

A BALANCE SHEET OF THE VICES AND VIRTUES OF 'POPULISMS'

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Abstract: *Politicians and political scientists invariably use the term 'populism' to designate persons or movements they do not like or would not like to have come to power. To be called a 'populist' is to be insulted and, if possible, excluded from 'respectable' liberal democratic practice. This short essay tries to define populism in a 'neutral' fashion and to explore its virtues, as well as its (much better known) vices. It also attempts to draw up a balance sheet between the contrasting contributions of populism to contemporary political life in Europe.*

Keywords: vicious populism, virtuous populism, political parties, decisionism, charisma.

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