

## EDITORIAL

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Nowadays, in the discourse of the social, legal, political and philosophical sciences, the term "vulnerability" is used more and more frequently with different, and sometimes even contradictory, meanings. This is even truer when political consequences are drawn from the definition of certain individuals or social groups as "vulnerable". In particular, one cannot forget that the term "vulnerability" assumes a stigmatizing and disciplining character when used in risk management studies in contemporary social policy, where the objective is the identification of the "most vulnerable" social groups, in order to adopt standardized assessment strategies and to implement measures aimed at limiting social costs through the creation of resilient individuals able to find first of all in themselves, thanks to the techniques of behaviorist psychology, the resources to reduce their "vulnerability".

In the legal field, the category of "vulnerable subjects" or "weak subjects" appears in various sectors - criminal procedure, labor law, administrative law, etc. It is used to identify groups of people that supposedly require particular rules, procedures, and practices, because of their alleged "weakness". Many are the groups qualified by law as "weak" or "vulnerable". Within them there are people with very different characteristics, such as women, children, the disabled, and victims of violence. From the legal point of view these categorizations raise acute concern, because they involve directly fundamental legal concepts such as autonomy, equality, and self-determination.

Given the extensive use of the "vulnerability" rhetoric in a wide range of disciplinary fields, it is important to understand and compare the most common conceptions of "vulnerability" in philosophical, legal, political and social language. This analysis will lead to a re-signification of the term, in order to separate the notion of "vulnerability" from stereotypes that tend to paint the so-called "vulnerable groups" or "vulnerable subjects" as victims. Framed in these terms, the term "vulnerability" opens up the possibility of a fruitful dialogue between theory and activism of historically marginalized and disadvantaged social groups, who are among the first to bear the costs of the austerity and welfare cuts of

contemporary neoliberal policies, but who are also often the first to challenge their own qualification as "vulnerable".

This edition has papers organized in three special sections about vulnerability: 1) The philosophical perspectives; 2) the philosophical - juridical debates; 3) the sociological perspectives.

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