

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Excerpts about Culture (1925–26)

Abstract

National Socialist conceptualizations of culture relied on a fundamentally “racial” understanding of what constituted culture, and how culture was cultivated. Policies that aimed to exclude “non-Aryans” from German cultural life were about more than simply determining who could or could not partake in the consumption or production of culture, and they went beyond “protecting” so-called Aryan culture from alleged corruption. These policies stemmed from the Nazis’ “völkisch” interpretation of human civilization, an interpretation that was rooted in a fundamentally hierarchical understanding of human civilization. This National Socialist conceptualization of culture was apparent early on in the life of the NSDAP and is outlined in the following excerpts from Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* (vols. 1 and 2). Culture, Hitler claimed, was the exclusive preserve of the “Aryan race.” In his mind, no other “race” was capable of producing genuine culture. Thus, it followed that protecting “Aryan” culture was tantamount to defending human civilization itself. By contrast, Hitler claimed that Jews possessed neither culture nor the means to create it. In fact, Hitler’s claims went even further—not only had the Jewish people never produced any “original” culture themselves, but they also stole and imitated the culture of so-called “superior races.” In this way, Hitler presented the Jews as cultural parasites who were completely removed from the “real” culture, art, and architecture of the “Aryan race.”

Source

From Volume 1 (1925)

[...]

It is a futile enterprise to argue which race or races were the original bearers of human culture and, with it, the actual founders of what we sum up with the word ‘mankind.’ It is simpler to put this question to oneself with regard to the present, and here the answer follows easily and distinctly. What we see before us of human culture today, the results of art, science, and techniques, is almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan.

[...]

The Jewish people, with all its apparent intellectual qualities, is nevertheless without any true culture, especially without a culture of its own. For the sham culture which the Jew possesses today is the property of other peoples, and is mostly spoiled in his hands.

When judging Jewry in its attitude toward the question of human culture, one has to keep before one’s eye as an essential characteristic that there never has been and consequently that today also there is no Jewish art; that above all the two queens of all arts, architecture and music, owe nothing original to Jewry. What he achieves in the field of art is either bowdlerization or intellectual theft. With this, the Jew lacks those qualities which distinguish creatively and, with it, culturally blessed races.

But how far the Jew takes over foreign culture, only imitating, or rather destroying, it, may be seen from the fact that he is found most frequently in that art which also appears directed least of all towards invention of its own, the art of acting. But here, too, he is really only the ‘juggler,’ or rather the ape; for here, too, he lacks the ultimate touch of real greatness; here, too, he is not the ingenious creator, but the

outward imitator, whereby all the turns and tricks he applies cannot deceive us concerning the inner lack of life of his creative ability. [...]

From Volume 2 (1926)

[...]

The Marxist doctrine is the brief spiritual extract of the view of life that is generally valid today. Merely for this reason every fight by our so-called bourgeois world against it is impossible, even ridiculous, as this bourgeois world also is essentially interspersed with all these poison elements, and worships a view of life which in general is distinguished from the Marxian view only by degrees or persons. The bourgeois world is Marxist, but it believes in the possibility of a domination of certain human groups (bourgeoisie), while Marxism itself plans to transmit the world systematically into the hands of Jewry.

In opposition to this, the “folkish” view recognizes the importance of mankind in its racially innate elements. In principle, it sees in the State only a means to an end, and as its end it considers the preservation of the racial existence of men. Thus it by no means believes in an equality of the races, but with their differences it also recognizes their superior and inferior values, and by this recognition it feels the obligation in accordance with the Eternal Will that dominates this universe to promote the victory of the better and stronger, and to demand the submission of the worse and the weaker. Thus in principle it favors also the fundamental aristocratic thought of nature and believes in the validity of this law down to the last individual. It sees not only the different values of the races, but also the different values of individual man. In its opinion, out of the masses emerges the importance of the person, but by this it has an organizing effect, as contrasted with disorganizing Marxism. It believes in the necessity of idealizing mankind, as, in turn, it sees in this the only presumption for the existence of mankind. But it cannot grant the right of existence to an ethical idea, if this idea represents a danger for the racial life of the bearers of higher ethics; for in a hybridized and negrified world all conceptions of the humanly beautiful and sublime, as well as all conceptions of an idealized future of our mankind, would be lost forever.

In this world human culture and civilization are inseparably bound up with the existence of the Aryan. His dying off or his decline would again lower upon this earth the dark veils of a time without culture.

The undermining of the existence of human culture by destroying its supporters appears, in a folkish view of life, as the most execrable crime. He who dares to lay hand upon the highest image of the Lord sins against the benevolent Creator of this miracle and helps in the expulsion from Paradise.

[...]

Source of English translation: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (1925–26). Complete and unabridged, fully annotated. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1939, pp. 397, 416–17, 579–81. Available online at: <https://purl.stanford.edu/wf256tk4600>; also excerpted in George L. Mosse, *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich*. New York: The Universal Library, 1968, pp. 5–7.

Source of original German text: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (1925–26). *Zwei Bände in einem Band. Ungekürzte Ausgabe*. Zentralverlag der NSDAP. Frz. Eher Nachf., G.m.b.H. München, 1943, pp. 317, 331–32, 420–21.

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