



BJ Seminars International

Inspiring and Connecting People

Tagging

At the station there is a sign saying, “Creating Garbage is NOT Art! Tagging is a CRIME!”

The train carriage is covered in tags. As I sit down, I hear a woman next to me say to her friend: “Disgusting isn’t it! They can’t have had time to clean this train or something.”

I sit looking idly at the tags. Tangled skeins of black in cryptic swirls and lettering. One looks like the symbol for infinity. Another reads “EMPTY”. And another over there says “ESENS”.

Infinity, empty, essence. POW! A flash ... of what? Insight? Just a feeling? I don’t know, but something in me is trying to find a frame, an expression.

Here I am in a train - one like every other train I catch to and from work every day - but there is something in the graffiti that makes *this* train, *this* trip to work different. Emptiness, infinity and essence. The blank, empty sameness of this train, this trip has somehow been filled, a little, with a glimpse of the Universe.

I wonder about the kids who created this difference around me, for me, in me. Was this what they were trying to create? A little of the Universe in their uniform, faceless world? To make their mark on the blank spaces around them? Right in this moment these unknown kids and I are one and the same. I may not use a thick black marker, but I too sometimes rail at the faceless, blank sameness around me. I too want to “make my mark” so that what I do and who I am has a place, makes a difference and has some kind of recognition in the face of that great existential void.

How am I trying to do this? I’d have to say through my work and through the relationships in my life. These are what give *me* my sense of meaning, of purpose. Work and relationships or relationships and work - it doesn’t really matter in what order you say them. In both these areas of my life I have my chance to make my mark, to avoid emptiness and make my connection with infinity and essence. All the things I try to create in my work and relationships are *my* tag - my signature on the world.

And I wonder. What if these things were taken away from me? What if I suddenly had to face the void without my usual ways of making my mark or being recognised? I may be choosing more socially acceptable ways of leaving my tag on this otherwise faceless and formless world - I may not be picking up that marker - but it is nevertheless *my* graffiti on the world. And what if somehow I'd missed out on finding that grab bag of socially acceptable tags from which to choose? Deprived of these, wouldn't I too grab the nearest, thickest and biggest black marker I could find?

So here I am, taking my position beside these kids who left their mark on my train this morning. I don't know their names or their faces, but I'm deeply connected with them all the same. They're standing beside me now, and somehow as you judge their tags, you are also judging mine.

The kids are being told they are creating Garbage, not Art. But what about me? Who will judge my tag? Who will decide in the end if what *I* am creating is art or nothing but garbage?

Will you?

And in the final analysis, isn't it all a question of perspective?

If tagging is a crime, perhaps I should be arrested too.