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Abstract

The Reverend Mr. James Dana, the pastor of the First Church in Wallingford, Connecticut, had never before attempted to pick a quarrel with his old friend and ally, Ezra Stiles, the president of Yale College. But in the winter of 1782 what was happening at Yale passed all the bounds of propriety and friendship. "I have understood that Mr. Edwards's book on fatality was laid aside some years since at your university," Dana wrote (not stopping to add what he surely must have thought, *and good riddance too*); but now, "it gave me pain to hear lately" that the divinity professor, the epileptic Samuel Wales, "particularly recommends this book to the young gentlemen who are studying divinity under his direction." Have you forgotten, Dana irritably asked, what kind of damage Jonathan Edwards and his *Careful and Strict Enquiry in the Modern Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of Will, which is supposed to be essential to Moral Agency, Vertue and Vice, Reward and Punishment* had done since the book appeared in 1754? "I need not say to you, sir, that it has been *the root of bitterness* which has troubled us...like Achan in the camp of Israel, *Hopkintonianism, Westianism, and Schism* are grafted upon it." It promoted fatalism and mechanism, "and if mechanism doth not explode moral good and evil, I have not the slightest pretence to any mental discernment." Not only mechanism and fatalism, "*Murrayism, Deism, and atheism*" also sprang indiscriminately from the head of Edwards's book; Dana even blamed the sensational murder-suicide of William Beadle that summer on "the principles" of "Mr. Edwards's system." Suppress the book, Dana pleaded, "interpose your good influence, that so dangerous a book be not introduced into college again." [excerpt]

Keywords

Jonathan Edwards, James Dana, moral agency, Freedom of the Will

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From Calvinist Metaphysics to Republican Theory: Jonathan Edwards and James Dana on Freedom of the Will

Allen C. Guelzo

The Reverend Mr. James Dana, the pastor of the First Church in Wallingford, Connecticut, had never before attempted to pick a quarrel with his old friend and ally, Ezra Stiles, the president of Yale College. But in the winter of 1782 what was happening at Yale passed all the bounds of propriety and friendship. "I have understood that Mr. Edwards's book on fatality was laid aside some years since at your university," Dana wrote (not stopping to add what he surely must have thought, *and good riddance too*); but now, "it gave me pain to hear lately" that the divinity professor, the epileptic Samuel Wales, "particularly recommends this book to the young gentlemen who are studying divinity under his direction." Have you forgotten, Dana irritably asked, what kind of damage Jonathan Edwards and his *Careful and Strict Enquiry in the Modern Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of Will, which is supposed to be essential to Moral Agency, Vertue and Vice, Reward and Punishment* had done since the book appeared in 1754? "I need not say to you, sir, that it has been *the root of bitterness* which has troubled us...like Achan in the camp of Israel, *Hopkintonianism, Westianism, and Schism* are grafted upon it." It promoted fatalism and mechanism, "and if mechanism doth not explode moral good and evil, I have not the slightest pretence to any mental discernment." Not only mechanism and fatalism, "*Murrayism, Deism, and atheism*" also sprang indiscriminately from the head of Edwards's book; Dana even blamed the sensational murder-suicide of William Beadle that summer on "the principles" of "Mr. Edwards's system." Suppress the

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book, Dana pleaded, “interpose your good influence, that so dangerous a book be not introduced into college again.”¹

Jonathan Edwards certainly had his critics, but the depth of Dana’s animus towards Edwards, and especially Edwards’s treatise on the will, has few parallels, then or now. By the time he wrote his letter to Stiles, Dana had already written a two-volume rebuttal of *Freedom of the Will*, which became the single longest piece of sustained philosophical invective in eighteenth-century American literature; and he spent another twenty-five years after his letter to Stiles trying to persuade Yale College and anyone else who would listen that it was the ideas packed into *Freedom of the Will*...and not the ideas of Tom Paine or Ethan Allen...which were leading New England Calvinism down to road to obliteration. The baleful influence of Edwards’s “book on fatality” existed on multiple levels for Dana, which was what made “this book” so unfit for Yale undergraduates. Dana was convinced that it led to intellectual despair and loss of faith, that it disrupted town and church life by fostering schism, and that in the largest context it would threaten to capsize the fragile stability of New England’s emerging republican order. This might have been, for Ezra Stiles, a great deal to impute to a fairly esoteric treatise on the age-old problem of free will and determinism; but for Dana the free will problem and political ideas about freedom were connected discourses in which the wider the notion of free will, the narrower the concept of republican liberty was likely to be. Thus, his apparently arcane debate over Edwards’s deterministic metaphysics came to represent a contest not just over terms but over the life of the mind and of society and even the shape of the republic itself.

Dana’s dread of Jonathan Edwards did not arise out of any personal antagonism between the two...Edwards, in fact, died in New Jersey six months before Dana arrived in Connecticut as an untried Harvard graduate to become the Wallingford church’s pastor. But Edwards’s New Light followers and admirers among the clergy of the Standing Order in Connecticut had crossed Dana’s path even before he became the pastor of Wallingford; and in the fall of 1758, in the most sensational ecclesiastical rift in the history of Connecticut Congregationalism, they had nearly managed to thwart his call to the Wallingford church. Wallingford had been a preserve of Old Light conservatism all through the Great Awakening and of Old Calvinist opposition thereafter, due in large measure to the skillful management of the parish by the Wallingford First Church’s first two ministers, Samuel Street (installed 1674) and Samuel Whittelsey (installed 1717).² Unhappily, when the

¹ James Dana to Ezra Stiles, 18 December 1782, in the Ezra Stiles Papers (microfilm reel 4), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

² Robert J. Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut: A History* (New York, 1979), 121; Gerald E. Farrell, “Dana, Whittelsey, and Wallingford: Change in the Eighteenth Century” (unpublished manuscript, November 1987, Connecticut Historical Society), 3-6, 8-9; and James Dana, *A Century Discourse at the Anniversary Meeting of the Freemen of the Town of Wallingford April 9, 1770* (New Haven, 1770), 31. “Old Light” was the general term used

23-year-old James Dana arrived in Wallingford as Whittelsey's successor in 1758, he could not suppress the urge to measure Wallingford against Harvard Yard and to treat Wallingford people accordingly. A group of suspicious Wallingford New Lights confronted him shortly after the call was issued and grilled him about "his sentiments, with regard to original sin, and the saints perseverance, with regard to the power of free will, and falling from grace," and how well he liked Connecticut's Saybrook Platform.

Dana replied sharply, "why we do not ask him how he lik'd John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, or Esoph's Fables"? The New Lights were not amused. In July, eighty members of the Wallingford church petitioned the New Haven Association, declaring that they "are not willing to have Mr. James Dana settled in the work of the ministry amongst us"; and on 10 October 1758 the consociation of New Haven East met at Wallingford to hear the charges against Dana.³ The charges involved a mixture of theological heresy and injured feelings: Dana was accused of having "wholly Neglected the Doctrine of the new Birth and the Safety [of] appearing in [the] Righteousness of Christ" and of having taught "that true Religion is built upon a Principle of Self Love." But it was plain that his greatest offense was intellectual snobbery, having unwisely declared to the petitioners "that he valued not if there were 150 signers against him for that a great part of them ... were Soft Heads & void of Understanding."⁴

Dana's theological offense was less obvious. His crime, in the eyes of the New Lights, was not that he actually disbelieved in "original sin, and the saints perseverance," but that he claimed that these matters were "mysteries" which human reason could only accept passively as brute facts of divine revelation and which one should not press harder than common sense and the

to identify all anti-revivalist clergy and laity in New England during the Second Awakening; "Old Calvinist" became the term used to describe those Old Lights who, after the Awakening, remained within the general orbit of Calvinist orthodoxy and did not move over to unitarianism or deism. See Mark A. Noll, "Ebenezer Devotion," *Church History*, 45 (1976), 297-307 and "Moses Mather (Old Calvinist) and the Evolution of Edwardsianism," *Church History*, 49 (1980), 275-83, Sidney E. Mead, *Nathaniel William Taylor, 1786-1858: A Connecticut Liberal* (Chicago, 1942), 97-124, and Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York, 1976), 60-61.

³ C. H. S. Davis, *History of Wallingford, Conn. From Its Settlement in 1670 to the Present Time* (Meriden, Conn., 1870), 164; Leonard Bacon, *Thirteen Historical Discourses, On the Completion of Two Hundred Years, From the Beginning of the First Church in New Haven* (New Haven, 1839), 267-68; "James Dana," in *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, ed. Clifford K. Shipton (15 vols.; Boston, 1965), XIII, 306; *The First Congregational Church, Wallingford, Conn.* (Wallingford, 1975), 27; and "To the Reverend Samuel Hall Moderator of the Consociation in New Haven County," and "We the subscribing members of the first Society," in *New Haven East Association Papers Relating to the Church in Wallingford, 1758-1832*, Beinecke Library.

⁴ "To the Rev'd Consociation of New Haven County to be held at Wallingford at the house of Charles Sperry" (10/27/1758) in *New Haven East Association Papers Relating to the Church in Wallingford, 1758-1832*, Beinecke Library.

Standing Order authorized.⁵ Dana never doubted that “all power is of God, derived from him, and subject to him,” and so “he numbereth the hairs of our heads, and disposeth the most contingent and casual events.”⁶ But he did not want that conviction descending into fatalism, and he was convinced that the radical Calvinism being preached up by the New Lights could only lead in that direction. Dana knew all too well that over the previous eighty-odd years, Thomas Hobbes, Anthony Collins, and a flock of “Practical atheists” had taken the Calvinistic doctrines of divine sovereignty and predestination and turned them neatly into system of hard mechanistic determinism, and he was certain that following radical New Light Calvinism into a fixation with the subject would lead people eventually to confusion, to despair, and to Hobbes.

What was critical to Dana was to assert the divine ordination of all events, but not in too much detail, and to proclaim divine election as a fact, which, of course, unaided human reason cannot expect to reconcile with human freedom.⁷ Ultimately, what set Dana decisively off from the Calvinism of the New Lights was not Enlightenment rationalism...his position was based on the incapacity of reasoning, not its powers...nor an outright disbelief in divine election but rather his conviction that “liberty, necessity and prescience are subjects of which we have no adequate ideas.”⁸

If we have no adequate ideas of them, then they cannot be taken as self-evident guides to determining the spiritual condition of others, nor can the established church be detached from the larger context of human society as a refuge for the elect come-outers. “We must not judge the *character* of professing Christian from detached parts, or from any darkness occasioned by external circumstances, or a mind overclouded and impaired,” Dana urged; “every real Christian has grace, whether he himself discerns it or not: Yea, whether it is in actual exercise or not.” There may be “the *habit* of grace” without “*temporary* awakenings, or the *externals* of religion.”⁹

The church was not, in Dana’s mind, merely a voluntary society of the self-consciously elect but a familial institution designed for nurture and growth, without the thunderous interventions of “temporary awakenings.” Baptism, then, and not the sudden mysterious seizure of conversion, “is the only form of admission into the Christian church”; and the work of the church is not to separate the wheat from the chaff but to act as an organic part

⁵ Dana, “The difficulty of being saved,” 12-13, in Sermon Manuscript Book, Beinecke Library.

⁶ Dana, *A Century Discourse*, 11, and “The Observation of the Lord’s Day,” in *Sermons to Young People; Preached A.D. 1803, 1804* (New Haven, 1806), 149

⁷ Dana, *The Folly of Practical Atheism: A Discourse delivered in the Chapel of Yale College, on Lord’s-Day, November 23, 1794* (New Haven, 1794), 18.

⁸ Dana, *The Duty of Christians to speak as the Holy Ghost teacheth: A Sermon preached April 29, 1789 ... At His Installation* (New Haven, 1789), 18-19.

⁹ Dana, “Adoption,” 17, “The conversion of St. Paul proves the truth of Christianity,” 48-49, and “Misconstruction of providential allotments,” 18, in Sermon Manuscript Book.

of human society, as a church-in-society, fitting its members for gradual growth by “continuing in prayer, and in the use of other appointed means,” and bringing them as much as possible “in a preparatory work of grace” through the morphology of the notorious “half-way covenant” to full Christian maturity.¹⁰ For Dana, who had prudently married into the Whittelsey clan upon his arrival in Wallingford, the Wallingford church was, in both fact and metaphor, an embodiment of stable patriarchal authority and one which James Dana, who owed both his griefs and his joys to patriarchy in Wallingford, had no hesitations defending. “Christianity is a means of *uniting*, not of *separating*, the children of the same common Father.”¹¹

The New Light faction in Wallingford was unimpressed. The doctrinal charges against Dana were referred by the dissidents to the local New Haven consociation, where the New Lights had the upper hand. Rather than take its chances with a New Light-dominated consociation, the Wallingford church proceeded to ordain Dana without waiting for the customary endorsement of the consociation, calling in Old Light stalwarts like Isaac Stiles and Samuel Whittelsey, Jr., to perform the laying-on of hands. The congregation justified this unilateral action by its ancient right as an independent congregation to choose its own pastor, but the consociation was not about to accept this argument at face value. Dana and the Wallingford First Church were accordingly found “guilty of scandalous contempt” by the consociation and excommunicated, and together they entered an ecclesiastical limbo in which only a handful of Old Light pastors and churches would dare to exchange pulpits and members with them.¹²

Dana remained under a cloud of New Light suspicion for over a decade, and the longer he stayed out of fellowship with the Standing Order, the darker the suspicions grew. At the worst Dana was rumored to be “a Heretick” who was “unsound as to the Trinity, Election, & univ. Salvation,” and even the best judgment put forward by other Old Lights was that Dana’s defiant behavior was “contemptuous & disorderly & inconsistent with his Character.” Edwards’s grandson, Timothy Dwight, mocked Dana as nothing more

¹⁰ Dana, *The Duty of Christians to speak as the Holy Ghost teacheth*, 43; “The difficulty of being saved,” 45, and “Hungering and Thirsting for righteousness,” 17, in Sermon Manuscript Book.

¹¹ Dana, “The Characteristics of Christianity” (p. 64) in Sermon Manuscript Book. For the purpose of discussing eighteenth-century Connecticut, I have treated *patriarchy* as a social order in which adult males control public institutions and the organization of their families, and speak as their family’s voice in their communities...see Toby Ditz, *Property and Kinship: Inheritance in Early Connecticut, 1750-1820* (Princeton, 1986), 119.

¹² Edmund S. Morgan, *The Gentle Puritan: A Life of Ezra Stiles, 1727-1795* (New Haven, 1962), 198-99; *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, ed. C. J. Hoadly (New York, 1968 [1880]), 344; Davis, *History of Wallingford*, 196-97; Leonard Bacon, “Historical Discourse Delivered at Norwich, June 23, 1859,” in *Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut* (New Haven, 1861), 55-56; see also Benjamin Trumbull, *A Complete History of Connecticut, Civil and Ecclesiastical* (2 vols.; New Haven, 1818), II, 480-526.

than a “*milky preacher*” and a “*hackney coachman of whores*.”¹³ For a hundred years afterwards the rumors lingered in the Connecticut churches that James Dana held “nothing more than that which is commonly known as the Arminian Doctrine” and had never impressed any of his parishioners that “he was hearing that upon which the immediate acceptance of which his soul’s salvation was depending.”¹⁴

That all of his sufferings had something to do with Jonathan Edwards, Dana might have been reasonably but only vaguely sure, but only because Edwards was one of the principal architects of the New Light. He had read Edwards’s books in the 1750s, including *Freedom of the Will*, but shrugged them off as too esoteric in their arguments to be much worry. It was not until 1765, eight years after the Wallingford controversy had left Dana and Wallingford outside the Standing Order, that Edwards’s chief disciple, Samuel Hopkins, published a sensational *Inquiry Concerning the Promises of the Gospel* which blew the lid off Connecticut’s uneasy post-Awakening quiet. In it Hopkins pushed New Light ultraism nearly as far as it could be pushed: sinners could not use the means of grace to repent because sinners (by analytic definition) are incapable of doing anything which pleases God; sinners who attempt to use the means of grace are pretenders who purposely preoccupy themselves with the “means” in order to avoid doing what they must do immediately, which is *repent*; doing good to one’s neighbor apart from regeneration is no better than cutting the neighbor’s throat, since it proceeds from an unholy motive; everyone is obliged by their natural abilities to obey the law of God fully, but utterly disabled by their moral inability without divine regeneration; and the church is composed of the self-consciously regenerate and not half-way covenanters, whose willingness to obey God runs all the way up to a willingness to be damned, if need be.¹⁵ Hopkins’s *Inquiry* was one of the early contributions to what became known as the New Divinity, the most radical version of the New Light yet to appear in New England, and the version most clearly destructive of the patriarchal church. As James Dana read Hopkins, the scales fell from his eyes; and he saw at once that the demonic intellectual power behind the New Divinity, and

¹³ Ezra Stiles, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, D.D.* (3 vols.; New York, 1901), III, 355-56; Noah Hobart to Solomon Williams, 25 November 1758, in *Miscellaneous Collections*, Massachusetts Historical Society; Dwight, in Kenneth Silverman, *Timothy Dwight* (New York, 1969), 102.

¹⁴ Leonard Bacon, *Thirteen Historical Discourses*, 276-77; see Conrad Wright, *The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America* (Boston, 1952), 283, who still enlisted Dana as “an Arminian at the beginning of his ministry” another hundred years on.

¹⁵ Hopkins, “An Inquiry Concerning the Promises of the Gospel” (1765), “The True State and Character of the Unregenerate ... being a Reply to Mr. Mill’s Inquiry” (1767), and “The Cause, Nature and Means of Regeneration,” in *Works* (3 vols.; Boston, 1854), III, 199-200, 309-10, 312, 561, 567; see also Joseph Conforti, “Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity: Theology, Ethics, and Social Reform in Eighteenth Century America,” in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 34 (1977), 572-89.

in all his troubles in Wallingford, lay in Jonathan Edwards and his marvelous treatise on *Freedom of the Will*.¹⁶

Jonathan Edwards knew about Hobbes, too, and he had been appalled, first by the skill with which Hobbes took that most salient of Calvinist doctrines, divine predestination, and turned it into a soulless determinism, and second, by the unseemly speed with which his fellow Calvinists panicked and bolted from their ancestral creed to embrace some form of free-willism. Hobbes provoked this panic by treating the action of willing as nothing more than the last moment in a series of alternations between fear and appetite. Hobbes thought of volition as a one-stage process, in which willing was merely a name attached to the last segment in the process of appetite, and which could not be interrupted by a process of further deliberation *within* the will, or the act of willing, itself. Consequently, the outcomes of all choices are necessary ones because they cannot be other than what the last appetite is, and the will could be spoken of as “free” not because it possesses *power* but simply because it possesses ability or opportunity.¹⁷ What frightened Hobbes’s English Protestant readers was the way Hobbes hooked this one-stage version of volition not to divine providence but to human appetite. In an intellectual climate already made jittery by mechanistic Cartesianism, Hobbes had produced a model of human choice which was nothing more than *necessity*, as fully deterministic as any Calvinist or Augustinian determinism, and made it work purely as a simple, natural mechanism responding (without the power of creating alternatives) to fear and appetite, pleasure and pain.

And so a great stampede ensued among English Protestants, who fled from all forms of determinism and necessity lest they play into Hobbes’s mechanistic hands. They grasped instead for models of choice which would grant the deliberation Hobbes had denied to the will and which would open up the process of volition into a two-stage process that allowed the will to dally over the messages sent it by the appetites and if necessary to suspend choosing entirely, for it was in this way only that establishment Protestants like Samuel Clarke could protect themselves from the frightening conclusion that human beings were merely biological mechanisms responding to the necessary dictates of desire.¹⁸ It was only by positing this power of “suspension” that English Protestants believed they still had evidence of the superiority of the human soul to the relentless clashing of mechanistic gears, and it was this that led New England Calvinists to trim the sails of their Calvinism lest they be mistaken for the disciples of Hobbes.

¹⁶ James Dana to Ezra Stiles, 1 May 1769, in Ezra Stiles Papers (microfilm reel 3).

¹⁷ Hobbes, “Supplement from Liberty and Necessity,” *Hobbes: Selections*, ed. F. J. E. Woodbridge (New York, 1930), 205-6.

¹⁸ R. F. Stalley, “The Will in Hume’s Treatise,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 24 (1986), 41-53; John H. Gay, “Matter and Freedom in the Thought of Samuel Clarke,” *JHI*, 24 (1963), 85-106; John Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule, and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England, 1660-1750* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), 208ff.

Jonathan Edwards was more suspicious of the free-willers than he was of Hobbes, and from his provincial perspective in the Connecticut river valley, he viewed the incursions of free-willism as nothing less than a treasonous “Arminianism” that stole God’s divine honor even as it stole his supreme determining power over all events. When at last Edwards was free to turn his attention fully to the problem in the 1750s, he was quite willing to turn Hobbes back on Hobbes and reappropriate a one-stage model of volition to describe human choice in a divinely-determined universe.¹⁹ Edwards had two major arguments to put forward concerning freedom of the will. One of them was strictly psychological, and it dealt with the precise description of volition. In a manner strikingly reminiscent of Hobbes, Edwards described the will as “that by which the mind chooses anything”...which is the same thing as saying that the will has no independent functions or powers of its own but acts strictly as the last segment of the mind’s inclination toward an object. “It will not appear,” as the two-stagers had claimed, that “a man’s choosing, liking best or being best pleased with a thing are not the same with his willing that thing”; and in a direct criticism of two-stage models of choice, Edwards insisted that “a man never, in any instance, wills anything contrary to his desires, or desires anything contrary to his will.”²⁰ Just as Hobbes had seen “the *last* appetite” as the cause of a choice, so Edwards proposed “motives” as the cause of choice, with a “motive” in this case being “something that is extant in the view or apprehension of the understanding, or perceiving faculty.” To the extent that a given motive is perceived as “the greatest apparent good” among all other motives, the will apprehends the object represented by the motive (just like Hobbes’s “*last* appetite”) without the intervention of any other deliberation. So close in fact is the connection between the motive and choice that “it must be true, in some sense, that the will always is as the greatest apparent good is.”²¹

This explained very neatly how God was able to determine all events without ever violating human freedom. For if the will was created simply to follow the lead of perception, then its true freedom lay precisely in following those leads, and God had only to present the proper motive to a perceiving individual of the required “temper” (depraved, regenerated, or otherwise) in

¹⁹ Clyde S. Holbrook, *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: Morality and Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1973), 28, 38; JE’s manuscripts indicate that he had some exposure, direct or indirect, to Hobbes as early as the 1720s...see “Miscellanies ‘f’ ” in Harvey G. Townsend (ed.), *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards From His Private Manuscripts* (rept. Westport, Conn., 1972 [1955]), 193.

²⁰ *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, 1957), 137-40; see also James Hoopes, *Consciousness in New England: From Puritanism and Ideas to Psychoanalysis and Semiotic* (Baltimore, 1989), 90-91, and Norman S. Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Chapel Hill, 1981), 292-98.

²¹ *Freedom of the Will*, 142, 146-47.

the proper circumstances for a perfectly predictable and inevitable result to ensue *freely*. Far from this releasing Edwards from the suspicion of mechanism, however, it merely suggested to suspicious readers that all human behavior really was *necessary* after all, with God arranging the pieces to create an illusion of freedom. Anticipating this objection, Edwards insisted that there are various ways of defining *necessity*.²² There is *natural* necessity, which is what people usually think of when they think of *necessity*, as when “men are under ... the force of natural causes” such as “pain when their bodies are wounded” or when “men’s bodies move downwards, when there is nothing to support them.” In order to be free from *natural* necessity, people must struggle; and when their struggles are unsuccessful, we agree that they cannot be considered to be free. What is more, we do not hold them morally responsible for the performance of actions that they were naturally unable to perform. However, there are more kinds of necessity than those which arise only from “natural causes,” Edwards added; there is also *moral* necessity, which springs from “moral causes, such as habits and dispositions of the heart, and moral motives and inducements.”²³ In that case the moral necessity created by such a habit, if a good one, is never something to be complained about or groaned under; in fact, having that kind of necessity govern human conduct is exactly what makes us praise some people as good, noble, or reliable, while being governed by evil habits is just what causes us to condemn and criticize others.

This left Edwards free to draw two conclusions, one that immediately addressed the conundrum created by Hobbes and another, less apparent, one which was reserved for the nearer audience of New England Calvinism. On the most obvious level Edwards’s definition of volition and his skilful deployment of the idea of motives as divine agents allowed him to coopt Hobbes’s one-stage determinism and turn it back into an engine of Calvinistic apologetics, and in the process Edwards would demonstrate that the only realistic defense for theism in the eighteenth-century was a full-blown moral determinism. What was less obvious was the other conclusion which Edwards drew, which faced back toward the Old Lights and their flight from the Great Awakening into “Arminianism.” If moral necessity and natural necessity did indeed represent two entirely separate and distinguishable strands of determined conduct, then it was possible to make a similar working distinction between natural and moral inability as well; and one had only to transfer that distinction out of the context of eighteenth-century moral philosophy and deposit it in the context of Edwards’s writings on revival and the

²² Edwards made several distinctions within the term *necessity*, the most primary being a distinction between “relative” necessity, where the necessary result comes from the coercive physical relations of bodies, and “philosophical” necessity, which describes the connections which exist between terms. He subsumed his discussion of *natural* and *moral* necessity under the heading of “philosophical” necessity (*Freedom of the Will*, 151-52).

²³ *Freedom of the Will*, 157-60.

Awakenings and his debates with the Old Lights in the 1740s for it to become clear that Edwards had fashioned a lever which could topple the entire Old Light-Old Calvinist edifice. For on that logic there is no need for the gradual use of the means of grace to bring someone closer to salvation: natural ability makes that available now. There is no use for half-way covenants, which only delay the sinner's free choice, or for the church-in-society, since every repentant sinner knows by direct self-inspection the operation of their own will and with whom they ought to associate. When moral and natural ability coincide, the twice-born know where their real family is to be found.²⁴

All of this might have been much clearer in 1754 when Edwards published *Freedom of the Will*, had not the book itself been spun out to enormous length with a host of ancillary debates over biblical exegesis and examinations of the self-contradictions of "Arminian" logic. It was not until 1765, when Hopkins's *Inquiry* lifted the arguments on natural ability/moral inability out of *Freedom of the Will* and dropped them heavily onto the Old Calvinists, that James Dana realized that Jonathan Edwards and *Freedom of the Will* was the real enemy. By the spring of 1769 he was able to inform Ezra Stiles that he was "well nigh finished ... some remarks on the most elaborate metaphysical production ever published in this country," and in the following year he published his lengthy *Examination of the late Rev'd President Edwards's 'Enquiry on Freedom of Will.'*²⁵ Two years later, Edwards's successor in the church and mission at Stockbridge, Stephen West, published a reply to Dana's *Examination*, and thereupon Dana began assembling material for another assault on Edwards (appealing, among other efforts, to Andrew Eliot to confirm the rumor Dana had heard that "the english impression of Mr. Edwards on the will was promoted by the *deists* in London; and that the *rakes* in Holland had procured a dutch translation of it").²⁶ In 1773 Dana unleashed an equally lengthy "*Examination of the Late Rev'd President Edwards's Enquiry on Freedom of Will,*" *continued*, in which he largely ignored West and resumed his argument with Edwards where he had left off three years before.

Dana wasted no time in the first *Examination* in marking out the chief problem with Edwards: too ambitious and too restless an intellect to abide content with the simple antinomy of divine providence and free moral choice, Edwards had plunged over his head into "elaborate and intricate" metaphysical speculations, and only Edwards's "strong practical sense of reli-

²⁴ On Edwards's immediatism see "Miscellaneous Remarks," Edward Hickman (ed.), *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (2 vols.; London, 1976 [1834]), II, 545, 563; see also Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan New England* (New Haven, 1966), 209-12.

²⁵ Dana to Ezra Stiles, 1 May 1769, in Ezra Stiles Papers [microfilm reel 3], Beinecke Library.

²⁶ Dana to Andrew Eliot, 9 July 1773, in Andrews-Eliot Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

gion” had actually kept him from having “philosophised” himself into “scepticism.” The principal point on which Dana sought to demonstrate that folly in his first *Examination* was the problem of motives, since the whole structure of Edwards’s psychology of volition hung on the functions he attributed to motives. Dana did not propose to question “whether the highest motive always hath a causal influence on the will”...that much was simply a tautology.

The real question was how any motive came to be “highest in the mind’s view.”²⁷ That, Dana was delighted to point out, Edwards had never really explained beyond the simple suggestion that motives *might* derive their force sometimes from the inherent attractiveness of the motive itself and sometimes from the inclinations of the perceiver of the motive. But this, Dana declared, only raised more questions than it answered: if the power of a motive lies in the motive itself, then how can we escape the inference that God deliberately tempts people when he places highly attractive but highly immoral motives in their path and thus reveals himself as the author of sin? “Will it now be said, that GOD is the cause of those ... acts of the will, which are so odious in their nature?” Dana asked: “On Mr. Edwards’s scheme this must be said.” Or if motives derive their force from the “temper” of the perceiving individual, then isn’t it really their “temper” which places them at fault and not their wills? “If an intrinsic cause, or original bias and propensity, be that necessity by which the will is determined, what is this but being determined by nature?”²⁸ The point is that both interpretations of the power of motives are alike ridiculous; Edwards cannot really say for certain what makes one motive greater or better than another, and neither can anyone else. “And thus the enquiry may be *pursued in infinitum* (which shews, by the way, the *futility*, at least, of entering on such an enquiry as that which is the subject of Mr. Edwards’s book).”²⁹

The second object of Dana’s attack in the first *Examination* had to be the natural/moral necessity dichotomy; if Edwards’s scheme of motives explained how choices became necessary, the natural/moral necessity dichotomy was needed to explain how necessary choices were compatible with moral responsibility. For Dana exploding this explanation was simply a

²⁷ Dana, *An Examination of the late Rev’d President Edwards’s “Enquiry on Freedom of Will”* (Boston, 1770), iii-iv, 1. Only four relatively brief commentaries have been written on Dana’s criticism of Edwards, and all of them respond to Dana as little more than a footnote either to Edwards (Paul Ramsey’s introduction to *Freedom of the Will* and Claude M. Newlin, *Philosophy and Religion in Colonial America* [New York, 1962], 161ff) or to anti-Calvinism (Conrad Wright, *The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America* [Boston, 1955], 106ff and Joseph Haroutunian, *Piety Versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology* [New York, 1932], 229-36).

²⁸ *An Examination*, 46-49, 53-56, 75; the same objection was raised by Arthur Murphy in his review essay on Paul Ramsey’s Yale edition of *Freedom of the Will*...see “Jonathan Edwards on Free Will and Moral Agency,” *Philosophical Quarterly*, 68 (1959), 200ff.

²⁹ *An Examination*, 6.

matter of insisting that the natural/moral necessity dichotomy was a distinction without a difference. As Dana complained,

What Mr. *Edwards* intended by a *moral* cause, we cannot satisfy ourselves. Sometimes he appears to reason as if supposed there was *really no distinction* between a moral and natural cause, or none to be perceived; while more generally he seems to suppose a distinction of great importance; which, however, he hath not so clearly pointed out as out as were to be wished.

The reason why Dana saw no clear distinction, and why Edwards was unable to make one, was that in practical terms the kinds of causation and ability which Edwards categorized as natural and moral intermix themselves. Natural necessity, which produces results which coerce us and which we struggle against, and moral necessity, in which we move unthinkingly or unresistingly along with a motive, overlap and produce behaviors where it is difficult to distinguish coercion from cooperation. "There is the *joint* influence of moral and natural necessity in moral events," Dana wrote, "their influence is closely linked."³⁰

The real question in determining freedom and responsibility, according to Dana, was not whether our choices are the product of natural or moral necessity (or ability) but whether our choices could have been other than they were...whether, in other words, there always exists, under natural or moral necessity, not just the opportunity to choose what the will chooses but whether, at the very moment of choosing, the possibility exists of selecting an alternative to what we actually chose. One may suggest that a *moral* necessity is perfectly compatible with freedom and responsibility while a *natural* necessity is not (or that a natural ability always involves one in responsibility even while laboring under a moral inability), but this means nothing if no alternatives to necessity exist. "If no being can chuse or act otherwise than he doth, we cannot conceive of a necessity more absolute." If not, then all the talk about necessity, natural or moral, is really about mechanism. "If there be a real necessity on the mind in all its acts, it is quite immaterial whether this necessity, by which the mind is in every instance determined, be called natural or moral."³¹ This made it clear, at least to James Dana's unmitigated satisfaction, that both Edwards's scheme of motives and the natural/moral necessity dichotomy could lead nowhere but to "*atheism and licentiousness*." Whether that meant that Edwards's book was really "copied from Mr. *Hume*, *Hobbs*, *Spinoza*, or any of the old heathen Philosophers, we do not say."³²

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

³² *Ibid.*, 84.

Dana's first *Examination* was long on criticism but short on positive alternatives. Fully as committed to a cautious "common sense" realism as Edwards was to immaterialism, Dana found freedom and responsibility by intuition rather than by analysis. "That we have internal liberty is apparent from our *moral discernment*," Dana insisted, "Let a man look into his own breast, and there he cannot but perceive inward freedom...*Inward Freedom*...For if freedom be not in the *mind*, it is nowhere." Consequently, Dana continued, Edwards's endless distinctions between necessities and abilities serve no real purpose. "The simplest notion of liberty we shall argue for is this, that *mankind have inward moral freedom* ... without endeavoring to state the exact *measure* in which it is possessed or within what *sphere* exercised by them."³³

This led Dana to the practical base of his loathing for Edwards; for while Dana was careful to "acknowledge the fallen state of our nature, and the impotency derived from the fall" and all the other proper *loci* of Calvinist doctrine, the only real question which mattered for Dana was "whether salvation is offered to sinners on *practicable* terms." Dana had been convinced both by the New Lights who had disrupted his life in Wallingford and by the New Divinity who wanted to abandon the "use of means" that Edwards's theory of human volition rendered salvation nearly as impracticable as it could become. "Is there no impropriety," Dana raged, "is there not a palpable contradiction, in speaking of an *offer* on terms known to be *morally* impossible?"³⁴

It did not take long for the Edwardseans to respond to Dana. Stephen West, who was wielding the flail of the New Divinity through the Berkshires, published his *Essay on Moral Agency* in 1772, chiding Dana for blaming Edwards without ever offering an alternative model of volition of his own. As it was, West insisted, Dana had deliberately misread Edwards's definition of necessity as meaning raw compulsion. That "there is a connection between antecedent states of mind, and voluntary exertions, this implieth all the necessity which that great Author, upon whom the Ex.....r is animadverting, ever urgeth."³⁵ What West fully expected that Dana was concealing, as his own idea of volition, was simply another two-stage model which permitted

³³ *Ibid.*, v, 88; Dana invokes at this point an argument which had become customary within the discourse of eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment philosophy; see Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of the Mind*, ed. Baruch Brody (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), 259, 283, and Selwyn A. Grave, *The Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense* (Oxford, 1960), 206-7.

³⁴ *An Examination*, 105.

³⁵ Stephen West, *An Essay on Moral Agency* (Salem, Mass., 1794) 34; defining what was meant by "connection," however, became a question of its own for the New Divinity, who used "connection" (as Edwards did) in an occasionalist sense to denote the divinely-guaranteed correspondence of two events which do not rely on their correspondence for an actual cause-effect relationship; and so for West (56), "Habit and Temper mean nothing more than a certain fixt connection between our *present* exercises of will and *future* voluntary exertions of the same general nature and denominations."

deliberation and suspension to occur somewhere between the choice of the intellect and the actual performance of an action. Whatever other messages Dana's intuitions might be giving him about freedom, West was sure that the mind "is conscious of a *power of will*, only in the *exercises of volition*." That minds should intuit a freedom to deliberate or suspend choice in the will was nonsense: "That the mind should be conscious of a *power of choice* which is distinguishable from *actual choosing*, is no more conceivable, than that we should be conscious of a power of thinking and perceiving, without at the same time *feeling* or *exercising any perception or thought*."³⁶

West's *Essay* was all the provocation Dana needed, and the next year Dana hurried into print *The "Examination of the Late Rev'd President Edwards's Enquiry on Freedom of Will," Continued*. In it Dana frankly admitted his fondness for a two-stage theory of will: "The *act of volition* or *choice* is a different thing from the *pursuit* or *execution* of what is willed or chosen."³⁷ The idea that the will rushed out to apprehend whatever the mind perceived as the greatest apparent good turned human beings into automata, pulled hither-and-thither by Edwards's ineluctable motives without any reflection on other possible objects of choice, and to Dana this seemed refuted by every turn of experience. To be sure, motives are what lead us to choice, but they fall considerably far short of possessing the powers Edwards attributed to them. "Is there, then, such a constant and unfailing connection or co-incidence between volition and the greatest apparent good, as is pretended?" Dana thought not: "The strongest motive is not the moral cause of volition," and therefore "there is no necessary coincidence between the one and the other." In fact "Perception and volition are as different as sight and taste"; and the more acquainted one becomes with human behavior, the more evident it is that "moral agents many times sin immediately against present light and conviction, while they have *full in their view* the wiser choice."³⁸

If this did not demonstrate the existence of an intermediate stage of deliberation and suspension in the process of volition, decisively separating motives from action, then there was nothing "on Mr. Edwards's scheme of liberty" to separate animals and humans.³⁹ "To say, that such a creature, in case of a competition of objects, cannot stop and consider *which* reason directs to and govern himself accordingly, is either to deny him the power of reflection, or to suppose him given over to a reprobate mind." What alternative is there in that case to considering God, as the creator of those motives, as "the proper efficient cause" of human behavior, including sinful behavior? Instead, Dana insisted that "a moral agent either hath power to *originate* an act of suspension and so bring himself into the view of new motives; or the

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁷ *The "Examination of the Late Rev'd President Edwards's Enquiry on Freedom of Will," Continued* (New Haven, 1773), 28.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 36, 40, 138.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

suspending act proceeds from a motive extant in his mind at the same instant with some motive to immediate election or action.”⁴⁰

It was far better, Dana pleaded, to drop the pretenses created by Edwards, along with the endless definitions and distinctions about necessity and connection, and admit to what common sense tells everyone. “If any truth be plain, this is, that man is free,” Dana wrote. “Next to the consciousness of our own existence is that of our moral freedom.”⁴¹ For after all of Edwards’s logical pinching and probing of free will, “all the argumentation of his book really concludes in this, that God is the cause of sin.”⁴² Common sense would also seem to dictate that no alternative to some form of free will existed apart from making God the author of sin. The folly of the answer demonstrated the folly of the argument. God cannot be the cause of sin, a “tyrannical, arbitrary prince, who aims only at his own grandeur, and the display of his power.” God is, as Dana had been telling people all along, “the *parent* of the universe.”⁴³

Over time, Dana’s obsession with Edwards and free will produced two remarkably contradictory results. As Hopkins and the New Divinity pushed the boundaries of Edwardsean radicalism further outwards (and drove New England “fast into Deism and Universalism,” wrote one disgruntled Old Calvinist), the Standing Order came to look upon Dana more kindly, at least by contrast with Hopkins. In 1768 the New Haven consociation offered Dana and Wallingford an olive branch in the form of a promise that they would “freely overlook” the irregularities surrounding Dana’s ordination in 1758, and in the same year the University of Edinburgh bestowed a further laurel of legitimacy with an honorary D.D.⁴⁴ By 1771 Dana was being invited to sit on ecclesiastical councils, and in 1775 he finally joined the consociation which had barred him as an outlaw for nearly twenty years. He ingratiated himself still further with the Standing Order by throwing his allegiance to the American revolutionaries in 1775, and in 1779 he delivered a sermon on the glories of republicanism to the Connecticut General Assembly.⁴⁵ Finally, in 1789, Dana left Wallingford to succeed his brother-in-law, Chauncey Whittelsey, as the pastor of the New Haven First Church, the premier Old Calvinist pulpit of Connecticut. James Dana had been rehabilitated.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 96, 127, 133.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁴⁴ “At a Council of the Consociated Elders and Churches of the County of New Haven” and “To the Rev. Dr. Dana, Pastor ... in Wallingford” (7 November 1775), in New Haven East Association Papers Relating to the Church in Wallingford, 1758-1832, Beinecke Library; *The First Congregational Church of Wallingford, Connecticut*, 31.

⁴⁵ *A Sermon Preached before the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut, at Hartford, on the Day of the Anniversary Election, May 13, 1779* (Hartford, 1779); Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millenium in Revolutionary New England* (New Haven, 1977), 159.

The other way in which freedom of the will turned up in Dana's life in New Haven was in the construction of his republicanism. The reputation Dana had earned during the Revolution as a republican divine was not undeserved, for like a surprising number of Old Calvinists, Dana had no trouble assimilating free will, politics, and patriarchy. As early as 1774 Dana had predicted to Andrew Eliot that "divine providence will interpose" in America to ensure the creation of "a firm confederacy," based (as he told the Connecticut General Assembly in 1779) on "the natural parity of mankind."⁴⁶ The sanction Dana invoked for this "confederacy" was the Hebrew patriarchs, "with JEHOVAH at the head." Their "confederate republic" offered a perfect republican pattern where "equality of condition was provided for, and the means of corruption prevented," Dana preached, and so "for this reason we give the preference to a representative democracy."⁴⁷ But "equality" and "democracy" did not mean for Dana what it meant for others in the eighteenth century, that is, the legitimized pursuit of self-interest or economic opportunism. Dana feared that "corruption" and "the spirit of party" were the real fruits of self-interest and only led to what he condemned as "the splendour and profusion, the great inequality, which have long been the curse of the European nations."⁴⁸ He was particularly fearful of the inequalities that might emerge from unfettered participation in world markets: for Dana, republican virtue demanded a republican agrarianism where "the principal riches of a state consist in the fruits of the field," and though some measure of foreign commerce was inevitable, "a free republic, as that of the United States" had no business pursuing commerce on any other basis than strict "reciprocal advantage."⁴⁹

Unfortunately, nothing that Dana saw in the first decade of the new republic gave him much hope that his warnings were being heeded. "With accession to our population, commerce and wealth, and other improvements, have we not declined rather than improved in vital piety and good morals?" he asked in the year of the Louisiana Purchase.⁵⁰ The principal evidence Dana found for this decline was the decay of patriarchy. "Family religion is in a manner extinguished," Dana complained, and he was sure that no "past period has endangered the faith and morals of youth comparably with the present." Post-Revolutionary New England held fewer and fewer opportuni-

⁴⁶ Dana to Andrew Eliot, 30 May 1774, in Andrews-Eliot Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Dana, *A Sermon*,... May 13 1779, 9.

⁴⁷ *A Sermon*,... May 17, 1779, 17, 19; and *The Intent of Capital Punishment: A Discourse delivered in the City of New-Haven October 20 1796* (New Haven, 1796), 9.

⁴⁸ "Civil Union" (pp. 62-63) in Sermon Manuscript Book; Dana, "Frugality," in *Sermons to Young People*, 267.

⁴⁹ *A Sermon*,... May 17, 1779, 21, 24, 41; Dana, "Frugality," in *Sermons to Young People*, 267.

⁵⁰ "Self-Dedication" and "Motives to a Conversation Becoming the Gospel," in *Sermons to Young People*, 128, 500.

ties for the increasingly land-locked sons of New England fathers; and as landless sons headed westward into uncertain futures, Dana could only protest that true “sons wish not to be discharged from the obedience of their parents. At least those who do, have not a filial spirit.”⁵¹

The remedies which Dana proposed for this crisis almost make the word *republican* fail on the lips. For what Dana wanted as a safeguard from corruption was compulsion: shoring up state-funded Congregationalism, religious supervision of public education, sumptuary laws (since “bribery, corruption and tyranny prevail wherever luxury doth”), and “public acknowledgement of a Supreme Being.”⁵² The republican society of Dana’s imagining was a coercive one, in which “we have various connections with our fellow creatures, and different relations in society; are qualified in different respects and degrees to be helpful to one another; are mutually dependent....”⁵³ Liberal individualism could not have been more foreign to Dana’s notion of republican patriarchy: “we are not at liberty to use or neglect our talents, or to manage them as we please.” Therefore, it worried Dana not at all that his republicanism might actually involve “some abridgements of liberty.”⁵⁴ The various liberal or individualist reifications of republicanism on offer in the early republic held no attraction for Dana, who thought that the very logic of republicanism meant the subordination of the individual to the collective, the self to society, the children to the parents, and the will to the mind.

This tightly regulated version of republicanism sits rather strangely beside Dana’s metaphysical free-willism, and even though the critics of the “republican synthesis” have insisted that the republican ideology of the early national era often involves the embrace and convergence of contradictory elements, not nearly enough effort has been put into discerning what philosophical threads may have been holding those elements together.⁵⁵ In Dana’s case, however, the thread that connects politics and metaphysics may lie surprisingly close at hand, that is, in what Dana’s life-long argument with Jonathan Edwards had taught him about freedom of the will. Dana believed

⁵¹ Dana, “Caution Against Bad Company,” in *Sermons to Young People*, 230; “Adoption” (p. 9) in Sermon Manuscript Book.

⁵² Dana, *A Sermon*,... May 17, 1779, 25; “Public Worship” (p. 16) in Sermon Manuscript Book.

⁵³ Dana, *The Character and Reward of the good and faithful Servant: A Sermon occasioned by the much lamented death of Charles Whittelsey* (Boston, 1764), 18.

⁵⁴ Dana, *The African Slave Trade: A Discourse delivered in the city of New-Haven, September 9, 1790* (New Haven, 1791), 11.

⁵⁵ See James T. Kloppenberg, “The Virtues of Liberalism: Christianity, Republicanism, and Ethics in Early American Political Discourse,” *Journal of American History*, 74 (1987), 9-33, Jeffrey C. Isaac, “Republicanism vs. Liberalism? A Reconsideration,” *History of Political Thought*, 9 (1988), 349-77, Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill, 1980), 236-39, and Daniel T. Rodgers’s survey of the development of “republican” interpretations, “Republicanism: The Career of a Concept,” *Journal of American History*, 79 (1992), 36.

that human volition was a two-stage process which permitted deliberation and suspension and did not move (as Edwards had said) spontaneously and predictably from perception to action, and therefore from a human perspective there would always be, no matter what the motives, an absence of certainty about the outcomes of human action. "I do not admit," Dana had told John Perkins in 1774, "that the mind *always* determines (if it doth generally) on what appears best," and that was why Dana had found it risky to allow people "to act according to their *acknowledged* sense & *feeling*."⁵⁶ The only guarantee of conduct, in that case, was the application of fatherly restraint and compulsion lest, "soured by childish controversy," people "act the part of children who quarrel on the most trivial occasions."⁵⁷

Thus Dana concentrated on the need to exercise control over both the self and republican society, for in a moral universe in which there is no immediate connection between motives and actions and in which reason and deliberation can form their own conclusions, the mere presentation of "motives" can no longer be relied upon to ensure proper behavior. In contrast to the portrait of Dana and Edwards offered by Jay Fliegelman, it is Dana the "Arminian" who is obsessed with the attenuation of patriarchy, while Edwards's greatest moment of trial came as a result of his rebellion against the patriarchal domination of his Northampton parish by his powerful relatives, the Williamsses.⁵⁸

This clearly sets Dana off from the liberal republicanism of *The Federalist Papers* and the Constitution, since the philosophers of the Constitution shared little of Dana's faith that the popular will could be guided by reason or deliberation, or rescued from irrationality and sentiment by the application of fatherly authority. But it also highlights another peculiar correlation, this time between the Edwardseans and *The Federalist*. While Dana held that willing was rational and deliberative (and therefore best contained within some form of established or enlightened hierarchy), both the Edwardseans and the authors of *The Federalist* saw humankind as governed entirely by the perception of the greatest apparent good (whether in the form of "motives" or "interest") and carried along on their paths by passion (whether sacred or secular) in their response to that perception rather than by self-restrained choices. Madison, for instance, was certainly no Edwardsean, and the shape of his republicanism also contains many more irregularities than the scholarly debates of the 1980s on republicanism imagined. Observers then and now, however, have remarked on the similarities of Madison's and Edwards's deterministic description of human psychology; and it is not hard to discover radical Edwardseans who, like Nathaniel Niles in 1774, uttered what

⁵⁶ Dana to [John] Perkins, 7 March 1774, American Antiquarian Society.

⁵⁷ *The Heavenly Mansions: A Sermon preached May 14, 1795, in the city of New Haven at the Interment of the Reverend Ezra Stiles D.D., LL.D.* (New Haven, 1795), 17.

⁵⁸ Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800* (Cambridge, 1982), 34-35, 169-70.

could have been a theological corollary to Madison's discussion of faction in *The Federalist No. 10*:

The saint will never be required to do anything irksome or disagreeable, because his heart will spontaneously choose to do, whatever his sovereign will choose to command. Thus while the laws of Christ will be the only standard of the thoughts and exercises of all, every one will be a law to himself. They will need to do nothing more than comply with their own inclination, in order to a perfect compliance with the will of Christ; because the same mind will be in them, that is also in Christ.⁵⁹

As William Breitenbach has pointed out in his study of New Divinity theories of "disinterested benevolence," the Edwardseans helped push New Englanders toward a new mentality of self-interestedness, competition, and a benevolent but decidedly individualistic liberal brand of republicanism...the republicanism, in other words, of Madison and not James Dana.⁶⁰

What Dana's anxiety in his 1782 letter to Ezra Stiles suggests is that, in the increasingly tangled theoretical thicket of the "republican synthesis" and its critics, one particularly important piece of the overall republican picture has been overlooked. While the "republican synthesis" has been repeatedly criticized for its neglect of ideology, of economics, and even of millennialism, none of these criticisms has noticed the absence of the clearest cognate of this discourse about political liberty, and this is metaphysical liberty and freedom of the will. If Dana's fears about Edwards signal anything, it is that the two discourses about liberty...one a matter of politics, the other a matter of metaphysics...frequently became entangled in the new republic; what the structure of his republicanism suggests, in turn, is that the ways in which eighteenth-century Americans chose to speak about the metaphysics of determinism influenced the way they chose to define the politics of a republican society. Thus, one piece of Alan Heimert's argument about religion and the American revolution can find in Dana's quarrel with Edwards an unexpected confirmation: Dana's Old Calvinist defense of free will, although it occurs within a republican context, does not lead to a more democratic defense of social or political freedom, but to less freedom.⁶¹ By the same token, defenders of theological or metaphysical determinism like Edwards and Hopkins

⁵⁹ Niles, *Two Discourses on Liberty* (Newburyport, Mass., 1774), 53-54.

⁶⁰ Breitenbach, "Unregenerate Doings: Selflessness and Selfishness in New Divinity Theology," *American Quarterly*, 34 (1983), 498-502; see also David W. Kling, *A Field of Divine Wonders: The New Divinity and Village Revivals in Northwestern Connecticut, 1792-1822* (University Park, Penn., 1993), 44-45.

⁶¹ Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), 457-60, 500-509.

lead, as Dana had feared, to the subversion of hierarchy, or at least to the hierarchy of James Dana.⁶²

The distance one travels between *The Federalist* and Jonathan Edwards seems at first so great that one scarcely thinks of them as similar, much less members of a dialogue over both republicanism and free will with the likes of James Dana. But within a polity dedicated to propositions about liberty, there has always been a discernible symmetry between notions of “free” political choice and notions about “free” psychological or metaphysical choices, a symmetry that extends to Robert Owen, Abraham Lincoln, and B. F. Skinner as much as Dana, Madison, and Edwards. What has usually obscured that symmetry has been, partly, the pragmatic penchant (beginning with William James’s attempt to dismiss “free will” as a non-problem in 1907) for evading the question as a particularly bad example of metaphysics or “hard” psychology (as in discourses about “nature” or “drives”); and more largely, the paradoxical shape of that symmetry in American thought, which repeatedly casts fatalists and Calvinists in the role of emancipators, and casts free-willers and Arminians as anxious controllers. In that respect Dana’s commentaries on Edwards and his sermons on republicanism are an illuminating moment, as much for questioning evasions of metaphysics as for understanding politics, psychology, and metaphysics together as parts of a single discourse on the possibilities of freedom in the eighteenth century.⁶³ The models of human action which both Edwards and Dana sanctioned continued alternately to antagonize and fascinate American religious thinkers for half-a-century afterwards, but they were models which spoke to far more than narrow dogmatic concerns. For Americans in the new republic, any description of freedom was a description of the larger political world they hoped to inhabit and the universe of meaning which gave them hope; in that context, the comparative intricacies of determinism, necessity, and fatalism only waited for the opportunity of patient controversy to become descriptions of Americans themselves, as moral individuals, as families, and as a republic.

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⁶² Gerald R. McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society: The Public Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (University Park, Penn., 1992), 157-72; see also Jon Pahl, “Jonathan Edwards and the Aristocracy of Grace,” *Fides et Historia*, 25 (1993), 62-72.

⁶³ See Jon Pahl, *Paradox Lost: Free Will and Political Liberty in American Culture, 1630-1760* (Baltimore, 1992), and for a shorter but more provocative discussion of this connection in the nineteenth century, see David Brion Davis, “Reconsidering the Colonization Movement: Leonard Bacon and the Problem of Evil,” *Intellectual History Newsletter*, 14 (1992), 3-16.