

Language and law between exclusion and inclusion – Prof. Salvatore Di Piazza

The project aims to reflect on the relationship - complex and articulated - between linguistic practices and the exercise of forms of violence and discrimination, and on the role that law plays (and can play) in this intertwining. If, in fact, on the one hand, language is one of the human being's most specific ways of creating community and strengthening the social bonds of the *polis*, on the other hand, it can be a form - again, entirely specific to the human animal - of exercising violence that is not necessarily less dangerous and destructive than physical violence.

One of the most typical manifestations of such violence exercised through language is that - rancorous and explicitly aggressive - represented by hate speech. This expression refers to any linguistic-expressive form whose purpose is to insult or denigrate members of a social group identified by characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation, or otherwise arouse hostility towards them. This is probably the most extreme and problematic form of violent speech, the one that most tests the patient forbearance that freedom of expression by its very nature requires.

Hate speech is, in fact, as brutal as language can be, the linguistic expression of the rejection of the other as a human being: the use of language to draw the Us/Them borderline in ontologically irrevocable terms, as an act of expulsion of the other from the sight of acceptable things.

The project sets out to initiate an investigation into the functioning and nature of the word that wounds, discriminates and excludes, starting with a series of hate-expression questions, immunising them, as it were, from any form of limitation. In this way, however, other issues would become central and cannot be postponed: would there not be a risk - symmetrically to what has been said above - of encouraging in this way that societies that call themselves democratic and liberal become hostile and repulsive environments for entire categories of subjects? Should we not somehow balance the right to freedom of expression with the right to other equally sacred values of the constitutional charter? What alternatives - linguistic and legal - should be proposed, since the two just presented often appear extreme and ultimately ineffective?