

The Work and Life Ethics at the Beginning of the 21st Century and the Vulnerability of Long-Term Unemployed over 45 Years Old in Spain since the Economic Crisis of 2008

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Abstract : In this paper, we will conduct an analysis of the results of the I+D+i research project "New types of socio-existential vulnerability, support and care in Spain" (VULSOCU) (2016-20). This project had the objective to analyze the new types of vulnerability that are the result of the combination of several factors as the economic crisis, the unemployment, the transformations of the Welfare State, the individualization, etc. We have, therefore, analyzed the way that Spanish long-term unemployed over 45 years experience vulnerability and its consequences on their lives. We have focused on long-term unemployed over 45 that had previously developed stable career paths and have been looking for a job for two years or more. In order to carry out this analysis, we will try to break the dichotomy between the social and the individual, between the socio-historical and the subjectivity, to overcome some of the limits of the research on unemployment. The fieldwork consisted of more than ten focus groups and fifty in-depth interviews. The work and life ethics completely changed at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the nineteenth century, companies had trouble maintaining their staff, but in the 21st century, unemployed workers feel that they are useless people. Workers value themselves if they have a job. This unveils that labor is a comprehensive social relationship in capitalist societies. In general, unemployed workers are not able to analyze their unemployment as a social problem. They analyze their unemployment as an individual problem. They blame themselves for their unemployment; instead of taking into account that there are millions of unemployed, they talk about themselves as if they were on their own. And the problems caused by unemployment are explained as psychological problems and are medicalized. Anyway, it is important to highlight that this is the result of an ideology and a social relationship that is part of our historical time.

Keywords : life ethics, work ethics, unemployment, unemployed over 45 years old

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