A BEHOLDING AND JUBILANT SOUL: SPIRITUAL AWAKENING
IN THE THOUGHT OF JONATHAN EDWARDS
AND RALPH WALDO EMERSON

THESIS

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This study explores continuities in thought between Jonathan Edwards and Ralph Waldo Emerson by comparing their respective views on spiritual awakening. Their parallel ideas are discussed as results of similar perceptual dispositions which lead both to view awakening as an inner metamorphosis that leaves man less self-centered and more capable of a universal perception and appreciation of spiritual unity and beauty. Emphasized are parallels in Edwards's and Emerson's concepts of God, their views on the nature of awakening, their versions of preparation, and their thoughts about virtue and the awakened man. These continuities are also discussed as ideas that compose an underlying unity in American thought which unites the seemingly contradictory heritages of Puritanism and transcendentalism.
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CHAPTER I

PARALLEL VOICES

That continuities in thought exist between Jonathan Edwards and Ralph Waldo Emerson seems, at first, unlikely because their respective religious backgrounds reflect the conflicting philosophical dispositions that form the ideological heritage of America. Edwards's Calvinism contributes the now repugnant theological doctrines of original sin, innate depravity, and election. Emerson's transcendentalism contributes the conviction of man's innate goodness and the democratic notion of equality among men--theories that now seem somewhat idealistic evaluations of the human condition. Yet, Edwards and Emerson are unique as representatives of these movements in that many of their ideas transcend obvious philosophical conflicts. As public figures and private thinkers, both are primarily concerned with describing and validating the phenomenon of spiritual awakening. They believe that the intuitive mode of perception provides a more accurate means of understanding reality than is offered by the intellect so revered by scientists. This study therefore seeks to illustrate that Edwards's and Emerson's ideas about spiritual awakening form a philosophical continuum not at first apparent when these men are studied only as
representatives of particular philosophies. Such perceptual parallels also reveal an underlying unity in American thought and character that is paradoxically embodied in the antithetical attitudes of Puritanism and transcendentalism. This subterranean unity reflects a philosophical disposition to consider free will and determinism as compatible opposites which constitute a world view that is both realistic and optimistic.

Puritanism in early America obviously encompassed a tradition of hellfire preaching that defined man as a miserable sinner inevitably condemned by an angry yet infinitely just God to suffer eternal torments in hell. First generation ministers in New England preached that all men inherit the taint of Adam's sin and are, of necessity, innately depraved. Only by receiving God's grace could anyone become regenerate, or capable of virtuous action, and God, in His infinite wisdom, granted salvation arbitrarily to a chosen few designated as His elect.

While these preachers taught that God alone determined who would experience redemption and that man could do nothing to bring about his own salvation, they also endorsed the doctrine of preparation. Puritan divines such as Thomas Shepard I and Thomas Hooker felt that although man could not induce his own regeneration, he could respond to the sermons he heard and the scriptures he read in ways that would prepare him to receive grace, even though his response did not
guarantee his becoming one of God's elect. Basically, this preparatory period involved an absolute devotion to introspection and self-analysis. If an individual were honest and self-effacing in examining the natural state of his soul, he first experienced a deep conviction of his own sinfulness. Having perceived sin and its corrupting influence, he then experienced abject humiliation which purged him of some vanity and pride and subsequently heightened his awareness of his dependence on God and need for God's grace. Theoretically, man's excursion into his own soul prompted him to seek God's grace while remaining fully aware that none of his actions could have any effect on whether or not he experienced regeneration. His desire to submit to God simply made him a proper receptacle for grace should it be granted to him.

The idea that an honest commitment to self-analysis is a preparatory response to hearing God's word lies behind many of the sermons preached in New England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thomas Shephard's *The Sincere Convert* (1640) and *The Sound Believer* (1649), while tracing the stages through which the soul moves during conversion, contain chilling images of the soul's torment in hell and depict with terrifying force the agony of man's despair. Jonathan Edwards's later sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (1741) utilizes apocalyptic images that have become classic examples of the terror tactics employed in this type of preaching. Such imagery seeks to
produce a clear reflection of the wickedness and helplessness of a graceless soul in language powerful enough to force the unregenerate listener into recognizing an image of himself and experiencing a heart-felt conviction of his own sinfulness and utter inability to save himself.

Although such sermons and jeremiads constitute only a small part of the body of Puritan literature, the imagery and exhortation they contain leave lasting impressions, even on modern readers who have rejected the dogma of Calvinism. Consequently, the rhetoric of terror used represents, for many, a definition of Puritanism. Yet, the fact that these works attempt to awaken men to their own sinfulness and to dispose them to seek God's grace indicates that beneath the life-denying language and imagery lies a quiet optimism about man's potential to experience a union with God by gaining insight into himself. While they acknowledged that only members of God's elect were granted grace, Puritan divines were also aware that no finite mind could anticipate who would experience an awakening, or when, or how. They were careful, therefore, to write and preach as though spiritual awakening was possible for all, and their sermons were designed to goad men into uncompromising self-examinations that would rid them of the delusions of self-pride and dispose them to rely on God and His grace as the ultimate source of man's true identity. This faith in man's ability to define himself from a God-oriented perspective by gaining
self-knowledge constitutes the optimistic side of a Puritan heritage.

Some scholars feel that this facet of Puritanism is more significant than the terrifying language and deterministic dogma in which it is embedded. In fact, several critics compare Puritanism with nineteenth-century transcendentalism to bring out the optimism that motivated the Puritans to seek a broader self-identity within the deterministic framework of Calvinism. That some similarities exist is inevitable, since both ideologies share three basic presuppositions. First, both assume that there is a God existing in the infinite who created and now governs the world according to His divine plan. Consequently, Puritans and transcendentalists alike seek to define this deity and gain some insights into the way He orders the world. Second, both define man as a finite being who lives in a spiritually unawakened state that prevents his perceiving the divine beauty and unity of God's creation. Man's self-consciousness, separating him from his world and his creator, helps him survive in a material world of time and space but dilutes his awareness of a higher, spiritual presence that permeates all things. Finally, the Puritans and transcendentalists both observe that some men experience a spiritual awakening that subsequently leaves them with an immediate sense and awareness of divine spirit. Describing the awakening experience is, in fact, the task with which
both movements are most concerned, for analyses of such
spiritual events are necessary to formulating valid theories
about God and man and the relationship between the two.
Ultimately, for both groups, man's identity becomes a func-
tion of the presence or absence of a personal relationship
with God.

In recent years, several scholars have gone beyond
making general statements about similarities between Purit-
anism and transcendentalism by discussing parallel thought
in Jonathan Edwards and Ralph Waldo Emerson as representa-
tives of these movements, respectively. While most compari-
sions are brief and partial explorations of the parallels
between the two philosophies and their spokesmen, they
nevertheless provide insightful commentaries about specific
continuities that exist between seemingly contradictory
heritages. Henry Bamford Parkes notes that Edwards's brand
of Puritanism anticipates transcendentalism:

Almost all the ideas of transcendentalism can be
found in Edwards. Edwards also found God in nature;
Edwards also saw in beauty the revelation of the
soul to the senses; the transcendentalist voice of
God in the intuition of the heart is merely Edwards'
"divine and supernatural light, immediately imparted
to the soul by the spirit of God," extended from the
elect minority to the human race as a whole.\(^3\)

Parkes perhaps overstates his case when he concludes that
the "philosophy of Emerson in particular is wholly Edwardian,
though he seems to have absorbed ideas which Edwards had put
into circulation rather than to have studied Edwards himself.\(^4\)
Perry Miller similarly concludes that elements of transcendentalism are implicit in Edwards's later works, such as his *Dissertation Concerning the Purpose for Which God Created the World*, in which Edwards theorizes that God created the world as an extension and glorification of Himself. Miller argues that this work in particular becomes transcendental when its ideas are carried to their logical conclusions:

If God is diffused through nature, and the substance of man is the substance of God, then it may follow that man is divine, that nature is the garment of the Over-soul, that man must be self-reliant, and that when he goes into the woods the currents of Being will indeed circulate through him.⁵

Other writers approach the subject of parallel thought from a different perspective: they view Emerson as one who is powerfully influenced by certain elements of a Puritan New England heritage and interpret parts of his transcendentalism as the nineteenth-century version of older Puritan piety. Jeffrey Duncan, for instance, points out that Emerson's theory of evil as essentially privative and his faith in the reality of an infinite order are restatements of arguments previously posited by Edwards in his treatise on *Freedom of the Will*.⁶ Hyatt H. Waggoner argues that Emerson's definitions of the Oversoul and of Reason correspond so closely to the "Puritan belief that only by a divine light, granted, not achieved, could man read Scripture correctly" that the similarity "should be too apparent
to require comment." He further observes that "the chief difference between Emerson's ideas and those of his Puritan forbears would seem to be that he has dropped the idea of 'election.'" 7

By far the most extensive and scholarly treatment of this subject to date is Roger Lips's unpublished dissertation, "The Spirit's Holy Errand: A Study in Continuities in Thought From Jonathan Edwards to Ralph Waldo Emerson." 8 It includes an in-depth comparison of Edwards's and Emerson's theories about the human mind and how it functions and an analysis of each writer's views on spiritual awakening and its effect on man's perception of reality. Lips's approach is similar to that of Duncan and Waggoner in that he proposes to illustrate how numerous remnants of Puritan thought, especially as Edwards reformulated it, can be shown in Emerson's work. And to see these for what they are can bring both better understanding of Emerson and more appreciation of Puritan thought. 9

By focusing on the elements common to Edwards's Puritanism and Emerson's transcendentalism, these and other critics have both identified the historical continuities between the two movements and made valid observations about ideological and philosophical similarities. There is a need, though, for a study that presents philosophic parallels in a framework that avoids labelling either Edwards as a transcendental Puritan or Emerson as a Puritan transcendentalist. Because the ingredient that makes their thoughts
continuous through time is present regardless of the religious atmosphere in which each developed his ideas, continuity in thought can be discussed as a function of similar perceptual dispositions as well as the result of inherited cultural and religious influences. This study, therefore, examines Edwards and Emerson not as representatives of two philosophical movements but as men whose thoughts run parallel because they share the same visionary frame of mind. A certain perceptual kinship that cannot be absolutely classified as either Puritan or transcendental disposes both to view physical reality as a manifestation of infinite, benevolent Being and to view man as finite consciousness created with the potential to unite or merge with its infinite source in an awakening. They further believe that only by fulfilling this potential can man broaden his limited, self-centered perspective and move toward an other-centered or God-oriented world view in which he recognizes and rejoices in the universal spirit that is both the foundation of all creation and the only true basis for any concept of self. Each man's faith in the potential of man's consciousness to discover a true identity serves as the foundation of his philosophy and acts as the mental catalyst that urged him to define himself as a spiritual guide. The body of writing that both writers left behind records their respective efforts to stimulate higher levels of awareness in others by defining and describing the spiritual
reality that he personally felt.

Evident in both Edwards's and Emerson's descriptions of their own awakening experiences are the parallel perceptions that this study seeks to emphasize. Edwards describes his awakening in *Personal Narrative* as the memory of "that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things" that occurred as he read the scriptural passage from I Timothy i: 17:

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 forever! I . . . went to pray to God that I might enjoy him, and prayed in a manner quite different from what I used to do; with a new sort of affection. . . . From about that time, I began to have a new kind of apprehensions and ideas of Christ. . . .

While a Puritan perspective is an obvious element of the description, the primary event being recalled is the union of finite with infinite Being or Consciousness—a union which transports him to a new emotional peak and subsequently leaves Edwards feeling an "inward, sweet sense of these things," a new "sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God. . . ." 11

Emerson also describes a spiritual awakening that leaves him filled with the same kind of delight toward divine Being. In his 1836 essay, *Nature*, he writes:
Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear. In the woods, too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough, and at what period soever of life is always a child. In the woods is perpetual youth. . . . In the woods we return to reason and faith. . . . Standing on the bare ground, --my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space, --all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God.12

Again, while this passage has a distinct transcendental flavoring--in fact, the transparent eyeball has become a classic symbol for transcendentalism--Emerson, like Edwards, is describing the union of a finite consciousness with God's infinite consciousness. Implicit in Edwards's description and directly stated in Emerson's is the idea that the individual is surprised by the sudden and immediate sense of divine bliss with which he is filled. Furthermore, each experiences a rush of emotion so commanding that he defines it as the indwelling of a universal spirit with which he feels united. Edwards's desire to feel "swallowed up" in God and Emerson's feeling the "currents of the Universal Being circulate" through him are their individual attempts to conceptualize the fusion of the infinite mind with finite human awareness. They do not gain an intellectual understanding of divinity but feel an intuitive sense or awareness or spiritual unity and beauty.

Especially significant are the verbs used in these
particular passages; they indicate that an awakening involves a perceptual acceleration and point to the idealism that forms the basis for both Edwards's and Emerson's philosophies. At the beginning of the epiphany, each speaks from the perspective of an unawakened man who feels as if some outside force is acting upon him. Edwards says that something "came into" his soul and "was as it were diffused through it," and Emerson feels himself "uplifted into infinite space" by some unidentified essence. As emotions accelerate, however, all concepts of "in" and "out" disappear as is indicated by the verbs used at the end of each description, when an emotional crescendo is reached. Edwards feels himself "swallowed up" in God and wishes that he could live in such a state forever. Similarly, Emerson feels the "currents of the Universal Being circulate through" him. Each man, then, moves from a perspective in which he feels influenced by a force over which he has no control into a state where he feels united with infinite Being. Their experiences leave them with the intuitive conviction that infinite Consciousness is ultimate reality and that all matter is an expression of infinite idea in finite form. Hence, in a world made of consciousness, there is no influx or efflux of spirit; there is only a sense of union or separation from the Being of which all things are a part. Consideration of this vision of a world that is created, sustained, and unified by infinite Consciousness renders
insignificant any concern as to whether divinity exists outside of man or within man. Ultimately, for Edwards and Emerson, all things are part of infinite Idea which, being eternal, transcends concepts of time and space, inside and outside.

This study, then, examines Edwards's and Emerson's concepts of the relationship between man and God, finite and infinite, before, during, and after spiritual awakening. Such an approach to parallel thought not only explores the unique perceptual gifts of Edwards and Emerson but also provides additional insights into the underlying continuity of thought that links Puritanism and transcendentalism, revealing both as characteristically American.

Chapter II primarily examines general similarities in Edwards's and Emerson's concepts of spiritual awakening. Both believe that the phenomenon is the result of the presence of a divine entity; therefore, this chapter begins with a brief exploration of their definitions of God and emphasizes the parallels that exist between their philosophical concepts of God as Being or Consciousness, the elemental force of animation that constitutes the organic essence of the universe. The comparative study that follows emphasizes four philosophical continuities that are inherent in their views on spiritual awakening. First, both believe that an awakening occurs when man momentarily becomes aware of the presence of divine unity and beauty within and without
himself. Second, both feel that the resultant moment of insight is one in which man transcends his subjective mode of perception and fleetingly glimpses ultimate truth or divine reality. Third, both Edwards and Emerson conceive of awakening as an intuitive perceptual experience that primarily affects man's emotional being. It is a moment in which man is filled with a new beatitude as he senses the presence of spirit and feels united with all parts of his world. Finally, each believes that an awakening leaves man with both the ability to contemplate spiritual things and the desire to exhibit the perceptual transformation that has taken place within himself.

Chapter III explores the philosophical idealism that forms the foundation of Edwards's and Emerson's concepts of awakening. Three continuities in thought are emphasized. First, Edwards and Emerson conceive of the finite material world as the manifestation of spirit. Second, both believe that the physical world exists solely as the emanation and exhibition of the infinite beauty, unity, power, and virtue of Being, Consciousness, or God. Both view nature as the mute revelation of divine spirit; man, as a more conscious life form, is meant to perceive this divinity in an awakening and subsequently become the articulation of divine virtue. Within this framework is also the idea that man has fallen away from communion with spirit. Edwards and Emerson share similar ideas about what constitutes man's
fall and how this fall ultimately leads to the fulfillment of God's plan to emanate and express himself through entities that possess varying degrees of awareness.

Chapter IV compares Edwards's and Emerson's views on how an awakening occurs and deals more specifically with the perceptual parallels that govern their concepts of the moment of awakening itself, a subject that Chapter II examines in a more general manner. Edwards's and Emerson's ideas about how man may prepare for an awakening are first explored with emphasis on similarities in their concepts of humility and of the value of seeking knowledge. The latter part of the chapter deals with their descriptions of awakenings as epiphanies and seeks to establish that, for both, a spiritual epiphany is a moment in which man may become aware of the presence of essential divinity in either all or part of his mental or physical world. In both instances, man is momentarily transported to a new spiritual plateau by an overwhelming divine rapture that subsequently alters his emotional and perceptual being.

Chapter V briefly examines Edwards's and Emerson's concepts of virtue in the awakened man, summarizes the continuities of thought analyzed in this study, and comments on the two-fold value of this comparative analysis. Most immediately, this comparison illustrates that, although the language that Edwards and Emerson use reflects obvious disparity between the general dispositions of a Calvinist and a
transcendentalist, the ideas about spiritual awakening that lie beneath the phraseology are parallel and reflect a perceptual continuity. In a broader sense, this study provides additional insight into the elements of Puritanism and transcendentalism that form an underlying substratum of religious thought in America.
NOTES


4 Parkes, p. 34.


6 Jeffrey Duncan, Power and Form in Emerson's Thought (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Va., 1973), pp. 87-88.


9 Lips, p. 21.


CHAPTER II

EDWARDS AND EMERSON: SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

More often than not, a hiker decides to climb a mountain because he believes there is something worth seeing at the top. He gathers his equipment, begins the strenuous uphill trek, suffers from extreme heat or cold, drinks his water sparingly so that it will last the entire trip, and perhaps endures pain from insect bites as well as from cuts and scratches--all because he imagines that the beauty of the panorama he will see is worth the effort he puts into climbing. When he reaches the top, he does not look over the edge right away. He drops his equipment, wipes his brow, catches his breath, and prepares to devote his full attention to the view. Yet, when he turns his eyes toward the brink of the precipice on which he stands, he realizes immediately that absolutely nothing could have prepared him for the awesome majesty that seems to pour forth from the very atmosphere. The world is suddenly glued together into one magnificent whole. Sky and mountains--heaven and earth--meet and merge. Clouds become ghostlike wisps that lend an ethereal splendor to the spectacle. Colors are at once sharper, more distinct, and yet more thoroughly blended together. The air itself seems supercharged with an energy he
has never before felt with such intensity. Unexpectedly, amidst pure silence and stillness, he feels the powerful dynamism of life. He is beyond thought. He seeks only to look, to drink it all in, because somewhere in the recesses of his being he knows that he is privileged, that his vision is NOW, and that he may never again live so completely.

Such moments are, of course, not limited to hikers. People in many different situations experience similar periods of elation in which the mind seems sensitized to a heightened perception and appreciation of natural beauty. Awesome as these moments seem, they are but shadowy suggestions of what Edwards and Emerson call spiritual awakening. Both writers conceive of an awakening as a moment in which man not only glimpses the beauty, unity, and harmony of nature but also senses the presence of a divine spirit behind the physical, feels a communion with the power of its unifying energy, and subsequently has his perception of himself and his world forever altered. For Edwards and Emerson, these epiphanies occur when man becomes aware that some primal, spiritual force is flowing through him. This awareness energizes him; his senses are sharpened and his whole being is galvanized by his more intense perception of this reality. Edwards and Emerson view this spiritual force as essentially divine, and they call it God, pure Being, Consciousness, or existence itself. They also believe that spiritual awakening is the result of the emanation of this
life force through man. While Edwards calls its emanation special grace and Emerson calls it Reason, both are speaking of the same kind of influence, and both believe that man's awareness of it elicits an awakening experience. They also share parallel views on the qualitative nature of awakening as an intuitive experience that leaves one more able to perceive spiritual beauty and truth. Furthermore, man's awareness of special grace or Reason leaves him with an inner, contemplative sense of divine beauty, truth, and peace and compels him to give evidence of the perceptual transformation that he has felt. Since their descriptions of spiritual experiences presuppose the existence of some divine entity, it is necessary first to explore their definitions of God.

Although Edwards as a preacher often describes a wrathful Deity who looks down upon and punishes sinners, he adheres to a more philosophical view of God in his treatises and private writings. He believes that absolute nothing is "utterly impossible." While there is "such a thing as nothing with respect to you and me" and "with respect to this globe of earth and . . . this created universe," there is "no such thing as nothing with respect to entity, 'being' absolutely considered" ("Of Being," 9). In Edwards's view, "it is necessary some being should eternally be" and this entity "must be infinite and omnipresent" since it is contradictory to say that "there must be being somewhere and not other where . . ."
He therefore declares that "Space is this necessary, eternal, infinite, and omnipresent being" because "space is the very thing that we can never remove and conceive of its not being" ("Of Being," 1). His logic culminates with the conclusion that the infinite Being that constitutes all space is God's transcendent spirit:

But I had as good speak plain. I have already said as much as that space is God. And it is indeed clear to me that all the space there is, not proper to body, all the space there is without the bounds of the creation, all the space there was before the creation, is God Himself. ("Of Being," 2)

Edwards further believes that "consciousness and being are the same thing exactly" because "it is really impossible . . . that anything should be and nothing know it" ("Of Being," 6-7). He therefore conceives of God as absolute existence, Being and Consciousness itself: "The eternal and infinite Being, is in effect, Being in general; and comprehends universal existence." Since "God and real existence are the same," Edwards declares that "it may be said that God is truth itself" ("Of Being," 30), and truth for man is "the agreement of our ideas with existence" or God ("Of Being," 32).

For Edwards, universal Consciousness or truth is also a dynamically benevolent force. God is a being in whom is all possible virtue, and every virtue in the most absolute purity and perfection, and in infinitely greater brightness and amiableness than in any creature; the most perfect pattern of virtue, and the fountain from whom all others' virtue is but as beams from the sun. . . .
Edwards thus views God as infinitely conscious and inherently virtuous Being—the elemental, transcendent life force of the universe.

Emerson's concept of God is remarkably similar to that of Edwards. He too sees God as the infinite, life-giving spirit that is absolute Being or existence itself:

One who is the life of things & from whose creative will our life & the life of all creatures flows every moment, wave after wave, like the successive beams that every moment issue from the Sun...... Such is God, or he is nothing. What is God but the name of the Soul at the centre by which all things are what they are, & so our existence is proof of his.\(^5\)

Emerson also believes that God can generally be called Being. Citing with approval Mencius's definition of this universal, dynamic force as a "vast-flowing vigor," Emerson declares,

In our more correct writing we give to this generalization the name of Being, and thereby confess that we have arrived as far as we can go. Suffice it for the joy of the universe that we have not arrived at a wall, but at interminable oceans.\(^6\)

In Emerson's thought, as in Edwards's, God is "the aboriginal abyss of real Being,"\(^7\) the embodiment and emanation of all truth and virtue:

Essence, or God, is not a relation or a part, but the whole. Being is the vast affirmative, excluding negation, self-balanced, and swallowing up all relations, parts and times within itself. Nature, truth, virtue, are the influx from thence. Vice is the absence or departure of the same. ("Compensation," 121)

Emerson also equates absolute Being with infinite Consciousness. God is the "Law [that] rules throughout existence; a Law which is not intelligent but intelligence;
--not personal nor impersonal--it disdains words and passes understanding. . . ."8 For Emerson, as well as Edwards, "the dread universal essence" that is God "is not wisdom, or love, or beauty, or power, but all in one, and each entirely, is that for which all things exist, and that by which they are. . . ."9

God is, in effect, the Spirit of Life, Consciousness in its purest and most perfect form. Its flowing through man is what Edwards calls grace and Emerson calls Reason, and man's awareness of its presence constitutes spiritual awakening. According to Edwards, "the Spirit of God . . . operates by infusing or exercising new, divine and supernatural principles" into man.10 Grace is the most glorious work of God, wherein he communicates of the goodness of his nature. . . . And the influences of the Spirit of God . . . [are] those wherein God does, in so high a manner, communicate himself, and make the creature partaker of the divine nature. . . . (Religious Affections, 203)

Edwards perceives two kinds of grace or divine influence. His views on common and special grace closely parallel Emerson's later distinction between Understanding and Reason. Common grace, like Emerson's Understanding, is a utilitarian principle that helps man to function effectively in a material world while special grace, like Emerson's Reason, is a spiritual influence that gives man insight into divine beauty and goodness:
Common grace is only the assistance of natural principles; special is the infusing and exciting supernatural principles; . . . common grace only assists the faculties of the soul to do that more fully which they do by nature. . . . But special grace causes the faculties to do that that they do not by nature; causes those things to be in the soul that are above nature and of which there is nothing of the like kind in the soul by nature. . . .

Special grace, for Edwards, is the influence that causes spiritual awakening. As a divine, supernatural force, it is that which transforms man's perceptual disposition so that he perceives and reflects the absolute benevolence of God in ways that were not possible before he received grace:

Grace in the soul is as much from Christ, as the light in a glass, held out in the sunbeams, is from the sun. But this represents the manner of the communication of grace to the soul, but in part . . . [:] the soul of a saint receives light from the Sun of Righteousness, in such a manner, that its nature is changed, and it becomes properly a luminous thing: not only does the sun shine in the saints, but they also become little suns, partaking of the nature of the fountain of their light. (Religious Affections, 342-43)

Edwards also feels that during awakening man's "natural faculties . . . are the subject of this light. . . ."12 On one hand, God's grace illuminates man's understanding: "it not only removes the hindrances of reason, but positively helps reason. It makes even the speculative notions more lively" (Religious Affections, 307). Yet, Edwards additionally believes that while "there must be light in the understanding," there must also be "an affected fervent heart" because where there is a kind of light without heat, a head stored with notions and speculations, with a cold
and unaffected heart, there can be nothing divine in that light, that knowledge is no true spiritual knowledge of divine things. (Religious Affections, 120)

Although the "Holy affections" stimulated during an awakening necessarily "arise from some information of the understanding, . . . some light or actual knowledge" (Religious Affections, 266), awakening is not man's acquiring a new ability to ratiocinate but is his receiving a new intuitive conviction of spiritual things that "consists primarily in a sense of heart of that spiritual beauty" (Religious Affections, 272):

Spiritual understanding primarily consists in this sense, or taste of the moral beauty of divine things. . . . But secondarily, it includes all that discerning and knowledge of things of religion, which depends upon, and flows from such a sense. (Religious Affections, 273)

While special grace strengthens man's intuitive ability to understand spiritual things, Edwards is careful to emphasize that this divine influence does more than bolster one's natural capabilities. Special grace gives

a new supernatural sense, that is as it were a certain divine spiritual taste, which is in its whole nature diverse from any former kinds of sensation of the mind, as tasting is diverse from any of the other five senses, and that something is perceived by a true saint in the exercise of this new sense of mind . . . as entirely different from anything that is perceived in them by natural men. . . . (Religious Affections, 259-60)

Thus, one who experiences the influx of special grace is given a "new spiritual sense" which is

not a new faculty of understanding, but it is a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul, for a new
kind of exercises of the same faculty of understanding. So that new holy disposition of heart that attends this sense, is not a new faculty of will, but a foundation laid in the nature of the soul, for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of will. (Religious Affections, 206)

This new sense governs all other senses and is that by which man communes with the primal, divine energy of the universe. During awakening, one is momentarily aware that he is permeated with the pure Life Force or Consciousness that is God, and this spiritual perception alters the temper and disposition and spirit of the mind. For what is done in conversion is nothing but conferring the Spirit of God, which dwells in the soul and becomes there a principle of life and action. ("Miscellaneis," 249)

Because grace affects man's total perceptual being and only secondarily imparts intellectual knowledge, Edwards views awakening as an intuitive experience. He compares the shock that one sustains during an awakening to the awe that a man born blind would feel should he suddenly be able to see (Religious Affections, 275). In an epiphany, one's spiritual eyes are opened and dazzled by the pure energy of divine life. His primal being—his soul—is illuminated, and he can find no words to describe his experience. As Edwards explains, those who have experienced an awakening have "seen, and tasted, and felt" divine excellency and are "as far from doubting of the truth . . . [of its existence] as they are from doubting whether there be a sun, when their eyes are open upon it in the midst of a clear
hemisphere. ..." 13 Yet, they are not able "to express or communicate" their reasons for believing in divinity because "they have intuitively beheld, and immediately felt, most illustrious works and powerful evidence of divinity in them" ("A Faithful Narrative," 179). Edwards claims that describing the quality of spiritual perception to others who have not been awakened is like trying to describe the taste of honey to one who has no sense of taste (Religious Affections, 207-08). The awakened man is aware that he has been touched by pure Being, the energy of Life itself, and can find no words to describe the joy of feeling so totally alive.

Yet, one's inability to articulate the nature or quality of his spiritual experience does not imply for Edwards that man cannot manifest the effects of special grace. Edwards believes that special grace leads to two kinds of exercises in man. Some are called "immanent acts": there are

those exercises of grace that remain within the soul, that begin and are terminated there, without any immediate relation to anything to be done outwardly, or to be brought to pass in practice. Such are the exercises of grace, which the saints often have in contemplation. . . . (Religious Affections, 422)

The second effect of grace leads to what are

more strictly called practical, or effective exercises; because they immediately respect something to be done. They are the exertions of grace in the commanding acts of the will, directing the outward actions. . . . (Religious Affections, 423)

Thus, special grace transforms man's soul and makes it
perceive and find happiness in spiritual things. This metamorphosis may not be visible to other men, or it can manifest itself through virtuous actions for all to see and judge.

For Edwards, then, spiritual awakening occurs when man receives God's special grace and subsequently feels

the power of godliness in his heart, has his inclinations and heart exercised towards God and divine things, with such strength and vigor, that these holy exercises do prevail in him above all carnal or natural affections... (Religious Affections, 100)

He further believes that "man, merely with the exercise of those faculties and his own natural strength, can do nothing towards getting such a sense of divine things" ("Miscellaneies," 123). Grace is an alien energy that is granted arbitrarily only to those whom Edwards calls the saints, members of God's elect: "The conversion of a sinner... [is] not owing to a man's self-determination, but to God's determination, and eternal election..." (Freedom of the Will, 436). Thus special grace is not a latent faculty in man that unaccountably surfaces and causes awakening, as Reason sometimes is for Emerson, but is a God-given influence which, when infused into man, elicits a spiritual epiphany and subsequently functions like a sixth, spiritual sense. It is a divine gift that becomes an indwelling principle and forms a new foundation for man's perception of himself and his world.

Emerson too sees spiritual awakening as the becoming
aware of the presence of divine power within oneself. He calls this presence Reason, and his views of it often parallel Edwards's views of grace as a supernatural influence that flows into man and acts as a new spiritual mode of perception after the moment of awakening. Yet, while Emerson often conceives of Reason as an influx of divine energy, he also thinks of it as a latent intuition or instinct that exists within and is accessible to all men. The chief difference, then, between Edwards's concept of grace and Emerson's concept of Reason is that for Edwards this influence does not exist in man in any form until God infuses it, while for Emerson, it is a latent visionary power within all men that is inexplicably activated just prior to an awakening. When viewed in the larger context of spiritual awakening, however, this difference of opinion concerning the accessibility of divine inspiration is minor. Ultimately, for both men, grace or Reason, be it a supernatural influence or a latent faculty in man, is a God-given perceptual power; its presence in man is the inevitable result of Being's inherent tendency to emanate its life-giving energy and consciousness through man. Of primary importance to both is the fact that when man is touched by this influence, when he becomes aware of its presence within and around him, he becomes the vehicle through which divine energy flows and becomes consciously articulated as virtue. It is a new awareness that does not add anything to man's consciousness
but changes the way he relates to the ideas already present in his mind so that he senses more immediately the goodness and beauty of divine virtue and the emptiness and deformity of things that do not partake of that virtue.

For Emerson, Reason is not man's intellectual ability to think rationally, as it is for Edwards; instead the Understanding, like Edwards's common grace, functions in a utilitarian manner and is the faculty by which man reasons: "The understanding adds, divides, combines, measures, and finds nutriment and room for its activity in this worthy scene." But Reason, like special grace, is a higher mode of perception by which man intuits spiritual truth: "Reason transfers all these lessons [of the understanding] into its own world of thought, by perceiving the analogy that marries Matter and Mind" (Nature, 36). From one perspective, then, Reason is an intuitive sense that works in conjunction with man's understanding and allows him to see past the dualism of a physical world into the eternal oneness of spirit, just as Edwards's special grace gives man an intuitive sense of spiritual beauty and cooperates with common grace to yield man a clearer understanding of spiritual truth. Emerson calls Reason "the aboriginal Self" and views it as "that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition, whilst all later teachings are tuitions."14 Reason is an instinctual intelligence that
lies beheath the acquired knowledge with which the understand deals:

In reckoning the sources of our mental power, it were fatal to omit that one which pours all the others into mould—that unknown country in which all the rivers of our knowledge have their fountains. . . . We have a certain blind wisdom, a brain of the brain, a seminal brain . . . which seems to sheathe a certain omniscience; and which, in the despair of language, is commonly called Instinct.15

While instinct is Reason in a dormant or passive state, inspiration is "this Instinct, whose normal state is passive, at last put in action" ("Instinct and Inspiration," 68). In Emerson's view, "Inspiration is vital and continuous. It is also a public or universal light, and not particular" ("Instinct and Inspiration," 70).

When Reason moves from the domain of the unconscious into the realm of consciousness, this old, racial intelligence seems, to man, to be a new intelligence that flows through him during awakening: "an intelligence which reveals to man another condition of existence and a nearer approach to the Supreme Being. This intelligence is Reason."16 Associating Reason with the influx of pure Consciousness, Emerson thinks of it as an illumination of the mind, just as Edwards thinks of grace as a "divine and supernatural light":

The pure intellect is God. As it enters our lower sphere, we call its pure light, whilst it is not mixed with particular considerations, but is the unmixed perception of Truth and Justice, --Reason.17

Because it is God, the Spirit of Life that creates and
permeates all things, "Reason exists in an eternal Now; it creates evermore; it exists only whilst it creates; . . . to Reason all things are fluid, plastic, and new."18 Reason is "a power which exists not in time or space, but an instantaneous in-streaming causing power" (Nature, 73). When it flows through man, it is "God, the moral element . . . an electric spark . . . [that] agitates & deifies us":19

The soul filled with Reason, hath omnipresence; Space and Time disappear before its all-dissolving intuitions.20

The influx of Reason, like the influx of special grace in Edwards's thought, transports man from the material world that the understanding knows into the realm of infinite spirit and reveals divine beauty as ultimate truth. Emerson draws the same distinction between the perceptual powers of the Understanding and those of Reason that Edwards draws between common and special grace. The Understanding is a sensual mode of perception while Reason is spiritual intuition:

To the senses and the unrenewed understanding, belongs a sort of instinctive belief in the absolute existence of nature. In their view man and nature are indissolubly joined. . . . The presence of Reason mars this faith. The first effort of thought tends to relax this despotism of the senses which binds us to nature . . . and shows us nature aloof, and, as it were, afloat. Until this higher agency intervened, the animal eye sees, with wonderful accuracy, sharp outlines and colored surfaces. When the eye of Reason opens, to outline and surface are at once added grace and expression. . . . If the Reason be stimulated to more earnest vision, outlines and surfaces become transparent, and are no longer seen; causes and spirits are seen through them. (Nature, 49-50)
Although Emerson conceives of Reason as both a latent faculty of perception and as the influx of pure Being or divine Intelligence, whether Reason is within man or given to man is ultimately unimportant to him:

The royal reason, the Grace of God, seems the only description of our multiform but ever identical fact. There is virtue, there is genius, there is success, or there is not. There is the incoming or the receding of God: that is all we can affirm; and we can show neither how nor why.21

Emerson then is concerned not with the nature of Reason but with its effect on the individual. Man is the organ through which divine energy flows, regardless of its direction:

We lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams. If we ask whence this comes, if we seek to pry into the soul that causes, all philosophy is at fault. Its presence or its absence is all we can affirm.22

For Emerson, as for Edwards, divine influence—call it special grace or Reason—flows through man: "it is not mine, or thine, or his, but we are its; we are its property and men" (Nature, 27). Of primary importance to both is the awareness of its presence or absence in all things that man gains during the moment of awakening.

Just as Edwards views the reception of grace as man's conversion, Emerson also sees the flowing-through of Reason as revelation in man. Whether it is called conversion or revelation, an awakening for both Edwards and Emerson is a perceptual experience that transforms man's inner being and
primarily affects him emotionally:

We distinguish the announcements of the soul, its manifestations of its own nature, by the term Revelation. These are always attended by the emotion of the sublime. For this communication is an influx of the Divine mind into our mind. It is an ebb of the individual rivulet before the flowing surges of the sea of life.23

Again describing revelation as a powerful emotional expansion, Emerson explains:

When we have broken our god of tradition and ceased from our god of rhetoric, then may God fire the heart with his presence. It is the doubling of the heart itself, nay, the infinite enlargement of the heart with a power of growth to a new infinity on every side. It inspires in man an infallible trust. He has not the conviction, but the sight, that the best is the true, and may in that thought easily dismiss all particular uncertainties and fears. . . . ("Oversoul," 292-93)

A spiritual epiphany, in Emerson's view, is too powerful and complete an experience to be grasped by logic alone, for

when God speaketh he should communicate, not one thing, but all things; should fill the world with his voice; should scatter forth light, nature, time, souls, from the centre of the present thought; and new date and new create the whole. ("Self-Reliance," 65-66)

Consequently, Emerson, like Edwards, sees awakening as an intuitive experience that cannot be described to others:

whilst . . . the oracles of this truth cease never, it is guarded by one stern condition; this namely: it is an intuition. It cannot be received at second hand.24

Just as Edwards believes that special grace leaves man with the inner desire and ability to contemplate spiritual
things, Emerson likewise views Reason as that which "awakens in the mind a sentiment which we call the religious sentiment, and which makes our highest happiness" ("An Address," 124). This religious sentiment is a contemplative disposition, the desire to perceive and reflect upon divine goodness that exists prior to man's actually acting in a benevolent manner:

This sentiment is divine and deifying. It is the beatitude of man. It makes him illimitable. . . . When he says, "I ought:" when love warms him; when he chooses, warned from on high, the good and great deed; then, deep melodies wander through his soul from Supreme Wisdom. --Then he can worship, and be enlarged by his worship; for he can never go behind this sentiment. ("An Address," 125)

Yet, for Emerson, as for Edwards, divine influence leads not only to the contemplation of goodness but also to the exhibition of virtue. The religious sentiment becomes the moral sentiment when it is consciously articulated by man through his actions:

For the origin of all reform is in that mysterious fountain of the moral sentiment in man, which, amidst the natural, ever contains the supernatural for men.25 Emerson further believes that any visible expression of divine beauty and truth is an expression of the moral sentiment. That which is inspiration in man is "out there in nature [and] we see its fatal strength. We call it the moral sentiment."26 The "Moral Sentiment . . . makes by its presence or absence right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, genius or depravation" ('Lecture on the Times," 289).
Thus, for both Edwards and Emerson, man's becoming intuitively aware of the presence of divine energy or pure Being constitutes an explosive perceptual metamorphosis that leaves man able to contemplate and exhibit the spiritual excellency that permeates his thoughts and emotions. While Edwards feels that this energy comes from outside man and Emerson views it as the activation of an inner visionary power, both believe that an awakening experience is one in which man feels more intensely the beauty, benevolence, and purity of Being, Consciousness, or God.
NOTES

1 Jonathan Edwards, "Of Being," in The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards from his Private Notebooks, ed. Harvey G. Townshend (Eugene: The Univ. Press, 1955), p. 1. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.


3 Jonathan Edwards, "The Mind," in The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards from his Private Notebooks, ed. Harvey G. Townshend (Eugene: The Univ. Press, 1955), p. 33. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.


7 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Compensation," in Essays: First Series, Vol. II of the Centenary ed. of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), p. 121. All further references to this essay are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.


of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), p. 63. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.


11 Jonathan Edwards, "Miscellanies," in The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards from his Private Notebooks, ed. Harvey C. Townshend (Eugene: The Univ. Press, 1955), p. 111. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.


14 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," in Essays: First Series, Vol. II of the Centenary ed. of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), pp. 63-64. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.

15 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Instinct and Inspiration," in Natural History of the Intellect and Other Papers, Vol. XII of the Centenary ed. of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1921), p. 65. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.


23 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Oversoul," in Essays: First Series, Vol. II of the Centenary ed. of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), pp. 280-81. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.

24 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "An Address," in Nature Addresses and Lectures, Vol. I of the Centenary ed. of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), pp. 126-27. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.


CHAPTER III

SPIRIT AS CREATOR: AWAKENING
AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

For both Edwards and Emerson, spiritual awakening occurs because God exists. As pure Being or Consciousness, He is the spirit of animation that forms the organic substance of the universe. He is not confined to one place but is dynamically diffused through all space and all time. Edwards and Emerson believe that God is a life-giving essence and that He gives life by creating a finite, material world from the emanation of His own sheer vitality. They thus construct similar philosophical idealisms to define both the physical world and its creatures as incarnations of spirit. Yet, this idealism is paradoxical. On one hand, it is a monistic view of the world that defines all matter as the manifestation of spirit. But since both Edwards and Emerson assert that Being creates by emanating itself, their monism encompasses a dialectic. As Clyde Holbrook explains in an analysis of Edwards's thought, this concept of overflowing Being . . . is haunted by the metaphysical and logical need for another principle than that of Being itself if it is to be said that Being emanates its fullness. Since in Edwards's figures of speech the nature of God is not static, but ever dynamic and active, there must be that by which or into which this process distributes itself.
proportionately. There must be that which at least reflects, to use Edwards's own phraseology, the glory of God. Polarity or duality is then presupposed even if it is only envisaged as a possibility anterior to the existence of created or emanated creatures.\(^1\)

Holbrook's remarks are equally applicable to Emerson's thought. The dialectical monism by which both he and Edwards define the world embodies their explanation of why spiritual awakening occurs in man. Both see the exhibition of pure Being, Consciousness, or God as the one purpose behind all creation. They further see nature serving this end by standing as the mute revelation of the perfect goodness, beauty, and unity of divine spirit. Man too is meant to reflect the virtue of spirit, but, adhering to the idea that infinite Being must have levels of finite being through which to flow, Edwards and Emerson believe that man exists in a fallen or lapsed state. Like the hiker who is removed from the summit he seeks to reach, man is spiritually distanced from God, the life-giving source of his being.

Edwards and Emerson thus believe that spiritual awakening necessarily occurs because pure Consciousness emanates its infinite awareness into finite consciousnesses. When such pure Being flows through man, he is permeated with divine energy: finite and infinite, time and eternity, merge; and man, the subjective perceiver, suddenly glimpses divine reality, or ultimate truth. The expanded awareness created during the moment of insight sees beyond the material world into the eternal unity of spirit. Man subsequently becomes
the articulation or conscious expression of the power and
virtue of this infinite life-force and, like nature, he re-
fects pure Being. Edwards and Emerson further believe that
in becoming the vehicle through which God expresses His own
vital essence, man finds complete fulfillment and happiness
because he becomes more intensely aware of the presence of
divine beauty and truth.

Because God is benevolent Being and Consciousness,
Edwards feels, the "virtue of the divine mind, must consist
primarily in love to himself. . . ." God is compelled by
His own nature to express love to Himself as a beneficent
life force. He expresses such love by emanating His pure
energy because such self-expression is essentially good:

he, from his goodness, as it were enlarges
himself in a more excellent and divine manner. This
is by communicating and diffusing himself; and so,
instead of finding, he makes objects of his benevo-
ience . . . by flowing forth, and expressing himself
in them, and making them to partake of him, and then
rejoicing in himself expressed in them, and communi-
cated to them.3

Only by emanating His own infinite Being through a finite,
material world and by infusing his vitality into the crea-
tures of that world does God find complete self-expression:

This propensity in God to diffuse himself,
may be considered as a propensity to himself dif-
fused; or to his own glory existing in its emanation.
A respect to himself, or an infinite propensity to,
and delight in his own glory, is that which causes
him to incline to its being abundantly diffused,
and to delight in the emanation of it. Thus, that
nature in a tree, by which it puts forth buds, shoots
out branches, and brings forth leaves and fruit, is
a disposition that terminates in its own complete self.
("The End," 463)
The infinite life-spirit and its finite, physical manifestation, as Emerson also recognizes, are the cause and effect that constitute a unified whole. In a definitive statement of his idealism, Edwards declares it a "gross mistake" to think of "material things [as] the most substantial beings" because "spirits only are properly substance."  

The physical world, as a finite manifestation of spirit, is therefore created within and subordinate to the pure Consciousness that is God. Thus, all things depend on the power of divine Being for their existence:

God does, by his immediate power, uphold every created substance in being . . . and their present existence is a dependent existence. . . .

The power of the infinite Consciousness that creates and sustains all physical forms is such that if it were removed, "the universe for that time would cease to be, of itself; . . . the Almighty could not attend to uphold the world . . . because God knew nothing of it" ("Of Being," 7).

Edwards further believes that the manifestation of Himself is God's original and only purpose in creating the world:

Thus it appears reasonable to suppose, that it was God's last end, that there might be a glorious and abundant emanation of his infinite fulness of good ad extra, or without himself; and that the disposition to communicate himself, or diffuse his own FULNESS, was what moved him to create the world. ("The End," 460)

Consequently, infinite spirit and finite matter reflect a unity of purpose and conspire toward one end only:
the design of the Spirit of God is not to represent God's ultimate end as manifold, but as ONE. . . .
For it appears, that 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 End," 526)

Edwards sees this end fulfilled in qualitatively different ways through nature and through man. On one hand, he believes that "the works of nature are intended and contrived of God to signify and indigitate spiritual things," and declares that "bodies being but the shadows of beings . . . shadow forth spiritual beauties. This beauty is peculiar to natural things, it surpassing the art of man" (Images or Shadows, 135). Nature, then, stands as the mute revelation, or glorification, of God. But Edwards feels that nature's beauty is not the final expression of God's perfection. He believes that "the moral world is the end of the natural world; and the course of things in the latter, is undoubtedly subordinate to God's designs with respect to the former." While natural objects reveal the beauty and perfection of pure Being, the final expression of God's essence depends on this beauty being perceived by a conscious entity and interpreted or understood as absolute goodness or virtue:

It was meet that His attributes and perfections should be expressed; it was the will of God that they should be expressed and should shine forth. But if the expressions of His attributes are not known, they are not expressions; the very being of the expression depends on the perception of created understandings. And so much the more as the expression is known, so much the more it is.

Hence, for Edwards, God is ultimately "a communicating
"This communication is really only to intelligent beings" ("Miscellanies," 130), and man, as an intelligent, emotional, and moral entity is the being to whom God is revealing himself through nature.

Man is distinguished from the rest of nature because, of all the creatures in the physical world, he alone is conscious, contemplative, and therefore especially fitted to receive divine communications. Edwards notes:

The main difference between men and beasts is that men are capable of reflecting upon what passes in their own minds. Beasts have nothing but direct consciousness. Men are capable of viewing what is in themselves, contemplatively. Man was made for spiritual exercises and enjoyments and therefore is made capable, by reflection, to behold and contemplate spiritual things.9

As a rational and emotional being, man is able, says Edwards, to feel "a conviction of the judgment by reasons that evince the truth of the things of religion that respect natural good" and of "a sense of heart of natural good" ("Miscellanies," 112-13). God is therefore able to communicate 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. . . . The first part of this glory, is called truth, the latter grace. . . . ("The End," 528)

Edwards’s implication is that nature reveals divine truth, and man, when he receives grace, perceives this truth and becomes the conscious expression of God’s moral perfection or holiness.
Though man's consciousness makes him a proper vehicle for the moral expression of divine goodness, Edwards feels that the unawakened man does not realize his own perceptual abilities. Man does not perceive himself as the organ through which pure Being flows because, as a finite form of life, he is distanced from God. He exists in what Edwards calls a fallen state of depravity and must be granted God's grace before he can exercise his full potential as a conscious entity. In explaining how and why man is alienated from God, Edwards formulates an account of the fall of man and interprets it as part of a divine plan to give man the knowledge of evil which is necessary to his becoming aware of the limitless goodness inherent in the life force that creates and sustains all things.

According to Edwards, Adam, as the first man, was immersed in and communed with pure Being, or God. Although he possessed what Edwards calls a latent and inferior inclination to self-love, he was permeated with enough divine energy to make his perception of universal goodness and beauty more immediate and compelling than his perception of private reward or pleasure. Edwards calls this energy "sufficient grace" and explains that it gave Adam "so much sense of spiritual excellencies and beauties, and so much inclination or appetite to them, as that that should be of itself above any of the inferior kind of appetites" such as self-love ("Miscellanies," 159). Thus, while Adam did not have God's
"efficacious grace, or a grace that should certainly uphold him in all temptations he could meet with" ("Miscellanies," 158), sufficient grace strengthened Adam's desire to love and commune with God and checked his inclination to self-love so that Adam lived in innocence. Because his egocentric tendencies never surfaced, he remained unaware of their existence. Born into and sustained by God's grace, he also had no knowledge of life without grace, no knowledge of evil.

In asserting that God implanted in Adam the principle of self-love and granted sufficient instead of efficacious grace, Edwards indicates his belief that God ordered the world so that Adam would sin and lose communion with pure Being. When Adam sinned, he "broke God's Covenant, and fell under his curse, [and] these superior principles left his heart: for indeed God then left him; that communion with God, on which these principles depended, entirely ceased . . . ." (Original Sin, 382). Once God removed His influence, Adam fell from innocence into total corruption or depravity:

the absence of positive good principles, and so the withholding of a special divine influence to impart and maintain those good principles, leaving the common natural principles of self-love, natural appetite, etc. (which were in man in innocence) . . . will certainly be followed with corruption, . . . and that it was thus indeed that corruption of nature came on Adam, . . . (Original Sin, 381).

Having lost God's grace, Adam also lost innocence and was "awakened and ashamed with a sense of . . . guilt" because
he learned of the evil (self-love) that existed within himself and disrupted his communion with God. He was also left "in a state of darkness, . . . nothing but flesh, without spirit" (Original Sin, 382) and thus became acquainted with the emptiness and disparity of life without God’s grace.

Edwards further believes that "as Adam’s nature became corrupt, without God’s implanting or infusing any evil thing into his nature; so does the nature of his posterity (Original Sin, 383). Adam’s "Original depravity" is "a thing belonging to the race of mankind, and as if it were a property of the species” (Original Sin, 262). Fallen man, then, exists without God’s grace so that his self-love dominates his understanding and his will:

Man’s love to his own honor, separate interest, and private pleasure, which before was wholly subordinate unto love to God . . . now dispose[s] and impel[s] man to pursue those objects, . . . (Original Sin, 383)

Having interpreted Adam’s sin in Eden as a fall out of innocence and into knowledge of evil—the absence or unawareness of divine spirit—Edwards indicates that such a fall is part of God’s plan to glorify Himself. The goodness of Being itself can be neither perceived nor appreciated by creatures who have no concept of its opposite:

We little consider, how much the sense of good is heightened by the sense of evil, both moral and natural. And as it is necessary that there should be evil, because the display of the glory of God could not but be imperfect and incomplete without it, so
evil is necessary, in order to the highest happiness of the creature, and the completeness of that communication of God, for which he made the world. . . . 11

Edwards thus implies that Adam's "sense of good" before the fall was "comparatively dull and flat, without the knowledge of evil" ("Concerning Divine Decrees," 359).

The fall, then, leaves mankind with knowledge of evil, but the memory of his former communion with God, a sense of good, is never completely lost. While man inherits Adam's self-centered disposition, he also inherits a kind of racial memory of having once been infused with divine energy, and there is "an inclination in the creature . . . to the adoration of a Lord and Sovereign. . . ."12 Although no longer a dominant, spiritual principle, this inclination nevertheless makes man aware that there is a Being infinitely worthy of love and esteem. In fallen man, this memory appears to be the foundation for what Edwards calls the natural conscience which is "implanted in all mankind, to be as it were in God's stead, as an internal judge or rule, whereby to distinguish right and wrong" ("True Virtue," 63). Yet, the natural conscience is more than a superficial grasp of social mores and laws:

Thus has God established and ordered that this principle of natural conscience, which, though it implies no such thing as actual benevolence to being in general, nor any delight in such a principle, simply considered, and so implies no truly spiritual sense or virtuous taste, yet should approve and condemn the same things that are approved and condemned by a spiritual sense or virtuous taste. And that moral sense which is natural to mankind, so far as
it is disinterested, and not founded in association of ideas, is the same with this natural conscience. ("True Virtue," 51)

The natural conscience, then, is a residue left in the wake of God's divine influence by which man senses his estrangement from God and feels a sense of loss as well as regret at his inability to love wholeheartedly a Being so infinitely deserving of his adoration. As a moral sense, it is the knowledge of both good and evil that deprives man of innocence and removes him from the state of blissful ignorance in which Adam existed before the fall. Man's conscience makes him aware that he should honor and esteem without reserve the life-giving spirit of Being itself and that he does not. He is therefore at war with himself; his emotional drives overwhelm his intellectual inclinations:

He has a will against a will. He has one will arising merely from a rational judgment of what is best for him. This may be called the rational will. And he has another will or inclination arising from the liveliness and intenseness of the idea of, or sensibleness of the good of, the object presented to the mind, which we may call appetite, which is against the other rational will and in fallen man in his natural state overcomes it and keeps it in subjection, ("Miscellamies," 157-58)

On one hand, man is rationally able to perceive that his well-being depends on communion with Being or God; his natural conscience, as part of his rational judgment, makes him vaguely aware that by not partaking of the energy of divine Consciousness he has lost something on which his spiritual peace and happiness depend. But his rational perception is
dominated by stronger, emotional drives, or appetites, that prompt him to seek not universal beauty and goodness but immediate satisfaction and reward for himself as a private individual. This perceptual imbalance creates in man a double awareness of good and evil that Edwards sees as the purpose behind God's decreeing a fall. By making man aware of the absence of good inherent in himself as a finite manifestation of Being, God makes man more aware of the good inherent in pure Being. God thus makes possible the most complete and conscious expression of His virtue, and, Edwards believes, He also provides for man's complete happiness

because the creature's happiness consists in the knowledge of God, and a sense of his love. And if the knowledge of him be imperfect, the happiness of the creature must be proportionably imperfect. . . . ("Concerning Divine Decrees," 359)

In acquainting man with evil, the deprivation of Being or grace, God enables man to perceive and appreciate goodness more completely by contrasting it with its opposite. Man's sense of divine goodness is subsequently heightened and God's glorification of Himself through conscious entities is complete. Edwards thus feels that "communicating good to the creatures, is what is in itself pleasing to God" because it is the emanation of His own vitality, goodness, and happiness ("The End," 510). God's "communication of Himself to their understandings is His glory, and the communication of Himself with respect to their wills (the
enjoying faculty) is their happiness" ("Miscellanies," 130). Thus, "The emanation or communication of the divine fulness, consisting in the knowledge of God, love to him, and joy in him, has relation indeed both to God and the creature" ("The End," 529). When man experiences awakening, he becomes aware of divine energy flowing through him and feels more alive and more comfortable in his world than he has ever felt before. His happiness and his virtue become conscious expressions of the goodness, virtue, and pure vitality of Being or God:

In the creature's knowing, esteeming, loving, rejoicing in, and praising God, the glory of God is both exhibited and acknowledged; his fulness is received and returned. Here is both an emanation, and reemanation. The refulgence shines upon and into the creature, and is reflected back to the luminary. ("The End, 529)

Spiritual awakening, in Edwards's as well as in Emerson's thought, is a spiritual homecoming for man. Having lost communion or contact with the energy of pure Being, man is haunted by a sense of loss and disturbed by vague regrets until he experiences a moment of insight in which he perceives that his spiritual home envelops him and has always enveloped him. His subsequent awe and delight in divine goodness is much greater for his having once been removed from its influence. His happiness thus more nearly approaches the infinite happiness of God, and this result, for Edwards, is the glorification of God and the end of all creation.
Emerson's perception of the physical world is remarkably parallel to that of Edwards. He too sees the world as the incarnation of spirit and asserts that all creation is meant to reveal the infinite power, beauty, goodness, and unity of universal Being, or God. Like Edwards, he views nature as the inarticulate expression of spiritual truth. He also constructs a version of the fall of man and interprets it as part of a divine design to emanate pure Being through a conscious entity that can both acknowledge and reflect its inherent virtue.

Emerson believes, as does Edwards, that the physical world is both the emanation of divine energy and the revelation of spiritual truth:

I believe in the existence of the material world as the expression of the spiritual or the real, and in the impenetrable mystery which hides (and hides through absolute transparency) the mental nature, I await the insight which our advancing knowledge of material laws shall furnish.13

Also embodied within this monistic view of the world is the dualistic idea that infinite Being must have lesser, finite forms of existence through which to express itself. Revelation, or the "advent of truth into the world," needs a vehicle or art by which it is conveyed to men. To be communicable it must become picture or sensible object. . . . The ray of light passes invisible through space and only when it falls on an object is it seen. When the spiritual energy is directed on something outward, then it is a thought.14

Thus, Emerson indicates that divine Being or Consciousness
is an omniscient intelligence that reveals its ideas or essence via visible objects:

There seems to be a necessity in spirit to manifest itself in material forms; and . . . [they] preexist in necessary Ideas in the mind of God, and are what they are by virtue of preceding affections in the world of spirit. A Fact is the end or last issue of spirit. The visible creation is the terminus or the circumference of the invisible world.¹⁵

For Emerson, as for Edwards, the physical world is totally dependent on divine Consciousness for its existence. Just as the ocean's water is the substance of its waves, so also is the divine Mind the transcendent substance of all matter:

all perishes except the Creator, the Creator who needs no companion, who fills the Universe with his own fulness, and instantly and forevermore reproduces Nature and what we call the world of men, as the sea its waves.¹⁶

An eternal unity pervades all things so that "Cause and effect are two sides of one fact,"¹⁷ and "So intimate is this Unity, that, it is easily seen, it lies under the undermost garment of Nature, and betrays its source in Universal Spirit" (Nature, 44).

Although Edwards and Emerson both perceive unity of purpose throughout the physical world, there is a marked difference in the language each uses to define this purpose. Relying on scriptural terminology, Edwards describes it as God's glorification of Himself. Emerson finds the same purpose manifested, though he does not use Biblical phraseology. He believes that only "Benevolence is absolute and real."¹⁸
Its presence in nature and in man constitutes virtue, and its eternal existence is God's emanation and "glorification," His statement that He exists:

Virtue is the adherence in action to the nature of things and the nature of things makes it prevalent. It consists in a perpetual substitution of being for seeming, and with sublime propriety God is described as saying, I AM.19

According to Emerson, then, all things are inherently good because they are vehicles through which God emanates His essential virtue. In nature, Emerson finds the expression of divine beauty:

A leaf, a sunbeam, a landscape, the ocean, make an analogous impression on the mind. What is common to them all, -- that perfectness and harmony, is beauty. (Nature, 23)

Since Emerson claims beauty as "the mark God sets upon virtue" (Nature, 19), nature is consequently the revelation of divine virtue. It is "the rapid efflux of goodness executing and organizing itself" ("Circles," 310). Therefore, "every natural process is a version of a moral sentence. The moral law lies at the centre of nature and radiates to the circumference" (Nature, 41-42). Nature is thus the incarnation of God "the all-fair" and illustrates that "Truth, and goodness, and beauty, are but different faces of the same All" (Nature, 24).

Yet, because nature is "a projection of God in the unconscious . . . the present expositor of the divine mind" (Nature, 64-65), Emerson, like Edwards, believes that
beauty in nature is not ultimate. It is the herald of inward and eternal beauty, and is not alone a solid and satisfactory good. It must stand as a part, and not yet as the last or highest expression of the final cause of Nature. (Nature, 24)

In Emerson's view, nature is meant "to stand as the apparition of God. It is the organ through which universal spirit speaks to the individual, and strives to lead back the individual to it" (Nature, 62). Nature "has a higher end, in the production of new individuals . . . namely, ascension, or the passage of the soul into higher forms."20 From nature, man is to learn that "Heaven is not something else than virtue. Truth must be sought not for farther ends, but must be the ultimate end."21 For Emerson, "The lesson which these observations convey is, Be, and not seem. Let us acquiesce. . . . Let us lie low in the Lord's power and learn that truth alone makes rich and great" ("Spiritual Laws," 160). When man recognizes virtue as an end in itself, he learns that "There is no penalty to virtue; no penalty to wisdom; they are proper additions of being. In virtuous action I properly am . . . ."22 In articulating such virtue, man substitutes being for seeming and becomes the organ through which God says "I AM" in a moral world. Thus, while Edwards describes the purpose of the creation as the glorification of God and Emerson describes it as God's saying "I AM," both believe that pure Being emanates and transmits its own vitality for the joy of seeing its own virtuous essence not only expressed in nature but perceived and articulated
by man. Both feel that

spirit creates; that behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present; one and not compound it does not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves: therefore, that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us. . . . (Nature, 63-64)

Emerson also believes, as does Edwards, that man is capable of receiving divine communications but that he does not realize this potential before awakening. In Emerson's view, man's consciousness makes him a fit vehicle for the reception and articulation of divine energy, just as, in Edwards's thought, the understanding and the will equip man to receive insights into divine truth:

[The] Individual Mind . . . has the capacity not only of receiving this great influx of the Divine Soul or of Intuition but has a certain inferior and private power of acting within certain limits from himself upon those perceptions, comparing, reasoning, constructing, etc., which we call Understanding.23

Though man may possess the proper mental and emotional equipment for the reception of divine truth and goodness, Emerson observes that man does not fulfill his role as a finite expression of divine virtue until he experiences awakening--the activation of Reason. The spiritual energy that "must become picture or sensible object" ("Intellect," 335), before it is communicable does not pass through the unawakened man; hence,

he is not homogeneous, but heterogeneous, and the ray does not traverse; there are no thorough lights, but the eye of the beholder is puzzled, detecting many unlike tendencies and a life not yet at one. ("Spiritual Laws," 162)
In explaining why man is not born into a state of natural or automatic communion with spirit, Emerson constructs a mythic account of the fall of man. Like Edwards, he interprets it as part of a divine plan to make man aware of both the presence and absence of spirit so that he may perceive the resplendence of pure Being by contrasting it with the emptiness that exists when divine energy is absent or unperceived:

'A man is a god in ruins... Once he was permeated and dissolved by spirit. He filled nature with his overflowing currents. Out from him sprang the sun and moon... The laws of his mind, the periods of his actions externized themselves into day and night, into the year and the seasons. But, having made for himself this huge shell, his waters retired; he no longer fills the veins and veinlets; he is shrunk to a drop. He sees that the structure still fits him, but fits him colossally. Say, rather, once it fitted him, now it corresponds to him from far and on high. He adores timidly his own work... Yet sometimes he starts in his slumber, and wonders at himself and his house, and muses strangely at the resemblance betwixt him and it.' (Nature, 71-72)

Here, Emerson's account of a fall indicates that, like Edwards, he views the unawakened man as able to sense that he is no longer in comfortable communion with the spirit that structures the world. Having fallen out of such union, he has a double but unequal awareness of both his own limitations and the unlimited power or life-force which surrounds him.

This mythic fall also explains why man, before awakening, is unable to sense and find comfort in the presence of spirit. His pride is the element that limits his perception
of spirit just as self-love is man's shortcoming in Edwards's thought:

There is somewhat infirm and retreating in every action; a pause of self-praise; a second thought. He has done well and he says I have done well and lo! this is the beginning of ill. He is encumbered by his own past.24

Criticizing mankind almost as vehemently as does Edwards, Emerson declares that "most men are afflicted with a coldness, an incuriosity, as soon as any object does not connect with their self-love . . . [;] their vanity is laying little traps for your admiration."25 He further believes that "The pest of society is egotists. . . . The man runs round a ring formed by his own talent, falls into an admiration of it, and loses relation to the world. It is a tendency in all minds" ("Culture," 132–33). Thus, Emerson also conceives of self-love as the dominant desire in man to gain private reward:

The depravity of man is this tendency here in the society of the brutes, here in the precincts of brute nature, here amid shadows and effects, the tendency to allow the near and sensible to daunt and master him, to converse more with matter than with the soliciting soul and transfer his Me from the Absolute Cause to the remote particular effect of his individual person. ("The Head," EL, II, 248)

Just as Edwards sees a conflict between man's rational judgment and his appetites, Emerson sees that man is "seduced by the temptations of sense from a devotion to those feelings which disdain to accept a half-way service."26 For Emerson, the conflict in man exists between an immediate
awareness of his private needs as an egocentric being and a vague apprehension of his more universal spiritual needs.

Man would enjoy his fame . . . by comparing his acts with the acts of others, and not with the commandment of Reason.

This pause is fatal. Sense pauses: the soul pauses not. In its world is incessant movement. Genius has no retrospect. Virtue has no memory. And that is the law for man. Live without interval: if you rest on your oars, if you stop, you fall. ("The Protest," EL, III, 88-89)

Although Emerson does not use Edwards's term "natural conscience" to explain how man perceives that he is disunited from spirit, he does believe that man has some internal power of intuition by which he is able to judge the presence or absence of divine unity and harmony. Part of man's character "is constrained ever to refer to a moral Ideal which we call God" ("Human Culture," EL, II, 218), and

all the worth that resides in existing men and institutions was the fruit of successive efforts of this absolute truth to embody itself, and moreover that is the instinct of the Ideal. . . . ("Human Culture," EL, II, 219)

Thus, in Emerson's view as in Edwards's, the unawakened man is dominated by self-love, but his "instinct of the Ideal" makes him aware of this limitation. Even though he is spiritually distanced from God, man is still connected to God by his conscience. God has given him a free agency[,] has permitted him to work his will in the world--doing wrong or right but has kept open this door by which he may come in at all times & visit his sins with distress or his virtues with pleasant thoughts. (Journals, III, 139)
Paralleling Edwards's idea that a concept of sin or evil is essential to a complete sense of good is Emerson's belief that "the first lesson of history is the good of evil. Good is a good doctor, but Bad is sometimes a better."27 Emerson thus feels that man's loss of communion with divine spirit is necessary to his moral growth and education because it introduces him to his own spiritual limitations and to the vacuity of life in which divinity remains unperceived:

we are learning for a remote period to be startled by & by, by the shocking discovery incontrovertibly proved that sin is fatal to peace of mind, that sin is . . . infamy, & sin is . . . woe. Shall we not say then that only when we are fully apprized that we are seeking truth for truth's sake are we innocent? God finds his perfection in himself[;] so must man. (Journals, III, 211)

Edwards and Emerson, then, believe that spiritual awakening occurs because God seeks to express Himself through man as a conscious entity. Both further believe that all things conspire to bring about this end. Nature, as the inarticulate expression of divine beauty and goodness, is meant to communicate ultimate moral truth to man. But man is distanced from spirit. By divine decree or necessity, he is a lesser, finite form of consciousness who is aware of both the inherent virtue of pure Being and the evil of its absence. Edwards and Emerson both believe that this double awareness of good and evil is essential to the complete moral expression of Being. Man cannot be a fit organ for
the expression of divine virtue if he does not have a concept and sense of evil by which to recognize and appreciate virtue and goodness. In Emerson's words:

Man is . . . a stupendous antagonism, a dragging together of the poles of the Universe . . . [:] here they are, side by side, god and devil, mind and matter . . . riding peacefully together in the eye and brain of every man.28

Man, then, must be distanced from spirit; he must "fall" away from pure Being before he can reunite with and share its benevolence. His moral education involves becoming acquainted with life without grace or Reason and learning the virtue of living completely through living partially and incompletely.

Like Edwards, Emerson feels that man's happiness depends on his becoming the expression of divine virtue. Man's "health and greatness consist in his being the channel through which heaven flows to earth, in short, in the fulness in which an ecstatal state takes place in him."29 The infinitely benevolent life-force, operating melioristically, does not seek to express itself at the expense of man's well-being. Thus, Emerson and Edwards believe that both the full expression of Being and man's complete happiness are answered during the moment of awakening:

A more secret, sweet, and overpowering beauty appears to man when his heart and mind open to the sentiment of virtue . . . He learns that his being is without bound; that to the good, to the perfect, he is born, low as he now lies in evil and weakness. That which he venerates is still his own, though he has not realized it yet. He ought. He knows the
sense of that grand word, though his analysis fails to render account of it. When in innocency or when by intellectual perception he attains to say, --"I love the Right; Truth is beautiful within and without for evermore. Virtue, I am thine; save me; use me; thee will I serve, day and night, in great, in small, that I may be not virtuous, but virtue;" --then is the end of the creation answered, and God is well-pleased. ("An Address," 120-21)
NOTES


6 Jonathan Edwards, Images or Shadows of Divine Things, ed. Perry Miller (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1948), p. 60. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text as Images or Shadows.


further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.

9 Jonathan Edwards, "The Mind," in The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards from his Private Notebooks, ed. Harvey G. Townshend (Eugene: The Univ. Press, 1955), p. 57. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.


14 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Intellect," in Essays: First Series, Vol. II of the Centenary ed. of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), p. 335. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.

15 Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature, in Nature Addresses and Lectures, Vol. I of the Centenary ed. of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), pp. 34-35. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.


17 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Circles," in Essays: First Series, Vol. II of the Centenary ed. of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), p. 314. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.


Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson 1826-1832, ed. William H. Gilman, et al., III (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963), 211. All further references to this volume are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text as Journals, III.


Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Head," in The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson 1836-1838, ed. Stephen Whicher, et al., II (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1964), 249. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text as "The Head," EL, II.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Protest," in The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson 1838-1842, ed. Robert Spiller, et al., III (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972), 87. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text as "The Protest," EL, III.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Culture," in Conduct of Life, Vol. VI of the Centenary ed. of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1904), p. 135. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Journals and Miscellaneous


Both Edwards and Emerson believe that spiritual awakening may happen to anyone at any time and that the individual has little or no control over whether or not it will happen to him. While Edwards feels that only members of God's chosen elect experience awakening and Emerson adheres to a more democratic belief in every man's potential to commune with spirit, each nevertheless conceives of special grace or Reason as a seemingly random influence that can flow through any individual regardless of whether or not he seems to merit such a gift. "[G]race and the exercise of grace," Edwards explains, "is given entirely by the Spirit of God by his free and most arbitrary motions" which are unknown to man.\(^1\) Emerson likewise views awakening as a spontaneous event. The quality of inspiration, he says, is "that it commands, and is not commanded. And rarely, and suddenly, and without desert, we are let into the serene upper air."\(^2\) An awakening is a mental growth or expansion that, for Emerson,

is spontaneous in every step. The mind that grows could not predict the times, the means, the mode of that spontaneity. God comes in by a private door into every individual; thoughts enter by passages which the individual never left open.\(^3\)
Despite their belief that man can neither control spirit nor perceive any pattern in its influence on individuals, both Edwards and Emerson feel that man may prepare himself to experience awakening by endeavoring to make himself emotionally and intellectually receptive to the influence of special grace or Reason. Having posited that man has "fallen" out of communion with spirit, that he has gained a knowledge of spiritual emptiness that has activated what Edwards calls the "natural conscience" and Emerson calls the "instinct of the Ideal," both view the unawakened man as able to sense the need for some spiritual influence in his life. Like the hiker who climbs toward a summit because he feels a compelling desire to see things from a higher platform, the unawakened man, removed from the summit or source of his being, is similarly able to seek a new, spiritual perspective. His inner conscience, or moral sense, compels him to believe that a more vital kind of life is possible even though he has only a vague, racial memory of this higher state of existence. Man, therefore, may seek union with God by paying attention to the faint promptings of his spiritual self. For Edwards and Emerson, this effort constitutes preparation for spiritual awakening.

Though both feel that preparatory seeking does not lead inevitably to spiritual awakening, they nevertheless believe that the seeker is more likely to experience an epiphany because of his conscious desire to make himself more receptive,
paradoxically, by actively seeking to be emotionally and in-
tellectually passive, to open himself up to divine influence.
Again, the unawakened man may be compared to the hiker who,
once he reaches a summit, delays looking over the edge while
he prepares himself to take in the view. The seeker can
similarly try to remove from his mind all distractions—all
thoughts, preconceptions, and biases—that may be blocking
the free and complete flow of divine energy through him.
Since Edwards and Emerson believe that self-pride in partic-
ular prevents man's sensing the flow of spirit through him,
both advocate that man seek God sympathetically by exchang-
ing his egocentric self-concept for a more accurate view of
himself as part of a spiritual whole, one of the organs
through which God means to express His virtue. This redefi-
nition of self constitutes humility in man, a humility that
Edwards and Emerson believe must be nurtured before one can
become properly receptive to the in-flowing of spirit. Both
also believe that the seeker may cultivate such humility
through introspection, an act of self-examination that in-
volves reliance on the universal, spiritual self, and through
prayer, action in which one consciously seeks to surrender
to the influence of divine spirit. Finally, both believe
that one may seek God intellectually by attempting to under-
stand more about himself and his world, for such activity is
visible evidence that man recognizes his ability as a ra-
tional being and, at the same time, tempers this perspective
with the humble acknowledgment that he does not know his world thoroughly, that his intellectual and spiritual education comprises the much-needed and never-ending development of his consciousness.

Thus, for Edwards and Emerson, preparation is a continuous process. It may or may not lead to an epiphany, but when it does culminate in spiritual insight, preparation does not stop. The awakened man continually seeks God, perhaps even more fervently than the unawakened man, because he is drawn by the irresistible beauty, power, and joy of divine truth.

Edwards and Emerson believe also that one who experiences such an awakening becomes aware of the essential divinity of either all or part of his world. Both view an epiphany primarily as a strong, emotional response to the perception of spiritual truth. It differs from common intellectual insights and mountaintop experiences in that one feels uplifted or transported by a completely new and overpowering beatitude, an awakening of man's total being, or soul, and not an exclusively intellectual perception. If one undergoes an emotional explosion that wipes from his mind all doubts about the validity of his insight and subsequently leaves him believing in an intuitive perception, the truth of which he cannot prove empirically, then his experience may be called an epiphany. It is the quality of the truth perceived and not the scope of man's intuition.
that elicits the divine euphoria which constitutes spiritual awakening. Whether one gains a diffused or focused sense of divine truth, his emotions are fully engaged by the infinite power, beauty, and virtue inherent in all facets of that truth. His angle of perception is altered by even the smallest glimpse of divinity, and he is thereafter able to view his world from a new perceptual plateau as the manifestation of spirit.

The idea that spiritual awareness may be general and diffused as well as specific and limited is inherent in Edwards's and Emerson's descriptions of awakenings. Each describes two spiritual events, both of which are peak emotional experiences. In one, man becomes intuitively aware of the presence of spirit in himself and throughout his world and feels energized by overwhelming rapture that gives him a sense of communion with God or spirit. After an awakening of this kind, man, as a rational creature, may draw on the memory of this insight, apply his general perception to particular parts of his world, and deduce the presence of spiritual unity and beauty in all parts of a world that previously seemed full of conflicting and contradictory forces. In another, equally powerful experience, man becomes aware of the essential divine truth of a specific idea or object in his world. For Edwards and Emerson, this insight usually pertains to a concept or theory and involves moving from an intellectual grasp of an idea into a
state wherein the inherent rightness and virtue of the concept is felt intuitively rather than understood rationally. This new awareness, also, fills man with delight and jubilation at having experienced the power and beauty of truth itself. One may subsequently generalize this insight and inductively become aware of the existence of divine truth throughout the world. In both instances, man's perception of his world is so altered that he is able to view himself and his world as parts of a spiritual whole, as manifestations of divine truth.

Although Edwards believes that awakening is preceded by a period of seeking, his concept of preparation is not the traditional one preached by first generation Puritan divines. Unlike Thomas Shepard I and Thomas Hooker, Edwards does not believe that preparation for awakening necessarily occurs in stages wherein man first feels a conviction of sin, then humiliation, and finally a compulsion to love and obey God. He feels that "the insisting on a particular account of the distinct method and steps, wherein the Spirit of God did sensibly proceed, in first bringing the soul into a state of salvation" is "unscriptural" and believes instead that "God is further from confining himself to certain steps, and a particular method, in his work on souls, than it may be some do imagine." Nevertheless, he also perceives that grace often comes to those who seek it. God's
ordinary method, notwithstanding, is to give grace to those that are much concerned about it, and earnestly and for a considerable time seek it or continue to do things in order to it. ("Miscellanies," 109)

The seeker, however, has no more control or power over the influences of spirit than does the non-seeker. Ultimately, even the act of seeking depends on divine decree and not on man's will: "man's power or device, and its being carried on depends not on our strength or wisdom" but on God's will.\footnote{6} Still, Edwards believes that man's powerlessness to elicit an awakening does not make seeking a futile endeavor. He compares preparation to man's attempting to see and believes that the cause-effect connection between seeking God and experiencing an awakening is similar to the cause-effect relationship between

\begin{quote}
a man's attempting to open his eyes, and his actually doing it: the supposed established connection between these antecedents and consequents, let the connection be never so sure and necessary, certainly don't prove that it is in vain, for a man in such circumstances to attempt to open his eyes, in order to seeing [sic]: his aiming at that event, and the use of the means, being the effect of his will, don't break the connection, or hinder the success.\footnote{7}
\end{quote}

The seeker's attempts to prepare for awakening, his attempts to open his spiritual eyes, are not futile, then, even though man himself can do nothing that will guarantee him a spiritual experience. According to Edwards,

God expects of all that they should use their utmost endeavors to promote it [awakening], and that the hearts of all should be greatly engaged . . . . and that we should improve strength in it, however vain human strength is without the power of God. . . . ("Some Thoughts," 384)
For Edwards, the most that the unawakened man can do and that which he is obligated to do as an intellectual being is to cultivate humility. In his fallen state, man is capable of perceiving his own limitations, Edwards has already argued. He is able to understand that his self-love prevents his communion with God, and his natural conscience, a shadowy reflection of the moral essence of God, tells him that "The most free beneficence that can be in men, is doing good, not from a confined selfishness, but from a disposition to general benevolence, or love to being in general." Man's duty, then, is to cultivate benevolence by ridding himself of pride and replacing it with humility that will make possible the expression of selfless love. "Pride above all things," Edwards believes, "promotes . . . degeneracy of experiences, because it grieves and quenches the Spirit of the Lamb of God, and so kills the spiritual part . . . ." ("Some Thoughts," 467). True humility, however, what Edwards calls "evangelical humiliation," is the spirit of reception, the intellectual and emotional disposition to seek knowledge while accepting one's own fallibility:

The humble person is like a little child; he easily receives instruction; he is jealous over himself, sensible how liable he is to go astray; and therefore if it be suggested to him that he does so, he is ready most narrowly and impartially to inquire. Nothing sets a person so much out of the Devil's reach as humility, and so prepares the mind for true divine light, without darkness, and so clears the eye to look on things as they truly are. ("Some Thoughts," 414-15)
Since humility lessens man's egocentric tendency to view his world through the subjective lens of his own pride and makes possible a more accurate perception of reality, Edwards believes that man should remove from his life all material comforts and ego-based activities with which he pampers his self-love. Man's duty in seeking God lies first in his
deny ing his worldly inclinations, and in forsaking and renouncing all worldly objects and enjoyments; and secondly, in denying his natural self-exaltation, and renouncing his own dignity and glory, and in being emptied of himself; so that he does freely, and from his very heart, as it were renounce himself, and annihilate himself. (Religious Affections, 315)

To the unawakened man, such self-abnegation, the destruction of the ego and subsequent loss of a personal identity based on pride, may seem more of a forfeiture than a gain. Edwards points out, however, that the seeker who believes pride to be a stumbling block will perceive the annihilation of his egocentricity to be desirable because it opens his mind to the influence of special grace. But one who does not honestly and completely desire to rid himself of pride will only "be legally humbled and have no humility"; thus he will perceive humiliation as a process by which he is "subdued and forced to the ground" (Religious Affections, 312). In denying himself the pleasures and comforts of a material world, he does not seek God from "a conviction of the worth of the reward, but [from a conviction] of the dreadfulness of the punishment" ("Miscellanies," 110). Edwards calls
this hypocritical kind of humility a "legal humiliation" (Religious Affections, 312), a state in which men are convinced of their own sinfulness "as the consciences of all will be most perfectly at the Day of Judgment," but lack "an answerable frame of heart, consisting in a disposition to abase themselves, and exalt God alone." "Evangelical humiliation," however, is not forced submission but the voluntary relinquishment of self-pride in which man is "brought sweetly to yield, and freely and with delight to prostrate . . . [himself] at the feet of God" (Religious Affections, 312). Whether or not one succeeds in emptying himself of pride in "his own righteousness and goodness, in whatever form or shape" ultimately depends, of course, on God's will (Religious Affections, 317). Some, in seeking, may never penetrate through the layers of self-pride that coat the consciousness like layers of an onion skin ("Some Thoughts," 417). Hence, they will always perceive humiliation as self-abasement, self-punishment, and the denial of all pleasant pastimes. Others may find evangelical humiliation; they will therefore willingly and gladly relinquish all pride and perceive humiliation not as forced submission but as voluntary, wholehearted obedience to the supreme divine spirit. For Edwards, who does not believe that awakenings consistently occur in easily identifiable stages, evangelical humiliation may come to man before or during an epiphany, and it may come to truly humble seekers, to proud,
hypocritical seekers, or even to those who do not seek God at all. Edwards does believe, however, that after awakening, man necessarily has had his perception altered and consequently sees humility not as the loss of a personal identity but as the acquisition of a universal concept of self that is based on a selfless desire to submit to and commune with the divine spirit:

Humility is that wherein a spirit of obedience does much consist. A proud spirit is a rebellious spirit, but a humble spirit is a yieldable, subject obediential spirit. (Religious Affections, 396)

In Edwards's view, prayer and self-examination are two effective acts by which the unawakened man can consciously nurture evangelical humility that will render him more receptive to divine influence. Edwards believes that

There is no way that Christians in a private capacity can do so much to promote the work of God, and advance the kingdom of Christ, as by prayer . . . [;] if they have much of the spirit of grace and supplication, in this way they may have power with him that is infinite in power. . . . ("Some Thoughts," 518)

Advocating an Emersonian kind of self-reliance, Edwards also declares that "it concerns everyone, in the first place, to look into his own heart and see to it that he be a partaker of the benefits of the work himself, and that it be promoted in his own soul" ("Some Thoughts," 502). If the man who practices introspection and prayer keeps in the forefront of his mind that he is only a potential vehicle for the expression of divine goodness, he will be better able to accept that he is powerless to bring about his own awakening and
will become more "evangelical" in his pursuit of humility. His new self-concept will remind him that he is at best a tool for God's self-expression. He is thus better able to perceive that his preparatory acts are his own free acts of volition and that his will, at the same time, is governed or encompassed by the inherently benevolent laws of the divine mind:

Decrees of our everlasting state were not before our prayers and strivings, for these are as much present with God from all eternity as they are the moment they are present with us; they are present or not as He decrees, or rather are the same, and they did as really exist in eternity with respect to God as much at one time as another. "("Miscellanies," 157)

While man should prepare for awakening by practicing meditation and prayer that will help him become receptive to divine influence, he should also actively cultivate his intellectual understanding of his world and, more important to Edwards, his understanding of the scriptures. Edwards believes that a well-developed intellect is essential to the perception of spiritual truth:

Though it is not easy, precisely to fix the limits of man's capacity, as to love to God; yet in general we may determine, that his capacity of love is coextended with his capacity of knowledge: the exercise of the understanding opens the way for the exercise of the other faculty. 9

Thus, behind the harsh language of self-denial that Edwards often uses is the idea that true humility is an attitude of reception and voluntary submission to divine influence, a redefinition of self that may lead to divine
illumination. It becomes self-abasement only when man views it from an egocentric perspective. Humility may be cultivated through self-examination, prayer, and intellectual devotion to finding real truth, acts and attitudes by which one may actively seek to become a better conductor for the flowing through of God's grace.

Emerson's views about how spiritual awakening occurs are similar if not identical to those of Edwards. He too believes that man has both the ability and the obligation to prepare for spiritual insight. Like Edwards, he sees pride as the element that hinders man's receptivity to the influence of Reason, and he believes that man can open himself to such influence by cultivating emotional and intellectual humility. His concept of humility and how it may be nurtured so parallels Edwards's ideas that both reveal strikingly similar views about what constitutes preparation.

For Emerson, as for Edwards, the perceptual weakness that prevents man's communion with spirit is pride. "Self-love is," Emerson says, "in almost all men, such an over-weight, that they are incredulous of a man's habitual preference of the general good to his own. . . ." Because of self-love, "the Intellect would be something of itself and not simply the organ of the soul." Pride also contaminates man's will: "The weakness of the will begins when the individual would be something of himself" ("Oversoul," 271; see also "Doctrine of the Soul," EL, III, 271). Yet, like
Edwards, Emerson believes that man can see past his pride; his moral sense or "instinct of the Ideal" gives him a vague awareness of the virtue of selflessness, the tendency in all things to unite with spirit, and this sense seems to be the foundation of Emerson's concept of religion:

All progress in every sort tends in the same direction to a quiet yet sublime Religion the hem of whose vesture we dare not touch whilst from afar we predict its coming whose temple shall be the household hearth and under whose light each man shall work that which his genius delights, shall possess that which he can enjoy; shall draw to him those companions that belong to him, and shall have a property in entire nature by the renouncement of all selfish and sensual aim.12

Thus, Emerson, like Edwards, feels that man must abandon his egocentric perspective before he can fulfill his potential as a conscious entity and become more receptive to divine influence. Emerson's concept of humility parallels Edwards's view of it as that which makes man like a child, ready and willing to absorb knowledge intuitively. Humility is a perceptual stance that makes man receptive to the influence of Reason:

A renunciation of all pride of opinion, a willingness to be taught, a pious beholding of that wisdom which is inscribed all over life, beaming from every trifle scarcely less than from great events and remarkable persons, will qualify us to learn. And an open ear is the most commanding claim upon the Spirit of Wisdom.13

Yet, for both writers, the renunciation of pride is not finally an intellectual or emotional loss but the acquisition of a more universal perception of self. What Edwards calls evangelical humiliation, Emerson calls self-reliance,
dependence on the inner, spiritual self, the "instinct of the Ideal" that reflects the divine essence of God. This similar but, perhaps, more modern concept of humility involves developing a new self-image or a

Self-trust, that is, not a faith in a man's own whim or conceit as if he were quite severed from all other beings and acted on his own private account, but a perception that the mind common to the Universe is disclosed to the individual through his own nature. Humility is the perception that "the last lesson of life" is not that man must be enslaved by an all-powerful spirit, but that there is in all things

a voluntary obedience, a necessitated freedom. Man is made of the same atoms as the world is, he shares the same impressions, predispositions and destiny. When his mind is illuminated, when his heart is kind, he ... does, with knowledge, what the stones do by structure.

When man learns to accept his limitations, when he "learns to welcome misfortune, learns that adversity is the prosperity of the great," he then "learns the greatness of humility" ("Worship," 233). With humility, he sees that "The way of life is wonderful; it is by abandonment." Thus, humility for Emerson, as well as for Edwards, allows "glad and conspiring reception, --reception that becomes giving in its turn, as the receiver is only the All-Giver in part and in infancy." It is man's acknowledgment that "his strength, his grace, his tendency, his art, is the grace and the presence of God. It is beyond explanation" ("Method of Nature," 194).
Emerson, like Edwards, recognizes that man's perception of humility depends on his self-concept, what Emerson calls his "angle of vision." If he is egotistical and seeks only to nurture a sense of self-importance, he will never conceive of abandonment, the loss of a prideful self-identity, as beneficial. Emerson therefore believes that man should develop a new perspective on humility by intellectually distancing himself from the hardship and pain of everyday living and endeavoring to see his failures and limitations not as burdens but as contributions to his spiritual growth:

Self-accusation, remorse, and the didactic morals of self-denial and strife with sin, are in the view we are constrained by our constitution to take of the fact seen from the platform of action; but seen from the platform of intellection, there is nothing for us but praise and wonder. ("Method of Nature," 204)

In seeking to change his self-concept, man must intellectually accept the paradoxical idea that his true identity and happiness lie in reliance on the universal spirit and not on a private self:

I know it is a nice point to discriminate this self-trust, which is the pledge of all mental vigor and performance, from the disease to which it is allied, --the exaggeration of the part which we can play; --yet they are two things. But it is sanity to know that, over my talent or knack, and a million times better than any talent, is the central intelligence which subordinates and uses all talents; and it is only as a door into this, that any talent or the knowledge it gives is of value. He only who comes into this central intelligence, in which no egotism or exaggeration can be, comes into self-possession.
If men view humility not as self-abasement but as the death of pride and the "opening of the spiritual senses," they will be willingly disposed ever to greater sacrifices, to leave their signal talents, their best means and skill of procuring a present success, their power and their fame, --to cast all things behind in the insatiable thirst for divine communications.26

Emerson also believes that humility may be cultivated through prayer, meditation, and study. While man has no knowledge "Of the modus of inspiration," there is "in the experience of meditative men . . . a certain agreement as to the conditions of reception."21 Among the activities that man can perform in nurturing humility, or universal receptivity, Emerson lists "Solitary converse with Nature" and "solitude of habit" ("Inspiration," 287-88). In what appears to be a sermon outline in one of his early journals, Emerson also recommends prayer and meditation.22 One of the most effective mental efforts that man can practice in seeking to become more open to divine influence is self-reliance, a form of humility. Emerson advises man not to trust his egocentric, private self but to listen to the whisperings of his instinctual, spiritual self:

Trust the instinct to the end, though you can render no reason. It is vain to hurry it. By trusting it to the end, it shall ripen into truth and you shall know why you believe. ("Intellect," 330)

With this concept of self-reliance, Emerson further advocates private prayer or meditation as a preparatory act:
if he would know what the great God speaketh, he must 'go into his closet and shut the door,' as Jesus said. . . . He must greatly listen to himself, withdrawing himself from all the accents of other men's devotion. ("Oversoul," 294)

By listening to the spiritual self through which the Universal Spirit speaks, and by abandoning oneself to this spirit through prayer and meditation, one can foster the empathetic humility necessary to seeking truth for its own sake.

Man can further remove the impediment of self-love by cultivating his intellect. When tempered by spiritual self-reliance, "The intellect goes out of the Individual, floats over its own private being, and regards it as a fact and not as I and mine" ("The Head," EL, II, 249). For Emerson, man's intellect is a universal mode of perception. It "implies the power to separate the fact considered from you, from all personal and local reference, and look at it as if it existed for itself alone" ("The Head," EL, II, 249). The truly intellectual man, like Edwards's humble person, can seek knowledge and truth because he is detached from his pride and unafraid of error: "An intellectual man has the power to go out of himself and see himself as an object; therefore his defects and delusions interest him as much as his successes" ("Powers and Laws of Thought," 39). Because of its detached nature, man's intellect sees the world "under a new order, not under a personal but under a universal light" ("Powers and Laws of Thought," 39). With humility, man is able to accept that his private will is governed
by a universal power. He can find peace and comfort in the realization that

I have been floated into this thought, this hour, this connection of events, by secret currents of might and mind, and my ingenuity and wilfulness have not thwarted, have not aided to an appreciable degree. ("Intellect," 328)

This universal self-concept leads man ultimately to view himself not as a selfdependent being but as an instrument through which a higher power flows and speaks:

We do not determine what we will think; we only open our senses, clear away as we can all obstruction from the facts, and let God think through us. . . . But the moment we do not so, but are wilful and ingenious in the matter, it is not Truth. ("The Head," EL, II, 250; see "Intellect," 328, for a similar passage.)

Edwards and Emerson thus believe that man can prepare for awakening intellectually by studying his world. Although knowledge of the scriptures is important to Edwards and the study of science and nature is important to Emerson, both see the exercise of the mind as the cultivation of intellectual receptivity to divine truth. Both also believe that man can cultivate an emotional empathy with divine influence by renouncing self-pride and seeking a humility that is a willing submission or abandonment to the universal spirit. Through prayer, spiritual meditation, and intellectual contemplation, man may alter his perception so that he sees humility and submission as additions to his being instead of negations:
The whole course of things goes to teach us faith. We need only obey. There is guidance for each of us, and by lowly listening we shall hear the right word. . . . Certainly there is a possible right for you that precludes the need of balance and wilful election. For you there is a reality, a fit place and congenial duties. Place yourself in the middle of the stream of power and wisdom which animates all whom it floats, and you are without effort impelled to truth, to right and a perfect contentment. . . . Then you are the world, the measure of right, of truth, of beauty.23

Edwards and Emerson also share similar ideas about what constitutes an epiphany. They view it as an immediate experience in which man intuits divine truth, and his emotional response to its manifestation is powerful enough to make him cleave to it as truth or reality even though he may not be able to justify his belief.

In his definition of awakening, Edwards reveals his belief that it may involve different levels of awareness of divine truth:

In some, many divine things seem to be discovered to the soul as it were at once; others have their minds especially fixing on some one thing at first, and afterwards a sense is given of others; in some with a swifter, and others a slower succession, and sometimes with interruptions of much darkness. ("A Faithful Narrative," 172)

Edwards describes the first experience as a moment in which a "converting light . . . like a glorious brightness [is] suddenly shining in upon a person, and all around him . . . ("A Faithful Narrative," 177). A sudden illumination that affects one's emotional core, "at once changing the heart and infusing life into the dead soul . . ." ("A Faithful
Narrative," 177), this diffusive transport is the kind that Edwards's wife, Sarah, experienced. Her soul was "perfectly overwhelmed, and swallowed up with light and love and a sweet solace, rest and joy of soul, that was altogether unspeakable . . ." ("Some Thoughts," 332). According to Edwards, there "seemed to be a constant flowing and reflowing from heart to heart. The soul dwelt on high, and was lost in God, and seemed almost to leave the body . . ." ("Some Thoughts," 332). Sarah's experience revealed to her total spiritual unity, and her emotional response made her feel integral to this unity. Looking upon the same world that others look upon, she became intuitively aware of a spiritual essence that others did not sense, and, although she could not empirically document its presence, she nevertheless had gained intuitive proof that such divinity exists and thereafter perceived her world from a new perspective.

Edwards also observes that awakening in other people is "like the dawning of the day, when at first but a little light appears, . . . and then it appears again, . . . til at length, perhaps, it breaks forth more clearly from behind the clouds" ("A Faithful Narrative," 178). Edwards conceives of this kind of epiphany as the reception of a "new sensation or perception of the mind, which is entirely of a new sort, . . . what some metaphysicians call a new simple idea" (Religious Affections, 205). These experiences involve the perception of divinity in specific objects or
ideas. Yet, even though the awareness of spirit is focused on one thing, the emotional response is equal to Sarah's because the quality of the truth perceived necessarily elicits such a response. The experience of Abigail Hutchinson, as Edwards describes it, is such a focused intuition, for she, also, had a revelation while reading the scriptures, and, like Sarah, seemed to hold "immediate . . . intercourse with . . . [God] as a child with a father . . ." ("A Faithful Narrative," 195). Just as Sarah felt swallowed up and lost in God, Abigail "appeared most remote from any high thought of herself and of her own sufficiency; but was like a little child and expressed a great desire to be instructed . . ." ("A Faithful Narrative," 195). While Sarah's experience involved becoming aware of divine benevolence and beauty, Abigail's was such that "the sinfulness of her nature and wickedness of her heart . . . came upon her . . . as a flash of lightning . . ." ("A Faithful Narrative," 192).

Thus, in Edwards's view, both Sarah and Abigail underwent a spiritual awakening, even though Sarah's elicited a diffused awareness of divinity and Abigail's involved a more focused intuition of the meaning of a scriptural passage and an immediate awareness of her own insignificance in the face of infinite power. Although these individuals perceived different facets of divine truth, their emotional responses were of a magnitude and quality that convinced Edwards that both had experienced awakenings.
Emerson also observes that the scope of spiritual awareness may differ in individuals who experience epiphanies. Yet, in both instances, the emotional response is necessarily the same. Both events elicit in man what Emerson calls an "ecstatical state" ("Method of Nature," 210-11). The former is a moment in which man becomes immediately aware of the unity that pervades all things: "This ecstatical state seems to direct a regard to the whole and not to the parts; to the cause and not to the ends; to the tendency and not to the act" ("Method of Nature," 211). Such an experience, Emerson believes, reveals general tendencies, shows man that nature "is growing like a field of maize in July; is becoming somewhat else; is in rapid metamorphosis" ("Method of Nature," 203). Man suddenly sees nature as a unified whole that "is oppressed by one superincumbent tendency, obeys that redundancy or excess of life which in conscious beings we call ecstasy" ("Method of Nature," 204). The ecstatical state elicited by this awareness of unity is one in which "noble emotions dilate the mortal as he enters into the councils of the creation, and feels by knowledge the privilege to BE! His insight refines him. The beauty of nature shines in his own breast." More overpowering than mere happiness or elation, such divine rapture makes man feel "physically nimble and lightsome; we tread on air. . . . We become immortal, for we learn that time and space are relations of matter; that with a
perception of truth or a virtuous will they have no affinity" (Nature, 57). For Emerson, this emotional eruption is
one in which man feels "uplifted into infinite space" (Nature, 10) just as, for Edwards, it is one's feeling "swallo-
lowed up" in God.

A more focused awareness of divine truth also consti-
tutes an epiphany for Emerson because this perception also
elicits an equally ecstactical state. Emerson himself ex-
perienced this kind of awakening, which he describes in an
early journal:

A beautiful thought struck me suddenly, without
any connection, which I could trace . . . with my
previous trains of thought and feeling. It had no
analogy to any notion I ever remembered to have
formed; it surpassed all others in the energy and
purity in which it clothed itself; it put by all
others by the novelty it bore, and the grasp it laid
upon every fibre; for the time, it absorbed all
other thoughts. . . .

Emerson's account of this experience corresponds to
Edwards's descriptions of the reception of a "new simple
idea." Most often, the perception occurs when an individual,
having focused his mind on a specific concept for a long
period of time, relaxes and rests from his efforts:

For example, a man explores the basis of civil govern-
ment. Let him intend his mind without respite, without
rest, in one direction. His best heed long time
avails him nothing. Yet thoughts are flitting before
him. We all but apprehend, we dimly forebode the
truth. We say I will walk abroad, and the truth
will take form and clearness to me. We go forth,
but cannot find it. It seems as if we needed only
the stillness and composed attitude of the library
to seize the thought. But we come in, and are as
far from it as at first. Then, in a moment, and
unannounced, the truth appears. A certain wandering light appears, and is the distinction, the principle, we wanted. But the oracle comes because we had previously laid siege to the shrine. . . . So now you must labor with your brains, and now you must forbear your activity and see what the great Soul showeth. ("Intellect," 331-32)

Intuitive insights into the essence of a particular concept differ from more common "aha" experiences, or the intellectual discoveries that man makes when he finds an answer or solves a problem, in that no logic or ratiocination is involved. In a directional epiphany, "Our thinking is a pious reception" ("Intellect," 328), and each insight is a "divine impulse" that "rends the thin rinds of the visible and finite, and comes out into eternity . . ." ("Oversoul," 275). Man's intellect, operating intuitively instead of rationally, "pierces the form, overleaps the wall, detects intrinsic likeness between remote things and reduces all things into a few principles" ("Intellect," 326). Man then "seeth nothing so much as Identity. It is a perceiving that Truth and Right are."26 The essence of the ideas intuited during these moments is divine; therefore, they elicit emotional cataclysms:

They catch us up for moments into their heaven and so fully engage us that we take no thought for the morrow, gaze like children, without an effort to make them our own. By and by we fall out of that rapture. . . . As far as we can recall these ecstasies we carry away in the ineffaceable memory the result. . . . It is called truth. ("Intellect," 328-29)

Directional perception of divine truth constitutes just as valid and complete an awakening as does the diffused
awareness of spirit because, Emerson claims, "in learning one thing well you learn all things" ("Powers and Laws of Thought," 51). In both instances, "man has access to the entire mind of the Creator, is himself the creator in the finite" (Nature, 64).

Thus, both Edwards and Emerson believe that an awakening is a beatific state elicited by a general or specific perception of divine truth. While perceiving and understanding this truth are necessary to the precipitation of this emotional state, it is the ecstasy itself that distinguishes an epiphany from all other experiences in which insight is gained. The illumination of a diffusive epiphany may be compared to a sudden flash of lightning that streaks across the darkness of night and momentarily reveals all things in a new light. The directional epiphany may be compared to a sunrise. The brilliance of the light that issues from the sun as it peeks over the horizon is neither diminished nor made less blinding by the fact that it emanates from a fraction of the sun's surface, just as the quality and power of divine truth is not lessened by the fact that man sees only part of the reality that forms a unified spiritual whole. All facets of divine truth, when perceived, elicit equal feelings of rapture because all are inherently and infinitely good, beautiful, and right. Man's undergoing this divine beatitude is evidence that he has, in fact, experienced the in-flowing of divine Consciousness.
that has momentarily made him feel and see a new, effer-
vescing energy within and without himself. Edwards there-
fore concludes that special grace cannot give light without
heat, but must provide an illumination that touches both the
understanding and the affections. Emerson similarly feels
that "no man has a right perception of any truth who has not
been reacted on by it so as to be ready to be its martyr."²⁷
NOTES

1 Jonathan Edwards, "Miscellanies," in The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards from his Private Notebooks, ed. Harvey G. Townshend (Eugene: The Univ. Press, 1955), p. 109. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.


3 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Head," in The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson 1836-1838, ed. Stephen Whicher, et al., II (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1964), 250. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text as "The Head," EL, II. For a similar but not identical passage, see also Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Intellect," in Essays: First Series, Vol. II of the Centenary ed. of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), p. 327. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.


11 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Doctrine of the Soul," in The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson 1838-1842, ed. Robert E. Spiller, et al., III (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972), 16. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text as "Doctrine of the Soul," EL, III. For a similar but not identical passage, see also Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Oversoul," in Essays: First Series, Vol. II of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), p. 271. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.


15 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Worship," in The Conduct of Life, Vol. VI of the Centenary ed. of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1904), p. 240. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.

17 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Method of Nature," in Nature Addresses and Lectures, Vol. I of the Centenary ed. of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), p. 194. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.

18 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Powers and Laws of Thought," in Natural History of the Intellect, Vol. XII of the Centenary ed. of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1921), p. 10. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.


21 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Inspiration," in Letters and Social Aims, Vol. VIII of the Centenary ed. of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1917), p. 274. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.

22 Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson 1826-1832, ed. William H. Gilman, et al., III (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963), 146. All further references to this volume are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text as Journals, III.


CHAPTER V

VISIONS OF THE AWAKENED MAN

The awakened man, in Edwards's and Emerson's view, is by no means a perfect expression of divine virtue. While compelled by his awareness of spirit to seek divine truth, he is never completely emptied of egocentricity. As a finite manifestation of spirit, one may reach a higher state of perceptual receptivity, but he can never attain the perfection of infinite Being. Nevertheless, Edwards and Emerson believe that the awakened man is motivated by a divinely virtuous disposition in all his thoughts and actions. In spite of the self-centeredness inevitably present to some degree in any finite consciousness, he feels a catholic love of truth for its own sake and, having glimpsed the inherent beauty and excellence of spirit during an epiphany, is compelled by this new universal love to seek spiritual knowledge. This God-oriented perceptual disposition constitutes virtue in both Edwards's and Emerson's thought.

For Edwards, saving grace, the "beam of light . . . [that] comes from the fountain of light upon our hearts, is pure, but as it is reflected thence, it is mixed . . . as it springs up out of the heart, is impure. . . ." Even with the spirit of grace as an indwelling principle, there is
still "much corruption left in the hearts of God's own children" ("Some Thoughts," 314). Despite the impurity of self-love, the awakened man has experienced a "transformation of nature" that leaves him with "a stronger bent of soul towards God and holiness." Edwards feels that this "disposition of heart" involves a "consent, union, or propensity of mind to being in general, which . . . is VIRTUE, truly so called; or in other words, true GRACE and real HOLINESS." Such "true virtue," however, is not merely the capacity for philanthropic action. Although many things done by the regenerate man may be judged as selfless by the unawakened masses, true virtue is not necessarily an observable tendency in man's character, for Edwards believes that "no external manifestations and outward appearances . . . are infallible evidences of grace" (Religious Affections, 420). Instead, it is an inner, spiritual state, "a disposition to benevolence towards being in general" or God. While "exercises of love to particular beings" ("True Virtue," 9) may arise from such a disposition, the essence of true virtue, like divine virtue, is such that "the primary object of virtuous love is being, simply considered . . ." ("True Virtue," 11). It "must chiefly consist in LOVE TO GOD; the Being of beings, infinitely the greatest and best" ("True Virtue," 15-16), and this love in the "heart of an intelligent being" dictates an appreciation of unity or "general beauty," wherein an object is "beautiful in a comprehensive
view, as it is in itself, and, as related to every thing with which it stands connected" ("True Virtue," 8). The awakened man's admiration of beauty and truth no longer depends on the extent to which his pride or self-love is gratified by his perception of such things, because he views his world from a universal perspective and worships the unity and integrity of all things.

Emerson holds similar beliefs about virtue and the awakened man. Like Edwards, he feels that while man's perceptual being is transformed by a spiritual epiphany, his egocentricity never entirely disappears. For man, a finite being, "faith comes in moments; our vice is habitual." 4 While there is "a depth in those brief moments which constrains us to ascribe more reality to them than to all other experiences" ("Oversoul," 267), these glimpses into eternity are separated by mortal concepts of time, space, and ego that make impossible a constant identity with universal spirit instead of with private self:

Neither miracle nor magic nor any religious tradition, not the immortality of the private soul is incredible, after we have experienced an insight, a thought... . But what we want is consecutive- ness. 'Tis with us a flash of light, then a long darkness, then a flash again. The separation of our days by sleep almost destroys identity. 5

Even though man's finitude or self-centeredness interrupts the flow of divine energy through him, Emerson, like Edwards, feels that "when souls reach a certain clearness of perception they accept a knowledge and motive above
selfishness." The awakened man "puts off the egotism of manhood, and becomes at last a public and universal soul." Virtue, for Emerson as well as for Edwards, is "a catholicity, a power to see with a free and disengaged look every object," and duty is

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\text{the endeavor of man to obey . . . : the voluntary conforming our action to the whole；to the inward sentiment never quite absent；the uniform preference of the whole to the particular.}
\]

The awakened man, though still limited by the self-centered perspective of a finite being, possesses a new attitude that compels him to believe that "against all appearances the nature of things works for truth and right forever." Edwards's and Emerson's concepts of spiritual awakening thus illustrate a substratum of thought that forms a philosophical continuum between the seemingly contradictory heritages of Puritanism and transcendentalism. Beneath the obvious theological conflicts of these two movements lie perceptual parallels about God, man, and the nature of the world. God is conceived of as infinite Being and Consciousness. The emanation of this divine entity results in the creation of a material world meant to stand as the finite manifestation of infinite power, beauty, virtue, and unity. Nature as a lesser incarnation of spirit stands as the mute revelation of its perfection. Man, having fallen away from communion with infinite Being, is aware of the emptiness and disparity of life without spiritual awareness though he
retains a vague memory of his former state. This memory, a "natural conscience" or an "instinct of the Ideal," may prompt man to seek reunion with spirit by attempting to make himself more emotionally and intellectually receptive to its influence. Though he may prepare for awakening by nurturing humility, a redefinition of self, and seeking knowledge of himself and his world, his endeavors do not guarantee that he will experience spiritual insight. If one does undergo an epiphany, however, he will glimpse divine beauty and truth and be filled with a new beatitude or divine rapture. He will gain a new intuitive sense of the presence of spirit and will subsequently believe in the truth he perceives despite his inability to justify his belief in logical or empirical terms. After awakening, he is able to view his world from a catholic or universal perceptual plateau as the exhibition of the infinite beauty, harmony, and truth of spirit or ultimate reality. Moreover, he is compelled to seek truth for its own sake, and this perceptual disposition in man constitutes his highest happiness. He becomes not the mute revelation of spirit but the conscious articulation of divine truth and virtue, the organ through which spirit flows and expresses its moral perfection. For Edwards and Emerson, this ultimate expression of divinity is the end for which the world exists.

From a broader perspective, the perceptual continuities just explored not only illustrate parallels in Edwards's and
Emerson's thought but also give insight into the antithetical elements that constitute the religious heritage of America. From Puritanism comes the disposition to view man deterministically as controlled and moulded by external forces over which he has no control. From transcendentalism comes the contradictory disposition to view man as one who possesses some inner individuality, a kernel of character or consciousness that remains untouched by external forces and that, when activated, elicits moral decisions and deeds that are acts of free will. Running beneath these conflicting currents of determinism and free will, however, is a philosophical stream in which these polar ideologies coalesce to form a kind of "bipolar unity," to borrow Emerson's phrase, that underlies a characteristically American view of the becoming man. William James perhaps best represents the manner in which Puritan determinism and transcendental optimism interrelate to form a "state of mind" that is religious because it answers man's highest aspirations and pragmatic because it allows him to become increasingly productive and comfortable in his world. James explains that amidst the tension caused by the determinism-free will tug-of-war, man "craves . . . to be consoled in his very powerlessness, to feel that the spirit of the universe recognizes and secures him, all decaying and failing as he is":

And here religion comes to our rescue and takes our fate into her hands. There is a state of mind, known to religious men, but to no others, in which
the will to assert ourselves and hold our own has been displaced by a willingness to close our mouths and be as nothing in the floods and waterspouts of God. In this state of mind, what we most dreaded has become the habitation of our safety, and the hour of our moral death has turned into our spiritual birthday. The time for tension in our soul is over, and that of happy relaxation, of calm deep breathing, of an eternal present, with no discordant future to be anxious about, has arrived.11

When man, in his becoming state, accepts that he is free only when he lives in harmony with universal laws, he learns "the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view." His prayers, wishes, and dreams cease to be struggles for power or pleas for mercy and become the "soliloquy of a beholding and jubilant soul . . . [,] the spirit of God pronouncing his works good."12
NOTES


4 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Oversoul," in Essays: First Series, Vol. II of the Centenary ed. of The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), p. 267. All further references to this work are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.


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