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Social change, preserving what is valuable

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Abstract. Social relationships are generally defined as *that type of interconnection between two, three or more social actors acting together, thinking together, feeling together, waiting or asking for an answer from one another, within life manifestations or common, palpable, sustainable and meaningful activities.* The foundation of social relationships (and their framework) is, therefore, represented by *the manifestation of life* that includes at least two individuals. When this life manifestation takes the form of *the meaning of life*, the foundation of a social action and, thus, the manifestation of a social relationship, is created... When *the manifestation of life* takes the form of a professional activity, we say that it has a professional meaning. The meaning of life is expressed in connection to the profession and, cumulatively, as a *vocation*"

Keywords. valuable, vocation, deontology in social work, religion, morality

Introduction

Social changes come and go with the current social time but what is valuable, what is highlighted by vocation, become perennial.

Vocation is the human ability to perform with less effort a certain type of activity. It is that special penchant for a certain art or profession. This vocation helps us choose the form of education compatible with our passions and, thus, education becomes both useful and enjoyable.

Moreover, it helps us choose the desired field of activity, it helps us practice the profession we desire without the need for training in more specialized fields, and to focus on the work that we love from the very beginning. If we choose our profession in accordance with our vocation, it becomes pleasant, our workplace becomes less stressful and the working tasks are more easily to achieve.

The human being lives within the society and the achievement of the individual good is possible only within the society. On the other hand, the human society exists by its individuals, and the individual (the human being) is endowed with an intrinsic value.

Therefore, the human being cannot be completely denied or enslaved by society. The human being stands at the service of the common good but he/she also perfects his/her own person, maintaining the continuous and intimate connection with the divine.

The moral and religious education urges the human being to serve the society and the society to support the progress and perfection of the human being. We can say that the human being and the society are at the service of higher values; therefore, the interfering of the

individual and the *social* is explained by the unity of the values guiding the human and social life.

Social work, be it secular or religious, should be professed by ***vocation***. Its purpose is represented primarily by moral conduct and education at the societal level.

Moral conduct is represented by the behavior of the human being, by the way in which he/she acts, and in which he/she is mentally led and regulated by moral conscience, which, in turn, achieves the union of behavioral and mental facts. Moral conduct is, therefore, the main criterion for assessing the moral value of the human being.

The shaping of *moral conscience* involves, in its turn, three components:

- *the cognitive component*, represented by the acquisition of norms and moral values;
- *the affective component*, represented by the adherence to norms, rules and values;
- *the volitional component*, represented by the attitude towards norms, rules and values.

Human society has permanently sought the cultivation and development of moral values because they were considered essential and necessary to the interpersonal relationships and to the relationships with a metaphysical element (good, truth etc.).

“The quality of life is not only a philosophical and scientific way of analyzing the existing conditions of life and of designing development strategies. It also tends to become the center of a *new ethics*. Human history reveals that the wise persons have persistently sought to find the fundamental ***ethical imperative*** in order to build around it the life strategies that lead towards happiness” [2].

For a constructive dialogue, through which people can help each other, it is necessary that everything that is moral, ethical, deontological professionally speaking to be preserved over time.

Social relations, social counseling of the social work profession must be built on traditional foundations with religious spirituality and high moral values.

Conceptual meanings regarding values, ethics, morality and deontology in social work

In order to tackle the ethical difficulties and moral dilemmas in social work practice, it is necessary to present the definitions and meanings of the following concepts: values, ethics, morality, morals and deontology.

Values are those items that we consider important. They include qualities, patterns of behavior, ideals; some of these items represent the spiritual heritage that guided several generations of individuals. Our values are closely related to ethical beliefs, as they help us to identify what is right and what it should be done in certain situations.

Ethics (the etymological root of the term is Greek: ethos - custom, character, etc.) is a philosophical discipline that studies either the theoretical and practical problems of an entire system of moral norms, characteristic of a philosophical current, or personally, or representing the foundation of a society in connection to the rules of conduct of moral life/ broadly morality.[3] A significant example of ethics is the Decalogue – “The Ten Commandments”, of religious and ethical nature, which were revealed by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, engraved on two tablets of stone; their text is included in the Holy Scripture of the Old Testament (Exodus 20, 2-17, Deut. 5, 6-21).

Morality is a set of rules governing the behavior, and it is based on values (truth – lie; moral – immoral; good – evil; responsibility; honesty etc.). This set of rules is characterized by a high degree of internalization and assertion, both by the moral conscience and by the influence and pressure of public opinions.

Morals is a concept of general nature, referring to the personal/ collective moral standards, as something imposed by the society, often being formally contrary to the generally accepted and formal norms and values, but widespread and practiced [4].

In other words, we can say that morals are those “habits” [5], those rooted and inherited customs, whose pernicious influence develop an unhealthy behavior within the society.

Deontology (from the Greek word *deon*, *deontos* – “debt”, “what is right” and *logos* – “science”) is a code of professional ethics, of principles and specific moral norms that involve the exercise of certain professions. *The Deontological Code* can be a written code or a code transmitted by tradition, orally and tacitly accepted by all the practitioners of a profession. Such a code is, for doctors, for example: “the Hippocratic oath” [6].

The value system of the social work profession

Through its system of values, social work brings forward ideas of ethical and moral conduct, solidarity, inclusion and acceptance of the least socially favored individuals at a certain time. By these values, social work gets very close to sociology, philosophy, psychology, but, especially, to the Christian social doctrine - the model of Christ.

The contemporary church has a difficult task, i.e. to prevent the fragmentation of secular ethics, complementary to the originary doctrine rooted in the Gospel, in the truth revealed by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Since His descent into the world and to its end ordained by the Creator, He represents, for the entire humanity, the Way, the Truth and Life.

Therefore, *the Christian social doctrine* is not a utopia, an ideology or “a third way”; it is a complex discipline rooted in the Revelation truths; it claims the right to apply the Word of God at the societal level; it has a solid philosophical and theological framing, and a universal nature, being able to renew itself constantly, without deviating from the Revelation truths.

The foundation of the Christian social doctrine and of human rights has a messianic basis [7]. Regarding the social mission of the Romanian Orthodox Church, especially the social mission of the Church during the IV - V centuries AD, the so-called gold centuries of Christianity, we can notice that *the dawn of the Romanian social work* itself dates from that period.

Within the value system of the social work profession, “our values as a model” may affect the assisted person, and, often, the professional represents a model for the latter. In this situation, it is very important to be aware of our values, strengths and weaknesses, in order to find the best way to help the assisted person to understand his/her own values.

In concrete social life problems, the individual values relative to the personal moral behavior differs from individual to individual. Thus, the physical and psychological child maltreatment, domestic violence, abortion, suicide, homosexuality are viewed from very different angles by the social adviser and by the assisted person.

The issues, which are important to us, are not necessarily important to the assisted person; thus, it is important to be aware of the way in which our values interrelate with the other’s values. Due to the relation between our values and the values of an institution, our personal value system may directly enter in conflict with the value system of the institution where we carry out our activities, or with our professional ethical code.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, in today's Romania there is a configured social assistance system that has all the necessary structural elements, but the way of organization and functioning, the inertia of decision makers at the central level, the sometimes defective management of institutions, the small number of social workers with university training, the lack of financial motivation of

specialists with higher education, as salaries are extremely low, and hence the often inferior quality of services provided. [8]

The current social assistance, either by the state or of the Romanian Orthodox Church is fully aware of the social problems faced by some of our country's population.

Although efforts are made to improve difficult situations that affect this segment of the population, it seems that the number of those in need is constantly growing.

The conclusions at the end of the paper revolve around the idea that solidarity between social actors, professional vocation, spiritual and moral values is a *sine qua non* condition, necessary and intrinsic in carrying out religious socio-educational activities, this solidarity being imposed as a necessity on the spiritual, social and economic crisis that plagued contemporary society.

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