

Antonella Besussi

Hate speech. An unreliable category

In this article hate speech is considered as a deeply politicized category of public discourse against which relevant reservations could be raised. First, the category suffers of conceptual vagueness (the label “hate” is vague; the objects of hate are vaguely identified; the border between what is speech and what is not is vaguely traced). Second, the category is fed by political and epistemic disparities: hate speech is possible only on the background of asymmetrical relations, it is unilateral discourse (from specific speakers against specific targets). Third, the category promotes a moralistic conception of public discourse, justifying a distinction between good and bad tendencies of forms of expressions and punitive interventions against the bad ones.

Explored these reservations the conclusion is that the category is unreliable both as an analytical and as a normative tool.

Gian-Luigi Bulsei

The we paradigm: social economy and common goods

Starting from the concepts of social economy and common goods, the article analyzes the potential that organizations and initiatives locally embedded can represent in the path to an “other” economy, more careful to the ethical, social and environmental dimensions. Territorial identity is a community resource on which to rely on to deal with adverse conditions, as in the case of initiatives to combat organized crime (the use of assets confiscated to the mafia), but also the fulcrum of a new cultural and civil para-digm capable of generating social value.

Carlo Fumagalli

Hate speech is ordinary

We are often told that public hate speech is something that deviates from what is standard in contemporary liberal democracies. So far, much of the literature has focused on the allegedly bad effects of such deviations as well as on measures to bring liberal democracies back to the normal course of events. Less has been said on the fundamental assumption that at a certain moment in time, and within that political context, hate speech is out of the ordinary. In this paper, drawing upon pragmatics, I contend that often public hate speech responds to a supply-demand logic, where speakers fulfill expectations by attacking target groups. Within this scheme, hate speech would be an answer to what a certain audience is ready to listen. At that moment of time, and within that political context, therefore, I argue in this article, hate speech is ordinary.

Anna Elisabetta Galeotti

Hate speech: a two decades long debate

The debate over hate speech, and over political correctness, is to be placed in the context of the discussion over multiculturalism. This debate is here reconstructed, considering the position in favor of restrictions of hate speech and the contrary position in favor of the precedence of free speech over any restriction. A relevant part of the discussion revolves around the notion of harm and of its interpretations, and around the notion of categories of speech. Are offenses to be considered harm? In that case, the category of harm is expanded to include symbolic harm. Or do offenses cause harm as their direct consequence, inducing attacks and harassment? Coming to speech, is the notion of content-neutrality reliable as a guideline for justified restrictions of speech? This article shows that hate speech is a problem for the inclusion of marginalized groups, but also that no easy solution is available. The three following essays show that this long standing debate can yet be analyzed from new and unconventional perspectives.

Nicola Riva

The harm principle and hateful and offensive expressions

The paper argues that there could be good prima facie reasons, from a liberal perspective, to restrict freedom of expression by prohibiting and punishing certain forms of hateful and offensive expressions towards oppressed social groups. In order to reach such a conclusion, it provides an interpretation of the harm principle and argues that hateful and offensive expressions could produce harms that are relevant for the application of that principle.