



## **A Guide to Humanistic Studies in Aging: What Does It Mean to Grow Old?**

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# A Guide to Humanistic Studies in Aging: What Does It Mean to Grow Old?

## A Guide to Humanistic Studies in Aging: What Does It Mean to Grow Old?

This volume explores the moral, spiritual, and cultural terrain of aging through interdisciplinary scholarship and clinically based research.

Aging has long been of interest to scholars and practitioners in a vast array of academic fields and professions. Thomas R. Cole, Ruth E. Ray, and Robert Kastenbaum have brought together leaders from a variety of academic realms to explore how aging is depicted in the modern era and the effect of these portrayals on individuals and society.

The first section views aging and old age through the lenses of four disciplines: history, literature, religion, and philosophy. It probes the idea and effect of age in different places and times in history; discusses the concept as put forth in novels, memoirs, and literary studies and criticism; and raises important existential and spiritual questions about the meaning of growing old.

The chapters in the second section demonstrate how interdisciplinary humanities can be applied to the study of aging through such thoughtful queries as: How do creativity and health relate in old age? What does "old" mean in an era of high-tech medicine, and what is our moral obligation to care for elderly persons? Why are friendships of special importance to older people?

Section three uses semiotics, cultural analysis, and ideological critiques to identify key social issues related to aging, including the concept of "home," ageism and discrimination, and our understanding of aging in the era of globalization. The text closes with Robert Kastenbaum's poignant reflection on his own considerations of meaning and mortality as he journeyed back to health following heart surgery.

This comprehensive guide works at the nexus of the humanities and health professions to provide the intellectual rationale, history, and a substantive overview of humanistic gerontology as it has emerged in the United States and Europe.

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