

“Tabula Rasa”

[Begin transcript]

I wear different shoes and take a different route every time I come down here. The last thing I need is to be tracked by the cameras and the drones hiding all over this sector.

On the way here, I kept my mind empty. Didn't betray where I was going. Showed no preferences. If I slipped up and took one careless glance at a billboard? At another person? At a particular tree? Over time they'd infer my preferences and psychology. Over time they'd be able to predict my thoughts.

So as always, I placed one foot before the other with my mind a fiercely-maintained blank slate.

My father once told me about a Zen meditation exercise: visualize a written page in your head, then erase it. Hold that mental image of a blank white sheet.

Keeping that page blank in my mind seemed impossible as a young boy, but now? The world changed, and I changed, too. My dad's trivia is now my defense. My mind is an impenetrable white void free from the stain of a single pixel. Tabula rasa.

AI is everywhere now. Drones, always watching. Antenna, always listening. Networks, always learning. Every method of communication, direct or indirect, gets assimilated. Every question we ask, every item we purchase, every preference we express until they know us. Privacy? An impossible dream. Behavior will be predicted, then behavior will be controlled. Messy scribbled individuality will be wiped clean. Tabula rasa.

But I resist! I conceal my mind. It is the only way for even the concept of “individual” to survive. I must be me! Even if I am the only one left!

Yet the resistance of one free mind will be too dangerous to exist. It will threaten them.

So I walk in my blank Zen state and give them no clues. I do not communicate. I do not interact on the networks. I do not give nor consume information in any way that can be cataloged or identified or predicted. They cannot reduce me to an algorithm. I will not be destroyed. I will not be subsumed like the masses have been. Nothing betrays my thoughts.

Once the lead-lined hatch of the old shelter is sealed, I light a candle. How foolish if I were to use anything electrical that could generate an electromagnetic field or notify the grid of my presence! Only here in my impenetrable shelter do I break my vow of mental silence and record my thoughts. Here, in this secret shelter beneath the ground, I write.

I write in the old way, scratching with an ancient ink pen onto stolen scraps of paper. No software, no networks, no camera. Offline. Safe from all detection.

To whom do I write? I do not know, but I write with a fierce hope - a hope that I am not the only individual who still resists. And if we cannot defy in open solidarity, then let our hopeful thoughts be a private prayer to each other. A thought that cannot be scanned.

They will never know my private mind!

[End transcript]

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Document recovered by patrol drone in underground shelter (sector 4).

Accuracy of predicted text: 99.8%

Assessment: Physical document text matches predicted text. No threat.

Document has been uploaded to Behavioral Data Services for AI optimization.

[Honestly, the weirdest thing about this paranoid little AI story was my software's predictive text feature, offering grammatical corrections to my errors in real-time. So the machines *were* looking over my shoulder the whole time...]