

Let us now apply the *polyscopic methodology* to investigate what's been happening with our *minds*.

This here will only be a short preview; in Chapter Eight we'll see—as I hinted in this book's opening—that this age-old theme has everything to do with ignored renegade power; and in remaining chapters I'll map the way to liberation. Here our focus will be on *phenomenology*—on simply seeing and comprehending *why* “our minds are just not there”. I'll offer an answer by stringing three *vignettes* in a *thread*; they are short and I won't bother to separate them.

Friedrich Nietzsche was looking at modernity as it was unfolding and jotting down notes; this one his sister published in *The Will to Power* after he died, in 1900:

“Sensibility immensely more irritable; the abundance of disparate impressions greater than ever; cosmopolitanism in food, literatures, newspapers, forms, tastes, even landscapes. The tempo of this influx prestissimo; the impressions erase each other; one instinctively resists taking in anything, taking anything deeply, to ‘digest’ anything; a weakening of the power to digest results from this. A kind of adaptation to this flood of impressions takes place: men unlearn spontaneous action, they merely react to stimuli from outside. They spend their strength partly in assimilating things, partly in defense, partly in opposition. Profound weakening of spontaneity: The historian, critic, analyst, interpreter, the observer, the collector, the reader—all of them reactive talents—all science!

Artificial change of one's nature into a ‘mirror’; interested but, as it were, merely epidermically interested; a coolness on principle, a balance, a fixed low temperature closely underneath the thin surface on which warmth, movement, ‘tempest,’ and the play of waves are encountered.

Opposition of external mobility and a certain deep heaviness and weariness.“

Isn't it marvelous that Nietzsche wrote these lines *before* the radio, the TV, the passenger jet, the cellular phone and the Internet?

Also the *complexity* of our world grew at a similar rate; I'll let Paul Ehrlich point to it; I once heard him recount how, as a junior researcher among the Inuits, he observed that every member of their community knew all community's tools. A hunting knife may not have been part of an Inuit woman's daily routine; but she certainly understood how it worked.

I challenge you to even name the *professions* whose expertise had to be combined to create your smartphone!

How do we cope?

By resorting to *ontological security*, Anthony Giddens explained; in *Modernity and Self-Identity*, in 1991:

“The threat of personal meaninglessness is ordinarily held at bay because routinised activities, in combination with basic trust, sustain ontological security. Potentially disturbing existential questions are defused by the controlled nature of day-to-day activities within internally referential systems.

Mastery, in other words, substitutes for morality; to be able to control one's life circumstances, colonise the future with some degree of success and live within the parameters of internally referential systems can, in many circumstances, allow the social and natural framework of things to seem a secure grounding for life activities.”



The **pattern** you are about to see follows from the **thread** you have just seen.

It will give us a way to characterize our **culture's** evolution.

I'll turn Johan Huizinga's 1938 book title into a **keyword** to give it a name: **homo ludens** (man the player, or man the game player) is a *cultural* 'species'; which (unlike cultural **homo sapiens**) *does not* seek **knowledge**; he *does not* use insights and principles to orient himself in the world and make choices.

He relies on embodied experience of what "works".

A **homo ludens** learns his professional and other roles as one would learn how to play a game.

And performs in them competitively.



So here is a challenge for a young researcher.

Who's anxious to make himself a name on this emerging academic frontier; where the **academy** studies itself in order to *renew* itself:

Find a living specimen of **homo ludens academicus**.

If they exist. The theory you have just seen, namely, predicts the existence of this curious cultural subspecies; which according to normal logic *cannot* exist: Wasn't the academic tradition *created* to help us all evolve the **homo sapiens** way? I cannot emphasize enough the importance of locating this aggressive cultural subspecies early enough.

Before it proliferates; and overtakes our universities.

And turns them into institutions for pursuing (not *knowledge* but) *careers*; and drives us *all* down the *th* devolutionary dead end street.