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# JONATHAN EDWARDS AND THE SENSE OF THE HEART

William Wainwright

This paper examines Edwards' attempt to make philosophical and theological sense of the regenerate person's new sense of the spiritual beauty of divine things. It is divided into six sections. The first two discuss the nature of the idea of spiritual beauty and Edwards' reasons for thinking that our apprehension of it is a kind of sensation or perception. The third explores the implications of Edwards' theory for the epistemic status of religious belief while the fourth and fifth examine his defense of the objectivity of the new "spiritual sense." The last section discusses the bearing of Edwards' remarks on current discussions.

Jonathan Edwards is well known for his insistence upon a "practical" or "experimental" religion that engages the human heart. At the core of the religion of the heart is a sense of God's excellence and loveliness, or of the beauty and splendor of divine things.

The savingly converted enjoy "gracious discoveries" of "God, in some of his sweet and glorious attributes manifested in the gospel, and shining forth in the face of Christ"—for example, "the all-sufficiency of the mercy and grace of God" or "the infinite power of God, and his ability to save them . . ." "In some, the truth and certainty of the Gospel in general is the first joyful discovery they have . . ." "More frequently Christ is distinctly made the object of the mind, in his all-sufficiency and willingness to save sinners . . ." (FN 171).<sup>1</sup> Recalling his own conversion Edwards says

The first instance that I remember of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things that I have lived much in since, was on reading those words, I Tim. i. 17. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever, Amen.* As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before. Never any words of scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in him for ever! (PN 59)



Again, Edwards tells us, "I remember the thoughts I used then to have of holiness . . . It appeared to me, that there was nothing in it but what was ravishingly lovely; the highest beauty and amiableness . . . a *divine* beauty; far purer than anything here upon earth . . ." (PN 63). "God," he says, "has appeared to me a glorious and lovely Being, chiefly on account of his holiness . . . . The doctrines of God's absolute sovereignty, and free grace, in showing mercy to whom he would show mercy; and man's absolute dependence on the operations of God's Holy Spirit, have very often appeared to me as sweet and glorious doctrines. These doctrines have been much my delight" (PN 67).

Some express their new experiences by the terms "sight or discovery," others by "a lively or feeling sense of heart" (FN 171-2). Both expressions refer to a new understanding of spiritual notions. Those who have these experiences find that phrases like "a spiritual sight of Christ," "faith in Christ," "poverty of spirit," etc., had not previously conveyed "those special and distinct ideas to their minds which they were intended to signify; in some respects no more than the names of colors are to convey the ideas to one that is blind from birth" (FN 174). But now "things of religion" seem "new to them . . . preaching is a new thing . . . the bible is a new book . . ." (FN 181). Indeed, "the light and comfort which some of them enjoy . . . causes all things about 'em to appear as it were beautiful, sweet and pleasant to them: all things abroad, the sun, moon and stars, the clouds and sky, the heavens and earth, appear as it were with a cast of divine glory and sweetness upon them" (FN 183).

This paper examines Edwards' attempt to make philosophical and theological sense of these experiences. It is divided into six sections. The first two discuss the nature of the idea of spiritual beauty and Edwards' reasons for thinking that our apprehension of beauty is a kind of sensation or perception. The third explores the implications of Edwards' theory for the epistemic status of religious belief while the fourth and fifth examine his defense of the objectivity of the new "spiritual sense." The last section discusses the bearing of Edwards' remarks on current discussions.

## I.

The objects of a sense or feeling of the heart are (1) "actual [i.e., lively, clear and distinct] ideas" (2) of things pertaining to the will or affections, (3) that involve a "feeling of sweetness or pleasure, or of bitterness or pains . . . ." They include (the ideas of?) (1) "beauty and deformity," "good or evil," as well as "excellency," "value," "importance" and their opposites, (2) delight and pleasure, and pain and misery, (3) affective and conative attitudes, dispositions, and states, e.g., "desires and longings, esteem . . . hope, fear, contempt, choosing, refusing . . . loving, hating, anger," (4) "dignity," "terrible greatness, or awful

majesty,” “meanness or contemptibleness,” etc., and (5) the non-evaluative characteristics upon which beauty and deformity, pleasure and pain, and attributes like dignity or majesty depend.<sup>3</sup> The object of a sense or feeling of the heart is, in essence, natural or spiritual good and evil, and what pertains to it. A sense of the heart involves pleasure or displeasure, a sense of things with respect to the good or evil in them. Natural good or evil is “good or evil which is agreeable or disagreeable to human nature as such . . .” Spiritual good or evil is what is agreeable or disagreeable to people with “spiritual frames,” i.e., to those who, because the Spirit dwells within them, love being in general (i.e., God and the beings that derive from Him and reflect Him) (Misc. 782, T 113-26).

The “immediate object of this spiritual sense” is “the beauty of holiness (RA 260), “the spiritual excellency, beauty, or sweetness of divine things” (Misc. 782), “true moral or spiritual beauty” (TV 11), “the highest and primary beauty” (TV 27)—a “new simple idea” that can’t be produced by “exalting, varying or compounding of that kind of perceptions or sensations which the mind had before” (RA 205).

What kind of idea is this? Or, put this another way, what does Edwards mean by “(true) beauty?” His remarks are open to at least three interpretations—that (1) “beauty” refers to the delight or pleasure which holy things evoke in people with spiritual “frames” or “tempers,” that (2) beauty is a dispositional property, *viz.*, the tendency of holy things to produce this pleasure or delight in the converted, and that (3) “beauty” designates a love to being in general, i.e., the consent of being to being in which holiness consists.

There is some evidence that Edwards held the first or second view. He asserts, for example, that “That form or quality is called beautiful, which appears in itself agreeable or comely, or the view of which is immediately pleasant to the mind . . . this agreeableness or gratefulness of the idea is *beauty* . . . we come by the idea of beauty . . . by immediate sensation of the gratefulness of the idea [thing] called beautiful . . .” (TV 98). In “The Mind” 1 (332) Edwards assimilates beauty and excellence, and then says, “We would know, why proportion is more excellent than disproportion, that is, why proportion is pleasant to the mind and disproportion unpleasant.” Passages like these imply that beauty is some kind of pleasure or agreeableness,<sup>4</sup> or a tendency to produce it in appropriate circumstances.

We probably shouldn’t attribute the second (dispositional) view to Edwards. If “(true) beauty” referred to the tendency to produce a unique sort of delight in those with spiritual frames, the idea of beauty would be a complex idea or “mixed mode.” This conflicts with the claim that spiritual beauty is a new simple idea (RA 205).<sup>5</sup>

There are also problems in attributing the first view to Edwards. The philosophers who most influenced Edwards (Locke and the Cartesians) explicitly denied

that ideas of pleasure and pain tell us anything about the nature of the objects that produce them.<sup>6</sup> The idea of true beauty does. Edwards thinks that the new “inward sense” agrees “with the necessary nature of things” and is appropriately “called by the name of light, knowledge, understanding, etc.” He repudiates the suggestion that “the idea we obtain by this spiritual sense could in no respect be said to be a knowledge or perception of anything besides what was in our own minds,” or that it is “no representation of anything without.” On the contrary, the idea of spiritual beauty is “the representation of the moral perfection and excellency, of which we could have no true idea without it” (TV 99, 102-3).<sup>7</sup>

A more compelling reason for doubting that Edwards identified beauty with pleasure (or a tendency to produce it) is that he so often speaks as if it were an objective property of the things that have it. One of Edwards’ central theses is that God’s nature and activity are overwhelmingly beautiful, and that the spiritual and natural beauty of creatures is a reflection of, or participation in, God’s own beauty. The tenor of the passages that express these claims seems inconsistent with the suggestion that beauty is simply a sensation which holy things produce in the suitably disposed (or a power to produce it). Edwards was strongly influenced by Locke and other empiricists. But he also belongs to a Puritan tradition that contains an important Platonic strand.<sup>8</sup> It may therefore be significant that Platonism thinks of beauty as an objective property.

Finally, a number of texts appear to identify beauty with the consent of being to being. This, too, seems inconsistent with the notion that beauty is some sort of pleasure or delight.

In “The Mind” 1, for example, Edwards assimilates beauty and excellency and then says “Excellency . . . seems to *consist in equality*” (322, my italics). Or again, “excellency *consists in the similarities of one being to another—not merely equality and proportion, but any kind of similarness . . . This is an universal definition of excellency: The consent of being to being, or being’s consent to entity*” (336, my italics). Edwards continues to speak this way in later works. In *Religious Affections*, he says “The true beauty and loveliness of all intelligent beings does primarily and most essentially *consist in their moral excellency or holiness,*” i.e., in their benevolence or love of being in general. “Holiness *is . . . the beauty of the divine nature*” (RA 257, my italics. Cf. 285f.). In *The Nature of True Virtue*, he asserts “This secondary ground of virtuous love [*viz., “pure benevolence to being in general”*] is the thing wherein true moral or spiritual beauty primarily *consists*. Yea, spiritual beauty *consists wholly in this and in*” what proceeds from it (TV 11, my italics). “That consent, agreement, or union of being to being . . . may be *called the highest and primary beauty . . . [although] there is another, inferior, secondary beauty, which is some image of this . . . which consists in a mutual consent and agreement of different things, in form, manner, quantity, and visible end or design; called by*

the various names of regularity, order, uniformity, symmetry, proportion, harmony, etc.” (TV 27, my italics). Passages of this kind imply that beauty just *is* (i.e., is identical with) some kind of agreement. Primary or spiritual beauty is the same thing as benevolence or the consent of being to being, and secondary beauty is the same thing as symmetry, harmony or proportion, i.e., “uniformity in the midst of variety” (TV 28).

But there are also serious objections to *this* interpretation. Edwards often speaks as if beauty were a property of holiness and hence not the *same thing* as holiness. For example, in *Religious Affections* he speaks of “the loveliness of the moral excellency of divine things . . . the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellency” (253 f.), “the beauty of their moral excellency,” “the beauty of his holiness,” “the beauty of his moral attributes” (256), “the loveliness of divine things . . . viz., . . . the beauty of their moral perfection” (271), “the beauty of the moral perfection of Christ” (273), “the beauty of holiness, or true moral good” (274), and so on. Edwards also asserts that the unconverted can see everything that pertains to God’s and the saints’ moral attributes *except* their “beauty and amiableness” (RA 264). Since one can perceive benevolence or harmony without perceiving (relishing) its beauty, there must be some distinction between them. Finally, beauty is a *simple* idea. The consent of (conscious) being to being, however, is a complex idea composed of the ideas of (conscious) being, and consent.<sup>9</sup>

In short, there is textual evidence for the claim that Edwards identified true beauty with a spiritual sensation or a tendency to produce it, and also for the claim that he identified it with consent. Both views seem incompatible with some of Edwards’ other positions. The first seems inconsistent with his belief that the apprehension of beauty is a “perception” of something existing “without” the mind while the second is inconsistent with his conviction that beauty is a simple idea. Can a coherent position be constructed from Edwards’ remarks? Perhaps it can’t. He may, however, have been driving at this:

Beauty is identical with benevolence or agreement in somewhat the same way in which lightning is identical with an electrical discharge or in which materialists think that consciousness is identical with certain arrangements of matter. (This accommodates the fact that one can perceive benevolence or agreement without perceiving its beauty even though its beauty “consists in” benevolence or agreement.) But benevolence is also the “objective” or “physical” basis of a dispositional property, *viz.*, the tendency to produce a new simple idea in those with converted hearts. The new idea is a delight or pleasure in being’s consent to being which somehow “represents” or is a “perception of” benevolence.

On this interpretation, the idea of true beauty resembles Locke’s ideas of primary and secondary qualities. Spiritual delight is, in Locke’s words, a simple “sensation or perception in our understanding” (*Human Understanding* II, viii,

8). The dispositional property is what Locke calls a “quality,” i.e., a “power to produce those ideas in us” (*ibid.*). Benevolence is the objective configuration underlying this power. Like simple ideas of primary and secondary qualities, the new spiritual sensation “represents” or is a “perception” of its object. Just as “extension” can refer to the idea, the power, or the physical configuration which is the base of the power, so “beauty” can refer to the sensation, to the relevant dispositional property, or to benevolence. (My interpretation thus accounts for the ambiguity of Edwards’ remarks.)<sup>10</sup>

Edwards’ account of spiritual perception may be subject to some of the same difficulties as Locke’s account of sense perception.<sup>11</sup> Is it, in any way, *less* satisfactory than Locke’s? It might be in one respect. If my interpretation is correct, the idea of true beauty is a kind of delight or relish and *also* an apparent cognition. Can something be both? It isn’t sufficient to argue that perceptions of objectively real value properties can be inherently affective (and thus pleasurable or painful), for Edwards doesn’t think of pleasure and pain in this way. Pleasures and pains aren’t qualities or affective dimensions of more complex experiences. They are discrete internal sensations. If spiritual pleasure *is* a kind of internal delight or thrill, however, it isn’t easy to see how it can also be a true representation of something existing without. Ordinary pleasures and pains differ from visual or auditory impressions in lacking what Berkeley called “outness”; they don’t seem to point beyond themselves. Either spiritual pleasure is unlike ordinary pleasure in this respect, or it isn’t an apparent cognition.

In the next section we will see why Edwards calls the feeling of spiritual pleasure a “perception.” Whether this resolves the difficulty, however, is doubtful.

## II.

While the spiritual sense is closely connected with a person’s will or inclination,<sup>12</sup> it is a cognitive faculty—“a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul, for a new kind of exercises of the . . . faculty of *understanding*” (RA 206, my italics).<sup>13</sup> A sense of the heart involves a person’s will or inclination because “when the mind is sensible” of spiritual beauty “that implies a sensibleness of sweetness and delight in the presence of the idea of it,” “the mind . . . relishes and feels.” But “there is [also] the nature of instruction in it”; it is a “kind of understanding” (RA 272).

Why does Edwards speak of this new cognition as a kind of perception or sensation? The influence of Locke (and possibly Hutcheson) provides part of the answer.<sup>14</sup>

The object of the spiritual sense is a new simple idea, and Edwards shared Locke’s conviction that simple ideas come “from experience” (HU II, i, 2). As Hutcheson said “Reasoning or intellect seems to raise no new species of ideas

but [only] to discover or discern the relation of" ideas "received by some immediate powers of perception internal or external which we may call sense . . ." (*Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, 135).

Spiritual understanding also involves a kind of relish or delight, and Edwards follows Locke and Hutcheson in thinking that being pleased or pained, like a feeling of tactual pressure or being appeared to redly, is a kind of sensation or perception. (All three believe that pleasure and pain are simple ideas.)

Then again, the new simple idea occurs involuntarily, and Edwards associates sensation with passivity (Cf. "Subjects to be Handled in the Treatise on the Mind" 29). This too was a commonplace. For example, Hutcheson said that a sense is "a determination of the mind to receive any idea from the presence of an object which occurs to us, independent on our will" (*Inquiry*, Second Treatise, I, D).

Finally, the mind's apprehension of true or spiritual beauty is immediate (non-inferential). "The manner of being affected with the" beauty of a thing "depends not on any reasonings . . . but on the frame of our minds whereby they are so made that" as soon as we perceive or cognize it, it "appears beautiful" (TV 99).<sup>15</sup> A comparison with Hutcheson is again instructive, for Hutcheson argued that the power of receiving the idea of beauty should be called a "sense" because "we are struck at the first with the beauty" (*Inquiry*, Second Treatise, I, XII).

It is thus clear *why* Edwards speaks of the new cognition as a perception or sensation. Whether he should have done so is another matter.

There is little force in the third and fourth considerations. Our sensations (and the beliefs directly based on them) appear involuntary and immediate, but so does our recognition of the fact that  $2+2=4$ . Passivity and immediacy aren't peculiar to ideas derived from (internal or external) sensation.

The first two considerations carry more weight. Locke and Hutcheson identify reason with reasoning. Reason is sharply distinguished from the will and its affections, and from the senses. Its sole function is to manipulate ideas received from other sources. Edwards shares these views.<sup>16</sup> Reason doesn't have an affective dimension and doesn't raise new simple ideas. The cognition of true beauty *has* an affective dimension, however, since it involves relish or delight. Furthermore, its object is a new simple idea. Spiritual cognition must therefore be some kind of sensation or perception.

This conclusion seems inconsistent with other aspects of Edwards' position. A number of Hutcheson's critics took exception to his moral sense theory because they believed that (1) at least some moral propositions are necessarily true, and that (2) necessary truths are discerned by reason.<sup>17</sup> Hutcheson maintained that the moral sense grasps the goodness of benevolent actions and dispositions, i.e., perceives that benevolence is (morally) good. His critics objected that "Benevo-

lence is good" is necessarily true, and that necessary truths are apprehended by reason. It is therefore significant that Edwards himself apparently believed that moral truths are necessary.<sup>18</sup> Nor is he likely to have thought that the connection between holiness (benevolent actions and dispositions) and spiritual beauty is only contingent; that holiness or benevolence might not have been truly beautiful. But if "Holiness is beautiful" is necessarily true, Edwards seems committed to the view that our knowledge of at least some necessary truths is derived from a sense, i.e., that some necessary truths are perceived by a kind of sensation. This isn't plausible.

One may be able to apprehend the redness of a table without apprehending *that* the table is red. But can one apprehend the moral goodness of a benevolent action without apprehending *that* the action is morally good, or apprehend its spiritual beauty without apprehending *that* it is truly beautiful? The idea of beauty derives from experience in the sense that one won't acquire the idea if one never encounters beautiful objects. However, the idea doesn't seem to be a discrete feeling or sensation which is *first* received from experience and *then* incorporated in a judgment. On the contrary, receiving the idea of beauty appears to *be* judging that what one is contemplating is beautiful. Edwards seems committed to claiming that this judgment is necessarily true. Does it make any sense, then, to speak of a person's apprehension of a thing's beauty as some kind of internal or external sensing?

If one were to interpret spiritual cognition as an "intellectual intuition" with affective overtones, one would avoid this problem as well as the one raised at the end of the last section. Spiritual "perception" would then be something like our immediate recognition of the *prima facie* rightness of an instance of justice or kindness on a view like W. D. Ross'. Edwards was familiar with at least one account of this type—John Smith's.

Like Edwards, Smith insisted upon the inadequacy of a merely notional or intellectual understanding of spiritual things. He, too, thought that divine truths can only be understood by those who lead holy lives, and he, too, spoke of a "spiritual sensation." "The soul," said Smith, "itself hath its sense, as well as the body: and therefore David . . . calls not for speculation but sensation, Taste and see how good the Lord is." Smith's spiritual sensation is an act of "that reason that is within us . . . [the] eye of the soul . . . our intellectual faculty." This intellectual intuition or perception of reason *incorporates*, but isn't identical with, love and delight.<sup>19</sup> (Smith doesn't find this problematic because he shares the Platonic view that reason itself has an affective dimension. Knowing the good involves loving it and delighting in it.<sup>20</sup>)

A view like Smith's sidesteps the two problems confronting Edwards—how a feeling of delight can also be an apparent cognition, and how a necessary truth can be grasped by a kind of sensation. Edwards' commitment to empiricism

precluded this solution. Philosophers like Locke identified reason with ratiocination, and insisted that simple ideas originate in experience (internal or external sensation). Edwards accepted these theses and therefore couldn't construe spiritual cognitions as rational intuitions.

### III.

While the spiritual sense's direct object is true beauty or excellency, it also has an indirect object—spiritual facts or truths. There are two cases to consider.

In the first, the spiritual sense enables us to recognize the truth of propositions that are logically or epistemically related to the excellency of divine things. For example, our apprehension of Christ's beauty and excellency produces a conviction of His sufficiency as a Mediator (Misc. 782, T 126; RA 273, 302). A perception of God's beauty and excellency is needed to understand the nature of His perfections and the works which express them (RA 273, 302). To grasp the appropriateness of God's end in creation, *viz.*, the communication of His glory, one must perceive its beauty. Those who appreciate the splendor of God's glory are the only ones capable of comprehending the fitness of the means He employs to secure it and thus understanding His wisdom (RA 274, 302). Nor can one discern "the amiableness of the duties . . . that are required of us" unless one perceives the excellency of divine things (RA 274). One must also see the excellency of holiness to appreciate the "hatefulness of sin" (RA 274, 301) and thus be convinced of the justice of divine punishment and our inability to make satisfaction (RA 302). The spiritual sense, then, enables us to grasp the truth of a number of important doctrines.

But it also helps us grasp the truth of the gospel scheme as a whole (RA 291 f).<sup>21</sup> A conviction of the gospel's truth is an inference from the beauty or excellency of what it depicts, *viz.*, "God and Jesus Christ . . . the work of redemption, and the ways and works of God . . ." (DSL 8). "There is a divine and superlative glory in these things" which distinguishes "them from all that is earthly and temporal" (DSL 8). A spiritual person "truly sees" this glory (RA 298). His perception of it is as immediate and direct as a perception of color or the sweetness of food (DSL 18), and a conviction of the gospel's truth "is an effect and natural consequence" (DSL 8). The perception and conviction are nevertheless distinct. The mind *infers* the truth and reality of the things contained in the gospel from its *perception* of their spiritual beauty. There is, however, no "long chain of arguments; the argument is but one, and the evidence direct; the mind ascends to the truth of the gospel but by one step, and that is its divine glory" (RA 298 f. Cf. Misc. 782, T 126).<sup>22</sup> Since only one step is involved we can truly say that the divinity, or reality, or truth of the gospel is "as it were" known intuitively, that "a soul may have a kind of intuitive knowledge of the divinity [truth, reality]

of the things exhibited in the gospel” (RA 298).<sup>23</sup>

The mind’s object differs in the two cases. In the first, its object is a fairly specific doctrinal proposition (like “Christ would be a sufficient mediator”) that is logically or epistemically connected with other propositions which affirm that some person or characteristic or activity or state of affairs is truly amiable or beautiful or excellent. Our spiritual sense enables us to *perceive* the truth of the latter and from this we *infer* the truth of the former. In the second, the mind’s object is the content of the gospel as such—what Paul Ricoeur has called “the world of the text.”<sup>24</sup> The dominant or controlling or central features of this world—God, Christ, and the scheme of salvation—are *perceived* to be truly beautiful. On the basis of this perception one immediately concludes that the Biblical world isn’t fictional, like the worlds presented in *The Brothers Karamazov* or *Moby Dick*, but *real*.

The inference also differs in the two cases. In the first, one infers that a being as excellent as Christ *would be* a sufficient mediator, or that the communication of God’s glory ad extra *would be* an appropriate end for a divine being, or that eternal punishment *would be* a fitting punishment for sin. These propositions could be true even if God didn’t exist and the gospel scheme was false. In the second, one infers that the gospel scheme is true. Only the second case, then, appears to involve an existential judgment.

Edwards’ view has some interesting implications. If my interpretation is correct, the new spiritual sense doesn’t involve a direct or immediate or quasi-perceptual awareness of God Himself. Instead, God’s reality is *inferred* from the excellency and beauty of the things depicted in scripture. As we have seen, however, the inference “is without any long chain of arguments; the argument is but one, and the evidence direct . . . .” Because of the inference’s spontaneity and immediacy, a person can even be said to have “a kind of intuitive knowledge” of divinity (RA 298). Edwards’ interpretation of knowledge of God’s reality thus resembles a familiar account of our knowledge of other minds and physical objects. While these things aren’t *directly* perceived, their reality or presence is immediately inferred from sensations or impressions that are directly apprehended. Edwards thinks our knowledge of God is similar. Although He isn’t *directly* perceived, God’s reality is no more remote or uncertain than other minds are on his own view, or physical objects on a view like Locke’s.

If I am right, Edwards’ position differs from a basic beliefs approach. One’s belief in God isn’t basic. On the other hand, the inference on which one’s belief is based doesn’t involve a long or complicated chain of reasoning, and is as spontaneous and compelling as our (alleged) inference to other minds or the reality of the physical world. The redeemed’s belief in God is thus similar to some of Hume’s natural beliefs—for example, the belief in the continued existence of unperceived physical objects and (perhaps) the belief in a designer.<sup>25</sup> It

differs in that the *basis* of the inference is a new simple idea which God bestows on the regenerate, and because the inference is sound.

## IV.

In the final chapter of *The Nature of True Virtue*, Edwards attempts to show that “the frame of mind, or inward sense . . . whereby the mind is disposed to delight in the idea of true virtue,” i.e., relish it for its spiritual beauty, isn’t “arbitrary” but agrees “with the necessary nature of things” (TV 99). Since the “frame of mind” which disposes a person to delight in true beauty (i.e., to be pleased with benevolence) is benevolence itself, Edwards thinks it will be sufficient to show that *benevolence* agrees with the nature of things. He employs four arguments to establish his conclusion.

*First Argument:*

- (1) A being with understanding and inclinations necessarily desires its own happiness (i.e., it desires what it wants or desires or finds agreeable).
- (2) Benevolence is the disposition to benefit being *in general*. Therefore,
- (3) A being with understanding and inclinations must approve of benevolence (for it benefits *him*). (From 1 and 2.) Hence
- (4) If a being with understanding and inclinations approves of vice (i.e., of malevolence or indifference to being in general), then his attitudes are inconsistent. (From 3.)
- (5) Virtue (benevolence) can be approved without inconsistency.
- (6) If virtue (benevolence) can be approved without inconsistency and vice (malevolence or indifference) can’t be approved without inconsistency, then virtue agrees with the nature of things and vice doesn’t. Therefore,
- (7) Virtue agrees with the nature of things and vice does not. (From 4, 5 and 6.) (TV 101-2)

The argument, if sound, shows that virtue agrees with the nature of things in the sense that loving virtue is a more rational (i.e., consistent) response to reality than loving vice.

But the proof isn’t persuasive. A person isn’t inconsistent in approving and disapproving (or not approving) of the same thing if he or she approves and disapproves (or fails to approve) of it in different respects. And this is surely the case here. The wicked approve of benevolence when it benefits them but hate it, or are indifferent towards it, when it benefits others. They approve of (or are indifferent to) malevolence or indifference when directed towards others

but not when directed towards themselves. These attitudes may be reprehensible but they aren't inconsistent. Let us therefore turn to Edwards'

*Second Argument:*

- (1) Benevolence is "agreement or consent of being to being."
- (2) Being or "general existence" is the nature of things. Therefore,
- (3) Benevolence agrees with the nature of things. (TV 100)

Edwards establishes his conclusion by identifying the nature of things with what is, *viz.*, being in general, and identifying agreement with being's consent to being.

This too seems unconvincing. The argument only establishes a tautology—that consent to being (i.e., benevolence) consents to (i.e., agrees with) being (i.e., the nature of things). What needs to be shown is that benevolence or consent to being is an *appropriate* response to the nature of things, and Edwards' argument doesn't do this. But, this criticism is somewhat superficial, for it neglects the argument's theistic context. Edwards believes that being in general is *God* and the "particular beings" that depend on Him and manifest His glory. A consent to, or love of, being in *this* sense is surely an appropriate response to it. The theistic metaphysics becomes explicit in Edwards'

*Third Argument:*

- (1) God "is in effect being in general." (All being either is God or unconditionally depends on Him.)
- (2) It is "necessary that God should agree with himself, be united with himself, or love himself." Therefore,
- (3) It is necessary that God is benevolent. (From 1 and 2. In loving Himself, God loves "being in general" and is thus benevolent.)  
Consequently,
- (4) Benevolence agrees with the nature of God. (From 3.) Now
- (5) Whatever agrees with the nature of what "is in effect being in general" agrees with the nature of things. Therefore,
- (6) Benevolence agrees with the nature of things. (From 1, 4 and 5.)  
(TV 100)

This argument uses "agreement" in yet another sense. Edwards' point is roughly that the (ultimate) nature of things is divine benevolence. Human benevolence agrees with it because it is its image.

Edwards is an occasionalist, an idealist, and a mental phenomenalist. What are "vulgarly" called causal relations are mere constant conjunctions. *True* causes necessitate their effects. Since God's will alone meets this condition, God is the

only true cause. He is also the only true substance. Physical objects are collections of “corporeal ideas” (color, figure, solidity, resistance, and so on). Minds are series of “thoughts” or “perceptions.” If a substance underlay perceptions, thoughts, and corporeal ideas, it would be something that “subsisted by itself, and stood underneath and kept up” physical and mental properties. But *God* is the only thing that subsists by itself, stands underneath, and keeps up thoughts, perceptions, solidity, color, and other corporeal qualities (ideas). Hence, “the substance of bodies [and minds] at last becomes either nothing, or nothing but the Deity acting in that particular manner . . . where he thinks fit.”<sup>26</sup> The only real cause and the only real substance is thus God Himself. God’s essence, however, is love. The real nature of things, then, is an infinite and omnipotent benevolence.

Our benevolence “agrees with” this in the sense that it resembles it or is an image of it. The thrust of Edwards’ argument is therefore this. Benevolence is appropriate because it mirrors reality. Nature’s activity is really God’s activity. Love is thus “natural” in the sense that it imitates the activity of “Nature.”<sup>27</sup>

Edwards’ theistic metaphysics is also implicit in his

#### *Fourth Argument:*

- (1) Harmony among beings is more agreeable to the nature of things than disharmony.
- (2) Benevolence (the consent of being to being) promotes (or is) harmony among beings. Therefore,
- (3) Benevolence agrees with the nature of things. (TV 100-1)

Edwards assumes that whatever promotes harmony in a system accords or agrees with its nature. This isn’t implausible where the system is organic or social and, in Edwards’ opinion, being in general *is* an organic or social system. The only things that exist without qualification are minds, and minds form a social system in which God is sovereign.<sup>28</sup>

Benevolence, then, has a “foundation in the nature of things.” Since the spiritual sense is an *expression* of benevolence, Edwards concludes that it too is founded “in the nature of things.” “The idea we obtain by this spiritual sense” is thus “a knowledge or perception” of something outside our minds, a true “representation” of something “without,” *viz.*, God’s moral perfection and excellence and its created reflections (TV 102-3).

Edwards’ defense of the objectivity of the new spiritual sense has four steps. (1) Benevolence agrees with the nature of things. The world is an interconnected system of minds and ideas in which the only true substance and cause is an infinite and omnipotent love. Human benevolence is thus an appropriate or fitting response to reality. (2) Benevolence is pleased by benevolence; it relishes it, or

delights in it, for its own sake (TV 10-12). Since benevolence is an appropriate response to reality, so too is benevolence's delight in benevolence. (3) But delighting in benevolence is identical with perceiving its spiritual beauty. (4) The redeemed's spiritual perceptions are thus true representations of something without.

How successful is this defense? The first two steps are plausible. While Edwards' occasionalism, idealism, and mental phenomenalism undoubtedly strengthened his belief in benevolence's agreement with the nature of things, similar conclusions follow from any theistic (or at least Christian) metaphysics. The second step is also plausible. Furthermore, the fourth step follows from the third *if* a "spiritual sensation" is a "representation" of something "without," i.e., *if* it is noetic or "perception-like." Edwards' arguments show that our spiritual sense is in order, that its motions are appropriate responses to reality. If spiritual sensations are only subjective feelings, the arguments simply show that they are appropriate reactions to their objects. If they are noetic, however, the arguments establish something more. If spiritual sensations are appropriate responses to reality, and are also apparent cognitions, they are (as Edwards thinks) a "knowledge or perception" of something "without."

The weakest link in the argument is the third. Because Edwards' identification of spiritual perception with a kind of pleasure is problematic (see sections I and II), his defense isn't fully successful. Nevertheless, Edwards' reflections provide a promising start. Benevolence may really be spiritual perception's underlying mechanism. The nature of this perception, though, and its relation to benevolence, needs further clarification.

## V.

The most instructive feature of Edwards' defense is the way it uses theistic metaphysics. I suspect that any persuasive justification of a spiritual sense's reliability will do the same. Is it therefore circular? It isn't *if* theistic metaphysics can be established without appealing to spiritual perceptions. Does Edwards think it can? He believes that theistic metaphysics is supported by natural reason and sometimes suggests that the rational evidence is sufficient. On the other hand, he also talks as if it won't habitually *seem* sufficient to those with unconverted hearts.

If Edwards is right, justifications of spiritual perceptions aren't circular in the sense that they employ premises which explicitly or implicitly assert that spiritual perceptions are reliable. Nor are they circular in the sense that they employ premises which can *in principle* only be known to be true by those who rely on their spiritual sense. Nevertheless, there *is* a psychological or causal connection between having spiritual perceptions and appreciating the force of the evidence

for a theistic metaphysics and thereby appreciating the force of justifications of the spiritual sense's reliability. It seems, then, both that these justifications aren't logically or epistemically circular *and* that those who lack spiritual perceptions, or distrust them, will normally find justifications of this kind unpersuasive.

An example may clarify my point. Suppose that someone sees the force of an inductive argument for the guilt of his brother only after he has been persuaded of his brother's guilt. (Perhaps his brother confessed.) Is the argument circular? Is it circular for him? Not clearly. The nature of his noetic equipment isn't such that he can't know the premises without knowing the conclusion. Indeed, he may have firmly believed that the premises are true. Nor is its nature such that he *can't* see that the premises establish the conclusion. The fault isn't with his noetic equipment but with his attachment to his brother which blinded him to the force of the evidence and prevented him from using his noetic equipment properly. The relation between believing the conclusion and recognizing the force of the argument for it is thus extrinsic or accidental—the result of a psychological aberration rather than a matter of logic or the nature of his cognitive faculties.

I think Edwards' view is similar. The reliability of our spiritual sense can be justified by a theistic metaphysics which is itself adequately supported by evidence accessible to natural reason. But sin blinds us to the evidence's force. There is thus a causal connection between spiritual perception and rational persuasion. Appeals to spiritual perceptions play no role, however, in the justificatory process itself. If this is correct, it seems misleading to say that the reliability of the spiritual sense can't be justified without circularity.

## VI.

Does Edwards contribute anything to current discussions? I think he does.

Edwards describes cases in which a person's belief in God is spontaneous, psychologically immediate, directly rooted in his or her experience but nonetheless inferential. These beliefs have been neglected in recent discussions. I think they occur, and suspect that at least some cases in which a believer claims to perceive God or God's activity are more aptly described in this fashion. That is, I think there is an interesting set of cases in which a person's belief in God is neither basic nor perceptual although it has a number of the phenomenological features that Alvin Plantinga and William Alston attribute to it.<sup>29</sup>

Another gap in contemporary discussions is a failure to adequately explain *how* theistic belief producing mechanisms operate. The issue is important for two reasons.

First, the nature of the mechanism has a bearing on its reliability. For example, Freud offers several accounts of the nature of the theistic belief producing

mechanism which, if true, cast doubt on its reliability. Theists can defuse criticisms of this sort by providing alternative and equally plausible accounts of the mechanism's operation that don't impugn its reliability.

The second reason is this. On reading the *Vedas*, an Advaitin may find himself spontaneously believing that they express the Nirguna Brahman. On reading the *Iśa Upanishad* or having a monistic mystical experience, he may find himself spontaneously believing that all differences are unreal or that the impersonal Brahman is ultimate. If these beliefs are true, theism is false. On the face of it, the theist's beliefs and the Advaitin's beliefs are formed in similar ways. The same sort of belief producing mechanism seems involved in both cases. If it is, then if one is reliable, so presumably is the other. And yet they can't *both* be reliable, for they produce conflicting beliefs. Hence, neither seems reliable.

What is needed is an explanation of the difference between theistic and (for example) Advaitin belief producing mechanisms together with an indication of why the former is reliable and the latter isn't.

Edwards may provide some assistance here for he has the beginnings of an account of how one theistic belief producing mechanism operates. His account is also the *right* sort. If the mechanism is (a function of?) benevolence rather than wish fulfillment or the working out of an Oedipal complex, there may be less reason for thinking it untrustworthy. Again, if the disposition to form true religious beliefs is a function of benevolence or love, if benevolence or love agrees with the nature of things, and if benevolence is either absent or less fully developed in Advaita, one has some indication of why the theist's religious belief producing mechanism is more reliable than the Advaitin's.<sup>30</sup>

My point, of course, is not that Edwards *has* provided a fully adequate account but that some account is needed to defuse a certain sort of criticism, and that the kind of account Edwards presents is the *right* kind.

Finally, Edwards' remarks bear on the claim that justifications of the reliability of spiritual experience are inevitably circular. The claim is plausible partly because those who lack spiritual experience or doubt its reliability so often find these justifications unpersuasive. If I am correct, a position like Edwards' can accommodate this fact without conceding that arguments for the reliability of spiritual experience are circular in a philosophically significant sense.

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## NOTES

1. Edwards' discussions of the sense of the heart are located in *The Nature of True Virtue* (Ann

Arbor, 1970), *Religious Affections* (New Haven, 1959), and the "Miscellanies" (a number of which can be found in *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards from his Private Notebooks*, ed. by Harvey G. Townsend [Eugene, Oregon, 1955]). For other relevant material see *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God, in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls . . .*, *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (both in *The Great Awakening*, ed. by C. C. Goen [New Haven, 1972]), "A Divine and Supernatural light" (*The Works of President Edwards*; 1968 reprint of the Leeds edition reissued with a two volume supplement in Edinburgh 1847, Vol. VIII), and "Personal Narrative" (*Jonathan Edwards: Representative Selections*, ed. by Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson [New York, 1935]), and "The Mind" (*Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, ed. by Wallace E. Anderson [New Haven, 1980]).

2. Edwards believes that the immediate objects of mental acts are ideas. Like Berkeley, he tends to conflate ideas and their contents (what the ideas are ideas of).

3. Why regard these as objects of a sense or feeling of the heart? Presumably because (for example) a perception of beauty or importance, involves a perception of the non-evaluative features upon which beauty or importance depend, or because one can't fully grasp or understand these non-evaluative properties without perceiving their beauty or importance, or both.

4. Edwards clearly thinks that there are qualitative differences between pleasures. The pleasure which the natural man takes in secondary beauty (i.e., in "regularity, order, uniformity, symmetry, proportion, harmony, etc." (TV 28) is qualitatively different from the spiritual person's delight in holiness.

5. This isn't absolutely decisive. On Locke's view, "red" can be used not only to refer to a simple sensation but also to a power of producing this sensation that certain objects possess in virtue of their primary qualities, i.e., "red" can be used to express a mixed mode as well as a simple idea. I will argue that Edwards' use of "beauty" exhibits a similar ambiguity. Nevertheless, it is reasonably clear that Locke believed that, in its primary sense, "red" denotes a simple idea, and that Edwards thought the same of "beauty."

6. See Locke, *Human Understanding* II, viii. Cf. Hutcheson who says that moral approbation, i.e., the disinterested delight in morally good actions and dispositions, "cannot be supposed an image of anything external, more than the pleasures of harmony, of taste, of smell." (*Illustrations on the Moral Sense* [Cambridge, Mass., 1971], p. 164).

7. This point is inconclusive, however, since Edwards sometimes departs from Locke. For example, he asserts that beauty is a simple idea although Locke thought it was a mixed mode (HU II, xii, 51).

8. Edwards was influenced by Henry More (who self-consciously combined Platonism and Cartesianism). He was also familiar with Ralph Cudworth and John Smith, and quotes both with approval.

9. Of course, Edwards *might* have believed that the relevant relational terms ("consents," "is equal to," "agrees with," "harmonizes with," etc.) stand for simple ideas, but he never says this, and while Locke thinks that the ideas of relations "*terminate in simple ideas*" (arise from the comparison of simple ideas) he doesn't seem to think that relations themselves are simple ideas (HU II, xxv, 9-10; II, xxviii, 18-20).

10. Does the idea of beauty not only "represent" but also "resemble" its object, as Locke's ideas of extension, figure and motion "resemble" the objective configurations that cause them? Edwards never explicitly says it does. (That the idea is a "perception" of "something without" only distinguishes it from ideas of tertiary qualities.) In calling it "knowledge," however, and in insisting that we can have no true idea of its objects without it, Edwards implies that the idea *accurately* represents (some aspect of) its object. This suggests that the idea of beauty should be assimilated to Locke's ideas of

primary qualities.

11. It isn't clear that the mind's immediate objects are ideas. It isn't clear how they represent or resemble their objects. And so on.

12. At one point, Edwards asks "concerning speculative understanding and sense of heart; whether any difference between the sense of the heart and the will or inclination . . ." ("Subjects to be handled in the Treatise on the Mind" 14).

13. Cf. RA 275. It involves a new "sort of *understanding* or *knowledge* . . . [viz.] that *knowledge* of divine things from whence all truly gracious affections do proceed . . ." (my italics).

14. Locke was a major influence. Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* is referred to in Edwards' "Catalogue of Books" on p. 8 and p. 22. On p. 22, Edwards writes "Hutcheson's Essay on the Passions cited in his Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue," which implies that he had read the *Inquiry* by that time. (Thomas H. Johnson ["Jonathan Edwards' Background of Reading," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, XXVIII (1930-33), 194-222] estimates that pages 15-43 date from 1746 to 1757.) Hutcheson is mentioned three times in *True Virtue*, and quotations from the *Inquiry* occur in *Original Sin* on pages 225 and 226. Hutcheson's *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections and Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (two essays) appeared in 1728 (three years after the first edition of the *Inquiry*). This work is entered in the "Catalogue" on pages 22 and 32. In the "Book of Controversies," the "*Nature and Conduct of the Passions*" is quoted, and this passage is incorporated into *Original Sin* but credited to Turnbull" (Clyde A. Holbrook, OS [introd.], 74f). The implication is that Edwards was familiar with the two essays. Whatever he was significantly influenced by Hutcheson, though, is unclear. I shall argue that Edwards' sympathy with the empiricists is sufficient to explain why he thinks of spiritual cognition as a kind of sensing. The idea of a spiritual sense was, however, a Puritan commonplace. For example, John Owen said that God "gives . . . a spirituall sense, a Tast of the things themselves upon the mind, Heart and Conscience." According to Richard Sibbes, "It is knowledge with a tast . . . God giveth knowledge *per modum gustus*." Francis Rous said that "After we have tasted those heavenly things . . . from this taste there ariseth a new, but a true, lively, and experimental knowledge of the things so tasted . . . For even in natural fruits there are certain relishes . . . which nothing but the taste it self can truly represent and shew unto us. The West-Indian Piney [pineapple] cannot be so expressed in words, even by him that hath tasted it, that he can deliver over the true shape and character of that taste to another that hath not tasted it." (The quotations are from Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, 2nd ed., Oxford, 1947, pp. 39 and 139.) Edwards was indebted to his predecessors for the idea of a spiritual sensation. His development of that concept, however, is heavily influenced by empiricists like Locke.

15. Cf. *Religious Affections*, 281f where Edwards speaks of the immediacy with which this new sense judges of the spiritual beauty of actions, or *The Nature of True Virtue* 98-9.

16. "If we take *reason* strictly—not for the faculty of mental perception in general [which would include sense perception], but for ratiocination . . . the perceiving of spiritual beauty and excellency no more belongs to reason, than it belongs to the sense of feeling to perceive colors . . . Reason's work is to perceive truth and not excellency" (DSL 18).

17. See, for example, the correspondence between Hutcheson and Gilbert Burnet.

18. Edwards clearly thinks that at least some moral truths are necessary. (See *Freedom of the Will* (New Haven, 1957), p. 153. Edwards' example is "It is . . . fit and suitable, that men should do to others, as they would that they should do to them.") It is worth observing that Locke, too, thinks

that moral truths are necessary. (*Human Understanding* III, xi, 15-18; IV, iii, 18-20; and IV, iv, 7-10.)

19. The quotations are from Smith's "Of the True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge," *Select Discourses* (New York, 1978). (I have modernized the capitalization and spelling.) In his introduction to *Religious Affections*, John E. Smith denies that Smith's spiritual sensation is an intellectual intuition (RA 66). Quotations like the last, however, and the Platonic tenor of the discourse as a whole, seem to support my interpretation.

20. "Intellectual life, as they [the Platonists] phrase it" is a nondiscursive "knowledge . . . [that] is always pregnant with divine virtue, which ariseth out of a happy union of souls with God, and is nothing else but a living imitation of a Godlike perfection drawn out by a strong fervent love of it. This divine knowledge . . . makes us amorous of divine beauty, . . . and this divine love and purity, reciprocally exalts divine knowledge . . ." (*Select Discourses*, p. 20.)

21. This was not, of course, a new idea. Thus, Richard Sibbes said "God . . . causeth him to see a divine majesty shining forth in the scriptures, so that there must be an infused establishing by the Spirit to settle the heart in this first principle . . . that the Scriptures are the word of God." Or again, "How do you know the word to be the word? It carrieth proof and evidence in itself. It is an evidence that the fire is hot to him that feeleth it, and that the sun shineth to him that looks on it; how much more doth the word . . . I am sure I felt it, it warmed my heart, and converted me." (Quoted in Nuttall, *op. cit.*, pp. 23 and 39.)

22. Presumably the argument is:

- (1) Gospel doctrines exhibit a divine excellency or beauty. Therefore,
- (2) Gospel doctrines are true.

2 follows from 1 *if* doctrines that exhibit this supernatural radiance or splendor must have a supernatural author. (On this point see DSL 10, Misc. 256 [T 249], and Misc. 782 [T 126].) How is this generalization related to the argument? If the inference involves only one step, it can't be functioning as a premise. Perhaps, then, the generalization is an inference rule. Or perhaps Edwards thinks of it as a necessary truth. (If it is, then 1 immediately entails 2.) Or perhaps it is simply an inductive generalization from a set of "natural inferences"—judgments that the redeemed find themselves spontaneously making in the presence of the gospel, and which are trustworthy given that their new faculties are God-given. (If the third alternative is correct, the generalization plays *no* role in the argument.)

23. A superficial reading of some passages might suggest, that Edwards thinks our knowledge of divine reality is immediate. Thus *Miscellanies* 201 (T 246f) and 408 (T 249f) assert that ideas which are clear and lively, and cohere with each other and with other ideas, are quite properly regarded as real or true. Those with converted hearts find the ideas of religion (scripture) clear, lively, internally coherent, and in harmony with their other ideas. They, therefore, quite properly take them to be real or true. But this "appearing real . . . cannot be drawn out into formal arguments." It depends upon "ten thousand little relations and mutual agreements that are ineffable," "and is a sort of seeing rather than reasoning the truth of religion." But Edwards isn't clearly denying that the conviction of reality is inferential. (He may simply be insisting on its psychological immediacy and coerciveness, and the fact that it doesn't rest on formal arguments.) In any case, his normal view is that presented in "Divine and Supernatural Light" and *Religious Affections*, *viz.*, that the reality of divine things is inferred by one step from their spiritual beauty and excellency. Nor is my interpretation adversely affected by Edwards' discussions of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In both *Religious Affections* and the *Treatise on Grace* (Cambridge, 1971), Edwards argues that "grace in the heart . . . is no other than the Spirit of God itself dwelling and acting in the heart of a

saint . . ." (TG 70). The "principle in them" is "no other than the spirit of God itself, united to the soul, and living and acting in it, and exerting itself in the use and improvement of its faculties" (TG 71). The saints thus "partake of that holiness by which He himself is holy" (TG 73, cf. RA 197ff). It would be a mistake, however, to infer that a perception of God's gracious influence is (literally) a perception of God Himself. What one seems *immediately* aware of in this case are one's new holy dispositions and affections and their spiritual beauty. These are indeed images of "the excellencies and beauties of God and Christ" (Misc. 239, T 248), and a consequence of God's immediate action on the soul (TG 53, DSL 17), but they aren't God Himself.

24. "Philosophy and Religious Language," *The Journal of Religion* 54 (1974), 71-85.

25. Cf., e.g., Ronald J. Butler, "Natural Belief and the Enigma of Hume," *Archiv Fur Geschichte de Philosophie* 42 (1960), 73-100 or John Hick, "A New Form of Theistic Argument," *Proceedings of the XIV International Congress of Philosophy V* (1970), 336-41. But also see (e.g.) J. C. A. Gaskin, *Hume's Philosophy of Religion* (London, 1978), chap. 8.

26. "Of Atoms" (*Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, p. 215). The quotations are from an argument "proving" that God is the only substance underlying corporeal properties. Edwards clearly thinks, however, that similar considerations show that God is also the only substance underlying mental qualities.

27. Since God is (according to Edwards) the only true substance and the only true cause, there is a real sense in which He is *natura naturans*.

28. Edwards also thinks that God (who is "in effect being in general") is triune and thus inherently social.

29. See for example, Alston's "Religious Experience and Religious Belief," *Nous* XVI (1982), pp. 3-12, or "Christian Experience and Christian Belief," in *Faith and Rationality*, ed. by Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame, Indiana: 1983). Or see Plantinga's "Is Belief in God Properly Basic?" *Nous* XV (1981), or "Reason and Belief in God," in *Faith and Rationality*, *op. cit.*

30. It will be more difficult for a Christian to cast aspersions on (e.g.) a Vaisnava's religious belief producing mechanism. Vaisnavism is a theistic grace religion that values love. To discriminate between the Christian's and the Vaisnava's intuitions, one must either (1) distinguish between the quality of the Christian's and the Vaisnava's benevolence, or (2) appeal to cultural, or (less plausibly) psychological or moral, factors that impede the proper operations of the Vaisnava's spiritual faculties. The Christian might, however, concede that some true beauty *is* perceived in the Bhagavad-Gītā and the theistic Upanishads. For he or she may think that these texts, too, are revelations though not as perfect as the Christian revelation. (Cf. Clement of Alexander's claim that philosophy may have been "given to the Greeks directly; for it was a 'schoolmaster,' to bring Hellenism to Christ, as the Law was for the Hebrews." [Henry Bettenson, *The Early Christian Fathers*, London, 1963, p. 232.])