

JONATHAN EDWARDS'S CONCEPT OF AN ORIGINAL ULTIMATE END

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I. INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

In his dissertation, *Concerning the END for which GOD created the World*,¹ we have the final version of Jonathan Edwards's painstaking labors to state precisely God's purpose and motive in creating the world.² In the Introduction Edwards writes, "It may be observed, that when I speak of God's ultimate end in the creation of the world, in the following discourse, I commonly mean in that highest sense, viz. the original ultimate end."³ Edwards's concept of an *original ultimate end* is crucial to his argumentation and in spite of his insistence that he means *original ultimate end*, it remains the least explicated feature of his view of God's end in creation. In these introductory remarks, I describe the background necessary for an appropriate appreciation of the centrality of this concept in Edwards's argument in *End of Creation*.

Edwards's lifelong concern was to experience and then to explain, promote, guide, and defend a view of Christian piety as a "work" of God by which redeemed persons actually experience God's own trinitarian self-knowledge, love, and joy. He strove to convince pastors, theologians, and philosophers in Great Britain and colonial America that only thereby can created persons truly know God and worship him, delight in his presence, and love each other in genuine fellowship. Thus, Edwards's primary goal in writing the *Two Dissertations* was to show, on shared assumptions, that such "true virtue" is God's ultimate end in creation. It is the content of the promise to Abraham, the culmination of redemption, the realization of the Kingdom of God.

Many of the ideas of God's end in creation that were proposed before and while Edwards was alive could be classified as ultimate ends in Aristotle's sense. However, in Edwards's opinion, given their content they actually tended to pro-

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¹ Jonathan Edwards, "Two Dissertations I. Concerning the End for Which God Created the World," in Paul Ramsey, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* 8, *Ethical Writings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Hereafter I will refer to this work as *End of Creation*.

² Even so, Samuel Hopkins wrote in the *Preface*, seven years after Edwards's death, "The author had designed these dissertations for the public view; and wrote them out as they now appear: though 'tis probable that if his life had been spared, he would have revised them, and rendered them in some respects more complete. Some new sentiments, here and there, might probably have been added; and some passages brightened with further illustrations. This may be conjectured from some brief hints, or sentiments minuted down, on loose papers, found in the manuscripts" (*WJE* 8:401).

³ *WJE* 8:413.

mote a view of religious experience contrary to the gospel. Since before the turn of the eighteenth century New England and Great Britain had been moralizing Christian experience by placing greater stress on natural goodness and ability—contrary to the Bible. It was thought that one could ascertain how to live by reason without revelation and that one could achieve such a life by self-determined choices and self-sustained effort. Thus, Edwards’s secondary goal was to undercut this contrary view of religious experience. In his 1757 letter to his friend, Thomas Foxcroft, Edwards wrote, “I have also written two other discourses, one on *God’s End in Creating the World*; the other concerning *The Nature of True Virtue*. As it appeared to me, the modern opinions which prevail concerning these two things stand very much as foundations of the fashionable scheme of divinity, which seems to have become almost universal.”⁴

Awareness and concern regarding such “fashionable schemes” were widespread among Reformed pastors in mid-18th-century New England. Only two years earlier, at the 1755 meeting of the General Association of the Colony of Connecticut, Thomas Clap, President of Yale, gave an address defending Calvinistic doctrines and describing an emerging contrary view. According to the scheme Clap refers to, “The only End and Design in Creation is the Happiness of the Creature.” This principle “naturally leads to most, if not all the rest,” namely that “The only Criterion of Duty to God is *Self-Interest* Sin consists in Nothing but a Man’s doing or forbearing an Action contrary to his own interest; and Duty to God, is Nothing but the Pursuit of our own Happiness.”⁵

Joseph Bellamy attended the meeting and is the same person whom Samuel Hopkins refers to in his diary dated February 12, 1756: “Mr. Bellamy came to my house last Tuesday, with whom I went to Stockbridge and stayed there two nights and one day, to hear Mr. Edwards read a treatise on ‘The Last End of God in the Creation of the World.’” Whether Bellamy and Edwards discussed Clap’s address, it is likely that Clap’s concern was widely shared even before the address and that refuting such “fashionable schemes” is part of Edwards’s intent. If the emerging “fashionable schemes of divinity” logically presuppose some view of God’s end in creation, as Thomas Clap and Edwards claim, then by refuting their conceptual foundation, Edwards can refute, and perhaps weaken, such schemes. If Edwards attacked the “branches” of such schemes in his 1754 publication, *Freedom of the Will*, by attacking their view of the will, in *End of Creation* he goes for the “root” by attacking their view of God’s end in creation, the logical “foundation” of such schemes.⁶

⁴ George S. Claghorn, ed., *Works of Jonathan Edwards* 16, *Letters and Personal Writings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) 694.

⁵ Thomas Clap, *A brief History and Vindication of the Doctrines received and established in the Churches of New England, with a Specimen of the new Scheme of Religion beginning to prevail* (Boston: Kneeland, 1757) 17, 22 (reprinted by Gale Eighteenth Century Collections Online).

⁶ Paul Ramsey, ed., *Works of Jonathan Edwards* 1, *Freedom of the Will* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957). John Owen (1948) attempted to undercut Arminian tendencies by arguing for a view of God’s end in creation. Owen’s view seems to be a mixed ultimate end on Edwards’s view. Also, it seems not to overcome Spinoza.

It is most likely that Edwards's ancillary aim was that his biblically faithful account of the end for which God created the world would also resolve a long-standing, multifaceted paradox concerning God's being infinite and perfect while being motivated to pursue an end in creating and sustaining the world. In his *Ethics* (1677) Baruch Spinoza argued that the very concept of acting to achieve an end entails that the agent values the last state—the state to be achieved—more than the initial state. So, *if God created the world to achieve an end, then the state achieved must be more valuable than the initial state without creation*. It must provide God with something real and valuable that he otherwise lacked. It follows that God must not have been fulfilled in his initial state without creation. If this is so, then God is not self-sufficient and, therefore, not perfect. Furthermore, God must have acted out of necessity to satisfy a deficiency. If so, then he is not free. Edwards's ancillary aim, therefore, is to make sure that his account overcomes Spinoza's. To do so, he must refute Spinoza's conditional (italicized above). That is, he must give some description of God's end in creation and then explain how what is achieved is not more valuable than God's initial state without creation. In addition, he must provide some account of what motivated God to create. This means there is a second reason why some proposed ideas of God's end in creation have to be rejected. Not only do they contradict Scripture, they are contrary to what reason dictates, running afoul of the conundrum raised by Spinoza.⁷ The concept of an original ultimate end is logically essential to the achievement of both of Edwards's aims and therefore essential in his solution to Spinoza's conundrum.

Edwards's presentation involves an extensive, multifaceted, deductive argument. He argues *from assumptions*⁸ shared by most, if not all, who had proposed a theory of God's purpose in creation.⁹ Edwards also argues *from definitions* of com-

⁷ While Edwards seldom mentions Spinoza, there is ample evidence that he was clearly aware of this conundrum. For example, in his *Miscellanies* 1338 he writes, "Yea, without a revelation, men would be greatly at a loss concerning God, what he is, what manner of being, whether properly intelligent and willing, a being that has will and design, maintaining a proper, intelligent, voluntary dominion over the world. Notions of the First Being like those of Hobbes and Spinoza would prevail. . . . 'Tis very needful that God should declare to mankind what manner of being he is. For though reason may be sufficient to confirm such a declaration after it is given, and see it consistence, harmony and rationality in many respects, yet reason may be utterly insufficient first to discover these things" (ed. Douglas A. Sweeney, *Works of Jonathan Edwards* 23, *The Miscellanies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) 347–48. For more evidence, see the author's paper, "Jonathan Edwards' *End of Creation* and Spinoza's Conundrum."

⁸ It was widely assumed that God *has* an ultimate end in creation and that creation is *ex nihilo* and that God is both infinite and perfect, although they did *not* agree on the *meaning* and *implications* of these.

⁹ Johannes Wollebius, *The Compendium Theologiae Christianae* (1626); John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (1648); Franco Burgersdyck, *Institutionum Logicarum* (1651); *Monitio Logica, or An Abstract and Translation of His Logick* (1697); Adrian Heereboord, *Meletemata Philosophica* (1654); *Ermencia Logica* (1663); Baruch Spinoza, *Thoughts on Metaphysics* (1663); *Ethics* (1677); Nicholas Malebranche, *The Search after Truth* (1674–75); *Dialogues on Metaphysics* (1696); Samuel Clarke, *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* (1704); *A Discourse Concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion* (1705); *Of the Goodness of God* (1738); John Balguy, *The Foundation of Moral Goodness* (1728); Thomas Bayes, *Divine Benevolence* (1731); Alexander G. Baumgarten, *Metaphysica* (1739); and Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion* (1817), each addressed these issues at some length. Although Wollebius (1626) does not address the issue at length, he does briefly describe God's purpose and motive in creation. Edwards studied Wollebius at Yale. There seems to be no evidence that Edwards was aware of Balguy, Bayes, or Baum-

monly held concepts regarding an agent's ends. Along the way Edwards clarifies the differences among types of ends until he arrives at the only type that could be God's end in creating the world. He calls it an "original ultimate end." Then—from those same shared assumptions and *from* the concept of an *original ultimate end*—Edwards traces, in six stages, what "reason dictates" concerning the matter. His argument involves four criteria that any candidate notion of God's end in creation must meet. He then argues for a philosophical expression of the content of God's original ultimate end that meets those criteria. In the second chapter, he exegetes the scriptural notion of God's end in creation and argues that the two concepts are identical. His argumentation is also based on widely accepted empirical postulates about agents acting from motives for ends and on the implicit use of "common notions" which are *logical truths*.

Edwards is following a pattern of demonstration he learned from his study of geometry under Timothy Cutler in 1719–20, observed in Wollebius, and learned in his study of several different logic texts.¹⁰ Edwards himself says in the first sentence that he aims to "avoid all confusion" regarding his discourse on the subject by first observing a crucial distinction.¹¹ Here we see the influence of Arnauld's *Port-Royal Logic*:

The best way to *avoid the confusion* in words encountered in ordinary language is to create a *new language* and new words that are connected only to the ideas we want them to represent.... Then we can give them the meaning we want them to have, designating the idea we want them to express by *other simple words* that are not at all equivocal.¹²

Edwards makes a series of distinctions regarding the ends for which an agent takes action. The end for which God created the world is not merely an ultimate end, it is an *original* ultimate end. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle introduced the notion of an *ultimate* end, contrasting it against a *subordinate* end. John Owen (1648) refines the notion by adding that an (ultimate) end can be either "that which [an agent] effecteth, or that for whose sake he doth effect it."¹³ This is a distinction that Franco Burgersdyck (1697) repeats as "end *of* which" and "end *for* which."¹⁴ William Brattle (as recorded in William Partridge's 1687 transcription), following Wollebius (1626), distinguished between "primary end" and "secondary end," which is a dif-

garten, and certainly not Kant. This does not diminish the importance of their work for this essay, for it shows the amount of attention the issue was receiving from 1722 when Edwards began his work on it and 1753 or 1754 when he completed it.

¹⁰ Edwards's probable first direct experience with a logic text was through his father, Timothy, who owned a William Partridge's transcription of Charles Morton's *A Logick System* and of William Brattle's *Compendium of Logick*. See Rick Kennedy, *Aristotelian and Cartesian Logic at Harvard* (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1995) x, 7 and William Morris, *The Young Jonathan Edwards: A Reconstruction* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005) 79, 80, 90, 290.

¹¹ *WJE* 8:405.

¹² Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, *Logic of the Art of Thinking* [1683] (ed. Jill Vance Buroker; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 60 (emphasis added).

¹³ John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (1648; repr. Edinburgh, 2007) 50.

¹⁴ Burgersdyck (1697), Chapter XVIII *of End*. See Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards*, on Edwards's study of Burgersdyck.

ference between the thing intended to be achieved and what moves the agent to so act.¹⁵ Even in this very truncated review of Edwards's background reading we see four crucial distinctions regarding the concept of an ultimate end. Edwards will adopt these concepts, but will present them in a "new language" as Arnauld advises. No one before Edwards had used the term, "original," or its composite concept in presenting an account of God's end in creating the world. It bears repeating that Edwards does not merely assert that God's end in creating is an original ultimate end, he demonstrates this deductively from shared assumptions and concepts.¹⁶ In so doing, he distinguishes three logically distinct types of ultimate ends: original, consequential, and mixed.¹⁷ Therefore, when theorizing about God's end in creation, the distinction that Edwards makes between these must be observed.

In what follows, I will argue that according to Edwards, every ultimate end has three aspects: a pleasure aspect, a practical aspect, and a valuational aspect.¹⁸ The valuational aspect has four dimensions, the cognitive and the passionate, both of which are dispositional and may become occurrent. Edwards extensively and specifically presents these three aspects, thereby indicating that God's end in creation must be understood in terms of these aspects and their dimensions. Even though Edwards does not *explicitly* distinguish an end's being dispositionally agreeable from its being occurrently agreeable, as we will see, his definitions and his examples illustrate such a distinction and cannot make sense without them.

Something should be said regarding the style of exegesis in this paper. A convincing expository paper should involve a justification of the interpretation. However, it is famously difficult to discern Edwards's exact usage of terms in the Introduction to *End of Creation*. Even Samuel Hopkins in the Preface to *End of Creation* writes that "[t]he author had designed these dissertations for the public view; and wrote them out as they now appear: though 'tis probable that if his life had been spared, he would have revised them, and rendered them in some respects more complete. Some new sentiments, here and there, might probably have been added; and some passages brightened with further illustrations."¹⁹ One can only wish that the final version had been a bit more perspicuous. Some people have taken the

¹⁵ Kennedy, *Aristotelian and Cartesian Logic* 280.

¹⁶ He complies with the "Rules concerning demonstrations" given in the "Port-royal Logic": "A true demonstration requires two things: one, that the content include only what is certain and indubitable; the other, that there is nothing defective in the form of the argument. Now we will certainly satisfy both of these if we observe the two rules we have laid down. The content will include only what is true and certain if all the propositions asserted as evidence are: Either definitions of words that have been explained, which, since they are arbitrary, cannot be disputed; Or axioms that have already been granted and should not be assumed if they are not clear and evident in themselves, by the 3rd rule; Or previously demonstrated propositions that have consequently become clear and evident by virtue of the demonstration" (Arnauld, *Logic* 251).

¹⁷ Edwards writes, "a thing sought may have the nature of an ultimate, and also of a subordinate end, as it may be sought partly on its own account, and partly for the sake of a further end" (*WJE* 8:407).

¹⁸ The distinction between the practical and the valuational underlies the distinction Edwards makes between a "chief end" and an "ultimate end" in his very first sentence of the dissertation.

¹⁹ *WJE* 8:401.

conceptual opacity of Edwards's Introduction to indicate that Edwards was a bit confused. For example, as Michael McClymond claims,

The internal layout of *End of Creation* testifies to Edwards' efforts at organizing his argument. Nonetheless, a discernible sprawl of ideas from chapter to chapter and from section to section indicates that his attempts at organization were not wholly successful, perhaps because his chosen topic resisted systematization. The preparatory notebooks of *Miscellanies* that Edwards kept throughout his adult life show the gradual development of his thinking on God's "end in creation." They indicate that the longer he pondered God's end in creating, the more his thinking on the topic ramified and diversified. *End of Creation*, in its published form, is less a single course of argument than a set of pathways to a common destination.²⁰

This verdict is premature and violates the principle of charity in interpretation, which requires one to take an author in the strongest plausible sense. Edwards helps the interpreter by providing many examples and, while he is not perfectly consistent, one can clarify his usage by checking one's interpretation against his examples. The whole process involves hypothesizing a meaning, then testing it by uniform substitution in every case. The hypothesized interpretation would be refined accordingly. A thorough justification might record this entire process. Doing so in this paper, however, would detract from its intent. Even so, I believe that I have supported my contentions with sufficient and appropriate citations, even though additional ones could have been added. In addition, one could also attempt to discern which claims are assumptions, common notions, postulates and propositions (theorems) and then trace his deductions (explicit and implicit) using formal logic. Space in this paper precludes this aspect of complete justification from being included.²¹ The point is simply that Edwards's philosophical argumentation in the Introduction and in Chapter One is deductively valid.

II. THE GENERIC CONCEPT OF AN ORIGINAL ULTIMATE END

Let us begin tracing Edwards's notion of an *original* ultimate end by considering first what he thought every ultimate end had in common. As Edwards writes, "An ultimate end is that which the agent seeks in what he does for its own sake."²²

The first feature to notice is that an ultimate end is a *state of affairs achieved by a sequence of actions*. Call this the *practical aspect* of ultimate ends in general. There are two sub-types. Such a state of affairs may be achieved and completed, requiring no further action. Acquiring a sum of money is an example. Alternatively, some ends require continuing action to sustain the achievement over time. Maintaining one's health and being respected by a particular person are two more of Edwards's ex-

²⁰ Michael McClymond, *Encounters with God: An Approach to the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 54.

²¹ I have done this in an unpublished paper, "Jonathan Edwards' Introduction to *End of Creation*: An Exposition and Logical Analysis." Proofs of Edwards's propositions are given in *First-Order Logic* showing the deductive validity of Edwards's entire argument in the Introduction.

²² *WJE* 8:405.

amples. As we shall see, Edwards's view of the end for which God created the world is of this second sub-type: it is eternally sustained. This practical aspect receives the lion's share of scholarly and pastoral attention. Nevertheless, there is so much more to the concept, and this feature alone is insufficient to characterize an original ultimate end.

An ultimate end always includes the *pleasure* or *enjoyment* one obtains in achieving that state of affairs. Call this the "pleasure aspect." He mentions this aspect in nearly every example he gives in the Introduction. That is, both the pleasure and the state of affairs constitute the end. He continues,

(An ultimate end is that which) ... he has respect to, as what he loves, values and takes pleasure in on its own account, and not merely as a means of a further end: as when a man loves the taste of some particular sort of fruit, and is at pains and cost to obtain it, *for the sake of the pleasure of that taste*, which he values upon its own account, as he *loves his own pleasure*.²³

Thus, an ultimate end is not the state of affairs achieved by itself, and neither is it the pleasure alone. It includes both.

The third aspect of ultimate ends—the *valuational*—is more complex. Edwards frequently uses the terms, "loves," "values," "esteems," "desires," and so on to denote an agent's various evaluative attitudes toward an end pursued. As Edwards writes,

Thus when a man that goes a journey to obtain a medicine to cure him of some disease, and restore his health, the obtaining that medicine is his subordinate end; because 'tis not an end that he seeks for itself, or *values* at all upon its own account; but wholly as a means of a further end, viz. his health: separate the medicine from that further end, and it is *esteemed* good for nothing; nor is it at all *desired*.²⁴

He does not clearly define these various evaluative attitudes, and his usage of terms is not perfectly consistent. Still, two distinct senses can be discerned in his use of these terms and should be recognized as what Edwards intended to convey. First, an original ultimate end is evaluated or assessed as to its actual inherent value. That is, its value is treated as a fact and assessed accordingly. In this first sense, it may be said that the agent "cognitively" values that end. In another sense, it may be said that the agent "affectively" or "passionally" values that end. Let us refer to these as the *cognitive* and the *passional dimensions* of the *valuational aspect*. The passional dimension presupposes the cognitive dimension. A person esteems and desires a thing because he believes the thing to be valuable in fact.

What justifies attributing this distinction to Edwards? First, with these senses distinguished, his argumentation in the Introduction is deductively valid. Perhaps more importantly, the validity of his argumentation for the third criterion in Chapter One requires this distinction. Thus, to deny that Edwards intended the distinction is to render his argument invalid in two places. Finally, the distinction is legiti-

²³ Ibid.; emphasis added.

²⁴ Ibid.; emphasis added.

mate given his view of an agent's understanding and will. The understanding informs and guides the will, which includes the affections.²⁵ A person does not value something affectively without first understanding its value.

In 18th-century terms, to assert that an agent values something sometimes involves both of these senses and may be expressed by saying that *that* end is "agreeable to" the agent. The term, "agreeable," is used twenty six times in the Introduction. The concept plays an increasingly prominent role and serves as the pivotal issue in his progressive refinement of the notion of an ultimate end.²⁶ Thus, it is crucial to get as clear as we can regarding Edwards's use. To reiterate, to say that something is agreeable to an agent is to say that that agent sees that the thing is valuable and esteems or desires it accordingly. But such evaluation need not always be occurrent; it need not always constitute the content of a present state of consciousness. It may be only dispositional. Edwards's examples indicate both:

Thus, for instance: A man may originally love society. An inclination to society may be implanted in his very nature: and society may be agreeable to him antecedent to all presupposed cases and circumstances: and this may cause him to seek a family.²⁷

Here the man has a disposition and he may be characterized by saying that he "loves society." Yet the man was not perpetually seeking a family; only later does this inclination initiate action.

Dispositions play a crucial role in Edwards's refinement of the concept of an ultimate end and in the argumentation of *End of Creation*, as well as in many other treatises and sermons. Let me make two general observations which, while they reflect the examples Edwards gives, they are couched in contemporary terms for the sake of clarity. First, some dispositions are related to what a person requires in order to exist, to function, or to be fulfilled. These signal *ontological* dependence, basic *functional* dependence, and *psychological* (emotional or overall well-being) dependence, respectively. Examples of *need* dispositions are *needs water* or *needs companionship*. Many, if not most, dispositions are not like these, though. Examples of *non-need* dispositions are *loves honey*, *is compassionate*, and *loves justice*. Second, dispositions essentially involve conditions that initiate their manifestation. The initiating conditions of *need* dispositions are somewhat easy to identify. For example, once the level of water in the cells of a human body falls below a certain level, the person experiences thirst and seeks water. The initiating conditions of non-need dispositions are more difficult to identify and are often unknowable. Thus, while seeing someone in distress seems clearly to be at least partly what initiates the disposition *is compassionate* (which manifests in showing compassion), it is more difficult to ascertain what

²⁵ The understanding is "that by which [the soul] is capable of perception and speculation, or by which it discerns and views and judges of things"; the will is that by which the soul apprehends things as "liking or disliking, pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting . . . [these exercises] are called the *affections*." John E. Smith, ed., *Works of Jonathan Edwards 2, Religious Affections* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959) 96.

²⁶ *WJE* 8:405–15.

²⁷ *WJE* 8:411.

conditions initiate the disposition *loves honey* (which manifests in desiring and acquiring honey).

While Edwards seems to have intended this simple and generic analysis of dispositions (as evidenced by the examples he gives), he does not state these generic aspects of dispositions in *End of Creation*. However, since the valuational aspect of ultimate ends is so important to his thesis, we should consider his examples in order to ensure an accurate understanding.

Edwards treats God's *loving justice* and *loving faithfulness* as dispositions.²⁸ In general, if a person *loves justice*, then *justice-accomplished* is agreeable to him or her. If a person *loves faithfulness*, then *promises-kept* is likewise. A person may be characterized truly by asserting that he appraises both states as being inherently valuable and also esteems and desires them accordingly. However, achieving these states (i.e. *justice-accomplished* and *promises-kept*) are not perpetually in the forefront of the agent's consciousness. They are occurrently desired and pursued only when circumstances initiate the correlative dispositions, which manifest in occurrent cognitive and passionate valuing and then in action, and finally in taking pleasure in their achievement.

Edwards also gives the example of someone's loving honey. To say "Sally loves honey" is to claim that Sally has a certain disposition. This is the same as saying, "The taste of honey is pleasant to Sally" or "Sally takes pleasure in honey." But then this in turn is just to say (using 18th-century language), "Honey is agreeable to Sally." Notice that Sally need not perpetually crave honey, seek to buy it, or even think about it for it to be true to say that honey is agreeable to Sally. As a matter of fact, most of the time, honey is not on her mind. Nevertheless, during those times when she is not even thinking about honey, it is still true that Sally loves honey. In this example, "loves" has a purely *dispositional* sense. What is asserted by the use of the sentence is only that Sally has a disposition to seek honey. However, *loves honey* also has an *occurrent* sense. The occurrent sense of the term applies to Sally, for example, when honey *is*, in fact, on her mind—when she then presently values and desires it. Thus, it may be said that Sally occurrently values honey. Again, in order to preclude someone's thinking that this construal is illegitimately being foisted upon Edwards, it must be insisted that Edwards's examples intentionally reflect these two modes of evaluation, even though he does not use the terms.

Taking stock of what we have so far, the issue on the table is the end for which God created the world. Edwards aims first to clarify the appropriate generic concept of an end. The process of Edwards's conceptual refinement tacitly assumes the general notion, *end*, and moves from a distinction between *ultimate ends per se* and *chief* ultimate ends, explaining *subordinate* and *inferior*, then finally to the distinction between *consequential* and *original* ultimate ends. The concepts that "do the work" in the refinement process are, first, an agent's *seeking* that end either for its own sake or for the sake of something else (this is the practical aspect of ultimate ends reflected in the distinction between *ultimate* and *subordinate* ends), and second, an agent's *valuing* that end (that is, both *cognitively* and *passionally*) which is introduced in

²⁸ WJE 8:412.

the distinction between *chief* and *inferior* ends), which is *dispositional* and may become *occurrent*. Thus, there are four dimensions of the *valuational* aspect of ultimate ends: valuing is both cognitive and passional; both dimensions are dispositional and may, under certain conditions, become occurrent.

1. *The difference between original and consequential.* In review, every ultimate end has three aspects: a pleasure aspect, a practical aspect, and a valuational aspect. The valuational aspect has four dimensions: cognitive, passional, and these are dispositional or occurrent. What, then, distinguishes an “original” ultimate end? Edwards writes:

But only here a distinction must be observed of things which may be said to be agreeable to an agent, in themselves considered in two senses. (1) what is in itself grateful to an agent, and valued and loved on its own account, *simply* and *absolutely* considered, and is so universally and originally, antecedent to, and *independent* of all conditions, or any supposition of particular cases and circumstances. And (2) what may be said to be in itself agreeable to an agent, *hypothetically* and *consequentially*: Or, on supposition of such and such circumstances, or on the happening of such a particular case.²⁹

As we have seen, every ultimate end is “agreeable in itself.” However, here Edwards recognizes a further distinction: ultimate ends can differ according to the types of differing *conditions* of their being agreeable. An *original* ultimate end is occurrently valued (cognitively and passional) *prior to* and *independent of* any (even hypothetically-considered) aspect of the entire series of actions and achievements which are taken to achieve it. *Before* any step is taken (or even intended) *something* initiates the correlative evaluative disposition so that the merely dispositional valuing becomes occurrent, leading to the agent’s planning and taking action. (As we shall see, when this is applied to God, it entails that he occurrently values his end *before* creating. He also *supremely* values it. The only extant supremely valuable thing is himself. As Edwards refines this: God eternally occurrently values his capacity-attributes and his intra-trinitarian “life.” Therefore, in some sense, God’s end in creation will be his capacity-attributes exercised so as to share the knowledge, love and joy he has in himself as trinitarian.)

An agent’s occurrent valuing and pursuit of a *consequential* ultimate end, on the other hand, *depends on* and *arises from* the pursuit or consideration of some state of affairs that is subordinate to some *other* ultimate end. The agent’s pursuit of this type of end is “consequent” to that agent’s having already at least considered what steps to take in seeking some *other* ultimate end. Achieving some state of affairs subordinate to some end is necessary and sometimes sufficient to initiate a disposition leading to the pursuit of a consequential ultimate end. That is, some state of affairs the agent either achieved or considers achieving as a means to his original ultimate end initiates an evaluative disposition regarding it (i.e. the consequential ultimate end) so that the agent decides to achieve it. Something initiates the disposition *after* some step had been taken. Therefore, the crucial difference between *origi-*

²⁹ *WJE* 8:411.

nal and *consequential* ultimate ends, in general, lies only in the *grounds* of their being occurrently agreeable in themselves and sought.

2. *Edwards's use of the terms "work" and "works."* To understand this better, we must be cognizant of Edwards's use of the terms, "work" and "works" in *End of Creation*. In one sense, a "work" is a state of affairs accomplished. In another sense, a "work" is an individual act. In yet a third sense, it is a sequence of actions aimed at one ultimate end. In a fourth sense, a "work" can also be a complex sequence of actions, like a "tree" having an "apex" (which would be the original ultimate end) with each "branch" terminating in a consequential ultimate end.³⁰ Thus, while in the course of a lifetime humans may pursue a number of works each defined by an original ultimate end and perhaps having several consequential ultimate ends, God has only one work guided by one original ultimate end, even though what God achieves in the process may be several consequential and mixed ultimate ends. The end for which God created the world is the ultimate end of the entire series of God's acts and accomplishments beginning with the first act of creating. Given that God has only one such work and that creation is a subordinate end, it follows that the end for which God created the world is an original ultimate end.

3. *Three points of elaboration.* With this notion of a *work* in mind, there are three logical implications that become apparent and merit elaboration. The first is that, while some created thing is involved in initiating the disposition associated with a consequential ultimate end, *no created thing or circumstance can be a "cause" of God's acting in the first place*. That is, when the concept of an original ultimate end is applied to God, no created thing could have been what initiated the disposition associated with the original ultimate end because, by definition, it does not yet exist. Creation is a subordinate end, but ultimate ends are valued by the agent and decided on *before* any subordinate end is achieved or even merely considered. Every subordinate end is decided upon *after* one's ultimate end becomes occurrently agreeable to the agent. Second, (as we shall see) every created alternative is eternally perfectly known by God simply as possibility. None could be eternally known and yet by itself trigger a disposition leading to its realization *ad extra*. So something else had to have been both dispositionally and occurrently valuable to God before creation or anything in it existed! As Edwards puts it, "but we must suppose something else that should

³⁰ From the first paragraph, it looks as though Edwards wants to emphasize a distinction between "the ultimate end" for which for which God created the world and "the chief end." There is some exegetical evidence suggesting that we should take "chief end" to be "the one chief end"; the most valuable end in an entire work. However, there seems to be other exegetical evidence in favor of understanding "chief end" generically as "the most valuable in a *branch* of ends." A "tree" or a "work" may have branches. Every branch, except the apical branch, terminates in a consequential ultimate end which is most valuable in that branch and so, by definition (albeit relatively speaking), "a" chief end. The chief end in an entire work (i.e. the original ultimate end) is the "supreme end." If we do not take Edwards this way, we are left with no term to describe the relative value of such ultimate ends. There is also logical evidence in favor of understanding it this way. In working out the logic of Edwards's Introduction, one discovers that it entails contradictions if one does *not* treat an ultimate end which terminates a branch to be "a chief end." A "*supreme end*" is the most valuable end in an entire work that, by virtue of having consequential ultimate ends, has chief ends which, nevertheless, are not the supreme end.

incline him to create the subjects or order the occasion.”³¹ We *must* suppose this, given the validity of his deductive argument so far. Therefore, whatever it was that “caused” God to begin his work *ad extra*—whatever it was that initiated his evaluative disposition towards it and moved him occurrently to value and to pursue it—it could *not* have been anything created or even imagined as having been created.

Nevertheless, this first logical implication does not preclude some created thing’s being imagined as an *aspect* of God’s original ultimate end because alternative states of creation are aspects of God’s eternal self-awareness. As Edwards writes, “The existence of the created universe consists as much in [God’s knowledge] as in anything: yea, this knowledge is one of the highest, most real and substantial parts, of all created existence, most remote from nonentity and defect.”³²

No doubt this claim takes most readers aback. “Creation consists in God’s knowledge”? “God’s knowledge is the farthest thing from non-existence”? Here is what I believe Edwards means by this. Since God is eternally omnipotent and eternally aware of his omnipotence, every possible achievement *ad extra* (every possible state of the world and sequence of such states) is eternally an aspect of God’s self-awareness (i.e. God’s knowledge). The actual creation and its sequential changes through time that God now wills into existence moment-by-moment is only one alternative history among many (perhaps infinitely many) of which God is eternally aware. In other words, the first implication does not rule out some created thing’s being imagined as an *aspect* of God’s original ultimate end because he is eternally aware of all alternatives.

Furthermore, since God *eternally* occurrently values his ability to create (i.e. his omnipotence), every creational alternative is *eternally valued*—simply as a possible expression of God’s ability *ad extra*. To put it another way, God is eternally aware of and values every created alternative (at least insofar as it is an aspect of God’s awareness of his ability *ad extra*). As Edwards claims, “It seems a thing in itself fit, proper and desirable that the glorious attributes of God, which consist in a sufficiency to certain acts and effects, should be exerted in the production of such effects as might manifest the infinite power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, etc., which are in God.”³³

As Edwards puts it here, God’s attributes are “glorious.” He then suggests that the *exertion* of God’s attributes to produce effects that manifest those attributes at least seems to be a valuable thing. Notice that there are three components to this: *God’s attributes*, the *exercising* of God’s attributes, and the *effects* of the exercising of God’s attributes. Edwards is not referring to all of God’s attributes, but rather only to those that “consist in a sufficiency to certain acts and effects.” These may be called, *capacity-attributes*. God’s capacity-attributes include his ability to create, to execute justice, to fulfill promises, and so on—any type of action that is by defini-

³¹ *WJE* 8:412.

³² *WJE* 8:432.

³³ *WJE* 8:428.

tion *ad extra*. Thus, Edwards is claiming that the value of any actual achievement derives from the value of the attribute. The value, for example, of the actual existence of “the heavens” lies solely in their being expressions of God’s own beauty and ability. In sum, each alternative state of creation’s inherent value lies in its being an expression (in potential and as actual) of God’s ability. However, none of them (achieved or imagined as being achieved) can initiate an evaluative disposition regarding an original ultimate end leading God to create.

The second logical implication is that *no end subordinate to an original ultimate end can be a means to a consequential ultimate end*. Recall that a consequential ultimate end is occurrently agreeable to an agent only *after* and *dependent on* some situation’s being imagined or being brought into existence. This is why it is called a consequential ultimate end. In other words, a consequential ultimate end is (occurrently) agreeable to an agent *after* and *dependent on* some situation (imagined or existing), which initiates the underlying evaluative disposition to manifest in occurrent valuing and pursuit. The initiating situation for a *consequential* ultimate end is a feature of some subordinate end pursued as a means to an *original* ultimate end. Therefore, the initiating situation cannot be a means to the consequential ultimate end—though it is *prior to* and a *necessary condition of* it in one sense. It cannot be a means to the consequential ultimate end, because it was the precipitating situation from which emerged the idea to pursue the consequential ultimate end in the first place and means do not precede ends in the order of deliberation.³⁴

These two points entail a third point of elaboration: *Every pure ultimate end is either original or consequential, but not both*. This implication directly serves Edwards’s primary polemical purpose in writing. He wanted to rule out those ideas that seemed to him to be “foundations of the fashionable scheme of divinity” that he opposed. Alternative theories of God’s end in creation seldom specify all of the dimensions Edwards draws out in *End of Creation*. Thus, any attempt to classify these theories as being either original or consequential will, in most cases, lack a description of some relevant feature. Nevertheless, since the categories are mutually exclusive, if it can be shown that a theory of God’s end satisfies defining characteristics of either type, it follows that it does not belong to the other type. Conversely, if it can be shown that a theory clearly lacks a defining characteristic of one type, then it follows that it *does* belong to the other.

III. THE CONTENT OF GENERIC CONCEPT WHEN APPLIED TO GOD

The generic concept of an *original ultimate end* that Edwards explicates seems to have been the commonly understood notion of an agent’s *purpose* for acting—though probably not all of its aspects were consciously intended or even known when the terms “end” or “purpose” were used. After he sufficiently refines the notion of an ultimate end, arriving at an “original ultimate end” and deducing that

³⁴ There remains the interesting issue of whether, in Edwards’s view, there really are any *purely* subordinate ends, that is, whether on Edwards’s view there are any ends which God achieves, but have no inherent value.

God's end in creation is an original ultimate end, Edwards continues his deductive argumentation in his application of the concept to God. In Chapter One his argument involves four criteria that must be satisfied by any candidate notion of God's end in creation. First, given God's aseity and that creation is *ex nihilo*, God's original ultimate end in creation cannot entail a deficiency, insufficiency, or mutability in God. Second, given the concept of an original ultimate end, it must be inherently and supremely valuable before creation and capable of being achieved by creating. Third, it must manifest God's supreme regard for himself. Fourth, it must be a practical consequence of God's creating the world.

When Edwards applies the concept of an original ultimate end to God's acting for purposes, two factors are underscored which have crucial consequences. The factors are the differences between a person's acting for ends and God's acting for ends. First, while persons have needs, God does not; he is self-sufficient. Only a non-need evaluative disposition could be involved in God's acting for ends. The second factor is that creation is a subordinate end and is *ex nihilo*. Since Edwards claims that the end for which God created the world is an original ultimate end, it follows from these, first, that God had to have valued the pleasure of something even *before* and *independent of* any created thing's existence or even God's consideration of its existence. Otherwise, by definition, God's end would not be an original ultimate end. What, then, *could* God have so valued? Edwards holds that God eternally experiences the pleasure of intra-trinitarian life. There are no sources external to him that could add to his pleasure in being God. God has no deficiencies that could be met by creating. God's value for himself is eternally occurrent. Thus, whatever motivates God to create it is not an appetite or a need-disposition. It must be some *other* kind of disposition connected to his eternal felicity as God. The initiating situation must be "internal," Edwards states this in the Introduction,

In like manner we must suppose that God before he created the world, had some good in view, as a consequence of the world's existence, that was *originally agreeable* to him in itself considered, that inclined him to create the world, or bring the universe, with various intelligent creatures into existence, in such a manner as he created it.³⁵

There is only one candidate that fits these criteria. As Edwards summarizes it in Chapter One, "a disposition in God, as an original property of his nature, to an emanation of his own infinite fullness, was what excited him to create the world; and so that the emanation itself was aimed at by him as a last end of the creation."³⁶ Here we have God's end and motive in creation. This is a general statement and seems to be the most that a philosophical account can yield, given the assumptions and initial concepts. Edwards calls such an end an "emanation," thereby indicating some kind of externalization of what God possesses as God.³⁷

³⁵ *WJE* 8:412; emphasis added.

³⁶ *WJE* 8:435; emphasis original.

³⁷ Edwards uses the same term, but conveys a concept distinct from the neo-Platonic concept of emanation. Creation itself is no part of the emanation in Edwards's view.

Edwards has been accused of advocating pantheism because of the way he states this.³⁸ This charge is misdirected. First, Edwards's occasionalist idealism is a realism. Edwards's idealism does not deny the extra-mental reality of the material world with respect to humans. Edwards does not deny, but rather affirms that material objects exist independently of human thought. However, the material world just *is* God's willing it in every aspect at every moment.³⁹ Thus, Edwards's occasionalist idealism is a form of *res*-idealism in contrast to Berkeley's *mens*-idealism.⁴⁰ Second, no aspect of an intentional object is identical to the agent for whom it is intentional. By analogy, no aspect of a scenario is identical to the person who is imagining it. So, no aspect of creation could be identical to God. Therefore, Edwards's occasionalist idealism *cannot* be a version of pantheism.⁴¹ It is better construed as *intentional object panentheism*: creation is "within" God as a thought is "within" a consciousness. Be this as it may, Edwards's philosophical account is not the complete picture. In Chapter Two Edwards restates his view:

all that is ever spoken of in the scripture as an ultimate end of God's works, is included in that one phrase, "the glory of God" ... the emanation and true external expression of God's internal glory and fullness ... (526, 7) The whole of God's internal good or glory, is in these three things, viz. his infinite knowledge; his infinite virtue or holiness, and his infinite joy and happiness (528) ... the external glory of God consists in the communication of these (528) ... God communicates himself to the understanding of the creature, in giving him the knowledge of his glory; and to the will of the creature, in giving him holiness, consisting primarily in the love of God: and in giving the creature happiness, chiefly consisting in joy in God. These are the sum of that emanation of divine fullness called in scripture, "the glory of God".... viz. God's internal glory or fullness extant externally, or existing in its emanation (529) It was this value for himself that caused him to value and seek that his internal glory should flow forth from himself (532).⁴²

The "infinite fullness" or the "internal glory and fullness" that Edwards elaborates is God's intra-trinitarian self-knowledge, self-love and joy.⁴³ The emanation is,

³⁸ The *locus classicus* may be Charles Hodge ("Theology" [1] 578–80 and "Sin" [2] 217–20 in *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

³⁹ At the level of theory, Edwards's view is structurally isomorphic with current theoretical physics and is consistent with *Structural Realism* in the philosophy of science. Simply put, the universe is real, but at bottom (whatever it is) it is not matter as we perceive it.

⁴⁰ Darren Hibbs, "Who's an 'Idealist,'" *Review of Metaphysics* 58 (2005) 561–70.

⁴¹ In his discussion of charges that Edwards's view is pantheistic, Robert Caldwell cogently shows that "Edwards quite clearly did not adhere to a divinization model of the relationship between the Spirit and the saint." Robert Caldwell, *Communion in the Spirit: The Holy Spirit as the Bond of Union in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006) 115–16.

⁴² *WJE* 8:526–32. Notice how this is consistent with but more developed than Wollebius's view which Edwards studied at Yale. "No active cause [*causa impulsiva*] other than the absolutely free will and purpose of God can be assigned to the divine decrees." *The Abridgment of Christian Divinity* (1650; translation of the Latin, *The Compendium Theologiae Christianae* [1626] and translated as *Prolegomena to Christian Theology* by John W. Beardslee in *Reformed Dogmatics: Seventeenth-Century Reformed Theology through the Writings of Wollebius, Voetius, and Turretin* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965] 49).

⁴³ As Andreas Köstenberger and Scott Swain report the same idea from their study of John's Gospel, "For the ultimate goal of the triune mission is that the messianic community ... might participate in

therefore, only God's own inner life experienced by, and increasing in, creatures created *ex nihilo*. In other words, God's *original ultimate end* in creating and sustaining the world is the *pleasure* he takes in his self-knowledge, holiness, and happiness eternally-increasing in a society of beings who are upheld in existence moment-by-moment *ex nihilo*. Before creating anything, God *appraised* this goal as being inherently valuable and *esteemed* and *desired* it as such. He then began to *pursue* this and continues to act toward it. God is *moved* to pursue this end solely by virtue of his eternally-occurrent supreme regard for himself as Trinity and for his capacity-attributes.

the intra-trinitarian fellowship of love, glory and *gifting* that existed 'before the creation of the world' (17:24)." Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel* (NSBT 24; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008) 177.