

CHAPTER FOUR

The Heart, Aesthetics and the Trinity

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Three has shown that both Edwards and Augustine believe that the heart is driven by its loves either towards or away from God. The orientation of the heart depends on the inclination of the will, and it is by grace that the will is inclined to love God. In keeping with their deep appreciation for the primacy of Trinitarian love in the heart as the essential prerequisite for the restoration of the image of God in humanity, both Edwards and Augustine draw attention to the role of beauty in attracting the heart to God. Love and desire for God who is beauty and truth mark the beginning of the return of the heart to God. Augustine poses the rhetorical question that ushers in the substance of this chapter: “Do we love anything except that which is beautiful?”¹ In this chapter I demonstrate that both men love God for his surpassing beauty which they see revealed in history in the Trinitarian work of redemption. In keeping with their appreciation for the Neoplatonic idea of beauty as harmony and proportion, the Trinity is the epitome of beauty. Jesus Christ, at once supreme God in all his divine majesty and frail man in his abject poverty and humility of sacrificial love, is the most fitting exemplar of the divine beauty.

Common to both theologies is the conviction that the spiritual beauty of the triune God is not simply in the eye of the beholder. Beauty is located in the object itself because God is the author and source of all beauty. All of creation images God’s Trinitarian beauty.² Edwards reasserts Augustine’s belief that the beauty of the holiness of the triune God is the highest or primary beauty in creation. The perception of this beauty is imparted to the saints at conversion and is equated with holiness. The essence of holiness in the converted heart is the aesthetic sense of the beauty of God which in turn leads to the gradual reformation of the image of God. When the divine moral beauty of God is missing from a life given over to an inordinate love of earthly beauty then all loves are disordered. Conversion imparts the beauty of Trinitarian holiness to the heart, a spiritual beauty that far outweighs created physical beauty.

Several important concepts are related to their understanding of God as a triune being of love and beauty. For example, spiritual perception of the moral beauty of God is closely allied to

¹ *Confessions*, IV. 13. 20, p. 64.

² “True Virtue,” in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, p. 550-551.

teleology and the happy life in their theology. The end of creation is the beatific vision of God's moral beauty and holiness which is also synonymous with God's glory. Consequently both display a boldly aesthetic element in their Trinitarianism.³ The divine beauty is also God's perfect goodness: to be perfectly good is to be perfectly beautiful. Where Edwards speaks of God as the *bonum formosum*, Augustine speaks of God as *bonum et forma*.⁴ Both affirm that the experience of divine beauty and holiness is known in the heart.

In what follows, I argue that there are four essential Augustinian themes in Edwards' Trinitarianism that suggest a strong correlation in their perception of the relationship between beauty, the heart and the Trinity. The first is their understanding of the dual nature of beauty, which sees the natural beauty of the created world as a type of the divine beauty.⁵ Second, is the belief that God's beauty is Trinitarian with Jesus Christ as the exemplar of divine beauty by virtue of his holiness and humility. As the mutual love of the Father and Son, the Holy Spirit imparts the gift of holiness, which is the divine beauty, to the heart. It is the gift of Trinitarian love that enables the heart to see and love Christ's beauty and to emulate it. The third theme is the inseparable relationship between the divine beauty and true virtue.

My examination of this relationship demonstrates that true virtue is an affection or disposition of the heart that arises from participation in the triune beauty of God. True virtue is Trinitarian in the sense that truly virtuous actions originate in and from the love for the beauty of divine holiness in the heart. Happiness is the fourth theme to be examined in this chapter. Only the truly virtuous will attain happiness because they alone love and reflect God's beauty which is infinite and immortal. Finally, both Edwards and Augustine cite God's Trinitarian beauty in their descriptions of ecstatic union of heart with the divine Trinity. If mysticism can be defined as the immediate perception of God which is known to both the conative and affective elements of the

³ The discipline of aesthetics is relatively modern in origin, and to speak of Edwards' and Augustine's "aesthetics" is simply to identify their appreciation for the divine beauty as a discrete category. That God is ontologically beautiful colours their Trinitarian theology. See Richard Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty and Art*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 106-107. Viladesau places Augustine within a Neoplatonic current of aesthetics that became one of the fundamental motifs of scholastic theology and on to the post-Reformation era. Edwards enhances Augustine's recognition of God's Trinitarian beauty in his more explicit rendering of the divine beauty as the chief characteristic of God.

⁴ *Soliloquies*, 1.3, Burleigh, *Augustine's Earlier Writings*, p. 24. God is "the Good and the Beautiful, in, by and through whom all good and beautiful things have these qualities..." The true saints recognize that the grace of God is a "*bonum formosa*," a beautiful good in itself, and part of the moral and spiritual excellency of the divine nature." Edwards identifies "the beauty of holiness" with "true moral good." The real beauty of the Godhead is the beauty of the moral perfections of God, including God's goodness and this can only be known in the regenerate heart. *Religious Affections, Works*, 2, pp. 262, 264-266, 274.

⁵ In both biblical and natural typology the spiritual anti-type serves as the teleological end and fulfillment of the type.

heart, then both Edwards and Augustine may be accounted mystics.⁶ Therefore, my comparison of their aesthetic Trinitarianism concludes with a brief reference to the mystical overtones to their immediate experiences of God's Trinitarian beauty in the heart.

The love of the divine beauty in Edwards and Augustine resonates with a common heritage. Two traditions contribute to their insights, the Neoplatonic and the Hebraic. Greek speculation on beauty tended to focus on the formal attributes of beauty of which measure was the principle attribute. Beauty in one strand of the Platonic tradition extended to moral beauty and thus included ethics.⁷ Purely spiritual reality is superior to material reality or a mix of both in the Neoplatonic universe, so Plotinus incorporated the idea of moral beauty with his understanding of God's being as beauty and Plato's idea of forms. Beautiful objects can inspire an intellectual ascent to knowledge because beauty and form are synonymous. Beauty is the good because being is beauty.⁸ Edwards and Augustine were to adopt a Plotinian aesthetic in their Trinitarian thinking by associating being, beauty and the triune God.

The notion of God's moral beauty or holiness as the highest aesthetic component of being is found in the Hebraic tradition.⁹ In the Psalms for instance, delight and joy in the beauty of creation and God's actions in history are appropriate responses for the chosen people.¹⁰ In their aesthetic Trinitarianism, Edwards and Augustine reflect the Neoplatonic view that there is an

⁶ Goethe's definition of mysticism is particularly apt for Edwards and Augustine. "Mysticism is the scholastic of the heart, the dialectic of the feelings." Quoted by W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (London: Methuen & Co. 1912) p.338. The mystical or Neoplatonic element in their theology sees God as the Good, the True and the Beautiful. The end of creation is the gathering together of all the disparate parts of the creation into one harmonious whole.

⁷ The original Greek concept of beauty had a wide connotation extending beyond beautiful things such as colours, shapes and sounds to include beautiful thoughts and customs. The idea of the good was included in Plato's definition of beauty so beauty could be used to refer to moral beauty as in ethics, as well as aesthetics. Plato's theory of beauty is outlined in the *Hippias Major* and the *Symposium*. The individual forms of Beauty partake in Absolute Beauty as Idea which exists outside time and reveals the ideal and universal idea of Beauty. Harmony and proportion were at the forefront of ancient notions of beauty with an emphasis on the relationship between parts of a whole as the key to discriminating between the beautiful and non-beautiful. Ideas of symmetry, harmony and proportion were initially important elements in Greek theories of beauty but faded into the background somewhat in Stoic thinking. Plotinus on the other hand, spoke of beautiful sciences and beautiful virtues in the same sense as Plato, and it is to this broader sense of beauty encompassing both ethics and aesthetics that Edwards and Augustine returned. The definition was narrowed somewhat by the Sophists and Stoics. See Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, "The Great Theory of Beauty and Its Decline," in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Winter, 1972), pp. 165-180.

⁸ "Beauty," in *Dictionary of Aesthetics*, vol. 1, Michael Kelly Editor in Chief, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 244-251. Plotinus held that inasmuch as the objects we perceive participate in form, they are beautiful, and their beauty is an image of the ideal form. Beauty as an idea is one, and creates unity as things participate in the Beautiful. The idea of becoming beautiful by participation is to be found in both Edwards and Augustine. (www.historyofideas.org)

⁹ James Alfred Martin Jr., *Beauty and Holiness: The Dialogue Between Aesthetics and Religion* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 9-10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11. There is however, a sense of the demonic possibilities in beauty in the Hebraic milieu and a suspicion that an over-emphasis on beauty could become idolatrous, and this reservation is articulated in both Edwards' and Augustine's aesthetics.

hierarchy of beauty ranging from inanimate objects which have little beauty and culminating in God who is absolute beauty. They also adhere to the Hebraic notion that God's beauty is a moral beauty and is synonymous with the beauty of holiness to be seen in conjunction with the idea of divine glory.¹¹ The beauty of holiness is most perfectly exemplified in the salvific work of Jesus Christ.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

4.1 Edwards' Philosophy of Beauty and the Heart

Edwards announces his manifesto of the divine beauty in strident tones: "God is God, and distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above 'em, chiefly by his divine beauty which is infinitely diverse from all other beauty."¹² Beauty for Edwards is the first principle of existence and is the primary characteristic of the Divine Being, "that wherein the truest idea of divinity does consist."¹³ In other words, "True beauty is God's beauty."¹⁴ In Edwards' Neoplatonic understanding, creation is the result of the outflowing of the divine love and glory from the mind of God. God's aim in creation is to diffuse his beauty throughout the creation by imparting knowledge of his beauty and holiness to his creatures made in his image and likeness.¹⁵ The creation is ordered out of God's own beauty and it is "according to His Beauty that God governs the world, both natural and moral."¹⁶ As the sum of ontological and moral perfection, the Trinity is:

...the foundation and fountain of all being and all beauty; from whom all is perfectly derived, and on whom all is most absolutely and perfectly dependent; of whom, and through whom, and to whom is all being and all perfection; and whose being and beauty is as it were the sum and comprehension of all

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11. See also Roland Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards: An Essay in Aesthetics and Theological Ethics*, The Jonathan Edwards Classic Studies Series (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2006), p. 118, n. 1. Delattre disassociates Edwards from any sympathy with the expression the "beauty of holiness" in its pietistic form, but Edwards does use it occasionally in sermons where it seems to mean exactly what it says. In a sermon on 1 Peter 1; 8 (a), (1729), Edwards writes, "Christ takes greater delight in the beauty of holiness which he puts upon believers that men do in any beauty of a fellow creature." Similarly he writes in *Religious Affections*, "The beauty of holiness is that thing in spiritual and divine things, which is perceived by this spiritual sense, ...this kind of beauty is the quality that is the immediate object of this spiritual sense; this is the sweetness that is the proper object of this spiritual taste." *Works*, 2, p. 260.

¹² *Religious Affections. Works*, 2, p. 298.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Sang Hyun Lee, Editor's Introduction to *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith*, *Works*, 21, p. 7.

¹⁵ "Concerning the End for Which God Created the World," in *Ethical Writings*, *Works*, 8, 431-435; *True Virtue*, *ibid.*, pp. 556-560.

¹⁶ Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards*, p. 162.

existence and excellence: much more than the sun is the fountain and summary comprehension of all the light and brightness of the day.¹⁷

To proclaim beauty as the distinguishing characteristic of the triune God certainly put Edwards at odds with some of his Puritan contemporaries who were happy enough to acknowledge that God was beautiful, but not to insist that God was beauty itself as the first and foremost perfection.¹⁸ As Edwards notes, it is the beauty of God's goodness and holiness, that is his moral beauty, that arouses joy and delight in the heart. The very structure of being is beauty, with God as Trinity the most beautiful being of all.¹⁹

In the third sign of a gracious affection, he writes that God's beauty is expressed in his "purity and beauty as a moral agent, comprehending all his moral perfections, his righteousness, faithfulness and goodness."²⁰ Humanity created in the image of God lost God's "moral or spiritual image, which is his holiness" at the fall. When the Holy Spirit changes the inclination of the heart the saints are made partakers of God's own "excellence and beauty; that is of holiness, which consists in love."²¹

As was discussed in Chapter One, a heightened sense of God's Trinitarian beauty and holiness came to Edwards at his conversion.²² It was at that point that he recognized that the whole creation was an expression of the beauty of God's love. The divine mind communicates the divine beauty in the structures of the universe, but nothing surpasses the beauty of holiness manifest in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. When the heart is renewed, the immediate object of love becomes the "the supreme beauty and excellency of

¹⁷ "True Virtue," in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, p. 551.

¹⁸ E. Brooks Holifield, "Edwards as Theologian," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, pp. 158-159. Holifield states that on the whole Edwards' contemporaries ignored his aesthetics.

¹⁹ See "The Mind," no. 64, in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings, Works*, 6, p. 382, where Edwards writes: "Excellency may be distributed into greatness and beauty. The former is the degree of being, the latter is being's consent to being." Two works devoted exclusively to Edwards' attention to beauty are Roland Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards*, and Louis J. Mitchell, *Jonathan Edwards on the Experience of Beauty*, *Studies in Reformed Theology and History*, New Series, no. 9 (Princeton: Princeton Theological Seminary, 2003). Delattre analyses Edwards' writings on beauty from the perspective of the division between objective and subjective beauty, while Mitchell is concerned with the more subjective aspects of the experience of beauty and its manifestations in Edwards' thought.

²⁰ *Religious Affections, Works*, 2, p. 255. In "The Mind," no. 63, Edwards says "Excellency may be distributed into greatness and beauty. The former is the degree of being, the latter, is being's consent to being." *Scientific and Philosophical Writings Works*, 6, p. 382.

²¹ "The Mind," no. 9, in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings. Works*, 6, p. 364.

²² "Personal Narrative," in *Letters and Personal Papers, Works*, 16, pp. 793, 796. Recalling that momentous occasion Edwards enthuses that his new spiritual sense impressed on his heart "the loveliness and beauty of Jesus Christ" and the feeling that holiness was "the highest beauty and amiableness."

the nature of divine things.”²³ That discovery of the divine beauty revolutionized his thinking to the point that beauty became foundational to his epistemology, aesthetics, ethics and teleology. References to the love of the divine Trinitarian beauty in the hearts of the saints occur throughout his works.²⁴

Like Augustine, Edwards’ conception of divine beauty is couched in both philosophical and theological terminology.²⁵ Edwards appropriates objective notions of beauty such as consent, proportion and harmony with likeness or agreement the general characteristic of all forms of beauty.²⁶ Immediately beauty becomes relational since it is defined as harmony and proportion. In fact, Edwards re-asserts Augustine’s view that “All beauty consists in similarness, or identity of relation.”²⁷ The feelings of love, joy and delight occasioned by the beauty of objects or persons is their subjective beauty.

In his more formal treatises, the Neoplatonic strand of Edwards’ idealism re-appears in his ranking of being and beauty based on various levels or degrees of consent or agreement with the greatest consent that of Being in general (i.e. God), within the Trinity. Consent within the Trinity is manifest as an eternal, reciprocal love and delight which is the pattern for human desires for loving communion with the other.

Beauty is measured on a sliding scale of rising perfection from simple beauty to complex beauty, with the highest form of beauty primary beauty which consists in “That consent, agreement or union of being to being”²⁸ or “the union of minds or spiritual beings in a mutual propensity and affection of heart”²⁹ that is found in spiritual realities. The

²³ *Religious Affections, Works*, 2, p. 271.

²⁴ Josh Moody, in his *Jonathan Edwards and the Enlightenment* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2005), pp. 104-108, is critical of scholars such as Roland Delattre who privilege beauty as the central concern of Edwards theology over all other categories. He claims that there is a tendency to try and find a “softer” Edwards to combat the “hell-fire and brimstone” image of the “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” Edwards that prevails. The “softer” Edwards is there however. The transformative power of grace induced an almost entirely affective change in Edwards. Where “unbelievers know nothing about spiritual beauty but by hearsay,” the regenerate heart “sees a beauty and an amiableness, and tastes an incomparable sweetness, that is altogether hidden from the wicked.” In “A Spiritual Understanding of Divine Things Denied to the Unregenerate,” *Sermons and Discourses, Works*, 13, p. 79.

²⁵ Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards*, pp. 1-2.

²⁶ “The Mind,” no. 62, in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings, Works*, 6, p. 380. “There is no other way that sensible things can consent one to another but by equality, or by likeness, or by proportion.”

²⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 1, p. 334.

²⁸ “True Virtue,” in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, p. 561. See also “The Mind,” no. 1, in *Works*, 6, p. 336.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 564.

triune God is the epitome of primary beauty and is the only being who has primary beauty within himself.³⁰

Secondary beauty is an image of primary beauty and consists in the beauty of equality, harmony, symmetry, and proportion in the physical world.³¹ Despite his love for nature, Edwards believed that the secondary beauty of the natural world is inferior to the true, divine beauty because it does not possess mind. The distinction between primary and secondary beauty parallels the distinction between spiritual or moral and natural beauty. Moral beauty is found in the agreement between beliefs, actions and the nature of beings, while natural beauty is found in the harmony and proportion between other objects and beings.

Edwards' hierarchy of beauty suggests that secondary beauty points beyond itself to primary beauty. God created the world so that "things natural" would "livelily represent things divine and spiritual."³² The physical world is an image or shadow of reality, so that the beauties of the material world are "images or shadows" of the divine perfections,³³ thinking representative of the Platonic idealism characteristic of Augustine.³⁴ The typological relationship between primary and secondary beauty is seen in Miscellany no. 108 where Edwards relates the beauties of nature to the person of Christ with his observation that "the beauties of nature are really emanations, or shadows, of the excellency of the Son of God."³⁵

³⁰ Primary beauty is "the proper and peculiar beauty of the spiritual and moral beings, which are the highest and first part of the universal system, for whose sake all the rest has existence." "True Virtue," in *Works*, 8, p. 561. "The Mind," no. 45. 12, in *Works*, 6, p. 365. "Tis peculiar to God that he has beauty within himself consisting of being's consenting with his own being, or the love of himself in his own Holy Spirit...".

³¹ "True Virtue," in *Ethical Writings*, *Works*, 8, pp. 561-562.

³² The "Miscellanies," no. 118, (c. 1724), *Works*, 13, p. 284.

³³ Mitchell, *Jonathan Edwards on the Experience of Beauty*, pp. 5-6. See "Miscellany" 186, "Fall," *Works*, 13, p. 330. "Seeing the beauty of the corporeal world consists chiefly in its imaging forth spiritual beauties, and the beauties of minds are infinitely the greatest, we therefore undoubtedly may conclude that God, when he created the world, showed his own perfections and beauties far the most charmingly and clearly in the spiritual part of the world. But seeing spiritual beauty consist principally in virtue and holiness, and there is so little of this beauty to be seen now in that part of the spiritual world that is here on earth; hence we may certainly conclude, and it fully convinces me, that there has been a great fall and defection in this part of the spiritual world from their primitive beauty and charms." Belden Lane suggests that Edwards had a sacramental view of the natural world that evoked in him feelings of desire and delight for the beauty of the world as a manifestation of God's glory. Belden C. Lane, "Jonathan Edwards on Beauty, Desire and the Sensory World," in *Theological Studies*, vol. 65, no. 1, (March, 2004), pp. 44-73.

³⁴ See Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Augustine*, pp. 80, 199, 91-92, 127, 118, 210. "True Virtue," in *Ethical Writings*, *Works*, 8, p. 565.

³⁵ The "Miscellanies," No. 108, in *Works*, 13, p. 279. Similar sentiments appear "The Excellency of Christ," in *Sermons and Discourses*, *Works*, 13, pp. 278-279. "So that when we are delighted with flowery meadows and gentle breezed of wind, we may consider that we only see the emanations of the sweet benevolence of Jesus Christ; when we behold the fragrant rose and lily, we see his love and purity. So the green trees and

The notion of "consent" is important in Edwards' understanding of the relationship between primary and secondary beauty. The higher form of consent is cordial consent within primary beauty which consists in "concord and union of mind and heart." Cordial consent represents true virtue or true moral beauty in the believer's heart.³⁶ The second type of consent is "a natural union or agreement" which has no reference to the heart and so is "an inferior secondary sort of beauty."³⁷ If the highest consent occurs within the Trinity, the lowest consists in the agreement or proportion of inanimate things such as colours or shapes. Both the objective and subjective aspects of beauty merge in Edwards' Trinitarianism. The more consent between entities, the more beauty, hence the superiority of the triune beauty of God who manifests the utmost cordial consent. God as "Being in general" is "the pattern of all and has the sum of all perfection"³⁸ exhibiting the epitome of complex spiritual beauty in the consent of love within the Trinity.³⁹ Edwards expounds his hierarchy of consent in the following passage:

The beauty of the world consists wholly of sweet mutual consents, either within itself, or with the supreme Being. As to the corporeal world, though there are many other sorts of consents, yet the sweetest and most charming beauty of it is its resemblance of spiritual beauties. The reason is that spiritual beauties are infinitely the greatest, and bodies being but the shadow of beings, they must be so much the more charming as they shadow forth spiritual beauties.⁴⁰

Primary or moral beauty is not restricted to God, but is also to be found in the hearts of beings capable of choice and consent.⁴¹ God's essential beauty and glory are known beyond the Trinity by those made in his image and likeness, creatures who most resemble the triadic being of God in that they possess understanding and will, the highest kind of created existence.⁴² The will

fields, and singing of birds, are the emanations of his infinite joy and benignity; the easiness and naturalness of trees and vines [are] shadows of his infinite beauty and loveliness; the crystal rivers and murmuring streams have the footsteps of his sweet grace and bounty."

³⁶ "True Virtue," in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, p. 565.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 565-566.

³⁸ "The Mind," no. 45, "Excellence," in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings, Works*, 6, p. 363.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 45. 9, p. 364. "But he exerts himself towards himself no other way than in infinitely loving and delighting in himself. in the mutual love of the Father and the Son. This makes the third, the personal Holy Spirit or the holiness of God, which is his infinite beauty, and this is God's infinite consent to being in general."

⁴⁰ "Beauty of the World" in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings, Works*, 6, p. 305.

⁴¹ "The Mind," No. 45, in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings, Works*, 6, p. 362. "But excellence in and among spirits is, in its prime and proper sense, being's consent to being. There is no other proper consent but that of minds, even of their will; which, when it is of minds towards minds, it is love, and when of mind towards other things it is choice. Wherefore all the primary and original beauty or excellence that is among minds is love and into this may all be resolved that is found among them."

⁴² "Concerning the End for Which God Created the World," in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, pp. 432, 454, 529.

and the affections, the heart in other words, must be involved before God's primary beauty can be discerned. Since volition is an act of love and the more consent the more love and beauty, Edwards says "The highest excellency, therefore, must be the consent of spirits one to another."⁴³ The saints who participate in the divine beauty display God's excellency and perceive "the beauty and sweetness of holiness as the grand object of a spiritual taste, and spiritual appetite."⁴⁴

In nature, physics, music and mathematics, Edwards perceived a beauty of consent that disclosed the hand of the divine Creator, exactly as Augustine had done.⁴⁵ Relations between entities do not require exact similitude to be beautiful. Complex beauty involves the harmonization of disproportionate things according to a more universal arrangement.⁴⁶ The resolution of disparate elements leads to a more intense beauty as in the human body, an analogy used by Augustine in his very similar discussion on beauty and proportion.⁴⁷ Music offers an example for Edwards of the harmony and proportion of complex beauty, with complicated musical scores or choirs evincing a more intense beauty.⁴⁸ Augustine too, found music fascinating for its pleasing harmonies.⁴⁹ Both men regarded music as one of the most complex and therefore most beautiful examples of secondary beauty.

At conversion, following the gift of the Holy Spirit, Edwards is of the opinion the heart perceives the divine beauty intuitively, that is, without recourse to reasoning, education, habit or prior knowledge.⁵⁰ Perception of the primary beauty that is God comes through participation in

⁴³ "The Mind," no. 45. 9, in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings, Works*, 6, p. 364.

⁴⁴ *Religious Affections, Works*, 2, 260.

⁴⁵ Other distinctions Edwards makes are those between general or particular beauty, true or false beauty and universal or partial beauty. Edwards' description of simple beauty in geometric terms of harmony and proportion where equality is obvious as in two circles with the same radii, is reminiscent of Augustine and the Platonic tradition of beauty. See "True Virtue," Chs. 2 -3, in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, pp. 550-574, p. 333. See also "Controversies," in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, p. 318. Augustine, "The Greatness of the Soul," Chs. 7-12, in *FC*, vol. 2, pp. 71-82.

⁴⁶ "True Virtue," in *Ethical Writings Works*, 8, p. 333.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 335. *Confessions*, IV. 13. 20, p. 64-65.

⁴⁸ "The Mind," no. 62, in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings, Works*, 6, p. 380. "When one thing sweetly harmonises with another, as the notes in music. The notes are so conformed and have such proportion one to another that they seem to have respect one to another, as if they loved one another."

⁴⁹ "On Music," in *FC*, vol. 2, pp. 167-379. The first five books contain an elaborate discussion of the technical aspects of music, but in Book VI, Augustine moves from the beauty, harmony and proportion of numbers to a discussion of beauty and God's sovereignty.

⁵⁰ "True Virtue," in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, p. 619. "the way we come by the idea or sensation of beauty, is by immediate sensation of the gratefulness of the idea called beautiful." In the *Religious Affections*, Edwards says that "spiritual knowledge does most essentially consist" in having the "holy beauty of divine things manifested to the soul..." *Works*, 2, p. 279. See also "Concerning the End for Which God Created the World," in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, p. 443, and "The Mind," no. 1, "Excellency," in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings, Works*, 6, p. 337. "God is proper entity itself...for so far as a thing consents to being in general it consents to him. And the more perfect created spirits are, the nearer do they come to their creator in this regard." The heart is drawn "nearer and

Christ's beauty when believers gain a share in God's excellency.⁵¹ "The [saints] have spiritual excellency and joy by a kind of participation of God. They are made excellent by a communication of God's excellency. God puts his own beauty, i.e., his beautiful likeness upon their souls."⁵² This experience of the divine love and beauty in the heart is to experience primary beauty in Edwards' understanding of reality.⁵³ Just as God's knowledge and God's love are one in the Trinity, so the hearts of the saints are unified through an experience of the divine Trinitarian beauty. The Neoplatonic ideal of God's essential being as beauty is combined with the Hebrew understanding of God's beauty consisting in the beauty of holiness to arrive at Edwards' aesthetic Trinitarianism.

4.2 Beauty and the Trinity

Delattre identifies the Trinity as the central motif in Edwards' conviction that divine beauty is the measure of all things. To the extent that beings participate in the divine beauty, they are both beautiful and holy.⁵⁴ Although the divine perfections are prominent in Edwards' spiritual vocabulary and are used interchangeably,⁵⁵ Delattre notes that in Edward's litany of God's perfections, beauty and excellency are most frequently used by Edwards to refer to God's essential Trinitarian being.⁵⁶

Excellency encompasses a complex of inter-related concepts such as beauty, holiness, and goodness which may also be described as God's glory. "Excellence, to put it in other

nearer to God, and the union becomes more firm and close; and at the same time the creature becomes more and more conformed to God."

⁵¹ The "Miscellanies," no. 187, "Spirit," in *Works*, 13, p. 331. "Seeing the beauty of minds is so much the greatest, and corporeal beauties but the shadows of them; and the beauties of the corporeal world being so immediately derived from God that they are but emanations of his beauty, and much more the primitive beauty of spirits, wherein the beauty of God's works chiefly consisted; and seeing this beauty is lost and is to be restored again, as we have just now shown [No. 186]: when it's restored again it will undoubtedly be by way of immediate emanation from his beauty, and not of our own or another's operation-except the original of the beauty of the world is to be looked upon as almost wholly alien to the perfection and efficiency of God."

⁵² "God Glorified in Man's Dependence," in *Works*, 17, p. 208.

⁵³ "The Mind," no. 1, in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, *Works*, 6, p. 337.

⁵⁴ Roland Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards*, pp. 104-111.

⁵⁵ "Excellence, to put it in other words, is that which is beautiful and lovely." *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, *Works*, 6, p. 344.

⁵⁶ Roland Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards*, Ch. 7, pp. 148-161. See also Roland Delattre, "Jonathan Edwards and the Recovery of Aesthetics for Religious Ethics," in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 31, vol. 2, (2003) 277-297. For further commentary on Edwards and beauty see Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), and Sang Hyun Lee, "Mental Activity and the Perception of Beauty in Jonathan Edwards," in *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 69, no. 3/4 (Jul.-Oct., 1976), pp. 369-396. For a more recent survey of Edwards' aesthetic thought see Louis J. Mitchell, *Jonathan Edwards and the Experience of Beauty*.

words, is that which is beautiful and lovely”⁵⁷ says Edwards. In another context, he speaks of God’s excellency as “his infinite beauty, brightness and glory itself.”⁵⁸ Excellency is the original good and true foundation of all good, and “the first foundation of all true love.”⁵⁹ The real good, which he equates with the moral beauty of God, is that which is wholly beautiful. This has implications for Edwards’ understanding of the nature of God as essentially Trinitarian and dispositional, because in his metaphysics, it is God’s dispositional essence to know and love true beauty and to display his glory. Therein lies God’s excellency. The supreme task of the individual members of the Trinity is to incorporate the elect into the beauty of the immanent Trinitarian life. This aesthetic vision of redemption through participation in Christ is the ultimate expression of divine beauty, and is one shared with Augustine.

As has been shown above, since being includes aesthetic properties that are inherent in concepts such as union, consent, beauty, harmony and proportion, God as Trinity expresses perfectly Edwards’ notion of excellency. God must be a plurality for consent and union to exist within the Godhead. If God is a being of beauty then God is essentially relational since, in Edwards’ view, and this is found in Augustine, beauty is a relation of consent, a relation of proportion and harmony.⁶⁰ Since the highest beauty is manifest in the most sublime union and consent of being to Being, so God as Trinity is the paradigm for Edward’s views on beauty and relationality. In one important respect, Edwards’ concept of beauty as relationality differs from Augustine’s in that Edwards does not see God’s goodness and beauty grounded in the divine simplicity and unity as they were for Augustine. Edwards’ Trinitarian universe is pluralistic with beauty located primarily in the harmony, agreement or consent of one thing to another.

God’s infinite Trinitarian beauty is manifest in the infinite, mutual consenting love and delight of the Father and Son which is the Holy Spirit. As perfect being and beauty, God has the disposition to increase his actuality and so to communicate himself. Everything in creation is intended to be related in networks of beauty, and with Edwards’s conception of being seen as that which is inherently disposed to more activities and relationships, then

⁵⁷ “The Mind,” no. 14, in *Scientific and Philosophic Writings, Works*, 6, p. 344.

⁵⁸ *Religious Affections, Works*, 2, p. 242.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

⁶⁰ “The Mind,” no. 1, in *Scientific and Philosophic Writings, Works*, 6, p. 362; The “Miscellanies,” no. 117, *Works*, 13, p. 248. See “The Nature of the Good,” 3-10, in Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, pp. 327-329.

being cannot be static or simply substance, but is essentially concerned with repetition and self-actualisation; more and more being, and more and more beauty. The creation affords a wonderful opportunity for the communication of God's *ad intra* knowledge, love, beauty and happiness *ad extra*. According to Edwards, the Trinity in its immanent being *ad intra* and economic activities *ad extra*, is the most beautiful, loving relationship of three equal persons who individually and as Trinity manifest and share the divine love, glory, holiness, and excellency that is God's beauty, with the elect. They in turn, manifest the divine beauty in their lives and relationships.⁶¹

Edwards re-states his premise that the beauty of the divine nature consists in God's moral excellency or beauty, commonly depicted as holiness of heart in the *Religious Affections*. God's beauty, that is the Holy Spirit, is most clearly manifest in the person and work of Christ, the perfect idea of the Father.⁶² Not only do the beauties of the creation reflect the beauty of Christ,⁶³ but in his Incarnation, the beauty of the immanent Trinity is revealed in time. There is an echo of Augustine's notion of descent and ascent in Edwards' depiction of the Incarnation as God's assumption of fallen human nature in order that humanity might participate in the divine life. The whole affair of redemption has an intrinsic beauty of harmony restored in the fitting work of the saviour. Recognition of Christ's beauty in effecting salvation entrances believers and draws their hearts to love and worship the beauty of the triune God. The pinnacle of creation is the beatific vision of God which follows participation in the divine life. It is a purely aesthetic experience which Edwards attributes to God's prior gift of "that beauty which is an image and communication of his own beauty."⁶⁴ By partaking of God's beauty and holiness, the moral image of God lost in the Fall is restored."⁶⁵

In Edwards' Christological thinking, the moral beauty of Christ's human nature is the exact "image and reflection" of the moral beauty of his divine nature. As the perfect embodiment of spiritual beauty, Christ's meekness, lowliness, patience, heavenliness, love,

⁶¹ Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards*, pp. 146-152.

⁶² *Religious Affections*, *Works*, 2, p. 258. "Discourse on the Trinity," in *Works*, 21, pp. 114-120; The "Miscellanies," no. 238, *Works*, 13, p. 354;

⁶³ See The "Miscellanies," no. 185, in *Works*, 13, p. 330. "We have all the same, and more, reason to conclude the spiritual beauty of Christ from the beauty of the world; for all the beauties of the universe do as immediately result from the efficiency of Christ, as a cast of an eye or a smile of the countenance depends on the efficiency of the human soul."

⁶⁴ "Concerning the End for which God Created the World," in *Ethical Writings*, *Works*, 8, p. 446.

⁶⁵ *Religious Affections*, *Works*, 2, p. 258. "As the beauty of the divine nature does primarily consist in God's holiness, so does the beauty of all divine things. Herein consists the beauty of the saints, or holy ones: 'tis the moral image of God in them which is their beauty; and that is their holiness."

condescension and compassion validate his status as the “holy One of God.”⁶⁶ In accordance with an Augustinian aesthetic that sees complex beauty consisting in the harmonization of disparate parts of a whole, Edwards contrasts the human and divine attributes of Christ in his paean of praise in “The Excellency of Christ.” Using the image of the lion and the lamb, Edwards sets out the “admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Christ” which constitute his spiritual beauty.⁶⁷ Throughout the course of his life, Christ displayed the beauty of holiness which culminated in his death on the cross, and it is “by that, above all other things, his divine glory appears.”⁶⁸ Christ’s infinite goodness in suffering for sinners is “beauty and excellency itself” and becomes the saints when they choose Christ as their saviour and are thereby partakers with him of the divine beauty.⁶⁹ Love for divine things because of their beauty is the spring of all holy affections in Edwards, and unless one perceives the beauty of holiness, one is ignorant of the entire spiritual world.⁷⁰

The fate of the wicked is determined by their inability to recognize Christ’s beauty and amiableness, Edwards declared in a sermon in 1746. Before sinners can see the beauty of Christ they must be recipients of the new spiritual sense of the heart that is Christ’s gift of the in-dwelling Holy Spirit. True Christian experience gives a “sense of the divine beauty” that savingly convinces the mind of the truth of the gospel. Once the believer’s eyes have been opened to “behold the divine superlative beauty and loveliness of Jesus Christ,” conviction as to the sufficiency of Christ as mediator follows, and the attractive

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* “Herein does primarily consist the amiableness and beauty of the Lord Jesus, whereby he is the chief among ten thousands and altogether lovely; even in that he is the holy One of God...”

⁶⁷ “The Excellency of Christ,” in *Works*, 19, p. 565. This sermon was first preached in 1734. See pp. 563-594: The conjunctions listed are infinite highness and infinite condescension, infinite justice and infinite grace, infinite glory and the lowest humility, infinite majesty and infinite meekness, reverence towards God and equality with God, infinite worthiness of good and the greatest patience under sufferings, an exceeding spirit of obedience and supreme dominion over heaven and earth, absolute sovereignty and perfect resignation, and self-sufficiency and an entire trust and reliance on God. See Edwards’ “Personal Narrative,” *Works*, 16, p. 793, for a similar use of the conjunction of excellencies. The “loveliness and beauty of Jesus Christ” are manifest in the conjunction of “majesty and meekness joined together: it was a sweet and gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; an high and great, and holy gentleness.” Similar ideas are expressed in “The Sweet Harmony of Christ,” (1735), in *Works*, 19, pp. 435-450; “Christ the Light of the World,” in *Sermons and Discourses*, *Works*, 10, pp. 535-546, and “Jesus Christ is the Shining Forth of the Father’s Glory,” (1734), in *The Glory and Honour of God: The Previously Unpublished Sermons of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, pp. 223-244.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 576.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 591.

⁷⁰ *Religious Affections*, *Works*, 2, p. 275.

power of Christ's beauty is revealed to the heart, "And 'tis this sight of the divine beauty of Christ, that bows the wills, and draws the hearts of men."⁷¹

In the sermon based on the verse that is quoted at the beginning of *Religious Affections*, Edwards asserts that "Christ represents himself as having his heart ravished with the beauty of the souls of believers. Christ takes greater delight in that beauty of holiness which he puts upon believers than men do in any beauty of a fellow creature."⁷² The church when brought into union with Christ loves him above all else, but it is a responsive love "because he has sweetly and powerfully drawn her by enlightening of her to see his glory and beauty."⁷³ Union with the beautiful Christ ushers believers into the divine family "that he, and his Father, and his people, should be as it were one society, one family; that the church should be as it were admitted into the society of the blessed Trinity."⁷⁴

If Jesus Christ is the exemplar of divine beauty *par excellence*, then the Holy Spirit is the divine beauty.⁷⁵ The Holy Spirit as the "beauty and joy of the Creator" is active in creation, indwells believer's hearts and gives them "their sweetness and beauty"⁷⁶ thus making the saints beautiful and holy.⁷⁷ Edwards defines holiness as "the beauty and sweetness of the divine nature" which is the distinctive quality of the Holy Spirit who, in communicating his nature to the saints, makes them "partakers of God's beauty and Christ's joy."⁷⁸

There is a dynamic quality to Edwards' portrayal of the Holy Spirit as "the essential act and energy of God" who "quickens and beautifies all things."⁷⁹ Edwards likens the work of the Holy Spirit in creation to his role in redemption. In the creation of the world, it was the special task of the Holy Spirit to bring "the world to its beauty and perfection out of the chaos; for the beauty of the world is a communication of God's beauty. The Holy

⁷¹ "True Grace, Distinguished from the Experience of Devils," in *Sermons and Discourses, Works*, 25, p. 635.

⁷² Unpublished sermon on 1 Peter 1: 8 (a) The Jonathan Edwards Centre, Yale Divinity School, p. 16

⁷³ Unpublished sermon on Matt. 25: 1-12a, The Jonathan Edwards Centre, Yale Divinity School, p. 63.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 594.

⁷⁵ "The Mind," no. 45. 12, in *Scientific and Philosophic Writings, Works*, 6, p. 365.

⁷⁶ "Discourse on the Trinity," in *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith, Works*, 21, p. 123.

⁷⁷ *Religious Affections, Works*, 2, p. 200. "So the saints are said to live by Christ living in them (Gal. 2:20). Christ by his Spirit not only is in them, but lives in them; and so that they live by his life; so is his Spirit united to them, as a principle of life in them..."

⁷⁸ *Religious Affections, Works*, 2, p. 210. In his sermon "The Way of Holiness," (see ch. 2, pp.21-22), Edwards eloquently describes the beauty of holiness. He says, "Holiness is a most beautiful and lovely thing. there is nothing in it but what is sweet and ravishingly lovely. 'Tis the highest beauty and amiableness, vastly above all other beauties; 'tis a divine beauty, makes the soul heavenly and far purer than anything here on earth..." *Sermons and Discourses, Works*, 10, p. 478.

⁷⁹ "Discourse on the Trinity," in *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith, Works*, 21, p. 123.

Spirit is the harmony and excellency and beauty of the Deity.”⁸⁰ Just as the Holy Spirit brought beauty out of chaos in the original creation, so will he bring “the spiritual world to such divine excellency and beauty after the confusion, deformity and ruin of sin.”⁸¹

The Trinitarian imperative in Edwards’ aesthetic is substantiated in his observation that through their “communion and participation” with the Holy Spirit in the heart, the saints have “truly fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, in thus having the communion or participation of the Holy Ghost.”⁸² Such is the profundity of the union of the saints with God (*theosis*) through the Spirit they are not only made partakers of “God’s spiritual beauty and happiness,” they have the “fullness” of God in their hearts in the form of grace which such that they partake of the divine nature in its holiness.⁸³ The beauty of holiness is God’s gift to the hearts of the saints.

4.3 Beauty and True Virtue

Edwards confirmed his early thinking and extended his speculations on the relationship between beauty, the heart and the Trinity in two dissertations written during his time at Stockbridge in the 1750s. The first is teleological in import, God’s end in creation, and the second, the nature of true virtue. They were intended to be read together. Paul Ramsay links the two works with his observation that the “‘end’ for which God created the world is the ‘end’ of a truly virtuous and holy life”⁸⁴ and that is a life infused with divine beauty. The two read consecutively give theological weight to Edwards’ metaphysics, thus uniting theology and philosophy in the manner exemplified by Augustine.

George Marsden, Edwards’ most authoritative biographer, places Edwards’ Christian metanarrative in an Augustinian framework with his claim that *The End for Which God created the World* governs all his earlier works. God’s ultimate end⁸⁵ in the creation of the world according to Edwards was to communicate “virtue and holiness to the creature.”⁸⁶ Since God’s virtue and holiness is also his beauty, God’s intentions in creation are

⁸⁰ The “Miscellanies,” no. 293, *Works*, 13, p. 384.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, no. 479, *Works*, 13, p. 523.

⁸² *Religious Affections*, *Works*, 2, p. 201.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁸⁴ Paul Ramsey, “Editor’s Introduction,” to *Ethical Writings*, *Works*, 8, p. 5.

⁸⁵ “Concerning the End for which God Created the World,” in *Ethical Writings*, *Works*, 8, p. 526. In the Introduction to his Dissertation and in some of his earlier Miscellanies Edwards differentiates between “ultimate” and “subordinate” ends. The Editor’s note 2 points out that discrepancies in Edwards’ statements concerning God’s ultimate end in creation may be resolved by seeing some ends as subordinate ends.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 528. “The whole of God’s internal good or glory,” says Edwards, “is in these three things, viz. his infinite knowledge; his infinite virtue or holiness, and his infinite joy and happiness.”

aesthetic. Without the divine beauty of the Trinity in the heart, there is no real purpose to existence nor is there any true virtue or beauty.⁸⁷

God's end in creating the universe is not primarily for the saints' benefit in Edwards' estimation. God's Trinitarian glory *ad intra* flows out *ad extra* not principally to make the saints virtuous or happy.⁸⁸ Nor is it so that God's glory may be reflected back by his creatures, although this does happen. The purpose of the creation is simply that God's glory shine forth and the creature receive.⁸⁹ Edwards is equally adamant with Augustine that there can be no hint of necessity or lack on God's part that would necessitate a creation apart from God's eternal Trinitarian being.⁹⁰

Of greater significance than the creature's happiness is God's intratrinitarian love, pleasure and regard for himself. Thus God's intention in creation is to extend his moral excellency and communicate his internal glory out of his "abundant fullness of good" with an "ultimate regard to himself."⁹¹ In so doing, God reveals "the disposition of his [i.e. God's] heart"⁹² which is "the fullness of every perfection, of all excellency and beauty, and of infinite happiness." Therefore, it is out of God's fullness of being, his internal glory as a society of infinite beauty, joy, goodness and happiness of consenting being that God graciously created the world "that his glory should be known by a glorious society of created beings."⁹³

Such magnanimity on God's part is cause for great rejoicing according to Edwards. To God "belongs all the heart" of his creatures.⁹⁴ Edwards expects that God will have the veneration of his creatures because, "As he is in every way the first and supreme, and as his excellency is in all respects the supreme beauty and glory, the original good, and fountain

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 442. The Neoplatonic strain in Edwards' thought is very much to the fore in his "Concerning the End for which God Created the World." Terms such as "emanation" "fullness" "effulgence" and "diffusion" recur throughout the work. So Edwards speaks of the emanation of the divine fullness or goodness, (pp. 433, 438, 442), effulgence of God's glory, (p. 447) diffusion of fullness of his being (pp. 433, 439), and the communication of his attributes by union with the divine nature.(p. 459). Marsden suggests that Edwards does not adhere to a "static Platonic idealism" but harbours a more relational, dynamic perspective on the creation based on his Trinitarian thinking. Edwards certainly appropriated Neoplatonic thinking but it had Christian overtones to begin with. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, p. 77.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 527. In one of his earliest Miscellanies, Edwards does suggest that the creature's happiness is the end of creation, but he has modified this position by the time of writing his final dissertations. See The "Miscellanies," no. 3, "Happiness is the End of Creation," in *Works*, 13, p. 199.

⁸⁹ The "Miscellanies," no. 448, "End of the Creation," in *Works*, 13, pp. 495-96.

⁹⁰ "Concerning the End for Which God Created the World," in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, pp. 430-431; p. 420. *Confessions*, XIII. 4. 5, p. 275.

⁹¹ *Ibid* p. 438.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 422.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 431.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 422.

of all good; so he must have in all respects the supreme regard.”⁹⁵ The creatures’ delight and enjoyment of God’s glory is an important part of Edwards’ teleology, because God’s “glory is then received by the whole soul, both by the understanding and by the heart.”⁹⁶ Again reflecting his Neoplatonic heritage Edwards parallels the idea of the return to the One with his portrayal of the gift of the divine fullness and its return to God. The knowledge, holiness, love and joy communicated to the hearts of the saints are reflected back to God as knowledge of God, love of God and joy in God. In this way, the affective and intellectual aspects of the mind are united in perception of the divine beauty, love and holiness. God’s fullness is received and returned, which to quote Edwards is “both an emanation and remanation . . . So that the whole is of God, and in God, and to God; and God is the beginning, middle and end in this affair.”⁹⁷ The joy of the saints as they perceive God’s Trinitarian excellency and beauty in their hearts is the essence of God’s happiness.⁹⁸

One unusual strand of Edwards’ teleology is his view that the communication of God’s glory *ad extra* is an enlargement of God’s being,⁹⁹ a concept which is difficult to reconcile with God’s incorporeal immutability, and not one in which Augustine would have acquiesced. In the latter’s view of redemption, it is the believer’s heart that is enlarged, not God himself.¹⁰⁰ Edwards’ view may be explained as the extension of God’s glory in the lives of believers, but this is not stated explicitly. Edwards justifies his more novel concept on the grounds that it is fitting that God’s infinite knowledge, holiness, joy and happiness be known and communicated just as beams from the sun flow out and are diffused *ad extra*,¹⁰¹ but this does not really explain how this communication is an “enlargement” of God’s being.

In the second Dissertation, “The Nature of True Virtue,” Edwards analyses the close relationship between the heart, divine beauty and true virtue. His foundation for ethics and virtue is Trinitarian and there is an unfailing accent on the divine beauty in his depiction of God’s glory as the exemplification of true virtue.¹⁰² Edwards’ vision of the close harmony

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 424.

⁹⁶ The “Miscellanies,” no. 448, *Works*, 13, pp. 495-96.

⁹⁷ “Concerning the End for which God Created the World,” in *Ethical Writings*, *Works*, 8, pp. 530-531.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 433. “such an emanation of good is, in some sense, a multiplication of it...the emanation, or that which is as it were an increase, repetition or multiplication of it, is excellent and worthy to exist.”

¹⁰⁰ *Confessions*, 1. 5. 6, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ “Concerning the End for which God Created the World,” in *Ethical Writings*, *Works*, 8, p. 433.

¹⁰² The most important moral philosophers with whom Edwards disagreed were the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), and David Hume (1711-1776). For a comprehensive discussion

between virtue and aesthetics was not his innovation and shows his indebtedness to the Cambridge Platonists. The notion that virtue is beautiful and has as its highest reference point God himself is Platonic in origin.¹⁰³

The Trinity is the perfect paradigm for ethics in Edwards' theology: there can be no more perfect model of consent, that is beauty, than the consent between the persons of the Trinity.¹⁰⁴ Order, harmony and proportion are essential ingredients in the divine beauty and these qualities constitute true virtue in its highest manifestation. Participation in the beauty of holiness which is the divine life is the prerequisite for true virtue in the heart. The disorder of sin creates the ugliness of moral life which is characteristic of the unregenerate heart and of human life in general.

Edwards' work contrasts his understanding of the nature of true virtue with what was commonly held to be virtuous by the eighteenth century moral philosophers who removed the supernatural element from their discussions on virtue.¹⁰⁵ Edwards agreed with some of their conclusions about the nature of beauty, but disagreed strongly with their insights concerning the ability of humans to determine moral virtue and follow its dictates. If true virtue was innately beautiful, as Hutcheson and others asserted, in reply Edwards argued (as did Augustine), that God the Trinity is the benchmark against which the beauty of virtue should be judged. In Edwards' ethics, only transformative grace could effect the union of

of Edwards moral thought in its eighteenth century contest see Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards' Moral Thought and its British Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981). See also Paul Ramsay's perceptive comments on Edwards' references to Hutcheson in "True Virtue," in *Works*, 8, Chs. 3-6, pp. 561-608.

¹⁰³ Edwards' view that knowledge of divine beauty is an intuitive apprehension of the heart is derived from the Cambridge Platonists in Europe and New England. They reinforced the Augustinian-Neoplatonic strand of aesthetics and ethics that formed the basis for moral theology at Harvard and eventually Yale. See Norman Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth Century Harvard: A Discipline in Transition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), Ch. 6, "The Break with Scholasticism: More and Gale," pp. 239-294. Fiering notes the importance of these two philosophers at Harvard and points out Gales' familiarity with the Augustinian tradition. Edwards was conversant with both thinkers.

¹⁰⁴ The "Miscellanies," no. 96, in *Works*, 13, pp. 263-264. Perfect goodness is to delight in communicating perfect happiness to another.

¹⁰⁵ They were essentially optimistic about human nature. The Cambridge Platonists minimized the resort to dogma and Shaftsbury and Hutcheson posited a natural, innate moral sense endowed by a benevolent Creator, one that approximated a sense of beauty. Humans were capable of living virtuous lives without recourse to divine intervention. In effect, Hutcheson based his ethics on secondary beauty. See Peter Kivy, "The 'Sense' of Beauty and the Sense of 'Art': Hutcheson's Place in the History and Practice of Aesthetics," in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 53, no. 4, (Fall, 1995), pp. 349-357. Kivy sees Hutcheson as one of the first to analyse aesthetics as a distinct discipline and as holding to the view that beauty was perceived immediately as "uniformity amidst variety". Edwards' thinking with respect to the high profile he accorded beauty in his discussions on virtue has to be seen in part as a response to the work in aesthetics and moral philosophy of Locke, Hutcheson and Shaftsbury who argued that beauty and morality were ideas that could be sensed by perception and had no immediate supernatural origin

hearts with the divine beauty that would ensure true virtue. He distanced himself from the British moralists by insisting that true beauty or virtue cannot exist independently of God.

True virtue consists in participating in and replicating the model of intratrinitarian beauty, but it is not simply love of God for his beauty alone. It is a combination of the love of benevolence and the love of complacency in Edwards' aesthetic. He sees a difference between love which loves disinterestedly without regard to the beauty of the object loved or the prospect of reward (benevolent love), and that which loves something for its beauty (complacent love). Only the love which seeks the highest good for the first object of benevolence, Being in general, or God, is truly beautiful and virtuous.¹⁰⁶ The heart must see the "original essential beauty of true virtue" before there is "any principle of true virtue in the heart."¹⁰⁷ This again is consistent with Augustine's distinction between a disinterested love of God and love of God which seeks a reward.

Without reference to the divine Trinitarian beauty all virtue is the product of self-love and has no connection with true virtue which he defines as "the cordial consent or union of being to Being in general."¹⁰⁸ Edwards makes a clear distinction between virtue as "the beauty of those qualities and acts of the mind that are of a moral nature," and true virtue which "is that consent, propensity and union of heart to Being in general, that is immediately exercised in a general good will."¹⁰⁹ In somewhat plainer language he insists that true virtue "chiefly consists in love to God; the Being of beings, infinitely the greatest and best of beings."¹¹⁰ He makes this claim on the basis that virtue has its seat in the heart and consists in love and beauty, a proposition with which Hutcheson would have agreed. Edwards, however, goes further than any of his contemporaries in arguing that only the love arising from a disposition or habit of benevolence to Being in general results in actions that are truly beautiful and therefore, truly virtuous.

Love for God's triune beauty and holiness takes pride of place in Edwards' hierarchy of love, much as is the case with Augustine. With Augustine, Edwards sees the virtues of the pagans as fatally flawed since they do not arise from God's triune love in the heart.

¹⁰⁶ "True Virtue," in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, pp. 542-549, p. 546: "Pure benevolence in its first exercise is nothing else but being's uniting, consent, or propensity to Being; appearing true and pure by its extending to Being in general..."

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 582.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 620. In "True Virtue," Edwards capitalizes "Being" when referring to "Being in general". In "End of Creation" Edwards defines Being in general as "the system...comprehending the sum total of universal existence, both Creator and creature." p. 423.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 539-540.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 550.

Many “sects of heretics and enthusiasts” have practised self-denial but mainly from a sense of pride so that they could flatter themselves for their self-righteousness.¹¹¹

The inclination of the affections (i. e. the will) is the foundation for true virtue in the heart, and all true virtues are evidence of God’s triune love altering the natural disposition of the heart. Edwards even suggests that it is the nature of the will itself that determines true virtue. “’Tis a certain beauty or deformity that are inherent in that good or evil will, which is the soul of virtue and vice...”¹¹² Actions are virtuous when carried out from motives which find their origin in the divine love and are aligned with the divine will. In Edwards’ ethics, true virtue is synonymous with holiness and beauty of heart and is the gift of the Holy Spirit.¹¹³

Actions which result from other loves are particular and private, serving only self-love needs and fulfilling the dictates of secondary beauty.¹¹⁴ Although many people are capable of good and just deeds, such deeds only have “a true negative moral goodness in them.”¹¹⁵ While good deeds should be applauded, they are indicative of the outworkings of “common grace” rather than evidences of true virtue.

Edwards believed secondary beauty could enhance the sense of spiritual beauty and promote “the exercise of divine love” in those whose “hearts are under the influence of a truly virtuous temper.”¹¹⁶ Love of secondary beauty, however, is powerless to change the heart from self-love to love of God who is the supreme, primary beauty.

If the first object of a virtuous propensity of heart is Being in general, then the second object of a virtuous propensity of heart is another being who shares a similar benevolence and beauty of heart. Those who love God as the first object of a benevolent love will love others whose hearts are enlarged by their love to God. The saints will see the beauty of being in other saints because “their hearts are united to Being in general” and so they will love and esteem those who share the divine beauty and excellency because the divine love

¹¹¹ *Religious Affections, Works*, 2, pp. 315-316.

¹¹² *Freedom of the Will, Works*, 1, p. 340.

¹¹³ See The “Miscellanies,” no. 186, “Fall,” *Works*, 13, pp. 330. “But seeing spiritual beauty consists principally in virtue and holiness, and there is so little of this beauty to be seen now in that part of the spiritual world that is here on earth; hence we may conclude ...that there has been a great fall and defection in this part of the spiritual world from their primitive beauty and charms.”

¹¹⁴ “*True Virtue*,” in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, pp. 540-549.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 613-614.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 565.

will be visible in their lives.¹¹⁷ All other loves must be consistent with the prior love for Being in general, or if inimical to the highest love, be abandoned.¹¹⁸

At this point in his treatise on true virtue Edwards' thinking is completely in accord with Augustine's.¹¹⁹ Both men view the order of love as all important with love for the beauty of the triune God the prior love to all other loves and the foundation of the virtuous life. Love of family, friends, and country is little more than self interest when love is given without reference to God. All depends on the disposition of the heart towards or away from the divine love and beauty. On its own, beauty has no intrinsic virtue, and love or admiration for a beautiful person or object is not indicative of a virtuous disposition of heart towards Being in general.¹²⁰

Edwards' aesthetics and ethics are inextricable from his spiritual epistemology. The way believers come to understand the idea or sensation of divine beauty is not by reason or argument but by "a certain spiritual sense given them of God, whereby they immediately perceive pleasure in the presence of the idea of true virtue in their mind."¹²¹ The immediate perception of true virtue by its association with the presence of divine beauty in the heart is testament to the union of the believer's heart with Being in general. In this way, God gives his own "temper and nature" to believers. Such consent and union of heart guarantees "agreement and union with every particular being" that is not opposed to Being in

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 546-547.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 545. "The first object of a virtuous benevolence is Being, simply considered: and if Being, simply considered its object, then being in general is its object; and the thing is has an ultimate propensity to, is the highest good of Being in general. And it will seek the good of every individual being unless it be conceived as not consistent with the highest good of being in general. In which case, the good of a particular being, or some beings, may be given up for the sake of the highest good of Being in general."

¹¹⁹ See *The City of God*, XV. 22, p. 637, XIX. 17, p. 878. In the first passage Augustine sets out the order of loves as the foundation for true virtue which is nothing less than "rightly ordered love" that is, referring all one's earthly loves to the love of God. (CCSL 48, 488). "Creator autem si ueraciter ametur, hoc est si ipse, non aliud pro illo quod non est ipse, ametur, male amari non potest." His vision of the eventual peace and perfection of relationships in heaven as "the perfectly ordered and completely harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and of each other in God" is exactly as Edwards envisages the relationships between God and believers and those between the saints. (CCSL 48, 685). "ordinatissima scilicet et concordissima societas fruendi Deo et inuicem in Deo..." William Daniher has detected Augustinian similarities in Edwards' ideas of true virtue as dependent upon divine illumination and love. Daniher regards Edwards' views on the immediacy of participation in the triune God through partaking of the Holy Spirit as different from Augustine's more Platonic emphasis on the replication of ideas in the mind as the basis for participation. I think Daniher overstates his point here. There is certainly a Platonic influence in Augustine's idea of participation in the sense that all being is good and beautiful in varying degrees because of created being's participation in the goodness and beauty that is God. Augustine also share with Edwards a sense of the immediacy of participation in the divine knowledge and love at conversion, both of which are mediated instantaneously through the gift of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Daniher, *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards*, pp. 144-145.

¹²⁰ "True Virtue," in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, p. 573.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 620.

general.¹²² The heart of the believer is made whole by participation in the beauty of benevolence to Being in general, and this beauty spills over into all relationships. The end result is an harmonious union of consent between believers, God and other believers that is modeled on the union of consent in the Trinity and is therefore, beautiful.

4.4 Beauty and the Happy Life

Edwards' endorsement of the triune God as Beauty is directly related to his preoccupation with human happiness as the well-spring of behaviour. People pursue that which is pleasing or beautiful in order to be happy. The desire for happiness originates in the affections of the heart, which, as has been noted before, is the whole mind in its inclinational aspect.¹²³ Whatever the heart determines will make it happy, that becomes the desired object or outcome. The sinful heart pursues worldly happiness whereas the saints have their hearts transformed by partaking of the divine love, beauty, virtue and happiness, all of which are perceived through the unity of heart and mind. Pleasing God then becomes the saint's happiness.

For Edwards, God's Trinitarian happiness is the fount of all true human happiness. His definition of happiness stems from his ideas on excellency, beauty, consent and proportion that have already been discussed.¹²⁴ The Trinity is a society of infinitely consenting persons who are united in love, joy and happiness. God revels in "the infinite joy and happiness in the eternal union and fellowship of the persons of the Trinity,"¹²⁵ an idea Edwards re-iterates using the model of the psychological analogy: "God is infinitely happy from all eternity in the view and enjoyment of himself...in the perfect idea he has of himself..."¹²⁶ Goodness, perfection, excellency beauty and happiness all contribute to God's "fullness" out of which he created the world¹²⁷ and shares his perfections with his creatures.

The happy life belongs to those who are partakers of the divine glory, that is, God's beauty, excellency and happiness. Edwards claims that true happiness is the end result of the perception of the beauty of consent and "consists in the perception of these three things: the consent of being to its own being; its own consent to being; and being's consent to

¹²² *Ibid.*, in *Works*, 8, p. 621.

¹²³ *Religious Affections*, *Works*, 2, p. 96.

¹²⁴ "The Mind," No. 1, "Excellency," in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, *Works*, 6, pp. 332-338.

¹²⁵ Unpublished sermon on 1 Peter 1:8 (a), The Jonathan Edwards Centre, Yale Divinity School, p. 9.

¹²⁶ The "Miscellanies," no. 94, "Trinity," in *Works*, 13, p. 257.

¹²⁷ "Concerning the End for Which God Created the World," in *Ethical Writings*, *Works*, 8, pp. 432, 433.

being.”¹²⁸ Of these three relations of consent, the first two find their fulfillment in God’s consent to his own being, wherein lies “the moral and spiritual glory of the divine Being (which is the proper beauty of the Divinity).”¹²⁹

The communication of divine happiness, like the communication of divine love and beauty to his creatures, is evidence for God’s Trinitarian being to Edward’s mind and is one of the reasons for the creation itself.¹³⁰ God’s disposition to communicate his Trinitarian goodness and happiness is extended to his creatures through the gift of the Holy Spirit who is the beauty, love and happiness of the Son.¹³¹ The gift of happiness for the saints is simply to “behold the excellency of God and his works, and to delight and be made happy therein.”¹³²

Like Augustine, Edwards was of the opinion that humans are endowed with a love of happiness. One cannot love happiness (and that means love of one’s own happiness) too much, even as a fallen creature. Love of one’s happiness is as necessary to man’s nature “as a faculty of will is.”¹³³ All intelligent beings in heaven and on earth love their own happiness and will pursue that which they value as an end for happiness. Since will and love are alike in all, but the objects of love are not, Edwards argues that only love of God’s beauty and excellence and participation in the divine beauty can make one truly happy. All lesser beauties are mutable and therefore any happiness to be derived from them is ephemeral and transient.¹³⁴ In the second distinguishing sign of a gracious affection Edwards establishes that conversion is linked to the love of the divine beauty which draws the heart to desire unity in God, simply because God is beautiful. Happiness is not the first consideration, but it follows union with the divine beauty as the believer looks to God for true happiness. There is, he says,

¹²⁸ “The Mind,” no. 1, “Excellency,” in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings, Works*, 6, p. 338.

¹²⁹ *Religious Affections, Works*, 2, p. 299.

¹³⁰ The “Miscellanies,” no. 92, “End of the Creation,” in *Works*, 13, p. 256.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, no. 104, “End of the Creation,” in *Works*, 13, p. 272.

¹³² *Ibid.*, no. 99, “Future State,” in *Works*, 13, p. 267.

¹³³ “Charity and Its Fruits” (1738), Sermon Seven, in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, pp. 254-258; “Subjects to be Handled in the Treatise on the Mind,” no. 44, in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings, Works*, 6, 388. The love of happiness is equated with the will in Edwards’ early notes on topics to be covered in his treatise on the mind.

¹³⁴ “The Mind,” no. 67, in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings, Works*, 6, p. 384. “The will, choice, etc. is nothing else but the mind’s being pleased with an idea, or having a superior pleasedness in something thought of, or a desire of a future thing, or a pleasedness in the thought of our union with the thing...” He argues that whatever the mind chooses to do is determined by the perception of the good, i.e. that which causes happiness. Whatever is perceived to be good or excellent is pleasing to the mind and the creature consents to it and it becomes the object of desire.

...a change made in the views of his mind, and relish of his heart; whereby he apprehends a beauty, a glory, and supreme good, in God's nature, as it is in itself. This may be the thing that first draws his heart to him, and causes his heart to be united to him, prior to all considerations of his own interest or happiness, although after this and as a fruit of this, he necessarily seeks his interest and happiness in God.¹³⁵

True virtue is the prerequisite for happiness in Edwards' sermon on 1 Peter 1:8 (a). The highest happiness is to glorify God and it does not arise from self-love. "A man must first love God, or have his heart united to him, before he will esteem God's good his own, and before he will desire the glorifying and enjoying of God, as his happiness."¹³⁶ Self-love cannot kindle the saint's love of God's beauty and holiness which leads to happiness, said Edwards, without the recognition of God's divine excellency and beauty that is its foundation. "There can be no happiness without love," said Edwards, and "self-love is not able to make so empty a creature as man happy." Since true happiness depends upon love and friendship with God, "all virtue may be resolved into love" which covers all aspects of the law. The disposition of the heart and "the virtue of the mind is the spring of its happiness."¹³⁷

It is impossible for a sinner to achieve true happiness until the hearts of God and sinner are united in love of the divine Trinitarian beauty as exemplified in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.¹³⁸ Reason alone cannot see the divine beauty with "the flame in the heart" that is essential for happiness. "We must have an intuitive knowledge of it" says Edwards. Nothing a sinner can do will guarantee the vision of divine beauty. Unlike the unbelieving heart, faith and joy in the believer's heart combine to raise "joy that is unspeakable and full of glory" thus ensuring the believer's happiness in the heart's union with Christ.¹³⁹ God seeks the good of the creature by imparting knowledge, holiness and happiness which "is an image and participation of God's own beauty." There is no division between God's respect to his own good and his respect to the creature's good. The end

¹³⁵ *Religious Affections, Works*, 2, p. 241.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

¹³⁷ Unpublished sermon on 1 Peter 1: 8 (a), The Jonathan Edwards Centre, Yale Divinity School, p. 8.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12. "There is no beauty or excellency so desirable as that of Jesus Christ" whose beauty and excellency excel all other beings as "the apple tree among the trees of the wood, or as the precious ruby among common stones."

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

result of participation in the divine beauty is that God and his creature “are united in one, as the happiness of the creature aimed at is happiness in union with himself.”¹⁴⁰

The happiness of the saints is not static, but increases following the initial union of hearts.¹⁴¹ As long as the saints behold Christ with the eye of faith, they will enjoy more happiness in this life than other people. Whilst provisional in this life because of the continuing reality of sin in the heart, eternal happiness is assured in heaven. “There is” says Edwards, “a very imperfect union with God to be had in this world” but if the saints “set their hearts on anything else” they will not attain their “proper end and true happiness.” He joins virtue and happiness by suggesting that God has given a desire for great happiness to the saints that makes it a virtue to long for the satisfaction of enjoying God. By “putting his own beauty upon them and making them partakers of his nature,” Christ “takes up his abode in their hearts by his Holy Spirit” and draws their hearts to himself, thus ensuring that those who live in the love of such a glorious friend as Christ, “do doubtless live the happiest life in the world.”¹⁴² True happiness is the ceaseless giving and receiving of the love of God given to the heart in conversion.

Edwards does not suggest that this union of the heart with God will reach perfection in this life or in heaven. That would be to arrive at Nirvana, not the biblical heaven. Instead, happiness and union are asymptotic, steadily increasing but never attaining a pantheistic state wherein the saints’ identity merges with God the Trinity. This notion of an eternal progression towards union in heaven is quite dissimilar from Augustine’s desire for “rest” in heaven, although in his depiction of heaven at the end of *The City of God*, Augustine does speak of the ceaseless activity of praise.¹⁴³

The beauty of the saints’ union in Christ has a corporate dimension which is made quite explicit in “Miscellany” no. 104 where Edwards says that one end of creation was that God communicate his happiness to the saints in the church which is “the completeness of Christ” and the “fullness of the Son of God.” As members of the church, they are “partakers of his glory.” Believers will have such an intimate communion with Christ in

¹⁴⁰ “Concerning the End for Which God Created the World,” in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, p. 533.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* “The more happiness, the greater union: when the happiness is perfect, the union is perfect.”

¹⁴² Unpublished sermon on 1 Peter 1: 8(a), (1729), The Jonathan Edwards Centre, Yale Divinity School, pp. 18-19.

¹⁴³ *The City of God*, XXII. 30, p. 1088. (CCSL 48, p. 862). “Ipse finis erit desideriorum nostrorum, qui sine fine uidebitur, sine fastidio amabitur, sine fatigatione laudabitur.”

heaven that their “glory and honour and happiness” will be exceedingly great as foretold in the Scriptures.¹⁴⁴

One last aspect of Edwards’ aesthetic experience of God deserves mention here and that is the confirmation of the reality of the divine beauty that came to him in ecstatic experiences. The centrality of the heart in Edwards’ Trinitarian aesthetics culminates in what could be classed as “mystical”¹⁴⁵ encounters with God. The passionate intensity of spiritual experience is captured in the distinctly erotic language of love, desire and the longing for beauty. In his rapturous encounters with God, the luminosity of the divine presence is enjoyed as a fire that consumes the heart with desire for union with the beautiful, triune God.¹⁴⁶ Edwards’ intimations of God’s beauty and love in the heart are repetitions of Augustine’s aesthetic experiences of mystical encounter with God to be discussed below.

He describes several of these epiphanies in his *Personal Narrative*, and as was the case with Augustine, they remained in his heart throughout his life as reminders of direct intuitions of the love and beauty of the triune God. Hence we see Edwards describing an other-worldly gracious experience of divine love that appeared to be:

...a calm, sweet abstraction of soul from all the concerns of this world; and a kind of vision, or fixed ideas and imaginations of being alone in the mountains, or some solitary wilderness, far from all mankind, sweetly conversing with Christ, and wrapt and swallowed up in God. The sense I had of divine things, would often of a sudden as it were, kindle up a sweet burning in my heart; an ardour of my soul, that I know not how to express.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ The “Miscellanies,” no. 104, “End of the Creation” *Works*, 13, pp. 272-273.

¹⁴⁵ Definitions of “mysticism” abound. Common to all is the experience of a personal intuition of the divine presence as pure love or beauty. It is a psychological, subjective state of divine awareness in the heart. One of the earliest catalogues of mystical experience describes it as a transient emotional experience of being grasped by a higher power. It is ineffable, passive and noetic. See Bernard McGinn, “Love, Knowledge and Mystical Union in Western Christianity: Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries,” in *Church History*, vol. 56, No. 1 (1987), pp. 7-24. Bernard McGinn includes direct contemplation or visions of God, ecstatic experience, deification, living in Christ, and union with God in his definition of what may be considered suitable paradigms for describing the “immediately experienced divine presence” which is usually referred to as “mysticism.” For a useful overview of Puritan piety including a discussion of different strands of mysticism to be found amongst the Puritans and its complexity see Jerald C. Brauer, “Types of Puritan Piety,” in *Church History*, 56, (1987), pp. 39-58.

¹⁴⁶ “Personal Narrative,” in *Letters and Personal Papers, Works*, 16, pp. 794-795. Edwards writes of the “inward burnings of my heart” when in prayer, and speaks of “a burning desire to be in everything a complete Christian; and conformed to the blessed image of Christ.”

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 793.

His heart is filled with “vehement longings” for God and Christ to the point where he is overcome with a sense of God’s holiness. His only ambition is to “spend my eternity in divine love, and holy communion with Christ.” Holiness is “ravishingly lovely” and the soul of a true Christian like a “little white flower...rejoicing as it were, in a calm rapture.” The thought of such beauty makes his heart pant after self-abnegation and his desire is to lose himself in God.¹⁴⁸ A mystical experience of ecstatic transport of heart is also depicted in Edwards’ apostrophe of his wife Sarah,¹⁴⁹ and his later account of her rapture during the Great Awakening,¹⁵⁰ so it is clear that Edwards does not disparage such experiences as long as they lead to humility and love for God. At no point is there any suggestion of a fusing of essences in mystical experience. Neither Edwards nor Augustine favour a pantheistic view of spiritual union. There is always a qualitative difference between God and all things finite. Nevertheless, the intensity of such moments of communion with God and the immediacy of the apprehension of the divine Trinitarian beauty testify to the mystical strain in Edwards’ spirituality.

In summation then, Edwards’ vision of the Trinitarian beauty and excellency underpins his depiction of the Christian life as a pilgrimage of the heart seeking happiness in union with God. The triune God is a society of love and beauty with Christ the exemplar of beauty to humanity in his life and salvific work. The Holy Spirit is the love, beauty and holiness of the Godhead given as gift. As a result of their union with Christ in the heart, the saints are to manifest the divine beauty both individually and corporately in the church, which is to be a harmonious society of love and beauty modelled on the Trinity. As redeemed creatures partake of God’s excellence and beauty as the gift of the Holy Spirit, which Edwards further defines as “holiness which consists in love,” they show that holiness and beauty “in loving others, in loving God and in the communications of his Spirit.”¹⁵¹

Through their incorporation into the divine life, the beauty of holiness imparted to the saints ensures that the happiness they long for in this life will reach its culmination in heaven in the presence of the triune God himself.¹⁵² Furthermore, in an Augustinian spirit,

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 793-796.

¹⁴⁹ “Apostrophe to Sarah Pierpont,” in *Letters and Personal Papers, Works*, 16, pp. 779-780.

¹⁵⁰ “An Example of Evangelical Piety,” in *The Great Awakening, Works*, 4, pp. 331-341.

¹⁵¹ “The Mind,” no. 45. 12, “Excellence,” in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings, Works*, 6, p. 365.

¹⁵² In the Millenium, the “glorious beauty” of the saints will mirror the divine Trinitarian beauty. The whole world will be one church “one orderly, regular, beautiful society, one body, all the members in beautiful proportion...” *A History of the Work of Redemption, Works*, 9, p. 484.

Edwards asserts that the happiness of heaven cannot be lost.¹⁵³ His aesthetic Trinitarianism and its relationship to the heart bear a striking resemblance to that of Augustine as the following discussion reveals.

¹⁵³ "Charity and Its Fruits," Sermon Fifteen, "Heaven is a World of Love," *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, pp. 382-383. Augustine, "On the Morals of the Catholic Church," Ch. 3, in *NPNF*, vol. IV, p. 42.

AUGUSTINE

4.5 Augustine's Philosophy of Beauty and the Heart

The weight given to love in Augustine's Trinitarian aesthetics scarcely surpasses his attention to beauty, with the language of love also the language of beauty. Unlike Edwards, whose writings that are heavily dependent on the importance of the divine beauty appear in the form of philosophical treatises, Augustine's references to beauty and the Trinity are scattered throughout his works without much systematization.¹⁵⁴ The *Confessions* reveal that he was always attracted by beauty, and as Emmanuel Chapman has shown, Augustine appreciated that beauty is the decisive factor in shaping love. The belatedness of his love for God is a result of his infatuation with lesser beauties into which he "plunged."¹⁵⁵ Conversion taught him that the divine beauty is the first and proper object of love.¹⁵⁶ Enlightened by divine illumination, Augustine's heart perceived the triune God to be the "most beautiful of all Beings, maker of all things, the good God, the highest good and my true good."¹⁵⁷

In his very first work after conversion Augustine lays claim to a boundless love for God who is the highest Wisdom and Beauty. Unfortunately he soon has to confess that conversion does not confer an instantaneous vision of the divine beauty such that he is able to overcome sensual pleasures. Instead, Beauty must act as a physician to heal the wounded heart if the vision of divine beauty is to become a reality that leads to knowledge of God. In a chastened mood he admits that he will have to keep silent about healing until he sees God's "spiritual beauty" in heaven.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ References to the divine Trinitarian beauty occur more frequently in Edwards' thought than in Augustine, and there is no discussion under the heading of "Beauty" or "Aesthetics" in Fitzgerald, *Augustine Through the Ages*.

¹⁵⁵ *Confessions*, X. 27. 38, p. 201. (CCSL 27, 175). "Et ecce intus eras et ego foris et ibi te quaerebam et in ista formosa, quae fecisti, deformis inruebam."

¹⁵⁶ Emmanuel Chapman, *Saint Augustine's Philosophy of Beauty* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1939), pp1-12. On beauty as the proper object of love see *Confessions*, 4. 13. 20, pp. 64-65. *On Music*, IV. 13. in *FC*, vol. 4, pp. 281-282. For helpful insights into the connection between Augustine's aesthetics and the nature of grief see James Wetzel, "The Trappings of Woe: Book IV's Confession of Grief," in *A Reader's Companion to Augustine's Confessions*, ed. Kim Paffenroth and Robert P. Kennedy (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), pp. 53-69, 23-28.

¹⁵⁷ *Confessions*, II. 6.12, p. 30.

¹⁵⁸ "The Soliloquies," I. 14. 24-26, in Burleigh, *Augustine's Earlier Writings*, pp. 38-39.

When one examines Augustine's frequent references to the beauty of God it is clear that the Neoplatonists were not entirely abandoned with his conversion.¹⁵⁹ Edwards' distinction between primary and secondary beauty is implicit in Augustine's hierarchy of beauty which has Neoplatonic overtones. The intellectual vision of the One emanating levels of being, beauty and goodness in a cascade of descending being towards non-being gave satisfying expression to a beauty that incorporated the one and the many, the beautiful and the good. The vision of God's Trinitarian beauty espoused by Augustine and Edwards holds the idea of the One and the many in tension, grounded in their idea of God as being and beauty.¹⁶⁰ Beauty is hierarchical with spiritual beauty superior to natural beauty. In order of importance, the spiritual beauty of minds out-ranks natural or corporeal beauty, but is itself out-ranked by God's Trinitarian beauty.¹⁶¹ God does not envy the beauties of his creation because all being and beauty flow from him."¹⁶²

As with Edwards, the heart stands at the centre of Augustine's Trinitarian aesthetics. Without beauty, things could not be loved or enjoyed because beauty is that which elicits love, delight and joy, thus engaging the affections. The joy and delight instigated by beauty

¹⁵⁹ Plotinus, *Enneads*, 1. 6. 6, "Beauty," trans. Stephen McKenna, (Oxford: Faber and Faber, Third edition, 1956), pp. 56-64; 61. Plotinus attributes the origin of beauty to God and sees the Soul's longing to be reunited with the divine Beauty and Good as its essential disposition. "Hence the soul, heightened to the Intellectual-Principle is beautiful to all its power. For Intellection and all that proceeds from Intellection are the Soul's beauty, a graciousness native to it and not foreign, for only with these is it truly Soul. And it is just to say that in the Soul's becoming a good and beautiful thing is its becoming like to God, for from the Divine comes all the Beauty and all the Good in beings." Edwards and Augustine express the same passion for divine beauty as Plotinus: "And one that shall know this vision-with what passion of love shall he no be seized, with what pang of desire, what longing to be molten onto one with This, what wondering delight! ...It is the very Beauty; he will be flooded with awe and gladness, stricken by a salutary terror; he loves with a veritable love, with sharp desire; all other loves than this he must despise, and disdain all that once seemed fair." See also Phillip Cary, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 159. Cary identifies one passage of many that are reminiscent of Augustine from the *Enneads* which could have been written by Augustine himself so closely does it resemble his thinking. From "On Beauty" in *Enneads* 1.6.8, pp. 62-63. "But what must we do? How lies the path? How come to vision of the inaccessible beauty, dwelling as if in consecrated precincts, apart from the common ways where all may see, even the profane? He that has the strength, let him arise and withdraw into himself, foregoing all that is known by the eyes, turning away forever from the material beauty that once made his joy." John C. Cavadini takes issue with Cary's suggestion of Augustine's interest in the "self," arguing that it is used anachronistically and has no place in Augustine's vocabulary. Paper given at Villanova University, 29th September, 2006.

¹⁶⁰ *Enneads*, 1. 6. 9, p. 64. "Therefore, first let each become godlike and each beautiful who cares to see God and Beauty... So, that treating the Intellectual-Cosmos as one, the first is the Beautiful: if we make distinction there, the Realm of Ideas constitutes the beauty of the Intellectual Sphere; and The Good, which lies beyond, is the Fountain at once and Principle of Beauty: the Primal Good and the Primal Beauty have the one dwelling-place and, thus, always, Beauty's seat is There."

¹⁶¹ *Confessions*, III. 6. 10, p. 41.

¹⁶² "Of True Religion," XXIX. 72, Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, p. 262. "By wisdom, the great Artificer knit his works together with one glorious end in view. His goodness has no grudging envy against any beauty from the highest to the lowest, for none can have being except from him alone."

integrate the heart by connecting the objective understanding of beauty with delight in its manifestation. The experience of divine beauty unites truth (knowledge) and goodness (will or love) in the consent of the heart. Insofar as the divine beauty is concerned, Augustine sees it as instrumental in conversion and the Christian life. Yet the heart which “was made to contemplate supreme beauty,” instead concentrates on the beauty of visible things which are not evil in themselves since they are beautiful according to their place in the scale of created beauty, but which fail to attain the divine unity, and are therefore, imperfect.¹⁶³ The principle of unity resides in God, the three in one, who is to be sought above all else: “We seek unity” says Augustine, “the simplest thing of all. Therefore let us seek it in simplicity of heart.”¹⁶⁴

In a discussion on his first work *The Beautiful and the Fitting*, Augustine accepts that his pre-conversion attempts to understand God’s essential being were misguided owing to the Manichean influence on theories of substance, evil and God’s corporeality. He later realizes that beauty is not an attribute of God but God himself. God’s being as truth, goodness and beauty is “beautiful and luminous beyond all things.”¹⁶⁵

Augustine favours a form of Platonic idealism to explain the presence and understanding of such abstract qualities as goodness, number, beauty, justice and truth in the human heart.¹⁶⁶ Each one of these qualities is synonymous with God’s essential triune being. Again, he echoes Plotinus and anticipates Edwards in arguing that the subjective judgments of the mind cannot provide a standard by which to judge these qualities. God alone provides an immutable standard by which to make aesthetic judgments about number, beauty, justice and truth.¹⁶⁷ By comparison everything created falls short of God’s Trinitarian beauty and it is only when the heart appreciates the magnitude of that divine beauty that the proper ordering of love and knowledge will be established.

Despite Augustine’s seeming preference for the divine unity over the intratrinitarian relations, the notion of relationality as an important quality of beauty appears in Augustine’s attention to the presence of design and number in the creation. “Scanning the earth and the heavens, it (reason) realized that nothing pleased it but beauty; and in beauty,

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, XXXVI. 67, p. 259.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, XXXV. 65, p. 258.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, IV. 15. 27-29, XI. 6. 13, pp. 68-70. 31.

¹⁶⁶ *The City of God*, VIII. 6, pp. 307-308. (CCSL 47, 223).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, XI. 17, pp. 459-460. See also *The Trinity*, VIII. 9, pp. 248-251.

design; and in design, dimensions; and in dimensions, number.”¹⁶⁸ This has some affinities with Edwards’ belief that beauty is not unitary but involves the harmonization of disparate elements. Numbers are especially beautiful for Augustine because they are indicative of the order, harmony and proportion of the universe. The settled nature of timeless mathematical truths that had nothing to do with sense perception existing as ideas or principles in the mind gave Augustine the hope that other stable truths about God could be discerned in the mind. Like the Pythagorean philosophers before him and Edwards after him, Augustine believed that the laws governing numbers are objective, timeless, and unchangeable, much like the triune God from whom they originate. Furthermore, the rules of number are the same as the rules of beauty. Just as it is possible to discover fixed numerical laws in the mind by a kind of divine intuition or illumination, so it is possible to see beauty as an immutable idea in the mind that comes from the perfect beauty that is God.¹⁶⁹

Although both Augustine and Edwards share the view that the foundation of beauty lies in harmony, proportion, correspondence, and symmetry, in Augustine’s case, such harmonies serve the purpose of preserving unity “and making the whole beautiful.”¹⁷⁰ This idea of unitary beauty is largely dependent on Augustine’s categorization of unity as the perfection of God’s being. While every created thing has some form or beauty, “no material thing, however beautiful, can possibly achieve the unity it aims at,” the “one harmonious whole” which constitutes true beauty and which belongs only to God.¹⁷¹

One example of harmony and proportion that is also indicative of sublime unitary beauty for Augustine is music. Edwards and Augustine both find in music a beauty above other forms of created beauty. Music has the ability to unite understanding and delight to bring about a deep appreciation of its intrinsic beauty.¹⁷² In the *Confessions*, for instance, Augustine speaks of the divine unity of the heart that is approached when both reason and

¹⁶⁸ “On Order,” II. 15. 42, in *FC*, vol. 1, p. 318.

¹⁶⁹ Augustine’s fascination with numbers is evident in the first five books of *De musica* (386), and in Book VI, he equates number and beauty. See Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 101-110.

¹⁷⁰ “Of True Religion,” XXX. 55- XXXIV. 64., in Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, pp. 252-258. In “The Nature of the Good,” XXIII, in Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, p. 333, Augustine discusses degrees of beauty in terms of likeness. “We speak of a form or appearance as being bad because it is inferior not in size but in comeliness when it is compared with more comely and beautiful forms.”

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, XXXII. 59, p. 255.

¹⁷² *On Music*, VI. 16 – VI. 22, *FC*, vol. 2, pp. 340-348. Music is evaluated at several levels, the highest being the *numeri iudiciales*, an innate capacity to judge the quality of sounds.

feeling combine in the enjoyment of sacred music, which he is sure is far superior to the popular music of his day.¹⁷³

Augustine's reliance on the Platonic forms sees the ultimate equation of being and beauty with God, just as did Edwards. For Augustine, as for Edwards, God is to be loved and adored as the supreme goodness and beauty from whom all goodness and beauty derive.¹⁷⁴ Everything else in creation only approximates this divine perfection of supreme beauty, but nothing in creation is entirely devoid of beauty, because everything has some beauty according to its appropriate form or species.¹⁷⁵

O'Donnell sees a Trinitarian underpinning to Augustine's triad of *modus/species/ordo* in *Confessions* I. 7.12.¹⁷⁶ *Forma* and *species* constitute the beauty of beings. The created world of forms (*formas*) or its synonym species (*species*) makes the visible world beautiful (*formosa, speciosa*). "If the form gives to the body its being...then the body is the more perfect, the better formed and the more beautiful it is, just as it is so much the less perfect, the uglier and the more deformed it is."¹⁷⁷ Beauty decreases as beings move away from the source of all beauty. Ugliness is the result of the privation of beauty, just as evil is the privation of good, but no created thing can lack being or beauty entirely.¹⁷⁸ By virtue of its very existence, the whole creation as given by God has beauty in all its parts. Every good thing is of God and "every corporeal creature, when possessed by a soul that loves God, is a good thing of the lowest order, and beautiful in its own way,

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, I. 2-1. 4, pp. 171-176. Music is the "science of moving well." p. 175.

¹⁷⁴ "The Nature of the Good," III, p. 327. (PL 42, p. 533). "We, Catholic Christians, worship God, from whom are all good things, great or small, all measure, great or small, all form (beauty) great or small, all order great or small. All things are good; better in proportion as they are better measured, formed (beautiful) and ordered, less good where there is less of measure, form (beauty) and order... God transcends all measure, form (beauty), and order in his creatures, not in spatial locality, but by his unique and ineffable power from which come all measure, form (beauty) and order."

¹⁷⁵ "Of True Religion," XVIII. 35, p. 242. See also *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, no. 46, "On Ideas," in *FC*, vol. 70, pp. 79-80. In this discussion on the notion of Platonic ideas, Augustine uses "forms" (*formae*), "species" (*species*), and even "reasons" (*rationes*) interchangeably for what he terms "certain original and principal forms of things," which are unalterable and contained in the mind of God. The concept of "form" in aesthetics has a long history and is usually associated with harmony, symmetry and proportion. As such, the "form" of any entity is its beauty, because it has been endowed with form by God who created everything good and beautiful in its own way, a theme endorsed by both Augustine and Edwards. For a discussion on the relationship between form and beauty see Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, "The Augustinian Conception of Beauty and Dante's *Convivio*," in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 15, 4, (June, 1957), pp. 436-437.

¹⁷⁶ *Confessions*, I. 7. 12, p. 10. "The supreme beauty, you give distinct form to all things and by your law impose order on everything." J. J. O'Donnell, *Confessions*, vol. II, pp. 246-247.

¹⁷⁷ "The Greatness of the Soul," VIII. 13, in *FC*, vol. 2, p. 39.

¹⁷⁸ "On Music," VI. 56, *ibid.*, p. 375. See also "On Order," I. 25, in *FC*, vol. 1, pp. 262-263. Even the fighting of fowls can provide beauty. Both victor and vanquished are "beautiful and in harmony with nature's laws."

for it is held together by form and species.”¹⁷⁹ The closer a created being to fulfilling its original design or form, the more perfect the form and the more beautiful.

In one of his early works Augustine depicts the ascent of the soul to God as climbing the ladder of beauty to the perfection of unity where the soul acts “beautifully in Beauty.” Seven steps (*gradus*) lead to the final stage of beatitude which is God and each stage has its own and proper beauty.¹⁸⁰ In a later sermon he explains that the ascent of the soul or heart to God simply means the heart’s drawing near to God.¹⁸¹ The hierarchy of mutable beauty suggests an immutable beauty behind every created thing, and that supreme beauty “Beauty itself, by which whatever is beautiful is beautiful,”¹⁸² is God the Trinity. Writing the *Retractions* towards the end of his life, Augustine disparages one of his earliest flights of fancy on the love of beauty with an observation that one can only speak of the love of beauty when the love of beauty is equated with the love of “things incorporeal and sublime” by which he means the divine Wisdom. God as truth is also God as beauty.¹⁸³

Another Augustinian distinction to re-appear in Edwards is the notion of intrinsic beauty or beauty which is “fitting,” or suitable with respect to other objects.¹⁸⁴ God, who is perfect harmony and order within the Godhead, has so disposed the universe as to mirror the divine order. Each thing has its appointed place according to God’s sovereign law and its “weight,” which in the case of humans, is the weight of love or pleasure.¹⁸⁵ God’s purposes in creation are not thwarted in Augustine’s universe despite the presence of sin, because everything is created good and exists in its rightful place. Fallen humanity is evidence for “corruptible beauties” says Augustine, but is still beautiful because “everything is beautiful that is in due order.”¹⁸⁶ It is even fitting that sinful humanity lives

¹⁷⁹ “Of True Religion,” XX. 40, in Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, p. 244. Augustine’s discussion of beauty, form and species is found in “Of True Religion,” XVIII. 35-46, pp. 241-248.

¹⁸⁰ “The Greatness of the Soul,” XXXV. 79. Starting from corporeality, each step in the ascent of the soul constitutes a higher form of beauty so that the soul acts “beautifully concerning something else,” “beautifully through something else,” “beautifully about something else,” “beautifully in the presence of something beautiful,” “beautifully in something beautiful,” “beautifully in the presence of Beauty,” and finally “beautifully in Beauty.”

¹⁸¹ “Psalm 122. 3,” in *WSA*, Vol. III/20, p. 31.

¹⁸² *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, no. 30, “Has Everything Been Created for Man’s Use?” in *FC*, vol. 70, p. 56. See also *The City of God*, VIII. 6, p. 308.

¹⁸³ *Retractions*, 1. 1. 3, (428/429), in *FC*, vol. 60, p. 9.

¹⁸⁴ “Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis,” V. 25, in *WSA*, 1/13 p. 128. “Thus there is beauty in every single thing, with him making it, and with him arranging them in regular order there is beauty in all things together.”

¹⁸⁵ “On Music,” X. 29, *FC*, vol. 2, p. 351. “Delectatio quippe quasi pondas est animae.” (PL 32, 1179). *Confessions*, XIII. 9.10, p. 278. “Pondus meum amor meus.”

¹⁸⁶ “Of True Religion,” 1. 77, in Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, p. 265. (PL 34, 156).

as it does. God has so ordained the creation that “all things should be glorious” and beauty is to be found in imperfections when viewed against the whole.¹⁸⁷ The punishment of sinners, the trials of believers and the eventual perfecting of the saints, is proof to Augustine of the beauty of the universe because it is fitting that sinners be punished.¹⁸⁸ There is also beauty in the stages in the salvation of souls according to divine providence.¹⁸⁹

Even mice and frogs, flies and worms have their allotted place and although Augustine has no idea why such creatures have been created, he is still convinced “they are all beautiful in their own specific kind” and each one in “its measures and numbers and order are geared to a harmonious unity.”¹⁹⁰ Augustine prefigures Edwards in seeing beauty in the harmonization of opposing elements. Nothing in the creation is ugly apart from moral ugliness. In physical terms, the ugliness of a part can contribute to the greater beauty of a whole as in a painting where dark shadows throw lighter beauties into relief.¹⁹¹

It can be argued that the beauty of the creation is purposive in Augustine’s aesthetics (as it is in Edwards) because it reveals God the artist whose very artistry attracts the heart to look beyond the material to the numinous.¹⁹² Augustine’s typological distinction between God as Supreme Beauty and the lesser beauties of the created world which point to the divine beauty brings to mind Edwards’ distinction between primary and secondary beauty. Unlike Edwards, Augustine does not include other spiritual beings in primary beauty.

To admire and praise the beauties of the natural world, including the beauty of ideas, societies and virtue itself, should inspire the heart to admire and praise its creator.¹⁹³ In an extended passage on the hierarchy of created beauty in his sermon on Psalm 144, Augustine discusses the revelatory power of beauty to show forth its source. He equates species (*species*) as the principle of being, with beauty (*pulchrum*), a concept that prefigures

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, XXXX. 74, p. 263.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, XX. 40-24. 45, pp. 244-247.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, XXIV. 45, p. 247.

¹⁹⁰ “On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees,” 1. 26, in *WSA*, 1/13, p. 55.

¹⁹¹ “Of True Religion,” XXXX. 76, p. 264; *The City of God*, XI. 18., XVII. 14, pp. 449, 744. Augustine refers to David as a lover of music who saw that the “the concord of different sounds, controlled in due proportion suggests the unity of a well-ordered city, welded together in harmonious variety.”

¹⁹² *The City of God*, XXII. 24, p. 1075. Natural beauty has a two-fold function, first, revealing God’s immanent and economic beauty and second, drawing the heart to God by inspiring love for the divine beauty. Augustine makes the further claim that the beauties of nature reveal God’s mercy because they are “the consolation of mankind under condemnation, not the rewards of the blessed.”

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 1073-1074. So beautiful is the harmonious congruence of the parts of the human body for example, that Augustine is at a loss to say whether “utility or beauty is the major consideration in their creation.”

Edwards' belief that the structure of being is beauty. From the least of the creation to the most auspicious, everything praises God by virtue of its own special beauty: "The dumb earth sings with the voice of its beauty." At the apogee of creation, the reasoning heart is drawn to praise God "because when you contemplate it (the world) and perceive its beauty, you praise God through it."¹⁹⁴ Augustine may have been the first to use the expression "the book of nature" a turn of phrase adopted by Edwards, as complementary to the book of Scripture in revealing God's beauty. The book of Scripture takes precedence because both realize that the beauties of nature are only signposts towards the beauty of God: "Observe the beauty of the world and praise the plan of the creator"¹⁹⁵ was Augustine's advice to his congregation towards the end of his life, a sentiment shared with Edwards.

Augustine's thinking on the right order of love is reflected in his thinking on the hierarchy of beauty. Sadly, the outcome of the fall is that God's rational creatures are unable to recall the deserted primal beauty that is God whose "pleasure is the whole glory of created beings."¹⁹⁶ Prior to conversion, the heart fails to find unity in God because the heart which "was made to contemplate supreme beauty," is enticed by the beauty of visible things which lack divine unity and are therefore, false beauties.¹⁹⁷ The heart is drawn to contemplate the supreme beauty that is God, but, just as in the order of love, the order of beauty is overturned when corporeal beauty is loved more than divine beauty.¹⁹⁸ Distracted by the senses, the heart is drawn to many different objects of delight but fails to find unity and so is dissatisfied.¹⁹⁹

As Augustine recalls in the *Confessions*, before conversion his love for earthly beauty overshadowed his vision of the true spiritual beauty of the triune God and he was powerless

¹⁹⁴ "Psalm 144.13," in *WSA*, pp. 391-392.

¹⁹⁵ "Sermon 68.5," (425-430), in *WSA*, III/3, p. 225. "Well, as a matter of fact there is a certain big book, the book of created nature." See also *The Trinity*, XV. 6, p. 399.

¹⁹⁶ "On Free Will," II. 43, in *Burleigh, Augustine: Earlier Writings*, p. 162.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, XXXIV. 67, p. 259.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, XXXIII. 61-XXXIV. 62, pp. 256-257.

¹⁹⁹ "On Order," in *FC*, vol. 1, 1. 2. 3, pp. 241-242. Grace M. Jantzen is critical of Augustine's ambivalence regarding created beauty, and it is an ambivalence he shares with Edwards. Beauty is seductive and ephemeral, a snare for the unwary if not constantly referred to God's triune beauty. Given the depth of their love for God's beauty, it is not surprising. I would argue that the bifurcation Jantzen posits between created beauty and the beauty of God in Augustine's aesthetics is modified somewhat with his emphasis on the beauty of God and all that he has created. Beauty in all its forms is at the heart of the creation and when "used" in an Augustinian way as a type of the beautiful God, brings the two realms of existence together. Grace M. Jantzen, *Beauty for Ashes: Notes on the Displacement of Beauty*, in *Literature and Theology*, vol. 16, no. 4, (December, 2002).

to re-direct it.²⁰⁰ The divine beauty must be revealed to the sinful heart by God himself. Whereas God is beauty in an ontological sense, the heart can only become truly beautiful by participation in beauty itself.²⁰¹ The converted heart is one “on fire with holy love” (*de intimis ardentis sancti amoris*), such that the believer loves the beauty of God’s house.²⁰² Nowhere is this more evident than in Augustine’s own life as he recalls in the *Confessions*.

Steinhauser sees Augustine’s lifelong concern with aesthetics and his eventual recognition that divine beauty is the goal in his quest to know God and the soul as the key to the unity and completeness of the *Confessions*. The search for the supreme beauty which is God “is a thread which runs through the entire work.”²⁰³ It was years before Augustine was to understand that the beauty of the material world was an image of God’s beauty, and to admit that everything in creation owes its existence to God who is beautiful.²⁰⁴ God’s beauty as the inspiration for love and praise from the renewed heart occurs throughout the *Confessions*. In Book I the mature Augustine praises God, who, among other attributes, is “the perfection of both beauty and strength”²⁰⁵ (*pulcherrime et fortissime*). After his conversion in Milan, he suggests that beauty is the magnet which draws forth love, since God is the most beautiful being, “the beauty of all things beautiful” (*pulchritudo pulchrorum omnium*).²⁰⁶ At the end of the *Confessions* in trying to justify his allegorical explanation of Genesis 1 he is still advocating the beauty of God. “All things are beautiful because you made them, but you who made everything are inexpressibly more beautiful.”²⁰⁷ To love beauty with a sanctified heart is to love the God who is beautiful.

As is evident from his attempts to trace God’s intervention in his spiritual journey in the *Confessions* the nature and origin of beauty had intrigued him from the beginning of his literary career as had its relationship to happiness. When he was twenty-six or twenty-seven

²⁰⁰ *Confessions*, VI. 16.26, p. 110.

²⁰¹ “On Eighty-Three Different Questions,” no. 23, “On the Father and the Son,” in *FC*, vol. 70, pp. 49, 50. Augustine says in *Retractions* 1. 25, that he gives a better explanation of God’s perfections and human participation in those perfections in *The Trinity*, VI. 3. See *The Trinity*, WSA, 1/5, pp. 206-207. See also VIII. 4-5, pp. 244-245. *Retractions*, 1. 25, *FC*, vol. 60, pp. 107-108.

²⁰² *The City of God*, XXII.21, p. 1064. (CCSL 48, 841).

²⁰³ Kenneth B. Steinhauser, “The Literary Unity of the *Confessions*,” in *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian*, p. 26.

²⁰⁴ *Confessions*, XI. 4. 6, p. 224. “Tu ergo, domine fecisti ea, qui pulcher es; pulchra sunt enim.” (CCSL, 27, 197). “Eighty-Three Different Questions,” no. 44, in *FC*, vol. 70, p. 75. “Because everything beautiful comes from the highest beauty which is God, and temporal beauty is achieved by the passing away and succession of things.”

²⁰⁵ *Confessions*, I. 4. 4, p. 5, (CCSL, 27, 3).

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 6, 10, p. 41.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, XIII. 20. 28, p. 289. (CCSL, 27, 257). “Et pulchra sunt omnia faciente te, et ecce tu inenarrabiliter pulchrior, qui fecisti omnia.”

years old and still a Manichee, he wrote his first work entitled *De pulchro et apto*.²⁰⁸ The work is significant in that it is the only one of his works he mentions in the *Confessions*, and it is about aesthetics rather than philosophy or theology. He is adamant that beauty is that which inspires love and longing. “Do we love anything except that which is beautiful?” he asks when looking back to a time before his conversion when he had been interested in the nature of beauty. “What then is a beautiful object? And what is beautiful?”²⁰⁹

Beauty is of two kinds, as he recalls. The first is the intrinsic beauty of created things by virtue of the “grace and loveliness inherent in them” and the second, beauty that is appropriate or fitting because of the inter-relatedness of two objects.²¹⁰ In his analysis of beauty Augustine continues the discussion begun in his earlier works on the difference between using things and enjoying things in God. Augustine’s ethical distinction between using and enjoying things (*uti* and *frui*), determines the ultimate end for believers and should establish the *ordo amoris*.²¹¹ God is to be loved above all else with neighbour and other beauties to be loved in God.²¹² There is no mention of God’s beauty at this stage, because as Augustine explains, throughout his youth and adolescence he had squandered his love on beautiful things of a lower order and had consequently fallen far away from God. The famous pear stealing episode is a case in point.²¹³

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, IV. 13. 20, p. 64.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.* (CCSL, 27, 50). “Num amamus aliquid nisi pulchrum? Quid est ergo pulchrum? Et quid est pulchritudo?”

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, IV. 15. 24. p. 67. Augustine takes up this distinction in *The City of God*, XXII.24., pp. 1070-1076.

²¹¹ Augustine distinguishes between God who is to be enjoyed, and things that are to be the means to the end of enjoyment of God. In *Teaching Christianity*, 1. 37, in *WSA*, I/II, p. 122, Augustine says that only God as Trinity is to be loved and enjoyed for himself; all other loves must defer to that prior love. “When something that is loved, after all, is available to you, delight is also bound to accompany it; but if you pass through this and refer it to that end where you are to remain permanently, you are really using it, and are said by a figure of speech, and not in the proper sense of the word, to enjoy it. If, however, you cling to it and remain fixed in it, placing in it the end of all your joys then you can be said really and truly to enjoy it; but this should not be done except with that divine Trinity, that is with the supreme and unchangeable good.”

²¹² See Raymond Canning, *Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St. Augustine*, (Heverlee-Leuven: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993), Ch. 3, pp. 79-115. Canning concludes that Augustine’s concept of “using” others out of deference for “enjoying” God is not as crude as it sounds. In a mysterious way, God providentially orders the universe so that the love for neighbour benefits the giver of love. In the end, all those who love God will enjoy him together. *Teaching Christianity*, 1. 35-39, *WSA*, I/11, pp. 121-123. “But when you enjoy a human being in God, you are really enjoying God rather than the human being.” As always with Augustine, the God to be enjoyed is Trinitarian. Christ is the way to the Father with the Holy Spirit “binding and so to say gluing us in there, so that we may abide forever in that supreme and unchangeable good.” Augustine shares with Edwards an aesthetic teleology. (p. 123).

²¹³ *Confessions*, II. 6. 12, pp. 30-31 As a sixteen year old Augustine had stolen pears not because they were beautiful, which they were, (*pulchra erant illa poma*) although he owned better ones, but because the theft in company with his friends, held a kind of perverse attractive beauty for him. The theft gave him more pleasure than the pears themselves. The pleasure obtained however, was unworthy and quickly spent, the act itself not

His initial failure to recognize and love the divine beauty is attributed to being torn between love for competing beauties which determine the direction of his loves. "I was caught up to you by your beauty and quickly torn away from you by my weight."²¹⁴ The "weight" in Augustine's case is his sexual desire which clouds his spiritual vision of God's beauty. Sin has disabled his heart, and he is unable to "think of the light of moral goodness and of a beauty to be embraced for its own sake - beauty seen not by the eye of the flesh, but only by inward discernment."²¹⁵ Conversion changes Augustine's thinking on the role of the affections and beauty in the heart. With the insight afforded by grace he knows that his earlier pursuit of love and beauty as ends in themselves was only illusory.

There is a poignancy to Augustine's belated confession of love for the divine beauty. In Book X of the *Confessions* which is a meditation on memory there is no triumphal catalogue of victorious living. Instead, one finds an acceptance that all of his best efforts are the work of God, and all of the weaknesses his own. Beauty is all around him, but he is only restored enough to catch a "glimpse of your splendour with a wounded heart."²¹⁶ In language reminiscent of Edwards Augustine laments his youthful failure to recognize and love God's triune beauty. His earlier protestations of love for the beautiful were misguided and he is conscious of the wasted years of fruitless searching. The following doxology is replete with erotic imagery that speaks of a transfigured heart, a sanctified heart but one that is still restless, longing for stability in the divine "beauty unchanged and unchangeable."²¹⁷

Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you. And see, you were within and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely created things which you made. You were with me, and I was not with you. The lovely things kept me far from you, though if they did not have their existence in you, they had no existence at all. You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I

nearly as beautiful as the beauty of inanimate stars or other vices that in a perverted way were still a reflection of beauty.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, VII. 17. 23, p. 127. (CCSL 27, 107). "et non stabam frui deo meo, sed rapiebar ad te decore tuo, moxque diripiebar abs te pondere meo..."

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, VI. 16. 26, p. 110. (CCSL 27, 90). "cogitare non possem lumen honestatis et gratis amplectendae pulchritudinis, quam non uidet oculus carnis, et uidetur ex intimo."

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, X. 41. 66, p. 218. (CCSL 27, 190). "vidi enim splendorem tuum corde saucio et reperiussus dixi."

²¹⁷ "Of True Religion," III. 3, in Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, p. 226.

feel but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours.”²¹⁸

Beauties that are spiritual rather than material now command his heart and he commends the true spiritual beauty of righteousness to his congregations. Even an ugly old man who is righteous to the point of suffering the horror of a martyr’s death has spiritual beauty that it seen with the eyes of the heart.²¹⁹

A recent critic has suggested that there is a tension between Augustine’s “contemplative aesthetic of divine beauty” and “an incarnational aesthetic of created beauty.”²²⁰ It is true that there is a caveat to an unqualified reverence for the love of created beauty after his conversion, one that is also there in Edwards.²²¹ Both authors are aware of the complexity of the heart’s response to beauty and there is at times an ambivalence towards created beauty as a possible snare to divert the heart from the beauty of God. As one who felt his wandering amongst the pagans was occasioned by an all too human love of earthly beauty, Augustine struggles to maintain a balance between over indulgence in the beauties of the world of the senses, and a too severe restriction of God-given pleasures which are necessities of life or which can be edifying to the mind in worship.²²² Edwards displays a similar asceticism. Single-minded devotion to God necessitates self-discipline

²¹⁸ *Confessions*, X. 27. 37, p. 201.

²¹⁹ “Psalm 64. 8,” in *WSA*, III/17, p. 275. “...the eye with the capacity to appreciate the beauty of righteousness is within you. If there were no beauty in righteousness, how could we love a righteous old man? ... righteousness has a beauty of its own, which we perceive with the eyes of the heart, and love, and kindle to, a beauty which people have dearly loved in the martyrs, even when their limbs were being torn by wild beasts.”

²²⁰ Marianne Djuth, “Veiled and Unveiled Beauty: The Role of the Imagination in Augustine’s Aesthetics,” *Theological Studies*, 68, (2007), pp. 77-91. Beauty, like love must be referred to God as the supreme beauty against whom all other beauties are measured, a point Augustine re-iterates. That it is not easy to appreciate God’s beauty above that of the creation is testament to the power of sin in Augustine’s thought.

²²¹ *The Trinity*, Prologue to Book IV, p. 153. Augustine is fully aware of his own frail heart and the need to exercise caution in his Trinitarian speculations. Humility is essential if progress is to be made. “I am fully aware how many fancies the human heart can breed” he confesses, “what is my own heart, after all, but a human heart?”

²²² See *Confessions*, X. 30. 41- X. 33. 57, pp. 203-213. Augustine quotes 1 John 2: 16 to cover all the possible temptations which beauty in its various guises might present to a fallen will. (CCSL 27, 176). “*tubes certe, ut contineam a concupiscentia carnis et concupiscentia oculorum et ambitione saeculi.*” Grace Jantzen argues that Augustine is part of a trend in Western Christendom to displace beauty with truth out of fear of the attractive power of created beauty which can be a “snare and a trap” to distract the heart from God, the Supreme Beauty. Grace M. Jantzen, “Beauty for Ashes: Notes on the Displacement of Beauty,” in *Literature and Theology*, vol. 16, no. 4, (December, 2001), pp. 442-449.

and renunciation for the sake of the greater joy and delight that flows from contemplation of the divine love and beauty.²²³

4.6 Beauty and the Trinity

In the first work written after his conversion, Augustine highlights the importance of the heart with respect to love for the divine Trinitarian beauty. God does not begrudge us the love of beauty, he says, but we should love the highest beauty which is the Trinity of the one highest God. The way to obtain this “sweetness of eternal things” is not with the “flashing human reasoning” but the “effective and burning fire of love” which purifies the heart.²²⁴

Whilst there is a consensus amongst scholars that Augustine was undoubtedly moved by beauty in all its forms, most recently a debate has emerged concerning the extent to which Augustine privileged beauty in his Trinitarianism.²²⁵ Although it is clear that he does not devote as much attention to analyzing the nature of God’s Trinitarian beauty as does Edwards, it is still a significant aspect of his thinking on the Trinity and is very clearly associated with the heart. Augustine differs from Edwards in that the uncreated, divine

²²³ “Resolutions,” no. 40, in *Letters and Personal Papers, Works*, 16, p. 756. “Resolved, to enquire every night, before I go to bed, whether I have acted in the best way I possibly could, with respect to eating and drinking.” Edwards’ youthful resolutions covered all aspects of his life to ensure a wholehearted commitment to God. Augustine did the same, living abstemiously in an attempt to make God the centre of his life.

²²⁴ “On Music,” in *FC*, vol. 2, XVI. 52, p. 373; XIII. 38, p. 363; XVI. 56, p. 375; XVII. 59, p. 378.

²²⁵ Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 27. Hanby argues that Augustine’s Christology is “the focal point for the manifestation of the eternal beauty of God in the temporal economy and the unfolding of the temporal economy within the eternal beauty of God. He adopts a threefold approach in his discussion of the relationship between aesthetics and the hypostatic unity of the one Christ in Augustine’s Trinitarian theology. The first concerns the generation and procession of the second and third persons of the Trinity in terms of Augustine’s understanding of the Trinity as transcendent love, and the second is a revision of the “psychological analogy”. In the final section the strands are brought together in Augustine’s Christology and its segue into ecclesiology. His thesis has provoked dissent from Johannes Brachtendorf who rejects Hanby’s emphasis on the beauty of God as the decisive characteristic of Trinitarian life. Brachtendorf identifies the *unum*, the *verum* and the *bonnum* as the basic characteristics of God for Augustine in *The Trinity*. Johannes Brachtendorf, “Orthodoxy without Augustine: A Response to Michael Hanby’s *Augustine and Modernity*,” in *Ars Disputandi*, [http://www.ArsDisputandi.org] 6 (2006), pp. 2-6. One must agree with Brachtendorf’s assertion that the eternal beauty of God is not the overt characteristic of Trinitarian being that Augustine discloses in *The Trinity*. At best, the divine beauty is only implicit in much of what Augustine says about the Trinity in his major doctrinal work, although it must be acknowledged that his study is shaped by the longing for joy that is promised for the pure in heart who seek a vision of God’s triune beauty. *The Trinity*, 1. 31, *WSA*, 1/5, p. 89. Augustine uses a number of biblical references including the reference to God’s beauty from Ps. 27.4. There is a case however, for arguing as Hanby does, that Augustine is attempting to understand the Trinity in terms of the aesthetic harmony of creation and redemption which has as centerpiece, Christ’s beauty. If God as Trinity is the highest good, God is also the highest beauty. For references to God and beauty see *The Trinity*, VI. 11, IX. 11, X. 1, X. 7, XIII. 4, XV. 3, pp. 213, 277, 286, 292, 345 and 396. See also Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*, Ch. 2, “*De Trinitate* and the Ethics of Salvation,” pp. 54-55.

Trinitarian beauty is equated with unity in Augustine's metaphysics, rather than as exemplified in the Trinitarian relationships, although they too are beautiful. The principle of unity resides in God the Trinity who is to be sought above all else for his divine beauty of simplicity. "We seek unity" says Augustine, "the simplest thing of all. Therefore let us seek it in simplicity of heart."²²⁶ This idea of unitary beauty is largely dependent on Augustine's categorization of unity as the perfection of God's being. While every created thing has some form or beauty, "no material thing, however beautiful, can possibly achieve the unity it aims at," the "one harmonious whole" which constitutes true beauty and which belongs only to God.²²⁷

Having said that unity is paramount in Augustine's depiction of the Trinitarian being and beauty of God, accusations that Augustine emphasized the divine unity at the expense of triunity can be overstated. The beauty of the oneness or simplicity of God is seen in the Trinity. God is beauty as Trinity, not as a monad. There is no absence of love for the beauty of the individual members of the Trinity as they exist relationally. Augustine speaks of God's beauty with the same intense affectivity that is to be found in Edwards' later effusions of divine beauty.

In Augustine's Trinitarian aesthetics not only is God as Trinity supremely wise and loving, he is "supremely beautiful (*perfectissima pulchritudo*), and blessed delight (*beatissima delectatio*)."²²⁸ Out of his essential goodness and, by implication, his beauty, God creates a beautiful world. God's Trinitarian beauty is reflected in the creation where each member of the Trinity plays a part: "God, the immutable Trinity" made all things "through his supreme wisdom (Jesus the Son) and preserves them by his supreme loving-kindness" (the Holy Spirit).²²⁹ Grace, which in Augustine's thinking is the "abundance of his generosity," is the reason for any existence apart from God's Trinitarian being.²³⁰

In his explanation of the relationship between divine simplicity and divine triunity in Book VI of *The Trinity*, for example, Augustine describes the immanent Trinity as the perfect expression of interpersonal love, delight and beauty. Taking his cue from Hilary's

²²⁶ "Of True Religion," XXXV. 65, in Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, p. 258.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, XXXII. 59, p. 255.

²²⁸ *The Trinity*, VI. 11, in WSA, 1/5, p. 213.

²²⁹ "Of True Religion," in Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, p. 241. For a discussion of Augustine's use of form and species to denote the identification of being and beauty see Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, "The Augustinian Conception of Beauty and Dante's Convivio," in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 15, 4, (June, 1957), pp. 435-448.

²³⁰ *The City of God*, XI. 24, p. 457. "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," 1. 12, in WSA, 1/13, p. 173.

Trinitarianism, Augustine explains the “form” of the Son as the inherent beauty that obtains in the harmony of likeness between the Father and his image: “that primordial equality and primordial likeness” (*prima equalitas et prima similitudo*), in which the being, living and understanding of the Father become one with the perfect Word, “the one from the one with whom it is one.” Nothing is lacking in the Word through whom all things are made as a manifestation of the “art of the almighty and wise God.” There is great beauty in the careful arrangement of all things created by the divine artist according to a pre-existent unity, form and order, all of which is a reflection of the beauty of the immanent Trinity. The Father and his Image cleave together in an “inexpressible embrace” that is “not without enjoyment, without charity, without happiness.”²³¹ Adumbrations of Edwards’ social Trinitarianism are quite explicit in this passage, but Augustine is, generally speaking, more restrained in his exposition of the beauty of the relationships within the immanent Trinity.

Of the three persons of the Trinity, Augustine, like Edwards, found the definitive expression of the divine beauty in Christ. Without belittling the person and work of the Holy Spirit who is the divine beauty imparted to the heart, Augustine extols the beauty of Christ whose inexhaustible beauty will never fail to satisfy the heart.²³² Passion for Christ’s beauty is seen in the believer’s knowledge of Christ’s “intellectual beauty.” In the closing chapters of *The City of God* he imagines a glorious vision of the heavenly city where the praise of God is the ultimate happiness. This blessed felicity “will kindle the rational minds to the praise of the great Artist by the delight afforded by a beauty that satisfies reason.”²³³ The truthfulness and beauty of Christ’s sacrificial love constrains the Christian in this life from falsehood and inspires ardent devotion in the next.²³⁴

Like Edwards, Augustine manifests a dialectical conception of beauty realized in the harmonization of opposites, with the utmost harmony seen in the majesty and humility of Christ. Christ in the union of his divinity and his humanity defines Augustine’s ideas on beauty. That humanity is reformed from the ugliness of sin and reformed to its true beauty or form as the *imago Dei* is the mark of Christ’s beauty. Christ is without beauty to the

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² “Homily III.21,” in *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, NPNF, vol. VII, p. 25.

²³³ *The City of God*, XXII. 30, p. 1087-1088. (CCSL 48, 862). “rationales mentes in tanti artificis laudem rationabilis pulchritudinis delectatione succedent.”

²³⁴ “Against Lying,” 36, in NPNF, Vol. III, p. 498. “For when shall I set before the eyes of my heart (*oculos cordis mei*), (such as they be) the intellectual beauty (*intelligibilem pulchritudinem*) of Him out of whose mouth nothing false proceeds...yet I am with love of that surpassing comeliness so set on fire, that I despise all human regards which would thence recall me.” (PL 40, 545).

fallen person, but to the purified and spiritual, those who love Christ and see his inner spiritual beauty, Christ is manifest in his eternal beauty. Believers know the surpassing beauty of the incarnate Christ, who is beautiful at every stage of his life.²³⁵

There is a special beauty in the drama of the immutable God forsaking his immutability to join with a recalcitrant creature. The loving humility of Christ evokes adoration and praise from both Augustine and Edwards because the very horror of the crucifixion is, in a perverse way beautiful, out of the horror comes redemption through Christ's act of divine, sacrificial love as he reminds nuns who were willing to renounce the world for the inner beauty of grace-controlled passions:

love with your whole heart (*toto corde*) him who is the most handsome of men ... Gaze on the beauty of your lover (*Inspicite pulchritudinem amatoris uestri*)...See how beautiful is the very thing for which the proud disdain in him...He wants to be wholly fixed in your hearts, he who for your sake let himself be fixed to the cross.²³⁶

Believers are those who recognize their own spiritual ugliness and who respond to the Christ event with the love of Christ's spiritual beauty that has transformed their hearts. In so doing, says Augustine, they too become beautiful "for love itself is the beauty of the soul."²³⁷ Being joined to Christ in faith and imitating him in love, humans receive his form or beauty and are thus encouraged to pursue a life of virtue.

Speaking on the virtues of remaining a widow he juxtaposes the deformity of Christ in his crucifixion with the spiritual beauty that is theirs because of his sacrifice. Paradoxically, Christ's deformity and "ugliness" in the crucifixion is both beauty personified and the means to their inner beauty of which their dedication to the religious life is proof: "from this ugliness in your Redeemer, however, there flowed the price of your

²³⁵ "Psalm 44. 3," in *WSA*, III/16, p. 283. "For all who do understand, the truth that the Word was made flesh is supremely beautiful...Let us therefore, who believe, run to meet a Bridegroom who is beautiful wherever he is. Beautiful as God, as the Word who is with God, he is beautiful in the Virgin's womb, where he did not lose his godhead but assumed our humanity. Beautiful he is as a baby,...He was beautiful in heaven, then, and beautiful on earth: He was beautiful in his miracles but just as beautiful under the scourges, beautiful as he invited us to life, but beautiful too in not shrinking from death, beautiful in laying down his life and beautiful in taking it up again, beautiful on the cross, beautiful in the tomb, and beautiful in heaven." (CCSL 38, 495-496). A similar theme appears in Psalm 127. 8, in *WSA*, III/20, p. 104. Christ is the bridegroom who is "unsurpassed in beauty" whose persecutors "lacked the eyes to see his beauty."

²³⁶ "Holy Virginity," 54. 55-56, in *Marriage and Virginity*, *WSA*, I/9, p. 104. (PL 40, 428).

²³⁷ "Homily IX. 9," in *Homilies on the Epistle of John*, in *NPNF*, vol. VII, p. 518. "How shall we become beautiful? By loving Him who is always beautiful. Inasmuch as love grows in you, in so much beauty grows; for love is itself the beauty of the soul."

beauty, although it is an interior beauty.” This inner beauty pleases God and is the means of re-ordering the pattern of their lives to continue to please God. Augustine reminds the nuns that their spiritual beauty parallels the intratrinitarian beauty of “that King who is captivated by the beauty of his one bride, of which you are members.”²³⁸

Augustine does not offer a vision of the Holy Spirit as the beauty of the Trinity imparted to hearts with conversion as does Edwards. Any idea that the Holy Spirit is beauty is only implicit in his equation of God as goodness and beauty. He does however, anticipate Edwards’ idea of the Holy Spirit as the holiness of the Trinity which is also synonymous with the divine goodness and beauty. Augustine’s designation of the Holy Spirit as the mutual love of Father and Son, or as “the harmony of unity and equality” in the Godhead gives a hint of the beauty inherent in the person of the Holy Spirit.²³⁹ The mutuality and harmony of the Trinity are beautiful and Augustine’s belief that God is beautiful implies that the Spirit of God is beautiful too. Since love is only attracted and drawn to that which is beautiful, in order that this “delightful and surpassing and inexpressible Trinity” may be loved, having “initiated, completed, arranged” the creation, it is the Spirit who “desires the hearts of lovers” and creates desire for God’s beauty in the first instance.²⁴⁰

In another context, the “love, delight, felicity and blessedness” that is the Holy Spirit, the “sweetness of begetter and begotten pervading all creatures according to their capacity with its vast generosity and fruitfulness,” ensures that all creatures are found in their rightful order and place in the creation and it is that order that makes the creation beautiful. Augustine concludes “that supreme triad is the source of all things, and the most perfect beauty, and wholly blissful delight.”²⁴¹ Love for the Trinitarian beauty of God who makes

²³⁸ “The Excellence of Widowhood,” in *WSA*, 1/9, pp. 129-130. The beauty in deformity of Christ’s crucifixion is a theme he returns to in “Sermon 27. 6,” in *WSA*, 111/11, p. 108. Humility embraces deformity, and once recognized, the deformity of Christ in the crucifixion enables humanity’s reformation, “for if he had not willed to be deformed, you would not have recovered the form which you lost. He therefore hung upon the cross, deformed; but his deformity was our beauty.”

²³⁹ *Teaching Christianity*, 1. 6.6, *WSA*, 1/11., p. 108. See also *The City of God*, XI. 24, p. 457. In a discussion on the role of the Trinity in creation, Augustine says: “It remains true that holiness is the distinguishing attribute of the Spirit, which suggests that he is the holiness of both, in substantial and consubstantial form. Now if the divine goodness is identical with the divine holiness, it is not a rash presumption but a reasonable inference to find a hint of the Trinity in the description of God’s creative works...” (CCSL 48, 343). “*proprie tamen ipse uocatur Spiritus sanctus tamquam sanctitas substantialis et consubstantialis amborum.*”

²⁴⁰ “Sermon 341. 7,” (417), in *WSA*, 111/ 11, p. 288.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.* Plotinus had a dualistic conception of form which included the notion of lustre as well as the classical understanding of form. Plotinus argued that if beauty only exists in harmony or proportion then there is no place for simple things like the sun or gold to be beautiful. *Enneads*, 1.6.1, pp.-56-57.

the heart beautiful is indispensable for even the merest semblance of a virtuous life now and for the promise of glory in heaven.²⁴²

4.7 Beauty and True Virtue

Augustine's ethical thinking prefigures Edwards' association of true virtue with the heart's participation in the divine Trinitarian goodness, beauty and holiness.²⁴³ Augustine's conviction that the redeemed heart is the only foundation for true virtue is also at the forefront of Edwards' ethics. Pagan moral philosophy proved to be ineffectual in the acquisition of virtue Augustine claimed because it failed to take account of the power of the sinful heart to overwhelm reason. Whereas the Stoics regarded "right reason" as the underlying guide to actions and contended that true virtue follows the dictates of reason in controlling the will, Augustine disagreed.

In his view reason comes a poor second when considered alongside the power of the passions to determine thoughts and behaviour. He argued that the Stoics limited the attainment of virtue to the few of superior intellectual prowess, an untenable position for a Christian to maintain given that it excluded the great mass of humanity from any semblance of virtue and failed to take into account the sway of sin in every human heart. The absence of God as the origin of true virtue meant that for Augustine, no matter how well-intentioned or helpful, the virtues of the pagans which appear to be good are in reality "vices rather than virtues."²⁴⁴ Virtues are distinguished from vices by their ends, and true virtue has as its end "the perfect love of God."²⁴⁵

Augustine's definition of virtue is multivalent. On the whole, he does not equate virtue with beauty so much as with love, but since God is also the Supreme Beauty, a right love for Augustine is implicitly love of the divine Trinitarian beauty. In one of his earliest works he defines virtue as the supreme love (*summus amor*) for God who is both perfect

²⁴² "Psalm 61. 13," in *WSA*, III/ 17, p. 215.

²⁴³ This is not to suggest that Augustine's ethical teaching was monolithic or static. As with all his explorations of doctrine, there is development and variety of expression of concepts depending on the context. What is consistent however, is his belief that all right thinking and actions ultimately originate in the regenerate heart. See Frederick S. Carney, "The Structure of Augustine's Ethic," in *The Ethics of St. Augustine*, ed. William S. Babcock, JRE Studies in Religion, Series Editor, James T. Johnson (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), pp. 11-36. Carney assesses Augustine's ethical thinking under the headings of value, virtue and obligation from the perspective of three periods of writing.

²⁴⁴ *The City of God*, XIX. 25, p. 891. There is an interesting discussion on the interaction of "splendid vices and secular virtues" in James Wetzel's article of the same name. "Splendid Vices and Secular Virtues: Variations on Millbank's Augustine," in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 32, 2, (2004), pp. 271-300.

²⁴⁵ "Of the Morals of the Catholic Church," 1. 15. 25, in *NPNF*, vol. IV, p. 48. (PL 32, 1309-1378).

goodness and beauty.²⁴⁶ Attracted by love for the divine beauty, virtue arises in the heart rather than the intellect, although he does at one point offer support for the Aristotelian position that virtue is partly dependent on learning right behaviours.²⁴⁷ Learned behaviours, however, do not suffice for true virtue unless upheld by love for God in the heart.

A right love for Augustine has the same character as that seen in Edwards and is derived from participation in the divine love and beauty through the agency of the economic Trinity in conversion. In grounding virtuous actions in love for God, Augustine anticipates Edwards. He argues that only rightly directed love originating from a pure (i.e. redeemed) heart can lead to truly virtuous actions.²⁴⁸ Where *cupiditas*, the love of inferior things or things that can be lost, is the root of all evil, *caritas* is the chief of virtues, and specific virtues but the offspring of divine love. Depending on the source and object of one's loves, so are thoughts or actions classified as virtuous or not. The only truly virtuous acts are those performed with reference to God's love as the prior claim in the Christian life. Love of anything else above God is idolatry.²⁴⁹

In a sermon on Psalm 77 he makes the point that beneficial actions performed out of fear of punishment are not virtuous because it is the "delight of righteousness" that should motivate behaviour. "If the heart is rightly directed, the actions will be too..." In a fallen world, "crooked hearts" fail to approach the "straightness" of God. The crooked heart is reformed when the love of God is poured into the heart and the will changed. Then the heart will be attached to God "so that it may be directed aright."²⁵⁰ Like Edwards, he sees no hope of true virtue apart from grace,²⁵¹ but only the heart that loves the divine Trinitarian beauty is the recipient of grace. The right action is that done out of love for God. It is in conformity with God's revealed law and it helps rather than hinders the spiritual journey. When the heart is drawn to God by a vision of his supreme Trinitarian beauty, then

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *The City of God*, XIX. 4, p. 853. "Then again, what of virtue itself, which is not one of the primary gifts, since it supervenes on them later, introduced by teaching?"

²⁴⁸ See Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptised*, pp. 168-169.

²⁴⁹ Oliver O'Donovan offers a considered discussion of Augustine's attempt to reconcile the two love commands (Love of God and love of neighbour) into one overarching love for God the Trinity. According to Augustine's distinction of using the creation (*uti*) and enjoying God, (*frui*), God alone is to be enjoyed and others must be "enjoyed in God," the term he adopted to avoid the notion of "using" one's family and friends. He does, however, maintain that "use" is a kind of love. *Teaching, Christianity*, I. 2-5, *WSA*, I/II, pp. 106-108. O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine*, pp. 24-29.

²⁵⁰ "Psalm 77. 10," in *WSA*, 111/18, p. 101.

²⁵¹ *The City of God*, XIV. .6, pp. 555-556. James Wetzel suggests that Augustine disagreed with the Stoic idea that there were two centres of motivation, reason and the affections. Augustine sees the affections embodying reason in a unity that provides the motivation to act. James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*, p. 101.

genuine virtue, not perfect virtue, is possible as a gift for which one should entreat God because nothing is more desirable than virtue.²⁵²

While Edwards and Augustine agree that God is the source and measure of true virtue, virtue as understood by Augustine is structured differently from Edwards. The four cardinal virtues of temperance, prudence, justice or fortitude are his chosen exemplars of virtue, although he does trace each one of them back to *caritas*, the love of God.²⁵³ The aesthetic dimension to his ethical thinking is summed up as follows: "The object of this love is not anything, but only God, the chief good, the highest wisdom, the perfect harmony."²⁵⁴ The Trinitarian nature of Augustine's ethical thought is clearly visible in this description of the triune God who is the object of love and the source of goodness. Humanity made in the image of God shares in the Trinitarian being of goodness, truth and love at conversion. Only in returning to one's heart to find God is any approximation to a true and loving life possible.²⁵⁵

Augustine points to the close correlation between true virtue, love, beauty and the happy life (as indeed did Edwards), in one of his earliest works. Here, virtue is defined as "right and perfect reason," a definition that taken superficially seems to be devoid of any aesthetic overtones.²⁵⁶ Reason (Augustine's interlocutor), goes on to explain that right reason is to be found in company with the Christian virtues of faith, hope and love. In the search for the Beatific Vision, when faith believes that the object of seeing will make one blessed, and hope insists that right looking will assuredly lead to a vision of God and love longs to enjoy that vision of God, then the true end for the believer, eternal happiness, will

252 "Psalm 137. 8," in *WSA*, III/20, pp. 247-248.

253 *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, no. 61, in *FC*, p. 121; *The City of God*, XIX. 4, pp. 853-857, "On the Morals of the Catholic Church," 1. 15. 25, (387/389), in *NPNF*, vol. IV, p. 48. So "temperance is love giving itself entirely to that which is loved; fortitude is love readily bearing all things for the sake of the loved object; justice is love serving only the loved object, and therefore ruling rightly; prudence is love distinguishing with sagacity between what hinders it and what helps it."

254 "Of the Morals of the Catholic Church," 1. 15. 25, in *NPNF*, vol. IV, p. 48.

255 *The City of God*, XI. 28, pp. 462-463. "Now we are human beings, created in our Creator's image, whose eternity is true, whose truth is eternal, whose love is eternal and true, who is a Trinity of eternity, truth and love,...And let us gaze at his image in ourselves, and, 'returning to ourselves,' like the younger son in the Gospel story, let us rise up and go back to him from whom we have departed in our sinning. There our existence will have no death, our knowledge no error, our love no obstacle."

256 "The Soliloquies," 1. 6.13, in Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, p. 31. This definition appears again in "The Usefulness of Believing" XII. 27, (391), in Burleigh, *Ibid.*, p. 314. Another way of defining virtue appears in Augustine's review of "On Free Will," in *Retractions*, I. XIII, in *FC*, vol. 60, p. 38. Here he defines virtue as "the good use of free will," but as discussed in Chapter Three, the will is only free for Augustine when it is the outworking of grace in the heart. Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, p. 104. In Letter 155, he says that those are truly happy who have "the virtue of the mind," i. e., they love God. Those who practise the four cardinal virtues, but do not do so out of love for God, act in vain. *WSA*, III/2, pp. 411-412.

be reached. "This truly is perfect virtue" says Augustine, "reason achieving its end, which is the happy life." Conversion inspires more longing for the heart's vision of God because it is a vision of Beauty himself and "when the soul sees that unique and true Beauty it will love it more."²⁵⁷ The longing to see more and more of the divine beauty is the impetus behind virtuous living and the practice of virtues such as justice, temperance, and love animate the heart and give it beauty. The more closely the heart approaches the divine beauty, the more virtuous it is.²⁵⁸

True virtue is identified with beauty in Augustine's preliminary remarks on using things and enjoying things. He says that virtue is synonymous with good order and consists in the desire to "enjoy what ought to be enjoyed and to use what ought to be used."²⁵⁹ Things that are enjoyable (here he calls them honourable as well, a term which also had the connotation of moral beauty in his day),²⁶⁰ are to be sought for their own sake. Those that are useful are directed to something else. The virtuous person uses reason to enjoy God and directs life to the end of enjoying God since this leads to happiness.

Like Edwards, Augustine believes that God alone is to be enjoyed because nothing is higher in terms of excellence of nature or being than God who is the standard of beauty and goodness by which all else is to be measured. God as Beauty and Usefulness (Divine Providence) is worthy of enjoyment since it is "invisible beautiful things, i.e. honourable things, that should be enjoyed."²⁶¹ Self-love has its place in preserving life as it does in Edwards' ethics, but love of oneself over against God is a wrong love.²⁶²

True virtue therefore, "and genuine virtues can exist only in those in whom true godliness is present,"²⁶³ begins in righteousness, "the beauty of the inner person."²⁶⁴ Believers, having been formed by God in their creation are in the process of being reformed into righteousness. True virtue is approached when the believer tries to "live in

²⁵⁷ "The Soliloquies," 1. 7. 14., Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, p. 31.

²⁵⁸ "The Immortality of the Soul," XV. 24, in *FC*, vol. II, pp. 43-45. In *The Trinity*, Augustine notes that "justice is a sort of beauty of mind by which many men are made beautiful even though they have ugly misshapen bodies." VIII. 9, p. 249.

²⁵⁹ *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, no. 30, in *FC*, vol. 70, pp. 55-56; *Teaching Christianity*, 1. 28. 27-1. 39. 35, *WSA*, 1/11, pp. 114-123.

²⁶⁰ *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, no. 30, p. 55.

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp. 55-56.

²⁶² *Teaching Christianity*, 1. 23. 22 -1. 25. 26, in *WSA*, 1/11, pp. 114-118. "So there is no need for a commandment that we should love our selves and our bodies, because it is by an unalterable law of nature that we do love what we are and what is below us but still a part of us." See *The Trinity*, XIV. 18, *WSA*, 1/5, p. 384.

²⁶³ *Ibid*., XIX. 4, p. 857.

²⁶⁴ "Letter 120. 20," in *WSA*, II/2, p. 140.

righteousness” and that is only possible for the converted heart. To be renewed in the image of God is to approach God’s beauty of righteousness which is incomparably more beautiful than that of believers.²⁶⁵

Any early ideas of perfectly virtuous living Augustine may have held immediately after conversion disappeared by the 390’s. In this life, he came to realize, all virtues are incomplete even when assisted by grace. Like Edwards, Augustine is unable to sustain his love for God and so attain true virtue. The “weight” of his sensuality drags him down. The realm of the senses intrudes upon the heart and he cannot keep his mind’s eye fixed with “strong love” on “that unique and true beauty.” “It (i.e. his mind’s eye, which is his heart), will never be able to abide in that most blessed vision” until the next life, when the soul gives itself wholly to God, and “love remains to hold it fast.”²⁶⁶

The problem as Augustine perceives it is that no-one loves with the whole heart or is pure in heart, and only the pure in heart will see God as he keeps repeating in *The Trinity*.²⁶⁷ The main obstacle encountered in the struggle to act virtuously is habit, or as Edwards would say, disposition.²⁶⁸ Humanity lives under the sway of *cupiditas*, which leads to the failure of the will to will the good and do it. “Carnal custom” is as strong as nature and results in “ignorance and difficulty.”²⁶⁹ As Augustine asks “in our present state, what human being can live the life he wishes, when the actual living is not in his control?”²⁷⁰ The attainment of virtue in this life is limited for even the best of hearts, and therefore humanity is, generally speaking, unhappy. Christians, however, can be happy in the knowledge that loving the beauty of God’s righteousness and holiness leads to the

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Augustine goes on to say that the beauty of God is infinitely more beautiful than the beauty of minds.

²⁶⁶ “The Soliloquies,” I. 6. 13, in Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, p. 31.

²⁶⁷ *The Trinity*, 1.27, 28, 30, 31, pp. 77, 86-89; VIII. 6, p. 246; XV. 44, p. 429.

²⁶⁸ Augustine and Edwards have a slightly different understanding of “habit.” For Augustine it is “carnal custom” or a “second nature” (*altera natura*) that leads to the continuance of sinning. For a helpful summary of Augustine’s views on the power of habit see Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptised*, pp. 175-185. In *Teaching Christianity* Augustine refers to “the undisciplined habits of the flesh warring against the spirit. 1. 25, WSA, 1/11, p. 116. Edwards defines habit as an innate, law-like agency that brings about a certain consequence. It can also have the meaning that Augustine assigned to it of propensities that are acquired through experience. See Sang Hyun Lee, “Mental Activity and the perception of Beauty in Jonathan Edwards,” in *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 69, No. 3/4 (Jul. – Oct., 1976), pp. 369-396. See also Sang Hyun Lee, “God’s Relation to the World,” in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, pp. 59-60. Habits are “active and causal powers.”

²⁶⁹ “On Free Will,” III. 52, in Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, pp. 201-202.

²⁷⁰ *The City of God*, XIV. 25, p. 589.

believer's growth in the fruits of righteousness, and that is the way to eventually arrive at true virtue and happiness in heaven.²⁷¹

4.8 Beauty and the Happy Life

Augustine's ethics lead inexorably to teleology and the ideal of the happy life since virtue and happiness are partners in Greek philosophy. While he stands within the tradition of classic Hellenistic Eudaemonism, Augustine adds to that philosophic stream his understanding of the happy life as one that is found in a Christian spiritual psychology of beauty, love and delight derived from participation in the Trinitarian life of God.²⁷² The scenario for happiness follows the path of love for beauty. As the heart is illumined by grace such that the spiritual person understands intellectually and loves perfectly the "inner beauties"²⁷³ of the triune God, then that person will attain happiness. The divine love and beauty act as a magnet for the weary pilgrim seeking happiness in the midst of the beauties and temptations of the world.²⁷⁴

Augustine's Trinitarian Eudaemonism manages to reconcile reason and the love of beauty in the pursuit of happiness. "Thus God is the supreme reality, with His Word and the Holy Spirit-three who are one. He is the God omnipotent, creator and maker of every soul and every body; participation in Him brings happiness to all who are happy in truth and not in illusion."²⁷⁵ Forgoing illusion, in Augustine's case the longing for happiness was inextricably linked with the search for wisdom.

The Augustinian focus on the heart sees the integration of knowledge, happiness and beauty in his Trinitarian aesthetic. Happiness is to know how to love rightly and he defines this as loving the highest good, that is, God. Since his Neoplatonism equates the good with the beautiful, the God Augustine loves is the supreme beauty he desires.²⁷⁶ In the preface to Book V of *The City of God* Augustine gives a definition of happiness as "the complete

²⁷¹ Bonnie Kent, "Augustine's Ethics," in *Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 204-233.

²⁷² See the entry on "Eudaemonism," in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopaedia*, pp. 413-414.

²⁷³ *The Trinity*, X. 7, p. 292. Brachtendorf accuses Hanby of neglecting the later triads and instead, devoting an inordinate amount of time to the triad of lover, beloved and love, rather than moving on as Augustine does to postulate more useful analogies

²⁷⁴ Michael Mendelson, "By the Things Themselves": Eudaimonism, Direct Acquaintance, and Illumination in Augustine's *De Magistro*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 39, 4 (2001), pp. 467-489. The theme of pilgrimage is also found in Sermon 346, "On Our Journey Through This Life," in *WSA*, III/10, pp. 80-81.

²⁷⁵ *The City of God*, V. 11, p. 196.

²⁷⁶ *Confessions*, X. 27. 38, p. 201, *Soliloquies*, I. 3, in Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, p. 24.

enjoyment of all that is to be desired.”²⁷⁷ Such an attainment requires that the heart’s longing be inclined towards that which cannot be lost, namely God, who alone is immortal.²⁷⁸ The proper end or goal for humans is to enjoy God as an end in himself and this enjoyment determines one’s moral choices and full happiness in heaven. To know and love God’s Trinitarian beauty in the heart entails living according to God’s character and law. True happiness is the gift of God, and the earnest of that happiness is the heart-knowledge of the beauty of heaven.²⁷⁹

Augustine’s sensitivity to the imperatives of the heart in seeking wisdom and happiness is made explicit in the *Confessions* where he equates delight, joy and the happy life with worship of the one true God:

There is a delight which is given not to the wicked, but to those who worship you for no reward save the joy that you yourself are to them. That is the authentic happy life, to set one’s joy on you, grounded in you and caused by you. That is the real thing and there is no other. Those who think that the happy life is found elsewhere, pursue another joy and not the true one.²⁸⁰

Like Edwards, Augustine believes that God is “the supremely good and unchangeably happy creator” who desires the love of his creatures and wants to make them happy.²⁸¹ The object of all human striving determines whether happiness will be transitory or eternal, because Augustine argues that the attainment of happiness is thwarted by directing one’s love away from the One “who is the joy of those who are true of heart (*et ipse est deliciae rectorum corde*), to lesser loves.”²⁸² If lesser beauties are pursued in the search for happiness, then any happiness obtained will not last as he observes in his commentary on Psalm 26.7. “Happiness does not consist simply in having what we happen to love. We sometimes are made more unhappy by having what we love than in not having it.”²⁸³ If the love of transitory beauties determines one’s striving then a person is worse off than the one who strives to be attached to God but who suffers in the effort to be virtuous. All earthly

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Preface, Book V, p. 179.

²⁷⁸ “On Free Will,” I. 32-34, in Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, pp. 131-134.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, V. 16, p. 205.

²⁸⁰ *Confessions*, X. 22. 32, pp. 198-199.

²⁸¹ *The Trinity*, XIII. 11, *WSA*, 1/5, p. 352. (CCSL 50A, 398). “Aut si uolunt ut ueritas clamat, ut natura compellit cui summe bonus et immutabiliter beatus creator hoc indidit...”

²⁸² *Confessions*, II. 5. 10, p. 30. (CCSL 27, 22).

²⁸³ “Psalm 26.7,” (2), in *WSA*, III/15, p. 278. (CCSL 38, 157). “Vere autem felix est, non si id habeat quod amat; sed si id amet quod amandum est. Multi enim miseri magis habendo quod amant, quam carendo.”

happiness no matter how wonderful, is tinged with sadness because it is temporal, so at one level the search for happiness in this life is doomed. Enduring happiness is the province of the redeemed heart in heaven.

At the conclusion of his first completed work as a Christian, *The Happy Life*, (386), the Trinitarian overtones to his definition of the happy life are hinted at: "This, therefore is the complete satisfaction of souls, that is, the happy life: to know precisely and perfectly Him through whom you are led into the truth, the nature of the truth you enjoy, and the bond that connects you with the supreme measure."²⁸⁴ For Augustine, there is only one end to the quest for the happy life and that is to be joined by faith and love to the Supreme Trinitarian Beauty in this life, and then to enjoy the Beatific vision in "the glory of the magnificent beauty of your kingdom."²⁸⁵ Enjoying the vision of God is the privilege of those who participate in the divine love, beauty and holiness. In Tractate 23 Augustine assures his congregation that "only one God makes the soul happy. It becomes happy by participation of God."²⁸⁶

The link between the heart's participation in the Trinitarian life of God and true happiness is made in Book I of *The Trinity* where Augustine declares that the remedy for the sickness of the soul and "the fullness of our happiness, beyond which there is none else, is this: to enjoy God the three in whose image we were made."²⁸⁷ Enjoyment of God and happiness go together in Augustine's aesthetics and the heart is where joy and happiness are experienced.

He returns to the theme of happiness in Books XIII and XIV of *The Trinity*. Prior to that in Book XIII he addresses the relationship between faith and the happy life in the context of the prologue to John's Gospel. Faith in Jesus Christ as the Word of God and the gift of the Holy Spirit as the mutual love of the Father and the Son are indispensable for attaining the happy life because it is only through participation in the Trinitarian love of God that the believer will know "the good of every good.... the good it can cleave to in

²⁸⁴ *The Happy Life*, 1.35, in *FC*, vol. 1, p. 83. Monica refers to Ambrose, Bishop of Milan as the passage continues. "Those three show to the intelligent man the one God, the one Substance excluding the variety of all vain and superstitious images. Our mother, recalling here those words that still deeply adhered in her memory, awoke to her faith, as it were, and, inflamed with joy, uttered this verse of our priest, Help O Trinity those that pray." See also *Confessions*, X. 20. 29, where Augustine equates seeking God with happiness in order to live rightly: "When I seek for you my God, my quest is for the happy life. I will seek you that 'my soul will live' (Isa. 53:3)." "Quomodo ergo te quaero, domine? Cum enim te, deum meum, quaero, vitam beatam quaero."

²⁸⁵ "Psalm 144. 15," in *WSA*, III/20, p. 392.

²⁸⁶ "Homily XXIII. 5, in "Homilies on the Gospel of John," in *FC*, vol. 7, p. 217.

²⁸⁷ *The Trinity*, 1.18, in *WSA*, 1/5, p. 77.

love, and what is this but God?”²⁸⁸ Knowing God as the highest good ensures the attainment of a happy immortality, that for which all humanity longs. Augustine develops the argument that immortality as the gift of God through the Word made flesh is the realization of the happy life as follows:

First, as Edwards was to re-state, Augustine is clear that the will to happiness is universal and that all people have some notion of what constitutes the happy life.²⁸⁹ There is a problem with the universal will to happiness. Although everyone wants to be happy and thinks they know what will make them happy, the idea of happiness is somewhat ephemeral and happiness is pursued in different ways. Augustine has no doubt that the happy life consists in two things: having everything one desires, and desiring only that which is right, so “no-one is happy but the man who has everything he wants, and wants nothing wrongly.”²⁹⁰

There is a dissonance within those who search for happiness apart from God because they “look for, or rather make up, any kind of thing that may be called, rather than really be, happiness in this life.”²⁹¹ Those who live apart from God want to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. They long for everlasting happiness but are deluded in their search for the happy life because the only true happiness is to be found in immortality. The heart’s longing for happiness can only be satisfied when it is re-directed from self-driven attempts to find the happy life to participation in the divine Trinitarian life. For Augustine, one’s loves should be directed to God who cannot be lost unless forsaken by unbelief. The mediatorial work of Jesus Christ makes it possible for believers “to dwell in God, that is, to be immortal.”²⁹²

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, VIII. 4, p. 244.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, XIII. 8, p. 349. “Therefore, since it is true that all men want to be happy, and yearn for this one thing with the most ardent love they are capable of, and yearn for other things simply for the sake of this one thing....it follows that all men know what the happy life is.” (CCSL 50A, 392).

“Quapropter quoniam uerum est quod omnes homines esse beati uelint idque unum ardentissimo amore appetant ut propter hoc cetera quaecumque appetunt, ...” See also *Confessions*, X. 21. 31, p.198. (CCSL 27, 172).

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, XIII. 11, p. 351.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, XIII. 12, p. 353. “For surely if the Son of God by nature became son of man by mercy for the sake of the sons of men...how much easier it is to believe that the sons of men by nature can become sons of God by grace and dwell in God; for it is in him alone and thanks to him alone that they can be happy, by sharing in his immortality; it was to persuade us of this that the Son of God came to share in our mortality.” See *Confessions*, IV. 9. 14, p. 61. “Happy is the one who loves you, and his friend in you and his enemy because of you...none lose you unless he abandons you...”

Even for the Christian pilgrim, the search for happiness is subject to frustration.²⁹³ In his Cassiciacum dialogues, Augustine had suggested that it was possible to attain full and perfect happiness in this life, but in *The Retractations*, he regrets suggesting that one can attain either perfect happiness or perfect virtue in this life.²⁹⁴ Faith and hope are essential in the midst of a life that is “full of delusion, distress and uncertainty.” with happiness more to be anticipated in hope than experienced in reality.²⁹⁵ Thankfully, he insists that the eschatological happy life is guaranteed for the redeemed “on the strength of divine authority, not of human argument, that the whole man who consists of course of soul and body too, is going to be immortal, and therefore truly happy.”²⁹⁶ When that happens, “the beauty of the whole world ...is played out like a great song of a certain and ineffable artist.”²⁹⁷

One final aspect of Augustine’s aesthetic Trinitarianism that was shared with Edwards is the semi-mystical experience of God.²⁹⁸ Like Edwards, Augustine’s worldview is decidedly eschatological with union of heart with the heart of God and the beatific vision

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, Prologue to Book IV, p. 152. Augustine writes of the “sorrow of the exile stirred by longing for his true country and its founder, his blissful God.”

²⁹⁴ *Retractations*, 1. 4, in *FC*, vol. 60, p. 17.

²⁹⁵ *The Trinity*, XIII. 10, *WSA*, 1/5, p. 350; *The City of God*, XIX. 20, p. 881. Augustine brings in the distinction between ends and means by suggesting that the only possible happiness for the saints in this present life is to “use it with the end in view of that other life on which he has set his heart with all his ardour and for which he hopes with all his confidence...”

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, XIII. 12, p. 353.

²⁹⁷ “Letter 138. 5,” to Marcellinus, (411/12), *WSA*, 11/2, p.228.

²⁹⁸ Bernard McGinn, “How Augustine Shaped Medieval Mysticism,” *The Saint Augustine Lecture 2005*, in *Augustinian Studies* 37:1 (2006), pp. 1-26. Augustine has been dubbed “The Father of Western Mysticism,” a title he may not have approved of in view of the absence of any notion of “mysticism” in late antiquity. The term “mysticism” is of fairly recent origin. See also the forward in Dom Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism: The Teaching of Augustine, Gregory and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life* (London: Constable & Co., 3rd ed. 1967), p. xiii. “Augustine is for me the Prince of Mystics, uniting in himself, in a manner I do not find in any other, the two elements of mystical experience, viz., the most penetrating intellectual vision into things divine, and a love of God that was a consuming passion. He shines as a sun in the firmament, shedding forth at once light and heat in the lustre of his intellect and the warmth of his religious emotion.” For a recent anthology of scholarly discussion on Augustine the mystic see *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue*, eds., Frederick van Fleteren & Joseph C. Schnaubelt (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994). See also Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 134-146. Louth sees a dimension of inward subjectivity in Augustine’s mystical thought that is absent from the Greek Fathers. He isolates three characteristic features of Augustine’s more mystical theology that reflect a Plotinian world view: the idea of the soul’s longing for God, the experience of a transitory ecstasy that comes with glimpses of the beatific vision, and the way of ascent of the soul. The affinities are quite remarkable when comparing Augustine’s recounting of the mystical vision at Ostia with several passages in one of Plotinus’ *Enneads*. Louth is of the opinion that Augustine found a soul mate in Plotinus, that the parallels between the two are more those of mood and sympathy deriving from a shared sense of the beauty of the divine, rather than an interest in speculation about abstract ideas. As shown above, a similar strain of aesthetic other-worldliness re-appears in Edwards whose writings also bear the imprint of the Neoplatonists.

the *summum bonum* which, as has been shown, is equated with a vision of the divine Trinitarian beauty.²⁹⁹ As noted previously, in his concluding remarks on the soul's ascent to union with God Augustine describes the journey in terms of an ascending approach to the divine beauty.³⁰⁰ The return of the heart to God is a theme found in Edwards and reflects their Neoplatonic heritage. For Augustine, authentic religious experience, just as in Edwards, involves the heart's joyful return to participation in God's beauty and uncreated light.

The occasion most commonly held to be a genuinely mystical illumination for Augustine occurs at Ostia and is mentioned in the previous chapter with respect to his spiritual epistemology.³⁰¹ It is an experience of divine love that is not only epistemological in orientation but is an aesthetic experience in its realization. In company with his mother Monica, they are inspired by the beauty of creation to ascend to Beauty himself. It is an experience of the most sublime affections (*ardentiore affectu in id ipsum*) in a movement of the heart towards "eternal being itself." They transcend their minds to encounter "the inexhaustible abundance" (*ubertatis indeficientis*) of divine Wisdom in "a moment of total concentration of the heart (*toto ictu cordis*)."³⁰¹ God is experienced in an overwhelming sense of immediacy and they are lost "in the abyss of interior joy."

Reflecting on the encounter Augustine and Monica agree that if it were possible to prolong it or repeat it by removing all sensory distractions to concentrate fully on God's revelation of himself, then that would be enough to "ravish and absorb and enfold in inward joys the person granted the vision" Instead of the confusion Augustine experienced after his earlier attempts at an ascent of the heart, the moment of ecstasy leaves both Augustine and Monica with an assurance of faith that is unshakeable because it is a "moment of understanding" (*momentum intelligentiae*) of the unsurpassed beauty of the triune God.

²⁹⁹ In "Psalm 109. 12," Augustine describes the glory of the mystical vision of heaven to which believers can look forward. They are being "led to a vision unutterable, of which unbelievers will not be found worthy." *WSA*, III/19, p. 274.

³⁰⁰ "The Greatness of the Soul," XXXV. 79, in *FC*, vol. 2, pp. 146-147. Andrew Louth likens Augustine's mysticism to that of Plotinus. *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 134-146.

³⁰¹ *Confessions*, IX. 10. 24-25, pp. 171-172. (CCSL 27, 147-148). See Chapter Three, p. 47. In "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," 12.26. 53, in *WSA*, I/13, p. 494, 495. Augustine refers to the intuitive heart knowledge of God that he associates with mystical experience when referring to Paul's experiences in 2 Cor. 12: 2-4 of being snatched up to the third heaven. Augustine writes of three types of vision: bodily, spiritual and intellectual. The latter is the most excellent and is the one used in contemplation of God. In this type of vision the soul is swept away from all imaginings to behold pure intellectual truth where "the ultimate bliss is to possess what you love." It is a richly aesthetic experience of the heart.

The language of mystical experience is surely that reproduced by Edwards, even if there are a number of differences in their recollections of transcendence.³⁰² For both men, mystical experience coalesces in the transformative effect of divine beauty on the heart which unites the understanding and will of the believer so that the whole heart participates in the intratrinitarian love, joy, goodness and beauty.

SUMMARY

There is more than an echo of Augustine in Edwards' belief that love of the divine beauty is the key to the transformed will, true virtue, and the happy life. Both Edwards and Augustine use a similar methodology in their aesthetics as in their spiritual epistemology. Objective knowledge of the beauty of an object (its goodness), when combined with a subjective response to that same object (delight or joy), integrates understanding and love to effect a whole-hearted consent to beauty. In the experience of beauty Augustine identifies what Edwards was to state many years later, namely, that the divide between knowledge and love is bridged as the heart contemplates the object of beauty, delights in its beauty and feels joy. Unless the heart is involved in the appreciation of beauty through the arousal of joy and delight, there is no adequate knowledge of the object of beauty. In this respect aesthetics and epistemology coincide. Both Edwards and Augustine observe that this conjunction of knowledge and love does not lead the heart to the triune God. What is necessary for the heart to be drawn to God is the recognition of his beauty. Unless the love and knowledge of God's beauty have been imparted to the heart by grace, the heart cannot participant in the divine beauty.

They also re-visit the Neoplatonic idea that beauty is arranged in an hierarchical scale of being from natural beauty to the divine moral beauty. In addition to the more formal, objective understanding of beauty, Edwards offers the view that the divine beauty is a subjective, inward experience related to the new sense of the heart. Believers know the divine beauty intuitively. So powerful is the attraction of the divine beauty that both men picture it in highly erotic language.

³⁰² First, Edwards' mystical experiences are not viewed as an ascent of the soul to touch eternal wisdom so much as an intuitive experience of the sweetness and beauty of God in the heart. Second, earthly beauties pale by comparison with this immediate experience of God for Augustine, whereas for Edwards, earthly beauties became more vivid and spectacular as manifestations of God's glory. A third difference to be considered is that Edwards' recounting of his mystical experiences at conversion mentions all three members of the Trinity, while Augustine's visions are of God as immutable light. See *Confessions*, X. 6. 8, p. 183. All exterior beauties pale beside Augustine's awareness of parallel beauties in his heart "where there is a bond of union that no satiety can part." When he asks the beauties of nature to tell him about God, the only response he gets is that God made them, and he knows this through their beauty *Confessions*, X. 27. 38, p. 183. "You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. You touched me and I was set on fire to attain the peace which is yours."

They understand God through an experience of being “ravished” by God’s beauty, and see love of the divine beauty as the magnet which draws the heart to worship and adore the triune God.³⁰³ It is this divine heart knowledge of God’s triune beauty that is the pre-requisite for the eschatological happy life since the intellect alone cannot respond to God’s spiritual beauty in a manner that encourages the move towards psychological wholeness. In both cases, the apprehension of divine beauty encompasses cognition and affectivity.

Delight and joy accompany the revelation of divine beauty which for believers is known in the heart through the gift of participation in the life of the Trinity. Any delight, joy and happiness to be found in the knowledge and love of God’s moral beauty is, however, transitory. The infrequent experiences of divine Trinitarian beauty in the heart are overshadowed by the snare of mundane beauty. Longing for a vision of that divine beauty becomes for Edwards and Augustine the dominant preoccupation of the spiritual life.

³⁰³ *Confessions*, IX. 10. 25; 1X. 6. 8-10, pp. 172, 183-184. “Personal Narrative,” in *Letters and Personal Papers*, Works, 16, p. 796.

CONCLUSION

A recent analysis of the first six books of Augustine's *Confessions* remarks that he "combines philosophy and passion in equal amounts."¹ The same integration of passion and philosophy is true for Edwards. Passion arises in the heart, and it is this shared passion for truth and wisdom that unites these two major theologians. They concluded that all truth resides in the triune God of the Bible who reveals himself to the hearts of the elect.

Beginning with the conversion of the heart as recounted by Jonathan Edwards and Augustine of Hippo in their spiritual autobiographies, this study has traced their use of the metaphor of the heart to explain the Trinitarian foundations of their spiritual epistemology and aesthetics. My study has shown that both Edwards and Augustine share a similar religious frame of mind. They evince a mystical intensity and contemplative imagination in their approach to the mysteries of the relationship between the triune God and the heart. Divine illumination and the subjective validity of the inward experience of the heart are legitimate arguments for Christian epistemology.

As I have pointed out they are indebted to the Neoplatonists in their adoption of idealism and the primacy of the interior life over the material. At the deepest level of their spirituality is the same sense of longing and desire to pursue knowledge of the triune God of love who they believed spoke to their hearts. Edwards' Augustinian sensibility is dependent upon his view that the heart is the centre of the spiritual life. As was the case for Augustine, the heart is the place where humanity and divinity meet, the locus for the saving work of the triune God.

In pursuing this study I did not set out to argue that their Trinitarian theologies are identical, or that Edwards' philosophy was inspired by Augustine. Nor was I anxious to demonstrate that Edwards borrowed extensively from Augustine's Trinitarian speculations in arriving at his own insights into the Trinity and the heart. Doctrine is not the most significant area of commonality between these two philosophical theologians, albeit they are brothers-in-arms when it comes to the main tenets of the Christian faith.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the alpha and omega of the religious life, absolutely foundational to their epistemology, ecclesiology and eschatology. I argue that their Trinitarian theology is characterized by a spirituality of "the knowing heart" that is derived from experiences akin to the "beatific vision" at conversion. They share a belief in the authority of Scripture and

¹ Carl G. Vaught, *The Journey Towards God in Augustine's Confessions, Books I-VI* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 3.

adhere to the decisions of the early church councils with regard to the Trinitarian nature of God and Christology. Of far greater moment is the fact that their doctrine is not sundered from the affections. I have argued throughout that the convergence of thought and theology to be found in Edwards and Augustine is most clearly articulated in their belief that true religion is known in the disposition of the heart.

Despite the long interval of time and the vicissitudes of historical particularity which separate Edwards and Augustine, in contrast to several of the current theological trends of his day, I have demonstrated that Edwards stands firmly within the Western, Augustinian trajectory of Trinitarian theology based on the mutual love model. In this model, the love of God is the dominant image of intratrinitarian life and shapes their discussions about the relationship between God and the creation. It is my contention that Edwards and Augustine arrive at the same destination theologically speaking because they share an all encompassing vision of theological reality that is firmly Trinitarian and experientially heartfelt.

Both Edwards and Augustine claimed that knowing God was based on the heart's apprehending the beauty of divine things. They argued that knowing God and loving God are inseparable, for in regeneration, divine love is infused into the heart thus uniting the believer's heart with the heart of God. The heart proved to be a most fruitful metaphor in which they found common cause for their exploration of the doctrine of the Trinity and religious psychology. Without God, they believed that the heart is shriveled and empty, unsatisfied and longing for fullness, no matter how learned in divinity.

Perry Miller saw a coherence of sensibility such that "the turn of mind and sense of values, even sometimes the very accent of Augustine" was visible in the Puritans and Edwards.² Augustine hungered after God himself, not his works in creation, and so too did Edwards. The movement of the restless heart initiated the search for wholeness, and it was to the heart that they believed the triune God revealed himself. Their Trinitarian excursions were occasioned by the promptings of the heart.

My study has revealed a number of convergences in their aesthetic Trinitarianism that justifies the recognition of Edwards as a latter day Augustine. However, the similarities outlined in my dissertation are balanced by some of the differences in their Trinitarian theology as set out in the summary which follows.

² Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, p. 5.

1. The Concept of the Heart

First, is a similar understanding of the metaphor of the heart as the centre of the spiritual life or the integrating principle of the personality. While the concept of the heart dominates their religious psychology, as I have shown, it is more than the affectional-aesthetic dimension of the interior life in Edwards' and Augustine's theology. They use the dialectic of the understanding and the affections to interpret the relationship between the heart and the Trinitarian being of God. In both theologies the heart is the basic inclination of the will and the affections, the fundamental amative orientation of the whole person.

Reason is not abjured in their concept of heart religion because as I have demonstrated, the spiritual life of the redeemed heart incorporates perception and understanding as well as volition. Neither Edwards nor Augustine separated the faculties of understanding and will in any way other than a notional sense. If the will were left to its own devices there could be no knowledge of God, and without the inclination of the will and the affections to follow the dictates of the understanding, knowledge would be useless. Their primary image of the heart envisaged it as unifying the cognitive and volitional dimensions of faith. Regeneration takes place in the heart. Love, joy and delight in the divine Trinitarian beauty in effecting the salvation of the elect are felt in the heart in the assent to divine revelation.

2. Shared Experiences of the Conversion of the Heart

My comparison of their conversion experiences provides confirmation for my contention that the Trinity is the basis for conversion, and that it is first and foremost a matter for the heart. Despite widely differing personal contexts and length of time spent searching for God, their religious experiences at this vital spiritual turning point reveal that both men underwent similar types of radical conversions. Head and heart are involved in the dramatic events they claim changed the disposition of their hearts from love of self and self reliance in finding and knowing God to a complete dependence on the love of God. Their conversion experiences shaped the rest of their lives and became a kind of paradigm for all other conversion experiences.

Conversion is not merely intellectual, nor merely affective. It involves the whole person at the most intimate level, which for both men is the heart. Common to both accounts is the immediacy of the final conversion following the reading of Scripture. God enters the heart and faith is given as an unmediated gift through the indwelling of the Holy

Spirit. Resolutions and subsequent decisions to lead lives wholly devoted to God are evident as a consequence of conversion.

My study shows that Edwards and Augustine experienced conversion primarily as an aesthetic experience of the heart. Recognition of the divine beauty is accompanied by overwhelming experiences of joy, delight and love in the definitive move from sinner to saint. Intellection and volition coincide in love and submission to the triune God who has revealed himself to their hearts. There is a clear moment of demarcation, a before and after self-consciousness of the formerly divided heart now unified and gathered into Trinitarian grace, in their conversion experiences. In their subsequent analysis of conversion, the final surrender of the self to God is a responsive act of faith to the divine initiative that takes place in the heart. In both cases the transformed heart is aware of the sweetness of the divine presence. As true believers, metaphorically speaking, they taste the sweetness of God in the palate of the heart and this brings rapturous feelings of joy and delight.

The importance of the conversion of the heart in their thinking is confirmed by their commitment to bring every aspect of life under the aegis of the Trinity. "With my heart already fully determined upon your service,"³ is how Augustine describes his immediate post-conversion state. The journey to heaven is that which "our hearts should be chiefly engaged in" said Edwards in a very Augustinian sermon in 1730. Christians should pursue holiness in order to "come nearer and nearer to the beatific vision" and should grow in divine love "till our hearts ascend wholly in this flame."⁴

3. Trinitarian Doctrine

On the Trinity they exhibit a similarity not only of doctrine but of expression. Both attribute conversion to the work of the triune God and place the doctrine of the Trinity at the centre of their theological project. Each of the Trinitarian persons has a unique and vital role to play in conversion and sanctification.

It is their joint reliance on the metaphor of the heart understood as the psychological centre of the interior life that provides them with an entry point for their attempts to decipher the Trinitarian mysteries of faith. As part of the long conversation about the Trinity that has taken place throughout Christian history, my study shows that Edwards and Augustine used similar mental imagery to describe the nature of the Trinity in its immanent

³ *Confessions*, IX, 2. 4, p. 157.

⁴ "The True Christian's Life a Journey Towards Heaven," in *Sermons and Discourses, Works*, 17, p. 435.

and economic manifestations. My analysis of their Trinitarian speculations reveals a number of important coincidences of language and imagery. These include the use of mental triads to unravel the Trinitarian mysteries, and the belief that humanity created in the image of God wears that image on the heart.

In addition, both favour Christ as the only sufficient mediator between God and humanity, and the communicative role of the Holy Spirit as the mutual love of Father and Son in the economic Trinity in conversion and the spiritual life. Further similarities obtain in their description of the intratrinitarian relations. The Father is unbegotten and the principle source of the procession of the Son and Holy Spirit. The generation of the Son is portrayed as the generation of intellect, and the procession of the Holy Spirit is seen in terms of the will or love in the mutual love of Father and Son. Edwards, like Augustine portrays the divine persons as personal distinctions of one subject rather than as individual centres of knowledge and will. The immanent Trinity existing as a perichoretic union based on love reveals the economic Trinity.

Their Trinitarianism is thoroughly Christocentric and both profess a profound love for the humility and love of the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ the Son of God. He is the focus for their adherence to the doctrine of the atonement, for their views on deification, and as the perfect exemplar for the Christian life. The infusion of the Holy Spirit into the believer's heart comes as the gift of Christ's atoning sacrifice. The heart is united to the triune God and the saints partake of the divine love, holiness and beauty of God.

While I have pointed out the shared Neoplatonic underpinning to their theology, Edwards' appropriation of Neoplatonic themes does not measure up to the strong vein of Neoplatonic thought that undergirds much of Augustine's Christian philosophy. One difference relates to their understanding of the metaphysics of substance. In Edwards' case he disavows the notion of God as spiritual substance preferring to speak of God's fundamental inclination or disposition. Augustine, on the other hand, bases his Trinitarianism on the categories of substance and relation. The plurality in the Godhead is not depicted in the striking imagery of the social analogies for Augustine as it is for Edwards, but Augustine's God is still a relational being.

4. The Image of God in the Heart

Both Edwards and Augustine share the view that humanity is created in the image and likeness of God insofar as people possess reason and will. Humanity is the pinnacle of creation and most approximates the likeness of God the Trinity. Sanctification involves the redeemed heart moving closer to God by likeness. Holiness is at the centre of the reformed heart, but Edwards re-iterates Augustine's belief that humanity is incapable of self-reformation. The grace of God is needed to renew the heart. Both men attribute the restoration of the image to the work of the Trinity. The immanent Trinity purposes to create and redeem humanity, and the economic Trinity effects redemption as the individual members fulfill their appointed tasks. The priority in the renewal of the image goes to Christ whose humble sacrificial love secures redemption. Christ becomes the pattern for the saints who are enabled to emulate his humility and love by their participation in the divine Trinitarian life through the in-dwelling of the person of the Holy Spirit in the heart.

One significant divergence in their understanding of humanity made in the image of God is Edwards' view that there is a dual image, one natural and the other spiritual. The spiritual image was completely lost in the Fall and the natural image vitiated. Augustine, however, prefers to speak of one image that is defaced, but not entirely lost. The powers of intellection and volition are impaired but not entirely negated. Conversion begins the restoration of both the natural and spiritual image in Edwards, while for Augustine, the fragmented heart is slowly healed as the image is renewed.

5. The Psychological Analogy

Edwards and Augustine are philosophical idealists and metaphysical empiricists, seeking knowledge of the triune God in the Neoplatonic world of ideas. Augustine understood the Trinity chiefly through an analogy with the human mind. The three divine persons were meant to correspond to the mind itself, then to its two principal faculties of understanding and will. A doctrine following these lines was adopted by Edwards. Both use a form of the psychological analogy of the mind, its understanding or idea, and the will or affection or love to describe the intratrinitarian relations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is commonly referred to as "the mutual love model" of the Trinity. Edwards follows Augustine closely in depicting the relations in the immanent Trinity as God, God's reflexive idea of himself and God's love for himself. In the psychological model, God's reflexive idea of himself is the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, or God's

reason or understanding, and God's will or love is the third person of the Trinity the Holy Spirit, who is the mutual love of Father and Son. Edwards' adoption of Augustine's description of the Holy Spirit as the mutual love of Father and Son has significant ramifications for their reliance on the heart metaphor. Both depict God in his Trinitarian essence as dynamically affective, ceaselessly active and loving within the immanent Trinity and in his relationship to the creation through the economic Trinity imparting grace to the human heart. The paramount image in their Trinitarian model is God who is love relating to humanity through the affections of the heart.

6. The Social Analogy

A second model of intratrinitarian life to be ascribed to Edwards and Augustine has been termed the social analogy. In this reading of the Trinity the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are likened to three human persons. The individual activity of the divine persons is given as much if not more attention than God as a unitary being. Because of his insistence on the mutual love model, Augustine is recognized as an early exponent of thinking that acknowledges the social aspect of intratrinitarian life, but until recently, he has been viewed primarily as the great supporter of divine unity and simplicity. As I have shown there is a discernible strand of social Trinitarianism in both theologies, based on their attachment to the mutual love model. Edwards' use of the mutual love model for the Trinity is decidedly Augustinian and both acknowledge the social implications of the ceaseless activity of the perichoretic love *ad intra* and *ad extra*.

It is clear, however, from my investigation that the social images of the Trinity found in Augustine's mutual love model are expanded and occur more frequently in Edwards. While neither man wholeheartedly endorses the Cappadocian use of the social analogy, Edwards has been appropriated by the social Trinitarians in recent studies, and although as I have shown, he pushes the social analogy to its limits with his depictions of the society or family of the three divine persons, I reject the notion that he errs on the side of tritheism. As demonstrated, there are occasions where Edwards stresses the individuality of the persons of the Trinity to the point that they appear to assume the status of autonomous beings, particularly in his covenant theology. However, he manages to retrieve the divine unity with his recourse to perichoretic language and his assertion that the divine unity is located in the divine nature as a shared understanding and will.

Accusations that Augustine ignored the relational nature of the immanent Trinity in the interests of divine unity and simplicity must be tempered with the acknowledgement that Augustine begins *De trinitate* with the divine processions and missions before moving to his discussion of the mental triads. In both usages of a social analogy, the divine persons are still viewed as subsistent relations.

7. **Spiritual Epistemology**

In both epistemologies, the Bible, reason and revelation play a part in securing knowledge of God. Reason is vitally important to give theoretical knowledge of God, but it is in the heart that the insights of reason are known. Their religious epistemology is cognitive and volitional. God is known in the heart of a converted sinner when both intellect and will combine to respond to God's activity in illuminating the heart. Neither the intellect nor the will alone suffice to provide saving knowledge of God which is only granted at God's discretion. The language of their epistemology is that of illumination or spiritual sight, but always involving the heart. Images of God as a divine light or the sun who dispels the darkness of unbelief recur throughout their writing.

Edwards differs from Augustine in devoting more attention to his analysis of the mechanism of spiritual knowledge. Both agree that a new supernatural, spiritual sense of the heart which is the immediate work of the Holy Spirit is required for true knowledge of God. However, grace in Edwards' spiritual epistemology is an intuitive idea that is analogous to the idea of the taste of honey in the mind. Saving grace changes the heart or will so that in a moment, the heart receives faith and is inclined to the love of God.

Augustine, too, sees the knowledge of God that comes with conversion as an immediate intuition dependent on a change to the inclination of the will or heart. However, he differs from Edwards, in grounding his spiritual epistemology on the Platonic notion of truth as a divine idea in the mind which is both the ontological foundation of all true things and the means whereby humans are able to classify and order sense data. Things are true by their participation in the absolute truth that is God, and it is God who illuminates the mind to know these truths. Augustine concludes that Christ is the true teacher and that all knowledge is a divine gift that comes through grace. With Christ as the teacher, knowing God is personalized and takes place in the realm of the heart.

In both spiritualities, God is known primarily through the affections of love, joy, delight and desire which fill the heart upon conversion and in contemplation of the beauty

of the divine plan of redemption. There are similarities in their use of aesthetic language to describe the knowledge of God in the heart. Sensory terms such as “taste” “smell” “feel” and “touch” constitute the lexicon of divine knowing. “Sweetness” is the word most commonly used to convey the sense of beauty that informs their spiritual epistemology. Augustine, too, compares knowing the sweetness of God in the heart with knowing the sweetness of honey, but he does not liken the infusion of grace that gives knowledge of God to the “new simple idea” that Edwards advocates in his spiritual epistemology.

Where Edwards’ analysis of the way in which the heart is changed with conversion most closely mirrors Augustine’s is in his theory of the will. My examination of the importance they attach to the conversion of the will has shown that there is a strong affinity in their view of the close identification of the heart with the will and the affections. Humanity is driven by love and desire, and the inclination of the heart is dictated by the object of love or desire. Edwards is convinced, like Augustine, that at the most fundamental level of the inner life, the heart is disposed either towards or away from God. As the inclination of the heart is, so is the person. Furthermore, as I have shown, in the light of their strong belief in the sovereignty of God, both attacked the notion of freedom of the will. Humankind is not free to choose to accept or reject the love of God. The true believer wills as God wills, but the initiative in the orientation of the will lies solely with God.

8. Theological Aesthetics

When Edwards and Augustine tried to answer the question, “Why do we love what we love?,” the answer in both cases was beauty. Augustine’s belief that God is beauty is one taken up by Edwards, and both saw the close link between the Trinity and ethics resting ultimately in aesthetics. Their Trinitarian theology of the heart highlighted the aesthetic dimension of Trinitarian reality. The primary aesthetic categories are those of the divine beauty, goodness, and holiness, and additionally for Edwards, excellency. Both agree that God as Trinity is beautiful and that conversion renders the human heart beautiful through the gift of the divine love, beauty and holiness.

Since love is the rationale for divine and human life, both concur that what determines the object of human love is beauty. God has so arranged the creation that it is filled with beauty, both natural and spiritual. Until conversion reveals the divine beauty of holiness displayed in the Trinity, the idolatrous love of created beauty is all consuming. With the eye of faith, believers are attracted to the eternal beauty of the Trinity, and the

illicit love of the temporal and transient is replaced by divine love which loves the temporal in the light of the eternal love of the Trinity. The love of God infused into the heart gives believers the desire to love God in return and empowers them to live according to God's revealed will.

Theological aesthetics is associated with true virtue for Edwards and Augustine. In their understanding of ethics, Edwards follows Augustine in locating the source of true virtue in the redeemed heart. They are broadly in agreement that the disposition of the heart determines right attitudes and actions, all of which are subsumed within the commands to love God and neighbour. Humanity can only be truly virtuous when the will is conformed to the will of God himself and this conformity is achieved through the union of the human and divine will by an infusion of the Holy Spirit into the heart. The heart infused with the love of the divine beauty of holiness is truly virtuous.

One major difference in their ethical theory pertains to Edwards' concentration on the idea of virtue in terms of consent. Where Edwards saw true virtue in the consent of being to Being in general, Augustine was to locate virtue in specific manifestations of temperance, justice, and prudence, all of which could be taught. However, he shares with Edwards the belief that true virtue is impossible without true religion. People have to have their hearts changed by an infusion of God's grace before any truly virtuous actions are possible. Both argue that no truly virtuous actions are possible apart from grace in the heart.

Another aspect of aesthetics where similarities between Edwards and Augustine are to be found is their interest in eudaemonism. Both see the pursuit of happiness as a perennial preoccupation for all people. The only true happiness is that which cannot be lost and both conclude that happiness sought without reference to God is doomed. Happiness is assured for believers who partake of the eternal beauty of God's Trinitarian holiness, but it is rarely achieved in this life. The sense of earthly life as a pilgrimage through the wilderness in search of the happiness of heaven is common to both. Eventually, the saints will enjoy perfect happiness in heaven. The pure in heart, a favourite Biblical image in both theologies, will see God face to face in the beatific vision in heaven.

9. The Mystical Sensibilities of Edwards and Augustine

A final point of convergence that supports my thesis that Edwards is Augustine's successor in his Trinitarian view of heart-religion is found in a shared mystical sensibility. The Neoplatonic strain of inward subjectivity in Edwards' Trinitarianism is remarkably

similar to that of Augustine. Three characteristic features of Augustine's inward subjectivity in his Trinitarian theology reflect a Neoplatonic, mystical world view that I argue is characteristic of Edwards. The love of the divine beauty, the longing for union with God in Christ, and occasions of immediate apprehension of the beatific vision of divine love reflect a Plotinian sensibility. Moments of ecstasy and glimpses of the beatific vision highlight my contention that the parallels between Edwards and Augustine are more those of mood and sympathy deriving from a shared sense of the beauty of the divine than an interest in speculation about doctrine. Although neither shied away from speculation, as my comparison of their Trinitarian explorations has demonstrated, the mystical strain in their aesthetic Trinitarianism substantiates my main thesis that the heart is at the centre of their Trinitarian spirituality. In their mystical sensibilities, Edwards and Augustine are soul mates.

All of the above remarkable parallels in their Trinitarian theology are associated with the prominence of the metaphor of the heart. These parallels and convergences of spiritual sensibility substantiate my thesis that Edwards is indeed the "American Augustine." Above all else, both believed that true religion is a matter for the heart.

IMPLICATIONS

The doctrine of the Trinity exerts a perennial fascination in Christian theology, largely one would hazard because it is the basis for a Christian understanding of God. While axiomatic to orthodox Christianity, the threeness/oneness paradigm for the Trinity is immensely problematical. Both Edwards and Augustine acknowledge this in their Trinitarian writings, even when declaring their total adherence to the Trinitarian decrees of the main councils of the early church. That two such impressive theologian- philosophers, separated as they were by so many centuries and ideas of faith and practice, are cited so frequently today indicates the continuing relevance of their Trinitarian spirituality. Recent criticisms of Augustine's Trinitarianism are *ipse facto* criticisms of Edwards and yet both still attract a large, appreciative audience. In their different contexts they were able to achieve an integrated approach to the reason versus experience dichotomy in religious epistemology.

Augustine's fascination with the aesthetic-affectional nature of the interaction of the human and divine reappears in Edwards. His depiction of the intensely affectional intratrinitarian relationships that spill over into the hearts of believers is reflected in his interest in the social analogy. The end result is the portrayal of the relationship between God the Trinity and humanity

in heart language which resonates with contemporary understandings of the nature of personhood, if not always with the nature of God.

It is the personal, affectional aspect of their Trinitarian theology that warrants designating Edwards and Augustine as “modern” in spite of other features of their theology that twenty-first century thinkers find anachronistic or abhorrent. Their affectional, aesthetic Trinitarianism has immense appeal in an era where the personal has become the measure of relevance. Contemporary concerns with relationality within the Trinity and the implications of the social analogy for Christian spirituality could be fruitful as a basis for further exploration into other Trinitarian analogies that might disclose insights into the Trinity that have contemporary appeal.

As an antidote to an excessive focus on the individual, both Edwards and Augustine articulate a Trinitarian *Weltanschauung* that permeates the whole of life, integrating the personal and social with the doctrinal under the auspices of the triune God. Their theological thinking about the Trinity is not divorced from church life or academic theology. In a time of religious and philosophical pluralism, their synthesis of intellect and will in conversion and the spiritual life continues to provide many with a satisfying sense of religious integrity that needs further development in contemporary Trinitarian theology. The competing claims of the major monotheistic religions make a modern attempt to explicate the Trinity imperative, and Augustine and Edwards would make excellent starting points.

One other feature of their Trinitarianism that has immediate relevance is their attention to aesthetics. The recovery of a theological aesthetic is a pressing need in the twenty-first century. Many scholars talk about beauty, happiness and ethics but few synthesise aesthetics with soteriology, Christology and ecclesiology as did Edwards and Augustine. Dogmatic debate between competing theological traditions does little to attract onlookers to explore the possibility of knowledge of God. Where Edwards and Augustine developed a contemplative, aesthetic approach to knowledge of the triune God who is beauty, wisdom, goodness, truth and love, without divorcing reason from the discussion, few theologians today manage to depict the ambiguous beauty of the crucified God who saves as they did. A latter day theologian who can articulate the vision they embraced is needed to enhance current Trinitarian speculations in as powerfully compelling a manner as did Edwards and Augustine in their respective times.