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Have you noticed — exhortations to indulge yourself are always followed by suggestions? Adherents of doctrines seek footholds to claim territory within you, salesmen grasp for handles to jerk you around… from new-age prophets to advertisers, from pornographers to radicals, everyone exhorts you to "pursue your desires," but the question remains: which ones? The "real" ones? Who decides which those are?

This just makes it clear what's going on: a war for your soul on every front. And those much talked-about desires are all constructed, anyway — they change, they're dependent on external factors, culture, the whole context and history of our society. We "like" fast food because we have to hurry back to work, because processed supermarket food doesn't taste much better, because the nuclear family — for those who still have even that — is too small and stressed to sustain much festivity in cooking and eating. We "have to" check our email because the dissolution of community has taken our friends and kindred far away, because our bosses would rather not have to talk to us, because "time-saving" technology has claimed the hours once used to write letters — and killed all the passenger pigeons, besides. We "want" to go to work because in this soci-

ety no one looks out for those who don't, because it's hard to imagine more pleasurable ways to spend our time when everything around us is designed for commerce and consumption. Every craving we feel, every conception we form, is framed in the language of the civilization that creates us.

Does this mean we would want differently in a different world? Yes, but not because we would be free to feel our "natural" desires — no such things exist. Beyond the life you live, you have no "true" self — you are precisely what you do and think and feel. That's the real tragedy about the life of the man who spends it talking on his cell phone and attending business seminars and fidgeting with the remote control: it's not that he denies himself his dreams, necessarily, but that he makes them answer to reality rather than attempting the opposite. The accountant regarded with such pity by runaway teenage lovers may in fact be "happy" — but it is a different happiness than the one they experience on the lam.

If our desires are constructs, if we are indeed the products of our environment, then our freedom is measured by how much control of these environments we have. It's nonsense to say a woman is free to feel however she wants about her body when she grows up surrounded by diet advertisements and posters of anorexic models. It's nonsense to say a man is free when everything he needs to do to get food, shelter, success, and companionship is already established by his society, and all that remains is for him to choose between established options (bureaucrat or technician? bourgeois or bohemian? Democrat or Republican?). We must make our freedom by cutting holes in the fabric of this reality, by forging new realities which will, in turn, fashion us. Putting yourself in new situations constantly is the only way to ensure that you make your decisions unencumbered by the inertia of habit, custom, law, or prejudice — and it is up to you to create these situations. Freedom only exists in the moment of revolution.

And those moments are not as rare as you think. Change, revolutionary change, is going on constantly and everywhere — and everyone plays a part in it, consciously or not. "To be radical is simply to keep abreast of reality," in the words of the old expatriate. The question is simply whether you take responsibility for your part in the ongoing transformation of the cosmos, acting deliberately and with a sense of your own power — or frame your actions as reactions, participating in unfolding events accidentally, randomly, involuntarily, as if you were purely a victim of circumstance.

If, as idealists like us insist, we can indeed create whatever world we want, then perhaps it's true that we can adapt to any world, too. But the former is infinitely preferable. Choosing to spend your life in reaction and adaptation, hurrying to catch up to whatever is already happening, means being perpetually at the mercy of everything. That's no way to go about pursuing your desires, whichever ones you choose.

So forget about whether "the" revolution will ever happen — the best reason to be a revolutionary is simply that it is a better way to live. It offers you a chance to lead a life that matters, gives you a relationship to injustice so you don't have to deny your own grief and outrage, keeps you conscious of the give and take always going on between individual and institution, self and community, one and all. No institution can offer you freedom — but you can experience it in challenging and reinventing institutions. When school children make up their own words to the songs they are taught, when people show up by the tens of thousands to interfere with a closed-door meeting of expert economists discussing their lives, that's what they're up to: rediscovering that self-determination, like power, belongs only to the ones who exercise it.

Shout it over the rooftops: Culture can belong to us. We can make our own music, mythology, science, technology, tradition, psychology, literature, history, ethics, political power. Until we do, we're stuck buying mass-produced movies and

compact discs made by corporate mercenaries, sitting faceless and immobilized at arena rock performances and sports events, struggling with other people's inventions and programs and theories that make less sense to us than sorcery did to our ancestors, shamefacedly accepting the judgments of priests and agony columnists and radio talk show hosts, berating ourselves for not living up to the standards set by college entrance exams and glamour magazines, listening to parents and counselors and psychiatrists and managers tell us we are the ones with the problems, buying our whole lives from the same specialists and entrepreneurs we sell them to — and gnashing our teeth in secret fury as they cut down the last trees and heroes with the cash and authority we give them. These things aren't inevitable, inescapable tragedies — they're consequences of the passivity to which we have relegated ourselves. In the checkout lines of supermarkets, on the dialing and receiving ends of 900 numbers, in the locker rooms before gym classes and cafeteria shifts, we long to be protagonists in our own epics, masters of our own fate.

If we are to transform ourselves, we must transform the world — but to begin reconstructing the world, we must reconstruct ourselves. Today all of us are occupied territory. Our appetites and attitudes and roles have all been molded by this world that turns us against ourselves and each other. How can we take and share control of our lives, and neither fear nor falter, when we've spent those lives being conditioned to do the opposite?

Whatever you do, don't blame yourself for the fragments of the old order that remain within you. You can't sever yourself from the chain of cause and effect that produced you — not with any amount of willpower. The trick is to find ways to indulge your programming that simultaneously subvert it — that create, in the process of satisfying those desires, conditions which foster new ones. If you need to follow leaders, find leaders who will depose themselves from the thrones in your

head; if you need to "lead" others, find equals who will help you dethrone yourself; if you have to fight against others, find wars you can wage for everyone's benefit. When it comes to dodging the imperatives of your conditioning, you'll find that indulge and undermine is a far more effective program than the old heritage of "renounce and struggle" passed down from a humorless Christianity.

To return, finally, to the original question — yes, we too are making suggestions about which desires you pursue. We would be scoundrels to deny that! But we would be scoundrels not to make these suggestions, not to extol freedom and self-determination in a world that discourages them. Exhorting others to "think for themselves" is ironic — but today, refusing to oppose the propaganda of the missionaries and entrepreneurs and politicians simply means abandoning our society and species to their control. There's no purity in silence. And liberty does not simply exist in the absence of control — it is something we have to make together. Taking responsibility for our part in the ongoing metamorphoses of the world means not being afraid to take part in the making of our society, influencing and being influenced as we do.

We make suggestions, we spread this propaganda of desire, because we hope by doing so to indulge our own programmed passion for propaganda in a way that undermines an order that discourages all of us from playing with our passions — and so to enter a world of total liberty and diversity, where propaganda and power struggles alike are obsolete. See you on the other side.