

CHAPTER 10

*The Feeling of Enthusiasm\**

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Kant defines enthusiasm as “the idea of the good with affect” (CJ 271) and as “the participation in the good with affect” (*die Theilnehmung am Guten mit Affect*; CF 86; cf. MM 408f.). This may strike readers today as a rather odd definition. Exactly what kind of a feeling is Kantian *Enthusiasmus*?<sup>1</sup> The meaning of Kant’s concept of enthusiasm differs somewhat from its ordinary English counterpart, which means an exalted state of excitement or intense, eager enjoyment or approval. Since Kant calls enthusiasm an “affect” (*Affekt*) and an affect *hinders* the attainment of ends and goals set by agents, enthusiasm is not really an eagerness to achieve a goal, as contemporary readers might think. Although Kantian enthusiasm is an

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<sup>1</sup> The topic of this chapter is *Enthusiasmus/Enthusiasm*, not *Schwärmerei* (fanaticism). On translating these terms as “enthusiasm” and “fanaticism,” respectively, see Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime and the Revelation of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4f., and especially Rachel Zuckert, “Kant’s Account of Practical Fanaticism,” in *Kant’s Moral Metaphysics: God, Freedom, and Immortality*, ed. Benjamin Lipscomb and James Krueger (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 293–97. Kant distinguishes *Enthusiasmus* and *Schwärmerei* at OBS 252n and “General Remark,” CJ 275. While the *Cambridge Edition* of Kant’s writings typically glosses *Schwärmerei* as “enthusiasm,” this archaic use of the latter risks confusing readers today (for whom “enthusiasm” means something like enjoyable excitement or approval), and just as significantly, it hides Kant’s crucial distinction between *Enthusiasmus* and *Schwärmerei*. The archaic translation has given rise to considerable conceptual confusion and misunderstanding among scholars (for examples, see Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime*, 5n10) and still continues to do so: a recent example is Robert Doran, *The Theory of the Sublime from Longinus to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 199–200, 267. In a 2012 translation of the Mrongovius lecture on anthropology and in *The Kantian Sublime*, I therefore used “enthusiasm” for *Enthusiasmus* and “fanaticism” for *Schwärmerei*. Like Hume and (at times) Shaftesbury, Locke condemns “enthusiasm” in a sense close to Kantian *Schwärmerei* (hence not in the sense of enthusiasm discussed in the present chapter). See John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 697–706, IV.xix; Anthony Ashley Cooper (3rd Earl of Shaftesbury), “A Letter concerning Enthusiasm,” in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. John M. Robertson (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 4–28.

“interested” or interest-based feeling in that it involves an engagement or determination of the will, and although it can have motivational force, the meaning of Kant’s term differs from, and is arguably more obscure than, its English counterpart. Its obscurity would seem to derive in large part from its status as an affect.

Although there is insufficient space to delve into the concept’s notable history, it is worth recalling that Kant contributes to the development of a concept found in authors ranging from Plato and Aristotle to Shaftesbury, Voltaire, and Diderot, up to card-carrying “postmodern” authors such as Jean-François Lyotard.<sup>2</sup> In his post-Platonic analysis of music, songs, and poetry in *Politics* (book 8), Aristotle defined enthusiasm as an *emotion of the ethical part of the soul*. Kant’s definition of enthusiasm as a person’s *sympathy or participation in the good with affect*, intentionally or not, takes up this ethical and psychological dimension. Unlike most of his Greek and even modern predecessors, Kant dissociates enthusiasm from artistic creation, musical and poetic genius, and/or divine inspiration. Kant conceives of enthusiasm more in anthropological and moral terms than in terms of inspired poetry, music, or songs. At a general level, one could say that his account goes in the same direction as his anthropocentric turn in theoretical philosophy, in which the Copernican revolution in philosophy involves stepping away from the theocentric perspectives of Leibniz, Wolff, and Newton, and in the same direction as his turn in ethics, in which reason, rather than a divine being, is the ground or source of morality and the moral law. Enthusiasm does not come from the gods or the divine, for Kant, but from reason in conjunction with the imagination and sensibility. On the one hand Kant’s account in the third *Critique* gives the impression that enthusiasm is a state of mind of individuals, rather than a group phenomenon (part of “mob” psychology), but on the other hand, in *The Conflict of the Faculties* a peculiar instance of enthusiasm is characterized as a “universal” and communal feeling shared by spectators in response to a monumental historical event perceived to be striking, stirring, and rare: the French Revolution.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *L’Enthousiasme: La critique kantienne de l’histoire* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1986). Jean-François Lyotard, *Enthusiasm: The Kantian Critique of History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> On the individual/group distinction, see Zuckert, “Kant’s Account of Practical Fanaticism,” 294. I suspect that a Platonic conception of enthusiasm as a feeling communicated and transmitted to others without the check of reason forms the background to Kant’s account more than he may have realized.

In the following, I characterize and comment on Kant's account of enthusiasm in the *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764), the lectures on anthropology (which Kant gave between 1772 and 1796), *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798), and an essay in *The Conflict of the Faculties* called "An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?" (written ca. 1795–1796 but published in 1798). This wide range of texts alone should indicate that Kant's reflections on enthusiasm do not amount to mere afterthought, a fleeting philosophical blip. While not at the center of his epistemology, aesthetics, or ethics, the concept of enthusiasm was clearly of philosophical interest to Kant over a period spanning several decades.

I begin by looking at the third *Critique's* account (Section 10.1). Subscribing to the position that feelings can have cognitive content (Section 10.2), I propose that the content of the feeling is an imaginative representation of a rational idea of the morally good. I characterize the more ordinary cases of Kantian enthusiasm (Section 10.3), which come primarily from Kant's essays and lectures on anthropology. I call these ordinary instances of enthusiasm described throughout the pre-Critical writings and student notes "paradigmatic" or typical enthusiasm, to distinguish them from the rather atypical kind of enthusiasm felt in response to the establishment of the first French Republic. I then examine this remarkable instance of enthusiasm: though an affect, it functions as a sign of moral progress in Kant's philosophy of history (Section 10.4). This leads me to a brief comparison of paradigmatic enthusiasm with other Kantian feelings (Section 10.5).

I conclude by claiming that enthusiasm remains profoundly ambiguous in Kant's account, with a deeply problematic side stemming from its nature as an affect, yet still capable of functioning as a symbol of moral progress and after all an imaginative-sensible response to the morally good. Since Kant had a lifelong interest in the topic, the feeling of enthusiasm deserves to be classified as an important Kantian feeling.

### 10.1 The Critical Account

It seems natural to commence a characterization of the feeling of enthusiasm by examining a *Critique*. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant defines enthusiasm as the "idea of the good with affect," that is, as an affective response elicited by an imaginative engagement with the idea of the morally good. One could say it is a kind of

imaginative-intellectual pleasure, though it should not be confused with the feelings of respect and (though this relation is more complicated) sublimity. The crucial passage is worth quoting in full. Just after claiming that morality (“the morally good”), when judged aesthetically, must be represented not so much as beautiful as sublime, Kant writes:

Conversely, even that which we call sublime in nature outside us or even within ourselves (e.g., certain affects) is represented only as a power of the mind to soar [*schwingen*] above **certain** obstacles of sensibility by means of moral principles, and thereby to become interesting.

I should like to dwell a little on the last point. The idea of the good with affect is called **enthusiasm**. This state of mind seems to be sublime, so much so that it is commonly maintained that without it nothing great can be accomplished. Now, however, every affect\* is blind, either in the choice of its end, or, even if this is given by reason, in its implementation; for it is that movement of the mind that makes it incapable of engaging in free consideration of principles, in order to determine itself in accordance with them. Thus it cannot in any way merit a satisfaction of reason. Nevertheless, enthusiasm is aesthetically sublime, because it is a stretching of the powers through ideas, which give the mind a momentum that acts far more powerfully and persistently than the impetus given by sensory representations. But (what seems strange) even **affectlessness** (*apatheia*, *phlegma in significactu bono*) in a mind that emphatically pursues its own inalterable principles is sublime, and indeed in a far superior way, because it also has the satisfaction of pure reason on its side. (CJ 271f.; cf. MM 408f.)

Before we examine how enthusiasm can be “aesthetically sublime” and why affectlessness (*apatheia*) is said to be sublime in a “far superior” way, we must attend to the beginning of this passage. Kant expresses a desire “to dwell a little on the last point.” What is that point? It is that some affects are seen as instances of the “sublime” in “nature . . . within ourselves,” that is, within human sensibility. Enthusiasm is presumably one of those affects that is represented as a power of the mind to “soar” above obstacles of sensibility by means of “moral principles.” Despite the reference to moral principles (or the “idea of the good”), enthusiasm should be distinguished from moral feeling and respect, not least because enthusiasm is an affect. The nature of “affects” is explained in a notable footnote:

Affects are specifically different from **passions**. The former are related merely to feeling; the latter belong to the faculty of desire, and are inclinations that make all determinability of the faculty of choice by means of principles difficult or impossible. The former are tumultuous and unpremeditated, the latter sustained and considered; thus indignation, as anger, is an affect, but as hatred (vindictiveness), it is a passion. The latter can never,

in any circumstances, be called sublime, because while in the case of an affect the freedom of the mind is certainly **hampered**, in the case of passion it is removed. (CJ 272f; cf. APV 251, MM 408)

What we call sublime within ourselves (certain affects) is represented as a power (*Macht*) of the mind. It “becomes interesting” because it demonstrates the ability to rise above sensibility by means of rational moral principles.<sup>4</sup> This leads Kant to consider the view that enthusiasm is “aesthetically sublime.”<sup>5</sup>

If enthusiasm is the affect described in the passage above, and it is thus represented as a power of the mind to soar above obstacles of sensibility, what would those obstacles be? The familiar, troubling inclinations and modifications of sensibility broadly construed are certainly good candidates. Just before the beginning of the block quote, Kant wrote that “human nature does not agree with that good of its own accord, but only through the dominion that reason exercises over sensibility” (CJ 271). In addition, perhaps one should not exclude the possibility that being phlegmatic or lacking feeling in a *negative* sense can also be an obstacle, just as phlegm can have a positive, moral sense, in which case it is an advantageous natural gift (APV 254).

Kant “dwells a little” at this point in order to claim that *enthusiasm* is an instance or example of the mind’s soaring above sensibility. It may be tempting to read this claim as referring not to enthusiasm but to the moral feeling of respect or to some purely rational or reason-caused feeling.<sup>6</sup> Such an alternate reading would claim that only the moral feeling of respect (respect for the “morally good”) “soars” above sensibility and that enthusiasm is to be *contrasted* with such superiority of reason. But such a reading does not seem accurate: it seems clear that Kant is discussing enthusiasm here, since he refers to certain “affects.”

<sup>4</sup> I suggest that we understand Kant’s claim that enthusiasm is “interesting” as similar to his claim that natural beauty is interesting or merits our intellectual interest (CJ § 42). According to the latter, the experience of natural beauty can be taken as a sensible hint or sign that nature is amenable to our ends or at least will not thwart our aims and efforts, above all our efforts to be moral (i.e., the highest end of nature; CJ 435). While this is not the same reason he finds enthusiasm interesting, surely Kant is exhibiting an analogous intellectual “interest” here.

<sup>5</sup> On the Kantian sublime, see Chapter 9, by Katerina Degligiorgi, in this volume. See also Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime*, chap. 2 (56–125); “What’s the Big Idea? On Emily Brady’s Sublime,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 50, no. 2 (2016): 104–18; and “The Place of the Sublime in Kant’s Project,” *Studi Kantiani* 28 (2015): 149–68.

<sup>6</sup> I will not pursue the differences between respect, the moral feeling, and other moral feelings (cf. MM 399–403), but use the term “moral feeling of respect” broadly. I also leave aside the issue of what motivates the moral agent – the moral law, a feeling of moral respect, or some combination or alternative.

In the next paragraph, Kant calls enthusiasm “aesthetically sublime.” To the extent that we recognize the dominance of *sensibility* in it, enthusiasm is not sublime: generally, if sensibility dominates reason, a feeling cannot be sublime. But enthusiasm is called “aesthetically sublime” because it shares a stretching of the mental powers and faculties (including imagination) also present in the sublime, even if enthusiasm qua affect lacks reason’s reflection and does not appear to involve an act of judgment.<sup>7</sup> Enthusiasm having the structure of the sublime is clear from Kant’s explanation: “it is a stretching of the powers through ideas.” This gives “the mind a momentum that acts far more powerfully and persistently than the impetus given by sensory representations.”<sup>8</sup> In this stretching through ideas, there is a *free play* between the faculties, namely, imagination and reason, whereby the imagination is expanded by the possibilities on which it reflects.<sup>9</sup> The free play between imagination and reason is a crucial component of Kant’s transcendental-philosophical explanation of enthusiasm.

If enthusiasm has a stretching (yet, qua *affect*, without reason’s reflection and judgment) similar to the one present in the sublime, then it would presumably be pleasant, just as the sublime is a “negative pleasure” (CJ 245). It is easy to see why enthusiasm would be pleasant. From a transcendental-philosophical perspective, i.e., at the level of explanation if not that of psychological awareness and phenomenology, the imaginative expansion and mental “stretching” is the principal source of the pleasure.<sup>10</sup> The exercise creates an expansion of the imagination, which is pleasing, even exhilarating.<sup>11</sup> Another source of pleasure arises from the fact that the enthusiast is imaginatively responding to and engaging with an idea of the *good*.

<sup>7</sup> It is worth recalling that in marginal notes from the 1760s Kant wrote that enthusiasm is the passion of the *sublime* (AK 20:43).

<sup>8</sup> Frierson reads this as an indication of the motivational force or “efficacy” of the enthusiasm. Patrick Frierson, *Kant’s Empirical Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 223. This seems right, even if Kant’s claim eventually needs to be squared with his claim that enthusiasm seems *aesthetically* sublime.

<sup>9</sup> Frierson emphasizes the role of the unbounded exercise of imagination in the construction of intuitions that are supposed to satisfy our moral demands, in the process of which reason momentarily loses control; Frierson, *Kant’s Empirical Psychology*, 224f. James Kirwan, in *The Aesthetic in Kant: A Critique* (London: Continuum, 2004), 90f., offers a sensualist reading of enthusiasm, in which sensuousness (in the affect) dominates sensuousness (sensibility).

<sup>10</sup> Kelly Sorensen prompts me to consider whether the pleasure and reflection are extrinsic, or instead intrinsic, to enthusiasm qua affect. I think that the pleasure and a kind of reflective activity are intrinsic components of enthusiasm; but the reflection is of or by imagination, not reason. Thus, I would distinguish the reflective activity of imagination (in enthusiasm) from that of reason and/or the power of judgment, in a judgment (*Urteil*) of the sublime. Reflection, moreover, should not be confused with *reflexivity* (i.e., self-awareness).

<sup>11</sup> With respect to the sublime (not enthusiasm), this source of the pleasure is elaborated in Clewis, “A Theory of the Sublime Is Possible,” *Wassard Elea Revista* 4 (2016): 45–68, esp. 60–61.

A puzzle arises at this point. Kant thinks that enthusiasm is *aesthetically* sublime, but he also denies that it is *truly* sublime, or at least not as sublime as *apatheia* (since affects, unlike experiences of the sublime, do not have the satisfaction of reason on their side). With this move, Kant appears to have asserted a contradiction. How can enthusiasm be both aesthetically sublime and *not* sublime (or at least not *very* sublime)?

The contradiction arises from an equivocation, and it disappears when one realizes that there are two senses of the sublime at work. The first is the familiar sense of the “aesthetic” feeling<sup>12</sup> of the sublime, where “aesthetic” is understood in a sense similar to the one in which the “Analytic of the Beautiful” is devoted to an examination of beauty. The feeling of enthusiasm has a stretching similar to that of the sublime in this sense: despite their crucial differences, both enthusiasm and the sublime can be characterized as a stretching of the mental powers through ideas of reason in conjunction with imagination, or as involving a play between the faculties of reason and imagination.

However, “sublime” sometimes just means “superior” to the sensible, that is, raised above inner or outer nature.<sup>13</sup> Here the sublime simply means elevation over or superiority to sensibility (inner nature). So construed, sublimity just *is* the fact that the rational faculty is independent of nature. Employing this sense, for instance, Kant refers to the sublimity of our nature and of our moral vocation, spiritual capacity, moral predisposition, and susceptibility to determination by pure rational principles and the moral law.<sup>14</sup> This sense has little to do with aesthetic *feeling* (in the third *Critique* sense) as such, and has no necessary connection to it. Enthusiasm is *not* sublime in this sense, since it is an affect. The enthusiast experiencing an affect is in the throes of sensibility; reason is not in control. To this extent, enthusiasm does not have the satisfaction of reason on its side. For this reason, Kant claims *apatheia* is far superior to enthusiasm in sublimity. In other words, the diminished view of enthusiasm derives from this second sense of “sublime.” It leads Kant to suggest that *apatheia* “in a mind that emphatically pursues its own inalterable principles is sublime.”

<sup>12</sup> Kant uses the term “sublime” quite widely: feelings, judgments, experiences, ideas, and reason are variously described as sublime, albeit in different senses. The fact that Kant is not clear about the sublime’s referent (reason, faculty of the supersensible, ideas of infinite power or magnitude, idea of humanity, idea of freedom) is unimportant for the present argument. It seems uncontroversial to claim (as I do here) that the sublime is a feeling.

<sup>13</sup> I thank Oliver Sensen for this point; see Sensen, *Kant on Human Dignity* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 196f.

<sup>14</sup> See Clewis, “The Place of the Sublime,” 158. Examples of this sense can be found at: CPR 7, 87, 117; CJ 262; and MM 435.

If we do not make the foregoing distinction between these two senses of sublimity, this passage can lead to absurdities. How could *apatheia* be sublime if the sublime involves intense feeling and *apatheia* (affectlessness) does not? The answer is not that *apatheia* necessarily involves an intense feeling of the sublime; this would be contradictory. A better answer is that the *apatheia* stimulates the feeling of the sublime in observers who aesthetically judge and appreciate *apatheia*, similar to how one might be impressed by a person fulfilling a (supererogatory) duty, especially at great self-sacrifice or even peril.<sup>15</sup> There is another, compelling and not necessarily exclusive explanation. Like freedom and our determinability by rational and moral principles, *apatheia* is called sublime in the sense of necessarily involving elevation over sensibility. “Sublime” is not being used in its “aesthetic” sense: *apatheia* is “sublime” in the second, perhaps simpler, sense of the word (elevated, raised).<sup>16</sup>

Kant’s claim that it is “commonly maintained” that “nothing great” can be accomplished without enthusiasm also merits comment. Examining the common opinions or beliefs, Kant’s method here is reminiscent of Aristotle’s consideration of received *endoxa*. What is the origin of the common view here? The slogan that without enthusiasm nothing great can be accomplished was frequently repeated throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>17</sup> It derives both from modern philosophers such as Shaftesbury and Rousseau, and strikingly, from Kant himself. (Later, Ralph Waldo Emerson cited the view approvingly, in the last paragraph of his 1841 essay, “Circles.”)

<sup>15</sup> Kant’s own examples: soldiers obeying orders stoically, going to their deaths, while following the principles of war (“displaying all the virtues of peace, gentleness, compassion”) and rules of engagement, with “reverence for the rights of civilians.” The “object of the greatest admiration” is “someone who is not frightened, who has no fear, thus does not shrink before danger but energetically sets to work with full deliberation.” They display the “incoercibility” of their minds by danger (CJ 262f.). An extreme instance of this is when such a person faces death without fear. Representations of such courageous confrontations, especially in art forms such as tragedy (as Schiller and Schelling explored in their discussions of sublimity) and in films such as Stanley Kubrick’s *Barry Lyndon* and *Spartacus* and Mel Gibson’s *Braveheart* seem intended to elicit the sublime.

<sup>16</sup> The present explanation thus expands my treatment of how Kant uses the word “sublime” and adds to the account in Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime*, 234, where I claim that moral *apatheia* can elicit the sublime. But, as Sorensen suggested to me, both of the following claims can be true: (a) affectlessness can arouse an affect in observers and spectators, and (b) affectlessness is “sublime” in the sense of “superior.” Sorensen offers an interpretation affirming (a) and maintains that a state or condition of affectlessness can arouse or elicit an affect, admiration (*Bewunderung*): “reason can produce an affect in attending to the absence of affect.” Kelly D. Sorensen, “Kant’s Taxonomy of the Emotions,” *Kantian Review* 6, no. 1 (2002): 123.

<sup>17</sup> Zuckert, “Kant’s Account of Practical Fanaticism,” 296.



Whereas in the cited passage Kant seems to reject, or at least doubt, the truth of the claim that nothing great could be accomplished without enthusiasm, Kant once considered it to be *true*.<sup>18</sup> Kant asserted a version of the claim: “This two-sided appearance of fantasy in moral sensations that are in themselves good is enthusiasm, and nothing great has ever been accomplished in the world without it (EH 267).<sup>19</sup> Eventually, however, Kant came to doubt the truth of the claim. For instance, the Friedländer transcription of the anthropology lecture (1775–1776) states, with a hint of skepticism: “One is wont to speak highly of enthusiasm, that it does many great things, and that all the great changes in the world are to have originated from enthusiasm, not from cold judgment, but from intuition” (AK 25:530, cf. 621). The Mrongovius transcription (1784–1785) develops this notion that cold judgment or reason should be the source of great changes, i.e., that reason should provide a rational principle (identified, in the contemporaneous *Groundwork*, as the moral law) by which to discern and even motivate courses of action. “Nowadays enthusiasm is praised so much, but one must intuit principles not with affect, but with cold reason” (AK 25:1287). Hence, when Kant says it is “commonly maintained,” he could have in mind not only writers such as Shaftesbury or Rousseau, but himself.

Although he calls enthusiasm “aesthetically sublime,” Kant never characterizes it as a judgment (*Urteil*) of the sublime. Why does he choose not to characterize enthusiasm as a pure or impure judgment of sublimity? An important conceptual reason is that, in the typical case, enthusiasm is “interested” whereas in judgments of the sublime the appreciator is disinterested: the satisfaction in the sublime is represented as “without interest” (CJ 247). Enthusiasm typically gives rise to an action, or at least to a desire based on a determination of the will. Unlike pure aesthetic feeling (i.e., beauty and sublimity), enthusiasm has motivational power, or at least involves an interested response to an idea of the good.

After stating that affects are imprudent because they do not have the guidance of reason, and that it would be wrong to foster affects intentionally, Kant states in the (1798) *Anthropology* (book III, “On the Faculty of Desire”):

<sup>18</sup> The claim itself seems to be false. For reasons, see Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime*, 40.

<sup>19</sup> The passage continues (slightly modified): “Things stand quite differently with the fanatic (visionary, raver) [*Fanatiker* (*Visionär*, *Schwärmer*)],” making a strong case for translating *Schwärmerei* as “fanaticism” (and reserving “enthusiasm” for *Enthusiasmus*).

Nevertheless, reason, in representing the morally good by connecting its ideas with intuitions (examples) that have been imputed to them, can produce an enlivening of the will (in spiritual or political speeches to the people, or even in speeches to oneself). Reason is thus enlivening the soul, not as affect but rather as cause of an affect with respect to the good, in which reason still always handles the reins, and an enthusiasm of good resolution is produced – an enthusiasm which, however, must be attributed to the faculty of desire and not to affect as a stronger sensible feeling. (APV 253f.; translation modified)

This passage is puzzling, since Kant is unclear about whether the feeling in question is an affect (“as cause of an affect”) or it is not (“attributed . . . not to affect”).<sup>20</sup> This lack of clarity, however, does not justify modifying the claim that for Kant enthusiasm is an affect. But there is another peculiarity: even if it is an affect, the feeling described here is far more *positive* than the description in the anthropology transcriptions and the third *Critique*. Reason, *while holding the reins*, causes enthusiasm by representing an idea of the good in intuitions and examples, thereby animating the will. It is thus an enthusiasm of “good resolution.” The enthusiasm is “interested” in the sense that it is “an enlivening of the will.” Yet reason appears to be in control. This is admittedly difficult to reconcile with Kant’s claim that enthusiasm is an affect, since that would seem to rule out control by reason.

Since affects belong to feeling (sensibility) (MM 407; CJ 272f), and enthusiasm is an affect, enthusiasm is a feeling rather than a desire. But the above-quoted passage is found in the section, “On the Faculty of Desire.” What is going on here? Enthusiasm is a feeling that (like the agreeable) engages the will, and therefore is linked to desire; this is what is meant by claiming that it has motivational force. But it is also an affect. In other words, the text seems unclear about whether enthusiasm belongs to the faculty of sensibility or desire, because enthusiasm is an affect that can eventually motivate.<sup>21</sup> As Frierson puts it, enthusiasm is a “practical” feeling.<sup>22</sup> In this context, it is useful to recall that Kant once wrote (in the 1760s) that enthusiasm is a *passion* (AK 20:43). Based on his later

<sup>20</sup> In *The Kantian Sublime* (3f., 42, 169–73) I resolved this by distinguishing “practical” from “aesthetic” enthusiasm, as well as at least five different senses of interest, which bear on how to conceive of the “practical.” In some senses, aesthetic enthusiasm is “interested,” while in others it is not. For a nuanced account of a relation between the idea of reason and the exercise of imagination that ultimately issues in volition and action, see Frierson, *Kant’s Empirical Psychology*, 223–27.

<sup>21</sup> That some affects can be desires and feelings is usefully illustrated by Sorensen’s figure 3 in “Kant’s Taxonomy of the Emotions,” 118.

<sup>22</sup> Frierson, *Kant’s Empirical Psychology*, 227.

accounts, I think Kant's considered, mature view is that it is an affect that can *lead to* or become a passion (see also APV 269).

Even if enthusiasm is a response to the morally good, deliberately inculcating it is still unquestionably prohibited since it is an affect (CPR 155), as I noted elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> In claiming this, Kant adopts a negative view of enthusiasm. Kant notes that it is popular to try to shape minds through "melting, tender feelings" or "high-flown, puffed-up pretensions" (one could say, through *bathos*, or the "false sublime"), which make the heart languid instead of strengthening it, rather than "by a dry and earnest representation of duty." He continues:

It is altogether contrapurposive to set before children, as a model, actions as noble, magnanimous, meritorious, thinking that one can captivate them by inspiring an enthusiasm [*durch Einflößung eines Enthusiasmus*] for such actions. For, since they are still so backward in observance of the commonest duty and even in the correct judging of it, this is tantamount to soon making them fantasizers. But even with the instructed and experienced part of humankind this supposed incentive has, where it is not a prejudicial effect on the heart, at least no genuine moral one, though this is what one wanted to bring about by means of it. (CPR 157)<sup>24</sup>

It is not that the feeling is immoral per se, but that it does not help educators achieve the ends of moral education: it has no genuinely moral effect. Of course, if such feelings are used improperly, it could create moral confusion in children and even adults. In similar fashion, Kant writes in the *Metaphysics of Morals*: "A good example (exemplary conduct) should not serve as a model, but only as a proof that it is really possible to act in conformity with duty" (MM 480).

<sup>23</sup> My recognition of this point was not sufficiently noted by Melissa McBay Merritt, who wrote: "According to Clewis, *Enthusiasmus* can play a legitimate and benevolent role in our moral development." See Merritt, "Review of Robert R. Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime and the Revelation of Freedom*," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 18, no. 3 (2010): 528. Yet I had written on page 40: "Kant is wary of using feeling in moral education, since it can lead to flighty fancifulness and sentimentality." Likewise: "In moral education Kant is critical of replacing firm, resolute states of mind with tenderhearted ebullitions, in short, with oversensitivity (CPR 155n; CJ 273), and I am not suggesting that enthusiasm be used in this way" (emphasis added); Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime*, 198. Likewise: "I am not suggesting that enthusiasm can or should replace the moral feeling of respect in Kant's account of moral agency" (197). "I am not claiming that enthusiasm is a *necessary* condition of acting from a priori, moral motives" (196). Her review also misidentifies the contents of the final two chapters (528), and for some reason interprets me as endorsing what she calls the "enthusiastic admiration of exemplars" (her words, not mine) (530). For what I actually wrote, see Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime*, 85.

<sup>24</sup> I also quoted this passage in Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime*, 179.

## 10.2 Conceptual Content: Freedom

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to give a proper account of the cognitive content of feelings.<sup>25</sup> I will simply assume that feelings can have cognitive or conceptual content of some kind. If so, what would be the conceptual content of enthusiasm? According to the account found in the third *Critique* (CJ 272), the conceptual content of the feeling would be the idea of the morally good and corresponding representation or intuition provided by the imagination, or perhaps more precisely, it would be the play between this idea and an imaginative representation. What makes enthusiasm an affect is that (as Frierson observes) “the activity of reason misfires into an overabundance of imagination, which in turn inspires intense feelings that preclude rational choice.” The feeling “arises from the efforts of *imagination* to reach the ideal posed by reason.”<sup>26</sup> The role of an unbounded imagination distinguishes enthusiasm from a rational reflection on a moral idea, i.e., from respect and other moral feelings.

Is Kant ever specific about which idea is in play here? He describes the conceptual or intellectual content in various ways over the four decades in which he discussed enthusiasm. Yet even in the early accounts in the *Observations* and lectures, the content is a “principle” or “idea.” In the third *Critique*, it is the idea of the “morally good” (CJ 272) and perhaps even the idea of God (CJ 274). In formulations from the 1790s, Kant understands “the good” broadly to include moral-political ideas (e.g., a republic). In the *Anthropology*, Kant calls it the idea of freedom.<sup>27</sup> (This does not mean that it must be this particular idea, but that it can be.) This identification of the content as freedom fits nicely into Kant’s conceptual framework, since, like other moral-political ideas, political freedom can be

<sup>25</sup> The literature on this topic is vast. For a useful overview, see Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and Its Role in Literature, Music, and Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>26</sup> Frierson, *Kant’s Empirical Psychology*, 226f.

<sup>27</sup> In my discussion in *The Kantian Sublime* of what it meant for the sublime and enthusiasm to “reveal” or be an experience of freedom, I paid attention to the necessary Kantian strictures about experiencing freedom, and these strictures still apply. While I still accept the core of my earlier account, my aim here is more modest: to cast freedom (the good) as enthusiasm’s *conceptual content*, while being agnostic about *revealing* freedom. For a defense of the latter, see Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime*, and Sorensen, “Kant’s Taxonomy of the Emotions.” In this 2002 article on sublimity, astonishment, and enthusiasm, Sorensen claims that “emotions can reveal our supersensible vocation as moral beings” and that the sublime plays the positive role of making us “aware of our noumenal freedom” (Sorensen, “Kant’s Taxonomy of the Emotions,” 124, and 128n22, respectively).

construed as a species of the good in a broad sense (leaving aside the debate about the priority of the right and the good).

Kant's aesthetic theory seems to imply that there can be a free play involving imaginative reflection with this idea, in other words, that there can be a play between the faculties of imagination and reason (the source of the moral idea) or between the specific imaginative intuitions and the idea of reason.<sup>28</sup> This would explain why the imagination is expanded: it is (pleasantly) stretched by the imagined possibilities on which it reflects. This reveals another specific difference between enthusiasm and the sublime (at least on one reading of the sublime). The conceptual content is not, as it is with sublimity, the agent's own agency or rational *powers*, i.e., theoretical reason (in the mathematical sublime) and practical reason (in the dynamical sublime).<sup>29</sup> Rather, it appears to be a play between the imagination and a moral idea (political freedom, the republic, justice, friendship) or corresponding attempt to realize that idea in the course of history.

Although Kant does not characterize it this way, it seems plausible to claim that enthusiasm is a response to some actual or concrete event or object, not just to an idea of reason, whereby an enthusiast judges an object or event to be good. If so, this could be articulated in terms of the more general formula:

An agent is enthusiastic about X because (only if) the agent judges X to be good.<sup>30</sup>

This reveals why enthusiastic agents can get into trouble or produce harm. A person can be wrong about what is good, i.e., (1) wrong about whether X is in fact good (good for oneself, for others, and so on), or (2) can attempt to achieve and instantiate X in the wrong way, or employ the wrong means to realize or attain X. The latter, for Kant, was a crucial fault and shortcoming of the French revolutionaries in the late 1780s and 1790s, as we will see. Employment of the wrong means is also a problem in the case of religious *Enthusiasmus*, which incites people to act in ways they would not typically act (possibly for the worse), making them harder for the authorities to control (CJ 275). To avoid such outbreaks of

<sup>28</sup> Hence in Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime*, 191–94, I call enthusiasm a *dependent* (adherent) feeling, on analogy with dependent beauty, since the perceiver imaginatively attends to the conceptual content (the good) in the object or event.

<sup>29</sup> Yet, as noted (see n. 13), Kant is not always clear about what actually is sublime.

<sup>30</sup> Note that the implication does not go in the reverse direction ("if").

religious enthusiasm, the “momentum of an unbounded imagination” would need to be moderated (CJ 274).

Perhaps it would have been better if Kant had defined enthusiasm not as the response to the *good* with affect, but as a response to the *perceived* good. This is compatible with (1) above: one’s perception could still be misguided or misinformed. Kant’s definition of enthusiasm (a response to the morally good with affect) masks part of the shortcomings displayed by enthusiasts, for the problem is not simply that enthusiasm is an affect. The enthusiast can also be wrong about what is in fact good. This feature of enthusiasm is made possible by its cognitive elements.

If one wanted to stay with *Kant’s* definition of enthusiasm as the idea of the good with affect, however, one could offer the following explanation, which is a way to account for (2) above: the good is properly identified (by reason), but the unbound imagination produces an intuition that obstructs or gets in the way of the proper implementation of means to that end (the rational ideal), while producing an affect.

### 10.3 Paradigmatic Enthusiasm in Kant’s Lectures and Essays

Up to this point, my discussion has been based on the Critical account. But the concept of enthusiasm did not just suddenly become interesting to Kant from out of nowhere, without a trace. He did not just mention enthusiasm in passing. Rather, there are descriptions of enthusiasm throughout the pre-Critical writings and student notes. To distinguish these from the enthusiasm described in the next section, these instances can be called *paradigmatic* or typical cases.

Kant’s pre-Critical work, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, despite having a title suggesting that it is a work in aesthetic theory, is largely about the sociological and anthropological differences between men and women and various peoples and nations. When Kant began to offer a course on anthropology in 1772–1773, it is thus unsurprising that much of this material was included in or covered by the new anthropology course. Enthusiasm, for instance, is discussed in the course.

In the *Observations*, Kant distinguishes fanaticism from enthusiasm. Fanaticism (*Fanaticism*), Kant writes (employing personification), “believes itself to feel an immediate and extraordinary communion with a higher nature” (OBS 251n)<sup>31</sup>. In contrast, enthusiasm “signifies the state

<sup>31</sup> The fact that Kant uses the cognate (*Fanaticism*) in his characterization of *Schwärmerei* provides still more support for translating the term as “fanaticism.”

of the mind that is inflamed beyond the appropriate degree by some principle [*Grundsatz*], whether it be by the maxim of patriotic virtue, or of friendship, or of religion, without involving the illusion of a supernatural community" (OBS 251n). In its "degenerate" form, the "fervor for freedom" inclines to enthusiasm (OBS 221). The fanatic or visionary (*Visionär*) is a "deranged" person who presumes to have immediate inspiration and familiarity with heavenly powers (EH 267).<sup>32</sup>

In the lectures on anthropology, Kant offers several descriptions of enthusiasm, at times taking the opportunity to criticize the textbook he adopted in the course, Alexander Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*: "The author [Baumgarten] conflates enthusiasm with fanatics [*Schwärmern*] or visionaries" (AK 25:1287).<sup>33</sup> A lecture transcription from 1775/76 (Friedländer) states: "The fantast fancies he sees objects of this world, but the enthusiast believes he sees objects of the spirit world . . . Enthusiasm is a fantasizing in regard to objects of the understanding, for example enthusiasm of the virtue of patriotism, when an ideal is taken for something real" (AK 25:528). "As noble as is the enthusiast, so base is the fanatic. The enthusiast has after all a true archetype as his object, but the fanatic follows absurdities and figments of the mind . . . All fanatics have no correct philosophy, but the enthusiasts indeed do, only they follow their correct concepts with complete affect" (AK 25:531). Whoever "gives way" to the ideal of patriotism "with affect," where the ideal cannot be attained, "is enthusiastic" (AK 25:530). The lecture transcription cites Rousseau as an example of an enthusiast who, for the sake of his ideals of universal benevolence and love of humanity, gave up chances at actual friendship and community with others. Still, "such enthusiasts are not malicious people, but they are touched with principles of benevolence toward the entire human race, and since they cannot find such, they become misanthropes, for example, Rousseau" (AK 25:530). In the

<sup>32</sup> Peter Fenves acknowledges the difference between the fanatic and the enthusiast: "Kant, like other German writers of the eighteenth century, never tired of trying to distinguish a thoroughly repugnant *Schwärmerei* from an *Enthusiasmus* without which 'nothing great in the world could take place.'" Fenves, *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Fenves (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), xi.

<sup>33</sup> According to the Academy editors, Kant is referring to *Metaphysica* section X "Praesagitio" (Anticipation) of part III (Psychology) (*Metaphysica* §§ 610–18), where Baumgarten mentions prophecy and divination. The interesting issues of how Kant made use of and commented on Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*, and the extent to which the lectures can or should be interpreted as illustrating Kant's dialectical interaction with the assigned textbook, are beyond the scope of this chapter. For Kant's university teaching and his relation to his textbook authors, see the essays in the collected volume, *Reading Kant's Lectures*, ed. Robert R. Clewis (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015).

Mrongovius lecture from the mid-1780s, a slight shift appears, as enthusiasm is called a “passion”:

Whoever habitually occupies himself with the idea of the good in fantasy is a fantast. For whoever is so taken in by the idea of a perfect good *up to the point of passion* that he forgets that this is a mere idea and believes that it could actually be realized, is such a fantast in the good, or enthusiast. Thus there are enthusiasts of patriotism, friendship, etc.<sup>34</sup> (AK 25:1262, cf. 1373; emphasis added)

How does the concept of enthusiasm develop in the 1790s? In the published *Anthropology* (1798), which came to press about five years after the Reign of Terror of 1793–1794, Kant criticizes loving freedom too much or in the wrong way. In the section, “On the Inclination to Freedom as a Passion,” Kant describes how nomadic or tribal peoples appear to value “outer” or external freedom, sometimes leading to a violent passion.

Thus it is not only the concept of freedom under moral laws that arouses an affect, which is called enthusiasm, but the mere sensible representation of outer freedom heightens the inclination to persist in it or to extend it into a violent passion, by analogy with the concept of right. (APV 269)

The contrast between the affect (enthusiasm) and violent passion is significant. The former enthusiasm is an *affect* involving an imaginative play with a rational (moral) concept, the idea of the good or “the concept of freedom under moral laws.” With a violent *passion*, there is only an *analogy* with the concept of right. By contrast, genuine enthusiasm is oriented toward the actual right (cf. CF 86).

The aforementioned passage at APV 269 sheds light on another passage in APV, where Kant discusses an enthusiasm that shakes “everything” and goes “beyond all bounds” as it did in revolutionary France. The revolutionaries (not the spectators) possessed a reprehensible passion, not just a strong affect (which after all would inhibit the choice and implementation of ends). The affable, friendly inclination of the French encourages benevolence toward others and even a general love of humanity (“universal philanthropy according to principles”), making the French likeable on the whole. But, Kant continues,

<sup>34</sup> Someone, presumably the transcriber (Mrongovius), here later inserted in reddish ink: “Enthusiasts of freedom 1793.” While not written by Kant himself, it agrees with Kant’s account in the *Anthropology*.



The other side of the coin is a vivacity that is not sufficiently kept in check by considered principles, and to clear-sighted reason it is thoughtlessness not to allow certain forms to endure for long, when they have proved satisfactory, just because they are old or have been praised excessively; and it is an infectious spirit of freedom, which probably also pulls reason itself into its play, and, in the relations of the people to the state, causes *an enthusiasm that shakes everything and goes beyond all bounds*. (APV 313f.; italics modified)

Readers may be tempted to interpret the claim in APV that enthusiasm “goes beyond all bounds” as a mere repetition of the claim in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that in enthusiasm qua affect the imagination is “unreined” (“General Remark,” CJ 275). However, in light of the deadly violence of the Reign of Terror, it is more likely what “shakes everything” is a violent *passion* rather than an affect.

It is likely that the Reign of Terror affected Kant’s characterization of enthusiasm. The characterization of enthusiasm in *Anthropology* counts more as a modification than a mere repetition of Kant’s familiar views concerning enthusiasm. For instance, in a lecture from 1784–1785, about five years before the beginning of the French Revolution, Kant is reported to have made a claim nearly identical to the one found in the third *Critique*. “With enthusiasts, the power of imagination is no doubt unreined, that is, without limits, but not unrulled. With the dreamer, the power of imagination is unrulled” (AK 25:1262, cf. 1287). Later in the same lecture (Mrongovius), the characterization of enthusiasm is repeated: “If the melancholic has a great deal of understanding, he becomes an enthusiast; if he has little understanding, he becomes a fantast [*Phantast*] or fanatic [*Schwärmer*]. With the enthusiast, the power of imagination is unreined; with the fantast, it is unrulled. I can still tame the former, for it is mere exaggeration of the rules, but not the latter, for it is without all rules” (AK 25:1373).

At the same time, the political events in France led Kant to characterize enthusiasm in a more *positive* light, too. According to a draft of “An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?” (R8077, ca. fall 1795–fall 1797) a feeling of “enthusiasm” is felt by “mere spectators of the revolution” sympathizing “with affect” and with “lively participation” (AK 19:604). The “universal” yet “forceful” participation (*Theilnehmung*) in the “highest cosmopolitan good” could even “approach the most powerful moral incentive” (AK 19:612). In the published version, to which we now turn, Kant clarified that, though enthusiasm cannot be a *moral* incentive per se, it is oriented toward the moral-political good or right (*Recht*), and he further interpreted enthusiasm for an actual republic in Europe as evidence of a moral predisposition in humanity.

#### 10.4 An Exceptional Case: Enthusiasm for a Republic

This exceptional instance of the feeling is felt in response to what Kant considered a remarkable event in history, the establishment of the first French Republic.<sup>35</sup> This instance stands apart in the Kantian corpus. As much as he faults the French people for (passionate, practical) enthusiasm in *Anthropology*, Kant also admires the enthusiastic response felt around the world and above all in other European nations. In “An Old Question Raised Again,”<sup>36</sup> enthusiasm is described as a sublime mental movement that is both disinterested and has universal validity. In section 6, “Concerning an Occurrence in Our Time Which Demonstrates This Moral Tendency of the Human Race,” Kant identifies this “occurrence” in the following passage:

It is simply the way of thinking of the spectators which reveals itself *publicly* in this play [*Spiele*] of great revolutions [*Umwandlungen*], and manifests such a universal yet disinterested participation [*uneigennützige Teilnehmung*] for the players on the one side against those on the other, even at the risk that this partiality could become very disadvantageous for them if discovered. Owing to its universality, this way of thinking demonstrates a character of the human race at large and all at once; owing to its disinterestedness, a moral character of humanity, at least in its predisposition, a character which not only permits people to hope for progress toward the better, but is already itself progress insofar as its capacity is sufficient for the present.

The revolution . . . finds in the hearts of all spectators (who are not engaged in this play themselves) a wishful *participation* [*Teilnehmung*] that borders closely on enthusiasm, the very expression of which is fraught with danger; this participation, therefore, can have no other cause than a moral predisposition in the human race. (CF 85)

Kant reads this rare enthusiasm as a sign of a moral tendency or predisposition in humanity, and thus as the basis for hope in moral-political progress for human beings. This feeling is clearly an extraordinary instance of enthusiasm. It fits into his broader philosophical aims in a way that ordinary enthusiasm does not. It helps him articulate an account of how morality, which he takes to be the “final end” of nature (CJ §§ 83–84), can

<sup>35</sup> I agree with Frierson that this instance of enthusiasm is the “exceptional” rather than paradigmatic case (Frierson, *Kant’s Empirical Psychology*, 227n13). I adopted a similar position in *The Kantian Sublime* (20, 169) and there called it “aesthetic” enthusiasm, highlighting its disinterestedness.

<sup>36</sup> For background on this text, see Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime*, 2n2.

be actualized in the natural order.<sup>37</sup> Here, the spectators feel enthusiasm in response to a concrete event unfolding in history, an event, Kant thinks, that will not easily be forgotten: such enthusiasm takes on symbolic import.

Despite Kant's interpretation of this instance of enthusiasm, his characterization of the feeling is consonant with that of the third *Critique*. Kant uses the language of exaltation (*Exaltation*) and of being stretched (*gespannt werden*). He describes the "zeal and grandeur of soul" (*Eifer und der Seelengröße*) (CF 86f.). The concepts of exaltation and grandeur were used throughout the eighteenth-century aesthetic and rhetorical tradition to describe or explain the experience of the sublime. Kant's reference to "being stretched" should sound familiar to readers of the third *Critique*. The description is reminiscent of the characterization of enthusiasm in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (CJ 272).

Some commentators have questioned whether the onlookers are actually feeling enthusiasm rather than something only "bordering" closely on it. But they are perhaps being misdirected by the phrase, "borders closely." It seems quite clear that the spectators are actually feeling enthusiasm. Kant characterizes this wishful participation as the "passionate participation in the good" (*Teilnehmung am Guten mit Affect*), which is nearly identical to the definition of enthusiasm in the third *Critique*. More explicitly, Kant makes a reference to "genuine" enthusiasm. He even defines it: "genuine enthusiasm always moves only toward what is ideal and indeed, to what is purely moral" (CF 86). In a footnote to this passage, Kant again mentions enthusiasm and refers to "such an enthusiasm – for upholding justice for the human race" (CF 86n). So there is actually little room for doubt.

Unlike the enthusiasm discussed in the *Observations* and anthropology lectures, this instance of enthusiasm is described as universal and disinterested ("universal yet disinterested participation"), namely, as possessing two of the "big four" features of a pure aesthetic judgment. (The other two are "purposiveness without a purpose" and "necessity.") Kant claims that the feeling is required of all disinterested spectators of the events ("the hearts of all spectators").<sup>38</sup> This is quite remarkable, and it suggests that

<sup>37</sup> See also Kant's discussion of creating a bridge from nature to freedom (CJ 175, 195; AK 20:244), in which aesthetic feelings and experience are to play a role.

<sup>38</sup> For these reasons, in Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime* (cf. 20), I claimed that *this particular instance of enthusiasm*, which like the sublime involves a stretching of the powers "through ideas," counts as an experience of the sublime. There are crucial differences between *paradigmatic* enthusiasm and the sublime (such as: qualifying as a judgment, the role of reason, nature of the reflective activity). Paradigmatic enthusiasm cannot be an instance of the sublime in the full Kantian sense of an aesthetic judgment of sublimity.

enthusiasm plays a far more important role in Kant's philosophy broadly construed than one would expect, if one limited one's reading to the third *Critique* alone. This symbolic use of enthusiasm in Kant's philosophy of history, which employs language from his aesthetics, justifies calling enthusiasm a significant Kantian feeling.

But Kant's characterization leads to a puzzle: how can enthusiasm be *disinterested*, as it states in this passage, if it is based on an interest and gives rise to actions, i.e., if it has motivational power? It is crucial to keep in mind the various senses of "disinterestedness."<sup>39</sup> The puzzle can be resolved if one keeps in mind that these spectators are disinterested in some senses, but not in others. They are disinterested in the sense that they are not directly involved in the events. They are not so much active contributors to the revolution as they are well-wishing onlookers. The spectators are neither the French nobility and aristocracy, nor the peasants and revolutionaries. The enthusiasts are not exactly passive, for they are actively reading, observing, discussing, and hoping – contributing by way of *feeling*, as it were. As observers and spectators, their "enthusiasm" does not exactly have the same motivational force as it does for the revolutionaries themselves (whom I think are best characterized as being passionate in Kant's sense of the term). They are not actively contributing in the sense of soldiers or partisans, nor even participating through "softer" means (e.g., providing resources or materials). But they are not impartial (in this sense they *are* "interested"), for they want the republicans to win. In the passage cited above, Kant ascribes "partiality" to the onlookers. One might call them "partial spectators" looking on from a distance. They want the good and the right to be realized in the world. They are rooting for the republic to be established; in this sense they are *not* indifferent to the "existence" of the "object" (to adopt the terms from CJ 205), namely, the republic in France. They have a rationally based desire to see the republic established, and they express this even at great risk to their own lives and well-being; hence the expression of their enthusiasm even runs *against* their personal interests (thereby creating another parallel with the sublime, which overrides or threatens self-interest).

But what is so special about this event? If we do not interpret the establishment of the French Republic in its historical-political context, it is easy to overlook that it was the first attempt of its kind in continental Europe, and that Kant saw it in its novelty. There were no other European events by which to compare it – indeed, like the sublime it could have been

<sup>39</sup> In Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime* (146f., 189), I distinguished five senses of disinterestedness.

perceived as being great “beyond all comparison” (CJ 250). It is meaningful to the spectators that these moral-political ideals are enacted for the first time, enlivening the imagination with thoughts of future possibilities. Kant’s observers see the establishment of the Republic as a historical event with consequences that could spread far beyond the single nation-state in which the events occurred. Kant claims that the event, and the response to it, will never be forgotten. It was not the violence and blood that had symbolic import, but the fact that the revolution was seen as a concrete first step toward setting up republics across Europe, and, Kant might have hoped (as *Perpetual Peace* suggests), a league of European states.

The reference to “a character which not only permits people to hope for progress toward the better, but is already itself progress insofar as its capacity is sufficient for the present” brings out the temporal character of this instance of enthusiasm. The modality of the feeling seems to be above all *futural*, even if it is obviously connected to and based on present events and opportunities. The spectators are not enthusiastic about the past as such, but about emerging possibilities – reflection on which the imagination, the faculty of possibility, plays an active role. Like hope, enthusiasm is oriented toward the future.

### 10.5 Comparison with Other Feelings

I now briefly compare and contrast (paradigmatic) enthusiasm with other Kantian feelings of pleasure and displeasure. Like the agreeable and the moral feeling of respect, and unlike the sublime, enthusiasm is “interested,” in that it engages and determines the will; it can be based on prior desires and interests as well as cause them and lead to actions. Like hope, the feeling has a *positive* valence since enthusiasm is a response to the morally good through an expanded imagination, even if (from the perspective of practical reason) enthusiasm qua affect involves a reprehensible loss of rational control.

Like the moral feeling of respect, and unlike the agreeable, it is a response to the morally good, hence is a kind of intellectual-imaginative pleasure, albeit one unquestionably distinct from the moral feeling. Unlike the agreeable, enthusiasm involves an imaginative play with ideas of reason. Like the sublime, it is a stretching of the mental powers through ideas in which the imagination is expanded, an intense and stirring (*rührend*) feeling and emotion. But unlike the sublime, it is not a *pure aesthetic* feeling or *judgment* (in the third *Critique* senses), and it lacks the reflection on one’s rational powers that seems to be (on one reading) a

necessary component of the sublime.<sup>40</sup> Unlike moral feelings and respect for the moral law, enthusiasm is not a purely rational feeling, but rather involves an unbounded, expanded imagination; technically, enthusiasm lacks moral worth and does not merit the satisfaction of reason. As an affect, enthusiasm involves an overpowering sensibility, in which the imagination is “unreined.”

The “unboundedness” of the imagination might perhaps be seen as another specific difference from the sublime: one might be tempted to claim that in enthusiasm the imagination is (or feels) unbounded, whereas in the sublime it is not. However, I do not think this point is as clear as it has struck most commentators, who tend to overlook this aspect of the Kantian sublime. (Lyotard is an exception here.) In the sublime, too, the imagination is active, stretched, and expanded. Moreover, the sublime is an intense, moving, stirring feeling. But is the sublime also an affect? In the rhetorical-aesthetic tradition, with which Kant was to a significant extent familiar, the sublime was indeed characterized as an affect, rapture, and transport, a kind of *ekstasis*. Following (if not exactly agreeing with) writers such as Edmund Burke, even Kant uses “astonishment” to present his account of the feeling of the sublime.<sup>41</sup> “The astonishment [*Verwunderung*] bordering on terror . . . [is] not actual fear, but only an attempt to involve ourselves in it by means of the imagination, in order to feel the power of” imagination (“General Remark,” CJ 269).<sup>42</sup> In the second *Critique*, Kant uses the term amazement (*Erstaunen*), an affect, to capture the responses to conventional elicitors of the sublime. “Something that comes nearer to this feeling [respect] is admiration [*Bewunderung*], and this as an affect, amazement, can be directed to things also, for example, lofty mountains, the magnitude, number, and distance of the heavenly bodies, the

<sup>40</sup> Or at least, the *potential* to so reflect seems to be necessary, even if it is not always realized in particular experiences of the sublime.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Burke: “Astonishment . . . is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree.” Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (part II, § 1), in *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 131–44, 132.

<sup>42</sup> Astonishment is an affect, namely an “affect” in the representation of “novelty” that “exceeds expectation” (CJ 272; cf. CJ 365 and APV 261). Although this would seem to imply that some feelings of the *sublime* could count as affects, I doubt that Kant would claim that the sublime is an affect (he never explicitly characterizes it that way). The claim that the sublime is an affect (unlike the more modest claim that the affect, astonishment, can issue from, or spin out of, the experience of the sublime) would appear to put into question the sublime’s rational basis, the role of reflection, and its status as a judgment. Kant would have wanted to avoid such implications.

strength and swiftness of many animals, and so forth” (CPR 76). But since it is time to conclude, I will not pursue this point further.<sup>43</sup>

## 10.6 Conclusion

For Kant, paradigmatic enthusiasm is problematic and deeply *ambiguous* (which is not to say that Kant’s description is vague). Throughout the Kantian corpus, enthusiasm is dual natured.

On the positive side, Kant defines enthusiasm as an imaginative response to the morally good, i.e., a sensible-imaginative play with an idea of reason: enthusiasm is “aesthetically sublime.” From a teleological perspective (and keeping in mind Kant’s Critical strictures regarding teleological claims), one could say that enthusiasm is one of the means that nature uses (or *appears* to use) in order to achieve the good. It helps bring about or cause “great” movements or effects. Enthusiasm perhaps functions in some ways like the drive for honor.<sup>44</sup> The latter leads us to want to appear to be good or honorable, which has the fortuitous outcome that we pursue the course of action that is in *accordance* with morality, even if we do so for amoral or prudential reasons (thus, for Kant, acting without moral worth).

Moreover, in one remarkable and exceptional instance, enthusiasm acts as a moral sign of progress in Kant’s teleological reading of history. As an imaginative response to ideas of the moral or political good, it possesses positive features that make it far preferable to delirium or fanaticism (*Schwärmerei*).

On the negative side, enthusiasm, qua affect, merits censure, for reason momentarily loses control while the enthusiast is in the throes of affect. The decisive feature here is not enthusiasm’s status as a feeling, since feelings per se are neither immoral nor moral, but its status as an affect. Without the constraints of reason, enthusiasm can in principle lead agents to commit immoral or unjust acts. As I have noted here and in *The Kantian Sublime and the Revelation of Freedom*, Kant clearly warns against employing the feeling of enthusiasm in moral education, since it replaces respect for the moral law with sentimental feeling and fantasy.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Sorensen writes that astonishment is an affect that appears “related” to the feeling of the sublime. Sorensen, “Kant’s Taxonomy of the Emotions,” 128n22.

<sup>44</sup> On the drive for honor, see Alix Cohen, “From Faking It to Making It: The Feeling of Love of Honor as an Aid to Morality,” in Clewis, *Reading Kant’s Lectures*, 243–56.

<sup>45</sup> The negative side is evident at CJ 273; APV 202; APV 314. See especially MM 408f. (translation modified): “It is only the apparent strength of someone feverish that lets a lively participation [*Anteil*] even in the good rise to the point of affect, or rather degenerate into it. An affect of this kind is called enthusiasm.”

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Kant thought and wrote about enthusiasm from the relatively early and middle stages of his philosophical career until its very end – he published a characterization of enthusiasm in 1764, continued to discuss it in his lectures on anthropology beginning in 1772, and wrote on the topic well into the 1790s, devoting a passage to it in a *Critique* published in the first year of that decade, and further commenting on it in the *Anthropology* and *The Conflict of the Faculties* as the eighteenth century drew to a close. Kant therefore maintained a lifelong interest in the topic, and enthusiasm deserves to be classified as an important Kantian feeling.

PROOF