So: I am working on a project on the will, and a major point of this project is to argue that this does not mean anything like what you will likely have assumed. Or, rather, it does mean some of those things, but they don't mean what you will likely have assumed. That is to say, the word "will" conjures up, for most people, a set of ideas about the "enclosed liberal individual" believed to possess the freedom—that is, the will—to determine his (and it is, of course, usually thought to be "his") own fate. Now, to focus on such a thing at the present critical moment would no doubt seem the height of folly—if not outright perversity (and I'm not certain it isn't the latter—but more on perversity anon). Are we not posthuman, post-individual, interested in surfaces rather than depths, exteriors rather than interiors, objects rather than subjects, bodies rather than minds? Have we not embraced all these gratefully as a way to get away from that darned liberal individual and all he represents?

Let me be as clear as possible at the outset here. It seems absolutely indisputable that some, perhaps even much, of the strongest work being presently done in the humanities today falls under the rubrics I've just named. From object-oriented ontologies to actor-network theory and distributed cognition, ecocriticism to animal studies and affect—these modes clearly encompass the most energetic new sites in contemporary theory. At the same time, however, working on all this has begun to make me wonder anew about why we all would rather be objects than subjects these days, and wonder whether part of it isn't that there is just something embarrassing about being a subject. Don't you think? And this, then, is what I'm going to talk
about here. By returning to the roots of the very idea of the will, I want to argue for a way in which it once stood for exactly this, the embarrassingness of being a subject (which also might be related to what's kind of fun, not to mention serious, about being one); and, further, that this sense of will, not the sense of it as simply an idealized rationality and freedom, is in fact crucial to nineteenth-century American literature (as well as, perhaps, to the novel as a form).

Our contemporary association between the term "will" and the idea of freedom likely derives from Kant, although even there, matters are more complex than they may seem. And yet in an Americanist context, of course, Jonathan Edwards already saw fit to argue against "the Modern prevailing Notions of...FREEDOM OF WILL" in 1754. Although this title suggests a rearguard attempt to preserve God's omnipotence against a notion of human agency perceived as "modern," this tells only half the story. As Allan Guelzo has argued, the "Arminians" against whom Edwards made his case were themselves arguing against the equally "modern" and, for many, even more scandalous notions of determinists like Hobbes, for whom the will could be defined as simply the last in a chain of appetites, which were "themselves merely the mechanical by-product of sensations" (12).

Edwards's Calvinism actually shared a good deal in common with Hobbes's thought—perhaps unsurprisingly given Hobbes's own Calvinist background. Certainly they both possessed a notably jaundiced view of human motivations. Yet the possibility of conversion was, of course, crucial to Edwards's schema as well. To grasp its full complexity, Edwards's thought needs to be understood within a broader Puritan context, in which—unlike for Hobbes—the will actually functions as a central concept, but crucially not in the modern "I am free to do anything!" mode against which Edwards wrote, and in which it is still usually understood.
Contemporary critiques of the notion of will often associate it with rational agency.¹ So the first thing it is imperative to understand is that the will only emerges as a category, historically, as a way to talk about action that does not simply follow the dictates of reason. As is often remarked, the ancient Greeks did not possess a concept equivalent to our modern notion of will (Kahn 240). Instead, they believed, one simply deliberated on the best course to follow for achieving the good—through our exercise of "practical reason," or proairesis in Aristotle²—and, if we did something else instead, this could be explained either by misjudgment (i.e., something correctable if we considered more carefully or had more knowledge at our disposal) or by the ability of our passions and appetites to overwhelm our ability to think straight.

Interestingly, then, it is with Christianity that we arrive at a more vexed picture—interestingly, because the notion of an eternal battle between the "higher" self and the animalistic body is usually presumed to be above all a Christian legacy. In fact, however, this notion is already quite developed in Plato; what is new is the emergence of a third term, the will, which begins to rear its head in the Epistles of St. Paul and the writings of the Stoics before receiving its fullest and most influential articulation in St. Augustine.

Augustine, who wrote around the turn into the fifth century, has recently been the subject of significant theoretical discussion due to his being positioned, most notably by Charles Taylor in The Sources of the Self, as a key figure in the invention of that much-referenced subjective "interiority" against which we now so often write. "Do not go outward; return within yourself. In the inward man dwells truth," Augustine wrote. Both from words like these, and, crucially, from the new primacy accorded the will (voluntas) in Augustine's conception of that "inward man," an entire "modernity," from Descartes to the Romantics, is believed to take its inspiration.³ These ideas show the influence on Augustine of the Stoics, who were the first to distinguish
human freedom from animal impulse as a moment of assent, a kind of inner yes-saying or no-saying, that accompanies our actions; thus, Epictetus imagines a man responding to a tyrant, You may fetter my body, but never my will (Kahn 247, 252). The question, however, is how to think these moves toward the will, freedom, and selfhood in Augustine together with the fact that, as a Christian, he also frames human will centrally as a question of "obedience or disobedience to the will of God" (as Kahn recognizes, 258).

Here it is crucial to recognize not simply the Stoic influence on Augustine's conception of will but that of St. Paul, and, specifically, the text cited directly at the critical turning point of the Confessions, Book 7 of the Letter to the Romans. For Augustine's experience, as he yearns toward communion with God but finds himself at the same time strangely resisting the very thing he most hopes for, directly echoes Paul's famous lament (in Rom. 7:15): "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." Paul here refers to the phenomenon that the Greeks—and contemporary analytic philosophers—call akrasia (or sometimes "incontinence"), and, as Taylor notes, it is an idea that causes much head-scratching among "rationalists" who must find a way to explain why one would act in direct opposition to what one has determined to be the best course of action (138). For Augustine, in stark contrast, such moments were virtually defining of human "moral experience," as Taylor puts it; to say so, however, was to characterize the human will as essentially acting against itself, which was to say, as "radically perverse" (in terms that Poe, indeed, might well have recognized!) (138).4

Why would such a notion emerge hand in hand with Christianity? Hannah Arendt writes powerfully on this subject in her fascinating study of the development of the idea of will. In Romans 7, Paul is specifically describing his recalcitrance with respect to God's law. What this law enjoins, Arendt reminds us, are not simply certain actions but a certain turn of mind:
commanding "Love thy neighbor as thyself," it insists not simply on what "thou shalt do" but how "thou shalt will" (Arendt 68). Yet the fact that such a radical injunction can never simply be achieved once and for all gives the law its magnitude and renders us, in our awareness of the gap between the "Thou-shalt" and the "I-can," a new recognition of the significance of will (67). The very capacity in us that makes us able to strive toward God, that is, speaks to our vast distance from him, our finitude. (Indeed, in a particularly perverse twist in Paul that I regret not having more space to discuss here, the law itself can be said to generate sin—for, as Paul says, "I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'Thou shalt not covet.'")

As Arendt emphasizes, however, while for Paul this split still takes the (indeed more Stoic) form of the soul weighed down by "flesh," for Augustine "the trouble was not the dual nature of man, half carnal and half spiritual"; instead, "it was to be found in the faculty of the Will itself" (93). Augustine thus dispenses with the entire notion of the will as an executive mental capacity ordering the body, as beside the point: yes, he says, I can tell my legs to move, but what good is that if my will cannot successfully command itself "that an act of will should be made" (172)? As the analytic philosopher Harry Frankfurt would much later suggest, human beings might be distinguished from animals less in their capacity to choose or even deliberate (both of which he sees as shared with other species) than in their capacity for what he calls "second-order desires": that is, to want to want X, or to want a particular desire to be your will (10). Yet as is suggested in Arendt's discussion of Augustine, this very capacity, which for Frankfurt forms the basis of our freedom, also reveals the will's nonunitary character: "if the will were 'entire,'" in Augustine's words, "it would not command itself to be" (qtd. on Arendt 94).

Another way of putting this is that the will is inherently "reflexive": thematizing itself is one of the key things that it does. And this idea can help us move more toward my main point
here: if Augustine does indeed represent a key moment in what Arendt, too, calls the "discovery of an inward life," which will become so important in the post-Reformation writing indebted to his thought, that new fascination with interiority must be understood in relation to the idea not simply of will but of perverse will. What Augustine is saying, as he confronts his own Pauline recalcitrance, is, "I have become a question for myself," and, as Arendt states, this is a question—the self as question—that is entirely new in Western philosophy (85).

So how does this take on the emergence of interiority affect our work as literary scholars, and particularly as Americanists? Both the novel as a modern genre, and American literature in general, are quite commonly understood as repositories of "individualism"; what I want to argue, then, is that we see here a version of the individual that not only differs from but in many ways actively counters what is usually understood by that term.

A more direct line connects Augustine to our archives than we might realize, for the Puritan autobiographical writing on which he exerted such an overwhelming influence has quite frequently been deemed crucial to the rise of the novel form. The new interest both in dailiness and in "the inner lives of ordinary people" (Damrosch 34) emerges first, many scholars argue, out of the Protestant sense of the individual's unmediated relation to God, which prompted so many seventeenth-century laypersons toward diary-keeping. And yet at the same time, however, the Puritan influence also occupies a tellingly problematic space in "rise of the novel" studies, from Ian Watt's influential work forward. The simplest way to put this might be to say that a consensus begins to emerge that while Puritanism (or, going even farther back, Augustinianism) is needed to jump-start something called "modern individualism"—and, thereby, the modern novel—both individualism and the novel need then to leave Puritanism behind in order to become their true, modern selves.
Criticism on *Robinson Crusoe*, again beginning with Watt, is emblematic of this process. For earlier readers—including those in the period itself—Defoe's novel could quite readily be understood as a kind of fictionalized Puritan autobiography, as Crusoe repeatedly casts his Adamic gesture of disobeying his father to go to sea as his "ORIGINAL SIN," one he must learn alone on his island to repent. For Watt, however, this kind of talk amounts to no more than the "mechanical" flutter of Defoe's otherwise discarded upbringing. "Crusoe's 'original sin,'" Ian Watt writes, "is really the dynamic tendency of capitalism itself," as manifested in the "individualist" aim at "improving on the lot one was born to," not resigning oneself to a predestined fate (65). As Leo Damrosch puts it, similarly, if Defoe "sets out to dramatize the conversion of the Puritan self, he ends by celebrating a solitude that exalts autonomy instead of submission" (187)—or what Franco Moretti terms the Lockean principle undergirding the modern novel as a form, that of "Liberty to follow my own Will" (qtd. in Moretti 209).

The assumption, then, in all these readings—as in ones treating memoirs like Augustine's *Confessions* or John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* as proto-novels—is that the more emphasis we see on the individual, the will, and freedom, the more we move away from something called "Puritanism," which is thereby assumed to entail the surrender of all these things to a predetermined storyline. This is of course no more than the familiar story of the emergence of modernity, as a movement away from blind adherence to tradition, toward self-determination. As a result of it, however, the peculiar double-sided will we saw in Augustine, the will as site of freedom and perversity at the same time, disappears from view.

And yet just this view of will was entirely central to seventeenth-century Puritanism (as well as, in fact, to *Crusoe—but I won't belabor that here*). In Perry Miller's classic account of what he calls the "Augustinian strain of piety" in the Pilgrims' New England, he describes how
arguments for the "autonomy of the will" went hand in hand with those stressing its "deliberate errancy," its ability—and, indeed, tendency—to ignore the urgings of reason (249-50, 260). As the historian Norman Fiering has shown, seventeenth-century writers wishing to "testify to a human capacity for deliberate, conscious choice made contrary to the continuously known higher good"—in other words, to "the existence of an independent and sometimes perverse will"—often cited not only the lament of St. Paul but that of Ovid's Medea: "I see and approve the better course; I follow the worse" (Fiering 528). Hence, for example, a 1658 commencement address refers to the will that, "when the mind offers good advice...says, 'I don't like it,'" as "resembl[ing] Medea more than the deity" (531).

Such arguments, as Fiering underscores, specifically targeted the idea (associated not only with the Greeks but with the medieval writings of Thomas Aquinas) of the will as an inborn desire for the good, which could thereby be properly oriented through a more sustained exercise of rationality. Such notions, after all, could lead to the idea, anathema to the Puritans, of guaranteeing one's salvation through "effort and endeavor"—the "Pelagianism" against which Augustine wrote, and the "Arminianism" that would so disturb Jonathan Edwards (Fiering 536).

And yet as Miller famously emphasized, Puritan thought in America in fact occupied a tense middle space, warding off both Arminianism and its seeming opposite, Antinomianism, at the same time. For if the former of these gave too much credence to human powers of rationality, in the Puritan view, the latter depended too much on a single self-obliterating moment of absolute revelation, of sheer surrender to God's grace, that could overcome all of our tortured self-rationalizations. Although this is not Miller's emphasis, it is the doubled Augustinian will, I would suggest, that enables Puritan thought to occupy this space between. And here is the point I want to make: As we move toward the nineteenth century (and indeed toward our own present),
we see both the "Arminian" and the "Antinomian" views of the inner self gain in prestige, at the expense of the Puritan, which finally grows to be associated with psychological pathology. It is crucial, however, to note that the novel, and particularly the American novel (along with the French, though that's another story\textsuperscript{12}) stands as a significant exception to this tendency.

As Charles Taylor and others have noted, the eighteenth century saw two emergent strains of thought that each conceived of the human will in sheerly optimistic terms. One, the Deism that would be so important to Benjamin Franklin, represented an increasingly secularized version of the earlier writings of Locke; the other, what would later be termed "sentimentalism," grew out of the moral philosophy of the Earl of Shaftesbury and Scottish writers like Hutcheson. Although the first of these might loosely be characterized as emphasizing rationality through empiricism and the second, the heart or what came to be called the "moral sentiments," they were united in their disdain for the Calvinist belief in "natural depravity" in the form of the constitutively wayward will, which for the Puritans would always shadow the human capacity to achieve our ends. Instead, for the Deists (and, as Albert Hirschman influentially argued, for early apologists for a nascent capitalism), self-interest—our built-in tendency to seek our own happiness—could serve as a laudable spur to productivity, while for the sentimentalists, our naturally benevolent hearts would lead us to seek our own ends in a way considerate of the quests of others.\textsuperscript{13}

Within these new frameworks, the will became transformed, appearing in forms considerably more familiar to us today. Against the enduring ambivalence typifying the Augustinian will, it became something easily embraced because subsumed into reason, as for the Deists (or, in the U.S., for the Unitarians who took over many of their ideas), or as easily discarded in favor of the affections, as for the sentimentalists (for whom feeling in effect took
reason's place as the surest guide to both truth and virtue). In either case, an essential belief in the human capacity to seek after and attain the good went hand in hand with a sense of historical progress toward greater Enlightenment (often symbolized, of course, by the youthful, aspiring nation)—one in which theological and secular ambitions could comfortably merge.

A fast-fading Puritanism, then, became the stand-in for all that these new views of personhood was not. In an essay on Edwards, Oliver Wendell Holmes called the Calvinist's brand of faith (perhaps accurately enough, given its philosophical underpinnings) not so much modern as "medieval," a product of "old-world barbarism" rather than the nineteenth century's "air of freedom" ("JE" 382, 395); similarly, in his 1820 "Moral Argument Against Calvinism," the Unitarian William Ellery Channing dismissed the religion of his New England predecessors as a doctrine out of step with "the progress of the human mind" (Herbert 40-41). For both Holmes and Channing, indeed, views like original sin quite literally threatened "the throne of reason" (Channing in Beecher 122). That is, hellfire sermons like Edwards's, Holmes suspected, led often enough to "nervous disorders of all kinds," if not outright "insanity" and suicidal despair ("JE" 400)—unsurprisingly given the minister's own "melancholic temperament" and typically Puritan tendency toward a ceaseless "introspection" Holmes recasts as a form of "spiritual hypochondriasism," in which the constant fear of disorder (whether bodily or moral) ends up producing the morbid result it most fears (396). (On this matter, Holmes cites Francis Galton's "On Heredity" concerning the "'air of invalidism'" evident in the entire spiritual autobiography genre, as well as Taine on "'the horrible malady of the nerves and the soul which leads to suicide, Puritanism, and madness'" [397].)

The turn here to a language of psychological pathology to explain what Puritans had construed as the ordinary state of the human will constitutes a notable historical development,
about which much more might be said. For now, I will note only the following. First, this discourse depends on a new category of mental disorder that comes into being around 1800, a precursor to the Freudian idea of neurosis (rather than all-out psychosis), which in effect recasts St. Paul's idea of a split between will and reason via the concept of "mania without delirium," or forms of insanity evident in persons otherwise quite able to conduct the business of everyday life. (These could include, for example, obsessions and compulsions, addictions, or "moral mania"—what would later be termed sociopathic behavior.) Second, as one might imagine, this concept can easily enough narrow the purview of what Paul or the Puritans depict as a definingly human conundrum, so that it becomes merely the province of a particular kind of individual, possessed of a particular—and indeed newly medicalizable—deficiency (perhaps, believe it or not, a "lesion of the will"). Such a narrowing then enables the notion of a properly healthy will to be separated off, creating a version of it much closer to an ideal self-determination.

It is, then, this co-emergence of the physicalized/medicalized will and the more familiarly moralized one (as tied to an optimism about progress) that I want to focus on here. As we might note, for starters, we see in this dyad a surprising conjunction of the two notions of will that more commonly appear as opposed in today's criticism: the one, which physiologizes it as no more than a form of mechanical reflex, and the other that sees it as the crucially human, modern ability to decide for ourselves. And yet, while contemporary posthumanisms often perceive only the second of these to be the inheritance of "Enlightenment modernity" (from which we must now liberate ourselves), any account of modernity worth its salt will recognize how central both of these are to seventeenth-century thought, which in fact simultaneously installs an unprecedented new sense of individual freedom and an equally radical new determinism at the same time. (Alongside the Cartesian cogito, in other words, we are bequeathed Hobbes's sense of the
individual as spinning top: the materially determined entity whose cherished belief in his autonomous motion amounts to the stubbornest of delusions.) When this more dialectical view is taken seriously, as, say, by the philosopher Robert Pippin, "modernity" appears not as a one-sided straw voluntarist from which we can readily distance ourselves (albeit, it should be noted, through the very progress-oriented notion of being "beyond" it) but as an enduring and bedeviling problem or question: in Pippin's words, "How [could] a person...both be the kind of object studied with such success by modern biology and physics, and so subject to the massive formative influence of modern societies, and yet also not just 'be' such a being, but take itself to be one...experience the world... in a way that...seems so distinctly to me, rather than just is...how [could] such a being...be so determined and dependent, yet also a subject, or free" (xvi)?

What the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century developments I've been discussing do, then, which is no doubt the very source of their appeal, is to re-present this problem—the misfit between a now equally radical materialist determinism and insistence on human freedom—as no problem at all. Instead, albeit from different angles, they seem united in the confidence (which itself powerfully speaks to how far they have traveled from Puritanism) that the body itself will set us free. And finally—no doubt more contentiously—it is in this respect, I am going to suggest, that they most resemble some of the ways we are most drawn to think today.

To set up this second point, it will help to have more of a sense of what I mean about the two historical modes of thought "having it both ways," as it were, with respect to the dilemma Pippin presents. So: the first of these, what I've been calling "Deist," follows, as Taylor notes, on the writings of Locke. For Locke, freedom should be understood as an attribute not of the will but of the person who is free to act on his will. The will itself is guided simply by what he calls "uneasiness," which is understood in utilitarian terms as either a desire for pleasure or an
aversion to pain. Although Locke states that this theory is intended to dispute the notion that the will is determined by the greater good, it turns out that, from his point of view, the fact that uneasiness gets us going is the greater good. Were we never to become hungry or thirsty, that is, we would never get off our duffs and become productive citizens.

In this sense, the body's basic needs in Locke drive laudable human action. This fact, as Pippin explains, goes hand in hand with modernity's broader sense of a wholly and readily achievable "progress." He thus memorably terms the modern project "both vulgar and excessively utopian," because its "much more 'realistic' view of the ends to be achieved by knowledge, ends such as health, pleasure, freedom from pain, and not, say, 'wisdom!'" ensures its sense of the likelihood those ends can be addressed (21, 20). In this sense, crucially (and there is an important link to Descartes here as well), a sense of dramatically empowered human will actually goes together here with the sense of bodily needs as driving that will's direction. Less surprisingly, then, we find that Locke goes yet further, emphasizing our capacity to reform our own desires through implanting better habits—a paradigmatic instance of the mind remaking the body, which then in turn more appropriately influences the mind.

Clearly, we can see much in common here with the version of modern selfhood that Foucault would term "discipline" or Weber, "rationalization." Yet I also want to bring in, then, the parallel way in which what might seem a wholly opposed set of discourses, those stemming less from Locke than from Rousseau, similarly enable our natures to be the source of our freedom rather than an at once obstacle thereto. For these theories, which I've called earlier "sentimental" ones (which overlap with certain aspects of Romanticism, albeit not of the more Byronic sort), what for Augustine looked like a Fall into human existence as we know it appears in narrower terms as a Fall into civilization, its ills readily addressed if we but heed the deeper
voice of nature itself. Thus here, too, a greater freedom is achieved by listening to nature rather than to culture, paradoxically making a kind of surrender of will the pathway to a greater self-realization—as, similarly, for the Antinomians, for whom all that worried Augustine might be swept away in a single moment of communion with divine grace.17

What I want now to show, then, is twofold. One is the persistence of what might be termed this "new Pelagianism" and "new Antinomianism" in some of the "posthuman" discourses of the present day. And the second is to offer an alternative to these in the writings of an earlier thinker who in fact shares considerable overlap with contemporary concerns, but who writes about them from a point of view deeply influenced by the doubled Pauline will I've been suggesting these other modes see as easily overcome.

Importantly, I want to show, the Pauline moment, of finding oneself doing something that goes against what you think you want to do, does not simply go away, but continues to pose an issue for all of these discourses. We may note its centrality, for example, in a book I'll offer as Exhibit A of "the new Pelagianism," The Brain that Changes Itself by Norman Doidge. This book represents a popularized brief for the exploding new scientific arena of "neuroplasticity," a version of neuroscience that many humanists have welcomed as a "non-reductionist" model that still reserves a place for human agency and progress. Let me be clear that I don't at all mean to discount the many significant findings of this field and the real impact they can have on people's lives. My interest is in understanding Doidge's stance, or that of other associated writers like Jeffrey Schwartz, within the historical framework of thought on the will. I need to be brief here, but what I want to focus in on is a tendency in these writings to rely on a split that often appears within contemporary writings on addiction: that between "wanting" something and "liking" it. Now, this idea, in itself—that one could "want" something yet not simply "like" it at the same
time—is of course recognizable as a version of the Pauline dilemma of the divided will. Doidge, then, relies on an entirely Lockean schema to tackle this problem, which appears notably in his book in the case of a man "addicted" to Internet pornography. In a kind of neurological update on cultural constructionism, such persons are said to have "downloaded into their brains" certain fantasy scenarios by watching them repeatedly; the good news, then, is that by creating new habits it is possible to wipe one's hard drive clean (104). As Schwartz reminds us in his book on behavior therapy for compulsive behaviors, "God helps those who help themselves."19

In fact, however, a fair amount of concern has been burgeoning within the humanities about the stance of books like these, as evidenced by the work of Catherine Malabou, Nikolas Rose and others. As suggested above, the attitude they represent is in many ways continuous with the rationalization that has for many years formed a significant subject of our critique. In many ways, then, I am more concerned to show a kind of mirroring set of problems in a discourse that often appears as an antidote to the technicist stance on view here—that is, in that which I'm terming "the new Antinomianism."

Once again, the Pauline moment is central to these writings. A good example—although there are others20—would be the recent work on Paul by Giorgio Agamben and Alain Badiou. For Badiou, indeed, the notion of the antinomian is quite apt, as signaled by the title of his chapter on Romans 7, "Paul Against the Law." Zeroing in on Paul's interest in the way knowledge of the law might itself generate sin, Badiou reads the entire moment in which "doing is separated from thinking," and "knowledge" from "will," as a result of "the law," which he sees Paul as thereby rejecting in favor of "grace." God's grace, here, merges into Badiou's notion of the "event," or sheer contingency, "which causes a multiplicity in excess of itself to come forth and thus allows for the possibility of overstepping finitude." More crucially, it allows the subject
to come forward, defined by Badiou in the sense of a realizable will: "We shall define 'salvation,'" he explains, "...thus: that thought can be unseparated from doing and power."\(^{21}\)

Agamben's concern, in a series of lectures given on the topic of will at the European Graduate School, is very similar; he sees Paul's discussion in Romans 7 as the foundation of a split between "possibility and acting" that is operative all the way through Kant, and to which he counterposes Spinoza's grounding of ethics on sheer "potentiality": on the question, "What can a body do?" As Gabriel Alkon has argued, however, there is thereby a fetishization of potentiality as such here that brings Agamben's apparently discarded "will" very close to a much more idealized absolute agency. Potentiality appeals because, in effect, by never actually choosing anything, it gets rid of the Pauline embarrassment about being a subject, or, in Alkon's words, it achieves a more radical "freedom from the will understood as a desiring elan toward particular objects"—the wanting that may not be the same as liking.

Brian Massumi's notion of affect as potentiality, I would suggest, operates very similarly—which can explain the odd fact Ruth Leys discerns in her recent critique of affect theory, the way in which it enables an apparent reduction to mechanism and a greater liberatory potential at the same time. Like Rousseau's nature prior to culture, Massumi's affective responses bypass the contaminations of language by being prior to them—and in this way, very tellingly, affect achieves what Massumi names an impregnable "autonomy." No less than the Kantian subject, it turns out—but without the angst that is in fact the Augustinian legacy still active in Kant—the affective body makes its own laws.\(^{22}\)

This, then, is where we are now: in a place where we don't need to confront the problems that the doubled will once enabled us to think through, because we have decided we can, in effect, have it all. And so here I want to turn to a different kind of thinker of embodied selfhood,
Hans Jonas, who wrote in the mid-twentieth century in the field of philosophy of biology (or, as he described it, of "life"). In many ways an important precursor to contemporary ecocriticism, who believed strongly in a continuum linking human beings to the most minute forms of organic existence, Jonas nonetheless wrote about such matters in an idiom far removed from ours today. Most significantly, perhaps, he created that continuum not by dispensing with the notion of the separated-off individual, but by *proliferating* it. "Life," that is, came into being when some, any, organic "substance" "seceded" from "the general integration of things...set itself over against the world"—"assuming a position of hazardous independence from the material substrate on which it nonetheless continued to depend"—"and introduced the tension of 'to be or not to be' into the neutral assuredness of existence" (*POL* 4).

The way this passage unfolds is absolutely crucial to understanding Jonas's work. Life separates itself out; he calls this "independence," "autonomy," and even "freedom," even "defiance." What it defies, by its existence, is the "non-being" that will subsume it in the end, when death returns "this unique one" once more to "the general integration [or 'equality'] of things" (5). And then, of course, new lives will arise. But Jonas does not simply take the cosmic perspective on all this. Indeed, he chides Whitehead (whom he also deeply admired) for treating the natural world as simply an ongoing event of creative unfolding, cheekily characterizing such a view as a kind of naturalist Hegelianism, "a story of intrinsically secured success" with no means of addressing the powerful fact of death, nor the "deep anxiety of biological existence" as its corollary (96). That anxiety, for Jonas as for Kierkegaard, was the necessary result of the same moment of self-separation that defined the individual's freedom; its intensity, or what we might call its will, spoke to the one as much as to the other.
Jonas's first book, then, explored the question of freedom via the Pauline moment in Augustine, and he returned to these issues decades later in a brief but remarkable essay on Romans 7 titled "The Abyss of the Will." What Jonas found in this tradition shows, perhaps more than anything else I've yet mentioned, how much a focus on its idea of a doubled will can change what we believe a "freedom" based on "interiority" entails. We saw that in Augustine (and this is also true, I'd argue, in Kant), the Pauline experience makes us aware of our capacity for freedom in the very moment in which we recognize its failure. The emblem of this doubleness is the will telling itself, internally, to will differently than it does. What Jonas does to this scenario, then (and here also I think he may be influenced by Kierkegaard), is bring to it the notion of the law itself generating sin, albeit in no longer strictly theological terms. For Jonas, that is, it isn't simply that the will might disobey itself (that wanting and liking, thinking and doing, might be split). It's that, in telling itself to will differently, the will further and perhaps more radically entraps itself, for it begins to "objectify" itself instead of actually acting. (Harry Frankfurt, the philosopher I mentioned earlier who defined free personhood as the integration of the will, called this phenomenon, in which instead of doing something a person might simply "will to will to will to will" and so on, "humanization run wild.") For Jonas, however, this possibility is simply inherent in the idea of interiority itself, to the extent this entails looking within—whether to God or to oneself—to ask after the right thing to do.

Importantly, however, this tendency of "humanization" to "run wild" actually has two distinct vectors in Jonas: one we might call constrictive, the other expansive. In the constrictive mode, the will becomes increasingly suspicious of itself, turned in on itself, as we see in much Puritan autobiography. The more it works to ferret out its own ignoble tendencies, the more it finds itself dwelling on these (like an anti-pornography committee poring over Lady Chatterley);
and even if it *does* seem to achieve its own standard of righteousness, pride over that very achievement then becomes the cruelly ironic sign of the achievement's failure. Were this the only mode anatomized by Jonas, one might perhaps simply take a Nietzschean view of all this—ah, those sadomasochistic Protestants!—and be done with it. Yet it is not the only mode; instead, Jonas turns out to bring the Augustinian view of will to a fully modern apotheosis by understanding *freedom itself as* the source of what we might call the will's self-seduction.

"[L]eft to itself," he states—that is, as an interiority—the will cannot resist temptation: yet not that of the flesh, or profit, or even "the forbidden" as such; rather, the temptation it cannot resist is that which Jonas calls "relishing itself" (351). The will, that is, succumbs to a "giddiness" in the face of "its own possibilities": it cannot help but "plunge into every espied... self-variation" of what it might do and be, *simply because it can* (351). And this means, of course, that it is bound to find itself "willing" what it is otherwise disturbed by.

Here, then, we begin to move more in the direction of the novel—and the novel specifically in the "romantic" mode once theorized by Lukacs and at times thought to be particularly relevant to American literature (though again, one might also say to the French and Russian). The novel emerges, Lukacs tells us, out of a modernity construed as a split between self and world. Interiority is the result. Yet what we seem to have forgotten—perhaps because when we in English departments say "the novel" we still tend to mean above all the British novel—is that for Lukacs as for other of the sharpest theorists of the novel form, interiority was inherently prone to what might appear a kind of pathology, in exactly the terms I've described here. The novel protagonist, that is—whether Captain Ahab, Isabel Archer, or Hester Prynne—is characterized by a will that will always be either excessive or deficient, because it emerges in
tandem with a constitutively unfulfillable, but just as constitutively unignorable, demand that Jonas, finally, identifies as that of freedom itself.²⁹

Notes

¹ Sometimes, as in Adorno/Horkheimer, Eagleton, or Cascardi, this notion of will is undermined by depicting will as really unfettered desire—the opposite of a sober deliberativeness. What is equally disallowed by both of these, however, is the idea of will as a mediating third term—irreducible simply either to (disembodied) reason or (bodily) desire, but rather the site of their communication (and not simply control, either)—that is my subject and interest here.

² Aristotle's proairesis.

³ Via, of course, the historical mediations of medieval voluntarism on the one hand (see the arguments of Gillespie and Arendt on Scotus) and Protestantism on the other (about which more below).

⁴ The result of this is that while Christianity and the idea of conversion specifically possess within them the "effort toward self-perfection" evident in Stoic self-care (259), this notion (which takes a much more Buddhist kind of form in the Stoics: an idealized will is that which assents calmly to what is) now becomes much more a kind of inspiring but impossible ideal. This is why many commentators, including Jonathan Edwards, underscore that Paul speaks not from the position of an "unregenerate" but from that of a "saint" who recognizes that there is no end to "backsliding." (Cf. also Hanby on Aug.)

⁵ Frankfurt.

⁶ The 17th century saw the Confessions' first translation into English (Confessions intro 16).

⁷ By dramatically democratizing the Augustinian principle of grace through self-scrutiny (see Cohen 6 or LD 137 qting Hobbes), the Reformation radicalized the potential for the most ordinary of life narratives to matter. The turn from oral confession to diary-writing encouraged not only a proliferation of authors but a new minuteness of detail, for the most local of moments might be pregnant with theological significance (Watkins 18ff).

⁸ In Michael McKeon's words, we watch our hero "progress, like Bunyan's Christian," toward a "long-awaited deliverance from captivity" in the form less of assured salvation than of ascendancy to the status of "self-possessed and enlightened capitalist entrepreneur of the modern age" (334). Watt explains he merely follows a host of economic theorists, most famously Marx himself, for whom Crusoe has stood as an exemplar of homo economicus, the modern individual governed first and foremost by his own self-interest (76, 81, 63). (In Marx's words, "Of [Crusoe's] prayers and the like we take no account"; they resemble merely forms of "recreation" (Norton 274-5).] Does not Robinson's rebellion against his father, after all, stem first and
foremost from "the wild and indigested Notion of raising my Fortune" (13)? And does he not, after all, end up succeeding quite handsomely in this regard?

9 That is to say, Crusoe's tendency toward restlessness, his "wand'ring inclination," can in fact never be assigned simply to either his economic success or his failures; as the cause of what makes him a fortune and then causes him to keep placing that fortune unnecessarily at risk, it is clearly the font of both. In this sense, his Augustinian will is the will of a capitalist, but not the rationalizing kind Watt and McKeon describe. Here Sombart's distinction between the "entrepreneur" and the "bourgeois" (and Moretti's use of this re the novel, 102) is helpful.

10 The idea is that the intellect can know ideals but not desire them. Alone, will is blind; intellect, passive (Fiering 521, 519).

11 On Antinomianism, see also Leverenz 152. Miller interestingly suggests that both of these resistances are to the idea of a process that seems overly "automatic: "there had to be a break somewhere, a power that could refuse to play the mechanically consistent part" (250).

12 The Jansenists in France, such as Pascal, are equally as influenced by Augustine.

13 Note, then, that both of these tendencies can be understood as broadly supportive of capitalist modernity.

14 These, then, become key sites for considering why and where it might be worth reviving the older idea of will today. See Goldstein.

15 In contrast to this are accounts, including Esquirol's own, that connected such disorders to modernity itself and therefore to freedom. On this, see Foucault's distinction in HOM.

16 See, e.g., Cary Wolfe.

17 This is also Kantian Schwärmerei. Note that for the "Pelagian" option, one can just separate off the misbehaving will a la Schwartz ("It's not me, it's" — sin, or OCD, or whatever) and a totally distinct "I" can then manage it; whereas for the "Antinomian" one, there is no split or conflict at all, as in one version of Freudianism (or Romanticism) in which the id merely represents one's deepest/truest/most "authentic" desires.

18 And this is the right thing to do, for addictive substances "give us pleasure without our having to work for it" (106).

19 Then, in both books, the problem of those who can't or, worse, won't change. On wanting/liking and addiction, see also Holton.

20 Thinking here of the use of Spinoza's writing on the Medea moment in Montag's book.

21 See also his point that the "automatistic" sinful desire that the law generates works against the subject, vs. bringing the subject into being (79).

22 And this is in fact very similar to Americanists wanting Hester to be both "autonomous" (really free) and "anti-nomos" (antinomian) at the same time.

23 It did so by assuming a position of hazardous independence" — what Jonas flatly termed "freedom" — "from the very matter which is yet indispensable to its being," generating a state of "continual crisis," in which "being itself" appears as "a constant possibility rather than a given state, ever anew to be laid hold of" in a "supreme, protracted effort of delay" until its inevitable dissolution in "non-being," that is, in death, which returns "this unique one" to "the general integration [or 'equality'] of things" once more (Phenomenon 4-5).

24 Jonas defines "will" as Heidegger's "care": the individual's "being an issue for himself" (345). In our present context, we could gloss this doubly: being an issue as mattering, and being an issue as being a problem/stumbling-block/dilemma.

25 Or the version of Kant-as-Sade in Dialectic of Enlightenment.
This interestingly uses Locke's language of "relish" for what the will prefers in a context that would not be possible in Locke, for whom will always maps directly onto action. Note also that this mode may indeed be very close to the "potentiality" fetishized by Agamben, William James, and co.—only with a feverish subjective elan built back into it (perhaps what Kant very briefly suggests could be a "passion" for freedom itself [in the Anthropology]).

This idea really is just an elaboration on where Augustine ends up in his tortured meditation on why he stole pears from a neighbor's tree: what he was really enjoying in doing so, he tells us, was not the pears (which weren't very tasty), or the act of doing wrong, but, simply, his own "sin" itself—that is, his own "perverse" will, which in the absolutely nonutilitarian cast of its own perversity becomes a strange mirror image of the demands of God (or, later, of the Kantian moral law, and thus of freedom itself). (We might also consider here his image of the recalcitrant will that delays the moment of surrendering to God as a person luxuriating in staying in bed.)

He says a world "abandoned by God." With respect to the emergence of the idea of will, we can take this in two senses: the world of the Augustinian God (who decides arbitrarily who will be saved) or that of modern science, which is equally "arbitrary" in comparison with the cosmos of the ancients.

He does here follow Kant, however. (Cf. not only Kant's essentially Pauline description of the moral individual in Religion but his account in "Conjectural History" of the person confronting freedom as a Poe-like abyss.) And the British novel, then, as Moretti so beautifully describes, by turning away from the romantic mode of the novel toward social realism, imagines a workable "social" instead, but at the cost of this demand's radicality. We identify this as "liberal" (or "reformist") on the way to dismissing it but, as Moretti shows, we might not want to do so lightly.