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Review for the volume: *Stabilitate și conflict în cuplul contemporan*. Iasi, Romania: LUMEN Publishing, 2017, authors: Iulian Apostu, Cristina-Andreea Iacob & Maria-Adriana Iordache

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Abstract: In the volume called *Stability and Conflict in the Contemporary Couple*, published in 2017 by LUMEN Publishing House, the authors Iulian Apostu, Cristina-Andreea Iacob & Maria-Adriana Iordache aim to investigate in detail the causes that contributed to the transformation of the marital couple, in order to form a clearer view of new trends and challenges in conjugality.

Keywords: stability, conflict, contemporary couple, modernity, lifestyle.

Introduction

The volume *Stabilitate și conflict în cuplul contemporan*, published in 2017 by LUMEN Publishing House, authored by Iulian Apostu, Cristina-Andreea Iacob and Maria-Adriana Iordache, develops a true radiography of the Romanian family from traditionalism to modernity. The authors insist on the functional changes that marked marital structures in the transition to neo-modernity. It is highlighted with priority the evolution of the types of solidarity, from the mechanical one, in which the personality of the individual was suppressed in favor of social norms imposed and assumed unconditionally, including those that defined the gender relations, the marital status, the constitution and the feminisation of the marital couple to the organic form of solidarity, in which the partners decide their own form of interaction, the structure of the gender relationship, the distribution of marital roles, etc. Throughout this sequential but evolutionary exposition from traditionalism to modernity, the authors explain different conjugal dilemmas and challenges, some designed to formally ensure the stability of the marital couple and the extended family by unconditional obedience to

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traditions, others that ensure the autonomy of the conjugal couple but almost inevitably lead to conflict. Thus, even in the traditional space, although women had no other reporting point regarding marital happiness or marital fulfillment, the canonical imperatives of the traditional world created them a generalized dissatisfaction, especially on the inequality of role and the one describing the gender relationship (Apostu, Iacob & Iordache, 2017).

The institution of marriage and the way of fulfilling the functions in the married couple

In the opinion of the authors, the importance of the study results from the fact that by identifying the differences of mentality from one conjugal system to another, regarding the institution of marriage and the way of fulfilling the functions in the marital couple, can be better emphasized the different orientations of the young people regarding it concerns the assumption and fulfillment of the functions, but also the way in which a potential cohabitation with the families of origin may or may not be functional (Apostu, Iacob & Iordache, 2017).

Difficult to change from the inside due to the rules and the way in which traditional members have assimilated traditional values, the evolution towards modernity has, according to the authors, the explanation in the effects of industrialization. If before this moment, the rules of the community and the family group were sets of imperatives that maintained the classical line of traditionalism, the external authority, the state authority, comes to modify these rules as an extension of the new socio-economic requirements derived from the process of industrialization. Thus, switching from "self-sufficiency productive unit" to a unit where income is sporadic due to the low payment capacity of a country in industrial progress, from precise Community rules to some flexible ones, also marks the moment of transition from the traditional classic structure to a new set of values, adaptable to the moment and new social contexts.

Another important direction of analysis open by the authors of the volume is the synchronicity between the evolution of the Romanian family, and that of the female status. Once a woman has gained a greater degree of freedom in the society, from access to study and career to financial independence, and even the promotion of female entrepreneurship, it was impossible to maintain the traditional situation any longer. The growing independence of women will also be supported by an evolution of the

country's economic capacity and, implicitly, an increased need for labor. In this system, the redistribution of role structures and functional valences of the family were natural consequences of the transition. However, this rethinking of the role and gender structure was not always a cordial one between spouses. For this reason, a consistent part of the book describes the concept of conjugal conflict, but also the alternatives to family therapy and self-therapy (Apostu, Iacob & Iordache, 2017).

The volume is structured in three chapters, as follows: the first chapter deals with the forms of manifestation and social consequences of transfigurations in the traditional family, and its course towards the modern family; the second chapter deals with a marriage analysis as a constantly changing institution; the third chapter presents the psycho-social dynamics of the marital couple.

According to the authors, most of the conjugal conflicts are based on cultural issues, the analysis of these differences becomes even more important as the main objective of the research is to identify the changes made in the contemporary marital couple, as a result of the increasingly obvious tendencies towards equality of the conjugal role, as well as the ever-lowering influence of families of origin in choosing a partner and imposing a way of life (Apostu, Iacob & Iordache, 2017).

The authors point out that the amendments to the Civil Code from 2013 regarding the patrimonial regimes, tend to provide a postmodern image of the Romanian family, so the analysis of the social opinions on conjugality creates an added relevance regarding the modernity of the Romanian family in relation with certain legislative references (eg the regime of the separation of goods, the legalization of engagement, etc.). The authors insist on the main sources of conflict in the contemporary couple, such as insufficient knowledge of the partner, cultural differences, the distribution of power in the couple, the damage to self-esteem, specific privacy issues, financial problems, the marital relationship, the problem of the societies, alcoholism, infidelity. Describing the general outlook of the conflict, the book explains, perhaps counterintuitively, its positive role. In its first phase of manifestation, the conflict is viewed positively because it highlights the differences between the partners, the dissatisfaction, the unfulfilled needs and exposes them to mediation. Of course, the psychological breakthrough of the conflict period makes some partners oversize the problem in such a way that the conflict is even harder to settle. For this reason, the authors developed a sociological research to study the reactions of the conflicting

partners regarding the separation of evidence as a strategy for revitalizing a conflict-affected relationship. The "trial separation" - is that type of separation, characterized by the situation where there are certain uncertainties regarding the future of the marital relationship (Apostu, Iacob & Iordache, 2017).

Among the most important results of the research carried out by the authors, we mention: the continuous changes that society suffers in all its forms, either due to the impact of modernity or Western influences, or as an expression of a growing distance from traditionalism or of increasing social tolerance, which involves a continuous adaptation to the new, also marks a fragile social stability of a generalized type, felt in the form of tension of each institutional category (Apostu, Iacob & Iordache, 2017). In order to ensure marital balance and to maintain a positive family atmosphere, it is essential that conjugal partners learn to build together a solidarity framework and maintain cohesion in the couple, by finding solutions to solve their conflicts. Analyzing gender differences in the decision on temporary separation has highlighted the fact that women are more affective, but also those who decide to temporarily separate in most cases (Apostu, Iacob & Iordache, 2017). On the other hand, men tend to initiate discussions and reconciliation strategies in order to mediate conflicting situations in the couple, which rather shows a tendency to change the relationship of power in favour of women. Although it is considered to be a period beneficial to the relationship, because it involves the necessary time and space resources that the two partners need for affective recharge, the advantages of temporary separation are only manifest in the immediate pre-reconciliation period. Later on, the old sources of conflict are reactivating, therefore temporary separation can be considered only an illusion of conjugal mediation, a saving solution for the moment, but at the same time an elegant abandon of the harmonious conjugal relationship from a structural and functional point of view (Apostu, Iacob & Iordache, 2017).

The data from the study showed that the probation separation decision, although seen by the conjugal partners as an optimal conflict resolution strategy, however, the analysis of the concrete situations of such couples has shown that the couple periodically crosses the same issues have led to separation. Thus, temporary separation is a false remedy that shows a momentary strain, not a strategy to solve the problems. Therefore, the false image of temporary separation with the purpose of reviving the couple's life was derived not from the solution of the respective problems, but from the

momentary strain that the partners felt. Strenuous tension by partners makes them even weaker in managing marital conflicts, and in this sense, temporary separation appears to be a good strategy (Apostu, Iacob & Iordache, 2017).

As a conclusion to the research, the authors believe that the present marital space is struggling to "decontaminate" the traditions in its course towards modernity and postmodernity. Considering all of this, tradition is also a resource that no partner would be willing to give up. The authors consider that the greatest problem of such an equation is that traditional values are not the same, as the woman wants the traditional type of protection of the man but denying him the obedience anywhere in the opposite direction, the great loser of contemporaneity remains the man because any form of modernity implies a settlement of the traditional male advantages to the markers of equity of role, gender and status. Analysing gender gaps in the decision on temporary separation has highlighted the fact that women are more affective, but also those whose temporary separation decision is, in most cases. On the other hand, men tend to initiate discussions and reconciliation strategies in order to mediate conflicting situations in the couple, which rather shows a tendency to change the power relations in favour of women (Apostu, Iacob & Iordache, 2017).

Conclusions

The importance of the volume is both a theoretical and practical one for sociology specialists, but also for other researchers in the sphere of social sciences, as well as in the psychological and legal spheres.

References

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