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Review of the Volume "Ethical Issues in Social Work Practice", Edited by Antonio Sandu and Ana Frunză, Published by IGI Global Publishing House, USA, 2018

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Abstract: The collective volume "Ethical Issues in Social Work Practice", coordinated by Prof. PhD Antonio Sandu and SR III PhD Ana Frunză, published in 2018 at the IGI Global Publishing House, United States of America, is an ample work dealing extensively with the relevant aspects of the ethical dimension of social work in a correlated approach, in which documenting, argumentative coherence, emphasis on topics of interest and practical applicability come together to generate a volume with relevance in the international literature.

Keywords: *social work; ethics in social work; ethical expertise; assistential practice.*

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Social work, seen as a field of study in humanistic sciences, because of its specificity - working with people who are in a vulnerable situation regarding their social status, financial status, family situation, age, health, employment etc. - requires not only a special attention in shaping the ethical aspects involved in the assistential practice, but also the general principles of professional ethics, according to the specifics of the individualized activities that target different categories of beneficiaries, to whom they are addressed. Social work can be seen as part of the social contract with the state, as a profession, as a form of social cohesion, as a restorative practice of inequalities and social inequities, as a counseling practice to prevent or mitigate these inequalities, as a form of humanitarian action etc., and all these dimensions are subsumed to fundamental values, which are circumscribed according to the functions of social work listed above.

The volume "Ethical Issues in Social Work Practice" (Sandu & Frunză, 2018) is a book in which the authors, researchers from 8 countries with experience in the field of study of social work (Frunză, 2018b; Loue, Stucker, & Karges, 2015; Sandu, 2017; Sandu & Frunză, 2017), correlates in the chapters included in the volume the ethical dimensions of social work, from the perspective of its functions for both the beneficiaries and society in general, taking into account the ethical specificity of the practice for professionals and trainers working in the field, synthesizing relevant theories, discussions and trends regarding the ethical dimension that is an integral part of the work of any social assistant, not only in their relations with the beneficiaries, but also in the way that professionists internalize the importance and effects of their own activities.

Released from the possessive conceptual design of philosophy, which has traditionally assumed to shape the notion of "ethics" and then of "applied ethics", the idea of professional ethics is the element that harmoniously combines the principles under which any profession with social impact is organized and operates, and social work is called upon by its practitioners to achieve not only the theoretical, but also the practical equilibrium - eventually, a successful one - between utilitarianism, deontology and virtue, as Ana Frunză points out in Chapter I of the book (Frunză, 2018a), when she presents the practical dimension of philosophical ethics reflected in the field of ethics expertise in social work.

The discourse is further developed, in the sense of descending from the spheres - sometimes considered abstract - of philosophy and adapting the ethical motivation to a more pragmatic understanding, closer to the daily human needs, by Sorin Tudor Maxim (Maxim, 2018). However, the author makes a complete circle together with his reader, since after extensive

discussions about tolerance and empathy as basic moral values in social work, he concludes that they are considered to be fundamental precisely because they have the role of empowering the social assistant to accomplish his superior function, which is to stimulate the beneficiary's desire to overcome his or her condition, as opposed to being helped and sustained perpetually.

Next in the book we find a series of three chapters (Dascălu, 2018; Focşa, 2018; Selamu & Singhe, 2018) where distancing from the abstract and the anchoring in reality become dominant, for the authors have the courage to address the difficult questions, with major disturbing potential: up to what point can we accept the beneficiary's individualism, namely his right to social work versus the right of society to invest resources in citizens with productive potential for the community, rather than in those with social vulnerabilities? Is the state of vulnerability, in one way or another, the fault of the vulnerable person, which would result in somewhat violating the principle of equitable distribution of resources, by placing an increased emphasis on the dimension of providing help for those in need that social work has? How does this principle of social justice correlate with respect for human rights, when resources are insufficient and can not equally meet the needs of those vulnerable and also of those with productive potential? Here are some questions that Dan Ioan Dascălu, Liranso Selam, Mohan Singhe and Tatiana Focşa try to answer at the end of the first part of the book.

The second part of the book, entitled "Applied Ethics in Social Work Practice", begins with a chapter (Loue, 2018) that outlines, perhaps better than any theoretical or principled exposition, the controversial framework in which social workers operate, as the author, Sana Loue, proposes an analysis based on strengths and weaknesses in assistential practices, focusing on respecting the right to self-determination and informed consent of the beneficiary.

The difference between the roles that a social assistant can have, as he can become a guide or collaborator in a wider process of individual evolution or he can be a decision-making authority or a source of benefits, is later in the book highlighted by four case studies on how to practice social work in Botswana (Malinga, Ntshwarang & Lecha, 2018), Turkey (Zengin, 2018), Romania (Sandu, 2018) and USA (Unguru, 2018). At the end of reading these four chapters, however, we discover that what seem to be practice patterns specific to countries on different continents with different cultural backgrounds are, in reality, facets of the same coin, as practitioners from all of these countries face the same ethical dilemmas, moral controversies and principal conflicts.

Some of these situations are well known all over the world, becoming famous not only among social workers but also among lawyers, doctors and bioethicists (Tatiana Tarasoff case). Others are generalized "occupational hazards", regardless of country, such as working under poor financial conditions, continuous struggle to cope with professional stress, inability to do more for the beneficiaries due to unfavorable social or economic context etc. As a profession with a strong humanist background, social work is likely to raise intense moral dilemmas in the conflict - to which the professional is subjected - between compliance with legal provisions and the basic human impulse to help the vulnerable. But the opposite perspective can also give rise to equally strong inner conflicts when the law imposes tolerance, but the inner tendency of the practitioner, even if not confessed as such, is perhaps in conflict with the legal-imposed tolerance (especially in the case of probation counselors, in dealing with convicted offenders).

More technical than the two previous parts, Part III of the book deals with social work supervision (Frunză & Sandu, 2018), ethical audit for social service organizations (Agheorghiesei, 2018), authorisation of social work institutions (Haraz & Vicol), social learning as a way of combating counterproductivity at work - a particular form of continuous professional training of social workers (Sharma, 2018).

Although not as seductive as the other two parts of the book for the reader who is less familiar with the field of applied ethics, perhaps this third part is one of the most important for the specialist, who realizes that the effectiveness of the assistential practices resides in their consistency and predictability, along with a well-established system whereby those involved in the system can learn not only from their own experience - based on their own ethical reflection or with the help of supervisors - but also from the experience of their colleagues, auditors, mentors.

Part III of the book focuses on the idea that organizing social service providers on long-lasting and sustainable principles ensures transparency (for employees, beneficiaries, financiers, society as a whole), which allows freedom for the professionist, but within the legal limits that, once understood and internalized (due to the understanding and interiorization of the ethical principles that dictate them), are no longer perceived as very constraining. In essence, this is the rationale for the value attributed to ethical expertise in social work.

After reading the volume, the social assistant practitioners will find that their dilemmas are understood, that they are not the only ones who face certain ethical dilemmas and that there are ways to integrate the rigors of the

profession into all the larger principle-frameworks that they, as individuals, use to guide their existence. The reader who is a theoretician specialized in the field of social work will discover new directions of study, analysis or simply for reflection. The reader who is a researcher in related fields will find a guide on which to base his analysis. And the reader who is driven just by curiosity will find that after reading the book he reflects more deeply on human values, which in this book are called ethical values in social work, but which can actually be the basis for any profession in which human interaction plays a central role.

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