presupposes holenmerism. For detail explanation, see Grant, 143-46, 223, 350 n. 127, 399 n.
238-39.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 228.
this vein we can understand Leibniz’s critique on Newtonian absolute space and its attribution to God: “since space consists of parts, it is not a thing which can belong to God.”73 As Grant interprets, Leibniz’s concern is that spatial extension would make God “have distinguishable parts even if those parts are immobile and inseparable.”74 In his dispute with Leibniz, Samuel Clarke affirmed the point certainly, defending Newton’s position: although “infinite space . . . may in our imagination be conceived as composed of parts,” “space consequently is in itself essentially one, and absolutely indivisible”; anyway, however, “infinities are composed of finites . . . as finites are composed of infinitesimals.”75 For More and Newton, divine infinity and eternity are understood in quantitative continuity with finite space and temporal duration. God and the world share the common attribute of extension and duration in spite of their infinite difference. For More there are the duration of time and the extension of space that can be measured by temporal units and spatial magnitudes before creation and after the annihilation of the world.76 Likewise, as Koyré comments, “[The] Newtonian God is, patently, not above time and space; His eternity is sempiternal duration, His omnipresence is infinite extension.”77 Clarke elucidates Newton’s view: “Space and time are not the mere order of things, but real quantities” and duration; “immensity signifies boundless space and eternity signify duration or time without beginning and end.”78

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73 Clarke, 25.
74 Grant, 250-51.
75 Clarke, 48.
76 Koyré, 120.
77 Ibid., 226.
78 Clarke, 32, 47, 49, 113.
The Newtonian concept of eternity and infinity diverges from traditional doctrines following Augustine’s claim that eternity and infinity are not the infinite extension of temporal succession and spatial magnitude and, therefore, that there is no time and space before creation. For this reason Descartes rejected More’s conceiving time and space beyond the world: “If we refer this duration or something similar to the succession of God’s ideas, this will be an error of our intellect and not a true perception of something.” To preserve the divine transcendence beyond the world, Descartes distinguished the unlimited extension of the world from God’s actual infinity. God is infinite in perfection, not in extension. Leibniz also elaborated on the qualitative difference of eternity and infinity from time and space:

'Tis true, the immensity and eternity of God would subsist, though there were no creatures; but those attributes would have no dependence either on times or places. If there were no creatures, there would be neither time nor place, and consequently no actual space. The immensity of God is independent upon space, as his eternity is independent upon time. These attributes signify only, [with regard to these two orders of things] that God would be present and co-existent with all the things that should exist. And therefore I don't admit what’s here alleged, that if God existed alone, there would be time and space as there is now: whereas then, in my opinion, they would he only in the ideas of God as mere possibilities. The immensity and eternity of God, are things more transcendent, than the duration and extension of creatures; not only with respect to the greatness, but also to the nature of the things. (Italics mine)

The Newtonian response to that critique is that quantitative continuity is limited by the immense difference between infinity of space and finitude of the world. Clarke avers the distance: “There is no union between God and the world.” He characterizes God’s omnipresence

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79 Grant, 328 n. 52, 354 n. 17.
80 Koyré, 121.
81 Clarke, 90.
82 Ibid., 50.
through Newtonian absolute space as an asymmetrical relationship in which God acts upon all things but is acted upon by nothing. God is not the soul of the world that composes a part of the world with body and mutually interacts with the body. God is an omnipresent governor who is the ground of being transcending the parallel disjunction of soul and body at the same ontological level. As Clarke expresses it, God exists in the dialectics of divine transcendence and immanence without reducing one or both: “God is neither a mundane intelligence, nor a supramundane intelligence; but an omnipresent intelligence, both in and without the world. He is in all, and through all, as well as above all.” The material world that is finite in its dimension is created in the extra-mundane space that is infinite in its dimensions. Indeterminate space that is indifferent to the order of the material world does not restrict God’s freedom. Among the parts of the infinite and eternal space God chooses to create matter in what particular quantity, at what particular time of eternity, and in what particular spaces of infinity he pleases. By God’s will the world is movable, and thus it should be finite and needs an infinite space in which its motion is performed. The finitude of the material universe necessarily presupposes an extramundane empty space. Without an independent space the material universe will be boundless and eternal. Newtonian infinite space also offers room for God’s sovereignty of voluntary freedom that it refutes mechanical determinism and the infinity and eternity of the world, as the Scholastics wanted to do by the invention of extramundane imaginary space.

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83 Ibid., 24, 50-51.
84 Ibid., 23.
85 Ibid., 46, 101, 120.
86 Ibid., 49.
87 Ibid., 46, 100-1, 108, 120.
Moreover, Newtonian absolute space is attributed to God but is not identified completely with God. “Space is not a being, an internal being, but a property, or a consequence of the existence of a being infinite and eternal. Infinite space, is immensity: but immensity is not God: and therefore infinite space, is not God.”

God is more than the infinite space, since God is the substance of space and the space is a property of God. “Space and duration are not hors de Dieu, but are caused by, and are immediate and necessary consequences of his existence.”

The Newtonian emancipation of infinite space from matter and its attribution to a property of God diametrically oppose divine infinity to the finite world and contrast divine aseity and self-sufficiency with the dependence of the world on God, rejecting a self-sufficient mechanical world. At the same time, infinite space directly associates God with the world, because both exist in the same dimensional extension and the space is not a third medium but God’s own property and presence. As a result, infinite space functions as a field for a dialectical relation of continuity and discontinuity between God and creatures. God transcends the finite world by infinity of space but is present in the world as its absolute space. Clarke exhibits this point and supports it with the authority of the Bible (Acts 17:27-28):

God . . . is not a mere intelligencia supramundana, (semota a nostiris rebus sejunctaque longe;) is not far from every one of us; for in him we (and all things) live and move and have our being . . .

Immensity, as well as eternity, is essential to God. The parts of immensity (being totally of a different kind from corporeal, partable, separable, divisible, moveable parts which are the ground of corruptibility;) do no more hinder immensity from being essentially one, than the parts of duration hinder eternity from being essentially one.

God himself suffers no changes at all, by the variety and changeableness of things which live and move and have their being in him.

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88 Ibid., 31.

89 Ibid., 47.
This strange doctrine, is the express assertion of St. Paul, as well as the plain voice of nature and reason.
God does not exist in space, and in time; but his existence causes space and time.\(^90\)

The Newtonian conflation of God with absolute space (following More) was an attempt, ontologically, to overcome Cartesian dualism and bridge spiritual and material substances and, theologically, to preserve a space for God’s presence and operation in mechanical world. Newton replaced Descartes’ concept of matter as a substance of extension with mass,\(^91\) and subjugated matter and motion to the incorporeal power of gravity performed by the mediation and grounding of immaterial space. Matter and material causes are dissolved into spiritual power in divine space. The intention of this effort was to prevent modern mechanism from lapsing into materialism and then atheism. Scientifically, Newtonian natural philosophy fills the gaps in the scientific knowledge of human reason with God’s operation in absolute space according to the divine will. Newton intended to satisfy theological, ontological, and scientific concerns by integrating them into the concept of absolute space.

Newtonian work, however, has become a tentative edifice that did not stand long, since his synthesis of absolute space was broken as each area developed more appropriate strategies for their respective aims. On the physical side Newtonian absolute space won a triumph over criticism like Leibniz’s and prevailed until the emergence of Albert Einstein’s relative space. Nonetheless it has been deprived of spiritual and ontological significance and reduced to a mathematical concept for physics. The rapid progress of the natural sciences made the hypothesis of God and divine space redundant for scientific explication, as Pierre-Simon Laplace declared. Newtonian mathematical explanation became no less deterministic and self-sufficient than

\(^{90}\) Ibid., 103-4.
\(^{91}\) Jammer, 99.
Cartesian mechanism and rationalism. As Koyré informs us, the attractive powers came to be considered as belonging to matter, and the finite place of the world in infinite space was extended infinitely to convert extramundane space into intramundane existence. The gradual dissolution of metaphysics undermined the validity of characterization of space as the substance of matter or as an attribute of God, and space became the void of atomists without the filling of God’s spirit.\textsuperscript{92} Space, which is emptied to be an infinite void by emancipation from material bodies, expelled God too and the material world again reoccupied the void of infinite space.

Furthermore, for theological and ontological purposes, absolute space became futile. New strategies to overcome Cartesian dualism and preserve a space for spiritual existence and operation were advanced. In the wake of new philosophies of empiricism and rationalism, the absolute and independent reality of space based on Newtonian mathematical realism was degraded into an idea of mind (Berkeley), psychological construction (Hume), or \textit{a priori} forms of sensible intuition (Kant). Spinoza attributed plainly Cartesian material and spiritual substances to God as divine modes without the mediation of absolute space. Immaterialism denied an independent substance of matter and subsumed matter directly into the spiritual category of ideal things rather than supposing, as Newton did, a third category of mathematical reality of space that has an ambivalent nature between spiritual and corporeal reality.

Consequently the association of space with God was no longer required or feasible for scientific, philosophical, or theological works. Grant explains, “God’s alleged relationship to space seemed beyond plausible and convincing explanation and posed insuperable problems. In the end, it seemed best to let the spiritual and physical go their separate ways.”\textsuperscript{93} Although space

\textsuperscript{92} Koyré, 274-75.

\textsuperscript{93} Grant, 255.
liberated from matter was extended to an infinite void and God filled the vacuum, the finite world encroached on the divine space such that at last God departed and only an impersonal mechanical world remained. On the other hand, the spiritual concept of space was reduced to a mere human psychological idea or category such that space departed from the divine spirit and was couched in the human mind.

As space was absorbed into one pole of two realities, the material world or spiritual human mind, Newton’s endeavor to mediate material and spiritual world through the mathematical and divine being of absolute space has failed. One of the main reasons for this failure lies in the fact that Newtonian natural philosophy did not have the support of an ontology other than substantial metaphysics by which it could grasp properly the concept of space in a dialectic relation of infinity and finitude between God and the world. As shown above, one of the gravest obstacles to affirming the actual reality of infinite space was that it could not be subsumed under the Aristotelian categories of substance and accident. Although the reasonability of substantial ontology gradually became suspect, particularly after Locke, the logic of predication according to a subject-object scheme still held. Diverging from those who rejected the application of Aristotelian categories to infinite space, More demonstrated that God is the subject of space according to substance-accident categories. Because of its feasibility, Newton and his proponents followed More’s reasoning. 

However the project of More and Newton did not have a durable efficiency, because substantial metaphysics had the fundamental limitation that it cannot subsume space. For that reason, as already seen above from Koyré’s argument, the

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94 Ibid., 227, 244; Clarke, 31, 47.
identification of space with a divine attribute became no longer viable after the dissolution of traditional substantial ontology.

Consequently the success of Newtonian absolute space in the area of physics came to yield in philosophical aspect to Cartesian rationalism and dualism. God was banished from Newtonian absolute space. At the same time, away went the Cartesian God who as the ontological ground integrated the two unbridgeable realms of spiritual and material substances. As a result, both domains went their own separate ways toward respective reductionisms and eventually slipped into atheism. Newtonian immaterial and mathematical causation, formerly attributed to the divine will and wisdom, was reassigned to human reason, since the development of mathematics and sciences left no vacuum for the divine arbitrary will. The self-sufficient mechanical world, according to laws of nature, was based on the two divorced grounds of Newtonian absolute space and human reason. Coexisting ambivalently, spiritual and material realms claimed respectively the place of ontological ground by the reductionism of idealism or materialism. After God’s departure, in the case of materialism physical space occupied the status of the ontological ground of being, and in the case of idealism the human mind did that. The ontology of metaphysics was dissolved to the physics of material phenomena or the psychology of human consciousness; as Kant’s critique philosophy argued, theology, epistemology and ethics lost their traditional ontological ground and were compartmentalized without their common mediating ground.

Originally, the infinite space of the Scholastics and Newton was invented in order to preserve room for divine creation and providence and maintain the absolute reality and operation of God transcending the world. However, God was banished from space such that God was divested of a field for creation and providence and the status of the ontological ground of being and motion. Where there is no extramundane space, no transcendent God can be distinguished
from the world. Eventually the existence of God was menaced by atheism. The ground of being was reduced to impersonal nature. The personal God who was separated from the ground of being and motion was degraded to the projection of the human person, as in the thought of Ludwig Feuerbach. Where God who created the world *ex nihilo* disappeared, only void space remained. Impersonal and indifferent space void of God came to the personal being of human as nihilistic nothingness to evoke the meaninglessness of existence. Subsequently, in late modern contexts Christian truth is relativized and privatized without its ontological ground that furnishes the foundation for the meaning of being in the material and secular world.

We have seen how the issues of theology, philosophy, and science were interrelated indissolubly in the concept of space and its relation with the doctrine of God especially in late medieval and modern contexts. Edwards stood in the transitional period right after Newton when Newtonian absolute space prevailed in physics and yet on the contrary began to be criticized in its theological and philosophical aspects. This period was right before the time when the tentative coexistence of the spiritual and material areas of Cartesian dualism was broken and they began to be divorced from each other.

Until the time of Edwards, both proponents and opponents of absolute space fought with each other for the same purpose, despite their diametrically opposite opinions, “*pro majore Dei Gloria*,” as the Scholastics did with the concept of imaginary space. While the advocates of absolute space triumphed in physics and its opponents prevailed in philosophy, eventually both sides failed in their theological purpose because they inadvertently contributed to expelling God from space. One of the most fundamental reasons for this consists in that they could not advance an actual substitute for Aristotelian substantial logic and ontology, although they successively

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95 Koyré, 273.
reacted to Aristotelian theology and natural philosophy. Aristotle’s metaphysics is abstracted from his pagan theology and cosmology that is alien to Christian theology and modern worldview. Christianity and modern sciences, however, did not have an ontological ground to buttress integratively their theological intention and scientific products. This also means that they could not grasp space and God as the ontological ground to mediate two separated realities of spirit and matter. Subsequently, the void of ontological ground was filled with other secular schemes like Aristotelianism, the empirical and positivistic framework of natural science that reflects the mechanical world of matter and laws of nature which are impersonal and indifferent to personal involvement, or like the idealistic framework that reflects human reason which domesticates transcendent God to human person immanent in the world. The result was no less devastating to theology than Aristotelianism was in medieval ages in the sense that there was no place for the transcendent God who is the ground of being as well as a personal God.

The fundamental cause of these effects could be found in the point that the essence of those secular systems, which they share despite their difference in concrete contents, lies in their substantial logic. Although Aristotelian metaphysics is no longer current, its fundamental logic of predication still prevails in modern empiricism and rationalism. The logic of substantial ontology is essentially based on a human perspective on matter rather than a theological or personal one. Its logic is based on the cognition of a human individual subject that perceives a thing as an object. The substantial logic derived from the human epistemic frame grasps the essence of being as an individual substance that exists by itself independent from other entities. Beginning from the individual entities, it treats their relation by disjunction through the subject-object scheme. In this ontological framework, relationship and space, the ground for relations, are merely the subsidiary categories of accidents that are subsumed into individual substances. It, therefore, cannot comprehend ontologically the reality of space, the field of power, the ground of being,
and relation without material mediation like motion at distance. Moreover it cannot incorporate
the asymmetric and dialectical relations between beings in different ontological dimensions or
levels such as soul and body, space and entities, infinity and finitude, and God and the world. In
those relations entities are contained in space but the total sum of finite entities cannot constitute
the infinite whole; space as ground transcends the disjunction of entities but is present in all
entities. First of all, the essence of entities contained in space is its relation with the space, and
space and relation constitute the substantial categories of reality. The starting point of cognition
in the ontological frame of the relation with space is the recognition of the infinite ground of
being by revelation, and all things are perceived in their relation with the ground on which they
stand. In conclusion, because of the fundamental limitations of substantial logic, the
philosophical and scientific outcomes of early modern thinkers like Descartes and Newton lapsed
into catalysts of reductionism and atheism against Christian theology, in contrast to their
theological designs.

Viewed within the contours of Edwards’ age, he occupies a momentous transition when
the seeds of the theological problems of modern times, which are still influential in the present,
were sown and about to sprout. Hence Edwards’ response to their germination in his time is still
relevant to our times. The crucial significance of his thought is that pro Dei gloria he performed
his philosophical and theological work by reconstructing an innovative ontological framework
differently from other modern thinkers that is able to overcome the logic of substantial ontology
and Cartesian dualism. It was possible because Edwards’ logic was induced from his
interpretation of the Bible and theological doctrines in contrast with secular frameworks. His
theological starting point that begins from above, God as the ground of being, enabled him to be
liberated from the restraint of substantial logic that is derived from below, created individual
substances, and to surmount the Newtonian mathematical frame of human reason. Primarily, the
trinitarian logic that was abstracted from the experience of Christian salvation by Jesus Christ played a principal role for Edwards’ philosophical and theological work, whereas Newton tended to prefer Arianism to Trinitarianism. Because of its theological starting point and foundation, Edwards’ ontological logic could incorporate the asymmetrical dialectics of infinity and finitude in the relation of God and creation, as examined in the proceeding chapter, in which God is a personal being and at the same time Being in general as the ground of being. Edwards’ reconstruction of the ontological logic and scheme was performed by reframing the doctrines of God and creation based on soteriology. First, analyzing its ontological implication, I will show that Edwards defines God Being in general as space, and that God as space is qualified as the spiritual space of the Trinity, that is, the dispositional space of communicative being.

**Edwards’ God the Space as the Spiritual Ground of Being**

Edwards explicitly identifies God with space. This idea should be understood in the context of the development of the idea on space elaborated above. We cannot specify the source of his idea exactly because Edwards did not give any direct reference for his thought on space. “But if we think in terms of a milieu, rather than individual influences, and begin to appreciate its unities . . . . It is clear that . . . directly or indirectly, he learned much from his older contemporaries overseas,” as Norman Fieri says. Nevertheless, historical reconstruction delineates the influences on his notion of God as the space. First, we can affirm that Edwards’

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knowledge of the Scholastic notion of “imaginary space” and holenmerism through the Protestant Scholastic theologians who agreed with the Scholastic ideas. Second, we can find numerous circumstantial evidences that Edwards directly or indirectly read the sources of Descartes, More, Newton, Clarke, and Leibniz, which the Yale College library owned by the Dummer donation in 1713 before Edwards’ entrance in 1716. There are conspicuous marks in Edwards’ argument on space that implicate their influence on him. However, Edwards did not follow anyone servilely. He took up eclectically the ideas of various thinkers and reorganized them in his creative framework such that terms and ideas which seem to connote a source do not have the same meaning as their origins had.

Edwards names God being itself as space to denote that God’s perfection of being is the ground of being which transcends the disjunctive relation of determinate beings. As seen above in the analysis of “Miscellanies” nos. 650 and 880, Edwards’ specification of God as the ground of being is based on his demonstration of God’s necessary existence as being itself which is not compatible with absolute nothing in disjunction with God. This logic for the proof of God the ground of being derives from his reasoning for God as space: God’s perfection of being is the aseity of God’s necessary existence and it presupposes the infinity of God’s being, that is, God as the infinite space of the world.

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98 Reid, 386, n. 7.

99 Norman Fiering, Jonathan Edwards’ Moral Thought and Its British Context, 22-23. Marsden holds that by 1719 Edwards had access to “the whole treasure trove of modern writers in the library’s new Dummer collection” (Marsden, 63).

100 For detail instances, see Reid, “Jonathan Edwards on Space and God,” 386-403.
Edwards associates the absolute perfection of God’s necessary existence with the infinity of God. The aseity of God’s absolute being assumes the infinity of divine perfection. In his sermon on Ps. 46:10 of 1735, Edwards discusses this point as natural to God’s sovereignty,

In that he is God, he is \textit{an absolutely and infinitely perfect being}; and it is impossible that he should do amiss. As he is eternal, and receives not his existence from any other, but exists of himself, he cannot be limited in his being, or any attribute, to any certain determinate quantity; for such \textit{a limitation necessarily supposes a cause} why he is just so great, and no greater. If anything have bounds fixed to it, there must be some cause or reason why those bounds are fixed just where they are, and not further nor nearer. Whence it will follow, that every limited thing must have some cause; and therefore that \textit{that being which has no cause must be unlimited}.\footnote{50.360: 41.}

God the ground of being, of self-existence without cause, is unlimited and infinite, while created beings are determinate beings limited by determination in disjunctive relation with God.

Edwards discusses the idea that the infinity of God’s necessary existence is space in the first three paragraphs of “Of Being,” written in 1721,\footnote{For the date of writing, see 13:91.} which is the origin of his arguments in his later works for the aseity, necessity, and infinity of God the ground of being. He affirms divine transcendence beyond disjunction by proving the necessary existence of space and identifying space with God. His demonstration is performed by rebutting the possibility of absolute nothing, as in his proof for the necessary existence of God as the ground of being. The impossibility of absolute nothing means that there cannot be a moment when there is nothing in the sense of absolute nothing distinguished from non-being in disjunction with determinate beings. “So that we see it is necessary some being should eternally be.”\footnote{6:202. Edwards does the same by proving that there is nothing in disjunction with eternity in “Miscellanies” no. 587 (18:122).} The eternal being is
an infinite ground because it transcends the bounds of determination by disjunctions. Edwards attributes the ground excluding absolute nothing to the necessary existence of space. “The words ‘absolute nothing’ and ‘where’ contradict each other.”

The absolute properties of space, viz., necessity, eternity, infinity, and omnipresence, are the same as the nature of God who transcends the disjunction of determinate beings as exhibited above. Accordingly, space as the ground of being is God.

I have already said as much as that space is God. And it is indeed clear to me, that all the space there is not proper to body, all the space there is without the bounds of the creation, all the space there was before the creation, is God himself. And nobody would in the least stick at it, if it were not because of the gross conceptions that we have of space.

(Emphasis mine)

Edwards’ concept of God as space is an extracosmic and pre-creational infinity beyond the world. It signifies the infinite omnipresence of the necessary existence of God. In the sermon on Ps. 139:7-10 preached in 1728, Edwards demonstrates that the absolute attributes of God’s necessary being, such as aseity, immutability, and omnipotence, postulate the infinite omnipresence beyond the finite world:

1. God is a necessary being and his being everywhere present will follow from thence when we say God is a necessary being we mean that he is not a being whose existence follows from another cause beside himself. . . . If you suppose God is finite and there are bounds to his existence then it must be because of one of these three things either because some cause made him so great and no greater nor less or that he only chanced to be so great, or that it is in its own nature impossible that God should be greater or less. The two former are against the supposition of God’s being a necessary being the latter is a gross absurd nonsense. . . .

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104 6:202-3.
105 6:203.
106 For the date, see 13:99.
2. God is an unchangeable being and it follows from that that he is everywhere. . . . If he were only in some definite place he would be capable of motion of moving from place to place which is change for everything that is finite is capable in its own nature of motion. . . .

3. God is omnipotent and therefore must be in every place. . . . If God be almighty then he is able to create another world beyond this and a thousand more but he can’t do it except he be there where we suppose those worlds must be. If God ben’t infinite then he can’t create and uphold and govern worlds any further than his existence is extended, and so his power would be reduced to the same bounds as his existence. (emphasis mine) ¹⁰⁷

Edwards’ reasoning is the same as the rationale that the Scholastics employed to prove divine omnipresence in extramundane infinite void space. Edwards’ extramundane space of God seems to follow Scholastic imaginary space and Newtonian absolute space. Edwards, however, explicitly distinguishes God as space from “the gross conceptions that we have of space” ¹⁰⁸ like Scholastic and Newtonian space abstracted from the dimensional place of the physical world. Edwards diverges from them in the crucial point that his idea of extracosmic space is derived from the spiritual existence of God as being itself. Edwards’ starting point is basically theological, in contrast to that of Scholastic and Newtonian space. This theological basis provides an ontological ground for immaterialism that is able to remove grave obstacles to the association of God with space. God as space is spiritual mind and stands as the ontological ground of being that determines the nature of all beings as mental or incorporeal. For that reason Edwards has no

¹⁰⁷ 42.44, L. 6r.-7r.

¹⁰⁸ 6:203. Edwards apparently differentiates God the space from the space of our “gross conceptions” in his first argument about space in “Of Being” of 1721. At this point, my interpretation is different from Reid’s in that Edwards conceived God as the absolute space according to More and Newton but he did not accepted their identification of God with dimensional space to extol the physical space as the absolute and divine. My gist is that from first Edwards consistently distinguished God as the absolute and spiritual space from the relative and extensional space. On the contrary, Reid argues that in his early times when writing “Of Being” Edwards diverged from the Protestant Scholastics and adopted the position of More and Newton to identify God with space; however, in “The Mind” of 1724 he changed his idea such that he rejected the possibility of vacua, following Descartes, and, like Leibniz and Berkeley, relativized Newtonian absolute space, though Edwards’ immaterialistic motif was preserved in the development of his thought about space (“Jonathan Edwards on Space and God,” 386–403).
reason to hesitate to confer ontological reality on incorporeal space or to conflate space with God because of the corporeal implication of space. Neither does he need to make particularly dimensional extension incorporeal and separate from matter. As a result, on the one hand Edwards’ extracosmic space can be the absolute reality of Godself, in contrast to Scholastics’ imaginary space that is a negative existence without positive reality. On the other hand, unlike the incorporeal extension of More and Newton, Edwards’ divine space is differentiated from mundane space and time of successive extension and duration by disjunction since it is the spiritual existence of a/the transcendent ground of being.

Edwards’ God as space disjoined from dimensional extension is divine mind which stands as the spiritual ground of being of souls and bodies. Edwards spiritualized the space associated with God far beyond the incorporeal and mathematical concepts of dimensional extension of More and Newton, and differentiated the absolute space of divine mind from the relative space of dimensional extension. Excepting the spiritual existence of God, there is no absolute thing in the physical world like Newtonian absolute motion and space. Hence the non-dimensional divine mind gained the status of absolute space as the ontological ground of being, replacing the Newtonian absolute space of magnitude. On the spiritual ground of being of the divine mind Edwards’ immaterialism is established. This immaterialism reduces spatial extension itself to an idea in the divine mind and the space of God’s mind is distinguished from human idea of colored space. At last matter, located on the necessary idea of space, becomes a relative idea which exists in the relation of disjunction with other ideas and subsists on the ground of the absolute space of divine ideas in God’s mind. I will track the development of Edwards’ thought on space and its relation with God, and in a later chapter will examine his immaterialism grounded on the concept of God as space.
In 1723 Edwards added several paragraphs to the first part of “Of Being,” written in 1721, in which he had identified God as space. The addition clarifies what Edwards meant by qualifying the divine space as that which is not “the gross conceptions that we have of space” in 1721. In the supplemental text he explicitly specifies the divine mind as the space of the world: “nothing has any existence . . . . certainly nowhere else but either in created or uncreated consciousness”; when there was no created intelligent being the “world has a being, but only in the divine consciousness”; “the universe . . . . exists nowhere but in the divine mind.” Also in the other parts of the addendum in 1723 and in another addition in 1732, Edwards rearticulates his previous reasoning for the impossibility of absolute nothing that exists in disjunction with God as space. He differentiates the divine mind as the space of the world from extension or magnitude by reasoning as follows: motion constitutes solidity as the essence of bodies; the extension of bodies depends on solidity; thus, the world deprived of motion would be an infinite void without bodies; however, the empty space is not absolute nothing, since “a world without motion [void of extensional bodies] can exist nowhere else but in the mind, either infinite or finite.” Consequently, God’s mind is the infinite space of the universe.

For Edwards the infinity and eternity of the space of the divine mind are not merely the things which extend infinitely the extent of finite space and the length of finite time in the world beyond the limits of creation. For that reason Edwards objects to the “gross conception” of More’s concept of spirit as extension and thus the Newtonian notion of absolute space based on

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109 6:203, n. 5; 13:93.
110 6:204, 206.
111 6:207, n. 5.

Our common way of conceiving of what is spiritual is very gross and shadowy and corporeal, with dimensions and figure, etc. . . . why should we then form such a ridiculous idea of spirits, as to think them so long, so thick, or so wide; or to think there is a necessity of their being square or round or some other certain figure? Therefore spirits cannot be in place in such a sense, that all within the given limits shall be where the spirit is, and all without such a circumscription where he is not. 114

After confuting More’s extension of spiritual existence, Edwards explains that the presence of spirits in place means that a spirit has clearer and more strongly impressed ideas than other places and produces effects by immediate operation. 115 In “The Mind,” no. 13 of 1724, 116 Edwards demonstrates the vexing question, which Leibniz posed to oppose Newtonian absolute space, that the supposition of successive duration of space and time before and beyond the creation raises: “why [was] the universe … placed in such a part of space, and why created at such a time?” According to Leibniz, a void space without determinate beings is meaningless, for its indifference does not provide any sufficient reason for God to choose a particular time and place in eternity and space. Like Leibniz, Edwards answers the problem by arguing that the difficulties can be removed by denying the successive extension of pre-creation space and time in which the universe was placed in a part of space and created at a certain time. 117 In Freedom

113 For the date, see 13:95.
114 6:338.
116 For the date, see 13:95.
117 6:343. Leibniz argued the same problem about Newtonian absolute space as Edwards did in his third paper, nos. 5-6 (Clarke, 26-27).
of the Will, published in 1754, Edwards explicitly rejects the extramundane space of More’s incorporeal extension and Newtonian absolute space, again following Leibniz’ argument against absolute space according to his principle of sufficient reason.\textsuperscript{118}

So this objection supposes an extent of space beyond the limits of the creation, of an infinite length, breadth and depth, truly and properly distinguished into different measurable parts, limited at certain stages, one beyond another, in an infinite series. Which notion of absolute and infinite space is doubtless as unreasonable, as that now mentioned, of absolute and infinite duration. ’Tis as improper, to imagine that the immensity and omnipresence of God is distinguished by a series of miles and leagues, one beyond another; as that the infinite duration of God is distinguished by months and years, one after another. A diversity and order of distinct parts, limited by certain periods, is as conceivable, and does as naturally obtrude itself on our imagination, in one case as the other; and there is equal reason in each case, to suppose that our imagination deceives us. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{119}

Thus Edwards’ critique of absolute space shows the same point as the reason underlying Leibniz’s objection to Newtonian absolute space: the spatial extension of absolute space would make God have distinguishable parts even if it is inseparable.\textsuperscript{120}

Edwards’ negation of absolute space does not mean that he denies divine eternity and infinity beyond created world. His point is just that the eternity and infinity of the necessary existence of God’s mind which comprehends all beings is distinguished from the dimensional

\textsuperscript{118} The Scholastic imaginary space and Newtonian absolute space postulate uniform and indifferent space for divine freedom to choose a place for creation. The thought presupposes the concept of liberty that is the act of a self-determining will to choose one among choices without determination by any preceding cause such as understanding or tendency. Against this reasoning, Leibniz argues that there is no sufficient reason for God to choose among indifferent parts of absolute space and in fact there is no liberty but blind fatality without wisdom. For Leibniz, freedom is to choose the best according to wisdom. It follows that the sufficient reason of the good cannot be deterministic necessity or fate (Clarke, 15-16, 26-28, 55-60). Edwards employs Leibniz’s reasoning relating to absolute space to defend his position that moral necessity determined by disposition is not fate but is compatible with liberty. For the relation of Leibniz and Edwards on this issue, refer to Paul Ramsey’s introduction in 1:113-18.

\textsuperscript{119} 1:386. With the denial of absolute space, Edwards maintains relativity of motion in opposition to Newtonian absolute motion, in “The Mind,” no. 65(b) (6:382-83).

\textsuperscript{120} Clarke, 25; Grant, 250-51.
extension of absolute space. Although Edwards denied More’s incorporeal extension and relativized Newtonian absolute space to a simple idea in “The Mind,” nos. 2, 13 of 1724, he still preserves the concept of God as extracosmic space of infinity distinguished from Newtonian absolute space. In the sermon on Ps. 139:7-10 preached in 1728, Edwards asserts God’s omnipresence beyond the world and its transcendence beyond the finite world:

Yet we unavoidably conceive meer space which is [a] positive thing but only room as having no bounds. [B]ut there is no part of space where God is not. God fills the world. Jeremiah 23:24 “do not I fill heaven & earthe saith the Lord” . . . he is where the world is not. [T]he heavens of heavens are spoke of as the utmost bounds of the world but yet they cannot contain God. 1 King 8:27 “behold the heaven nor the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee” . . . God is where the world is and where the world is not and everywhere where the world is not. God in essence is as much beyond the utmost boundaries of the creation as it is beyond the bounds of a little ball. (emphasis mine)121

There is no extramundane void space of infinity but God’s omnipresence is extracosmic infinite space.

Refuting Newtonian absolute space of dimensional extension in Freedom of the Will as exhibited above, Edwards articulates the space of divine mind as the divine life which is different from the indifferent and impersonal space of mechanical or mathematical dimensions. Drawing on Andrew Baxter’s An Enquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul, he describes it as “The eternal duration which was before the world, being only the eternity of God's existence; which is nothing else but his immediate, perfect and invariable possession of the whole of his unlimited life, together and at once; vita interminabilis, tota, simul et perfecta possessio.”122 Baxter’s demonstration which Edwards refers to shows more clearly how the eternity and infinity of

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121 42.44, L. 2v.-3r.

122 1:385-86.
divine mind differ from Newtonian mathematical concept of God’s infinity composed of successive parts,

*Time is nothing but the existence of created successive beings, and eternity the necessary existence of the Deity.* Therefore, if this necessary Being hath no change or succession in his nature, his existence must of course be unsuccesive. . . . The philosophers themselves mislead us by their illustrations; *they compare eternity to the motion of a point running on forever, and making a traceless infinite line.* Here the point is supposed a thing actually subsisting, representing the present minute; and then they ascribe motion or succession to it: that is, they ascribe motion to a mere non-entity, to illustrate to us a successive eternity made up of finite successive parts . . . If once we allow an all-perfect Mind, which hath an eternal immutable and infinite comprehension of all things, always (and allow it we must) the distinction of past and future vanishes with respect to such a mind. . . . In a word, if we proceed step by step, as above, the eternity or existence of the Deity will appear to be *vita interminabilis, tota, simul et perfecta possessio*; how much soever this may have been a paradox hitherto. (Italics except Latin terms mine)

Edwards’ opposition to God’s dimensional presence in the thought of More and Newton follows the traditional doctrine of eternity and infinity of Augustine: there is no successive time and extensional space before creation; if there is an extracosmic space beyond creation in which God dwells, it is Godself as spirit or thought.

Edwards’ position on God as space is delineated comprehensively in his sermon of 1728 on Ps. 139:7-10. First, the personal God who is omnipresent in the world exists in Godself rather than in an infinite void space distinct from God. God is the space of Godself and thus the ground of the world. God as space is personal omnipresence in the world:

[Saint Bernard] said thus that *God was in himself* as alpha and omega, that he is *in the world as author and governor* that he is in the angels as their pleasure and beauty, that he is in the Church as the Father of a family, that he is in the soul as a bridegroom in his

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124 Grant, 328 n. 52, 354 n. 17.
Chamber, in the just as helper and protector in reprobates as terror and horror. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{125}

Edwards characterizes God as space as the spiritual life of personal action. On the one hand God as space is penetrable and indivisible like More’s incorporeal extension and Newtonian absolute space of infinite void. On the other hand, unlike More and Newton, God’s omnipresence is simple, without dimensional extension, and is of God’s spiritual power and operation. Edwards continues to explicate those features of God’s omnipresence:

God is in all places at once at one and the same moment of time. . . .

God is not excluded by other things but is there where other things are not only round about them but in them. We are in God and (Act 17:28) in him we live move and have our being. And God is in us and in every part of us he is in us and he is through us. Eph. 4:6 One God and Father of all who is above all and through all and in you all.

We must take heed that we haven’t too gross a notion of God’s immensity and omnipresence. We must not conceive of it as part of God were in no place and part in another as great bodies are for God is not made up of parts for he is a simple pure act . . . . ’tis not part of God that is in us but God is in us.

God is present everywhere where any other being is by his operation. God is in the continual exercise of the infinite power and wisdom everywhere throughout the whole creation. . . .

. . . God not only is everywhere but he is everywhere working where any created thing acts or is. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{126}

This simplicity without dimension manifests the divine space as the ground of being beyond the disjunctive relation of determinate beings. As in the penetration of spatial dimension, God can coexist with created beings at the same place without disjunction. Accordingly, God is the ground of being beyond disjunction with creatures. Likewise God’s personal action concurs with that of created beings without disjunction. God as simple space is omnipresent in terms of simple

\textsuperscript{125} 42.44, L. 5v.-6r.

\textsuperscript{126} 42.44, L. 3r-4v.
pure act. God’s transcendent existence as the ground of being beyond disjunction defines the divine personhood as surpassing the relations of disjunction between human beings.

Here we can find that Edwards takes up the traditional idea of the mode of spiritual existence in the same manner as Scholastic holenmerism and nullism, which More rebutted, and adapts it to his immaterialism. For Edwards, according to holenmerism, God the infinite spirit exists wholly “in all places at once” without separation into parts extended in the world, while “a finite spirit cannot . . . be in all places at a time equally.”127 In his modified nullism, God exercises divine power with being nowhere in the mode of dimensional extension. Edwards’ immaterialism, drawing on Newtonian natural philosophy, makes the Scholastic distinction between holenmerism and nullism functionally meaningless. Holenmerism, as represented by Thomas Aquinas, claims that for God’s action on something the divine essence must be present there and that there is no action of God at distance. Nullism, espoused by Duns Scotus, holds that God operates at a distance by divine will and power without the presence of God’s essence. Edwards integrates both sides such that God’s being is divine power itself.128 Following holenmerism, Edwards affirms that “God, indeed, with respect to his essence is everywhere.”129 “God is present everywhere in his being and essence.”130 Then he identifies the power of being with the being and essence of God.131 “Since that where his power is exercised, there his essence must be, his essence can be by nothing excluded.”132 In the self-sufficient being of spiritual God,

127 6:339.
129 8:369.
130 42.44, L. 2r.
the divine essence, power, and exercise of power are not separate, as is the case with inanimate material existence which cannot move or act by itself and depends for its motion on an agent and mediation other than itself. In the divine essence, “there is no distinction of substance and act, but it is wholly substance and wholly act.” The spiritual God does not need a field in which God acts. The divine power and act themselves constitute the space. The infinite space of God is the extension of purely spiritual attributes without any connotation of corporeal magnitude or mathematical dimension.

In “Miscellanies,” no. 194, noted in 1725, Edwards explicitly characterizes the mode of divine presence as a living spirit, integrating holenmerism and nullibism:

That is a gross and an unprofitable idea we have of God, as being something large and great as bodies are, and infinitely extended throughout the immense space. For God is neither little nor great with that sort of greatness, even as the soul of man; it is not at all extended, no more than an idea, and is not present anywhere as bodies are present, as we have shown elsewhere. So 'tis with respect to the increated Spirit. The greatness of a soul consists not in any extension, but [in] its comprehensiveness of idea and extendedness of operation. So the infiniteness of God consists in his perfect comprehension of all things and the extendedness of his operation equally to all places. God is present nowhere any otherwise than the soul is in the body or brain, and he is present everywhere as the soul is in the body. We ought to conceive of God as being omnipotence, perfect knowledge and perfect love; and not extended any otherwise than as power, knowledge and love are extended; and not as if it was a sort of unknown thing that we call substance, that is extended.

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132 6:214.

133 21:116.

134 For the date, see 13:17-18.

135 13:334-35.
Following holenmerism, God’s infinite spirit exists “equally to all places,” and in terms of nullibism, God is present “nowhere” other than by divine power, ideas or knowledge, and operation or love. The three modes of divine presence correspond to Edwards’ interpretation of three persons of the Trinity. The eternity and infinity of divine mind is the trinitarian life, and God’s space of spiritual existence is omnipresent by the acts of the Trinity. God is the ground of being and the divine space is spiritual. The spiritual ground of being is the trinitarian life of love.

Edwards’ concept of space as God’s mind is an attempt to integrate two aspects of God’s absolute perfection in being and personhood, viz., as Being in general and as the sovereign governor of the world. God as space is the ground of being which is omnipresent in beings and God the Spirit exercises omnipotent power in the world through omnipresence. The omnipresence of the Spirit is revealed as the omniscience of the divine wisdom and the omnipotence of the divine will. Edwards’ intention to reconceive God as spiritual space is the same as that of Newton’s in his comparison of absolute space to a sort of divine sensorium, by which Newton wanted to represent God as an intelligent and living being who perceives and acts through divine omnipresence in infinite space. Edwards, however, adopted Newton’s scheme by revising his concept of absolute space. Edwards disjoined absolute space from dimensional extension and rearticulated it as the spiritual ground of being that transcends both the spatial extension and temporal succession of physical phenomena and human consciousness. By this reconception of absolute space, Edwards reserves God’s transcendence within divine immanence and involvement in the world. His removal of extensional magnitude from the absolute space of


137 Newton, Opticks, 370, 403.
God strengthens divine transcendence and at the same time radicalizes divine presence, because the space present in beings becomes Godself rather than an attribute of God.

Edwards’ strategy might avoid the result of the immanence of Newtonian mathematical absolute space, which let the ontological ground of God be reduced to the reason of humanistic idealism or the physical world of materialism. Nevertheless his alternative is confronted with another vexing puzzle: how can the transcendence of indeterminate ground of being be reconciled with the personhood of God’s mind engaged with the world? The divine personhood in relation with the world is derived from an analogy to human consciousness and relation which presuppose determination by the disjunction of subject and object or of being and non-being. This is the conundrum which modern idealists like Hegel struggled with. Edwards tried to solve the problem by analyzing the ontological logic of the trinitarian space of God’s life.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE PERFECTION OF GOD’S BEING AND PERSONHOOD
REVEALED IN THE GLORY OF GOD IN SALVATION

The Analogia Fidei of the Divine Glory

Edwards’ notion of the space of God’s mind incorporates the dialectic of the two poles of God’s perfection in being and person. As the divine personhood features God as space as spiritual mind, God’s character as infinite ground of being redefines the divine personhood as that which transcends the finitude of human spirits. This chapter will examine Edwards’ doctrine of God that is constructed by a reciprocal delimitation between the divine perfection of being and personhood. Preliminarily, I will outline the logic and methodology of Edwards’ argument that this chapter will elaborate.

As shown above, the perfection of divine being is infinite space as the ground of being, and divine existence is a spiritual being of power, knowledge, and action. Accordingly the perfection of God’s spiritual being is the infinitely perfect exercise of divine power according to divine knowledge through omnipresence. The infinite ground of being is revealed as the infinitely perfect action of a personal God. Because God as the ground of being is self-sufficient, divine action is manifested as the overflow of fullness without any imperfection of need for receiving from insufficiency. The omnipresent foundation of God action becomes the fountain of all beings. Edwards says, God’s “arbitrary operation is every way and everywhere at the head of the universe, and is the foundation and first spring of all. (emphasis mine)”¹ God who is perfect

¹ 23:212.
in being and person manifests Godself as “the Fountain of all being and operation.”2 The personhood of God represents the overflowing of being from the fountain as a personal act of communication of the good, that is, love, since the being of spiritual existence is the meaning that comes to the spiritual mind as the value of the good. The perfection of spiritual being is the complete exercise of psychological faculties of understanding and will in order to achieve the moral excellence of love, which is perceived as lovely beauty that evokes responsive love again and then leads to the delight of happiness in the communion of mutual love. The perfection of being is spiritual, moral, social, and thus the social life of love. The excellence and beauty of divine perfection are present as the glory of God. God’s personal salvation through Jesus Christ exhibits the glory of God as the life of love in the Trinity. God the self-sufficient ground of being is happy in Godself alone by having the communal life of love between the trinitarian persons within Godself. The divine mind is the social space of life in love. The infinite space of God’s excellent spirit is the glory of the Triune life of love. This is Edwards’ definition of God’s perfect personhood, characterized by the divine perfection of being as the infinite space of the ground of being.

Edwards’ reasoning about the perfection of divine being is grounded on his rational analysis of the revelation of Scripture that reflects the Christian experience of salvation. Edwards articulates this notion remarkably in his sermon on 1 Tim. 6:15. He discusses three kinds of revelation in Scripture that manifest the divine happiness, the perfection of God’s spiritual being as the trinitarian life of love: the divine image as the saints’ fellowship with God, the divine essence of light and love, and the divine subsistence in the persons of the Trinity.3

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2 3:405.

3 53:494, L. 12r.-15r.
First, the saints’ happiness is the experience of the Deity as the divine person through their communion with God. It is a source of revelation of God’s being, since it is the common partaking with God’s happiness as the divine essence of the trinitarian life through the communication of Godself, the Holy Spirit. The salvific experience provides an analogy of faith to God’s being by participating in divine existence through the divine work.

Second, the divine essence of light and love resulting in God’s happiness is the glory of Christ in his person and work, which the saints experience through their communion with God. Edwards advances this idea in his sermon on John 1:14, as will be elaborated below. Jesus Christ reveals the glory of God as truth and grace; truth means the divine essence of light as the excellence of understanding, and grace signifies the divine essence of love as the excellence of will. Christ’s perfect exercise of his psychological faculty of understanding and will by truth and grace reveals and communicates the infinite felicity of God to the saints. It establishes their fellowship with God to proceed toward the kingdom of God, the holy society of love between the Trinity and saints.

Third, the divine essence of infinite light and love that Christ reveals is the divine glory of love, which is the happiness of God yielded from “the communion of the persons of the blessed Trinity.” This divine happiness is the infinitely pure and perfect and eternal act of mutual love and enjoyment between the Father and the Son. In summation, the Christian experience of Christ’s salvation results in fellowship with God through the Spirit of Christ; it discloses the truth that the essence of God is the happy life of infinite love; and the divine life manifests God as the Trinity. Consequently, the analogy of faith to the revelation in human experience of God furnishes the ground for the analogy of being to reach the perfection of God’s being.

Edwards’ sermon demonstrates that the analogy of faith in Scripture itself contains the analogy of being, that is, the theological interpretation about the experience of revelation that
proceeds to analogical reasoning about the being of God. Edwards also tries to explore and follow the logic of revelation in the Bible, integrating rational reasoning with biblical revelation. The methodology is displayed perspicuously in the scheme of his dissertation *Concerning the End for which God Created the World*. Edwards composed this treatise of two parts: what reason teaches, and what is to be learned from Holy Scriptures. In the treatise, he first elaborates the revelation of God’s perfection through arguing purely by reason; second, he analyzes and induces the meaning of God’s glory from the Bible and systematizes it; third, he manifests that both arguments from reason and from Scripture support his demonstration by their mutual complementation, proof, and agreement. The conclusion of the dissertation is that the end of God’s creation is the glory of God that reveals the divine perfection in being and personhood, and the moral excellence of Being in general.

Accordingly, divine glory is the central motif guiding Edwards’ induction from the analogy of faith to the analogy of being. The notion of glory originates from the biblical term designating the presence of God’s being in the world. In Edwards’ exploring the essence of God’s being, glory is the hermeneutical lens for his systematic exposition of Scripture and at the same time the biblical regulator that frames his theological and philosophical reasoning. The glory of Christ reveals God by virtue of the redemption through Christ’s person and action. The glory of God in Christ is the trinitarian life in love that fills by flowing *ad intra* and overflows *ad extra* in virtue of God’s work, from creation and through salvation and toward the end of glorifying Godself. The glory of God penetrates the whole of divine work and beings, and reveals the essence of the divine ground of being that sustains them. The ontological structure of divine glory fabricates the being and work of the Deity, whence created beings are made. It is christological, soteriological, and trinitarian.
Edwards’ reasoning from the revelation of Christ to the Trinity is not original but faithfully follows Christian theological tradition, which has defined God as the Trinity to validate the experience of salvation through Jesus Christ. Edwards’ innovative work consists in the point that in terms of glory he examined the fundamental logic of the theological ratiocination of the Christian experience in order to explicate its ontological significance. Edwards probed the ontological meaning of God’s glory, arguing that God the ground of being is revealed as the personal savior Jesus Christ and the revelation manifests the ground of being as the Trinity.

Therefore, Edwards establishes the *analogia entis* on the foundation of the *analogia fidei* through the rational and philosophical examination of theological doctrine and the revelation of Scripture. He does not abstract his definition on the perfection of God’s being from physical or material beings, but from the salvific experience of God’s spiritual existence and operation. The analogy of faith through the revelation of salvation determines the analogy of being through which we define the perfection of God’s being. As the revelation of Jesus Christ manifests God as the Trinity, the glory of Christ delineates the ontological ground of being as the triune life of love. Reconceiving the perfection of being by the glory of the Trinity reforms the concept of being and constitutes the ontological foundation for theology. For that reason theology is not delimited by a philosophical framework, but the contents of theology constitute its philosophical form itself. I will explore Edwards’ idea of God’s perfection of being as spiritual existence that associates the ground of being with personal perfection. According to Edwards’ methodological frame, I will trace back from his analogy of faith by the interpretation of Scripture to his analogy of being by philosophical argument on theological doctrine.
The Glory of God in the Salvation of Christ

Edwards integrates the perfection of divine person with the spiritual ground of being by the biblical concept of glory, *kabod or doxa*. The experience of salvation reveals the ontological perfection of being itself as the perfection of personal being, and religion and morality are grounded on God’s perfection in which being is integrated with the good of value that gives meaning. Edwards takes notice of the fact that Scripture represents the presence of God’s perfect being in terms of glory and examines the significance of the word in relation to the Christian experience of salvation through Jesus Christ. The infinite space of God’s perfect being is present through divine perfect action culminating in salvation. The *shekinah* (presence) of divine glory reveals God’s being itself as the savior in personal relation with humans.  

Infinite space is not a void but the fullness of God’s glory. Edwards explicates the meaning of glory in his interpretation of the following biblical passages: God as being itself (Ex. 3:14) manifests Godself as love (1 John 4:8, 16) by the divine glory of grace for salvation (Ex. 33:18-19). God’s glory of salvation is revealed archetypically by the redemptive action of Jesus Christ (John 1:14). The

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4 In Jewish tradition the term *shekinah* (presence), which derives from *shakin* (to dwell) and means the presence of God’s glory, is used as a name of God. Several rabbinic texts linked it with another divine name of space, *maqom* (place) (Copenhaver, 491-92). For a perspicuous instance, Crescas, who affirmed the existence of an infinite homogenous three-dimensional void space for the first time in Western Europe since Greek antiquity, exhibited the relation of God’s glory with God the space. He explained the idea of God as the space of the world in terms of God’s glory and the divine name of *maqom*: “Accordingly, since the Blessed One is the form of the entire universe, having created, individuated and determined it, He is figuratively called Place, as in their oft-repeated expressions, ‘Blessed be the Place [*maqom*]’; ‘We cause thee to swear not in thy sense, but in our sense and in the sense of the Place’; ‘He is the Place of the world.’ This last metaphor is remarkably apt, for as the dimensions of the void permeate through those of the body and its fullness, so His glory, blessed be He, is present in all the parts of the world and the fullness thereof, as it is said, ‘[Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts], the whole earth is full of his glory’, the meaning of which may be stated as follows: Though God is holy and separated by a threefold holiness, alluding thereby to His separation from three worlds, still the whole earth is full of His glory, which is an allusion to the element of impregnation, which is one of the elements of Glory” (Hasdai Crescas, *Or Adonai*, bk. 1, pt. II, prop. I. Translation by Harry A. Wolfson in Crescas’ *Critique of Aristotle* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929], 201).
The Glory of Yahweh Being Itself, the Infinite Fountain of Love

As we have shown above, Exodus ch. 3 describes how God as being itself is revealed to Moses as the personal God for salvation of the Israelites. The shekinah, the divine glory, exhibits explicitly God’s personal presence in salvation. The event in Exodus chs. 33-34, which occurs after the Israelites betray God by making the golden calf, shows that God’s glory integrates the divine names signifying God as space, God as being itself, and God as a personal being. In the second revelation of God on Mount Sinai, God descends and exhibits the divine glory to Moses, in answer to his personal request that God show him the glory (Ex. 33:18-19). The divine glory is the divine face or presence (Ex. 33:14) that denotes God’s forgiving and saving the Israelites. The intercession is performed in the tabernacle, the shekinah of divine glory, in which the intimate personal relationship between God and Moses like that of friends is forged. The representation of divine glory is God’s goodness (Ex. 33:19) that reveals God as the moral governor of mercy (Ex. 34:5-7). It is God’s own elucidation of the divine name of Yahweh, “I AM WHO I AM,” (Ex. 3:14), which designates the aseity of God as being itself who exists without any cause except Godself. When Yahweh the ground of being is present in a “place

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5 “Now the LORD [Yahweh] descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation’” (emphasis mine) (NRS).
(maqom)” (Ex. 33:21) through the personal relationship of God and Moses, the glorious presence reveals God as being itself as the personal God of mercy.

Edwards elaborates the significance of divine glory revealed in this event in his sermon on Ex. 33:18-19. He comments that God’s glory appears to the saints as the infinity of God’s goodness and grace. God’s glory associates the infinity of being with goodness. The absoluteness of God’s infinite being demarks the divine goodness of eminent glory from human goodness:

God is a being of infinite goodness. The goodness of God, that perfection of his nature whereby he delights, is to communicate his own infinite good. . . . God, who is self-sufficient and is infinitely and perfectly happy in the enjoyment [of Godself] is incapable of any addition to his own good could have nothing else in his nature to move him to create other beings but only goodness to communicate himself: he did not create the world for God’s own; therefore, it must for the creatures’ good; he did not create the world with a view to receiving anything from the creature; therefore, it must be with a view to the communication of something to the creature. (emphasis mine)

Since God is spiritual existence, the aseity of God’s infinite being is understood as the self-sufficient perfection of God’s personhood, infinite happiness in Godself. The personal perfection of divine infinite being is revealed to creatures as God’s goodness to communicate without receiving, that is, gratuitous grace. The goodness of the ground of being is a personal disposition of infinite love:

But God in that he is infinitely good has infinite love in his heart. Love is the divine temper. The nature of God is love and goodness itself. The infinite God is nothing but an

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6 The rabbinic tradition glosses the maqom in this passage as a name of God.


8 46.202, L. 4r-4v.
infinite fountain or ocean of love. The very divine nature and essence is only a pure flame of love of a heat infinitely intense (1 John 4: 8, 16). (emphasis mine)\(^9\)

The perfection of God’s infinite being, the divine greatness in being, differentiates God’s infinite love from human love:

God *infinitely loves himself*. Yet so abundant is his love that it flows out also towards others, it seeks out other, [and] it flows out also to the creature in abundant streams. . . .

God’s greatness reflects glory on his goodness as it sets him above want or need of the creature . . . .

God’s goodness is from a directly contrary cause from the goodness of the creature. The creatures’ love is from want. ’Tis because the creature in himself is not full and its love seeks something to fill it. God’s love is from *fullness* because he overflows and seeks something to receive those overflowings.\(^10\)

God is already the self-gratifying fullness of love by loving Godself infinitely such that God’s love is a pure benevolence to seek only the communication of divine fullness without any need of satisfaction. God’s perfection in being that determines the Deity as the ground of being specifies the perfection of the divine person as an infinite fountain of love.

Therefore God’s glory manifests the ground of being as the infinite space of love, and the glory is revealed apparently and eminently in God’s redemption through Christ. Salvation is the most glorious work, because it is the infinite exercise of the divine infinite goodness and grace. God as infinite space is not a void space of the world but the fullness of God’s glory of love, which bridges the infinite gap between God and creatures and fills the void of the creature that is empty in itself. Edwards describes God’s infinite extension of personal love:

God has manifested his goodness and grace to be infinite in that he has *extended* it to the sinful. Sin sets the creature at an infinite distance from God . . . . as it is infinitely . . .

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\(^9\) Ibid., L. 6r.

\(^10\) Ibid., L. 6r, 8r.
contrary to God’s nature which is infinitely holy. . . . God redeems men from hell which is an infinite evil. He bestows eternal blessedness upon them which is an infinite good. Such is God’s goodness that he gives his own and only begotten son who is a divine person a person of infinite glory. . . . God has . . . not only exercised that mercy which is infinite but . . . he has exercised it in an infinite degree. (emphasis mine)\(^\text{11}\)

The glory of the Deity reveals the infinite space of God as the divine person of infinite glory, that is, Christ the Son. Edwards explicitly affirms that the divine glory, face, goodness, and name to communicate God’s goodness in Ex. 33:14, 18-19 “signif[y] the second person in the Trinity.”\(^\text{12}\)

The infinite perfection of the divine person is represented as the infinite fountain of love which exercises infinite love infinitely. The perfection of God’s personhood is the divine action of redemption through the person of Jesus Christ the Son, who loves the world infinitely by his intimate personal presence in the incarnation. Hence the glory of God’s personal space reveals the divine perfection in being and person by the person and work of Jesus Christ the Son.

The Glory of Christ as a Divine Person of Infinite Glory, the Trinitarian Fountain of Love

Edwards interprets the shekina of divine glory in the Old Testament as a type of the glory of Christ. “The glory of the Lord,” “the Shekinah, or cloud above the mercy seat, in the tabernacle and temple” is the symbol and representation of the deity or the divine presence.\(^\text{13}\) In a note on Exodus 16:10 Edwards writes,

The Shekinah that now appeared, and that appeared afterwards in the tabernacle and temple, was called the “glory of the Lord,” not only because of that outward brightness that appeared, but especially because that brightness was the symbol of the Son of God as

\(^{11}\) Ibid., L. 12v.-13r.

\(^{12}\) 8:518, 523-24; 21:118.

\(^{13}\) 15:235, 387; 24:855.
there manifesting himself, who is the brightness of God's glory. The glory of God is spoken of as a person in Isaiah 3:8. See note on Revelation 21:23. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{14}

Jesus Christ, “the divinity dwelling in flesh, or God incarnate,”\textsuperscript{15} is the archetype of all glory of divine presence from creation to the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and earth. The Christian experience of salvation epitomizes the infinite and eternal presence of God in the incarnated person of God, and the divine person is expanded into the ground of being and meaning by the doctrine of creation. The glory of God reveals the ground of being as the personal space of love.

The glory of the divine person is displayed by the redemptive work of Christ. In the sermon on John 1:14\textsuperscript{16} Edwards explains that the glory of the divine person of the Word is manifested by the glory of Christ’s office as a savior. The glory of Christ’s person and work represents the personal perfection of God the ground of being as “the fountain of light and life,” that is, “the moral excellency of truth and grace.” Edwards explicates the moral excellence of Christ as the perfection of the spiritual being of mind:

In grace and truth is comprehended all the excellency and glory of beauty of spirits both of the divine and of created minds. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{17}

Truth is the excellency of the understanding and grace the excellency of the will. So in grace and truth, light and love, are comprehended all the gracious communications from God to the creature. In truth and light is comprehended the proper good and enjoyment of the understanding, [and] in grace and love the enjoyment of the will. These two, the apostle says, [are those which] Christ appeared as being full of. He was full of truth in the

\textsuperscript{14} 24:228.

\textsuperscript{15} 24:732.

\textsuperscript{16} 45.163.1-2. “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14 NRS).

\textsuperscript{17} 45.163.2, L. 1v.
The person and work of Christ are conjoined in Calvin’s concept of Christ’s threefold office. In Christ’s exercise of his offices, the person and work mutually constitute each other. The personal being is action. The spiritual existence is the exercise of two faculties of mind, understanding and will. The perfection of personal being is the happiness of enjoyment in perfect action. The perfect action of personal mind is the communication of truth and grace. The communicative action of Christ derives from the trinitarian fountain of truth and grace.

The glory of God incarnated in Jesus Christ is the presence of the triune fountain by the communication of the trinitarian persons. Christ’s glory of truth and grace is the fullness of the Spirit of God who dwells in Christ’s human nature. The Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, is given to Jesus Christ “not by measure but fullness of it,” and is communicated to the church and saints through Christ. In the first sermon on John 1:14 Edwards expounds on Christ’s glory of truth as the trinitarian presence and communication:

Christ is full of truth as he has a fullness of the Spirit of God whereby he gives men the spiritual understanding of the truth. Christ, as he is God, is one person from whom the Spirit of God proceeds. The holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son and Christ as man and a mediator has the Spirit of God given by the Father not by measure he has a fullness of it and ’tis of his fullness we receive. He has received the Holy Ghost not only for himself but for all that God has given him.

The Spirit of God descended on Christ like a dove. He was anointed with it and it is like oil that runs down [Ps. 133:2] from the head to the skirts of the garments it is poured upon Christ the head of the Church and from thence it is derived down to his church. And hereby Christ fills the minds of believers with divine light and with the spiritual understanding and belief of the truth. (emphasis mine)
In the second sermon on John 1:14, Edwards elucidates Christ’s glory of grace according to the same trinitarian logic as the glory of truth, drawing on the Johannine identification of God with love:

Christ is full of grace in that as he is God. He is a person of infinite goodness. God’s grace and goodness is one of the divine attributes all which are infinite. God, as the apostle John tells us, is Love (1 John 4:8, 16). The infinite essence of God is love nothing but a boundless ocean of love. The infinite essence of God is love nothing but a boundless ocean of love. God’s love is infinite towards himself. The Father infinitely loves the son and the son infinitely loves the Father. And there is also an infinite fountain for the creature and the son of God, as he is of the same essence of the Father, has the same attributes of love and grace. The ocean of love that there is Christ’s heart it overflows abundantly like a flood. . . . the grace and love of Christ is the full everlasting and never failing fountain of all good and happiness. . . .

. . . he is not only full of grace in himself as he is God, but he is full of grace as he is our savior. His grace and goodness shines and flows forth in his exercise of his office as redeemer of mankind to a most a marvelous manner. . . .

As the mind of Christ himself is full of holy and excellent virtues and dispositions, Christ as God is the triune fountain and origin of holiness. The divine mind is full of infinite excellency, beauty, and holiness. Holiness as it is in Christ considered only as God is not called grace. Holiness is called grace only as derived from God and communicated by him through his Spirit. . . .

Christ is full of grace as he has a fullness of the Spirit of grace not only for himself but also to give to his people. (emphasis mine)²⁰

Christ’s work of redemption exhibits the glory of Christ as a savior. Christ’s glory in salvation communicates the divine holiness of love from the trinitarian fountain of love. The glory of grace in Christ’s person and work represents the infinite personal goodness of [his] disposition to communicate, which is grounded on the infinite love among the trinitarian persons. The glory of Christ’s redemption specifies the essence of God the spiritual ground of being as the infinite fountain of love.

²⁰ 45.163.2, L. 2r.-2v., 5r, 6r.
Edwards elucidates in more detail Christ’s glory of the trinitarian presence and communication, elaborating that the shekina of God’s glory in the ark of covenant is a type of Christ, in his note on Exodus 25:10-22.21 The ark of covenant that contained the precious treasure of the law of God and the pot of manna is “the symbol of God’s most immediate presence,” “a lively type of Jesus Christ.”22 As the ark is a repository to contain and a vehicle to convey that which is “infinitely excellent and precious,” Christ’s humanity contains the deity and conveys it to the church. The person of Christ is the vessel of the trinitarian divinity and the work of Christ makes his person the vehicle to communicate the trinitarian grace.

First, the glory of Christ’s person is the fountain of the trinitarian presence. The deity is the fullness of the trinitarian glory, and Christ becomes the trinitarian fountain by the hypostatic union of divinity and humanity. The ark denotes the human nature of Christ in which “dwelt God himself; the divine Logos dwelt in it by his Spirit, signified by the law and manna.”23 The Father has sight of “infinite beauty (or holiness, which is the beauty of the divine nature)” in the Logos the beloved Son of God, “the infinite love” to him, and the infinite happiness, joy, delight and satisfaction in him.24 The law of God signifies divine holiness, and the pot of manna divine happiness. These two things signify the Holy Spirit.

Second, the glory of Christ’s work is the trinitarian communication. “It is only by Christ that God manifests his glory to his church. They see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;

23 15:244.
24 15:243-44.
he is the effulgence, or shining forth, of his Father's glory."\textsuperscript{25} "The law that was put into the ark signified the righteousness of Christ, containing both his propitiation and obedience."\textsuperscript{26} The glory of divine holiness is manifested by the righteous work of Christ, which satisfied God’s law through his sufferings while obeying the law in his heart. God’s holiness communicated is the divine grace. “The mercy seat was upon the ark, and never was separated from it, which shows that God's mercy is only in and through Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{27} The divine grace for happiness is revealed by Christ’s fulfillment of the covenant between God and humanity through the divine holiness of his righteousness. Hence Jesus Christ the triune fountain communicates the divine holiness and happiness to the church through the Spirit. “The church hath the Holy Spirit, which is the sum of all her good, no otherwise than through Christ and in Christ.”\textsuperscript{28} As a result, Jesus Christ becomes “the Light of the world” by the Logos or the Word of God in him, and “the bread of life” by the Spirit in him.\textsuperscript{29}

God’s glory in the person and work of Jesus Christ is present in the world through the Spirit of Christ by the trinitarian work of salvation. Christ’s redemption reveals the person and action of God as love. As is exhibited in his sermon on John 1:14, Edwards interprets the essence of the divine being revealed by Christ as love, following the Johannine definition of God as love. Accordingly, the triune salvation of Christ represents God the infinite ground of being as the trinitarian fountain of love, which is constituted by the union in distinction of the trinitarian

\textsuperscript{25} 15:245.  
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{27} 15:243.  
\textsuperscript{28} 15:244.  
\textsuperscript{29} 15:245.
persons through their reciprocal love. The glorious presence of the Trinity fills the world with love by the redemptive work communicating God’s love. Christ’s salvation is accomplished by the completion of “the kingdom of Christ in the world”\textsuperscript{30} into the triune community of love. The world, established on the foundation of divine space by God’s personal work, is “the glorious society”,\textsuperscript{31} that is, “a world of love.” Edwards describes the glorious presence of God the Trinity completed perfectly in the heavenly state of the church as follows:

Heaven is a part of the creation which God has built for this end, to be the place of his glorious presence. And it is his abode forever. Here he will dwell and gloriously manifest himself to eternity. And this renders heaven a world of love; for God is the fountain of love, as the sun is the fountain of light. And therefore the glorious presence of God in heaven fills heaven with love, as the sun placed in the midst of the hemisphere in a clear day fills the world with light. The Apostle tells us that God is love, 1 John 4:8. And therefore seeing he is an infinite Being, it follows that he is an infinite fountain of love. Seeing he is an all-sufficient Being, it follows that he is a full and overflowing and an inexhaustible fountain of love. Seeing he is an unchangeable and eternal Being, he is an unchangeable and eternal source of love. There even in heaven dwells that God from whom every stream of holy love, yea, every drop that is or ever was proceeds.

There dwells God the Father, and so the Son, who are united in infinitely dear and incomprehensible mutual love. There dwells God the Father, who is the Father of mercies, and so the Father of love, who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life [John 3:16]. There dwells Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the Prince of peace and love, who so loved the world that he shed his blood, and poured out his soul unto death for it. There dwells the Mediator, by whom all God's love is expressed to the saints, by whom the fruits of it have been purchased, and through whom they are communicated, and through whom love is imparted to the hearts of all the church. There Christ dwells in both his natures, his human and divine, sitting with the Father in the same throne. There is the Holy Spirit, the spirit of divine love, in whom the very essence of God, as it were, all flows out or is breathed forth in love, and by whose immediate influence all holy love is shed abroad in the hearts of all the church [cf. Romans 5:5]. There in heaven this fountain of love, this eternal three in one, is set open without any obstacle to hinder access to it. There this glorious God is manifested and shines forth in full glory, in beams of love;

\textsuperscript{30} 8:475.

\textsuperscript{31} 8:371.
there the fountain overflows in streams and rivers of love and delight, enough for all to drink at, and to swim in, yea, so as to overflow the world as it were with a deluge of love. (emphasis mine)\(^{32}\)

The completion of triune salvation perspicuously displays the perfection of Christ’s person and work. The glory of Christ’s personal perfection is the full actualization of Christ’s understanding and will into the virtues of truth and grace for salvation. The consummation of Christ’s salvation is the perfection of divine personhood in the full presence of the triune fountain of love. The glory of Christ’s salvation discloses conclusively the triune fountain of love as the life of the glorious society of the trinitarian persons. The infinite space of God is the personal space of community. The perfection of personhood is not merely an individual self-realization but the actualization of virtue toward a moral society of love. The glory of Christ’s salvation reveals the trinitarian glory of being, in that the perfection of being is the virtue of love and the beautiful life of happiness in the social union through mutual love.

**The Ontological Structure of God’s Glory: Being,**

**Spirit, Moral Love, and Social Happiness**

The Glory of God: God’s Perfection of Being Revealed in the Divine Work

I have shown that Edwards grasps the Trinity as the perfection of God in being and personhood revealed in the salvation of Christ, interpreting the Bible with the concept of glory. His hermeneutical lens, the glory of God, has the background of Calvinistic tradition. Edwards adopts it as the central motif of his theology and articulates explicitly its theological and philosophical implications in order to delve into the essence of divine being and its ontological structure. He demonstrates the glory of God as the ultimate end of God’s works through the

\(^{32}\) 8:369-70.
explication of the Scriptures, and explores the essence of God’s being by examining the ontological structure of God’s glory.

As the motto of the Protestant Reformation, “soli Deo Gloria” (glory to God alone), demonstrates, the biblical concept of glory was one of the central motifs in traditional Protestant theology. Calvinism introduced divine glory into its theological confession, as the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* begins with the question and answer: “What is the chief end of man? Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” The human supreme end, the glory of God and human happiness in it, is the same as God’s glory of happiness in the trinitarian life of love that traditional rational theology affirmed, as Edwards states it in “Miscellaneies,” no. 94: “’Tis often said that God is infinitely happy from all eternity in the view and enjoyment of himself, in the reflection and converse love of his own essence, that is, in the perfect idea he has of himself, infinitely perfect.” From this coincidence we might conclude that the first confession of the catechism implicates faith in the Trinity and reflects trinitarian theology. The perfection of human being achieved by fulfilling the human end of faith represents the excellence of God’s being.

The prime purpose of a thing reveals the essence of its being, particularly of the spiritual existence whose being is meaning and who realizes that meaning by action. As Edwards expresses it, in the perfect being and personhood of God there is no distinction “between power or habit and act” and “between temper or disposition and exercise.” God’s act displays the divine disposition toward an end. In the act of God’s being, “there is no distinction of substance

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33 13:257.

34 21:113, 122.
and act, but it is wholly substance and wholly act.”

God’s action exposes divine substance. Therefore, the goal of God and human action manifests the substance of spiritual being and therein God’s perfection of being as spiritual existence.

Edwards maintains that the ends of God and humans are united in the divine work of salvation, and defines its end as the glory of God. The actualization of human ends, the happiness of enjoyment in glorifying God, is accomplished by God’s work of salvation. Hence humans’ chief end, defined by faith in God, is the end of God’s work and is God’s end of creation of the world, since the intelligent and moral part of the world is “the end of all the rest of the creation.”

Edwards elaborates this point that “The last end for which God has made moral agents must be the last end for which God has made all things: it being evident that the moral world is the end of the rest of the world.”

In the chapter two of his dissertation Concerning the End for which God Created the World, Edwards proves that Scripture declares the glory of God as the sum and end of true religion and virtue and the last and ultimate end of God’s work, which converges from creation, through providence towards the moral world of intelligible agents, and ultimately on the kingdom of Christ by the redemption of Jesus Christ. Divine glory as the end of God’s action makes God’s perfections known for its praise. Edwards explicates the significance of the unity of the confessional faith and the theological doctrine of God by defining God’s glory as the end of God’s work. In other words, the glory of God’s work toward the end of salvation unites the end of God and humans and establishes the ground for analogy between the

36 8:470.
37 8:559.
38 8:467-536.
perfection of God’s being and human existence. Edwards explores God’s end of creation in Concerning the End for which God Created the World and the human end of moral virtue in The Nature of True Virtue. The set of two dissertations, composed in 1755, demonstrates the accordance of divine and human ends: glorifying the Deity is the love of God to create the happiness in the communion of good by mutual love, in which complacence for self and benevolence for others are incorporated. It can be understood as a superb elucidation of the first confession of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Edwards grounds his reasoning on the synthesis of God’s perfection in being and personhood so that the moral excellence of God Being in general consists in God’s glorification and love of Godself by taking happiness and delight in divine love to communicate the good of Godself. It demonstrates that the glory of God, the common end of God and humans, reveals the nature of God’s being.

The external glory of God’s work is the manifestation and communication of the internal glory of God’s being as the trinitarian life. The ontological structure of God’s glory represents the ground of being defined with personal perfection as the trinitarian being of God. The glory of God manifests the dialectic of God’s perfection in being and personhood as the dialectic of God’s moral excellency between complacence and benevolence. The moral virtue of love is benevolence beyond the complacence of self-love. At the same time, God’s moral virtue of love should be the love of Godself since God is Being in general. Edwards synthesizes the two poles of the dialectic by showing in the glory of God that God glorifies Godself by communicating good. This means that divine glory reveals the perfection of spiritual being as moral excellence, which harmonizes complacence and benevolence through virtuous happiness in the social life of communion by mutual love. Edwards infers the ontological structure of God’s glory from the glory of Christ’s person and work, and incorporates it into the glory of the Trinity. The life of divine glory defines God as the Trinity and displays the ontological structure of God’s trinitarian
being. In this vein Edwards’ argument on the glory of God and its ontological structure reflects his doctrine of the Trinity, which is developed in *Discourse on the Trinity*, written from 1730 to the 1740s, and is treated in the articles of “Miscellanies.” I will examine the logic and structure of glory to elucidate the ontological frame of the perfection of God’s being defined by the moral excellence of personhood.

**The Ontological Structure of God’s Glory**

Edwards’ notion of glory reveals the divine perfection of spiritual being. It integrates ontological being with axiological good and adapts the goodness of being to spiritual or personal being such that the excellence of being is the ethical morality of love and the aesthetic beauty of communal life. Consequently glory reveals the essence of being as the dynamic life of a teleological act which is performed by the psychological faculty of spiritual being for the purpose of moral good, the happy society of love.

First, Edwards interprets the biblical term of “glory” as the conflation of the ontological concept of being with the axiological value of good. As the Hebrew word of glory, the *kavod*, designates gravity, heaviness, weight, and the greatness and abundance of being, glory means an internal character “inherent or in the possession of the subject,” which signifies the fullness of good in general and the valuation of the good such as “excellency, or great valuableness, dignity, or worthiness of regard.” For Edwards being is good. “Entity is the greatest and only good.”

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39 For the date, see 21:109.

40 8:512-13.

41 6:335.
“Existence or entity is that into which all excellency is to be resolved.” The goodness of being determines value. “The degree of regard should always be in a proportion compounded of the proportion of existence and proportion of excellence, or according to the degree of greatness and goodness considered conjunctly.”

Second, glory as the fullness of the good denotes that the perfection of being is the dynamic act and life of communication, just as gravity causes motion. According to Edwards the word ‘glory’ expresses “the exhibition, emanation or communication of the internal glory . . . . as in an effulgence or shining brightness, by an emanation of beams of light.” The perfection of being is not potentiality but its actualization. Edwards says about the divine attributes, “The glorious attributes of God, which consist in a sufficiency to certain acts and effects, should be exerted in the production of such effects as might manifest the infinite power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, etc., which are in God.” The value of the good connotes a teleological end and a dynamic movement for its actualization. If there were no exercise of the good, it would be useless and invaluable. Edwards sustains this point by quoting a part of the sermon of G. Tennent as follows:

The end of wisdom (says Mr. G. Tennent, in his Sermon at the opening of the Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia) is design; the end of power is action; the end of goodness is doing good. To suppose these perfections not to be exerted, would be to represent them as insignificant. Of what use would God’s wisdom be, if it had nothing to

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42 6:381.
43 8:423.
44 8:515.
45 8:428-29.
design or direct? To what purpose his almightiness, if it never brought anything to pass? And of what avail his goodness, if it never did any good? (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{46}

Third, the dynamic concept of glory presupposes that being is spiritual, social, and moral. The value of the good and its actualization require the existence of spiritual beings that can be a subject or object of action and valuation by having the psychological faculty of understanding for knowledge and the will for love. The life of spiritual beings is conducted in social space. Their relation with the valuable end and with others is moral. Edwards maintains that

the glorious perfections of God should be known, and the operations and expressions of them seen by other beings besides himself. . . . "Tis a thing infinitely good in itself that God's glory should be known by a glorious society of created beings.

As it is a thing valuable and desirable in itself that God's glory should be seen and known, so when known, it seems equally reasonable and fit, it should be valued and esteemed, loved and delighted in, answerably to its dignity. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{47}

Accordingly glory defines the perfection of being as the action of spiritual existence that operates the psychological faculties for the good completely. It results in the knowledge of truth to recognize the value of the good, and the moral virtue of love to seek and communicate the good. The practice of spiritual action constitutes relation, and it is consummated through mutual communication. Glory as the good of value consists in reciprocal interaction, the manifestation of value by the moral act of communicating the good and responsive love according to the appreciation of virtuous acts. Edwards writes of the mutual love of glory in “Miscellanies,” no. 1142,

That glory of God that is spoken of in Scripture as the end of God’s works is the egress and reception of God’s fullness, the egress of it from God and the reception of it by the

\textsuperscript{46} 8:429-30, n. 3.

\textsuperscript{47} 8:430-32.
creature. The fullness of God is twofold: 'tis his excellency and his happiness, answerable hereto. There is a twofold faculty in the creature that the egress has respect to and which is its recipient subject, viz. a faculty of perceiving and of approving; a twofold manner of egress or going forth, viz. manifestation and communication. There are three things called by the name of glory in Scripture: excellency, goodness and happiness. (emphasis mine)\(^{48}\)

The glory of being is happiness in the communion of the good through the moral excellence of love. It reveals the dynamic nature of spiritual and living goodness to communicate happiness in the fullness of the good in itself by love. The mutual love of glory constitutes the society of union that brings about the communion of the good, in which the ends of individuals accord. Happiness represents the fellowship through reciprocal communication of love, and beauty exhibits the harmony of life yielded by moral excellence. In conclusion, glory exhibits the perfection of spiritual being as moral excellence, the love of goodness that leads to the happiness of communal life. The glory of God reveals the trinitarian ground of being, that is, the dynamic space of social life in love.

**Moral Excellency the Perfection of Spiritual Being**

Edwards understands the essence of spiritual existence as moral agency and the good of spiritual being as moral goodness. He distinguishes the “virtuous or meritorious” good of spiritual beings, such as God and humans, from the good of inanimate nature and brute creatures. Moral goodness presupposes the moral faculties of understanding and will and its exercise. Moral action is caused from the choice of will which is “guided by understanding.” In other words, it is influenced “by moral inducements or motives exhibited to the view of understanding and reason.”\(^{49}\) Edwards explains the moral faculty and action of moral agency:

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\(^{48}\) 20:517.

\(^{49}\) 1:165.
Here it may be noted, that there is *a circumstantial difference* between the moral agency of a ruler and a subject. I call it circumstantial, because it lies only in the difference of moral inducements they are capable of being influenced by, arising from the difference of circumstances. A ruler acting in that capacity only, is not capable of being influenced by a moral law, and its sanctions of threatenings and promises, rewards and punishments, as the subject is; though both may be influenced by a knowledge of moral good and evil. And therefore the moral agency of the Supreme Being, who acts only in the capacity of a ruler towards his creatures, and never as a subject, differs in that respect from the moral agency of created intelligent beings. God's actions, and particularly those which he exerts as a moral governor, have moral qualifications, are morally good in the highest degree. They are most perfectly holy and righteous; and we must conceive of him as influenced in the highest degree, by that which, above all others, is properly a moral inducement; viz. the moral good which he sees in such and such things: and therefore he is, in the most proper sense, a moral agent, the source of all moral ability and agency, the fountain and rule of all virtue and moral good; though by reason of his being supreme over all, 'tis not possible he should be under the influence of law or command, promises or threatenings, rewards or punishments, counsels or warnings. The essential qualities of a moral agent are in God, in the greatest possible perfection; such as understanding, to perceive the difference between moral good and evil; a capacity of discerning that moral worthiness and demerit, by which some things are praiseworthy, others deserving of blame and punishment; and also a capacity of choice, and choice guided by understanding, and a power of acting according to his choice or pleasure, and being capable of doing those things which are in the highest sense praiseworthy. And herein does very much consist that image of God wherein he made man (which we read of, Genesis 1:26, 27 and ch. 9:6), by which God distinguished man from the beasts, viz. in those faculties and principles of nature, whereby he is capable of moral agency. Herein very much consists the natural image of God; as his spiritual and moral image, wherein man was made at first, consisted in that moral excellency, that he was endowed with [italics in this sentence Edwards’]. (emphasis mine)\(^{50}\)

For Edwards the analogy of being is the analogy of morality. This is because God the spiritual ground of being is the fountain of moral good who is revealed as the personal being of a moral governor in relation with created beings. Edwards recognizes that we cannot grasp the essence of the divine mind or the modes of operation of its faculties with exact metaphysical truth, because there is infinite difference between God and humans that human language is incapable of

\(^{50}\) 1:165-66.
overcoming. He, however, maintains we can confirm roughly that God is a spiritual being of moral agency who has the moral faculties of understanding and will and practices them to accomplish moral good. The analogy of morality is grounded on the analogy of faith that describes humankind as created in the image of God. Edwards interprets the human image of God as moral ability and its actualization. Paul Ramsey summarizes this idea of Edwards:

“These two things, the natural and the spiritual or moral image of God in man, are not to be identified but distinguished in JE [Jonathan Edwards]’s thought. By the natural imago Dei man is capable of moral agency; By the spiritual imago Dei he was originally endowed with moral excellence in the exercise of that agency.”

Edwards elaborates that,

As there are two kinds of attributes in God, according to our way of conceiving of him, his moral attributes, which are summed up in his holiness, and his natural attributes, of strength, knowledge, etc. that constitute the greatness of God; so there is a twofold image of God in man, his moral or spiritual image, which is his holiness, that is the image of God’s moral excellency (which image was lost by the fall); and God's natural image, consisting in men's reason and understanding, his natural ability, and dominion over the creatures, which is the image of God's natural attributes. (emphasis mine)

God’s greatness of being as the ground of being consists in the spiritual existence of moral ability; and God’s excellence, the goodness of being, is the perfect actualization of moral capacity. A mere possession of moral faculty is not enough for moral excellence. To be perfect in morality, a spiritual being should exercise its mental faculty and ability for their original purpose of moral good.

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51 1:376.
52 1:166, n. 3.
53 2:256.
Spiritual existence is essentially a dispositional and teleological life of dynamic movement toward an end, because its functions of knowledge, selection, and action always presuppose their objects and ends. Hence the perfection of spiritual being is the full actualization of its meaning of existence toward the end of goodness as its well-being. For moral excellence, the end that the spiritual being pursues should be moral good in addition to having spiritual faculties and operating them. Edwards distinguishes moral good and evil, that are determined by whether something is contrary to a rule of duty, from natural good in respect to mere nature.\textsuperscript{54} The formal structure of spiritual being is framed by action conforming to the choice of will affected by the knowledge of understanding. The character of an end determines decisively the nature of a spiritual being, whether it is moral or merely natural. Purpose offers meaning to a spiritual being. The teleological meaning determines the value of being.

The end of moral good renders a spirit excellent and its action the virtue of truth and holiness. As the case of Christ’s moral excellence demonstrated above, the practice of understanding is knowledge and the appropriate knowledge of moral good is the virtue of truth; the exercise of will is love and the love truly right to moral good is the virtue of holiness. Accordingly Edwards characterizes moral excellence as the holiness of love toward moral good: “The moral excellency of an intelligent voluntary being, is more immediately seated in the heart or will of moral agents. . . . holiness comprehends all the true moral excellency of intelligent beings.”\textsuperscript{55} “Holiness in the creature consists; viz. in love, which is comprehension of all true

\textsuperscript{54} 2:254-55.

\textsuperscript{55} 2:255.
virtue; and primarily in love to God.”

“A holy love has a holy object.”

“Their [saints’] love to God for his holiness is what is most fundamental and essential in their love.”

The moral excellence of virtuous acts fabricates the being of spiritual existence and vests spiritual beings with loveliness and beauty:

The true beauty and loveliness of all intelligent beings does primarily and most essentially consist in their moral excellency or holiness. . . . ‘Tis moral excellency alone, that is in itself, and on its own account, the excellency of intelligent beings: ‘tis this that gives beauty to, or rather is the beauty of their natural perfections and qualifications. Moral excellency is the excellency of natural excellencies. Natural qualifications are either excellent or otherwise, according as they are joined with moral excellency or not. . . . The holiness of an intelligent creature, is the beauty of all his natural perfections.

(emphasis mine)

“All the spiritual beauty of his [Christ’s] human nature . . . is summed up in his holiness.”

The spiritual beauty of moral excellence again becomes the end of moral good that evokes love for and happiness in it.

The spiritual image of God’s moral excellence is the essence of spiritual being that causes a being to be really “spiritual” beyond the nature of inanimate things and instinctive animals. The substance of being is spirit and thus the moral excellence of spiritual being. When the perfection of glory that associates being with the good is applied to the spiritual being of action and life, the

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56 8:442.
57 2:260.
58 2:256.
59 2:257.
60 2:259.
61 2:256.
glory of being becomes the moral excellence of the virtuous life. Spiritual glory is the moral glory of holiness and the beauty of moral perfection. The moral principle of divine love is “the dignity, life, happiness, and glory of man’s nature.” The glory and essence of God the ground of being is the beauty of moral excellence; being itself is the spiritual good and beauty of moral holiness:

The saints and angels do behold the glory of God consisting in the beauty of his holiness. . . .

. . . He that sees the beauty of holiness, or true moral good, sees the greatest and most important thing in the world, which is the fullness of all things, without which all the world is empty, no better than nothing, yea, worse than nothing. . . . This is the beauty of the Godhead, and the divinity of Divinity (if I may so speak), the good of the infinite Fountain of Good; without which God himself (if that were possible to be) would be an infinite evil: without which, we ourselves had better never have been; and without which there had better have been no being. (emphasis mine)

The Life of Moral Society in the Happiness of Virtuous Love

We have seen that for Edwards the perfection of spiritual being is moral excellence, the exercise of understanding and will for moral good, which knows the truth what is really the moral good and loves to pursue it. Then what is the moral good as the object of the knowledge of truth and the holiness of love? Edwards defines it as the happiness of moral society in the life of communion by mutual love, conjoining the concept of happiness with love. The happiness of love marks the affectional aspect of the moral virtue of love and represents its aesthetic result, the beauty of love that yields communal fellowship. It displays its dynamic life from the

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62 2:299-300.
63 3:381-82.
64 2:264, 274.
fulfillment and fullness of love. In his first sermon on 1 Pet. 1:8, Edwards argues that the happiness caused by the completion of human imperfection lies in the life of love, social union by the moral virtue of love:

> they live the happiest life in this world . . . live a life of love to Jesus Christ, beholding him with an eye of faith. . . . the happiness of men consists in love and friendship between the saints and Jesus Christ. . . .

> . . . a man who is so feeble and so imperfect creature while he is alone is empty and never can be happy except it be in union with some other being. . . .

> There is no other way of intelligent minds being united as to cause happiness in each other but love. 'Tis that by which two are as it were made one and they have communion in each other and the creature empty in itself does in any measure fill its capacity by receiving the addition. It receives by union with another.

> There can therefore be no happiness without love. The happiness of man consists in the enjoyments of love and friendship that all virtue may be resolved into love. It comprehends the duties of both tables of the law. The virtue of the mind is the foundation of its happiness.

> Man’s happiness consists in the contemplation and enjoyment of some excellent object or object suitable to the nature of the soul, which object must be some other mind or else it will not be of a nature suitable for the enjoyment of a mind and will not be capable of yielding happiness because it will be of a much inferior nature to it and in order to the enjoyment of such an object viz. of another mind there much be union. There must be a suitable exercise of our wills towards the object which is love and answerable returns which is by mutual love and proper expressions of this love in society.\(^65\) (emphasis mine)

An isolated substance of individual existence is an imperfect being. However, the essence of a human being differentiated from natural existence is moral, and the prime virtue of love explicitly reveals moral nature as communal life. For that reason the perfection of spiritual being is personhood in social relation. On the one hand, morality presupposes social contexts. On the other hand, the virtue of love constitutes and completes social life by the union of felicity. The

\(^{65}\) 44.131, L. 2v.-4r.
happiness of holy love manifests the ontological truth that the essence of spiritual being is the
moral excellence of love, and for that reason it is social life.

Edwards explicated moral perfection as the happiness of delight in the virtue of goodness
to communicate happiness to others, in “Miscellanies,” nos. 96, 97 on the Trinity and happiness:

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; . . . Goodness in the exercise is communication of happiness. . . . 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.
(emphasis mine)

Now it is necessary that to those whom we love most, we should have the strongest desire
of communicating happiness.66

The goodness of spiritual being is displayed by the affection of happiness and delight that derives
from accomplishing the purpose which gratifies the pursuit of love. In this respect happiness is
primarily a complacence that takes delight in self-satisfaction. Happiness is a kind of pleasure
that Edwards conceived of as a natural good, as distinguished from moral good.67 However,
when one’s own aim itself is converted to the moral good of benevolence that communicates the
good to make others happy, delight comes from the exercise of virtuous love and it becomes a
moral excellence. The virtuous happiness of love guarantees the most voluntary spontaneity that
the perfection of moral virtue presupposes. This is the strongest motivation to accomplish the
goal of love in the social life of mutual communion: “The more happiness the greater union:
when the happiness is perfect, the union is perfect.”68 The happiness of love is not merely a

66 13:263-64.
67 2:254-55.
68 8:533.
transient and passive affection, but its passion is the active energy of love that manifests the ontological actuality and fullness of love. It incorporates the action of love into actual and aesthetic reality, the harmonious union of society. As the effect of love, happiness appears again as a new ground of love and union to evoke much more delight. The happiness of love is the full actuality of love and the disposition to realize the dynamic life of love toward the synergetic enhancement of mutual love for the perfection of communion. Conclusively, virtuous happiness is the actual reality, dynamic life, and excellent beauty of love in harmonious union with distinction. I will elaborate on the dynamic process of the virtuous happiness in love.

Love is a teleological disposition toward an object of end to satisfy itself. The introverted and extroverted nature of love premises mutual relation. Edwards writes in “Miscellanies,” no. 1208, “For, doubtless, love ought to seek that which love tends to. Love should seek to gratify itself. Love is not fit to be had and cherished any further than it is fit to be gratified. The nature of love is a disposition or tendency.”

Love is self-gratification through relation with others. Hence it is composed of two poles: of complacence that takes delight in the beauty of its object for the satisfaction of oneself, and benevolence that takes delight in the happiness of its object for the well-being of other beings. Edwards argues that a complacent love is first in the order of nature and the foundation and reason for a benevolent love. The dialectic of love between complacence and benevolence forges the dynamic life of mutual communication. Edwards declares it as the perfection of love in his sermon on 1 Cor. 13:8-10, “Heaven is a World of

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69 23:139.
70 8:542-43.
71 21:174-75.
Love”: “Love there [heaven] always meets with answerable returns of love. Love is always mutual, and the returns are always in due proportion. Love always seeks this. . . . Love naturally desires to express itself.”\textsuperscript{72} The happiness of love expresses completion of the purpose of love in the reciprocal relationship. The happiness of virtuous love shows how the two conditions of love can be fulfilled by taking delight in the virtuous act of benevolence itself. It articulates the social nature of love in which complacence and benevolence consort through the dynamic life to create mutual communication of love for the communion of the good. Edwards presses this point continuously in “Miscellanies,” nos. 96, 97,

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.

Now the happiness of society consists in this, in the mutual communications of each other's happiness; neither does it satisfy in society only to receive the other's happiness without also communicating his own. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{73}

The virtue of love requires others as the object on which to confer the good. The communication of love brings about the goodness of happiness and delight to both the subject and object of love. When the end of love is fulfilled, the object of love is happy in receiving the good and the subject of love is happy in achieving its own purpose and also satisfying its own desire. The benevolence of virtuous love evokes complacence in both the lover and the beloved. The mutual relation of love is not caused by the give-and-take with the calculation of gains and losses. Even if the act of love is initiated by one party gratuitously, the effects of love are mutual because both share the common good of happiness. The complacence of the beloved through the

\textsuperscript{72} 8:377.

\textsuperscript{73} 13:263-64.
benevolence of the lover leads the beloved to love the lover reciprocally and thus to give complacence again to the lover. The virtuous love leading to the delight of communion is initiative and creative. It is an asymmetrical reciprocity that brings about the communion of the good by harmonizing complacence in an individual self and benevolence toward others for social union. This communion establishes common ground for the mutual relation of communication to achieve the end of society, that is, the life of communal union.

The social virtue of happiness distinguishes the morality of love from one-sided relationships: the self-sacrifice of dry or painful duty without any delight or good for oneself, or the self-love of natural pleasure from the gratification of self-interest. The mutual communication of the good by love transcends the dichotomous disjunction between egoism or eros and the altruism of sacrifice or agape. The benevolence of virtuous happiness shapes union, and its complacence enhances the reality of the self by intensifying self-consciousness. The dialectic of benevolence and complacence yields the communion of union in distinction which relapses into neither of two opposite extremes, totalitarian unification or individual isolation. This holy love presupposes the context of social relation, and at the same time founds the social space for the life of communion by mutual love. Happiness exhibits the spiritual beauty of moral virtue embodied in its communal life of harmony. Therefore, that the essence of spiritual being is moral means that it is substantially the personal relation in the friendship of communion constituted by mutual communication of goodness. The happiness of virtuous love displays the social life of union as the quintessence of spiritual existence. Edwards presents it as the glory of human perfection in heaven that reflects the glory of God’s perfection in the trinitarian life, in his sermon, “Heaven is a World of Love,”

Everyone and everything there shall conspire to promote love, and promote the enjoyment of each other’s love. Heaven itself, the place of habitation, is a garden of pleasures, a heavenly paradise fitted in all respects for an abode of heavenly lovers, a
place where they may have *sweet society and perfect enjoyment of each other's love*. All things there, doubtless, remarkably *show forth the beauty and loveliness of God and Christ*, and have a luster of divine love upon them. The very light which shines in and fills that world is the light of love. It is beams of love; for it is *the shining of the glory of the Lamb of God*. (emphasis mine)\(^{74}\)

**Conclusion: the Spiritual, Moral, Social Life of Love**

Conclusively, in “Miscellanies,” no. 1338, Edwards exhibits the relation of spiritual faculty, morality, and sociality in the moral excellence of the happiness of friendship:

God's moral government of a kingdom or *society of intelligent and willing creatures*, to which society he is united as its head, ruling for its good. The nature of that requires that it should be declared and open and visible, as is most apparent. . . . Moral government of a society, in the very nature of it, implies and consists in an application to their *understandings*, in directing of the intelligent *will*, and in enforcing of it the direction by the declaration made. . . .

Especially do we find conversation proper and requisite between intelligent creatures concerning *moral affairs, which are their most important affairs*, and affairs wherein especially moral agents are concerned, as joined in society and having union and communion one with another. . . . *'Tis concerning moral agents, as united in society, in a commonwealth or kingdom, that we have been speaking. . . .*

The ground of moral behavior and all moral government and regulation is society, or mutual intercourse and social regards. The special *medium* of *union and communication* of the members of the society, and the being of society as such, is *conversation*. And the well-being and *happiness of society is friendship*. *'Tis the highest happiness of all moral agents. But friendship, above all other things that belong to society, requires conversation. 'Tis what friendship most naturally and directly desires. 'Tis maintained and nourished by that, and the *felicity of friendship* is tasted and enjoyed by that. The happiness of God's moral kingdom consists, in an inferior degree, in the members' enjoyment of each others’ friendship, but infinitely more in the enjoyment of the friendship of their head. Therefore, here especially, and above all, is conversation requisite. . . .*

. . . the purposes of friendship, which is one of the main concerns of society, in some respects the main social concern, and the end of all the rest.\(^{75}\)

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\(^{74}\) 8:382.  
\(^{75}\) 23:345-46, 349, 350, 351.
The faculty of spiritual being is the medium of communication for the moral good of social union, the felicity of friendship. Spiritual being is essentially relational, dispositional, and teleological. For that reason it is social, since it is inclined to communal relation. The psychological faculty of a spiritual existence presupposes and functions on the basis of social ground for the purpose of reciprocal communication to constitute the social space of communion. The moral virtue of love realizes the psychological faculty fully and forms its mental existence into a social being that is open to others beyond the subjective world of self-consciousness. Spiritual existence is not merely an individual existence within the autistic, narcissistic, or egoistic world, but the social life of communion which is actualized by the love of mutual communication. A spiritual being is a moral agency and it entails a social being in the communal ground of the good. Therefore the essence of a spiritual being is the holiness of love that forges the dialectic space of social life in which the two poles of psychological agency of individual being and the basis of social context are integrated. The happiness of friendship derived from the communion of social life represents the perfection of spiritual being by holy love. The spiritual is neither psychological or mental nor social or communal, but it consists in the dynamic life of union in distinction constituted in the relationship between an individual and the social ground. The moral end of happiness from the virtue of love manifests this fact: the essence of being is spiritual, moral, and social; the glory and excellence of being is the spirit, the virtue of holy love, and the social life of union. The essential glory of an excellent being is the spiritual beauty of harmony in the happiness of love: “The true glory of heaven . . . consists in the beauty and happiness that is in holiness” (emphasis mine). Edwards writes in “Miscellanies,” no. 182 on “Heaven”:

76 2:274.
But how much more ravishing will the exquisite spiritual proportions be that shall be seen in minds, in their acts: between one spiritual act and another, between one disposition and another, and between one mind and another, and between all their minds and Christ Jesus and the supreme mind, and particularly between the man Christ Jesus and the Deity, and among the persons of the Trinity, the supreme harmony of all. (emphasis mine)  

The Christological and Trinitarian Structure of God’s Glory

Edwards infers the ontological structure of being as the moral excellence of virtuous love from the glory of Christ’s salvation and applies it to the doctrine of God to reach the following conclusion: God the ground of being is the social space of the spiritual life of love, that is, the Trinity. The glory of Christ manifests the moral perfection of God’s being and the is the epitome of the image of God: “Since the Holy Scriptures teach us that Jesus Christ is the head of the moral world, and especially of all the good part of it; the chief of God's servants, appointed to be the head of his saints and angels, and set forth as the chief and most perfect pattern and example of goodness” (emphasis mine). The analogy of faith by the revelation and salvation of Jesus Christ presents the analogy of being as the analogy of morality. The perfection of divine being is revealed by the synthesis of two analogies of Christ’s person and work: the psychological analogy of Christ’s person and the social analogy of the kingdom of God accomplished by the work of Christ.

As shown above, the glory of Christ the savior and his redemption exhibits the moral excellence of truth and grace to accomplish the good of the moral society of love. Truth is the excellence of knowledge, the proper exercise of understanding, and grace is the excellence of love, the proper exercise of will. The holiness of moral excellence is the spiritual beauty and

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77 13:328-29.

78 8:474.
happiness of salvation that makes the creature know and love God. The excellence of truth and grace establishes the moral world in which the union of the Trinity and creatures is achieved by the communication of knowledge and the communion of love. The enjoyment in understanding and will results in the happiness of the moral world of love.

Christ is the mediator of God’s moral perfection between the Trinity and the creature, as the Word is that of God’s being in the creation of the cosmos. Christ’s moral perfection is imparted to humans through the Spirit of Christ. Through the communication of Christ, the moral excellence of truth of knowledge, holiness of love, and happiness of union is transmitted from the triune fountain of the life of love to the creature and returns to God. The mutual interaction of communication and return fulfills the end of moral excellence, that is, the moral society of happiness in the life of love.

Edwards sets forth the moral excellence of created being as the knowledge and love of God according to the same frame with that of Christ:

\begin{quote}
Understanding and will are the highest kind of created existence. And if they be valuable, it must be in their exercise. But the highest and most excellent kind of their exercise is in some actual knowledge and exercise of will. And certainly the most excellent actual knowledge and will that can be in the creature is the knowledge and the love of God. And the most true excellent knowledge of God is the knowledge of his glory or moral excellence; and the most excellent exercise of the will consists in esteem and love and a delight in his glory. (emphasis mine)\end{quote}

The moral perfection of humans is the spiritual image of God, the divine nature, for which humans “immediately depend on man's union and communion with God, or divine communications and influences of God's Spirit.”

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{79} 8:454.  \\
\textsuperscript{80} 3:382.  
\end{flushright}
The spiritual structure of the moral excellence of human being corresponds to that of the Trinity, since it is imparted from the Trinity through the trinitarian persons and work of Christ and the Spirit. Edwards explicates it in his “Miscellanies,” no. 448, of the title “END OF THE CREATION”:

God is glorified within himself these two ways: (1) by appearing or being manifested to himself in his own perfect idea, or, in his Son, who is the brightness of his glory; (2) by enjoying and delighting in himself, by flowing forth in infinite love and delight towards himself, or, in his Holy Spirit.

So God glorifies himself towards the creatures also two ways: (1) by appearing to them, being manifested to their understandings; (2) in communicating himself to their hearts, and in their rejoicing and delighting in, and enjoying the manifestations which he makes of himself. They both of them may be called his glory in the more extensive sense of the word, viz. his shining forth, or the going forth of his excellency, beauty and essential glory ad extra.81

The Deity transmits God’s own infinite fullness of good: divine knowledge, virtue of holiness or moral good, and happiness or joy.82 Those in the creature are the images of and participation in God’s own knowledge, holiness, and happiness of Godself.83 Human moral excellence is the disposition toward the Deity: knowledge of, love for, and happiness in God. Consequently, God’s communication to the creature is returned to God and makes Godself its ultimate end. As Edwards expresses it,

In the creature’s knowing, esteeming, loving, rejoicing in, and praising God, the glory of God is both exhibited and acknowledged; his fullness is received and returned. Here is both an emanation and remanation. The refulgence shines upon and into the creature, and is reflected back to the luminary. The beams of glory come from God, and are something

81 13:495.
82 8:433, 438-39, 530.
83 8:441.
of God, and are refunded back again to their original. So that the whole is of God, and in God, and to God; and God is the beginning, middle and end in this affair.\footnote{84}{8:531.}

The glory of God reveals the dynamic life of happiness in the Trinity and the saints, which is constituted by the movement of mutual interaction of love in the space of God Being in general.

The life of glory harmonizes complacence and benevolence in both God and the saints.

Edwards explains the cases of God and the saints respectively:

he manifests a \textit{delight in himself}; and in making these expressions of his own perfections his end, \textit{he makes himself his end} (this italics Edwards’). . . .

. . . A respect to himself, or an infinite propensity to, and delight in his own glory, is that which causes him to incline to its being abundantly diffused, and to \textit{delight in the emanation} of it. (emphasis mine)\footnote{85}{8:437, 439.}

this holiness in the creature consists; viz. in love, which is the comprehension of all true virtue; and primarily in love to God, which is exercised in an high esteem of God, admiration of his perfections, \textit{complacency in them}, and praise of them. All which things are nothing else but the heart's exalting, magnifying, or \textit{glorifying God}; which as I showed before, God necessarily approves of, and is pleased with, as he loves himself and values the glory of his own nature. (emphasis mine)\footnote{86}{8:442.}

The consent between the complacence and benevolence of God and saints unites both with the communion of the good through giving complacence to each other by their benevolence.

Edwards declares that

God and the creature, in this affair of the emanation of the divine fullness, are \textit{not} properly set in \textit{opposition}; or made the opposite parts of a \textit{disjunction}. . . . God's having respect to his glory and the communication of good to his creatures . . . . God's communicating his fullness for himself, and his doing it for them . . . . these things, instead of appearing entirely distinct, are implied one in the other. That \textit{God in seeking his glory, therein seeks the good of his creatures}: because the emanation of his glory
(which he seeks and delights in, as he delights in himself and his own eternal glory) implies the communicated excellency and happiness of his creature. And that *in communicating his fullness for them, he does it for himself*: because their good, which he seeks, is so much *in union and communion* with himself. God is their good. Their excellency and happiness is nothing but the emanation and expression of God's glory: God in seeking their glory and happiness, seeks himself: and in seeking himself, i.e. himself diffused and expressed (which he delights in, as he delights in his own beauty and fullness), he seeks their glory and happiness. (emphasis mine)\(^{87}\)

The communion of good by mutual love forms the community of union like family, as Edwards mentions.\(^{88}\) This union by communion evokes happiness, and happiness strengthens the union. The synergetic interplay between happiness and union proceeds toward the end of the trinitarian communion, the perfect happiness of virtuous love:

> God's respect to the creature's good, and his respect to himself, is not a divided respect; but both are united in one, as the happiness of the creature aimed at is *happiness in union with himself*. The creature is no further happy with this happiness which God makes his ultimate end than he becomes one with God. *The more happiness the greater union*: when the happiness is perfect, the union is perfect. And as the happiness will be increasing to eternity, the union will become more and more strict and perfect; nearer and more like to *that between God the Father and the Son*; who are so united, that their interest is *perfectly one*. (emphasis mine)\(^{89}\)

God the space as the holy society of love between the trinitarian persons posits the ground for the glorious society or family by being the fountain of love, and addresses its end by being a perfect model. Edwards expresses the trinitarian foundation thus: “All our good is of God the Father; ’tis all through God the Son; and all is in the Holy Ghost, as he is himself all our good.”\(^{90}\) He describes the goal of the glorious community in “Miscellanies,” no. 741, 571 as follows:

\(^{87}\) 8:458-59.

\(^{88}\) 8:444.

\(^{89}\) 8:533-34.

\(^{90}\) 21:137.
Again it shows how much God designed to communicate himself to men, that he so communicated himself to the first and chief of elect men, the elder brother and the head and representative of the rest, even so that this man should be the same person with one of the persons of the Trinity. It seems by this to have been God’s design to admit man as it were to the inmost fellowship with the deity. There was [as] it were an eternal society or family in the Godhead in the Trinity of persons. It seems to be God’s design to admit the church into the divine family as his son’s wife. (emphasis mine)\(^91\)

Christ has brought it to pass, that those that the Father has given him should be brought into the household of God, that he and his Father and they should be as it were one society, one family; that his people should be in a sort admitted into that society of the three persons in the Godhead. In this family or household, God [is] the Father, Jesus Christ is his own natural and eternally begotten Son. The saints, they also are children in the family; the church is the daughter of God, being the spouse of his Son. They all have communion in the same spirit, the Holy Ghost. (emphasis mine)\(^92\)

The communication of glory in the Trinity \textit{ad extra} through Christ’s redemption founds the happy society of holy love between the Trinity and the saints which manifests and repeats that in the Trinity \textit{ad intra}.

Conclusively, the structure of glory represents the ontological frame of God’s perfection in being and personhood. It derives from the christological fabric of being in Christ’s person and work, which is actualized through the eschatological completion of salvation into the kingdom of Christ. The christological, soteriological, eschatological structure of being illuminates the ontological framework of the Deity who is the ground of being revealed as the personal God of moral excellence. The ontological perfection of being framed by the christological and soteriological structure reveals God the ground of being as the Trinity, the spiritual space of the social life of love. The following chapter will explore the ontological logic of Edwards’ rational analysis for the conclusion of the trinitarian being of God.

\(^91\) 18:367.

\(^92\) 18:110.
The Mystery, Analogy, and the Being of the Trinity

The mystery of the Trinity manifests the truth of God that the Christian church has experienced through the salvation through Jesus Christ and his Spirit. The task of Christian theology concerning God was how to reconcile the oneness of God with the three persons experienced in the Christian church, that is, God’s ontological perfection of being and the Christian experience of a personal God through three persons. The elusive truth of the Trinity can be grasped in a degree within our need and ability through the analogy of faith and its rational presentation by dialectical logic. The creeds of the church took the via media between modalism and tritheism by describing the Trinity with the axiom of one essence and three persons with the dialectical formula of union in distinction, which represents the perfect status of social union by the communion of mutual love. Christian theology traditionally has explained the doctrine by analogical reasoning through diverse analogies that reflect multifaceted aspects of the trinitarian being of God.

Edwards basically follows the Western tradition of St. Augustine in that his trinitarian theology is grounded on the psychological analogy, the unity of the human soul and the distinction of its functions. Edwards’ theology of the Trinity, however, parts from tradition in that he focuses on love as the exercise of will, and reinterprets it with the concept of the glory of happiness in order to counterbalance the weight to unity of the psychological analogy. The Augustinian analogy of love has potentiality to be developed into a social analogy. In the Western tradition, however, its actualization is obstructed by the intellectualism and logocentrism that regard reason as the main faculty of the human soul and the essential image of God.
Diverging from the rationalistic tradition, Edwards unfolds the implications of the analogy of love to integrate dialectically the psychological and social analogies of the Trinity. In place of speculative reason, he adopts love as the overarching operation of spiritual existence which represents the whole self beyond a mere function of one psychological faculty. Going further, he reconceives love in the light of the glory of happiness in which complacence and benevolence are united in the social life of mutual love. Consequently, Edwards’ analogy of the Trinity is the life of love in which the psychological analogy centered on love is synthesized with the social analogy to become soteriological, pneumatological, voluntaristic, ethical, and aesthetic rather than intellectualistic. It is more appropriate to describe the God of religion and morality who is experienced actually in the life of Christian church as beyond the God of philosophical or speculative reason.

For Edwards the analogical theology of God the Trinity is not a mere figurative depiction of God but delves into the essence of God’s being disclosed by God’s revelation. The essence of infinite God, however, is impenetrable and cannot be subsumed into the categories of finite human beings. Hence Edwards does not pretend to explain fully the Trinity “so as to render it no longer a mystery.” As mentioned above in the introduction to chapter four, Edwards recognizes that the invisible reality of spiritual existence, God the Trinity, is so incomprehensible to our human mind that we can adumbrate it only with the figurative language of analogy to visible things and human souls and experience. He states, regarding human limitation on the metaphysical exploration of God’s being, that

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1 21:134.
2 1:376, 2:212.
we had need to be *infinitely able metaphysicians*, to conceive with clearness, according to strict, proper and perfect truth, concerning the nature of the divine essence, and the modes of the action and operation of the powers of the divine mind . . . . in the first Being, who is self-existent, independent, of perfect and absolute simplicity and immutability, and the first cause of all things. (emphasis mine)³

Of course we cannot be infinitely able metaphysicians, but we can be finitely able metaphysicians within human limits and practical purposes. The divine revelation from above provides the ground for human knowledge of God in relation with the creature. Although our knowledge is analogical, at least it conveys truth about the Deity to the extent of God’s relation with creatures. When Edwards presents the analogy of the Trinity to the mystical experience, he holds that it contains truth though it is metaphorical.⁴ If there is some truth in the analogies of God, it has its own logic and structure that expose the ontological truth of being and reflect the reality of noumenon, thing-in-itself. Explaining the analogy of the Trinity to the sun and rainbows, Edwards holds that

> the whole visible creation, which is but the *shadow of being*, is so made and ordered by *God* as to *typify and represent spiritual things*, for which I could give many reasons. I don’t propose this merely as an *hypothesis*, but as a part of *divine truth* sufficiently and fully ascertained by the revelation God has made in the holy Scriptures. (emphasis mine)⁵

For Edwards the symbol, figure, and shadow of analogical language are not merely arbitrary allegories but typological revelations of the divine truth. The revelation through the analogy of faith has an ontological ground on which the analogy of being can be deduced from the analogy of faith. Both analogies of faith and being have an ontological foundation based on the feature of spiritual being. God’s work of creation and salvation reveals the nature of divine being, as the

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³ 1:376-77.

⁴ 13:261.

action of an invisible spirit manifests its personality. Edwards’ theology of the glory of God’s being ascertains the ontological ground, since the divine glory flows from the intratrinitarian life through God’s extratrinitarian work toward the world to reveal God’s essence by divine action as I have elaborated in the previous chapter. The spiritual feature of being makes an analogy of its action close to the truth, while its invisible spirituality makes an analogy more distant from the reality.

Although analogical reasoning may be approximate and hypothetical metaphysically, it is still practical and significant enough for us, if the purpose of our knowledge of God is to enhance and organize more rightly human relation with God. The reason is that the only and adequate way that we can have a genuine relationship with God is in the communication and action of Godself to and for us, as it is in the case of that with other human persons. The revelation of God in relation with us, beside the impenetrable depth of the Deity, is sufficient to achieve the end of human existence before God, to glorify God by our love of God. Therefore we can and should seek the ontological knowledge of God’s being to reform again and again our faith and practice it radically from its deep structure and fundamental ground. In this vein Edwards’ exploration of the essence of God’s being, through his analogical theology of the Trinity, is valid and relevant.

The previous chapter elaborated on how Edwards proceeds to his analogy of being for God’s perfection through the interpretation and rational analysis of the analogy of faith. Through his analogical reasoning he argues that the glory of God in Christ’s salvation reveals the Deity of perfection in being and personhood as the being of the Trinity, that is, the spiritual space of social life in the happiness of virtuous love. The trinitarian being of God’s glory is framed by the christological and soteriological structure, according to the analogy of faith. Edwards’ analogy of
being based on the analogy of faith manifests the ontological truth of the being of God in relation with creatures.

In this chapter I will examine Edwards’ ontological logic and structure which formulates his analogy of faith and being for the Trinity. Preliminarily I will review the logic of traditional theology that tried to solve the puzzle of the simplicity and plurality of the Trinity, and particularly that of the intellectualistic tradition of the Western church that Thomas Aquinas represents. This will evince the remarkable features of Edwards’ ontological logic of analogical reasoning. God’s perfection of being requires divine simplicity and God’s perfection of personhood requires a relation of plurality. Edwards reasons, according to the logic of moral perfection of love in happiness, that God’s perfection in being and personhood leads to the Trinity of simplicity in plurality. Edwards probes the ontological logic of love and beauty that penetrates and constitutes the various analogies of the Trinity. The ontological logic of a pure act of love integrates the analogies of the Trinity to the human soul and society and complements them by the analogy of the sun and rainbow. The logic of love presents the aesthetic ontology of beauty in simplicity of plurality. It will address Edwards’ pneumatological structure of the trinitarian being, which reveals God’s essence as a communicative being of love and represents the dispositional ontology of the Trinity. The examination in this chapter will demonstrate that his analogical reasoning provides an innovative ontological model of God’s being which incorporates a dynamic dialectics of life more adapted to the revelation of Scripture and the religious experience and morality of Christian life.

The Divine Simplicity and Plurality of the Trinity

The personal experience of God as Jesus Christ implicates a kind of God’s plurality in relation with human beings, and the ontological absoluteness of God requires divine simplicity.
The theological issue of the Trinity reflects the problem of how to harmonize God’s personal relation with divine immutability and raises an ontological conundrum as to how the plurality of three trinitarian persons can be harmonized with the divine aseity of simplicity. For that reason other monotheistic traditions of Judaism and Islam attacked the doctrine of the Trinity as incompatible with the oneness of God. The puzzle of simplicity and plurality is not endemic to the Trinity but common to all religious traditions that premise a personal deity. The philosophical issue of the Trinity connotes a more fundamental subject of ontology as to how the perfection of being can be reconciled with spiritual and personal existence. Spiritual existence itself is not simple but predicates relational plurality, since it is essentially intentional, dispositional, and teleological. Ultimately the ontological problem of the one and the many lurks at the root of the Trinity and God’s personhood.

The Simplicity of Plurality in Pure Act and Subsistence Relationship

The traditional theology of the Western church finds a philosophical solution to reconcile divine simplicity with the plurality of the three persons from two ancient metaphysical notions of pure act and subsistence relationship. According to Aristotle and Plotinus, the simplicity of plurality is feasible in a combination of conditions: pure spirit, pure act, the triune structure, and subsistence relation. There is a substratum as the third of the triune structure of principles that comprehends all beings and transcends the dichotomous disjunction of beings. The ground of being is pure spirit and pure act that is the simple unity of plurality. Determinate beings on the ground of the substratum are not individual substances but relations subsist in relation itself.

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Aristotle demonstrates the triune structure of the principle of nature: two contraries and their one substratum.\textsuperscript{7} There are three principles, and one substratum underlies the two dualistic principles of one and privation. The substratum survives the change of generation and transcends the haecceity of substance and the disjunction of subject and object by predication. The substratum is neither one as “sheer exclusion of multiplicity” nor “sheer multiplicity.”\textsuperscript{8} It is not complicated by change but a simple ground for plurality beyond the dichotomy of “the One and the Indefinite Dyad.” Aristotelian triune structure with one substratum is applied to his doctrine of God as Nous.\textsuperscript{9}

There is a mind of pure and productive activity that is what it is not “by virtue of becoming all things” but “by virtue of making all things.” “Mind in this sense of it is separable, impassible, unmixed, since it is in its essential nature activity. . . . Actual knowledge is identical with its object.”\textsuperscript{10} The mind is not merely simple but is a substratum like “a precedent community of nature between the factors” on which interaction between two factors is constituted.\textsuperscript{11} The mind of pure act is not a composite posterior to elementary parts but the simple ground of being prior to all plural beings. The Deity is the pure act of mind, which is purely spiritual without matter and is the most supernatural and the best reality and substance that does not depend on something else. Hence the object of thinking is not external things

\textsuperscript{7} Aristotle \textit{Physics} 1.7.

\textsuperscript{8} Burns, 279.

\textsuperscript{9} Aristotle \textit{Metaphysics} 12.9.


\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 3.4.
outside God but God itself. The Nous is “a thinking of thinking” that thinks thinking activity itself.\textsuperscript{12} The immaterial Nous of “absolute self-thought” is not a mutable and divisible composite, but is indivisible, purely simple, and devoid of all potentiality throughout eternity. God the substratum of all beings and change is the pure act of thinking which unites simply the disjunctive contraries of subject and object in thinking.

The spiritual substratum of pure act is antecedent to all individual entities of substances. Hence the triadic structure of the substratum transcends the categories of substance-accident and the logic of predication in the subject-object scheme such that relation emerges as a main category of being. Plotinus argues the category of relation from the view of the spiritual One. When we consider relation from the perspective of material and quantitative beings, the mutual relation that “exists over and above the objects” is “a notion void of content” that “has no reality” and a mere accident posterior to discrete beings of substances.\textsuperscript{13} However, if reality is essentially immaterial from the viewpoint of idealism, relation, which is an immaterial quality and common principle, is not a subsidiary category subject to substances but an actual reality that subsists in itself. Plotinus explains it: “the actuality of the relationships is derived from no other source than relation itself”; the being of relation “arises simultaneously” “as correlatives” “with no priority” and “is precisely this of mutual dependence.”\textsuperscript{14}

According to the subsistence in relation, Plotinus explains the pure act of thinking:

agent, knowledge and the rest-the relation must be considered as in actual operation, and the Act and the Reason-Principle in the Act must be assumed to be real. . . .

\textsuperscript{12} Aristotle \textit{Metaphysics} 12.9, 1074b34.

\textsuperscript{13} Plotinus \textit{The Enneads} 6.1.7.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
If Reality implied embodiment, we should indeed be forced to deny Reality to these conditions called relative; if however we accord the pre-eminent place to the unembodied and to the Reason-Principles, and at the same time maintain that relations are Reason-Principles.\textsuperscript{15}

The beings of subject, object, and act are not substances but relations that exist in their mutual relations themselves. The pure act of knowing subsists in plural relations. Therefore, pure act is comprised of plural relations but is simple without division into individual substances. Both plural relations and the simple act are actual realities.

The Western theological tradition took up the Aristotelian notion of pure act and Plotinian subsistent relation and adapted them to the doctrine of the Trinity in order to validate the trinitarian simplicity of plural persons. The Trinity has no simplicity in the three persons who are “plural” and “several realities” in the “real relation” of “relative opposition,” while other attributes of the divine essence are not “mutually opposed.”\textsuperscript{16} One person of the Trinity is not directly the divine essence, but the plurality of persons is reduced to the simplicity of one divine essence through the trinitarian life in which three persons subsists.\textsuperscript{17} The essence of God’s being is not merely simplicity without plurality but simplicity of unity in plural relation which subsists in the trinitarian life of relation among plural persons.


\textsuperscript{16} Thomas Aquinas \textit{Summa Theologica [ST]} 1.28.3, 29.4, 30.1.

\textsuperscript{17} St. Augustine writes, “we say it is simple, because it is what it has, with the exception of the relation of the persons to one another. For, in regard to this relation, it is true that the Father has a Son, and yet is not Himself the Son; and the Son has a Father, and is not Himself the Father. But, as regards Himself, irrespective of relation to the other, each is what He has; thus, He is in Himself living, for He has life, and is Himself the Life which He has. It is for this reason, then, that the nature of the Trinity is called simple” (\textit{City of God} 11.10., NPNF, ser. 1, vol. 2, p. 488).
The trinitarian simplicity of plural relation is regarded as the ontological characteristic of God’s perfection in being and personhood. The trinitarian being of God is not univocal with but is demarcated from imperfect human soul and created beings. The Deity is the most excellent person of an intelligent and living being and simultaneously is the ground of being beyond the disjunctive relation of subject and object.\textsuperscript{18} The plurality of relation in God reflects the personal nature of spiritual existence, but divine simplicity, however, is ontologically the necessary condition for the absolute perfection of God being itself. The simplicity of being and plurality of personhood are incorporated dialectically into the trinitarian life of God’s being. The dynamic dialectics of God’s life is explained by the notion of pure act. Accentuating the unity of simplicity more than plurality, the Western church explained the pure act of the divine life mainly as the rational act of understanding according to the intellectualistic model of psychological analogy and rather than the voluntaristic model of love and the social analogy. Thomas demonstrates the rationales of the Western intellectualistic tradition.

Thomas Aquinas’ Intellectualistic Model of the Trinity

Thomas defines the trinitarian person as “an individual substance of a rational nature” according to Boethius, extolling reason in that “subsistence in a rational nature is of high dignity.”\textsuperscript{19} Although the rational nature of the divine person is not “discursive thought, but in a general sense, an intelligent nature,” it basically designates the intellectual act of understanding

\textsuperscript{18} Thomas states explicitly that “He is the supreme self-subsisting being, and the most perfectly intelligent being” (ST 1.29.3 ad 1). In the same article he discusses the idea that the person of Godhead is the incommunicable existence of the divine nature as the “most perfect in all nature” and “hypostasis distinct by reason of dignity.”

\textsuperscript{19} Thomas Aquinas ST 1.29.1, 3 ad 2; Boethius Liber de Persona et Duabus Naturis ch. 3.
for knowledge. “Will follows upon intellect.” “Will and intellect are not diverse in God” except as “a distinction of order inasmuch as love requires by its very nature that it proceed only from the concept of the intellect.”

In the intellectualistic vein, Thomas appeals to Aristotle’s idea of God as self-thinking thought as he demonstrates the coexistence of simplicity and plurality in the perfection of intellectual being and act. Divine perfection in being and personhood specifies the characteristic of God’s being as the pure act of simplicity in plural relation. First, God is an intellectual agent that has plural relations. God as being itself is the first cause that is related to the world as the first mover, the first efficient cause, the cause of being and goodness, the intelligent being governing the world. God the first cause should be a personal agent that acts by intellect and will. The reason is that, “since both intellect and nature act for an end, as proved in Phys. ii, 49, the natural agent must have the end and the necessary means predetermined for it by some higher intellect.”

Second, the ontological perfection of God’s being is manifested as simplicity. God as being itself in relation with created beings is “the first being” as the ground of being and “the first mover” as the uncaused cause that outside Godself has no other being to cause the divine being. The divine aseity and self-sufficiency of uncaused independence makes God’s being as simple. The composite depends on component parts or cause of unity. The ground of being

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21 Ibid., 1.19.1.
22 1.27.3 ad 3.
23 Ibid., 1.2.3.
24 Ibid., 1.19.4.
transcends the composition by disjunction of matter and form, of genus and difference, of subject and accident, and of potentiality and actuality.\textsuperscript{25} The divine simplicity means Godself is God’s own essence and existence. God is pure form and existence itself. Accordingly, God as being itself is the formal principle of existence to “actuate all things, even their forms.”\textsuperscript{26} God’s being is pure form that is not contracted and determined by matter, such that God is simple and infinite.\textsuperscript{27} The pure and infinite form without matter is immaterial and for that reason intellectual. The pure and infinite form without matter is cognitive in that “the mode of immateriality is the mode of knowledge.”\textsuperscript{28} It is because the intelligent being has intellectual form in the act of understanding, and in the perfect act of understanding pure form matter exists as pure form. Thomas concludes,

\begin{quote}
the nature of intelligent beings has a greater amplitude and extension; therefore the Philosopher says that “\textit{the soul is in a sense all things}” . . . . the intellect is still further cognitive, because it is more separated from matter and unmixed, as said in De Anima iii. Since therefore God is in the highest degree of immateriality as stated above, it follows that He occupies the highest place in knowledge.\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

The intellectual spirit of pure form is the infinite and immaterial ground of being. The intelligent being is a voluntary being that has a will seeking to possess the intelligible form of good.\textsuperscript{30} Hence God as being itself of simplicity is the intellectual being of purely immaterial form. The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 1.3.7.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 1.4.1 ad 3.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 1.3.2 ad 3, 7.1.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 1.14.1.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 1.19.1.
\end{itemize}
plural relation of divine acts with created beings defines God as the cause of teleological acts, and the simplicity of being itself specifies God as pure form without potential matter. Both conjoin to determine God as being itself as the pure act of intellectual and voluntary being that incorporates the divine simplicity of being and plurality of relation. The following discussion will elaborate on how the ontological structure of spiritual being includes and integrates both plurality of relation and simplicity of unity.

First, the immaterial being of spiritual existence is essentially relational, dispositional, and teleological such that it is plural and social, presupposing the object of others and community. The natural things of non-intelligent beings have actual existence by their own form, but the spiritual existence of intellectual beings is actually intelligent by its intelligent form of other thing. Hence in every intellectual being there is the action of knowledge and the will for the actualization of its perfection of being that has, tends towards, and seeks the intelligible form of some other thing. The fully actualized perfection of intellectual being has the action toward other things apart from itself as the object for its operation to extend and produce. Accordingly, the perfection of spiritual existence is realized by dynamic action or movement from potentiality to actuality in relation with others.

Second, the ontological characteristic of spiritual being enables simplicity to be reconciled with plurality through pure act in itself that unites simply the plural relation. The action of spiritual being has two ways, an outward or local act to external matter and an inward

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act remaining within the agent. As an instance of the latter, Thomas illustrates and explicates an intelligible emanation of understanding, explaining the intratitarian procession:

an inward procession corresponding to the act remaining within the agent . . . applies most conspicuously to the intellect, the action of which remains in the intelligent agent. For whenever we understand, by the very fact of understanding there proceeds something within us, which is a conception of the object understood, a conception issuing from our intellectual power and proceeding from our knowledge of that object. This conception is signified by the spoken word; and it is called the word of the heart signified by the word of the voice.

Although the action of understanding also has two way of knowing both internal and external objects, it is essentially a self-reflective movement in itself in which the object of action going out of the subject returns to and exists in the subject itself. The knower knows the object known “according to its (mode of) existence outside the knower,” but the knower “knows that it understands,” that is, only “has knowledge of the object known as it is in the knower.” The actual object of knowledge is “the idea of the thing known . . . in the knower.” Therefore, “to understand is not an operation proceeding out of the operator, but remaining in him.” It is “not a movement that is an act of something imperfect passing from one to another, but it is an act, existing in the agent itself, of something perfect.” The self-subsisting act that returns to itself

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33 Ibid., 1.27.1.
34 Ibid.
37 Ibid., 1.14.4 ad 1.
38 Ibid., 1.14.2 ad 2.
by self-knowing creates the possibility of pure act, which does not depend on external beings for its full actualization:

in operations that remain in the operator, the object signified as the term of operation, resides in the operator; and accordingly as it is in the operator, the operation is actual. Hence the Philosopher says that “the sensible in act is sense in act, and the intelligible in act is intellect in act.” For the reason why we actually feel or know a thing is because our intellect or sense is actually informed by the sensible or intelligible species. And because of this only, it follows that sense or intellect is distinct from the sensible or intelligible object, since both are in potentiality.

Since therefore God has nothing in Him of potentiality, but is pure act, His intellect and its object are altogether the same . . . . the intelligible species itself is the divine intellect itself, and thus God understands Himself through Himself.  

In the case of human understanding, the actual idea and act of understanding in the human knower is realized through being informed by “the intelligible species of something” outside and distinct from oneself. However, the form of God’s understanding is nothing outside Godself but the idea in Godself which proceeds from God’s act. The act of understanding of God the ground of being is pure act that transcends the disjunction of subject and object by simply uniting both.

Subject and object subsist in the pure act. Thomas summarizes it and emphasizes the unity of pure act:

\[ \text{the act of God's intellect is His substance.} \ldots \text{In God there is no form which is something other than His existence, as shown above. Hence as His essence itself is also His intelligible species, it necessarily follows that His act of understanding must be His essence and His existence.} \]

\[ \text{Thus it follows from all the foregoing that in God, intellect, and the object understood, and the intelligible species, and His act of understanding are } \text{entirely one and the same.} \text{ Hence when God is said to be understanding, } \text{no kind of multiplicity is attached to His substance. (emphasis mine)} \]

\[ \text{39 Ibid., 1.14.2c.} \]

\[ \text{40 Ibid., 1.14.4.} \]
Therefore the intellectual being of God establishes simplicity in plurality by pure act in Godself.

Thomas elucidates the trinitarian procession in God by the concept of pure act in God’s intellectual being, which is differentiated from an actualization of potentiality in the disjunctive relation of subject and object:

Procession, therefore, is not to be understood from what it is in bodies, either according to local movement or by way of a cause proceeding forth to its exterior effect, as, for instance, like heat from the agent to the thing made hot. Rather it is to be understood by way of an intelligible emanation, for example, of the intelligible word which proceeds from the speaker, yet remains in him. (emphasis mine)\(^41\)

Simplicity and plurality are not incompatible but strengthen each other synergistically in the pure act of the trinitarian procession in Godself. Thomas explains this feature:

Whatever proceeds by way of outward procession is necessarily distinct from the source whence it proceeds, whereas, whatever proceeds within by an intelligible procession is not necessarily distinct; indeed, the more perfectly it proceeds, the more closely it is one with the source whence it proceeds. For it is clear that the more a thing is understood, the more closely is the intellectual conception joined and united to the intelligent agent; since the intellect by the very act of understanding is made one with the object understood. Thus, as the divine intelligence is the very supreme perfection of God, the divine Word is of necessity perfectly one with the source whence He proceeds, without any kind of diversity. (emphasis mine)\(^42\)

The simplicity of plural relation is a logical paradox in material beings, but is feasible in the “transcendental” mode of divine existence as the pure act of immaterial spirituality.

The pure act of internal procession in the Deity establishes “a real relation in God” between the trinitarian persons that is not based on the quantitative plurality of disjunction between subject and object:

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 1.27.1.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 1.27.1 ad 2.
According to the Philosopher, every relation is based either on quantity, as double and half; or on action and passion, as the doer and the deed, the father and the son, the master and the servant, and the like. Now as there is no quantity in God, for He is great without quantity, as Augustine says it follows that a real relation in God can be based only on action. Such relations are not based on the actions of God according to any extrinsic procession, forasmuch as the relations of God to creatures are not real in Him. Hence, it follows that real relations in God can be understood only in regard to those actions according to which there are internal, and not external, processions in God. These processions are two only, as above explained, one derived from the action of the intellect, the procession of the Word; and the other from the action of the will, the procession of love.  

The plural relation established in God by pure act is simplicity in the sense that it has no plurality derived from division. Thomas reconceives the simplicity and plurality of pure act as a “transcendental” mode that supersedes the numerical disjunction itself of one and many:

One, as it is a transcendental . . . in God it may mean both substance and relation, according to the context. Still, the very signification of such names adds a negation of division, beyond substance and relation. . . .

transcendental multitude, which adds only indivision to those of which it is predicated. . . .

“One” does not exclude multitude, but division, which logically precedes one or multitude. Multitude does not remove unity, but division from each of the individuals which compose the multitude.

The simplicity in plurality of pure act surpasses the material division of quantity and the formal division of multitude. The numerical term applied to God is metaphorical in the sense that it does not add any accident to the being of God except negation of division. The one of the Trinity means one divine substance or one divine life of the trinitarian relations and the multitude of three persons denotes only distinction without division. In other words the oneness and multitude of the Trinity should be union in distinction. The transcendental simplicity in multitude reveals

43 Ibid., 1.28.4.

44 Ibid., 1.30.3.
the ontological nature of the ground of being as perfect spiritual existence that transcends both plurality of material being and the imperfect human spirit. The former is separated into discrete entities and the latter is fabricated by ideas determined by the subject-object scheme.

Thomas extends the logic of pure act in the divine understanding to God’s operation of will:

Such an action in an intellectual nature is that of the intellect, and of the will. The procession of the Word is by way of an intelligible operation. The operation of the will within ourselves involves also another procession, that of love, whereby the object loved is in the lover; as, by the conception of the word, the object spoken of or understood is in the intelligent agent. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{45}

Like the divine action of understanding God’s love of self-sufficient being itself is a self-reflective movement toward Godself. The good as the end and object of divine love is Godself whose essence is good. Accordingly God’s love is not a passion that is moved by other beings to seek what it does not possess, but is pure act moved by God’s own goodness which has always its object in the divine self and loves and delights in what it does possess.\textsuperscript{46}

Despite being the same action residing in itself, the act of will is a more dynamic movement toward others than the intellectual act of understanding. The reason for this is because it realizes actively the intellectual tendency toward the intelligible form of the good by seeking to possess it and putting into action “what the divine intellect has conceived.”\textsuperscript{47} The act of understanding is essentially introspective in that the divine knowledge of things other than God

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 1.27.3.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 1.19.1.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 1.19.1, 4.
\end{itemize}
knows all beings “in an intelligible mode” that “pre-exist” in God.\textsuperscript{48} The act of will, however, is an essentially extroverted disposition to communicate the good. God wills all beings to \textit{exist actually} and creates them even though this is still a self-directed movement from, through, toward, and in Godself. Thomas declares that

every agent, in so far as it is perfect and in act, produces its like. It pertains, therefore, to the nature of the will to \textit{communicate} as far as possible \textit{to others the good} possessed; and especially does this pertain to the divine will, from which all perfection is derived in some kind of likeness. Hence, if natural things, in so far as they are perfect, communicate their good to others, much more does it appertain to the divine will to communicate by likeness its own good to others as much as possible. Thus, then, He wills \textit{both Himself to be, and other things to be}; but Himself as the end, and other things as ordained to that end; inasmuch as it befits the divine goodness that other things should be partakers therein.

( emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{49}

Divine being is essentially God’s act of understanding as action in itself but the divine act of will makes God as the first cause to effect. Thomas explains the relation and difference between the divine act of understanding and of will in God’s causation:

the intelligible form does not denote a principle of action in so far as it \textit{resides} in the one who understands unless there is added to it \textit{the inclination to an effect}, which inclination is through the will. For since the intelligible form has a relation to opposite things (inasmuch as the same knowledge relates to opposites), it would not produce a determinate effect unless it were determined to one thing by the appetite, as the Philosopher says. Now it is manifest that God causes things by His intellect, since \textit{His being is His act of understanding}; and hence His knowledge must be the cause of things, in so far as His will is joined to it. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{50}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 1.14.5, 19.2.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 1.19.2.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 1.14.8.
\end{flushleft}
The extratrinitarian work of God is the extension of divine pure act of the Trinity: “The processions of the Persons are the type of the productions of creatures inasmuch as they include the essential attributes, knowledge and will. The processions of the divine Persons are the cause of creation.”

Through the divine act of will the intratritarian procession in Godself proceeds to the divine act of creation *ad extra* and returns to Godself. “Although nothing apart from God is His end, yet He Himself is the end with respect to all things made by Him.” The relation between the single being itself and beings is explained by divine pure act like the simplicity and plurality of the Trinity: “As the divine intellect is one, as seeing the many only in the one, in the same way the divine will is one and simple, as willing the many only through the one, that is, through its own goodness.” Consequently, God’s action in plural relation with created beings is grounded on God’s dynamic life of pure act in the divine self. The simple God of plural relations is the pure act of the first mover who is unmoved but moves itself. Thomas articulates the divine life conclusively:

> Hence, since the will of God is His essence, it is not moved by another than itself, but by itself alone, in the same sense as understanding and willing are said to be movement. This is what Plato meant when he said that the first mover moves itself.

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51 Ibid., 1.45.6.

52 Ibid., 1.19.1 ad 1.

53 Ibid., 1.19.2 ad 4.

54 Ibid., 1.19.1 ad 3.
The Limitation of the Intellectualistic Model of the Trinity

Thomas’ explanation of the divine action of will in Godself is strikingly similar to Edwards’ theology of God’s glory that was elaborated above. However, for Thomas the pure act of understanding is the primary structure of intratrinitarian life, in contrast with Edwards’ emphasis on God’s voluntary act of love. The intellectualistic interpretation of the simplicity of plurality in the Trinity has an advantage to preserve the self-sufficiency of action in itself, and thereby preserve simplicity. On the other hand, it has difficulty in explaining real plurality as more than a mere distinction of phenomenal modes. If the distinctive reality in understanding is heightened, the model becomes essentially dualistic, since knowing is an objectification to juxtapose a being in disjunction with the subject of cognition. For that reason Neoplatonism criticized the Aristotelian Nous as still dualistic, and as an alternative to the Nous advanced the One beyond any determination of cognition as the fundamental ontological ground. It also developed the Aristotelian triune structure of principles into the triadic structure of being, three hypostases and the triadic movement of rest-procession-return. Despite its strength and the same triadic structure as the Trinity, the Neoplatonic strategy was unacceptable to Christian theology without drastic modification, because it sacrificed the personhood of God for the impersonal One and the equality of three persons for subordinationism of three hypostases. Neoplatonism maintained the simplicity of the One and separated the triune structure of plurality from the One by subordination. As a result, it did not satisfy the need of the Christian doctrine of God the Trinity to preserve the two poles of the simplicity of being itself and the plurality of personal relations dialectically without compromising either pole.

Although Aristotle and Plotinus offered ontological possibilities for the Trinity as simplicity in plurality as shown above, they did not unfold the potentiality to the extent of reconstructing their philosophy according to the triune structure of being. The ontological
structure of beings, rather than the ground of being, regulated their metaphysical framework by substantial ontology and the logic of predication. They did not grapple with the ontological significance of love because they prepossessed with an intellectualistic mind to degrade love as imperfect and passive affection incompatible with the immutable simplicity of the perfect being. In the case of Christian theologians, they adopted the ideas of pure act and subsistence relation to verify the trinitarian being of God that cannot be subsumed into the traditional category of subject-object scheme. However, they still tried to accommodate it to the pagan philosophical framework of intellectualism and substantialism rather than to reform and reconstruct the ontological structure according to the ontological fabric of God the Trinity, the divine being in perfection. The result was the alienation of philosophical theology on God from the doctrine of the Trinity that at last leads to the rejection of the Trinity as a pagan philosophy from extremely literalistic Biblicism, or as unreasonable and futile dogma from secular liberalism.

Edwards’ novel contribution to the doctrine of the Trinity consists in that by logic of love he realized the potentiality of philosophical theology for the trinitarian simplicity of plurality. The actual integration of the dualistic disjunction of plurality is accomplished by love. The genuine act is love as the operation of will. The pure act, constituting a triune structure of union in distinction, is that of love. Edwards exalts the will of love as the primary and overarching faculty and function of spiritual existence and elucidates the Trinity according to the logic of love. Accordingly, he defines the trinitarian being as the pure act of love and rationalizes the simplicity of plurality as the beauty of harmony. The beauty of pure act of love frames Edwards’ trinitarian theology with a pneumatological structure to reinterpret the divine personhood in subsistence relation through the perichoresis. The pneumatological structure of the trinitarian ground of being proposes the dispositional ontology of God that the divine essence is apprehended by the relational category of disposition deduced from love. Edwards’ philosophical
theology of the Trinity stresses plurality more than the psychological and intellectualistic model to counterbalance its bias toward simplicity. It attempts to comprehend God’s trinitarian being as the dynamic life of pure act of love beyond the disjunction of simplicity and plurality.

**The Analogical Logic of the Trinity: the Divine Happiness of Love in Godself**

The Dialectics of God’s Dynamic Life in Love

Edwards derives the essence of God as the trinitarian being from the glory of God’s perfection in being and personhood through his interpretation of Scripture and through rational analysis. For him “the glorious and infinitely excellent nature and essence of God” is “the infinite fountain of glory and love.”

Edwards expresses the glory of the ground of being as the fountain of the good in “Miscellanies,” no. 1208,

> As he is **infinite and has all possible existence, perfection and excellence**, so he must have all possible regard. As he is every way **the first and Supreme Being**, and his excellence is in all respects **the original excellence, the fountain of all good, and the supreme beauty and glory**, so he must in all respects have the supreme regard. (emphasis mine)

Edwards’ sermon on John 1:14 explicates that the divine glory of the fountain of the good is revealed through the glory of Christ’s moral excellence of understanding and will, the truth of knowledge and the grace of love, through Christ’s person and work. Edwards applies the scheme of Christ’s glory to the Trinity by extending it within the one person of Christ to the three

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55 20:193.
56 23:133.
57 45.163.
persons of the Trinity. He grounds the structure of the trinitarian glory on the revelation of the Bible and affirms it by reason:

Deity subsists in them distinctly, so they are distinct divine persons. We find no other attributes of which it is said that they are God in Scripture, or that God is they, but Ἀγώ and Ἀγάπη, the reason and the love of God (John 1:1 and 1 John 4:8, 1 John 4:16). (emphasis mine)\(^58\)

Reason is sufficient to tell us that there must be these distinctions in the Deity, viz. of God (absolutely considered), and the idea of God, and love and delight; and there are no other real distinctions in God that can be thought [of]. There are but these three distinct real things in God. (emphasis mine)\(^59\)

Consequently, Edwards orders his doctrine of the Trinity according to the logic of happiness of virtuous love. He launches his rational explanation of the Trinity with God’s happiness and the Johannine definition, “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16), in his dissertation of Discourse on the Trinity.\(^60\) The salvation of Christ reveals God as love. As shown above, the perfection of spiritual being is the moral excellence of love and the happiness of mutual love in social life. Hence God the infinitely perfect being should have a nature of spiritual excellence. Edwards states that “Love is certainly the perfection as well as happiness of a spirit. God, doubtless, as he is infinitely perfect and happy, has infinite love.”\(^61\) Since God is the infinitely perfect good of love, the nature of divine love should not be self-love but benevolence: “to incline to and delight in making another happy . . . as in enjoying of it himself.”\(^62\) Perfect love

\(^{58}\) 21:132.

\(^{59}\) 21:131.

\(^{60}\) 21:113.

\(^{61}\) 13:283.

\(^{62}\) 13:263.
should be exercised completely to bring about the happiness of fellowship. Accordingly, it requires an object of love, and the beloved should be equal with the subject of love in order to be capable of receiving all goodness of the full exercise of the lover and responding to it with corresponding love. The divine love presupposes “an eternal and necessary object” that is equivalent to God. 63 “But to no finite being can God either incline to communicate goodness so much as he inclines to be happy himself, for he cannot love a creature so much as he loves himself; neither can he communicate all his goodness to a finite being.” 64 God is “being in general” and “the all-comprehending Being, he that is and there is none else.” 65 Therefore nothing except Godself can be the object of God’s infinite love. God’s love, however, should be the proper love of communion beyond self-love. God is happy in Godself and at the same time “the happiness of the Deity, as all other true happiness, consists in love and society.” 66 Consequently, Edwards concludes that “if God is excellent, there must be a plurality in God; otherwise, there can be no consent in him” (emphasis mine). 67 The mutual delimitation of divine perfection of infinite love and being supposes a sort of social communion in Godself for the divine happiness of love, and it reveals God as the Trinity. Edwards elaborates on this in his sermon on Acts 20:28:

> God is self-sufficient; his happiness is in himself; as his being is necessary and underived, so is his happiness and glory. ’Tis underived as to any cause or author: no other being is

63 21:114.
64 13:264.
67 13:284.
the author of [it]. ’Tis underived as to the fountain and [the] object in the enjoyment of which he is happy: enjoyment of himself.

Indeed, the eternal, infinite happiness of the divine being seems to be social, consisting in the infinitely blessed union and society of the persons of the Trinity, so that they are happy in one another: so God the Father and God the Son are represented as rejoicing from eternity, one in another. Proverbs 8:30, “Then was I by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” So that, according to our imperfect way of conceiving and speaking of things, the persons of the Trinity gave one another happiness as they derived happiness one from another. But this argues no dependence on any other being; on the contrary, it shows God’s absolute independence on the creature. (emphasis mine) ⁶⁸

When the absolute perfections of the Deity such as infinity, aseity, self-sufficiency, and immutability delimit the divine essence of love, God the ground of being is revealed as the social space of communion between the trinitarian persons.

The contradictory and incomprehensible juxtaposition of happiness “in himself alone” and in “the society of the persons of the Trinity” represents the dialectic that the reciprocal determination between God’s perfection of being and personhood creates. In the discussion of the perfection of spiritual being elaborated above, Edwards’ illumination of the virtuous love in the light of happiness demonstrates the dialectic in which the two poles of complacence in an individual self and benevolence toward others for social communion are integrated harmoniously. His argument about the virtuous happiness of love is conducted to prove God as the Trinity who is the social union of the trinitarian persons in Godself. The dialectic created by the happiness of

⁶⁸ 25:662-63. Edwards states the same point in his first sermon on 1 Pet. 1:8, contrasting God with creatures: “The happiness of men consists in love and friendship. ’Tis peculiar to the divine being to have happiness and satisfaction in himself alone. No being can be independently happy but is an all sufficient and an all comprehending, he that is absolutely perfect and is the infinite of all good. Creatures that are finite and imperfect beings are not thus self-sufficient. There is no creature has that in himself alone that will fill the capacity and cravings of his nature so as to satisfy him. A man who is so feeble and so imperfect creature while he is alone is empty and never can be happy except it be in union with some other being. . . . God only is happy in loving and rejoicing in himself, and even the joy that God has in himself may be conceived of as the joy of union and society, the infinite joy and happiness in the eternal union and fellowship of the persons of the Trinity” (emphasis mine; 44.131, L. 3r.-3v.).
love reflects the dynamic life of love within the unity of the ground of being. A finite creature
cannot realize the dialectic life alone by itself but only by social relation with others imperfectly.
By contrast, the infinite God as the ground of being actualizes it in Godself, and this is revealed
as the communal life of the trinitarian persons in one divine spirit. It means neither that a single
ground preexists as a vessel to create and contain the dynamic life, nor that the plurality of
individual entities as substances precede and constitute social life by their relations. God is
neither a mere simple substance nor an empty vessel, but the trinitarian ground of being is the
life of fullness in itself.69 The dynamic life of love itself constitutes the unitary ground. The
spiritual space of life in love transcends the dichotomous disjunction of being between one and
many and of personality between an individual and society. It evinces the ontological structure of
the ground of being beyond disjunction that is conflated with the framework of the perfection of
spiritual being. Edwards expresses it unequivocally in another part of his sermon on 1 Tim. 6:15
quoted above:

In order to [be] happiness there must be both an object and a faculty, and both must be
good and fitted one to another and united together. . . .

. . . God hath both infinite objective good and also infinite subjective good in
himself. He has infinite objective good as he has infinite beauty to behold and he has
infinite capacity or infinite knowledge to behold this infinite beauty. And he has infinite
subjective good as he has infinite holiness to love and delight in his own beauty and
excellency. And therefore nothing can be wonting in order to his being infinitely happy.
And seeing he has this capacity and this object and subject in and of himself from eternity
and unchangeably, hence it must follow that he has this infinite happiness in an absolute
independence eternity and immutability. And so that his happiness is in all respects
absolutely perfect. (emphasis mine)70

69 Edwards avoids the image of a void container like the Platonic receptacle for the divine ground of being.
For him God is fullness and creatures are empty vessels. For an instance, he contrasts Christ as fullness in himself
with the church as an empty vessel in itself (15.348:333).

70 53.494, L. 4v., 10v.-11r.
The divine personhood of God’s absolute being transcends the disjunction of a/the subject-object scheme by comprehending both the subject of psychological faculty and the object of its operation in Godself. The perfect person of God the ground of being is differentiated from the structure of human personality and sociality, which is grounded on the substance of an individual person and presupposes the disjunction of subject and object in human cognition and relation. The incomprehensible mystery of the divine personhood of God as space can be apprehended only partly by the dialectical incorporation of love between the psychological analogy of human soul and the social analogy of human society. The trinitarian formula of union in distinction expresses the dynamic life of the transcendent God as the ground of being.

The Dialectics of Psychological and Social Analogy of the Trinity

Edwards’ synthesis of the psychological and social analogies of the Trinity incorporates God’s space of the dynamic life of love and associates the two dialectics of the divine perfection, between one and many in being and between an individual and society in personhood. Plurality in God is confined within the unity of divine mind, and at the same time psychological unity generates the plurality by spiritual operation. The spiritual being of God is one mind, and the divine mind is the social space of communional plurality. The moral excellence of Christ in his redemptive action manifests the perfect practice of his psychological faculty of understanding and will, the knowledge of truth and love of grace, within one person. The revelation of Christ’s person and work displays the distinct divine persons in God. The perfect operation of the psychological faculties of understanding and will, knowledge and love, within Godself constitutes the society of the trinitarian persons. Edwards elaborates this idea in “Miscellanies,” no. 94, on the Trinity,
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 himself no more than a stone. And if God loves himself and delights in himself, there is really a triplicity, three that cannot be confused, each of which are the Deity substantially. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{71}

The one substance of the Trinity is constituted by the divine act of understanding and love. The divine essence “in which there is no distinction of substance and act, but it is wholly substance and wholly act”\textsuperscript{72} is the pure act of simplicity in plurality.

On the one hand, Edwards’ trinitarian theology is grounded on the oneness of mind, following the Augustinian and Western tradition that begins with and emphasizes the unity of the Trinity. Following the traditional doctrine of divine simplicity, Edwards confirms explicitly the simplicity of God’s spiritual ground of being, demarcated from human finite spirits: God is self-existent and necessary being “without a cause” unlike the imperfect, dependent, and contingent existence of a composite that has spatiotemporal parts of disjunction; God is the simple space of “a simple pure act” that is not made up of manifold parts divided.\textsuperscript{73} Therefore Edwards claims that there is no distinction in God between power or faculty, habit, and act or between substance and act.\textsuperscript{74} The divine attributes are not parts constitutive of the deity but different facets of God’s one simple essence seen from a human perspective that delimit each other to define God’s perfection:

God is a being of all possible perfection and excellency. We distinguish the glory and excellency by reason of the finite imperfections of our understanding . . . whereas the

\textsuperscript{71} 13:262.

\textsuperscript{72} 21:116.

\textsuperscript{73} 18:190-91; 42.44, L. 3v.

\textsuperscript{74} 21:113, 116.
glory and excellency of the divine nature is really simple. Power in God is not really distinct from his wisdom, his goodness not really distinct from his holiness and justice, nor any from his divine essence itself. . . . So the holiness of God for instance may be looked upon as the beauty of the divine nature the perfection of his perfections and the glory of his other attributes. 'Tis the glory of God’s power that it is a holy power. If God were otherwise than holy, the more powerful he was the more evil than tyranny. So 'tis the beauty and glory of God’s wisdom that it is a holy wisdom. The more knowing and subtle, a wicked being is the more hateful for he becomes by his craft so much the greater mischief. So this may be said to be the beauty of God’s mercy that it is a holy mercy. Were it not so, mercy would be no perfection at all but a weakness.75

Although Edwards explicitly declares the plurality and social union in God, he avoids rendering the trinitarian persons as three individual substances and seems more to emphasize unity than communal plurality by using less definite terms such as “seems to be” and “may be” in denoting sociality in the Trinity.

On the other hand, Edwards evidently maintains the plurality of the trinitarian persons in that there are three real distinctions in God which are “real attributes of God and not of mere modalities” and to which all other attributes of God are reduced as their modes or relations: direct existence, idea, and love and delight.76 As quoted above, he employs the terms of “duplicity” and “triplicity” that are unequivocally contrasted with “simplicity.” The perfection of God’s spiritual action generates the real plurality of the three persons by the repetition of divine essence. For example, he explains the duplicity of the Deity by the generation of a divine idea: “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

75 46.202, L. 3v.-4r.

God, to all intents and purposes, and that by this means the Godhead is *really generated and repeated*” (emphasis mine). 

Edwards’ underscores the distinctive realities of the trinitarian persons to counterbalance the emphasis on unity in the psychological analogy. For this purpose Edwards differentiates the perfection of divine spirit in *pure act* from the imperfect manner of human souls in “Miscellanies,” no. 94. He reinterprets the psychological analogy through its ontological ground of immaterialism and the analogy of mystical experience of immediate intuition and ecstasy.

First, Edwards illuminates the generation of the Son in light of his new ontology of immaterialism. At first he repeats traditional reasoning concerning God’s pure act in the divine self based on divine simplicity, as elaborated in the case of Thomas. Then he complements it with his own reasoning based on immaterialism to heighten the duplicated reality of the divine idea and its substantial reality of simplicity in plurality.

We cannot suppose that God reflects on himself after the imperfect manner we reflect on things, for we can view nothing immediately. The immediate object of the mind’s intuition is the idea always, and the soul receives nothing but ideas; but God's intuition on himself, without doubt, is immediate. But ’tis certain it cannot be, except his idea be his essence; for *his idea is the immediate object of his intuition. An absolutely perfect idea of a thing is the very thing*, for it wants nothing that is in the thing, substance nor nothing else. That is the notion of the perfection of an idea, to want nothing that is in the thing. Whatasoever is perfectly and absolutely like a thing, is that thing: but God’s idea is absolutely perfect.

I will form my reasoning thus: if nothing *has any existence any way at all but in some consciousness or idea* or other, and therefore those things that are in no created consciousness have no existence but in the divine idea as supposing the things in this room were *in the idea of none but of God*, they would have existence no other way, as we have shown in our Natural Philosophy; and if the things in this room would nevertheless be real things—then *God’s idea, being a perfect idea, is really the thing itself*. And if so, and all God’s ideas are only the one idea of himself, as has been shown, [then God’s idea of himself] must be his essence itself. It must be *a substantial idea, having all the perfections of the substance perfectly*; so that by God's reflecting on himself the Deity is

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77 21:114.
begotten, there is a substantial image of God begotten. . . . ’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. (emphasis mine)⁷⁸

The crucial difficulty in the psychological model of the Trinity consists in explaining the distinctive reality of the divine idea rather than its unity with the Father. Edwards’ immaterialism, however, makes feasible the actual reality of the divine idea, since it interprets the spiritual idea as a genuine mode of reality. It conceives the ontological essence of beings as ideas disposed in the divine space of mind by God’s act. The ground of being is the divine perfect idea of the Logos that is simplicity in plurality, which comprehends “all things truly and properly present to him from eternity” without succession. The substantial reality of the divine idea, demarcated from human finite ideas, consists in its “being the very thing,” that is, being itself.

Accordingly Edwards’ immaterialist ontology prevents the trinitarian analogy of the human soul from lapsing into a sort of modalism that regards the generated idea of the Father merely as a psychological phenomenon without actual reality. By virtue of immaterialism, Edwards marks the distinction of the divine idea from the Father to delimit the psychological analogy by articulating the difference between God’s spirit and the human soul. Moreover, the most notable point is that Edwards deduces the perfection of the Logos’ ontological reality from its eternal and immutable simplicity that unites all plural beings. Hence he accentuates the dialectic life of pure act beyond the disjunction of simplicity and plurality, rather than merely the unity of simplicity. This is perspicuously contrasted with Thomas’ position that asserts the unity

of divine procession in Godself without “[any] kind of multiplicity” by the divine act of understanding.⁷⁹

Edwards’ immaterialism provides an ontological framework for understanding the simplicity in plurality of the Trinity, but in fact it unfolds the ontological significance in God’s pure act of understanding that generates the divine idea. Edwards explains that “God’s knowledge of himself includes the knowledge of all things; and that he knows, and from eternity knew, all things by the looking on himself and by the idea of himself, because he is virtually all things.”⁸⁰ The simplicity of plurality in the Trinity is the ontological foundation that reconciles the simplicity of God the ground of being with the divine plural relation with created beings. This is the trinitarian foundation of Edwards’ immaterialism.

There is an image of this in created beings that approach to perfect action: how frequently do we say that the saints of heaven are all transformed into love, dissolved into joy, become activity itself, changed into mere ecstasy. I acknowledge, these are metaphorical in this case; but yet it is true that the more perfect the act is, the more it resembles the infinitely perfect act of God in this respect. And I believe it will be plain to one that thinks intensely, that the perfect act of God must be a substantial act. We say that the perfect delights of reasonable creatures are substantial delights; but the delight of God is properly a substance, yea an infinitely perfect substance, even the essence of God. (emphasis mine)⁸¹

Second, Edwards’ analogy of the Holy Spirit as ecstasy in the heavenly state represents more conspicuously the simplicity in plurality of pure action, the “activity itself” of love and joy. The analogy is not plainly the psychological model of a human soul but of the perfection of the saints in social relation with others. In other words, the analogy is of the beauty of happiness in

⁷⁹ Thomas Aquinas ST 1.14.4.
⁸⁰ 13:257.
⁸¹ 13: 260-61
the communal life of union through the complete action of love, which integrates the psychological and social analogy. The analogy, according to the logic of happiness, evinces how simplicity and plurality can be reconciled without contradiction by the dialectics of complacence and benevolence.

An imperfect human spirit experiences the pathological fragmentation and inconsistency of self between thought, knowledge, will, affection, and act, as the extreme case of schizophrenia exhibits. In the disparity of compartmentalization each phenomenon of the psychological faculties appears to other spiritual functions as a strange and alien thing, loses the ontological foundation of the self, and slips into mere illusion. The separation destroys not only the unity of self but also the distinctive reality of the faculties in the discord and chaos of the disorganized self. The dissolution of simplicity dismantles the plural identities themselves. Moreover, disorganized individuals without robust self-identity dismantle the reality of society, and reciprocally the deconstructed society threatens the identity and reality of an individual self.

By contrast, the perfect exercise of spiritual faculties produces the most perspicuous effects of reality that completely correspond to its intention. As a result, it leads to the harmonious unity between faculties, and each operation represents the whole self perfectly to gain its firm reality like the being of the entire self. Although the function of each psychological faculty is distinguished from others, the operation of each faculty manifests the essence of the complete self in agreement and unity with others. In the robust self of moral excellence the accordance and distinction of its faculties strengthen each other synergistically, and the intensified self-consciousness of self by the unity of its faculties demarcates the distinctive
consciousness and reality of its faculties. The union in distinction is experienced more remarkably in the happiness of the virtuous love. The complete concord of one’s faculties in moral excellence is embodied in the act of love itself. The unity in one soul becomes again the dynamic act toward the plurality of others. The excellent love of persons consummates social communion. In perfect love the benevolence of virtuous happiness shapes union, and its complacence enhances the reality of the self by intensifying self-consciousness. The psychological unity of oneself through moral excellence is expanded to the social union, and the logic of union in distinction in oneself is valid in the communion of society. Consequently, the infinitely perfect existence of personal being becomes the activity of love itself and the felicity of communal union itself. Both characteristics of the spiritual perfection of being can be apprehended only in the dynamic and dialectical life of union in distinction between an individual soul and communal society.

Likewise the same structure of union in distinction is applied to the Trinity. The Trinity has the distinctive three persons of one divine spirit in comparison to the functions of human psychological faculties. Its plural persons are united to establish the divine simplicity in which God’s power or faculty, habit, and act are without distinction as mentioned above. The divine unity of simplicity reveals God’s essence as the pure act of love in happiness. The unity of simplicity is fabricated by the plurality, and the perfection of divine simplicity becomes salient

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82 Thomas sets forth explicitly the same point within the act of intelligence in the mind, “Whatever proceeds by way of outward procession is necessarily distinct from the source whence it proceeds, whereas, whatever proceeds within by an intelligible procession is not necessarily distinct; indeed, the more perfectly it proceeds, the more closely it is one with the source whence it proceeds. For it is clear that the more a thing is understood, the more closely is the intellectual conception joined and united to the intelligent agent; since the intellect by the very act of understanding is made one with the object understood” (ST 1.27.1 ad 2). Edwards goes further to expand the logic of the act of love toward others through the relation between faculties.

by uniting the plurality to be purely simple. Divine simplicity consists in the beauty of the trinitarian union in distinction, “the supreme harmony of all.”  

For Edwards, the spiritual and personal being of God is sharply distinguished from human finite existence in that it cannot be reduced either to a human individual soul or to society. The image of God does not consist merely in the psychological analogy of the human soul but also in the social analogy, which is adapted to the experience of the communion of saints with God through Christ’s redemption. The epiphany of Christ’s glory discloses the truth of the divine essence as love. The analogy of faith, according to the revelation of Christ, integrates the psychological and social analogies by the moral analogy of love. The analogical reasoning to the nature of God is not a projection of a human soul and ideal society onto God from below, but is grounded on the dialectics of revelation from above and the experience of epiphany from below. The psychological analogy of the human soul and the social analogy of human society are delimited and synthesized by the dialectic of infinity and finitude. Neither the infinite expansion of a human soul nor the infinite extension of human society reaches the divine perfection of infinite personhood. The incomprehensible mystery of the infinite perfection of God’s personal being consists in love, which is grasped only through the synthesis of the psychological and social analogies of the Trinity. The infinity of God the ground of being defines the divine essence of love as the Trinity. The analogies of love and of being determine each other and both are integrated by the analogy of faith, Christ’s revelation of the trinitarian God. The analogy of being, according to the analogy of faith, represents the analogy of morality in that God’s essence is the moral excellence of love which is spiritual and social. Just as in God the ground of being we live  

84 13:329.
and move and have our being, so also in the social ground of being we know and love and gain our happiness. The primordial social ground of being is God the Trinity. God the ground of being is a spiritual mind and at the same time the social ground of personal meaning and morality and community. God the person of the infinite ground of being is the unitary spirit of social space filled with the life of love.

Consequently, the analogy of love integrates the psychological and social analogies of the Trinity. The genuine image of the Trinity consists not only in merely the intellectual act within a human mind but also in the saints’ activity of love itself and thereby in the social image of the saints’ happiness in their fellowship with God the Trinity that partakes in the life of happiness between the trinitarian persons. The analogy of the Trinity to finite human existence can adequately delineate the infinite being of God’s spiritual existence only in the incorporation of the analogies to human soul, act, and society by the notion of happiness in love. The trinitarian being of God discloses that the analogy of divine being is the pure act of love in simplicity of plurality.

**The Beauty of the Trinity in Simplicity of Plurality**

Edwards’ theory of the perfection of God’s being as the Trinity seems to be contradictable and inconsistence at first glance, because he claims the excellence of divine being as both simplicity and plurality. However, for Edwards divine simplicity and the plurality of the trinitarian divine persons are by no means incompatible, as they were for St. Augustine, Pseudo-

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85 53.494, L. 13r.
Dionysius, St. Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas.\textsuperscript{86} Originally divine simplicity dealt with the properties of the one divine essence rather than the three persons of the Trinity. It was “on modal matters relating to deity” to “deny the very possibility that any of the properties constitutive of deity be lost by the individual who is God.”\textsuperscript{87} Rejecting the traditional idea of God’s simplicity as the unity of modal attributes in one divine essence, Edwards understands the doctrine of divine simplicity as the validation of the trinitarian unity of real plurality:

It is a maxim amongst divines that everything that is in God is God, which must be understood of real attributes and not of mere modalities. If a man should tell me that the immutability of God is God, or that the omnipresence of God and authority of God [is God], I should not be able to think of any rational meaning of what he said. \textit{It hardly sounds to me proper} to say that God’s being without change is God, or that God’s being everywhere is God, or that God’s having a right of government over creatures is God. But if it be meant that the real attributes of God, viz. his understanding and love, are God, then what we have said may in some measure \textit{explain how it is so}: for Deity \textit{subsists} in them distinctly, so they are \textit{distinct divine persons}.\textsuperscript{88}

Edwards emphasizes the real distinction of the trinitarian persons by differentiating it explicitly from modality, and shows that divine simplicity lies in the trinitarian relationship of subsistence in one essence.

Edwards markedly diverges from the intellectualistic notion of pure act in a subsistence relationship of the Trinity. His focus is on pure \textit{act} itself rather than \textit{act in} itself. For Edwards the

\textsuperscript{86} According to Burns, “In each of these cases the term's meaning was radically modified by their Trinitarianism so that in effect it came to mean ‘unity’ rather than sheer ‘simplicity’” (Burns, 274). For the direct quotations of their positions, see n. 1 on the same page. For example, Thomas Aquinas declares, “The supreme unity and simplicity of God exclude every kind of plurality of absolute things, but not plurality of relations. Because relations are predicated relatively, and thus the relations do not import composition in that of which they are predicated” (\textit{ST} 1.30.1 ad 3).

\textsuperscript{87} Thomas V. Morris, “On God and Mann: A View of Divine Simplicity,” \textit{Religious Studies} 21, no. 3 (Sep., 1985): 316. As Edwards holds that God’s modal properties are not the real issue of simplicity, Morris proposes that the modal problem can be solved “apart from any doctrine of divine simplicity.”

\textsuperscript{88} 21:132.
trinitarian simplicity in plurality primarily consists in the pure act of will and love rather than in that of understanding and knowledge, since the perfection of spiritual being lies in the moral excellence of love fully actualized in the life of its practice rather than in speculative notions and knowledge within the mind. As Thomas explains, the voluntary act is more dynamic and creative than the intellectual act. The extroverted act of will connotes plurality more apparently than the introverted act of understanding heightening simplicity. Therefore, Edwards’ pure act of God is more plural than the intellectualistic model biased toward simplicity. His greater emphasis on plurality, however, does not mean that he is slanted toward another pole diametrically opposed to simplicity. It denotes that he counterbalances the tendency toward simplicity in order to integrate the two poles of simplicity and plurality in the dynamic life of love. The Trinity is the divine perfection of spiritual and personal being that surpasses the human dichotomy of an individual soul and communal society. The trinitarian perfection of being is displayed by the pure act of love that transcends the disjunction of simplicity and plurality.

The Perfection of Spiritual Being: the Beauty in Simplicity of Plurality

Edwards’ definition of the trinitarian perfection of spiritual being radically subverts the traditional idea of the ontological perfection of being. In order to display clearly his crucial points, I quote again the two statements of Edwards cited before in the discussion about the perfection of spiritual being:

And as we rise higher in the scale of beings, we don’t see that an increase of perfection diminishes the need or propriety of communication and intercourse of this kind, but increases it. And, accordingly, we see most of it among the most perfect beings. (emphasis mine)

89 23:348.
It appears that there must be more than a unity in infinite and eternal essence, otherwise the goodness of God can have no perfect exercise. . . . 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. So that we may conclude, that Jehovah's happiness consists in communion, as well as the creature’s.  

For Edwards, the crux of ontological perfection consists in neither simplicity nor plurality but in the dynamic life of love itself. It is an incomprehensible paradox to the human finite viewpoint of analytic and discursive reason in which simplicity and plurality stand in a relation of incompatible disjunction. For that reason we can adumbrate it only by the dialectics of simplicity and plurality. The dynamic dialectics of the pure act of love is revealed as the beauty of harmony and is perceived by aesthetic sensation. Thus simplicity and complex plurality are consonant in the beauty of being. Therefore Edwards reconstructs the analogy of being to the trinitarian being by the analogy of beauty inferred from the analogy of love. The perfection of being as the moral excellence of love is beauty.

Edwards defines being as beauty because beauty consents to the natural affection of happiness in the perception of human spiritual existence: “The reason why equality thus pleases the mind, and inequality is unpleasing, is because disproportion, or inconsistency, is contrary to being. For being, if we examine narrowly, is nothing else but proportion. When one being is inconsistent with another being, then being is contradicted. But contradiction to being is intolerable to perceiving being, and the consent to being most pleasing.”  

The perception and affection of spiritual existence reflect the ontological nature of being in relation with other beings

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90 13:263.

91 6:336.
and being in general. Happiness derived from aesthetic sensation represents beauty as the perfection of being, which consists in the *unity of complex plurality*:

Proportion is *complex* beauty. . . .

Spiritual harmonies are of vastly larger extent; i.e., the proportions are vastly oftener redoubled, and respect *more beings*, and require a vastly larger view to *comprehend* them, as some simple notes do more affect one who has not a comprehensive understanding of music. . . .

. . . This is an universal definition of excellency: The consent of being to being, or being’s consent to entity. The more the consent is, and the more *extensive*, the greater is the *excellency*. . . .

One alone, without any reference to any more, cannot be excellent; for in such case there can be no manner of *relation* no way, and therefore, no such thing as consent. Indeed, what we call “one” may be excellent, because of a consent of parts, or some consent of those in that being that are distinguished into a plurality some way or other. But in a being that is absolutely without any plurality there cannot be excellency, for there can be no such thing as consent or agreement.

One of the highest excellencies is *love*. As nothing else has a proper being but *spirits*, and as bodies are but the shadow of being, therefore, the consent of bodies to one another, and the harmony that is among them, is but the shadow of excellency. The highest excellency, therefore, must be the consent of spirits one to another. But the consent of spirits consists half in their mutual love one to another, and the sweet harmony between the various parts of the universe is only an image of mutual love. . . . *Happiness*, strictly, consists in the perception of these three things: of the consent of being to its own being; of its own consent to being; and of being’s consent to being. (emphasis mine)\(^\text{92}\)

Edwards’ point is that the excellence of oneness does not consist in a mere simplicity or plurality but in the beauty of harmonious unity in plurality. The perfection of being is the spiritual harmony of life in mutual love between the distinct parts of plurality. Thus Edwards’ reasoning about the excellence of being is the same as that about the perfection of God’s being as the Trinity, the happy life of love in Godself by the union with distinction between the three persons. Although Edwards says “parts,” it is an analogical term comparable to material things which are

\(^{92}\) 6:333, 336-38.
shadows of being. His focus is on “the consent” of parts. Edwards’ oneness of excellence denotes
the one configuration that the beauty of harmony displays by comprehending complex plurality
as a whole. The complexity of harmony is not inconsistent with a single form of beauty. On the
contrary, the more compound and plural a being is, the more extensive unity and delicate beauty
are possible. Edwards illustrates this idea in Miscellanies, no. 328, explaining the exquisite
spiritual beauty of harmony among saints, the humanity and deity of Christ, and the trinitarian
persons:

our capacities will be exceedingly enlarged, and we shall be able to apprehend, and to
take in, more extended and compounded proportions. We see that the narrower the
capacity, the more simple must the beauty be to please. Thus in the proportion of sounds,
the birds and brute creatures are most delighted with simple music, and in the proportion
confined to a few notes. So little children are not able to perceive the sweetness of very
complex tunes, where respect is to be had to the proportion of a great many notes together
in order to perceive the sweetness of the tune. Then perhaps we shall be able fully and
easily to apprehend the beauty, where respect is to be had to thousands of different ratios
at once to make up the harmony. Such kind of beauties, when fully perceived, are far the
sweetest. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{93}

The beauty of being is proportionate to the extendedness and complexity of proportions. The
aesthetic sensation grasps the simple image that complex plurality delineates. In the ontological
level of finite beings, the simplicity of plurality in beauty implicates the greatness of the
epistemic capacity but does not designate an ontological reality of simplicity. It might be
understood as a mere psychological gestalt constructed by human mind. In the material beings
that are the shadows of spiritual beings, complex plurality means a compound divisible into parts
that is not simple but depends on more substantial elements. Likewise a spiritual unity like
human society cannot be simple, because it is always a sort of composite that premises individual

\textsuperscript{93} 13:329.
persons. From the perspective of finite human beings, an individual substance is the primary category of being and the starting point of cognition in the subject-object disjunction. Finite human cognition perceives beauty as a composite composed of distinct parts rather than as a simple being. It is the reason for the limitation of the psychological and social analogies of the Trinity to human finite existence that cannot grasp the simplicity in plurality of the Trinity.

Nevertheless, in spiritual existence, which is more substantial than matter, the complex plurality of beauty in harmonious unity does not signify imperfection in the degree of being but moral perfection. Moreover, in a pure spiritual mode of being, the greatness of being is in proportion to its comprehensiveness that unites complex plurality with simplicity. The beauty of compound plurality manifests the ontological perfection of being, the fullness of reality, as the infinite omnipresence of divine space unlike material extension is “the comprehensiveness of idea and extendedness of operation.” 94 The purely spiritual space of God is the ground of being for immaterialism. According to immaterialistic ontology, a gestalt idea of beauty as aesthetic sensation is not a mere psychological phenomenon but an actual reality of simple being that comprehends complex plurality harmoniously. Hence spiritual existence is more complex and thereby much simpler than material beings. God the ground of being is simplest in the most complex beauty that comprehends all beings.

From the perspective of God as infinite space, the unity in simplicity of plurality that is not a composite of divisible parts is feasible. God the ground of being is the unity of all beings but is not a composite. God is the only one ontological substance which precedes the plurality of individual beings, as the various colors of a rainbow derives from the simple and white light of

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94 13:334-35. See the same point of Thomas, ST 1.14.1.
the sun. Although God is a substance and a subject in relation with created beings, the unity of
divine ground is the beauty of the pure act of love beyond the subject-object disjunction of
substantial ontology. In the trinitarian pure act of love neither the simplicity of one essence nor
the plurality of subsistence relations is prior to the other but both subsist in each other mutually.

The Analogy of the Trinity to the Sun and Rainbows

The trinitarian beauty of simplicity in plurality is ineffable for the psychological or social
analogies because of the limitations of human being and cognition argued above. For that reason,
Edwards elucidates it with the analogy of faith to the sun and rainbow, interpreting Scripture. He
illustrates the sun with the human soul as the “eminent and remarkable images of the Trinity
among the creatures”: the Father is compared to the substance of the sun, the Son to the
brightness and glory of the disk of the sun, and the Holy Ghost to the action of the sun by its
heat.95 Particularly, the Holy Spirit as God’s act of love in happiness is likened to rainbows.96
Edwards explains the analogy of rainbows:

They well represent the love and grace of God, and were made use of for this purpose in
the rainbow after the flood; and I suppose also in those rainbows that were seen round
about the throne by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:28, Revelation 4:3), and round the head of Christ
by John (Revelation 10:1).

The various sorts of the rays of the sun and their beautiful colors do well
represent the Spirit, or the amiable excellency of God, and the various beautiful graces
and virtues of the Spirit.97

95 21:138.

96 For the historiographical and exegetical analysis of Edwards’ idea about a rainbow, see Stephen J. Stein,
no. 3 (Sep. 1974): 440-56.

97 Ibid. Almost the same passages appear in 13:434, 441-42.
The rainbow is a representative image of beauty in simplicity of plurality. It is a type of the glory of the Holy Spirit who, by her communication to and indwelling in the church, reveals the perfect harmony of simplicity and plurality in God’s trinitarian life of love and constitutes its image in the fellowship between the Trinity and the saints.

First, beauty in the union of saints reflects the simple glory of God:

The light, which in the sun, its fountain, is one and unvaried, as it is reflected from the cloud, appears with great variety; so the glory of God, that is simple, is reflected from the saints in various graces. The whole rainbow, composed of innumerable, shining, beautiful drops, all united in one, ranged in such excellent order, some parts higher and others lower, the different colors, one above another in such exact order, beautifully represents the church of saints of different degrees, gifts, and offices, each with its proper place, and each with its peculiar beauty, each drop very beautiful in itself, but the whole as united together much more beautiful. (emphasis mine)\(^98\)

A rainbow, the composite of various colors, is caused by the simple light of the sun. Likewise, although the communion of the church is composed of individual saints, the beauty of union does not originate from a composite of plural saints but from the communication and indwelling of God’s simple glory, the Spirit of God.

Second, Edwards explains the beauty of the Holy Spirit who is simple and contains all variety:

Thee various colors of the light of the sun signifies the various beauties of the Spirit of God in two respects, and are so made use of in Scripture: first, to represent the moral goodness of God (which, as it is in God, is the same with the Holy Ghost), as variously expressed and manifested in several attributes, as justice, truth, goodness, mercy, patience and the like; second, to represent the virtues and graces in the saints that are the various exercises and fruits of the Spirit in their hearts.

White, which comprehends all other colors, is made use of in Scripture often to signify holiness, which comprehends all moral goodness and virtue: sometimes to denote

\(^{98}\) 15:331.
the holiness of God . . . and sometimes the holiness or righteousness of the saints, either imputed or inherent. . . .

There is a variety in light: one and the same white light, though it seems to be an exceeding simple thing, yet contains a very great variety of kinds of rays, all of so many different excellent and lovely appearance. So the same simple Spirit of God seems to contain a great variety, and therefore he is in Revelation called “seven Spirits.” There is one body, one Spirit, and yet a vast variety of gifts. (emphasis mine)

The Holy Spirit is the moral goodness of God’s love, that is, she reflects the perfection of God’s spiritual being. The simplicity of God’s perfection as holiness is the comprehensiveness of all plural varieties. The external glory of the Spirit who is simple and plural manifests the internal glory of the trinitarian simplicity in plural persons, as a rainbow exhibits the light of the sun.

Third, the Holy Spirit of simplicity in variety presents the glory of the Trinity as the light of love: “the beauty and loveliness of God and Christ . . . The very light which shines in and fills that world is the light of love. It is beams of love; for it is the shining of the glory of the Lamb of God. . . . [and] is compared to the beautiful sight of the rainbow for its pleasantness and sweetness.” The light of love, the glory of God and Christ is the Spirit as the beauty of happiness in love. Accordingly, as the rainbow derives from the sun, the Holy Ghost who is simple and plural reveals the divine glory and beauty of the pure act of love, mediating and representing both the internal and external glory of God. Simplicity and plurality are completely conflated in the trinitarian life of union in distinction.

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99 11:69.

100 8:382.
The Divine Pure Act of Understanding as Aesthetic Sensation

The truth of God is the beauty of the Trinity in the simplicity of plurality that fabricates the divine being. As the moral excellence of virtuous love determines the perfection of spiritual being, the will and act of love and its resultant beauty regulates intellectual understanding. The spirit of love makes the understanding of spiritual existence actually spiritual. The Holy Spirit of holy love makes the divine understanding of God the Spirit essentially spiritual. The spiritual understanding of love is knowing the truth of beauty. Therefore the trinitarian pure act of love determines the divine act of understanding as an aesthetic sensation.

We have seen that Edwards explains the generation of the Son as the result of a pure act of understanding, God’s immediate intuition of divine self, and emphasizes the distinct reality of the divine idea by his immaterialism. For Edwards the Son’s simple unity with and plural distinction from the Father can be reconciled by defining God’s knowing as spiritual understanding of aesthetic sensation. The ontological foundation of immaterialism is the divine space as the beauty of pure act of love, and beings in the space are ideas of beauty. Accordingly the divine idea which is the object of the divine pure act of love and the ground of aesthetic ideas proceeds from God’s aesthetic intuition of Godself.

The intellectualistic tradition sharply distinguished empirical sensation from rational understanding for the knowledge of truth, as that sensation cannot be applied to God’s understanding and knowledge. In this line, Thomas underscores the simplicity of God’s love as action in itself correspondent to the divine understanding rather than its communicative nature toward others.¹⁰¹ The divine act of love is conceived of as a mode of intellectual action to seek

¹⁰¹ Thomas Aquinas ST 1.27.3.
the pure form of the good. For that reason, he demarcates the divine procession in Godself from the act of sensation, since it “takes place outside the intellectual nature, nor can it be reckoned as wholly removed from the sphere of external actions.”

By contrast, for Edwards rational understanding is never the only way of understanding. Edwards advances spiritual understanding as aesthetic sensation, which is distinguished from a mere notional or speculative understanding in which only the intellect is concerned. Besides the external sensation of physical sense organs, there is a “spiritual supernatural sense” and “the sensations of a new spiritual sense, which the souls of natural men have not.” “The spiritual understanding consists primarily in a sense of heart of that spiritual beauty.” “The proper and immediate object of a spiritual sense of mind . . . is the beauty of their moral perfection.” In spiritual sensation the two faculties of understanding and will operate in harmonious unity. Accordingly, the ideas of spiritual understanding derive from the aesthetic sensations of beauty and the spiritual knowledge “of loveliness” becomes “the proper foundation of love.”

Therefore, there is another kind of immediate intuition beyond rational understanding, the spiritual sensation of beauty without mediation of physical senses. Edwards explains the sensible

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102 Ibid., 1.19.1.
103 Ibid., 1.27.5.
104 2:275.
105 2:271.
106 2:272.
107 2:271.
108 Ibid.
apprehension of spiritual beauties in the harmony of heaven in “Miscellanies,” no. 182, mentioned above:

there will [be] immediate intellectual views of minds, one of another and of the supreme mind, more immediate, clear and sensible than our views of bodily things with bodily eyes. In this world we behold spiritual beauties only mediatelty by the intervention of our senses, in perceiving those external actions which are the effects of spiritual proportion; hereby the ravishingness of the beauty is much obscured, and our sense of it flattened and deadened. But when we behold the beauties of minds more immediately than now we do the colors of the rainbow, how ravishing will it be! (emphasis mine)\(^{109}\)

Edwards compares the aesthetic sensation of spiritual beauty with that of the rainbow and accentuates how the spiritual sensation appreciates the beauty of complex beauty more simply and clearly. The spiritual sensation of beauty is not a passive perception but leads to the act of love that constitutes the simpler beauty of social harmony in more complex plurality than material beings.

In this vein, for Edwards the internal and spiritual sensation which is the immediate intuition of pure act in itself is feasible. The divine act of immediate intuition is reinterpreted as the pure aesthetic sensation of spiritual beauty that leads to the act of love. The Son as the idea and image of God’s “glorious essence” is the “beloved” of the Father, “the object of God’s eternal and infinite love.”\(^{110}\) The divine act of understanding Godself that generates the object of love and delight is the sensation of God’s excellence or beauty, the infinite fountain of the good. Edwards explicates the aesthetic sensation of the Father in his notes on Ex. 25:10-22:

the infinite dignity and preciousness of Christ in the sight of God the Father, and the infinite love the Father hath to him, and delight he hath in him. The beloved Son of God

\(^{109}\) 13:329.

\(^{110}\) 21:118.
is his most precious treasure, in which God’s infinite riches, and infinite happiness, and joy from eternity to eternity does consist. . . . Christ is the person in whom is the Spirit of God . . . . In him the Father beholds infinite beauty (or holiness, which is the beauty of the divine nature); and in him the Father has his food, or infinite delight and satisfaction.\textsuperscript{111}

The divine idea is the infinite beauty which the Father beholds, loves, and delights in. The beauty of the Logos makes the Father breathe forth the Spirit. The divine idea is the truth of love. The Logos of divine beauty is revealed as Christ in whom the Logos dwells through the Spirit. Christ reveals the truth of beauty in the Trinity as the pure act of love that can be grasped only by spiritual and aesthetic sensation.

Therefore, for Edwards the pure act of love is the primary and overarching act of God that determines the structure of divine understanding and of divine being as simplicity in plurality. The spiritual understanding of aesthetic sensation is not a simple act in itself but a dispositional act toward others that grasps simplicity in plurality to constitute its union by love. The divine procession by knowing the beautiful Godself is not a mere self-reflection of simplicity but an actual communication of distinct reality that constitutes real plurality in Godself and thereby the beauty of harmony in the simplicity of plurality by the pure act of love.

Conclusion

Edwards’ aesthetic immaterialism is deduced from the spiritual perfection of being as the moral excellence of love. The ontological framework adapts the psychological analogy of the Trinity to the social analogy and conflates both to describe the divine being in simplicity of plurality. The analogy of the Logos as immediate intuition is specified as aesthetic sensation, and

\textsuperscript{111} 15:243.
the analogy of the Holy Spirit to the activity of love itself is represented as the beauty of harmony in the saints’ communion. Alone, the psychological or social analogy of the Trinity to finite human existence exhibits the simplicity of plurality in the Trinity imperfectly, since it tilts towards one pole of simplicity or plurality. However, like the perimeter of an ellipse drawn by its two foci, the analogy of the Trinity as the sun and a rainbow delineates God’s dynamic life of love continuously flowing from the intratrinitarian being to the extratrinitarian work, which the two analogies of the Trinity as human soul and society describe with their dialectical integration. The trinitarian analogy of the sun and a rainbow delimits the analogy of the human soul, in that the psychological analogy should be interpreted by the dynamic logic of glory in the life of love and thus in the context of the social analogy. At the same time the psychological and social analogies of human spiritual being prevent the glory of the trinitarian being flowing ad extra from being interpreted as the impersonal emanation of Neoplatonism.

In conclusion, Edwards explores the glory of the Trinity by the dialectical integration of its impersonal analogy to the sun and a rainbow and its personal analogy to human spirit and society. Through the rational analysis of analogies of the Trinity he apprehends the ineffable mystery of the Trinity as the pure act of love in the simplicity of plurality.

**The Pneumatological Structure of the Trinitarian Being and Personhood**

Edwards’ new strategy in his doctrine of the Trinity derives from the fact that he reconceives of the perfection of spiritual being through the examination of biblical revelation and religious experience rather than a mere rational and philosophical speculation of being. We have seen in the above discussion that for Edwards the christological and soteriological frame of being determined by Christ’s person and redemption determines the ontological structure of the perfection of the human soul and God’s personhood. Edwards’ revision of the psychological
analogy of the Trinity should be understood in the light of his structure of spiritual being and in its integration with the social analogy. His psychological analysis of the human soul evinces the reconstructed structure of spiritual existence that frames his psychological analogy, since the ontology of spiritual being is psychological. It varies from intellectualism or rationalism and displays the features of his trinitarian theology centered on its analogy to the glory of happy love. This disposition and love come to the front as the quintessence of human spirit. It will mark Edwards’ trinitarian logic as pneumatological and dispositional.

In the part one of *Religious Affections* Edwards demonstrates through the interpretation of Scripture and analysis of religious phenomena that the true religion consists in affections, which are the subject of sensible knowledge about the spiritual and moral beauty of divine things. Speculative knowledge or a mere notional understanding by the exercise of an intellectual faculty is not enough for true religion. In contrast with intellectualism or rationalism, for Edwards reason is neither the main source of knowledge nor the essence of spiritual being. Moreover, affection, the love of the heart, is more especially valuable than the knowledge of understanding or the knowledge of speculative reason, “as moral beauty especially consists in the disposition and affection of the heart.”

Affection is defined as “the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul,” named as inclination, will, and heart. Also Edwards designates affection as

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112 2:93-124.
113 2:272.
114 8:432.
115 2:96.
habit, disposition, or frame of mind,\textsuperscript{116} which means the structure, life, and power of spiritual being that actually affect, alter, and determine the essence of reality by directing and regulating the whole self and its practice.\textsuperscript{117} Among affections Edwards advances love and happiness as the primary dispositions of glory overarching the human soul. Love is “the chief of the affections, and fountain of all other affections.”\textsuperscript{118} Love shows that the substance of spiritual being is dispositional, teleological, ethical, and aesthetic. The holiness of moral excellence and beauty lies in the disposition and affection of the heart, and love is “the comprehension of all true virtue.”\textsuperscript{119} The spiritual beauty of moral virtue “most essentially consists in love.”\textsuperscript{120} Edwards conjoins love with joy and glory. Religion appears “true and pure, and in its proper glory” (emphasis mine) through the religious affections of love for and joy in Christ.\textsuperscript{121} The perfection of love is manifested as “glorified joy,”\textsuperscript{122} which is joy filled with God’s glory communicated through the divine love. As exhibited before in the discussion about the happiness of love, joy signifies the effect, completion, fullness, and actual reality of love that is experienced in creating the social life of communion by mutual love. It represents the dynamic and aesthetic being of love. Glory denotes the excellent value and beauty of love that is represented by the joy of love.

\textsuperscript{116} 2:108, 8:542.
\textsuperscript{117} 2:100-2, 118-19
\textsuperscript{118} 2:106.
\textsuperscript{119} 8:422, 432, 442.
\textsuperscript{120} 8:539-41.
\textsuperscript{121} 2:94-95.
\textsuperscript{122} 2:95.
The religion of the saints consists in “love, and joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”\(^{123}\) The perfection of the human soul has the structure of the glory of the happy life of love corresponding to God’s glory of the Trinity.

As the disposition of love characterizes the perfection of human spirits, the Holy Spirit comes to the front in Edwards’ theology of the Trinity which is centered on the analogy of love and happiness that designates the distinctive personhood of the Spirit. The Paraclete is the trinitarian person who manifests most directly and perspicuously the essence of the Godhead to human beings.

First, in extratrinitarian relations the Holy Spirit is the trinitarian person through whom the Christian church experiences the Trinity, except for those who encountered the incarnated person of the Son, Jesus Christ. Edwards explains that our experience of the Paraclete is the Spirit herself:

> Now the sum of God's temper or disposition is love, for he is infinite love; and as I observed before, here is no distinction to be made between habit and act, between temper or disposition and exercise. This is the divine disposition or nature that we are made partakers of (II Pet. 1:4); for our partaking or communion with God consists in the communion or partaking of the Holy Ghost. . . .
>
> . . . the blessing from the Father and the Son is the Holy Ghost; but the blessing from the Holy Ghost is himself, the communication of himself.\(^{124}\)

Because of the unity of the divine essence, the Holy Spirit, the act of God exhibits the divine nature and essence of the Trinity in the Christian experience of God’s work of revelation and salvation. Through the glory of the Spirit the trinitarian economy of salvation displays the essence of the Godhead as the happy life of communion in love.

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\(^{123}\) 2:113.

\(^{124}\) 21:122, 130.
Second, in the intratrinitarian relation the Spirit consummates the Trinity as the love between the Father and the Son, and represents the end result of the innertrinitarian communion between the persons of the Trinity. The sum of all good in communion is the Spirit, and the beauty and happiness derived from this communion is also the Spirit.\(^\text{125}\) In the psychological analogy the Father who is the depth and fountain of the Godhead that we cannot reach is called simply “God, mind, and direct existence” “without any addition or distinction” of particular specification.\(^\text{126}\) When Edwards expresses the trinitarian communication of Godself, he omits the property of the Father but presents two of the Spirit: “knowledge, holiness [virtue or love] and happiness [joy].”\(^\text{127}\) The love of holiness and the delight of happiness designate the affection of God’s mind, the Holy Spirit: “The word ‘spirit,’ most commonly in Scripture, is put for affections of the mind; but there is no other affection in God essentially, properly and primarily, but love and delight-and that in himself.”\(^\text{128}\) The Spirit has another name, of happiness, in addition to the name of love that is a function of the will as one specific faculty of mind.\(^\text{129}\) As the term spirit designates the mind and its affections, the appellation of the Spirit, happiness defines God’s mind the Father, and represents the entire self of God beyond one function of deity as the Father does. This happiness displays the beauty of the Trinity as the fruit of love, and

\(^{125}\) 21:130.

\(^{126}\) 21:131, 135, 138.

\(^{127}\) 8:433, 439, 441-42, 530-31.

\(^{128}\) 13:300.

\(^{129}\) Richardson underscores happiness as a distinctive nature of God’s unity that is differentiated from God’s knowledge and love and is their foundation and principle, and he identifies divine happiness with the Father rather than the Holy Spirit of will and love (Richardson, 256-62, 368-74). I agree with his former point, but unlike his latter point I will demonstrate that Edwards specifies divine happiness as the Spirit. Edwards’ texts do not at all support Richardson’s interpretation of Edwards’ trinitarian theology that attributes the happiness to the Father.
therein the status of God’s trinitarian self as a whole which is constituted by the communion of the trinitarian persons through mutual love. Hence the happiness of love depicts the social life in Godself such that the analogy of love becomes the ground dialectically conjoining the two poles of the analogies of psychological faculty and social community.

The Father is “the fountain of Godhead”¹³⁰ and the Spirit of happiness discloses its fullness, that is, the last effect of the flow of act and life from the fountain of Godhead. The stream of intratrinitarian glory is the Father’s generation of the Son by knowing and the procession of love from the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is the love that flows from the fountain of the Father and the happiness that is the fullness of this flowing love. In the trinitarian communion, the Spirit becomes again the fountain of love and its stream to create and accomplish the end of creation by establishing the holy society or family of the Trinity enlarged by the union of God and the church. Edwards describes the consequence through two blessed fruits of love in heaven: happiness and its cause as the action of love that founds the glorious loving society of communion in a garden of love.

Divine love is the sum of all good principles, and therefore is the fountain whence proceed all amiable actions. . . . they are employed so as in some way to be subservient to each other's happiness under God; because they are represented in Scripture as united together as one society, which can be for no other purpose but mutual subserviency. . . . Here is joy unspeakable indeed; here is humble, holy, divine joy in its perfection. Love is a sweet principle, especially divine love. It is a spring of sweetness. But here the spring shall become a river, and an ocean. (emphasis mine)¹³¹

The quotation evinces the flowing glory of the Holy Spirit: the principle and spring of love, the disposition of God’s mind, is actualized into the saints’ moral action of love through the

¹³⁰ 21:135.
¹³¹ 8:383-86.
indwelling of the Spirit of Christ in them as a river overflows from its spring, and this virtuous love constructs a society of happiness through the communion of the Holy Spirit as rivers join together in the ocean.

At the origin of the intratrinitarian life the Father represents the whole Godhead and at the end the Spirit does. In the extratrinirian revelation and action the Holy Spirit is its fountain, flow, and the ocean. The Holy Ghost is the disposition, act, end, and their unity of simplicity in God’s mind as the Father. The Spirit is the disposition, inclination, temper, affection, habit, and action of God’s mind which determine the essence and reality of the divine mind, the whole self of God, as those of the human spirit do. The Holy Spirit reveals the Father the fountain of Godhead as the ocean of fullness, the happiness of love. Christ the Son has revealed it by virtue of his redemption through the spontaneous sacrifice of his life with happiness in love. Christ’s revelation represents the intratrinitarian actualization of the Father’s disposition. The Son is the glory of the Father as his first and essential communication. Edwards explicates Christ’s revelation of God’s essence as the disposition to communicate the excellence of happiness in his sermon on Jas. 1:17,

Jesus Christ is the eternal communication of God’s essence. The creation of the world and the communication of God’s goodness to the creatures is not the first communication of God but there is an eternal and essential communication which is the sun of God, to whom God naturally communicates all his essence and all his excellency and all his happiness. He is an eternal and infinite effulgence of the Godhead, by which God always shone before the foundation of the world with an infinite glory. . . . as Christ is the essential brightness and glory of God so he is the light of the world. This is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. ’Tis he that makes manifest the Father that

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132 21:122.
reveals to us the divine nature and makes us discover the mind and will of God and discover the heavenly world. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{133} 

The intratrinitarian communication of the Father’s disposition emanates from the Holy Spirit, who is the will and disposition of God’s mind that reveals the disposition of the Father as the essence of God. “The Spirit, as it is God’s infinite love to himself and happiness in himself, is as the internal heat of the sun; but as it is that by which God communicates himself, is as the emanation of the sun’s action, or the emitted beams of the sun.”\textsuperscript{134} The Spirit of Christ discloses the ineffable and infinite ground of being as the infinite fountain of love and the social space of the happy life with mutual love. Hence the Holy Spirit exposes the essence of God as the personal perfection of the ground of being, and the remarkable feature of the divine personhood as the ground of being, by constituting the trinitarian life by communion. The communion of the Spirit forms the personal space of the ground of being beyond the disjunction of an individual and communal society through the dynamic life of love. The Spirit who proceeds from the love between the Father and the Son is not a subject but disposition, act, and communion itself.

First, the origin of the Spirit is not an act of a single subject but the mutual communication between the Father and the Son. Edwards’ pneumatological structure of the Trinity emphasizes the mutuality of action from both the Father and the Son in the procession of the Spirit:

The Son of God is not only the infinite object of love, but he is also an infinite subject of it. He is not only the infinite object of the Father's love, but he also infinitely loves the Father. The infinite essential love of God is, as it were, an infinite and eternal mutual holy energy between the Father and the Son, a pure, holy act whereby the Deity becomes

\textsuperscript{133} 43.66, L. 4v.-5r.

\textsuperscript{134} 21:138.
nothing but an infinite and unchangeable act of love, which proceed from both the Father
and the Son [filioque]. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{135}

for their love and joy is \textit{mutual}, in mutually loving and delighting in each other.
(emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{136}

The rationale of Edwards’ affirmation of the \textit{filioque} tradition lies in his focus on love which is
the peculiar personhood of the Spirit rather than a sort of christocentric subordinationism.

Second, the feature of the procession of the Spirit is incorporated into the personhood of
the Spirit herself. The Holy Spirit is the love that is constituted by mutual acts and fashions the
life of mutual indwelling, in which the disjunction of subject and object is dissolved into the
communion of \textit{perichoresis}.\textsuperscript{137} Accordingly, the person of the Spirit is not a subject. Edwards
takes notice of the fact that salutations and blessings in the Pauline Epistles in the New
Testament never mention the Holy Spirit as the subject or origin of the blessing. He explains the
reason,

\textit{The blessing from the Father and the Son is the Holy Ghost; but the blessing from the}
\textit{Holy Ghost is himself, the communication of himself}. . . . This I suppose to be the reason
that we have never any account of the Holy Ghost's loving either the Father or the Son, or
of the Son's or Father's loving the Holy Ghost, or of the Holy Ghost's loving the saints:

\textsuperscript{135} 8:373.

\textsuperscript{136} 21:121.

\textsuperscript{137} The term \textit{perichoresis} appeared first in the works of Maximus Confessor but its verb form was used by
Gregory of Nazianzus in order to explain the relation between Christ’s two natures. John of Damascus extended its
usage to describe the dynamic life in the interpenetration of the trinitarian persons. As LaCugna elaborates its
significance with Wilson-Kastner and Leonardo Boff: the \textit{perichoresis} represents God’s substance as the divine
dance in the dynamic and relational life of the immanent Trinity; it is “essential to God’s life of communion”; it
provides an theological and ontological foundation for the ethical value of mutuality, equality, and reciprocity, and
communal inclusiveness opposed to hierarchical subordination (Catherin M. LaCugna, \textit{God for Us: the Trinity and
Christian Life} [New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993], 270-78). Edwards’ explanation of the Trinity with the
perichoresis is a remarkable feature of his trinitarian theology demarcated from other theologians of the Western
church, preceding modern scholars such as Jurgen Moltmann, Wilson-Kastner, Leonardo Boff, and so forth. His
pioneering thought in the Western tradition derives from his interpretation of the Scripture (21:129-30) and the
soteriological and pneumatological structure of his trinitarian theology and ontology.
though these things are so often predicated of both the other persons, I think the Scripture reveals a great deal more about it than is ordinarily taken notice of.\textsuperscript{138}

The personhood of the Holy Spirit does not consist in her being a subject of act in disjunction with an object but the act of communication and communion itself.

Edwards expects a refutation of his qualification of the personhood of the Spirit. In response to the expected objection, he demonstrates that the personhood of the trinitarian persons consists in their communion by the relationship of \textit{perichoresis}:

One of the principal objections that I can think of against what has been supposed is concerning the \textit{personality of the Holy Ghost}, that this scheme of things don’t seem well to consist with that, [that] a person is that which hath understanding and will. If the three in the Godhead are persons, they doubtless each of ’em have understanding: but this makes the understanding one distinct person, and love another. How therefore can this love be said to have understanding? Here I would observe that divines have not been wont to suppose that these three had three distinct understandings, but all one and the same understanding. In order to clear up this matter, let it be considered, that \textit{the whole divine essence} is supposed truly and properly to \textit{subsist} in each of these three— viz. God, and his understanding, and love — and 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 \textit{communion in one another}, and are as it were \textit{predicable} one of another. . . . 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 \textit{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. 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 so 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 \textit{God's infinitely more perfect manner} of acting, so that the whole divine essence flows out and subsists in this act. The Son is in the Holy Spirit, though it don’t proceed from him, by reason that the understanding must be considered as prior in the order of nature to the will or love or act, both in creature and in the Creator. . . .

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

\textsuperscript{138} 21:130-31.
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. Nor is it to be looked upon as a strange and unreasonable figment that the persons should be said to have an understanding or love by another person’s being in ’em: for we have Scripture ground to conclude so. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{139}

Edwards evinces a novel concept of God’s personhood in the divine perfection of being as differentiated from the human. He validates the divine personhood in the \textit{perichoresis} by two rationales from Scripture and from the infinite perfection of God, as he deduces the divine glory of perfection in being and person. In the argument Edwards explicates more clearly the meaning of “subsistence” in that the trinitarian persons are constituted by their relations with other persons. He proposes that the relation grounding the personhood of the Trinity is the \textit{perichoresis}, the communion by mutual indwelling. The \textit{perichoresis} interprets this subsistence as the dynamic life of love, which the Spirit represents among the three persons, to manifest what establishes the subsistence relation.

The significance of Edwards’ claim lies in that the trinitarian personhood has a pneumatological structure. The personhood of the Spirit is not a specific case among the persons of the Trinity, but defines the personhood of the other two persons and of the Trinity as a whole. Accordingly the person of the Spirit manifests the essence of the entire Godhead in which the three persons subsist. The reason for this is that the person of the Spirit is the communion of the \textit{perichoresis} itself that constitutes the trinitarian personhood in subsistence, and is the love that creates the \textit{perichoresis}.

The \textit{perichoresis} elucidates more clearly the meaning of the communion of the trinitarian persons by delimiting it. The concept stresses the intimacy of fellowship beyond a mere social

\textsuperscript{139} 21:132-34.
relation of individual members in the disjunction of subject and object. While the concept of communion connotes a social image of plurality, the mutual indwelling counterbalances it by emphasizing unity beyond individual substances. As Edwards himself plainly states in the quotation, the *perichoresis* prevents the danger that the three persons of the Trinity are separated into three individual substances who have their own psychological faculty for personality independently without relation with other persons. The *perichoresis* qualifies the social image of communion so as not to lapse into a kind of tritheism. The function of *perichoresis* incorporates appropriately the intention of St. Augustine, who adopted the relational concept of subsistence as an alternative to the categories of substance and accident in order to avoid making the three persons as independent substances of tritheism or a mere subsidiary accidents of modalism.\(^{140}\)

The fellowship of *perichoresis* exposes the logic of the glory in the happiness of love, since like the *perichoresis* virtuous happiness derives from the communion of mutual love. The reciprocal indwelling describes the dynamic life of mutual movement that does not belong to any individual parties. This mutuality preserves the particular identity of the trinitarian persons, removing any implication of dissolving each person into the whole without distinction. The dynamic life of *perichoresis* represents the dialectic of the Trinity between unity and distinction, between psychological and social analogy in personhood, and between one and many in being. The dialectic movement dismantles the logic of predication and the subject-object scheme by incessantly interchanging the roles of subject and object, as Edwards’ phrase “both objectively and subjectively” suggests. In the *perichoresis* any one person of the Trinity is not a decisive subject or object. Even the Father cannot be subsumed by the category of substance as the substance of the Trinity, though the Father is “the fountain of Godhead” that “sustains dignity of

Deity” and “all is from him, all is in him originally.” Edwards qualifies the meaning of substance in his analogy of the Trinity to the sun: “The Father is as the substance of the sun (by substance I don’t mean in a philosophical sense, but the sun as to its internal constitution)” (emphasis mine). The Father is not an individual substance but a constitution that is established in the subsistence relation by which he represents the whole Deity. The categories of subject-object and substance-accident scheme are no longer valid for the divine personhood, as Edwards’ subjunctive statement, “as it were predicable,” denotes. This displays the characteristic of divine personhood specified by God’s perfection of infinite being, that is, personal space beyond any disjunction of beings. Consequently, Edwards’ definition of the divine personhood in the communion of the *perichoresis* presents the pneumatological logic that frames the glory of the social life of happiness by mutual love, which is elaborated repeatedly above.

**The Dispositional Ontology of God the Communicative Being**

For Edwards the analogical revelation and logic of the trinitarian glory manifests the essence of God’s being. He defines the being of God as “a communicative being” and the essence of divine being as the disposition to communicate Godself. The perfection of God’s nature is “a being of infinite goodness” “to communicate his own infinite good.” Therefore the essence of God Being in general is the dispositional space of communional life in the mutual

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141 21:143.


143 13:410; 43.66, L. 3v.

144 13:277-78. The original text states that “it is his [God’s] essence to incline to communicate himself.”

145 46.202, L. 4r.
communication of love. Edwards’ ontological definition of God with the category of disposition is deduced from the pneumatological structure of God’s trinitarian being as exhibited above. The trinitarian framework epitomizes the ontological fabric of God’s glory that incorporates the christological and soteriological frames into the ontological perfection of the ground of being.

The Essence of God as the Light of Love

The divine disposition to communicate is Edwards’ ontological interpretation of the biblical revelation of God’s nature. According to Edwards’ sermon on 1 Tim. 6:15, Scripture teaches us that the infinite and absolute happiness of God reveals “the essence of God” as “light and love.”

Light and love denote the glory of Christ that reveals the truth of knowledge by understanding and the grace of love by will, as elucidated in Edwards’ sermon on John 1:14 above. The glory of Christ reveals the glory of the Trinity in which light is the Son and love is the Spirit, as Edwards states explicitly in “Miscellanies,” no. 331: “God is said to be light and love. Light is his understanding or idea, which is his Son; love is the Holy Spirit.”

Moreover, both light and love together ultimately designate the Holy Spirit, the essence of God the Trinity as a whole as well as the two divine persons. Light signifies “comfort, joy, happiness, and good in general” and the communication of God’s glory, as the love of the Spirit does.

Particularly, light remarkably exhibits the communicative and dynamic nature of the disposition of love as God’s glory, as the concept of happiness does. It verifies that the

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146 53.494, L. 13r.-13v.
147 13:409.
148 8:521.
149 8:515.
christological structure qualifies the pneumatological fabric of the divine essence. Christ the Son who is the first and essential communication of the Father epitomizes God’s dynamic action of love such that being itself condescends radically to the death of nothing and ascends to the highest head of all beings. In his sermon on Jas. 1:17 Edwards addresses Christ as the light of the world and explicates this light as the divine essence as a whole:

God has this glory essentially and of himself. He is independently and necessarily glorious.

God is a communicative being. Light is communicative or rather a communication from the luminary. The sun communicates himself to the world by light. . . . God is like the sun in this respect [that] he is abundantly communicative. He is a fountain of goodness continually scattering abroad his and diffusing of his bounty plentifully and abundantly as the sun diffuses his rays. (emphasis mine)

The light of the Son reveals the light of love from the Trinity that is the beauty of happy life in love, as shown above. Therefore, the divine essence of light defines that of love such that the divine love is the dynamic glory of life, as the trinitarian analogy of the light of the sun relocates the psychological analogy in a dialectic with the social analogy by the dynamic logic of glory. The light of love in the Trinity is represented and communicated by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, “God’s glory or shining . . . is the Spirit of the Lord. . . . The Spirit of God is called the Spirit of glory . . . upon two accounts: because ’tis the glory of God and [is] as it were his emitted beams, and as it is the believer's glory and causes him also to shine.”

In summation, the divine essence of light and love designates the glory of God’s happiness of life in the trinitarian communion by mutual love, which is the Holy Spirit who represents the entire self of the Trinity. The pneumatological structure of being fabricates the

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150 43.66, L. 3v.
151 13:442.
ontological framework of God’s trinitarian being, as the disposition or frame of the mind does. As the disposition of God’s mind, the Spirit manifests God’s ontological essence. “The nature of love is a disposition or tendency”152. “The sum of God’s temper or disposition is love, for he is infinite love.”153 God’s disposition of love is the dynamic concept that reflects the life of glory shining forth or flowing out the fullness of the good. For that reason the divine disposition is happiness in moral excellence that exercises perfectly love to communicate good for the union by communion. The essence of God the Trinity consists in the subsistence of three trinitarian persons by the communion of the perichoresis. The divine love in the trinitarian life, the disposition to communicate the good is the essential substance that composes fellowship in the dynamic movement of mutual love. As a result of Edwards’ reasoning, the ontological essence of God is a communicative being and the disposition to communicate.

The Relational Category of Habit in God as Dispositional Space

Edwards interprets the essence of God’s being by the category of disposition inferred from the pneumatological structure of the Trinity.154 Although the depth of God is unfathomable,

152 23:139.

153 21:122.

the divine disposition reveals God’s spiritual and personal existence in relation with the creature. It is deduced from analogical reasoning to the being of God, which grounds the relationship between God and created being that Godself created initiatively. Accordingly, the disposition derived from traditional philosophy or psychology is an analogical term that denotes God in relation with the creature rather than a strictly exact metaphysical truth of God. For that reason Edwards adapted the category to God’s perfection of being.

Edwards’ introduction of the dispositional concept is innovative, but it derives from the teaching of the church. It does not mean a radical change of the traditional doctrine of God but an invention of a philosophical strategy and the framework to justify it. The rationale of Edwards’ adoption of a dispositional ontology consists in that it is more appropriate to explain the traditional theology of the Trinity than the substantial ontology of traditional metaphysics. Hence his category of disposition should be understood in the light of his reconstructed ontological fabric of God’s being. It incorporates the divine being as the pure act of love constituted by the pneumatological fabric of the Trinity. The disposition is a relational category of habit.

First, the category of disposition defines an existence as a relational being disposed in space. God the spiritual space is a dispositional space that is constituted by the triune structure of ground relation in the subsistence relationship of the trinitarian persons, and frames creatures

God but in that Edwards’ concept of God diverges from the philosophical interpretation of the doctrine of God according to the ontology of substance. Corroborating Lee’s dispositional ontology, I argue that Edwards’ dispositional ontology is deduced from the biblical and doctrinal idea of God’s glory and God as a disposition of love and it is a philosophical framework which is more faithful to the Augustinian-Calvinist doctrinal and theological tradition. Adhesion to the Bible and the traditional doctrines does not demand loyalty to traditional philosophical tools employed for the theological interpretation of the Scripture and doctrines. Edwards’ biblical and doctrinal conservativism set him free from the factors in the traditional philosophical theology that are alien to the biblical worldview and doctrinal framework. I illuminate Lee’s dispositional ontology in the light of christological, soteriological, and pneumatological structure of the divine ground of being.
as relational beings disposed in the matrix of relations on the divine ground.\textsuperscript{155} As exhibited above in Plotinus’ discussion of relation to the disjunctive contraries, a substratum is displayed as the uniting relation of a common principle. The ground relation is revealed as the dialectical dynamics of pure act in the triune structure of simplicity in plurality. The disposition represents the ground relation. According to Aristotle, “‘Disposition’ means the arrangement of that which has parts, in respect either of place or of potency or of kind; for there must be a certain position, as even the word ‘disposition’ shows.”\textsuperscript{156} It actualizes the existence of a part by locating it in a particular position in space.

Accordingly, disposition is a \textit{law} that regulates the act of actual disposing parts and thereby determines a structure of being as a relational existence disposed in the web of relations in the space. The disposed relations are constituted between a potential space and actualized points, that is, between one substratum and plural beings on the ground. Although disposition is a kind of law and relation, it is a “condition” that is present in and conjoined with a particular being, unlike general and abstract laws, and a “quality” that defines concretely the content of the form of relation.\textsuperscript{157} Hence, disposition is \textit{a mediating ground of virtual status} between particular beings and general laws and between actual beings and potential forms or space.

\textsuperscript{155} Lee articulates the peculiarity of divine disposition distinguished from human dispositions: it is the eternal, infinite, sovereign, and supremely beautiful and personal disposition of primordial and complete actuality in the intratrinitarian life of fullness (Lee, \textit{The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards}, 175-196). The dispositional space of God, which associates the dispositional concept of God with the idea of God as space, exhibits more evidently the discontinuity between God’s disposition with the dispositions of created beings. In this respect Lee’s interpretation of Edwards’ doctrine of God in terms of disposition should be understood as what agrees with Daniel’s interpretation of Edwards’ God as a communicative matrix according to “the logic of communicative ontology” rather than the dispositional subjectivity of substantial ontology (Daniel, \textit{The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards}, 66, 144-45). Cf. 318, n. 41 below.


\textsuperscript{157} Idem, \textit{Categores} 8.
Contrasted with the dispositions of created beings, the divine disposition is not a mere quality of virtual law and status in space. As a pure act embraces subject, object, and their relation, the disposition of *divine pure act* is the *actual reality* of *dispositional space* which *comprehends* the potential space and all actual parts and relations constituting the structure *by disposing act*. The divine dispositional space is really a *relational ground* that transcends the disjunctive relation of predication between general and potential forms and particular and actual substances. God is the single ground of being in plural relations with the individual subjects of creatures. The Trinity discloses the ontological frame of the ground of being as the triune structure of a spiritual substratum in the subsistence relation. The trinitarian ground of God is revealed as a dispositional space instead of a mere simple ground or a composite of plural entities of substances.

Second, Edwards’ relational category of disposition is a *habit* (the Latin *habitus*, the Greek ἔνδον) that denotes a more *abiding* and *active* disposition that constitutes the structure of being and regulates the act of being. Habit evinces the mediating virtual status of disposition as the law of the disposing *act* and as the *structure* of being in relation with the ground. Plotinus explains that habit is a quality of common relation and act as a substratum to “bind” both the subject and object of action.¹⁵⁸ According to Aristotle, the *hexis* (having) is “a disposition” as “a state” that means “an activity . . . of the haver and the thing had.”¹⁵⁹ Although habit is a disposition, “habit differs from disposition in being more lasting and more firmly established.”¹⁶⁰

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¹⁵⁸ Plotinus *Enneads* 6.1.6, 9.

¹⁵⁹ Aristotle *Metaphysics* 5.20.

¹⁶⁰ Idem, *Categoires* 8. The translation is by E. M. Edghill, the Internet Classics Archive, accessed November 30, 2012, [http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/categories.2.2.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/categories.2.2.html).
On the other hand, Aristotle differentiates the activity of habit from the activity of actual exercise. Habit is the status of a virtual actuality distinguished from a mere potency (dynamis) of abstract state and practical acts (praxis) actualized in a particular state. It is a dynamic and relational ground and a deep structure of being that is not a static status but connotes a creative movement of actual practice in particular relations.

Third, the virtual reality of dispositional habit in the ontological level of finite creatures is the actual and substantial reality of that of God’s infinite being. Substantial metaphysics, which is based on the viewpoint of an individual substance in temporal limitation, defines the relational category of disposition not as a substantial essence of being but only as an accident of quality subordinated to a subject. However, if the disposition is applied to God who is the infinite space of eternity, it becomes a primary category prior to individual substances as seen above in Plotinus’ discussion about the category of relation. God the ground of being is not a subject of an individual substance in disjunction with created beings. Accordingly, the divine disposition does not emerge as the result of God’s relation with the creature but as the ground relation that precedes and creates the relationship and the created beings.

As the category of disposition is understood differently whether it is conceived from the ground or from discrete substances, it takes a different place in being whether it is located in a time segment or in eternal space. The habits of finite beings in time are an invisible and potential quality of lower degree of being than reality actualized in time, since it is not an immutable status of perfection that necessitates its actualization in the proper conditions. In this case habit is severed from the reality of acts in particular times. The abiding nature of habit is separated from

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the full actuality of being by temporal fragmentation, because it is active and inactive alternately. In a temporal dimension disposition is inductively inferred from bundles of actions repeated in the same condition, as relation is constituted posteriorly by the disjunction of discrete beings. Consequently, a finite human being does not have or keep the disposition of habit as her or his actually abiding reality but as a mutable quality of potentiality.

Contrariwise, in the perfection of being, disposition spanning time segments is a fundamental reality more actual and substantial than its specific exercises in time. From the perspective of divine eternity disposition is the ontological ground of an existence that yields and comprehends particular acts in time. In God’s perfection of simplicity argued above, the divine disposition does not fail to actualize itself, and habit coincides completely with power and act. Accordingly, habit is a pure act of full actuality. The immutable divine nature of pure act is revealed as God’s disposition in time. The divine disposition is the being of God that is manifested by divine works in relation with the world in temporal dimension.

Conclusively, viewed from God who is perfect in being as the infinite and eternal ground of being, disposition is not an accident but the main category that designates the essence of being. The divine disposition exists on a higher ontological level than individual and imperfect substances in the disjunction of subject and object and of potentiality and actuality. The habitual disposition of God is the substantial reality of a pure act in full actuality. It is, as Aristotle says, the End of Goodness in the spirit that comprehends both states or faculties and their activities or

\[162\] 21:113.
processes, that is, “the best disposition or state or faculty of each class of things that have some use or work” (emphasis mine).\(^{163}\)

The Full Actual Reality of Pure Act of Love in the Trinity

Edwards’ divine habit is the disposition to communicate as the pure act of love according to the pneumatological structure of the Trinity. As argued above, the ontological perfection of God’s being is the dispositional *space* distinguished from a virtual reality of disposition, and the full actuality of divine disposition is *pure* act distinguished from particular acts predicated of a subject. The dispositional space of pure act has the triune structure that transcends the dualistic disjunction of discrete beings and the temporal disjunction between potentiality and actuality. In the triadic structure the third factor mediates and unites the dualistic disjunction of two factors and by the mediatory union the third constitutes the triadic space of subsistence relationship and transforms disjunctive entities as relational beings disposed in the space. Within the limitations of the human finite perspective of substantial logic we cannot but analyze according to a kind of successive order wherein the three factors precede the triune space and the third is posteriorly added to the precedent two. However, in the trinitarian ground of God, the three persons exist only in relationship with others without any independent and precedent existence and the one space and three persons subsist in each other with simplicity in plurality. This triune structure of dispositional space incorporates the trinitarian logic of happiness in Godself elaborated above, by which Edwards reconciles the divine personhood in life relation and the self-sufficient ground of

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being. Aristotle distinguishes the virtuous habit of disposition from the virtue of happiness (eudaimonia) as its “activity in conformity with virtue” that manifests the disposition by active exercise.\(^\text{164}\) God’s dispositional space is the full actuality of pure act in which the disposition of virtuous love coincides with the happiness of the fully actualized activity of love.

Therefore the third component of the trinitarian logic is the disposition of God the Spirit that designates the pure act and life of love in happiness. The Holy Spirit is “an infinitely holy and sweet energy” and the “most pure act” of God\(^\text{165}\) that represents the full actuality of dispositional space. The divine power of energy does not designate a mere potential substratum like the primordial matter prior to actualization. Likewise the pure act does not mean an act predicated of a subject as an effect posterior to exercise of a faculty. Both signify the dispositional space of dynamic life beyond the disjunction of subject and object and of potentiality and actuality. Edwards explains the divine energy and pure act of the Spirit as the act of will and the disposition of love:

This is the eternal and most perfect and essential act of the divine nature, wherein the Godhead acts to an infinite degree and 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. So that the Godhead therein stands forth in yet another manner of subsistence, and 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. (emphasis mine)\(^\text{166}\)

The Holy Spirit is God’s perfect act and at the same time God’s disposition or affection of will, God’s love and joy. As already explained in the discussion of Edwards’ divine simplicity, the

\(^{164}\) Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.8.

\(^{165}\) 21:121.

\(^{166}\) Ibid.
Holy Spirit is “the disposition, temper or affection of the divine mind,” and there is no distinction “between habit and act, between temper or disposition and exercise.”\footnote{21:122} The complete unity of disposition and action is the feature of God’s perfection of pure act. The essence of God’s mind, the Father, is unfathomable but the fully actualized act of the Father reveals the disposition of the Father. The complete exercise of the Father is the Spirit that consummates the Trinity. The Holy Spirit discloses the disposition, act, and full actualization of the Father, the depth of Godhead. Hence the divine disposition of love to communicate the good is not potentiality but pure actuality fully exercised already in the divine self. It articulates ontologically the dynamic life of God the spiritual ground of being. The glory and fullness of the Trinity signifies the full actuality of reality.

God the Dispositional Space to Communicate: the Ground of Being and Beauty

The trinitarian disposition of full actuality forges the ontological ground on which God’s immutability of being and personal involvement in the world are reconciled. The excellent disposition of God is already full actuality, and simultaneously it should be performed still because of and for the purpose of its perfection. Edwards writes,

As there is an infinite fullness of all possible good in God, a fullness of every perfection, of all excellency and beauty, and of infinite happiness. And as this fullness is capable of communication or emanation ad extra; so it seems a thing amiable and valuable in itself that it should be communicated or flow forth . . . . And as this is in itself excellent, so a disposition to this in the Divine Being must be looked upon as a perfection or an excellent disposition; such an emanation of good is, in some sense, a multiplication of it; so far as the communication or external stream may be looked upon as anything besides the fountain, so far it may be looked on as an increase of good. And if the fullness of good that is in the fountain is in itself excellent and worthy to exist, then the emanation, or that
which is as it were an increase, repetition or multiplication of it, is excellent and worthy to exist. (emphasis mine except the Latin ad extra)\textsuperscript{168}

Edwards affirms the coexistence of two natures in the divine disposition: perfection as the fullness of actuality, and a kind of potentiality for further exercise and perfection that should be realized into other beings outside God’s being. Although the divine exercise of perfection is for the purpose of Godself, it seems to be movement toward a more complete state as if God is not perfect:

This propensity in God to diffuse himself may be considered as a propensity to himself diffused, or to his own glory existing in its emanation. A respect to himself, or an infinite propensity to, and delight in his own glory, is that which causes him to incline to its being abundantly diffused, and to delight in the emanation of it. Thus that nature in a tree, by which it puts forth buds, shoots out branches, and brings forth leaves and fruit, is a disposition that terminates in its own complete self. And so the disposition in the sun to shine, or abundantly to diffuse its fullness, warmth and brightness, is only a tendency to its own most glorious and complete state. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{169}

However, the extension of divine being by its actualization \textit{ad extra} is qualified with subjunctive words, because it is already performed ontologically within the divine ground of being. Edwards articulates this point, insisting that God’s extratrinitarian work is also God’s absolute self-sufficient, independent, and immutable happiness in Godself:

\textit{Nor} do any of these things argue any dependence in God on the creature for happiness. Though he has real pleasure in the creature's holiness and happiness; yet this is not properly any pleasure which he receives from the creature. For these things are what he gives the creature. They are wholly and entirely \textit{from him}. Therefore they are \textit{nothing} that they give to God by which they add to him. His rejoicing therein is rather a rejoicing in his own acts, and his own glory expressed in those acts, than a joy derived from the creature. . . .

\textsuperscript{168} 8:433.

\textsuperscript{169} 8:439.
Another thing signified by these expressions of Scripture is that nothing that is from the creature adds to or alters God’s happiness, as though it were changeable either by increase or diminution. . . . It can’t be added to or diminished by the power or will of any creature; nor is in the least dependent on anything mutable or contingent. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{170}

Therefore God does not depend on the creature for the fulfillment of God’s existence. Although God’s extratrinitarian act is the exercise of the divine disposition, it does not change God by a sort of addition to or enlargement of the divine being. God’s disposition to the happy life of love is completely actualized in the Trinity, and God’s disposition to communicate Godself ad extra is disposed on Godself the ground of being. The extratrinitarian expansion of God’s being is not a reality in the strict meaning of ontology but a kind of virtual reality that subsists in the divine supposition within the space of God’s mind. Edwards’ dispositional concept of God formulates ontologically the dynamic dialectics of God’s personal ground of being beyond the disjunction between potentiality and actuality.

As a result, the motivation, ontological basis, and the end result of God’s extratrinitarian actualization exist in the being and disposition of God the ground of being. Edwards explains,

\textsuperscript{170} 8:447-48.
. . . God being \textit{all and alone} is absolutely self-moving. The exercises of his communicative disposition are absolutely \textit{from within himself}, not finding anything, or any object to excite them or draw them forth: but all that is good and worthy in the object, and the very \textit{being} of the object, proceeding \textit{from the overflowing of his fullness}. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{171}

God’s ontological perfection is not incompatible with the divine disposition and its exercise, but the former determines the latter as the moral excellence of pure benevolence in relation with the creature. The divine disposition of full actuality satisfied in itself is revealed as the agape of God to only communicate the good without receiving. Edwards articulates the absolute and gratuitous love of God in “Miscellanies,” no. 314:

For he would have an inclination to it though they were considered as \textit{nonentities}; for he has an \textit{absolute inclination} to goodness in his own nature, which is \textit{the reason even of their being}, so that he loves them with a love of \textit{benevolence for nothing} at all in them, and without being inclined thereto by any of their perfections natural or moral. Now \textit{a love free} in this sense is \textit{a perfection} of God. (emphasis mine)

The love of agape, the perfection of divine personhood is based on God’s absolute perfection of being as the ground of being. The moral perfection of God’s disposition is not a mere psychological motive but an ontological reality. It defines God’s being itself as the creative ground of being, which yields the object itself for its exercise of love without any need of other beings outside God. Edwards declares God’s disposition as the ground of created beings.

Merely in this disposition to diffuse himself, or to cause an emanation of his glory and fullness, which is \textit{prior to the existence} of any other being, and is to be considered as \textit{the inciting cause of creation, or giving existence} to other beings, God can’t so properly said to make the creature his end, as himself. For the creature is not as yet considered as existing. This disposition or desire in God must be prior to the existence of the creature, even in intention and foresight. For it is a disposition that is \textit{the original ground of the}

\textsuperscript{171} 8:461-62.
existence of the creature and even of the future intended and foreseen existence of the creature” (emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{172}

The divine disposition of love is the ground of beauty to complete the perfection of being, the well-being of good, as well as the ground of being.

benevolence or goodness in the Divine Being is generally supposed not only to be prior to the beauty of many of its objects, but to their existence: so as to be the ground both of their existence and their beauty, rather than they the foundation of God’s benevolence; as ’tis supposed that it is God’s goodness which moved him to give them both being and beauty. So that if all virtue primarily consists in that affection of heart to being, which is exercised in benevolence, or an inclination to its good, then God’s virtue is so extended as to include a propensity not only to being actually existing, and actually beautiful, but to possible being, so as to incline him to give being, beauty and happiness. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{173}

The divine disposition of full actuality reveals the absolute perfection of infinite and spiritual being: the ground of being as pure act of love is the action of creation ex nihilo and the ground of beauty.

First, Edwards’ category of disposition applied to God’s being is the dynamic actuality of fullness that goes beyond the disjunction of potentiality and actuality. It reveals the ground of being as the dynamic life of pure action that creates out of nothing but from and through and toward God. The term of ground itself connotes both the perfection of being in itself and the origin of being and action by creation, as the disposition does. Human love is in a sense passive affection or action. The love of complacence is a passive affection that reacts to the beauty of an object as its initiative cause. The love of benevolence is an active action in the sense that it does not require beauty in its object and its motive is in the subject, but is still passive in presupposing

\textsuperscript{172} 8:438.

\textsuperscript{173} 8:542.
the existence of an object. The divine disposition of love is the full actuality of pure benevolence that surpasses the imperfect activity of human benevolence by creating its object itself. It is the pure actuality of love _ex nihilo_ that does not presuppose any condition of love except God’s action itself. The love _ex nihilo_ is the action of creation not _ex nihilo_ but _ex Deo_ that creates the object of love, the beauty of the object, mutual love between the lover and the beloved, and happiness in communal union. The absolute subject of love and creation _ex nihilo_ does not presuppose any object in disjunction with itself that it is not subsumed in the subject-object categories. It is the ground of being and beauty that overcomes the disjunction of subject and object by its full actuality of the action out of nothing. God’s disposition is not a category of accidents predicated by a subject to an object. The human mind is always dispositional such that it reveals the distinctive functions of a spirit in its disposition, which are not separated into individual entities but constitute the whole mind with union in distinction. Likewise the divine disposition is the ground of full activity which does not postulate the individual substance of subject and object for its constitution but on itself disposes the subject and object as the functions of the activity.

Second, the divine disposition of love reveals the ground of being of creative action as the ground of beauty, that is, the essential love beyond the disjunction of complacence and benevolence. God the ground of being is the spiritual beauty of virtuous love. Therefore the dispositional space of the Spirit is the ground of love that creates natural beauty by bringing chaos into order, the spiritual beauty of moral virtue by sanctification, and ultimately the beauty of happy society in happiness by completing salvation.¹⁷⁴ God the spiritual and moral ground of

being creates and beautifies the world by accomplishing the end of creation. Edwards describes the communicative essence of God as the ground of beauty in his sermon on Jas. 1:17,

> He [God] communicates excellency to the creature. He *beautifies and adorns* the world as the sun adorns the world with his rays . . .

> . . . he not only possesses this *essential* glory in himself but is so abundantly *communicative*. He pours forth his goodness as plentifully as the sun pours forth his light. The whole world is *beautified*, and supplied by his diffusive communication” (emphasis mine). 175

God the ground of being and beauty is the foundation for personal relationship between God and created beings. On the ground of God’s pure benevolence to confer being and beauty on creatures, God takes real complacence from created beings and loves them in reward for their giving God happiness:

> For there are these two propensities in the divine nature: to communicate goodness *absolutely to that which now is nothing*, and to communicate goodness *to that which is beautiful and holy*, and which he has complacence in. He has a propensity to reward holiness, but he gives it on purpose that he may reward it; because he loves the creature, and loves to reward, and therefore gives it something that he may reward. (emphasis mine) 176

We experience the personal God of love in salvation according to the human finite categories of the subject-object scheme. The person of God, however, is not a mere human projection or crude anthropomorphism but the revelation of the ground of being and beauty, who is the perfect being of spiritual existence as the disposition of the pure act of love.

175 43.66, L. 4r., 9r.
176 13:396.
The trinitarian happiness in Godself alone discloses the dialectic in which the disposition of God Being in general is the complacence in Godself according to the psychological analogy\textsuperscript{177} and the public affection of benevolence according to the social analogy.\textsuperscript{178} The divine disposition in the Trinity is revealed as the extratrinitarian dialectic: on the one hand it is pure benevolence in relation with creatures that creates their being and beauty to be loved, and on the other hand it is complacence both in creatures and in the action of Godself. The dialectic of complacence and benevolence reveals the spiritual ground of being as the social space of union that transcends the disjunction between communal unity and distinctive plurality. Hence the dialectical category of God’s disposition between potentiality and actuality incorporates ontologically the dialectic of God’s perfection of being and person between one and many and between complacence and benevolence.

The divine disposition is the ontological category that is framed by the pneumatological trinitarian logic formulating the christological and soteriological structure of God’s glory. The extratrinitarian pure benevolence of God is epitomized in the gratuitous love of God in the redemption of Christ. God’s creation of beauty in the happy and moral society of love is performed through divine salvation that completes the end of creation. God the ground of beauty is incarnated in the Jesus Christ, and the salvific revelation of Christ manifests the ground of being as the ground of beauty. Edwards clarifies that the extratrinitarian actualization of God’s disposition never means the imperfection of God’s being, but it is God’s spontaneous condescension that manifests divine perfection in disposition of love:

\textsuperscript{177} 21:114.
\textsuperscript{178} 8:455.
God looks on the communication of himself, and the emanation of the infinite glory and good that are in himself to belong to the fullness and completeness of himself, as though he were not in his most complete and glorious state without it. Thus the church of Christ (toward whom and in whom are the emanations of his glory and communications of his fullness) is called the fullness of Christ: as though he were not in his complete state without her; as Adam was in a defective state without Eve. And the church is called the glory of Christ, as the woman is the glory of the man, 1 Corinthians 11:7. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{179}

Edwards presents his christological and soteriological interpretation of the divine disposition in “Miscellanies,” no. 97 on “Happiness”:

no being could be happy without the exercise of this inclination of communicating his happiness. Now the happiness of society consists in this, in the mutual communications of each other's happiness; neither does it satisfy in society only to receive the other's happiness without also communicating his own. Now it is necessary that to those whom we love most, we should have the strongest desire of communicating happiness-to any but one that has infinite, and cannot receive additions of happiness. And although God is the object of the creature's love (of a creature not depraved), yet God being infinitely happy, he cannot desire to communicate his happiness to Him, which is nothing to the happiness God enjoys. But in the gospel God is come down to us, and the person of God may receive communications of happiness from us. The man Christ Jesus loves us so much, that he is really the happier for our delight and happiness in him. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{180}

Edwards states that the purpose of personal incarnation of the Son is to produce the mutuality of communication for the happiness of society between God and the church. The intratrinitarian society of love is repeated through the incarnation. The person and work of Christ reveals God’s disposition of love and its full exercise in the Trinity, as Edwards declares in his sermon “Heaven is a World of Love”: “The heart of Christ, the Head of the society, is fullest of love.”\textsuperscript{181}

\textsuperscript{179} 8:439-40.

\textsuperscript{180} 13:264.

\textsuperscript{181} 8:377.
God’s extratrinitarian work is the virtual reality that is supposed in God’s mind as the ground of being. It does not have the same degree of reality as God’s being, but it is actual existence to creatures. On a human ontological level, virtual existence in the human mind, such as that of ideas, is a mere potentiality that is not necessarily actualized. Virtual existence in God, however, is only a relative concept in relation to the absolute being of God. This virtuality in the ontological level of God is in fact actual reality, since the disposition of God’s mind is complete actuality. The reality of the creature exists in the supposition of God’s love, and the divine supposition is the actuality of God’s disposition. The actual reality of virtual existence in God’s disposition is affirmed prominently by the fact that Godself realizes it by condescending divine being itself through the incarnation of the Son. The “divine perfection” of the infinite ground of being is “an infinitely condescending God” of “humble acts of love” in opposition to pride, as Edwards preaches in his sermon on the humble spirit of love. The personal God whom the saints encounter through the Spirit of Christ is the actual reality of the Trinity, who accommodated God’s infinitely perfect personhood of the ground of being to human weakness. The analogy of faith based on divine revelation has an ontological ground for the analogy of being differentiated from the anthropomorphism of human projection. The ontological ground is the reality of God’s love in divine salvation, the disposition and actuality of God the Trinity.

The dispositional ontology of God’s being dismantles the hierarchy of being by the dynamic actualization of dispositional love. The divine supposition of humility reveals God the highest existence in the degree of being as the ground of being in which things in all degree of being subsist. According to Elwood’s phrasing quoted already above, the ground of being is “the

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182 8:247.
reality that underlies and penetrates all levels.” For Edwards the ground of being is the dispositional space, that is, the intratrinitarian life of love that integrates dialectically simplicity and plurality.

The divine disposition connotes both one and many. The one and many in the disposition do not stand in static disjunction but consist in the dynamic life of communication. The one is unfolded into many and the many are united into one. This does not mean that the disposition itself is divided and united but the one and many subsist in the dispositional ground, which is not the one in disjunction with the many. They are disposed on the ground by supposition. As argued above, the supposed beings are virtual realities that have their being in relation with the dispositional ground.

The trinitarian and dispositional ground of being comprehends all beings through the unity of dynamic life by the communication of mutual love instead of hierarchy. The dynamic life characterizes the eternity and infinity of the ground of being. Eternity is not a static and cyclic ground like the Aristotelian notion in which the world is eternal and there is no creation. Infinity is not an impersonal and indifferent space like the Neoplatonic Oneness. Edwards develops this idea, explaining “the eternity, and most absolute immutability of God’s pleasure and happiness”:

For he eternally has this disposition [happiness], and eternally sees and enjoys this future gratification of it as though it were present. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{184}

For though these communications of God, these exercises, operations, effects and expressions of his glorious perfections, which God rejoices in, are in time; yet his joy in them is without beginning or change. They were always equally present in the divine

\textsuperscript{183} Elwood, 28.

\textsuperscript{184} 23:128.
mind. He beheld them with equal clearness, certainty and fullness in every respect, as he doth now. They were always equally present, as with him there is no variableness or succession. He ever beheld and enjoyed them perfectly in his own independent and immutable power and will. (emphasis mine)¹⁸⁵

The disposition of God’s mind that exists prior to creation is the eternal ground of being that embraces all beings in time. The infinite space of God’s dispositional mind is the divine happiness of the trinitarian life. God’s extratrinitarian happiness consists in the trinitarian life of Godself in that God knows and loves his perfect idea, the Son. Therefore the fact that creatures subsist in God’s dispositional space means that they exist in the divine idea of the Son. The dispositional ground of the Spirit as God’s mind is the spiritual space of God’s dispositional and creative idea, the Son. The Holy Spirit is the divine disposition of communication, and the Son is the first and essential communication of the Father in the Trinity. Created beings in the dispositional space of the Spirit exist in the eternal idea of the Son that is disposed in the essential communion of the intratrinitarian life. Edwards elaborates the reason for this in “Miscellanies,” no. 94,

¹Tis also said that God’s knowledge of himself includes the knowledge of all things; and that he knows, and from eternity knew, all things by the looking on himself and by the idea of himself, because he is virtually all things; so that all God's knowledge is the idea of himself. . . .

. . . those things that are in no created consciousness have no existence but in the divine idea . . . God's idea, being a perfect idea, is really the thing itself. And if so, and all God's ideas are only the one idea of himself, as has been shown, [then God's idea of himself] must be his essence itself. It must be a substantial idea, having all the perfections of the substance perfectly . . . . 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)

¹⁸⁵ 8:448.
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.  

To sum up, all beings exist in the trinitarian ground of being, that is, in God’s dispositional mind that is constituted by the divine idea of the Son and the divine disposition of the Spirit. Their virtual reality is actual existence by subsisting in God the ground of being, since God is “virtually all things.”  

Therefore all God’s extratrinitarian work and its resultant beings subsist on the ground of the Trinity and represent God’s intratrinitarian life. For Edwards it is the revelation of God’s glory: “The emanation or communication is of the internal glory or fullness of God, as it is. . . . God’s external glory is only the emanation of his internal glory.”  

The dispositional ontology of God the Trinity incorporates the logic of divine glory, which discloses God’s dynamic life in the dialectics between the perfection of being and personhood. As the external glory of God’s work represents the intratrinitarian glory of God, Edwards’ ontology of God’s glory constructs the bridge between God’s essential being and extratrinitarian work and the beings of creatures. The dispositional ontology of the Trinity establishes the fundamental foundation and framework for Edwards’ doctrine of creation and ontology.

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187 13:257.
188 8:528-29.
CHAPTER SIX

CREATION EX NIHILO AS EMANATION DE DEO

Introduction: God’s Being and Act of Creation and Emanation

I have elaborated on how Edwards grasps God’s existence as perfect in being and God’s personhood as the ground of being of pure act of love, that is, the dispositional space to communicate Godself. His definition of God’s being is inferred from the glory of God revealed in the divine act of salvation through Christ. Conversely, the existence of God determines the divine act in general, which is initiated by God’s creation and is completed by God’s end of creation. God’s perfection in being as the ground of being determines the divine act as creation, and God’s perfection in personhood as the spiritual being of the happy life in love determines God’s act as a new creation of salvation. God’s being as spiritual space integrates both acts of God such that divine creation is the actualization of God’s personal end of creation from the first creation and through the new creation of salvation. The connection between God’s being and act is ascertained clearly by the feature of divine space in that God’s spiritual being is pure act. Accordingly, the structure of God’s being determines the divine act, and also the dialectic of divine perfection in being and personhood frames it.

The dialectic of God’s perfection in being and personhood exhibits the conundrum of how the divine transcendent existence as the ground of being can be reconciled with God’s personal relation with the world. The issue of God’s being is presented again in God’s act of creation by the juxtaposition of two models of creation, creation ex nihilo and emanation from the ground of being. The doctrine of creation out nothing conceives creation as the act of a personal God and preserves the transcendence of God by negating primordial matter in disjunction with God.
However, it is ambiguous about the ontological connection of God and the world, though it maintains a causal connection between God and the creature. Originally, the main concern of the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* was soteriological and an *ad hoc* solution against the heretical doctrines of creation such that it was not a general ontological conception. By contrast, the theory of emanation clarifies the ontological relation of God the ground of being with the creature. However, it sacrifices the personhood of God to preserve the ontological transcendence of the ground of being, and the ontological continuity makes creation an ontological necessity that infringes on God’s personal transcendence of freedom. Moreover, emanationism itself was the heretic doctrine against which the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* was established. Therefore, creation *ex nihilo* and emanation from God have been regarded as incompatible.

This chapter, first, will consider the problematic aspects of creation *ex nihilo* in comparison with emanationism through a brief historical delineation. Then I will explore how Edwards incorporates creation out of nothing with emanation from God to take up their strengths eclectically. It will manifest that the logic of synthesis is the same as that of Edwards’ doctrine of God to integrate the divine perfection in being and personhood. Edwards’ ideas concerning creation out of nothing and emanation from God should be understood in their synthesis on the ontological context of God’s being redefined by him. As a result, for Edwards the divine creation out of nothing is God’s spiritual causation of emanating act from God’s dispositional space of pure act. It is the emanation *ad extra* of the trinitarian glory to communicate the divine fullness of the good emanating from God. The trinitarian act of communicating the divine self is performed by the Son’s communication of divine ideas through the emanation of the Spirit.

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God’s creation realizes the divine disposition of love to the fullness of Christ by the life of love in happiness between God and the creature.

**Creation ex Nihilo and Emanationism in History**

First of all, the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* and Neoplatonic emanationism were reactions to Platonic cosmology, which has two crucial problems of ontological dualism and anthropomorphism. Platonism presupposes eternal pre-existent matter which stands in binary relationship with the *Demiurgos*, the Creator God. In this case, a higher single ground of being is needed to unite them ontologically and divine being depends upon it in that divine aseity is decisively threatened by dualism. On this problem secular metaphysics and Christian theology have the same aim, to preserve God's aseity and impassibility and to provide one ontological ground. Hence, it is surely no accident that we can find the idea of creation *ex nihilo* in gnostic Basilides' thesis a generation before Tatian and Theophilus. However, on this point of contact between creation *ex nihilo* and emanation, at the same time, we stand at the watershed from which two positions bifurcate crucially. The foci and emphasis of both theories are different from each other. The focus of creation *ex nihilo* in divine aseity is on God's omnipotence and freedom and that emphasis is incorporated into the idea of creation by the Word. On the other hand, Neoplatonism puts the emphasis of aseity on indifference and impassibility and theorizes it as emanation theory.

The Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* was conceived in order to rebut the dualism of Platonism and primordial eternal matter. Of course, it does not recognize the subordinationism of Arianism and Neoplatonism. However, insofar as creation *ex nihilo* is the act of a personal God as a determined entity, God as a subject cannot but be contrasted with the created world as an object such that another ontological ground or at least another principle is needed. “If the divine
disposition were in any way prior to God’s actuality, God would be dependent upon a principle other than his own actuality for his existence.”

Additionally, the theory of creation *ex nihilo* differentiates God from the world by denying direct ontological connection between them, but links them by the Word and free will in semiotic and noetic dimensions. In this case, the Word complements ontological connection on behalf of God. Particularly, regarding this problem, Irenaeus explained that God “took from himself the stuff, the pattern and the form for the things be created.” Also he says, “the will of God is the substance or *ousia* . . . of all things” and “the sole ground for the origin of all being,” and “God had used his will and his power as matter.” However, “Irenaeus’ concept of will is in its essence unphilosophical” in that he did not explore the ontological connection of divine will and power. While the direct ontological mediation of Christ has been developed fully in the soteriological dimension by the doctrine of the Incarnation, it has not been adequately expanded to the doctrine of creation. As a result, the ontological contact point between God and the world and relationship between natural and revelatory theology has been a perennial conundrum.

By contrast, the Neoplatonic emanation paradigm connects the One with other beings directly in the ontological dimension, but denies personal noetic connection between them. In this case the mediator complements the noetic relation on behalf of the One. In Neoplatonism the One is distinguished from Nous, the creator, and the origin of Nous and primordial matter is

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2 21:14.


4 Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* 2.30.9.

5 Ibid., 2.10.2.

6 Gerhard May, 167.
explained as indifferent and automatic emanation from the impersonal One. The One is not Being, but being’s begetter.\(^7\) The One is self-sufficient, completely impassive, and isolated from beings by virtue of its pure self-presence. In short, the Neoplatonic strategy for the ontological problem of cosmology is to separate the One as ground of being from Nous as the Creator God and to connect the One with being by involuntary emanation. While the aseity of the One as ground of being is thoroughly preserved by impersonality and emanation, the self-sufficient otherness and involvement in the world of one God are incompatible with each other. The immediate ontological connection by emanation is mutilated by the mediator Nous, primordial matter, and hierarchical chain of being. In this sense the duality of transcendence and immanence are not still overcome and ground of being is not being-itself but emptiness. Accordingly, the subordinationism of Arianism is inevitable and the personal Creator God of Scripture cannot be retained. The dualism of soul and matter cannot be avoided such that creatures relapse into a meaningless by-product.

The comparison between the two ideas reveals that the crucial point is how to relate the noetic and semiotic dimension of mediation with the ontological. This point is closely related with the problem of how to make divine aseity compatible with divine cause of creation.

In Neoplatonism the problem is relatively easily solved by the separation of the self-sufficient One and the Creator God. It is to divorce the ontological ground of being from the divine cause of creation. In fact Neoplatonic emanation is not a direct ontological connection between the One and the world. However, Christianity could never adopt this philosophical solution because of its subordinationism. On this point Christian theology decisively rejected the doctrine of emanation. Although the relation of the Son and the Father is described by various

\(^7\) Plotinus *Enneades* 5.2.1.
emanational terms, its usage is decisively different from that of Gnosticism or Neoplatonism. While the Gnostic and Neoplatonic image of emanation is used “to describe the decline of the divine being and ultimately its fall,” it indicates “the essential unity of Christ with the Father” in Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Emanation from God denotes the same essence as God in the Trinity. Because of this significance of the image of emanation, its use is not widely accepted and is often regarded as an implication of pantheism.

This worry about emanation’s pantheistic connotations is clearly revealed in Augustine’s thought. Augustine distinguishes between creation “from” God (ex Deo) and creation “out of” God (de Deo). Creation from God connotes “causal connection” but not always direct ontological connection. It is compared with the relationship between a man and the house which he builds. Creation out of God connotes “direct ontological connection,” that is, “the same nature as God.” This case is compared with the relationship between a man and the son whom he begets. In short, the world is created from God, however, not out of God but out of matter. Here cause and ontological relation is distinguished from each other.

Here we should note that Augustine’s negation of emanation from God is associated with creation ex prope nihil because created matter is not absolute nothing (omnino nihil) but a kind of non-being. In this case the ontological cleavage between God and the world is widened and deepened. It radicalizes divine transcendence and aseity toward diametrically opposite side from emanationism. As a result, creation ex nihilo becomes actually creation ex prope nihil so that a

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8 Gerhard May, 97.

9 Augustine De Natura Bini 27; N. Joseph Torchia, Creatio ex nihilo and the Theology of St. Augustine: the Anti-Manichaeian Polemic and Beyond (New York: P. Lang, 1999), 178-80.

10 Augustine Confessiones 12.3.3, 12.6.6, 12.8.8.
third being as matter or non-being becomes the actual ground of being and insulates God from the world. The ontological vacuum between God and the world in the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* itself, at any time and regardless of original intention, could be the place of the evil spirits of deism, nihilism, and materialism, as Nishitani indicates. The result could become an even worse atheism than emanationistic pantheism. Of course, through Pseudo Dionysius, especially from John the Scotus Eriugena to scholasticism and mystic tradition, creation is customarily regarded as a kind of emanation. Thomas Aquinas identifies creation *ex nihilo* with emanation from God.11 However, as in the case of Irenaeus its ontological significance was not explored adequately.

Consequently, the task of the Christian doctrine of creation is how to develop the noetic and semiotic mediation and cause of creation, the divine will and the Word, to ontological mediation and the ontological ground of being. And it should avoid the danger of subordinationism and pantheism and to preserve both divine aseity and involvement.

**Creation out of Nothing and Emanation from God as Spiritual Space**

For Edwards, explicitly, God creates the world out of nothing, and at the same time all created beings “are originally out of himself [Godself].”12 Creation *ex nihilo* is emanation *de Deo*:

> If we make no difficulty of allowing that God did *immediately make* the whole universe at first, and *caused it to exist out of nothing*, and that every individual thing owes its being to an immediate, voluntary, arbitrary act of almighty power, why should we make a difficulty of supposing that he has still something immediately to do with the things that

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11 Thomas Aquinas *ST* 1.4.1.

12 8:461.
he has made, and that there is an arbitrary influence still that God has in the creation that he has made. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{13}

He had regard to it [the world] as an \textit{emanation from himself, and a communication of himself}, and as the thing communicated, in its nature returned to himself, as its final term. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{14}

Creation as emanation from God is God’s voluntary action of communicating Godself. By the conception of God’s communicative act, emanation from God is associated with creation \textit{ex nihilo}. God’s immediate creative power is not only causal mediation but also ontological mediation between God and creatures. Accordingly, for Edwards creation as emanation from God is not a sharp antithesis to creation \textit{ex nihilo}. Conversely, the procession of creatures from God is the logical conclusion and the result of radicalization of creation \textit{ex nihilo}. The absoluteness of God’s existence as the ground of being is the absolute cause of creation. The divine absoluteness makes God the ontological ground of creation which reconciles creation \textit{ex nihilo} with emanation \textit{de Deo}. Below I will explore how Edwards’ concept of the absoluteness of God integrates two theories of creation which have been regarded as incompatible with each other.

\textbf{Creation out of Nothing and Emanation from the Absolute Cause of God as Spiritual Space}

\textit{The Absolute Cause, God as Spiritual Space}

For Edwards the creation \textit{out of nothing} does not mean \textit{out of no cause}, the denial of any cause or the self-existence or eternity of the world. He raises the question of cause and conceives it as an essential principle of beings implanted by God’s creation:

\textsuperscript{13} 21:177.

\textsuperscript{14} 8:532.
How the world could be made out of nothing? to say, it came into being out of nothing, without any cause.\textsuperscript{15}

I assert, that \textit{nothing ever comes to pass without a cause}. What is self-existent must be from eternity, and must be unchangeable: but as to all things that begin to be, they are not self-existent, and therefore must have some foundation of their existence without themselves. That whatsoever begins to be, which before was not, must have a cause why it then begins to exist, seems to be \textit{the first dictate of the common and natural sense which God hath implanted} in the minds of all mankind, and the main foundation of all our reasonings about the existence of things, past, present, or to come. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{16}

For Edwards, the idea that “That what is not necessary in itself, must have a cause” is a “grand principle of common sense.”\textsuperscript{17} The principle of causation is a postulate to prove the existence of God who is “the eternal infinite most perfect Being.”\textsuperscript{18} There should be a cause of the eternal, self-existent, and necessary being. The first efficient cause is God “the Creator.”\textsuperscript{19}

By virtue of a teleological argument, Edwards demonstrates the efficient cause of God the personal being as the archetype of humans in his “Miscellanies,” no. 749: Edwards launches into his reasoning with the premise that the world as the cosmos is teleologically disposed and ordered for the end of final causes or future good, and infers from it that there is an efficient cause of spiritual agency that has purpose and governs the disposal to complete it; the spiritual cause should be an intelligent and voluntary agent that has the aim of future good already in the divine \textit{idea} by \textit{understanding} and \textit{acts} with design by \textit{will} to select the best “out of an infinite variety that are equally possible”; the spiritual cause is God who is “infinitely the most

\textsuperscript{15} 1:414.
\textsuperscript{16} 1:181.
\textsuperscript{17} 1:182.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} 1:183.
intelligent” and “infinitely more purely active”; the sum of all acts of God’s will is “the divine love.”

Edwards’ argument of the divine cause follows Thomas Aquinas’ cosmological proof of God’s existence according to the analogy of being. Moreover he goes on to evince the transcendence of divine cause by defining God as infinite space. As elaborated in chapter three, Edwards demonstrated that the single necessary being of eternity and infinity is the space of God as the ground of being on which all other beings depend for their existence. For Edwards the divine ground is not an indifferent or impersonal existence like Newtonian absolute space that has no sufficient reason for the disposal of beings in the space. God the ground of being is a teleological cause of the spiritual space that has disposition in itself, distinguished from the relative space of physical universe. In “Miscellanies,” no. 880, Edwards verifies God the spiritual space as a “disposing cause” of indeterminate space that disposes beings in particular parts of space in disjunction with others chosen from infinite different parts of supposable disjunctions; the indifferent space and determinate beings unnecessary in themselves do not have any sufficient reason for the disjunctions of beings; the cause of disjunction is the dispositional space of “Being in general without a disjunction” that comprehends both physical space and created beings.

The absolute being of God as space is an external cause which is “something distinct from the whole chain” of cause and effect in the world. The external does not mean that God

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21 20.880:122.
22 1:177.
exists in a spatial disjunction with the world as in the anthropomorphic and dualistic model like Platonic Demiurge. Rather it denotes the ontological transcendence of God as the ground of being which exists on a higher ontological level that comprehends and transcends the ontological dimensions of the world. The necessary cause of God’s infinite ground stands beyond the whole concatenation of cause and effect in the finite world. Edwards argues this point again in “Miscellanies,” no. 880:

’tis just so unreasonable to suppose an infinite succession of beings, not existing of themselves, to be without an efficient cause without themselves, as a finite succession. . . .

The absurdity of an infinite succession of beings having existence without any external cause . . . . And therefore, there is [as] much necessity that their existence, which is not at all necessary should have some cause without the whole succession. . . .

the whole effect, whether it be eternal or of temporary beginning, is dependent on an external efficiency; and the greater the effect is, the greater efficiency does it require to produce it. (emphasis mine)”

God the infinite ground of being does not stand at the terminus of an infinite regress of the cause-effect chain, but is a genuine infinity in which the infinite relations of disjunction of beings subsist. The single cause of God is not a subject of substance predicated by the effects of beings but the holistic ground.

God the Absolute Cause of Creation out of Nothing

The absoluteness of divine being and cause defines the divine creation as creation ex nihilo. God the infinite space does not allow any being in disjunction of God’s existence. The nothing of creation ex nihilo does not designate an ontological origin but negates any other ontological ground besides God. There is no existence of absolute nothing or a prime matter

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parallel to the divine being. Edwards affirms that “before this world itself began, viz. an
universal nonexistence.”\textsuperscript{24} As elaborated in chapter three, he proves that there is no absolute
nothing in disjunction with God Being in general, arguing for the necessary being of God as the
infinite and spiritual space of beings. Moreover, Edwards contravenes any kind of primordial
matter.

In “Of Being,” in which he denies the existence of absolute nothing,\textsuperscript{25} Edwards proposes
a thought experiment that removes from the universe any distinction of beings determined by
consciousness, light, or motion. In such a case there could not be any figures, magnitudes,
relations, properties, proportions, or colors. Edwards describes this indeterminate world as
“infinite emptiness,” the infinite and incomprehensible void and nothing.\textsuperscript{26} He arrives at this
immaterialistic conclusion: “What then is become of the universe? Certainly, it exists nowhere
but in the divine mind. . . . we see that a world without motion can exist nowhere else but in the
mind either infinite or finite” (emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{27} The world without determination is not an
existence of absolute nothing or a substratum of formless matter but exists in the spiritual space
of God. This reasoning rejects not only creation out of a non-created and eternal primordial
matter but also creation out of a created primordial matter. Creation \textit{ex nihilo} is not creation \textit{ex
prope nihil}.

At this point Edwards diverges from Augustine, not to mention from Platonism and
Neoplatonism. If creation is out of any primordial matter, whether existing before creation or

\textsuperscript{24} 20:109.
\textsuperscript{25} 6:206-7.
\textsuperscript{26} 6:205.
\textsuperscript{27} 6:206.
created out nothing, it cannot avoid a dualism of mind and matter. Given primordial matter, matter or chaos is pre-existent before the being of creatures, and the divine act of creation is directed toward matter rather than toward creatures. Accordingly, the primordial matter is the ontological ground of created beings, and God is just an indirect cause of created beings. There is no direct ontological connection between God and the creature. In this case, created beings have two origins of good God and bad chaos before the fall of human beings. While the otherness, aseity, and immutability of God are stressed, creation \textit{ex nihilo} is actually creation \textit{ex prope nihil}. As a result, instead of God, the primordial chaos actually becomes the ground of being like the Platonic receptacle, though emanation from deity itself is evaded. The existence of any kind of formless matter implies that the finitude of creatures is not a mere imperfection but ontological evilness inherent in created beings, or at least their endemic tendency to nothing. Creation was not very good as Scripture declares (Gen. 1:31), but the finitude of created beings necessarily leads to the fall. Hence primordial matter becomes the ontological ground of the imperfection of finite creatures and thus of evil, and God is fundamentally responsible for evil by providing its ontological ground. This result diametrically contradicts the intention of traditional theology that defined evil as privation of being without any positive reality.

By contrast, for Edwards matter or absolute nothing never participates in the role of origin and ground of being, but material beings are dissolved into ideas in the divine mind, as spiritual modes of being. Consequently, the theological and ontological dualism of good and evil deities and of spirit and matter is denied certainly. God the spiritual space is the only cause and origin and medium of creation and created beings. Being is identified exactly with the good, and the goodness of created beings is confirmed thoroughly. While the ontological finitude of the creature is nothing in comparison with the infinite being of God, nothingness is distinguished from the moral evil that is worse than nothing. The fall does not derive from the fate of
ontological necessity, which is demarcated from moral necessity. Conclusively, creation out of nothing by God the ground of being leaves no ontological vacuum for materialism, nihilism, or dualism.

*God the Absolute Cause of Emanation*

The ontological feature of divine cause as spiritual space reconciles creation *ex nihilo* with emanation *de Deo*. Creation out of nothing removes all mediatory beings from divine creation such that God is the single ground of being and the relation between God and the creature becomes an immediate relation. Therefore, divine creation is out of nothing but from God. God as the cause of created beings is God as the fountain of creatures. “All things are from God as their first *cause* and *fountain*” (emphasis mine). The dispositional space of God is the ontological fountain of beings and the personal pure act of creation. God’s personal act of creation out of nothing is a divine emanation from God the fountain of beings. The transcendence of God’s infinite ground forms the dialectics of transcendence and presence in relation with finite creatures. It establishes an immediate ontological connection without mediatory beings, and simultaneously renders the distance of relationship infinite by standing on a higher ontological level than the creature beyond a difference of degree in the same level. Accordingly, the creation from God as space preserves both the ontological distinction between God and the creature that the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* intends and the ontological link between them that the theory of emanation intends.

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28 8:444.
Continuous Creation out of Nothing and Emanation from God the Eternal Space

God’s first act of creation in the beginning of the world belongs to the incomprehensible sphere of divine transcendence such as God’s being in the internal glory of the Trinity. It escapes all human cognition and experience. However, God’s continuous action that we experience after the first creation, by religious experience and scientific observation, provides us with an analogical ground from which we can deduce the way of God’s act of creation. Moreover, God’s ontological nature as the ground of being furnishes an ontological ground that affirms the analogical reasoning for the divine creation. God’s continuous action conspicuously exhibits the meaning of creation out of nothing and its incorporation with emanation from God.

In the temporal dimension of finite creatures God as infinite space is revealed as eternity. God’s spiritual space of infinity is not merely spatial ground like physical space, but it is spatiotemporal ground that comprehends the spatial and temporal dimensions of the world. That God the ground of being comprehends all beings means it is an eternal ground that embraces all time slices of past, present, and future. Therefore, God’s creation is a continuous act through all times toward the eschaton to accomplish the divine end of creation. The continuous creation of God is revealed as the continuous act of creation out of nothing and continuous emanation from the ground of being. The dialectics of the two models of creation derives from the idea that the causation of divine creation occurs between different ontological levels between the eternity of infinity and the temporality of finitude.

Continuous Creation out of Nothing

First, God’s absoluteness as the ground of being defines the divine act of creation as a continuous creation out of nothing:
so must the existence of each created person and thing, at each moment of it, be from the
immediate continued creation of God. It will certainly follow from these things, that
God’s preserving created things in being is perfectly equivalent to a continued creation,
or to his creating those things out of nothing at each moment of their existence.29

Creatures are not self-existent or necessary beings, but exist in the limits of time and space. They
have a “dependent existence” that relies for its continuous existence on the infinity and eternity
of God the ground of being. The key premise of the conclusion is that “no cause can produce
effects in a time and place on which itself is not.”30 Thus any created thing in time cannot be the
cause of the existence of creatures including itself, because it can never coexist with any past
created thing in the same time and place. This is due to the temporal limitation of created beings.
As Augustine says, “the present has no extension [spatium, which means extension either in
space or time] whatever.”31 “In the Eternal, on the other hand, nothing passes away, but the
whole is simultaneously present. But no temporal process is wholly simultaneous.”32 Likewise,
for Edwards there is no real extension of present time: “In point of time, what is past entirely
ceases, when present existence begins; otherwise it would not be past. The past moment is
ceased and gone, when the present moment takes place; and does no more coexist with it.”33

Therefore, created existence is a fragmentary many “torn between the times,”34 as
Augustine says. It cannot depend upon the prior existence of its substance or other created things

29 3:401.

30 3:400.

31 Augustine Confessions 11.15.20. The translation is by Albert C. Outler, Confessions and Enchiridion
(Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 197, accessed October 1, 2012,

32 Ibid., 11.11.13, 194.

33 3:400.

34 Ibid., 11.29.39.
but upon God who is eternal and thus exists at every moment. In the space of divine power and eternality, created beings can have the relations of cause and effect among themselves which they cannot have by themselves, as if they coexist. Accordingly, Edwards holds that the continual existence of created things “is not merely in part from God, but wholly from him; and not in any part, or degree, from its antecedent existence” (emphasis mine).³⁵ The identity of substance in created beings and the cause-effect relation between substantial entities are in fact phenomena resulting from the unity of temporal fragments that are associated by God’s eternal and infinite ground through the incessant and immediate involvement of divine power. The “oneness of created substance, existing at different times, is a merely dependent identity,” which counts on God’s continuous creation. The absolute dependence on God’s continuous creation is in fact creation out of nothing. Edwards articulates the idea that

Therefore the antecedent existence is nothing, as to any proper influence or assistance in the affair; and consequently God produces the effect as much from nothing, as if there had been nothing before. So that this effect differs not at all from the first creation, but only circumstantially; as in first creation there had been no such act and effect of God’s power before.³⁶

Continuous creation out of nothing designates the absoluteness of divine cause that transcends the secondary cause of beings, as the first creation out of nothing presupposes the single ground of being in that does not allow any existence in disjunction with divine being. As Being in general as a whole existence transcends finite beings, the divine cause as a whole cause goes beyond disjunction with secondary causes. As finite beings are nothing in comparison to the infinite being of God, a secondary cause is not an actual cause if viewed from the perspective of

³⁵ 3:402.
³⁶ Ibid.
God the infinite and eternal cause. Edwards explicitly declares the point: “what nature is, in created things: and what the established course of nature is; that, as has been observed already, it is nothing, separate from the agency of God; and that, as Dr. Taylor says, ‘God, the Original of all being, is the only cause of all natural effects.’” To sum up, Edwards’ idea of creation out of nothing negates any existence of ontological ground except God, the actual reality of created substances self-existent after creation, and secondary causes on the same ontological level with God. Creation “out of nothing” means creation “wholly from God.”

*Continuous Emanation from Divine Space*

Second, creation out nothing but wholly from God means *emanation from* the divine ground of being. Edwards declares that

> All dependent existence whatsoever is *in a constant flux*, ever passing and returning; renewed every moment, as the colors 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.* “In him we live, and move, and have our being.” (emphasis mine)

Edwards compares this continuous procession from God to the image of emanation, rays from the sun, and finds its reason in the existence of created beings in God the ground being. In a footnote, he illustrates other examples of light emanation, such as the lucid color or brightness of the moon and images of things in a glass, which is renewed every moment by the immediate and instant exertion or application of power. These figures of emanation manifest a direct

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37 3:401.
38 3:404.
39 3:402-3, n. 5.
ontological association between cause and effect as well as causal relation, and they exhibits the ontological subordination of phenomenal effects to the substantial reality of original cause. Emanation represents the continuity of being between cause and effect and the discontinuity of their different ontological levels.

_The Spiritual Act from Divine Space_

Third, the continuous emanation from God out of nothing is the personal act of God as spiritual existence:

[T]he existence of created substances, in each successive moment, must be the effect of the _immediate_ agency, will, and power of God.\(^{40}\)

[T]here is no identity or oneness in the case, but what depends on the _arbitrary_ constitution of the Creator; who by his wise sovereign establishment so unites these successive new effects, that he _treats them as one_, by communicating to them like properties, relations, and circumstances; and so, leads us to regard and treat them as one. When I call this an arbitrary constitution, I mean, that it is a constitution which depends on nothing but the divine will; which _divine will_ depends on nothing but the _divine wisdom_. In this sense, the whole course of nature, with all that belongs to it, all its laws and methods, and constancy and regularity, continuance and proceeding, is an _arbitrary constitution_.\(^{41}\)

The existence, identity, and motion of created things rely on the successive communication of God’s immediate power according to the laws constituted by God’s will according to divine wisdom.

\(^{40}\) 3:401.

\(^{41}\) 3:403-4.
Firstly, “Body is nothing but an infinite resistance in some part of space caused by the immediate exercise of divine power.”

“Resistance is nothing else but the actual exertion of God’s power, so the power can be nothing else but the constant law or method of that actual exertion.”

It is the continuation of the first communication of God’s power in creation. “The creation of the corporeal universe is nothing but the first causing resistance in such parts of space as God thought fit, with a power of being communicated successively from one part of space to another, according to such stated conditions as his infinite wisdom directed.”

And “the preservation [is] only the continuation or the repetition of this power every moment to cause this resistance.” In other words, the preservation is a successive communication of that resistance “according to the laws of motion.”

These constant laws are not an ontological necessity that constrains divine action, but they are God’s arbitrary constitution that in the first creation is determined voluntarily by the will of divine self according to divine wisdom. God’s arbitrary operation of power generally keeps the laws of nature that God established arbitrarily, “but ties not himself to it, sometimes departs from it according to his sovereign pleasure.”

Therefore, God’s preservation is the arbitrary act of God’s creation out of nothing like the first creation.

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42 6:241.
43 6:351.
44 6:216.
45 6:241.
46 6:216.
47 23:404.
Secondly, spiritual beings are in the same case as corporeal things. Souls are created immediately out of nothing by God’s power. Moreover, not antecedent thoughts but God immediately produces and upholds human thoughts. Accordingly, “The identity of consciousness depends wholly on a law of nature; and so, on the sovereign will and agency of God.” The operation of God on spiritual beings is more arbitrary than it is on material beings. “The higher we ascend in the scale of created existence [from the lowest rank of material things to the highest rank of spiritual beings], and the nearer we come to the Creator, the more and more and more arbitrary we shall find the divine operations on the creature.”

Conclusion

God’s voluntary act of creation out of nothing is the communication of God’s immediate power according to divine will and wisdom. The immediate act of successive communication in temporal dimension establishes a kind of extension (spatium) or space for the existence of created beings. The divine space of action is eternity as a real extension beyond fragmentary time and dimensional space. On the space of divine action, created beings fragmented in time slices have their continuing identity. Hence the divine space of action is the ground of being that constitutes the substance of created beings. The existence of created beings depends upon and is identified with the exercise of divine power constituted by the will and wisdom of God. The being of the creature is constituted by God’s act, that is, by divine power, will, and wisdom. As

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48 23:205.
49 13:373.
50 3:399.
51 23:203.
shown above in the discussion of divine simplicity, there is no distinction of act, power, will, and substance in God the Trinity. Divine power designates the Father, divine wisdom the Son of God, and divine will and act the Holy Spirit. The divine essence is the pure act that subsists in the trinitarian relationship of divine power, wisdom, and will. The representative images of the Trinity among creatures are inanimate sun and spiritual mind. The creation of God the trinitarian space is compared to the emanation of the sun and the communication of mind. As rays of light reveal colors and the human mind produces ideas, the Trinity creates beings as ideas in the divine mind by the emanation of the intratrinitarian glory that communicates divine self.

Consequently, the creation of beings by divine communication is the emanation of divine being in the Trinity. God’s act of creation out of nothing means the creation of time from eternity and the procession of finite and temporal beings from the infinite and eternal ground of being. The divine act of creation out of nothing is the communication of divine being, the action of emanation from God. God’s perfection of being and personhood, the spiritual space of the Trinity defines the divine action of creation as the dialectic of creation ex nihilo and emanation ex Deo. Below I will examine Edwards’ logic for integrating both models of creation dialectically.

The Spiritual Causation of Emanation from the Divine Space of Pure Act

As shown above, the kernel of Edwards’ logic that synthesizes creation ex nihilo and emanation de Deo is the ontological nature of God’s being that determines the structure of divine

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54 21:138.
act: divine existence is the spiritual ground of being as the dispositional space of the Trinity; the divine act of creation is purely spiritual causation to actualize the disposition of the Trinity according to the trinitarian logic.

God’s act of creation out of nothing is an emanation from the divine space of pure act. The spiritual nature of divine space defines the causation of God the ground of being as the personal act of emanation. Edwards understands the causation of personal being as the emanation of act from will. Emanation designates the spiritual causation by which invisible and immaterial cause engenders visible and external effects. The act of God who is purely spiritual existence is revealed by emanation from God without any mediation of matter.

Edwards contrasts the spiritual causation of acts emanating from an internal and invisible principle with mechanical causation such as clockwork in his sermon on Rom. 3:11-12, “All That Natural Men Do Is Wrong”:

[A] piece of clockwork; whose motions are mechanical, and that goes with weights, and springs, and has no internal, spiritual principle from whence its motions proceed. And therefore what is mainly respected by the rule in the subject to be regulated, is the heart or spiritual principle. This is primarily respected, and man’s external actions are respected only secondarily, viz. as proceeding from an inward, invisible principle. (emphasis mine)\(^56\)

Edwards refutes the mechanical causation of the world. The Deity is not a deistic God who creates the mechanic world like a clock out of nothing and leaves it to automatically operate for itself without God’s involvement. For Edwards God creates the world continuously out of nothing by the spiritual causation of divine acts emanating from God’s dispositional space.

\(^56\) 19:523.
Edwards explains God the ground of being as the personal cause of the world analogous to the human soul:

That [the] first supreme and universal principle of things, from whence results the being, the nature, the powers and motions, and sweet order of the world, is properly an intelligent willing agent, such as our souls only without our imperfections, and not some inconceivable, unintelligent, necessary agent . . . man’s soul only seems to be the image of that supreme universal principle. . . .

‘tis only the soul of man that does as that supreme principle does; that is, is a principle of action, has a power of action in itself as that first principle has, and which no unperceiving being in this lower world has. Man’s soul determines things in themselves indifferent (as motion and rest, the direction of motion, etc.), as the supreme cause does. Man’s soul has an end in what it does, pursues some good that is the issue of its actions, as the first universal principle doth. Man’s soul makes, forms, preserves, disposes and governs things within its sphere, as the first principle does the world. Man’s soul influences the body, continues its nature and powers and constant regular motions and productions, and actuates it, as the supreme principle does the universe. (emphasis mine)  

For that reason he compares God to the soul of the world and divine causation to the emanation of external acts from the spiritual principle of the human soul, which is nearest to God except for its imperfections and association with material bodies. I will first examine how Edwards conceives of spiritual causation of acts from moral necessity as an emanation from the fountain of disposition, and second how he explains analogically God’s creation as an act of emanation from divine dispositional space.

Edwards holds that “spirits have an influence on matter. . . . according to established rules.” Spiritual causation is the act of emanation. “All these external actions being truly from us, as their cause.” Edwards expresses the action from human spiritual cause of will and

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57 13.383:452.
58 13:326.
59 1:428.
disposition as an emanation of flowing. Actions depend on and flow from our desires and
designs.\textsuperscript{60} Voluntary actions “are the effects of the will, and depend upon it, which flow from it”
(emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{61} To put it more exactly, the spiritual causation of emanation designates the
necessary procession of acts from a disposition, which is a nature of “a more powerful principle
of action” and “a thing more constant and permanent” than contingent will.\textsuperscript{62} The spiritual
emanation of act from disposition is a moral necessity of voluntary act distinguished from the
natural necessity of impersonal or inanimate beings. Although the act is free in the sense that it is
caused by will without compulsion of extrinsic cause, the intrinsic cause of will is determined by
the inherent foundation of disposition. Edwards explains the spiritual causation between the
disposition of grace and actual affections and practice:

True gratitude or thankfulness to God for his kindness to us, arises from a foundation laid
before, of love to God for what he is in himself; . . . The gracious stirrings of grateful
affection to God, for kindness received, always are from a stock of love already in the
heart, established in the first place on other grounds, viz. God’s own excellency; and
hence the affections are disposed to flow out, on occasions of God’s kindness. (emphasis
mine)\textsuperscript{63}

The tendency of grace in the heart to holy practice, is very direct, and the connection
most natural close and necessary. True grace is not an unactive thing; there is nothing in
heaven or earth of a more active nature; for ’tis life itself; and the most active kind of life,
even spiritual and divine life. ’Tis no barren thing; there is nothing in the universe that in
its nature has a greater tendency to fruit. Godliness in the heart has as direct a relation to
practice, as a fountain has to a stream, or as the luminous nature of the sun has to beams

\textsuperscript{60} 1:462.
\textsuperscript{61} 18:112.
\textsuperscript{62} 2:395-96.
\textsuperscript{63} 2:247.
sent forth, or as life has to breathing, or the beating of the pulse, or any other vital act; or as a habit or principle of action has to action. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{64}

The spiritual disposition of soul based on God as “the lowest foundation”\textsuperscript{65} is the life, actual reality, and ground of being that emanate the actual existence of particular affections and acts. The moral necessity of a voluntary act of disposition is a direct, natural, and necessary emanation from the fountain of soul.

The spiritual causation of emanation from human soul is analogically applied to God’s causation, but the divine act is decisively different from the exertion of a human soul in that it is a purely spiritual causation and the divine spirit is the pure act of spiritual ground of being. In the case of human spirits combined with material bodies, the spiritual causation between soul and body occurs through the emission of animal spirits from the brain to body and its influx to the brain by efflux from the body.\textsuperscript{66} Moreover, a human act of the body is performed through the mediation of external material beings, and the action is predicated by the disjunction of subject and object. On the contrary, the divine causation is performed by the purely spiritual emanation of act without any mediation of animal spirit mixed with bodies, since God is simply spiritual unlike a human soul. In addition, God is the pure act of the ground of being that has no need of external mediation in disjunction with God.

God is the purely spiritual cause of the world. For Edwards the mechanical world is not merely material or automatic but a teleological machine that is operated toward God the end of

\textsuperscript{64} 2:398.

\textsuperscript{65} 2:246.

\textsuperscript{66} 6:246.
creation by Godself as the soul and spirit of the world. In “Miscellanies,” no. 1208, Edwards declares that the whole universe, including all creatures, animate and inanimate, should in all its proceedings or revolutions and changes, great and small, that come to pass in it, as it were, act with and from such an absolutely supreme regard to God as its last end that every wheel, both great and small, of the vast machine should, in all their motions, move with a constant, immutable regard to God as the ultimate end, as much as if the whole system were *animated and actuated by one, common soul* that were possessed of such perfect wisdom and rectitude. (emphasis mine)\(^{67}\)

The spiritual cause of the world in relation with God is a third person like an arbiter, “as if such an arbiter were not only the soul of the world, but were a common spirit animating the sum total of existence consisting of God and the creature.”\(^{68}\) The arbiter is the divine self, since God is the ground of being besides whom there is no third being of person “differing from both God and the world” and there is no need of any other.

God himself is possessed of that perfect discerning and rectitude and, on this account, it belongs to him to be supreme arbiter, supreme lawgiver, and that his own infinite wisdom and rectitude should state all rules, and all methods of proceeding and mutual intercourse between him and the creature. . . .

Though he is not animated by the spirit of a third person of infinite wisdom and rectitude, yet he is animated and directed by a spirit of infinite wisdom and rectitude, though it be *his own Spirit.*\(^{69}\)

God the spiritual cause of the world is the ground of being on which the personal relationship of God and the world is constituted. The Deity is the soul of the world as the agent of teleological

\(^{67}\) 23:134.

\(^{68}\) 23:135.

\(^{69}\) 23:135-36.
action in the universe, and the act of the divine soul is exerted by the presence of divine spirit in the world.

God as space is omnipresent, and the causation of divine ground occurs by the presence of divine power in created beings. Divine space is the communicative matrix of spiritual space, since it is constituted by the exercise of divine power according to God’s spiritual faculties of will and wisdom. As Edwards argues in “Miscellanies,” no. 194, quoted directly above in the discussion about the spiritual characteristic of divine space in chapter three, God the ground of being is a spiritual space of “the increated Spirit” that “is present everywhere as the soul is in the body.”\(^{70}\) God comprehends all beings as ideas in the divine mind, and is extended by the divine operation of “power, knowledge and love.” The spiritual cause of divine space is the presence of omnipotent power, and at the same time, is its exercise according to perfect knowledge and perfect love.

Therefore, the act of spiritual space is the presence of divine power such that the act communicates divine power to be present in created beings. As a result, through the divine act divine power flows out from God to the creature. God’s act of creation out of nothing by omnipotent power is the emanation of God’s power to be omnipresent. For Edwards, power is a medium to connect between “two existences, or between the cause and effect.”\(^{71}\) The mediation of power is its exercise of act and its presence of emanation. The mediatory power of God is the same with its cause Godself, since God is not a subject disjunctive with the power but is the divine space that itself is present as divine power, as a field of power is the power itself present

\(^{70}\) 13:335.

\(^{71}\) 6:352.
and operating. In this case there is no mediator besides God in that the exercise of divine power is immediate presence and act without any mediatory being, as creation out of nothing designates. The immediate power of God is the divine existence itself and the ontological ground of creation that constitutes created beings. God’s act of emanating divine power is the communication of the divine self. The subject, medium, and object of divine act all are the power of divine space, Godself. This means that the divine ground of being is the pure act. In relation with created beings the pure act of divine spiritual space is revealed by the dialectical integration of the divine act of creation ex nihilo and emanation ex Deo. The purely spiritual causation of divine pure act communicates the divine self through the emanation of the Spirit of God instead of animal spirits, bodies, and external matters in human spiritual causation.

**Creation of the Trinity: Creation out of Nothing by the Communication of the Word Through the Emanation of the Spirit**

The Creation of the Trinity

Edwards explains as the Trinity the cause of God’s creation elaborated above, the divine space of pure act to exercise power according to wisdom or knowledge, will and love:

*[T]here are power, wisdom, goodness and holiness in God . . . as to the power of God . . . . ‘tis nothing else but the essence of God. And if we take it for that by which God exerts himself, ’tis no other than the Father; for 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. As to the wisdom of God, we have already observed that this wholly consists in God’s idea of himself, and is the same with the Son of God. And as to goodness, the eternal exertion of the essence of that attribute, it is nothing but infinite love, which the apostle John says is God. And as we have observed that all divine love may be resolved*
into God’s infinite love to himself, therefore this attribute, as it was exerted from eternity, is nothing but the Holy Spirit. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{72}

The Father’s eternal exertion of himself, the perfect energy of God according to the idea and wisdom of God, is the Holy Spirit, the pure act of infinite love. The spiritual causation of God’s creation is the act of emanating divine glory from God to communicate Godself already actualized perfectly in the Trinity:

The Father is as the substance of the sun (by substance I don't mean in a philosophical sense, but the sun as to its internal constitution). The Son is as the brightness and glory of the disk of the sun, or that bright and glorious form under which it appears to our eyes. The Holy Ghost is as the action of the sun, which is within the sun, in its intestine heat, and being diffusive, enlightens, warms, enlivens and comforts the world. The Spirit, as it is God’s infinite love to himself and happiness in himself, is as the internal heat of the sun; but as it is that by which God communicates himself, is as the emanation of the sun’s action, or the emitted beams of the sun. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{73}

The dialectic of God’s creation between creation \textit{ex nihilo} and emanation \textit{ex Deo} reflects analogically the trinitarian structure of God’s existence, since God the spiritual ground of being is pure act, and divine creation is the emanation of the pure act of divine ground. God’s creative act to communicate Godself is the extratrinitarian actualization of the intratrinitarian glory of the disposition to communicate. The divine act of creation out of nothing is the emanation of God’s trinitarian glory \textit{ad extra}. Emanation from God denotes the continuity between the internal and external glory of the Trinity, as creation out of nothing does the discontinuity. Edwards integrates creation out of nothing and emanation from God by the trinitarian act of disposition to communicate Godself. The synthesis grounds his integration of God’s perfection in being and personhood in the divine glory of the Trinity. Below I will explore the trinitarian logic and

\textsuperscript{72} 13.94:262-63.

\textsuperscript{73} 21:138.
structure of divine creation that incorporates the dialectic synthesis of creation *ex nihilo* and emanation *de Deo*.

Creation as the Act of Emanating God’s Glory

Edwards’ term of *emanation* for God’s creation is biblical rather than Neoplatonic. His basic motif of emanation is the same as that of Neoplatonism, the overflowing fullness of good that refers to the ontological perfection of the ground of being, the One. However, Edwards’ emanation derives from its usage in Scripture for God’s glory, which signifies the divine perfection of spiritual being revealed in Christ’s personal act of grace rather than the Neoplatonic One. For Edwards, emanation is the external glory of God, its cause is God’s internal glory, and its end is God’s glory. The glory of God’s perfection in being as the ground of being is the moral excellence of spiritual existence. For that reason, Edwards’ emanation from God is not the impersonal, indifferent, and necessary emanation of Neoplatonism but the personal, teleological, and voluntary act of love to *communicate* Godself.74

Edwards understands God’s creation as the external glory of God, the *emanation* of God’s internal glory which is the fullness of God’s goodness. The “emanation of divine fullness [is] called in Scripture, ‘the glory of God.’”75 “The word ‘glory’ is used in Scripture often to express the exhibition, emanation or communication of this internal glory. Hence it often signifies a visible exhibition of glory; as in an effulgence or shining brightness, by an emanation of beams

74 Paul Ramsey differentiates the biblical concept of emanation as “an action, disposition, or will” of “communication” from the Neoplatonic concept of emanation as “some sort of procession of or from God” (8:433, n. 5). However, my point distinguished from Ramsey’s consist in that for Edwards the biblical concept of emanation as communication connotes also procession from God.

75 8:529.
of light.” The emanation of divine glory is God’s personal act of grace to communicate the good in salvation. “The word ‘glory,’ as applied to God or Christ, sometimes evidently signifies the communications of God’s fullness, and means much the same thing with God's abundant and exceeding goodness and grace.” “The glory of God” is “the emanations and fruits of his grace in man’s salvation.”

In the temporal dimension of the world, God’s eternal glory of spiritual space is revealed as a teleological act of continuous emanation toward the eschatological purpose of creation. The emanation of God’s glory is essentially a purposive act flowing out toward an aim, since divine glory is the end of creation: “God’s aiming at glorifying himself—as one way of that flowing out or beaming forth of the infinite good that is to [be] considered under the notion of a last end of God’s works” (emphasis mine). The end is the object of “desires, aims, actions and pursuits.”

The teleological end connotes the cause of purposive will and defines emanation as a voluntary act of will:

For if God had any last end in creating the world, then there was something, in some respect future, that he aimed at, and designed to bring to pass by creating the world: something that was agreeable to his inclination or will.

Whatever is God’s last end, that he wills for its own sake; as grateful to him in itself: or which is the same thing, it is that which he truly delights in, or in which he has some degree of true and proper pleasure.

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76 8:515.
77 8:518.
78 8:520.
79 20:525.
80 8:450.
God’s works in creating and governing the world are properly the fruits of his will, as of his understanding.\textsuperscript{81}

The cause of creation, the divine will of God’s glory is the fullness of the good as the spiritual disposition to communicate Godself. Accordingly, the cause of creation, God’s glory defines the emanation of divine fullness as the personal act of communicating fullness for the purpose of the fulfillment of God’s glory in the world. The external glory of creation is the divine presence of the fullness of ground of being, and immanence is revealed as the overflowing emanation and communicating act to fill the emptiness of creatures for the purpose of the fullness of God’s glory in creatures.

The Emanation of Divine Fullness and the Communicating Act of Disposition

First, the cause of emanating glory is the internal glory of God’s fullness of the good that reveals the complete being of divine space. “The motive of God’s creating the world” is “nothing else but his goodness,” “an inclination to show goodness.”\textsuperscript{82} “God’s fullness” signifies and comprehends “all the good which is in God natural and moral.”\textsuperscript{83} The biblical term of fullness of divine perfection denotes spiritual goodness of God’s “knowledge, his holiness, and happiness,”\textsuperscript{84} and the emanations are “God’s own knowledge, holiness and joy.”\textsuperscript{85} Divine fullness is the moral excellence of spiritual being consummated by the beauty of happiness in

\textsuperscript{81} 8:449.

\textsuperscript{82} 13:251-52.

\textsuperscript{83} 8:433, n. 7.

\textsuperscript{84} 8:439.

\textsuperscript{85} 8:433.
love. “There is an infinite fullness of all possible good in God, a fullness of every perfection, of all excellency and beauty, and of infinite happiness.”

Therefore, God’s fullness of the good is a moral nature of disposition to communicate the divine good. The emanation of divine fullness is the spiritual act of God’s dispositional space.

Second, the cause of creation, the disposition of divine space specifies the creation of emanating divine fullness as the act of communicating Godself. The term disposition of the good in general does not necessarily presuppose a personal will or act, as the Neoplatonic One’s disposition of goodness to cause emanation is an impersonal thing without deliberation or design. For Edwards, however, the divine disposition, “the inciting cause of creation” is “desire in God” and “God’s love, or benevolence.”

Although Edwards compares the divine disposition to the natural tendency in the root and stock of a tree and in the sun to diffuse and send forth itself, it is a personal nature to cause a voluntary act of will. Moreover, the external emanation of creation is distinguished from the eternal generation of the Son from the Father that does not depend on the “arbitrary” will of the Father but “was natural and necessary.”

The divine emanation of creation is not necessary like God’s existence but is caused by God’s arbitrary will determined by the spiritual disposition of God. The divine creation according God’s nature of disposition entails the deliberate selection of free will by divine wisdom, as Edwards presents it in “Miscellanies,” no. 1062:

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86 8:432-33.
87 8:438.
88 8:435, 439.
89 19:571-72.
For God’s determining to glorify and communicate himself must be conceived of as flowing from God’s nature; or we must look upon God, from the infinite fullness and goodness of his nature, as naturally disposed to cause the beams of his glory to shine forth, and his goodness to flow forth. Yet we must look on the particular method that shall be chosen by divine wisdom to do this as not so directly and immediately owing to the natural disposition of the divine nature, as the determination of wisdom intervening, choosing the means of gratifying that disposition of nature.\textsuperscript{90}

As mentioned above, God is the disposing cause of creation. The creation of divine disposition is the calculated act of will that disposes beings in determinate relations of disjunction in the space of infinite supposable disjunctions, as Edwards argued in “Miscellanies,” no. 880.\textsuperscript{91}

God’s disposition to determine a divine act of will is the moral necessity of God as pure act of spiritual space. As elaborated above, God is the ground of being who is the necessary existence of being in general without disjunction with “absolute and universal nothing.”\textsuperscript{92} The necessary being of God has “the necessary perfection of his nature”: the divine perfection of being is spiritual existence that has infinite power, underived and independent will, and God’s own all-sufficient wisdom.\textsuperscript{93} While the human act of will follows its disposition determined by interrelation with other external beings, God’s necessary act of will is perfectly free since it is regulated purely by the independent wisdom and self-determined disposition in God’s self-sufficient being. “The dispositions and acts” of God’s necessary being are the moral necessity “in which no opposition is supposed or supposable.”\textsuperscript{94} “It no more argues any dependence of God’s

\textsuperscript{90} 20:432.
\textsuperscript{91} 20:122.
\textsuperscript{92} 1:152.
\textsuperscript{93} 1:377-81.
\textsuperscript{94} 1:151.
will, that his supremely wise volition is necessary, than it argues a dependence of his being, that
his existence is necessary.”95 God is “necessarily wise” and “necessarily holy.”96 The
disposition of God’s necessary being and perfection is the perfect moral virtue of necessity that
never fails to produce acts and the most voluntary freedom that is not determined by any external
beings. It is not fatal necessity but the moral necessity of voluntary disposition to incite the free
act of will:

God himself has the highest possible freedom, according to the true and proper meaning
of the term; and that he is in the highest possible respect an agent, and active in the
exercise of his infinite holiness; though he acts therein in the highest degree necessarily:
and his actions of this kind are in the highest, most absolutely perfect manner virtuous
and praiseworthy; and are so, for that very reason, because they are most perfectly
necessary. (emphasis mine)97

As God the ground of being transcends the determinate disjunction of subject and object, God’s
emanation of disposition and acts is the moral necessity that transcends the disjunction of
deterministic necessity and contingent freedom.

The dialectic of necessity and freedom in God’s act derives from the dialectic of divine
love between complacence and benevolence in God’s perfection in being and personhood. The
moral necessity of divine ground is the full actuality of the pure act of free benevolence98 that
necessarily and perfectly actualize the most spontaneous will of love. God’s creation from the
divine disposition of love is necessary in relation with the divine self and is arbitrary in relation

95 1:381.
96 Ibid.
97 1:364.
98 8:460-61.
with the creature. The necessity of divine creation does not derive from any need or cause of external being and beauty but from the internal disposition of divine fullness, the complacence of divine self. The purely self-motivated love of God is revealed as free and gratuitous benevolence to the creature that confers being and beauty on the creature.

Therefore, the divine creation is not an accidental event that has only a mere contingent causal connection by God’s arbitrary will, but it is a deliberate and necessary action according to the disposition of love in freedom which has its ontological ground in the essence of God’s being. God’s creation is the arbitrary action out of nothing by divine will, but also the calculated action from divine wisdom and the necessary action of divine disposition. The creature is not a mere by-product as in the case of Neoplatonic emanation that is caused by the natural necessity of impersonal One and through the self-actualization of the Nous and the Soul toward the One. Creatures themselves are the aim of God’s active and purposive act of creation like the divine self:

God and the creature, in this affair of the emanation of the divine fullness, are not properly set in opposition; or made the opposite parts of a disjunction. . . . That God in seeking his glory, therein seeks the good of his creatures . . . in communicating his fullness for them, he does it for himself: because their good, which he seeks, is so much in union and communion with himself. God is their good. Their excellency and happiness is nothing but the emanation and expression of God’s glory. (emphasis mine)\(^99\)

Edwards removes entirely the connotation of dualism derived from the Neoplatonic ambivalence concerning the good and evil of the created beings. The value and beauty of creation and created beings are affirmed by their ontological participation in the divine being, because their beings are emanations of the glory of divine being. Moreover, the value of creatures are ascertained more

\(^{99}\) 8:458-59.
obviously by the fact that the emanation is God’s own teleological act of communicating the divine self and God’s delight in it is like that in God’s own being: “The emanation of God’s glory is *in itself worthy and excellent*, and so God delights in it” “as he delights in *his own* beauty and fullness” (emphasis mine).¹⁰⁰

In conclusion, the emanation as divine creation is the teleological act of communication according to personal disposition:

it was what God had respect to as an ultimate end of his creating the world, to communicate of his own infinite fullness of good; or rather it was his last end, that there might be a glorious and abundant emanation of his infinite fullness of good *ad extra*, or without himself, and the disposition to communicate himself or diffuse his own *fullness*, which we must conceive of as being originally in God as a perfection of his nature, was what moved him to create the world. . . . *so that the emanation itself was aimed at by him as a last end of the creation.*¹⁰¹ (italics original?)

On the one hand, emanation is a purposive act since the emanation of divine fullness is the end of creation. On the other hand, the divine act of communication is emanation in the sense that the object of communication is Godself. Consequently, the emanation of divine glory is God’s action to communicate the divine fullness of Godself.¹⁰² The divine disposition as the cause of creation is the nature of God to emanate divine being and the moral necessity of voluntary act. The divine act of creation out of nothing but emanation from God is the divine communication of Godself.

¹⁰⁰ 8:459, 460.
¹⁰¹ 8:433-35.
¹⁰² 8:439.
Creation by the Son and through the Spirit

Divine creation as extratrititarian glory is the emanation of God’s act from the spirit of God according to the divine disposition of fullness. As elaborated in the previous chapter, the Holy Spirit is God’s disposition of the trinitarian fullness that reveals the essence of God as the light of love in the Trinity. God’s creation, the extratrititarian act of emanation is the light of love, the *emanation of light* and the *act of love* to communicate Godself. God’s creation is the economy of the Trinity. God’s creative act of emanation reflects the triune structure of divine being as the pure act of the ground of being analogically in the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity. As the end and the origin of motive is the glory of God, the subject of agency, way of medium, and object of divine act in creation are the trinitarian persons of God. The divine act of creation out of nothing by the Word, the Son, is the emanation through the Spirit. God’s creation of communicating the divine self is the communication of divine idea and the emanation of divine spirit.

The divine creation is the action of God the Trinity as the pure act of love. Edwards interprets Gen. 1:2: “all things owed their beginning and production to love; [which is] a shadow of the truth, that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And further they say, God was *moved to create the world, by the love of his own principle*. God’s love to himself, that is, to his Son, I suppose to be the Holy Spirit” (emphasis mine). The cause of creation is God as love to communicate the divine fullness of the good, which subsists in the relationship of the trinitarian persons that is represented by the Holy Spirit. The agency of creation, the Trinity is revealed by the Son and the Holy Spirit. In his exegesis on Ezekiel 1:4 Edwards interprets the “a

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103 13:302.
fire enfolding itself” as “the action of the deity towards itself, in the action of the persons of the TRINITY towards each other”: “The Godhead is perceived only by perceiving the Son and the Spirit, for ‘no man hath seen God at any time’ [John 1:18]. He is seen by his image, the Son, and is felt by the Holy Spirit, as fire is perceived only by its light and heat, seen by one and felt by the other. Fire, by its light, represents the Son of God, and by its heat, the Holy Spirit. God is light, and he is love.”104 The chariot of God that signifies the world “came out of that cloud and fire,” the intratrinitarian glory of God, and “comes forth out of nothing” (emphasis mine).105

Consequently, the divine creation out of nothing mediated by the Son and the Spirit is the exercise of the intratrinitarian light of love ad extra, the emanation of beams from the fountain of God and the act according to the disposition of love to communicate Godself.106 It is a twofold emanation of action to communicate through the Son and the Spirit who reveal the depth of the Father: “This twofold emanation or communication of the divine fullness ad extra is answerable to the twofold emanation or going forth of the Godhead ad intra, wherein the internal and essential glory and fullness of the Godhead consists, viz. the proceeding of the eternal Son of God . . . and the proceeding of the Holy Spirit.”107 Accordingly, the two persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit represent the divine act of extratrinitarian glory and mediate the communication of God to the creature. Edwards declares in “Miscellanies,” no. 1349, “Therefore, we must

104 15:387.
105 15:388.
107 23:213.
suppose that the Father created the world by the Son, and the Son did not create the world by himself, but by the Spirit of God, as his minister or instrument.”\textsuperscript{108}

The Christocentric Structure of Creation

In the external glory of creation the Son comes to the fore as its subject and end, as the Father is the origin of intratrinitarian procession and its object is the Son. God’s extratrinitarian act of creation is the actualization of the divine disposition to communicate the fullness of the Trinity. Edwards presents the Son as the subject, mediator, object, and end of God’s disposition to creation and its actualization. The Son’s act of creation to communicate his fullness is the emanation of the Spirit of God.

The disposition and act of the Son derives from the Father, in that “by the will and disposition of the Father, all things were made by him [the Son] and all things consist by him.”\textsuperscript{109}

The disposition of the Father to communicate divine self is God’s essence in which the Son also subsists. As “the Father’s begetting of the Son is a complete communication of all his happiness” for the life of love in happiness, “the Son has also an inclination to communicate himself, in an image of his person that may partake of his happiness: and this was the end of the creation, even the communication of the happiness of the Son of God.”\textsuperscript{110}

As the Son as the subject of creation represents the Father, he represents the divine self as the end of creation. The Son is the Father’s aim of creation, the glory of God. “The Father also created the world as well as the Son, as we know; and he did it for his Son. The Scripture is plain

\textsuperscript{108} 23:429.

\textsuperscript{109} 20:44.

\textsuperscript{110} 13:272.
in that, that the world and the church are a gift of the Father to the Son.111 “The end of God’s creating this world was to provide a kingdom for his Son in it.”112 The end of creation is the glory of the Son, which is the body of Christ, the church and kingdom of Christ. Edwards elaborates on this in his notes on Ephesians 1:22-23:

“And gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” . . . here the Apostle teaches that Christ, who fills all things, all elect creatures in heaven and earth, himself is filled by the church. . . . As ’tis from and in Christ that all are supplied with joy and happiness, so Christ receives the church as that in which he has exceeding and satisfying delight and joy. This seems to be the good that Christ sought in the creation of the world, who is the beginning of the creation of God, when all things were created by him and for him, viz. that he might obtain a spouse that he might give himself to and give himself for, on whom he might pour forth his love, and in whom his soul might eternally be delighted. Till he had attained this, he was pleased not to look on himself as complete, but as wanting something, as Adam was not complete till he had obtained his Eve (Genesis 2:20). (emphasis mine)113

The church is the fullness of Christ that realizes his disposition of love to fill him with happiness of love. As the Father actualizes his disposition through his procession of the Son and the Spirit to reach the trinitarian life of love, the Son does likewise in terms of creation through the Spirit toward the life of love in the union of Christ and the church.

The Soteriological Structure of Creation

The Christocentric structure of God’s extratrinitarian act derives from the centrality of salvation in the work of God: “This seems to have been one reason why God made the world by Jesus Christ, viz. that the creation of the world was a work that was subordinate to the work of

111 13:301.
112 9:349.
redemption.”

The end of creation is performed by Christ’s redemption. Accordingly, all acts of God have a soteriological structure that is Christocentric, as Edwards demonstrates in “Miscellanies,” no. 702:

So that the work of God is but one, so far as the works of God are made known to us, for I would say nothing of possible unrevealed works with which we have nothing to do. 'Tis not many works that are separate and not dependent, or subordinate. 'Tis but one work. 'Tis all one scheme, one contrivance; and that is the scheme, contrivance and work of glorifying himself and his Son Jesus Christ, and gathering and uniting his creatures to himself, and making them happy in himself through Christ God-man by means of that glorious redemption that he has wrought out. And everything that God has purposed he has purposed in Christ the Redeemer. All his purposes are included in the work of redemption and all that [he] has done or will do in fulfillment of those purposes, is done in and by Christ. He created the world by Christ; all things visible and invisible were created by him and for him. He governed the church of old by Christ. He governs heaven and earth by Christ. The consummation of all things will be by Christ. (emphasis mine)

The act of Christ and its end centering on redemption is the Holy Spirit, as Edwards states it in “Miscellanies,” no. 706:

[T]he Holy Spirit is the last of them and he by whom both the others act. . . . not only because the Spirit acts in the name of the other two, but because he is the great and ultimate end of the acting of the other two in the affair of redemption, and all their concern in it. . . .

. . . that person who is the very goodness, and love, and grace of the divine nature. . . .

. . . Thus the ultimate aim of the Father in electing and sending the Son, etc. is the Spirit.

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114 18:289.
115 18:295.
The mediation of Christ’s act of communication to himself is the emanation of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ. Christ is the “the grand medium of all communications of grace and happiness from God, by which especially God glorifies himself.”\textsuperscript{118} He “is the common fountain of all their good and the common medium through [whom] God communicates himself to all” and “by whom they all have their eternal fullness and glory.”\textsuperscript{119} The emanation of light from the Son is communicated by the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{120} Christ “who by his immediate influence gives being every moment and by his Spirit actuates the world.”\textsuperscript{121}

The Creation of Christ’s Person and Christ’s Act of Creation through the Holy Spirit

The trinitarian logic of creation by the Son through the Spirit derives from the Christocentric and soteriological structure of God’s act, which is revealed in Christ’s act of redemption and God’s creation of Christ’s person in the incarnation.

The Son achieves the purpose of creation by filling empty creatures with his fullness of the good. The act of filling is the extratrinitarian glory of the light of love \textit{ad extra}. It is the \textit{emanation} of light overflowing the fullness of the good, and simultaneously the \textit{purposive act} to fill by communicating the divine fullness according to \textit{the disposition of love} differently from Neoplatonic impersonal emanation. The emanation of God’s fullness of glory fills all in all by the act of Christ centered on his salvific work, which is brought about “by Christ’s descending

\textsuperscript{118} 18:70.
\textsuperscript{119} 18:389.
\textsuperscript{120} 18:363.
\textsuperscript{121} 13:279.
first to earth and to death, and then ascending into heaven.” The filling work of Christ is exerted through emptying himself by the incarnation and suffering.

The act of Christ originates from the person of Christ Jesus God-man, who is created by the Father as “the image of the invisible God, i.e. the image of the Father.” The main subject of making Christ God-man is the Father, though “all the persons of the Trinity do concur in all acts ad extra.” “All things are from him as God-man, but he him [self] as God-man is from the Father.” The human nature of Christ is the only “external work” of God ad extra that the Father produced directly: “Christ’s own human nature with all its fullness and glory (which is as much as all other creatures in heaven and earth with all their glory put together), is from the glory of the Father.” The incarnation is the epitome of all creation that reveals the structure of God’s creative act, since “the man Christ Jesus be [is] a creature, the chief of all creatures, this firstborn of every creature” and at the same time “the maker” who “created all things visible and invisible” (emphasis mine).126

The basic framework of divine creation that the incarnation reveals is creation out of nothing by filling the emptiness with the communication of the divine self of fullness: “God’s design was first to show the creature’s emptiness in itself, and then to fill it with himself in an eternal, unalterable fullness and glory.”127 The self-emptying act of the Son is the Father’s filling

122 24:1095.
123 20:238.
124 Ibid.
125 20:239.
126 20:238.
127 20:192.
the human nature of Christ with the fullness of the Father through the Spirit. This divine repletion is the trinitarian act that the Father performs by the communicating act of the Son through the emanation of the Spirit.

The incarnation of the Son into Christ God-man is the emanation of the fullness of the Godhead, the Spirit, into the humanity of Christ from the Father through the Holy Spirit, which is the same with the divine good or fullness of God, his infinite holiness and joy. Christ is the person in whom is the Spirit of God, and therefore is called the Anointed. “In him dwells the fullness of the Godhead” [Colossians 2:9]; . . . In him the Father beholds infinite beauty (or holiness, which is the beauty of the divine nature); and in him the Father has his food, or infinite delight and satisfaction.  

As the church of Christ is the end of creation and the fullness of Christ, the disposition of the Father is actualized in extratritarian work through the creation of Christ God-man. Jesus Christ is the fullness and glory of the Father by which the Father is satisfied and filled with love and joy. The fullness of the Father is accomplished completely by the act of Christ the Son, who fills the creature with divine fullness to be the body of Christ and is filled with the fullness of his church. The disposition of God the Trinity *ad extra* to glorify the divine self by communicating Godself is completed by the act of Christ to communicate the divine fullness. “All Christ’s fullness is from the Father, although all the creatures’ fullness be from him, and he filleth all in all, fills all things, both in heaven and in earth.”  

The divine creation is the act of Christ the Son, which repeats the structure of Christ’s personal being and of the Father’s act to create the God-man.

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128 15:243-44.

129 20:239.
The fullness communicated from the Father through Christ the Son is the Holy Spirit, the glory and beauty of life in the happiness of communal union by love. Edwards explains the fullness of Christ in “Miscellanies,” no. 402:

The great thing purchased by Jesus Christ for us is communion with God, which is only in having the Spirit; ’tis participation of Christ’s fullness, and having grace for grace, which is only in having of that Spirit which he has without measure; this is the promise of the Father, Luke 24:49. He purchased God’s love, favor and delight, which is still the Holy Ghost, for us. . . “Good things” and “the Holy Spirit” are synonymous. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{130}

The divine being of the Trinity is the fullness of good, and divine fullness is the perfection of created beings and their well-being. The divine fullness communicated to the creature through Christ’s fullness is the \textit{emanation ad extra} of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son: “the river of water of life spoken of in the Revelation 22, which proceeds from the throne of the Father and the Son, is called the river of God’s pleasures (Psalms 36:8): ’tis a confirmation that the Holy Ghost is the infinite delight and pleasure of God. That river is the Holy Ghost.”\textsuperscript{131}

Consequently, the divine act of the Father and Christ the Son to fill the creature by communication of divine fullness is the emanation of the Spirit. The emanation \textit{ad extra} of the Spirit represents that \textit{ad intra}. The Holy Spirit is the emanation of the internal glory of the Trinity, in which the disposition of the Father is actualized through the generation of the Son and is completed by being satisfied and filled with the Father’s love and happiness in the Son. The fullness of the Father and the glory of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit, God’s pure act of love.

\textsuperscript{130} 13:466.

\textsuperscript{131} 13:411.
The First Creation and the New Creation

The divine act of redemption for the fullness of Christ and the church fabricates the overarching structure of the divine act of creation, since it is the end of creation. The divine act is creation out of emptiness by filling the void with communicating the fullness of the good emanating from God. The divine creation of God the eternal space is revealed as a continuous creation that is initiated by the first creation and is completed by the new creation of salvation, the fullness of Christ and God. Edwards argues that the old creation was a type of the new creation of salvation: 132

[T]he creation of the visible world was in order to the work of redemption, that not only the things made do shadow forth things that appertain to this work, but the work of creation itself seems to be so done that it should shadow forth the work of redemption in the manner of doing of it. 133

The first creation in the beginning and the new creation of salvation are two centers that frame the whole structure of divine creation by defining each other reciprocally, as two foci of an ellipse draw its perimeter by mutual delimitation. The first creation incorporates more evidently God’s perfection of being as the ground of being, and the new creation reveals God’s perfection of personhood. The Christological and soteriological structure of the new creation defines the divine creation as the trinitarian act, and the divine ground of the first creation characterizes the trinitarian act as the pure act of divine space. The Son and the Spirit are not only the mediators of creation but the subject, object, and end of the divine disposition and act. Therefore, God’s creation is the communicating act emanating from God the dispositional space of communicative

132 15:530.
133 18.702:284.
love, which is exercised by Christ’s act of communicating himself through the emanation of the Spirit.

Creation as the Repetition and Completion of the First Creation

Genesis 1:2-3 describes God’s creation by stating that the Spirit of God hovered over the face of waters covering the formless and void earth with darkness and God first created light by the divine word. Edwards interprets this passage as showing that the divine creation was the shining forth of the light of love of the Trinity. God’s creation out of empty void was initiated by the divine disposition of love, the intratrinitarian life of love that the Spirit represents, as shown above. The internal glory of the Trinity shone forth ad extra such that light came out of darkness and confusion. The actualization of the divine disposition of love in creation is performed by the communication of the Son the Word of God and the emanation of divine fullness from the Spirit the Love of God.

Christ the Son is “the wisdom of God and the brightness of his glory and the light of the world,” who causes “light to shine out of the chaos (2 Corinthians 4:6) . . . by speaking the powerful word, his saying ‘Let there be light’ [Genesis 1:3]”; “everything was first a chaos and things were brought out of a state of utter darkness and confusion and (as it were) ruin. And the first thing that appeared, by which the world began to come out of this state, was light” (emphasis mine). God creates beings out of nothing by the divine omnipotent power of the Word.

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135 18:285.

God’s creation out of nothing by the Son’s communication of the Word is the emanation of the Holy Spirit. The divine creation through the Holy Spirit is the exercise of God’s disposition of love to communicate divine fullness of the good. Creation was void and empty in itself and it “brought out of this state of emptiness, and became good” by being “infused of a divine fullness or good into it” “from the Spirit of God.” Edwards elaborates on the meaning of the Spirit’s communication in his notes on Genesis 1:2:

[I]ts [the creature’s] fullness or goodness is not in itself, but in him [God] and in the communications of his Spirit, animating, quickening, adorning, replenishing, and blessing all things. . . . the Spirit of God is here represented as giving form, and life, and perfection to this empty void and unformed mass, as a dove that sits, infuses life, and brings to form and perfection the unformed mass of the egg. Thus the fullness of the creature is from God’s Spirit. If God withdraws from the creature, it immediately becomes empty and void of all good. The creature, as it is in itself, is a vessel, and has a capacity, but is empty; but that which fills that emptiness is the Spirit of God. (emphasis mine)

At first glance, like Augustine Edwards seems to hold a kind of two-staged creation of hylomorphism wherein God creates the primordial formless matter out of nothing and shapes determinate beings by providing form to the matter. Hylomorphism is based on the dualism of two ontological grounds of ideal forms and indeterminate matter. However, for Edwards there is only one ground of being, the spiritual being of God, such that there is no matter, and in fact material beings are the modes of ideas and beings themselves the forms of the good. Edwards’ hylomorphic description has the purpose of manifesting the typological relation of the old creation with the new creation of good out of evil. The hylomorphic terms of the old creation are

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137 24.2:1101.
138 15.448:530.
139 6:235.
an analogical delineation of creation out of nothing from God the Word and the Spirit. The chaos and unformed mass in Gen. 1:2 and the vessel of created beings do not designate a prime matter or receptacle but figures that refer to the absolute dependence of the creature on the divine ground of being for its existence. They signify literally the emptiness of nothingness without any existence of primordial matter or receptacle, as darkness is merely a phenomenon that exhibits a privation of light without any reality of its own.

Edwards elucidates the meaning of emptiness more clearly in “Miscellanies,” no. 936:

To show the emptiness of the creature, the old creation or the old heavens and earth were to go to ruin and perish in some sense, or at least all was to be emptied; great part of the old creation was actually to sink into total and eternal perdition, as fallen angels and fallen men. All mankind was in a sense to be totally ruined, though some of ’em were to be restored after they had sensibly been emptied of themselves. . . . hereby to be brought to see their own emptiness and utter insufficiency, and so as it were to perish or die as to self-dependence and all self-fullness, and to be brought to an entire dependence on the sovereign grace and all-sufficiency of God, to be communicated to them by his Son as their head. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{140}

The destruction of the old creation and perdition of evil beings manifests the ontological finitude of created beings, which derives from their ontological origin in that they are created out of nothing but from God. Unlike God, created beings are not self-existent, necessary, immutable, or eternal. The ontological finitude itself of creatures is not evil but is the goodness of being, since the ontological foundation of their existence is the essence of divine being as the glory of love without any connotation of primordial matter. The actualization of finite nature of creatures, their dependence on God, brings them into the divine fullness of the good to participate in God’s perfection of being. Evil is the pride of self-dependence that pretends to be capable of existing without the divine ground. Evil pride is an illusion of ontological impossibility, which brings

\textsuperscript{140} 20.936:192.
about the deconstruction of material beings and spiritual existence. Eternal perdition reveals explicitly the ontological meaning of evil such that it destroys the essence of spiritual beings, that is, their good, meaning, and life of well-being in happiness through communional love.

On the contrary, Christ’s salvation through the emanation of the Spirit is the new creation of good *out of evil* and its resulting *chaos*. It creates the new spiritual beings of the sanctified saints and their material habitats of the new heaven and earth. It *repeats* and *completes* the old creation *out of emptiness* to communicate the divine fullness of the good emanating from divine love. It is the Holy Spirit’s *application* of Christ’s redemption to the cosmological scale of whole world in all times. *In essence* the soteriological and eschatological new creation of *well-being* is the archetype and epitome of creation, and *in order* the ontological and cosmogonic first creation of *being* is that.

**Creation in Temporal Process: Emanation and Remanation**

The Holy Spirit, the divine fullness of good is the best of being as God’s perfection, since being is good. Therefore, God’s creation of love to give *being* is to confer divine *good* on the creature through the emanation of the Spirit. Christ the Son’s disposition to communicate himself is actualized through the emanation of the Spirit from God. Since God is the *infinite and eternal space* of love, the emanation of the Spirit is the eternal act of God. For that reason Neoplatonism conceived of the emanation of the One as an event that occurs in an eternal dimension without actual temporal progress and thus presupposed the eternity of the world. By contrast, Edwards differentiates the *voluntary emanation* of divine creation in a *temporal* dimension from the *necessary procession* of the trinitarian persons in an *eternal* dimension, as mentioned above. The emanation of voluntary creation yields beings in time according to the difference of degree in being, for in the intratraditional procession there is no ontological hierarchy or subordination. For
Edwards the creating emanation of the Spirit to give goodness of being is accomplished by a *gradual process in time* toward the *well-being* of the creature, the perfection of love in happiness of communal union. The creative act of the Logos, the speaking of God’s inward word, communicates created ideas in time as if in outward words.\(^{141}\) The communication of divine ideas is emanated through the Spirit by unfolding them in time with the various degrees of being, as the outward words are pronounced in temporal succession. Edwards exhibits the gradual process of God’s continuous creation toward the end of creation through the new creation of salvation that repeats and completes the progress after the first creation out of nothing from God:

> And after the light all things were brought to beauty, and perfection and excellent order out of this dark chaos; but yet *gradually*, one thing after another, till the seventh day, the day of holy rest, when all things appeared very good, in *their complete beauty and perfection*, and all remainders of chaos were perfectly done away. Genesis 1:31, “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold it was very good”; which well represents two things, viz.
>
> 1. How that the work of grace that is begun *in the soul* is *gradually* carried on, till it is brought to its *perfection* without any remains of sin or misery in the heavenly rest and eternal sabbath, to which that sabbath of the seventh day is expressly compared.
>
> 2. How that the work of redemption is *gradually* carried on *in the world*, till *the church* shall be brought to the *most perfect and glorious and happy state* on earth, to a state of rest. (emphasis mine)\(^{142}\)

The Spirit’s emanating disposal of plural created beings in temporal dimension incorporates the dialectic of God’s creation that connects the infinite and eternal space of God and finite and temporal creatures. In the vertical relation of God and creatures, God’s *infinite* ground of being evolves numerous beings of different extents of participation in the divine being. In the temporal relation the trinitarian structure of divine being in *eternity* is revealed as the

\(^{141}\) 21:120.

\(^{142}\) 18.702:285.
triune frame of divine act in time to comprehend and unite with God: self-glorification, emanation, and remanation.

Edwards’ triadic account of God’s act is substantially different from the Neolatonic exitus-reditus model, in spite of their striking similarity. The Neoplatonic emanation is the impersonal overflowing goodness of the One or the by-product of lower hypostases’ personal pride that implicates negative meaning. The movement of emanation and return is essentially the self-actualization of a lower hypostasis toward a higher rather than an intentional act of salvation from a higher hypostasis.

Contrariwise, Edwards understands emanation and remanation in God’s creation as the divine act of love to communicate Godself as well as the repetition of God’s self-glorification already realized in the Trinity. They are the personal grace of God for salvation by which God acts directly and immediately and communicates the divine self. The triune act is a cosmologically extended type of Christ’s redemption through the Spirit, in which Godself condescends and ascends by the person and work of Christ and dwells in and lifts up the saints through the Spirit. The trinitarian love of union in distinction without subordination is revealed by the Son’s communication of himself through the emanation of the Spirit, which comprehends all beings by the divine act of descension and ascension as well as by being their ground of being. God’s creation through the emanation of the Spirit of divine love supersedes hierarchical subordination with mutual subservience of love for the glorification of God through their participation in the fullness of God’s being. By virtue of this trinitarian and soteriological structure of divine creation Edwards affirms certainly the beauty and goodness of all beings without ambivalence concerning the matter like Neoplatonic emanation. Neoplatonism also tried to confirm it, but remained ambiguous because of its dualistic hylomorphism and ontological subordinationism.
Discussing the trinitarian structure of divine glory in chapter four, we already elaborated how the end of creation, union in distinction of God and the world, is achieved by the dialectic of complacence and benevolence. Here I will examine the trinitarian logic of the divine act of creation that constitutes the dialectic of love and is repeated and extended from the first creation to the new creation toward the end of creation.

Creation by the Son’s Communication of Himself through the Emanation of the Holy Spirit

As seen above, the first creation out of nothing is performed by the Son’s communication of himself as the Word and through the emanation of divine fullness, the Spirit. First, the subject of creation, the Logos is “the inward word” of God as the “thought or idea itself” of the divine mind, which represents the spiritual idea and the perfect image of the Father generated by divine understanding. The Logos is God’s wisdom or knowledge as the light of divine mind that reveals the truth of the internal glory of the Trinity to the creature.

Second, the creative act of the Logos is a sort of spiritual speaking of the inward word of God. It is revelation by the act of communicating divine ideas. The communication of the Logos is not an act of a subject in disjunction with an object but the pure act of divine ground that creates the object of communication before communication. The act of communication itself constitutes the beings of the creatures as ideas in the divine mind, as the speaking act itself is the word of expression and the ideas expressed. “Men’s children are the very fruit of themselves, are the communication of their own beings.” The generation of a being from another existence is

143 21:114-17, 120.
145 14:154.
the communication of being, and the communicated being is the image of the original being. The created existence to which the divine being is communicated is the image of God, and God’s communication of being is the spiritual word of the Logos. Therefore, creatures as the spiritual images of God are the ideas of God, the images of the Logos God’s essential idea.

[T]he Son of God created the world for this very end, to communicate himself in an image of his own excellency. He communicates himself properly only to spirits; and they only are capable of being proper images of his excellency, for they only are properly beings, as we have shown. Yet he communicates a sort of a shadow or glimpse of his excellencies to bodies, which, as we have shown, are but the shadows of being, and not real beings.¹⁴⁶

Third, the beings of creatures communicated by the Logos are the ideas of the Son himself; the essence of God’s being. Accordingly, the communicating act of the Son is the emanation of divine reality, though it is not the express and perfect repetition of divine essence like the Son. The emanation is performed by the Spirit of God the Son, and the emanated divine being is the image of God that participates in the divine being:

He [Christ] who by his immediate influence gives being every moment and by his Spirit actuates the world . . . . though beauty of face and sweet airs in man are not always the effect of the corresponding excellencies of mind, yet the beauties of nature are really emanations, or shadows, of the excellencies of the Son of God. (emphasis mine)¹⁴⁷

Created beings emanated from God are shadows of divine existence, because they are infinitely less in degree of being than God’s infinite being. However, the shadows of emanation do not mean merely illusive phenomena, but are actual communication of divine reality. Edwards suggests that

if there be anything amongst all the beings that flow from this first principle of all things, that bears any sort of resemblance to it or has anything of a shadow of likeness to it, spirits or minds bid abundantly the fairest for it. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{148}

That, which is a sure sign of grace, must either be something which has the nature and essence of grace; or is flowing from, or some way belonging to its essence: for that, which distinguishes things one from another, is their essence, or something appertaining to their essence. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{149}

Created ideas emanated from God are indexical signs ontologically caused and connected by the divine essence of Logos.\textsuperscript{150}

Fourth, the Son’s creation by the communication of the Word emanates the Son himself through the Holy Spirit. The communicating divine self takes the mode of emanating the Spirit from God. The being of Spirit is determined by the way of emanation of divine essence in the Trinity: “The Holy Ghost is the divine essence flowing out, or breathed forth, in infinite love and delight.”\textsuperscript{151} In the extratrinitarian glory, “the Holy Ghost is as the heat and continually emitted

\textsuperscript{148} 13.383:452.

\textsuperscript{149} 25:610.

\textsuperscript{150} The term “indexical signs” is coined by Charles S. Peirce (\textit{The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce}, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931-35], 2.304-5; 3.434; 4.56, 447, 531; 5.73). He classifies signs into three kinds: icons, indices, and symbols. “Every sign is determined by its object, either first, by partaking in the characters of the object, when I call the sign an Icon; secondly, by being really and in its individual existence connected with the individual object, when I call the sign an Index; thirdly, by more or less approximate certainty that it will be interpreted as denoting the object, in consequence of a habit (which term I use as including a natural disposition), when I call the sign a Symbol” (Peirce, 4.531). An indexical sign has a genuine ontological connection with its referent, in contrast with an iconic sign and a symbolic sign: “A sign, or representation, which refers to its object not so much because of any similarity or analogy with it, nor because it is associated with general characters which that object happens to possess, as because it is in dynamical (including spatial) connection both with the individual object” (Peirce, 2.305). For the indexical feature of religious symbols, see Robert C. Neville, \textit{The Truth of Broken Symbols} (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), 41-42.

\textsuperscript{151} 13:412.
influence, the emanation by which the world is enlightened, warmed, enlivened and comforted.” Edwards develops the emanation image of the Spirit:

All the metaphorical representations of the Holy Ghost in the Scripture, such as water, fire, breath, wind, oil, wine, a spring, a river of living water as proceeding from God, do abundantly the most naturally represent the perfectly active flowing affection, holy love and pleasure of God. So the Holy Ghost is said to be poured out and shed forth (Acts 2:32–33; Titus 3:5–6), as love is said to be shed abroad in our hearts [Romans 5:5].

As the communicating act of the Father is the pure act of love, the Spirit, the communicating act of the Son is the emanation of good from the ground of love, the Spirit. The disposition of the Son to create the world for the communication of himself is God as love that the person and work of Christ in redemption reveals. The Word is the truth of love that manifests the divine disposition of love and communicates the divine reality of love. God’s disposition and existence of love are the Holy Spirit. As the Son is the ground of divine idea, the Spirit is the ground of divine love. The communication of God the Son is the emanation of the Spirit of God from God the communicative ground of love.

The New Creation of Salvation

Created beings emanated from God by the Son’s communication partake of the divine being with their difference in degree of participation. The grades of being scale from body through soul to the spiritual excellence of virtue. The proper communication of the Son himself

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152 13:434.
153 13:468.
is spiritual beings and only “a sort of a shadow or glimpse of his excellencies” is communicated to bodies, because God and proper beings are spiritual existence.\footnote{Ibid.}

After divine creation out of nothing in the beginning, the human bodies are made out “of preexistent matter.” On the contrary, like “some rare instances of miracle,” a human soul is created out of nothing by God’s immediate communication of divine self:

[T]he soul of man is . . . the chief and most noble of all, and the crown and end of all the rest . . . should be reserved to be the more immediate work of his own hands, and to be \textit{communicated directly from him}, without the intervention of instruments or honoring second causes . . .

the soul is represented as being in a higher, more direct and immediate manner from God, and so communicated that God did therein as it were \textit{communicate something of himself}, something of his own Spirit of life or divine vital fullness. (emphasis mine)\footnote{20.1003:327-28.}

Particularly, Edwards distinguishes a \textit{natural or carnal} soul, who is influenced by the Spirit of God with the \textit{common} grace, from the \textit{spiritual soul} of \textit{saving} grace, who “partakes of \textit{the nature} of that Spirit.”\footnote{21:178-80.} Original human reason and conscience is “a participation of the divine \textit{essence},” but the participation is lost with the fall; hence “the giving of the Holy Spirit, therefore, in sanctification is a sort of adding a new-soul to this that is come to \textit{nothing}, or is \textit{making a new soul} of this” (emphasis mine).\footnote{13.210:342.} The new creation of God is “imparted \textit{more immediately by himself},” without any intervention of secondary causes, than the creation of human soul: it leads humans to the “\textit{true virtue and holiness}, which is the highest and most noble of all the qualifications gifts and attainments of the reasonable creature, and is the crown and

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\footnotetext{154}{Ibid.}
\footnotetext{155}{20.1003:327-28.}
\footnotetext{156}{21:178-80.}
\footnotetext{157}{13.210:342.}
glory of the human, and that by which he is nearest to God and does partake of his image and nature, and is the highest beauty and glory of the whole creation, and is as it were the life and soul of the soul” (emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{158}

The new creation of salvation is the work of Christ and the Spirit that repeats and completes the old creation. For that reason it represents the structure of the old creation and of the creation of Christ’s person and work. The new creation of conversion is creation \emph{out of nothing from God}. The communication of the Word that shines forth light is a new creation to confer \emph{being} by \emph{emanation} through the Spirit, and the being is the \emph{personal} existence of \emph{spiritual life}:

\[\text{The Scripture speaks of the actual being of a gracious principle in the soul . . . . Natural men are represented in Scripture as having no spiritual light, no spiritual life, and no spiritual being; and therefore conversion is often compared to opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, and a work of creation (wherein creatures are made entirely new), and becoming newborn children. (emphasis mine)}\textsuperscript{159}\]

First, conversion by saving grace or virtue is creation \emph{out of nothing} compared to a resurrection:

\[\text{[C]onversion is represented by in the Scriptures, particularly its being represented as a work of creation. When God creates, he does not merely establish and perfect: the things which were made before, but makes wholly and immediately something entirely new, either out of nothing, or out of that which was perfectly void of any such nature, as when he made man of the dust of the earth. (emphasis mine)}\textsuperscript{160}\]

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{158} 20.1003:328.
\item\textsuperscript{159} 2:204.
\item\textsuperscript{160} 21:519.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
There is no medium between being dead and alive. He that is dead has no degree of life. He that has the least degree of life in him is alive. When a man is raised from the dead, life is not only in a greater degree, but 'tis all new” (emphasis mine).  

The new creation is out of nothing that “brings such great good out of such great evil . . . such order out of confusion” like life out of death. There is an infinite difference between good and evil that consists not in degree but in kind. Evil of sin without “the beauty of holiness” is “empty, no better than nothing, yea, worse than nothing.” Conversion is not “improvement” of that which is different only “in degree,” but the creation of “whole nature” in “an entirely new kind of principle” “either out of nothing or out of that having no degree of the same kind of qualities and principles” (emphasis mine).  

Second, the new creation out of nothing means creation wholly from God, that is, from pure benevolence according to God’s absolute free will and pleasure. The salvific act out of nothing does not depend on any involvement of secondary causes nor presupposes any preconditions of human subjects. The work of redemption is “so absolutely, immediately and apparently dependent on God, so that God alone should be exalted.” Edwards argues that grace . . . . has God reserved to be bestowed by himself, according to his arbitrary will and pleasure, without any stated connection, according to fixed laws, with previous voluntary acts of men, or events in the series of natural things.

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162 9:524-25.

163 2:274.

164 2:205.

165 21:164.

166 13.486:528.
Common benefits are as much immediately from God as men’s highest perfection and happiness; i.e., one is as much by the direct present exercise of the power of God as the other. But there is this difference: common benefits are statedly connected with preceding things in the creature, so that they are in a sense dependent on the creature; but this excellency and blessedness of the soul is connected only with the will of God, and is dependent on nothing else. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{167}

The new creation of divine grace is like the first creation out of nothing without any precedent existence, rather than a continuous creation out of nothing. In the work human subjects are in fact nothing, as Edwards explains:

God’s making holiness his end in justifying a sinner, or in contriving a method of justification, is . . . any more than his creating a being out of nothing in order to such an end. In which case, the merit or moral value of the subject of creation can’t be the ground or price of the benefit of creation, because the subject has as yet no being and therefore can have [no] moral value to purchase such a benefit. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{168}

Third, the new creation out of nothing but from God is the emanation from the pure act of divine ground that communicates the divine self by and through Godself: “There is no gift or benefit that is so much in God, that is so much of himself, of his nature, that is so much a communication of the Deity, as grace is; . . . it should be so much the more immediately given, from himself and by himself” (emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{169} In the new creation God’s communication of divine self is exerted in two ways, representing two processions in the Trinity of the Son and the Spirit: the communication of divine ideas to human understanding and the emanation of divine love to human will and hearts.\textsuperscript{170} The spiritual causation of new creature is the communication

\textsuperscript{167} 13.481:523-24.  
\textsuperscript{168} 21:366.  
\textsuperscript{169} 18.537:83.  
\textsuperscript{170} 13:495.
of the divine light of the Word through the emanation of the Spirit, which creates a new spiritual and divine sense for the knowledge of God’s spiritual beauty and a new disposition of will for the love of God.171 Jesus Christ himself, the essential Word of God emanates the word written and preached, as the sun shines forth rays of light.172 The emanation of the Word through the Spirit effects a work of the Spirit, “spiritual understanding, as consisting most essentially in a divine supernatural sense and relish of the heart.”173

Edwards’ distinguishes the ideas communicated by the Word through the emanation of the Spirit from natural ideas in religious experience. The imaginary ideas of imagination or fantasy have no ontological foundation. Their referent is “an external or outward nature,” but is “not perceived by the senses” and “is not present in reality.”174 They are delusive illusion caused by the animal spirits of body175 or the human projection of self-interest and self-love. On the contrary, the spiritual sensation is “true experimental knowledge of religion” that has a real ontological foundation of God’s spiritual reality and world.176 The divine light and spiritual sensation are not merely an epistemic causation but the ontological creation of spiritual beings as semiotic signs that are disposed to God by the life of love.

Accordingly, the communication of the Word is the emanation from God that transmits actually the life of divine being, the Spirit of God:

171 2:206.
172 10:542.
174 2:211.
175 2:289-90; 2:221, 310.
176 2:275.
The light of the Sun of Righteousness don’t 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. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{177}

The Holy Spirit is not only a mediator but also the object itself of communication, the divine self communicated by God. The Spirit of God “exerts and communicates himself in his own proper nature,” “dwelling as a vital principle in their souls” and “as an abiding principle of action.”\textsuperscript{178}

The new creation is a genuine emanation of divine self from God “infusing or exercising any new spiritual principle,”\textsuperscript{179} that is, “an extraordinary effusion of the Spirit of God, and a supernatural influence upon the minds . . . by the supernatural power of the Spirit” (emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{180} By contrast with supernatural and saving grace, the Spirit does not communicate herself\textsuperscript{181} in the natural grace of the Spirit operating upon natural humans and other creatures.

Therefore, the communication of the divine self creates a new creature out of nothing through the emanation of the Spirit herself. The emanation of divine light through the Spirit changes the “nature” of the soul of a saint to “become properly a luminous thing” so that “the saints . . . also become little suns, partaking of the nature of the fountain of their light” (emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{182} The new creature is “a being made partakers of the divine nature.”\textsuperscript{183} The new nature

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{177} 2:200-1.
\item \textsuperscript{178} 2:201-2.
\item \textsuperscript{179} 2:207.
\item \textsuperscript{180} 18.660:199.
\item \textsuperscript{181} 2:202.
\item \textsuperscript{182} 2:343.
\item \textsuperscript{183} 2:343.
\end{enumerate}
is a transformation of ontological foundation and frame that creates a new faculty and actualizes it by exercising it toward the perfection of being. The new creatures have “the sensation of a new spiritual sense” by which they are able to know and love “the beauty or loveliness of divine things”; through the spiritual sensation they can reach the beauty of moral perfection.184

Fourth, new creation through the emanation of the Spirit is a *remanation* that returns to God by new creatures’ glorifying God. The new being created by divine emanation becomes an *emanating* existence:

In this respect, the manner of their derivation of light, is like that of the lamps in the tabernacle, rather than that of a reflecting glass; which though they were lit up by fire from heaven, yet thereby became, *themselves burning shining things*. The saints don’t only drink of the water of life, that flows from the original fountain; but this water becomes *a fountain of water in them*, springing up there, and *flowing out of them*; John 4:14 and ch. 7:38–39. (emphasis mine)185

The new creatures emanate spiritual acts returning toward God, as God emanates creating acts toward the world by spiritual causation. Edwards explains the emanation of the new being returning to God as *remanation*, as the following passages quoted again exhibit:

In the creature’s knowing, esteeming, loving, rejoicing in, and praising God, the glory of God is both exhibited and acknowledged; his fullness is received and returned. Here is both an *emanation* and *remanation*. The refugence shines upon and into the creature, and is reflected back to the luminary. The beams of glory come from God, and are something of God, and are refunded back again to their original. So that the whole is *of* God, and *in* God, and *to* God; and God is the beginning, middle and end in this affair.186

183 2:340.
184 2:271.
185 2:343.
186 8:531.
The remanation makes the relation between God and the saints one of mutual love, which unites them for the fullness of happiness in the dialectics of complacence and benevolence, as discussed in chapter four. It is the actualization of the divine disposition to creation in the fullness of Christ as well as the human realization of their beings. The perfection of a spiritual being is actualized in the mutual relation of subservience, as it is in the intratrinitarian life of three persons. The participation of new creature in divine being is a partaking of God’s life. This affirms again the fact that the life of love in happiness is the essence of spiritual beings including both God and the creature. For that reason the saints’ acts of knowing and loving God create God’s new life of love with creatures and constitute the existence of God and creatures in their communal life.

Accordingly, the returning acts of the saints are the emanations of their beings to God that in a sense increases the being of God.

The emanation of creatures is the remanation of divine being again to Godself that God communicated to them, since the disposition in their hearts from which spiritual acts emanate is that which is emanated from God. Although the subjects of remanation are humans, the Spirit Godself indwelling in them is the foundation of human subjects, such that remanation is a wholly human act and wholly God’s own act. Consequently, in fact the remanation of the creature never adds new being to God, and the acts and emanation of divine being from God in creation never infringe on God’s self-sufficient existence of aseity, immutability, and simplicity.187

Fifth, the new creation is a cosmological emanation and remanation of “the whole elect universe” beyond the confined scope of an individual soul and humankind. The Holy Spirit applies and extends Christ’s act of redemption by his descent and ascent to the universal scale

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187 8:448.
such that the divine act of creation is the emanation and remanation of the Spirit of God to complete the end of creation through a cosmological new creation. God the Creator is the ground of being, as God is revealed as the first and efficient cause and the final and teleological cause in time, and God’s creation as emanation from God’s fountain of dispositional space and remanation to God’s ocean of infinite life of love.

The conversion of a human is “a great and universal change”\(^\text{188}\) “bringing a person into a new world.”\(^\text{189}\) The new creation relocates an individual in the spiritual world. The spiritual domain is not a thing ontologically isolated from the present universe. It is the same world but viewed newly in the light of a spiritual truth on the ontological principle that God the ground of being is “the infinite Fountain of Good.”\(^\text{190}\) The new world is the thing seen on the foundation of human love to God.\(^\text{191}\)

The spiritual world disposes an individual conversion on the context of God’s providence for the cosmological new creation of the whole universe, the kingdom of Christ in the new heaven and earth. Because the divine creation is the spiritual causation of God’s spiritual existence, the end of creation and the new creation is substantially the spiritual being of humankind. Edwards states that “Christ’s filling ‘all in all’ seems evidently to be intended that he supplies all the creatures in heaven and in earth”; but he interprets “all the creatures” as “all intelligent creatures” (emphasis mine).\(^\text{192}\) “The Son of God created the world for this very end,

\(^{188}\) 2:341.

\(^{189}\) 2:275.

\(^{190}\) 2:274.

\(^{191}\) 2:206, 240, 246.

\(^{192}\) 15.235:186.
to communicate himself in an image of his own excellency”; but “he communicates himself properly only to spirits” (emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{193} God’s creation to emanate divine self from God is the communication of God’s spiritual good of knowledge and love to the spiritual existence of human beings that have understanding and will.\textsuperscript{194}

However, the human return to God is not merely a psychological, individualistic, or anthropocentric movement limited to a human soul, a particular human individual, or humankind. On the contrary, it is the holistic, communal, and universal remanation of whole creatures including human body and all creatures besides human beings, which is accomplished by the communional relationship of mutual subservience.\textsuperscript{195} Edwards describes the moral contexts of communal world:

\begin{quote}
[T]he whole world should appear together, in one great assembly, before the judgment seat. The whole world is all one commonwealth and kingdom, all made of one blood, all under one moral head and one law and government, and all parts of it joined in communication one with another, all so far linked together that all have moral concerns one with another, and all are dealt with (as is evident only by God’s common providence) in the same manner and by the same rule, with respect to their moral state. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{196}
\end{quote}

The moral world in relation with God includes all beings, embracing creatures besides humankind. The knowledge and love to God of the regenerated are not immediate acts like that

\textsuperscript{193} 13.108:279.

\textsuperscript{194} 13:495.


\textsuperscript{196} 20.1007:337.
of pure act of the Trinity but are mediated by their bodies and other creatures of humans and nature. “The state of [the] inanimate, unperceiving part of the world, is nothing regarded any otherwise, than in a subserviency to the perceiving or intelligent [part].” 197 However, spiritual beings also serve other creatures to glorify God. All creatures exist in the relation of mutual subservience for the glory of God.

All creatures created by God’s communication of the divine self are the ideas of God for the glorification of Godself: “For God to glorify himself is to discover himself in his works, or to communicate himself in his works, which is all one; for we are to remember that the world exists only mentally, so that the very being of the world implies its being perceived or discovered” (emphasis mine). 198 Material beings are the types of spiritual things directed toward God, and all created beings are signs to signify God. The glorification of God is performed by understanding the meaning of signs referring to God and by actualizing their signification by love directed to God. Accordingly, spiritual beings should exist for the end of creation, the glory of God:

What could move him to will, that there should be some beings that might know his power and wisdom? It could be nothing else but his goodness. . . .

an inclination to show goodness. . . . Wherefore, if God created the world merely from goodness, every whit of this goodness must necessarily ultimately terminate in the consciousness of the creation; for the world is no other way capable of receiving goodness in any measure. But intelligent beings are the consciousness of the world; the end, therefore, of their creation must necessarily be that they may receive the goodness of God, that is, that they may be happy.

It appears also from the nature of happiness, which is the perception of excellency, for intelligent beings are created to be the consciousness of the universe, they they may perceive what God is and does. This can be nothing else but to perceive the excellency of

197 18.547:95.
what he is and does. Yea, he is nothing but excellency; and all that he does, nothing but excellent. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{199}

“Reasonable creatures are \textit{the eye of the world},” and they “are made to be \textit{the eye of the creation}” to behold the beauty, excellence, and glory of God the Creator’s workmanship in creatures.\textsuperscript{200} It means that they are the spiritual sense, disposition, and soul of the world, as the Spirit indwelling in the saints is to them and Christ is to the world.

Spiritual beings function as the eye and consciousness of the world by their remanation to God, which is only possible in virtue of their new creation through the emanation of the Spirit. The church composed of the new creatures is the fullness of Christ that emanates the light of divine being to the world by her remanation to Christ. The disposal of a sign in a new semantic context confers a new meaning on the sign, and the transformation of meaning means a new existence of the semiotic being because the essence of semiotic being is meaning. In the human knowledge of God through the created beings, they become signs signifying God such that the essence of their beings, the meaning of ideas in the semantic space of the Logos, is actualized. Moreover, creatures are transformed into aesthetic signs of beauty through the human love of God, which is exercised on the foundation of human knowledge through created beings.

Consequently, the centrality of humankind in divine creation derives from the spiritual characters of God’s existence and causation, but humans are a major but not the sole end of God’s creation. All creatures participate in the divine being and life through human participation in the divine life of love in happiness. The remanation of the saints communicated by emanation

\textsuperscript{199} 13.87: 251-52.

\textsuperscript{200} 20.1007:336-37.
of the Spirit creates the whole elect universe of God’s glorious fullness, which consists in the life of love by union of God and the creature:

And thus the whole old creation, both heaven and earth, as to all its natural glory and creature fullness, was to be pulled down, and thus way was to be made for the creation of the new heavens and new earth, or setting forth the whole elect universe in its consummate and everlasting immutable glory, in the fullness of God, in a great, most conspicuous, immediate and universal dependence on his power and sovereign grace, and also on the glorious and infinitely excellent nature and essence of God, as the infinite fountain of glory and love, the beholding and enjoying of which, and union with which, being the elect creature’s all in all-all its strength, all its beauty, all its life, its fruit, its honor and its blessedness. (emphasis mine)\(^\text{201}\)
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TRINITARIAN IMMATERIALISM OF DISPOSITIONAL ONTOLOGY

Introduction: Theological and Theocentric Ontology

I have elaborated the being and act of infinite God as the ground of being in dialectical and personal relation with creatures. In this chapter, I will elaborate how Edwards’ logic for apprehending the structure of divine being and creation reconstructs a theological and theocentric ontology and a relation of union in distinction between God and creatures.

Edwards’ conception of being is theological and theocentric in that it begins with the premise of God’s existence who is the creator and the ground of being. The theological principle of theocentric ontology is deduced from the religious experience of the divine reality and work in salvation. Therefore, the theological ontology is not merely the result of theoretical or speculative reasoning but is based on its own empirical foundation of religious experience. As exhibited above, Edwards explains it as “true experimental knowledge of religion” gained by the spiritual sensation of the regenerated, which reveals a new world of spiritual and divine things and convinces them “that there is a reality in religion.”1 The knowledge is not mere epistemic cognition but the actual experience of spiritual reality through their own ontological transformation by new creation. In the experience of regeneration the existence of God is invisible and spiritual, but establishes a new ontological ground in the depth of the human self and realizes a much stronger and more radical effect in reality than visible and physical phenomena. Humans are the subjects of experience but it is revelatory creation out of nothing emanated wholly from above the Other extra nos. The external cause of new creation, the being

1 2:275, 450-53, 461.
of God becomes the ontological foundation and the world is transformed to a new world illuminated in the light of relation with God the ground of being. In the spiritual causation of God, the light of epistemic enlightening is an ontological emanation that reveals God’s being and creates a new being. The communication of Christ’s revelation is emanated through the Spirit of God to reveal and communicate the being of spiritual God the Trinity and to create a spiritual existence in relation of ontological dependence on the trinitarian ground of being. The new creatures, which are represented by their epitome, Jesus Christ as the second Adam, become typical beings that manifest the ontological structure of God and all created beings.

Consequently, the revelatory experience of salvation constructs an analogy of faith, on the basis of which an analogy of being is established. Conversely, the analogical reasoning to God’s being provides a theological ontological ground for theocentric ontology. God’s act of creation and the new creation mediate and fabricate the hermeneutical circulation of analogical ontology between God’s being and created beings. God’s being as pure act determines the divine act of creation as emanating communication of the divine self to make creatures participate in the life of God’s trinitarian being. This God’s own act of revelation establishes an ontological ground for the analogy of being. Edwards declares it in his “The Mind,” no. 45: “God is the prime and original being, the first and last, and the pattern of all, and has the sum of all perfection” (emphasis mine).

In the analogical relation between the created beings and God the infinite and eternal ground, God’s being is revealed in the dialectic of perfection in being and personhood and God’s act in the dialectic of creation out of nothing and emanation from God.

The dialectical being and act of God manifests deity as the Trinity, the dispositional space of life in love, and the being of God founds an ontological ground for Edwards’ reconstruction

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2 6:363.
of a theological and theocentric ontology. God the ground of being redefines all independent substances as relational beings in the divine space to deconstruct substantial ontology and the logic of predication in subject-object disjunction. God the spiritual ground specifies all beings as the incorporeal mode of ideas in the divine mind to establish theocentric immaterialism. The ideal mode of beings is not a rational idea of humanistic idealism but a spiritual idea in the divine Logos that reveals the truth of the divine Spirit, love. The spirit of spiritual immaterialism of theocentric ontology designates beings in relation with the Spirit of God the infinite space differentiated from the spirits of finite humans. Since the spiritual ground of God is the dispositional space of life in love, created ideas are signs that are disposed to God, and ethical and aesthetic beings in that the essence of semiotic beings, the meaning in the divine space is actualized in the life of love, that is, the moral relation of harmonious beauty. In conclusion, Edwards’ theocentric ontology is a spiritual immaterialism of dispositional ontology according to the trinitarian logic.

The Spiritual Immaterialism of God the Spiritual Space

Theocentric Immaterialism

Edwards’ concept of God as the spiritual ground of being establishes his theocentric ontology as immaterialism by deconstructing substantial metaphysics. God is the spiritual space of pure act who creates beings continuously out of nothing through communicating act from divine self. The act of God’s spiritual space dissolves the substances of human souls and matters

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3 The term “immaterialism” is introduced by Berkeley in order to “refer to his doctrine of the mind-dependent nature of bodies” (Reid, “Early eighteenth century immaterialism in its philosophical context,” 1). I use the negative term of immaterialism and positively specify it with the words “spiritual” and “trinitarian” in order to underscore the theocentric, trinitarian, and pneumatological feature of Edwards’ ontology distinguished from other idealisms.
into ideas in the divine spirit. The ontological ground of a spiritual God transcends the disjunction between soul and body without reduction to either one of them. This confutes the Cartesian dualism of two substances of mind and matter, and the reduction of materialism to material substance or idealism to spiritual substance.

Edwards validates his theocentric immaterialism by two rationales of God’s creative act. In a theological aspect, the end of creation of a dispositional God postulates Edwards’ immaterialism. God’s creation of communicating the divine self to the creature purposes the glorification of Godself. As shown above in Edwards’ discussion of the new creation as remanation, which is the end of creation, “the world exists only mentally” as the signs of God’s work to be “perceived or discovered,” by which human beings perceive the excellence of God and glorify God.4 With respect to natural philosophy, in order to dismantle material substance, the crucial obstruction to immaterialism, Edwards reinterprets Newtonian science philosophically and theologically through his ideas of God and creation as communicating act from the divine spiritual space. Because the theological ground of immaterialism, the end of creation has been already elaborated above, here I will focus on Edwards’ natural philosophy.

Immaterialism: the Deconstruction of Material Substance

Revising the identification of God with space, Edwards reconstructs a new objective and theocentric ontological ground, viz., the trinitarian space of divine intelligent and living being. Edwards’ trinitarian space of divine mind is the spiritual existence of non-dimensionality differentiated from the Newtonian absolute space of extension. It occupies the place of absolute

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space as the ground of being instead of the Newtonian absolute space, to constitute an ontological foundation for his immaterialism. On the spiritual ground of being Edwards disjoins the extensional space from God and reduces it to a relative idea in the trinitarian space of divine mind. As the result of relativizing dimensional extension, Descartes’ material substances of extension and thereby matter are dissolved into ideas in divine mind. However, Edwards’ deconstruction of absolute space and material substance does not mean that extensional space and matter lose their objective identity of reality to be relativized into human subjective ideas. The ideas of space and matter are grounded on uncreated ideas in the divine mind, as distinguished from relative ideas in human mind. The spiritual space of the divine mind is not reduced to the human subjective mind.

Relativizing Newtonian absolute space, Edwards does not subject extensional space to matter but to the spiritual space of the divine mind. Edwards’ relative space is ideal rather than material. In “Mind,” no. 9, Edwards differentiates the necessary existence of God from Newtonian absolute space. Edwards redefines the latter, identified with God, as a necessary and simple idea in divine mind, as the existence of all exterior things is mental. Extensional space is necessarily connected with other simple exterior ideas of extensional matter. It is absolute in relation with bodies and distinct from them in the sense that it is the common substance or subject of exterior things. Nevertheless the idea of space always subsists in relation with ideas of exterior bodies and divine mind. In the respect that space is always associated with bodies,

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5 Edwards’ concept of space as a necessary idea of exterior things seems to adopt Descartes’ concept of internal space and revise it as ideas according to his immaterialism. Descartes accepted Philoponus’ distinction of dimension of space from bodies that he attributes to extension of a generic unity distinguished from bodies. But he did not separate the spatial extension from bodies. For Descartes, extension is always occupied by bodies. He associated extension with bodies as the substance of matter, drawing on Philoponus who rebutted Aristotelian indeterminate matter and assigned three-dimensional extension to prime matter. Unlike Descartes Edwards holds that extension is not substance but an idea of solidity subsisted by another substance, God’s power (6:205). For Descartes’ concept of internal space and its influence from Philoponus, refer to Grant, 14-17.
Edwards agrees with his denial of void space separated from bodies, referring to Descartes in the corollary of “The Mind,” no. 9. For the same reason, there is no infinite space beyond the universe of matter and before the creation of bodies as shown above in the explanation of “The Mind,” no. 13. In conclusion there is no absolute dimensional space self-existent, but only relative ideas of space that exists only in relation with ideas of bodies and God’s mind.

But relativity in relation with God the absolute ground of being does not mean subjectivity. In “The Mind,” no. 13, Edwards compares the idea of space in a human mind to a colored space, which is composed of extensional bodies perceived as the ideas of colors by human sensation. He argues that the colored space of a man born blind would be nothing like ours. To put it in another way, the human idea of space is a subjective idea that is perceived differently by each observer and exists in human mind demarked from the objective reality of external things. Edwards concludes: the substance of bodies is a stable idea in God’s mind with the divine stable will; and human ideas are the things that are communicated from God by the divine will according to laws established by God. The idea in the infinite mind of the Creator is communicated to human finite minds after a different manner adapted to human finitude, as it was in the case of divine communication of ideas into the finite mind of Christ’s human nature. Despite the subjectivity of the human mind, God’s mind furnishes the ground of being for the objective identity of exterior ideas of bodies. The human mind is not an absolute ground that causes subjective ideas in the mind and the exterior ideas of bodies, but a sort of relative space

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7 6:344-45.
that depends upon divine ideas in God’s mind. The space of divine mind is an absolute space for human spirits and material bodies.

Edwards employs the Cartesian concept of extension as the substance of matter in ways diametrically opposed to Cartesian dualism. As in Descartes’ case, Edwards’ idea of space is the substance of bodies as exterior ideas. But Edwards dismantles the Cartesian material substance of extension by grounding it on a more fundamental substance, the space of God’s mind. As spatial extension is relativized into an idea, matter grounded on the substance of extension also is reduced into ideas. Exalting the non-dimensional divine mind to absolute space, Edwards dissolves the concept of extension itself to subsidiary category rather than, as More did, employing it as the common ground of spirit and matter. This deconstruction of material substance and extension itself is conducted by reinterpreting Newtonian natural philosophy according to Edwards’ immaterialism. As elaborated above, the Newtonian world is composed by atoms in absolute space and is operated by laws of gravitational power. According to his natural philosophy, Newton ascribed the phenomena of the universe to God’s exercise of spiritual power according to divine wisdom and will through the extension of his immensity. Edwards follows Newton’s theological interpretation of natural phenomena except for the concept of absolute space based on More’s incorporeal extension.

For Edwards, solidity, the effect of divine power, is more substantial than extension. Extension is not the substance of matter as it was for Descartes, but depends on solidity. “If there is no solidity, there is no extension, for extension is the extendedness of the solidity. Then all figure and magnitude and proportion immediately ceases.” Edwards grasps the essence of the

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8 6:205.
body as solidity or resistance by divine power in order to emphasize that the identity of a body is annihilated by breaking its solidarity into parts. In other words, bodies lose their being without the preservation by constant exercise of God’s infinite power, gravity.\textsuperscript{9} Solidity is a motion of “resistance to touch, the resistance of some parts of space,” which is caused by gravity, the divine immediate operation of infinite power.\textsuperscript{10} Consequently, bodies have no unknown substance of their own which subsists by itself and stands underneath to keep up solidity and all other properties. The proper substance of bodies is God’s creation and preservation: the immediate exercise of divine power according to particular manner that causes resistance in some part of space and communicates the resistance from one part of space to another successively.\textsuperscript{11}

Edwards develops the theological conclusion of Newtonian natural philosophy into his immaterialism. Newtonian physics interprets physical phenomena by mathematical laws that are apprehended by human reason. Clarke argues that the cause of natural phenomena is not material or mechanical but an intelligent being, and mathematical principles demonstrates metaphysical principles.\textsuperscript{12} Like Newton, Edwards induces the metaphysical substance of bodies as God’s power from the mathematical law of gravity that constitutes the phenomenon of the solidity of bodies. He articulates that God’s power, the substance of bodies, is “nothing else but the constant law or method of that actual exertion” of God’s power.\textsuperscript{13} Going further than Newton, who stops

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[10] 6:205, 214, 234.
\item[12] As Clarke states, mathematical principles show that the frame of nature arises from anything but an intelligent and free cause (Clarke, 20).
\item[13] 6:351.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
at mathematical analysis and declaration of divine cause, Edwards incorporates their
metaphysical significance into his immaterialism.

Edwards analyzes the immaterial essence of corporeal bodies by an analogy of the divine
spiritual cause to the spiritual function of human mind. In human cognition, external things are
perceived as a distinct color in a part of space demarked from other parts of colors. In “The
Mind,” no.13, Edwards states, “The idea we have of space, and what we call by that name, is
only colored space, and is entirely taken out of the mind if color be taken away; and so all that
we call extension, motion and figure is gone if color is gone.”14 In a human mind the idea of
color becomes a substantial idea on which other properties of a matter depend. Edwards holds, in
“The Mind,” no. 27, that an idea of a body is constituted by the idea of color that corresponds to
the essence of the body, that is, solidity constituted by divine powers: “For what idea is that
which we call by the name of body? I find color has the chief share in it. ’Tis nothing but color,
and figure which is the termination of this color, together with some powers such as the power of
resisting, and motion, etc., that wholly makes up what we call body.”15 The extension of a thing,
which is conceived as the substance of matter by Descartes, is perceived by the idea of color that
demarks a part of space from other parts of space. Extension exists in the human mind by
perception, the action of the human mind, and as a mode of perception, viz., an idea of color. The
space in human perception is patched by distinct ideas of colors. Consequently the human mind
becomes an absolute space in which an idea of color demarked in relative space is created by
perception and is located through distinction by relation with other spaces of ideas.

14 6:343-44.
15 6:351
Analogous to ideas in human mind by perception, beings are ideas in the space of divine mind by God’s spiritual action. Edwards reaches this conclusion by dissolving the distinction of primary and secondary qualities. The primary/secondary quality distinction originated from Epicureanism, was revived by Galileo, Descartes, Boyle, and was explicitly articulated by Locke. Primary qualities such as solidity, extension, figure, number, and motion or rest, are supposed to exist objectively in a thing itself out of mind. Secondary qualities such as color, taste, smell, and sound are produced by sensation as subjective ideas, or modes of perception, in the mind. The distinction demarks objective physical reality from subjective mental ideas. Newtonian natural philosophy attributes to God’s execution of divine power the primary qualities. Going further, Edwards argues that primary qualities are the same as the secondary quality of color, because the external thing exists in the space of God’s mind by divine spiritual action.

In “Of Being,” Edwards parallels the primary quality of solidity caused by motion with the secondary quality of color caused by light. The world deprived of every ray of light would be immediately deprived of all its colors and become an incomprehensible infinite emptiness. Likewise, the universe deprived of motion would be immediately deprived of all solidity to become void of all figure and magnitude. Light is the substantial cause of mental ideas, motion that of physical reality. Both create and preserve the determinate identity of things and their distinctive ideas in human mind. A motion of resistance producing solidity is caused by God’s action of divine power, and light, effecting the idea of color, represents the perception of mind or the divine illumination to communicate divine knowledge to human mind. Therefore the solidity of matter is an idea in God’s mind, because God’s action is the communication of ideas in the

16 For the detail explanation of the distinction, see John Locke, Essay concerning Human Understanding, bk. 2, ch. 8 and Jasper Reid, “Early eighteenth century immaterialism in its philosophical context” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2000), 128-30.
The divine mind is the space of human ideas and matter. Edwards reaches the conclusion of immaterialism against materialism:

What then is become of the universe? Certainly, it exists nowhere but in the divine mind. . . . a world without motion can exist nowhere else but in the mind either infinite or finite.

It follows from hence, that those beings which have knowledge and consciousness are the only proper and real and substantial beings, inasmuch as the being of other things is only by these. From hence we may see the gross mistake of those who think material things the most substantial beings, and spirits more like a shadow; whereas spirits only are properly substance. (emphasis mine)

In “The Mind,” no. 27, Edwards elaborates more explicitly the link in his reasoning that external beings are reduced to ideas, the secondary quality in mind, on the ground of God’s mind. The primary qualities that are regarded as external existence out of a human mind such as solidity, extension, figure, motion are subsumed into resistance, the actual exertion of God’s power. The essence of material extension is solidity and the substance of solidity is God’s exertion of power to resist in some part of space. For resistance “there must be something resisted before there can be resistance.” But there cannot be any object of resistance out of the mind since all external beings are nothing but a divine power according to God’s establishment. Since God is the spiritual existence of consciousness, the exercise of divine power is a spiritual function of the divine mind, that is, God’s perception and knowledge. All external beings to be resisted are the effects and objects of divine perception and, thus, are comparable to the idea of color as formed by human perception. The exercise of divine power is embodied as and conducted with “a mode of an idea” in the space of the divine mind. Edwards reaches the conclusion of immaterialism: “It is easy to conceive of resistance as a mode of an idea. It is easy

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17 6:206.
to conceive of such a power or constant manner of stopping or resisting a color. The idea may be resisted—it may move, and stop, and rebound . . . The world is therefore an ideal one”; “all material existence is only idea”; “all existence is mental, that the existence of all exterior things is ideal”; “the world, i.e., the material universe, exists nowhere but in the mind” (emphasis mine).

Consequently, the substance of bodies, traced back to the exercise of divine power by Newtonian natural philosophy, is rendered anew in immaterialistic terms: “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” (emphasis mine). In Newtonian natural philosophy the world is composed of atoms in infinite space and is operated by the laws of gravity power. Edwards reinterprets the space, power, and law of Newtonian science according to his theocentric immaterialism: all phenomena in the divine space are interpreted as instances of God’s operation of divine power according to the laws of divine wisdom, that is, God’s actualization of divine ideas in God’s mind by divine will.

Accordingly, there is no material substance out of mind or independent from the spiritual act of mind: “as bodies have no substance of their own, so neither is solidity, strictly speaking, a property belong to body; and to shew how. And if solidity is not so, neither are the other properties of body, which depend upon it and are only modifications of it. So that there is neither real substance nor property belonging bodies” (emphasis mine). Matter and spirit have the

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19 6:344.
20 6:238.
same mode of existence. “All existence is perception. What we call body is nothing but a particular mode of perception; and what we call spirit is nothing but a composition and series of perceptions, or a universe of coexisting and successive perceptions connected by such wonderful methods and laws.”\textsuperscript{21} Therefore, Edwards contravenes materialism: “From hence we may see the gross mistake of those who think material things the most substantial beings, and spirits more like a shadow; whereas spirits only are properly substance.”\textsuperscript{22} Edwards supports his position by invoking Ralph Cudworth’s discussion about the allegory of cave of Platonic idealism.\textsuperscript{23} In opposition to materialism, material things are the shadow of spiritual beings: “nothing else has a proper being but spirits, and as bodies are but the shadow of being.”\textsuperscript{24} He assertively refutes Hobbes’ materialism: “instead of Hobbes’ notion that God is matter and that all substance is matter; that nothing that is matter can possibly be God, and that no matter is, in the most proper sense, matter” (emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{25}

However, Edwards’ immaterialism does not negate the existence itself of material beings as illusion nor does it reduce them to subjective ideas in human minds. His point of immaterialism is that matter does not have its own substance or mode of being but has the same ontological mode with spiritual beings only with a lesser degree of being. In “The Mind,” no. 34, Edwards explains that his immaterialism does not mean that things in material universe exist in the human brain; but they “are truly in those places” as the mode of ideas, and thus it means that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{21} 6:398.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} 6:206.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} 6:359.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} 6:337.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} 6:235.
\end{itemize}
“this mode of our idea of place appertains to such an idea.” 26 Edwards argues that material things can have their actual existence in an “uncreated idea,” “God’s consciousness” without the actual perception of human minds. 27 As in the case of relative space argued above, material beings have their objective ground of being in God’s mind. Therefore, Edwards’ theocentric immaterialism is not merely a “phenomenalistic idealism” but an objective and realistic immaterialism. 28

Spiritual Immaterialism: the Deconstruction of Spiritual Substance

Going further from the negation of material substance, Edwards denies ultimately all substances of created beings. For him, “spirits only are properly substance.” 29 This means that spiritual beings are more substantial than matter, but does not mean that human souls are real substances. As seen above in the discussion about continuous creation by God’s immediate act, the substances of spiritual beings, like material beings, are also the divine space of act, that is, God’s exercise of power according to divine will and wisdom. 30 Edwards explicitly denies the substances of human souls:

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26 6:353.
28 Anderson designates Edwards’ philosophy as “phenomenalistic idealism, like that of Berkeley,” in his “Editors’ Introduction” (6:112). According to dispositional ontology, Lee emphasizes “a realist element” of Edwards’ immaterialism that the external beings have their own independent identities and realities according to their dispositions or laws (though they depend upon human mind for their full actualization), and thereby he identifies Edwards as “an objective idealist” (Lee, The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards, 65, 93-94, 250-54).
29 6:206.
30 3:399, 403.
For certainly there is something that immediately produces and upholds that thought; here is a new thing, and there is a necessity of a cause. It is not antecedent thoughts, for they are vanished and gone; they are past, and what is past is not. But if we say ’tis the substance of the soul (if we mean that there is some substance besides that thought, that brings that thought forth), if it be God, I acknowledge; but if there be meant something else that has no properties, it seems to me absurd. (emphasis mine)\(^\text{31}\)

The identity of created substance itself is the result of continuous emanation of act from God the spiritual space: “the existence of created substances, in each successive moment, must be the effect of the immediate agency, will, and power of God.”\(^\text{32}\)

Therefore, neither matter nor human spirits are their own substances, but God is \textit{the only one substance} of them, literally being itself:

’Tis impossible that we should explain and resolve a perfectly abstract and mere idea of existence; only we always find this, by running of it up, that \textit{God and real existence are the same} . . . that \textit{God is}, and that \textit{there is none else}. (emphasis mine)\(^\text{33}\)

\[\text{All that is real, it is immediately in the first being. . . . The nearer in nature beings are to God, so much the more properly are they beings, and more substantial, than bodies.} \quad \text{(emphasis mine)}\]

Matter and spirit are no longer juxtaposed antithetically as in Cartesian dualism or Spinoza’s two modes of God. But soul and body are ontologically integrated into God’s one substance with their difference in the degree of being. This means that “those beings which have \textit{knowledge and consciousness} are the only proper and real and substantial beings, inasmuch as the being of other

\(^{31}\) 13.267:373.

\(^{32}\) 3:401.

\(^{33}\) 6:345.

\(^{34}\) 6:238.
things is only by these”; “real existence depends on *knowledge and perception*” (emphasis mine).  

All beings depend for their existence upon God the ground of being. Creatures are not self-subsistent substances but subsist in relation with God who creates them continuously out of nothing through communicating act. Accordingly, the category of substance in its strict sense can be applied only to God. However, it is also meaningless to explain God’s being, because God is the ground of being and pure act that is simple without the distinction of essence and existence. The category of substance presupposes the disjunction of the subject-object scheme that is constituted by determinate beings and human cognition. But God the ground of being transcends the disjunction of substantial ontology and the logic of predication.

Therefore, God is not subsumed into the category of spiritual substance like the human soul, as God is not a material substance. God the spiritual ground overcomes the dichotomy of soul and body such that *God the Spirit* of infinite and eternal space transcends the finite *human spirits* and comprehends souls and bodies. The difference between the Spirit of God and human spirits distinguishes Edwards’ *theocentric* immaterialism based on *the Spirit* from *humanistic* idealism based on *human spirits*. In this sense Edwards’ theocentric immaterialism is a *spiritual* ontology that interprets *beings in relation with God the Spirit*, contrasted with an ontology of the world viewed from the perspective of *natural* human souls. Spiritual immaterialism based on the absolute being and cause of God repudiates Cartesian dualism and the reduction of materialism or humanistic idealism, and deconstructs their more fundamental principles, substantial ontology and the logic of predication.

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35 6:206, 398.
Edwards’ *spiritual* immaterialism designates the ontology of the *new spiritual world* which is revealed to the *regenerated*. The spiritual world is enlightened by their *supernatural relation with the Holy Spirit* through saving grace, unlike the *natural* relation of common grace. Edwards explains that the meaning of

the epithet “spiritual” . . . is not used to signify any relation of persons or things to *the spirit or soul of man*, as the spiritual part of man, *in opposition to body*, which is the material part: qualities are not said to be spiritual, because they have their seat in the soul, and not in the body: . . . . But it is with *relation to the Holy Ghost, or Spirit of God*, that persons or things are termed spiritual, in the New Testament. (emphasis mine)\(^{36}\)

The spiritual is not synonymous with merely a mental or psychological character contrasted with corporeality. It means a supernatural and divine thing, which is not in disjunction with materiality but is a new disposition brought about by the indwelling of the Spirit that integrates human soul and body harmoniously and regulates them in a new framework toward God.

Likewise, the supernatural world is not disjunctive with the natural universe but comprehends the whole world newly in relation with the God of Spirit.\(^{37}\) The spiritual world is a new *ontological interpretation* caused by the experience of the new creation that lays God in the foundation of their personal existence and on the place of the ground of being of the whole world. The Deity is not a conceptual and philosophical God described by the speculative or rational reasoning of natural reason but a personal and living God experienced in the salvation of Christ through his Spirit.

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\(^{36}\) 2:198.

\(^{37}\) In the same vein, Elwood explicates Edwards’ concept of the transcendence of God the infinite space as “the immanence of the transcendent” that Karl Heim’s term “suprapolar” and Reinhold Niebuhr’s the “super-historical” intended to designate, which is differentiated from the preternatural meaning of supernaturality in disjunction with the natural world (Elwood, 18-19). For the details of Heim’s idea in relation to the analogy of dimension, see 343, n. 16 below.
Of course, in a sense most idealisms in philosophical history presuppose the ultimate reality of spiritual being. Nevertheless, they vary in their definitions of the ultimate spiritual ground. Idealisms in Christian culture mostly postulate the God of Christianity as their ontological ground; but this does not guarantee their theocentricity in the sense that their starting points of analogy of being that proceed toward the ground are those of revealed theology, based on the interpretation of Scripture or the Christian experience of salvation. The remarkable feature of Edwards’ immaterialism consists in that it is founded on his reconstruction of the doctrine of God and creation and the analogy of being in virtue of the rational analysis on the revealed theology and the analogy of faith as elaborated above.

Consequently, Edwards verifies that God in spiritual relation with the regenerated is the spiritual space of the Trinity that incorporates the christological and soteriological structure of being into the ontological ground of being. The trinitarian space of God has the pneumatological structure of dispositional space. Hence, the ontological ground of Edwards’ immaterialism is the Spirit of infinite God, and the Spirit is the Holy Spirit of love that represents the life of the Trinity as the pure act of love. The ontological ground characterizes his theocentric immaterialism as a spiritual, trinitarian, and dispositional ontology that is distinguished from intellectualistic or rationalistic idealism, just as the feature of Edwards’ theology of the Trinity is. The new creature, the regenerated, represents the archetypical being of Christ and epitomizes the ontological structure of being in Edwards’ immaterialism.

**The Trinitarian Immaterialism of Dispositional, Semiotic, and Aesthetic Ontology**

The Relational Ontology of the Trinitarian Disposition

In Edwards’ spiritual immaterialism, God the ground of being and the Creator is the spiritual existence of perfection, the dispositional space of the Trinity. In relation with the divine
ground, created beings are defined as ideas disposed in the matrix of relations of divine mind according to God’s idea and disposition determined by divine wisdom and will. Accordingly, Edwards’ spiritual immaterialism is a relational and dispositional ontology according to the trinitarian logic.

**Beings as Dispositional Ideas**

God the ground of being is the spiritual being that has the understanding of ideas and the will of love. The Spirit of God has moral perfection, a teleological disposition of love that communicates divine self by benevolence in order to glorify Godself by complacence. God realizes the end of the divine disposition by disposing action according to divine ideas and will. As argued above, God is the personal being of an intelligent and voluntary agent that disposes beings in a particular point of space and time in disjunction with others; the determinate position is chosen from among infinite different points of supposable disjunctions according to divine idea and will. The divine person of disposing cause is the spiritual space of God’s mind in which beings and their contexts of spatiotemporal place exist as ideas. This means that the divine act itself is the ontological ground that emanates beings from God by communicating divine power, idea, and will, as demonstrated above. Therefore, God’s disposing act is the exercise of divine power according to God’s will and wisdom, and the communicated divine attributes themselves constitute the beings of creatures by being their law or disposition.

Edwards concludes that the ideal modes of beings are dispositional, arguing of the essence of material beings that “there is nothing but the power of resistance. And as resistance is

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38 18.749:392-97; 20:122.
nothing else but the actual exertion of God’s power, so the power can be nothing else but the *constant law or method* of that actual exertion. . . . The world is therefore an *ideal* one; and the *law* of creating, and the succession of these ideas, is *constant and regular*” (emphasis mine).\(^{39}\)

God’s disposition is the law of the divine exercise of power determined by divine wisdom and will; it thereby functions as the continuing substance of created beings by maintaining the “constancy and regularity, continuance and proceeding” of divine “arbitrary constitution” (emphasis mine).\(^{40}\) God’s power, will, and wisdom constitute the law or disposition of divine action, which determines the continuing identity of created beings as ideas in the divine mind. In a word, both God’s disposing act of the divine mind and the ideal beings created in the divine mind are represented and mediated by divine disposition. Creatures are disposed beings in God’s mind, and God the pure act of ground of being is the disposing cause, disposing act, and dispositional space. Consequently, Edwards’ *immaterialism* is a dispositional ontology: the ideas of created beings are *dispositional beings*, the identities of which are specified by the successive continuation of disposed positions in the divine space, and their positions are determined by divine disposition determining God’s continuous disposing act.

*The Relational Ontology of Disposition in the Trinitarian Space*

The disposed being does not have its own self-subsistent substance, but its identity of position is constituted by the web of relations determined by a particular law in the matrix of the divine disposition. It is like a mathematical point of zero-dimension that exists only in the sets of

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\(^{39}\) 6:351.

\(^{40}\) 3:403-4.
relations determined in a higher dimension without its own length, area, or volume. Accordingly, the essence of a being is not its own substance but its *disposition* and *relations* in God’s dispositional space. Edwards’ immaterialism is a *relational ontology*, which is specified as a *dispositional ontology*. Edwards defines all beings in relation with God the ground of being, so that he deconstructs the substances of created beings. The relations with God constituting beings of creatures are dispositions, since God is the dispositional space of disposing act.

The dispositional feature of Edwards’ theocentric ontology derives from the fact that his doctrine of God is thoroughly trinitarian and his theology of the Trinity has a pneumatological frame that represents God as the Holy Spirit, the disposition of love to communicate divine self. As mentioned above, Edwards follows the traditional doctrine that God creates beings by divine will according to archetypical ideas in God, as other theocentric immaterialisms insist: God the intelligent and voluntary agent has the end of future good that already exists in the divine idea by understanding and acts with design by will to select the best; “the substance of all bodies is the infinitely exact and precise and perfectly stable *idea in God’s mind*, together with his stable *will.*” However, Edwards’ immaterialism is demarcated by the point at which he reinterprets

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41 The idea of dispositional ontology derives from Sang Hyun Lee’s interpretation of Edwards’ thought. His definition of a dispositional ontology is as follows: dispositions as “habits and laws function as the permanent and structural principles of being. . . . the dynamic nature of reality . . . results from this dispositional reconception of being. . . . (1) The most basic character of reality is dispositional— that is, an ordered power of tendency. (2) Being is the act of moving from virtuality to full actuality. And (3) reality is in a process of being increased or multiplied in actuality” (Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 95). According to Daniel, I redefine Lee’s dispositional ontology in light of God as the dispositional *space* and the trinitarian ground of being (see 208, n. 155 above). As Daniel shows, “a disposition is a dis-position” disposed in a position of space “whose meaning consists in pointing beyond itself to an other” (Daniel, *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards*, 90, 134).


43 6:344.
the doctrine in the light of his reconception of God’s trinitarian being and act according to the dispositional ontology of God.

The power, wisdom or ideas, and will or disposition or act of God represent respectively the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. God’s exercise of divine power according to divine wisdom and will is the Son’s communication of divine self through the emanation of the Spirit. Therefore, beings created by the trinitarian act of the Trinity are fabricated by the trinitarian structure such that they are dispositional ideas. The Holy Spirit, the disposition of God, represents the Trinity and the divine being that is communicated to and present in creatures. The ontological connection between God and the creature through the emanation of the Spirit determines the ontological structure of creatures as dispositional beings, as shown above in the epitomic case of created beings in that the new disposition of the Spirit creates the new beings of the regenerated. Consequently, Edwards’ theocentric immaterialism is a trinitarian and spiritual ontology of disposition.

The Realistic Idealism of Dispositional Ontology

Edwards’ trinitarian structure of dispositional ontology is founded on the ground of being as the dispositional space of the Trinity, and it interprets beings as dispositional ideas in the divine ground. The dispositional space of the Spirit that emanates created beings by disposal represents the space of divine idea, the Logos, which frames the ground of divine power, the Father. God’s power is communicated as the divine idea of the Son, and the uncreated idea of the Logos is realized into the actual existence of created ideas in the divine disposition of the Spirit. Edwards asserts in “The Mind,” no. 36: “Things as to God exist from all eternity alike.

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44 For Edwards’ realistic idealism, see 311, n. 28 above.
That is, the idea is always the same, and after the same mode. The existence of things, therefore, that are not actually in created minds, consists only in power, or in the determination of God that such and such ideas shall be raised in created minds upon such conditions” (emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{45}

The determination of God is the divine disposition.

Created beings are present already in the uncreated idea of God’s mind from all eternity and without succession, that is, in the Son who is God’s one simple idea of divine self.\textsuperscript{46} The uncreated idea of God is the dispositional space of God’s mind, in which the actual existence of beings subsists. Edwards explains in “The Mind,” no. 34:

[I]f it be inquired what exists in the divine mind, and how these things exist there, I answer: there is his determination, his care and his design that ideas shall be united forever, just so and in such a manner as is agreeable to such a series. . . . he causes all changes to arise as if all these things had actually existed in such a series in some created mind, and as if created minds had comprehended all things perfectly. And although created minds do not, yet the divine mind doth, and he orders all things according to his mind, and his ideas. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{47}

God has disposed the whole series of ideas of things in the web of relations which are inseparably interconnected by dispositions or laws like an organic whole of a body.

As Edwards argues in “The Mind,” no. 40, the universe of whole spatiotemporal extension disposed by God is the complete “system of the ideal world,” in which all ideas are “united forever” such that the least change would cause the infinite alternations to make the whole universe otherwise; it is like the system of the laws of gravity that “the existence and motion of every atom has influence, more or less, on the motion of all other bodies in the

\textsuperscript{45} 6:355.

\textsuperscript{46} 6:356; 13.94:257-58; 18.749:392.

\textsuperscript{47} 6:354.
universe”⁴⁸, therefore, “those things . . . which have an actual existence, but of which no created mind is conscious” exist “in God’s supposing of them, in order to the rendering complete the series of things—to speak more strictly, the series of ideas—according to his own settled order and that harmony of things which he has appointed[:] the supposition of God which we speak of is nothing else but God’s acting in the course and series of his exciting ideas, as if they, the things supposed, were in actual idea.”⁴⁹

God acts in time in the presupposition of the whole system of ideas, and the temporal acts of God are the manifestation of the eternal dimension of God’s whole dispositional space into temporal parts. A being disposed in the divine disposition presupposes, implicates, and manifests the whole system by its disposition fabricating the network of relations. The dispositional existence in divine supposition is a virtual being from the finite perspective of human cognition in the limitations of spatiotemporal dimension; however, from the point of view God it is in fact an actual reality that is already present with God in divine dispositional space and will necessarily occur in some occasions according to the law of disposition.

The disjunction between virtuality and actuality is the logic of human finite cognition in which most ideas are mere illusions dispersed away without realization into actual realities through practical acts. By contrast, the ideal matrix of the concatenation of causes and effects in which the dispositional being subsists is the most actual reality of divine pure act, the Spirit herself of God. Therefore, the ontological ground of Edwards’ immaterialism is not a kind of

⁴⁸ Edwards explains the cause of entanglement in the whole system of the cosmos by gravity in terms of God’s dispositional space that contains the relative spatiotemporal universe. We can find a similar viewpoint of the holistic universe of relationality in theological interpretation of modern quantum physics (Kirk Wegter-McNelly, *The Entangled God: Divine Relationality and Quantum Physics* [New York: Routledge, 2011]).

monistic nothingness that absorbs all beings into indistinguishable oneness and reduces all beings to illusion. As corroborated above in the discussion of the trinitarian simplicity in plurality, the dispositional space of the Spirit can be analogized to the optical space disposed by the simple colorless light of the sun that creates numerous varieties of color as in a rainbow. The dispositional space of God reveals the ground of being not as a mere monistic oneness of simplicity but as the trinitarian ground relation in the simplicity of plurality full of spiritual meaning and beauty, which comprehends all beings with their distinctive identity of reality. Therefore, Edwards’ theocentric immaterialism, based on the divine dispositional mind, is a realistic idealism that preserves the independent actual realities of beings external to human minds without reduction to human ideas.

As the Son and the Spirit manifest specifically God the Trinity, the dispositional space of the Trinity is revealed as the space of the Word and Love. The trinitarian space full of spiritual meaning and beauty disposes beings on the semantic and aesthetic matrix of dispositions. Accordingly, Edwards’ spiritual and trinitarian immaterialism defines dispositional existence as a semiotic sign of aesthetic beauty for ethical value.

The Dispositional Immaterialism of Semiotic Ontology

Edwards’ dispositional immaterialism is a semiotic ontology. Created beings are temporal and finite but are grounded on the uncreated idea in the eternal and infinite God’s mind. The dialectical structure of existence between eternity and time fabricates creatures as

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dispositional beings, which exist in God’s supposition of the dialectics of *virtuality and actuality*. The dialectical frame in God’s dispositional space specifies dispositional beings as semiotic signs of *mediating* signification.

Edwards presents analogically the semiotic fabric of beings by illustrating two cases of beings that are actually absent in present time but existent in the divine disposition as signs of the future in design or of past beings in memory. His analogy of divine eternal space to the human mind follows the same motif as Augustine, 51 but he goes further than Augustine on the point that he explains the transcendence beyond the limitation of a temporal dimension in terms of his dispositional ontology and thereby articulates more evidently the semiotic nature of beings in God’s eternal space. Beings exist in a temporal dimension with the dichotomy of *presence and absence*, but beings as ideas in God’s mind exist as semiotic beings of signs in the eternal space of God’s disposition.

In the case of signs of future things, God disposes beings according to divine ideas and disposition such that divine ideas are signs to signify actual beings in the future and the actualization of the divine ideas creates beings as signs in the dispositional space:

> [T]here is no other way that that which has *no actual existence* can have existence but only by *having existence in the understanding, or in some idea* . . . it argues that that cause is intelligent, and that he foresees that future thing, or that it exists already in his idea, just as much as if he foretold it. To foretell an event to come is to hold forth those things that are *signs* conformed to the future event, and by their conformity manifestly show that that *future event is present with the efficient of those signs*, and that there is an aim or respect of the efficient to the event in *directing and ordering and designing* those

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51 St. Augustine *Confessions* 11.18.23, 24; 11.20.26. Augustine understands the divine eternity with its analogy to ideas in mind: past as memory, present as direct experience, and future as expectation exist in the mind as present; future events in expectation exist in the present as signs or images.
things wherein the sign consists in conformity to the event signified, and for an end, viz. to signify or give notice of that future event. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{52}

In temporal aspects God’s disposition according to the divine idea in God’s eternal space is revealed analogically as a presupposition of future events in designing action. The supposition of God in divine dispositional space is the presupposition of ideas in the ideal space of the Son. A supposed being in the divine disposition is a presupposed idea of a sign in the divine understanding of the Logos. Uncreated and eternal ideas in the Logos are realized into the actual existence of ideal beings by God’s act disposing the ideas in the divine mind, and their realization is completed by communicating the ideas actually in the created minds. The space of the Logos is actualized by disposing action into a semantic matrix, and the abstract ideas in the Logos are actualized by becoming concrete signs disposed in the semantic matrix of dispositional space.

In the case of signs of past beings, Edwards explains human memory according to the same logic with God’s dispositional space, in “The Mind,” no. 69, illustrating the same example of furniture being present in a closed room without being perceived by human consciousness:

\textquote{Memory is the identity, in some degree, of ideas that we formerly had in our minds, with a consciousness that we formerly had them, and a supposition that their former being in the mind is the cause of their being in us at present. There is not only the presence of the same ideas that were in our minds formerly, but also an act of the judgment that they were there formerly; and that judgment not properly from proof, but from natural necessity arising from a law of nature which God hath fixed.}

\textquote{In memory, in mental principles, habits and inclinations, there is something really abiding in the mind when there are no acts or exercises of them, much in the same manner as there is a chair in this room when no mortal perceives it. For when we say there are chairs in this room when none perceives it, we mean that minds would perceive chairs here according to the law of nature in such circumstances. So, when we say a person has these and those things laid up in his memory, we mean they would actually be}

\textsuperscript{52} 18.392: 393-94.
repeated in his mind upon *some certain occasions according to the law of nature*. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{53}

The actual existence of the chair exists in the memory of human mind, as it subsists in the uncreated idea and supposition of divine dispositional space.\textsuperscript{54} Human memory is a kind of dispositional space, in which the former idea of the chair *actually sensed* by perception in past is *supposed* as identified with the chair present now in the room by the judgment that *disposes* the past idea in the web of causation according to the disposition in the mind corresponding to a law of nature. In human *perception* the idea of actual existence alternates between presence and absence according to whether it is actually perceived or not; however, in the *disposition* of human memory the idea is always present without change. In the dispositional space of memory, the idea actually perceived in past stands as a representative sign to signify the continuous presence of a being and its idea. Analogically, we can compare the continuous actual existence of the chair to the divine uncreated idea of the Logos as a whole, the past idea actually perceived to an actual being in human cognition, and the repeated ideas of the chair according to the disposition to all beings that exists in the divine supposition of God’s dispositional space regardless of human actual perception.

The simple and one idea of the eternal Logos that implicates the disposal of all beings as a whole is disposed into created beings as ideas in God’s mind according to divine disposition. By being disposed in a position in the dispositional space, a dispositional being represents the whole system of dispositional space, since through the web of relations the particular position in the matrix is related with all ideas composing the whole system. The disposed position has

\textsuperscript{53} 6:384-85.

\textsuperscript{54} 6:356-57.
intentionality that directs it to the end of the disposing act of spiritual agency. As a result, the dispositional existence is a teleological being as an idea in the divine mind; the teleological direction fabricates the dispositional being as a semiotic being of a sign that signifies the end of God’s disposal by its dispositional existence itself. The essence of a semiotic being is its meaning of signification, and the meaning is revealed by its frame of relations structured by its disposition. The dispositional fabric of relations emerges in the matrix of beauty, and the signification of semiotic beings is actualized by being signs of beauty to realize the disposition of love.

The Dispositional Immaterialism of Aesthetic Ontology

Edwards’ spiritual immaterialism of dispositional and semiotic existence is an aesthetic ontology to be axiological, rhetorical, ethical, and affectional. As elaborated above, the divine disposition of the Spirit reveals God as the dispositional space of the Trinity, the spiritual beauty of life in the happiness of love. Semiotic beings disposed in God’s dispositional space refer to God by being images of God that repeat and represent God’s perfect being. Accordingly, in “The Mind” Edwards defines the essence and good of created beings in the dispositional space as the excellency of beauty in the relation of the spiritual virtue of love that brings about the affection of happiness.

Edwards’ chain of reasoning to aesthetic ontology is as follows (below emphasis mine):

(1) “Entity is the greatest and only good.” (2) “Existence or entity is that into which all excellency is to be resolved.” (3) “All excellency is harmony, symmetry or proportion”; “proportion is . . . an equality, or likeness of ratios”; “proportion is complex beauty”; “being . . .

is nothing else but proportion.” (4) “All beauty consists in similarness, or identity of relation.” (5) “Excellency may be distributed into greatness and beauty. The former is the degree of being, the latter is being’s consent to being.” (6) “This is an universal definition of excellency: The consent of being to being, or being’s consent to entity. The more the consent is, and the more extensive, the greater is the excellency.” (7) “One alone, without any reference to any more, cannot be excellent; for in such case there can be no manner of relation no way, and therefore, no such thing as consent.” (8) “Disagreement or contrariety to being is evidently an approach to nothing, or a degree of nothing, which is nothing else but disagreement or contrariety of being, and the greatest and only evil.” (9) “As nothing else has a proper being but spirits, and as bodies are but the shadow of being. . . . The highest excellency, therefore, must be the consent of spirits one to another. But the consent of spirits consists half in their mutual love one to another.” (10) “Wherefore all virtue, which is the excellency of minds, is resolved into love to being.” (11) “Agreeableness of perceiving being is pleasure, and disagreeableness is pain.” (12) “Happiness, strictly, consists in the perception of these three things: of the consent of being to its own being; of its own consent to being; and of being’s consent to being.”

The fundamental logic of this reasoning derives from his semiotic ontology of disposition. It is a holistic and propositional logic in opposition to the atomistic and predicative logic of substantial ontology. The holistic logic of dispositional ontology views beings from the perspective of God’s dispositional space that comprehends the system of the world as a whole, instead of individual elements of atomistic substance. It is a propositional logic in which subject

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56 6:335; 381; 332-33, 336; 334; 382; 336; 337; 335; 337; 363; 335; 338.

57 For the meaning of the logic of proposition contrasted with the logic of predication in substantial ontology, see 4, n. 10 above.
and object emerge as functions in terms of displacement on the ground relation of a proposition as a whole, in contrast to the logic of predication in which the subject and object stand substantially in disjunction and are related posteriorly by predication.

According to the holistic logic of dispositional and semiotic ontology, the essence of a being is not a substance but dispositional relation, that is, the frame of web of relations fabricated by disposition. The form of structured relations emerges in the contexts of dispositional space beyond the one point where the existence is disposed. Edwards comments,

How exceedingly apt are we, when we are sitting still and accidentally casting our eye upon some marks or spots in the floor or wall, to be ranging of them into regular parcels and figures; and if we see a mark out of its place, to be placing of it right by our imagination—and this even while we are meditating on something else. So we may catch ourselves at observing the rules of harmony and regularity in the careless motions of our heads or feet, and when playing with our hands or walking about the room. (emphasis mine)\(^{58}\)

A distinctive identity of being is grasped by the imagination that disposes and fabricates sensual ideas according to its law or disposition to compose a gestalt form. Likewise, the essence of a semiotic being, the meaning of a sign is specified by its semantic form constituted by the semiotic matrix of signs and their relations. A sign “alone, without any reference to any more”\(^{59}\) has no meaning, that is, no being. Meaningless nothingness and evil are a kind of signifying relations of a sign among infinite sets of relations, which disagree with God’s disposition of the semantic matrix of whole universe, the motif of the whole texts of God the Word. The vantage point of a dispositional and semiotic perspective is the end of disposition, which is manifested in the semantic matrix of dispositional space. The gestalt form shaped by the fabric of relations is

\(^{58}\) 6:336.

\(^{59}\) 6:337.
perceived by aesthetic sensation rather than analytic reason; its relation with the ultimate end or meaning that the disposition of whole ideal system delineates determines its value of good or evil; the goodness of value in consenting relations manifests beauty.

The disposition or law that weaves the matrix of relations determines the proportion, ratio, or identity of relations constituting beauty. The consent of relation is the identity of disposition. The degree of beauty is proportion to the extent of relations and consent in relations. As in the induction of a law from particular physical phenomena, more cases displays a principle more perspicuously; the more complex web of relations in a greater extension stands out in its disposition more crisply and simply. From the point of view of atomistic or elementary substance the excellence of simplicity is monistic oneness without composite parts, but from the aesthetic viewpoint it consists in the singular gestalt form of one delicate and superb disposition that penetrates, embraces, and fabricates complex plurality, which looks like disproportion in the narrower purview, as the harmonious beauty of simplicity in plurality:

*Particular disproportions* sometimes greatly add to the general beauty, and must necessarily be, in order to a more universal proportion — so much equality, so much beauty — though it may be noted that the quantity of equality is not to be measured only by the number, but the intenseness, according to the quantity of being. . . .

Spiritual harmonies are of vastly larger extent; i.e., the proportions are vastly oftener redoubled, and respect more beings, and require a vastly larger view to comprehend them, as some simple notes do more affect one who has not a comprehensive understanding of music. (emphasis mine)⁶⁰

The equality of substance demolishes the identity of an individual substance into insipid uniformity, but the equality of disposition weaving the structure of relations creates the exquisite beauty of union in distinction like a rainbow. Edwards writes, “Two beings can agree one with

⁶⁰ 6:335-36.
another in nothing else but relation; because otherwise the notion of their twoness (duality) is destroyed and they become one” (emphasis mine).\(^6^1\)

According to the foundational logic of holistic beauty, Edwards’ reasoning for his aesthetic ontology of love can be elaborated as follows. The signification of a semiotic being is actualized by its relation consenting to the end of its disposal. Since the identity of a sign consists in a semantic matrix of God’s eternal and infinite dispositional space, the end of the divine disposition is not a point in the spatiotemporal space, but is a gestalt form that emerges from the whole matrix of relations of God’s dispositional space at the eschaton. The gestalt form of the matrix reveals the divine idea of the Logos as a whole. The content of the form that the divine idea signifies is the truth of Godself, that is, the beauty of the trinitarian life of love in happiness. Accordingly, the semantic matrix of the Logos is disposed into the dispositional space of the Holy Spirit, that is, the dynamic and aesthetic matrix of the life of love. God’s dispositional space repeats and represents the trinitarian space of happy life in love. Semiotic beings disposed in the dispositional space are realized into aesthetic signs, and they are axiological signs that are valued by their consent relation for the realization of their existences.

Consent for the value and beauty of beings become ethical and affectional relations in the spiritual contexts of the ground of being as God the Spirit. The spiritual feature of God’s being formulates the divine ground as a dispositional space, and the dispositional structure fabricates beings as the dispositional signs of beauty. The dispositional, semiotic, and aesthetic frame derives from the spiritual structure of being that reflects the trinitarian structure of the ground relation as the pure act of love. As a result, the nature of beings belongs to Charles Peirce’s

\(^6^1\) 6:335.
category of the thirdness of mediation and representation that subsists in triadic relations like the trinitarian being of God.\textsuperscript{62} The teleological relation of disposition is mediated by the triune relation of semiotic signification, and is actualized into the harmonious relation of the whole that shapes beauty.\textsuperscript{63} The triadic relation of the thirdness of disposition, signs, and beauty postulates the third existence of spiritual beings that mediate God and the creature. Beings in divine supposition are actualized by the third spiritual existence that perceives the beings, interprets the meaning of aesthetic signs, and acts for realizing the meaning of value into beauty. Without the spiritual existence beside God, dispositional, semiotic, and aesthetic beings are in fact meaningless nothing. The actualization of value of being into beauty constitutes the ethical relation among spiritual beings of God and spirits, which regulates the whole matrix of dispositional relations.

The ethical relation of spiritual beauty is grounded on the aesthetic sensation of beauty and affectional influence. The interpretation of signs disposing them in their semantic matrix is a kind of aesthetic sensation of a gestalt form. The aesthetic image influences the perceiver by evoking affection. The affectional effect validates the point that the ontological structure of

\textsuperscript{62} Peirce, 1.328, 356, 361, 536-37; 5.66, 70-71; 8:328, 331-32. Peirce explains thirdness as a semiotic relation of mediation contrasted to firstness and secondness as follows. “The first is that whose being is simply in itself, not referring to anything nor lying behind anything. The second is that which is what it is by force of something to which it is second. The third is that which is what it is owing to things between which it mediates and which it brings into relation to each other” (Peirce, 1.356). “Category the Third is the Idea of that which is such as it is as being a Third, or Medium, between a Second and its First. That is to say, it is Representation as an element of the Phenomenon” (Peirce, 5.66). “Thirdness is the triadic relation existing between a sign, its object, and the interpreting thought, itself a sign, considered as constituting the mode of being of a sign” (Peirce, 8.332).

\textsuperscript{63} Peirce explains the tendency of things to take habits as “the Third or mediating element between chance, which brings forth First and original events, and law which produces sequences or Seconds” (“One, Two, Three: Kantian Categories,” in The Essential Peirce, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992], 1:243).
beings, which is dispositional, semiotic, and aesthetic, fabricates the epistemological frame of the same features:

The reason why equality thus *pleases* the mind, and inequality is unpleasing, is because disproportion, or inconsistency, is contrary to being. For *being*, if we examine narrowly, is nothing else but *proportion*. When one being is inconsistent with another being, then being is contradicted. But contradiction to being is intolerable to perceiving being, and the consent to being most pleasing. (emphasis mine)⁶⁴

Edwards’ reconstruction of spiritual immaterialism confers ontological significance on the aesthetic and affecional sensation to *sense the essence of being*, diverging from traditional rationalistic and empiric epistemology. The affection raised by aesthetic sensation entails the perception of the value of good and evil, and the axiological perception through the power of affection elicits acts that pursue the end intended and signified by beauty. Aesthetic signs function *rhetorically* through its affecional power that incorporates the aesthetic signification into ethical relations of consent. The actualized moral consent of love again forms an aesthetic sign of spiritual beauty to bring about the affection of happiness. The aesthetic nature of signs enables the semiotic cycle of the *triadic* relation to be repeated continuously by its affecional power. As a result, the mediating relation of *communicating signification* extends the *aesthetic* matrix of love in *communional* relation through the *ethical* relation of *mutual* love in order to complete the end of *disposition*, the beautiful *union* of whole world.

The ultimate purpose of the whole system of the universe is God being itself. “The sum of all exercise of the divine will” to dispose beings is “the divine love,”⁶⁵ which communicates the divine self by benevolence in order to glorify Godself by complacence. The divine disposition of

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⁶⁴ 6:336.

⁶⁵ 18.392:396.
love is accomplished by the harmony of consent among spiritual beings, the virtuous acts of love. The ethical relations of spiritual beings are constituted by the triune relation of consent among the three elements, its own being, other created beings, and God; it completes the dyadic relation of unactualized supposition and signs into the triadic relation of signification and beauty. As exhibited above in the discussion about the remanation of the whole elect universe, created beings contribute to the consent of spiritual existence by being aesthetic signs that represent the divine beauty and lead spiritual beings to know and love God; thereby, spiritual beings participate in the divine act of creation and through them all creatures partake of the life of virtuous love. The triadic relation of semiotic signification and ethical love shapes the beauty of harmony with union in distinction. It is the dynamic dialectics of life that transcends dyadic disjunction or dichotomous polarities, representing the trinitarian life of simplicity in plurality. All beings are aesthetic and axiological signs for the ethical value of life in love to evoke happiness.

The ontological power of dispositional being is communicated by the sign of beauty and emanated by its affectional influence, as the trinitarian act of creation communicates the divine self by the communication of the Son through the emanation of the Spirit. The affectional power of disposition is not a mere passive emotional affect but an active and creative spiritual power emanated from the dispositional space of the Spirit of love. The communicative ground of the trinitarian life is the semantic matrix of the Logos, the aesthetic space of Love, and the field of affectional power of the moral virtue of love. Images of God, created beings disposed in the divine space of communicative disposition are relational, dispositional, semiotic, aesthetic, axiological, rhetorical, ethical, and affectional existences in their communal relations of life in love.
CHAPTER EIGHT
THE UNION IN DISTINCTION OF TRINITARIAN PANENTHEISM

Analyses of the Relationship Between God and Creatures

I examined how Edwards’ *trinitarian* immaterialism overcomes the impasse between *dualism* and *monism* or reductionism. A dispositional ontology based on the structure of God’s trinitarian being and act enables Edwards to establish the *asymmetrical* relation of *union in distinction* between God and creatures. The dynamic *life of love* incorporates the *dialectical* structure of God’s existence in the perfection of being and personhood and of God’s communicating action by creation out of nothing and emanation from God. The dialectical relation of union in distinction integrates *personal theism* with *panentheism* to surmount the polarity of *dualistic theism* and *monistic pantheism*.

Edwards’ doctrine of God is *panentheistic* in the sense that God is the ontological ground of being *in* which all beings subsist, and simultaneously is a personal theism in the sense that God is the spiritual existence that stands in personal relation with humans. As elaborated above, Edwards attempts to integrate two poles of God’s being such that God is the spiritual person of dispositional space without any dualistic disjunction of God and the world. The dialectical synthesis is performed by his soteriological and trinitarian logic of life in love, and it is framed by his trinitarian immaterialism of dispositional ontology. Therefore, his personal theism is a *soteriological* and *trinitarian* panentheism, in which God and the world are united in distinction by the communional life of love representing God’s internal glory of the trinitarian life. Below I will examine how Edwards exhibits his *panentheistic personal theism* in his analogies of relationship between God and creatures, and demonstrates it with his innovative logic and ontology reconstructed according to the analogy of faith.
First, Edwards’ panentheism should not be understood in terms of the dualistic and crudely physical image of a container and its contents. God who comprehends the world might be illustrated as the container of the world, or the world could be compared to a vessel that needs to be filled with God’s fullness. However, this image is basically dualistic, for a container and its contents stand in a relation of disjunction on the same ontological level. The dualistic point of that analogy is apparent in the case of Plato’s cosmological myth of creation in the *Timaeus* suggesting that the Demiurge creates the ordered universe of cosmos by imposing forms on the formless receptacle as a *material substratum* and *spatial field*.\(^1\) In contrast to Plato’s receptacle, God is the only ground of being that does not allow any existence of primordial matter or material substratum. God is the spiritual space distinguished from the place of the physical field.

On the other hand, Edwards compares Christ’s humanity to a vehicle that contains the deity, the Spirit of God,\(^2\) and creatures or the church to empty vessels that should be filled with the fullness of God’s good.\(^3\) These similes, derived from the relation of human soul and body, heighten the absolute dependence of creatures on God and the spirituality of God. Despite of those strengths they are still the dualistic images of disjunctive beings.

Second, Edwards’ panentheistic relation between God and the world has an emanational motif of ontological continuity, but it is distinguished from monism or pantheism by the dialectic of infinity and finitude. To complement the weakness of containing image, Edwards dilates on the meaning of creatures as empty containers: “The saints are as *so many vessels, of different

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1 Plato *Timaeus* 48e-53c.


3 15.348:333, 15.448:530.
sizes, cast into a sea of happiness, where every vessel is full; this Christ purchased for all” (emphasis mine).⁴ God the ground of being is analogized as the ocean, which is a container but is already self-sufficiently replete by itself and fills the empty barrels. This figure contrasts sharply God’s infinite fullness with creatures’ finite emptiness. In comparison with the infinite ocean the vessel itself is almost nothing, and in fact it is absorbed into the ocean by being filled with sea water and becomes the same nature with it.

Edwards develops the analogy of divine emanation to remove any tint of dualistic disjunction and to articulate the ontological continuity between God and the world. Edwards’ analogical explanation of new creation, the culmination of divine emanation, exhibits this clearly:

The light of the Sun of Righteousness don’t 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. (emphasis mine)⁵

The creature emanated from God is not a vessel in disjunction with God, but is a real image of God that participates and is comprehended in the divine being like a part of an organic whole.

On the other hand, Edwards qualifies the image of emanation in order not to implicate a pantheistic demolition of distinction between God and creatures:

[T]he emanations of his fullness in the work of creation . . . . a communication of God’s infinite knowledge . . . . This knowledge in the creature is but a conformity to God. ”Tis the image of God’s own knowledge of himself. ”Tis a participation of the same: ”tis as

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⁴ 19:219.

⁵ 2:200-1.
much the same as 'tis possible for that to be, which is infinitely less in degree: as particular beams of the sun communicated, are the light and glory of the sun in part. . . .

. . . the communication of virtue and holiness to the creature. . . . hereby the creature partakes of God's own moral excellency, which is properly the beauty of the divine nature. . . . as truly as the brightness of a jewel, held in the sun’s beams, is a participation, or derivation of the sun’s brightness, though immensely less in degree. (emphasis mine)

The things emanated from God are the same as God’s own, but there is infinite difference in degree between them. As mentioned above, the infinity of quantitative difference forms ipso facto a qualitative discontinuity of difference in kind. Moreover, the spiritual nature of communicated being clearly differentiates divine emanation from the material image of partition from the whole. As the analogies of the Trinity to the sun and to the human soul complement each other, the spiritual and trinitarian structure of God’s being and act enables the dialectic of infinity and finitude to found the relation of union in distinction between God and the world. The trinitarian structure of divine spiritual space reconciles the continuity of presence with the discontinuity of transcendence between God and the world, as it constitutes the trinitarian life of union with distinction in the simplicity of plurality. Consequently, Edwards’ analogies of relationship between God and the world complementally delineate the relation of union in distinction; his trinitarian immaterialism of dispositional ontology incorporates the motifs of various analogies in order to overcome the ontological impasse of dualistic theism and monistic pantheism.

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6 8:441-42.
Identity in Distinction According to the Relational Ontology of Disposition

Edwards’ dispositional ontology of trinitarian immaterialism enables the relation of union in distinction between creatures and God the ground of being, which has been an incomprehensible conundrum to substantial logic and ontology. In substantial ontology, the identity and distinctions between beings are determined by the nonrelational properties of their individual substances. As Wallace E. Anderson explains, in contrast to Edwards’ relational ontology, according to substantial ontology, an individual substance “can exist by itself independently of all others, or that it can have any unity or self-identity apart from the relations in which it stands to others” (emphasis mine). On the one hand, in order to stand in any relation to each other, two beings must have “a similar nature or common properties, each in itself” as their own inherent attributes; on the other hand, to be distinguished from each other, they must have “a different nature and distinct properties each in itself.” Leibniz formulated the principle of the identity of indiscernibles to explain the identity of a being according to the logic of predication and substantial ontology: two or more objects or entities are numerically identical if they possess all the same properties in common. According to this logic, traditional theology explained the relation between God and the world with divine communicable attributes and their distinction with divine incommunicable attributes.

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7 6:85.

8 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, ed. and trans. Leroy E. Loemker (Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 1956), 413, 472-73, 821-22, 1045. Leibniz applies the principle to the identities of substances (472-73) and monads (1045). In the correspondence with Clarke, he employs the principle of the identity of indiscernibles in association with the principle of sufficient reason in order to refute the Newtonian absolute space of an indifferent vacuum in which things that are exactly alike and are transposable with each other can exist as numerically different beings in terms of their different positions in place (Leibniz, 1117-18, 1126, 1138-40; Clarke, 36-37, 45-46, 60-62).
The logic of substantial ontology is inherently infeasible for theology, which presupposes God’s existence as the ground of being who comprehends all beings and transcends the disjunction of determinate beings. The problem is induced from its fundamental ontological premise that its starting point is an individual substance which is independent from relations and stands in disjunction with other substances. First and definitely, as examined above, it cannot explain the kernel of Christian doctrines and theology, that is, the union in distinction of the Trinity. According to the principles of the identity of indiscernibles, the *repetition* of the same substance with any *distinction* as well as with numerical difference is impossible. The Father’s generation of the Son and their union in distinction with the *same substance* are unreasonable paradoxes of faith incompatible with rational theology.

Second, this conundrum is extended to God’s relation with creation to cause the disjunction of creation out of nothing and emanation. In the substantial ontology God’s communication of divine self is sharing of divine substance, since there cannot be distinction in God the ground of being. In divine simplicity any distinction of communicable and incommunicable attributes is meaningless, since all properties of God are identified with others and reflect the simple divine essence. The problem is the same even if the communicated attributes are defined as parts or aspects of divine nature, since God is not a divisible matter. On the contrary, if we give up divine simplicity, God’s communication of divine self becomes a sort of partition of divine being as in the case of crude materialism. Another solution has been to disjoin the direct ontological connection between the creature and God’s being and act, as in creation out of nothing without ontological communication and forensic imputation without infusion. This strategy presupposes the distinction of God’s communicable attributes as spiritual and moral things from the divine substance and being. It results in a nominalism in that God’s spiritual action of the Word and the Spirit of love cause real effects but in themselves merely
words and emotions without any communication of actual and substantial reality. The consequence inadvertently poses serious theological issues in that it severs *deus revelatus* (the revealed God) from *deus absconditus* (the hidden God) and fatally infringes on the ontological foundation of Christian theology to reduce religious phenomena to practical tools or illusive projection.

Third, according to substantial ontology the divine presence as the ground of being is inexplicable, since two substances cannot coexist at the same place and time without the collapse of their identities. In this paradigm two beings cannot be in real mutual indwelling. Union in distinction and distinction in union between them are impossible ontologically. There could be only the oneness of identity without distinction and the distinction of two entities without union. Oneness and distinction are actually incompatible. If all beings have not their own substance but only properties which are included in God as their substance, then there is no real identity of created beings and no distinction between God and other beings. The remaining alternative in the framework is to conceive of God as the one substance, and to reduce all other beings into parts on the same ontological level as the divine substance, as in materialism, or into the modes or properties of divine substance on a lower level, as does Spinoza. As a result, there is no way for all beings to be in God without losing their distinctive identities. There is no middle way between transcendence and immanence, dualism and monism, personal theism and pantheism, and the aseity and involvement of God.

In contrast to substantial ontology, Edwards’ relational ontology of disposition identifies all properties as relational. Instead of a substance, the identity and nature of a being are determined by relations fabricated in terms of its disposition. In the dispositional matrix, relation itself constitutes both identity and numerical difference: “In identity of relation consists all likeness, and all identity between two consists in identity of relation. 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 it their correspondency and beauty” (emphasis mine).\(^9\) Anderson elucidates the meaning of Edwards’ argument by illustration in his “Editor’s introduction”:

Because beauty consists in the identity or sameness of relations, Edwards emphasizes that in this case the relation of either body to the other is the same as the relation of the other to it; if one is just six feet from the other, the other is just six feet from it. In the case of this and all other symmetrical relations, no individual can stand in it to another unless the other stands in the same relation to it. But “is distant from,” “is just six feet from,” “is next to,” are also relations that nothing can have to itself. Whatever stands in such relations must, as such, be numerically distinct things. In this case, it would appear, numerical difference follows from the relation itself, or as Edwards might say, from the sameness or agreement of the relations; a difference of properties or relations is not logically required. Where no difference of property or relation is present, of course, the two bodies would be indiscernible, but they would still be numerically distinct.\(^10\)

Two distinctive identities have the same essence of their existence, that is, their consenting relation of beauty, on which they stand in the relation of union in distinction with same nature without the collapse of respective identities. Edwards writes, “Two beings can agree one with another in nothing else but relation; because otherwise the notion of their twoness (duality) is destroyed and they become one” (emphasis mine).\(^11\)

The aesthetic relation of union in distinction is the ontological ground of two distinctive existences, and it is established by being disposed in a place. The disposed relation with place functions as the prime relation of an existence. The disjunctive position is the essence of being that specifies the numerically different identity of the same nature:

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9 6:334.

10 6:86-87.

11 6:335.
I will not deny it to be possible for God to make two bodies perfectly alike, and put them in different places; yet it will not follow, that two different or distinct acts or effects of the divine power have exactly the same fitness for the same ends. . . . If God makes two bodies in themselves every way equal and alike, and agreeing perfectly in all other circumstances and relations, but only their place; then in this only is there any distinction or duplicity. . . . for this determination he has some reason. There is some end, for which such a determination and act has a peculiar fitness, above all other acts. . . . The difference of place, in the former case, proves no more than the difference of time does in the other. (emphasis mine)\(^\text{12}\)

Because only a singular position in a spatiotemporal place is the one necessary condition of numerical difference, Edwards holds the weakest form of Leibniz’s principle of the identity of indiscernibles such that it is trivialized. On the other hand, a specific position, instead of a substance of inherent nature, determines the essence and all natures of a distinctive existence. Two beings of the same properties in different places are not mutually transposable: “that is not true; namely, that the two bodies differ and are distinct in other respects besides their place. So that with this distinction, inherent in them, they might in their first creation have been transposed” (emphasis mine).\(^\text{13}\) In “The Mind” no. 72, Edwards maintains the same with the identity of a person, which does not consist in “sameness or identity of consciousness . . . having the same ideas” but in God’s disposition at a particular spatiotemporal place.\(^\text{14}\) Thus, the spatiotemporal space is not indifferent but is a disposed matrix like a coordinate system, which has distinctive directions and in which every position has its own unique significance in relation with others. A distinctive position is determined by the web of relations and the contexts of place. As shown above, since a place is also an idea like other beings in God’s mind, it is a “necessary” and

\(^{12}\) 1:388-89.

\(^{13}\) 1:389.

\(^{14}\) 6:385-86.
“simple idea that is necessarily connected with other simple exterior ideas, and is, as it were, their common substance or subject.”\textsuperscript{15} Relations and contexts are not separate factors, but a spatiotemporal place itself is a disposed relation with other ideas though it is a primary relation. The disposed relations, including spatiotemporal place, compose the matrix of disjunctive positions. Therefore, a spatiotemporal place is a relative space disposed in the absolute space of God’s mind. God the creator is a disposing cause that disposes the divine self as the ontological ground of dispositional space by God’s own act of disposition. The ground relation of consent is a disposed space, and God’s disposition creates both the distinctive identities and the ground relation.

The identity of a being is a position in dispositional space. The disposed position is the center of fabricated network of relations, that is, the subject of relations; from the perspective of the whole space it is a point of the dispositional space that is determined in the web of relations. The points of distinctive identities subsist in their disjunction of consenting relations, which are founded on the dispositional ground as a whole network. On the matrix a singular being coexists with whole other beings and also with the dispositional space itself, and has its own identity in the relation of union in distinction with them.

The relation of union in distinction can be likened to those between different mathematical dimensions.\textsuperscript{16} At one position a point, line, plane, and volume are superposed with

\textsuperscript{15} 6:341.

\textsuperscript{16} This analogy derives from the insight of Karl Heim, to which Elwood referred in his interpretation of Edwards’ panentheism based on the concept of God as the space. According to Heim, God is nonobjective and suprapolar space which is the archetypal space that embraces the objective and polar space of the world. He conceives of the relation between God and the world in terms of “dimensions rather than levels or layers.” Elwood explains Heim’s thought: “The ‘otherness’ of God is not to be interpreted as ‘otherworldliness,’ for the transcendent is not an otherworldly realm of being independent of this world, but a dimension of reality that underlies and penetrates all other dimensions.” Heim himself states that “the polar and the suprapolar worlds do not stand with respect to one another in the same relation as two floors of the same house but in the relation of two spaces . . . in
dimensional difference. A lower dimension *coexists* with and *indwells* in its higher dimension; the latter is *present* and its presence is immanence within the limited range of the former, but the higher *transcends* the lower. Even a limited line of the first dimension has infinite mathematical points which do not have their own extension of a divided line. Further, if the line is infinitely extended, its gap with a point is widened so much more as to be insurmountable. The dimensional difference presents the difference of *degree* between infinity and finitude as an ipso facto insuperable ontological discrepancy of *kind*.

According to the logic of mathematical analogy, a disposed point belongs to the dispositional space and in a sense is part of the same nature, but it in itself does not compose the space. On the contrary, the disposed point is constituted by the dispositional space that comprehends all positions. The position signifies the disposition of whole matrix, partly by representing an aspect of the entire form through the network of relations centering on it. In this analogical vein, we can understand the reason that Edwards identifies infinite difference in degree with that in kind, explaining the relation of finite created beings with God the infinite space. To put it more exactly, God’s spiritual space has infinite dimensions such that it comprehends and transcends all physical dimensions. The relation of union in distinction is weaved by the dialectic of infinity and finitude in dimensional difference. Like the analogy of dimensional logic, God can have a dialectical relation of transcendence and immanence by two spaces one and the same reality may be ordered simultaneously in accordance with two entirely different structural laws. One and the same occurrence in the world may manifest itself to us in two different aspects’” (Elwood, 18-19, 41-43; Karl Heim, Christian Faith and Natural Science [London: SCM Press, 1953], 108, 170-72). The thrust of Heim is that the infinite God of *suprapolar* space *transcends* polar *disjunction* among finite beings. The similarity between Edwards and Heim derives from the fact that both conceive of God as the *absolute* space of the world distinguished from the *relative* space of physical universe. As Elwood points out, Heim developed his thought from Einstein’s concept of relative space. On this point Edwards’ position is more adaptable to present physics than to Newtonian science. Edwards’ singularity consists in that he explains dimensional difference with the degree of laws according to his dispositional ontology, as I will elaborate.
mutual indwelling with created beings. In sum, the ontological dialectic of union in distinction is possible in the dispositional relation on spiritual space. The *distinction* is actualized by the *emanation* of *semiotic* communication *repeating* the divine *idea*, and the *aesthetic union* is realized by the *remanation* of *ethical life* loving divine *beauty*. The dispositional relation of union in distinction is unfolded by signifying the idea of divine disposition and is completed by incorporating it into the life of love.

**Union with Distinction by the Creation of Communication and Emanation**

**Distinction in Union by the Communication of Divine Ideas**

The semiotic structure of dispositional beings creates the relation of union in distinction with God, their ontological ground and referent. Beings as ideas are not self-subsistent substances that, after their first creation, can exist independently without relation with other beings and their ground of being. They depend on the ground of being for their existence continuously without interception, as the existence of a sign relies on the relation with its referent:

“The design of an idea is to represent, and the very being of an idea consists in similitude and representation. If it don’t actually represent to the beholder, it ceases to be. And the being of it is immediately dependent on its pattern. Its reference to that ceasing, it ceases to be its idea.”

This continuous ontological dependence designates continuous creation out of nothing and procession from its causal ground. The semiotic existence of ideal beings reveals their causation as the spiritual creation of communication and emanation from mental existence.

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17 21:117. Peirce defines this as a nature of indexical signs: “An index is a sign which would, at once, lose the character which makes it a sign if its object were removed, but would not lose that character if there were no interpretant” (Peirce, 2.304). Also, see 283, n. 150 above.
In spite of absolute dependence on its cause for existence, an idea of semiotic representation can possess its own independent actual reality distinct from the referent by repeating it:

Those ideas which we call ideas of reflection—all ideas of the acts of the mind, such as the ideas of thought, of choice, love, fear, etc.—if we diligently attend to our own minds, we shall find they are not properly representations, but are indeed repetitions of those very things, either more fully or more faintly; they therefore are not properly ideas. Thus ’tis impossible to have an idea of [a] thought or of an idea but it will [be] that same idea repeated. . . .

And so certainly it is, in all our spiritual ideas. They are the very same things repeated, perhaps very faintly and obscurely, and very quick and momentaneously, and with many new references, suppositions and translations. But if the idea be perfect, it is only the same thing absolutely over again. (emphasis mine)  

In human perception the reflected ideas of external things cannot be the repetition of their actual existence. But ideas of spiritual phenomena are not merely representation but the actual repetition of their existence, since spiritual things also exist as ideas. In the case of material beings the repetition of the same being without partition is impossible, but the existence of ideas can be repeated into distinct ideas without any division of their original being. Given Edwards’ immaterialism maintaining that all beings subsist in God’s ground of being, unlike ideas in human mind, there is no distinction between external beings and internal ideas in the divine mind such that the realities of all beings including matter are ideas in the divine mind.

Therefore, firstly, God’s creation does not contradict with divine simplicity and aseity, since God’s emanation of divine being is the communication of divine ideas. The Logos is the perfect repetition of the Father’s substance, and created beings as ideas are imperfect repetitions of the divine idea of the Son. A human disposes the inward word of an idea to the outward word

of speech in time by repeating it according to her or his “will to speak the same words, or make the same sounds at two different times.”\textsuperscript{19} In this case repeated words or sounds have the same nature in relation with the idea, but their own distinctive identities by different positions in temporal space. Likewise, God’s creation that disposes beings in God’s eternal mind is performed by virtue of the communication of the Word, which repeats and unfolds God’s inward word of divine ideas in the Logos into distinctive positions in the spatiotemporal place of God’s dispositional space according to divine disposition. Accordingly, the divine emanation as creation is not giving them parts of divine substance by taking them off from the whole being of God like material partition. The purely spiritual creation by communicating ideas does not raise the problem of how an immaterial God can produce material beings, since material beings also are ideas; however, the same nature never demolishes identities of created beings. Communicated ideas by divine creation exist in God’s mind but have real existence distinct from God with difference in degree of repetition.

Secondly, although the ontological modes of created beings are ideas communicated by God, created ideas are distinguished from the uncreated idea of God the Logos as divine essence. While creatures are the images of God, they are imperfect images, unlike the Son who is the express and perfect image of God:

The end of other images is to beget an idea of the things they represent in us; but the idea is the most immediate representation, and seems therefore to be a more primary sort of image. And we know of no other spiritual images, nor images of spiritual things, but ideas. . . . However exactly one being—suppose one human body—be like another; yet I think one is not in the most proper sense the image of the other, but more properly in the image of the other. Adam did not beget a son that was his image properly, but in his

\textsuperscript{19} 1:389, 21:120.
image; but the Son of God, he is not only in the image of the Father, but he is the image itself in the most proper sense.²⁰

Edwards expresses the imperfect image as being in the image. This means that the image represents only a partial aspect of its referent without repeating the whole of being completely. It connotes an ontological subordination to the archetype. In this sense finite creatures are a sort of contracted ideas of God that subsist in the infinite and perfect image of God, the Logos. The solidities of inanimate material beings are the most contracted ideas, but human souls are more extended ideas that represent more properly the image of God communicated by the Logos.

Union in Distinction by the Emanation of the Spirit of God

Semiotic beings communicated by the Logos are the emanation of divine being. Edwards understands emanation from God according to the dialectics of an analogical relation between infinite God and finite creatures, the same nature with infinite difference in degree. The emanated beings stand in union in distinction with God according to the semiotic and analogical dialectic of image or idea, since the emanation of the Spirit is constituted by the communication of the Logos.

God’s emanation culminates in the new creation of the regenerated, in which God infuses the divine self most properly and through which all other creatures participate in divine being. The epitomic case of divine infusion manifests most perspicuously the relation of union in distinction: “The grace which is in the hearts of the saints, is of the same nature with the divine

²⁰ 21:117.
holiness, as much as 'tis possible for that holiness to be, which is *infinitely less* in degree” (emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{21}

On the one hand, through the communicated Spirit of God the saints genuinely partake of God’s existence, the divine life of holy love in the Trinity: “The Spirit of God . . . exerts and communicates himself, in this his sweet and divine nature, making the soul *a partaker* of God’s beauty and Christ’s joy, so that the saint has truly *fellowship* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, in thus having the *communion or participation* of the Holy Ghost” (emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{22}

On the other hand, Edwards distinguishes the divine being and nature partaken of by the saints from the essence of God:

Not that the saints are made partakers of the *essence* of God, and so are “Godded” with God, and “Christed” with Christ, according to the abominable and blasphemous language and notions of some heretics; but, to use the Scripture phrase, they are made partakers of God’s *fullness* (Ephesians 3:17–19, John 1:16), that is, of God’s *spiritual beauty and happiness*, according to the measure and capacity of a creature. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{23}

Here Edwards evidently preserves the distinction between God and the creatures, and removes any implication of pantheistic divinization.

At first glance, this position seems to be inconsistent with Edwards’ other usage of divine essence, since he uses the term to designate the perfection of divine being which is the divine fullness derived from God’s spiritual beauty of happy life in holy love. However, Edwards’ point consists in differentiating God’s infinite fullness from human *finite fullness* limited by its

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{22} 2:201.

\textsuperscript{23} 2:203.
capacity that is infinitely less than God. Fullness does not necessarily mean infinity but simply the perfection of beings according to their kind, that is, “the full of capacity” that their “nature will allow”; besides humans “other creatures are perfect in their kind”; any existence is imperfect, if it is left like “a vessel partly empty and never to be filled”; humanity is created with “a nature capable of knowing and loving God, has a nature capable of enjoying [God].”

The capacities of human beings are not the same but various: “in general, Christ purchased eternal life, or perfect happiness for all, according to their several capacities. The saints are as so many vessels, of different sizes, cast into a sea of happiness, where every vessel is full; this Christ purchased for all: but after all ’tis left to God’s sovereign pleasure to determine the largeness of the vessel” (emphasis mine).

Consequently, the fullness of the saints is the same nature as God’s fullness, but it is in infinitely less degree, according to their finite capacity. The communicated divine being is different from God’s existence in degree, but its infinite extent makes the difference a thing in kind. The divine nature of the Spirit in the saints is “spiritual” and “divine,” but it is not the same kind with the divine essence of infinite ground of being.

Edwards clarifies the ambiguous meaning of communicated Godself in his letter that responds to the same question on his usage of the Spirit’s “own proper nature”:

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

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

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24 14:151.


26 2:203.
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 sun’s 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. (emphasis mine)\(^2\)

As his illustration of the emission of light from the sun shows, emanation is not incompatible
with the singularity of divine essence and the distinctive identities of created beings. The divine
nature communicated to the saints is a commensurable attribute between God and the creature.
The distinction of communicable and incommunicable attributes does not consist in the
difference of nature but in that of degree between infinity and finitude. The incommunicable
essence of God designates the divine infinity of dispositional space, which enables creatures to
participate in the divine being by comprehending them but transcends their finitude.

Edwards’ distinction of two meanings of the word spirit clearly evinces his dialectic of
infinity and finitude in divine emanation:

The word ‘spirit,’ or πνεῦμα, in Scripture is used in these two senses, either for a spiritual
substance or mind, or for the temper of the mind; when it is not put for a spiritual
substance itself (angel, or human soul, or divine essence), it is put for the disposition,
temper, inclination or will of that spiritual substance.

So the word “spirit,” when it [is] used concerning God: when it is used to signify
the divine essence (as sometimes it is, as when we read that God is a Spirit) it signifies the
holy temper, or disposition or affection of God, as when we read of the Spirit of God. . . .

And whenever the Scripture speaks of the Spirit of God’s dwelling in us, or our being
called with the Spirit, it will signify much the same thing if it be said, a divine temper or
disposition dwells in us or fills us. Now the temper and disposition or affection of God is
no other than infinite love. This Holy Spirit of God, the divine temper, is that divine
nature spoken of, 2 Peter 1:4, that we are made partakers of through the gospel. As God’s
understanding is all comprehended in that, that he perfectly understands [himself], so his

\(^{2}\) 16.66:203.
temper or disposition is perfectly expressed by that, that *he infinitely loves himself*. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{28}

Edwards discriminates spirit as a substantial subject from that as an attribute of the subject. For humans a disposition is an accidental attribute of a human subject, but for God the Trinity it subsists in the divine essence. The divine disposition communicated by the Spirit is not the substance of a human subject, but for God the divine disposition is God’s substance itself. The finite humans do not possess God’s essence as the *self-substence of divine disposition*, which is derived from the divine incommunicable nature of infinity, that is, the ground of being as the pure act of love.

Accordingly, Edwards’ insistence that the Spirit indwelling in the saints is distinguished from the divine essence does not mean that the Spirit is separated from God’s essence. In the distinction of the trinitarian persons, the mind is the Father and the divine disposition as the spirit of God’s mind is the Spirit.\textsuperscript{29} However, the Spirit is not a mere accidental attribute of the Father, but the pure act of love that subsists in the same divine essence with the Father in the *perichoresis* of subsistence relationship of the Trinity. The subject-object scheme of predication is not applied to God who is the ground of being that transcends the disjunctions of determinate beings. In the trinitarian simplicity of plural relations, the Holy Spirit is the disposition of the Father and represents the divine essence itself. Therefore, for Edwards the incommunicable essence of God does not designate something dissociated from the divine good and pure act of love, the Spirit, but an aspect of divine nature that finite humans cannot share with God. It refers to the infinity and self-sufficient perfection of God’s internal glory that finite and dependent

\textsuperscript{28} 13.396:461-62.

\textsuperscript{29} 21:138.
creatures cannot reach; and to the incomprehensible depth of God the Father, the original divine disposition, in which creatures cannot participate directly without the Spirit’s emanation of external glory. The divine nature in which the saints participate is God’s existence which is apprehended in relation with the creature and with the limited degree of finitude.

Emanation by the communication of the divine self unites the saints with God by the indwelling of the Spirit in them. The union in distinction does not absorb human individual identity into the divine being. If we approach the union from the perspective of substantial ontology based on the logic of predication, the union should sacrifice the identity of one subject. However, the Spirit of God is not simply a subject in relation with created beings, but the ground of being that transcends the disjunction of subject and object. Hence, the relation should be understood in light of the relational ontology of disposition based on God’s existence as the dispositional ground of being, as elaborated above.

Therefore, the immanence of the Spirit does not take the place of human subject or replace human faculties. The communicated divine nature is not identified with a human subject. Also it is not God’s incommunicable essence of divine substance itself as the singular and infinite ground of being. However, the indwelling of the Spirit is a new creation that transforms the ontological structure determining the haecceity itself of being, while for God the communication is neither the whole of God’s infinite essence and nor changes it. The new being created by the communication of the Spirit is a new disposition that has the spiritual sense for the sensation of divine beauty.

The divine disposition is subsumed into an accidental attribute of a substantial subject according to substantial ontology. However, it is not a mere accident, but plays the role of an ontological foundation on which human subject is disposed and its substance is reconstituted:
This new spiritual sense, and the new dispositions that attend it, are no new faculties, but are new principles of nature. I use the word “principles,” for want of a word of a more determinate signification. By a principle of nature in this place, I mean that foundation which is laid in nature, either old or new, for any particular manner or kind of exercise of the faculties of the soul; or a natural habit or foundation for action, giving a person ability and disposition to exert the faculties in exercises of such a certain kind; so that to exert the faculties in that kind of exercises, may be said to be his nature. So this new spiritual sense is not a new faculty of understanding, but it is a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul, for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of understanding. So that new holy disposition of heart that attends this new sense, is not a new faculty of will, but a foundation laid in the nature of the soul, for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of will.30

The spiritual sense that mediates God and creatures and determines their relation with God becomes the disposition which stands in the place of a substantial essence of created beings. This reveals the relational essence of created beings that subsists only in continuous relation with God the ground of being. The communicated disposition is the essence of both God’s being and the being of the regenerated. It is the consenting and ground relation by which God and beings are united by sharing it and also are distinguished. The disposition that disposes God in a disjunctive relation with the creature is Godself, the Spirit of God, such that God as the dispositional space stands in a relation of union in distinction with dispositional beings.

As shown above in the discussion of moral necessity, a disposition determines the will of a human subject, but the determining necessity of disposition does not deprive the subject of voluntary freedom. Likewise, the indwelling of the Spirit as a regulative disposition in a human subject does not dissolve subjectivity or free will. Through the dispositional existence, two subjects of God and a human are united in the asymmetric relationship of order, preserving distinctive identities and indwelling in each other.

30 2:206.
The Scales of Being According to the Disposition of Beauty and Life

The Degree of Being: Dispositional Identity between Necessity and Freedom

Created beings are disposed as distinctive beings that subsist in the one ground of God the Trinity by the communication of the Son through the emanation of the Spirit. The relation of distinction in unity between God and the world is unfolded in actual spatiotemporal space into the dialectic and dynamic life of asymmetric but reciprocal interrelation with the distinction of degrees of being. As mentioned above, God does not belong to “the highest in a scale of relative degrees of being,” but is the absolute ground of being which transcends the links of the whole chain. The trinitarian ground of God comprehends all beings in the dispositional space by the dynamic life of love in mutual interaction. There is a degree of being but it is not a hierarchical subordination. The degree of a being is determined by its relation with the dispositional space of the Trinity, that is, its disposition that specifies the extent and consent of relations by fabricating the matrix of relations centered on its disposed position. The degree of disposition is the compass of capacity to signify and actualize the divine glory and fullness in the life of love.

Edwards presents degrees of being from inanimate matter to the perfection of God’s spiritual existence: material things, plants, animals, humankind, the spiritual saints on earth, the saints and angels in heaven, the mind of the man Christ Jesus, and God.32 The ontological scales are determined by a closeness to spiritual nature that can have intercourse with God for the end of creation. In other words, the degree of being is proportionate to the contribution to the glory of God, the happy life of love in the communional union through mutual communication of


knowledge and love. The spiritual relation of communication with God presupposes the divine love in freedom, which is revealed as the arbitrary, sovereign, and immediate influence. The degree of being is the extent of freedom proportionate to the arbitrariness of God’s action on it:

If we ascend towards God in the scale of existence according to the degrees of excellency and perfection, the nearer we come to God the nearer we shall come to arbitrary influence of the Most High on the creature, till at length, when we come to the highest rank, we shall come [to] an intercourse as is in many respects quite above those rules which we call the laws of nature. . . .

If we rise to mankind, and particularly the mind of man, by which especially he is above the inferior creatures, and consider the laws of the common operations of the mind, they are so high above such a kind or general laws of matter, and are so singular, that they are altogether untraceable. The more particular laws are the harder to be investigated and traced. And if we go from the common operations of the faculties of the mind and rise up to those that are spiritual, which are infinitely of the highest kind, and are those by which the minds are most conversant with the Creator and have their very next union with him . . . .

And if [we] rise to the highest step of all next to the Supreme Being himself, even the mind of the man Christ Jesus, who is united personally, to the Godhead, doubtless there is a constant intercourse, as it were infinitely above the laws of nature. (emphasis mine)33

The scale of being according to the arbitrariness of divine action is the degree of disposition in the dialectic of necessary law and free love. Analogically, the higher level can be compared to a complex matrix of a dynamic system in chaos theory that looks like arbitrary chaos or random but is deterministic by the disposition of a higher sensitivity to initial conditions.

First, a dispositional being is arbitrary in relation with the laws on its lower level, since it transcends them without subjection. When the laws that are strict and necessary on the lower level are applied to an upper level, they have more arbitrary modes in a broader and complicated context of relations. The extended scope provides more room for choice, despite the regulation of the laws, or makes them no longer valid. On the other hand, another kind of laws emerges in the

33 Ibid.
matrix of a higher dimension. As Edwards illustrates, the psychological laws of the human mind are common on the same level, but they emerge as more particular things than the general laws of matter on the lower scale. As seen in the case of human memory, ideas in the mind are not restricted by the laws of time. For other examples, the axioms of Euclidean geometry such as the parallel postulate are not veritable in the curved spaces of non-Euclidean geometry; while animated lives are governed by the law of gravity, they can overcome it by their acts according to their degree of incorporeal ability of instincts and intelligence.

Second, the liberty of a dispositional being is not irregular and contingent arbitrariness without any its own self-governing disposition or the regulation of external law; but more freedom of dispositional existence means a law or disposition common to its kind but more particular and singular to itself, which is not restricted by more general laws like the laws of nature that control the existence of lower degree in being. Edwards states this explicitly, illustrating the case of the spiritual human in the highest degree of being before the fall: “there was an extraordinary influence and intercourse God had with man, far above the law of nature, immediately instructing, enlightening and conducting him, and arbitrarily fixing those habits in his mind” (emphasis mine).34 Here Edwards demonstrates three different modes of one law according to relations with different ontological levels. The habit in human mind is arbitrary operation on God’s level; a voluntary but necessary law in the human level; and a law of liberty that emancipates the human from the law of nature. To put it another way, from human perspective, the habit fixed in human mind by God is heteronomous, necessary, and deterministic in relation with God on a higher level; autonomy, voluntary, and self-determining in relation with

34 23.1263:208.
oneself on the same level; and independent, arbitrary, and contingent in relation with nature on the lower level. The disposition is theonomous and at the same time autonomous; it is the law of freedom to both God and humankind. Like habits in the first creation, Edwards explains the spiritual disposition of the regenerated in the new creation according to the same framework, explained above.

Moreover, the same logic is applied to God. “If we ascend up to God this way, proceeding in the succession of events till we come to the end of time, this way of proceeding will again bring us to a disposition of the world by a divine, arbitrary operation through the universe”; “therefore arbitrary operation . . . that originally he, in all things, acts as being limited and directed in nothing but his own wisdom, tied to no other rules and laws but the directions of his own infinite understanding” (emphasis mine). Consequently, the divine operation of interposition that constitutes the disposition of the world is arbitrary in relation with creatures; the voluntary actualization of divine disposition in relation with Godself; the necessary determination of divine will according to God’s own wisdom in the intratrinitarian relation of order. The crucial difference of God’s case from that of other creatures is that God is the dispositional space of infinite ground in whom the establishment of divine disposition is self-subsistent in God’s own trinitarian life.

The different modes of human habits derive from the in-between nature of disposition in God’s dispositional space. Habits constitute the existence of a human; however, the human is not its substance but only its subject. Disposition in relation with its actualized acts is not simply a deterministic law but an open and infinite space for acts like a higher mathematical dimension, as argued above analogically. The necessity of disposition does not determine particular

occasions and effects directly by itself but in its interrelation with contexts, which offers a choice of freedom since the contexts are an infinite web of innumerable relations. A being in the dispositional space is free in light of its disposed point, for, as a center or subject, it has infinite possible relations; however, it has already been determined from the aspect of the whole system, for the web of relations has been fabricated by the disposition of the entire organization. Nevertheless, the whole cosmos in the divine dispositional space is not a closed frame but an open space of freedom since it is infinite.

God is the necessary disposition of the entire network and simultaneously Being in general, that is, the whole system itself. God the dispositional space determines the whole cosmos by disposing it on the infinite ground of divine life. Therefore, human disposition is determined by God, but it is free in human finite domain. It is ultimately free, since it has its origin in God’s arbitrary act of freedom, that is, the infinite space of God’s disposition of love in freedom. Like a higher mathematical dimension, an upper level in relation with the lower is revealed as a dispositional space of love that provides beings on the lower level with an infinite web of relations. The lower beings have freedom in the dispositional space and their distinctive identities of subjects in the dispositional freedom, and they are united in the space of love with distinction. The more arbitrary disposition in a higher degree is revealed as a moral necessity of virtuous love in voluntary freedom that transcends the natural necessity of laws of nature. The disposition of the Trinity on the highest ontological level regulates the whole extent and degree of beings. The glory of the trinitarian life is “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” which emancipates all beings “from the law of sin and of death” causing the futility and decay of creation, and brings them “the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (emphasis mine).³⁶

³⁶ Romans 8:2, 19-21.
Consequently, the degree of being as disposition in the divine ground is the range of its triadic spiritual space, the semantic and aesthetic matrix of the life of love in freedom. Created beings are united in distinction by the law of the Spirit of life that comprehends all dispositions in the different degrees of being.

The Degree of the Spiritual Law of Beauty and Life

The disposition that constitutes beings in the trinitarian ground is the spiritual law of beauty and life that fabricates the semiotic matrix of divine Logos and the aesthetic space of the Spirit of love. The more particular laws denote the more complicated web of relations and dispositions on the higher ontological level than that on the lower. The more complex and delicate matrix extends the range of dispositional space spiritually. For an analogical example, a mathematical point with another point in a line has only one relation; but when it is disposed in the second dimension of a plane, it has infinite lines of relations that connect it with another point. The spiritual extension of dispositional space does not mean an enlargement of empty space like an abstract mathematical or physical plane, which is separated from its contents of relations. The disposition itself constitutes a dispositional space by a disposing act that fabricates new forms of relational network. The spiritual extension makes the matrix of relations much denser to create the semantic space of much fuller meaning and much more delicate forms of beauty. It forms the more lively dynamics of relations that incorporate more multifarious variety into its system integratively without contradiction.

The degree of being is proportionate to the extension of beauty. Edwards explains a more particular law of a higher degree of being as a more general proportion:

Thus the matter is, as to the Holy Spirit's gracious operations on the mind. We have shown in philosophy, that all natural operations are done immediately by God, only in harmony and proportion. But there is this difference: these being the highest kind of
operations of all, are done in the most general proportion, not tied to any particular proportion, to this or that created being; but the proportion is with the whole series of acts and designs from eternity to eternity, as miracles are, as the creation of the world, the birth and resurrection of Christ are. These operations are most arbitrary and bound to no knowable law, any more than any actions of the Deity whatever. Not but that there is commonly, in these spiritual operations, a respect to outward means; but they are not at all tied to them. That it is thus may be argued, because harmony argues it: lower operations are done by a more particular proportion, higher according to higher, and more general. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{37}

Here Edwards articulates the meaning of particularity of law that comprehends subtle particulars in harmonious beauty of a whole edifice while preserving and sharpening their variegated and delicate aspects, differently from monotonous uniformity. As shown above in the discussion of aesthetic ontology, the generality of beauty designates the comprehensiveness of its extent that integrates plurality into the simplicity of a singular intensity.

Edwards elucidates more unambiguously the particularity of law and generality of beauty as the flexibility and susceptibility of dispositional life contrasted with the hardness and fixedness of inanimate matter. In “Miscellanies,” no. 1296, he declares that the beauty is proportionate to spirituality and life:

The seed appears like an inert, lifeless thing with but little beauty. But the beautiful plant appears like a living thing. Therein is much of its superior excellency: that it appears to have more life, and so [to be] more like a spiritual thing.

The animated parts of this lower world have the greatest beauty because they have most of a resemblance of spiritual beauty, or of beauties of minds. (emphasis mine)\textsuperscript{38}

In addition, Edwards explicates the meaning of spirituality and life, describing the glorified and perfect status of the saints’ bodies and material parts of the new heaven and earth:

\textsuperscript{37} 13.64:235.

\textsuperscript{38} 23.1296:238.
'Tis no evidence that hardness and fixedness of substance is necessary to durableness. It will certainly be otherwise in heaven. The glorified bodies of the saints will be exceeding far from this fixedness. They, as we must suppose, will be most flexible, movable and agile, most easily susceptive of mutation . . . The fixedness of these inanimate parts of this lower world is really an imperfection, wherein appears most of that chief imperfection of material things, as below the things which are spiritual. . . .

their agility and susceptiveness of the influence of spiritual beings, and particularly the Being of beings, be more like spirits. . . . as it were animated, and susceptible of impressions and happy alterations

There may be in the material parts of heaven that which shall have as great a resemblance of life and spirituality . . .

by being quickened, exhilarated, beautified and glorified by the presence and influence of Christ, and receiving communications of his beauty and happiness. . . . as it were transformed, and put on immediately the image of that beauty which is presented, and reflect that glory that shines upon them. (emphasis mine)³⁹

Edwards evinces the thrust of his spiritual immaterialism that is centered on living life and spiritual phenomena against an ontology based on immutable substance and impersonal physical phenomena. Instead of the simplicity and immutability of atomistic substance, plurality in beauty and the dynamic life of communal relation come to the front as the essential nature of beings. The perfection of beings, life and spirituality consist in relation with God, which is the personal life of mutual communication according to sensitivity to God’s presence and act. As plurality is redefined positively as a condition of a being’s excellence in its aesthetic respect, mutability is reinterpreted as the characteristic of being’s perfection for life in relation with God. A being’s aesthetic integration of particulars in time is performed by the dynamic life of flexible interaction with ceaseless altering situations according to its constant disposition. The durable identity of a being does not subsist in its immutable substance but in its persisting structure of disposition, which is adaptable to all specific transitory occasions without its transition.

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Change in temporal dimension itself is not simply passive status, meaningless vanity, or illusion to be superseded. By contrast, incessant mutation ontologically reflects the reality of God’s existence and active creation that is continuously communicating the divine fullness of good. The progressive life toward God’s end of creation reveals the perfection of semiotic and aesthetic beings, which is replete with the meaning of beautiful happiness that is renewed and increasing forever and infinitely. As a result, *time, human bodies, and material beings* participate in the perfection of being, the glory of divine life. Corporeal bodies and things are *spiritualized, signified, beautified*, and *glorified* with intelligent beings by contributing to the glorification of God. As a result, material beings that are solidified in themselves without any further interaction and semiotic reference are opened to signify and partake of the spiritual life of communication. They are transformed into living things, such as a kind of vegetative life without nutrition, increase, and generation so as to be incorporated into the whole ideal system of spiritual life, the body of Christ, as human body is organically united with a soul in distinction. Since material beings also are the spiritual modes of ideas like human beings, their spiritualization never means the destruction of their natural identities but the actualization of the original meaning of their beings.

**Union in Eternity and Distinction in Time by the Life of Triune Remanation**

The Triadic Relation of Signification Between the Scales of Being

Created beings are disposed vertically on the different ontological levels according to the degrees of disposition, the laws of beauty and life. Dispositional beings in the scales are united in distinction by the actualization of their meanings according to “the law of the Spirit of life in

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
Christ Jesus” that harmoniously integrates all dispositions of different dimensions. The dynamic relation of *dispositional dialectics between necessity and freedom* disposes beings in the semiotic dialectic of signification. Dispositional beings in relation with their upper ontological level are not mere shadows but the semiotic signs communicated from the higher ground; their existence and meaning subsist in the dispositional matrix of a higher dimension and they manifest and signify the existence of the upper. A being of dispositional signs between ontological levels exists in *the semiotic dialectic of a virtuality of absence and the actuality of presence*. On the dispositional space of the divine Logos, all beings participate in the essence of semiotic existence, that is, meaning in the divine communicative matrix. Therefore, semiotic beings have not only actual reality but also an active meaning of their existence as *typological signs* that signify the spiritual meaning of the divine disposition to glorify God: “the whole visible creation, which is but the shadow of being, is so made and ordered by God as to typify and represent spiritual things” (emphasis mine).\(^{41}\) The whole ideal system of disposition is a typological matrix of communication for the glory of God, the beauty of happy love in union with distinction. The semiotic matrix is disposed in temporal space. As shown above, like “a man’s will to speak the same words, or make the same sounds at two different times,” by creation God’s disposition repeats the inward word of the divine idea to the outward word of speech in time, which is the typological world of semiotic beings disposed in the divine space of the Logos by the communication of the Word.\(^{42}\)

\(^{41}\) 21:138-39.

\(^{42}\) 1:389, 21:120.
The Life of Love in the Triune Remanation between Eternity and Time

The *triadic* relation of *signification* mediating the vertical scales of being is unfolded horizontally by the *triune movement of life* in a temporal dimension toward the divine glory: *eternal life* in the trinitarian ground of being and *emanation* from and *remanation* to the divine life in everlasting time. God’s emanation mediates ontologically the being of God and the beings of creatures. The emanation from the divine eternal space is revealed in temporal dimension as the process of remanation that returns to God the end of creation through the first and continuous creation out of nothing. In this vein, Edwards likens the divine ground of emanation to the infinite ocean of remanation: “We began at the head of the stream of divine providence . . . as it began in God, so it ends in God. God is the infinite ocean into which it empties itself” (emphasis mine).43 A figure of God, the infinite sea marks saliently the ontological continuity between God and the creature. As the analogy connotes a union in the image of being swallowed up by the ocean, with the same expression Edwards presents the remanation of love to God toward union with God through redemption from the fall in his seventh sermon on charity:

[H]is soul was under the government of that noble principle of divine love whereby it was, as it were, enlarged to a kind of comprehension of all his fellow creatures; and not only so, but was not confined within such strait limits as the bounds of the creation but was extended to the Creator, and dispersed itself abroad in that infinite ocean of good and was, as it were, swallowed up by it, and become one with it . . . in the work of redemption . . . . Christianity restores an excellent enlargement and extensiveness to the soul. It again possesses it of divine love or that Christian charity of which we read in the text, whereby it again embraces its fellow creatures and is devoted to and swallowed up in the Creator.

(emphasis mine)44

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43 9:517.

44 8:253-54.
This union with God reflects Edwards’ own experience of Christ’s excellent fullness and glory that he describes in his “Personal Narrative” to be “wrapt and swallowed up in God” and “emptied of myself, and swallowed up in Christ.”

Nevertheless, Edwards’ depiction of remanation to union with God never connotes the monistic or pantheistic absorption of human beings into God without distinction. He qualifies the expression “swallowed up” by the subjunctive phrase “as it were.” This union is the representation of biblical revelation and the traditional Christian experience of communion with God, the archetype of which is declared in the doctrinal formula of the Trinity, the union in distinction by the mutual indwelling of love. Edwards evinces the biblical foundation for and elucidates the union in distinction with the dialectic of eternity and time:

[T]he thing which God aimed at in the creation of the world, as the end which he had ultimately in view, was that communication of himself, which he intended throughout all eternity. . . this eternal emanation of divine good . . . in an increasing communication of himself throughout eternity . . . the more those divine communications increase in the creature, the more it becomes one with God . . . the creature comes forever nearer and nearer to an identity with that which is in God. In the view therefore of God, who has a comprehensive prospect of the increasing union and conformity through eternity, it must be an infinitely strict and perfect nearness, conformity, and oneness. For it will forever come nearer and nearer to that strictness and perfection of union which there is between the Father and the Son: so that in the eyes of God, who perfectly sees the whole of it, in its infinite progress and increase, it must come to an eminent fulfillment of Christ’s request, in John 17:21, John 17:23: “That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one” [Italics Edwards’]. In this view, those elect creatures which must be looked upon as the end of all the rest of the creation, considered with respect to the whole of their eternal duration, and as such made God’s end, must be viewed as being, as it were,
one with God. They were respected as brought home to him, united with him, centering most perfectly in him, and as it were swallowed up in him. (emphasis mine)\(^47\)

God’s eternal emanation is performed through the temporal progress and increase of divine communication throughout all eternity. The communication of Godself results in an identity with God, but the identity is “with that which is in God” (emphasis mine). Union with God is with distinction, like that “between the Father and the Son.” Moreover and crucially, human union with God consists in the distinction derived from temporal limitation, differentiated from the union of the Trinity in an eternal dimension. The endless time progress unfolded in the space of eternity incorporates the dialectic of infinity and finitude diachronically in temporal dimension. Edwards delineates the temporal evolution of eternity in terms of infinity:

> And as to the good of the creature itself, if viewed in its whole duration, and infinite progression, it must be viewed as infinite; and so not only being some communication of God’s glory, but as coming nearer and nearer to the same thing in its infinite fullness. The nearer anything comes to infinite, the nearer it comes to an identity with God. And if any good, as viewed by God, is beheld as infinite, it can’t be viewed as a distinct thing from God’s own infinite glory. (emphasis mine)\(^48\)

The participation of creatures in God’s being is that of the image of God and is “infinitely” and “immensely less in degree”\(^49\); however, in infinite progress it partakes of the same fullness of glory with God as to be one with God. Human identity with God consists in God’s view of mercy, that is, the supposition by God’s disposition of love and grace, which is actualized in everlasting evolution. Nevertheless, in “the most perfect union with God . . . the time will never come when it can be said it has already arrived at this infinite height. . . the time will never come when it can

\(^{47}\) 8:443.  
\(^{48}\) 8:459.  
\(^{49}\) 8:441, 442.
be said it is attained to, in the most absolutely perfect manner. . . the particular time will never come when it can be said, the union is now infinitely perfect” (emphasis mine).

The dialectic of eternity and time manifests the asymmetric relation of union in distinction between God and the world by God’s absolute and free initiative of love that God’s redemption by gratuitous grace through faith without merits represents typically. The ontological cleavage between God and creatures is the split between eternity and time beyond which finite creatures cannot go but only eternity can bridge. The door to the ladder between eternity and temporality can be opened up only from the side of eternity. The eternal life of the saints is a dispositional reality between eternity and time that is disposed in the dispositional space of God mediating divine infinite eternity with finite time. Spiritual being is a finite existence in a disposed point. Finite beings in time cannot be at the terminus of it, but eternally only on the road toward the union with God. Nevertheless, they are already present and participate in the eternal and infinite space, and by virtue of their existence on the path disposed to God they are consented and connected with the whole of space through the web of relations; the dispositional space of God is already present but transcends by its infinity such that finite creatures cannot reach its end. The dispositional being in the divine ground is the existence-in-between that is constituted by the dialectic of already and not-yet. All beings participate in the eternal progress of the regenerated toward union with God the ground of being: “As all things are from God as their first cause and fountain; so all things tend to him, and in their progress come nearer and nearer to him through all eternity: which argues that he who is their first cause is their last end” (emphasis mine).

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50 8:534-36.
51 8:444.
Edwards’ remanation consists in the dialectic between union in eternity and distinction in time, as his emanation of continuity is weaved with the discontinuity of creation out of nothing. For Edwards, union in distinction of dispositional life reveals a sort of moralistic dualism of the regenerated and the reprobated instead of ontological dualism. Union in eternity and perdition in eternity constitute two sides of the same coin. “God’s judgments on the wicked world, and also their eternal damnation in the world to come, are spoken of as being for the happiness of God’s people. So are his judgments on them in this world.” The eternal punishment sets off the eternal truth of theocentric ontology that created beings subsist in their absolute dependence on God the ground of being. The essence of dispositional beings consists in the actualization of their meaning of being by consenting relation with God that knows by signification and loves by aesthetic sensation of God. If we understand it according to Edwards’ paradigm, the existence itself of all beings is already in God the ground of being; however, its realization demands the life of mutual love by human response to God, which perceives beings by disposing them in the semantic and aesthetic matrix of God’s disposition, that is, beings in Christ and the Spirit. If an intelligent being never has the disposition of spiritual sensation consenting to the divine idea and beauty, it can never participate in the divine life of happiness in love. Infinite punishment is the existential expression that reveals the ontological truth, though ontologically its reconciliation with God’s infinite love is a perennial scandal. Edwards selected this way to preserve the tension of biblical revelation instead of compromising it with rationalization with rational logic within human limitation. The problem of eternal damnation discloses the human logical and philosophical limits that cannot exhaustively grasp the dialectic of divine love in freedom between God’s absolute freedom of arbitrariness and personal condescension of love. Edwards’

52 8:509.
ontology implicates that the best answer for this vexing question consists in its existential aspect of human temporal dimension: it calls for resolution to God and is virtually dissolved away in the beauty of life in a progressive movement that realizes the disposition to God through the actual practice of faith in God, that is, love to God and all creatures.

**The Trinitarian Panentheism of Non-Dualistic Personal Theism**

**Union with Distinction in the Beauty of a Rainbow**

In conclusion, I will exhibit how Edwards takes a via media between dualistic personal theism and monistic pantheism, by illustrating his analogy of a rainbow. The analogy is the conclusive integration of his analogies for the relationship of God and the world. The ineffable union in distinction between different ontological levels goes beyond the purview of rational and analytic logic in temporal limitation. It can be described only by analogical and aesthetic depiction, but the delineation is most proper to the ontological nature of being, the dispositional, semiotic, and aesthetic existence according to trinitarian immaterialism.

The dynamic life of love is a mediating and dispositional movement of triadic structure in time, which embodies the dialectic of infinity and finitude into that of eternity and time. The triadic movement in the relation of God and the world manifests in temporal dimension the trinitarian structure of divine life and the dialectic of divine act between the discontinuous causation of creation out of nothing and the ontological continuity of emanation. The dialectical life itself constitutes the relation of union in distinction of God and the world, as the intratrinitarian life of love establishes the communion of the trinitarian persons and God’s trinitarian being itself. The communional life itself is the external glory of God that extends the union with distinction in the Trinity to the relation of God and the world. The divine glory is the life of God that is present among creatures in fellowship with other creatures. In this vein,
Edwards describes the life of beauty in communion between God and creation by the type of a rainbow, which is the extension of the trinitarian analogy of the sun and signifies the Spirit who reveals the divine life of love. The rainbow signifies “the divine presence.” The symbol of “God’s covenant of grace” signifies “God’s favor and blessed communications” of intratrinitarian glory, which is manifested as “the beauties and sweetness of the divine Spirit of love” through the incarnation of Christ, God-man.

First, there is infinite distinction between the fullness of infinite God and the emptiness of finite creatures. The rainbow is “a pleasant light in the bosom of a dissolving cloud.” The cloud and the innumerable drops composing it signify the human nature of emptiness in itself:

[A] cloud, that is but a vapor, that continues for a little while and then vanishes away, is an empty, unsubstantial, vanishing thing, driven to and fro with the wind, that is far from having any light or beauty of its own, being in its own nature dark. . . .

. . . The drop in itself is wholly water, as the nature of man in itself is wholly corrupt. In the saints, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing; they have no light or brightness in them, but only what is immediately from heaven, from the Sun of Righteousness. (emphasis mine)53

Created beings are not substances but relational beings that exist only in a relation of subsistence in God the ground of being who creates all beings continuously out of nothing by communicating divine being through emanation from God.

Second, the union of God and the church is accomplished by dynamic life in temporal dimension, that is, the gradual process in the dialectic movement of descent and ascent. As the drops of rainbow are mixed with water descending and fire ascending, Christ in the personal union of divinity and humanity descends to the suffering of death and ascends toward glory, and

the saints of flesh and spirit descend to death and ascend to heaven. Through the dialectics of descension and ascension, the saints “gradually from their first conversion,” “go from step to step” towards “the most excellent order and perfect union” in heaven, as the bow of the rainbow is “on earth and part in heaven” and “gradually rises higher and higher from the earth towards heaven.”

Third, the presence of divine glory is the aesthetic relation of union in distinction represented by the simplicity in plurality. “In the rainbow the light of the sun is imparted to and sweetly reflected from a cloud.” The light designates the external emanation of the glory of intratrinitarian union in distinction that is communicated by the Word and emanated through the Spirit. The rainbow is the conflation of the rays of the sun that symbolizes the extension of the intratrinitarian union, the hypostatic union of Christ’s divinity and humanity and the communion of the church as the body of Christ. As shown above in the discussion of God’s simplicity in plurality, the whole rainbow is “disposed in the most perfect union and beautiful order”; the “simple” one of “great variety” is composed of beautiful drops that are “all united in one” with order and respective “peculiar beauty” (emphasis mine). Likewise, the church of Christ in heaven is “the most pleasant and perfect harmony, of a great, and amiable, and blessed society, dependent on, blessed in, and showing respect to, the fountain of all light and love” (emphasis mine). The fullness of the church represents the whole world beyond the community of saints that includes bodies and matter created renewedly in the new heaven and earth.

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54 15.348:331-32.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid., 331-32.
57 Ibid., 332-33.
As “the rainbow, if completed, would be a perfect circle” like a halo surrounding the sun, the church of fullness will become an *emanated extension* of the trinitarian glory like the rainbow upon Christ’s head (Rev. 10:1) and around Christ’s throne (Rev. 4:3-4); however, it is an *image* that is “in itself an empty vessel” and “diversified,” in contrast with the fullness of Christ that is “simple” and has “all fullness in himself”; the whole church “reflects but a little of the brightness of the fountain,” and God the ground of being “*infinitely exceeds* the whole in light” (emphasis mine).\(^58\) Despite the complete *union by emanation*, there is still God’s *transcendence of infinite difference* from the world.

At first glance, the image of a halo around the sun looks like a dualistic image of a vessel containing the fullness of the light of sun. However, the halo is the emanation of the sun and an extension of the disk of the sun that belongs to a *field* of the light of the sun. This seems to be a sort of pantheistic or monistic model such that God and the world are identified with the same circumference of extension. Nevertheless, there is infinite distinction between the substance of the sun and the rainbow like a halo of the sun.

The center of the sun symbolizes God who is “Being in general” as “one single point, without a disjunction.”\(^59\) It designates the infinity of God, as Edwards writes in his “Miscellanies,” no. 1234: “‘God is a Being whose center is everywhere, and circumference nowhere’ . . . Any two points of time, though never so distant, are exactly in the middle of eternity. The remotest points of space, that can be imagined or supposed, are, each of them,

\(^{58}\) Ibid.

\(^{59}\) 20.880:122.
precisely in the center of infinite space.” God is the infinite space of fullness that comprehends all and fills all in all through Christ; all beings in God are from or of, through, and toward God, and God is the first beginning, middle, and the last end such that “all unites in him as the center.” God is “all in all, in comparison of whom all the rest is nothing.”

This expatiation of God’s infinity not only avoids the simple identification of God and the world, but also shuns any misunderstanding about panentheism that thinks of it as God’s containing the world according to its literal meaning. The illustration of panentheism that depicts two concentric circles of different extension, in which the small one is included in the larger, is an analogical diagram that symbolizes the asymmetric relation of distinction between God and the world. However, despite the qualification of the union of the world with God by the analogy of an infinite circle, it still does not guarantee the distinctive identity of God and created beings. The infinite circle could connote a kind of pantheism or monism such that all beings are contained in and absorbed into the infinite space of God without distinction. The image of immersion appears conspicuously in the simile of the ocean, which symbolizes God as the end of remanation as God the fountain of emanation is analogized to the sun.

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60 23.1234:168. The quotation is from Philip Skelton (Deism Revealed, vol. 2 [London, 1751], 111). The proposition that Skelton explains derives from Empedocles (The Extant Fragments). Elwood contrasts God’s infinite space with Einstein’s relative space in which “all parallel lines eventually intersect” and thus which “has a circumference, however immeasurable by existing instruments” (Elwood, 43). He mentions other sources of the same point with Empedocles such as Plotinus, Nicholas Cusanus, Blaise Pascal, and Karl Heim (Elwood, 167-68, n. 46).

61 8: 433, 442, 450, 506, 515, 611.

62 8:450, 531; 17:212.

63 8:611.

64 Elwood employs the analogy to explain Edwards’ panentheism (Elwood, 21-22).
On the contrary, both types of the sun and the ocean should be understood in their mutual supplement. They complementally exhibit the dialectics of trinitarian panentheism, which founds the relation of communion in distinction by mutual indwelling between God and creatures. The sun in the halo of a rainbow depicts God as the center that is present in the world, and the absorbing ocean portrays God as the infinite space that comprehends all created beings. The rainbow surrounds the sun as a halo and is included in the field of the light of the sun. All beings of dispositional existence, with the leading of the saints, eternally “aim at” and “tend to a certain center” “by a constant and eternal motion” of progress, that is, toward God who is “the cause of their motion” and “the last end”65; they “aim finally to meet in one” like two lines separate at the beginning but directed to the same center66; from the viewpoint of infinite God the creature is “in infinite strict union” and “an identity with God” without distinction from “God’s own infinite glory,”67 as the center of an infinite circle is already and always present in all points and circumferences. However, created beings in the time of everlasting progress always exist in an infinite and insurmountable difference from God, as the circumference of a circle moves endlessly around its center with constant distance without conflation, always referring to its center; nevertheless, created beings already experience here and now the actual effect of union with God in eternal presence by subsisting in Christ with the fullness of the Spirit, as the open vessel immersed in the ocean is full of her water but is infinitesimal in comparison with the infinite sea.

65 8:535.

66 8:459.

67 Ibid.
In conclusion, the meaning of dispositional beings is accomplished by the triadic relation of semiotic signification into the aesthetic relation of union in distinction like the infinite circle; the triadic relation in the infinite circle is unfolded into the triune movement of eternal presence and temporal emanation and remanation; for finite creatures the triune movement is unfolded into the eternal remanation in time such that they everlastingly ascend into infinite God more and more by God’s continuous and renewing creation out of nothing again and again with the discontinuous stages of perfection from birth, conversion, and death to the resurrection of body in the new heaven and earth. Conclusively, the exact meaning of Edwards’ panentheism is the interpersonal relationship of asymmetrical perichoresis between God and the world established by the communion of mutual love with the initiative of God’s gratuitous love. Edwards’ emanation and remanation in the dialectic of eternity and time manifests the dynamic life of reciprocal love in mutual indwelling between God and creatures; it reveals the personal relation of fellowship in the dialectic of transcendence and presence. The personal and mutual love and temporal dimension of Edwards’ conception of emanation-remanation is the crucial point that maintains the dialectical tension between union and distinction and definitively differentiates Edwards’ frame from the Neoplatonic emanationism of an impersonal and subordinationistic cycle of exitus-reditus in eternity.

Conclusion: the Trinitarian Panentheism of Non-Dualistic Personal Theism

Edwards’ trinitarian panentheism is a non-dualistic personal theism in which God and the word are united in distinction with asymmetrical perichoresis without dualistic disjunction. It results from his trinitarian immaterialism of dispositional ontology, which is deduced from the theological and philosophical analysis of the analogy of faith in Scripture and the Christian experience of salvation. Therefore, his panentheism is a soteriological and trinitarian theism,
distinguished from that of process theology that sacrificed God’s transcendence in traditional sense for divine involvement and personhood.

Edwards’ reconstruction of panentheistic personal theism dialectically integrates the polarity of God’s being and action and relation with the world through his ontology based on the perfection of God’s being, the dynamic life of happy communion by virtuous love. His ontology grasps the multifarious nature of being that cannot be reduced to a single section, integrating the semiotic, aesthetic, affectional, axiological, and ethical aspects of being by the ontological foundation of God’s trinitarian being. It proposes an ontological foundation on which all realms of human self and communal life and all created beings are harmoniously incorporated for the ultimate end of God with their distinction but without fragmentation or compartmentalization.

As a representative case, Edwards’ spiritual immaterialism in opposition to substantial ontology never connotes the negation of the actual reality of human spirits and matter. Contrariwise, its transcendence of substantial disjunction comprehends the two worlds of the spiritual and physical as coexisting with the order of difference in degree of being and without disjunction. Accordingly, his theocentric immaterialism provides an ontological ground on which theology and natural science are reconciled, preserving their particular domains and complementing each other:

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 only mental in our sense, or no. Though we suppose that the existence of the whole material universe is absolutely dependent on idea, yet we may speak in the old way, and as properly and truly as ever.68

68 6:353.
The spiritual world in Edwards’ trinitarian immaterialism is neither a psychological domain of human soul in disjunction with body and matter, nor stands in disjunction with the secular world. Spirituality does not abolish the material world and temporal dimension, but sublimates those by embracing all beings in its semantic and aesthetic matrix of value to invest them with meaning and beauty. This spiritualization is the continuous creation in which all creatures participate in God’s being and act and life toward their perfection in the cosmological new creation of heaven and earth. The continuous creation out of chaos does not merely perish the old creation to meaningless nothingness but comprehends it in the eternal ground of God by the continuous new creation of emanation from God. Ambivalent, ambiguous, and meaningless emptiness and evils prevail in this world and are incomprehensible. Nevertheless, the spiritual imagination, which is based on the aesthetic sensation of the veritable and eternal reality of God’s glory, creates the actual reality of being, good, value, meaning, and beauty out of evil by virtue of the practical act of love in communion with God and all creatures. The life of love, which is disposed to and proceeds toward the glory of God in the fullness of Christ’s church, comprehends the unintelligible present in time with the ineffable felicity of the unfathomable eternal now.


_____. *Nicomachean Ethics*.

_____. *Physics*.

_____. *On the Heavens*.


_____. *De Natura Bini*.


Boethius. *Liber de Persona et Duabus Naturis*.


Empedocles. The Extant Fragments.


Irenaeus. Adversus Haereses.


Plato. Timaeus.

http://classics.mit.edu/Plotinus/enneads.6.sixth.html.


