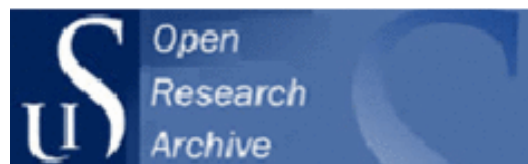




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Peter J. Thuesen (ed.): *Catalogues of Books: The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, pp. 512, £55.00, \$95.00 (hb.). ISBN 978-0-300-13394-3

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) is generally acknowledged as one of the most prominent American philosophers, and Yale University Press has now completed the first critical edition of his works. The twenty-sixth and final volume of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* contains, however, not a book by Edwards, but a transcription of the literature lists he compiled from late 1723 to late 1757.

In this volume we have something like an eighteenth-century bibliographical database. Edwards used two documents to keep track of books, and both his ‘Catalogue’ and ‘Account Book’ are transcribed in this volume. The Catalogue records 720 books, tracts, sermons and newspapers he wanted to read and buy. In the Account Book, Edwards jotted down literature he loaned and distributed. The private format of the Catalogue and the Account Book contrasts markedly with the publishable format of Edwards’s better known ‘Miscellanies’ and, of course, his published works. However, these annotations are helpful in understanding his broad intellectual frame of reference, and useful for comparison with citations or references in his writings. They compensate somewhat for the loss of the list of books in Edwards’s private library at his death.

The editor, Peter J. Thuesen, provides a valuable introduction to the Catalogue and the Account Book. The first half of his introduction traces the context of Edwards’s reading in grammar school, college, tutorship, library association and private collection. The second half classifies his reading interests into reformed and non-reformed theology, apologetics, polite literature, history, and philosophy. The introduction ends with a discussion on marginal symbols, datings and missing leaves. There are also useful appendices on the library and reading of Edwards’s father, Timothy Edwards, a register of those who borrowed books from Edwards, a list of extant books with Edwards’s signature or annotations, and a record of the printed works to which Edwards referred. In brief, Thuesen’s overview on Edwards’s own intellectual development and the wider transmission of ideas in colonial British America, together with the compilation of bibliographical material, builds on and confirms (with the help of online library catalogues worldwide) the careful and path-breaking research of Norman Fiering and William Sparkes Morris.<sup>1</sup> There are, though, gaps that could easily have been filled. For example, Thuesen only gives the percentage of

<sup>1</sup>Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981) and William S. Morris, *The Young Jonathan Edwards: A Reconstruction* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing, 1991 (a 1955 dissertation from the University of Chicago)).

some of the literary categories in the Catalogue and the Account Book, and that of philosophy books is in particular, omitted.

This volume is a much-needed contribution to our understanding of Edwards's intellectual lineage. Edwards belongs to a generally unknown past, the rudimentary knowledge of which (at least) is requisite for a historically informed analysis of his philosophical arguments. Of great importance for such an assessment is how and when Edwards arrived at the general philosophical position he maintained throughout his life. Marsden's recent biography is surprisingly sparse on the intellectual influences and development of Edwards.<sup>2</sup> Scholarship on Edwards's development has long suffered from the early editors' mistaken dates of most of his early manuscripts. Fortunately, Thomas Schafer's analysis of the early manuscripts during the last quarter of the twentieth century has led to a revision of their dates, and consequently to a (more) correct account of Edwards's philosophical development and position.<sup>3</sup> Although there is no complete contemporary record of his curriculum and earliest sources, the main scope of his syllabus can be reconstructed from circumstantial evidence and the chief philosophical influences can be inferred from his early writings. Here, the Catalogue and the Account Book contribute to our understanding, since they show the wide range of philosophical literature to which Edwards had access in New England and enable us generally to reconstruct his philosophical frame of reference more clearly than ever before. They reveal him as a full participant in the European republic of letters by means of international journals that heralded new scholarship. This in itself should prevent a one-dimensional analysis. For instance, it has been alleged for a long time that John Locke had a dominant influence on Edwards from the age of thirteen, yet in the Catalogue there is no evidence that Edwards desired to read Locke before 1724 and evidence that he did not own a copy of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* before 1754. Similarly, the Catalogue and the Account Book seem not to support Morris's view that Franco Burgersdijk was very influential on Edwards. Rather, the broad philosophical discussion within modern rationalism was, from the start, Edwards's framework.

However, Edwards's universal reception of Enlightenment thought and its setting of his intellectual agenda raise questions as to the coherence of some of his views. According to Thuesen, a 'fruitful tension between Enlightenment "latitude" and Reformed traditionalism animated Edwards' entire career'; and 'still fully committed to Reformed orthodoxy, he nevertheless sought access to the full range of Enlightenment thought' (3, 9n4). Edwards seems indeed to have sought to be faithful to his theological

<sup>2</sup>George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup>See, for instance, Thomas A. Shafer 'Editor's Introduction', in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: The 'Miscellanies': a-500*, edited by Thomas A. Shafer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) 1–90.

heritage all his life, but he appears not to have realized that his own adoption of modern philosophical views may have been opposed to the theological heritage he sought to defend. For instance, the difference between the logical analysis of what is presupposed in our ordinary general concepts of matter in traditional physics and the reduction of matter through mathematical concepts in modern physics; the traditional realist view that knowing is a form of being and the modern idealist (including empiricism) view that being is a form of knowing; Aristotelian monism and Cartesian dualism in anthropology; and traditional partialism and modern impartialism in ethics. His standard textbooks in Christian doctrine – William Ames’s *Medulla sacrae theologiae* and Johannes Wollebius’s *Compendium theologiae Christianae* – probably did not restrain his anti-Aristotelian sources and views, and these rather non-technical works do not set out the traditional philosophical assumptions at any length. Edwards’s later estimations of Francis Turretini and Petrus van Mastricht would expose him to more thorough argumentations that assumed traditional logic and metaphysics,<sup>4</sup> but it is not clear that Edwards grasped the incompatibilities between the two frameworks. What we lack and need are studies that evaluate whether, and if so how, Edwards was able to fuse coherently Enlightenment thought with traditional philosophy.