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Review of the Book: Joanna K. Wawrzyniak, *Starość człowieka – szanse i zagrożenia. Implikacje pedagogiczne [Human Old Age – Opportunities and Threats. Pedagogical Implications]*, Wydawnictwo CEDEWU, Warszawa 2017

Old age is now one of the most serious challenges facing policymakers at all levels – from the local level to the international level. The concept has been unfamiliar to philosophy and history over the years. As science develops and new disciplines emerge, it is also used by sociologists, demographers, educationalists and political scientists. This latter provenance provides the rationale for a review of Joanna K. Wawrzyniak’s position. Once read, this text can serve as a basis for political science research (especially applied research) and, above all, as an excellent compendium of expert knowledge for practitioners of political science and administration dealing with security, social/public and economic policy. In particular, it would be beneficial for those working in the field of social policy and public administration to gain an understanding of the social aspects of old age.

The author of this monograph has set herself the task of describing a subject that is difficult but interesting and, in the usual sense, unattractive and unpleasant. Nevertheless, such threads are important for politics. Especially given the contemporary role of political scientists in sharpening the functionalist paradigm.

The first chapter deals with activating the lives of elderly people in the last phase of their existence, entitled *Aktywność i aktywizacja seniorów*. Wawrzyniak presents the view that activity is the driving force behind a successful old age, *ergo* the concept of successful ageing. The first subchapter describes what these concepts are. The second links them to professional and social activity and to a broader quality of life based on good health. In the second section, the author characterises the types of mobilisation activities implemented in old age. She adopted the seven-area perspective put forth by Grażyna Orzechowska. The third section has a closer look at the issue of activation areas. One by one, the author lists the correlated possible dynamising activities. Social practice supports the examples. And in the fourth extract, he enumerates the determinants of a successful old age.

The second part of the monograph, entitled *Społeczne postrzeganie starości i ludzi starych*, addresses a highly pertinent topic. There is a political component. In the first section, the author delineates the sociological shifts in the perception of old age. It is also important to consider the issue of redefining the concept of old age and the language used



to describe it. It is notable that there is no uniformity in the representation of old age throughout history. The second paragraph shows the life of the elderly in the context of the family. Wawrzyniak posits that the contemporary parental model and the stereotyping of old age are pivotal in shaping attitudes and negative behaviours, even unconsciously. Furthermore, it draws attention to the discrepancy in the portrayal of the elderly between urban and rural contexts. The third passage addresses the issue of stereotyping and the role of the media in shaping perceptions of old age. The author presents a clear and unambiguous negative perspective on the subject. The penultimate part touches on the significant role of education. Wawrzyniak underscores the fact that this phenomenon is linked to culture and to stereotypes. The duality of the old age stereotype is described in the final subchapter.

The third chapter of the book is an essential contribution to policymaking, and in particular to the building of a capable policy. It presents societal attitudes towards old age which, taken together, create a negative rather than a positive image of old age. She identifies marginalisation as the first of these. It should be noted that discrimination is not far behind, as the author also points out. Additionally, she presents the English-language version of the term, which is becoming increasingly prevalent in international discourse – ageism. Discrimination against senior citizens is a phenomenon that manifests in many contexts. Wawrzyniak points to areas such as health, the labour market, social welfare, institutions and offices, public communication and public participation. Each of these issues is considered in some detail. The second paragraph is devoted to the social exclusion of older people. Social exclusion mainly manifests itself in the limitations experienced by senior citizens and in failing to participate in important areas of social life. Significantly, he refers to social exclusion as a systemic issue (p. 70). In the third part, the author highlights a relatively new phenomenon, social gerontophobia, and in the fourth part, she presents the problem of delaying old age. These two facts are both contemporary and variable. The final sub-part is devoted to the issue of labour force participation as a form of postponing old age. In this context, Wawrzyniak proposes the limitation of early retirement.

The penultimate extract is entitled *Samotność i sieroctwo seniorów*. These difficulties are interrelated. Pointing out the phenomenon of loneliness and the changes in family care in the 21st century, the author discusses the issue in a synthetic way.

The first paragraph is a description of tasks and development opportunities in old age. These goals are close to science and the wisdom of life. In contrast, the author emphasises the problem of reduced economic status. In the second, he explains how important and needed it is to prepare to become a doyen. In the third subchapter, the author develops five areas of gerontological prevention according to Zofia Szarota. They are the following: biological, psychological, intellectual, social, economic. The context of gerontological prevention is the subject of the fourth part. Wawrzyniak points to the indispensability of education for life in old age. *Konieczność (coraz) wcześniejszej edukacji* is the title of the fifth subchapter. The author presents a perspective on the interrelationship between social policy and gerontological prevention. In the last subchapter of the book, the role of social policy in gerontological prevention is shown. Recommendations from the international level, the central level and the specialist level are quoted.

Dr Joanna K. Wawrzyniak's monograph is undoubtedly worthy of consideration from a political science perspective. The publication is not a new one, and a review of it can

already be found online¹. Nevertheless, I have decided to reflect on it once again, given the importance of the issue raised and the increasing politicisation of policies for older people.

The topicality of the subject discussed by the author should certainly be emphasised. A well-designed policy for senior citizens should consider all the aspects that are raised in this book. It is noteworthy that the monograph is written in an accessible style. It is not extensive, but it covers key issues affecting senior citizens. In the context of the aforementioned themes, the proposed opportunities and threats encompass both economic and social issues. It is evident that these implications extend beyond the realm of pedagogy. The issue of marginalisation and discrimination of older people is central to the development of effective policy (especially politics). Describing these phenomena, about which relatively little is said in the Polish public sphere, is valuable from a decision-making perspective. Furthermore, in the context of increasing life expectancy, it is crucial to acknowledge the phenomenon of delayed old age. Especially as this challenge is becoming an increasingly important social issue due to the mediatisation of everyday life, the dominance of physical fitness and the cult of the body. In this respect, the advisory and decision-making bodies that are directly responsible for local policy in the public sphere (local authorities, foundations, associations) should demonstrate a high level of activity. They can effectively help to tame old age. As a result, this issue, which is still new to Poland, can be of strategic importance in the second half of the 21st century, and it is no less urgent to highlight this issue than the previous ones. The author's description of the opportunities and threats of old age is also a demonstration of the predictive function of science, which is so rare, and this is undoubtedly one of the book's merits. Regarding economic and social discrimination against older people, she gave broad examples of where it occurs, e.g. in healthcare, the labour market, social welfare, institutions and offices, public communication and public participation. At least in this respect, the work benefits from greater thematic universality, and in terms of content, it undoubtedly addresses state (local government) problems. It should be noted that there are no strictly legal or decision-making recommendations, but this does not alter the fact that the very description of the issues should make well-organised policy-makers aware of Wawrzyniak's expertise.

It is crucial for legislators to recognise the benefits of lifelong education, as highlighted in the introduction and conclusion. These elements also emphasise the causal role of communities and institutions. When juxtaposed with the axiology, these elements provide substantial evidence to support the argument that old age in the present era has been linked to politics to a greater extent than ever before. An essential aspect of the reality in which each one of us lives is brought to light. Additionally, the author underscored the challenging aspects of ageing and statehood, elucidating each country's pursuit of economic growth.

The advantages are the legibility of the print and the Wawrzyniak's flow. It is the reviewer's belief that this book will be an easy read and, more importantly, that there will be a lot of enjoyment and learning to be had from it. The monograph's advice is also valuable and inspiring for policy-makers in Central and Eastern Europe, where the problem of an ageing population is becoming increasingly apparent.

¹ A. Wierciszewska, "Zeszyty Naukowe WSG" – series: "Edukacja-Rodzina-Społeczeństwo" 2018, vol. 3, pp. 343–346.

This monograph also has some weaknesses. The introduction outlines the objectives of the work, but does so in a brief manner. Among the shortcomings are the lack of reference to the state of research in 2017 and the paucity of methodological aspects of the work. These are the two biggest downsides of the work. From the perspective of modern science, the description, although interesting and important, is fraught with methodological gaps and is a serious caveat for any author's workshop. The work does not present any methodological concepts.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the potential disadvantages of the book do not outweigh the advantages in terms of enriching the knowledge of policy-makers. A review was conducted with this perspective in mind. It is certainly valuable reading and should lead to greater interest in the fate of senior citizens, especially in countries where this process is not yet as noticeable as, for example, in the western countries of the European Union.

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