

BOOK REVIEW

**SOCIAL MALADIES. EXPLANATORY THEORIES,
POSSIBLE RESEARCHES AND REMEDIES**

Dumitru STAN, *Maladii ale socialului: teorii explicative, cercetări și remedii
posibile*, Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Iași, 2015

Carmen PALAGHIA *

Professor Dumitru Stan, PhD, teaches at the Faculty of Philosophy and Political Social Sciences, Department of Sociology and Social Work, at the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi, courses in History of Sociology, General and Romanian Ethnology, General Sociology, Sociology of Culture.

Some of the books published under his coordination are: *Elements of Sociology*, *Sociology of Traditional Romanian Countryside*, *Introduction to Sociology*, *Social Work with Minority Groups*, *Social Work. Studies and Applications*, *NGOs in the East*, *Reality and potential in Local Development*.

In the book *Social Diseases. Exposing theories, researches and possible remedies*, published in 2015 at the Publishing House of “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi, the author presents the present society as being in the phase in which it essentially transforms its life plan, where people have found “not always rational”, moral, aesthetic, or socially acceptable own needs. In the postmodern era, where the “essence of human identity” is defined by aspects such as: extensive computerization, complete or almost complete automation of many productive technologies, controlled interventions on genetic phenomena, construction of ultraperfected infrastructures, incursions into outer space, inventing nanotechnologies, capitalizing of many categories of material wastes as economic resources, performance due to which postmodernity gains cultural growth, current and massive relating of individuals to “factors of progress”, consumer abundance, knowledge, efficiency, precision, security, and generally everything that seems desirable to communities and societies.

* Lecturer PhD, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Carol I 11, 700506, Iași, Romania; e-mail: carmenpalaghia@yahoo.com

At the same time, according to the author, there are many situations of impasse that seem to share the term “crisis”: economic, political, moral, values, family, university, relations, etc., words that we hear almost on a daily basis. Money has been transformed from a “means of feeding the social body” into a (virtually) end in itself. Rights have been complemented with “strange freedoms,” related to same-sex marriage, euthanasia, mild drug use, declassification of certain sexual acts as no longer constituting incest and not being charged as such any more, personal decision on gender, etc.

For the author, these “new freedoms” seem to generate “individual and collective identity shocks”, emphasize the sense of insecurity rather than optimizing the existence of people.

The gradual decrease of the ozone layer, generated by the continuous degradation of the environment, will cause the disappearance of many species of plants and animals, and especially, more seriously, will be the main cause for the emergence of new diseases threatening humanity, health problems of the humankind will be more and more serious than current ones.

However, the sociologist of Iasi thinks that the most serious of the problems is the CONFUSION OF VALUES. Individuals and groups seem to be left without certain landmarks in their lives. For example, the professor asserts, “working hard is not just about high energy consumption, but also about the inability of those involved to take advantage of the opportunities they have; to learn during the many stages of schooling is seen more like a danger of becoming a “nerd” or piling up unnecessary diplomas than accumulating cultural capital; respecting social norms seems more like an exaggerated conformism and a reduction in the possibilities of being happy; the family is more and more often defined as the “death of love”, and fidelity as “primitive praise”; what is old must be left behind on the grounds that it would represent communitarianism, conservatism, gregariousness, and would be detrimental to growth, individual will, etc.”

The volume refers to ten “shocking social situations”, such as: family conflict; incest, between drama and ignorance; state of health and crisis of civilization, advanced age, presented as a source of stability and social crisis and the multiple roles of the elderly; identifying critical issues and “disruptions” in the university field; social segregation, “between pathological and bearable”; discrimination, from discomfort to crisis; nationalism and resilience; delimitation of “chances” for the overcoming by society of the functional impasse by capitalizing on the attributions of community, social work system and social economy.

The society that faces such “bumps of social normality” is characterized by the term “crisis”; there are also terms such as “apocalypse”, “trauma”, “pathology”, “dysfunction”, “sin”, through which the present society (an “uncertain society”, as Andrei Marga calls it) is described.

Not only does sociologist Dumitru Stan describe the current and pressing problems of society, but he also highlights, in a realistic manner, effective ways to remedy them, which makes the book a valuable source of ideas for the prevention and control of such problems.

