

Studies of Capitalist Culture

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By

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When people speak of the ideas that revolutionise society, they do but express that fact that within the old society the elements of a new one have been created.

—Karl Marx

We must change the world in order to change ourselves.

—Christopher Caudwell

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PREFACE

This book is a study of Capitalist culture. It is a study of modern culture under Capitalism. It is a study of the problems of Capitalist culture. We live in an age of Capitalist crisis. We also live in an age of Capitalist cultural crisis. By looking at the relationship between culture and Capitalism, we might be able to understand the relationship between culture and the struggle for Socialism — for a society based on a free culture and a free humanity.

Culture is how human society expresses its ideas. Culture is how human society develops its ideas. Culture is the process of how human societies create their ideas and preserve them through time and changes in society. Culture is a vital part of humanity. Culture is one of the great achievements of humanity. It allows humanity to remember its ideas — and it allows humanity to express its ideas. The creation of culture, through labour, is a major part of what makes humanity really human. Culture reflects society. Society creates culture. The power of culture is a social power. Indeed, culture has often played a key role in all of the great social revolutions of human history. Culture, as a social force, has often been vital in terms of achieving social progress and social revolution — in the long history of humanity.

This book is an attempt at a Socialist study of culture. Specifically, it is a Socialist study of the politics of culture. This book is a Socialist study. It is a Socialist Humanist study, in the tradition of Democratic Socialism. This book aims to present a Marxist account of the development of culture — of where culture exists in the social struggle for human freedom. It is an attempt to apply the basic ideas of Marx and Engels to the study of culture. It is an attempt to apply the basic ideas of Historical Materialism to the study of culture.

Capitalism, today, has many problems — including cultural problems. The only way to solve these problems is via Socialism.

In order to have a free culture we must build a free society — a Socialist society. Marx was correct in believing that the struggle for Socialism is the struggle for a liberated humanity. We must achieve a Socialist culture and a Socialist society.

R.G. Williams

(2023)

CHAPTER I

CULTURE – A SOCIALIST STUDY

This short essay is a study of culture. It is a Socialist study of what culture is and the social role it plays in society. Today, in the early 21st century, culture is obviously a powerful force in modern human society. Our modern, Capitalist, society is clearly a society being shaped by culture – alongside the other economic, social, and political developments which make up modern society. Culture, today, is obviously a social force – with the power to shape and revolutionise human society. Culture has always been a powerful social force in human history, since the beginning of humanity, but it is also a revolutionary force – helping to drive forward the development of humanity.

Culture is the social expression of social ideas. It is the social development of ideas – through art, literature, and social expression. It is how human societies develop, refine, and shape their ideas. Culture is a social force in human history. It is a revolutionary force in human history – as part of the economic, social, political, and historical revolutions which shape human development. Culture, as part of wider social revolution, can be part of the revolutionary struggle for a better world.¹

Culture is how society develops its ideas. Culture, in basic terms, is how any society expresses its ideas. Every society, in human history, has produced its own culture – in order to express its ideas and the social relations of its society. For Socialists, culture is a powerful part of the reality of humanity. Culture is part of what makes human beings really human.

Human beings, collectively, create culture. They create it through their struggle and through their determination to create a better world. Culture only develops by the labour and action of human beings. It is the agency of human beings, and the creative agency of human beings, usually as workers, which pushes forward the development of society.

Culture, like all social forces, is diverse. Culture can be expressed and developed in a variety of ways – through art, literature, film, etc. This diversity of culture allows it to be a varied social force. Culture, at its most revolutionary, has been crucial to the great social revolutions of human history – revolutions which have helped to push forward the struggle for human freedom. Culture, by itself, cannot achieve social progress – as only human beings, and human agency, can achieve social progress – but culture is still vital to understanding and shaping our society. The struggle for a good culture, for a free culture, is a vital part of the struggle for a good and free society. It is a vital part of the struggle for a better society.

Culture belongs to all. Every human being has a right to culture and a right to contribute to the development of culture. Culture is one of the crucial human rights – in any democratic or free society. Culture belongs to everyone. Culture belongs to all. Culture is part of the common heritage of humanity. As Raymond Williams, the great British Socialist, once wrote: ‘culture is ordinary ... and not elite’.² This means that culture is part of everyday life, but it also means that culture belongs to ordinary people. Ordinary people can and do contribute to culture – despite what any elitist ruling class might say about culture. Every man, every woman, every child, every nationality, every race, every sex, every gender, every class, and every person, in a good society, deserves culture. Every man, every woman, every child, every nationality, every race, every sex, every gender, every class, and every person can contribute to the development of culture. In order for human beings to live in a free and good society they need to live in a society based on a free culture – on a democratic culture.

For Socialists, culture is one of the great achievements of humanity. Socialists, in political terms, struggle for a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all – e.g. Socialism. This includes the free development of society and the free development of culture. This means that understanding culture, in economic, political, social, historical, and intellectual terms is crucial for the struggle for Socialism – for a free society.

Understanding culture is important. It is important because ideas are important – and culture helps to shape ideas. We are living in a time, at the beginning of the 21st century, where culture is being revolutionised by the social revolutions of our times. If we really wish to understand our times, and the possibilities of our times, we must understand culture – and society.

Culture is clearly political. It is clearly part of the political struggle for a better world. It is obvious, if we look at our society today, that culture is political. This means that the struggle for a free culture is also a political struggle – as is the struggle for a free society. For Socialists, the struggle for culture is both a struggle for humanity and for a free humanity. In order to achieve real human freedom, we need to achieve economic, social, and political emancipation for the majority of the population of the world – but we also need to achieve cultural emancipation. We need to achieve a world where culture is free and where culture is enjoyed by all.

Definitions of culture based on elitist definitions are useless. In the end, culture is the social expression of all of the ideas of humanity – both good and bad. Elitist, usually reactionary, ideas about culture are useless. They usually deny the common basis of culture – that all of culture belongs to all of humanity.

Not all culture is necessarily ‘good’ – but all culture contributes to the development of humanity.

Culture will always be part of humanity. As long as humanity exists, culture will be part of humanity. Hopefully, the future struggle for a better society will allow culture to become truly free – in the hands of the majority.

I believe in a free humanity. I believe in a liberated humanity. I believe in an emancipated humanity. Freedom, liberation, and emancipation requires social struggle. I believe the struggle for a free culture is part of the struggle for a free humanity. I believe Socialism, as the struggle for the free development of humanity, is a vital part of the struggle for a free culture – for a free humanity.

The struggle for Socialism is the struggle for a free and emancipated humanity. The struggle for Socialism requires a social struggle for Socialism. This means culture, as part of society, is part of the social struggle for freedom.

Notes

1. R. Williams, *Resources of Hope*, (1989)
2. R. Williams, *Culture is Ordinary*, (1958)

CHAPTER II

CULTURE AND HUMANITY

This essay is a study of culture and humanity — specifically a Socialist study of culture. All human societies produce culture. Culture is part of the reality of the development of human society. Culture is one of the great achievements of humanity. Indeed, culture is what has made humanity really human. If we wish to understand humans and humanity, we must understand culture and its social relationship with society. The social power of culture can be seen in both the politics of culture and the history of culture — the role of culture in politics and society. Culture can be explained by Historical Materialism. Cultural change can be explained by Historical Materialism. Historical Materialism suggests that human history develops due to material conditions, productive forces, social relations, social struggle, class struggle, human agency, and social revolution. History develops because of revolutionary social development — according to Historical Materialism. Culture develops because of revolutionary social development — according to Historical Materialism. All of humanity produces culture. All societies produce culture. Culture comes from society. Society produces culture. This means that we must understand the relationship between culture and humanity if we truly wish to understand humanity itself — and its revolutions of society and culture.

We can define culture. Culture is the social expression of social ideas. It is an expression of the popular creativity of humanity, as individuals, as classes, as societies, and as a species. Culture, in the end, is how any human society expresses its ideas and how any human society develops its ideas. Culture is the expression of human life. Culture is a social expression of human life. Culture is the practical expression of human life.¹ This expression of culture means that culture is, necessarily, a social product of human society. Culture, according to Marx, is an expression of the social reality of a society, the social relations of a society, the social ideology of a society, and the social ideas of a society. Culture, for Marx, is part of ‘the definite forms of social consciousness’. Culture is part of the ideological superstructure of human societies — the means of expressing ideas and

social ideas.

There are many types of culture — art, music, literature, poetry, film, etc. All of these types of culture have emerged from the revolutionary development of culture and the revolutionary development of culture and society.

The development of culture is one of the most important developments of humanity. Humanity, as a species, would not have developed as well or as far without culture — without the revolutions of culture. Culture is part of the historical development of humanity.²

The development of culture has been a key part of the development of human freedom. Indeed, it has been a key part of the development of human struggles for social development and social freedom. Humanity, today, is the result of these types of social development. Social development, social struggle, and social revolution, today, has resulted in the possibility of a really free and human society – Socialism, a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all.³

Human history is the history of revolution. Indeed, the history of humanity is the history of social revolution: the Neolithic Revolution, the Urban Revolution, the Feudal Revolution, the Capitalist Revolution, and the contemporary struggle for Socialism. Human social history is also a product of revolution. Humanity, so far, has proceeded through various forms of society: Primitive Communism, Ancient society, Feudal society, Capitalist society, and the contemporary possibility of Socialism. This history of revolution includes culture. Human beings have revolutionised themselves and their societies through social, economic, political, intellectual, and cultural revolutions. Revolution, as defined by Marx, is the process of the revolutionary transformation of society. This revolutionary history has been part of humanity since the beginning of the human species. It has shaped both the development of humanity and the development of society and culture. Human history is the history of the revolutionary struggle for revolution – in order to achieve human freedom. The Socialist revolution, of today and the future, will hopefully produce a free humanity.

The development of culture has been part of humanity since the beginning of human evolution and since the beginning of the human species. Culture is part of the revolutionary development of humanity. Indeed, culture has been part of humanity since the development of humanity through its social

struggles and social revolutions – the Neolithic Revolution, the Urban Revolution, the Feudal Revolution, the Capitalist Revolution, and the current struggle for Socialist Revolution. Human labour and human culture, through co-operation and social revolution, has been a key basis for human progress. Indeed, culture, as a process of labour, as a process of creation, can be considered part of the species-being of humanity — as defined by Marx.³

Culture is part of the process and progress of human liberation. Indeed, the development of culture is a vital part of the process of achieving human freedom. Humans, uniquely, create culture in order to achieve their self-realisation and their self-liberation. This is clear in terms of how Marx defined the process of human liberation as both a social, historical, and cultural process. As Marx wrote in ‘The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844’ (1844): ‘historical development is the process of human emancipation and rehabilitation’.⁴

Human history is the history of the development of society. It is the history of human struggle, class struggle, social struggle, and social revolution. Culture is an expression of this development. All of the social conflicts and social developments of human history — such as class conflict — have been vital to the development of society and culture.

Marxism, the theory and practice of working-class emancipation, has a powerful theory of the history and development of culture. For Marxism, culture is the social development of the ideas of human society. Culture, for Marxist theory, develops because of human activity, human struggle, and material development.

Marx’s theory of Historical Materialism explains the development of culture. Historical Materialism shows that history develops because of material conditions, producing social relations and social revolutions. The material conditions of history produce certain ‘modes of production’, shaped around the economic base and the social superstructure of society, including culture, as shown by the base/superstructure model of historical development, and the agency of social revolution. History, for Marx, develops because of the development of the mode of production, the forces of production, and the relations of production, through production, development, class struggle, and social revolution.⁵ History is the product of material conditions, social struggle, class struggle, and social revolution. The socio-economic base of society produces the socio-ideological

superstructure of society. Culture and changes in culture are part of the socio-ideological superstructure of society. Social change occurs, in the form of social revolution, due to conflict, specifically class conflict, within the mode of production and the relations of production. It is conflict, between these forms of production, which produces social development — in the form of class struggle and social revolution. The economic base of society produces a social superstructure — a social superstructure which includes culture. Culture, in the form of ideology, law, politics, religion, art and philosophy, is part of the social superstructure of human society. Historical development is the result of the development of both the base and superstructure of human societies — including culture. The development of culture is a historical development. Culture emerges as part of the social reality of humanity. The ultimate form of social development is social revolution. For Marx, culture is part of the social development of human society. For Marx, culture is part of what makes humanity, effectively, human — because it is a product of human activity. This means that culture is part of the dynamic of history, and the theory of Historical Materialism.

Culture emerges as part of the social reality of humanity due to the constant development of the mode of production, the forces of production, and the relations of production — in the form of class struggle, social production, and social revolution. In all of human history the development of culture occurs from the economic base of society and from the social base of society.

Social development is the basis for the development of culture. As a result, the history of social development is the basis for the history of culture. This point is consistent with the basic idea of Historical Materialism. It is material and social development which produces social and cultural change in human societies — because of the fact that social conditions determine consciousness, rather than consciousness determining social conditions. As Marx pointed out in ‘Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy’ (1859): ‘It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness’. Culture is an intellectual product, and a social product, of the social relationships in society. Culture is a product of the relationships between the mode of production, the forces of production, and the relations of production. Culture emerges, ultimately, out of social development and social relations.

Culture is an expression of human society and human development. Culture is an expression of the ideas of a society. It is the artistic expression

of its ideas and ideals. All of the various forms of culture, from art to painting, from science to social organisation, can be connected to the social reality and the social progress of society — of humans and humanity. Culture, in the end, is a social product and a social relationship. Culture is connected to society. The history of society is the history of culture. The history of culture is the history of society.

Culture is an expression of economic society and economic development. The economic base of society produces the economic development which leads to social revolution, social progress, and cultural development. This economic determinism is the basis from which all forms of culture must emerge. Humanity can only produce culture when the correct social organisation and the correct social development exists to produce it. The power of culture, however, means that culture is itself a revolutionary force — but only within the boundaries of economic revolution and social revolution.

The beginning of society is the beginning of culture. Culture can only really start to emerge when humans co-operatively work to produce it — in the social organisation of society. All forms of society, from Primitive Communism to Feudalism, from Capitalism to Socialism, rely on the social organisation of society itself in order to produce their culture. The power of culture comes directly from its social organisation and its social connection. All of the great examples of art and culture, from all societies, would have been impossible to achieve without the social organisation of society. Every artist in history understands that their work is a product of their social environment. Every artist in history understands that their work is a product of their society. Historical Materialism can account for this social relationship — as the social relationship between an artist and their society is an example of the many forms of social relationship which make up human societies.

All societies produce culture. This is obvious if we look at any human society, at any point in the development of human society. Every society which has emerged as part of humanity has produced culture and forms of culture. Culture has been part of humanity since the beginning of humanity and human societies — since the origins of humanity out of the process of biological evolution and social evolution. Every society which has emerged from human history has produced culture and forms of culture.⁶ Every society has produced a useful culture — a culture which helps to progress that society and to maintain that society. All human culture is the product of

all human society. Studies of culture always need to recognise the revolutionary dynamic and revolutionary nature of culture. Culture is a revolutionary reality of humanity. Culture is a universal reality of humanity. Every society takes part in the production of culture. Every individual can take part in the production of culture. The social power of culture shows that culture has a social basis and social relationship. Every Socialist and every Marxist knows the social power of culture. All studies of culture can see its importance — both to society and to social revolution.

The basic relationship between humanity and culture is a social relationship. One produces the other. They produce each other. In the end culture cannot exist without society and society cannot exist without culture. This fact shows that the development of culture and society are linked. This fact also shows that the development of culture and society are necessarily social developments, economic developments, political developments, and historical developments. In order to understand culture and humanity we must understand the various connections which outline the connection between culture and society. This connection is crucial to understand for three reasons. The first is the need to understand the connection between culture and society. The second reason is the need to understand the connection between culture and Capitalism. The third reason is the need to understand the connection between culture and Socialism. In order to achieve Socialism, a society based on equality and co-operation, we must understand the basic connection between culture and society.

The historical development of culture can be explained by Historical Materialism. Culture develops through the process of the class struggle and the process of the contradictions of the mode of production and the relations of production. Marx outlined this, quite simply, in his 'Preface to a Contribution of the Critique of Political Economy' (1859). His point was that culture cannot exist outside of social development and human development. Every advance in culture was preceded by other types of social conflict and social revolution. The plays of Shakespeare came from the social struggle of the Wars of the Roses and the Tudor period. The novels of Dickens came from the realities of the Industrial Revolution. The artistic revolution of the Renaissance came from the social revolutions and economic revolutions of the Renaissance, in the 15th century, and from the crisis of the 14th century. Every cultural revolution can be linked to a greater social revolution. The materialist roots of culture are shown by any basic analysis of culture, by the materialist conception of history.⁷

The history of culture shows the connection between culture and society. No culture has emerged artificially from society — instead, history shows that culture only emerges from the historical development of society. The connection between culture and society is a concrete reality and a concrete force in human history.

Culture changes in two ways — through slow social reform or through social revolution. The history of culture is the history of societies producing changes in culture through such reform or such revolution. It is these two types of social and cultural change that have produced the greatest social revolutions of human history. The main forms of social revolution in human history have been the Neolithic Revolution, the Urban Revolution, the Feudal Revolution, the Capitalist Revolution, and the current struggle for Socialist Revolution.

Revolutionary struggles for change in culture have dominated the history of culture. The Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, the invention of painting, the invention of writing, the invention of art, were all produced by social revolutions which became cultural revolutions.⁸

Change in human culture has usually come from revolution. Revolution is the process of the revolutionary transformation of society. It is a social or political process which results in social transformation. The two main forms of revolution, social revolution and political revolution, result in serious social change. All of the great revolutions of human history have produced cultural revolutions. All of the great social revolutions of human history have produced cultural revolutions. The neolithic revolution, the urban revolution, the rise of Ancient society, the rise of Feudal society, the rise of Capitalist society, and the possible rise of Socialist society, were major social revolutions in human history. All of these revolutions produced economic revolutions which created cultural revolutions. The English Revolution of 1640, the American Revolution of 1776, the French Revolution of 1789, the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Chinese Revolution of 1949, the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and the revolutions of today, all created political revolutions which created cultural revolutions. The revolutions of culture, from the neolithic revolution to modern society, from the Renaissance to the internet age, have been shaped by the economic revolutions and social revolutions which produced these cultural revolutions. The power of social revolution, in the history of culture and society, is impossible to ignore. The power of social revolution is the revolutionary force which drives forward both culture and society. It is

social revolution, in the end, which produces the greatest forms of cultural revolution, and cultural change. Indeed, social revolution produces the most innovative and revolutionary forms of new culture.

The politics of culture shows the revolutionary connection between culture and society. The politics of culture also show the connection between culture and revolution. Human culture has changed, throughout history, because of social change and social development — but it has also changed due to the reality of political revolution, social revolution, and economic revolution. Major changes in the history of culture have usually occurred because of a wider social revolution imposing social change — or achieving the basis for a successful cultural revolution. All revolutionary struggles produce their own form of culture and revolution — even if simply in terms of the revolutionary theory and the revolutionary ideas they use in order to achieve social revolution and political revolution. The political development of societies, throughout history and politics, through revolution and counter-revolution, have shaped the basis by which culture has developed and the basis by which culture has changed. The historical development of humanity, since the neolithic revolution, is the basis by which almost all culture has been created, shaped, and changed. The historical development of society, through changing modes of production, has produced the basis by which the revolutions of culture have taken place. Revolution and social change are some of the key means by which cultures change and adapt. It is impossible to write the history of culture, or the history of the social development of culture, without understanding the history of revolution and counter-revolution. Revolutions of culture seek to develop culture. Counter-Revolutions of culture seek to maintain culture as it is. All social revolutions produce cultural revolutions. All economic revolutions produce cultural revolutions. The French Revolution of 1789 produced a cultural revolution. The transition from Feudalism to Capitalism (1450-1850) produced a cultural revolution. The Russian Revolution of 1917 produced a cultural revolution. The possible revolution to achieve Socialism will probably produce a cultural revolution. In the world today, the link between culture and revolution is very clear. We can see the link in all the revolutions of the past and all the revolutions of the future. It is likely that the revolutions of the future will produce cultural change and cultural revolution. This assumption simply follows the basic assumptions of Historical Materialism. A revolution in society produces a revolution in culture.⁹

Human history has led up to today. Today we live in a Capitalist society and in a Capitalist culture. This society, and this culture, has been created

and shaped by the historical developments of human history. Capitalist society and Capitalist culture are the dominant forms of society and culture in the world today. We must understand this if a better form of society and culture is to emerge today — in order to create Socialism and a Socialist culture. This means that we need to understand Capitalist society and Capitalist culture. This means we need to create Socialism. This means we need to create a Socialist culture.¹⁰

If we are to understand the connection between culture and society, we must understand the connection between culture and society today. Culture, and society, today, is being shaped by the economic society which exists today. That economic society is the society of Capitalism.

Capitalism shapes culture. This has been an obvious fact since the rise of Capitalism and the fall of Feudalism. The rise of Capitalist culture, from the 19th century, has come to dominate the bulk of culture which exists in human society today. The strength of this culture has gone from strength to strength —especially since the victory of Capitalism in the Cold War. Despite this it is now clear that the culture of Capitalism is beginning to run into serious problems and serious issues — due to the crisis of Capitalism and the crisis of the Capitalist system. We cannot yet know what will happen to Capitalism or Capitalist culture in the coming decades, but it is obvious to most that Capitalism is once again in crisis. Capitalism is in crisis. Capitalist culture is also in crisis.

Culture shapes Capitalism. Culture has been one of the best tools for Capitalism since the emergence of Capitalism. Indeed, culture has been used by Capitalism at every level of the Capitalist system — from advertising to propaganda, from politics to ideology. Every form of Capitalism, since the end of Feudalism, has used culture in some form or another – in order to justify and maintain Capitalism. Culture is a key tool for any Capitalist society. This means that the development of culture helps to shape the development of Capitalism – in Capitalist societies. Yet the ability of culture to promote Capitalism is also beginning to decline today — as the structure of Capitalism itself weakens due to the reality of the crisis of Capitalism. In this process the opportunity emerges for new and different types of culture to emerge. Capitalism will not be overthrown by criticising its culture — but it will be weakened by the decline of its culture and by the decline of Capitalism itself.¹¹ Capitalism, today, can no longer rely on culture to help maintain Capitalism.

The development of Capitalism shapes culture. Capitalism has existed since the transition from Feudalism to Capitalism — the transition between 1450 and 1850. The development of Capitalism has led to the development of both culture itself and the development of a Capitalist culture. The development of Capitalist culture has always sought to uphold the economic development and the intellectual development of Capitalism. Capitalist art, and Capitalist culture, tends to reinforce the economic goals and the political goals of Capitalism. This has made culture a vital part of modern Capitalism and modern Capitalist society. Capitalism is, today, the dominant form of society and culture in the world.

The economic development of Capitalism shapes culture. Capitalism, in the last two hundred years, has created major economic forces. These economic forces have spread across the world and have shaped the world — both for the better and for the worse. Economic development always leads to a development of culture — even if just in terms of the social development of the means of production. Capitalism, for the first time in history, has created a truly global culture and a truly universal culture. Capitalism has also created the forces and the social forces which can create Socialism and a better culture. Capitalism has produced the working class — a class which is capable of making Socialism. The economic development of Capitalism has been a major triumph for Capitalism — but it has also produced the social forces and the economic forces which will lead to the downfall of Capitalism. Capitalism will be replaced by Socialism. Capitalist culture will be replaced by Socialist culture.

The political development of Capitalism shapes culture. The political development of Capitalism, in the last two hundred years, has been shaped by the development of culture. Capitalism has developed many different types of political movements and political ideas — Liberalism, Conservatism, Neo-Liberalism, Neo-Conservatism, Fascism, and Nazism. This has led to both revolutions and counter-revolutions for culture. The French Revolution brought about a revolution for culture. The triumph of Nazism brought about a counter-revolution for culture. The history of Capitalism is the history of both revolution and counter-revolution for culture. The political development of Capitalism shows that Capitalism is capable of both progressing the development of culture and capable of crushing the development of culture. Capitalism is capable of both culture and Barbarism. This fact is shown by the historical development of Capitalism —since its origins out of Feudalism. Future developments for culture and for art will have to be based on a different type of society —one

which overcomes the limits of Capitalist society and Capitalist culture. Humanity needs to think about the struggle for Socialism. Humanity needs Socialism.

The relationship between culture and society, today, is shaped by Capitalism. The politics of culture shows the connection between culture and society. All class societies produce culture — but they produce culture in line with the ideas of their ruling class, and the interests of their ruling class. Indeed, the majority of the ideas in any culture are usually the ideas of the ruling class. In Feudal society, culture was dominated by the interests of the Feudal Lords. In Capitalist society, culture is dominated by the interests of the capitalist class. The majority of culture produced by class society tends to be in line with the interests of the ruling class. This is because for most of human history the ruling class, of most societies, tends to dominate the cultural politics of society. Our culture, today, is a Capitalist culture because the capitalist class, the ruling class of Capitalist society, dominates the culture of our society. Only very rarely in the history of class societies does this tendency towards the ruling class dominating culture break down — in revolutionary periods and revolutionary struggles. The free development of culture, in class societies, is impossible. The only way to achieve the free development of culture is to abolish class society. This is why Socialism, the struggle to achieve a liberated society, is the social revolution which can produce a real human culture. Socialism will revolutionise culture.¹²

Socialism can liberate culture and society. If we wish to see a really free culture, we need to abolish Class society. So long as Class society exists the interests of Class society will dictate the type of culture which is produced and the direction of the development of culture. A free culture requires a free society. A free society requires a classless society. In Capitalist society the capitalist class dominates culture and shapes culture. In Socialist society the working class dominates culture and shapes culture. In Socialist society, Humanity itself dominates culture and shapes culture.

Socialist culture is a culture which is based on Socialism. Socialism is a society in which co-operation and equality are the basis of society. Socialism is also a society which is based on the free development of each and the free development of all. This means that Socialism is a powerful force for the development of human culture — and the development of a liberated culture. The power of a Socialist society would lead to a culture in which all people are free to pursue their interests and their culture. Marx

understood the revolutionary power of culture to liberate humanity. His vision of Socialism was based not only on economic liberation, political liberation, and social liberation but also on cultural liberation. He believed in a vision of a Socialist society where the 'free development of each is the condition for the free development of all'. This vision of Socialism is the vision of a Socialist culture.

We live in a Capitalist society. The basic culture of contemporary culture and popular culture is shaped by Capitalism. This has been the reality of the development of culture and society since the triumph of Capitalism and the triumph of the Industrial Revolution. In order to achieve a free culture, we must establish Socialism.¹³

We can sum up culture. Culture is the ideas of human society. Culture is an expression of the ideas, principles, and values of human society. It is the social production of ideas in human societies. It is the social expression of social ideas. Society produces culture. Culture helps to shape society. The development of culture depends on social development and historical development. Culture has progressed through various historical stages — Primitive Communism, Ancient Society, Feudalism, Capitalism, and on to Socialism. Culture is part of what makes humanity into humanity. Culture is part of what makes humans into humans. This type of social development is crucial towards achieving the social liberation of humanity.

We can also sum up how society produces culture. Culture is produced by the social relations of society. Changes in culture occur when there is conflict in the social relations of production and conflict between the social relations of production, the forces of production, and the mode of production. If the social conflicts of society become revolutionary this sparks a social revolution — which changes the mode of production, the forces of production and the social relations of production. This type of social revolution brings about changes in culture. This type of social revolution brings about cultural revolution.

Historical Materialism can explain culture. Historical Materialism can explain the revolutions in culture. Culture cannot be explained by simply referring to the innate superiority of one culture over another — as Capitalists and Fascists do. Culture can only be explained by the material developments of humanity — the material development of the liberation of humanity. Culture can only be explained by its social development and its social connection. What makes a bad culture, or a good culture, is generally

its attitude about humanity. A bad culture is that culture which holds back social development and social freedom. A good culture is that culture which helps to develop social freedom. The best type of culture would be that culture which helps to bring about complete social freedom and the abolition of classes — Socialism and Communism.

Humanity deserves a truly human culture. Humanity deserves a humanist culture. This type of culture, one which is free and universal, can only come from a society which is based on co-operation and equality. Socialism, by developing co-operation and abolishing classes, produces the basis for that type of human culture. Socialist Humanism, in particular, focuses on the idea that human liberation can only come from human self-liberation. Human culture, to be a truly free human culture, must be liberated from the realities of Class, exploitation, and oppression. Only when this has been achieved will we have a culture which is truly human. Capitalist culture must be replaced by Socialist culture.

The social power of art and culture is obvious. The social power of art and culture can often shape society. The social power of art and culture can often improve society. If we wish to see a truly free art and culture, then the only way to achieve this is to break with Capitalism and to establish Socialism. The reason for this is that Capitalism, as a system based on exploitation and hierarchy, is not interested in the development of art or culture. Socialism, on the other hand, is interested in the development of art and culture, because Socialism seeks to eliminate exploitation and hierarchy — and unleash the creative development of art and culture. In place of a culture which is dominated by the interest of Capitalism we need a culture which is dominated by the interests of humanity.¹⁴

The liberation of culture will only come via Socialism. Socialism is the only type of society which has the economic development to create culture while also having the social power to liberate culture. In the end the social development and social revolution of humanity will lead to Socialism — as a process of the historical development of society. This will lead to not only a better society but also to a better culture. The social power of this new form of culture will be to liberate humanity. It will allow humanity to be able to both produce culture and to enjoy culture. Culture will become the common inheritance of humanity.

The role of the artist is vital in understanding the relationship between culture and society. The artist helps to produce culture. The artist helps to

shape culture. The artist helps to advance culture.

Culture is produced by people, artists, by individuals, by collectives, and by wider society. It is produced by ordinary people. This is a collective process. When we think of culture we often think of the artist or the individual artist — developing their work in isolation from society. We often think of such artists working alone, as individuals in isolation, producing revolutions in culture purely through their individual genius. This is not how revolutions in art or culture have usually happened — either in history or today. This is not how artists or individual artists work either. Culture and the real development of culture is inherently a collective process and a collective progress. Individual artists can achieve major developments in culture, as individuals, but every major revolution in culture, in history, has occurred because of collective developments – by many artists and through society. No artist can escape from the reality that their work and their art is part of a wider social process and a wider social progress. Every producer of culture exists in a wider social relationship and a wider social reality — from which emerges both culture and ideas. Indeed, the best forms of artistic revolution, in history and in the present, occurred because of human co-operation. The Renaissance, for example, was a social revolution – it relied on human co-operation. The Renaissance (1450-1600) was based on centuries of social revolution and cultural revolution — revolutions which developed because of countless workers, artists, artisans, thinkers, and craftsmen. The Renaissance was a social revolution in 15th century Italy before it became an artistic revolution. The Renaissance was based on social revolution and not simply individual genius. Achieving revolutions in art and culture usually depends on a wider society or a wider social struggle. Individual genius does exist in culture and in the arts, from Shakespeare to Brecht, but all artists, at some point or another, live in society or engage with society. Their art is a product of society and a product of their engagement with society. No artist, no individual, can divorce themselves from society without losing some part of what makes them human. Even the most individualistic writer, artist, film director, or poet, cannot escape this wider connection with society. Their work influences society and culture — but their work is ultimately determined by society and culture. Artists do make revolution – but only through social revolution.¹⁵

Percy Shelley, the great British radical poet of the 19th century, understood the connection between the individual artist and wider society. He understood that humanity, in the end, is connected. No artist can escape their social reality, just as no culture can escape its wider social reality. Shelley

understood the reality of the social connection between culture and society. Shelley understood that all culture ultimately is connected to the society which produced it. Shelley understood that all artists are connected to society. Society is shaped by its culture — but culture is determined by society. No artist is an isolated individual in the end. Every artist is a product of society. Shelley outlined the mutual connection of humanity in his epic poem ‘Prometheus Unbound’:

MAN, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
 Whose nature is its own divine control,
 Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;
 Familiar acts are beautiful through love;
 Labour, and pain, and grief, in life’s green grove
 Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they could be.¹⁶

Karl Marx, the great Socialist and Communist, understood that human development and human liberation, in the form of human culture, relies on human beings and human co-operation. For Marx, the ultimate development of human history is the struggle for human liberation — through the development of the mode of production, the forces of production, the relations of production, and the reality of class conflict, class struggle, and social revolution. Marx, in the end, always understood that all human culture is a co-operative process — a process which must lead to freedom for all, through Socialism and Communism. Human beings can only fully realise themselves, and their own liberation, through co-operation. For Marx, humans are humans because they are able to labour as universal and free beings. This outline of humans, and humanity, is vital to Marx’s theory of humanism — of human liberation. For Marx, humans are a natural species, a species which is part of nature and also a species which can change nature. He fully expressed this in ‘Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844’ (1844):

Man is directly a natural being. As a natural being and as a living natural being, he is on the one hand endowed with natural powers, vital powers — he is an active natural being. These forces exist in him as tendencies and abilities — as instincts. On the other hand, as a natural, corporeal, sensuous objective being he is a suffering, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants. That is to say, the objects of his instincts exist outside him, as objects independent of him; yet these objects are objects that he needs — essential objects, indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers.¹⁷

Marx outlined a fully humanist theory of human beings. He argued that humans are human because of their ability to labour and their ability to express their humanity as universal. For Marx, the real basis of humanity, our species-being, is our ability to labour, and our ability to have agency as human beings. He fully expressed this in 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844' (1844):

Man is a species-being, not only because in practice and in theory he adopts the species (his own as well as those of other things) as his object, but — and this is only another way of expressing it — also because he treats himself as the actual, living species; because he treats himself as a universal and therefore a free being.¹⁸

Marx outlined the real social basis of human development — in the development of production, the development of labour, and the development of social relations. Co-operation is the basis of the advancement of any human society or any human society. Marx outlined this in his pamphlet, 'Wage Labour and Capital' (1847):

In the process of production, human beings work not only upon nature, but also upon one another. They produce only by working together in a specified manner and reciprocally exchanging their activities. In order to produce, they enter into definite connections and relations to one another, and only within these social connections and relations does their influence upon nature operate — i.e., does production take place. ... These social relations between the producers, and the conditions under which they exchange their activities and share in the total act of production, will naturally vary according to the character of the means of production.¹⁹

Marx outlined the role of culture and cultural development in the development of humanity. Marx's theory of historical materialism, his theory of history, understood that history develops because of the development of material conditions, the mode of production, the forces of production, the means of production, the relations of production, class conflict, class struggle, and social revolution. History develops because of the conflicts of the material base and superstructure of society — which leads to class conflict, class struggle, and social revolution. Culture, as part of the superstructure of society, plays a role in history and development. For Marx, culture and cultural development plays a role in the development of human history and human society. Marx, in his theory of Historical Materialism, shows the importance of culture and ideology to overall historical development. Marx outlined this in 'Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy' (1859):

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or — this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms — with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure.²⁰

The basis of any real advance in human society, for Marx, is the struggle of achieving real human liberation and real human freedom. This can only be achieved by achieving a society which overcomes the economic basis and the social basis of exploitation and oppression. For Marx, the only way to achieve a liberated society is to achieve a society which abolishes class and class antagonisms — a society based on the free development of each as the condition for the free development of all. Human culture, if it is to be a liberated culture, must be a real human culture — a culture of Socialism.

Marx outlined his ideas about the necessity of human liberation as the basis for human culture in his long outline of the humanism of Communism — a society based on the free development of each and the free development of all. The ultimate development of culture and society can only occur in the form of the advanced development of humanity itself, via the positive development of a stateless, classless, democratic, society — a society of Socialism, a society of Communism. Marx outlined this idea in ‘Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844’ (1844):

Communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature, and between man and man, the true resolution of the conflict between existence and being, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be the solution.²¹