

PRESENTS

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Demagogues and Citizens

Wednesday, 1 March, 11:00 a.m. Nádor 15, Room 103



Democracies and republics have always grappled with demagogues – ‘leaders of the demos’ who use manipulative speech to mobilize popular support. Ancient philosophers critically examined the methods of demagogues and the ways they harmed political life. This talk builds on these classical traditions, asking: how and how far does demagoguery threaten the deep fabric of democracies? When are we entitled to hold fellow-citizens responsible for supporting or enabling demagogues, and when should we see them as victims of poor education or socioeconomic deprivation? Are the opponents of demagoguery immune to the demagogue’s manipulations?

Erica Benner is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study. She has written widely on the ethics of nationalism and on Machiavelli’s ethics and political thought. Her books include *Really Existing Nationalisms* (Oxford UP: 1995), *Machiavelli’s Ethics* (Princeton UP: 2009), *Machiavelli’s Prince: A New Reading* (Oxford UP: 2013), and *Be Like the Fox: Machiavelli’s Lifelong Quest for Freedom* (Penguin and W.W. Norton: 2017). She received her doctorate from Oxford University in 1993, and taught for many years at Oxford and the London School of Economics before becoming a Fellow in Political Philosophy at Yale.