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Rethinking death: between cultural traditions and modern society

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Perceptions of death vary profoundly from one culture to another. In traditions such as those of Mexico and the Andes, death is an integral part of daily life, far removed from the taboo often observed in modern societies. These cultures celebrate death through rituals rich in symbolism, which strengthen family, community and cultural ties.

Mexico's Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead), for example, brings families together to pay tribute to the deceased, fostering the transmission of values and generational histories. In the Andes, ancestors are seen as protectors of the community, with ceremonies often coinciding with agricultural cycles, linking spirituality and daily life.

These traditions have both social and economic benefits. As well as strengthening family and community unity, they attract visitors, boosting the local economy. These celebrations remind us of the importance of preserving a living link with the past, while enriching modern societies with an emotional and spiritual framework for dealing with death and mourning.

However, in many of today's so-called 'developed' societies, death is increasingly removed from ancient traditions. The emphasis on materiality and the neglect of traditional rituals have led to a disconnect between life and death. This spiritual void makes the grieving process more difficult, as individuals lack the cultural tools to cope with loss.

To overcome this disconnect, governments could play a proactive role by reintegrating death-related practices into public policy. By valuing these rituals, societies would strengthen social bonds and provide emotional balance, enabling individuals to find meaning in the natural cycle of life and death.

References

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