

Extract from **Internationale Situationniste at Context XXI**

(http://contextxxi.org/theses-on-cultural-revolution.html)

extracted on: 24 February 2024

Date of this contribution: June 1958

# Theses on Cultural Revolution

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JOHN SHEPLEY (TRANSLATION)**1**

The traditional goal of aesthetics is to make one feel, in privation and absence, certain past elements of life that through the mediation of art would escape the confusion of appearances, since appearance is what suffers from the reign of time. The degree of aesthetic success is measured by a beauty inseparable from duration, and tending even to lay claim to eternity. The Situationist goal is immediate participation in a passionate abundance of life, through the variation of fleeting moments resolutely arranged. The success of these moments can only be their passing effect. Situationists consider cultural activity, from the standpoint of totality, as an experimental method for constructing daily life, which can be permanently developed with the extension of leisure and the disappearance of the division of labor (beginning with the division of artistic labor).

**2**

Art can cease to be a report on sensations and become a direct organization of higher sensations. It is a matter of producing ourselves, and not things that enslave us.

**3**

Mascolo is right in saying (in *Le Communisme*) that the reduction of the working day by the regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat is “the most certain assurance that it can give of its revolutionary authenticity.” Indeed, “if man is a commodity, if he is treated as

a thing, if the general relations of men among themselves are the relations of thing to thing, it is because it is possible to buy his time from him.” Mascolo, however, is too quick to conclude that “the time of a man freely employed” is always well spent, and that “the purchase of time is the sole evil.” There is no freedom in the employment of time without the possession of modern instruments for the construction of daily life. The use of such instruments will mark the leap of a utopian revolutionary art to an experimental revolutionary art.

**4**

An international association of Situationists can be seen as a union of workers in an advanced sector of culture, or more precisely as a union of all those who claim the right to a task now impeded by social conditions; hence as an attempt at an organization of professional revolutionaries in culture.

**5**

We are separated in practice from true control over the material powers accumulated by our time. The Communist revolution has not occurred, and we still live within the framework of the decomposition of old cultural superstructures. Henri Lefebvre correctly sees that this contradiction is at the heart of a specifically modern discordance between the progressive individual and the world, and calls the cultural tendency based on this discordance revolutionary-romantic. The defect in Lefebvre's conception lies in making the simple expression of discordance a sufficient criterion for revolutionary action within the culture. Lefebvre renounces before-

hand all experiments toward profound cultural change while remaining satisfied with a content: awareness of the (still too remote) impossible-possible, which can be expressed no matter what form it takes within the framework of decomposition.

**6**

Those who want to overcome the old established order in all its aspects cannot attach themselves to the disorder of the present, even in the sphere of culture. One must struggle and not go on waiting, in culture as well, for the moving order of the future to make a concrete appearance. It is its possibility, already present in our midst, that devalues all expression in known cultural forms. One must lead all forms of pseudocommunication to their utter destruction, to arrive one day at real and direct communication (in our working hypothesis of higher cultural means: the constructed situation). Victory will be for those who will be able to create disorder without loving it.

**7**

In the world of cultural decomposition we can test our strength but not employ it. The practical task of overcoming our discordance with the world, i.e., of surmounting the decomposition by some higher constructions, is not romantic. We will be “revolutionary romantics,” in Lefebvre's sense, precisely to the degree of our failure.

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