Work, Body, and Injustice. The Critical Potential of Contemporary Social Philosophy

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This research framework made it possible to organize seminars and meetings in Granada and Madrid in 2023 and 2024. In these events, the authors of the contributions gathered in this special issue were able to discuss approaches and methodologies informed by critical theory, open to interdisciplinarity and committed to a sound application of the results of social philosophy research. Although the chair has conducted quantitative research, updating the data from a reference work[1], these studies are based on the conviction that without qualitative research, the structural dimensions of physical violence cannot be accurately captured. And without this dimension, which is central to understanding *structural injustice*, it is impossible to develop ambitious policies to combat exclusion, domination and exploitation of bodies.

1 J.L. Moreno Pestaña, Carlos Bruquetas Callejo, "Sobre el capital erótico como capital cultural", *Revista Internacional de Sociología*. 74, 1 (mar. 2016), e024., https://doi.org/10.3989/ris.2016.74.1.024.

Moreover, this set of papers gives a complete account of classical sources and an updated state-of-art related to the philosophy of work, providing helpful tools to early stage research and PhD candidates intending to pursuit research in this applied field of social philosophy. In short, the knowledge provided can be useful for political activists fighting against violence against the body in all its forms.

As editors, we have sought to articulate the contributions on two levels. The first two propose a normative and analytical framework to explore the meaning of bodily harm and to offer possible theoretical and political responses to the difficulty of making it visible today. The last two articles present case studies: one centered on practices in the field of cultural creation and management, and another on the imposition of bodily–aesthetic imperatives on women aspiring to hold important positions in the political sphere. In all cases, priority has been given to situated knowledge produced by the researchers, which speaks especially to the Iberian and Latin American contexts. This special issue also seeks to bring into international debate perspectives and diagnoses that have not received the attention they deserve in the field of the philosophy of labor—largely because of their commitment to ambitious and critical research designs, distant from the reliance on quantitative databases as a standard of legitimacy for overly abstract exploration. The case studies addressed here instead focus on interviews with workers who have personally experienced bodily suffering in the workplace, as well as on the analysis of the normativity disseminated and imposed by the media. Yet in none of these cases are the approaches carried out from a supposed epistemic superiority over the experiences captured by the researcher. Rather, the aim has been to ensure that the analyses can have a transformative impact on the societies that endure the forms of exploitation and domination the papers inspect.

The paper *A Bodily Normativity for Neoliberal Work: A Social Philosophy Approach*, by Pablo López Álvarez, Clara Navarro Ruiz and Nuria Sánchez Madrid (Complutense University of Madrid). The article sketches a normative framework for analyzing bodily harm in contemporary work settings through three recent paradigms: Christophe Dejours' psychodynamics of work, José Luis Moreno Pestaña's theory of bodily exploitation, and Lisa Herzog's reflections on economic democracy. Drawing on the articulation of these perspectives, the authors explore the institutional and governmental challenges raised by labor domination and exploitation, arguing for the need to extend legal

recognition and protection to normative blind spots that have become entrenched in contemporary workplaces. Platform labor is examined as a particularly revealing case of the ongoing crisis of the productive and labor model, insofar as the algorithmic governance of work processes stands at odds with the temporalities of bodily recuperation and the formation of subjectivity. The contribution, grounded in a broad review of the state of the art, seeks to provide a normative basis for illuminating the legal and social challenges posed by the concealment of corporeality and human finitude within the dominant productive frameworks of the European and global labor sphere.

The second contribution in this special issue—*On the Exploitation of the Body. Exclusion, Domination, and Exploitation: Three Threads of a Weave*, by José Luis Moreno Pestaña (University of Granada), takes stock of an extensive research on the mechanisms and categorical as well as political patterns that produce bodily exploitation in contemporary work environments. Through an analysis structured around the identification of processes of exclusion, domination, and exploitation, the author calls for a political reading of the tensions and contradictions that the contemporary working subject is compelled to confront, denouncing the excessive demands that the neoliberal labor framework imposes on bodies and on their conditions of reproduction. Drawing on a historical approach that revisits Hegel's and Marx's reflections on the centrality of the working body, and under guidelines inspired by Bourdieu, Gramsci and Althusser materialist critical theory and marxism, the article situates the present transformation of corporeality as a key dimension of new work cultures. This transformation complicates the web of demands that today's working subject must meet, with particular attention to the axes of social class, race, and gender, which render some bodies more vulnerable than others to experiences of exclusion and exploitation.

The second part of the dossier presents case studies that provide decisive material confirmation of the analyses and theoretical proposals set out in the first two articles. The third article—*Bodies and Work: A Study on Jobs in the Service and Cultural Sectors*, by Nuria Peist (University of Barcelona) and Francisco Carballo (University of Salamanca)— inaugurates this line of inquiry by focusing on the physical harm, emotional strain, and aesthetic pressures experienced by workers in both the cultural industry and the service sector (notably supermarkets), where the authors identify a crucial entanglement of

economic and cultural exploitation. Drawing on interviews with workers in these sectors, the article brings to light immaterial obstacles—often obscured by the apparent allure of certain artistic professions—such as servility, anomie, and competitiveness, which hinder a more sustainable exercise of professions marked by conflicting normative demands that the individual subject cannot resolve alone. In the face of the high levels of suffering generated by such labor models, the authors advocate for the delineation of what they term "realizable utopias": frameworks capable of aligning the objective performance of specific work tasks with the conditions of bodily reproduction, which they interpret as a basic democratic demand of contemporary societies.

The fourth and final contribution of this special issue —*Beauty Tax: The Unfair Price Women Pay in Politics*, by Jessica Melo Rivetti (University of São Paulo/University of Granada)— focuses on the aesthetic pressure directed at President Dilma Rousseff during her tenure in Brazil, examining her gradual adaptation to dominant standards of feminine beauty that confine women to roles such as protective and discreet mothers. The author analyzes and identifies the rigid drives of bodily control that operate in the public sphere, imposing specific physical traits as prerequisites for performing functions that ought to be concerned with the public interest and the proper administration of common goods. In doing so, the article provides an important element for denouncing the obstacles that undermine democratic health and gender equality in Latin America, as well as the hypocritical frameworks underlying what is commonly understood as meritocracy.

This final contribution also reflects the editors' intention to bring together critical perspectives on bodily exploitation in labor from both Southern Europe and Latin America, thereby fostering the epistemic balance needed for the analyses, diagnoses, and normative evaluations gathered in this special issue. We would also like to express our gratitude to the editors-in-chief of *Ethics, Politics & Society* at the University of Minho, Nicola Piras and Daniele Santoro, for welcoming the proposal to devote this space to a set of Euro-American studies in the social philosophy of labor, as well as for their support throughout the entire process of review and editorial production.