



Research Article

Aging and professors emeriti: A personal view

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#The welfare crisis has weakened trust between generations, which requires a new pact between them. It seems obvious that the covenant is no longer based on the receiving and returning that has been successful for about two thousand years.

Remo Bodei (1938-2019)

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Everything started in the myth

The role of Pandora

“Driven by her unstoppable curiosity —stimulated by Epimetheus the fterthinker Titan God, her husband, —Pandora disobeyed: she opened the jar and all the evils came out of it, which furiously rushed upon the world: old age, jealousy, illness, pain, madness and vice fell upon humanity. At the bottom of the jar remained only hope (Hepes “expectation”), which did not have time to go away because the box was closed again [1].

The jelausy of Hera towards Leto

Hera after discovery of Zeus affair with Leto forbade her to delivery on land and she had to be moved to Delos, then a floating isle, where she delivered Apollo and Artemis.

In 426 BC, during the Peloponnesian War, Athens decreed a “purification ” of Delos.

This involved removing all burials and prohibiting any births or deaths on the sacred island. The bodies were relocated to the nearby island of Rínea, and people were forbidden from being born or dying on Delos itself.

Terminally ill people were transported to Rínea, as well as pregnant women, as their time drew near.

In Roman time (after 166 CE) the number of inhabitants was more than 30,000. Now there are 24 inhabitants.

Heracles confronted with Geras

Getting old is often synonymous with dying. However from

amphorae in the British Museum, Louvre, Cerveteri we know that Actic vase painters knew that Heracles, besides fighting many enemies of humankind (Nemean lion, Boar of Erymanthos, Man eating birds on Lake Stymphalos, for a total of 12 labors) he confronted also with Geras, the god of old age. No other ancient texts reports on this fight, but Actic vase painters knew.

What is the old age?

The Bible and the Gospels

“Lenght of days is not what makes age honourable

Not numbers of years the true measure of life”.

Wisdom 4, 8

“When adam was a hundred and thirty years old he fathered a son and called him Seth.Adam lived for eight hundred years after the birth of Seth and he fathered son and daughters. In all, Adam lived for nine hundred and thirty years, the he died”,

“When Seth was hundred and five years old he afthered Henosch. After the birth of Henosch he lived for eight hunred and seven years, and he fathered sons and daughter. In all Seth lived for nine hundred and twelve years, then he died”

Omitting the complete list we may go directly to Noah who was born from Lamech at the age of hundren and eighty-two years.

“After the birth of Noah Lamech lived nine hundred and ninety-five years and fathered sons and daughters”. Noah, in turn, “when he was five hundred years old fathered Shem, Ham and and Jafeth”: In other words patriarches were longlive and fertile nearly to end

of their life and “fathered sons and daughters Genesis (5,5-5,32.

“in all truth I tell you, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put a belt around you and take you where you would rather not go” John 21, 18.

Various definitions

Old age has been defined “L’età del desiderio/The age of desire” [2], L’età sperimentale /The experimental age” [3], / L’età da inventare /The age to be invented [4], “L’età grande/Advanced age (Caramore G, 2023), Aging a problem for artists /Altern als Probleme für Künstler, Gottfried Benn, 1954).

For François Mitterand (1916-1996), who needed palliative care for a terminal prostate cancer, “the old is an age when the body is broken on the threshold of infinity, we lose all our faculties and are forced to stretch out our hands”. For Philip Roth (Everyman, 2006) “Old age isn’t a battle, is a massacre. It’s like the body is in a war you are losing”.

In “Sailing to Byzantium “, 1927) William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) wrote:

“That is no country for old men. The young

In one another’s arms, birds in the trees,

—Those dying generations—at their song,”

[...]

“An aged man is but a paltry thing,

A tattered coat upon a stick, unless

Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing

For every tatter in its mortal dress,”.

When you are little

Artists catch the soul of the times. Simone Cristicchi has won the 2025 San Remo Song Festival in Italy by chanting the frailty of his mother who after a cerebral hemorrhage has permanent damage.

“When you’re little, I’ll help you understand who you are

I’ll be by your side like I’ve never been before

We’ll slow down the pace if I walk too fast

I’ll speak for you if your voice gets stuck

We’ll play remembering how many kids you have

That you were born on March 20th, ‘46

If you ask why you have that ring on your fingers

I’ll tell you about my dad, your husband

I’ll teach you to stand on your own

To find your way back home.

The age to be invented

Two centuries ago childhood was “invented “. It was understood that the child was a person with his dignity, in need of protection and specific attention. We now have to “invent “ old age. What is the human, social and spiritual meaning of this new time (twenty-thirty years) of life? Let’s not forget: rather than life itself, old age has lengthened...we are part of a mass elderly population... and we have no references or models to look up to [4].

Health Inequalities shorten life spans by decades

Göran Thornborn (The killing fields of inequalities) has reported that in London moving East on the Jubilee Line 6 months are lost for each stop for a total gap in life expectancy of 9.2 years between the richest and the poorest.

At the two extremes of the Washington metro the difference between poor and rich quarters may well reach 20 years of age. In Turin (Italy) there is a tram that on its route from the mythical hill, where Family Agnelli lives, to the periphery, shrinks life span of a year per kilometer.

World Health Organisation (WHO) on May 6 published the 2025 Report on Social Determinants of Health Equity where one learns that health inequalities shorten life by decades.

“Social determinants such as lack of quality housing, education and job opportunities can affect people’s health outcomes more than genetic influences or access to health care by causing a dramatic reduction in healthy life expectancy in both high - and low - income countries. People in the country with the lowest life expectancy will live, on average, 33 years less than those born in the country with the highest life expectancy. In short, social determinants of equity may influence people’s health outcomes more than genetic influences or access to health care” [5].

Philosophy and ageing

Philosophy helps in conceptualizing the value of aging. Gianbattista Vico (1668-1744) in *Scienza Nuova* (1725) pointed out that “Both individual men and peoples in general follow an evolutionary path according to which first they feel without noticing, then they perceive with a disturbed and moved soul, finally they reflect with a pure mind”.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) in the penultimate paragraph of the introduction to *The Philosophy of Right* (1820) states: “the owl, sacred to Minerva, Goddess of wisdom, comes out at dusk” which means that only at the end of the day can each individual verify how many and which of the projects started at dawn has been realized.

Adopting complexity as a method

For Edgar Morin, we have to learn how to learn, that is learning by separation while linking at the same time, through a process of contemporary analysis and synthesis. We have to learn to

overcome linear causality (cause–effect) by learning reciprocal, relational, circular causality—the latter encompassing feedback and recursion. Furthermore, we should be aware of the uncertainty of causality. Causes do not always lead to identical effects since the reaction of systems may be different. Last but not least, different causes may be conducive to identical effects. Thus, we have to rise to the challenge of complexity arising from all fields of knowledge and action. To meet the challenge we have to create a new thought”(Einsegner a vivre. Manifeste pour changer l’éducation, 2017).

Complexity has no age. The complexity of ages

Giuseppe Rocco Gembillo, a philosopher of complexity, thinks “that complexity has no age. He departs from the Spanish thinker Ortega y Gasset [6] for whom every society is supported and evolves thanks to the contemporary presence of at least three generations: the young, the adult, the elderly, who are bearers of experiences and, above all, of different needs. Generations are born from one another, so that the new ones already find the forms that the previous ones have given to existence. For each generation, therefore, living is a two-dimensional problem: one consists in receiving the experience - ideas, evaluations, institutions, etc. - from the previous one; the other, in letting one’s spontaneity flow. The attitude of a generation cannot be the same towards what belongs to it and towards what it has received [7].

Young people have been misshandled over the centuries

In Greece at the time of Pericles young people spoke at the end of the assemblies, the seniors at start. A comment attributed to Socrates reads “Young people love luxury”. The Elder Seneca in the *Declamations* wrote “Born feeble and spineless they stay like throughout their lives (*Emolliti nervisque quod nati sunt in vita manent*).

For the great Italian writer Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1378) writing for those who started the Renaissance (1400-1550) “young people are wimps”.

Recently a lot has been written on millennials to discredit them who have been classified as “entitled”. The *Webster Dictionary* says that if you feel “entitled,” then you think that you deserve money or respect even though you have done nothing to earn or deserve it. You think you’re better than other people.

However, as Franz Kafka wrote in *The Hunger* artist (1922) “Youth is happy because it has the capacity to see beauty. Anyone who keeps the ability to see beauty never grows old”.

Indeed a graffiti observed by the writer of this text on the red stones on the Wenner Green Institute in Stockholm in Fall 1968 read “Harvesting the sun”. That fully expressed the real aspiration of the young generation of that time that as was very critical about those above thirty “Do not trust anybody over thirty” (Jack Weimberg, Free Speech Movement”.

Younger people have had difficulties and Bob Dylan chanted (*The Times they Are A Changin*):

Come mothers and fathers / Throughout the land

And don’t criticize / What you can’t understand

Your sons and your daughters / Are beyond your command

Your old road is rapidly agin’

Please get out of the new one if you can’t lend your hand

For the times they are a-changin.

So, only at end of the last century (after 1968) young people acquired a role in the society. That year was crucial because of students’ protests in Berlin, Paris, Belgrade, Prague, Warsaw the year of the first human heart transplan and of the Harvard definition of brain death, the year of Zond 5 (first vehicle to circle the Moon) and the launch of Apollo VII and VIII, the year of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., and of Robert Kennedy.

The creativity of older artists and scientists

The German poet, essayist and physician Gottfried Benn-nominated for a Nobel Prize five times-wrote, in 1954, *Old age* as a problem for the artists [8] that in the last four hundred years 150-200 geniuses determined the cultural progress of Western Europe. Half of them were old-old. Benn reported on three groups of geniuses; the first included 25 sculptors and painters, the second 35 poets and writers and the third a total of 16 composers (Table 1).

A. Painters and sculptors	Age at death		Age at death
Titian	86-88	Michelangelo	89
Frans Hals	86	Goya	82
Hans Thoma	85	Liebermann	88
Munch	81	Degas	83
Bonnard	80	Maillol	83
Donatello	80	Tintoretto	75
Rodin	77	Käthe Kollwitz	78
Renoir	78	Monet	86
James Ensor	89	Menzel	90
Matisse	85	Nolde	89
Gulbransson	85	Hofer	77
Scheibe	75	Klimsch	90
B. Poets and writers			
Goethe	83	Shaw	94
Hamsun	93	Maeterlinck	87
Tolstoj	82	Voltaire	84
Heinrich	68	Mann	80
Ebner Eschenbach	86	Pontoppidan	86
Heidenstam	81	Swift	78
Ibsen	78	Bjørnson	78
Rolland	78	Victor Hugo	83
Tennyson	83	Ricarda Huch	83
Gerhart Hauptmann	84	Lagerlöf	82
Heyse	84	D'Annunzio	75
Spitteler	79	Fontane	79
Gustav	79	Freytag	79
Frenssen	82	Claudel	87
Thomas Mann	80	Hesse	85
Döblin	79	Carossa	78
Dörfler	77	Emil Strauss	94
C. Composers			
Verdi	88	Richard Strauss	85
Pfitzner	80	Heinrich Schütz	87
Monteverdi	76	Gluck	73
Händel	74	Bruckner	72
Palestrina	69	Buxtehude	70
Wagner	70	Georg Alfred Schumann	86
Reznick	85	Auber	89
Cherubini	82	Sibelius	92

Table 1: Age at death of painters and sculptors, poets and writers and of composers [8].

Many artists including David Bailey, Montaigne, Katsushika Hokusai, Henry Moore, Oscar Niemeyer, Picasso, have produced masterpieces when they were old or old-old. Rembrandt painted many self-portraits in the years 1629-1663 and their quality and power did not decay with aging. At Rijks Museum in Amsterdam, one can also admire his Isaac and Rebecca (The Jewish Bride) that has been defined by Roderick Conway Morris “as one of the most exciting studies on aging and on a life lived with fullness”. Michelangelo worked till the last days on La Pietà Rondanini (Milan, Castello Sforzesco), Anton Gaudi worked for La Sagrada Família till his death and Ian Mirò completed *La femme et l’oiseau* when was 90 years old [9].

The Death of Titian

In The death of Titian of Hofmannsthal [10] the scene opens on the Terrace of Titian’s Villa where Titian’s fellow-assistants (Tizianello, Antonio, Gianino, Paris and Page) appear devastated. The verdict of the Titian’s doctor had left no space for hope. The maestro was going to die within a day. However, he continues working hard, more than before on Danae the mythological Argive Princess.

Death of Titian, excerpts

Tomorrow, e’en today, must he end!

On his wild fever he is painting now

With hastily, breathless haste on his new work.

The maids are posing for him; he has sent

Us all away.

He paints with such passion is he rent

As I’ve not seen any other hour...

As tortured by some strange, mysterious power!

The Master calls

For his old paintings, from the garden walls

Why he wants them?

He wishes them, he says

“The pitiful, pale works of earlier days!

I would compare them to this last I paint.”

Shall we do as he bids?

Go, go! Make haste!

Ye cause him pain each moment that ye waste.

He’s quiet now, a radiance as a saint’s,

Shines through his pallor, as he paints and paints...

Benn has very intense notes when he talks about the late old age works of Rilke, Hofmannsthal, Eliot and Gide and expresses his

enthusiasm for those who have focused on the same topic as young as well as old artists [8]. The maximum of his enthusiasm is for the old Leonardo, who after the death or defeat of his protectors takes in 1516 accepted the invitation of Francis I to live as architect of France, at Château de Cloux on the Loire. His patron, offers him four thousand ducats for the Mona Lisa, but Leonardo cannot and does not want to part with it.

“it is his life. For five years, he worked on it, for five years he bent over it, in silence, growing old without showing it to anyone.... There for five years he saw everything for that single internal vision. The king and his entourage found him miserable, but so he kept the painting in his room”

Leonardo had a paralysis in his right arm, with his left he could only draw but not paint. But, soon also his left hand became paralyzed.

When Leonardo died in 1519, a neighbor of his, an icon painter, “approached the easel of the Saint John and expressed himself like this “Unheard of shamelessness, this rascal naked like a slut, without beard or moustache, should be the precursor of Christ? Diabolical vision, do not open my eyes”

A recent multiauthored volume edited by Nadeije Laneyrie-Dagen and Caroline Archat —*L’Art au Rique de l’âge* (Aging and Arts)—discusses many important aspects of Aging and Arts, and specifically the effects of old age on creativity [3]. It reflects the interest of group of historians, critics of art, neurologist, psychoanalysts, philosophers and sociologists—mainly aged—with old age in their horizons. The works of many artists in their late years are illustrated (Table 2). Among them Titian, Duchamp and Louise Bourgeois Georgia O’Keffe, Zhao Wou-ki.

Artiststs	Age at death
Gian Lorenzo Bernini	81
Louise Bourgeois	99
Michelangelo	88
Otto Dix	79
Jean Dubuffet	85
Marcel Duchamp	81
Jean-Auguste Ingres	87
Georgia O’Keffe	99
Pierre Auguste Renoir	79
Titian	87-88
Zao Wou-ki	92

Table 2: The Aged artists of Nadeije Laneyrie-Dagen and Caroline Archat [11].

Titien: la vieillesse au pluriel

The chapter on “Titien: la vieillesse au pluriel, is capturing. The reason is that Giorgio Vasari in *Le vite dei più eccellenti pittori scultori e architetti*, descrizione dell’opere di Tiziano da Cador

pittore (Giunti, Florence 1569), although formally gracious with Titian and affirming appreciation for Titian's last works did not even mention one his works produced after 1550. One shall not forget that in the 1550 edition of his treatise Vasari wrote that it was a pity that in his late years Titian did not accept to consider painting just an hobby (un passatempo) not a work of art. A true denigration, pointing to the idea that after 1550 Titian had lost his great capability of painting details. The reader is confronted with the new findings in the writings of the Marco Boschini [12] where one learns that Giacomo Palma il Giovane (1544-1628) had seen Titian in his atelier in the late years completing the works of his fellows using the fingers more than the brush. In a paragraph entitled "An old painter paints with his fingers" we learn that Vasari identified in the life of Titian (i). the style of his youth, (ii). that of maturity and (iii). the style of decrepitude when the artist painted just spots of color (macchie). Palma identified in the last years of Titian the period of painting with brush and fingers and the period of the painting with fingers only. So in the last years there was a methodological innovation. Titian used his fingers to perform "sfregazzi", a difficult Italian term to explain, indicating "application of pure pigment (not mixed to medium) on dry canvases" [13] The major part of the chapter is dedicated to answer the fundamental question "why old person paint?". Very original piece of research. Titian continues to work on the canvas like an old surgeon or a bone setter, however he has eye problems and his hands shake. In addition, the atelier is very productive, his assistants are creative, but their works need refinements, corrections. He is obliged to use a different approach. His fingers are the substitute, they give him the possibility to give an answer to his insuppressible need to paint, that giving him life and days [13].

Louise Bourgeois

In 2008 Louise Bourgeois had a major exhibition at Capodimonte; not a retrospective, but about seventy new works including the Grande maman. The show taught the Neapolitans that great modern art could be exhibited and enjoyed alongside the great works of the Renaissance that the Museum is proud of. Louise Bourgeois was 98 years old and died the following year [14].

Giorgio de Chirico

Giorgio de Chirico (Volos 1888- Rome 1978) has been defined *Pictor optimus*. In his life he had many different periods of creativity: Metaphysics, Reformed Metaphysics, Classicism, Surrealism and NeoMetaphysics. The latter lasted 10 years (1968-1978) and was based on a the revisiting of paintings and graphic works of the years 1910-1930).

For Roderick Conway Morris "Giorgio de Chirico set himself the unusual goal of "painting that which cannot be seen." The upshot was Metaphysical Art, which sought to reflect strange and elusive psychological landscapes, fugitive states of mind and to capture "the eternity of the moment" in physical form, in paint. The Metaphysical phase of de Chirico's output lasted only from 1910 to 1919, in a career that was to span 70 years, with several changes of direction and style. Metaphysical painting had no clear

antecedents: with its invention de Chirico's position as one of the most original and influential of 20th-century artists was assured.

It was not until he was in his 80s that the artist returned, as it were, to his roots, in his "neo-Metaphysical" phase (1968-74). Old themes were revisited, but this time in toy-town bright colors. And some new themes emerged. No longer disturbing, the works have the eccentric charm of an odd child's picture book" [15].

As Pontiggia wrote "The painter creates at 80, it is not a senile painting but a new adventure, a raid in the field of colors and lights wherein the restlessness of the past is turned into a smiling imperturbability [16].

The artist was very concerned about his late achievements.

"Since long time I paint subjects that are evolutionsof visions, of what appears and the hidden senses of those subjects that I painted earlier for many years" [17].

"These new inspirations and visions – as you may call them— are based on various metaphysical and physical elements. The physical elements include a greater clarity in the general tonality of the painting and the use of the black color, at a greater extent than used in the past. I have always had a particular interest in blackness. The black according to Tintoretto is a color that ennobles the other colors and I agree with him".

Neomethaphysics is born not only through new revelations as those he had in the previous decennials, inspirations that for the painter are evolutions of his famous subjects but also a clear painting with a new brightness that depends on the refined use of black that de Chirico links to the teachings of Tintoretto. Neometaphysics is connected with cartoons and to Pop Art (Andy Wahrol) ispiried by the language of cartoons, that has elected de Chirico as reference painter [17].

Indeed the Neometaphycs

"was the final bright period of the long and productive life giving to de Chirico in the years 1968-1978 a new way of conceiving and understanding art and at a certain extent also life. A way to trespass the borders". "His last period recalls that of Picasso, he painted figures, themes, stylistic features of his rich past composing them, disassembling them, reassembling them with a sense of playing". Visions of a creative genius who deals with life that ends". "At the end of his life de Chirico makes new and extreme discoveries. The art of discovery renders life possible and reconciles it to the mother Eternity. The discovery allows to pay a tribute to the minotaur that humans call "Time". [18].

The artist reconciles himself with the eternity by walking unknown territories beyond the frontiers of time. Thus Neometaphysics appears a long and confident dialogue with life, death, immortality of art and a soul"[19].

Roger Dadoun

Roger Dadoun (1928-2022), former professor of Comparative Literature at Diderot University in Paris, in the Manifeste pour une

vieillesse ardente [20] raises many points for discussion and reflection.

“Man has lived through time as an instrument accumulating and preserving knowledge, and as a condition for their systematic transmission. And time, concretely, is age. Advancing in years means increasing one’s knowledge and becoming its custodian. The elderly person, a true repository of collective knowledge, assumes a vital function for the group. Thanks to their experience, the elderly are called upon to watch over the continuity, cohesion, balance, and self-regulation of the group. To age is to oversee”.

Dadoun also thinks that now seniors have the potential of “Creating a mythical movement of affirmation and recognition of old age, the advanced age - agonizing and paradoxical, which in this third millennium possesses the strength of numbers and political potential - would be able to face a society dominated by fantasies of impetuous youth and the easy enthusiasms of mature and “handsome” men in the prime of life”...“Growing and affirming as a senior, advanced age could - call to mind utopia, make its entrance into history, bringing awareness of memory, prudence, distance, and perhaps wisdom. All qualities that would offer humanity the possibility of a future, of a new era...freshly painted with the colors of the present”.

Dadoun discussed extensively about the individual contribution of artists and scientist personal list of aged artists On which we have built (Table 3) starting with Marculs Tullius Cicero. (106 BCE-43 BCE) and ending with the philosopher and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari (1930-1992).

Name	Qualification	birth/death	Age at death
Marcus Tullius Cicero	Phislosopher, writer	106 BCE-43 BCE	69
Lucius Anneus Seneca	Philosopher	c4 BCE-65CE	67-68
Michelangelo Buonarroti	Global artist	1475-1564	88
Tiziano Vecellio	Painter	c1488/90-1576	87-88
El Greco	Painter, sculptor	1541-1614	73
Katsushika Hokusai	Painter	1760-1849	88
François-René de Chateaubriand	Writer	1768-1884	79
J.M.W. Turner	Painter	1775-1851	76
Jean-Dominique Ingres	Painter	1780-1867	86
Victor-Marie Hugo	Poet, writer	1802-1885	84
Gustave Moreau	Painter	1826-1898	72
Camille Pissarro	Painter	1830-1903	73
Claude Monet	Painter	1840-1926	86
Joseph Breuer	Precursor of psychoanalysis	1842-1925	83
Sigmund Freud	Psychoanalyst	1856-1939	84
Havelock Ellis	Psychologist	1859-1939	80
Lou Andréas Salomé	Psychoanalyst, writer	1861-1937	75
Pierre Bonnard	Painter	1867-1947	79
Hernri Matisse	Visual artist	1869-1954	84
George Henri Rouault	Painter	1871-1958	86
Leopold Szondi	Psychoanalyst	1893-1986	92
Carl Gustav Jung	Analytic psychologist	1875-1961	85
Konrad Adenauer	Statesman	1876-1967	91
Pablo Picasso	Painter, sculptor	1881-1973	91
Melanie Klein	Children psychoanalyst	1882-1960	78
Marie Bonaparte	Psychoanalyst, writer	1882-1962	80
Gaston Bachelard	Philosopher of science	1884-1962	78

Helen Deutsch	Women' psychoanalyst	1884-1982	97
George Groddeck	Psychoanalyst	1866-1934	67
Marcel Duchamp	Painter, sculptor, writer	1887-1968	81
Theodor Reik	Psychoanalyst	1888-1969	81
Joan Miró	Painter, sculptor	1893-1983	90
Heins Hartmann	Psychoanalyst	1894-1970	75
Anna Freud	Psychoanalyst	1895-1982	87
Donald Winnicott	Pediatrician	1896-1971	74
Wilfred Bion	Psychoanalyst	1897-1979	82
Margaret Mahler	Psychiatrist	1897-1985	88
Herbert Marcuse	Radical philosopher	1898-1979	81
Imre Hermann	Psychoanalyst	1889-1984	94
Octave Mannoni	Psychoanalyst	1899-1989	89
Eric Fromm	Psychoanalyst, philosopher	1900-1980	79
Muriel Gardiner	Psychoanalyst, psychiatrist	1901-1985	84
Erik Erikson	Psychoanalyst	1902-1994	92
Bruno Bettelheim	Philosopher	1903-1990	86
Gilles Deleuze	Philosopher	1925-1995	70
Félix Guattari	Philosopher, psychoanalyst	1930-1992	62

Table 3: Old artists scientists quoted by Roger Dadoun in *Manifeste pour une vieillesse ardente*, Zulma, Paris, 2005 [20].

A very interesting section is dedicated to Freud, who in 1925 at 69 wrote *An autobiographic study*, in 1927, *The future an illusion*, in 1929 *Civilization and its discontents*. Furthermore, In 1935 started writing *Moses and Monotheism* completed before death in 1939. And much more Dadoun stresses the fact that in 1936 Freud (80 years old) and very ill because of intractable maxillary cancer wrote to the American poetess Hilda Doolittle: "At my age life is not easy, but spring is magnificent so is love".

Our society ages upwards and downwards

Our society is aging both upwards and downwards. It is aging upwards because the number of people living longer due to better living conditions has increased. However, life expectancy can progress more slowly than life expectancy in good health. It also entails high social costs. Our society is aging downwards as well, since birth rates have decreased. Couples are choosing to have fewer children to improve their own quality of life and to provide more opportunities for their children.

Migrants help but are not the final solution, although all countries need them. However, migrants will be unable to solve the problem because, when they arrive in the European Union, they immediately adopt our lifestyles. However, in Italy, in the last two years, 300,000 migrants have been granted citizenship, which compensates for the decline in birth rates.

Building intergenerational harmony

Different generations have varying expectations, which can lead to social conflicts. The entire community may be unable to withstand these tensions, and in extreme cases, this can lead to its downfall. Therefore, overcoming generational interests is essential to ensure seniors have satisfactory living conditions.

In an aging society, the economic burden of supporting the elderly poses a significant challenge. To sustain growth, it is essential to prioritize the well-being of older adults alongside the expectations of younger generations. Conversely, a society that grants well-being only to productive groups would be unfair.

Jean-Hervé Lorenzi and his circle of economists from Aix-en-Provence emphasize that, nowadays, a quarter—soon almost a third—of a person's life is spent after the age of sixty. It is therefore essential to develop activities, prevention strategies, and lifelong learning tailored to this new phase of life—something that has never happened before. The structure of our society is complex, as it is built upon four generations living together [21].

“The Aging Society / La société du Vieillissement”

“Our first recommendation consists in a simple commitment: every person, during their retired life, according to their health conditions, their skills and their retirement age, must maintain an

activity whose scope is not limited to an associative activity, but assumes that he can remain in active life.”

“Hence the idea of establishing socialization pathways. We believe that all basic and higher education institutions should have dedicated departments to facilitate these socialization paths, in order to meet the needs of millions of pensioners. The benefits of this solution are at least twofold: it helps individuals ward off the fear of incompetence that erodes confidence, and it provides additional training that enables them to feel more comfortable and fulfilled in this new phase of life.”

“One can easily imagine that these initiatives could, in part, be carried out by retirees themselves. This intergenerational interaction would help eliminate, in the minds of everyone, especially those with fewer skills, the feeling that they have never been able to fully express their talents” [21].

Escape the error of Faust

Faust sold his soul in exchange for eternal youth. He is an individualist who shows little concern for the society in which he lives. By seeking a personal solution to the problem of death, he makes a significant mistake. In the future, we should avoid granting a few privileged individuals the exclusive benefits that come at the expense of the many [21].

Some solutions

There are several solutions for financing social needs: (i) delay retirement, (ii) put the homes of the elderly on the market with a state guarantee, (iii) provide all citizens with state insurance, and (iv) offer specific insurance coverage for degenerative diseases. The funds allocated for this personal insurance could be reimbursed if no degenerative disease develops by the time individuals reach eighty or older. Additionally, everyone should be encouraged to participate in social work as a means of fostering community engagement and support [21].

Universities

“Universities are the places where we do things that will be discussed in the media twenty years from now” stated Umberto Eco to the students of the University of Bologna on the day he celebrated his 70th birthday. We have to be aware that our universities have the talents and the skills to maximise the effects of education. However, at the time when the economy of knowledge flourishes, we have to support them more than in the past. In “post-pandemic university” a crucial effort is required to achieve a diffuse status of excellency, not just for few and not just in a few places and not just in a few disciplines. In addition, students should be empowered to give solutions for the present but receive a dual education for the short and long period of time. There they should also learn how to achieve another peak of development in their field after having achieved a peak. This means that they will also learn how to walk the valley between peaks that have downward and upward routes [22].

Retired professors ambulant gigantic libraries and living witnesses of what happened before their advent in science

In the introduction to *Little Science Big Science* (1963) Derek de Solla Price analysed what was ‘Big Science’ in comparison with the former state of ‘Little Science’.

“Because the science we have now so vastly exceeds all that has gone before, the national expenditures of manpower and money on it have suddenly made science a major segment of our national economy. The large-scale character of modern science, new and shining and all-powerful, is so apparent that the happy term “Big Science” has been coined to describe it. Big Science is so new that many of us can remember its beginnings. Big Science is so large that many of us begin to worry about the sheer mass of the monster we have created. Big Science is so different from the former state of affairs that we can look back, perhaps nostalgically, at the Little Science that was once our way of life”.

In the Prologue he stated something relevant to retired professors.

“We can say that 80 to 90 percent of all the scientists that have ever lived are alive now. Alternatively, any young scientist, starting now and looking back at the end of his career upon a normal life span, will find that 80 to 90 percent of all scientific work achieved by the end of the period will have taken place before his very eyes, and that only 10 to 20 percent will antedate his experience”.

That is to say that retired scientists are ambulant gigantic libraries and they are living witnesses of the What happened before their advent in science is not critical for further development.

Terence Kealy reviewing the fate of the book for *Nature* (2000; 406:279) noticed that “Price showed, science demonstrates diminishing returns. The rate of scientific growth is about twice that of economic growth, which means that you have to do four times as much science to get twice as rich. One day, as science’s exponential demands on national incomes become excessive, the rates of scientific - and therefore economic growth - will slow”.

Professor Emeritus, Professor Emerita, Professors Emeriti

In the Merriam Webster Dictionary emeritus (noun), plural emeriti “a person retired from professional life but permitted to retain as an honorary title the rank of the last office held.

As adjective “holding after retirement an honorary title corresponding to that held last during active service”, “retired from an office or position.

Professor emeritus—converted to emeriti after a plural: professors emeriti

In Britannica Dictionary Emeritus: “retired with an honorary title from an office or position especially in a university”.

According to the Treccani dictionary, “Emeritus indicates a person who, despite having finished his service in a certain role, maintains the title and honors associated with that role, and sometimes even

the salary. In particular, the term is often used to indicate a university professor who has concluded his active service but retains the title of professor emeritus and some academic privileges.

The term derives from the Latin verb “emerēri”, which means “to deserve well” or “to finish one’s service”.

Originally, in ancient Rome, it indicated the soldier who had completed his military service and received discharge with related awards.

Extensively, it can indicate a person of great professional or scientific value, but its most common use refers to people who have concluded their active service in a certain role, maintaining the title and honors.

Examples:

Professor Emeritus: a university professor who, despite having finished his active service, maintains the title and honors of the role.

Bishop Emeritus: A bishop who has completed his term but retains the title of bishop emeritus.

Councillor Emeritus: An honorary position that may be conferred upon a councillor who has completed his term.

In short, “emeritus” means a person who, while no longer in active service, is recognized for the value of his work and retains the title and honors of the role previously held.

In the Oxford Learner’s Dictionary Emeritus is used before or after a title to show that a person, usually a university teacher, keeps the title as an honour, although he or she has stopped working. The earliest known use of the word “emeritus” is in the early 1700s. The earliest evidence for “emeritus” is from 1711, in the writing of Bernard Mandeville, physician and political philosopher. The form “Emerita” is used for women.

After the publications of the books of proceedings of the Naples international Conference on the Human Capital of Age in 2016 [23-26], Vincenzo Bonavita and Natale De Santo asked to Aldo Masullo, emeritus professor of moral Philosophy, politician, former member of the Italian and European Parliament to elaborate on the meaning of “emeritus” since great conductors, instrumentalists, composers, never become emeritus, just as those who in Naples work at the Hospital of Dolls or the artists making with imagination, sense of modernity and skills nativity terracotta statues in San Gregorio Armeno Street do not become emeritus.

His conclusion was that “emeritus(a) is anyone who lifelong has done a job, a profession or a trade at high quality level teaching it by example, and in old age is available to discuss with younger people how to further its goals as well as the modalities to improve that job” [14].

Professors emeriti, those who have the wisdom, the transgressors, those who, look for the beyond and the unknown

For Adolfo Russo emeriti are “those who have reached an even

higher vision of reality, combining different skills with the maturity of an outlook that comes from the experience of life, from the dialogue of the various schools of thought and from the awareness that only a life lived intensely can offer.

In Italian we have a distinction between the verb “sapere” and verb “conoscere” whereas you use just ‘to know’ for both. For us “sapere” is much more than “conoscere”: it is having the flavor of life in a world begging for meaning. “Denken heißt immer überschreiten”. I am reminded of the words that a great German thinker Ernst Bloch [28], who died in Tübingen in 1977 used to repeat: “Denken heißt immer überschreiten”, meaning “to think is to always go further”. Words that the disciples wanted to remain engraved on the headstone of his tomb. To think is to transgress, in the Latin sense of “transgredior”, to go beyond borders, to go beyond limits. After all, the man of thought, the wise, is always a “transgressor”. A mind that knows how to go beyond the acquired data, beyond the conventions, beyond the established schemes. And perhaps the best compliment you can pay to a professor emeritus is to call him a “transgressor”. In fact, wisdom is never a definitively conquered goal, but a direction of travel, the desire to go further, perhaps to meet the “Beyond” [27].

Professors emeriti have great responsibilities towards the territory where they have worked and or live.

“It is useful to recall, in this regard, that universities are called to carry out a triple, classic mission: research, teaching, social impact. We know that little is usually invested in the latter field. You could be the innovators that the territory needs, thanks to the third mission. You can provide solid basic skills, make your scientific skills available, as a function of a sustainable and inclusive society, which has the creativity of good ideas, which is able to launch start-ups with new job opportunities, enriching the entrepreneurial and social aspects of the territory” [27].

“The responsibility of universities towards the territories in which they operate constitutes an objective that cannot be renounced and which can be applied to every activity. The cultural, ethical and social values that the university is able

to induce are precious elements for the growth of the community. Without them, the global development of a country’s civic awareness cannot be achieved. Obviously, intermediation structures, the social involvement of institutions, public utility projects, scientific dissemination initiatives and animation are required, making the community an active component and participant in these innovative paths.

A vast cultural heritage currently underused or frozen in your minds placed at service of the needs of citizenship. An unforgivable waste of culture and civilization. Among the many strands of commitment, one could start with a project that has, as its objective the construction of an inter-ethnic city” [27].

Professors Emeriti in USA

In USA, emeritus professors continue to work in the departments

where they have worked lifelong, they can apply for private and public grants and act as principal investigators. In USA chronological age is not a factor to withdraw from a job and the value and the role of older investigators for the scientific enterprise of the country is fully understood and appreciated. University tenures are not age limited, although there is evidence that old scientists prevailed over young scientists in obtaining grants from the National Institutes of Health in the years 1980-2010: This is certainly a case for concern. But as expected from a country where merit has a priority all efforts are made in order to allocate correctly the applications for public grants. A change toward forbidding applications of older scientists as principal investigators is not into discussion [29].

In USA there is no compulsory age to retire. This kind of discrimination has been abolished. However, university, research, economics have not collapsed. Aging Thoughtfully has discussed the pros and the cons of this change [30]. For Marta Nussbaum "like all American academics of my generation, I have been rescued from a horrible fate by the sheer accident of time. At sixty-nine I am still happily teaching and writing, with no plans for retiring because the United States has done away with compulsory retirement. So I had never had to anticipate compulsory retirement or think myself as a person who would be on the shelf at sixty-five, whether I liked or not. It is no accident, then, that it seems weird and horrible to me to see members of my age cohort in philosophy turned out to pasture just because they happen to be employed in Europe or Asia, even though they are a few years younger than I am. Some have been dismissed not only from department and office but also from university housing, forced therefore to relocate, sometimes to distant isolating suburbs, too far away to interact with scholarly pals or graduate students, or for any of them to see much of former colleagues".

Professor Nussbaum is very critical about the fact that "before the end of the compulsory retirement in US universities, judgments about who should retire were made with all sorts of irrelevant factors such as fads and social prejudices. In the Harvard of my graduate school days, when the university was permitted to decree that some retired at sixty-five, some at sixty-eight, some at seventy, choices were conspicuously not made in accordance with academic productivity or beneficial contributions to the academic community. They were more often made in keeping with fads, alumni connections, and even baneful prejudices such as class and I am sadly convinced anti-Semitism. They were not based on gender simply because there were no tenured women. In short, unequal treatment, problematic in general, is especially problematic when it gives incentives to institutions to distort the academic enterprise in ways that track existing hierarchies that are peripheral to the academic mission". "The emeritus status might conceivably be redesigned to be less stigmatizing, as when, in our law school, retired professors keep an office are welcome at workshops and roundtable lunches, and teach if they want to. But nobody has thought this through a convincing way across the wide span of the profession".

Are old scientist detrimental to the progress of science?

If one analyzes the 10 greatest discoveries in the years 1453—1953 departing from Vesal (*De humani corporis fabrica*) to Maurice Wilkins (the double helix), if we include William Harvey, Antony Leeuwenhoek, Edward Jenner, Crawford Long, Wilhelm Roentgen, Ross Harrison, Nikolai Anichkov, Alexander Fleming, it becomes evident that their mean age at the time of discoveries was 32.4 years. However, Vesal, Long, Anichkov were just twenty years old, whereas Maurice Wilkins flourished at 38 years of age. That is to affirm that young people bring the innovation in the scientific enterprise, however a team made of just young people lacks diversity which is indispensable to stimulate creativity. In a team the lack of diversity (only young scientists or only old scientists does not make a difference) reduces the quality and the quantity of the output. The best results are obtained when young people work together with old people who bring the experience, this renders possible the birth of epochal ideas when the coordination of the team is made by a young scientist. When the coordination is in the hands of old scientists the outcome is not granted since old scientists tend to enroll old scientists [31].

Rita Levi Montalcini (1909-2012) did not agree [32] with Simone de Beauvoir and Norberto Bobbio who looked at ageing people with repugnance. For her in old age the brain acquires no wrinkles. She provided a short list of politicians, scientists, thinkers including Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), (Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), David Ben Gurion (1886-1973), Pablo Picasso (1871-1973).

Scientists do not improve with age

Martin Reese College, and Director of the Institute of Astronomy at Cambridge University in the book *On the future: Prospects for Humanity* [33] stated that "It is a conventional wisdom that scientists do not improve with age—that they "burn out". However he takes the occasion to stress that the physicist Wolfgang Pauli had a famous put-down for scientists past thirty. "Still so young, and already so unknown". Reese thinks that "There seems to be three destinies for us. First a diminishing focus on research - sometimes compensated by energetic efforts in other directions, sometimes just a decline into torpor. A second pathway followed by some of the greatest scientists is an unwise and overconfident diversification into other fields. They think that they are doing science, they want to understand the world and the cosmos, but they no longer get satisfaction from researching in the traditional piecemeal way: they over-reach themselves. The third way - the most admirable - is to continue to do what one is competent at, accepting that there may be some new techniques that the young can assimilate more easily than the old and that one can probably at best aspire to be on a plateau rather than scaling the heights."

Nomination of Professors emeriti in Europe

Coming back to those ambulant libraries, we know that the majority of universities nominate emeriti and have rules for awarding the title. However, there are discrepancies between what is allowed

by law and what emeriti achieve individually. That is to say that emeriti receive by practice - not by law - benefits that are in excess of those granted by university constitutions. This indicates that the personal charisma of emeriti matters.

Professors Emeriti in France

“In France the title is conferred by the Administrative Council for 1-5 years and may be renewed based on productivity. They may direct seminars, dissertations, participate in the examination committees. The main goal of the emeritus status is to allow professors to continue to coordinate and drive to an end all dissertations they have been assigned to. They are considered volunteers, working at no cost to the state -”*“Ils sont considérés comme des collaborateurs bénévoles du service public”* - thus a status of professors emeriti is not taken into consideration“ [34].

Professors Emeriti in Germany

In Germany the title was cancelled by national law in 1976. However retired professors have a number of academic rights such as teaching (*venia legendi*) and participation in examinations and research. But all depends on the successor to their chair and/or on the relevant faculty, but this happens rarely [35]. Recently the retirement age was increased by 2-3 years and, more importantly, a number of states and institutions have programmes for ‘emeriti of Excellence’ without age limits in order to preserve the National Capital of Age in the country that is ranked fifth in the World Figures of the Economist for aged countries in 2019.

The role of emeriti and retired professors in medicine

University professors, at least in Europe, are requested to retire at fixed ages, independent of their wishes or intellectual abilities. By contrast, in the USA, age alone cannot legally be a reason for imposing retirement. After retirement, in many universities some professors achieve the status of emeritus(a) which in some instances is an honorary title, but usually allows continued research and teaching. However, the nomination of emeritus(a) professors is not granted to everybody, and specific studies on these academic policies are still lacking and is the goal of this study.

A study in universities of countries of low, intermediate and high economy countries

Recent data showed that in the departments of medicine of 99 universities of high, medium and low economy countries, emeriti and retired professor could (i) apply and receive donations in 42.5%; (ii) they were allowed to keep their offices (57.6%); (iii) and a laboratory with full email, and telephone/fax facilities (41.4%); (iv) parking was allowed in 7.1%; (v) in 35% of the universities emeriti participated in departmental meetings but right to vote was allowed in a few cases; (vi) in 30% teaching (face to face, tutorials, seminars) was allowed in normal as well as in Ph. D and Masters courses ; (vii) in 41.2%, emeriti continued to do research and had published at least one impact factor paper or one book in the previous 12 months--many had produced more than 7 items, a few more than 10 [36].

Retired and emeriti pediatricians in Europe

The European Pediatric Association in 2016 [37, 38] studied the contribution of retired and emeriti paediatricians to the activities of postgraduate schools of paediatrics in 28 European countries. The inquiry answered two questions: 1. Is the older generation of paediatric professors (emeriti) an under-utilised resource that could mitigate the present problems of child health care services in Europe? 2. Could retired paediatric professors thereby serve as a standby option in countries with a crisis in child health care services? The study was made in 18 of the 28 European Union (EU) countries; 8 East European countries, including Russia and Turkey, plus Israel and Switzerland. The questionnaires were answered mainly by presidents of national paediatric societies. The results of the analysis on rights and duties of an emeritus were very heterogeneous from country to country; and within countries, from university to university. A total of 24 of the 28 countries had fixed ages for retirement (10 countries at 65 years, 7 at 67 or 68 years, 7 at 70 years). Four countries had a flexible age limit with the option for females to stop working at the earliest at 55 years and for males at 60 years. Five of 28 countries did not establish the status of emeritus in their university. The results led to the conclusion that emeriti were not well integrated into the academic life of half of the 28 European countries studied. There was a trend for retired professors to be more often involved in postgraduate, rather than undergraduate teaching. Thirteen of 28 countries reported that a wide range, 10-80%, of retired professors were still active in research. Of the 28 countries, 11 reported that retired professors were still active in clinical care. More important was the conclusion of the study which pointed out that professors of paediatrics emeriti, and retired, should be seen as a reserve of competence to be utilised for practising paediatrics in those countries where such services do not exist. It was hypothesised following the suggestion of J.G. Hall [39] that medical faculties should develop career pathways for senior academic paediatricians and that the Council of Europe and the European Commission should start an initiative empowering emeriti in paediatrics in Europe to act as promoters for the well-being of children [37, 38].

Professors Emeriti in European Union: the examples of the University Ca’ Foscari and of the University of Calabria

The European Union (EU) protects the creativity of emeriti professors and allows them to coordinate and direct projects which are financed by EU. However, the permission to sign and direct a project proposal must be firstly granted by the institution where the professors emeriti(ae) work.

By studying the constitutions of various Italian universities, I have learned that each of them has particular characteristics (i) in terms of rules for appointment, as well as (ii) in terms of opportunities for professors emeriti to conduct research and teaching. Such possibilities are very limited and differ from university to university. Ideally it might be appropriate to have, for the whole country, identical rules for the effective participation of emeriti in research and mentoring. This possibility should be explored

in order to develop a European plan allowing emeriti to utilize their talents, and creativity if they are willing to participate in the making of new knowledge, provided that they have enough physical resources to continue to work.

There are two universities that protect and promote the role of emeriti that deserve particular mention. Their constitutions are exemplary and should be taken as models to be adopted by Europe as a whole; they are; the Ca' Foscari University in Venice [40] and that of the University of Calabria at Rende [41].

The University of Ca' Foscari, the first Italian school devoted to commerce, was founded on August 6, 1868. Structured on 8 departments and 3 schools, Ca' Foscari meets the needs of 21,000 students served by 1,100 investigators and professors. Its constitution states [2] that professors emeriti and honorary professors can continue to work [40] as outlined in (Table 4).

1. Continue to undertake research in the departments where they worked.
2. Continue coordinating research projects for which they are responsible, including those financed by public and private institutions.
3. Receive remuneration for work in research or for advisory activities from third parties.
4. Coordinate projects from third parties only after approval of the Council of the Department.
5. Teach on official courses, usually at no cost, or even be remunerated, if law allows, after being nominated by the Council of the Department.
6. Be a member and preside on committees for curricular exams and for Degree Exams.
7. Teach on PhD courses after approval of the Council of the PhD School.
8. Participate in meetings of the departments in which they were active at the time of retirement, and have an advisory vote.
9. Participate in the meetings of the Didactical College and those of the College for the PhD if they are titular of a course.

Table 4: Activities of Professors Emeriti [40] at the University of Ca' Foscari in Venice.

The University of Calabria at Rende (Province of Cosenza), founded in 1972, is structured on 14 departments. It is a university for 30,000 students served by 1200 investigators and professors. This university is age friendly [41] as outlined in (Table 5).

1. Be nominated after retirement having held, for a minimum of 20 years, a full professorship. They shall not have disputes with the University of Calabria. They shall not have been subject to disciplinary measures or criminal or civil convictions. They shall have held roles of significant responsibility in the University".

2. Continue research activities, at no cost to the University, in its department.

3. Be responsible for projects including those financed by public and private institutions. In this case the department shall provide appropriate logistic support to perform the studies, including an office equipped with technical support. In such status they can activate research contracts and participate in committees selecting the recipients of those contracts.

4. Participate in teaching on official and supplementary courses but at no cost to the University.

5. Be members and preside in Degree Examination Committees;

6. Teach on PhD courses - following ad hoc deliberation of the College of

Professors - and participate, with an advisory vote, in the activities of the Council of Professors for PhD.

7. Attend, and have an advisory vote at, meetings of the department where they research and teach.

Table 5: Activities allowed to emeriti at the University of Calabria at Rende [41].

Both Ca' Foscari and University of Calabria of these Universities allow full participation of professors emeriti allowing them teaching official and supplementary courses and, at the same time, let them be responsible for projects financed by private and public activities. In other words, both constitutions allow the unity of research and mentoring that is the main pillar of strength on which universities rest.

These two successful models offer the possibility of solving the problem of insufficient effective participation of emeriti in research teams. Young researchers and emeriti scientists should sit together, with the former taking the helm. At present, it is difficult to adopt, in Europe, the model of the U.S., where the retirement age limit has been removed. The European Association of Professors Emeriti should strive for the practical use of the two well-functioning models than to try to establish a uniform rule for the appointment of emeriti(ae) binding for all countries, which is in contrast to the multifaceted history of Europe, the so-called "creative Europe of bell towers".

Professors emeriti as entrepreneurs

Peter L. Berger, professor emeritus of sociology at Boston University, in *Adventures of an accidental sociologist*, declared himself proud of his appointment as senior associate professor. This ambiguous title allows him to continue to coordinate a series of special projects and to have a place to pause and ponder big ideas while keeping in practice for the last sonata, even though it may generate the unpleasant feeling that life is coming to an end [42].

There are many reasons to retire. Many miss the contact with student and many more the sense of satisfaction generated by a

work of excellence done in a stimulating environment that may cause depression. Returning to profession and also economical problems may have a role [43].

With the aim of continuing to strengthen age-inclusive initiatives across Central Connecticut State University, the present study used a survey methodology to explore the interest and ability of retired and emeritus faculty to remain engaged with the university. In a study recruiting 38 emeriti, men age 73, 50% women 50% had some connection to the university department, and faculty. The majority expressed interest to participate in a retired/emmeriti professors associations and many more in short, time limited opportunities to remain engaged with students. Semester long activities were seen less interesting [44].

Raymond Saner, emeritus professor of Economics at the University of Basel in a recent paper outlined the role of professors emeriti as entrepreneurs. A paper with vision [45].

Professors Emeriti “can contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by leveraging their knowledge and experience to address global challenges” ...“To maximize the potential of professors emeriti it is crucial to provide institutional support that encourages their engagement in entrepreneurial and community focussed activities”.

Professors Emeriti could (i). “Provide human capital, if supported, in countries suffering from low human development and facing chronic knowledge and skill deficiencies”, (ii). “strengthen the science, technology and innovation capacity for least developed countries”. (iii). “by knowledge sharing and cooperation for access to science technology and innovation and (iiii) by enhanced Sustainable Development Goals capacity in developing countries”.

Saner concludes that emeriti “as social entrepreneurs by using internet and communication technology, could contribute to the realization of these targets”.

The ideal work for professor emeriti: teaching building sand castles”

Nicholas A. Christakis, Professor of Social and Natural Sciences and of Medicine at Yale has explained his attraction to the towers made of minute silica crystals.

“Some people like to build sand castles, and some like to tear them apart. There can be much joy in the latter. But it is the former that interests me. You can take a bunch of minute silica crystals, pounded for thousands of years by the waves, use your hands, and make an ornate tower. Tiny physical forces govern how each particle interacts with its neighbours, keeping the castle together; at least until a force majeure of a foot appears. But, having built the castle, this is the part that I like the most: you step back and look at it. Across the expanse of beach, here is something new, something not present before among the endless sand grains, something raised from the ground, something that reflects the scientific principle of holism”. He is aware that “The properties arise because of the connections between the parts. I think grasping this insight is crucial for a proper scientific perspective on the world. You could

know everything about isolated neurons and not be able to say how memory works, or where desire originates. It is also the case that the whole has a complexity that rises faster than the number of its parts” (Christakis, www.edge.org).

A personal View

For the past 11 years, I have worked alongside many others to inspire emeritus professors in Europe to recognize their cultural role, to join the European Association of Professors Emeriti, and to declare their willingness to serve in a new capacity within the European Union.

I organized, alongside Professors Vincenzo Bomavita and Luigi Santini in Naples, an International Conference on The Human Capital of Age (September 14-16, 2016), and published its proceedings [24-26]. Additionally, I worked to promote the European Association of Professors Emeriti (EAPE), founded in Athens two weeks later, serving as Vice President and President. I also organized the 2022 Second International EAPE Conference in Naples, which was honored with Patronage and a Medal from the President of the Italian Republic.

Furthermore, I initiated and led activities for the European Association of Professors Emeriti (EAPE) in observance of the World Day of Older Persons that derived medals of the President of the Italian Republic Hon. Prof: Sergio Mattarella in the years 2023 and 2024. I also served as a member of the presidential committee organizing committee for the 2025 Naples EAPE International Conference on One Health, which featured a roundtable discussion on The Role of Professors Emeriti in Europe. This session included distinguished speakers from Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, and Canada. The above events were made possible through the dedicated efforts of hundreds of passionate and committed emeriti. However, in absolute terms, these efforts have not significantly improved the status of emeriti across Europe. Some emeriti continue to work and have workplaces at universities, but much depends on their personal abilities and the networks or institutions they have established. This situation persists even in the absence of specific rules regarding the nomination or recognition of emeriti.

Obviously, there are both limitations and strengths in this work. The limitations can be understood in the context of Saul Bellow’s perspective. Saul Bellow (1915–2005) wrote in his novel *Herzog* (1964): “When the need for illusion is profound, a great deal of intelligence can be employed in not understanding” [46].

An additional limitation has been represented (*si parva licet componere magnis*) by indifference, the capital sin as underlined by Elie Wiesel (1928–2016).

However, there are strengths. One has been recently emphasized by the renowned architect Renzo Piano—the man who opens think-tanks (*ateliers*) in every place where he initiates a new construction—in a debate with Richard Axel [47], which suits the emeritus status.

“When you reach a certain age, you understand that each of us is the sum of the friends we have had, the films we have seen, the books we have read, and the love we have felt. That is what we really are. A poet I greatly admire, Jorge Luis Borges, said that we are suspended between memory and oblivion. And it is in that space ideas are born that are not only ours, therefore, but we have seen or experienced them somewhere; even if we thought we had forgotten them, they were in one of the 86 billion neurons. To that memory, you add something, and an idea is born”.

The second strength is something that is frequently highlighted in European media. We live and work in Europe, the continent where thought, art, and science flourished; where banks were founded; where modern physics developed; where universities have maintained constant relevance and influence—even before their pivotal role in the economy was fully recognized. Europe also saw the shaping of the European Union during the final days of World War II, driven by the prevailing zeitgeist. The European Union is the place with the highest percentage of people who have had access to higher education, particularly among those aged 25-34, and where women tend to do better than men.

Higher education is a key to democracy, social justice, equal opportunities, and wisdom. It can also contribute to intergenerational harmony, which is a prerequisite for the elderly to remain active and to make full use of their talents; in other words, to be recognized and accepted for their merit. Just for their merit.

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