

# AZIMUTH

*Philosophical Coordinates in Modern and Contemporary Age*

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## **The Subject of Politics: People, Populism, and Democracy**

## **Il soggetto della politica: popolo, populismo e democrazia**

edited by • a cura di

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## ABSTRACTS

### JORGE ÁLVAREZ Y ÁGÜEZ, EL MOMENTO POPULISTA ANALIZADO POR MARX

In the history of populism it is common to take the cases of the Russian Narodniki and the American People's Party as the first populist phenomena. But we have an earlier case, which was the policy carried out by Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. Karl Marx left us an excellent analysis on the Louis Bonaparte's *coup d'état* of 1851, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, perhaps the most influential Marxist book on political theory. In this work, we can find, without the presence of the word populism, which is only formally coined later, an enlightening study of a singular politics that years later will be called populist.

### CLAUDIO SERGIO INGERFLOM, EL POPULISMO EN LA GÉNESIS DEL LENINISMO

This article aims to identify (a) theoretical and political aspects that allow to articulate Leninism and Russian populism and (b) theoretical and political aspects that distinguish them completely. To reconstruct that processes – using *Russian language* sources – shows a temporal analogy between the Russian situation at the end of nineteenth century/early twentieth century and our neoliberal present: dismantling of social classes as classical social division and the quest for a political struggle that not only may to defeat neoliberalism but to gain a *beyond democracy* different from a mere return to liberal democracy.

### MARTÍN CORTÉS, LO QUE VUELVE. TRAZOS DE LO NACIONAL-POPULAR EN ARGENTINA

The paper proposes to reflect on the national-popular in Argentina, understood as a societal structure forged in the first Peronism, which transcends and lasts beyond the ideologically diverse orientations of the governments that have ruled politically in Argentina after Perón's exile. This reflection is carried out through the presentation and the counterpoint between different interpretations of Peronism that put the focus of attention on the question of the national-popular, privileging those that were deployed from the left. Thus, the paper asks at the same time about the persistence – even with its variations – of the national-popular as the hard core of Argentine politics, resistant to the various forms of offensive by the ruling classes, as well as the ways in which the left were linked and linked with that structure. Likewise, trying to project the reflection beyond the Argentine singularity, it is aimed at suggesting the importance of the problem of the historicity of the national-popular, at a distance from possible formalistic slippages that threaten contemporary theories of populism.

### PASQUALE SERRA, PER GINO GERMANI. TEMI E VARIAZIONI SUL NAZIONAL-POPOLARE

In this essay, the complex and topical research program of Gino Germani is reconsidered through the analysis of some themes related to the concept of the «national popular». All these themes revolve around the crisis of «representative reason» and the struggle of «populist reason» to act as a valid and convincing alternative. The research of Gino Germani remained, for a long time, stucked in this *impasse*, even if he desperately tried to find a way out. We find ourselves, today, in the same *impasse* – a condition we cannot escape without dealing with the problem of democracy, imagining different forms of it.

## BRUNO BOSTEELS, THE SUBJECT'S TURN: ELEMENTS OF A MATERIALIST HISTORY

This paper seeks to revisit the theory of the subject in the wake of the post-Heideggerian and post-Althusserian critique or deconstruction of Western humanism. The opening hypothesis claims that contemporary political theory and philosophy is based on a unique theory of the subject that harkens back to the tradition of German idealism. This new post-Hegelian consensus could be summarized as a slight but significant variation on the famous line from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Today, that is to say, the truth must be understood not only as (incomplete) substance but also as (divided) subject. The following pages intend to construct a critical genealogy of this new consensus, shared by thinkers as varied as Alain Badiou, Judith Butler, Sandro Mezzadra, and Slavoy Žižek. To do so we must first begin by interrogating not so much the famous «death» or «return» of the subject but rather its «birth». This means that our initial question is not «What is the subject?» but «When is the subject?». Not «Who comes after the subject?» but «Who (or what) comes before the subject?».

## ALEJANDRO SÁNCHEZ BERROCAL, NIETZSCHEANISMO DE IZQUIERDAS Y POSTESTRUCTURALISMO. SOBRE UNA FUENTE DE LA TEORÍA POPULISTA

Among the various sources of Ernesto Laclau's philosophy – such as Lacanian psychoanalysis, Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, Heidegger's post-metaphysical thought, or the *sui generis* interpretation of Gramsci – there is a series of theoretical elements that has a marked Nietzschean imprint, largely assimilated following French poststructuralism. This article offers an approach to the said intellectual environment, its most relevant topics, and theoretical consequences. We do it by tracing a series of motives in Nietzsche's philosophy that are part of what Laclau, referring to the German philosopher, has called “the failure of objectivity”: the critique of the ideas of objectivity, truth, and progress. We also show how these themes return with force in the French cultural and philosophical climate of the second half of the 20th century, when the new postmodern readings of Nietzsche are directed against the heritage of the Enlightenment, Hegelian dialectic, and Marxist historical materialism by some authors such as Gilles Deleuze or Michel Foucault.

## LAURA BAZZICALUPO, LA RIMOZIONE DEL SOCIALE NEL POPULISMO E NEL NEOLIBERALISMO: LA FUNZIONE AMBIVALENTE DELLA BIOPOLITICA

Despite the apparent theoretical and logical contrast, neoliberalism and populism converge, one as the mirror of the other. They both share an anti-representative and anti-dualistic biopolitical ontology. In the emphasis on disintermediation and immediacy, what is lost is the concrete articulation of the social, canceled by the absolutization of the neoliberal individual and by the totality embodied in the populist leader.

## MASSIMO VILLANI, IL POPOLO DEBOLE: UNA CRITICA DELLA CONTINGENZA

The target of the essay is the post-foundational logic on which Ernesto Laclau's populist theory is based. It's an ontology of lack that, embracing the neoliberal premise of the exacerbated fragmentation of the social, attempts to build a political subject which, lacking in substance, can only become concrete through conflict. But since this strategy is built on division, on a lack of foundation, on a void that goes through the social and undermines it, political praxis can only experiment crisis as its eminent paradigm. In order to break this deadlock, the essay suggests a reading of postmodernity

emancipated from the logic of contingency: in this perspective, the social has always appeared expression of shapes and strengths, with no necessity to go through the conflict phase to find organization or, in a theological-political lexicon that we hereby attempt to discharge, salvation.

#### JORGE RAMOS-GONZÁLEZ, POPULISMO Y SOBERANÍA. UNA APROXIMACIÓN A SU RELACIÓN DESDE UN ENFOQUE TEÓRICO-DISCURSIVO

Populism has gained an increasingly important role in the European context over the last decades. In response to the globalization process, and to the progressive loss of power that nation-States have experienced in recent times, several political actors have focused their discourse on the importance of recovering national sovereignty. In this transnational context, populism has become a very useful tool for those political actors who are interested in the spread of these sovereign claims. Nevertheless, this relationship has slightly been studied in Europe. The aim of this paper is to provide a theoretical review of the consequences of the neoliberal revolution, understood as a passive revolution, and a practical analytical framework in order to understand the ideological aspect of these discourses. It also examines the ways in which sovereignty may be articulated.

#### DONOVAN VAN DER HAAK, AN AMELIORATIVE APPROACH TO POPULISM

The rise of populism is often associated with threats to democracy, in particular its inclusivity. But depending on our definition of populism, the extent of populism's accountability for this threat varies greatly. Philosophers like Jan-Werner Müller and Ernesto Laclau have provided fundamentally different answers to this question. In this paper, I will take on an ameliorative approach in order to find out which definition of populism can help us mitigate this political threat towards democratic inclusivity. I argue that, in contrast to Laclau, Müller's definition of populism best satisfies this ameliorative function.

#### RODRIGO AGUILERA HUNT, ESTALLIDO SOCIAL, REVUELTA POPULAR Y DEBATE CONSTITUCIONAL EN CHILE. UNA LECTURA DESDE LA TEORÍA DEL POPULISMO DE ERNESTO LACLAU

From Ernesto Laclau's theory of populism, the aim is to develop a reflection applied to the Chilean political contingency based on the demands and social imaginaries deployed since the social explosion and popular revolt of October 2019 through the significant "*Chile Woke up*". It will be maintained that the relationship that has come about between the popular revolt and institutionality has produced a democratic tension that has forged the political horizon for drafting a new Constitution of the Republic via the institutional process. The main objective is to think about the possible scope and interference of the strategy of discursive articulation that the Chilean social movements can deploy in the political struggle for hegemony, in the framework of the public sphere in general and in the constitutional debate in particular.

#### XENIA CHIARAMONTE – DARIO FIORENTINO, IL SISTEMA PENALE È INTRINSECAMENTE POPULISTA?

Reflections on political populism tend to consider the penal system as a more or less rhetorical basin that can be used for political purposes. This article gives account on the potential uses that the criminal «impure matter» can offer to governments in office. However, it goes further by wondering more

radically whether criminal law as such is immanently populist, both in its permanent features and in its recent variations. So, the question is reversed: what if instead of coming first a political populism that uses criminal justice, it was the penal system that had an «intimate» populist nature of its own? We, therefore, examine criminal practices to historically situate the recent restructuring of intrinsically «populist» characteristics – which, limited to the Italian case, we identify in the period of the emergency (1970-90) – and finally find out that the long-lived model of political justice accounted for similar figures and tactics. If there is a novelty in the recent populist use of criminal justice, this lies in the tendency towards the open declaration of warlike objectives and suitable enemies, and yet this piece intended to enhance the *longue durée* of the political use of criminal justice, a much older feature than its contemporary populist declinations.