

TOWARDS A SOLUTION TO THE “PERENNIALY INTRIGUING PROBLEM” OF THE SOURCES OF JONATHAN EDWARDS’ IDEALISM

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Abstract

This paper argues that Jonathan Edwards developed idealism from the instruction he received and conveyed in logic, ethics, physics and metaphysics. His view of the direct perception of mind with its ideas and the indirect perception of matter provided the basis for a dualism between mind and matter and the necessary condition of the distinction between the ideal and the material world.¹

A Perennially Intriguing Problem

Jonathan Edwards is generally acknowledged to be one of the most prominent American philosophers. Although much scholarship has been devoted to his idealism, Norman Fiering calls “the sources of Edwards’ youthful metaphysical idealism, that perennially intriguing problem in American intellectual history.”² In this paper I seek to show how Edwards’ idealism grew out of his studies, teaching and research. His writings show his endorsement of early eighteenth-century notions and experiments, and from this general philosophical framework Edwards developed idealism—just as John Norris, Arthur Collier, George Berkeley, (the American) Samuel Johnson and a host of other contemporary thinkers did something similar.³ His arrival at or development of idealism is thus not intriguing, if by “intriguing” is meant something remarkable or curious.

¹ The author is grateful for comments on earlier drafts of this material from Profs. Oliver Crisp, Paul Helm, Kenneth Minkema, Richard Muller, Douglas Sweeney, Dr. Jasper Reid, the Jonathan Edwards Centre at the Heidelberg University, the higher seminar for theoretical philosophy at the department of philosophy, Gothenburg University, and a philosophy seminar at L’Abri, Mölle.

² Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 35. Cf. “the mystery of Edward’s idealism,” Wallace E. Anderson, “Immaterialism in Jonathan Edwards’ Early Philosophical Notes,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 25 (1964): 181.

³ John Norris, *An Essay towards the Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World* (1701; rep. New York & London: Garland, 1978); Arthur Collier, *Clavis Universalis: or, a New Inquiry after Truth, Being a Demonstration of the Non-existence or Impossibility of an External World* (London: Robert Gosling, 1713); George Berkeley, *Of the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710) and *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (1713), ed. A.A. Luce and T.E. Jessop, vol. 2, *The Works of George Berkeley* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1949); and Samuel Johnson, *Elementa philosophica* (Philadelphia: B. Franklin and D. Hall, 1752). Norris is a transitional figure here, but is arguably an idealist: Charles J. McCracken, “Stages on a Cartesian Road to Immaterialism,” *Journal of the History of*

Earlier Research into Edwards' Idealism

The problem of Edwards' idealism seems partly to be perennial because of misunderstandings in earlier scholarship. In this section I seek to straighten out some of these.

Edwards formulated his ontology most succinctly in the following way: "all existence is perception."⁴ Paul Ramsey, Perry Miller, William Morris and Sang Hyun Lee flatly contradict this by claiming that "Jonathan Edwards' idealism was not Berkeley's 'to be is to be perceived.'"⁵ Edwards' consistent adherence to the view that existence is perception throughout his life has similarly been denied.⁶ Even if this did not contradict the many references to Edwards' writings above, it would not be strange if Edwards did not express his view throughout his life, since he hesitated to publish his idealism for fear of opposition.⁷ Theodore Hornberger notes that Edwards' use of "familiar analogies and dialectic" made "the average reader" interpret him "as utterly untouched by any speculation outside of Scriptural exegesis."⁸ Although Edwards probably did not know that the former Yale tutor Samuel Johnson had to defend his idealism in correspondence between 1745 and 1747,⁹ he must have guessed that idealism would upset his colleagues and parishioners generally. According to Anderson, "for all his reluctance to submit the claim to public scrutiny in his published writings, Edwards seems to have remained fast in his conviction that consciousness, involving perception and knowledge, is necessary for the existence of anything whatever."¹⁰

Philosophy 24 (1986): 34; and W. J. Mander, *The Philosophy of John Norris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 91-98.

⁴ "Notes on Knowledge and Existence," WJE 6:398. Similar statements are found, for example, in "Of Being," WJE 6:204, 206; "The Mind" nos. 1, 9, 34, 40, 45, 51, 62, WJE 6: 337, 342, 353, 356-57, 363-64, 368, 380; "Miscellanies" nos. f, pp, 45, 94, 179, 247, WJE 13:166, 188, 226, 258, 327, 360. Idealism is also implicit in Edwards' published writings: *Freedom of the Will*, WJE 1:183; and *Original Sin*, WJE 3:404.

⁵ WJE 8:566, n. 1; cf. Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1949), 62; William S. Morris, *The Young Jonathan Edwards: A Reconstruction* (1991; rep. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 366, 585; Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, Expanded Ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 93.

⁶ Egbert C. Smyth, "Some Early Writings of Jonathan Edwards," *American Antiquarian Society* 10 (1895): 232; similarly, H. N. Gardiner, "The Early Idealism of Jonathan Edwards," *The Philosophical Review* 9 (1900): 591.

⁷ Note, for instance, the introductions to "Natural Philosophy" and "Of the Prejudices of the Imagination" in *WJE* 6: 192-95, 196-98.

⁸ "The Effect of the New Science upon the Thought of Jonathan Edwards," *American Literature* 9, no. 2 (1937): 201.

⁹ See John Ryder, "Cadwallader Colden, Samuel Johnson, and the Activity of Matter: Materialism and Idealism in Colonial America," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 32, no. 2 (1996): 248-72.

¹⁰ "Introduction," *WJE* 6:29; similarly, pp. 26, 68, 76.

If these misunderstandings can be left aside, then we can focus on the background of Edwards' idealism. Here many scholars have defended the influence of one thinker on Edwards.¹¹ Their source material is scarce and the argument reductionist. Contrary to a mass of research it has recently even been claimed of Edwards "not having any firsthand knowledge of the main figures of Western philosophy."¹² According to Fiering's apt description: "Edwards has been too often pictured as an isolated mental giant, nourished only by the near-miraculous circumstance of his early exposure to Locke and Newton. Instead he ought to be seen in the larger context of the Atlantic intellectual community in the first half of the eighteenth century."¹³

Still, a disproportionate amount of research has in particular been spent on Edwards' possible relation to Berkeley. Although Lyon's claim in *L'Idéalisme* that Edwards relied on Berkeley is generally discredited, their similarities still tempt scholars to find a connection. For example, Edwards' writings indicate, according to Anderson, that he had read George Berkeley's *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709) sometime between 1726 and 1729.¹⁴ However, although it paved the way for Berkeley's developed idealism in *Of the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), his *New Theory of Vision* appears not to have been as influential as has sometimes been claimed: "In sum, the alleged success of Berkeley's theory of vision must be seen as the success of a severely truncated version of his theory."¹⁵ Marsden suggests with a reference to Minkema that "Edwards may have even met Berkeley on a trip to Newport in 1731", but Minkema says nothing about such a meeting.¹⁶ Still, contrary to Smyth and Miller, Berkeley's *A New Theory of Vision* as well as his *Principles* and *Alciphron* are

¹¹ For example, Georges Henri Joseph Lyon (*L'Idéalisme en Angleterre au XVIIIe siècle* [Paris: Alcan, 1888], 406-46) singled out George Berkeley; John H. MacCracken ("The Sources of Jonathan Edwards's Idealism," *The Philosophical Review* 11, no. 1 [1902]) isolated Arthur Collier; Clarence Gohdes ("Aspects of Idealism in Early New England," *The Philosophical Review* 39 [1930]) settled on Theophilus Gale; Perry Miller (*Jonathan Edwards*, esp. 54-61) nominated John Locke; Morris (*Young Edwards*) picked out Franco Burgersdijk and Adrian Heereboord; Charles J. McCracken (*Malebranche and British Philosophy* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1983], esp. 329-340) and Paul Copan ("Jonathan Edwards's philosophical influences: Lockean or Malebranchean?," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44, [2001]) selected Nicolas Malebranche.

¹² Miklos Vetö, "Edwards and Philosophy," in *Understanding Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to America's Theologian*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 153, approved by Magdalena Sevcikova, "Alternative viewpoint: Edwards and Philosophy," *ibid.*, 171.

¹³ Fiering, *Edwards's Moral Thought*, 13-14.

¹⁴ "Introduction," *WJE* 6:36, 100, 123-24.

¹⁵ Margaret Atherton, "Berkeley's Theory of Vision and Its Reception," in *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 121; cf. Egbert C. Smyth, "The 'New Philosophy' Against which Students at Yale College were Warned in 1714," *American Antiquarian Society* 11 (1896): 251-52.

¹⁶ George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 73, referring to Kenneth P. Minkema, "Jonathan Edwards's Defense of Slavery," *Massachusetts Historical Review* 4 (2002): 23-59. Note of the editors, there is the possibility that JE could have sought out Berkeley while in Newport.

actually in Edwards' reading list.¹⁷ However, Edwards never referred to Berkeley and none of his works are found in the "Account Book" where Edwards registered his books on loan to friends.¹⁸ Edwards most likely read Berkeley's anonymous essays in the first volume of *The Guardian* he owned.¹⁹ Yet, Edwards' concealment of his idealism from fear of opposition may be taken as evidence for his independent development. For if he had known in the formative years that a host of others had arrived at similar conclusions from the same sources, he could have appealed to them for acceptance. However, this is not to deny, for instance, that there are "remarkable" and "striking thematic continuities" between Berkeley's objections to moral sense theory in *Alciphron* and Edwards' ones in *True Virtue*²⁰ as well as notable parallels in their logic, physics and metaphysics. Yet, emphasis on the similarities can obscure the dissimilarities. For instance, whereas Berkeley refers to the overcoming of skepticism and atheism in the development of his idealism, Edwards does not.²¹ Edwards endorses while Berkeley rejects Locke's account of abstraction.²² They held to reversed relations between the senses of sight and touch.²³ Edwards writes that his natural philosophy is "exceedingly beside the ordinary way of thinking" but Berkeley says that his one is an "endeavour to vindicate Common Sense."²⁴ It is somewhat noteworthy in this connection that there is no evidence of any response by Edwards to (probably) the first comprehensive critique of Berkeley's idealism by Andrew Baxter. Baxter published *An Enquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul* in 1733, and Edwards owned the third edition of 1745 at least by 1751²⁵ and quoted it by 1754.²⁶

¹⁷ Smyth, "Early Writings," 233; and Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 61-62. "Catalogue" nos. 319, 318 (ca. 1726-1728), 350 (ca. 1731-1735), *WJE* 26:184, 192.

¹⁸ *WJE* 26: 319-56; cf. also Appendix D, *WJE* 26:430.

¹⁹ Cf. *WJE* 26: 119-20, 331-32; and George Berkeley, "Essays in the Guardian," *Works*, vol. 7 (1713; London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1955), esp. on the implicitly idealist, pp. 225-28.

²⁰ Richard A. S. Hall, "Did Berkeley Influence Edwards? Their Common Critique of the Moral Sense Theory," in *Jonathan Edwards's Writings: Text, Context, Interpretation*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (Bloomington: Indiana Univ Press, 1996), 100, 105.

²¹ Berkeley, *Principles*, § 92.

²² "The Mind" nos. 7, 37, 41, *WJE* 6:340-41, 355, 359-61; John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979, 1689), II.xi.9, II.xxii.1, 8; Berkeley, *Principles*, Introduction.

²³ Cf. *WJE* 6: 350, and George Berkeley, *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*, *Works* (1709; London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1949), § 1.

²⁴ "Natural Philosophy," *WJE* 6:193; Berkeley, *Dialogues* III.

²⁵ Cf. *WJE* 26: 321.

²⁶ *Freedom of Will*, *WJE* 1:379, 386, 392. For Baxter's argument, "Dean Berkeley's scheme against the existence of matter, and a material world examined, and shewn inconclusive," see *An Enquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul*, 2 vols. (3d ed., London: Millar, 1745), II:235-320.

In the hope of having cleared up some misunderstandings in earlier scholarship,²⁷ I think we can focus on the perennially intriguing problem of the *sources* of Edwards' idealism. Building on a few helpful studies on Edwards' intellectual development,²⁸ I will in the next section attempt to show how Edwards' idealism grew out of his studies, teaching and research.

The Sources of Edwards' idealism

The scholarship on Edwards' philosophical development has long suffered from the early editors's mistaken dates of most of his early manuscripts.²⁹ Fortunately, Thomas Schafer's analyses of the early manuscripts during the last half of the twentieth century has led to a revision of their dates, and consequently to a (more) correct account of Edwards' philosophical development.³⁰

"Records of Edwards' reading are incomplete,"³¹ but the main scope of Edwards' syllabus can be reconstructed from circumstantial evidence³² and the chief philosophical

²⁷ There are a number of other earlier publications on Edwards' development of idealism, but to my mind they shed little light on the issue in question: Smyth, "Early Writings"; Smyth, "New Philosophy"; Smyth, "Jonathan Edwards' Idealism with Special Reference to the Essay 'Of Being' and to Writings not in his Collected Works," *The American Journal of Theology*, no. 4 (1897); Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 61-65; Elizabeth Flower and Murray G. Murphey, *A History of Philosophy in America*, 2 vols. (New York: Capricorn Books, 1977); McCracken, *Malebranche and British Philosophy*, 329-40; Michael McClymond, *Encounters with God: An Approach to the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 33, 127-28, n. 45; Bruce Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America: 1720-2000* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 5-25; Daniel, "Edwards as Philosopher"; and Roger A. Ward, "Jonathan Edwards and Eighteenth-Century Religious Philosophy," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Philosophy*, ed. Cheryl J. Misak (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4-6.

²⁸ Anderson, "Immaterialism," and "Introduction"; Jasper Reid, "Jonathan Edwards on Space and God," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41 (2003), and Jasper Reid, "The Metaphysics of Jonathan Edwards and David Hume," *Hume Studies* 32 (2006). To date, the best studies for understanding Edwards' general intellectual development are probably Anderson, "Introduction," together with Fiering, *Edwards's Moral Thought*, 13-47; Norman Fiering, "The Rationalist Foundation of Jonathan Edwards's Metaphysics," in *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 91; Reid, "Edwards on Space and God"; and Thuesen, "Introduction." One does, however, still come across rather dated presentations of Edwards' philosophical influences and position: Morris, *Young Edwards* (following Smyth, e.g., p. 186); John E. Smith, *Jonathan Edwards* (London & Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 14-28; Kuklick, *History*, 5-25, and *Churchmen*, 15-42; and Lee *Philosophical Theology*, 10-11.

²⁹ For example, Smyth "Early Writings."

³⁰ Schafer, "Introduction," in *WJE* 13:59-90. There are helpful suggestions throughout Anderson, "Introduction."

³¹ Ward, "Jonathan Edwards and Eighteenth-Century Religious Philosophy," 3-4.

³² Richard Warch, *School of the Prophets: Yale College, 1701-1740* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1973); Edwin Oviatt, *The Beginnings of Yale 1701-1726* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916); Brooks Mather Kelley, *Yale: A History* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1974), 11-36; and John C. Schwab, "The Yale College Curriculum 1701-1901," *Educational Review* 22 (1901): 1-5. Fine accounts of Edwards' studies are found in Fiering, *Edwards's Moral Thought*, 23-33; and Anderson, "Introduction," *WJE* 6:7-34. For some social and material circumstances of his studies, see Wilson H. Kinnach and Kenneth P. Minkema, "The

influences can be inferred from his (early) writings.³³ Edwards' B.A. curriculum seems to have been almost identical with the Harvard one described by the tutor Henry Flynt in 1723, and his M.A. course seems to have been by individual arrangement just like the Harvard one.³⁴ His studies thus agreed most likely with the Harvard College education of his father and grammar school teacher Timothy Edwards as well as of his Yale tutor and cousin Elisha Williams.³⁵ During the second half of the seventeenth century, Harvard had abandoned a traditional or broadly Aristotelian curriculum and adopted a modern or roughly Cartesian curriculum.³⁶ At Yale, Williams was hostile towards traditional logic and metaphysics, and assigned modern textbooks to Edwards,³⁷ which the latter inherited from his father's studies at Harvard.³⁸ Edwards' context seems to have had many similarities with that group of seventeenth-century thinkers associated with the University of Cambridge (rather inaptly called "Cambridge Platonists") who endorsed Cartesian dualism in anthropology and corpuscularianism in physics.³⁹ His undergraduate course progressed from logic and ethics

Material and Social Practices of Intellectual Work: Jonathan Edwards' Study," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (2012). On learned culture generally in the early American Enlightenment, see, for instance, John Corrigan, *The Prism of Piety: Catholick Congregational Clergy at the Beginning of the Enlightenment* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); and David D. Hall, "Learned Culture in the Eighteenth Century," in *A History of the Book in America: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Hugh Amory and David D. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

³³ WJE 16: 32-33, 37-38; WJE 6 and 13. In addition, he recorded books of interest in his "Catalogue," which are analysed in Thuesen, "Introduction," WJE 26, superseding the dated Thomas H. Johnson, "Jonathan Edwards' Background of Reading," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 28 (1935): 193-222; and Morris, *Young Edwards*, 219-86.

³⁴ Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Tercentennial History of Harvard College and University, 1636-1936*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936), I:146-50; Fiering, *Edwards's Moral Thought*, 31, and Warch, *School of the Prophets*, 40, 244, 195-96 and 186-249 on the curriculum in general.

³⁵ Timothy Edwards graduated MA from Harvard in 1694, whereas Elisha Williams earned his BA in 1711 and his MA 1714. Williams was later an important rector of Yale; see Warch *School of the Prophets*, 132-36, 164-85; Kelley, *Yale: A History*, 37-45; and Franklin Bowditch Dexter, *Sketch of the History of Yale University* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1887), 24-26.

³⁶ Morison, *The Tercentennial History of Harvard College and University*, 1636-1936, 139-284; and Norman Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard: A Discipline in Transition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 4-7.

³⁷ See Elisha Williams's correspondence in Fiering, *Edwards's Moral Thought*, 26-27. Berkeley's education at Trinity College Dublin was similar: cf. Berkeley, *Principles*, intro, §§ 17, 20; and Lisa Downing, "George Berkeley," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2013), 1.

³⁸ Two of his logic compendia are published in Kennedy *Aristotelian and Cartesian Logic at Harvard* (Boston, Mass.: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1995)

³⁹ Cf. Daniel Walker Howe, "The Cambridge Platonists of Old England and the Cambridge Platonists of New England," *Church History* 57, no. 4 (1988): 472-73; Sarah Hutton, "The Cambridge Platonists," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2008); and Stuart Brown, "Platonic Idealism in Modern Philosophy from Malebranche to Berkeley," in *The Cambridge Platonists in Philosophical Context: Politics,*

to physics and metaphysics, while the graduate studies were planned individually.⁴⁰ By the time of his graduate studies, Edwards also explored the best library in the colonies with its Dummer collection.⁴¹ When he became tutor the curriculum was much the same as during his own studentship⁴² and he was also given the task of cataloguing the books of the college library, which enabled him to excerpt reviews and abstracts from a wide range of periodicals, dictionaries and monographs.⁴³ So Edwards' studies and teaching at Yale were transformative. This can be seen more particularly from how each major area of philosophy—logic, ethics, physics and metaphysics—is reflected in his writings; especially logic.⁴⁴

Edwards received and conveyed instruction in logic based on longstanding (broadly) Cartesian textbooks.⁴⁵ Edwards' tutors Elisha Williams and Timothy Cutler used Antoine Arnauld's and Pierre Nicole's *Logic or the Art of Thinking*,⁴⁶ which had been a textbook at Harvard at least since the early 1690s, so both Edwards and his father had a copy in their private libraries.⁴⁷ In addition Edwards employed William Brattle's *Compendium of Logick* and Charles Morton's *Logick System*, which were extracted from Arnauld's and Nicole's textbook as well as from Anthony LeGrand *An Entire Body of Philosophy According to the Principles of the Famous Renate Des Cartes* and used at Harvard between 1687 and 1767.⁴⁸ Oddly, Stephen Daniel misinterprets the logical framework to be Ramist rather than Cartesian, perhaps from

Metaphysics and Religion, ed. G. A. J. Rogers, Jean-Michel Vienne, and Yves Charles Zarka (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1997).

⁴⁰ Cf. Edwards' letter to his father on July 24, 1719 in *WJE* 16:33, with Warch *School of the Prophets*, 211, n. 53.

⁴¹ Kelley, *Yale: A History*, 17; Oviatt, *The Beginnings of Yale 1701-1726*, 396, 289-303; Warch, *School of the Prophets*, 68, 60-69; Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 36; and Anderson, "Introduction," *WJE* 6:21.

⁴² Oviatt, *The Beginnings of Yale 1701-1726*, 421-22.

⁴³ On the influence of international journals and dictionaries in general, see Norman S. Fiering, "The Transatlantic Republic of Letters: A Note on the Circulation of Learned Periodicals to Early Eighteenth-Century America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 33 (1976): 642-660; and on, Edwards in particular, Fiering, *Edwards's Moral Thought*, 14-23, and Thuesen, "Introduction," *WJE* 26:20-28. At least forty-one percent of the literature references in Edwards' notebooks date from his tutorship (*ibid.* 14, 110-111); cf. Schafer, "Introduction," *WJE* 13:15.

⁴⁴ Note, for instance, the many references to logic in Edwards' "The Mind."

⁴⁵ On the early teaching of logic at Yale and Harvard, see the overviews in Warch, *School of the Prophets*, 194, 200-208; Morison *The Tercentennial History of Harvard College and University*, 1636-1936, I:185-93; Kennedy, *Aristotelian and Cartesian Logic at Harvard*, esp. 32-33, 36-37, 93-102; Flower and Murphey, *A History of Philosophy in America*, I:367-88, n. 3.

⁴⁶ Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, *Logic or the Art of thinking*, trans. John Ozell (London: William Taylor, 1717). *WJE* 16: 33, *WJE* 26:121, and Fiering, *Edwards's Moral Thought*, 34.

⁴⁷ Thuesen, "Appendix C: Books with Edwards' Autograph or Handwritten Notes," *WJE* 26:423, and Minkema, "Appendix A: Timothy Edwards' Library and Reading" *ibid.*, 383.

⁴⁸ William Brattle, *Compendium of Logick, According to the modern Philosophy, extracted from Le-grand & others their Systems*, and Charles Morton, *Logick System*, in Rick Kennedy, ed., *Aristotelian and Cartesian Logic at Harvard*; cf. Thuesen, "Appendix C," *WJE* 26:425.

mistaking bifurcation to proceed from Ramus rather than (at least as early as) Porphyry's *Isagoge*.⁴⁹ However, Edwards' textbooks were clearly Cartesian and he had at least as tutor access to LeGrand's standard work while he was teaching Brattle's *Compendium*. Although Edwards' compendium included a synopsis of George Downame's *Commentarii in P. Rami Dialecticam*⁵⁰ and Ramus's book had earlier been a standard work in logic at Yale, it is unclear that it was still in use by his time.⁵¹ Even Morris emphasizes the importance of the Port Royal logic for Edwards,⁵² and Anderson contends that Cartesian logic was crucial in Edwards' development of idealism.⁵³ In this context, Edwards pursued epistemology on his own by reading (among others) the enlarged edition of Locke's *Essay*, Malebranche's *Search after Truth* and Isaac Watt's *Logick*.⁵⁴ These works were as much introductions to epistemology as to logic, and accomplished the so-called "epistemological turn" in European philosophy from the judgment that there *is* something to that something *is known*. Thus the object of knowledge is ideas rather than things. In Edwards' words: "We immediately perceive nothing else but the ideas which are this moment extant in our minds. We perceive or know other things only by means of these, as necessarily connected with others, and dependent on them."⁵⁵ These immediately perceived ideas are caused by the impact of atoms on our sense organs and the motions thus generated are transmitted by the

⁴⁹ "Edwards, Berkeley, and Ramist Logic," *Idealistic Studies* 31 (2001). Cf. Jonathan Barnes, *Porphyry Introduction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2003).

⁵⁰ Cf. Edwards, "Notes in Downame's 'Logic,'" *WJE* 40; and Thuesen, "Appendix C," *WJE* 26:424.

⁵¹ Warch, *School of the Prophets*, 205-206.

⁵² Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards*, 290-301.

⁵³ Anderson, "Introduction," *WJE* 26:24, 51, 94, 122.

⁵⁴ "Catalogue," nos. 15, 130, 303, 313, *WJE* 26:121, 142, 183. Edwards used the second edition of Locke's *Essay* from 1694 (as in "The Mind" no. 11, written June-August 1724, according to Schafer, *WJE* 13:94), but summaries circulated widely in New England at least from 1723: Fiering, "Transatlantic Republic," 648-650; and Kennedy, *Aristotelian and Cartesian Logic at Harvard*, 97. A similar epistemological interest is revealed in the references to John Norris: "Catalogue," nos. 26, 244, 664, *WJE* 26:124, 167, 298. On some parallels in Malebranche, Norris and Edwards, see Mason I. Lowance, Jr., "Jonathan Edwards and the Platonists: Edwardsean Epistemology and the Influence of Malebranche and Norris," *Studies in Puritan American Spirituality* 2 (1991): 129-52. That Edwards was especially influenced by Arnauld and Nicole in the senior course at Yale is emphasized by Leon Howard, "*The Mind*" of *Jonathan Edwards: A Reconstructed Text* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963). A similar and likely available source was the popular *Logica sive ars ratiocinandi* (1692) by Jean LeClerc.

⁵⁵ *Freedom of Will*, *WJE* 1:183; similarly, "The Mind" no. 6, *WJE* 6:340; "Miscellanies" no. 94, *WJE* 13:257; *Religious Affections*, *WJE* 2:502, 504. He is here reflecting, for example, Arnauld and Nicole, *Logic*, intro., pt. I; William Brattle, *Logick*, 266; Nicolas Malebranche, *Search after Truth: or, a Treatise of the Nature of the Humane Mind*, trans. Richard Sault (London: Dunton, 1695), III.i; Jean Le Clerc, *Logica, ontologia, et pneumatologia*, 5 ed. (London: John Churchill, 1716), 7, 322-29; René Descartes, *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, vol. 7, *Œuvres de Descartes* (1642; 2d ed., Paris: Vrin, 1996) VI; Locke, *Essay*, II.i.1, II.viii.8, IV.i.1, IV.iv.3; Berkeley, *Principles*, § 4; and Norris, *Theory*, Epistle Dedicatory. Cf. Fiering, *Edwards's Moral Thought*, 26-27.

nerves to the brain: “Tis by impressions made on the brain, that any ideas are excited in the mind, by the motion of the animal spirits, or any changes made in the body.”⁵⁶ These ideas are “perceptions,” “images,” “pictures,” “resemblances” or “representations” on or in the brain that the mind senses: “An idea is only a perception wherein the mind is passive, or rather, subjective.”⁵⁷ Likewise,

Ideas are images of things; and there are no other images of things, in the most proper sense, but ideas, because other things are only called images as they beget an idea in us of the thing of which they are the image; so that all other images of things are but images in a secondary sense.⁵⁸

This mechanical account of perception was generally accepted among scholars at the time and influenced semantics, so that words were regarded as signifying pictures in the brain—“their Audience in the Brain, the mind’s Presence-room”⁵⁹—that the mind names. Thus, according to Edwards, humans understand and attend to the meaning of words when they are “connecting any idea with them”, since ideas are “properly signified by words, naturally excited in their minds on hearing the words” and without ideas “the words have no sense in thought to answer them.”⁶⁰ So, the meaning of a word is an idea, image or picture. In logic, finally, Cartesians reduced types of predicates to mathematical or geometrical ones, so that the predicate of substance is substituted by extension, the predicates of quality, action and passion are revised to those of quantity, figure and motion, and predicates of relation are transferred to “affection of reason” or modification of mind.⁶¹ Edwards argues against quantity, figure and motion and thus only relation to mind remains: “For being, if we examine narrowly, is nothing else but proportion [relation].”⁶² Thus

⁵⁶ *Religious Affections*, *WJE* 2:290; similarly, *Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8:566; “Of Insects,” *WJE* 6:156; “Things to be Considered,” *ibid.*, 220, 283; “Beauty of the World,” *ibid.*; Charles Morton, *Compendium physicae*, ed. Theodore Hornberger, vol. 33, *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1940, 1687), 187; Antoine Le Grand, *An Entire Body of Philosophy according to the Principles of the Famous Renate Des Cartes*, trans. Richard Blome (London: Samuel Roycroft, 1694), 283; and Locke, *Essay*, II.i.23, II.iii.1.

⁵⁷ “The Mind” no. 67, *WJE* 6:384; similarly, *Religious Affections*, *WJE* 2:205; “Miscellanies” no. 94, *WJE* 13:262; “Discourse on the Trinity,” *WJE* 21:113; “The Mind” no. 3, 60, *WJE* 6:339, 375; *Freedom of Will*, *WJE* 1:183; Locke, *Essay*, II.i.3, II.ix.4, IV.i.2; Le Clerc, *Logica*, 324; and Berkeley, *Principles*, § 4.

⁵⁸ “Miscellanies” no. 94, *WJE* 13:258-60; similarly, no. 151 (141), p. 302; cf. no. 447, p. 495; “Miscellanies” no. 1253, *WJE* 23:185; “Discourse on the Trinity,” *WJE* 21:117, 120; *WJE* 14:145; Descartes, *Meditationes* 37; Arnauld and Nicole, *Logic*, I.i; Brattle, *Logick*, 266; and J. O. Urmson, *Berkeley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 10.

⁵⁹ Locke, *Essay*, II.iii.1, II.xii.17.

⁶⁰ *WJE* 16: 407, and “Miscellanies” no. 587, *WJE* 18:122, respectively; similarly, “Miscellanies” no. 782, *WJE* 18:454; *Freedom of Will*, *WJE* 1:152, 316; “The Mind” no. 18, *WJE* 6:345, 393; cf. Arnauld and Nicole, *Logic*, I.i.

⁶¹ Brattle, *Logick*, 269; cf. Locke, *Essay*, II.viii.14.

⁶² “The Mind” no. 1, *WJE* 6: 336.

Edwards is faithful to the Latin distich he had memorized: *Mens, mensura, quies, motus, positura, figura / Sunt cum materia, cunctarum exordia rerum*.⁶³ On this Brattle comments that Cartesians

are persuaded that the whole of nature is contained under these 7 classes: by *mens* they understand a thinking substance, by *materia*, an extended substance: - by *mensura*, magnitude: - by *positura*, the site or disposition of parts among themselves: by *figura, motus, et quies*, that which is usually understood thereby.⁶⁴

Of these “classes” only *mens* or “thinking substance” remains for Edwards. This doctrine of categories is of course also incompatible with the alleged influence of Franco Burgersdijk.⁶⁵ From all this it is clear that Edwards endorsed the view that we immediately perceive nothing but ideas in the mind, that our words signify ideas and that we can account for perception in exclusively mechanical terms.

In moral philosophy, Edwards’ training and teaching were likewise based on established texts.⁶⁶ Edwards began with Henry More’s *Enchiridion ethicum* (or one of the widely distributed tutorial summaries of it), which had been textbook at Harvard since the 1680s (English translation *An Account of Virtue* in 1690).⁶⁷ More writes: “I will ever follow closely his [Descartes’s] footsteps, unless hindered by some major reason.”⁶⁸ Edwards continued on his own with Cumberland, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume and Turnbull.⁶⁹ Cartesians developed ethics as an outgrowth of the irreducibility of the thinking mind to the mechanical operations of extended bodies. For bodily motions are transmitted by the nerves to the brain and thereby give rise to passions in the mind. Thus “it is not the body, but the mind only, that is the proper seat of the affections.”⁷⁰ To Edwards and his likeminded, the mechanistic physiology required a new account of mastering the passions in which a notion of virtue became crucial: “virtue in its most essential nature, consists in benevolent affection

⁶³ For instance, in Arnauld and Nicole, *Logic*, I.3.

⁶⁴ Brattle, *Logick*, 270.

⁶⁵ Cf. Franco Burgersdijk, *Institutionum logicarum, libri duo* (London: Roger Daniels, 1637, 1651), esp. cap. IV.

⁶⁶ On the ethics curriculum at Yale and Harvard in the second half of the seventeenth century, see the older surveys of Warch, *School of the Prophets*, 195, 230-34, 239, 293-96, and Morison, *The Tercentennial History of Harvard College and University, 1636-1936*, I:258-63, respectively. For an historical overview of the geometric method and the emotive content of Cartesian ethics, see Jill Kraye, “Conceptions of Moral Philosophy,” in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1300-1308; and Susan James, “Reason, The Passions, and The Good Life,” *ibid.*, 1358-1396. For an insightful paper on Cartesian ethics, see John Cottingham, “Cartesian Ethics: Reason and the Passions,” *Revue internationale de philosophie* 50, no. 195 (1996): 193-216.

⁶⁷ Fiering, *Edwards’s Moral Thought*, 21, n. 23.

⁶⁸ *Enchiridion*, I.vii.1; similarly, Le Grand, *Philosophy*, 346-402; Locke, *Essay*, II.i.4.

⁶⁹ Cf. “Catalogue” nos. 335, 410, 552, *WJE* 26:187, 211, 258; and *Freedom of Will*, *WJE* 1:218.

⁷⁰ *Freedom of Will*, *WJE* 1:98, 113, 118, 132; *Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8:591, “Miscellanies” no. 1263, *WJE* 23:207; *Freedom of Will*, *WJE* 1:370.

or propensity of heart towards Being in general”.⁷¹ Accordingly all Edwards’ treatises on affections, will and virtue belong to the mid eighteenth century discussion of the relation between passions, sentiments, feelings or emotions on the one hand and reason on the other.⁷² His ethics course thus reinforced a view of the immediate access to the mind and (at least) prepared the way for a dualist anthropology.

Moreover, Edwards studied and taught nature through standard works in the mechanistic physics that Descartes invented.⁷³ He may have begun with Morton’s *Compendium physicae*, which was extracted from Descartes, Hereboord, Rohault and Boyle, and was assigned well into the 1730s at Yale.⁷⁴ (The notebook he inherited from his father also contained William Ames’ *Technometria* (a synopsis of Peter Ramus’s physics) and some theses taken from Henry Gutberleth *Physicae*). He continued with Pemberton’s *A View of Sir Isaac Newton’s Philosophy* and “physico-theological” writings (or tutorial extracts).⁷⁵ As tutor Edwards seems also to have studied such works as John Ray *Three Physico-Theological Discourses* and Isaac Watts’s *First Principles of Astronomy and Geography*.⁷⁶ Standard works by Rohault, LeClerc and LeGrand must also have been available,⁷⁷ and the metaphysics textbook of Henry More contained much physics and had a profound influence on Newton and Edwards.⁷⁸ The importance of the mathematic-experimental ideal of natural science in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is hard to overestimate, and its popularity arose out of the rediscovery of the atomistic conjectures of Democritus, the powerful application of mathematics to matter, the renewed and rapid development of mechanics, and

⁷¹ *Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8:557.

⁷² For a very good account of this, see Fiering, *Edwards’s Moral Thought*.

⁷³ On the syllabus in natural philosophy at Yale and Harvard, see surveys in Warch, *School of the Prophets*, 208-18, and Morison, *The Tercentennial History of Harvard College and University, 1636-1936*, I:223-51, respectively. For two succinct passages of the mechanistic system of natural science, see Descartes, *Principia philosophiae*, *Œuvres* vol. VIIIA (1644; Paris: Vrin, 1982), II:64, pp.78-79; and *Objectiones septimae in meditationes de prima philosophia*, *Œuvres* vol. 7 (1642; Paris: Vrin, 1983), 440.

⁷⁴ Warch, *School of the Prophets*, 217. Morton’s compendium was assigned well into the 1720s at Harvard; Morrison, *The Tercentennial History of Harvard College and University, 1636-1936*, 238.

⁷⁵ “Wisdom in the Contrivance of the World,” *WJE* 6:309; Warch, *School of the Prophets*, 210.

⁷⁶ Cf. Anderson, “Introduction,” *WJE* 6:22, 42; *WJE* 26:133, 168, 180, 183. Edwards may have read Ray already at home: Minkema, “Appendix A,” *WJE* 26:365.

⁷⁷ Cf. Warch, *ibid.* 212-213. For an overview of Rohault, see Dennis Des Chene, “Cartesian Science: Régis and Rohault,” in *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Steven Nadler (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

⁷⁸ Henry More, *Enchiridion metaphysicum: sive, De rerum incorporeis* (London: Flesher, 1671); cf. Geoffrey Gorham, “Newton on God’s Relation to Space and Time: The Cartesian Framework,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 93 (2011), Anderson, “Introduction” 21, 24, 111-112, and James H. Tufts, “Edwards and Newton,” *The Philosophical Review* 49, no. 6 (1940).

the graphic illustration of the universe as a machine or a game of billiards.⁷⁹ Edwards firmly adhered to this view of nature:

All bodies whatsoever, except atoms themselves, must of absolute necessity be composed of atoms, or of bodies that are indiscerpible, that cannot be made less, or whose parts cannot by any finite power whatsoever, be separated one from another.⁸⁰

He believed that Newton's "laws of motion and gravitation hold universally."⁸¹ Consistent with mathematics, matter is conceived as extension in motion, where "extension" means that which has such geometrical qualities as shape, size and divisibility, and "motion" means the local change of a quantity. As a consequence, this programme treated those qualities that can be described in kinematic or geometric terms as "real" and those that can be described in sensuous terms as "appearances." Since the former qualities can enter into scientific explanations, they are "primary," and while the latter qualities cannot enter into such explanations, they are "secondary". Matter can then, according to Edwards, be said to have the "essential and primary qualities" of solidity, gravity and mobility,⁸² whereas sounds, colours and pains are not qualities of things but of minds.⁸³ This mechanistic notion of nature established for him that the world of perception must differ from the world of physics.

Last, in metaphysics Edwards studied and taught in the Cartesian tradition with a focus on natural theology and human psychology. According to Morton, "Metaphisicks, [is] a science of all beings as such."⁸⁴ There are though no records of textbooks in metaphysics, so the students probably relied on the rector's lectures, chiefly a combination of natural theology and philosophy of mind.⁸⁵ Edwards' studies may have been guided by summaries of

⁷⁹ Cf. Edwards, *The End for which God Created* 508, "Miscellanies" 833-1152 no. 976 p. 286, and *Miscellanies* 1153-1360 no. 1208 p. 134, no. 1263 p. 206. For Edwards' general high regard for mathematical physics: *Miscellanies* 1153-1360 no. 1340 pp. 362-363.

⁸⁰ "Of Atoms," *WJE* 6:208; on his general atomism, *Freedom of Will*, *WJE* 1:387-93. The word "indiscerpible" Henry More used for "indivisible."

⁸¹ *Freedom of Will*, *WJE* 1:392; "Of the Rainbow," *WJE* 6:298; "Miscellanies" nos. 931, 977, *WJE* 20:185, 286.

⁸² "Things to be Considered," *WJE* 6:290. In "Of Atoms," the primary qualities seems to be space, figure and mobility (*WJE* 6:212). In "The Mind," he conflates "quality" and "property" and uses "primary property" of "matter" in the context of "solidity, mobility and gravitation"; more fully in no. 21(a), *WJE* 6:347. In this context, "solidity" is used interchangeably with "solid extension." On gravity, see "Things to be Considered," *WJE* 6:234. In some of his formulations, Edwards seems to prefer Locke's and Newton's account of body as solidity rather than Descartes's one of body as extension; see, for instance, "Of Atoms," *WJE* 6:211.

⁸³ "The Mind" nos. 22, 27, *WJE* 6:348, 350; "Miscellanies" no. pp, *WJE* 13:188; "Of Being," *WJE* 6:204; cf. Locke, *Essay*, II.viii.8-26; David Hume, *A Treatise Concerning Human Nature*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch (1739; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), I.4.4-3.

⁸⁴ Morton, *Logick*, 143.

⁸⁵ Warch, *School of the Prophets*, 223, 225.

More's *Enchiridion metaphysicum* and John Le Clerc's *Logica, ontologia et pneumatologia*.⁸⁶ Although LeClerc's as well as Heereboord's metaphysics were very popular, I have not found evidence in favor of Edwards' direct use of them.⁸⁷ Anderson suggests that the instruction was based on Henry More,⁸⁸ but in view of Edwards' writings it is clear that he did not adopt the distinctives of More's *Enchiridion metaphysicum* and seems rather to have been influenced by the more common Cartesian metaphysics.⁸⁹ Fundamental to this system is the exclusive and exhaustive division of being into minds as thinking substances and bodies as extension in motion: "An INTELLECTUAL substance is a thinking substance; or a thing where in Immediately there is cogitation A MATERIALL substance or a body is a substance extended into length, weadth & profundity."⁹⁰ Edwards' later study of Locke's *Essay* and Malebranche's *Search after Truth* would of course also have buttressed substance dualism (with the properties and modes of substances). Unperceivable substances exist independently and sensible properties depend on the existence of the substance they modify. Sensations, ideas, volitions and passions modify mind, while size, shape, motion and rest modify matter.⁹¹ Yet here Edwards departed from the general framework:

those beings which have knowledge and consciousness are the only proper and real and substantial beings, inasmuch as the being of other things is only by these. From hence we may see the gross mistake of those who think material things the most substantial beings, and spirits more like a shadow; whereas spirits only are properly substance.⁹²

Thus Edwards revises the dualism of mind and matter in his sources to a monism of minds as "the only proper and real and substantial beings," Elsewhere Edwards articulates his developed idealism as a revision of the exhaustive Cartesian distinction between

⁸⁶ Morison, *The Tercentennial History of Harvard College and University, 1636-1936*, I:258.

⁸⁷ Cf. Fiering, *Edwards's Moral Thought*, 21, 31. For a brief summary of Heereboord's metaphysics, see H. De Dijn, "Adriaan Heereboord en het Nederlands Cartesianisme," *Algemeen Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte* 75 (1983): esp. 60-64.

⁸⁸ Anderson, "Introduction," *WJE* 6:23.

⁸⁹ The more common Cartesian metaphysics is found, for instance, in Le Grand, *Philosophy* 14-15, 265-66, 320-45, and Le Clerc, *Logica*, 8, 13-17, 284-89, deriving from Descartes, *Meditationes*. For a summary of standard Cartesian metaphysics, see Brattle, *Logick*, 273, and Richard A. Watson, *The Breakdown of Cartesian Metaphysics* (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett, 1987, rep. 1998) 47-65.

⁹⁰ Brattle, *Logick*, 273; cf. p. 267; *Freedom of Will*, *WJE* 1:188; "Miscellanies" no. 313, *WJE* 13:394; no. 782, *WJE* 18:453; no. 790, *WJE* 23:485; "The Mind" nos. 5, 11, 16, *WJE* 6:339-40, 342, 345; "Things to be Considered," *WJE* 6:246, 265-66; "Of Atoms," *WJE* 6:214-16; *Religious Affections*, *WJE* 2:96, 98, 288; Le Grand, *Philosophy*, 265-66, 320-45; and Le Clerc, *Logica*, 300-307.

⁹¹ In "The Mind" no. 25, *WJE* 6:350, Edwards sets out the relation between substance and mode; cf. no. 35, *WJE* 6:354; "Miscellanies" no. 267, *WJE* 13:373; no. 782, *WJE* 20:458; no. 1253, *WJE* 23:185-86; "Of Atoms," *WJE* 6:211-12; Locke, *Essay*, II.i.9.

⁹² "Of Being," *WJE* 6:206.

“substance” and “property,”⁹³ Opposite to the view that spirits are “more like a shadow” of material things, he repeatedly defends the view that “nothing else has a proper being but spirits, and [. . .] bodies are but shadows.”⁹⁴ Just as bodies are “vulgarly” supposed to cast shadows and thus shadows depend on bodies, so “metaphysically” bodies are the shadows that minds cast and thus bodies depend on minds. This is how material things are “by these” spiritual things. Edwards spells out this dependence more thoroughly:

when I say, “the material universe exists only in the mind” I mean that it is absolutely dependent on the conception of the mind for its existence, and does not exist as spirits do, whose existence does not consist in, nor in dependence on, the conception of other minds.⁹⁵

Without a mind having an idea of a body or the material universe, they cannot exist. Their existence does not only depend on but consist in the conception of a mind. Thus “all existence is perception.” He continues:

What we call body is nothing but a particular mode of perception; and what we call spirit is nothing but a composition and series of perceptions, or an universe of coexisting and successive perceptions connected by such wonderful methods and laws.⁹⁶

The view that a body is a mode of a perceiving mind and that a mind is a composite series of perceptions, raises of course the problem of how a body or the material universe can exist without a human conceiving them. It is here that God enters into the metaphysics of Edwards. For “the universal system, or sum total of existence,” is divided into “all intelligent existence, created, and uncreated.”⁹⁷

Natural theology was not only important in itself for Cartesianism generally but was also its very foundation. “In the conception of God, as in so much of early modern philosophy, Descartes is the seminal figure.”⁹⁸ Le Grand places natural theology before all other parts of philosophy (following logic) in his *Body of Philosophy*. Natural theology “is required to the laying of the Foundations of *Human Disciplines*, and in that without the knowledge of *God*, no solid Knowledge can be had of any thing whatsoever.”⁹⁹ According to

⁹³ “Things to be Considered” no. 44, *WJE* 6:238; “The Mind” no. 61, *WJE* 6:380; “Miscellanies” no. 267, *WJE* 13:373.

⁹⁴ “The Mind” no. 1, *WJE* 6:337; similarly, no. 62, *WJE* 6:380; “Beauty of the World,” *WJE* 6:305; “Miscellanies” no. 108, *WJE* 13:279; *Nature of True Virtue*, *WJE* 8:611.

⁹⁵ “The Mind” no. 51, *WJE* 6:368.

⁹⁶ “Notes on Knowledge and Existence,” *WJE* 6:398.

⁹⁷ *End of Creation*, *WJE* 8:424; similarly, “Of Being,” *WJE* 6:204, 356; Morton, *Logick*, 144.

⁹⁸ Thomas M. Lennon, “Theology and the God of the Philosophers,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Donald Rutherford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 283; cf. Elmar J. Kremer, “Antoine Arnauld,” in *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Steven Nadler (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 115.

⁹⁹ Le Grand, *Philosophy*, 54, depending on Descartes, *Meditationes*.

Edwards: “all being [. . .] is, in strictness, only a shadow of his.”¹⁰⁰ Every finite being not only depend on but consist in God, having an idea of it. In an early statement of this general account of being, Edwards sets out that things really are God’s ideas:

I will form my reasoning thus: if nothing has any existence any way at all but in some consciousness or idea or other, and therefore those things that are in no created consciousness have no existence but in the divine idea - as supposing the things in this room were in the idea of none but of God, they would have existence no other way, as we have shown in our Natural Philosophy; and if the things in this room would nevertheless be real things - then God’s idea, being a perfect idea, is really the thing itself.¹⁰¹

Clearly nothing exists, according to Edwards, but in some consciousness, and the furniture in the room as well as the material universe exist as the ideas of God. This not only aims to account for the existence of things that are not the objects of a human mind, but also to make it possible for ideas to be the only objects of human minds:

Seeing our organs themselves are ideas, the connection that our ideas have with such and such a mode of our organs is no other than God’s constitution that some of our ideas shall be connected with others according to such a settled law and order, so that some ideas shall follow from others as their cause.¹⁰²

For instance, the organ of sight by which human minds seem to see ideas is itself a divine idea as is the human mind and its ideas. Although God was generally conceived by Cartesians as the supreme spiritual substance and Edwards uses such typical designations as “the uncreated consciousness” and “the infinite mind,”¹⁰³ for him this meant that “speaking most strictly, there is no proper substance but God himself.”¹⁰⁴ By “substance” Edwards means “a complexion of such ideas which we conceive of as subsisting together and by themselves,”¹⁰⁵ and therefore he sets out his idea of God more fully in Lockean terms: “The notion of God, or idea I have of him, is that complex idea of such power, holiness, purity, majesty, love, excellency, beauty, loveliness, and ten thousand other things.”¹⁰⁶ A complex idea is composed of simple and more basic ideas, and by combining the latter humans can arrive at the former as, for instance, an idea of God.¹⁰⁷ However, “there is no such

¹⁰⁰ “The Mind” no. 8, *WJE* 6:364; “Miscellanies” no. 108, *WJE* 13:279; “Of Atoms,” *WJE* 6:214.

¹⁰¹ “Miscellanies” no. 94, *WJE* 6:258; cf. no. *pp*, *WJE* 13:188; “Of Being,” *WJE* 6:204; “The Mind” no. 40, *WJE* 6:356; and Berkeley, *Principles*, 45.

¹⁰² “The Mind” no. 40, *WJE* 6:359.

¹⁰³ “Of Being,” *WJE* 6:204; “Miscellanies” nos. 144 (134), 205, *WJE* 13:299, 340-41; “Discourse on the Trinity,” *WJE* 21:113.

¹⁰⁴ *WJE* 6: 215; similarly, pp. 235, 238, 344, 350, 380, 398.

¹⁰⁵ “The Mind” no. 25, *WJE* 6:350.

¹⁰⁶ “Miscellanies” no. *aa*, *WJE* 13:177; cf. Locke, *Essay*, II.xii, II.xxiii.33.

¹⁰⁷ “The Mind” no. 25, *WJE* 6:350, and nos. 42-43, pp. 360-63; cf. “Miscellanies” no. 1253, *WJE* 23:185-86.

distinction in God of substance and property [since] this is opposite to the simplicity of God's nature."¹⁰⁸

So, Edwards received and conveyed instruction in logic, ethics, physics and metaphysics within a broadly Cartesian framework, and this framework is reflected in his writings.

Towards a Solution

Edwards' formative years culminated in his attempt to write a systematic treatise of what is real and in particular to develop an account of idealism as basis for natural theology.¹⁰⁹ The sources of this have however been regarded as the "perennially intriguing problem in American intellectual history."

Yet, with the background of studies, teaching and research that Edwards did at Yale, his idealism should not be a perennially intriguing problem. For Cartesian dualism was arrived at by the methodical doubt that made it possible to doubt "the existence of the external world" including one's body. If one can doubt the existence of one's body, then one can doubt that there is anything else than minds with their ideas. Following Descartes there was a sustained debate among philosophers "whether material things exist" and not only minds.¹¹⁰ Among those that questioned his affirmative argument was Pierre Bayle, who denied the validity of the distinction between primary and secondary qualities.¹¹¹ Although Edwards had no taste for Bayle's general scepticism, he pursued his *Dictionary* eagerly¹¹² and likewise argued that primary and secondary qualities are equally mind-dependent.¹¹³ Among other authors Edwards perused, Malebranche dismissed Descartes' proof for the existence of material things,¹¹⁴ and although Locke seems impatient with the question of whether there is an "external world," he still maintained that knowledge of the existence of anything else than oneself and God "extends not beyond the Objects present to our senses."¹¹⁵ We do

¹⁰⁸ *WJE* 42. Sermon on Deut. 32:4.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. "The Mind" and "Outline of 'A Rational Account,'" *WJE* 6:386-93, 396-97.

¹¹⁰ Descartes sought to prove the existence of bodies and material things in his sixth meditation: *Meditationes*, 71-90. Pierre Bayle summarized the subsequent continental discussion in *An Historical and Critical Dictionary*, 5 vols. (2d ed., London: Knapton, 1734-1738), IV.654, note B, and V.611-614.

¹¹¹ Bayle developed many arguments denying the existence of extension (e.g., in footnotes G and H to his article on Zeno of Elea), but the one in which he denies the validity of the distinction between primary and secondary qualities is perhaps especially noteworthy (*Dictionary*, V.612).

¹¹² Edwards had access to the first English edition of Bayle's *Dictionary* from 1710 in the Dummer Collection and he desired to obtain it in 1724 as well the second edition in 1738: "Catalogue" nos. 234, 414, *WJE* 26:165, 213. Both entries are crossed out as if obtained, but whether he studied these passages we do not know.

¹¹³ Edwards argues that primary and secondary qualities are equally mind-dependent in "The Mind" nos. 13, 27, 61, *WJE* 6:343-44, 350-51, 376-80. Berkeley did something similar in *Principles*, 18.

¹¹⁴ Malebranche, *Search after Truth*, VI.vi.

¹¹⁵ *Essay*, IV.iii.21; cf. IV.xi.9-11.

not know whether these passages of Locke, Malebranche and Bayle had any influence on Edwards, but we have in this paper seen that he eagerly studied within this tradition. Several scholars have shown how many thinkers both on the Continent and the British Isles were gradually led to doubt or deny Descartes's proof that bodies exist and affirm that only minds exist.¹¹⁶ To Edwards and his likeminded, idealism seemed obviously to follow from it. For starting from the commonly acknowledged premise at the time that only minds and their ideas are immediately and indubitably accessible whereas matter is not, Edwards found a basis for an ontological distinction between "two worlds, the external, the subject of natural philosophy; the internal, our own minds."¹¹⁷ For the distinction between the directly accessible mind and the indirectly accessible matter, together with the distinction between primary and secondary qualities of matter, was generally supposed to establish that mind and body are two distinct substances. To this ontological dualism answer an epistemological one:

the body and the senses obscure the views of the mind. The world seems so differently to our eyes, to our ears and other senses, from the idea we have of it by reason, that we can hardly realize the latter.¹¹⁸

In his arguments for idealism Edwards eliminates bodies by his account of perception and denial of the distinction between primary and secondary qualities.¹¹⁹ Thus he infers a technical distinction between the "vulgar" and the "rational account" of the world. On the one hand, there is "the material world [...] existent [...] as is vulgarly thought."¹²⁰ On the other hand, the "rational account" teaches that "the world, i.e., the material universe, exists nowhere but in the mind [...] the world [is] only mental [. . .]. [T]he existence of the whole material universe is absolutely dependent on idea."¹²¹ Hence how the world seems to the senses is superficial, deceptive, or illusionary, whereas how the world is to reason is

¹¹⁶ Louis E. Loeb, *From Descartes to Hume: Continental Metaphysics and the Development of Modern Philosophy* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1981), 235; McCracken, "Stages"; Brown, "Platonic Idealism"; Silvia Parigi, "Is There a Cartesian Road to Immaterialism?" in *Berkeley et le cartésianisme*, ed. Geneviève Brykman (Paris: Université Paris X Nanterre, 1997); Charles McCracken, "Knowledge of the Existence of Body," in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Stuart Brown, "The Critical Reception of Malebranche, from His Own Time to the End of the Eighteenth Century," in *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche*, ed. Steven Nadler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Jasper Reid, "Immaterialism," in *The Routledge Companion to Eighteenth Century Philosophy*, ed. Aaron Garrett (London: Routledge, 2014), 130.

¹¹⁷ "The Mind," *WJE* 6:387.

¹¹⁸ "The Mind" no. 22, *WJE* 6:349; similarly, "Miscellanies no. 1340," *WJE* 23:363; Malebranche, *Search after Truth*, I.vi.25; Le Grand, *Philosophy*, 302-303; Arnauld and Nicole, *Logic*, IV.i.

¹¹⁹ Especially in "The Mind" nos. 13, 27, 61, *WJE* 6:343-44, 350-51, 376-80. I analyze and evaluate these arguments in a forthcoming work.

¹²⁰ *WJE* 6: 354; cf. pp 368, 193-96; *Freedom of Will*, *WJE* 1:150, 155, 346, 348, 363; *Religious Affections*, *WJE* 2:254; Norris, *Theory*, 251; Berkeley, *Principles*, 44.

¹²¹ "The Mind" no. 34, *WJE* 6:353.

profound, genuine and true. Edwards allows, though, ordinary talk of the world: “yet we may speak in the old way,” namely, in the mechanistic way of “atoms” and their primary qualities of “bulk and figure” and “motion.”¹²² However, this is just the vulgar conception of the world. In this way the doctrine of the direct perception of mind with its ideas and the indirect perception of matter is the basis for the dualism between mind and matter and the necessary condition of the distinction between the vulgar and the rational account of the world. From these idealism may seem easily to follow. Since ideas are not material and not inaccessible, they can be viewed as constituting the world as it really is.

Thus it is not necessary to identify the exact sources and specific passages beyond his general framework to account for Edwards’ evolution of idealism; it would indeed be unhistorical to assume that one or two sources influenced him. Rather “nourished on an early diet of Cartesian rationalism”¹²³ an independent thinker such as Edwards could clearly develop a version of idealism from his own studies, teaching and research. In a different context, Jasper Reid has similarly suggested that the common source of Edwards and Malebranche is “a Cartesian [...] adulterated Augustinianism,”¹²⁴ Common sources rather than dependence would seem to be the case in Edwards, Berkeley, Collier, Norris, Leibniz and others as they all worked within the same framework of the modern turn to the subject. Most students at Yale probably remained within standard Cartesianism, while such as Edwards and Samuel Johnson moved on to idealism.¹²⁵

¹²² “The Mind” no. 34, *WJE* 6:353-54. When Edwards writes, “we may speak in the old way,” Sang Hyun Lee misinterprets this as “Edwards is here speaking about the pre-Adamic-world” (*The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 61). From the context it is obvious that Edwards writes about mechanistic discourse.

¹²³ Thuesen, “Introduction,” *WJE* 26:91.

¹²⁴ “The Trinitarian Metaphysics of Jonathan Edwards and Nicolas Malebranche,” *The Heythrop Journal* 43 (2002): 153.

¹²⁵ On Samuel Johnson’s idealism, see Berkeley, “Philosophical Correspondence between Berkeley and Samuel Johnson,” II.271-294; Johnson, *Elementa philosophica*, 321-29; and Ryder, “Cadwallader Colden, Samuel Johnson, and the Activity of Matter: Materialism and Idealism in Colonial America.”