

The Sublime People

: A Kantian Aesthetics of Popular Sovereignty and Democratic Citizenship



Juman KIM
Assistant Professor
Towson University

Date: 10 February 2023

Time: 10:00 am (HKT)

Venue: Online (This talk will be held via ZOOM)

Speaker: Juman KIM, Towson University

Abstract

The people cannot appear in any immediate form. This indefinite nature of the people makes its representation both necessary and incomplete, thereby placing individual citizens in permanent tensions with the people. In contrast to what I call the *reductionist* paradigm and its *aspirational* counterpart—those aim at relaxing the tensions by either constraining or valorizing the potential of popular energy, respectively—this study proposes a theory of *the sublime people* as an interpretive tool with which we can better attend to the interplay between the individual citizen and the people. This paper argues that the democratic people can be best understood as a sublime object—à la Kant—showing that the people so understood can guide individual citizens to keep invoking and engaging with the ideal of popular sovereignty as an indispensably inspiring idea and real force while holding up against the tendency of endangering themselves to lapse into uncritical passivity and the idolatry of the claimed people.

Short Biography

Juman Kim is Assistant Professor of Political Science and Director of the Program in Law and American Civilization at Towson University. He is a political theorist whose research and teaching interests range widely over ancient and modern political thought, democratic theory, political and legal philosophy, and American constitutional & political development. His current book project, tentatively entitled *Living with Frustration: The Quest for a Democratic Citizenship of Perseverance*, involves examining how to better acknowledge, endure, and make most use of the pivotal experiences of frustration endogenous to democracy. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania and both M.A. & B.A. degrees from Yonsei University. Prior to joining the faculty at Towson, he taught political theory and public law at the Korea Air Force Academy, Penn, Rutgers University-Camden, and the University of Oregon.