

Quality of Life

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As a logical consequence of the demands of our technological civilization, which is based on the quality and performance of its products, people have finally begun to look at the human being as the main factor in any model of civilization, whether technological or otherwise.

It is now increasingly understood and accepted that the greater a person's sense of well-being when he or she is producing something, the greater will be the objective quality of the material product. Once again, it has been proved that machines by themselves cannot produce a fully finished product and that the mere incentive of owning more things or earning more money is not enough to make a human being happy. Consequently, it has become fashionable to focus on enhancing the quality of life. In thousands of businesses all over the world – large, medium-sized and small – campaigns have been launched to raise self-esteem, conscious efficiency and the sense of participation and responsibility, and to develop human relationships and appropriate communication between people.

This is all well and good, and indeed, positive advances have been achieved in many cases: people are more relaxed, more attentive to their work and more satisfied with their working environment. But it cannot stop there. The basic motivation behind this drive for increased quality of life does not cover the whole spectrum of the human being; it seeks to achieve increased and better quality production, but it does not usually take into consideration the other needs that are inherent in the condition of being alive, of facing dozens and dozens of situations that are not always related to work and productivity. Of course, human beings need some material resources – which may be more or less technical – to enable them to live with dignity. And, above all, people need resources to enable them to compete and make their way within our specific societies of today, societies that measure people based on what they have and on the prestige they obtain.





But we shouldn't forget that, alongside that material subsistence, there are feelings – not always clearly defined – that can make people happy or torment them; there are ideas – not always clear or resolved – that make it difficult for people to make firm progress and choose their own future. And we would also add those other experiences – spiritual or metaphysical – that arise unexpectedly in the consciousness, asking for answers to the eternal enigmas.

If we are to talk about an authentic quality of life, we should consider the human being as a whole and not only with regard to what he or she can give and produce. We should think about an education which, from the very first years, looks after the psychological, mental, moral and spiritual development of those who, later on, will have to give the best of themselves, after they have first managed to make themselves better.

In the psychological aspect, it is important that each person should be able to distinguish their everyday and fleeting emotions from those deep and refined feelings that can and should be nourished, so that they can become lasting and stable sources of happiness. As long as quality of life is associated with superficial and changing emotional experiences, and the emphasis and interest remain at that level, there will be no individuals who will be sure of themselves or of those around them. Things that are always changing can be entertaining for a while, but they don't have the seal of quality.

In the mental aspect, it is not only necessary to study, as this is understood today, because we can see from experience how easily people forget what they have not studied properly. There is a need to learn, to remember with intelligence, gathering our own experiences and those of others, making everything we learn something alive, if we are to achieve quality of life at this level as well.

In the moral aspect, and even if daily examples suggest the contrary, it is indispensable to develop the latent virtues in all human beings. It doesn't matter that it's not fashionable to be good, honest, just, prudent, courteous, brave, generous and dignified; the truth is that, without these and other similar characteristics, there will be no quality of life. And the facts demonstrate this.

In the spiritual aspect, without falling into fanatical and intransigent formulas, some answers have to be offered to the questions of the soul, which wants to know what we are doing here in the world, where we come from and where we are going. There are plenty of teachings and pieces of advice from great sages of yesterday and today to provide perspectives in this sense. We have to know how to make use of them and leave aside the vain prejudice that nobody can transmit anything valid to us – especially if these are concepts that have been passed down through the centuries from ancient times.

It's true, we all want quality of life. But we want to give life its real and broad meaning and make sure that this quality improves us in all aspects. Then we will be more efficient, happier, more intelligent, a little wiser, and we will be able to wear the badge of human beings with pride. ★★★