
“Besides Our Selves”: An Essay on Enthusiastic Politics and Civil Subjectivity

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Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.
Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Circles”

Considering the perilous cast of contemporary political life, structured as it is by the perceived threat and reality of theologico-political violence, a study into the historical proximity of religious enthusiasm and modern democratic politics might seem frivolous, on the one hand, and imprudent, callous, or worse, on the other. Frivolous, if we forget that enthusiasm and enthusiasts posed a constitutive challenge to the formation of our now seemingly fraught political modernity. Imprudent or callous, if we simply conflate enthusiasm with democracy and suggest that, despite recent reports to the contrary, these two are not intertwined in a World Historical struggle but are instead disturbingly partnered, expressions of a shared historical drift. Optimistic purveyors of modern disenchantments prefer the former thesis, while those that locate a secret fanaticism at the heart of modern universalism, rationalism, or liberalism sometimes pursue versions of the latter.

I would like to thank UCLA's Center for Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Studies and the staffs of the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library and the Ahmanson and Getty Foundations for providing the resources needed to begin this study. Although in its initial stages, the project has already benefited from conversations with Rom Coles, Kim Curtis, Sarah Ellenzweig, Peter Euben, Stanley Hauerwas, Kinch Hoehstra, Jeff Lomonaco, Kirstie McClure, John Pocock, and George Schulman; its shortcomings are mine alone.

Public Culture 17(3): 371–92
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In what follows, I sidestep these positions and suggest instead that the examination of enthusiasm in early modern Anglophone politics and political theory provides an important lens for understanding how modern forms of civil subjectivity were imagined and achieved in prominent Enlightenment responses to enthusiasm, in particular those responses associated with eighteenth-century moral sentimentalism. For moral sentimentalists like Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third earl of Shaftesbury, civil subjectivity was in part a product of ongoing encounters with enthusiasm rather than an effect of its theoretical and practical suppression, and these encounters were often marked by a transformative undoing of the self rather than its autonomous declaration. A more supple vision of democratic politics can be glimpsed from this approach to enthusiasm than from the approaches contemporary democratic theorists have inherited from Kant and his followers. In the civil subjectivity of the moral sentimentalists, citizenship is envisioned as an ongoing practice of encounter and negotiation rather than a primarily juridical category, and the cultivation of political sentiments and ethos takes precedence over the articulation of a command morality.¹ Rather than joining the campaign against enthusiastic politics, particularly as manifested in the familiar call for a more deliberative democracy, I suggest we be more attentive to both its persistence and its promise. In order both to mark the political valence of enthusiasm in early modern Anglophone contexts and to flag its relevance for debates in contemporary democratic theory, the essay begins with the appearance of enthusiasm in the newly formed communities of colonial Massachusetts.



*We are (I say) in that River, and that River in us, when we are
besides our selves, undone, nothing.*
Abiezer Coppe, *Some Sweet Sips, of Some Spiritual Wine*

By the time Anne Hutchinson was summoned to appear before accusing ministers and deputies of court in 1637, what would subsequently become known as the “Antinomian crisis” had already made a deep and lasting impact on the political culture of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and beyond. That this impact was at once theological and political, ecclesiastical and civil, can be readily seen

1. For a compelling account of how contemporary democratic theory might benefit from attention to the cultivation of ethos over the articulation of command moralities, see William E. Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). For a critical engagement with Kant on this question, see William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 164–77.

in the existing records of her examination and particularly in the questions and answers pursued by Hutchinson and the then-governor of the colony—also its foremost political thinker—John Winthrop. In her statements before the court, Hutchinson marshaled scripture to justify her semipublic ministrations against the colony’s religious authorities and their purported commitment to a doctrine of works rather than a doctrine of free grace. These authorities, Hutchinson claimed, were “ministers of the *letter*” rather than “ministers of the *spirit*,” their sermons given over to the exigencies of worldly *law* rather than the ineffability of divine *gospel*.² What was worse for her accusers, Hutchinson based these claims not on the authority of scripture alone but on an inspired appeal to the Word behind the words, to the arresting call of “immediate revelation.” It was this appeal to an ultimate authority beyond the ministry of the word that Winthrop identified as “the most desperate enthusiasm in the world,” “the ground of all these tumults and troubles . . . the root of all mischief.” This attempt to circumscribe entirely the mediation of worldly, textual, covenantal authority—the very basis of Puritan political and religious obligation—threatened, as Winthrop succinctly stated during Hutchinson’s examination, to “overthrow all.”³

Hutchinson was ultimately found guilty, “not fit for [Puritan] society,”⁴ and exiled with her family first to Rhode Island and then to the New York frontier, where she was killed in an Indian raid (an event that authorities back in Massachusetts took as a sign of divine justification). The difficulties that Hutchinson’s enthusiasm posed for colonial authorities, however, were not so easily expelled.⁵ Across the Atlantic, “enthusiasm” became arguably the “central discursive flash-point of England’s Civil War,” the privileged term for designating the manifold

2. David D. Hall, ed., *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638: A Documentary History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), 337–43; my emphasis. Unless otherwise noted, all italics used for emphasis are present in the original. On Puritan responses to enthusiasm more generally, see John F. Sena, “Melancholic Madness and the Puritans,” *Harvard Theological Review* 66 (1973): 293–309.

3. On the textual basis of Puritan political authority, see John Schaar, “Liberty/Authority/Community in the Political Thought of John Winthrop,” *Political Theory* 19 (1991): 493–518; and Tracy B. Strong, “How to Write Scripture: Words, Authority, and Politics in Thomas Hobbes,” *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1993): 128–59.

4. Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 347.

5. David S. Lovejoy has convincingly argued that Hutchinson and other religious enthusiasts established a “pattern for radical expression” that can be detected in the politics of the American Revolution and beyond. See his “‘Desperate Enthusiasm’: Early Signs of American Radicalism,” in *Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism*, ed. Margaret Jacob and James Jacob (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984), 231–42, and, especially, *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World: Heresy to Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985).

challenge posed to religious and political orthodoxy by the “giddy headed multitude,” the swarming sects and congregations of radical dissenting Protestantism.⁶ As such, enthusiasm stands at the center of one of the formative theological and political debates of Western modernity. This centrality has been emphasized by a number of contemporary political theorists and historians of political thought. John Pocock, for example, characterizes enthusiasm as “the Antiself of Enlightenment” while also carefully framing how enthusiasm thereby became an important component of that self. In a similar vein, James Farr identifies antienthusiastic discourse—particularly in its Scottish expression—as the main progenitor of eighteenth-century political science. And in her compelling work on Thomas Hobbes, Melissa Orlie argues that the early modern response to enthusiasm “institutes the predominant modern, sovereign conception of the political.”⁷

These seem to me warranted and mutually reinforcing theses, and I add to them only a different set of emphases. In contrast to those who see in enthusiastic subjectivity the emergence of a modern “imperial self” and the basis of a strong, if not possessive, individualism, early modern enthusiasts actually posed quite the opposite problem for their critics.⁸ Enthusiasm announced first and foremost the potential dissolution of subjectivity, evoking a rupture when, as the Ranter Abiezer Coppe wrote in *Some Sweet Sips, of Some Spiritual Wine* (1649), “we are *besides* our selves, undone, nothing.”⁹ Following this critical diagnosis of enthusiasm’s tendency to unhinge the self, one prominent Enlightenment response to the enthusiastic threat—the response that emerged in the sociable religiosity of Cambridge Platonism; the belles lettres of Shaftesbury, Addison, and Steele; and ultimately in the moral sentimentalism of the Scottish Enlightenment—deployed a constructive or formative effort to institute civil subjectivities that were at once reflective and constitutively social.¹⁰ These reactions to the threat of enthusiasm

6. Clement Hawes, “Enthusiasm’s Further Adventures,” *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 41 (2000): 247–53.

7. J. G. A. Pocock, “Enthusiasm: The Antiself of Enlightenment,” in *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650–1850*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein and Anthony J. LaVopa (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library Press, 1998), 7–28; James Farr, “Political Science and the Enlightenment of Enthusiasm,” *American Political Science Review* 82 (1988): 51–69; Melissa A. Orlie, *Living Ethically, Acting Politically* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), 91.

8. Quentin Anderson, *The Imperial Self: An Essay in American Literary and Cultural History* (New York: Knopf, 1971); Crawford Brough MacPherson, *Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

9. Abiezer Coppe, *Some Sweet Sips, of Some Spiritual Wine*, in *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Nigel Smith (1649; repr., London: Junction, 1983), 69.

10. A formative conception of politics assumes that political institutions inevitably shape and pattern the practices and beliefs of those they govern. Political institutions not only establish a framework of rules and codes that regulates the actions of an otherwise autonomous citizenry, they also constitute

anticipated the achievement of a refined, mannered, and polite subjectivity fit for a civil society.¹¹

In order to chart this reaction and this anticipation, I begin with a closer look at early modern Anglophone understandings of enthusiasm, paying particular attention to Henry More's influential discussion in *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* (1662). Next, I examine how the unrestrained communication of enthusiasm—its unnerving tendency to erupt into an “anarchy of reciprocal imitations”¹²—posed explanatory difficulties for its opponents. Enthusiasm's expression seemed to vacillate wildly between the solipsism of ineffable singularity and the unreflective contagion of collective passions; in both instances enthusiasm suspended the operation of a well-regulated intersubjectivity. The metaphors employed in Restoration antienthusiastic discourses to explain the worrisome phenomenon of enthusiastic communication illuminate the tenuous boundaries between sociability conceived as collective fusion and the laudatory negotiations of a polite or civil subjectivity. In the essay's conclusion I turn to the attempt to cultivate this latter form of subjectivity in Shaftesbury's writings.¹³

Although enthusiasm is perhaps most closely associated with radical sects of the English Civil War—Ranters, Levellers, Diggers, Quakers, Fifth Monarchy Men, and others—in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the term had a much broader range of association than these fringes of Protestant dissent.¹⁴ In

both the very conditions favoring certain forms of politics over others and the everyday practices of the citizenry on a micropolitical as well as a macropolitical level. For a recent discussion which emphasizes the avoidance of this dimension in contemporary liberalism, see Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: In Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 129–33.

11. Investigation into “tempers, sentiments, and manners” characterizes a good deal of recent revisionary work in the history of political thought. For a lively account of political theory's tendency to overemphasize “juristic modalities of political discourse,” see J. G. A. Pocock, “Virtues, Rights, and Manners: A Model for Historians of Political Thought,” *Political Theory* 9 (1981): 353–68. For a more recent exploration of eighteenth-century attempts to construct a properly civil subjectivity within the context of the “rise of the social,” see Mary Poovey, “The Liberal Civil Subject and the Social in Eighteenth-Century British Moral Philosophy,” *Public Culture* 14 (2002): 125–45.

12. I take this phrase from Michael Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue: Punishment, Revolution, and Authority in Philadelphia, 1760–1835* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 87–88.

13. Lawrence E. Klein's work on Shaftesbury emphasizes how Shaftesbury's writing worked to cultivate political subjectivities appropriate to civil society. See his *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and also his “Sociability, Solitude, and Enthusiasm,” in *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650–1850*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein and Anthony J. LaVopa (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library Press, 1998), 153–78.

14. On the role of political enthusiasm in the English revolution, see Christopher Hill's seminal *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 1972).

the seventeenth century, Catholics and Anglicans, Puritans and Platonists were all charged with enthusiasm. It was wielded against figures as diverse as Gerard Winstanley and René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes and Robert Boyle. In the eighteenth century, the range of associations included the likes of Benjamin Franklin and George Whitefield, Shaftesbury and Thomas Paine. This surprising diversity of application has led some researchers to view enthusiasm as a common and somewhat empty term of denigration rather than a substantive index of the period's political and cultural change—an all-purpose early modern epithet.¹⁵ This temptation is mitigated, however, once enthusiasm is understood less as a particular doctrine, ideology, or mentalité and more as the manner or disposition through which a particular doctrine is held or claimed.¹⁶

This approach is suggested by the word's etymology. *Enthousiasmos*, which makes significant appearances in several Platonic dialogues and particularly in the *Phaedrus*, essentially means “possessed by a god”: *en theos*, the “god inside.”¹⁷ In the widely read *Glossographia* of 1656, enthusiasm was defined as “an inspiration, a ravishment of the spirit, divine motion, Poetical fury.”¹⁸ As this evocative attempt at definition suggests, in early modern Anglophone contexts, enthusiasm was associated with both belief and action grounded in divine inspiration, whether real or (more commonly) deceptive, and expressed with a notable and sometimes frightening zeal. The dispositional aspects of enthusiasm were also believed to characterize the temper of different places or times, no matter how historically or culturally distinct. As Meric Casaubon wrote in his influential *Treatise concerning Enthusiasm* (1655), “enthusiastik times and tem-

15. Jan Goldstein, “Enthusiasm or Imagination: Eighteenth-Century Smear Words in Comparative National Contexts,” in *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650–1850*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein and Anthony J. LaVopa (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library Press, 1998), 29–50.

16. This raises the question of how enthusiasm is to be approached by researchers. Histories of semantic change, for example, do not do justice to the affective and rhetorical questions involved in tracing enthusiasm's volatile political history. Clement Hawes has helpfully suggested that enthusiasm is best understood as a rhetoric, a “manic style.” Shaftesbury himself suggested the difficulty of locating the significance of enthusiasm with any real specificity. The term's far-reaching and ambiguous valence may, of course, help explain some of the power it had over the early modern political imagination. See Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style: The Rhetoric of Enthusiasm from the Ranters to Christopher Smart* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Susie I. Tucker, *Enthusiasm: A Study in Semantic Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

17. Norman O. Brown, *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 46–68.

18. Taken from Hillel Schwartz, *Knaves, Fools, Madmen, and That Subtile Effluviuim: A Study of the Opposition to the French Prophets in England, 1706–1710* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1978), 50.

pers” are those in which the “natural temper of men [is] somewhat ecstaticall; in their actions, most of them tumid and high; in their expressions very poetical and allegorical.” In such times, Casaubon continued, men tend to be “more guided by sudden rapture than reason.”¹⁹ Following Plutarch, Casaubon associated the pre-Socratic age as a paradigmatic instance of this “enthusiastik” temperament or disposition. With the Socratic introduction of the logos, men became, in his words, “more civil and sober in their conversations,” “more rational everywhere in their discourse.”²⁰

Like most of his contemporaries, Casaubon associated enthusiasm with an adamant and assertive refusal to submit one’s beliefs to the process of deliberation or to accommodate them to a context provided by worldly authority and mediated institutions, even the textual mediation of scripture itself.²¹ Max Weber isolated (and idealized) this aspect of enthusiasm in his formulation of charismatic authority, notably developed in the chapters from *Economy and Society* (1978) devoted to the sociology of religion.²² Weber called charisma “the specifically creative revolutionary force of history,” the form of authority associated with the extraordinary, the extrainstitutional, and the only form of authority capable of innovation. “Charismatic authority,” Weber writes, “transforms all values and breaks all traditional and rational norms.” Its paradigmatic formulation is captured by Weber’s oft-repeated phrase, “It has been written . . . but I say unto you.”²³ In the quest for immediacy, free from the artifice of worldly institutions, enthusiasts

19. Meric Casaubon, *A Treatise concerning Enthusiasme as It Is an Effect of Nature: But Is Mistaken by Many for Either Divine Inspiration, or Diabolical Possession* (London: Printed by R. D. and are [sic] to be sold by Tho. Johnson, 1655). Casaubon’s *Treatise* can be credited with raising enthusiasm’s profile in Restoration attempts to understand and explain the Civil War. After its publication, treatises explicitly addressing the political dimensions of enthusiasm became much more common. This might explain why Hobbes, in all of his writings, uses the terms *enthusiasm*, *enthusiastic*, or *enthusiast* only a handful of times, despite their obvious proximity to his concerns. I owe this insight to conversations with Kinch Hoehstra.

20. Casaubon, *A Treatise concerning Enthusiasme*, 5.

21. The association of enthusiasm with a rejection of context and worldliness becomes important in eighteenth-century transformations of the term, in particular those undertaken by Edmund Burke. See J. G. A. Pocock, “Edmund Burke and the Redefinition of Enthusiasm,” in *The Transformation of Political Culture, 1789–1848*, ed. François Furet and Mona Ozouf (New York: Pergamon, 1990), 142–67.

22. Ronald A. Knox adapts and develops this Weberian typology in his interpretation of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theological disputation. See his *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion, with Special Reference to the XVII and XVIII Centuries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950).

23. Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 2, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Winch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1115–17.

rebelled against the fixity of letter and law, reaching instead for the rapturous unification of grace and life. Clearly stating and criticizing the radical economic and political implications of this quest, Robert South, in a sermon titled “Enthusiasts Not Led by the Spirit of God,” wrote:

When the yoke of government begins to sit uneasy upon their unruly necks, or when they have run themselves out of their estates, and so come to case a longing eye upon the revenues of the church, or of their rich neighbors about them; why then the word, that commands obedience, and forbids all violence and injustice, presently becomes not only a dead, but a killing letter, and a beggarly rudiment, and in comes the Spirit with a mighty controlling force to relive and set them at liberty.²⁴

The enthusiast’s visionary rejection of both established social rules (through promiscuous encounters in public squares, refusing to obey rituals of social deference) and the parameters of discourse that these rules secured (through speaking in tongues, convulsive, glossolalic speech) powerfully shape the orthodox reaction. The Cambridge Platonist Henry More begins his influential antienthusiastic tract *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* on this very point. Like Casaubon before him, More emphasized the undisciplined and incommunicable facets of enthusiastic belief—its solipsistic intransigence in the face of contrary argument or empirical evidence. This emphasis on noncommunicative certitude provided More with the grounds to surprisingly assert in his essay a “great Affinity and Correspondency betwixt Enthusiasm and Atheism.” While these two social figures haunting the early modern political imagination seem polar opposites, on More’s account they exist in “joynt conspiracy against the true knowledge of God and Religion” and actually work to reinforce one another by either associating all reason with atheism (in the case of the enthusiast) or all religion with fanaticism (in the case of the atheist). Through their equally assertive certainty in the face of established Anglican beliefs, the atheist and the enthusiast were equally negligent of “the calm and cautious insinuations of free Reason,” equally subject to what More described as the vicissitudes of their distempered corporeality.²⁵

The Atheist and the Enthusiast “vary and change,” More writes, “with the weather and present temper of the Body.” By basing enthusiasm in the “Magisterial Dictates” of the body, More reveals the key to his analysis, which is to locate

24. Taken from Michael Heyd, *“Be Sober and Reasonable”*: *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1995), 170.

25. Henry More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus; or, A Brief Discourse of the Nature, Causes, Kinds, and Cure of Enthusiasm* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), 1.

the principal causes of enthusiasm not in the external powers of demonological temptation—the principal framework of explanation for most earlier antienthusiastic tracts—but in the immanent disorganization of the body itself.²⁶ Following Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), More emphasized the naturalistic basis of enthusiasm, that is, its basis in the distemper of the body's humors and animal spirits, rather than its purported supernaturalism. For More, the enthusiast was diseased rather than cursed, and his work elaborated the mechanisms of this largely medical pathology in great detail. By doing so, More's work furthered what Michael Heyd has called "the medicalization of the critique of enthusiasm" in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.²⁷ Here I will remark only on how More's naturalistic analysis foregrounds the problems posed by the phenomenon of enthusiastic communication and how his response prefigures the later eighteenth-century projection of a properly sociable subjectivity.

For More, the principle cause of enthusiasm lies in a disordering of the faculties of the soul. Adopting a Platonic tripartite hierarchy, More associates the soul's innermost reaches with the highest and freest of its "degrees" or "natures," and associates its lowest degrees with its "*Vegetative or Plantal Faculties*," that is, with the faculties that passively accept the bombardments of outward sense. In between sits the imagination, the main culprit of enthusiastic expression on More's diagnosis. The imagination provides, More writes, "the inward figuration of our *Brain or Spirits* into this or that representation." It is freer than the vegetative faculties of sense because it actively shapes the images and representations through which individuals create a common world, but it is not as free as the high seat of reason, because it remains prone to unconscious forces lurking in the deepest reaches of the body. "Though [imagination] be in some sort in our power," More explains, "as Respiration is, yet it will also work without our leave." A brief excursus on the deception of dreams provides More with compelling examples of imagination working against or outside of human intent. In addition to being a creative force under our control, the imagination may be a deceptive force subject to subterranean bodily forces and affects. In a disordered soul—such as the soul of the enthusiast—the strength of the imagination seizes control, fixating attention on its own figurations and representations. The enthusiastic imagination reifies the existence of its own representations in the face of all contrary evidence and all attempts to bring the "distempered phansy" down to earth by appeal to "the common notions of man." More writes, "Being so wholly

26. More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, 5.

27. Heyd, "Be Sober and Reasonable," 10.

and entirely immersed in this conceit, and so vehemently touched therewith, [the enthusiast's soul] has either not the patience to consider any thing alleged against it, or if she do consider and find herself intangled, she will look upon it as a piece of human sophistry, and prefer her own infallibility or the infallibility of the Spirit before all *carnal reasonings*.”²⁸

While the potential for self-deception is inherent in human embodiment itself, under normal circumstances it takes long periods of time and the powers of “*Custom* and *Education*” to rigidify the deceptions of the imagination into a habitual second nature. With a “distempered phansy,” however, these changes are extraordinarily abrupt. In passages such as these More gives expression to a common Restoration worry over the millenarian emphasis on abrupt suspensions of regularity, constancy, and repetition. His study works to contain these frequently articulated claims by opposing the free and reliable constancy of the rational soul to the vicissitudes of the distempered imagination. To elaborate on this point, More invokes a wide array of physical forces capable of, in his words, “*transform[ing] and regenerat[ing] the Soul into a new nature*,” forces capable of bringing about “a new Scene of *Thoughts*.”²⁹

The *Spirit* then that wings the *Enthusiast* in such a wonderful manner, is nothing else but that *Flatulency* which is in the *Melancholy* complexion, and rises out of the *Hypochondriacal* humour upon some occasional heat, as *Winde* out of an *Aelipila* applied to the fire. Which fume mounting into the Head, being first actuated and Spirited and somewhat refined by the warmth of the Heart, fills the mind with variety of *Imaginations*, and so quickens and enlarges *Inventions*, that it makes the *Enthusiast* to admiration *fluent* and *eloquent*, he being, as it were drunk with new wine drawn from the Cellar of his own that lies in the lowest region of his Body, though he be not aware of it, but takes it to be pure *Nectar*, and those waters of life that spring from above.³⁰

With the enthusiast, these promptings from *within* are tragically misinterpreted as a call from *without*; a volcanic indigestion is embraced as inner light.

Like other church divines uncomfortably posed between popish superstition, on the one hand, and evangelical congregationalism, on the other, More's arguments against enthusiasm frequently risked falling to one side or the other of the *via media* he so assiduously pursued. While attempting to formulate a rational

28. More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, 3, 4.

29. More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, 5.

30. More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, 12.

religion, More had to nonetheless provide room for the unending possibility of revelation.³¹ If the anarchy of unconstrained subjectivism—“one man, one religion”—was one threatening dimension of enthusiasm, the lure of superstitious priestcraft was another danger to be avoided.³² In negotiating this tension, More, like Shaftesbury three decades later (and Kant after that), invoked the possibility and pursuit of an “*Enthusiasm* in the *better* sense.”³³ The ambivalence of his resulting position is tangible throughout *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* but perhaps nowhere more than in the following passage:

I humbly conceive, and I may do so without any suspicion of the least tincture of *Fanaticism*, that there may be such a presage in the spirit of a man that is to act in things of very high concernment to himself, and much more if to the publick, as may be a sure guide to him, especially if he continue constantly sincere, just, and pious. For it is not at all improbable but such as act in very publick affairs, in which Providence has a more special hand, that these Agents driving on her design may have a more special assistance and animation from her: Of which as others have not the sense, so neither can they imagine the manner of it. And this is the case, I think, wherein that of *Siracides* may be verified, *That a man's own heart will tell him more then Seven watchmen on a high Tower*.³⁴

By insisting that Providence might indeed provide “special assistance and animation” and that there may exist a warrantable “presage of a man’s own heart from a Supernatural impulse sensible to himself, but unexplicable to others,” More somewhat warily embraced the possibility of a “better enthusiasm.” He did so, however, only at the risk of invalidating his previous arguments against enthusiasm tout court. As he himself recognized in the face of his own denial,

31. For an excellent account of the difficulties of negotiating reason and faith in Restoration theology see John Spurr, “‘Rational Religion’ in Restoration England,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49 (1988): 563–85.

32. Enthusiasm and superstition had importantly different connotations during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In Hume’s writing, for example, enthusiasm was clearly distinguished from superstition, though both were opposed to “enlightenment” and thought in terms of their relation to social and political authority. Where superstition emerged from unfathomable fear and led to public docility and priestly power, enthusiasm derived from hope and pride and was expressly antiauthoritarian: “*superstition is an enemy to civil liberty*,” Hume summarizes, “*and enthusiasm a friend to it*.” David Hume, “Of Superstition and Enthusiasm,” in *Political Essays*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (1772; repr., New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 46–57, 49. See also Truman G. Steffan, “The Social Argument against Enthusiasm (1650–1660),” *Studies in English* 41 (1940): 39–63.

33. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein (1711; repr., New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 352–53.

34. More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, 21.

the suspicion of “*Fanaticism*” can’t help but creep in here. The only guide More provides for distinguishing between dangerous enthusiasm and that of the “better” sort is also telling. It is more likely that those who *truthfully* claim to be guided by Providence be involved in “publick affairs, in which Providence has a more special hand.” More’s invocation of a “publick” dimension to this better sort of enthusiasm should not be confused with what will later be understood as a political enthusiasm that incites individuals to public engagement.³⁵ Rather, it is the enthusiasm expressed by those involved in “publick affairs,” by which More means nothing more than the “Agents” of ecclesiastical and civil authority. The state’s claim to be guided by the designs of Providence is more plausible than the claims of a “private” man, because Providence has a “more special hand” guiding its larger, public concerns. Agents of the state have, More writes, “a more special assistance and animation from her.”³⁶

More is not concerned with completely abolishing enthusiasm and the prophetic-political politics that often accompany it, but with placing them in the right hands. In an essay written some years after *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, More warns that

it behoves the Christian Rulers, whether *Ecclesiastical* or *Civil*, to be so well acquainted with the meaning of these *Prophecies*, that they may be able to stop the mouths of these loud *Fanaticks* by those holy Oracles they pervert thus and abuse . . . and that it was both the *Doctrine* of the Apostles, and *Practice* of the Church, while it was symmetrical, to obey the Magistrate and live peaceably under him. . . . That Superiour and Inferiour are as natural in a people as Head and Feet in the Humane body; and that therefore no man can decry Government but out of madness or some villainous design to enthrall others at least under the yoke of their own lawless Fury.³⁷

As an Anglican proponent of what Pocock has called a “rational and sociable theology,” More and other Cambridge Platonists sought to impugn the isolation-

35. This positive and political understanding of enthusiasm is developed by Immanuel Kant in his writings on the French Revolution. See his *The Conflict of the Faculties*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (1798; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992). I am grateful to Jeff Lomonaco for bringing these writings to my attention. See his “Kant’s Unselfish Partisans as Democratic Citizens,” in this issue.

36. More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, 12.

37. Henry More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness; or, A True and Faithfull Representation of the Everlasting Gospel of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Onely Begotten Son of God and Sovereign over Men and Angels* (London: Printed by J. Flesher for W. Morden, 1660), 204.

ism inherent in the enthusiast's position.³⁸ Enthusiasm of the lesser sort seemed to encapsulate all that was divisive and privative in the constitution of man. By so confining enthusiasm to a kind of assertive solipsism, however, More and other Restoration opponents of enthusiasm also had difficulty confronting a commonly observed component of enthusiastic phenomena: its unconscious and virulent communicability. If enthusiasm plunged the self into an abyss of phantasmatic isolation, removing it from the predictability of proper social interaction and the norms of intersubjectivity, it also threatened to dissolve the self into a rapture of fusional identification with others. Enthusiasm at once removed individuals from networks of communicative sociality and dissolved that individuality into a frightening collective amalgam. How did this powerful "transpiration" occur?

In his *Essay upon Reason, and the Nature of Spirits* (1694), Richard Burthogge pinpointed the dilemma precisely. If enthusiasm is the product of individually pathologized "phansy" and is therefore largely unintelligible "Nonsense" or "Noise," how, Burthogge asks, can its opponents account for its regularly demonstrated tendency to furiously spread among the multitude? If enthusiasm bypasses regular channels of communication (that is, intelligible, linguistic communication), how does it work to nevertheless so effectively and powerfully communicate itself? Burthogge's response:

I conceive it fit to observe, that when *Enthusiasts* think that they understand One Another . . . yet for as much as no sober man, tho never so sagacious or inquisitive, can understand them, it must be reckoned an effect of Sympathy, and not of *Intellectual Apprehension*; I mean, they understand one another not *judiciously*, by conceiving; that is, by framing clear and consistent Notions of what is said, but only *sympathetically*, by having upon such *Expressions*, some Notions, and consequent Thoughts, excited in them, that are conformable to theirs that use the Expressions; it being with *Enthusiasts*, who possess the same Frame and texture of mind, as with *unison Lutes*, or other *Instruments* fitly tuned; in which to touch one, is to affect and stir all within a convenient distance.³⁹

Burthogge's invocation of sympathy—arguably the central category of eighteenth-century Anglophone moral thought—in distinction from "*Intellectual Apprehension*," illuminates the commonly affective mode of communication and intersubjectivity that the discourses around enthusiasm and sympathy announced: a communication of bodily affect and sentiment that escaped the judicious bounds

38. Pocock, "Enthusiasm: The Antiself of Enlightenment," 12.

39. Richard Burthogge, *An Essay upon Reason, and the Nature of Spirits* (London: Printed for John Dunton, 1694), 44.

of individual deliberation.⁴⁰ Burthogge's metaphor of stringed instruments uniformly tuned and communicating through a kind of telepathic resonance is in fact a common trope in this literature. The metaphor appears regularly in anti-enthusiastic tracts as a way of accounting for the mysterious efficacy of communicating one's "distempered phansy" to others. A decade before Burthogge, an anonymous writer, trying to explain this tendency of communicated unintelligible "Noise" to produce apparent assent in the speech and actions of others, yet without "in any degree [reaching] the Seat of their Reason and Judgment," invoked a congregation (in this case a congregation of women) "*tuned* (like two Viols) exactly alike by the Magick of Enthusiastic Sympathy."⁴¹ The addition of "Magick" to the description captures the sense of wonder that rational theologians experienced in the face of this phenomenon. In the next century, even so disenchanted a commentator as David Hume repeated the metaphor in his *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739) to describe the sympathetic communication of affect between all human beings, not only those with troubled, melancholic, or otherwise disordered constitutions.⁴²

Enthusiasm's ability to suspend even the relative autonomy of intersubjectively related selves is captured by another, more familiar set of metaphors for explaining this phenomenon in the period: metaphors taken from the medical language of disease and contagion. As the discourse around enthusiasm became increasingly medicalized in the late seventeenth century, the ways for explaining manifestations of its various symptoms were also translated into medical discourse. As a result, the play between the metaphorical and literal levels of meaning can be difficult to trace. This indeterminacy is perhaps most pronounced in Shaftesbury's *Letter concerning Enthusiasm* (1708), the early eighteenth century's most influential treatise on enthusiasm. In this essay, enthusiasm's volatile communicability itself takes precedence as a central and hereafter unavoidable aspect of any analysis of enthusiasm. Shaftesbury emphasizes the "insensible transpiration" through which enthusiasm is spread. Contemporary responses to Shaftesbury's "Letter" (by notables like Edward Fowler and Mary Astell) seized upon this aspect of his

40. The complex relationship between sympathy and enthusiasm in eighteenth-century Anglophone political discourses can only be noted here. John Mullen has suggested that "throughout the [eighteenth] century, 'sympathy' could be synonymous with enthusiasm." While this may overstate the case, it marks an important site for further research. John Mullen, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 26.

41. *Religio Clerici* (London: Printed for Henry Brome, 1681), 64.

42. David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, ed. P. H. Nidditch (1740; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 577.

analysis in formulating their criticisms.⁴³ In a passage frequently singled out for attention, Shaftesbury invoked a fraught social and spatial context in which a passion is communicated among a gathered crowd by way of “aspect” or “sympathy.” “In this state,” Shaftesbury writes,

their very looks are infectious. The fury flies from face to face, and the disease is no sooner seen than caught. They who in a better situation of mind have beheld a multitude under the power of this passion, have owned that they saw in the countenance of men something more ghastly and terrible than at other times is expressed on the most passionate occasions. Such force has society in ill as well as in good passions, and so much stronger any affection is for being social and communicative.

In his *Remarks upon the Letter to a Lord concerning Enthusiasm* (1708), Edward Fowler criticized how Shaftesbury seized on the very communicability of the passion rather than identifying its particular content or original cause. If affection and passion is “so much stronger . . . for being social and communicative,” then the frightening zeal that seemed to attach itself to enthusiasm could be explained in part by the very communicability of the passion itself. Shaftesbury’s response to such instances of “popular fury,” then, was not primarily to cultivate some other, more beneficial passion but to temper the very manner of communication, to direct it toward a more gentle (and genteel) sociability. Shaftesbury opposed conversation to contagion, so that the more alarming components of a natural sociability could be channeled, regulated, and disciplined to produce salutary social effects.

Unlike Hobbes, who famously located social faction and political divisiveness in natural egoism and the drive for self-preservation, Shaftesbury and the moral sentimentalists that followed him located these political dangers primarily in *unregulated* forms of sympathetic communication, in an *improper* sociability. It was because of the violent passion of “the herding principle and associating inclination,” Shaftesbury wrote, “that so much disorder arose in the general society of mankind.”⁴⁴ “In short, the very spirit of faction, for the greatest part, seems to be no other than the abuse or irregularity of that social love and common affection which is natural to mankind.”⁴⁵ Natural sociability stood for Shaftesbury

43. Mary Astell, *Bart’lemy Fair; or, An Enquiry after Wit* (London: R. Wilkin, 1709); Edward Fowler, *Reflections upon A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm, to My Lord *****: In Another Letter to a Lord* (London: H. Clement, 1709).

44. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 52.

45. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 53.

as both problem and solution.⁴⁶ His response to enthusiasm's dual tendency to privative isolation and collective conflation initiates a project for the formation of a refined and sociable subjectivity capable of effectively negotiating the involved polarities.⁴⁷ This was a formative project to be sure, but Shaftesbury was eager to distinguish it from the plans of those other "modern projectors," who "would willingly rid their hands of these natural materials [complex social passions] and would fain build after a more uniform way . . . [who] would new-frame the human heart and have a mighty fancy to reduce all its motions, balances and weights to that one principal and foundation of cool and deliberate selfishness."⁴⁸ This is a familiar position still. In contrast to the position of these "narrow minded philosophers," Shaftesbury sought not to "new-frame the human heart" but to direct and guide its complex sociability and sympathetic predispositions in felicitous directions. If Henry More invoked a sociable theology capable of directing the designs of public affairs, Shaftesbury's Whig invocation of sociability came, in the words of Lawrence E. Klein, "to imagine a new culture of gentlemen, with an elitist politics, an Erastian church, and a public culture of civil discourse."⁴⁹ In both instances, subjectivity, rather than being an assumed ground on which the edifice of social and political order could be based, was instead envisioned as an effect of that order, a fragile achievement.

More had already significantly prefigured Shaftesbury's response in *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, in which he pursued several potential cures or preventatives to enthusiasm's virulent disease.⁵⁰ Avoiding reference to medical responses to

46. This dynamic is present in the work of those Scottish Enlightenment figures influenced by Shaftesbury's work, most notably Hume; it is also emphasized by Gilles Deleuze in his study of Hume. For Hume, as for Shaftesbury, "society finds its obstacle in [improper, disorganized] sympathies rather than in egoism. . . . The problem of society . . . is not a problem of limitation, but rather a problem of integration." Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, trans. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 39.

47. "The fact that enthusiasm could be seen as both unsociable and sociable meant that the proposed antidotes to enthusiasm were diverse. Insofar as enthusiasm represented a deficiency of sociability, its cure involved socialization. However, insofar as enthusiasm represented an excess or unregulated form of socializing, its cure required a degree of social abstinence, a kind of solitude in which the social passions could be understood and addressed." Lawrence E. Klein, "Sociability, Solitude, and Enthusiasm," 157.

48. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 55.

49. See Klein's introduction to Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, xxix.

50. The influence of Cambridge Platonists like Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, and Benjamin Whichcote on Shaftesbury has been well documented; Shaftesbury's very first publication was an edition of Whichcote's sermons. While Shaftesbury was removed from the Cambridge Platonists' attempts to maintain the bonds between ecclesiastical and civil authority, he nonetheless drew a good deal from the "sociable" aspects of their theology emphasized in the above discussion of More.

the disease, however, which he willingly reserved to those “with a knowledge of Physick or acquaintance with the Apothecarie’s shop,” More fittingly emphasized cures with a “moral” or “theological” hue, such as temperance, humility, and reason. Thus, More warns first against excitations of the body that can generate the internal “vapours” that unsettle and invigorate the imagination in the first place. Second, he seeks to avoid the signs of self-proclaiming pride that often accompany the sovereign delusions of the enthusiast. And finally, by emphasizing reason as a cure, More assumed that a composure of the mind could bring representations within the orbit of “the known Faculties of the Soul, which are either the *Common notions* that all men in their wits agree upon, or the *Evidence of outward sense*, or else a *clear and distinct Deduction from these*.”⁵¹

In his “Letter,” Shaftesbury elaborates upon these sociable aspects of More’s response, but he also dismisses the grave tone that inevitably marks the antienthusiastic tracts of the Restoration period, More’s included. “Mirth,” Shaftesbury reminds his readers, “for the most part, cuts through weighty matters with greater firmness and ease than seriousness.”⁵² By emphasizing the medical dimensions of enthusiasm, More took some of the moral responsibility away from enthusiasts themselves, treating them as ill patients rather than immoral sinners. Shaftesbury goes further and treats enthusiasts as if they were comically deluded clowns. As a result, crushing enthusiasm through recourse to law and censorship is, on his account, wholly ineffectual, or worse: it can contribute to the proliferation and spread of enthusiasm.⁵³ He rejects outright the attempt “to suppress by violence the natural passion of enthusiasm,” calling instead for enthusiasm to be engaged and subjected to ridicule, raillery, and wit. “Good humour,” Shaftesbury claimed to the outrage of many of his more pious readers, “is . . . the best security against enthusiasm.” With engagement and the free exchange of ideas, enthusiasts will be more effectively disciplined than would be the case with the strong hand of the state censor. Politeness and civility form the operating ethos of this vision of publicity, conversation, and comportment. In response to enthusiasm, Shaftesbury proffers a theory of “amicable collision,” writing, “All politeness is owing to liberty. We polish one another and rub off our corners and rough sides by a sort of

51. More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, 38.

52. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 8.

53. As Richard B. Wolf suggests, Shaftesbury’s claim that “repression stimulates the growth of enthusiasm; ridicule serves as an aid to reverence; uncritical praise dishonors its objects” is just one of several paradoxes explored in his *A Letter concerning Enthusiasm*. See Richard B. Wolf, “Shaftesbury’s Wit in ‘A Letter concerning Enthusiasm,’” *Modern Philology* 86 (1988): 46–53; quote at 47.

amicable collision. To restrain this is inevitably to bring a rust upon men's understandings. It is a destroying of civility, good breeding and even charity itself under pretense of maintaining it."⁵⁴ As a growing body of recent literature on the topic has demonstrated, refinement and wit provided the governing ethos of London's clubs and associations, and the ethos demanded by Shaftesbury to restrain the fanatical aspects of enthusiasm. In his "Letter" the disciplining imperative of this elite sociability is moved from the agents of the state (still emphasized in More's *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*) to the immanent regulations of a civil society.⁵⁵ In fact, Shaftesbury's "Letter" counsels the magistrate to withdraw from direct regulation and to be instead "a real artist" when dealing with the popular furies of the people. Rather than reverting to "caustics, incisions, and amputations," the magistrate should instead employ the "softest balms" and divert and heal the people's inflamed passions through indirect mechanisms.⁵⁶

Exploring the political study of enthusiasm through the lens of negotiated intersubjectivity situates the nascent project for the formation of a critical and reasoned public sphere into a larger disciplinary framework, reframing some of the questions most commonly asked about the formation of alternate publics during the eighteenth century. Understanding how deliberative publics were envisioned as practical responses to enthusiastic expression reveals the disciplinary measures that stand behind the public sphere's institutions of communication and their implicit or explicit governing norms. As Lawrence E. Klein and Anthony LaVopa have written, "when a public distinguished by its rationality was juxtaposed to a mob disfigured by the contagion of enthusiasm, the underlying point was to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate ways of communicating and receiving ideas."⁵⁷ Enthusiastic counterpublics can help us better understand the regulatory dimensions and internal character of the deliberative publics they oppose and that have so captivated the contemporary theoretical imagination.⁵⁸

54. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 11, 13, 31.

55. The task of regulating enthusiastic expression is therefore directly related to what political theorists have characterized as the "rise of the social" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 1962); Keith Baker, "Enlightenment and the Institution of Society: Notes for a Conceptual History," in *Main Trends in Cultural History*, ed. Willem Melching and Wyger Velema (Atlanta, Ga.: Rodopi, 1994), 95–120; Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830–1864* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1960), 286–351.

56. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 11.

57. Lawrence E. Klein and Anthony J. LaVopa, eds., *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650–1850* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library Press, 1998), xii.

58. Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone, 2002). Lynn M. Sanders is right to point out that (and to criticize) the idea that "increasing deliberation enhances democracy

Unlike more rarefied later visions of a public, Shaftesbury believed in the necessary persistence of enthusiasm as a crucial part of the sociability he pursued. He believed enthusiasm could be described in the terms of all that was “sublime” in the human passions.⁵⁹ Enthusiasm was related to that uncommon, extraordinary passion ascribed to those who bring the new into the world: heroes, poets, orators, musicians, even philosophers themselves.⁶⁰ Bringing the new into being, however, was not simply an assertion of subjectivity but also a transcendence of subjectivity, a mark of its dissolution, to invoke again the words of Abiezer Coppe, a space of spontaneity opened up by being “*besides* our selves, undone, nothing.”⁶¹ Enthusiasm marked a space of persistent enchantment in a world that seemed to Shaftesbury bent on ridding itself of its enchantments.⁶²

Whether, in fact, there be any real enchantments, any influence of stars, any power of demons or of foreign natures over our own minds, is thought questionable by many. Some there are who assert the negative, and endeavor to solve the appearances of this kind by the natural operation of our passions and the common course of outward things. For my own part, I cannot but at this present apprehend a kind of enchantment or magic in that which we call enthusiasm.⁶³

Enthusiasm is “wonderfully powerful and extensive,” and when this takes the form of a “noble enthusiasm,” the kind of inspiration capable of taking us “outside of ourselves,” it is the affection that “raises man to action.” Shaftesbury, following More explicitly here, states that enthusiasm “disjoins the natural frame and the ordinary tone and tenor of the mind.”⁶⁴ But in saying this, Shaftesbury’s sociable response to enthusiasm ultimately sought to enlist and incorporate enthusiasm to its own project as an ineradicable but potentially governable aspect of human experience. In the pre-Kantian public sphere of the moral sentimentalists and their encounter with enthusiasm, we find a richer understanding of the affective dimensions of public life, the importance of emergent and transformative sensi-

has become, in some theoretical circles, a truism.” See her “Against Deliberation,” *Political Theory* 25 (1997): 347–76.

59. The relationship between enthusiasm and the aesthetics of the sublime has been examined by Shaun Irlam in *Elations: The Poetics of Enthusiasm in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999).

60. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 27.

61. Coppe, *Some Sweet Sips, of Some Spiritual Wine*, 69.

62. See Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

63. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 351–52.

64. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 356.

bilities lurking below the register of recognition, and the salutary potentials of subjective undoing.⁶⁵ The enthusiast is the figure in which these neglected dimensions of public life are brought together as both promise and threat.

Within politics enthusiasm was rightly understood as a great intensifier, an unsettlement of convention, and a harbinger of new possibilities. As critics frequently note, a good deal of contemporary democratic theory, particularly when envisioned in the neo-Kantian deliberative mode, has difficulty accounting for these dimensions of political life. Jürgen Habermas, to take one prominent example, too quickly relegates the “world-disclosive” dimensions of speech and action to the margins of social and political practice, placing them outside the threefold validity claims supposedly adhering to everyday speech acts.⁶⁶ A democratic theory strictly governed by the assertion that mutual understanding is the inherent telos of human speech cannot sufficiently account for either the everyday existence or the transformative potential of incommunicability and glossolalia associated with enthusiasm.⁶⁷ Habermas himself acknowledges his theory’s inability on this front while not fully coming to terms with the significance of this inability.⁶⁸ Enthusiasm still haunts our democratic life, in both its theory and its practice.

Jumping forward almost three hundred years from the period covered in this essay, it is surprising to find Habermas, at the close of an essay that endorses and elaborates a distinctly nonenthusiastic, procedural, and discursive model of democratic legitimacy, noting the ultimate insufficiency of the context-transcending validity claims on which his own democratic theory is famously based. In

65. Clement Hawes has suggested that this subjective undoing is achieved in the working of the “manic style” characteristic of enthusiastic tracts. Melissa Orlie has likened this undoing to Georges Bataille and Michel Foucault’s conception of the “limit experience.” Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*; Melissa Orlie, *Living Ethically, Acting Politically*, 61–88.

66. Habermas relegates the “world-disclosive” dimensions of speech to a sharply demarcated realm of “literature” in his critique of both Heidegger and Derrida. See Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987). For a thoughtful critique of this approach to world disclosure from within a broadly Habermasian perspective, see Pieter Duvenage, *Habermas and Aesthetics: The Limits of Communicative Reason* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity, 2003), 120–41. For a discussion of the threefold validity claims—claims to rightness, truth, and truthfulness—that Habermas believes implicit in a communicative utterance, see his “Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification,” in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 43–115.

67. On glossolalia, see Michel De Certeau, “Vocal Utopias: Glossolalias,” *Representations* 56 (autumn 1996): 29–47.

68. Jürgen Habermas, “A Reply to My Critics,” in *Habermas: Critical Debates*, ed. J. B. Thompson and David Held (Basingstoke, U.K.: Macmillan, 1982).

an appendix from *Between Facts and Norms* (1996), Habermas notes the need for “another kind of transcendence” and mentions as one possibility the “one preserved in the critical appropriation of identity-forming religious traditions.” We need this other transcendence, Habermas writes, because “the trivial and the everyday must be open to the shock of what is absolutely strange, cryptic, or uncanny. Though these no longer provide a cover for privileges, they refuse to be assimilated by pregiven categories.”⁶⁹ Habermas’s concern with the entropy of meaning in spaces of idealized communicative symmetry leads him to this conclusion—a welcome development, but the challenge to his theory may be more encompassing than this somewhat halfhearted and gestural attempt at inclusion suggests. The enthusiast cannot be so easily accommodated by an intersubjectivist constitution of freedom. The question of how the deliberative imperative works to prevent and delegitimize enthusiastic articulations should be more directly engaged; deliberative paradigms not only insufficiently recognize the importance of enthusiasm to the transformative dimensions of democratic politics and democratic speech but work to stifle the appearance of this speech. Doing justice to enthusiasts and to their importance to democratic theory and practice requires more than an acknowledgment of the function they might serve in preventing entropy. While deliberationists occasionally recognize the importance of noise, theater, declamation, testimony, and protest to “gain attention,” their tendency to reduce insurgent politics to noncooperative assertions of political interest is insufficiently alert to the importance of spaces of political insurgency to the vivifying articulation of wrongs in a democratic polity.

If enthusiasm haunts the politics of the modern, even for an avowedly post-metaphysical thinker like Habermas, the best approach might not be to pursue new moves that demystify or talk it out of being but to explore its different manifestations in contemporary democratic life: some dangerous to be sure, but in others, a glimmer of hope. Rather than the futile and often violent attempt to exorcise enthusiasm out of political life once and for all—an attempt, as Shaftesbury well recognized, frequently marked by its own fanaticism⁷⁰—it is better to engage it, recognize its historical contributions to democracy, and pursue its potential to

69. Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 490.

70. “To understand ourselves and know what spirit we are of: Afterwards we may judge the spirit in others, consider what their personal merit is and prove the validity of their testimony by the solidity of their brain. By this means we may prepare ourselves with some antidote against enthusiasm. And this is what I have dared affirm is best performed by keeping to good humour. For otherwise the remedy itself may turn out to be the disease.” Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 28.

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further enact that history beyond the limits presented by contemporary democratic practice.

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