

# **A Personal View**

*Aiming towards Personality*

*+ list of 175 articles*

By [Miguel A. Fernandez](#)

Some readers of my [Solar Warrior](#) and [Operative Traditions](#) series have commented that these two collections have an extremely impersonal style where there is practically no trace of any autobiographical element. This is very true, and the key reason for this is that ultimately I consider writing essays as developing an “architecture of ideas” where, as in all architecture that stands up effectively, ideally every building element ought to be cleansed as much as possible from any decorative or artificial subjectivism. In my two former [novels](#) I have permitted many more autobiographical elements to gain presence, and this is due to the selfsame character of this genre, which gives much more space for these subjective elements. A building can be very aesthetically interesting and artistically appealing, but above all it has to be able to stand up.

So what I aim with this book is to invite readers to the interior of such building, opening them the door to a welcoming view of personal elements that are more linked to my specific taste and experience.

As occurs in the contrast between the interior and exterior of a building, the “architecture of ideas” I’ve presented in my former essays have emerged as an artistic boundary between the particular challenges of my private life and the specific external conditions of existence that characterize our time. As we know, buildings shelter human life from the cosmos, and the material boundary which is erected between the interior and the exterior of the building expresses a language of forms derived exclusively upon the knowledge of the exterior world. It is precisely this knowledge what allows us, as humans, to play a role amid the powerful forces of nature. And not only our lives physically depend on such knowledge of the exterior world, but also any understanding of the meaning of our selfsame lives is futile unless we first correlate such understanding with the developments taking place in the cosmos at large.

Consequently, in my former essays there is actually implicit a *personal view* upon many aspects of life, a personal view that exclusively has its source of illumination in the self-knowledge I gained when confronting my personal life with the conditions of existence that characterize our times. The architecture of ideas emerged therefore as a clash between my inner world and the external world, as a clash that turned out to generate a mediation and conciliation.

So the fact that my [Solar Warrior](#) and [Operative Traditions](#) series lack autobiographical elements in no way implies that such collections lack a personality in their genesis... Let’s say you are a master architect and you want to erect a building... The first crucial aspect is

the choice of the engineers, technicians and coworkers in general who shall develop it. It is precisely in this critical recruiting phase of the project where your personality is absolutely decisive... Once you've hired your team, all you can do is integrate the best skills of all your team so you maximize the outcome of their efforts, and along this quest it is totally counter-productive to be guided by any arbitrary, subjective or artificial consideration. One ought to respect the correspondence between form and function in every element, never adulterating such correspondence and always being capable of delegating total responsibility in the team's expression of such skills. Maybe excellent gardeners understand me quite well in this regard.

So in the "recruitment" process of making use of the ideas of others as foundations and "roots" of the ideas I develop as an author, I'm forced to choose between countless authors, scientists and philosophers who compose the very extensive heritage of Western culture. As one can imagine, it is impossible to integrate them all in the "building" and one ought to prioritize, this is, to establish a hierarchy based on value... And where does this value arise from?... Essentially from one's core personality, from the outcome of being that derives from acknowledging the vital experience one goes through in all situations of life, whether such experiences are pleasurable or painful. This not only decisively determines the "recruiting" criterion for selecting your team, but also determines the friends you chose to have in life, the girlfriends you attract, and the way we interpret things in general.

Many cultural critics often point out the following question: *can authors be judged by their work?*... In professional domains in general, skill and competence are personal attributes that are required to adapt to a set of work standards, and this adaptation intensively erodes the margins for affirming personal style in a similar way as how typewriting erodes the personal gestures that characterize handwriting. So when we observe a professional work that has considerable competence in its field we can affirm without hesitation that the workers who produced it received a high quality formation and training. But beyond this type of evaluation it is unclear that we can infer from the work any trait of the personality of the selfsame workers, mostly because in highly normalized workplaces both personality and character traits can only play a marginal role during the creative process of production. And this is so because in a heavily regulated industry of production such as today's, the final product expresses above all the compliance or not of the worker's skills with a complex set of external norms and standards.

This erosion of personal style not only takes place in high-tech industrial sectors, but also occurs in the so-called "cultural industry", a common expression that is not free from ambi-

guity and self-contradiction. In this type of industry, the progressive monopolization on the part of the distribution and commercialization sectors during the last decades have forced producers, publishers and artists in general to adapt to their requirements. Consequently, any free or independent artistic work is forced to remain in an extremely marginal position, and any expression of their authenticity and style is forced to become diluted whenever aiming to comply with the intensive industrial standards of distribution that characterize our age. But in order to not provide to the consumers a rather insipid or grey final product that lacks any trace of human spirit, the products are then accompanied with an appealing and persuasive packaging that highlights the author's prestige, fame or academic recognition. This technique resembles very much the industrial process of adding artificial sweeteners, emulsifiers and colorants to those foods that have irreversibly lost their fresh nutritional qualities along the industrial chain supply.

And yet even in the latter case we still can't infer any personality trait of the author of the work... First, because the work initially complied with strict technical norms that inevitably erode any true margin of personal thinking, and second because the publicity of the author as a marketing tool constitutes an artificial adjunction that serves to decorate the product, in a similar way as how countless decorative styles can artificially cover a building's facade without affecting its core engineering, which is extremely normalized and allows very little margin for any capricious subjectivism.

Very few authors have observed in depth the consequences of modern industrialization in the erosion of personality at work, and maybe French philosopher Jacques Ellul (1912-1994) is who more thoroughly addressed this crucial phenomenon. Ellul often pointed out that a free personality only exists to the extent a free work is also accessible to the individual, and that the alienation that induces the pandemic of neurosis in most modern society is powerfully triggered by this lack of opportunities for free work. In French there exists the term *oeuvre* which is conceptually different to *travail* (work) and its main nuance is that it refers to an activity that is freely chosen. The distinction also exists in Spanish (*obra/trabajo*) and Italian (*opera/lavoro*) but in English this crucial distinction is eroded and the term "work" accepts a jumble collection of the most diverse concepts. *Oeuvre/obra/opera* are terms that were often used by artists in the past in order to point out that they aimed their works to be an honest expression of their personality. And this takes us to the crucial question: what is actually a *personality*?...

In team sports (like football, etc.) we are always required to elect a captain who is not necessarily the more talented player but the one we consider has the more developed personality. And what do we ultimately mean by *personality* in this context of sport?... We ultimately mean the capacity of the captain to take quick decisions based on value and discernment of team hierarchy during competition. This requirement is quite linked to the traditional notion I'll immediately address, in which the capacity to embody values is not something "democratic" and is only reserved for an extremely tiny minority.

Little do most people know that the idea of a personality linked to a given individual is a very recent notion in Historical terms... Before the advent of rationalism in Western culture, any consideration that "an individual has a personality" was a sacrilegious and heretic defiance to many religious worldviews -such as the Catholic- which assume that the core values that drive individual's life are external to the individual and considered as transcendent or divine. In many traditional societies the only aspect that could resemble the modern notion of personality (as an attribute that supposedly characterizes the individual) is that of "the diverse degrees of divine service"... In other words: in this religious context the higher the individual service to the divine the more such individual is assumed to embody values that discern the diverse states and hierarchies present in fields such as politics, science, art, architecture, etc. Also, in this religious context all individual character traits, behavioral patterns, intellectual traits, emotional predispositions or physical attributes never equate with the idea of personality and, at best, only constitute the necessary -yet not sufficient- "bricks" to build it.

Many individuals influenced by modern liberal thinking might consider that such traditional notions on the relation of the individual to the divine are repressive, authoritarian, or as they like to say in the U.S: "patriarchal". Unfortunately most of modern historiography has completely misunderstood the notions of hierarchy that characterized the Middle-Ages, and especially during the Gothic period in Spain, France and Italy. As a consequence, such period appears to today's culture as barbarian, primitive, "dark" and full of social injustice. And yet in such period not only the recognition and affirmation of the value of the feminine reached heights inconceivable for today's common mentalities but also nature in no case was an exploitable resource -as regarded today- and rather was artistically cared and developed to her maximum expression. The mindset that impregnated this period set the foundations for facilitating the production of *oeuvres/obras/opera* that allowed work to express a personality that was not human but divine.

The traditional idea of personality compares it often to a “mask” that individuals wear, a “mask” that is not arbitrary but rather characterized by a typical form. This “mask” of personality overcomes any individual sense of egotistic separation with the forces operating in the world and specifies the mediations that a given human individual has with such powers. The symbolic expression of these mediations is traditionally exposed in clothing, which is neither capriciously designed nor dictated by aesthetics or stylism. In the same way the form of bird’s feathers can’t be separated from the bird’s skills at flight, also clothing aims to express the skills an individual devotes towards a very specific function. So this entails that, from a traditional viewpoint, the function of an individual is what exclusively defines the personality of the selfsame individual. Although the latter notions on the “mask” of personality are buried in the mists of time, there are still some reminiscences of them in the way that most society today still grants status to an individual to the extent such individual serves public interest in government and politics.

And yet there are very little resemblances in today’s notions on political hierarchy compared to those that impregnated the Gothic period in Europe. The critical difference is that in such medieval times hierarchy was based on *spiritual* values... But what do I mean exactly by “spiritual”?... This term has been lately so overused that it is hard to longer know what are we exactly referring to by it, and one of its main reductionisms is to link such term exclusively to the resolution of the existential and psychological conflicts of the individual who suffers from the anxieties of modern life. The term “spiritual” has been intensively linked in the last decades to the notion of healing by mediation of the spiritual traditions of the past (yoga, etc.) as if spirituality only has application in pathological and dysfunctional societies. But couldn’t spirituality also have a meaning and application in societies that are rather healthy and not affected by any mode of neurosis?...

Probably the great American scholar Theodore Roszak (1933-2011) was the first intellectual to pioneer the idea that practically all notions of modern spirituality since the times of Sigmund Freud are rigidly enclosed in the exclusive domain of human affairs and that such notions implicitly assume that the healing of individual psychological pathologies can be effectuated for the sake of healing itself. However, in ancient shamanic practices there is practically no trace of this “healing for the sake of healing”, and in these contexts healing rather entails a “re-calibration” of the individual’s psyche so that the “mask” of a personality can be eventually wore. The personality that is adopted here is *transcendent*, which simply means that it permeates the entire cosmos... So when Roszak makes use of his concept of eco-

psychology he is implying indirectly that the health of the human or social psyche are only possible insofar the psyche defines firm relations with the powers operating upon nature, similarly to the territorial links established by the most powerful animals when thriving amid wilderness. If these relations are strong we can then assume that the individual or society that have defined these ties are healthy, and generally this health is hierarchically precipitated in a system of castes that has practically no resemblance whatsoever to the more recent notion of social “class” which is linked exclusively to individual wealth. Each caste embodies a specific or typical personality (a “mask”), and its function is to care the ties with a given territory, be this territory a local community or an Empire. And these ties are strictly of a *spiritual* nature.

The separation that has been progressively effectuated between human societies and nature since the Middle-Ages has not only gradually impeded a human reconnection to divine personalities or cosmic “masks” but has also weakened the legitimacy of the old castes, aristocracies and nobilities which have been mostly overthrown by the strata of bankers, industrialists, technocrats and CEOs, and today these old castes only maintain a marginal representative function. And yet this process of erosion was compensated in the last times by a rather hypertrophic cult of individual personality, a fetishism of individual personality that is no longer linked to any transcendent function. Probably the most evident expression of this anarchic subversion of “individual personalities” at all levels is how individual personality can be easily customized and tailored in the form of a specific clothing style. Whereas in the Gothic period the acquisition of a personality could require decades of self-discipline, today we can buy a personality in the shopping center and upload it in real-time to Instagram. But as I learnt many years ago, whoever takes things personally lacks a true personality,

Although the fetishist cult of personality is a very common trait in our times, it is worth recalling that during the times of the most extraordinary cultural developments taken place in the West, anonymity in artistic production constituted a very typical style, and the biographic elements of the author were not aspects included in the work. This dissolution of the ego is effectuated by the progressive realization that there is no separation between the inner and outer domains –a separation fortified by the human ego- and that we can only define our being by resorting to the symbolic language that characterizes the cosmos in a given time. For instance, if I discover that I have developed invisible yet strong ties with the dynamics that characterize a mountain... What is the significance of the word “I” here?... This term only gains significance to the extent that the human-cosmos convergence is not established.

It was precisely after the times of the Renaissance and the emergence of humanism as a cultural trait when the association of author and individual work gained progressively more prevalence, arriving to a situation such as today's in which the promotion of a given work in the industry of culture is forced to run in parallel to the promotion of the selfsame author.

The fact that, for instance, during the Gothic flourishing period most artistic works were developed anonymously in no case implies that such works were created with an "impersonal" spirit. In this context, work is conceived as *opus*, and this term implies the creation of a type of art that expresses a language of the cosmos (or *cosmology*) that is well beyond any anthropomorphic, scientific or humanist framework. It is precisely the progressive creation of this cosmic language (in the form of craft, architecture, etc.) what allows the artists, craftsmen and architects to define the specifics of their individual lives in relation to a much greater whole; a whole where every single human experience is embedded with a transcendent meaning. So in the Gothic period it was logically considered as irrelevant to hypertrophy the relevance of the biographical aspects of the artist, and here the creative ideal is rather to produce works that capture and integrate the experiential connections that the artist establishes with nature. This artistic integration provides symbolic form to such type of experience, whereas all other human experience that is not framed within the context of a very specific human-nature relation are considered as contingent, formless, chaotic, irrational and insubstantial.

The biographic aspects of our life are like materials that provide us the chance to build a life with meaning, and as all excellent architect ought to know, the qualitative aspects of the materials determine the form that can be feasibly built. However, since the times of René Descartes, the qualitative aspects of things have been vastly overlooked, and as a consequence of this modification in our perception of nature, the notion of form and matter became independent from each other. One of the direct consequences of the latter modification is that matter became conceived merely as something that "fills a form", a form that in this case can be quite arbitrarily chosen. This notion is deeply entrenched in modern science, since in this realm it is implicitly assumed that matter passively obeys formal laws. Besides, at the level of human biographies the consequence of this rupture was also the dismissal of the cultural value of those individual experiences which can't be framed under a religious, ideological, economic or political conception of the world... Or in other words, modern society at large attributes a rather fetishist value to the biographical elements of an individual to the extent such

elements successfully fulfill the ideals of wealth, political power, fame or religious/ideological leadership.

So the split between form and matter operated in modern thought after the medieval period decisively affected the way we observe our selfsame lives... In high-tech urban-industrial societies not only the qualitative aspects of food ought to surrender to the specifications and standards of normalized industrial distribution and commercialization, but also the genuine aspects of our lives and experiences are forced to be enclosed under standards that are quantitative, for the simple reason that anything embedded with quality can't be decomposed in quantitative elements without suffering degradation.

But interestingly enough the key point of departure during the greatest cultural achievements of the Gothic period were precisely the most genuine and qualitative experiences of the individual, this is, those experiences that simply admit no comparison or can't be grasped through an easy explanation. But when referring here to the term "genuine" we ought to resort to its association with the Latin root *genius*, which defines the formative potential of a given *gens* or lineage that has a symbiosis with specific territorial conditions. In this context, the term *genuine* relates to the unique experiences an individual gains with the forces of nature, well beyond the realm of human drama or sociopolitical and economic institutions. Ernst Jünger (1895-1998) referred to this type of experiences as the contact with what he referred to as the "elementary", this is, a first-hand contact with those external forces that menace the egotistic separation between the individual and the cosmos, and consequently dissolve the stiffness of the individual's ego. Jünger not only considered that the realm of the elementary impregnated wild nature, but also impregnated the world of machines, industry and technique in general.

These genuine contacts with the elementary forces constitute the "substance" that is willing to fulfill a form. Jünger referred to this form as a *figure*, and we can equate his notion to the formerly addressed idea of a typical "mask" of personality. Many alchemical treatises of the past constantly allude to this crucial requirement, although in an enigmatic language that resembles very little the systematic expositions that characterize modern science. The main reason for not exposing a rigorous methodology in this regard is because the art of catching one's genuine experiences with the elementary is very much as subtle as catching a butterfly; the moment you think you've found the catching methodology, that is the moment that the butterfly escapes...

The “substance” of one’s genuine life experiences acts as a soil that is prepared to be cultivated, and during this cultivation the artist of his/her life is encouraged to *imitate nature in her ways of operation*... And if we carefully observe how nature operates when developing a form out of the formless we’ll conclude that form is never *imposed* upon nature by some sort of “outwardly authority”, but that form emerges spontaneously from nature, once nature is allowed to expose her qualitative aspects and the essence of her substances. The creative power that operates upon nature not only operates exclusively upon her qualitative aspects, but also operates simultaneously upon the qualitative experiences of the individual who relates to her. This entails that the progressive discovery of the forms that nature spontaneously tend towards is like the discovery of a symbolic “mirror” that reflects the higher meaning of the individual’s genuine experiences.

Contrarily to work conceived as an activity that serves an economic goal, in the case of *opus* the activity is not driven by economic purposes. As *opus* is a free form of work it can’t either initially surrender to any utilitarian purpose; the development of *opus* is like the emergence of a novel tree that suddenly grows in total solitude without granting any fruits. If *opus* is successfully developed it then expresses a vision of the cosmos (cosmology) in a similar way as how that the spontaneous emergence of a novel tree species is a higher symbolic expression of the typical natural dynamics that characterize a given ecosystem. *Opus* then gains the status of a *referential framework of values* that allows organizing and integrating countless fields of experience and knowledge, and whenever any individual makes use of this referential framework for addressing problems or conflicts that affect human life and human societies then such view on such conflicts or problems can be strictly conceived as *personal*, not in the sense of reinforcing the aforementioned fetishism of personality in the individual, but in the sense of allowing the projection of such transcendent light to illuminate the substantial aspects of human life that are prone to serve a higher meaning.

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So in *A Personal View* my intention is to project a coherent cosmovision upon topics that are related directly to many of our life challenges. This cosmovision is ultimately the vision of a macrocosms that illuminates the meaning of life at all levels, from the growth of vast empires to the growth of tiny snowflakes; it allows framing and categorizing the most diverse fields of human experience and knowledge. So in this regard, it is a *universal* view which acts as the crucial foundation for organizing human life in all its most diverse aspects.

Gothic cathedrals are still today a great memory of how the symbolic forms that are erected upon the material word also serve to configure all the most varied expressions of inner human life. In these architectures there exists pure coherence between the interior and the exterior, a coherence that is mediated by a bridge of spiritual disciplines that were forgotten in modern times, especially since humanity began to believe that it was possible to freely “decorate” one’s inner private life regardless of all the forces operating upon the cosmos. And yet the privacy of our lives are challenged by such forces in the same way the heavily decorated interior of the Titanic was also challenged by an iceberg.

Because the way we observe the state of the world correlates to the way we observe ourselves, many of the following articles address topics such as global warming, global resource depletion, sustainability, ecology, the recent Greta Thunberg phenomenon, and many other articles on the recent coronavirus pandemic which most outline its political and sociological aspects.

The reader of these articles shall not only be often shocked by many thought-provoking and politically incorrect standpoints, but along this destructive-creative experience such reader might be even capable of imagining the personal view that illuminated such topics in the first place.

by [Miguel A. Fernandez](#)

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