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Jonathan Edwards on Negative and Positive Cause of Moral Evil and on Kinds of Dispositions Inherent in Human Nature

This article is a voice in the debate on the supposed change of the Edwardian stance on the question of the ontological status of a disposition to moral evil in human nature. According to a common interpretation the young philosopher had upheld a privative standpoint on the matter however, as an adult Edwards claimed the opposite, Paulinistic view. The author of the paper proves this opinion to be false to the philosopher's concept. It is evident that since his earliest notes Edwards has agreed with both these explanations, treated by him as two aspects of the same corruption, and did not change his mind through his lifetime. On the one hand, Edwards thinks that the deprivation of a human heart consists in the want of moral good, that is a lack of moral restraints and active disposition to moral good, which is a negative cause of evil. On the other hand, he is sure that it is positively or effectually caused by morally indifferent *natural self love* together with malevolence as its part. This means for Edwards that even natural social dispositions like love of persons (Edwardean *love of complacency*), and love of intersubjective values and matters (Edwardean *love of benevolence*), naturally come from private interest. Although these dispositions are often mistaken with true virtue, they are morally indifferent too, and can cause evil actions turning into evil dispositions. Only a community focused on the moral good can suppress the latter.

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human nature, natural dispositions, self love, moral evil, malevolence, benevolence, virtue, saving grace