

Flânerie



JOE FERGUSON, PhD

PhD Clinical Psychology, Fielding University
MBA, Wharton School of Business

A *flâneur* is one who strolls out into the boulevard to experience the life of the city without participating in it. *Flânerie* is distinguished from voyeurism by its relative detachment. Our inner voyeur seeks to satisfy our desires by means of vicarious experience, projecting our identity into real or imagined scenarios that are otherwise unobtainable, unacceptable, unsafe or inconvenient. And this is not just about sex. Certain spectator sports and video games are surrogates for bloody combat,

politics and religion enable us to visualize ourselves as powerful and immortal when we are neither, and the global entertainment and news juggernaut provides us with increasingly realistic vicarious experiences of increasingly unrealistic scope and grandeur. Vicarious experience is not an aberration; it is a fundamental component of our lives. More than you realize.

Our inner *flâneur*, on the other hand, seeks to be swept up in the flow of an unknown or unpredictable environment in order to discover it; to be absorbed *in* a situation without being absorbed *by* it. The art of *flânerie* is to relax the despotism of the ego so that whatever situation we have entered can enhance us directly, in its own idiosyncratic ways. To the extent that we bring our expectations, interpretations and intentions to a new situation, we mask its inherent novelty and diminish what we can learn from it. But detachment is difficult to sustain. Familiarity engenders attachment and suddenly we are a player with stakes and motives. Then it is about action rather than discovery, which is good too.

I like going to academic conferences outside my field and to venues outside my comfort zone. I like Burning Man, unpredictable jazz and surprising new thoughts. I try to approach new clients in this open spirit of discovery, so as not to be overly misled by my training and experience. This way we can focus on what is important in your life rather than in mine. Trust me. Call me.

Concise Personal Counseling

\$150 per 70-minute session

332 Forest Avenue, Suite #17, Laguna Beach, CA 92651
(949) 235-2615 ~ DrJoe@Fergi.com ~ www.Fergi.com