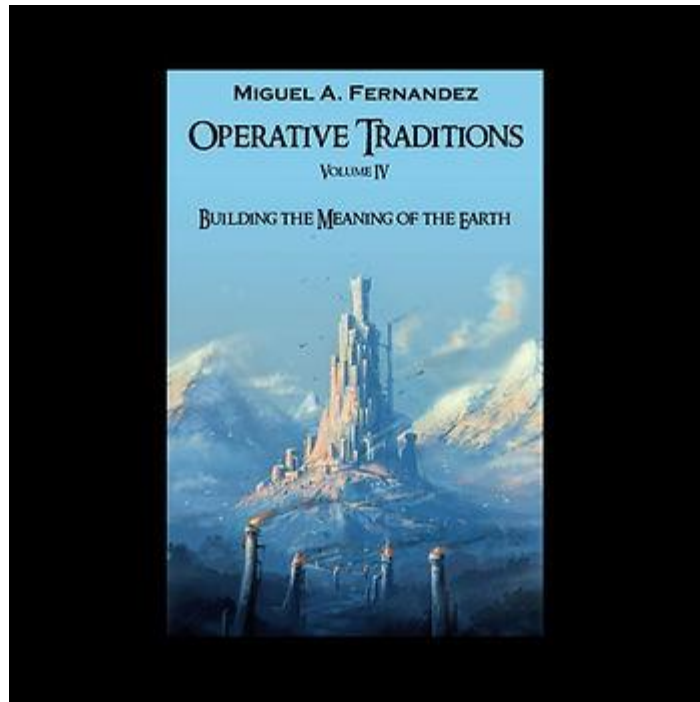


# Operative Traditions IV - Introduction

[by Miguel A. Fernandez](#)



## **Introduction: *The Great Architect of the Universe***

The main goal of *Operative Traditions IV - Rubedo* is to present new alternatives for revolutionizing a more harmonic relation to the earth.

In this book is shown how architecture can serve as the most excellent healing and regenerative practice capable of harmonizing human's actions with the earth's inherent potentials. Along the several sections of this book, such technical field recovers its purest artistic capacities, which is not only that of expressing the transcendent forces that configure matter at all levels, but also in the sense of allowing the individuals who participate in such construction to serve an *idea*. The main purpose of this exposition is to ultimately demonstrate that a culture is something that *ought to be built*.

Hence *Operative Traditions IV - Rubedo* distills the creative potentials of the earth amidst the most high-tech conditions of our times. The result is a revolutionary view on architecture, which in this book is coined *Operative Architecture*. This type of architecture not

only restores the cultural and cosmological value of architecture itself, but also incorporates the most excellent engineering spirit of our times, driving it towards a universal vision that symbolically manifests the deep connections existent between human action and the cosmos at large.

Like in the former volumes, *Operative Traditions IV - Rubedo* aims to introduce to the general public the heroic ideas of Ernst Jünger, Julius Evola and many others relatively unknown authors. Building upon the ideas of these extraordinary thinkers does not aim to reinforce the senility of a dying past that is not completely dead, but rather such ideas are incorporated in order to provide the seeds of a new future which has not yet been delivered.

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One of the main conclusions resulting from the former volume (*Operative Traditions IV – Albedo*) was to realize that the cosmos *self-organizes* towards symbolic configurations that transcend all anthropomorphic, humanist and scientific frameworks. Such realization allows chaos and mystery to regain their hegemony as domains that allow effective human contact with transcendence.

Hence in this volume the reader will be prepared to realize that human hubris consists essentially in maintaining the sacrilegious notion that cosmic processes can be “controlled” in order to surrender to human goals or abstract concepts. Due to the dynamics of long-range *self-organization* which are exposed in detail in the former volume of *Operative Traditions*, human action has two basic alternatives available: one option is for human action to *cultivate* these dynamics, thus creating a *culture* based on effective cosmic values... In this case is awakened the highest attribute of the human condition, this is, the capacity to *symbolize* such dynamics and consequently establish a *symbiosis* in which it is no longer possible to establish a separation between such dynamics and human action, gesture and language. The latter is an evolutionary practice in which all menaces and dangers are rendered an opportunity for liberation. This cosmological *symbiosis* is the experience of expressing: “*an inner unity with life, or the Earth, or the universe*”<sup>1</sup>, as English biologist Rupert Sheldrake writes.

As a second alternative, human action can rather *impose* an abstract worldview on the cosmos... In this case there is no cultivation, no cultural creation, no symbiosis between the human condition and the earth’s processes. Rather, alienation is reinforced in this context and the exploitation human beings exert on nature is not only a *parasitism* that opposes *symbiosis*,

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<sup>1</sup> Sheldrake, Rupert. *Morphic Resonance: The Nature of Formative Causation*. Inner Traditions Bear and Company, 2009

but it also corresponds to the most honest expression of the exploitation individuals exert on their own core being, this is, the self-imposition of a false view on human nature upon cosmic destiny. Instead of participating in an evolutionary pursuit, this type of exploitation of nature degrades the human condition to that of a mechanized being that surrenders to the most unexpected long-range and impersonal forces. Such mechanized exploitation of nature and of human nature itself can render wealthy both individuals as societies, yet this wealth is no longer a liberating factor –as occurs in true richness- but rather imposes its own burdens in its proprietors.

So the latter realizations allows diagnosing that at the deepest roots of today's crisis is implicit the false ideology that human rationality, science and subjectivism have the capacity to alter the direction of technical development in order to satisfy human needs and interests. Such is not only the most twisted “Trojan horse” infiltration of Judeo-Christian worldviews in the realm of modern culture, but is also a radical Promethean standpoint that is both shared by Capitalist/liberal/Marxist ideologies and the scientific/technocratic communities at large. However, this naivety emerges from a debased conception on the traditional architectural function, which in modern times is no longer conceived as that of exposing men's place in the cosmos, but rather is ingenuously assumed as feasibly subservient to the artificial constructions of the human mind. It is only when the warrior castes have extinguished that in the State-nation public opinion emerges a moralistic interpretation of weapons and technical objects in general, allied in parallel with a romanticist, socioeconomic and aesthetic valuation of jewelry. Contrarily, wherever we see the presence of an Operative Tradition we shall always perceive the beauty of weaponry in close connection to the beauty of jewelry and the artistic cultivation of nature, all in perfect harmony.

The degradation and disappearance of typically operative disciplines also modifies the cultural perspective on technique in general, which is then associated exclusively with profitable machines, technology, science and engineering, or in other words, the *technical phenomenon* is no longer perceived in its deep significations, and a rather utilitarian and moral perspective on the manipulation of technical means emerges as the main public concern. Almost a century ago, Ernst Jünger was one of the very few who realized the key issue at stake and wrote: “*it can be said that the fundamental error, which renders every speculation unproductive, consists in seeing in technique a causal system closed in itself*”<sup>2</sup>. So this error causes social debate on the issue of technological development to focus in the “good”, “bad” or profit-

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<sup>2</sup> Jünger, Ernst. *Der Arbeiter*. Klett-Cotta. 1981, 100

able use of a given weapon or technical object, which completely misses the point of what effectively defines the direction of such technical development. This development transcends any human interest to the point that G. Simondon concludes that “*if the technical objects evolve towards a small number of specific types, it is by virtue of an internal necessity, and not as a consequence of economic influences or practical demands*”<sup>3</sup>. Acknowledging this fact is of key importance in our times.

If the development of techno-industrial infrastructures have apparently run amok and compromised the future habitat of humans upon the earth’s biosphere, it is essentially because the *machine* has not been recognized in terms of its implicit dynamics. To believe that a machine “can be used” for assisting human work and for increasing economic performance is an extremely superficial dogma that dismisses the entire cultural context of machine production and the purely symbiotic man-technology links that are established<sup>4</sup>. In regard to this crucial concept of the machine, modern culture would have to wait until around the 1920-1930s, when apart from Ernst Jünger, other exceptional thinkers such as French writers, Georges Friedmann<sup>5</sup> and Bernard Charbonneau<sup>6</sup>, began to perceive a more multidimensional concept of the machine, in which a new concept, *technique*, began to penetrate strongly into the *man=machine* equation.

The severe biosphere disruptions taking place on earth constitute the most honest macro-cosmic expression of the incompatibility that exists between materialistic worldviews and cosmic dynamics. Since the end of the Middle-Ages human thought was naively supposed to be capable of dominating nature through measurement, but this approach -which is rather one mechanistic projection upon nature among countless others- has monopolized and seduced the techno-scientific mindsets for centuries, and this methodology has necessarily entered into a profound conflict with the biosphere’s evolving potentials, generating a widening gap between humans and the territorial configurations, which only enhances alienation and neurosis.<sup>7</sup>

Consequently, it is extreme wishful thinking to believe that the problems of the world can be “solved” without in the first place rendering intelligible the selfsame forces that operate on the world at all levels. For instance, aiming to “eliminate poverty” or “solve global

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<sup>3</sup> Simondon, G.. Du mode d'existence des objets techniques. © Editions Aubier, 1989, 28

<sup>4</sup> An insightful exposition of this symbiosis can be read in Joel de Rosnay, *The Symbiotic Man: A New Understanding of the Organization of Life and a Vision of the Future* McGraw-Hill, 2000

<sup>5</sup> Georges Philippe Friedmann (1902–1977), was a French sociologist and philosopher, known for his influential work on the effects of industrial labor on individuals and his criticisms of the uncontrolled embrace of technological change in twentieth-century Europe and the United States.

<sup>6</sup> Bernard Charbonneau (1910 – 1996) was a French writer who authored about twenty books and numerous articles, published in *La Gueule Ouverte*, *Foi et Vie*, *La République des Pyrénées*. An apolitical and independent thinker, he is considered to be a major inspiration for the various French ecological movements.

<sup>7</sup> As Wolfgang Smith writes: “*the Cartesian philosophy has plunged us into a collective state of schizophrenia, a doubtless unwholesome condition, which may well have something to do with not a few of our contemporary ills*” Smith, Wolfgang. *The Quantum Enigma. Finding the Hidden Key*. Sophia Perennis, 2005

warming” through technological development (or through policies that rely on technological development) is already a standpoint that assumes adequate knowledge on how technique and technology operate in the planet. Already in 1932, and before all the most dramatic events of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Ernst Jünger already foresaw that: “*through technology, nothing is saved, nothing is simplified, nothing is resolved – it is the instrumental, the projection of a particular way of life*”<sup>8</sup>. But this knowledge on technique is not available today, mainly because in modernity culture and technology are still supposed to pertain to two different realms, or as G. Simondon writes: “*culture ignores in the reality of technique a human reality*”<sup>9</sup>. Also many decades ago Martin Heidegger perceived that technology was not surrendering to human control, and wrote that: “*the will to mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control. But suppose now that technology were no mere means, how would it stand with the will to master it?*”<sup>10</sup>. However, nobody can ever gain awareness on the issue Heidegger refers to unless are addressed the dynamics of the most powerful architectures operating in our times. Hence, to become immune to economic or ecological crisis, the main antidote is to provide individuals with honest knowledge on the world’s dynamics, no matter how “profane” these dynamics might appear to the aesthetic or intellectualist taste.

In spite of the fact that the East has to a large extent adopted the high-tech industrial processes of the West, in the spirit of its Traditions is still present a core memory of the importance of operative activities that the West can now appropriate in a synthetic way. As Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes: “*If the East is learning by compulsion and necessity the Western techniques of domination over nature, it is from Oriental metaphysics that one must learn how to prevent this domination from becoming sheer self-annihilation*”<sup>11</sup>. And not only the East, but all around the planet there are still fringy cultures and communities that have kept up a key premise in regard to the human-earth relations, which essentially conceives that the earth is not in the service of the human condition, but rather the other way around, this is, that human destiny is that of serving the earth’s destiny... And as the most excellent artistic production to present the former ideas to the reader, in this volume IV we shall resort to film director Godfrey Reggio’s productions –especially *Koyaanisquatsi: Life Out of Balance* (1983)- as the most adequate set of scenarios that provide us a vision of architectural devel-

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<sup>8</sup> « *Durch die Technik wird nichts erspart, nichts vereinfacht und nichts gelöst – sie ist das Instrumentarium, die Projektion einer besonderen Lebensart* », Jünger, Ernst. *The Worker. Collected Works*. Second Edition. Klett-Cotta. 1981, 58

<sup>9</sup> « *Nous voudrions montrer que la culture ignore dans la réalité technique une réalité humaine, et que, pour jouer son rôle complet, la culture doit incorporer les êtres techniques sous forme de connaissance et de sens des valeurs* » Simondon, G.. *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques*. © Editions Aubier, 1989, 9

<sup>10</sup> Martin Heidegger. *The Question Concerning Technology*. Garland Publishing, INC. New York & London, 5

<sup>11</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *Man and Nature. The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1990, 83

opment. In this volume of *Operative Traditions* it is aimed to recover the sensation of awe in regard to the cosmos, a view that permits realization of the mysterious yet extraordinary dynamics that impel all things. Just like the rebirth into a completely unknown world, in this section all planetary configurations are no longer restricted to anthropomorphic concepts, or in other words, the cosmos is perceived in the same way a baby learns a new language through imitation of the gestures of the surrounding living beings.

The film *Koyaanisquatsi: Life Out of Balance* not only demonstrates that the cosmos operates in *out-of-balance* dynamics *at all levels*, but also exposes the massive proliferation of technological infrastructures during modernity which have a purely Titanic/Promethean character, especially in the case of industrially developed countries such as the U.S. which to a large extent have very seldom experienced the genesis of a human-nature *symbiosis* and rather adopted an exploiting parasitism in regard to nature. As a diametrical contrast to the latter we shall progressively present in this section the notion of *Operative Architecture*, this is, an architecture that has not in view the exploitation of nature but rather aims to express the evolutionary path which is open to all those beings who aim to gain self-knowledge by framing such path on the true dynamics operating on the world.

One of the secondary goals of *Operative Traditions IV - Rubedo* is to present for the first time in modernity an *architectural model on economics*, mainly in order to allow the field of economics to leap from its characteristic constriction as a *science of means* towards a *science of aims*... As practically all modern sciences, also economic sciences lack a cosmological shelter capable of defining a set of implicit values, and yet in *Operative Traditions* is presented the idea that such cosmological “cupola” or “superstructure” can be built and symbolized in the forms/figures that characterize an *Architecture*, conceived here as the *material integration of techniques*... By relying on the exposition outlined in *Operative Traditions III - Albedo* here it is exposed that, when it comes to understand the core foundation of any economy, the difficult challenge that arises is that of extracting energy from nature in order to serve life. And it is demonstrated that the only way a surplus of energy and work can be efficiently organized in a given territory is by affirmation of an architecture that succeeds in channeling and recycling the energy surplus dissipated in all working processes. Or as expressed synthetically by Ernst Jünger: “*Architecture is the technique that allows men to inhabit the earth*”<sup>12</sup> ... Without this capital energetic prerequisite, it is useless to even put money or any other economic factor in circulation. So realization of the latter allows concluding that the

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<sup>12</sup> Ernst Jünger. *Los titanes venideros*. Página Indómita, 2016, 71

first requirement of any economy is the development of an organization that, above all, resolves a purely energetic problem. And the entity that is responsible of solving such core problem is the State, though it ought to be remarked that the notion of State presented in this problem no longer corresponds to the modern State-nation... In this regard, the State is no longer defined based on abstract boundaries, political interests and territorial frontiers, but can be identified by the type of architectures that embody it<sup>13</sup>.

Hence, the ultimate purpose of *Operative Traditions IV - Rubedo* is to consecrate the vision of *architecture*, as the most honest and integral expression of the symbolic mediations that exist between men and the transcendent forces of the cosmos. Consequently, a completely renewed vision on the matter is presented where architecture not only recovers its primordial cultural value but the idea of *architecture* itself supersedes the reductionism it suffered into the separated field of engineering and aesthetics. The simplest particular case of architecture is a house, which protects human life from the chaotic dynamics of nature, but the primordial idea of architecture expands well beyond this particularization and refers to the material expression of an *Idea* that is present in all and every part of the cosmos; an embodiment of *being*. In this sense architecture reveals the character of material power and the spirit of time (*Zeitgeist*), and due to the ubiquity of this spirit it also affects the degrees of freedom available for human action, or in other words, it configures *technique*, which as Jacques Ellul pointed out, is one of the greatest mysteries of the modern world. As the French writer states: “No social, human, or spiritual act is so important or spiritual act is so important as the act of technique in the modern world. And yet no subject is so little understood”<sup>14</sup>.

In this section is presented an idea that permeates the cosmos, the *opera of life*... This idea allows the creative power of time to act at all levels in the most subtle yet decisive way, especially amidst the technical realm, confirming Arnold Gehlen’s words when stating that: “technique not only surrounds modern men, but penetrates into his blood”<sup>15</sup>. Empirical access to this idea can only be accomplished by means of an *operative* discipline that succeeds in deeply modifying human perceptive faculties and gestures under stress, and in this regard the *sword* emerges as the most paradigmatic symbol of a purely operative weapon that aims for such purpose. A traditional sword is also the excellent example of a purely *individuated* object, that is to say, the most excellent symbolic materialization of an idea that –as we shall

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<sup>13</sup> Hence, based on this purely operative criterion, it is not preposterous to consider that today we live in a *global cybernetic State*, since it is precisely cybernetic architectures (data centers, communication networks, etc) the infrastructures that have gained the automatic responsibility of organizing all planetary work processes, in order to temporarily keep at bay the diminishing returns that are induced at all levels by the 2<sup>nd</sup> law of thermodynamics.

<sup>14</sup> Ellul, Jacques. *The Technological Society*. Knopf/Vintage, 1967, 3

<sup>15</sup> “la técnica no sólo circunda al hombre moderno: entra en su sangre” Gehlen, Arnold. *Antropología Filosófica*. Ediciones Paidós, 1933, 267

progressively expose- is of a musical nature. This transcendent music is *concretized* in forms by means of human gesture and craft. *Concretization* –a term coined by Gilbert Simondon- is what affirms the power of a novel language; it is the fundamental practice that permits an object reflect a cosmological view of the universe, which in essence is the purpose of all operative architecture, as for instance occurred in Gothic times. Concretization is a necessary condition in order to gain that which Ernst Jünger referred to as the *typical closure* [*abgeschlossen*] of a technical development<sup>16</sup>.

Not only the sword, but also playful frameworks such as kid's Lego sets or bricks shall serve to introduce the reader of this book to some fundamental notions on *concretization*. Also extraordinary figures such as Burt Munro (1899-1978) who still maintains today the 1967 world speed record under 1,000 cc when riding a 47-year-old motorbike at the age of 68, and Chuck Yeager who was the first test-pilot to break the sound barrier, shall also provide us with examples of the power of *concretization* in the technical domain. As well, Ayn Rand's main character of her novel *The Fountainhead*, Howard Roark, shall also serve as an adequate personification of an operative style of work in the highly complex conditions of modernity, or in other words, Roark shall provide us in mainstream fiction with very likely the most resembling embodiment of Ernst Jünger's main figure: the *Operator*.

Hence, the architectural proposal of *Operative Traditions IV - Rubedo* revolutionizes all reductionist conceptions on the relations of men to the cosmos, and recovers a more primordial idea in which the architectural developments of a given territory are conceived as strictly correlated to the actions and paradigms of the individuals who participate in such development. Such was a key doctrine sustained in practice by the Operative Freemasons, who were the main architects of the Gothic grandeur, and yet this key doctrine was progressively buried during modern historical times, and in modern culture in general.

Whenever the solution to this architectural/energetic problem defines constructions that pilot human senses towards transcendence, then we can strictly refer to an *Operative Architecture*. And in this regard, Gothic architecture is not only typically Operative, but also a fully functional Apollo rocket is as well. In both cases the liberated energies of the earth are architectonically channeled towards the quest of a singularity that ought to be felt, above all, in one's senses. Opposed to Operative Architectures are Titanic Architectures, which also succeed in solving the key energetic problem of life, yet by means of mechanization, functional-

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<sup>16</sup> "The development of technique is not limitless; It is completed when it meets the peculiar demands of the form of the worker's workmanship". [Die Entwicklung der Technik ist nicht grenzenlos; sie ist in dem Augenblick abgeschlossen, in dem sie als Werkzeug den eigentümlichen Anforderungen entspricht, denen die Gestalt des Arbeiters sie unterstellt]Jünger, Ernst. *Der Arbeiter*. Klett-Cotta. 1981, 85



ism, technocratic mentality and exploitation of both resources and living beings. Whereas Operative Architectures are *imperial*, Titanic Architectures are *imperialistic*... In Operative Architectures are excellently expressed how the most powerful ideas survive the power of time; these ideas make sense of all the working processes of a given territory, and those individuals who adopt in practice such ideas in such territories are bound as well to become sovereign and free. These ideas can't be expressed dialectically, scientifically nor conceptually, but rather can only be accessed to the extent an individual co-participates *actively* in their development, which materialize as powerful symbols and figures. This is the implicit assumption of Ernst Jünger when stating that in such context: "*Man enters into new relations, which he does not at first grasp with his consciousness, let alone through their configuration—an eye for the meaning of the scene comes only with time. And only then does sovereignty become possible*"<sup>17</sup>.

The value of an *Operative Architecture* relies in its power to materially express the highest forces that govern a given age, to timelessly express the *spirit of time* in an integral and synthetic way. In this regard, Ernst Jünger already opposed today's titanic or "workshop" (Werkstättencharakter) architectures with those characterized by a "*monumental character which is a symbol of eternity*"<sup>18</sup>, and we can affirm here that an *Operative Architecture* not only complies with Jünger's view but this type of architecture is also the most magnificent expression of transcendent immanence. As a purely operative endeavor, human participation in the development of its symbols has the profound capacity to substantially modify one's relation to the worldly dynamics, also providing a chance of gaining a mastery, which is not equivalent to any notion on "control", but rather—as Titus Burckhardt magnificently expresses by resorting to the Operative Freemason's doctrines—allows a "*conscious participation in the plans of the 'Great Universal Architect'*"<sup>19</sup>.

Ernst Jünger's key figure, the *Operator* (unfortunately referred to in English as "The Worker") is he who is in charge of the latter task in the specific conditions of modernity. He relates to the forces of his time, its spirit, and yet merely as a means to an end, as a poison that mutates into a medicine. This task brings us back to the connections that exist between architecture and alchemy, an activity that not only Titus Burckhardt defined as "*the art of the transmutations of the soul*"<sup>20</sup> but also Seyyed Hossein Nasr referred to as "*compared to the*

<sup>17</sup> Jünger, Ernst. *The Forest-Fleer*. Telos Press Publishing, 2013, 301

<sup>18</sup> Jünger, Ernst. *The Worker. Collected Works*. Second Edition. Klett-Cotta. 1981, 128

<sup>19</sup> Burckhardt, Titus. *Principles and Methods of Traditional Art*. Études Traditionnelles, January-February 1947, later appeared in *Aperçus sur la connaissance sacrée*, Milano, Archè, 1987

<sup>20</sup> Burckhardt, Titus. *Alchemy, Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*. London: Stuart and Watkins, 1967, 22

*celebration of a cosmic mass*”<sup>21</sup>, especially when architecture is developed towards its maximum cultural symbol.

The three stages of spiritual development (*nigredo, albedo and rubedo*) pointed out in the alchemical tradition run in parallel to the development of an external material configuration, which in the alchemical tradition is allegorized in the field of metallurgy/chemistry, and where each material state corresponds to a spiritual state on the part of the alchemist. However, today the art of transforming nature is no longer restricted to metallurgy and chemistry, but has expanded towards very powerful planetary configurations. In terms of discovering the meaning of today’s architectural forms, these three alchemical stages are perfectly applicable, since in order to relate in practice to the cosmic creative power it is first required to burn all the cultural worldviews that impede relating to the immanent dynamics of our times which are essentially an external symbolic expression of the inner dynamics.

#### **About the Style of *Operative Traditions IV - Rubedo***

Professional architects might be interested in this book, expecting an exposition that resembles a historical or technical study on architectural styles and developments, and yet this volume aims to rather unveil the underlying operative aspects of any architectural style that has effectively succeeded in symbolizing the *values at work* of a given culture. In this sense, architecture is aimed here to gain a political value and as an embodiment of the State at work, as it materializes the dynamic potentials present in a given society, a materialization that is absolutely crucial for an economy to exist due to thermodynamic reasons that shall be progressively exposed.

Consequently, professional architects are one among many other sectors who might be interested in the cutting-edge conception presented in this book, because as exposed in former volumes of *Operative Traditions*, one of the fundamental goals of these essays is to provide practical alternatives to the problem of cultural nihilism, or in other words, of how can new values emerge that provide meaning to a world, such as the modern, where practically all the former religious and ideological worldviews have been proven totally powerless to address and master the developments taken place effectively, especially after the 20<sup>th</sup> century. So, recovering the *operative* spirit of architecture is effectuated in this volume as a means of realiz-

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<sup>21</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *Man and Nature. The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1990

ing the key cultural connections that exist between the type of architectures that in a given time succeed in harnessing material/energetic power, and the *style of work* of those individuals, groups or communities who directly and indirectly participate in such construction. The structure and organization of the most diverse fields of knowledge depend on this *style of work*, which obliges us to again resort to the *Post Laborem Scientia* adagio (Knowledge comes after work) already addressed in former volumes of Operative Traditions.

This volume might be of great interest to those individuals or institutions who aim to develop truly self-sufficient communities, by realizing in the first place the key cultural challenges this alternative demands. This entails that those scientists, engineers or project managers who are aiming towards such goals ought to realize that in any functional design or techniques there are already implicit a set of values, and that in order to overcome the drawbacks inherent to most of today's technological applications and their negative influence on the natural ecosystems, new values ought to be first created.

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