

Il valore strumentale delle identità collettive

ANNA ELISABETTA GALEOTTI

The Instrumental Value of Collective Identity

Abstract: In this paper I will deal with identity only as collective identity, and not as personal identity which raises complex metaphysical questions. I shall start my argument by contextualizing the issue of collective identity which became relevant in the discussion on multiculturalism in the Nineties, and was known under the label of “identity politics”. The thesis that I want to defend is as follows: the claim to identity recognition grasps an important insufficiency of the universalistic approach of liberal and democratic theory. Yet, such insufficiency is neither properly analyzed nor adequately addressed. I propose a negative approach to collective identity, for this notion, if used in the negative, allows to see practices of discrimination, oppression and exclusion; if, by contrast, it is used in the positive to ground a model of just society, turns out to be a problematic proposal, at odds with some cherished ideals of the liberal democratic society. The paper is articulated in the following section: section 1: what is the problem of injustice which identity politics was supposed to remedy? Section 2: what are the problems engendered by identity politics to the ideals of liberal democracy. Section 3: which reinterpretation of collective identity can address the issue raised in section (1) without causing the troubles analyzed in section (2)?

Keywords: Collective identity, Identity politics, Universalism, Discrimination, Exclusion.

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