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**Review of *The Other Invisible Hand: Delivery Public Services through Choice and Competition*. Julian Le Grand. Reviewed by James Midgley.**

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to approach the challenges and decision-making processes faced by different entities—individual, family and society—and important issues such as end of life decision, long term care, intergenerational issues, Social Security, and Medicare drug benefit. In particular, decisions about autonomy at the end of life, both legally and spiritually; responsibility across generations for long term care; and distributive justice with respect to resources between the young and the elderly are discussed in detail. Some policy challenges are also addressed, including issues of Social Security reform and Medicare drug benefit.

The editors' choice of the three ethical principles (autonomy, responsibility and distributive justice) serves as a good instrument with which the essential issues and challenges facing an aging population are well explained. Most readers may have read this volume with some prior awareness or knowledge of aging issues. However, it is with this volume that they will be introduced to a well-organized layout of debates on what an aging population brings to individuals, families and society. As a result, they will have a better and clearer understanding of what is at stake. Policy makers, researchers, practitioners, and students in sociology and social work are all likely to benefit from this book. One aspect that may have been developed in this volume is the infusion of diversity, especially cultural diversity. Individuals and families living in the U.S. with a culturally different background may encounter different (or similar) challenges. In addition to the editors' thoughtful consideration of the health of minority elders in one of the chapters, it would have been helpful if the discussion of cultural diversity was infused as each of the ethical principles mentioned earlier was discussed. With regards to the ethical principle of responsibility, for instance, a family of Asian decent may have different concerns or different intergenerational challenges in caregiving due to their roots in Confucianism. However, perhaps such a detailed discussion may deserve an additional volume geared toward the challenges of a "diverse" aging society.

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Julian Le Grand, *The Other Invisible Hand: Delivery Public Services*

*through Choice and Competition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007. \$24.95 papercover.

As government spending on the social services increased rapidly in the middle decades on the 20th century, the notion of state responsibility for welfare was not only institutionalized but accompanied by the idea that government itself would be the primary provider of social services. Accordingly, a sizable number of administrators, social workers and other social services personnel found employment and government agencies and the proportion of labor force working in statutory social service programs increased significantly. In many cases, social services unions became powerful advocating not only for the interests of their members but for the continued expansion of these programs.

Today, the situation has changed dramatically as many governments have sought to contain costs and to curtail the apparently inexorable expansion of social programs. Social service budgets have been cut and increasingly, these services have been outsourced to nonprofit and commercial providers. The result is a growing market (or quasi-market as it is technically known) in social welfare in which a variety of nonprofit and commercial providers compete for government social services funds. As Julian Le Grand points out in this readable book, this has allowed consumers to exercise greater choice in utilizing the services they need.

The purpose of the book, Le Grand points out, is determine how best public money can be used to meet social needs through high-quality, accessible and efficient social services. One approach is to rely on professional providers who have a strong commitment to quality and who have secured the trust of consumers. Another is to use a "command and control" approach in which planners set targets can monitor performance. A third is to rely on the "voice" of consumers and on their ability to pressure providers to meet standards. The fourth is to create viable markets in which different providers compete and consumers purchase services. The creation of markets still require governments to fund the social services, but different providers compete to provide consumer choice and maximize efficiency.

Although Le Grand is careful to point out that all of these approaches have merits, he clearly prefers the choice and competition model. Indeed, a whole chapter of the book is devoted to an exposition of this model and objections to the model are systematically dismissed. His claim that high-quality public services will only emerge as a result of the creation of markets is then applied to a discussion of choice and competition in school education and health care. In addition, he examines the prospect of expanding choice through the provision of what are known as direct payments by which resources are allocated to consumers to allow them to purchase the services they need. The book ends with a discussion of some of the ideological and political implications of these recommendations and two leading experts, Alan Enthoven and David Lipsey provide commentaries on Le Grand's proposals.

Although many of Le Grand's ideas are familiar to readers in the United States, he provides an interesting and incisive account of the case for the "reform" of the British social services through promoting markets. The author's own preference for the expansion of market behavior in social welfare will of course be contested by many social policy scholars not only in the United States but in Britain and elsewhere. Although Le Grand examines some of the objections that have been made to the expansion of social service markets, others are given little attention and some are ignored. Nevertheless, the book provides a lively, and well written polemic that should be widely consulted particularly by those who are skeptical about the merits of a market approach to social welfare.

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Lynn R. Horton, *Grassroots Struggles for Sustainability in Central America*. Boulder, CO: University of Colorado Press, 2007. \$55.00 hardcover.

The 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development was heralded as an opportunity to rejuvenate and inspire continued attention to issues of sustainable development worldwide. However, despite these lofty goals, the Summit has been criticized by some as a step backward in the attempt to achieve sustainability due to its unclear and