The release of the third edition of the volume Modern Social Work Theory, represents an extremely important contribution for the field of social work, found out, in Romania the last few years, in a continuous and intense evolution. This contribution is as more valuable as it is offered by the emeritus professor Malcolm Payne, who is now the director of the department of spiritual and psychosocial care in *St. Cristopher’s Hospice, London.*


Running over Modern Social work Theory, translated into Romanian language, it can be observed, from the beginning, that this edition relies on a substantial reevaluation of the social work theories, presenting what is available. The work mixes the practical approach with the theoretical one trying to explain, to describe and to justify what social workers do.

The author gives a particular attention to the structure, including in the second part of the work, a series of instruments that facilitate the acknowledging of some theoretical notions, highlighting some *practical aspects, main ideas, connections* and *comments.* The readers will meet the clarity of this special work, starting with the first pages, in which we find an eloquent preface signed by Malcolm Pyne and a *note on the terminology.* Then, the essential points which have a theoretical and practical character are highlighted through *tables* and *images,* completing, in this way, the narrative presence with the visual one, offering accessibility.

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The work is structured in two parts with a number of fourteen chapters and offers the readers a step-by-step comprehension on the perspective of the various theories and practices.

The first part of the paper is dedicated to the reflection upon the theory concerning social work, presenting a general discussion concerning the theory of the social work practice. The author considers that the social workers need concepts that will try to explain why and how should we take practical decisions.

Social work may be thought in practical terms, as being a succession that covers the evaluation, intervention and the finishing, but the presence of guidelines concerning the efficient ways of evaluation, intervention and finishing is necessary.

This first part of analyzes, among others, the way in which all the practices are influenced by formal and informal theories concerning what is social work, how to do social work and the world of clients (page 24-27). Also, it is analyzed the idea of social builder (page 27), which makes up a political game of theories, being about a policy of social work. In the author's vision, by selecting a theory that will be current, the social workers contribute to the way of building social work through a social working process.

Another important aspect, which we meet in this part, is represented by the idea of modernism and postmodernism in the social work theories, because, inevitably, the people will build theories as they are affected by social changes (page 35).

The policy of theory – practice relations is examined by the author, being centered on four subjects: application, relevance, assuming responsibilities and legitimation (page 46 - 48).

The last chapter of this part approaches the problems of the theoretical practices in social work, being presented the recent debates concerning the theories of social work (page 61). The author makes an analysis of the existing practical theories,
sketches their horizon and highlights, in this chapter, the existence of the different comparisons of the different theories in individual, community social work and social work at the macro level.

The second part of the paper is dedicated to mentioning the groups of theories according to their main themes and applications developing an analysis of their value. We can affirm, without mistake, that the thing that gives value and quality to this book is the clarity and the critical analysis of different currents of thought. The author offers, through this valuable book, the access to a multitude of helpful ideas.

Therefore, the first chapters from the second part of the book (chapters: 4, 5, 6 and 7) are centered on the individual – reformist theories, working with people, families and groups and how to improve their situation in the current social order (page 93-182).

Malcolm Payne insist on the understanding of the psychodynamic theory as being an essential condition for the examination of other theories of social work, despite the criticism that brought in the attention the absence of convincing evidence and the usage of the ways of internal thinking. The psychodynamic therapy changed the social work relationship style, being a permissive one, opened and based on listening.

In the author’s vision the practice of using the theory of attachment involves an evaluation that will keep track of current relationships, on the history of relationships and the context (page 104).

Both the intervention in crisis situations and the practice that is centered on assignments reflect a contemporary tendency towards brief, concentrated and structured theories that treat brief, immediate and which can be criticized problems because they avoid individual and long term problems; a thing that could lead to social exclusion. Although they are different from a theoretical point of view, for a better comparison of the two well-known ways of practice and for high-lightening the common points (short interventions, works on the basis of a
well structured plan, the contract between the client and the therapist, etc.) in the fifth chapter the author presents them together.

In the sixth chapter there is presented the cognitive-behavioral practical elements and their considerable influence in what social work is concerned, being mentioned the critical aspects of these theories.

The theory of systems is presented as being the occupant of one important place in social work being presented in chapter seventh. This approach involves a continuum from the atomic perspective to the holistic one, being based on individuals seen as being a part from some systems and incorporating others. In the author’s vision, the theory of the systems integrates both the elements of the psychological practice as well as the social one, the social workers taking care of a better integration and functioning of the families and communities taken as a whole; it is an individual-reformatory approach.

The following chapters, of the second part, approach different theoretical ideas used in social work. Therefore, perspectives are approached that come from social psychology and social building (the theory of the roles, the theory of communication, page 190 - 194).

The perspective of humanism, of existentialism and spirituality are approached by the author, highlighting their importance through the values of social work, which have a humanist and spiritual nature. The symbolic interaction and the phenomenological ideas, provide a basis for understanding human beings, more flexible, less deterministic and less subjected to the judgment (page 230). The respect for all persons and for the common good represents an essential part of the efficient practice and a basic value of social work.

Covering the chapter of this book, we are introduced in the way of relating the social development with the community one as different practical areas; the social development being the main form of social work, and the community activity being the
practice that helps people to gather itself in order to identify the problems and in order to take a position in solving them. The author approaches the feminist perspective, dedicating it an entire chapter, showing, in this way, the theoretical importance of feminist ideas. This approach from a social work perspective helps us to understand the role and the social position of oppressed women from most societies.

In chapters: 11, 12 and 14 are brought in the attention aspects of the passing from a radical perspective to a critical perspective and aspects related to antidiscrimination and cultural and ethnical sensibility. These approaches start from the concern concerning racism and ethnic conflicts, but they have come to cover discrimination against other social groups and also to cover extended forms of social exclusion. The different accents of these approaches obligate the social workers to reach a common agreement as how this has to be put into practice.

The self-sufficiency can be found in the last chapter of the book, being approached together with the advocacy idea. The two approaches have, in the vision of the author, a relationship with the critical, feminist and antidiscrimination theories, but they have their origin in the social-democratic practice which has as goal: the capacity to exceed the barriers in reaching the objectives and to obtain access to services (page 324 - 325).

The things that attract the attention and open the path to understanding are, in particular, the chapters that approach the analysis of the group of theory according to their main themes and applications. These are accompanied by practical aspects contributory to a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical approach.

During the 400 pages of this book we are introduced to the diversity of the theories and with the dynamics and the complexity of the field of social work. We find, not only a rich documentation of the book but also the distinguished expertise of the author, which give excellence to this book.
Malcolm Payne brings *pro* and *con* arguments specific to each theory, also outlining to us, *an ensemble image of the value of the theory in practice of social work*.

Definitely, this valuable text will stay among the few of its kind, existent in the Romanian space, becoming a guiding mark not only for students, or those that are at the beginning of practicing this special profession but also for the practicians that have experience in the field.