STORRS McCALL

5. QUALITY OF LIFE

ABSTRACT. What is sought is a definition of Quality of Life (QOL). Other authors have defined QOL in terms of actual happiness or perceived satisfaction/dissatisfaction. The present paper defines it not as a summation of the individual happiness-states of all members of a society, but as the obtaining of the necessary conditions for happiness throughout a society. These conditions being necessary not sufficient, high QOL is compatible with actual unhappiness. The necessary conditions in question are identified with the availability of means for the satisfaction of human needs rather than human desires, and a Maslowian analysis of the former is proposed in default of any more satisfactory analysis. The paper concludes with a discussion of how maximizing need-satisfaction (as opposed to want-satisfaction) automatically guarantees fair distribution of needed goods. This ensures that in at least some respects high-QOL societies are societies characterized by justice.

Use of the phrase 'Quality of Life' seems to date back to 1964,[1] but no agreement yet exists as to what meaning it carries. In what follows we shall attempt to provide a definition.

Recent discussions on Quality of Life (henceforth QOL) have been motivated by two rather different concerns. The first of these represents a feeling on the part of many people that modern industrial society, despite impressive gains in affluence, ease of communication, and leisure, has not made any significant overall progress in improving man's lot. Mankind's prospects may, in fact, be less attractive now than they were 25 years ago.[2] Interest in QOL represents, therefore, under this interpretation, a desire for something better or a nostalgia for something lost.

> The concept of *Quality of Life* has emerged in the last few years as an undefinable measure of society's determination and desire to improve or at least not permit a further degradation of its condition. Despite its current undefinability, it represents a yearning of people for something which they feel they have lost or are losing, or have been denied, and which to some extent they wish to regain or acquire.[3]

The second concern that has motivated research into QOL is the desire for an index of social well-being analogous to GNP and other measures of economic well-being. The emphasis here is on *measurability*, which has provided the thrust for recent intensive research on social indicators as a

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proper subset of social statistics. The ultimate aim (admittedly very far from realization now or in the foreseeable future) is to be able to aggregate all indicators into a master QOL index. Current interest in quality of life, then, stems from at least two distinct sources: one a popular concern and lack of satisfaction over what life has to offer, the other a desire on the part of social scientists to provide, for purposes of governmental decision-making as well as out of intellectual interest, measures of social progress.

Although the purpose of investigating QOL is clear enough, understanding of what exactly is being investigated is not. For example, is QOL something that pertains primarily to societies, to groups of people, or is it something that attaches basically to individuals, and is thence extended to societies or groups by a process of summation? Is QOL measured by collecting subjective reports of satisfaction/dissatisfaction, or of perceived well-being, on the part of individual members of society? Or is it measured by the number of schools and hospitals, by nutrition levels and command over goods and services, by crime rates and air quality? Is QOL one and the same for men and women, for Newfoundlanders and Albertans, for old and young, for Africa and Western Europe? Or is QOL a radically culture-bound concept, requiring that each segment of human society, each demographic group, seek out for itself an understanding of where it conceives life's quality to lie? None of these questions, as far as I know, has been answered. In the absence of at least rough agreement about answers, the concept of QOL can hardly be said to exist. Not only do we not know what it is, we don't even know what category it belongs to. What is needed, as a prerequisite to further work on QOL, is an understanding of what the expression 'quality of life' means.[4]

Let us begin with the word 'quality,' which is a slippery term because it has both an evaluative and a non-evaluative use. Used non-evaluatively, the word is similar in meaning to 'attribute' or 'character.' Thus if we say, "Life in Paris has a certain distinctive quality," we mean that it has a distinctive character. Furthermore, in the nonevaluative sense of the word, it is meaningless to ask whether QOL in Paris is greater or less than QOL in Rome. Instead, life in each of these cities has just the particular quality it has and no other. In its non-evaluative sense, the word 'quality' behaves somewhat like the word 'colour': every object has its

own particular colour, and we cannot say that one colour is greater or less than another. But it is the evaluative rather than the non-evaluative sense of the word 'quality' that interests us here. Used in this sense, the word behaves more like 'weight,' which is a comparative term, than like 'colour.' Every object has a weight, and the weight of one object is always comparable in amount to the weight of another. However, in another respect, the word 'quality,' as used evaluatively, differs from both 'colour' and 'weight.' To say that something is of high quality is automatically to recommend it, to say that it is 'better' (in some sense) than something of low quality, whereas heavier things are not *per se* better than lighter ones. The notion of quality, as we shall henceforth understand it, not only differs from colour and resembles weight in being comparative, but also differs from weight in being evaluative. As used evaluatively, QOL admits of degrees, and it is meaningful to speak of QOL in Paris as being greater or less than QOL in Rome. QOL becomes, therefore, not a name for the particular character or savour of life in different regions of the globe, but for a property which characterizes different societies to different degrees, desirability being directly proportional to degree.[5]

The word 'quality' is sometimes confusingly employed in the sense of 'high degree of quality.'[6] For example, we sometimes speak of 'a quality wine,' meaning 'a wine of high quality,' or of 'losing the quality of life,' although strictly speaking life always has *some* degree of quality, whether high or low. These idioms are harmless, provided their literal meaning is recognized.

Merely saying that quality is an evaluative property admitting of degrees does not serve as a definition. As Baier points out, the quality of a thing is only one among many evaluative properties. Others include usefulness, efficiency, efficacy, worth, worthwhileness, value, merit, beauty. Specifying exactly what it is about something that constitutes its *quality*, as opposed to, say, its *usefulness* or its *beauty*, can be a complex matter. The extent of the complexity may be indicated by considering some examples. Good quality *wine* is distinguished by its body, colour, mellowness of taste, and aroma. A high quality *fabric* is generally one that wears well and is pleasing to the touch, although it may not be as useful as a drip-dry. *Air* quality is a function of the gaseous emissions and particulate matter it contains, together with ozone (at the seashore). Poor quality *restaurants* are those that are dingy, or dirty, or serve inferior

meals, and are sometimes but not always characterized by low quality *service*. And so forth. In Baier's terminology, the quality of a thing is both *multi-criterial* and *type-dependent*. It is multi-criterial because the applicability of the word 'quality' depends on the presence or absence not of one but of a cluster of other properties.[7] It is type-dependent because the criteria which determine the quality of one type of thing (say wine) are not the same as those which determine the quality of another (say fabric). Now, what lessons can be learned from all this about quality of *life*?

To begin with, the word 'life' in the phrase 'quality of life' refers not to my life or your life or Bob Brown's life but to 'life in a certain society,' or 'life in a certain region of the earth's surface.'[8] Given that QOL applies to regions or societies, what are the criteria to be used in assessing it? This is, of course, the nub of the question. If we review the examples given above, those of quality of wine, fabric, air, restaurants, and service, we note that a common element runs through them all, namely, an intimate relation to human beings and their needs, wants, and desires. Without the human denominator, there *is* no such thing as quality of wine, fabric, air, restaurants, or service. Just as the proof of the pudding lies in the eating, so the proof of the quality of the wine lies in the drinking, or of the fabric in the wearing. And so it might be said, proof of the quality of life lies in the living. This would seem to indicate that regions of high QOL were regions where living was somehow enhanced, where people got more out of life, in some sense, than people did in other regions.

We are on the right track, but we must proceed carefully. We first need a name for the state of life-enhancement: let us borrow an old term and call it 'happiness.' There is much to be said about this term and only a tiny fraction of it can be said here, but the following will indicate broadly how we shall understand it.

(i) Unlike pleasure, happiness is not episodic. Feelings of pleasure and pain are episodes, and can occur both in the context of a happy life, and in the context of an unhappy life. We must distinguish 'feeling happy now' from 'being happy.'

(ii) Happiness is closely related to (may even be identical with) fulfillment. Each person has certain talents or capabilities or potentialities. Whether he is happy or not depends to a large extent on whether these capabilities are realized.

(iii) Plato argued long ago that the happy life was the good or virtuous life. There may well be a moral dimension to happiness but the state of the argument has not advanced much since Plato.

(iv) Happiness may best be found by not seeking it. In Mill's words: "Those only are happy... who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means but as itself an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness by the way."[9]

Given the notion of happiness, it might seem that we could proceed directly to define QOL in terms of the general or average happiness of the people in a region or society. But this would be, in the opinion of the author, a mistake. The reasons why it would be a mistake are rather complicated, and need to be considered carefully.

First, we already have a perfectly good measure of social welfare in terms of happiness, coming down to us from Bentham and Mill, as incorporated in the theory of utilitarianism. It is true that Mill defined happiness in terms of pleasure and the absence of pain rather than in terms of fulfillment. But, with this difference, to define QOL in terms of the general happiness, of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number,' would be merely to repeat Mill's work.

A second and more important reason for not defining QOL in terms of the general happiness is this. Suppose we have a region R in which the general happiness is very high. People are fulfilled, gather together frequently for joyful communal activities, and subscribe passionately to certain common goals. An outsider X, who defines QOL in terms of happiness, decides that R is the place for him and moves in. Alas, he experiences nothing but frustration and anguish. Why? Because the people who inhabit R are a group of snobs or bigots who refuse to admit X. Alternatively, let S be a region of inutterable misery and deprivation (e.g., Bangladesh after a flood). Yet Y, who moves there, is sustained by an inner life of intense religious convictions and leads a dedicated and fulfilled existence. What these examples indicate is that QOL is independent of the general happiness. Region R may seem at first sight to be a high-QOL area but in fact is not, its happiness being based on inequity (we shall return to questions of justice and inequity later). Region S is a low-QOL area and remains so, no matter how many happy and fulfilled

religious people move into it.

Consider a third example. Let *T* be a society with every conceivable amenity, both physical and social. *T* has good schools, full employment, excellent health care, very little crime, democratic government, incorruptible officials, clean air, a high level of affluence, and no poverty. And yet, for one reason or another, almost everyone in *T* is unhappy. *A*'s mother has just died, *B* can't get along with his boss, *C* has an anxiety neurosis, *D* and *E* suffer the pangs of unrequited love, *F* is married to the wrong man, etc. Does this mean that QOL in *T* is low? It would if QOL were measured by summing the individual unhappinesses of *A*, *B*, *C*,.... But intuitively, one would think that the QOL of *T* were high, and to insist that it is low indicates only that we have chosen the wrong definition. Suppose now that the psychological atmosphere in *T* improves. *A* gets over his mother's death, *B* changes jobs, *C* goes to an analyst, *D* and *E* get married, and *F* gets divorced. Does QOL increase? No. The sum total of human happiness increases, but this is not QOL.

What then *is* QOL? Just as quality of wine is something that pertains to wine, and quality of a fabric something that pertains to a fabric, so QOL is something that pertains to a society or region. Just as quality of wine is different from the pleasureable taste that one gets from drinking it, but is in some way causally connected with it, so QOL is different from happiness, but is in some way causally connected with it. We shall say that QOL consists in the obtaining of the *necessary conditions* for happiness in a given society or region. The concept of a 'necessary condition for happiness' is vague, and needs to be elaborated

Nicholas Rescher, in a work which explores at some length the relationship between happiness and welfare, puts forward three factors that must be distinguished in any discussion of happiness:[10]

(1) *General happiness requisites.* What it requires for an arbitrary member of the human species to be happy. The general happiness requisites or requirements (GHR's) do not vary from person to person. Note that the GHR's are *necessary* conditions for happiness, not sufficient conditions.

(2) *Idiosyncratic happiness requisites.* What it requires for me to be happy, or for you to be happy, or for Bob Brown to be happy. The IHR's will in general differ from one person to another.

(3) *Happiness itself.*[11] The actual state of being happy.

Let us re-examine the case of society *T*, the society which had every conceivable amenity but whose members were unhappy, in the light of these distinctions. Plainly it is quite possible, in the case of any society, for the *general* happiness requirements to be satisfied although, for any individual member of that society, his *idiosyncratic* happiness requirements are not. This is the case in society *T*. The necessary conditions for happiness are satisfied, where by 'necessary conditions' we mean GHR's, i.e., what is necessary for a person (any person) to be happy. But the sum total of the GHR's do not constitute a sufficient condition for happiness. In addition, each person has certain idiosyncratic requirements, the IHR's, which if not met will frustrate the attainment of happiness. The IHR's, unlike the GHR's, are very much a matter of the individual differences and contingencies which separate one person from another: I may like tennis and you may like golf, with the result that I am miserable and you are happy in a region that has only golf courses. Or *X*'s spirit may be broken by the loss of a loved one, while *Y* may be able to reconcile himself and rise above the loss. Whether people are happy, therefore, depends as much upon certain needs being met that are peculiar to them as individuals, as upon the satisfaction of needs they share with everyone else.

Quality of life, as we shall define it in this paper, consists in the satisfaction of the general happiness requirements. To the extent that the GHR's are met in a given society or region, what we shall understand by QOL is high in that society or region; to the extent that they are not met, QOL is low. In the next few paragraphs, I shall point out certain consequences of adopting this definition of QOL, and how the definition differs from other definitions that have previously been proposed. In the last part of the paper, I shall take up the extremely difficult question of what the general happiness requirements are.

The first and probably most important consequence of our definition is that QOL is not to be determined by questioning people about how satisfied or dissatisfied they are. Questions like: "Taken altogether, how would you say things are these days – would you say you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?"[12] though no doubt interesting and important in their own right, have nothing to do with QOL. The approach to QOL taken here runs directly counter to all the proposed definitions of the concept which are to be found in the first and so far only published

volume devoted explicitly to QOL.[13] Thus we find:

> The premise on which the studies are based is that *quality of life* refers to human experience, and the criteria of *quality of life* are those dimensions of life by which people experience levels of satisfaction-dissatisfaction (pleasure-pain, happiness-unhappiness, etc.).[14]

And in another paper:

> By *quality of life* we mean an individual's overall perceived satisfaction of his needs over a period of time.[15]

Finally, in reporting on the results of a QOL questionnaire, Dalkey and Rourke state:

> In our instructions to the subjects *we defined the term 'Quality of Life' (QOL) to mean a person's sense of well-being, his satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life, or his happiness or unhappiness.*[16]

Each of these definitions of QOL represents what we may call a *subjectivist* approach to the matter. By contrast, the definition of QOL in terms of happiness requirements rather than happiness is an attempt to provide an *objective* definition.

The difference between the subjective and the objective approaches to QOL parallels a long-standing dispute in the field of social indicators, which we shall digress for a moment to explore. This is, whether to admit subjective indicators as measures of social welfare. At a seminar on social indicators in 1972, Dorothy Walters, of the Economic Council of Canada, spoke both of the need for such indicators and of the problems involved in obtaining them:

> Part of our current dilemma arises out of the apparent paradox that measured improvements in objective conditions have not been associated with similar improvements in satisfactions. This whole 'subjective' area provides an opportunity for creative theoretical and operational research.... There is a large political content in this emphasis on attitudes and reactions. In view of the sensitive nature of these data, it is probably preferable that the major developments in subjective data take place in private agencies and institutions.[17]

Despite these difficulties, it seems now to be generally acknowledged that a complete social indicator program will of necessity have to admit subjective data. Thus, in its policy statement on social indicators, the OECD asserts:

> The perceptions which individuals and groups have of fundamental aspects of their well-being are a necessary and important component of the social indicator program.

> This type of information reveals another dimension of reality and may also show up objective factors which have not previously been recognized as significant. The well-being of individuals in many goal areas cannot be readily detected without recourse to the account of the individuals themselves.[18]

The two most recent compendia of socal indicators in the U.S. and Canada both profess an interest in subjective data, although in fact they contain mostly non-perceptual material.[19]

In view of the generally-accepted belief that subjective data are needed in any satisfactory social indicator program, and that what is indicated by social indicators, roughly and broadly, is social well-being or quality of life, would it not seem that we were over-hasty in rejecting a subjective definition of QOL in terms of perceived happiness or felt satisfaction? It might. But a closer examination of how subjective indicators behave, and how they relate to 'objective' data, shows that it is possible to combine, within a single conceptual or methodological framework, the notion of a subjective QOL *indicator* with that which is *constitutive* of QOL, the latter being wholly non-subjective.

Perhaps the most suggestive and interesting work done on subjective indicators is that of Stanley Seashore on job satisfaction.[20] Seashore argues that in assessing the quality of working life (QWL) we must take into account not only such objective measures as pay, hours of work, health conditions and pension plans, but such things as *satisfaction* with pay, *preference* for more or fewer hours of work, *need* for a vacation, *perception* of hazard, *expectation* of promotion.[21] Pay and satisfaction with pay are two very different things, and both, according to Seashore, are relevant to QWL. One might think that job satisfaction varied as widely or more widely than working conditions, but surprisingly this is not so. In the U.S. in 1969–70, 85% of the employed adults reported themselves as being at least 'somewhat' satisfied, and only 15% dissatisfied. Although adequate time series are not yet available, Seashore anticipates that these figures will remain fairly constant, for the following reason. Job dissatisfaction, on his analysis, represents an unstable and transitional state, which is sooner or later removed by man's capacity to adapt himself. 'Adaptation,' of course, may take many different forms, such as changing jobs, lowering expectations, cognitive distortion, aggression, and other more pathological ways of coping with the situation. But in one way or another, if Seashore's theory is correct, the large majority of

working people will come round to being 'satisfied,' or at least to expressing themselves as 'satisfied.' Even Ivan Denisovitch, in his Siberian labour camp, meets and overcomes challenges in a way not too different from the way in which North American workers do, and at the end of the day goes to bed a 'satisfied' man.[22]

Now, if all this is so, what becomes of QWL? If both good working conditions and bad working conditions produce a more or less constant percentage of workers who describe themselves as 'satisfied,' will we not be forced to conclude that quality of working life is something that varies independently of job satisfaction? It won't do to say that QWL is constituted by some *combination* of objective and subjective factors. We might as well say that the quality of a fabric lies not in the fabric but consists in some esoteric combination of properties of the fabric together with pleasurable feelings on the part of the wearer. No, quality of a fabric lies in the fabric, and QWL lies in working conditions. The role played by job satisfaction indicators is to indicate *which* working conditions are important in determining QWL. At the moment, we have only rather imprecise ideas concerning this. Is good pay more or less important than good relations with one's supervisor? How important is the element of creativity in work? What leads to dissatisfaction with pay? These are questions that cannot be answered without talking to and observing people at work, and this is, in a sense, the job that subjective indicators do for us. Working conditions constitute QWL, while job satisfaction reports, sometimes in a rather oblique way, indicate it.

Let us leave the matter of whether QOL is objective or subjective and turn to another question. This is, whether what constitutes QOL varies from one region or society to another. This is not the question whether QOL varies in degree, but whether what counts as QOL varies. Is QOL a culture-bound or regional concept?

According to the definition of QOL proposed above, QOL consists in the satisfaction of the general happiness requirements in a given region. The general happiness requirements are those requirements which are necessary conditions of anyone's happiness – without which no member of the human race can be happy.[23] Since there is but one human species in all regions of the world, the criteria which determine QOL do not vary from one region to another. It is a consequence of our definition that what makes for high or low QOL in Alaska is exactly the same as what

makes for high or low QOL in Tahiti. Therefore QOL, although it applies to regions, is not a region-relative or society-relative concept.[24]

Another question: if QOL, in a given region, consists of the satisfaction of certain requirements, in the absence of which no one can be happy, does this mean that if only one person in the region is happy, then the requirements are met and consequently QOL is maximized? No, this is not what is intended. What is intended, and what should be stated explicitly, is that QOL in a given region consists in the satisfaction of the GHR's *throughout the region*, i.e., for each inhabitant. The greater the percentage of people in the region for which the GHR's are satisfied, the higher the level of QOL. This is somewhat oversimplified, since it does not take into account structural inequities in a region. For example, if in a developing country there exist only a few hospitals, then a certain percentage of the population will be effectively denied health care and QOL may be increased by increasing the number of hospitals. But if all the new hospitals are built in the home area of the country's president, then even if no health care redundancy exists, QOL will suffer, since inequities have been introduced which are not simply the result of chance (i.e., how far one's home happens to be from a hospital). This example indicates that a principle of equity or justice plays some part in the specification of what constitutes QOL, and leads us to the last part of the paper, in which the nature of the general happiness requirements is discussed.

To specify what the GHR's are is not at all easy. What I have to say on the subject is tentative, and will raise more problems than it resolves. To begin with, are the general happiness requirements provided for by the satisfaction of human needs, or by the satisfaction of human wants and desires? This question is an important one, and to answer it we must briefly discuss the notion of what it is to need something, and how it differs from wanting or desiring.

The concept of a *need* is an extremely general one. Given any object O, whether animate or inanimate, and any state S of O, then what *O needs* (relative to the state S) is whatever is required for O to attain S, or, if O is already in S, to remain in S.[25] We often omit the qualifier, 'relative to the state S,' in speaking of needs. Thus we speak of an engine needing oil without normally mentioning that the engine needs oil in order to function smoothly. But these ellipses are common and, in most cases, well understood. Some philosophers and psychologists conceive of a need as a

lack. But a need is not necessarily a lack, since it is perfectly possible to say that a person needs all his strength to lift something without suggesting that he lacks the strength.[26]

The notion of a want or desire is more restricted, since apart from archaic or colloquial uses of the word 'want,' as in 'This coat wants mending,' only animate subjects can want or desire anything. What a person wants, and what he needs, are in general quite independent of one another. I may want a cigarette, although I may not need one; I may need to go to the dentist, although I may not want to. Wants differ from needs in at least the following respects:

(i) Unlike the specification of a need, the full specification of a want does not necessarily involve reference to any end state which fulfillment of the want promotes. A man needs money in order to eat, but a miser may simply want or desire it, not as a means to something else, but for its own sake.

(ii) Wants are controllable in a way that needs are not. One can check one's desire for food, but not one's need for it. We can eagerly want things, but not eagerly need them. Furthermore, we can only want what is to some degree within our grasp, whereas what we need may be conceptually out of reach. To lead a happy life, for example, we may need to have had a happy childhood.

(iii) What we want bears a close relationship to what we believe. For example, whether or not mountain air is good for my health, I may want a holiday in the mountains because I believe it to be good for my health. In contrast, what I believe is strictly irrelevant to what I need.[27]

(iv) Generally speaking, people are the best judges of what they want, but not of what they need. What I may want is a large juicy steak, whereas all I may need for nutritional purposes is soup, raw carrots, and rice. So, if you want to know what I want, ask me, whereas if you want to know what I need, an expert's advice would be as good or better.

(v) Philosophers frequently distinguish between the 'intensional' character of wanting and desiring, as opposed to the 'extensional' character of needing. I may want to punch the next person I meet, and the next person I meet may be Muhammed Ali, but his does not entail that I want to punch Muhammed Ali. On the other hand, if I need to punch the next person I meet, and if the next person I meet is Muhammed Ali, then I need to punch Muhammed Ali.[28]

(vi) The satisfaction of a want or desire differs in an important way from the satisfaction of a need. Frequently, the satisfaction of a want or desire requires the occurrence of an event in the world of physical things, as when a person satisfies his desire for food by consuming a meal. However, *whether the desire is satisfied* is never settled by examining the physical world. Instead, it is settled by examining the person's mind (or, if we are materialists, the state of his brain). In the case of needs, on the other hand, the question of *whether a need is satisfied* is normally though not always settled by examining the physical world. Whether my need for food is is satisfied, for example, as opposed to my desire, is purely a matter of the quantity and the variety of the food I eat, and not of whether I feel content.

Summing up the differences described under (ii)–(vi), we might say that wanting and desiring are *psychological states*, whereas the state of needing something is not a psychological state. Combining this result with the one obtained earlier about the non-subjective character of QOL, we are able to infer something about the general happiness requirements. QOL, as we have defined it, consists in the fulfillment of the GHR's. Since the presence or absence of unsatisfied wants is a mental phenomenon, fulfillment of the GHR's cannot lie in the satisfaction of human wants. If anything, it must lie in the satisfaction of human needs.

An important consequence of focussing on needs rather than wants is that we avoid the escalation problem. Wants tend to escalate in the sense that if you give me what I want, I shall stop wanting it and want something else. This phenomenon, of rising expectations or rising aspirations, is sometimes appealed to in order to explain how it is that modern man, in the face of a steadily rising standard of living, continues to regard himself as less happy than his forebears.[29] The phenomenon was known to the Epicureans, who embodied it in the following proportion:[30]

$$\text{degree of satisfaction} = \frac{\text{attainment}}{\text{expectation}}$$

Unlike wants, however, needs do not escalate. There is no suggestion that if you give me what I need, then I immediately start to need something else. Hence if QOL is measured in terms of the satisfaction of needs, not wants, comparisons of QOL in societies at different times and places will be possible, whereas if QOL is measured in terms of wants we shall find,

as Seashore did with job satisfaction, that in all societies QOL tends to seek a certain equilibrium level.

If satisfaction of the general happiness requirements is to be understood as consisting in the fulfillment of needs, it still remains to be said what human needs are. As we saw earlier, '*X* needs *Y*' is always short for '*X* needs *Y* in order to *Z*.' In the context of the general happiness requirements, we may interpret 'to *Z*' as 'to be happy.' But what is it that human beings need in order to be happy? This is an extremely difficult question. Perhaps the most ambitious and the most widely known attempt to answer it is that of Abraham Maslow, whose 'hierarchy of needs' is an ordered list with the property that higher needs cannot be met until the more basic ones have been. Maslow's hierarchy is as follows.[31]

(1) *Physiological needs.* The lowest category of needs, comprising the need for food, water, sleep, shelter, reproduction, etc. These needs are prepotent, and if they are not satisfied, dominate the individual's behaviour.

(2) *Safety or security needs.* Needs for protection from harm and for a life that is safe and secure, including assurances about the future satisfaction of physiological needs.

(3) *Belongingness needs.* The need for love and affection. These needs are of two kinds – the passive need to be loved and accepted, and the active need to love others.

(4) *Esteem needs.* People's need for a stable, firmly based, usually high evaluation of themselves. Like belongingness needs, esteem needs divide into a need for the esteem or respect of others, and for self-respect or self-esteem.

(5) *Self-actualization needs.* These needs, the highest in Maslow's hierarchy, are often said to differ from the others in being 'growth' rather than 'deficiency' needs, although the exact nature of the intended difference is unclear. The satisfaction of self-actualization needs is said to correspond roughly to "what some personality theorists call the 'fully mature' person, adding to the notions of emotional balance and of self-acceptance a notion of drive, of open-ended achievement in unfamiliar and challenging situations."

It will be noted that most of the needs in Maslow's hierarchy are what we may call 'psychological' needs, meaning that the purpose of meeting them is to achieve a psychological state of health or happiness. However, although the end state is psychological the means of achieving that state

are in general not. For example, one way to satisfy belongingness needs is (in Africa at least) to be a member of an extended family, but being a member of an extended family is not a psychological state. The question of just what physical, interpersonal, or social institutions are causally related to what psychological end-states is one that admits of no simple answer. No doubt the answer is different in different societies. But if Maslow's theory, or some theory similar to it, is correct in asserting that a list of needs can be drawn up which holds for all men at all times and places, then the first step will have been made in laying down a set of objective criteria for QOL.

Against this, it has been objected that Maslow's need hierarchy is too abstract and general to be of any use in assessing QOL. Taking as an example the low-level need for shelter, Michalos remarks:

> We get practically instant agreement that people need shelter. And then what? What do we do with that? What follows by way of research or policy from that? There's not much point in launching a search to find out what per cent of our people don't have shelter. Virtually everyone lives *in something*. We must go beyond mere shelter to do anything useful and then we are beyond Maslow on this basic need. We must talk about space per person, toilets and tubs, kitchens and windows, and so on to get anywhere talking about shelter.[32]

Michalos is, of course, right in implying that we cannot assess QOL in any very satisfactory way by merely counting 'shelters' (unless we are UNHCR people dealing with refugees). But Maslow's need hierarchy will take us a little farther than this. In a 'shelter,' is good insulation necessary? Yes, if it is needed to sustain body temperature. A bathroom? Yes, for health reasons, unless some equally convenient sanitary facility is available. Does each member of the family need to have his own room? Only if a case can be made for such an arrangement on the basis of esteem and self-actualization needs. Etc. Plainly, a lot of work needs to be done, but at the moment I know of no argument demonstrating that the need hierarchy (or something like it) is incapable of providing appropriate criteria for assessing QOL. And the need hierarchy possesses a sufficient degree of generality that we shall not be forced into culture-bound absurdities like asserting that QOL in Burma must be low because they don't have bathrooms or two-car garages.

The last matter I wish to take up is the question of equality or justice, which was discussed briefly earlier. The central problem is whether or not

the way in which goods and amenities are distributed in a society is relevant to QOL. In our earlier discussion of the example of the distribution of hospitals in a developing country, we asserted that distribution was indeed relevant, and that an unjust or inequitable distribution would actually lower QOL. But our treatment of the matter was hasty, and it was not made clear *why* injustice should be incompatible with high QOL, or what relationship, if any, existed between quality of life and equality. So let us examine the matter a little more carefully.

Consider a society in which the general happiness requirements of a certain percentage of the population are met. Suppose that, in addition, there now exist means of providing for additional GHR's. There need be nothing very subtle about this; let us suppose that there is hunger, and that a certain amount of food becomes available. How shall the food be distributed? It could, of course, be given to those whose needs are already met, but no increase in QOL would result from this, since once a need is satisfied, any further attempt at satisfaction is redundant.[33] The only way of using the additional food to increase QOL, therefore, would be to give it to those whose needs were not met. (Recall that we defined QOL in a given region as consisting in satisfaction of the GHR's throughout the region, i.e., for each inhabitant.) QOL could be increased in this way until the needs of all members of the society were met, following which no further increase would be possible. Note that fair and equal distribution of the GHR's in a society where QOL is maximal is guaranteed, and that what guarantees it is the fact that each person's needs are finite, and their limits fixed. Furthermore, when we confine ourselves to the GHR's and exclude the IHR's, no person's needs differ from another's.

Several comments must be made. First, it is perhaps not strictly true that a person's needs are finite, and cannot be increased without limit. In particular, it might seem that Maslow's need hierarchy was quite open-ended about human needs. It is true that I need only a finite amount of food, clothing, and shelter, but is there any limit to the amount of love a person needs? Can an upper bound be placed on one's need for self-actualization? Perhaps not, but it is not clear that there is any limit on the amount of material available for the satisfaction of love needs and self-actualization needs either. Those needs for the satisfaction of which only limited resources are available, such as needs for food and shelter, are (fortunately) limited in extent.[34] And those which are not limited in extent

seem capable of all being satisfied, without person *X*'s needs conflicting with person *Y*'s.

In a society in which resources are adequate to satisfy everybody's needs, the problem of distribution is solved automatically by going ahead and satisfying needs. But we have not yet solved the problem of when resources are inadequate, since it has not yet been shown that a society in which the needs of *A*, *B* and *C* are each partially met has a higher QOL than one in which *A* and *B* are fully satisfied and *C*'s needs are met minimally if at all. A slave state, for example, might exhibit the latter structure, or a contemporary society in which women hoe, chop wood, cook, fetch water and look after the children, while the men drink beer, keep an eye on the cattle, and discuss important clan and village matters. If we think in terms of the need hierarchy, however, it will be seen that a more equitable distribution of labour and of amenities would actually increase need satisfaction, since love, esteem and self-actualization needs are all deprived in slave and quasi-slave conditions. If QOL is defined in terms of need satisfaction, therefore, societies with high QOL will in general exhibit juster and more equitable distribution patterns than those with low QOL, since the satisfaction of certain needs requires such patterns.

A final remark about wants, In our imaginary society where people were hungry and where extra food became available, the satisfying of needs automatically ensured fair distribution because the needs of individuals were limited. But suppose our society had been, not a society of unsatisfied needs, but a society of unsatisfied wants? Since what a man wants is potentially limitless, one possible distribution would be to give everything to one extremely concupiscent individual. This is, of course, an unjust distribution, but nothing rules it out as long as what we are concerned with is maximizing the satisfaction of wants. It *is* ruled out, however, if we are interested in satisfying needs rather than wants. It was doubtless the potentially limitless character of wants, together with the fact that wants conflict and that what one man wants may be to exploit other men, that led philosophers beginning with Hobbes to develop the notion of the social contract as a compromise on which civilized life could be built. In this connection it is interesting to note that if instead of trying to construct an optimal solution to the problem of satisfying human wants, we were to construct an optimal solution to the problem of satisfying human needs, then a principle of justice requiring fair distribution

of needed goods would be derivable without the theoretical apparatus of a social contract.

Dept. of Philosophy, McGill University and
Advanced Concepts Centre, Environment Canada

NOTES

[1] "These goals cannot be measured by the size of our bank balances. They can only be measured in the quality of the lives that our people lead." (Lyndon B. Johnson, Madison Square Garden, 31 October 1964.)

[2] See for example Robert Heilbroner, *The Prospect for Man*, New York Review of Books, January 24, 1974.

[3] *The Quality of Life Concept*, Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, 1973, p.iii.

[4] It is an interesting question, to what extent we are describing an *already-established* meaning of the expression, and to what extent we are prescribing or recommending a meaning *for future adoption*. Obviously the situation with regard to the concept of QOL is very different from the situation with regard to, say, causation or freedom, for these latter notions have a long history in the philosophical literature. On the other hand, the notion of quality of life has some intuitive content, and is very far from being a neologism like 'quark' that we can define as we will. These facts lend QOL studies a certain charm of their own.

[5] It has been suggested that we identify 'quality in the evaluative sense' with 'value'. If this suggestion is to have any merit, we must carefully distinguish the many senses in which the word 'value' is used. Since it is perfectly possible to say of a high-quality rug in a shop that it is undervalued, plainly quality cannot be identified with market or exchange value. For similar reasons, it cannot be identified with any of the following: survival, nutritional, surprise, historical, decorative, or entertainment value. Could the quality of something be identified with its 'intrinsic' value? This might seem plausible in the case of a rug, but is much less plausible in the case of air or restaurant service. Is poor quality air, air which is of low intrinsic value? What is the intrinsic value of high quality service? These questions seem impossible to answer. For this reason, it appears preferable to keep the categories of 'quality' and 'value' separate. For an excellent discussion of the notion of value, including the slippery notion of 'intrinsic' value, see Kurt Baier, 'What is Value?', in *Values and the Future* (ed. by Baier and Rescher), New York 1969, especially pp. 49–50.

[6] See Kurt Baier, 'Towards a definition of "Quality of life"', in *Environmental Spectrum* (ed. by R. O. Clark and P. C. List), New York 1974, p. 63. Baier's paper contains an excellent discussion of many issues surrounding the notions of 'quality' and of 'life', although the definition of QOL given below represents a somewhat different approach from his.

[7] Multi-criteriality gives rise to indeterminancy, since it may be impossible to say whether a restaurant that serves good food badly is of higher or lower quality than one that serves bad food well.

[8] This point is made by Baier. It is I suppose possible to attach a meaning to the ex-

pression "quality of Bob Brown's life," but this would require a separate investigation, distinct from that of the present paper.

[9] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, Columbia University Press, 1924, p. 100.

[10] Rescher, *Welfare*, Pittsburgh 1972, pp. 62–63. I have changed Rescher's terminology from 'Consensus happiness requisites' to 'General happiness requisites,' because I think it unlikely that any consensus exists on what these requisites are. Nor do I believe that one can arrive at what they are by interviewing people and trying to obtain a consensus of their opinions.

[11] Rescher calls (3) 'Hedonic mood.' The difference between hedonic mood and happiness has already been indicated.

[12] Norman Bradburn and David Caplovitz, *Reports on Happiness*, Chicago 1965.

[13] *The Quality of Life Concept*, Environmental Protection Agency, Washington 1973 (henceforth cited as QOL-EPA).

[14] Kenneth W. Terhune, 'Probing Policy-Relevant Questions on the *Quality of Life*', QOL-EPA p. II–22.

[15] Arnold Michell, Thomas J. Logothetti, and Robert E. Kantor, 'An Approach to Measuring the *Quality of Life*', QOL-EPA, p. II–37.

[16] Norman C. Dalkey and Daniel L. Rourke, 'The Delphi Procedure and Rating *Quality of Life* Factors', QOL-EPA p. II–210.

[17] Dorothy Walters, 'Social Intelligence and Social Policy', in *Social Indicators*, (ed. by N. A. M. Carter), The Canadian Council on Social Development, Ottawa, 1972, p. 16. In 'On Looking before Leaping', in the same volume, Gail Stewart provides some extremely perceptive criticisms of the social indicator movement.

[18] *The OECD Social Indicator Development Program*, OECD, Paris, 1973, p. 12. It is of interest to note that, among the OECD member delegations, Sweden objected to the inclusion of subjective indicators and presented a formal paper on the subject. See Alan H. Portigal (ed.) *Measuring the Quality of Working Life*, Department of Labour, Ottawa, 1974, p. 46.

[19] See the introductory remarks in *Social Indicators 1973*, Office of Management and Budget, Washington 1973, p. xiii, and in *Perspective Canada*, Ottawa 1974, p. xxii. Subjective indicators, which are based upon people's reported attitudes, preferences and beliefs, must be distinguished from statistics which reflect the collecting agency's judgements and values. Almost all statistics fall into the latter category: what, for example, constitutes being 'unemployed'?

[20] Stanley E. Seashore, 'Job Satisfaction as an Indicator of Quality of Employment', in the Portigal volume cited above, pp. 9–38, plus discussion, pp. 39–55. Reprinted (without the discussion) in *Social Indicators Research* **1** (1974), 135–168.

[21] Seashore, p. 21.

[22] A. Solzhenitzyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch*; Seashore, p. 53.

[23] There may be problems here. What of the abnormal individual who can walk barefoot through the snow and survive on 200 calories a day? I suppose we shall have to end up talking in terms of 'typical' or 'average' human beings – convenient fictions!

[24] Again, quite different opinions are expressed in the EPA volume: "QOL is viewed by many as not applying to the nation as a whole. In their view, the only way QOL could be applied at the macro-level would be by homogenizing the country, forcing everyone to accept the same value standards." (QOL-EPA p. I–11) This difficulty is avoidable by not basing the definition of QOL on value standards.

[25] See Alan R. White, 'Needs and wants', *Philosophy of Education Society Proceedings*, 1974; also to appear as a chapter in White's forthcoming book, *Modal Thinking*. I am

indebted to White's paper for most of what I say about the distinction between needs and wants.

[26] To suppose otherwise, as White remarks, would be interpret "You are never here when I need you", as railing against logical necessity.

[27] It may be, of course, that what I need is to believe something. Doctors and missionaries, to be effective, need to believe that their work is worthwhile. But if so, they do not merely *believe* that they need to believe, but they *in fact* need to believe.

[28] Care is necessary in dealing with these inferences. Because my fuel tank is low, I may need to stop at the next gas station, and the next gas station may be empty, but it doesn't follow that I need to stop at an empty gas station.

[29] Rescher, *op. cit.* p. 45, cites various studies between 1939 and 1963 which indicate that Americans, by a ratio of 2 to 1 or better, regard earlier generations as happier, but at the same time reject the idea of going back.

[30] Rescher, p. 43.

[31] A. H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, New York, 1954, pp. 35–47. The characterization of the various levels in the hierarchy given here derives partly from that of Mitchell, Logothetti and Kantor in QOL-EPA, p. II–46 ff., and from G. Huizinga, *Maslow's Need Hierarchy in the Work Situation*, Groningen 1970, pp. 21–24.

[32] Alex C. Michalos, 'Strategies for Reducing Information Overload in Social Reports', *Social Indicators Research* **1** (1974), 124.

[33] It is true that the security needs of those who have food already might be met, but these needs are of lesser weight than the prepotent physiological needs, and the gains in satisfying security needs might be nullified by losses in love and esteem needs.

[34] Whether the fit between limited resources and limited needs in these cases is a happy coincidence, or a matter of logic, is a question I leave to others.