

*Book Review*¹

Edited by Mario Cusinato

Golini A., Rosina A. (Eds.) (2011). *Il secolo degli anziani. Come cambierà l'Italia [The Elderly century. How Italy will change]*. Bologna: Il Mulino, pp. 225.

This book discusses about aging from different viewpoints. After an initial exhaustive introduction written by the two editors, the first part of the book opens up with a study on demographics and its connection to health.

In the first chapter, the authors Graziella Caselli and Viviana Egidi, introduce the topic of health in seniors over 70. Today, and in the future, we can expect a greater life expectancy and health, due to a significant decrease of the risk of death for cancer or cardiovascular diseases. The chapter, then, expands on other topics, including an interesting gender comparison in terms of causes of death.

The second chapter, edited by Antonio Mussino, deals with the geography of aging and demographic discomfort. The author shows how in many Italian cities the effects of a continuous increase of mean age and an emphasized fertility decrease are evident, determining together with immigration flows and job market difficulties, a demographic discomfort, especially in the south of the country.

The second part of the book, deals with family and housing, and opens up with a chapter edited by Cecilia Tomassini and Giovanni Lanura. The authors underline how, in our country, there is an increasing lack of public as well as private structures for the assistance of the non self-sufficient elderly. The ancient custom of cohabiting with seniors, after the second world war, has been replaced by new and diverse marriage and cohabiting forms. In this new context, young couples tend to live away from their parents, mostly for

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professional reasons, and are no longer able to guarantee their assistance and thus need to be replaced in this role of care.

Giandomenico Amendola, in the fourth chapter, highlights the need for cities to reorganize urban spaces allowing to the growing population of elderly to actively participate in, utilize and enter society. The author proposes models that account for the possibility of comfortably aging in the same place, thanks to technology (smart home), but with special attention to social relations as a fundamental factor in the perceived wellness of senior citizens.

In the third part of the book, Vincenzo Galasso and Marco Leonardi discuss the issue of work and retirement. The current historical period surely is especially sensitive to this theme, as we probably face an important transition. The previous age, fosterer of “baby” retirements according to the logic of public assistance, heavily conditioned the country as it caused an exorbitant debt and lack of mature workers capable of producing social security. The new generations are now facing the effects of this logic, rising important questions on the future of welfare in our country.

Andrea Brandolini and Alfonso Rosolia illustrate, in the sixth chapter, the relationship between population aging and expenditure agenda, consumes, and income accumulation with special attention to theories of the life cycle. If generations that aged in the past ten years are blessed by an adequate welfare, due to government choices made during the 90’s, the same is not true for the future generations. They, in fact, will have to face the austerity of the current job market situation and fewer retirement benefits than today’s workers.

In Chapter seven, referring to the forth part of the book that deals with the theme “Society and Generations”, Maria Luisa Mirabile underlines the need to recapture a new image of the elderly as a resources. Today’s elders are increasingly active participants in society, thanks to various kind of voluntary sector. The author deepens the theme, showing how today’s seniors more predominantly participate to the life of the country than youth and in precious decades, bringing a substantial contribute to society.

The grandparents-grandchildren relationship is the central theme of the last chapter of the book, edited by Chiara Saraceno. Being a grandparent is a gift given to human being starting from the middle of the XVII century, due to a longer life expectancy. The chapter expands on the meaning of being a grandparent from multiple viewpoints and rises up how research still knows little about this special relation connecting two generations in what are opposite phases of life.

The text is coherently and exhaustively written. The reader get involved through all chapters as in a continuum. The authors often use clearly interpreted graphs and allow every type of readers to make use of its multivariate contents. The test, thus, represents an interesting and complete contribute to a definitely up-to-date topic, from which everyone can derive cogitative afterthoughts. Clearly, the book can attract a professional audience as well: psychologists,

sociologists, demographers and, why not, politicians and businessmen interested in the possibility of future investments.

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L'Abate L. (2011). *The Seven Pleasures of Life. Making Way for the Upside in the Midst of Modern Demands*. Praeger. Santa Barbara, CA. pp. 225. ISBN 978-0-313-39579-6.

The Seven Sources of Pleasure in Life is a easy-to-read book for researchers and the general public interested in positive psychology and resilience with special focus on happiness and subjective well being. In the preface, the author discusses the need for more focused attention to pleasure, as “*functionality, contentment and satisfaction in life are related to the ratio of pleasures over displeasures, or joys over hurts*” (p. xi). The author warns about researchers and clinicians having lost sight to the “*upside of life and its pleasures*” (p. xi) highlighting the importance of factors and events that bring smiles, laughter, emotional and spiritual rewards, and fine memories in improving overall health. The goal of the volume is “to increase sensitivity for how to convert and transform every-day, taken-for-granted survival sources and resources into pleasures” (p. xii).

The author identifies and introduces 7 sources of pleasure (art & creativity; avocations; being, doing and having; food; music; play; and body) while presenting specific and concrete scientific evidences of the link between them and health, well-being and wellness. He explores the vitally important experience of pleasure, with humor and personal anecdotes and offers practical exercises for infusing one's life with greater pleasures.

Hedonic experiences has been traditionally found somehow inappropriate, connected to instinctual tensions and shunned in favor of emotions and processes considered more adaptive (anger, depression, and grief). Increasing our sensibility to everyday moments or opportunity that bring pleasures can allow us to appreciated and fully experience “our wills, whims, and the wonders of our bodies” (p. 2). The sources of pleasure are not an utterly non productive use of time, as they bring invaluable health and wellbeing. Fitting pleasures in a busy lifestyle, in as reciprocal exchange with others, can provide.

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Gøsta Esping-Andersen (2011). **The unfinished revolution. Women, families, and welfare.** Bologna: Mulino, pp. 239.

Although in today's Western democracies the rights and duties of citizens seem to have shot down at least formally the rock of sex discrimination in daily practice, the participation of women in public life stands for its limited membership. "The question of gender inequality ultimately has to do with the disparity in terms of freedom" (Sen, 2000, p. 175), this is not a freedom that goes exclusively by the shapes of modern law, but of a freedom that redraws the geometric boundaries of female mobility.

Gøsta Esping-Andersen, in his book "The Unfinished Revolution – Women, families, welfare" defines the process of emancipation as a social revolution. It is precisely in this assumption that the author places the focal point of his work. He argues that over the centuries women worked, invested and fought to achieve "the less obvious, but definitely not least, revolutionary transformation represented by the change of status of women. We can say that the quiet revolution of the female role (...) is a bitter rival of new technologies (...) but has not yet reached maturity"(p. 11). The author wonders about what are, in Western society, the major factors that hinder the fulfillment of women's revolution.

The researcher defines "unfinished revolution" the path of women's emancipation, as already in the first decade of the third millennium, in the most ancient and enduring Western democracies, the discrimination between the two sexes are tangible items, and much studied, albeit not effective in reducing almost totally different accessibility to gender equality while preserving differences and specificities of individuals.

The author analyses the process of emancipation of women paying great attention to comparing international data on the themes of independence and fairness, not neglecting economic policies in support of the family, relations between intra-and inter-domestic partners and topics such as procreation, and aging. The text is enriched in every chapter, by an updated bibliography and references to empirical research. His attention to international data comparison allows the reader to make wide-ranging reflections on the status of women and the consequent impacts on civil society. The falling birth rates, the difficulties in earning an income and in being able to secure a capital in a dignified manner to support retirement years, represent social wounds far from negligible.

The scholar should be given credit for having analyzed the condition of gender inequality flexibly and having put the attention on the dynamics acted in the contemporary historical context while anticipating their future if the process of gender equality continued to grow so slow.

The text in each part is unaffected by an ideology of recrimination and rejection of civil commitments, and indeed looks appears updated and critic.

The author at several points, recovering structured theory from big names in social sciences, raises several critics on assumptions often re-elaborated, but are now useless in interpreting and understanding contemporary social context. “The Unfinished Revolution – Women, families, welfare” offers many considerable opportunities for reflection and represents a valid reading text. The text must be acknowledged the merit of being very updated in citations of scientific production. In several parts the text is dull and slow making it difficult to maintain the reader's attention to the interpretative thesis proposed by the author. Some points are at risk of being omitted because of a loose interest. Another weak point of the reviewed book is poor attention to the analysis of issues technically less obvious than the economic such as those of care, distribution of households, but just as binding in the production of social development to accompany the complete emancipation of women. Little space is given, in fact, to the analysis of gender representations and the emotional-cognitive aspects binding the construction of human relationships and their consequent community structures.

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