readings of classic texts that contribute to our understanding of the fundamental problems facing our age.

Me the People: How Populism Transforms Democracy.

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Innumerable scholars and commentators agree that a populist "revolt" is unfolding against liberal constitutional democracy. Whatever one thinks of this diagnosis—I, for one, find it unduly alarmist—it seems indeed that *something* has changed within established democracies over the last decade or so. Democratic politics appears more personalized than ever before; the tone of political debates has become aggressive and antagonistic; and even mainstream politicians sometimes portray institutionalized procedures of compromise building as something that needs to be overcome, rather than followed. What has happened?

In *Me the People*, distinguished democratic theorist Nadia Urbinati takes stock of these developments and systematically links them to the phenomenon of populism. The book opens with a clarification of the contested term: acknowledging that populism is "ambiguous" and "difficult to define in a sharp and uncontested way," Urbinati suggests thinking about it not in terms of an "ideology or a specific political regime" but as a "*representative process*, through which a collective subject is constructed so that it can achieve power" (p. 5). This sounds surprisingly much like a radical-democratic conception of populism, as defended by Ernesto Laclau and others—but unlike radical democrats, whose primary concern is with the articulation and mobilization of collective identities, Urbinati is interested in the effect of populist politics on representative democracy.

The central claim of the book is that populism is not, as many believe, about *opposing* representative democracy but about *transforming* it from within. It is not merely a "movement of opposition" but one that "wants to compete for power, and ultimately rule" (p. 112). Along the way, argues Urbinati, it "disfigures" representative democracy. The argument is developed over four chapters, each of which analyzes a different dimension of populist politics. Throughout, an ideal-typical conception of representative democracy serves as the foil against which populism is contrasted, which also enables Urbinati to pinpoint which of the essential features of representative democracy are reshaped by populism.

The first chapter discusses populism's "antiestablishmentarian" thrust. According to Urbinati, this is rooted in the "association of power with impurity or immorality" (p. 56). Populists scorn the political establishment because they view those who hold power as *inevitably* corrupted by their power, while ascribing to the powerless the status of higher moral purity. Although this is not per se an undemocratic impulse, populists use their "antiestablishmentarian rhetoric" in a distinctive way that is different from merely declaring opposition to the party or parties in power. They assert that the supposedly powerless mass on whose behalf they claim to speak "deserves superior recognition because it is *objectively* the 'good' part" of the population (p. 75).

Urbinati suggests that this moralizing view of political conflict has direct consequences for how populists engage with representative-democratic institutions. Most notably, it leads them to reject traditional party competition, which is predicated on the idea that no political collective can plausibly claim to deserve superior recognition due to its alleged moral purity. The book's second chapter elaborates this point, examining how populism's predisposition to treat the powerless as morally pure translates into a particular populist conception of the "people." Populists, in short, reject the notion that the people are always indeterminate and open to change in a democracy. Instead, they "declare that they are the people, once and for all" (p. 90). As Urbinati shows, using recent examples from Hungary, Poland, and Bolivia, this delusional self-conception often makes populists aim for "unbounded power" (p. 109). Whenever possible, they will try to "fuse their party platform with the will of the state" by "inscribing their policy preferences onto the constitution" (p. 110).

As the third chapter explains, leadership plays a crucial role in how populists govern. Most interestingly, Urbinati draws attention to a major challenge facing populist leaders in office: they still need to make "strong proclamations of antagonism and antiestablishmentarianism, yet because they do not institute a dictatorship, they must [also] continue to negotiate with the opposition" (p. 115). This in turn puts pressure on them to "assure the people that power will not make them like the old establishment" (p. 116); that is, corrupt and out of touch with the people they claim to represent. A common solution to this problem is the cultivation of direct and highly personalized forms of communication, which are meant to sustain the faith of populist supporters in their leader. An early example is Hugo Chávez's famously solipsistic TV show *Aló Presidente*, where the former Venezuelan president "spent an extraordinary number of hours denouncing capitalism" (p. 131) without ever having to answer critical questions. Today, populist leaders most effectively communicate via social media, Exhibit A being Donald Trump's obsessive use of Twitter (at least until he was banned from that platform).

One of the major conceptual innovations that Urbinati introduces is the notion of "direct representation"—the topic of the book's fourth and final chapter. Urbinati argues that populists, contrary to widespread belief, do not want to make *democracy* more direct. The tweeting of

Donald Trump, the blogging of Beppe Grillo, or the "digital acclamation" (p. 187) methods used by Movimento 5 Stelle or Podemos suggest that they instead want to make *representation* more direct. Unlike traditional "mandate representation," which is based on (a degree of) mistrust toward and the close monitoring of elected partisan representatives, direct representation should generate "*trust through faith*" in the leader, a faith that remains "undivided and unreserved" (p. 164). Whether this can actually be achieved with tweets or blog posts remains, of course, an open question, but the ambition to generate unreserved faith is arguably there. Supporters are meant to believe that the leader *embodies* the people.

In sum, this is a complex and highly stimulating book that adds considerable complexity to a theoretical debate that has largely ran out of steam. The book's value lies not least in its distinctive approach: unlike most studies of populism that I am aware of, Urbinati tries to sensitize the reader to the fact that democratic institutions, procedures, and practices are always liable to dynamic change and to the role of political agency in effecting transformations of democracy.

This, then, leads me to a question raised by reading the book: Have populist parties and leaders also transformed their mainstream *political competitors* and perhaps even had a greater impact on *them* than on democratic institutions? Consider that we might be witnessing the dawn of a "post-populist" age: Trump has been voted out of office, and the same goes for Matteo Salvini's Lega or the Austrian FPÖ—to name just three high-profile cases of populists in power. And although democratic institutions have withstood the challenge, it seems to me that ostensibly moderate politicians are increasingly assuming populist features. The social democratic Danish prime minister Mette Frederiksen, the conservative Bavarian minister-president Markus Söder (who may well have become German chancellor had the CDU nominated him), or the just-ousted former Austrian chancellor Sebastian Kurz have all successfully instituted highly leader-centered forms of "direct representation," silencing their party organization and opposing traditional forms of intermediation. However much one recoils from the idea of populist parties in power, the prospect of a mainstreamed post-populism is equally unsettling. Urbinati's book helps us further understand why.

Justice across Ages: Treating Young and Old as Equals. By Juliana Uhuru Bidadanure. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. 256p. $100.00 cloth.

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In our current moment, at the convergence of climate change and pandemic catastrophes, we have been reminded that the young and the old are disproportionately affected by political, environmental, and economic calamities. Juliana Uhuru Bidadanure's *Justice across Ages: Treating Young and Old as Equals* represents one of those rare instances of a book arriving at precisely the right time. Bidadanure's philosophical exploration of intergenerational justice and equality has a great deal to tell us about how we might think through these enduring problems.

Part I begins with the question of which inequalities between young and old are acceptable and which are unjust. Unlike forms of injustice rooted in immutable characteristics linked to race and sex, individuals are not frozen at a fixed age. Thus, we are all at one age a beneficiary and at another a victim of age-based inequalities. The question, then, is how to judge the justness of these differences that have a uniquely temporal dimension. Bidadanure identifies two approaches. The first, a synchronic approach, attends to the distribution of goods at a snapshot in time and assesses whether the discrepancies within that moment between people of different ages are just or unjust. Sometimes they might be acceptable because it is important that some opportunities are responsive to age, as when elderly folks quite reasonably receive the lion's share of health care resources. A diachronic approach looks at how people of a certain generation fare over their lifetimes and compares that with other generational cohorts. A commitment to equality seems to demand that no generation should be left worse off than the generation that preceded it. Granted, it might be necessary to treat two people of different ages unequally for a period of time, but their lifetimes ought to mirror one another in terms of generational prospects.

Innovating on the Rawlsian veil of ignorance exercise, Bidadanure argues that a "prudent planner" who is unaware of their age would conclude that resources afforded during one's lifetime ought to be, at a minimum, sufficient to avoid deprivation and to uphold freedom. The prudent planner would also conclude behind the veil of ignorance that resources ought to be distributed efficiently throughout one's lifetime so as to maximize opportunities, which typically entails frontloading opportunities so that young people can set themselves up early for success.

Now, there are many defects inherent in distributional models of justice. Bidadanure does not disentangle these snares directly, but she does devote a great deal of analysis to the way distributional arguments fail to capture the whole picture. The problem of unequal standing, esteem, and respect between people of different ages is an issue related to distribution but also one that falls outside its purview. These additional considerations require a synchronic approach, one that looks at particular relations of respect and equality between people of different ages at a discrete moment in time, regardless of whether the injustice is ultimately temporary or will be balanced out by some future (or past) reversal of fortunes. Bidadanure refers to this theorizing of social stigma and marginalization as the