

ÉTICA DE LOS SERVICIOS SOCIALES**BEGOÑA ROMÁN****HERDER (BARCELONA, 2016)**

Begoña Román is not only a scholar who specializes in ethics, but she also knows first-hand the changes undergone by social services in the last years. Throughout the book, the reader witnesses her love for social services in the most ethical and responsible sense of the term. More than a book, we are in front of a vital story. This raises the book to a quality worthy of consideration and makes it one of those books that can never go out of fashion – regardless of the circumstances this book is always worth being read.

When one finishes the reading of the book, one corroborates that the two objectives that the author aims to achieve have been fulfilled: first, the acquisition of a better knowledge of the work carried out by social services today; and second, the training possibilities offered to university students of social education, social work, psychology, education, etc., for a better understanding of the complexity that they will face sooner rather than later.

The book, perfectly articulated, raises three big issues. The first one is: what ethics for social services? It is often thought that it is enough for each professional who works in social services to exercise his or her own sense of responsibility. This perspective has been partly promoted by moral liberalism, which trusts the individual's ability to construct an ethical project in an autonomous way. However, the book argues that this is not enough, and that, in fact, reality shows that there are many professionals who, even against their will and reasoned judgments, leave ethics in the hands of circumstances, with the dangers this entails. The current reality requires making ethical responsibilities explicit, as well as publicly displaying the values that will illuminate the different actions and pointing out the place people deserving social attention will occupy. It is not a matter of thinking of social services as mere places of assistance, of waiting for the problem to be provided some kind of solution. It is rather about taking a proactive attitude, of having the theoretical means to face something before it happens. This requires at least two considerations: to consider the person as the heart of social action and to plan and evaluate such social action. Only in this way we can convince ourselves that social service is essentially an ethical task, that social care is a way to build good life projects. Therefore, the social services thus formulated

have not only external goods to achieve, but also have internal goods to achieve, as pointed out by neo-Aristotelian philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre. All this is explained in a masterful way in the first three chapters of the book.

The second question that the book raises and which is addressed in the fourth and fifth chapters is: to whom are social services addressed? The variety is broad, but the common denominator is social exclusion and dependency. The author of the book has the capacity to show us that we are not talking about minority groups but about society as a whole. In other words, social services are the responsibility of each of us, we are all exposed to their tasks, or if you prefer, nobody is excluded from being involved in situations that need social assistance or collaboration.

The third and final question posed by the book is: what are the principles that guide decision making and what are the virtues required in social services? It is here that perhaps the book acquires a more proactive and functional character. In the last four chapters the author puts forward two interesting proposals: on the one hand, a list of virtues that are based on all the theory exposed above, especially in the first three chapters. It is interesting to be able to read a book that does not remain in the mere theory, that in a brave way bets on virtues that need to be practiced by nowadays social services. On the other hand, it is committed to a methodology of deliberation on problematic cases, cases for which the author also proposes the creation of spaces for reflection, committees or commissions that ultimately institutionalize ethics in social services.

In short, this is not another book of ethics in social services: it is rather a fundamental and necessary book for these services that urges them to do everything they are called for. Ethics should not become mere cosmetics, nor should ethics be a mere option. Ethics is a consubstantial part of the social services and of its professionals, and it is great news that someone like Begoña Román, from her exhaustive knowledge of the matter at work, presents it to the reader in such a masterful, clear and clarifying way.

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