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Can we do without the people?
Geminello Preterossi

The essay develops a critical reading of Laclau's original theory of populism, by relating the claims made in the book *The populist reason* with some further analysis, conducted in polemical dialogue with Zizek. The interest of this debate is not merely theoretical, because populism is nowadays put to the forefront of the contemporary public arena as the prevailing 'political' issue, in an ambivalent sense. Most of the representations that the mainstream thought or the media narrative offer of such outbreaks is quite misleading. To understand its meaning, but also to criticize the possible drifts, we must tear the veil that hides the crisis of the compromise between capitalism and democracy, with its consequences.

The populist issue. Notes on the philosophical (mis)uses of a notion
Gianluca Bonaiuti

This paper suggests a theoretical re-reading of populism. Usually dismissed as a pathological form of politics, it deals with borders of political system and raises important issues to democratic theory. Koselleck's notion of modern political semantics helps to reframe the discussion of the ambiguous meaning of this term and introduce to philosophical interpretations of this concept. Drawing from heterogeneous philosophical material (especially, theory of power of Claude Lefort and theory of People of Jacques Rancière), it is argued that the problem of populism arises when a particular form of collective *ensemble*, the people, is asked to open up for prospect of democratic expectations. Populism thus acquires an ambivalent position by articulating contemporary political reason.

Populism, radical Right, extreme Right. Affinity and false equivalences
Marco Tarchi

Populism and extreme Right are often confused, by journalists and also by scholars. This article, based on an empirical analysis of the discourses and actions of the movements which are usually included in both categories, aims at demonstrating that, together with some convergences and affinities, these political families show many differences and contrasts. This appears to be true in the fields where they express their political cultures: the mentality of their members and leaders, the vision of society, the programs. These factors explain why, today, populist parties and extreme right movements are more frequently competitors than allies.

The populist phenomenon
Nadia Urbinati

The paper advances an analytical rendering of populism and argues that the components that make it a recognizable phenomenon are simplification and polarization of political divisions in the view of achieving a deeper unification of the masses against the existing élite and under an organic narrative that most of the time a leader embodies. Populism is thus internal to and a challenge of representative democracy; it competes with it on the meaning and practice of representation since aims at a more genuine identification between the represented and the representatives. After a premise on the distinction between a popular movement and populism, the paper argues that to better understand this phenomenon we should situate it within the republican as Roman tradition.

Populism. The obscure clarity of a political category
Marco Baldassari

The essay's purpose is to provide some theoretical guidelines about the concept of populism, conceived as a political category. The essay's starting point is the post-marxist analysis developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, inherent the construction of the social agents and the hegemonic logic, on which is based the construction of people (taking into consideration their original interpretation of Gramsci's thought). The essay focuses on the rationality of the populistic phenomenon and not only on the descriptive aspects linked with mentality or ideology. Furthermore, the essay intends to problematize the use of populistic modalities assumed by the élite in the neoliberal contest, as well as the implications that the transformation of 'sovereignty' and 'democracy' have determined for populism itself.

The collective name of solitude.
Neoliberalism, populism and what remains to be thought
Diego Melegari

The essay's starting point is the definition of 'populism' proposed by Ernesto Laclau and how it is nowadays used to explain the success of political forces such as *Syriza* and *Podemos*. The focal point of the essay is not to look for the definitive criteria to define 'left populism', but rather to investigate the relocations of the 'antagonistic frontiers' as opposed to the neoliberal governance. On one side, the possibility to find out populistic features in the neoliberal governance itself is emphasized (by using the category of Rosanvallon's 'counterdemocracy'). On the other, the essay focuses on the problem of political organisation as the main aspect which remains unelaborated both in the contemporary neoliberalism and populism. This topic emerges urgently from the potentiality and ambivalences that characterize their struggle for hegemony.

Populisms and aesthetization
Rino Genovese

The article considers the contemporary populisms as an aesthetization of the political communication which is based upon the fundamental aesthetic code 'I like/I don't like'. In this perspective, plebiscitarianism, typical of the Bonapartist dimension of populisms, lives a new life because of aesthetization, which in turn, on the basis of its purely communicative way, exceeds the heroic leadership vision of the classical Bonapartism. Populism is therefore more a 'function' than a determined political form.

Populism: substance or attribute?
Davide Tarizzo

Laclau sees populism as the very essence or substance of political life. Here, along the lines of Freud's investigation into group psychology, it is argued that populism is merely an attribute, or property, of political leadership. Seen in this light, populism comes to affect political life only at times, when a given society starts undergoing a process of radical reshaping. Thus, the question of populism paves the way for a further question: What does it mean that a society reshapes itself?

Beyond style. The anti-heroic individualism of Lionel Trilling
Andrea Tagliapietra

The article explores the 'philosophy of the individual' of Lionel Trilling. Focusing on his essays on Jane Austen and William Wordsworth, and on his 1972 book *Sincerity and Authenticity*, the author goes deep in dialectic which, in Trilling's opinion, lays at the ground of both modern literature and modern individual. On the one hand extremely aware of the theatrical essence of life in society, modern individual is on the other hand ashamed of it and lives his spiritual life in search of his 'own self'. Modern individual lives following the two cognate ideals of sincerity and authenticity. But, Trilling holds a dialectic vision of this two concepts as well: the only way to live an authentic life which is not a parody of itself is to live, as Wordsworth and Austen have sometimes fancied, 'beyond style'.

Ethics and public administration. A mirror between political power and society
Gian Luca Sanna

The aim of this paper is to analyse the problem of the relationship between ethics and public administration. At first, it focuses on the two principles of justice theorized by John Rawls, seeking whether it is possible to derive from them a kind of universal ethical foundation for administrative actions. The work then examines the 'rule-utilitarianism' proposed by John C. Harsanyi, meaning it as a viable alternative to the problems raised by the theory of Rawls. The 'rule-utilitarianism' is considered as an interesting proposal to rethink the functions of public administration in terms of what we define an 'ethics of the mirror': a dramatic process of synthesis between the reforms proposed by the political and legislative power and the needs of an increasingly pluralistic and differentiated society.