

# From Populism to People: The Case for Meanings in Life

## Abstract

We have seen the rise of populism in Western democracies over the past few years. If we are looking to explain this phenomenon, its underlying causes must be examined on a longer time scale. And indeed, there do seem to be two fundamental developments that match the timeline of the populist rise and help explain the particular shape populist politics have taken in recent years: a perceived decline in living standards from one generation to the next and the perceived threat to national identity and status posed by immigration and the growth of supranational organizations.

The term *populism* goes back to the latin word “populus” which means people. It has been a tool of progressives, of reactionaries, of democrats, of autocrats, of the left and the right, opposing large business and financial interests but also frequently being hostile to established socialist parties. Populism is an ideology to identifying the people as the privileged subject of politics. It’s core consists of four distinct but interrelated dimensions:

- The existence of two homogeneous units of analysis: ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’.
- The antagonistic relationship between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’.
- The idea of popular sovereignty.
- The positive valorization of ‘the people’ and denigration of ‘the elite’.

Understanding populism means understanding the **three core concepts of populism**: the People, the Elite, and the General Will:

Who are **the People**? There are, broadly speaking, three senses in which ‘people’ is commonly used in modern english language: (1) The People as Sovereign, (2) The People as Nation, and (3) The People as opposed to the ruling elite (‘the common people’).

Who is this **Elite**? In defining the elite, populists often condemn not only the political establishment, but also the economic elite, the cultural elite, and the media elite. All of these are portrayed as one homogenous, corrupt group that works against the ‘general will’ of the people.

What is the **General Will**? For populists, the ‘general will’ of the people is something that should take precedence over the preferences of ‘the elite’. This concept is closely linked to the work of the Swiss-French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who’s central doctrine in politics is that a state can be legitimate only if it is guided by the ‘general will’ of its members. The general will could be seen as the intention to promote the common good. The community expresses the general will insofar as it promotes the common good, and likewise with its individual members. Thus, the general will is intimately related to the common good of the community.

### First attempts at problem solving:

The first line of defense against populism could be a cure for the widely perceived economic problem: too many people feel left behind. The problem is, that there may be no

economic cure available, since the economy is an instrument to fulfill the needs of people. But, in Western countries absolute needs like food, shelter, security, etc., are widely fulfilled. What is an unresolved problem are relative needs: the comparison with ones neighbor. But relative needs can never be fulfilled in the real world, unless we realize equality of outcome for everyone. Alas, that is impossible and has not been achieved in even the most socialist countries.

A second problem to be attacked is the status problem. In the good old times many white men had superiority over women and people perceived to be lower status like slaves, jews and the like. Unfortunately, this problem, too, cannot be solved in the real world. Going back to the roles of men and women in the 19th century and before is not conceivable in a democracy with voting rights for women. Neither will going back to a slave holder society find significant acceptance in today's world.

### **An attempt at a philosophical answer:**

If all other possible solution attempts fail, the cure must come from philosophy:

If people feel left behind they feel that other people are to blame that they are left behind. They believe that responsibility for their lives is not in their hands, and therefore they might be victims to their victim mentality which is a result of 'learned helplessness'. Psychologically, this is an attractive point of view because if others are responsible, others will have to change their behavior. But, it is also a dangerous point of view because it destroys the individual's ability to realize their potential. Change must start here!

Although we live in a capitalist society, we should not accept that our lives are reduced to money. People are far more than what is in their Bank accounts. Usually, we see ourselves as members of a variety of groups. A person's family, hometown, gender, church, politics, profession, employment, food habits, sport interests, taste in music, social commitments, etc., make us members of a variety of groups. Each of these collectivities, to all of which this person simultaneously subscribes, gives her a particular identity. None of them, individually, defines a person's identity. This is also applicable to a person's wealth.

Here, **meaning in life** comes into play. What makes life meaningful is something every person has to find out for oneself, i.e., every person is responsible for their life. There are some accounts of what makes life meaningful, e.g., by certain achievements, developing moral character, or relationships with family members or friends. Although we are born with different talents, everybody can find his role. At least, almost everybody (including self perceived left behind people) can find someone weaker than himself around him, a child, a sick or handicapped person, or an old and ailing person. Everybody can find a meaning in life and make a difference in helping others who are in great need. As Nietzsche said: "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how."

That is why a philosophical answer to populism might be that we first take responsibility for our lives, second find meaning in our lives, and third, consequently, revive family and community.

## 1. Introduction

Approaching my topic, I undertook some groundwork on populism, including some background information, attempts at a definition of populism, and the three core concepts of populism: The People, the Elite, and the General Will. Unfortunately, for the problems of many populists there may be no economic cure available, and also the status problem, too, cannot be solved in the real world. Thus, we have to look for other solutions. Many populists feel left behind, so, we have to help them overcome their victim mentality. People need to feel needed, and thus everyone has the tools to find meaning and consequently live a meaningful life.

## 2. Populism

### Some background

We have seen the rise of populism in Western democracies over the past few years. In finding the answer to the question of why so many people currently support populist ideas and populist politicians, a first avenue to take is so painfully obvious that it is often ignored: one should not a priori dismiss the charges anti-political establishment actors formulate. Maybe, some of the arguments of the populists are true, which could explain why they are so successful.<sup>1</sup> In other words, populism might be a dismissive term for everything metropolitan elites cannot find the energy to understand.<sup>2</sup>

If we were looking to explain the phenomenon of populism, its underlying causes must be examined on a longer time scale. And indeed, there do seem to be two fundamental developments that match the timeline of the populist rise and help explain the particular shape populist politics have taken in recent years: a perceived decline in living standards from one generation to the next and the perceived threat to national identity and status posed by immigration and the growth of supranational organizations.<sup>3</sup> Mistrust<sup>4</sup> led to new political movements: The Tea Party for those who didn't trust the government and Occupy Wall Street for those who didn't trust big business.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, populism appears to be a consequence of declinism. Too many people feel that their society is in decline, unable to live up to the new challenges posed by growing internal diversity and globalization.<sup>6</sup>

The term *populism* goes back to the Latin word “populus” which means people. Nevertheless, it is both contemporary and important as it is revealed as 2017s Word of the Year by Cambridge University Press<sup>7</sup>. *Populism* is described by the Cambridge Dictionary as “political ideas and activities that are intended to get the support of ordinary people by

giving them what they want”<sup>8</sup>. It includes the usage label ‘mainly disapproving’.<sup>9</sup> According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica<sup>10</sup> populism is a political program or movement that champions the common person, usually in favorable contrast with an elite.

Populism has been a tool of progressives, of reactionaries, of democrats, of autocrats, of the left and the right, opposing large business and financial interests but also frequently being hostile to established socialist and labor parties.<sup>11</sup> Most likely, populism is not a relic of an earlier developmental stage, but rather an enduring feature of the modern civic and political landscape.<sup>12</sup>

### **Attempts at a definition of populism**

We cannot hope to reduce all cases of populism to a single definition or find a single essence behind all established uses of the term.<sup>13</sup>

First of all, populism can be seen as a ‘*thin*’ ideology that in practice is to be found in combination with established, ‘*full*’ ideologies.<sup>14</sup> ‘Thin’ ideologies are those whose structure is restricted to a set of core concepts which alone are unable to provide a reasonably broad, if not comprehensive, range of answers to the political questions that societies generate. In contrast to ‘thin’ ideologies ‘full’ ideologies could be nationalism, liberalism, or socialism. Populism is a ‘thin’ ideology; it is diffuse in its lack of a programmatic center of gravity, and open in its ability to cohabit with other, more comprehensive, ideologies.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, populists can be found at different locations along the political spectrum and there is both left-wing populism and right-wing populism. The reason for its adaptability lies in the ‘empty heart’ of populism: populism lacks a commitment to key values. While other ideologies contain, either implicitly or explicitly, a focus on one or more values such as liberty and social justice, populism has no such core to it. This explains why populism is appropriated by such a wide range of political positions. It also explains why populism is very often appended to other ideologies. Populism’s natural position is an adjective attached to other ideas that fill the empty space at the heart of populism. Consequently, populism is more likely to attach itself than be attached to.<sup>16</sup>

As a result, there are quite a few definitions, the most prominent<sup>17</sup> being the *popular agency approach*<sup>18</sup>, the *socioeconomic approach*<sup>19</sup>, the *charismatic leader approach*<sup>20</sup>, the six features of populism according to *Isaiah Berlin*<sup>21</sup>, and the *ideational approach*<sup>22</sup>.

Populists differ in how ‘the people’ are defined, but it can be based along class, ethnic, or national lines. Populists typically present ‘the elite’ as comprising the political, economic, cultural, and media establishment, all of which are depicted as a homogenous entity and accused of placing the interests of other groups—such as foreign countries or immigrants—above the interests of ‘the people’. Populism is an ideology to identifying the

people as the privileged subject of politics. Its core consists of four distinct but interrelated dimensions:

- The existence of two homogeneous units of analysis: ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’.
- The antagonistic relationship between the people and the elite.
- The idea of popular sovereignty.
- The positive valorization of ‘the people’ and denigration of ‘the elite’.<sup>23</sup>

Looking for direct opposites of populism, there are two: ‘elitism’ and ‘pluralism’.<sup>24</sup>

### **The three core concepts of populism: The People, the Elite, and the General Will:**

Who are **the People**? It is more than 230 years ago that the constitution of the United States of America started with its first sentence: “We The People (of the United States) ...”.<sup>25</sup> Since the writing of the constitution of the United States of America the principle that the people’s consent is the only basis for a legitimate government has become commonplace.

In simplifying the complexities of reality, the concept of ‘the people’ is vague and flexible,<sup>26</sup> with this plasticity benefitting populists who are thus able to expand or contract the concept to suit the chosen criteria of inclusion or exclusion at any given time.<sup>27</sup> In employing the concept of ‘the people’, populists can encourage a sense of shared identity among different groups within a society and facilitate their mobilization toward a common cause.<sup>28</sup>

There are, broadly speaking, three senses in which ‘people’ is commonly used in modern English language: The People as Sovereign, The People as Nation, and The People as opposed to the ruling elite (‘The Common People’).<sup>29</sup>

The first way that populists employ the understanding of ‘the people’ is in the idea that the *people are sovereign*, that in a democratic state governmental decision should rest with the population and that if they are ignored then they might mobilize or revolt.<sup>30</sup><sup>31</sup>

The usual implication of the *People as Nation*<sup>32</sup> is that all those native to a particular country are included, and together they form a community with a common life. There are two images of community, the nation and the people, that have become entangled in our minds. Disentangling them, however, is extremely difficult, since we tend to use the words ‘nation’ and ‘people’ interchangeably. Both the people and the nation are imagined communities.

The national community can be defined either in civic or in ethnic terms. In this sense ‘people’ fits comfortably into the classic conservative mold. When we talk about ‘the German people’ or ‘the people of the United States of America’ we usually mean the

nation, the country, implying a corporate whole that includes all living members, but also reaches back into the past and stretches out to the future. The people in this sense are not only a collection of individuals, but an articulated and structured community. What binds us into national communities is our image of a shared heritage that is passed, in modified form, from one generation to another.<sup>33</sup>

It is hard to imagine a cosmopolitan citizenship with enough popular solidarity at a global level to allow a United Nations ‘People’s Assembly’ to hold a global government to account. That means that the people are clearly imagined as a bounded community.<sup>34</sup> In essence, a nation can be best understood as an intergenerational community bound by an imagined heritage of cultural symbols and memories associated with a particular territory or territories.

Although ‘the people’ may at times mean the whole nation, it can equally well refer to a particular section of the nation, to what used to be called the *common people*, the lower classes.<sup>35</sup> In this more restricted sense, the term can be contrasted with some kind of elite or upper class. Consequently, the People as Underdogs can be seen as the less privileged majority of the whole community.<sup>36</sup>

Besides using the word with an article—‘the people’ or ‘a people’—we talk about ‘people’ in general. That is, *People as Everyman* can mean individual human beings at large. Speaking of the common people often refers to a critique of the dominant culture, which views the judgements, tastes, and values of ordinary citizens with suspicion. In contrast to this elitist view, the notion of the common people vindicates the dignity and the knowledge of groups who objectively or subjectively are being excluded from power due to their sociocultural and socioeconomic status: ‘From common people comes common sense, and that is better than bookish knowledge.’<sup>37</sup>

Now, who is the **Elite**?<sup>38</sup> The existence of elites is something that is not only to be endured, but it is something quite natural. In every society, in every era, and in every part of human endeavor there have been elites. For a couple of thousand years there were basically two sources of power: God and Land Property. Now, we have the idea of a meritocracy, like it is presented in the Protestant Ethic (and the Spirit of Capitalism) of Max Weber.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, anti-elitism is a characteristic feature of populism. In populist discourse, the fundamental distinguishing feature of the elite is that it is in an adversarial relationship with the people. In defining the elite, populists often condemn not only the political establishment, but also the economic elite, the cultural elite, and the media elite. All of these are portrayed as one homogenous, corrupt group that works against the ‘general will’ of the people. In American politics in particular, this anti-elitist style of popular rhetoric is very common. Nineteenth-century populists contrasted the people with “the plutocrats, the aristocrats, and all the other rats”.<sup>40</sup>

First and foremost, the elite are defined on the basis of power, i.e., they include the people who hold leading positions within politics, the economy, the media, and the arts and sciences. Although condemning almost all those in positions of power within a given society, populists often exclude both themselves and those sympathetic to their cause even when they too are in positions of power.<sup>41</sup>

Americans enjoy many features central to democratic governance, such as regular elections, freedom of speech and freedom of association. But to some extent, policymaking is dominated by powerful business organizations and a small number of super affluent Americans. Therefore, America's claims to being a democratic society are seriously threatened.<sup>42</sup> After all, it has been Dwight D. Eisenhower who told us already in 1961 in his farewell address: "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex."<sup>43</sup>

What is the **General Will or *volonté générale***? It is the third and last core concept of the populist ideology. For populists, the 'general will' of 'the people' is something that should take precedence over the preferences of 'the elite'. This concept is closely linked to the work of the Swiss-French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 - 1778)<sup>44</sup>.

Rousseau principally explores two routes to achieving and protecting human freedom: the first is a political one aimed at constructing political institutions that make sure that free and equal citizens can co-exist in a community where they themselves are sovereign; the second is a project for child development and education that enables autonomy and avoids the development of the most destructive forms of self-interest. Rousseau thought that humankind is good by nature but is corrupted by society.<sup>45</sup>

Rousseau's central doctrine in politics is that a state can be legitimate only if it is guided by the 'general will' of its members. The general will could be seen as the intention to promote the common good. The community expresses the general will insofar as it intends to promote the common good, and likewise with its individual members. Thus, the general will is intimately related to the common good of the community.<sup>46</sup> The idea of the general will finds its most detailed treatment in "On the Social Contract or Principles of Political Right"<sup>47</sup>. It starts with the famous phrase: "Man was/is born free, and everywhere he is in chains."<sup>48</sup>

The key to the reconciliation of the freedom of the individual with the authority of the state is the idea of the general will: that is, the collective will of the citizen body taken as a whole. The general will is the source of law and is willed by each and every citizen. In obeying the law each citizen is thus subject to his or her own will, and consequently, according to Rousseau, remains free.

Thus, the question is “Find a form of association that defends and protects the person and goods of each associate with all the common force, and by means of which each one, united with all, nevertheless obeys only himself and remains as free as before.” This is the fundamental problem which is solved by the social contract.<sup>49</sup>

The answer is: “If, then, everything that is not of the essence of the social compact is set aside, one will find that it can be reduced to the following terms. *Each of us puts his person and all his power under the supreme direction of the general will; and in a body we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole.*”<sup>50</sup> “As long as several men together consider themselves to be a single body, they have only a single will, which relates to their common preservation and the general welfare. Then all the mechanisms of the State are vigorous and simple, its maxims are clear and luminous, it has no tangled, contradictory interests; the common good is clearly apparent everywhere, and it requires only good sense to be perceived.”<sup>51</sup> Consequently, Rousseau takes it for granted that the interests individuals have in common are at least as important as their personal interests, if not more so.<sup>52</sup>

It is obvious that the best way for the general will to emerge is where there is no difference between the governors and the governed; in other words: a political order is one where the sovereign people are governed by their own general will: where the people are both rulers and subjects at the same time.<sup>53</sup> As this is only imaginable in rather small communities, the problems arise with the representation of the general will or the people in larger societies. Subsequently and based on Hobbes<sup>54</sup>, Rousseau presents three forms of government<sup>55</sup>: *Democracy*<sup>56</sup>, *Aristocracy*<sup>57</sup>, and *Monarchy*. Rousseau has a favorite view on the elective aristocracy which could also be seen as a form of an indirect sovereignty.<sup>58</sup>

Rousseau holds that good laws make for good citizens. However, he also believes both that good laws can only be willed by good citizens and that, in order to be legitimate, they must be agreed upon by the assembly. This could be seen as political theology in the sense that Rousseau’s general will has godlike dignity, uniting power and justice. It is an unlimited and unlimitable legislator, the source of the laws of the state as God is of the laws of nature.<sup>59</sup>

However, there are two dangers to the ideal rule of the general will:

First, the general will can err: “One always wants what is good for oneself, but one does not always see it. The people are never corrupted, but they are often fooled, and only then do they appear to want what is bad.”<sup>60</sup> It is not always the case, “that all the characteristics of the general will are still in the majority.”<sup>61</sup>

Second, the representatives don’t follow the general will but their own selfish interests at the cost of the people. This becomes possible, when public service ceases to be the main business of the citizens, and they prefer to serve with their pocketbooks rather than with

their persons. Then the state is already close to its ruin. “Is it necessary to march to battle? They pay troops and stay home. Is it necessary to attend the Council? They name deputies and stay home. By dint of laziness and money, they finally have soldiers to enslave the country and representatives to sell it.”<sup>62</sup> That is the reason why Rousseau apparently rejects ‘representative government’.<sup>63</sup>

In emphasizing the general will, many populists share the critique of representative democratic government. This approach regards representative governance as an aristocratic and elitist system in which a country’s citizens are regarded as passive entities. Rather than choosing laws for themselves, these citizens are only mobilized for elections in which their only option is to select their representatives rather than taking a more direct role in legislation and governance. Populists often favor the use of direct democratic measures such as referenda and plebiscites.

### **3. Meaning in Life as a Philosophical Answer**

The first line of defense against populism could be a cure for the widely perceived economic problem: too many people feel left behind. The problem is, that there may be no economic cure available, since the economy is an instrument to fulfill the needs of people. But, in Western countries absolute needs like food, shelter, security, etc., are widely fulfilled. What is an unresolved problem are relative needs: the comparison with one’s neighbor: Keeping up with the Joneses.<sup>64</sup> But relative needs can never be fulfilled in the real world, unless we realize equality of outcome for everyone. Alas, that is impossible and has not been achieved in even the most socialist countries.

Perhaps expectation management is what we need. What people in the affluent west typically want is a great partner who is both a terrific friend and a terrific lover; a good material standard of living; well adjusted, happy children; a stimulating and fulfilling job; a varied social life with interesting, amusing and intelligent friends; and regular holidays abroad. Of course, one only needs to read the list to realize that very few people have all these things. Yet there is a widespread belief among the western middle classes, influenced by the media and advertising<sup>65</sup>, that all this can and should be achieved almost by right.<sup>66</sup>

A second problem to be attacked is the status problem. In the good old times many white men had superiority over women and people perceived to be lower status like slaves, Jews and the like. Unfortunately, this problem, too, cannot be solved in the real world. Going back to the roles of men and women in the 19th century and before is not conceivable in a democracy with voting rights for women. Neither will going back to a slave holder society find significant acceptance in today’s world.

If all other possible attempts at solution fail, cure must come from philosophy!

If people feel left behind they feel that other people are to blame<sup>67</sup>. They think that responsibility for their lives is not in their hands, they feel they are being victimized and therefore they might be victims to their victim mentality, victims by choice.<sup>68</sup> The victim mentality is a result of ‘learned helplessness’<sup>69</sup>, it is characterized by pessimism, self-pity, repressed anger and a belief that life is beyond one’s control. Victims not only believe in their helplessness but actually worship it.<sup>70</sup> They blame any and every available scapegoat (fate, circumstances, other people, etc.) for their problems and disappointments. Unlike true victims, people with a victim mentality lament their misfortunes and stop there. The victim style becomes a life-affirming activity: ‘I am miserable, therefore I am.’<sup>71</sup> They make no effort to learn from their mistakes, to analyze what went wrong, to pick up the pieces and move on. We have to distinguish real victims from those who adopt the role, ignoring their own capacities to improve their situation.<sup>72</sup>

Psychologically, victim mentality is an attractive point of view because if others were responsible, others will have to change their behavior. Constantly acting as a victim can actually have a lot of advantages.<sup>73</sup> But, the victim mentality is also a dangerous point of view because people have no positive influence on their lives anymore.<sup>74</sup> Change must start here, since victim mentality is learned and not inborn, so it is possible for everybody to change it.<sup>75</sup> To reject the ability to live a life someone has imagined results in a life lost, along with its potential and possibilities. We all have only one life to live, and we are able to respond to achieve what we desire.<sup>76</sup>

Although we live in a capitalist society, we should not accept that our lives are reduced to an exclusive financial matter. People are far more than what is in their Bank accounts. Usually, we see ourselves as members of a variety of groups. A person’s family, hometown, gender, church, politics, profession, employment, food habits, sport interests, taste in music, social commitments, etc., make us members of a variety of groups. Each of these collectivities, to all of which this person simultaneously subscribes, gives her a particular identity. None of them, individually, defines a person’s identity.<sup>77</sup> This is also applicable to a person’s wealth.

Here, **meaning in life**<sup>78</sup> comes into play. As the Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, who survived the Nazi camps, stated: “As the causation of the feeling of meaninglessness, one may say, albeit in an oversimplifying vein, that people have enough to live by but nothing to live for: they have the means but no meaning.”<sup>79</sup> A proposal for what it is to live a meaningful life: It is one that is actively and at least somewhat successfully engaged in a project (or projects) of positive value.<sup>80</sup>

It has been shown that meaning in life is a fundamental normative category that is distinct from welfare and morality.<sup>81</sup> Viktor Frankl goes so far as to claim that the “striving to find a meaning in one’s life is the primary motivational force in man.”<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, we should not confuse happiness with meaning. Happiness is generally defined as

subjective well-being (measured as affect balance and life satisfaction) whereas meaningfulness is presumably both a cognitive and an emotional assessment of whether one's life has purpose and value.<sup>83</sup> Happiness is about the present—whereas meaningfulness is about linking past, present, and future together.<sup>84</sup> Meaningfulness is associated with doing things for others—whereas happiness is associated with others doing things for oneself.<sup>85</sup> Hence, happiness goes with being a taker more than a giver, while meaningfulness is associated with being a giver more than a taker.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, a meaningful life differs from a moral life full of dutiful action.<sup>87</sup>

Religion was once the default path to meaning, today it is one path among many: a cultural transformation that has many people adrift. Today, what makes life meaningful is something every person has to find out for oneself, i.e., every person is responsible for their life. There are some accounts of what makes life meaningful. According to Frankl meaning in life can be discovered in three different ways: “(1) by creating a work or doing a deed; (2) by experiencing something or encountering someone; and (3) by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering.”<sup>88</sup>

Frankl's first account of what makes life meaningful, i.e., by making certain (**creative**) achievements, raises the question what an achievement is. For an achievement to contribute meaning to a life, the following conditions must be satisfied: (1) Something counts as an achievement for X only if, were X to fail at attaining it, X would have a reason to reassess herself. (2) Something is an achievement for X only if, when X attains it, X can justifiably enlarge her self-conception. (3) Something is an achievement for X only if it is difficult for the average human to do. (4) Something is an achievement for X only if it is difficult for X to do. It is only when an achievement satisfies these four conditions it contributes meaning to a life.<sup>89</sup>

The second way of living a meaningful life is **experiencing** good relationships with family members and friends, and even experiencing nature. Here, it has been argued that especially biological ties are genuinely meaningful.<sup>90</sup> Direct acquaintance with biological relatives helps people to know what they are like, knowledge of family history helps people to understand what it means to be like this.<sup>91</sup> As human beings are quintessentially social creatures, it is only through social interaction that we, as human beings, come to have a sense of self. It is on account of being valued by their parents that children come to see their activities as having meaning.<sup>92</sup> Next to parenthood, friendship is the most remarkable way in which human beings are purely valued by another human being.

It could be questioned whether **attitude** as the third point is an independent source of meaning. Attitude, especially in frustrating life phases, can be seen as an opportunity to hold on to the other sources of meaning in remembering past meaningful life, in experiencing a good present, for example good relationships, or in hope for future meaningful

activities. When attitude is phrased in a broader sense, i.e., by developing a moral character, there might be a chance to give it some meaningfulness. There is something about the nature of a moral life that grants one a non-trivial advantage when it comes to leading a meaningful life.<sup>93</sup>

Everybody can find out for himself what best suits him. Although we are born with different talents, everybody can find his role. At least, everybody (including self-perceived left behind people) can find someone weaker than himself around him, a child, a sick or handicapped person, or an old and ailing person. Everybody can find meaning in life and make a difference in helping others who are in great need.<sup>94</sup>

#### **4. Conclusion**

A philosophical answer to populism might be that we first take responsibility for our lives, second find meaning in our lives, and third revive family and community which is a good start for a meaningful life. If we want to help those that feel left behind we can help them find meaning in their lives because people need to be needed.<sup>95</sup> As Nietzsche said: “He who has a why to live can bear almost any how.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Mudde, C. (2004). "The Populist Zeitgeist." *Government and Opposition*: pp. 541-563, p. 552.

<sup>2</sup> See Cohen, R. (2018). It's Time to Depopularize 'Populist'. *The New York Times*. New York, The New York Times Company: pp. A20.

Sometimes, the understanding of the metropolitan elite could be labeled 'elitist democracy'.

Reduced to caricature, it might be stated as follows:

- (1) 'Democracy' means the system of a representative government that exists in various advanced industrial countries. It does not mean direct popular self-government, which all political scientists know to be impossible.
- (2) The main difference between democratic states and nondemocratic mass-participatory systems lies in the free competition between political parties and other organizations characteristic of democracy.
- (3) Most citizens in democratic countries are apathetic and do not participate much in politics. However, this is just fine, as the masses are of ignorant, irrational, and authoritarian temperament. Democracy is a system in which liberally minded elites rule, and the masses participate just enough to make it impossible for their rulers to ignore their interests. (See Canovan, M. (1981). *Populism*. New York/ London, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, pp. 179-180.)

In consequence, it is not supposed to be a good idea to take decisions away from the experts and give them to the ignorant.

Actually and unnoticed by most political scientists, a form of undemocratic liberalism has taken root in the West. In this form of government, procedural niceties are carefully followed (most of the time) and individual rights are respected (much of the time). But voters have concluded that they have very little influence on public policy, and they aren't altogether wrong. Consequently, there are two alternatives: In the first case, the will of the people pushes aside the independent institutions that were meant to protect the rule of law and the rights of minorities. In the second case, the force of the markets and the beliefs of the technocrats push aside the will of the people. (See Mounk, Y. (2018). *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, p. 13.)

In many modern Western democratic countries elite political culture is strongly imbued with liberal values such as individualism, internationalism, multiculturalism, permissiveness and a belief in progress. That is the background for a populism that is bound to involve more or less resistance to these values, and can at times amount to a relatively coherent alternative world-view. (See Canovan, M. (1999).

"Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy." *Political Studies* 47: pp. 2-16, p. 4.)

It is safe to say that liberal elites have been unable and unwilling to make migration and globalization a topic of discussion and political dispute. Together with the proposition that the current policy is good for everyone (a win-win policy) and without alternative (TINA: there is no alternative), this has made liberalism a synonym for hypocrisy. In many combinations there is a liberalism of the elite that combines social tolerance with political intolerance: understanding for everything that is socially different, no understanding for anything that is politically different. We see elites taking hold of the political system and making it increasingly unresponsive: the powerful are less and less willing to cede to the views of the people. As a result, liberalism and democracy, the two core elements of the political system of the West, are starting to come into conflict. (See Mounk, Y. (2018). *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, p. 13.)

Another driver for populism might be the development of opinion polling that has given a considerable boost to populism and its anti-elitism. Polls enable the unorganized ordinary people to know what they as a group think, and sometimes draw the attention to embarrassing differences between majority views in the country and those favored within the establishment. (See Canovan, M. (1984). " 'People', Politicians and Populism." *Government and Opposition* 19: pp. 312-327, p. 325.)

<sup>3</sup> See Mounk, Y. (2014). "Pitchfork Politics: The Populist Threat to Liberal Democracy." *Foreign Affairs*: pp. 33-42.

<sup>4</sup> To understand the populism of the recent years it is as well crucial to have a look at the financial crisis of 2008 and thereafter. The financial crisis was a moment that devastated the western world. It broke a social contract between the plutocrats and everyone else. But it also broke a sense of trust, not just in financial institutions and the government that oversaw them, but in the very idea of experts and expertise. The past ten years have seen an open revolt against the intelligentsia.

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<sup>5</sup> See Sorkin, A. R. (2018). The Echoes Of Lehman In Our Time Of Distrust. The New York Times. New York, The New York Times Company: pp. B1

<sup>6</sup> See Elchardus, M. and B. Spruyt (2014). "Populism, Persistent Republicanism and Declinism: An Empirical Analysis of Populism as a Thin Ideology." *Government and Opposition* 51(1): pp. 111-133, p. 125.

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.cam.ac.uk/news/populism-revealed-as-2017-word-of-the-year-by-cambridge-university-press>

Wendalyn Nichols, Publishing Manager at Cambridge University Press, is quoted: "What sets populism apart from all these other words is that it represents a phenomenon that's both truly local and truly global, as populations and their leaders across the world wrestle with issues of immigration and trade, resurgent nationalism, and economic discontent."

<sup>8</sup> See <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/populism>

<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.cam.ac.uk/news/populism-revealed-as-2017-word-of-the-year-by-cambridge-university-press>

<sup>10</sup> See <https://www.britannica.com/topic/populism>

<sup>11</sup> See Taggart, P. A. (2000). *Populism*. Buckingham, Open University Press, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> See Jansen, R. S. (2011). "Populist Mobilization: A New Theoretical Approach to Populism." *Sociological Theory* 29(2): pp. 75-96, p. 91.

<sup>13</sup> According to Isaiah Berlin we must not suffer from the Cinderella complex, "by which I mean the following: that there exists a shoe—the word 'populism'—for which somewhere there must exist a foot. There are all kinds of feet which it *nearly* fits, but we must not be trapped by these nearly-fitting feet. The prince is always wandering about with the shoe; and somewhere, we feel sure, there awaits it a limb called pure populism. This is the nucleus of populism, its essence. All other populisms are derivations of it, deviations from it and variants of it, but somewhere there lurks true, perfect populism, which may have lasted only six months, or [occurred] in only one place. ... We must not, I suggest, be tempted in that direction." (Berlin, I. (1967) "To Define Populism." The Isaiah Berlin Virtual Library, pp. 1-19, p. 6.)

<sup>14</sup> See Stanley, B. (2008). "The thin ideology of populism." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 13(1): pp. 95-110, p. 95.

Starting with 'ideas', we find that ideas exist in a dialectical relationship with social and historical circumstances. There is the claim that what actors are doing in 'having ideas' is *interpreting* the world in which they find themselves. If ideas are individual interpretations, *ideologies* are interpretative frameworks that emerge as a result of the practice of putting ideas to work in language as concepts. The essence of ideology is simplification, but ideologies do not simply reflect possible pathways through the political; they also play a role in shaping them. A comprehensive, 'full' ideology will contain particular interpretations and configurations of all the major political concepts attached to a general plan of public policy that a specific society requires. (See *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.)

<sup>15</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>16</sup> See Taggart, P. A. (2000). *Populism*. Buckingham, Open University Press, pp. 3-4.

<sup>17</sup> For the definitions see *Ibid.*, page 10-22; Mudde, C. and R. C. Kaltwasser (2017). *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 1-20. See also Di Tella, T. S. (1997). "Populism into the Twenty-first Century." *Government and Opposition* 32: pp. 187-200, p.196; Canovan, M. (1982). "Two Strategies For The Study Of Populism." *Political Studies* 30(4): pp. 544-552, pp. 550-551.

Another interesting definition might be the *Laclauan approach* to populism which is based on the ideas of the Argentinian political theorist Ernesto Laclau. In this approach populism is considered not only as the essence of politics, but also as an emancipatory force. The main difficulty with theories of political representation is that most of them conceived the will of the people as something that existed before representation. This is what happened with the aggregative model of democracy which reduced the people to a pluralism of interests and values; and with the deliberative model which found for example in 'justice as fairness' (see Rawls, J. (2001). *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press) the basis for a rational process. Once that point has been reached, the only relevant question is how to respect the will of those represented, taking for granted that such a will exists in the first place. But, there is nothing automatic about the emergence of a people that could express such a will. On the contrary, it is the result of a complex construction process which can fail to

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achieve its aim. So the answer of Laclau is that liberal democracy is the problem and radical democracy is the solution. (See Laclau, E. (2005). *On Populist Reason*. London, Verso; Laclau, E. and C. Mouffe (2014). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London, New York, Verso.)

<sup>18</sup> According to the *popular agency approach* populism means a democratic way of life built through popular engagement in politics. So the popular agency approach considers populism essentially as a positive force for the mobilization of the (common) people and for the development of a communitarian model of democracy. In its most democratic form, populism seeks to defend the interest and maximize the power of ordinary citizens, through reform rather than revolution. In the United States the term was applied to the program of the Populist Movement, which gave rise to the Populist, or People's, Party in 1892. Many of the party's demands were later adopted as laws or constitutional amendments (e.g., a progressive tax system). The populist demand for direct democracy through popular initiatives and referenda also became a reality in a number of U. S. states.

<sup>19</sup> The *socioeconomic approach* has understood populism primarily as a type of irresponsible economic policy, characterized by a first period of massive spending financed by foreign debt and followed by a second period marked by hyperinflation and the implementation of harsh economic adjustments. The background for this approach was the Latin American populism of the 1980s and 1990s. In the second half of the 20th century, populism came to be identified with the political style and program of Latin American leaders such as Juan Perón, and Hugo Chávez.

Dornbusch and Edwards analyze the policy experiences of left wing populism that ultimately fail, and when they fail it is always at a frightening cost to the very groups who were supposed to be favored: Dornbusch, R. and S. Edwards (1990). "Macroeconomic Populism." *Journal of Development Economics* 32: pp. 247-277.

<sup>20</sup> In its contemporary understanding, however, populism is most often associated with an authoritarian form of politics that can be named as *charismatic leader approach*. Populist politics, following this definition, revolves around a charismatic leader who appeals to and claims to embody the will of the people in order to consolidate his own power. In this personalized form of politics, political parties lose their importance, and elections serve to confirm the leader's authority rather than to reflect the different allegiances of the people.

Max Weber has famously distinguished three types of authority: legal, traditional and charismatic. (See Weber, M. (1980). *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*. Tübingen, Mohr, pp. 122-142.) Our modern society saw the rise of legal-rational authority as the form where we can trace the legitimacy of leaders through law and institutions and, in contemporary democracy, through the consent of (the majority of) the governed. Consequently, legal authority is meant to be based on competence, and often on bureaucracy. Traditional authority traced legitimacy through immemorial traditions. Unlike these authorities the charismatic authority is rooted neither in structures nor in history but in the particular personal characteristics of the leaders and the qualities ascribed to them by their followers.

Insofar, charismatic leadership has strong similarities to religious leadership. The term 'charisma' comes from the word 'grace', and charismatic leaders will tend to inspire a loyalty from their followers that is like devotion and based on faith. Consequently, the leaders themselves will be attributed powers that are almost superhuman and which are contrasted with the ordinariness of their followers. So, the dilemma of leadership for populism is that a movement of ordinary people relies on the most extraordinary of individuals for leadership. (See Taggart, P. A. (2000). *Populism*. Buckingham, Open University Press, pp. 101-103.)

<sup>21</sup> The Russian-British social and political theorist, philosopher and historian of ideas *Sir Isaiah Berlin* proposed that there was general agreement over six features of populism that applied across the different variants: (See Berlin, I. (1968). "To Define Populism." *Government and Opposition*: pp. 137-179, pp. 173-178.)

The first feature is commitment to *Gemeinschaft* (approximately community). According to Berlin *Gemeinschaft* is that famous integral society which everybody talks about—some sort of coherent, integrated society, which has roots in the past, either imaginary or real, and is opposed to a competitive, atomized society.

The second feature is that populism is apolitical: that is to say, it is not principally interested in political institutions, although it is prepared to use the State as an instrument for the purpose of producing its

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ends. But a State organization is not its aim and the State is not its ideal human association. Populism believes in society rather than in the State.

The third feature is that populism is concerned with returning people to their natural and spontaneous condition to which they belonged before having been subject to some sort of spiritual collapse. Either the collapse has been in the past or it is threatening—one of the two. Either innocence has been lost, or enemies are breeding within or attacking from the outside. The enemy may be capitalism, it may be foreign States which have forms of political, social or economic organization which threaten the spontaneous integral group and the sense of brotherhood which unites them.

The fourth element is that some degree of past-directness is essential to all populisms. In this sense populism seeks to bring back ancient values into the contemporary world. According to Berlin there is no populism which assumes that man was born in a low or undesirable state and that the golden age is somewhere in the future.

The fifth feature is that populism seeks to speak in the name of the (silent) majority. The silence of the majority comes from the fact that they are the ones who are working, paying taxes and quietly getting on with life. They are the have-nots, in some sense, the obvious majority of the deprived. They might be any group of individuals with whom you identify the true people, and you identify the true people with them because the ideology of populism itself springs from the discontented people who feel that they somehow represent the majority of the nation, which has been done down by some minority or other. Populism cannot be a consciously minority movement. Whether falsely or truly, it stands for the majority of men who have somehow been damaged by an elite, either economic, political or racial, some kind of secret or open enemy. The implication of mobilizing the silent majority is that the majority is politically reluctant and only shaken from that reluctance by a sense of necessity brought on by perceived extreme conditions—by a sense of crisis or collapse, potentially caused by a societal and economic modernization. (Perception could be different from facts. Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway make this very clear in their brilliant ‘thriller’: Oreskes, N. and E. M. Conway (2012). *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*. London, Bloomsbury)

That’s why finally, Berlin suggests that populism emerges in societies undergoing or about to undergo modernization. Populists resist economic and social development that they fear is able to threaten them if they do not in some way catch up (which they might not be able to) or create some kind of walls with which to resist modernization. With respect to the recent populist movements, the alleged crisis is the result of the transformation to a post-industrial society, as well as the (perceived) inadequate way in which the welfare state has tried to deal with it. The populist heartland (The ‘Heartland’ is described in more detail in Taggart, P. A. (2000). *Populism*. Buckingham, Open University Press, pp. 95-97.) becomes active only when there are special circumstances: most notably, the combination of persisting political resentment, a (perceived) serious challenge to ‘our way of life’, and the presence of an attractive populist leader. (See Mudde, C. (2004). "The Populist Zeitgeist." *Government and Opposition*: pp. 541-563, p. 547.)

<sup>22</sup> Another common framework for interpreting populism is known as the *ideational approach*: (See Mudde, C. and R. C. Kaltwasser (2017). *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 5-9.) this defines populism as an ideology which posits ‘the people’ as a morally good force against ‘the elite’, who are perceived as bad and corrupt. In this understanding “populism always involves a critique of the establishment and an adulation of the common people”, and populism itself is a product of an antagonistic relationship between the people and the elite, and is “latent wherever the possibility occurs for the emergence of such a dichotomy” (Stanley, B. (2008). "The thin ideology of populism." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 13(1): pp. 95-110, p. 96). This understanding conceives populism as a discourse, ideology, or worldview.

Usually, the term populism is used against others, often in a pejorative sense to discredit opponents. Beyond the lack of agreement on the defining attributes of populism, most of the definitions have focused on the idea that it should reference some form of relationship between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’. Now it could be, however, that elites are incapable of addressing a number of different demands. Although these (unsatisfied) demands are not set in stone, they are also a function of some kind of failed ‘expectation management’, i.e. people expect more than the elites are willing to deliver or more than what objectively could have been delivered. Here, populism insists that the people ought to get what they want, when they want, and however they want. Consequently, a ‘logic of equivalence’ dominates and an antagonism arises between the people and the elite.

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So, ultimately the ideational approach defines “populism as a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic camps, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.”

<sup>23</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>24</sup> See for ‘elitism’ and ‘pluralism’: Mudde, C. and R. C. Kaltwasser (2017). *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 7-8.

Elitism shares populism’s basic distinction of society, between a homogenous ‘good’ and a homogenous ‘evil’, but it holds an opposite view on the virtues of these groups. To put it simple, elitists believe that ‘the people’ are dangerous, dishonest, and vulgar, and that ‘the elite’ are superior not only in moral, but also in cultural and intellectual terms. Hence, elitists want politics to be exclusively or predominantly an elite affair, in which the people don’t have a say. They either reject democracy altogether or support a limited model of democracy.

Pluralism is the direct opposite of the dualist perspective of both populism and elitism, instead pluralism holds that society is divided into a broad variety of partly overlapping social groups with different ideas and interests. Pluralism sees diversity as a strength rather than a weakness. Pluralists believe that a good society should have many centers of power and that politics, in working on compromises and consensus, should reflect the interests and values of as many different groups as possible. Thus, the main idea is that power should be distributed throughout society in order to avoid specific groups acquiring the capacity to impose their will upon the others. Populists are always anti-pluralist because they claim that they, and they alone, represent the people.

<sup>25</sup> It might be interesting that in England of that time landowning gentlemen were the natural representatives of the people as a whole, whereas in American politics the sovereign ‘people’ to whom government was to be given back included those previously regarded as the (male, white) common people. (See Canovan, M. (2005). *The People*. Cambridge, Polity, p. 29.)

<sup>26</sup> See Mudde, C. and R. C. Kaltwasser (2017). *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> See Stanley, B. (2008). “The thin ideology of populism.” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 13(1): pp. 95-110, p. 107.

<sup>28</sup> See Mudde, C. and R. C. Kaltwasser (2017). *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> See Canovan, M. (2005). *The People*. Cambridge, Polity, p. 2. See also Canovan, M. (1984). “‘People’, Politicians and Populism.” *Government and Opposition* 19: pp. 312-327, pp. 314-316.

<sup>30</sup> See also the Second Amendment of the Constitution of the United States: “A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.”

It was in city-states, not nations, that the conception of popular sovereignty was first articulated. More recently, this notion is closely linked to the American and French Revolutions. However, the formation of a democratic regime does not imply that the gap between governed and governors disappears completely. Under certain circumstances, the sovereign people can feel that they are not being well represented by the elites in power, and, accordingly, they will not even criticize but rebel against the political establishment. This could set the stage for a populist struggle to give government back to the people.

<sup>31</sup> The notion of ‘the people as sovereign’ is a reminder of the fact that the ultimate source of political power in a democracy derives from a collective body, which, if not taken into account, may lead to mobilization and revolt. This is the sense of ‘the people’ employed in the late 19th century United States by the People’s Party and which has also been used by later populist movements in that country. (See Mudde, C. and R. C. Kaltwasser (2017). *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 10. For further information about populism in the United States see Canovan, M. (1981). *Populism*. New York/ London, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, pp. 17-58; Laclau, E. (2005). *On Populist Reason*. London, Verso, pp. 201-208.)

In this context resistance theory might be of some help. Resistance theory is an aspect of political thought, discussing the basis on which constituted authority may be resisted, by individuals or groups. In the European context it came to prominence as a consequence of the religious divisions in the early modern period that followed the Protestant Reformation. Protestant resistance theory was most fully

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articulated by the French Huguenots after the St Bartholomew's Day massacre of protestants on August 24, 1572. It argued that kings rule by the authority of the people and for the sake of the people's welfare. Consequently, the authority of the kings is conditional. If the king breaks his contract with the people, the latter have the right to resist. Resistant theories can also underpin and justify the concept of revolution as now understood. Resistance theory of the early modern period can be considered to predate the formulations of natural and legal rights of citizens, and to co-exist with considerations of natural law.

Any 'right to resist' or 'right of self-defense' is a theory about the limitations on civil obedience. The Declaration of Independence can in a sense be read as the culmination of the traditional resistance theory.

Before moving to the next narrative of the people a legal view on the concept of sovereignty might shed some extra light on this subject. In connection with the law of the states and the law of the peoples there is a distinction of three models of sovereignty: (See Held, D. (2002). "Law of the States, Law of the Peoples: Three Models of Sovereignty." *Legal Theory* 8: pp. 1-44)

- (A) Classic sovereignty,
- (B) Liberal international sovereignty, and
- (C) Cosmopolitan sovereignty.

*Classic sovereignty* is the undivided power to make and enforce the law and, as such, is the defining characteristic of the state.

The beginning of the regime of the *liberal international sovereignty* is marked by attempts to extend the processes of delimiting public power to the international sphere and by attempts thereafter to transform the meaning of legitimate political authority from effective control to the maintenance of basic standards or values that no political agent should, in principle, be able to abrogate. Effective power is challenged by, among others, the principles of the human rights regime with its interrelated features (a) the constitutive human rights agreements; (b) the role of self-determination and the democratic principle that were central to the framework of decolonization; and (c) the recent recognition of the rights of minority groups as the proper basis of sovereignty.

Nevertheless, states remain of the utmost importance to the protection and maintenance of both the security and the welfare of their citizens. For in the regime of liberal international sovereignty it is not a question of international versus national law, but rather of a multiplicity of overlapping legal competencies, institutions, and agencies seeking to provide the administration necessary to protect and nurture human rights.

Finally, the *cosmopolitan sovereignty* has some paramount principles: (a) equal worth and dignity; (b) active agency; (c) personal responsibility and accountability; (d) consent; (e) reflexive deliberation and collective decision-making through voting procedures; (f) inclusiveness and subsidiarity; and (g) avoidance of serious harm and the amelioration of urgent need. It remains a project.

<sup>32</sup> The word nation came to English from the Old French word 'nacion' which means 'birth' (naissance), 'place of origin' and in turn originates from the Latin word 'natio' literally meaning 'birth'. In English, the term nation tends to have more of a cultural connotation, the people more of a political connotation. In German, it is the other way around. (See Yack, B. (2001). "Popular Sovereignty and Nationalism." *Political Theory* 29(4): pp. 517-536, p.533.)

<sup>33</sup> National communities, as a result, are imagined as starting from some specific point of origin in the past and extend forward into an indefinite future. The people, in contrast, presents an image of community over space. It portrays all individuals within the given boundaries of a state as members of a community from which the state derives its legitimate authority. The concept of the nation allows us to imagine the evolving community that precedes our existence and survives our death. The concept of the people allows us to imagine the community that we share at any particular moment in dealing with the state's coercive authority. (See *Ibid.*, pp. 520-521.)

As we see in Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1966:

"1. All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."

Implicitly, this means that even if we were able to extend popular solidarity, however, it would not alter the fact that any specific people have boundaries and that members of a democratic people enjoy rights and powers denied to people in general. (See Canovan, M. (2005). *The People*. Cambridge, Polity, p. 41.)

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To see the problem in another perspective, we can take a look at the statement of the Statue of Liberty in New York:

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

The irony of these universal words of welcome is that the mission to all people does not erase the boundary between the chosen people and the rest. The American people might be readier than other peoples to welcome new immigrants, but the boundary between insiders and outsiders remains, denying to people in general the rights enjoyed by ‘our’ people. Neither liberal universalism nor globalization can erase the significance of these boundaries. (See *Ibid.*, p. 59.)

<sup>34</sup> But where do its boundaries come from?

On one hand, it seems like there is a simple and clear answer to the question. A people derives its boundaries from its state. It is sovereignty within the boundaries of its state’s territories, and nothing more, that the people claim. If peoples are the communities to which states are accountable, then the boundaries between one people and another will be the boundaries that distinguish the reach of one state’s coercive authority from another’s.

On the other hand, if the people is imagined as prior to the state, as the community that authorizes the establishment of the state’s authority and survives its dissolution, then its boundaries cannot be defined by the boundaries of particular states. An appeal to the people is an appeal beyond the constituted authority of state actors and institutions to the community that lends them their authority. And if the appeal to the people is an appeal beyond the state, why should we imagine peoples as limited by the contingent borders that a history of accident, force, and fraud have established for states? The people, it seems, is imagined both as existing prior to the state and as defined by the borders of an already constituted state, or as both a pre political and post political community. In practice, the application of popular sovereignty doctrine usually takes for granted existing state boundaries. But by raising the prospect of a pre political community on which the legitimacy of state authority depends, the new popular sovereignty doctrine raises questions about the pre political sources of community, questions that visions of national community are much better equipped to answer than are visions of the sovereign people. (See Yack, B. (2001). "Popular Sovereignty and Nationalism." *Political Theory* 29(4): pp. 517-536, pp. 522-523.)

<sup>35</sup> For common people see Canovan, M. (2005). *The People*. Cambridge, Polity, pp. 68-74.

<sup>36</sup> For a long time there has been an ambiguity of the word ‘demos’: on the one hand, it meant the citizen body as a whole; on the other hand it meant the common people, the many, the poor. The ancient citizen population was itself a select group, raised above slaves, women, and foreign residents. In Republican Rome, ‘populus’ in this sense meant the ‘plebs’, who were often feared by their patrician betters. There have been three connected reasons for fearing the common people:

Since the people were the poor, they could easily be incited by demagogues to plunder the rich. Being also ignorant and resentful, they were irrational and could be turned into a mob, the ‘many-headed monster’. Finally, they posed a danger to any mixed constitution and limits on power because they could be induced by a populist military leader to support the establishment of a tyranny like the ‘Caesarism’.

<sup>37</sup> Populists typically seek to reveal to ‘the people’ how they are oppressed. In doing so, they do not seek to change ‘the people’, but rather seek to preserve the latter’s way of life as it presently exists, regarding it as a source of good. Although populist leaders often present themselves as representatives of ‘the people’, they often come from elite strata in society; examples like Silvio Berlusconi, Boris Johnson, and Donald Trump were all well-connected to their country’s political and economic elites.

From the point of view of a socialist, ‘the people’ are the workers, the laboring class contrasted with the parasitic capitalists. Although this left-wing people includes less of the population of any given nation than its right-wing counterpart, this is compensated for by its links of solidarity with the lower-class people of other nations.

<sup>38</sup> See Mudde, C. and R. C. Kaltwasser (2017). *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 11-113.

<sup>39</sup> Weber, M. (2011). *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (Reprint of the Original of 1934). Paderborn, HWA Historisches Wirtschaftsarchiv

<sup>40</sup> Canovan, M. (1984). "‘People’, Politicians and Populism." *Government and Opposition* 19: pp. 312-327, p. 319.

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To understand the background of this statement the famous book “The Theory of the Leisure Class” of the Norwegian-American economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen is a must-read. (Veblen, T. (2009). *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.)

<sup>41</sup> When populists take governmental power, they are faced with a challenge in that they now represent a new elite. In such cases—like Chávez in Venezuela—populists retain their anti-establishment rhetoric by making changes to their concept of the elite to suit their new circumstances, alleging that real power is not held by the government but other powerful forces who continue to undermine the populist government and the general will of the people itself. Linking the elite to economic power is particularly useful for populists in power, as it allows them to explain their lack of political success, because they are sabotaged by the elite, who might have lost political power but who continue to hold economic power.

As a matter of fact one can with good reasons claim that the development of communication techniques and the globalization of the recent years have established an interconnected global elite. (As a useful example of portraying and analyzing this global elite see Rothkopf, D. (2008). *Superclass. The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making*. New York, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux) Although there is a growing political gap between the national oriented and the international oriented part of society. Business is more or less international oriented and is interested in the international markets for capital and labour, whereas employees are more national oriented and perceive immigration and free trade as threatening their jobs and wages. Nobel price winner Joseph Stiglitz of Columbia University was not the only one who emphasized that elites all over the world have pushed changes that have been in their interest, and at the same time prevented changes that might have been most profitable for the society. (See Stiglitz, J. E. (2002). *Globalization and its Discontents*. New York, W.W. Norton)

<sup>42</sup> See Gilens, M. and B. I. Page (2014). "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics* 12(3): pp. 564-581, pp. 575-577. See also Winters, J. A. and B. I. Page (2009). "Oligarchy in the United States?" *Ibid.* 7(4): pp. 731-751.

When the preferences of economic elites and of organized interest groups are controlled for, the preferences of the average American appear to have only a statistically non-significant impact upon public policy. When a majority of citizens disagrees with economic elites or with organized interests, they generally lose. Moreover, because of the strong status quo bias built into the political system, even when fairly large majorities of people favor policy change, they generally don't get it. That is in line with analyses of U. S. politics which argue that a chief aim of the framers of the U. S. Constitution was to protect private property, favoring the economic interests of wealthy merchants and plantation owners rather than the interests of the then-majority small farmers, laborers, and craft workers. (See Gilens, M. and B. I. Page (2014). "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Ibid.* 12(3): pp. 564-581, p. 566.)

<sup>43</sup> Eisenhower, D. D. (1961) "Farewell Address." pp. 1-6 , p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> See also Baczko, B. (1988). "The Social Contract of the French: Sieyès and Rousseau." *Journal of Modern History* 60: pp. S98-S125; Bertram, C. (2012). "Rousseau's Legacy in Two Conceptions of the General Will: Democratic and Transcendent." *The Review of Politics* 74: pp. 403-419; Forsyth, M. (1981). "Thomas Hobbes and the Constituent Power of the People." *Political Studies* 29(2): pp. 191-203; Grofman, B. and S. L. Feld (1988). "Rousseau's General Will: A Condorcetian Perspective." *American Political Science Review* 82(2): pp. 567-576; Neuhaus, F. (1993). "Freedom, Dependence, and the General Will." *The Philosophical Review* 102(3): pp. 363-395; Sreenivasan, G. (2000). "What is the General Will?" *Ibid.* 109(4): pp. 545-581

Rousseau's work is dominated by his concern to find a way of preserving human freedom in a world where people are increasingly dependent on one another for the satisfaction of their needs. In the *Social Contract*, Rousseau sets out to answer what he takes to be the fundamental question of politics, the reconciliation of the freedom of the individual with the authority of the state. This reconciliation is necessary because human society has evolved to a point where individuals can no longer supply their needs through their own unaided efforts, but rather must depend on the co-operation of others. The process whereby human needs expand and interdependence deepens is set out in the 'Discourse on the Origins of Inequality'.

All needs, whether real or only perceived needs, have the potential to give rise to dependence, as long as they are perceived as needs by the subject. (See Neuhaus, F. (1993). "Freedom, Dependence, and the General Will." *Ibid.* 102(3): pp. 363-395, pp.375-376.) According to Rousseau there are two kinds of needs, namely the commodities of life for oneself, and consideration among others. These needs result in two main types of dependence: economic and psychological dependence. The former consists

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in dependence on others in the production or acquisition of necessary commodities, whereas psychological dependence is dependence on others for the recognition one needs in order for one's sense of one's value or standing among others to be reflected and thus confirmed in the external world. (See *Ibid.*, p. 377.)

Sreenivasan suggests the following definition of the general will:

“The general will is any deliberative decision made by the community when

- (i) the subject matter of the deliberation is perfectly general, and
- (ii) the conclusions of the deliberation apply equally to all the members of the community, and
- (iii) all the members of the community participate in the deliberation, and
- (iv) all parties to the deliberation think for themselves.” (Sreenivasan, G. (2000). "What is the General Will?" *Ibid.* 109(4): pp. 545-581, p. 574.)

W. G. Runciman and Amartya K. Sen suggest an interpretation to be given to the general will on the model of the prisoner's dilemma: Runciman, W. G. and A. K. Sen (1965). "Games, Justice and the General Will." *Mind* 74(No. 296): pp. 554-562; see also Arrow, K. J. (1963). *Social Choice and Individual Values*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, pp. 81-86.

<sup>45</sup> “As long as men were content with their rustic huts, as long as they were limited to sewing their clothing of skins with thorns of fish bones, adorning themselves with feathers and shells, painting their bodies with various colors, perfecting or embellishing their bows and arrows, carving with sharp stones a few fishing Canoes or a few Musical instruments; in a word, as long as they applied themselves only to tasks that a single person could do and to arts that did not require the cooperation of several hands, they lived free, healthy, good, and happy insofar as they could be according to their Nature, and they continued to enjoy among themselves the sweetness of independent intercourse. But from the moment one man needed the help of another, as soon as they observed that it was useful for a single person to have provisions for two, equality disappeared, property was introduced, labor became necessary; and vast forests were changed into smiling Fields which had to be watered with the sweat of men, and in which slavery and misery were soon seen to germinate and grow with the crops.” (Rousseau, J.-J. (1992). *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* (second discourse); *Polemics; and, Political Economy*. Translated by Judith R. Bush, Roger D. Masters, Christopher Kelly, and Terence Marshall. Hanover, NH, University Press of New England for Dartmouth College, pp. 1-95, p. 49.)

<sup>46</sup> See Sreenivasan, G. (2000). "What is the General Will?" *The Philosophical Review* 109(4): pp. 545-581, p. 547.

<sup>47</sup> Rousseau, J.-J. (1994). *Social Contract; Discourse on the Virtue Most Necessary for a Hero; Political Fragments; and Geneva Manuscript*. Translated by Judith R. Bush, Roger D. Masters, and Christopher Kelly. Hanover, NH, Published by University Press of New England for Dartmouth College, pp. 127-224.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-224, p. 138.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-224, p. 139.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-224, p. 198.

<sup>52</sup> As a starting point for clarifying the general will democratic procedures are conceived of as a method for discovering the truth about the public interest; they then interpret the general will as a deliberative means of seeking outcomes that satisfy the preferences of individuals and render the authority of the state legitimate. “It can be seen ... that the way in which general matters are handled can provide a rather precise indication of the current state of morals and health of the body politic. The more harmony is in the assemblies, that is, the closer opinions come to obtaining unanimous support, the more dominant as well is the general will. But long debates, dissensions, and tumult indicate the ascendance of private interests and the decline of the State.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 127-224, p.199.)

“The Citizen consents to all the laws, even to those passed in spite of him, and even to those that punish him when he dares to violate one of them. The constant will of all the members of the State is the general will, which makes them citizens and free. When a law is proposed in the assembly of the People, what they are being asked is not precisely whether they approve or reject the proposal, but whether it does or does not conform to the general will that is theirs. Each one expresses his opinion on this by voting, and the declaration of the general will is drawn from the counting of the votes.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 127-224, pp. 200-201.)

According to Rousseau there are two (convincing) maxims that can serve to regulate the voting: “One, that the more important and serious the deliberations, the closer the winning opinion should be to una-

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nimity. The other, that the more speed the business at hand requires, the smaller the prescribed difference in the division of opinions should be. In deliberations that must be finished on the spot, a majority of a single vote should suffice. The first of these maxims appears more suited to laws; the second, to business matters. However that may be, it is a combination of the two that establishes the proper ratio of the deciding majority.” (Ibid., pp. 127-224, p. 201.)

<sup>53</sup> See Bertram, C. (2012). "Rousseau's Legacy in Two Conceptions of the General Will: Democratic and Transcendent." *The Review of Politics* 74: pp. 403-419, p. 403.

In a well-ordered society, there is no tension between private and general will, as individuals accept that both justice and their individual self-interest require their submission to a law which safeguards their freedom by protecting them from the private violence and personal domination that would otherwise hold sway.

<sup>54</sup> Hobbes, T. (2008). *Leviathan, or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civil*. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Simon & Schuster, p. 143.

<sup>55</sup> “The Sovereign can, in the first place, entrust the Government to the entire people or the majority of the people, so that there are more citizens who are magistrates than citizens who are simply private individuals. This form of Government is given the name *Democracy*.

Or else it can restrict the Government to the hands of a small number, so that there are more simple Citizens than magistrates; and this form bears the name *Aristocracy*.

Finally, it can concentrate the whole Government in the hands of a single magistrate from whom all the others derive their power. This third form ... is called *Monarchy* or royal Government.”

(Rousseau, J.-J. (1994). *Social Contract; Discourse on the Virtue Most Necessary for a Hero; Political Fragments; and Geneva Manuscript*. Translated by Judith R. Bush, Roger D. Masters, and Christopher Kelly. Hanover, NH, Published by University Press of New England for Dartmouth College, pp. 127-224, p. 172.)

<sup>56</sup> “In the strict sense of the term, a genuine Democracy has never existed and never will exist. It is contrary to the natural order that the majority govern and the minority be governed. It is unimaginable that the people remain constantly assembled to attend to public affairs, and it is obvious that it could not establish commissions to do so without changing the form of administration.” (Ibid., pp. 127-224, p. 173.)

So it doesn't come as a surprise that Rousseau concludes: “If there were a people of Gods, it would govern itself Democratically. Such a perfect Government is not suited to men.” (Ibid., pp. 127-224, p. 174.)

<sup>57</sup> As far as the Aristocracy is concerned, according to Rousseau there are three kinds of it: natural, elective, and heredity. The first is suited only to simple peoples. The third is the worst of all Governments. The second is the best; it is Aristocracy properly so-called. (See Ibid., pp. 127-224, p.175.) By the way, the word ‘aristocracy’ derives from the Greek term *aristokratia*, from *aristos* ‘best’ + *-kratia* ‘power’. The term originally denoted the government of a state by its best citizens.

<sup>58</sup> See Hont, I. (1994). "The Permanent Crisis of a Divided Mankind: 'Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State' in Historical Perspective." *Political Studies* 42: pp. 166-231, pp. 171-172: “I try to show that the language of the ‘nation’ and representation which emerged in the political thought of Emmanuel Sieyès was a continuation of the Hobbesian theory of indirect popular sovereignty.”

In this context a quote from Rousseau is enlightening:

“Beside the advantage of distinguishing between the two powers, aristocracy has that of the choice of its members. For in popular Government all the Citizens are born magistrates, whereas this type limits them to a small number, and they become magistrates only through election, a means by which probity, enlightenment, experience, and all the other reasons for public preference and esteem become so many new guarantees of being wisely governed.

Moreover, assemblies are more conveniently held, business is better discussed and acted upon in a more orderly and diligent manner, the prestige of the State is better sustained in foreign countries by venerable senators than by an unknown or scorned multitude.

In short, it is the best and most natural order for the wisest to govern the multitude, as long as it is certain that they govern for its benefit and not for their own. Devices must not be multiplied uselessly, nor must twenty thousand men do what one hundred well-chosen men can do still better. But it must be noted that here the corporate interest begins to direct the public force in accordance with the rule of the general will to a lesser degree, and that another unavoidable tendency exempts from the laws a part of the executive power.

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With regard to particular matters of expediency, a State must not be so small, nor the people so simple and upright, that the execution of laws follows immediately from the public will, as is the case in a good Democracy. Nor must a nation be so large that the leaders, dispersed to govern it, can each make decisions for the Sovereign in its own department, and begin by making themselves independent in order to become masters in the long run.

But if Aristocracy requires somewhat fewer virtues than popular Government, it also requires others which are specific to it, such as moderation among the rich and contentment among the poor. For it seems that rigorous equality would be misplaced in an aristocracy. It was not even adhered to in Sparta.

Besides, if the form includes some inequality of wealth, it is simply in order for the administration of public affairs to be generally confided to those who can best devote all their time to it; but not, as Aristotle claims, for the rich to be always given preference. On the contrary, it is important that an opposite choice should occasionally teach the people that personal merit offers more important reasons for preference than does riches." (Rousseau, J.-J. (1994). *Social Contract; Discourse on the Virtue Most Necessary for a Hero; Political Fragments; and Geneva Manuscript*. Translated by Judith R. Bush, Roger D. Masters, and Christopher Kelly. Hanover, NH, Published by University Press of New England for Dartmouth College, pp. 127-224, pp. 175-176.)

<sup>59</sup> See Arato, A. (2013). "Political Theology and Populism." *social research* 80(1): pp. 143-172, p. 145.

<sup>60</sup> Rousseau, J.-J. (1994). *Social Contract; Discourse on the Virtue Most Necessary for a Hero; Political Fragments; and Geneva Manuscript*. Translated by Judith R. Bush, Roger D. Masters, and Christopher Kelly. Hanover, NH, Published by University Press of New England for Dartmouth College, pp. 127-224, p. 147.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-224, p.201.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-224, pp. 191-192.

<sup>63</sup> With regard to Rousseau's account of relations between sovereign and government there is an important issue that arises, and that is his political pessimism, even in the case of the best-designed and most perfect republic. Just as any group has a collective will as opposed to the individual private will of its members, so does the government. As the state becomes larger and more diffuse, and as citizens become more distant from one another both spatially and emotionally, so the effective government of the republic will need a proportionally smaller and more cohesive group of magistrates. Rousseau thinks it almost inevitable that this group will end up usurping the legitimate sovereign power of the people and substituting its corporate will for the people's general will.

<sup>64</sup> See James, O. (2010). *Britain on the Couch: How keeping up with the Joneses has depressed us since 1950*. London, Vermilion.

<sup>65</sup> In terms of social comparison there is little doubt that advertisements encourage the viewer not to employ analytical skills. An advertising that presents the sequence 'the problem is pain, the solution is a pill and pleasure is the result' discourages any consideration of changing your lifestyle to avoid repeated headaches. (See *Ibid.*, p. 187)

Advertisements also promote a kind of hedonic angst, the fear that there are great pleasures others are enjoying which we are not. (See Baggini, J. (2005). *What's it all about? Philosophy and the Meaning of Life*. London, Granta Publications, p. 139)

I would argue that today's social media is an increase of what we know from TV and advertising.

<sup>66</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>67</sup> Why do people blame?

- Blame and resentment is fear of accountability.
- Blame is a good way to take the heat off yourself.
- Blaming others is a way of maintaining self-esteem and looking good in the eyes of others.
- Blame and resentment is a character flaw that splits people into good and bad groups and helps the blamer cope with a 'hostile' world. (See Goens, G. A. (2017). *It's Not My Fault: Victim Mentality and Becoming Response-able*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London, Rowman & Littlefield, p. 78)

<sup>68</sup> See Kets de Vries, M. F. R. (2014). "Are you a Victim of the Victim Syndrome?" *Organizational Dynamics* 43(July): pp. 130-137, p. 130. See also Goens, G. A. (2017). *It's Not My Fault: Victim Mentality and Becoming Response-able*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London, Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 16-18.

<sup>69</sup> Learned helplessness was initially used to label the failure of certain laboratory animals (dogs, rats, cats, fish, and mice) to escape or avoid shock, despite giving an opportunity, subsequent to earlier exposure to unavoidable shock. Now, the term has been applied to the failure of human beings to pursue, utilize, or acquire adaptive instrumental responses.

The cornerstone of the learned helplessness hypothesis is that learning that outcomes are uncontrollable results in three deficits: motivational, cognitive and emotional. (See Abramson, L. Y., M. E. P. Seligman and J. D. Teasdale (1978). "Learned Helplessness in Humans: Critique and Reformulation." *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 87(1): pp. 49-74, p. 50.)

See also Seligman, M. E. P. (1972). "Learned Helplessness." *Annual Review of Medicine* 23: pp. 407-412

<sup>70</sup> See Goens, G. A. (2017). *It's Not My Fault: Victim Mentality and Becoming Response-able*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London, Rowman & Littlefield, p. 18.

<sup>71</sup> See Kets de Fries, M. F. R. (2014). "Are you a Victim of the Victim Syndrome?" *Organizational Dynamics* 43(July): pp. 130-137, p. 131.

<sup>72</sup> Being a victim requires a giving up of most, if not all, personal responsibility. When we allow ourselves to be victims, we are letting the people and circumstances in our lives dictate how we will feel, and ultimately, who we will be.

There are a couple of victim stories: First, "I am innocent, and it is not my fault for what has happened.

The second theme is 'It is all your fault': I am innocent at the hands of a villain or perpetrator. Or the third story line: I am helpless and there is nothing I can do to correct the situation. Unfortunately, today it seems that many individuals and groups respond this way. Any individual responsibility for outcomes and events is denied." Goens, G. A. (2017). *It's Not My Fault: Victim Mentality and Becoming Response-able*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London, Rowman & Littlefield, p. 12.

<sup>73</sup> These can look like the following:

- You don't have to take responsibility for things.
- You have the 'right' to complain and receive attention.
- Others feel sorry for you and give you attention.
- People are less likely to criticize or upset you.
- Others feel compelled to help you and do what you ask for.
- You can tell stories about the things that happened to you and seem interesting.
- There is no time to be bored because there is so much drama in your life.
- You can avoid ever feeling anger as you are too busy being sad and upset.

See also Kets de Fries, M. F. R. (2014). "Are you a Victim of the Victim Syndrome?" *Organizational Dynamics* 43(July): pp. 130-137, p. 133.

<sup>74</sup> On the other side, successful people tend to: take full responsibility for their actions instead of blaming others, learn from mistakes, instead of seeing them as signs of incompetence, and improve the way things are done instead of clinging to old habits.

<sup>75</sup> See Goens, G. A. (2017). *It's Not My Fault: Victim Mentality and Becoming Response-able*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London, Rowman & Littlefield, p. 20.

<sup>76</sup> See *Ibid.* p. xii

Life presents challenges and opportunities. People have to live their life even though they don't control much in this world. However, they do determine their attitude toward circumstances and challenges. People are able. They can act. They are not without virtue. (See *Ibid.*, p. 9)

<sup>77</sup> See Sen, A. (2006). *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. New York, W. W. Norton & Co., pp. 4-5. See also Fukuyama, F. (2018). *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment*. New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

<sup>78</sup> A good overview on the philosophical discussion on meaning in life is Metz, T. (2013) "The Meaning of Life." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, pp. 1-38. See also Metz, T. (2001). "The Concept of a Meaningful Life." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 38(2): pp. 137-153; Metz, T. (2011). "The good, the true, and the beautiful: toward a unified account of great meaning in life." *Religious Studies* 47: pp. 389-409; Metz, T. (2015). *Meaning in Life: An Analytic Study*. Oxford; New York, NY, Oxford University Press.

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For further research on the meaning of life see Wolf, S. R. (2010). *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press; Wolf, S. R. (2015). *The Variety of Values: Essays on Morality, Meaning, and Love*. Oxford; New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 89-140; Cottingham, J. (2003). *On the Meaning of Life*. London, Routledge; Ford, D. (2007). *The Search for Meaning: A Short History*. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London, University of California Press; Eagleton, T. (2008). *The Meaning of Life: A Very Short Introduction*. New York, Oxford University Press; Smuts, A. (2013). "The Good Cause Account of the Meaning of Life." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 51(4): pp. 536-562.

For another approach on the topic see Solomon, R. C. (1993). *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life*. Indianapolis, Hackett.

<sup>79</sup> Frankl, V. E. (2006). *Man's search for meaning*. Boston, Beacon Press, p. 140.

"Just consider the mass neurotic syndrome so pervasive in the young generation: there is ample empirical evidence that the three facets of this syndrome—depression, aggression, addiction—are due to what is called in logotherapy 'the existential vacuum', a feeling of emptiness and meaninglessness." (Ibid., p. 141)

In September 1942, Viktor Frankl, a prominent Jewish psychiatrist in Vienna, was arrested and transported to a Nazi concentration camp with his wife and his parents. Three years later, when his camp was liberated, most of his family, including his pregnant wife, had perished—but he had lived. In his bestselling 1946 book 'Man's Search for Meaning', which he wrote in nine days about his experiences in the camps, Frankl concluded that the difference between those who had lived and those who had died came down to one thing: Meaning.

<sup>80</sup> See Wolf, S. R. (2015). *The Variety of Values: Essays on Morality, Meaning, and Love*. Oxford; New York, Oxford University Press, p. 94.

<sup>81</sup> See Metz, T. (2002). "Recent Work on the Meaning of Life." *Ethics* 112(4): pp. 781-814, p. 782.

<sup>82</sup> Frankl, V. E. (2006). *Man's search for meaning*. Boston, Beacon Press, p. 99.

<sup>83</sup> See Baumeister, R. F., K. D. Vohs, J. L. Aaker and E. N. Garbinsky (2013). "Some key differences between a happy life and a meaningful life." *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 8(6): pp. 505-516, pp. 505-506.

<sup>84</sup> See Ibid., p. 510.

<sup>85</sup> See Ibid., p. 512.

<sup>86</sup> See Ibid., p. 515.

<sup>87</sup> For further research on this aspect see Thomas, L. (2005). "Morality and a Meaningful Life." *Philosophical Papers* 34(3): pp. 405-427.

<sup>88</sup> Frankl, V. E. (2006). *Man's search for meaning*. Boston, Beacon Press, p. 111. See also Frankl, V. E. (2015). *Der Mensch vor der Frage nach dem Sinn. Eine Auswahl aus dem Gesamtwerk*. München/Berlin, Piper; Frankl, V. E. (2016). *Der Wille zum Sinn*. Bern, Hogrefe; Frankl, V. E. (2014). *Ärztliche Seelsorge. Grundlagen der Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse. Mit den 'Zehn Thesen über die Person'*.

<sup>89</sup> See James, L. (2005). "Achievement and the Meaningfulness of Life." *Philosophical Papers* 34(3): pp. 429-442, p. 440.

<sup>90</sup> Velleman, J. D. Ibid. "Family History." pp. 357-378, p. 361. Velleman is making the case not only for the legal family but for the biological family.

<sup>91</sup> See Ibid., p. 376.

<sup>92</sup> See Thomas, L. Ibid. "Morality and a Meaningful Life." pp. 405-427, p. 413.

<sup>93</sup> See Ibid., p. 426.

<sup>94</sup> Helping others cannot be the meaning of life itself. But it is essentially tied to a meaningful life, because it is premised on the notion that life can be a good in itself. If this is true for one it is true for all, and so we have reasons for helping others. Altruism is thus not the source of life's meaning but is something that living a meaningful life requires. We just need to remember that the purpose of helping others is to bring them benefits, not to engage in charity for charity's sake. (See Baggini, J. (2005). *What's it all about? Philosophy and the Meaning of Life*. London, Granta Publications, p. 71)

<sup>95</sup> See Goens, G. A. (2017). *It's Not My Fault: Victim Mentality and Becoming Response-able*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London, Rowman & Littlefield, p. 105.

<sup>96</sup> Nietzsche, F. (2013). *Zur Genealogie der Moral: (1887) ; Götzen-Dämmerung: (1889)*. Hamburg, Felix Meiner, p. 176.

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