

## **BOOK REVIEW**

**Mohan, Brij(2018).The Future of  
Social Work: Seven pillars of practice.  
SAGE: New Delhi, India**

Reviewed by

**Yolanda G. Ealdama**

Associate professor at international institute of social studies (ISS)  
University of the Philippines



The Future of Social Work: Seven Pillars of Practice looks interesting. Brij Mohan weaves his experience with wisdom borne out of years of doing and teaching social work. Reading it makes one feel as if one is reading a literary work rather than an academic reference book. The book however is not for a neophyte social worker; the author minces no words when exposing the conflictive nature of social work. This is recommended for mature social work readers. The book does not romanticize social work as a profession but the reader can see through the criticism the deep appreciation of the author to the profession that he embraced through the years.

Only a Brij Mohan can say, "*SW is a by-product of dreams and delusions. Social engineers and self-righteous altruists invented a pseudo-profession to hide the wounds of poverty and war with a subconscious guilt under the cover of philanthropy masquerading as professional help. As we will notice, a great civil society lost its innocence without resolving its adolescent complexes.*" (Brij Mohan, 2018, p. 5). The book is an interesting read as it is anchored on the author's depth knowledge of the profession. This comprehensive knowledge of the profession turned into wisdom by years of experience as educator. Only somebody who grasps the history of the social work profession can sharply identify its flaws and see its possibilities. The author weaves his personal experience with philosophical insights creatively, that turned an otherwise boring academic treatise into an excellent literary piece.

He discusses poverty, war and welfare starting with the political and social realities of the American society to the conflicts and war in various parts of the world to the impacts of religious ideologies in Asia. His use of the postmodern perspective allowed him to deconstruct grand theories and religious ideologies in a literary way that even the avid supporters of these theories and ideologies will appreciate.

The title, "The Future of Social Work", however is misleading. What the author describes as the "future of social work" is actually happening now : climate change, wars and conflicts, digital revolution and environmental injustice. He however, missed the confluence of all these events with the pandemic since the book was published before the onset of the pandemic.

The “Seven Pillars of Social Work” that is supposedly the core of the book are not given enough space. The author also labeled the seven pillars: mission, education, service plus emphatic humility, liberatory assistance, transparent effectiveness and buoyance as algorithms of social practice. He however, did not elaborate on how these seven pillars are operationalized in actual social practice. Instead of discussing the seven pillars he moved to “ontology and practice” . The author posits that the ontology of social work is based on the “flawed assumptions about HSD (Human Social Development)” (BrijMohan, 2018, p. 101). He then proposed for a new professional discipline founded on the “liberatory praxis” and calls this Social Practice. This social practice the author insists should incorporate his seven pillars of practice that are not explained fully. The final chapter, “The end of Social Work” (p. 138) . is actually a postmodern challenge. It captures what he wants to convey all throughout the book, the end of the traditional notion of social work and the need for a new paradigm of social work that is capable of responding to the ever changing world, as he aptly said, “What we need are the unpretentious angels of self-transformation” (p. 140).