

La corruzione dei pubblici ufficiali: un male politico o un problema di etica personale?

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The Corrupt Behavior of Public Officials: Is it a Behavior Politically Wrong or a Personal Ethics Issue?

Abstract: There is a general intuition that the corrupt behavior of public officials is wrong. But how is it wrong exactly? According to recent “institutionalist” approaches, the wrongness of this behavior consists by and large in a breach of personal/professional ethics. It acquires political import only when it is so systematic to cause systemic damages to the trustworthiness of institutions. We challenge this view by arguing that there is an inherent political dimension in the corrupt behavior of public officials. To make our case, we concentrate on the corrupt behavior of public officials entrusted with the power to implement public rules in a liberal democracy. Although not necessarily unlawful, their corrupt behavior is politically wrong to the extent that it consists in an abuse of public power that contradicts surreptitiously the requirement of public justification that undergirds the public order. Therefore, we can find politically relevant instances of corruption also within institutions that are not per se corrupt.

Keywords: Corruption, Institutions, Liberal democracy, Responsibility, Professional ethics.

notizie di POLITEIA, XXXIV, 129, 2018. ISSN 1128-2401 pp. 35-49