

Some problems of Aspiration Research

Habit of Life and Aspirations

by

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On the Status-aspirations of Parents in Connection
with Their Children

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Habit of Life and Aspirations

Aspiration is a realized impelling force, a starting energy which directs man, through perception, from experience to action. Aspiration is by all means dynamic, it's directed to future. As opposed to the static habit-behaviour system of values on the one hand, it may strive for the realization or creation of something different, but may also endeavour to the strengthening of what already does exist in the society in motion.

Aspiration may coincide with the present system of habits and values. In this case one can speak of conservative-actuated aspirations, or such aspirations, characteristic of the individuals, strata and groups respectively which want to upkeep the present "system of weights" of the things and relations in the future. If it wants to create a change which would differ from the present situation, according to the size and character of the deviation it can be of several kinds: from that of correlational character up to as far as the radical ones.

These aspirations must be built exclusively on a/ some actual social motion, b/ the possibility of some social motion, c/ the postulation or necessity of this motion. It may continue the experiments of the present situation, if it is able to choose or decide between its possibilities, it may build up or strive for the creation of new possibilities, or may try to find new ones. But the decision exceeds the fields of aspiration, the latter being just a preparation to it.

Habit of life is being realized in that everyday series of action-decision during which man creates his life-conditions and makes use of them, tries to change them, while by the changes in conditions he is changed himself. Within the framework of researching the habit of life we can get acquainted with the level and quality of the material, economic and human relations of any society, in addition to cultural faculties and erudition of the people in anthropological sense. /That is to say, all the way the forms of activity come into existence from the already existing possibilities and man's capacities/. Furthermore, on what level, in what communities and in what forms do these forms of activity make possible the awaking and meeting of man's biological, social and human requirements.

The origin and role of aspirations can be observed in the change of the habit of life. Namely, it depends on significant social and demographical factors, when and by what elements the changes are started, and also when and what elements remain resistant and unmoveable.

Changes in the habit of life can start with: 1. the side of the objective, material possibilities which also contain to reasons: a/ the enlargement, b/ the tightening of the conditions of the material and economic existence, but new possibilities, new conditions spring into existence in either case. If changes are started through life-conditions /e.g. industrialization, urbanization, production of goods at a higher level, development of communication and technics etc./ this would upset the traditional balance of needs and turn people to up-to-then unknown aspirations.

Changes in the habit of life can start with: 2. the shaping and modification of the system of relations of the social and human communities which result in a change of the internal structure, habits and system of values developed up to then in the community, and in a new way of creating new

formations of the habit of life. It is fundamental change within the system of social relations /e.g. socialist ownership and relations of distribution/ which changes social hierarchy, because it dwindles the social weight of wealth, opposed to which new values are being formed, and compels both people and social groups to radically different aspirations.

Here's another example to enlighten our statement: even the change in the relations system of the smallest social unit, the family, is of utmost importance: the riot against the traditional, patriarchal family started first from the women's side, and it did change the habits of life by means of the - successful or not - experiments of emancipation. Also a great significance can be attached to the riot of children within the family which has a tendency against this family or the adults.

Finally, changes in the habit of life can start with: 3. the influence of systems of ideas too. According to the evidence of history, great ideas which embrace and mobilize societies /from Christianity to turning into a nation and socialism/ they cause great changes. Both the individual willingness sacrifice led by great ideas / a worker or a peasant shouldering guerilla life, a missionary - gospeller or doctor -, a revolutionary/ and the mass movements also call forth a change in the habit of life. All this is transmitted by aspirations, and also as aspirations present themselves those models suggesting modifications and changes in the habit of life which launch the changes in the life-conditions of people. social groups and strata, which make use of the changed conditions and which transform human relations or prepare changes on the way towards ideation and ideas.

Types of Aspiration

I'd like to lay special emphasis on three of the different types of aspirations:

1. Aspirations on the level of primary needs,
- 2/ Aspirations: relations of human connections, and
- 3/ Aspirations in aesthetics.

1. Aspirations on the level of primary needs

The examination of the coming into existence and regulating role of aspiration does not demand by all means a high material and economic level and a wide scale of the possibilities of choice. It was revealed just by our field under examination /a representative estimation on the habit of life of the inhabitants of an essentially agricultural country/ that even the way the primary biological needs are satisfied, in addition to the hierarchy of these needs, is modified by the aspirations, slants of values and alignment norms. Even as early as at this level it is the aspirations by which the quality, quantity and order of satisfying the primary needs are formed and regulated. In many cases it's primarily the principles as aspiration which determines how the people, groups and strata are bound to assort and give prominence to their resources - even if they are most straitened. These principles are the ones which at a primary level transmit to man both values and alignment.

In the circle we studied, the circle of the onetime agrarian proletarians, poor peasants and farm servants, eating, for example, which is really the most primary biological need, simultaneously appears as a symbol of status and as an aspirational factor as well. In case of the majority of these people both the fact of starvation and the happiness over repletion were real, experienced reminders, the latter being mostly an unobtainable privilege of the rich, and even today belongs to the rank of the fulfilled "experiences". This also explains why they do insist upon the obsolete way of eating: it's the newly -gained symbol of "well-being", even if health education tries to make them conscious of how harmful too

much carbohydrate in food is.

As to clothing, we have similar experiences too. It's well known that in certain parts of Hungary in the days prior to urbanization and industrialization even the poorest peasant had to acquire the national dress which was worth of a mint of money, even at the cost of starvation or drudgery, and thus he despaired of eating in order to be able to get to the folk dress. /"Window-dressing"/ Nowadays the aspirational factor and its status-marking role appear in another way of clothing. At some places this is the only means one can mark urbanization with and at the same time it's a conspicuous prove of the development of the different strata. The richly ornamented fences in our villages are aimed at expressing the same: they show welfare to the unconcerned spectator, while it's possible that the flats lack even furniture jet.

The hierarchy and the order of satisfying the primary needs may break down. Aspirational consideration can modify the biological needs and the order of satisfaction as expected by the society: e.g. he gives up eating for clothing, or clothing for flat, or at another level: the flat for the car. This, in addition to the previous examples, also shows that aspiration comes into prominence, as factor bearing influence upon decision just at the level of requirements.

Aspiration may change the upset of hierarchy, owing to its restricted possibilities, only temporarily and exclusively for the realization of a concrete objective. But after the needs had been satisfied and his way of living had been modified, and in his everyday decisions he had been directed by his aspirations, he returns again to the socially determined order of satisfying the needs. /After having reached or renounced the others/

Implied from all this, at it's demonstrated by our experiences, in those societies which are at the level of sa-

tisfying their primary needs aspiration is both present in the strata and does bear and effect. /Maybe this is the only point where I'd differ with the brilliant conception of Chaumbard de Lauwe./ It's beyond doubt that in case of this primary needs the satisfaction of the biological stress is essentially, and this is no aspiration, but a condition of existence. But the questions of what quantitative productions are used, what is underlined, what is considered important, what is omitted by man or groups or individuals living at a minimum subsistence level of a given society, in order to satisfy their needs; these questions are decided already on the base of value slants in which aspirations are reflected, such ones which anticipate and forecast the needs, owing to the change in the field of alignment normatives.

2. Aspirations for the Humanization of Human Connections

This type of aspiration plays a most important part in the lives of the people, though it is not stressed so strongly as it is felt to be important. This conceptual class comprises essentially the expectations of the humanized forms of human coexistence.

In the course of our researches we paid attention to three aspirational characters being in dependence from each other. Our survey was both actually concrete, as they were assessed as a result of the work of the everywhere existing teacher, doctor and chairman of the council, in addition to the experiences of the given environment, but simultaneously symbolical too, since we wanted to get some ideas on the expectations and aspirations in connection with those who are responsible for "knowledge", "health" and "power" in three different social spheres.

It also enlarged the importance of the field under survey that by its help we could get acquainted not with the connection system of people living under equal conditions,

but with the expectations and aspirations developed in the systems of dependence. In this circle the teacher who grants education for the children, symbolizes school and with it "knowledge", the panel doctor does not only heal but appears as a symbol of life and "health" too, and the chairman of the council is the local, accessible deputy of the state apparatus, a responsible leader and the symbol of "power" respectively.

While examining the aspirational systems which have come into existence as opposed to us, we divided aspirations roughly in three big groups, using to this division the methods of content analysis. They were as follows:

1. Skill, expertness,
2. Benevolent treatment,
3. The classic moral system of postulates of the ethic behaviour. /Within this there were naturally more sub-groups./

The standpoints polarized especially in two basic questions: in that of benevolent treatment and the postulate expertness.

Without beginning a major or qualified analysis, we are able to give account of one regularity: the greater the distance was between the "interviewed" and the "responsible", as to their place in the social structure of the system of prestige-hierarchy, and the smaller the chance was to interfere or take part in, the stronger grew the aspirations for benevolent treatment. And conversely: the nearer the "interviewed" in the social structure was to the above actual and symbolical "powers", and the more similar his situation was in the social system of prestige, the more probable it was that he would take part in such and similar decisions, their aspirations for the actual professional skill enlarged and their expectations as to the benevolent treatment diminished.

Thus, in a word, the smaller the difference in level, the more important the demands of objective skill; and the greater the difference and more exposed the "interviewd", the greater the claim to honesty.

3. Aspirations in Aesthetics and Arts

While making researches in the field of artistic aspirations, we could see that artistic and aesthetic aspirations were present as early as on the most primitive living standard. But to this, naturally, we had to leave the ranks of the normative aesthetics and start from the world of the everyday's aesthetic quality.

In a previous investigation I differentiated three basic functions, each of which simultaneously also pointed to the way and types of the aspirations:

a/ One of the basic functions of art which returns on all levels is to stimulate man in making his environment, the objective world and the social world more pleasant and favourable for himself. This is the way of action and formation. He is led on this way when adorning his garden, making a fence, decorating his room, buying fancy articles or singing together with his mates to make work easier, or making social life more familiar by joint music.

b/ Man wants to get acquainted with the world so that he could more easily adapt himself to it, enlarge his orientation unerringness, so that by means of art he could recreate and live over again what once he had already lived over, or - from another aspect - could relieve through art what he can never obtain. It is this basic aspiration to which the artistic duty of getting acquainted and making others acquainted can be truly or falsely attributed.

c/ Man wants to express himself in order to establish connections with the others, to make himself understood and

to understand the others. The third group of artistic aspirations is given by the need of human expression, understanding and making oneself understood. Within this, man wants to express his observations, opinions, feelings, knowledge, all the thoughts, endeavours and experiences he lived through during his activity and connections.

If we abstract from aspirations which pertain to the satisfaction of the fundamental functions /formation and action, cognition and expression/ and examine content questions, i.e. the questions of artistic and social truth, in case of artistic aspirations we'll find undoubtedly that in mass desires the claim to arts does appear only there, where it promotes everyday activity, alleviates tiredness and helps escape from everydayness.

It's within very narrow bounds that in the artistic aspirations one can find not only loosening, oblivion and abatement, but problems, tasks and unsolvedness too. Objectively these aspirations are determined by the living standard which people must shoulder for their subsistence, i.e. by those forms of activity which enable or disable them to relieve the different levels. Subjectively the aspirations are determined by the level of consciousness: with which they take over or reject the cognition of the society and themselves, and at last by that artistic system of symbols and structure, the comprehension and understanding of which they had already learnt by practice, are able to follow and respond to according to the sense.

Thus aesthetic aspirations are strongly connected with the habit of life /forms of activity, level of group-knowledge etc./ on the one hand, with the social behaviour-problems of life-conception, perception of the outside world and ideation on the other.

In the following we will examine the aspiration-systems within the various models of habit of life.

Types of Habits, Aspiration Models

Hereinafters I wish to make an attempt at the formation of such formalized, abstracted habit-typology which seems theoretically correct and operationally utilizable. This typology is built on two dimensions i.e. two such dimensions of habits which can be formed subjectively too: the differences between the satisfaction of material needs in the dualism of facility and utilization and the life-regulating role of theoretical values. In the case of the former we deal with behaviour, or the latter /systems of ideas/, with orientation. In my opinion this model is nearer to our problem under present survey, i.e. to the formation of aspirations than another two-dimension hypothetic model which compares man's forms of activity with the community's relation systems.

The dimension of material needs was surveyed in the following relation: to what an extent do people, groups and strata utilize the given possibilities: below, on or above their level. Or again, what are the social motivations of this all; and as a final result what is the relation of these all to the ideal factors of orientation which may determine the extent and quality of utilization. Following the substitution by the concrete material, the abstract model grows determined, since "the socially given possibility" in the group or stratum under survey may act as an effective index. This index shows how it finds its place in the social structure, what actual possibilities it is assured with by the society's relation system of material distribution, and what the latter's relations to the other social groups are, what its spreading is in connection with the social average, and where it is placed between the subsistence level and society's groups of high income.

I. Satisfaction of Material Needs on the Utilization
Level of Facilities. Behaviour.

1. Lives below the level determined by his own salary, and the way he satisfies his needs is below the socially determined level of consumption. This phenomenon can be attributed to a double reason and presents itself in two main types:

a/ The hoarder: His standard of living is more reduced than he could afford to live at: for saving and hoarding. This type is created partly by penury, and it gets out of primarily the category of small-holders: he was traditionally used to be able to get to something - land, tools, horses - if "saving up" to the detriment of his won living standard. This behaviour keeps existing specifically even then, when it makes no sense any more and its target has already ceased to exist. This type is unable to change the way of living, penury is its form of existence, for some objective or another. This type is characteristically longing for property, small property.

b/ The disclaimer: His living standard is also more reduced than he could afford to live at as to the possibilities, not because of his objectives would be the purchase of some property or hoarding, but because he disclaims the importance of material values, disbelieves that pleasures of life are obtainable through financial means and denies material values. With more or less "show" he "leaves" the scene of the society's material fights. This type had been produced and is being reproduced by all societies; the ascetic, the hermit, the missionary, those being led by some religious idea, the idea of fighting against "the pomps and vanities of this wicked world", or the revolutionary who steps on this road to fight against the old social system, but I put the hippies none the less in this same row, as they revolt against manipulated consumption and society's accepted customs.

2. Material Facilities are Utilized in an Adequate Way in the Interests of His Needs

a/ by the puritan: though he does have points of contact with the previous category, essentially differs with it by the fact that he does not disclaim theatrically the material values, however, they are no leading values for him either.

b/ by the one who lives at the average level: contraly to the puritan, the satisfaction of material needs does have certain values for him. The satisfaction of needs on an adequate level has a role in the grouping of his material needs.

c/ by the hedonist: He treats material needs not in a thrifless way, but with enjoyment; while satisfying his material needs he "optimalises" his pleasures to a certain extent.

3. Needs Satisfied Above Possibilities

Characteristic features: Fluctuating consumption and fluctuating satisfaction of needs respectively. Spends more, runs into debts, then is hard up. To this type belong two behaviours; two categories: a/ the deviant, thrifless consumer and the disreputable elements, b/ the "dressing upwards", sham consumer, who lives better or spends more in certain fields in order to be received into or to be able to feel equal with the coveted higher social group.

These types of material behaviour were compared with the grades of types guided by the Idea, and our typology was constructed according to what strong a role the orientation of ideas plays in the formation of the habit of life.

Like in case of concretizing the former dimension, here also, I could achieve the sociologically relevant result by "substituting" the given types for the categories meaning the grades of ideal commitment which are always representing a given ideological or human system of ideas as well.

1. I rank to the idea-centric category all those for whom the leading life-principle is the chosen idea /social, revolutionary, aesthetic or humanistic/. The grade of willingness to sacrifice I treat as a question of quality and quantity. For instance: does he give up social state, rest, money and respect in the interest of serving to and fulfilling the idea.

2. Oriented in ideas. "Ideal" is also important for him, but - and this is where the quantity component becomes a quality problem - is not willing to give up everything for it. In his life ideas have a basic, guiding place, but their role is not a central one.

3. Orientation in ideas appears in the role of alignment value as a group norm to be followed at a so-to-say transitional type. For them idea is not a central value, nor is it of basically orientation importance, but a symbol and means of the social adaptation and belonging to a group.

4. Passive in question on ideas. With them the line of linkage to ideas is concluded. Ideal values do not play a significant role in their lives.

5. The ideas-disclaiming type. Disbelieves all ideal values, is opposed to them, it's only the material world that has importance for him. This category comprises the disappointed, the cynical, the greedy, the selfish etc.

As I have already pointed out, a third dimension could make more unambiguous the types of orientation in ideas. This would be the dimension of the relations between equally what is the number of types from the unsociable to the man turning to the community, and how this changes, differentiates the types of those oriented in ideas. But the reason of the difficulty is the fact that the difference between the fact, the mind and the effect may include relevant differences within the unity of orientation and behaviour. /E.G.: the one is

revolutionary, but unable to act, the other is oriented to the masses, but does not reach them, or conversely: concentrates only at his art or science, yet revolutionizes or is advantageous for the whole society. But I do not want to set it forth here.

The comparison of the two dimension /material and ideal/ results in the following system of types:

Strong relation: 3
 Weak relation: 2
 Exceptional relation 1
 No relations: 0

Level of material possibilities

	below hoarder	dis- claim- ing	on pu- ri- tan	ave- rage do- nist	above deviant con- form- ing		
Idea-centric /social, human, aesthet./	0	3	3	2	1	2	1
Guided by ideal values	1	2	3	2	1	2	2
Conforming to ideas externally	2	1	1	2	3	1	3
Passive in ideas	3	0	2	3	3	3	2
Disclaims ideal values	3	1	0	1	2	3	2

Thus the above relations are hypothetical connections - though partly they are built on our researches up to now - which, if they can be verified, become characteristic on new and new structures in the system of the level and density of relations. It becomes the characteristic feature of groups, societies and historical situations, when and around which pole the relations thicken and which relations remain undis-

inctive and blank. It is characteristic and may be examined, what the relationship of the orientation in ideas is with certain material behaviours deriving from necessities, which are excluded and which are attracted by it. It's possible to carry on both static researches /with reference to society, nations, classes and strata/ and dynamic ones. The latter endeavour to detect how in the different historical and social situations the behaviour of certain people and groups of people was formed. Where and how did it move out, /on the ideal side/ for instance, of the idally passive, and moved along to the type oriented in ideas or to the idea-centric one, while his behaviour in connection with the material needs also underwent a change, and the one-time hedonist became perhaps a puritan or a disclaimer, We may observe the same ways also with opposite sign and in opposite direction, and then we may notice characteristic movements as well: Where does the demand of the old puritan behaviour, the prestige-saving character of hoarding become a guiding principle; where and in what relation does appear the type of the "running through", "live-for-today" hedonist which wants but feel well and has fears for his safety not because of a direct financial uncertainty; where does it play a role that - though he does not enjoy the things himself, wouldn't even be able to obtain them by his own force, - he wants to show to others in a spectacular way on what standard he lives, and this causes him a greater pleasure than to fill up his possibilities with content. With the above types differs he who e.g. gives up material values for human one: or he who abandons material and spiritual values for revolutionary aims. At the meeting-points of the two above dimensions, several differences in behaviour of the habit of life can be arranged clearly, and can be represented from the elementary level of satisfying the most primary needs as far as up to the highest, most abstracted questions on ethical level.

The Problem of Possibility and Utilization

Let's see some examples from our own researches. The new conditions of existing and the change in the system of social relations do not mean unambiguously also their utilization. This is already depending on the forming culture of the habit of life, of the appearance and changing of the aspiration. That is to say, the life-conditions do not create a new habit of life by themselves. The utilization of possibilities does not go automatically. It occurs that one does not appreciate duly the changes, and it also occurs that one does not even want to appreciate the changes and keeps on insisting upon the traditional way of living. It happens too that one does appreciate the changes, but does not make any use of them, because he is bound by the old norms of morals and behaviour. E.G.: though electricity has been installed, he still uses a bulb by which one can see hardly any better than with the old oil lamp. Or, for instance, one builds houses with two rooms and a bathroom, but he is still under the cult of the "clean room", and lives practically in the kitchen, even sleeping there. Another characteristic problem is that certain strata of the peasantry do not know what to do with their suddenly raised salary: they can't consume it - do not even want to do so -, because they are no consumer types. Their ethics, the whole tradition and the system of habits protest against "lavishness". Their eating culture is at a low level. They do not build, since their children have already gone to town. The surplus of their wages does not flow back to production, for it would not develop their "own" holding, and there is no way for them to take part in the communal investments etc. In this sphere the everyday actions are guided by the old behaviour principles and old aspirations, while the social conditions have already changed essentially.

The time factor and the aspirations

If we examine aspirations parallel with the patterns of live-habits, we may observe a constant fight between new demands and old traditions, since-long-time coveted and seemingly reached but really unobtainable goals. It is the old and new driving forces which, according to time and stratum, change man's order of valuation, behaviour and orientation. It is of utmost importance to understand the temporal character of the aspirational patterns: there are "synchronous", "past" and "future" patterns. We pay attention generally to the presently ruling prestige-order of today's society, but those values and aspirations also have a fantastically vivid and strong effect which were ruling in the early stages of one's life, moreover, had been ruling in the life of his father, had marked unreachable, coveted aims and had been changed to a guiding principle through his whole life.

In the county we observed /Békés County/ 70% of the population were interested in different ways in the changes of society. A middle-aged peasant had to live through and work up in himself at least four changes of social orientation. /An unemployed agrarian proletarian could become both a state functionary and an unskilled worker in town, while he went through the stage of a smallholder and that of the cooperative worker/.

Thus it was most interesting to see how these changes brought along aspirations of different types; which of these aspirations took root, and which of them vanished totally, on which social base they were built and what is today the social possibility of their realization. /Precapitalist pattern, the type imitating the outward shape of the gentry behaviour etc./

It's the other side of the temporal character that people are attracted by such aspirations, the social, provi-

sion, technical conditions of which have far not been developed yet. Or they aspire after such human connections which at the present state of development of society and man, in the actual, everyday practice of the present systems of relations cannot spring into existence.

This unreal attractive force of aspirations was even increased by the revolutionary penetration of information. Television draws the up-to-then secluded villages and hamlets into the world. While - just in our area observed - mobility reduces and seemingly comes to a standstill, the presence of the outside world which is brought in its place flows to the people by means of informations and pictures unobtainable up to then to the direct experience, and thus the distance is increased and tension is enlarged between the actual possibilities and the televised "reality". The elaboration of this tension is another theme. During ten years I abandoned the county in the circle under survey. /This tension brings along both aspiration and frustration, both the activity's reduction on different levels and apathic passivity or escape./

Aspirations thus may come into existence owing to direct or indirect social experiences which are being realized at a primary level just by the aspiration. Aspiration is virtually a "realized goal", a movement, a tendency. It conditionals primarily a real possibility of choice, be it examined in any respect. But this possibility does not postulate realization by all means, to the establishment of aspiration it's suffice that it want the possibility and its necessity. Therefore aspiration can spring into existence also in the motionless strata, groups and societies, that is where the choice and decision alternatives are practically not realizable within the given social formation. But the establishment of aspirations may express a real social necessity, a claim to motion, an intention to changes.

Judit H. Sas:

On the Status Aspirations of Parents toward Children

Social sciences and the management of society are equally interested in the objective driving forces that bring about changes in society.

Marx and Engels in the "German Ideology" virtually had already explained the mechanism of the endeavours for changes which is characteristic on individuals, social groups and the whole society. The satisfied need, they wrote, the operation of satisfaction and the means of satisfaction already obtained lead to new needs. That is to say, each new need which differs with the former one is built on the satisfied existing ones. The satisfied needs themselves, the social consciousness formed on them, in addition to the objective world satisfying the needs, act as preconditions, parents, and at the same time as a base to the new demands which are built on them and differ with the old ones. The endeavours to the realization and satisfaction of the new needs, though built on the satisfied old ones, may turn against and generally do turn against the already realized and satisfied needs.

Thus the coming into existence of the new needs and the strive for their satisfaction come about so to say regularly. /The type of needs depends naturally on the grade of development of the given society./ At all events, the aspirations, i.e. the endeavours to the satisfaction of the needs play an enormous role on the way leading to the manifestation and satisfaction in social sizes of these needs. For this very reason, aspirations are both the results and consequences of the forming new needs.

As the very plastic remark of I. Kon goes /in his work titled "The 'I' in the Society"/, there is always a