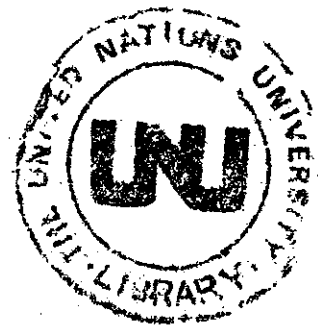


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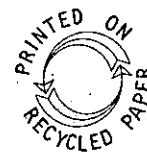
**THE UPPER-CLASS WAY OF LIFE:  
AN ALTERNATIVE FOR WHAT?**

**Barbara Roos and J.P. Roos**

University of Helsinki  
Department of Social Policy  
Franzeninkatu 13  
SF-00500, Helsinki 50  
Finland



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## CONTENTS

I. The Problem	1
II. The Character-Mask Concept and Dominant Way of Life	3
III. The Capitalist Character Mask	5
IV. What is the Upper-Class Way of Life? An Empirical Excursion	9
V. Destructive Tendencies	19
Notes	24
Bibliography	26

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This paper is being circulated in a pre-publication form to elicit comments from readers and generate dialogue on the subject at this stage of the research.

## I. THE PROBLEM

In one of the outlines for the Alternative Ways of Life (AWL) Sub-project, Johan Galtung<sup>1</sup> suggests that the study of alternative ways of life should comprise the entire life span of the individuals in question, even consider more than one generation, and, drawing on this material, enter into a constructive and concrete phase where both other ways of life and other ways of segmenting one's life are envisaged.

To do this in a truly realistic way is not easy. There is the obvious danger of lapsing into pure utopianism or anarchism in the sense of forgetting the social constraints or the society "outside" the small group to which the alternative way of life in question is related.

Our objective in this paper is to try to present the upper-class way of life understood as an alternative way of life in present-day society. As we shall try to show, one of the essential qualities of the upper-class way of life is precisely that it is an alternative: an alternative open only to people with a certain background and means, an alternative created during many generations which had all the conceivable resources and means at their disposal. In other words, the upper-class life as an alternative is a concrete, observable Utopia, an escape from the drudgery and necessities of the life of ordinary people.

Of course, this way of life is not an alternative way of life in the sense of our project. On the contrary, it breaks the basic ground rules: It is based on the appropriation of other people's work. Nobody can lead an upper-class way of life through his own work assessed at normal labour values.

The suggestion that the upper-class way of life might include some alternative qualities in the sense of our project must certainly be rather provoking for many participants. Certainly we do not propose a direct connection: the upper-class way of life as the alternative. Neither do we think that the qualities of upper-class life could simply be transferred to the alternative ways of life, with the "bad" aspects left untouched.

Yet it is clear that some aspects of upper-class life come rather close to the AWL principles formulated in the project papers. This is true for the role of work, for the sense of life as a game with as little everyday life as possible, for the ability to control one's life to a great extent, for the possibility of self-realization, for the rather harmonic identity structure, for the self-control inherent in respect for traditions. But these aspects cannot be taken out of context: i.e., the exploitation, the mindless production of useless but marketable gadgets, the unemployment and extravagant overconsumption, and the luxury as "necessity" that are the social foundations of upper-class life.

The discussion below is based partly on relevant literature and partly on interviews conducted by Barbara Roos with some members of the Finnish upper class. The interviewees represented three generations of well-known, Swedish-speaking Finnish families in various positions in society. The interviews were conducted in the framework of a life-history discussion, where the interviewer had only a very small role in guiding the discussion. All the interviews were taped, and the excerpts presented in this paper are our translations of the transcripts. Out of a regard for the strict confidentiality of the data, we make only a very general identification of the person in question. Where names are mentioned, the material has previously been published elsewhere.

## II. THE CHARACTER-MASK CONCEPT AND DOMINANT WAY OF LIFE

The upper-class way of life is not identical with the dominant way of life.<sup>2</sup> The dominant way of life is, in the definition of Galtung and Wemegah,<sup>3</sup> the way of life into which the dominant pattern of a society leads the members of the society. This dominant pattern is, according to Galtung and Wemegah, overdevelopment which

drives people towards overconsumption in one way or the other so that only the very convinced, and among them only the very ego-strong, can resist the pull and go in for an alternative way of life . . . in high income countries, characterised by many forms of overconsumption side by side with underconsumption.

But it is important to see that the dominant way of life is not in itself a subjectively desired way of life — at least not completely. It is something people are led into by an unseen hand or by an overarching subject (*übergreifendes Subjekt*),<sup>4</sup> so that people often find themselves living their lives in a way they do not actually want. "What am I doing? Why am I doing this? Do I really want to do this?" are the typical questions in our time.<sup>5</sup>

This process has been very elegantly discussed by Klaus Ottomeyer in his recent books and articles,<sup>6</sup> where he has tried to analyse the dominant patterns of capitalist society. He attempts to describe how economic coercion — *ökonomische Zwänge* — in a specific way patterns human activities and interaction in the three basic activity spheres, namely distribution, production, and individual reproduction.<sup>7</sup> The patterns are conflicting; they serve to destroy and undermine the identity-building process necessary for the individual to go on living.

The basic problem is how the socio-economically necessary processes

affect these structures, which also could be called the basic element of the way of life. Or more specifically: How does the overarching process of the reproduction of capital determine individual reproduction or the identity-building process through the three spheres of activity? This determination process has been subordinated by Ottomeyer under the category of character mask (*Charaktermaske*).<sup>8</sup> Character mask refers to the combination of the various impulses from the spheres into one (conflicting but still functioning) determining structure.

Thus, one could say that the character mask of the wage earner, blue or white collar, transmits the dominant patterns into an individual's way of life.

### III. THE CAPITALIST CHARACTER MASK

Ottomeyer does not discuss explicitly any other character mask than that of the wage earner, even though there is some universality in his presentation. In fact, class position comes in very covertly in Ottomeyer's presentation.

Some things are directly class-relevant and others are not. For instance the *liebenswürdige Schein* is clearly an essential quality of the commodity owner. As one of our interviewees, a managing director, put it: "Sometimes it feels real bad to go out with clients. But it is a way to get to know them, to come closer to them, 'to feel their pulse,' to come closer to the problems. . . . I don't think any one of us wants to become more personal friends with clients." This *liebenswürdige Schein* becomes a wage earner's characteristic only in reference to the selling of labour power.

Thus the influences in the distribution sphere are direct ingredients of the capitalist character mask, i.e., charming surface-behaviour and distrust of others. In the sphere of production, the capitalist character mask is not marked so much by instrumentalization as by abstraction from the concrete productive activities. The true capitalist operates only in the world of money and high finance, not with the mundane matters of production, which are left for technicians. The utmost expression of this is the stock exchange which has little if anything to do with actual productive activities — as speculation fever has shown.<sup>9</sup> As the role of the capitalist himself it is clear that since the days of the American "robber barons," the management of most firms has been mainly disconnected from actual productive activities. Extreme examples are the American railroad battles in which financiers

fought over control while transportation went on as usual. Matthew Josephson<sup>10</sup> tells how he asked one of the great financiers of the twenties, Robert Ralph Young, who was running the railways he owned. "He said, 'Go down and see our operating vice president, old Mr. Schmidt.' . . . I found a big stout man who directed the transport of mountains of coal day by day, but knew almost nothing else, and seemed very frightened of Young and his like."

The same thing was expressed many times in our interviews: A modern manager is simply a decision maker, he is a general manager who can manage almost any firm — a gamesman, not a technocrat, as Michael Maccoby<sup>11</sup> says. This of course isolates him from the exploitative activities of the capitalist enterprise as such. On the other hand, the abstract activities in the sphere of production are coupled with a very personal feeling of creation of wealth, of making money not in an instrumental sense but as an end in itself — a vast difference from the world of the worker who also "makes money" and not products, but only in an instrumental sense.

And in the sphere of individual consumption, the character mask is partly visible through the concept of necessary luxury.<sup>12</sup> This sphere is dominated by women who live the high life, a continuous festival instituted by them, into which the men plunge when they are not making money or engaging in their club or outdoor activities. Thus this sphere becomes not compensatory but complementary, the well-deserved result of the activity in the two other spheres. The capitalist identity builds upon the two other spheres but it is constituted in the third, the three thus supporting each other.

It is important to note that even though the capitalist character mask can be said to be contradictory — especially in production — its basic contradictions are partly invisible to the capitalist. That is, the contradictions inherent in the exploitation of others by the capitalist are transparent. *Also, the essence of being capitalist, the essence of the upper class is exactly the ability to isolate the contradictions from the everyday activities, from the identity-building process.*



Falk<sup>13</sup> has described this process as the distancing of the character mask from the bearer, which gives the flavour of the problem. The capitalist can separate the character mask from his "true self" so that capital and the capitalist become truly impersonal. This is never possible for the worker who has to carry the character mask practically always, even during his leisure time.

We should also remember that in the capitalist class it is not only one lifetime but many — a whole chain of generations which are important. That is, when analysing the identity-building process of the upper class we have to consider much longer time dimensions than in the working class. This is one reason for the distance between the contradictions of the character masks and the identity of the capitalist himself.

The turbulent past of the first generations, be it Rockefeller or Krupp, or von Rettig in Finland, are forgotten in the abstract financial transactions, charitable activities and cultural aspirations of the later generations. As a biographer wrote of the children of the owner of a Finnish tobacco company: "It was truly a rich heritage the children received from their parents, rich in a material but not less in a non-material way."<sup>14</sup>

The relevance of the analytical scheme above to our problem, the study of the upper class as a concrete alternative way of life, lies in the fact that the upper class is not only a capitalist class but also something else, a way of life precisely because its distance from its character mask is so great. But the character mask is there, as is illustrated for instance in a nightmare told by one interviewee, a patron's wife. She is repeatedly dreaming of a group of threatening men entering the mansion, and she is recoiling into the inner parts of the house closing doors behind her but she cannot stop the men, who force their way in.

The "alternative" way of life of the upper class is interesting because it simultaneously comprises very contradictory tendencies — developmental processes necessary for a truly realistic alternative way of life for

the majority of people and processes that are the worst aspects of capitalist society.

That is, the problem of an alternative way of life in a very general sense is a problem of creation of a distance between the present character mask in a similar manner to what takes place in the upper-class way of life. For example, we cannot expect that a person can sever all connections with his previous life when embarking on an alternative course. On the contrary, this process is rather slow and painful. One possible solution is the creation of double structures such as in the capitalist way of life: One part of the life spent according to the dominant pattern; one part of the life spent according to the alternative. In fact, this is what often takes place. But as a clear-cut strategy it is still undeveloped, and here the upper class way of life may serve as an example.

#### IV. WHAT IS THE UPPER-CLASS WAY OF LIFE? AN EMPIRICAL EXCURSION

In our study we have not tried to find a general objective definition of the upper class. This would be a very difficult task in present-day society where class relationships are blurred and real power seems to be nowhere. We have started from a subjective definition, i.e., we have let the subjects themselves define what makes the upper class and who is a member of it. This implies using a "snowball technique," which interestingly reveals the social interaction network within this group.

Two conditions seem to be needed: money and wealth combined with a comfortable life on one side and a background, long family history, and traditions on the other. Usually these two conditions go hand in hand, but the importance of a historical background is shown by the fact that, better than wealth as such, it guarantees one a place in the upper class. The demarcation line between the upper class and the new rich is very clear.

The upper-class way of life is essentially determined by other things than simple economic *Zwänge* that rule ordinary people's lives. This is well expressed in the following quotation: "They were free, they were intelligent, they were rich. Life offered them no sense of resistance, of goals worth striving for, so they set up an imaginary goal and played a game; then the game turned to reality." The quotation is from the story of Leopold and Loeb, the famous child murderers in the twenties in Chicago, described by Colin Wilson.<sup>15</sup>

The notion that life offers the upper class no resistance is the key notion here — there is no external, only internal, resistance, choices

which one must learn to make. In fact this is the second essential aspect of the upper-class way of life: self-discipline, self-control, following directly from the lack of external controls in the form of resources or means of survival.<sup>16</sup> Without this self-discipline and self-control they would not be able to hold their financial and material position; they would undermine their socio-economic position. Main themes in the socialization process are to make children learn to feel responsibility towards their background and social position and to handle financial problems. In other words, without self-discipline they would not for very long be upper class. The tension between vast resources and lack of resistance in this sense and self-discipline on the other hand seem to be the red thread that greatly determines the way of life of the members of the upper class.

We shall try to illustrate here in light of our preliminary empirical results the forms the "alternative way of life of the upper class" has taken during three generations in Finland. We deal with the main influences and main determinants if we assume the character mask distance, and the implications of this for the study of alternative ways of life.

The concrete examples and quotations refer mainly to a rather specific type of upper class: the Swedish-speaking Finnish old elite, which established Finnish industry but now does not play such an absolutely dominant role in society as it used to. Some of the old wealth and traditions have remained, however, as well as persons who remember the glorious past. The examples we present are derived from three generations: the children of the founding fathers, the present controllers of the family fortune, and the young upcoming or alienated heirs. The material is very preliminary, and the presentation is not meant to be complete. What counts is the idea: this segment of the upper class as carriers of traditions and as representatives of those who have got the best out of the capitalist society in a historical perspective.

The universal feature in all three generations is the comfort and

privilege inherent in the upper-class life shown by quotations from the eldest and the youngest generation:

Everything came home and there was everything that should be. If something was needed I just had to say.

When I was young I had everything I wanted to have. For instance I went to military service in my red sports car and had my horse with me. I had always sailing boats and everything.

The comforts may differ slightly, but the basics are still the same. A fashionable apartment in the southern tip of Helsinki or a house on one of the two islands west and east of Helsinki. A necessary ingredient is a vast country estate and in many cases sports lodges in Lapland or in the archipelago, for fishing, hunting, skiing, and so on. Two cars, a yacht, membership in one of the exclusive yacht clubs, riding horses, lots of travels combining business and pleasure — safaris, fishing, slalom, etc.

Of course many of these privileges have already been attained and surpassed by the new rich, but as noted above this is not the point.

A young heir of a very old family says:

The essential thing is history, the traditions, it's what defines the whole issue because materially they don't differ so much, but if one is upper class one is upper class. . . . It builds upon a cultural heritage, that is, a milieu which is inherited from generation to generation, a certain cultural and social role. . . . Today it is perhaps not so much a mission as simply a definition or a difference.

He points out that the members of the upper class have a very strong feeling of being different from others, or an "ability to discriminate":

It is obvious that they are conscious of the background, they are conscious of the family tradition, where they come from, and their identification is surely based on the historical background, and it is also this which makes them understand that they differ from other people.

It is the history, tradition, that is important. The process of socialization in this sense is very strong, even through it may take several forms, from being very straightforward to something that could

be deduced from attitudes and feelings. But the result is the same: a strong self-consciousness, a consciousness of one's own history and historical and cultural mission combined with a strong ego, sense of security, self-consciousness and sophisticated behaviour, style. This sometimes arrogant self-confidence is a strong foundation in all stages of life.

How the manners and self-discipline of the upper class are transmitted is not very clear to the children themselves. So much is implicit, natural, shown in the following quotations from an interview with a daughter of an old family:

"Never in our family, never have I heard a violent word, neither from the members of the family nor from others. At that time such language was not used, we controlled ourselves, or I need not even control myself."

"How were you raised, was mother strict with you?"

"No, it wasn't necessary, it was not even possible that we should do something, I don't know."

And a young heir of a very old family says:

In my family it has never been preaching or persuasion about some explicit conception of how it is and how it should be, but it more or less can be interpreted, be read from attitudes and feelings. I'd say that in my family a certain historical responsibility, a cultural heritage, something like a historical commodity, in an abstract sense has been expected to be taken care of, carried further and perhaps even built upon and developed.

Work is without doubt one of the most central issues in adult life. It is especially important in discussing alternative ways of life. This is why in the following we shall concentrate mainly on aspects concerning work.

A four-generation perspective shows very different working patterns and attitudes toward work, some of which seem more bound to a certain generation than others. The scale includes total absence of work. One person belonging to the upper class defined it as follows:

"Characteristic for a member of the upper class is that he does not work." This seems anyhow to be a relatively rare position. Most of

the members of the upper class<sup>17</sup> have some education and a position in the industry and/or managing a large family estate. The other extreme is the full-blooded manager type who works at very high pace and sees his work as a risk-taking game, a personal challenge.

Naturally, the eldest generation, the founding fathers who came to or started their activity in Finland in the middle of the nineteenth century worked relatively hard. Finland was a "maiden country," the opportunities were there; and what was needed was "youth, energy, and creativity" combined with some special skill. Some of the founders died rather young because of hard work. "He worked too much and then he died," as a daughter of one such a founder put it. This big bourgeoisie was fused into the old upper class, the nobility with its roots in the seventeenth century. Among these we find more of those who concentrated on the "good life." As a member of an old noble family described her father: "He was a patron, so he did not do anything, but he owned the estate and cried when the trees were felled."

Today, more than 100 years later, these two groups are extremely intermingled — "all are relatives" — so that most members of the old traditional nobility have high positions in industry and the big bourgeoisie has large country estates. "I used to say that I was taken for the money, not that he liked me, too, but it was so convenient, he could pay the debts," says an old lady from a very old noble family. This illustrates in one way how this process can go.

For the next two generations the choice of profession was more or less self-evident: to continue in the firm,<sup>18</sup> or carry on the cultural and historical mission of managing the family estate, sometimes combined with a bourgeois profession. But the genuine foundation of wealth made work a very special thing: "He worked when he wanted to, all his life," or: "He worked most for his own fun," "His work was his passion," and so on. Work is something very different from making your living, it is truly a "living."<sup>19</sup> For many it is a personal challenge, not in a material sense but in the sense of self-realization — a hobby where you can use creativity, seldom boring or loaded with routines, or as one said:

"There is very little everyday," referring to the fact that most of the days are very different, bringing new projects, travelling, challenges.

These people have great difficulty in telling about an ordinary day:

"It is terribly difficult to say what a quite normal day looks like."

The days seem to vary so much: "It is fantastically changing work. . . .

It is never boring. I must say that all the years that I've been here, never have I thought that it is boring and uniform. It is not, never."

Also in a broader sense they have no strictly bounded everyday life, or if they have a feeling of it they can go and climb Mont Blanc even though they are board chairmen in everyday life, finding motivation in this way: "You don't conquer Mont Blanc, but yourself — your own comfort, laziness, and desire for an everyday life in comfort."

Obviously the above concerns the men. For the three eldest generations the women's role was well defined and in most cases accepted: to become housewives and hostesses, to be a support for their husbands, to be representative. Their days seem to be a mixture of social life, hobbies, arts and crafts, planning parties, but no household work:

We had three woman servants: a cook, a maid and a nurse, there was no lack of anything. I sewed all the children's clothes and most of mine, too, and I was not idle. . . . When I married, I could do nothing. . . . I had no idea how coffee was made, none, I married a cook, with my husband.

Charity was in many cases a central theme. "Who is given to manage great wealth is duty-bound to divide his wealth," was a principal rule in the case of, for instance, Bertha Paulig, wife of the founder of a family firm. Many of these ladies were very busy in handling social issues in the firm or in various organizations, like the Red Cross, scouts, founding of kindergartens, etc.

On the surface there does not seem to be any great conflict between the husband's work and the family life. One interviewee described the 1920s: "It was good times, funny, my God, so many parties, big, fine. . . . That time, you know, was fun and happiness. . . . Young men came to the staircase and sang." Often that time is described as more childish,



easy, so that the work-free, carefree and playful existence was for these people "accessible long after they had outgrown their children's shoes."<sup>20</sup>

At least the everyday problems were not connected with money. "We had lots of money, we had no problems. It was just the terrible thing, there were no problems." Which certainly does not mean that there were no problems at all. But they are very well hidden behind the luxury facade, problems of emptiness, human relations, and so on. They are well described in Henrik Tikkanen's novel:

But the carefree existence gives them an abundance of time to think how unhappy man is, and to forget their great unhappiness they throw themselves into various hectic enjoyments and then they become soon truly unhappy.<sup>21</sup>

Today the situation seems to have changed in several respects. The young generation — Those between 30 and 40 — has in many respects re-evaluated many things, orientation towards the family history, culture, work, the family firm. There is clear evidence of an emancipation movement among the wives, a rapidly growing conflict between work and family life.

Concerning work there are at least two different orientations: One is to go into the family firm, and the other is to try to stay on your own feet. The reasons for the latter vary: family disputes, economic difficulties in the family firm, etc. In one case it was explained as follows: "If it had gone well, I'd sit there, in the family firm. I'd never do anything except ride and sail and have real fun, but not fun in the sense of doing something and getting satisfaction out of it." Common to both orientations is a strong sense of managerism: "Generally the high-level manager is a professional and specializes in the decision-making process of the management. He has usually had to leave his original profession, be it engineer or economist, and concentrate on the very important task of the management, the making of decisions." Or: "You are a specialist in being a manager and nothing else," you become a general manager.

In both cases the persons are highly educated, having studied abroad, continuously following new theories and participating in various courses to keep pace with time. For them work is even more a competition, a risk-taking game, a challenge: "Well, it is obvious that my salary is not paid for just sitting on my ass and keeping myself on the safe side, no, the salary is paid just because I must be ready to take risks, use my judgement." And: "It is truly a challenge to go on. That is what is interesting." As soon as the work is learned, it gets a flavour of routine and becomes irritating: "It irritates me so damned much if something becomes routine, it is not fun any more." One young manager describes what gives him pleasure in work in the following way: "To have a problem and to solve it is like a competition. If you win, it's over, you have a new feather in the cap, but you must have a new one, a bigger one, you must get up to a higher class, and then that's over, too, and you must go on again."

These "supermanagers" may even buy themselves small firms as "hobbies": "And as I had for many years been professional manager I wanted to try out what it would be like to be an entrepreneur in a small firm. There are 30 employees and it has been a very pleasant experience to be its managing director."<sup>22</sup> It is evident that they have a very strong feeling about themselves being something very special - reflected in their view on what characterizes a good manager. As a young manager of a multinational firm's Finnish branch put it: "I think that there are people who never can become leaders, I think there are some who are born to it." "I'm quite sure that if one wants to be a good manager one must not do any routine chores at all because one must be able to delegate them to others." They are there to draw the general lines to make use of their creativity, to plan and to encourage other people. Much of their schooling is concerned with questions about human relations. Everything is subordinated to profit - contrary to all the learned talk about modern corporations: "There is just one thing, the profit, if I can reach the profit target by legal means, I can do whatever I wish," says the above-mentioned young manager. They feel themselves absolutely free to decide about their ways of acting within this framework: they decide when, where, how, with whom, and why.<sup>23</sup>

What are the implications of this far-out managerism? At least three things are clear: There is a growing conflict between work and family; the leisure time is very different; and they have to consciously change and control their ways of life: "You must not let yourself start drinking and smoking and staying up too much so that you can't go on." You have to keep yourself in good shape. This together with the growing family dilemma greatly shapes the leisure time. The leisure is much taken up by sporting, but with sports that can be done together with the family, "otherwise you would never see them." Friends and parties are rare: "I'd say that I've lost a lot of socializing because of the job." There is no time for culture, so important for the elder generations. There seems to be a very clear line between work and leisure as the following exchanges show:

"You haven't sold your soul altogether?"

"I've sold it almost but with some restrictions."

"What are they?"

"They are restrictions related to the fact that I like to have free time, too. I don't take my job home, ever . . . because if you do that, it's the last thing."

So even if work is very challenging, exciting, a means of self-realization, they are not ready to give themselves completely. There is the other sphere, the private sphere, which according to external attributes is somewhat different from that of their parents and even more from their grandparents. A young heir of a very old family says:

I have the impression that the young generation does not have the same sense of history — this is perhaps the same for the society as a whole — it does not surround itself with the same symbols, the mythological decor which was important for their parents and grandparents. . . . It's no more rococo and crystal chandeliers that are being collected.

There is the quality, comfort, a good apartment, a summer house, a comfortable car, all the food and clothes you ever want, a boat, etc. All this even in the degree that there is no need for more. Money is not a prime incentive in looking for new positions. All the privileges are necessary, they must be there but then they become a normal part of life, not anymore reflected upon.

One qualitatively new feature in the private life sphere of the upper class is the already mentioned conflict between work and family, or the wives' strivings toward emancipation from their traditional roles as representative hostesses. This has been very clear in the interviews, but it has recently also been discussed in the ladies' journals. As one of our interviewees put it:

It is a real conflict: if I wanted to get a top position I should have said yes to the offer for South America, but now she wants to start working again, so we should move to a country where she can work, or then we just do as I want and that means a very difficult situation for us in the future. . . . She wants to develop herself and have a job, perhaps not a career, and it's in a clear conflict with my aspirations.

It is not solely a question of women's liberation but also a question of time available for wife and children. As one interviewee put it: "I have all possibilities to use my time so that I wouldn't see the family at all."

There are various ways to cope with it. One is to rationalize as follows:

I think that it is unnecessary to create problems where they don't exist by themselves. If I think that I am neglecting my family, then they will notice it. And it becomes a problem. But if I don't take that attitude, I think everything will go well.

Another way is to recognize the conflict and go on hoping for the best and in the long run believe that they would choose the family in case of a conflict. The third and now not so rare way is divorce. The picture of the coherent and united family in these circles where everybody supports the main object, the upholding of the family, is increasingly an empty norm even though it is not generally recognized.<sup>24</sup>

## V. DESTRUCTIVE TENDENCIES

One might say that the previous analysis has been biased towards the good in the upper-class way of life, both objectively and subjectively. Yet, the tension between self-discipline and lack of limitations of an ordinary nature -- external control -- does not always result in a balance between those two qualities. In every generation there are "black sheep," incompetence, stagnation, and alienation from the social background.

Already in our preliminary material there are stories about disruption of the balance between self-control and free choice and of persons whose talents were not in accumulating capital:

He just loved to study, write and read. He studied at the university but then his father -- manager of a big family firm -- became ill and he had at the age of 18 to begin to manage the firm. . . . He could never do what he wanted to. . . . And then the firm started to go badly and he started to drink more and more.

Another case has much in common with the famous Buddenbrooks by Thomas Mann. It is the story of a family which came to Finland about a hundred years ago. The father established an extremely successful firm but died too early, before being able to groom the sons. "The sons had no idea about the worth of money. . . . They got everything they needed and could travel as much as they wanted." Everything was available from the office: One had simply to go there and get money or send the bill. The only one with some business sense was one of the daughters. "She would have become as good as anybody but the boys would not have it, they did not want to hear about her coming to work in the firm." The boys were placed in various positions but they only "played rich man's sons, went hunting and sailing all the time." The young namesake of

the father "was not spoiled in such a way that he wouldn't have wanted to work. Of course he wanted to work, but in the office he just sat and talked about hunting and dogs and anything which had nothing to do with his work, and so others had to do it."

Finally the boys succeeded in nearly getting the firm bankrupt: They had sold almost everything of value, and only the timely investment by an old friend of the father's saved the firm, which still exists, now under the joint control of the original founder family representatives and the rescuing family. The boys were left with some fortune, and the growth of the firm gave them more: One of them married a patron's daughter, and one continued his comfortable bachelor life with an obscure position in the firm; one emigrated and was never heard from again.

Recently there have been some very merciless novels about the destruction and decadence in upper-class families written by Finnish novelists with upper-class backgrounds. One of them<sup>25</sup> writes about his own family: "This is the ugly story of early death, misery, whoring and drinking. It is about a family's unhappiness, about the fight against unhappiness, which is the meaning and impossibility of life."

Their life was perfect, at first: beauty, skills, wealth, culture, all comforts. But there had been dreams of other careers — of becoming an opera singer, for instance — not carried out because it would have meant giving up the fun and champagne, hunting and nice cars. "Besides he understood that an opera singer in a small country could not afford to buy a nice car or to hunt. And what was worst was that an opera singer would have to stand on the scene and sing while other people — who counted — were having fun and drinking champagne."<sup>26</sup>

Little by little, the fun changes into perversion and decadence. Mad scenes follow each other, the illusion is broken. The father ends his days selling carpets at the upper-class department store in Helsinki. The son goes through a painful crisis to become a commercial artist and successful author on the sad story of his life.

These stories abound: The moral is simply that the temptation to succumb to merely having fun, to throwing oneself to mindless, expensive pursuits, to living truly well in accordance with the popular image of upper-class life is real. Still the essence of the upper class is the preservation of tradition, and the accumulation of wealth through generations. If this is given up, the result is mediocrity, disappearance into the anonymity of the upper middle class.<sup>27</sup> In modern society, the tradition is often carried by a large, indestructible corporation: Its personal torch-carriers may change, and there is no one family to carry it. This is what makes the present-day upper class so difficult to distinguish.

To conclude, the main connections between AWL and the upper-class way of life which we see as relevant are the following:

1. The upper class way of life is an actual, socially produced way of life, a result of human needs and social forces. Simultaneously it contains many of the alternative way of life qualities: It is one instance of an alternative way of life which has become social reality for some, in the sense noted in the beginning of this paper: as an alternative for the drudgery of the life of the majority.

There is also the interesting fact that some aspects of the upper-class way of life actually are transformed into the way of life of the majority of the people in developed capitalist countries. This goes especially for the luxuries of yesterday which now are available to the common people. But it also goes for some patterns of behaviour, e.g., leisure activities, protection of privacy, etc.

2. The dominant way of life has been influenced by the upper-class way of life, and thus it has affected the actual ways of life of the people. This is the question of how in capitalist society class-specific ways of life have become "contaminated" and people try and are able to hide their class origins by adopting new ways of life. This is one reason Ottomeyer can discuss quite universal tendencies without reference to class.

3. Distance from the character mask is typical of a well-established upper-class life. How the money is made and the various connections to misery are extremely distant. The character mask is there, but becomes visible only in certain exceptional situations. The distance is created by education, traditions, ability to protect oneself, ability to hire people to take care of unpleasant tasks, etc.

Now we might ask whether these three aspects -- societal connection, influence on the dominant way of life, and distance from the character mask -- are specific to the upper-class way of life or are more general. These aspects must be considered in any analysis where the interest lies in the actual promotion of alternative ways of life on a mass scale. We claim that this is true.

Regarding the first point, any alternative way of life must be socially anchored in the aspirations and needs of the people and in their imagination and made possible by their actual lives. This is an obvious requirement, and yet it often seems to be forgotten. Many alternative way of life requirements are impossible in any socially relevant sense. An individual might be able to lead an alternative way of life in isolation but never as a member of society, perhaps not even as a member of a family.

Second, how can alternative ways of life gather momentum in a capitalist society? They cannot be introduced by a decree nor developed purely spontaneously, by example. The only solution is that it must seep into the actual ways of life of the people through changes in the dominant way of life. Of course, in the extreme this requires a basic transformation of the society. But still it is possible to change many aspects of the dominant way of life even in present-day society, as the relationship between the upper class and the dominant ways of life has shown. This has happened through example, authority, and the innate enviousness of what the upper class has done. In our opinion, the same model should work also in the relations between AWL and the dominant ways of life.

Third, how are distances from the character masks maintained? Of course



there are many aspects in present-day society that imply such a distance, but in the wrong direction.<sup>28</sup> Concerning the character mask distance, applying experiences from the upper-class to alternative ways of life is difficult as the starting point is so different. The distance is created in the course of historical development, not suddenly and immediately. But perhaps the lesson is that we should look for the roots of the AWL in the past, the traditions of emancipation and the good life among common people.<sup>29</sup>

As a whole, we think that there is much to be learned from the upper-class life, its good and bad qualities and the constraints it faces. It seems obvious that it is much more difficult to lead an upper-class way of life, from a subjective point of view, than it was earlier. This has to do with some societal pressures, which are working towards the AWL, as some of our interviews also indicate - for instance, the wish to return to the simple life and nature. But these problems remain outside the scope of this essay.

NOTES

1. Galtung 1977.
2. See our previous project paper for the elaboration of this point:  
Roos and Roos 1978.
3. Galtung and Wemegah 1978, p. 5.
4. Marx.
5. Cohen and Taylor 1978.
6. Ottomeyer 1977, 1979.
7. Mainly consumption, but also household work and the like.
8. Marx.
9. See for example Glaser 1908; Galbraith 1969.
10. Josephson 1973, p. 183.
11. Maccoby 1978, p. 14.
12. Falk 1979.
13. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
14. Nyberg 1964.
15. See Cohen and Taylor 1978, p. 193.
16. See Elias 1978, who sees the development of the modern way of life  
as a spread of the self-control out of the *höfische Gesellschaft*.
17. I.e., the men!
18. For many, the family and the firm were one and the same thing.
19. Compare with Wemegah 1978.
20. See Wemegah 1978.
21. Tikkanen 1977, p. 7.
22. Gustav Rosenlew, head of a large family concern, in a TV interview.
23. Galtung; see Wemegah, p. 8.
24. As, for instance, Bob Slocum in Joseph Heller's *Something Happened*  
is well aware.
25. Tikkanen.
26. Tikkanen, p. 12.

27. As the Rockefeller story would seem to show; see the final chapters of Collier and Horowitz 1977.
28. Cohen and Taylor, 1978, chap. 5, mention for example fantasies and free areas like hobbies, games, gambling, and sex, as escape routes from the realities of everyday life in modern society; these are only the most standard ones.
29. See Moore 1979.

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