

# 8 EGOS AT WORK

INSIDE THIS BOOK



**A handbook to better leadership  
and a happier, more productive, life  
at work and anywhere else**

2nd. Edition, 2023.

**Dr. Miguel A. Cerna**

8  
EGOS  
AT WORK

# 8 EGOS

## AT WORK



A handbook for better leadership  
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Second Edition, 2023

Dr. Miguel A. Cerna

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## Other publications by the Author

### Books

– THE DAY TO DIE, Quasi fiction. Portugal, 2021.  
English (ISBN 978-99961-2-387-0), Español (ISBN 978-99961-2-386-3) and Portuguese (ISBN 978-99961-2-388-7).

LIVE A GREAT LIFE AS A COUPLE. Overcoming tensions in a state of emergency. Portugal, 2021.  
English (ISBN 978-99961-2-431-0), Español (ISBN 978-99961-2-429-7), Português (ISBN 978-99961-2-430-3).

– EL AMOR EN LA SOCIEDAD DE CONSUMO.  
(Love in a consumer society). Non-fiction, Spanish. El Salvador, 2004.

– MI CORAZÓN SE QUEDARÁ CONTIGO TAIWAN  
(My heart will stay with you Taiwan). Poetry, Spanish and Mandarin edition, Taiwan, 1999.

– EL AMOR Y OTRAS DOLENCIAS  
(Love and other sufferings). Poetry, Spanish edition, El Salvador, 1993).

### **Academic publications**

Culture at the Center of Economic Development, Stability and Growth.

International Business Research; Vol. 9, No. 9; 2016  
doi:10.5539/ibr.v9n9p1

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v9n9p1>

The Chinese “Togetherness-Separation” Paradox: An Analytical Approach to Understanding Chinese People’s Behavior and Its Implication to International Cooperation. International Journal of Business and Management; Vol. 10, No. 12.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v10n12p194>. 2015

Influence of Study Habits on Academic Performance of International College Students in Shanghai.

Higher Education Studies; Vol. 5, No. 4; 2015 Online Published: July 21, 2015 doi:10.5539/hes.v5n4p42

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/hes.v5n4p42>

November 2013

What really matters for carrying out successful cross-cultural exchanges. A comparative study of professionals from China and the USA.

International Journal of Business and Management. Vol. 8, No. 23. Canada.

<http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ijbm/article/view/26771>

### **Online publications**

The following list shows some of the author’s articles

published on LinkedIn on various subjects.

[\(https://www.linkedin.com/in/dr-miguel-cerna-alternatives/\)](https://www.linkedin.com/in/dr-miguel-cerna-alternatives/)

### Human behavior

- Behavioral change - a rather simple feedback.
- The same but different.
- The emotional animal – lessons from advertising.
- Diversity and bias in AI.
- Beyond jiu-jitsu.
- How I stopped doing it – on changing habits.
- Fear of evolving.
- Now what? My life is over :(
- AI - Human behavior - Block-chain
- That wouldn't be honest.
- Why love doesn't happen... or does 2.
- Why love doesn't happen, or does.
- Great ideas don't change anything.
- No more “why not?”. “How to?” is the new right question to ask.

### Globalization and China relations

- Who is China today and how the west, partially or as a whole, might see it.
- Breaking cooperation right before it starts.
- A paradox worth noticing.
- Contextual differences in international cooperation - China & the EU.
- Gut bacteria, the more the better - on cooperation.
- “Face” key to connecting and fostering cooperation.
- From macro to micro in international cooperation.
- El Salvador is becoming a country of further admiration.
- Language role in globalization and internationalization.

- On China-Europe business cooperation.
- Cooperación con China.
- Solving conflict through entering a blood-shedding war?
- El cambio de narrativa como estrategia de cambio nacional.
- El contrato legal vs. el contrato real.
- The legal vs the real contract.
- No es lo que China está haciendo.
- It's not about what China is doing.
- Why public safety should be a priority for national development – the Shanghai case.
- En respuesta al lector –sobre la seguridad civil y el desarrollo nacional.
- Por qué la seguridad ciudadana tiene que ser prioridad para el desarrollo nacional – el caso de shanghai.
- On international cooperation.
- Relaciones con china. Por qué deben tenerse en mente las consecuencias a largo plazo.
- Cuatro retos actuales para China y el mundo.
- Diplomatic relations between El Salvador and China.
- An urgent love letter!
- On getting incorporated in China.
- The network factor of Japan - China - KoreaEducation
- The future workforce and the current working platform.
- Explaining China - series on globalization.
- Globalization - focused on China.

#### At work

- It's all about people ... at large.
- Being good at vs being good at within a different context.
- ... But you ended leading a team.
- The wrong team leader.
- A letter to the boss.
- God bless human error.

- The coach as a manager.
- What is this “management” thing all about?
- Are you asking for career advancement or promotion?
- On customer service. What poor cross-cultural training might cause - a case study on coaching.
- Work-life balance? What’s that?
- Yes business organizations are systems, but the are “social” systems.
- On management - professional ego may lead to the worst “form” of communication.
- The new expertise every modern organization must have.
- On management.
- Stability in terms of growth 2.
- Stability in term of growth.
- Integration, the hidden word in the organizational dictionary.
- Organizational integration, a hope more than a reality.
- In search for the causes of human error at work.
- Positive vs. negative effects of ego reactions at work.
- Emotions and human error at work.

### Behavior and economics

- Tourism and economics.
- A jiu-jitsu perspective of economic reasoning.
- A walk in the park - examples of economic behavior.

### Covid-19

- Observations during covid-19 times: what it has taught us and what to do to avoid repeating the suffering.
- ¿Volver a la normalidad? ¡ni locos!
- On covid-19 — back to normal? Hell no!
- Expansion prognostic of covid-19 — a behavioral perspective.

- El fin de la dependencia y la “nueva normalidad”.
- The end of dependency and the “new normal”.
- Closed doors. A contingency plan facing the covid-19 for urgent worldwide implementation.

### Higher Education

- On education - higher education for the 21st century.
- Built for tomorrow’s workforce.
- On education – What do EMBA professors actually do?
- New systems & technology or new mindset, what matters the most?
- For the sake of the new generations.
- Don’t undermine what you’ve learned in school - a note to young professionals.
- For the sake of practical education. Industry-academia programs.

### 8 Egos at Work – First edition

- 8 egos at work – A conversation with the reader.
- 8 egos at work – In response to the readers.
- In response to the readers’ questions.
- In response to the readers’ questions.
- A new perspective to understand relationships at work... and anywhere else.
- The ego at work put as in either positive or negative emotional states.

### Other writings:

<https://www.literary-versatility.com>

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## 8 EGOS AT WORK

A handbook for better leadership  
and a happier, more productive, life at work  
and everywhere else.

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<https://www.linkedin.com/in/dr-miguel-cerna>

X



## DISCLAIMER

The concepts and methodologies proposed in this handbook are based on the author's more than three decades of corporate experience working for and with organizations and people from over eighty countries. These concepts are also supported by twenty years of systematic field observations of human behavior within specific organizational contexts as well as outside the work environment.

The reader is advised of potential changes in ego actions and reactions due to changes in contexts, new generational trends, culture, and personalities. When applying the knowledge acquired from this handbook, these potential changes must be taken into consideration.

[Read the full book.](#)

8 EGOS AT WORK

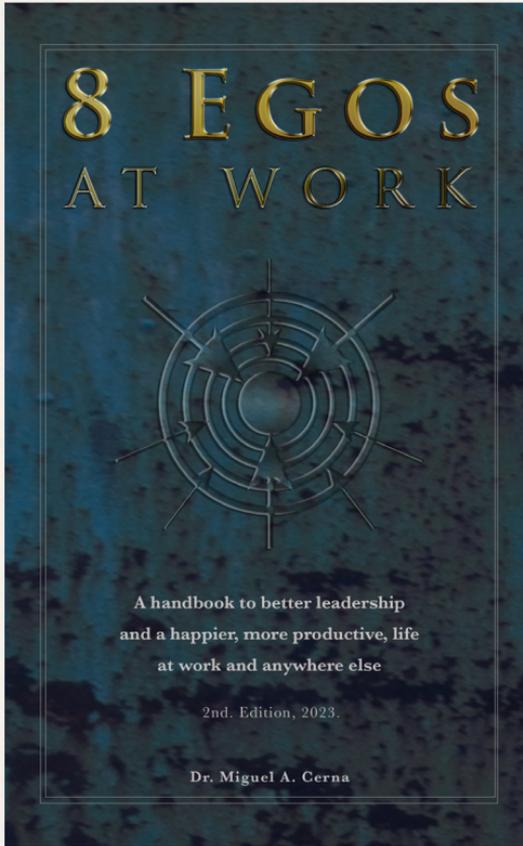
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THE  
DESIGN  
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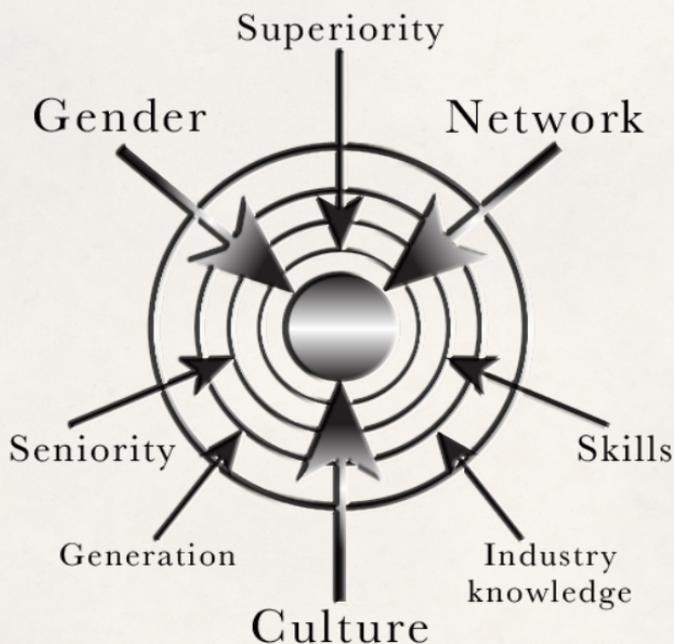
INSIDE THIS BOOK

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## BOOK COVER

Designed by the author. The golden title represents the intrinsic value of the ego. The rusted metallic background and embossed elements represent the time-tested nature of the ego. The style of the cover is mystic to represent the sort of mysticism with which people frequently speak of the ego.



### THE 8 EGOS ICON

This icon was designed by the author as a visual analogy of the concepts discussed in this handbook; it represents 1) the person (represented by the center circle and outer layers), 2) the duality within each person (represented by the light crossing the inner circle), and 3) the eight egos (represented by the eight arrows).

There are three egos, Network, Gender, and Culture (represented by the thicker arrows) that are deeply rooted in a person's psyche and therefore more pervasive

and, as a result, more aggressive when challenged by other people or the environment. The other five egos are more superficial including Seniority, Superiority, Skill, Industry Knowledge and Generation (represented by the thinner arrows). These five egos show different strengths and lengths depending on the circumstance. For example, an ego reaction would be different if it happens while interacting with a superior vs. a person of the same hierarchical level. Work and social situations would lead to different reactions.

Each ego is rooted within the person at different levels, which is represented by the intersection of the arrows with the different inner circles. The outer circle is untouched by any arrowhead representing the outward persona each person presents to the world, the outside look, which does not show any egos unless an active as a consequence of external stimuli.



TO ALL PEOPLE.  
THE TRUE AND ONLY  
SIGNIFICANT MACHINERY  
ENSURING SUSTAINABLE  
HUMAN PROGRESS.



“EVERYTHING SHOULD BE MADE  
AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE,  
BUT NOT SIMPLER.”

Allegedly by Albert Einstein.

[Read the full handbook](#)



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*“There are so many of you  
who have made this handbook possible. Thank you”.*

The Author.

To say the very least, writing this handbook, and working on this e-Book four years after the first edition in printed form, has been a further humble undertaking, a priceless character building, a learning experience, and a challenge in many ways.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges in regards to this e-Book has been to work on it during the Covid-19 Pandemic, which cast me away to a land not of my choosing and caused my company to collapse, living me for the last two years without income.

Both the Pandemic and the making of the second edition have humbled me even further and reassured my conviction that even in the face of misfortunes, good things may happen. Whatever egos I developed before the Pandemic, manage them well, I hope I've done that, has been key to my current survival.

Two of the good things that came to me during these difficult times are, first, meeting Raquel Lucas de Sousa, whose loving support and trust in the value of my doings has allow me the peace of mind and space so that the digital edition of this handbook is now a reality, and who is a living proof of the positive power of easing one's egos.

The second good thing has been knowing Keir Steinke and his lovely family, who kindly agreed to read this

handbook and write the forewords to the second edition, for which I am forever indebted. Keir's companionship and intellectual wealth have also made my life much more bearable during the present Covid times.

Another great challenge I faced in the process was writing this handbook in English. Although this is the language I have used most of my adult life, it is not my mother tongue. So, making this content understandable for the English speaking community worldwide (not only natives) has been a challenging goal.

Since I've been exposed to many different uses and accents of English language over the last three and a half decades, the reader might find a mix of expressions not pertaining to any specific country or region. In that sense, I have made every effort to deliver the content in a form understandable for native and non-native English speakers. I kindly ask the reader to forgive any form of the language that might sound "foreign" in his or her local context, and concentrate on the content, which I truly believe can help people to have a happier life in every sense. My appreciation is, in this case, to the reader.

I'd also like to express my deepest gratitude to Diane Wang, a supportive and dear friend since I moved to China, who continues to show me her support even now that we are far apart, and who has never shown any ego actions or reactions during our many years of

friendship.

To Ernesto Panamá, former Ambassador of my beloved country El Salvador, accredited in \*Taiwan, and a forever-respected friend, to whom I owe my entry to international communities, and thanks to whom I've learned that knowing how to manage my ego would become my most important asset in life. “*Don't fight the cook*”, he told me once when I had just arrived in Taiwan.

To my friend Christian Martin, for his kind contribution in writing the Executive's Preface to the printed version (also included in this edition), his honest, professional and friendly comments in regard to the content, and his input in suggesting to add the summary included at the end of this handbook as chapters 26 and 27.

My gratitude is also to my friend and fellow professor, Mr. Chris Fay for taking the time to read and provide advice that helped to significantly improve the content and quality of the first edition of this handbook. Our sort-of intellectual conversations –with much more intellect from his side than mine–, his wit and his honesty, make him a most-missed friend now that life has set us at different time zones for quite some time.

Finally, I'd like to express my deepest gratitude to my former bosses, for setting up, and allowing me to use the stages on which I developed and polished my

understanding of human relationships at work; and to the many international professionals who, over three and a half decades, had contributed to my understanding of the forces that affect organizational and personal success at work and anywhere else.

\*The Embassy of El Salvador was moved to Beijing in 2018, and remained there at the moment of this publication.

“IN ANGER

WE SHOULD REFRAIN BOTH

FROM SPEECH AND ACTION”

(ALLEGEDLY BY PYTHAGORAS.)



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LIFE IS GOOD!



# 1

## WHAT THIS HANDBOOK IS NOT



I have tried to avoid technical or academic jargon as much as possible so that any person may relate to this content more easily and may consider it in relation to his or her specific working, personal and social contexts.

While as a scientist I know the great value of systematically acquired knowledge for our understanding not only of the issues at hand but also of their evolution, the reader need not be an expert in any specific field to understand how the eight egos relate to what he or she does daily. This work intends to translate the science to enable the reader to make sense of what afflicts his or her present and propose ways for future improvements. To this end, I briefly include some findings from both prior and contemporary fellow researchers. See chapter The Ego Explained by Psychology and Religion as Compared to this Handbook at the end of the handbook.

The content of this handbook comes from several sources. First, field observations conducted during thirty-five years, twenty of which I have carefully documented. During this period of time period I have carried out different tasks and responsibilities within varied organizational contexts in collaboration with people from a wide range of cultures.

A second source for the writing of this handbook is theories and concepts from different areas of study including behavioral science in general, cognitive

behavioral psychology, relationships psychology, social psychology, organizational behavior, culture, management, human resources, human conflict, and communication among others. Why so many fields? The answer is simple: because human and organizational lives are a complex mix of many seemingly unrelated factors. Focusing only on one aspect leads to very unclear and inaccurate assumptions at best. This handbook is not exhaustive in such respect, but every effort has been made to include, to varying degrees, the different elements that influence the ego actions and reactions I present.

And the third source –perhaps the most important one– for generating this content comes from opinions and comments provided by professionals just like you, the reader, who wake up early in the morning to go to work whether in a physical or cyber space. People who hope that today will be a good day. People who, on a daily basis, deal with so much baggage affecting their emotions and work processes, and yet try to perform at their best. People who sometimes go home frustrated due to an impossible person they had to deal with at work. This applies to business owners, employees at any type of organization or hierarchical levels as well as freelancers.

**Continue reading from the handbook.**

8 EGOS AT WORK

2

# FOREWORDS



INSIDE THIS BOOK

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**L**ife, I believe is not a series of co-incidental events, but more like a set of equations that play out in determining who, when and how you meet other people, and more importantly, later you come to discover WHY, as every human interaction and relationship is part of a bigger plan or picture that shapes you and your life ahead.

So with this in mind, meeting Miguel nearly two years ago at the first open event after an initial Covid lockdown period was not a random event of luck but one of those “predetermined” meetings that have changed both our lives – for the better !!

As such Miguel has not only become a good family friend, a partner in some small business ventures but also a wise, practical and sincere personal advisor to me in my ongoing journey of life. Thus it has been an enormous pleasure to read Miguel’s book and write a foreword for it.

A little bit about me. I suppose you could call me one of those global citizens or nomads, finding great excitement, challenges and rewards in living and working around the world. I was born in South Africa and have had the privilege of living in New Zealand, UK, Russia, Germany, Brazil, China, Netherlands, Vietnam and now Portugal, where I have come to “rest” on this global journey. I have worked in Senior Leadership positions in the Innovation space for a

number of bluechip companies.

While a Bio Chemist and a great believer in technology, the thing that gets me out of bed in the morning is PEOPLE. Nothing is possible in this world without interacting with other people in your life. So when Miguel asked me to read his book my ears pricked up immediately – what and how can I learn to be better in my day to day interactions with other people from all walks of life – from the lady selling me fish at the market to the CEO of the next business that I interact with.

The Ego is central to every individual, it is Miguel, Keir, all of us -putting the “I, myself ” at the center of each of our thinking and behavior, caring for the individual before the group. While Miguel has explored some of the theories and models around the concept of the Ego, he has kept it simple and concise focusing clearly on understanding 8 different Ego’s in the workplace, how they influence individual behavior, some of the consequences and very importantly how to overcome and deal with them.

While potentially, complex and a “mind boggling” topic, what I have really enjoyed in reading this book is the way Miguel, with his extensive experience and insights on the topic has distilled it all down into a simple easy to understand model around the 8 key Ego’s that play out primarily at work everyday around the world. This

understanding leads directly to helpful and practical ways proposed by Miguel in terms of enhancing the power of the Ego to make  $1+1=3$  out of situations in the work place, which more than often lead to  $1+1 = \text{minus } 1$  !!

Miguel's use of novel concepts such as length/strength of the Ego, Ego as sword or shield, along with many personal and real life examples help to make the content easier to understand, contextualize and then ultimately apply.

He focuses on the following 8 forms of Ego: Superiority Ego, Seniority Ego, Generation Ego, Industry Knowledge Ego, Skills Ego, Network Ego, Gender Ego, and Culture Ego and what makes it even more powerful and meaningful for me is that he also delves into the interrelationships between these 8 Egos and the resulting complexities that arise – as you will come to realize, it is seldom just one Ego form at work.

Probably one of the most interesting parts of the book for me personally, has been the “adventure” behind understanding the Cultural Ego form. Given the multiple cultures that I have lived and worked with, and the number of times I have walked away from what should have been a simple conversation or issue to have been resolved, with my head spinning and asking myself “What went wrong there?” Now being able to reflect on some of those situations with the content of Miguel's

Cultural Ego form in front of my mind, this book has been invaluable in helping me understand how to do it differently with better outcomes next time – and there will always be a next time !!

So my advise, read this handbook diligently – take the time to absorb, reflect and most importantly apply the valuable insights that it has to offer.....!!!

Keir Steinke.

“LIVE AS IF YOU WERE TO DIE TOMORROW.  
LEARN AS IF YOU WERE TO LIVE FOREVER.”

Allegedly by Mahatma Gandhi

[Read the full handbook](#)

8 EGOS AT WORK

# 3

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE



INSIDE THIS BOOK



WATCH YOUR THOUGHTS  
THEY BECOME WORDS

WATCH YOUR WORDS  
THEY BECOME ACTIONS

WATCH YOUR ACTIONS  
THEY BECOME HABITS

WATCH YOUR HABITS  
THEY BECOME CHARACTER

WATCH YOUR CHARACTER  
IT BECOMES YOUR DESTINY

(Allegedly by Lao Tzu)

In the first edition of this handbook, I mentioned that it was the time for me to share what I've learned so far from life and from being an entry-level employee, a team member, a manager, an entrepreneur, an educator and a passionate researcher on everything human.

This second edition holds the same intention, and includes a more elaborate section on the ego as well as further explanation in regard to dealing with each of the eight egos, for which I include more case studies. Now in digital form, this edition attempts to reach, and hopefully help, a broader audience worldwide.

The content of this handbook comes mainly from field observations conducted during my working time, from 1995 to 2022, in and with organizations (local and foreign, physical and cyber) with headquarters in Taiwan, Mainland China, South Korea, Japan, The Philippines, Thailand, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, the USA, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Austria, Spain, France, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Dominican Republic, Mexico, El Salvador, Panamá, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay, Kenya, Lesotho, and Russia.

During this time, I've interacted with politicians, business people from diverse industries, educators in different fields of knowledge, communicators, and students from over eighty countries. Each of them has

### 3. Author's Preface

greatly contributed to the diversity of my observations.

Among many other things, I've learned that poor ego management is a factor that generally leads to broken relationships at work as well as in any other scenario where human interactions take place.

Why this title for this handbook?

This handbook deals with the ego and its effect on people at work and on work process, which in turn, affects organizational performance, stability, and growth as well as the life of those involved in ego struggles.

The content of this handbook is useful for the layperson as well as for experts in specific areas of work and academic fields for the following reasons: First, the ego has never been approached in such a manner as to separate it into the eight forms presented here. Second, the ego has barely been discussed in terms of its influence on work settings, which is the focus of this handbook. And third, the concepts of length and \*strength of ego actions and reactions, as presented here, are new in psychology and academic literature. So you have in your hands a handbook presenting new perspectives for practical use.

\* Different scholars had discussed the concept of ego strength. For example, in his psychosocial theory, Erik Erikson speaks of eight ego strengths, which are different from the strength presented in



this handbook. Besides some reviews of Erikson's works conducted by later researchers, to my knowledge, no one else has brought the two-word term –Ego strength– into the literature from a different perspective. I discuss this in the chapter Ego Development.

My personal ego battles, those I have observed, those I've helped to solve, as well as the ego battles reported by hundreds of other professionals, inform these pages and have provided me with a plethora of case studies from which I've narrowed the ego at work and anywhere else into eight forms, which I term eight egos.

I am aware of how rare this topic might be perceived within organizational contexts. However, my observations indicate to me that ego actions and reactions are responsible for broken relationships at work, as they are in other types of human interactions. In turn, these now broken relationships greatly affect organizational performance because, among other things, cooperation between those involved in ego battles stops either temporarily or permanently, and at work, as it is elsewhere, without cooperation, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to fully achieve our goals ... whatever those goals might be.

My early years in Asia, especially between 1995 and 1998, when I was appointed Honorary Attaché to the Embassy of El Salvador in Taiwan, raised the question as to why people with high level of formal education (college and above) and much experience dealing with

### 3. Author's Preface

organizational issues, both local and global, find it so difficult to agree?

That question puzzled me for a long time, and so far, regardless of the extent of my research in this respect, I can't claim to have a final answer. In fact, the more I delve into the area of human behavior to enhance my understanding of its dynamics –such understanding being still very narrow–, one thing has become very clear to me: When questions about human interactions arise, there will never be a final answer encompassing every situation. This is because we are in constant evolution, hence, what holds to be accurate today, may not hold as such tomorrow. Also, due cognitive and experiential diversity of each person, what holds true for one person will not for another.

My position at the Embassy of El Salvador in Taiwan was my first international assignment. That was an opportunity I was blessed with by what in Mandarin language is labeled as 缘分 (yuan fen), most commonly translated into the English language as “fate”, but such term also implies luck and something else –something linked to someone's past, like karma–. My work experience and academic education were limited when I arrived in Taipei. The only organizational experience I had at that time was my five years in journalism, a job that represents my first gift from “yuan fen” back in El Salvador. Besides that, journalism and its corresponding skills, I brought with me my skills in the visual arts and

eighteen artworks. I also brought my English language skills and my rather limited studies in psychology.

When I arrived in Asia, I had no training whatsoever in cross-cultural issues. It was my first time entering into a completely different cultural context. So my beliefs, assumptions, and ‘great’ ideas were limited and tinted by both my own cultural blueprint and my inexperience interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. I was fortunate though, my Ambassador, a man of great wisdom, from whom I learned that my ego might become my worst enemy if I didn’t learn how to manage it, guided me with patience and absolute trust in my capabilities. So I listened, observed, and learned.

After those years as an attaché, I entered the amazing and highly intricate world of international trade and organizational development, where I witnessed seemingly good cooperation projects fail due to what I label “ego pain”. Reports of frustration, anger, and confusion were very common, and cases of verbal violence disrupting organizational dynamics were not rare.

During those early years assisting my Ambassador, although I acknowledged my limitations, it still made me uncomfortable to see that the suggestions I provided to people in negotiation processes had little or no impact at all. They seemed practical to me but proved not to

be appealing to the parties involved in the interactions. It was clear to me that cultural differences played a critical role in how each party perceived my proposed strategies, but I continued to sense a human element playing an even more important moderating role. That human element, I discovered, was the ego.

Leaving cultural differences aside, the discomfort I sensed from the parties in conflict—the ego pain I just mentioned—, affected the success of many projects because the processes were disrupted sometimes to the point that people stopped cooperating for good. This is what triggered my approach to understanding organizational issues from the perspective of an individual's emotional and psychological states. So, early in my first year in diplomacy, I started to observe people's behavior at work more closely.

Those observations raised many other questions, which later evolved into a lifetime commitment to academic and field research intended to discover the root cause of behavior and ways to lower the negative stress people suffer at work. I also intended to find out ways to prevent corporate failure. This handbook is just a tiny part of what there is to know and do in order to reach these goals.

Not happy with my own assumptions, but certain about the influence of the human element as a key moderator for organizational success or failure, I started to apply a

systematic process to find out what factors, tangible and intangible, influence people's emotions and how those emotions affect organizational performance, stability and growth. The key to this three-pillar formula for organizational survival (performance, stability, and growth) was the stability pillar. Without it, performance is low, and when performance is low, growth is literally impossible. (See definitions of stability, performance and growth at the end of this section).

Based on how each factor would affect each pillar, I intended to find out to what extent each one of those factors contributes to human conflict at work, to later develop a system of practical use for addressing organizational conflicts. So, by the end of 1995, I started to document my personal organizational day-to-day experience, carefully analyzing both my failures and my few successful cases.

Unable to come up with coherent statements regarding my discoveries, and still hesitant about the truth of my assertions, I decided to pursue a doctorate degree in the area of organizational cross-cultural conflict management, which gave me the methodology to question, research, and explain organizational issues; only this time, taking into consideration insights from many diverse areas of knowledge.

Since scientific and academic findings directed to scientists and academics have very little on not use for

people and organizations –because not many use such findings to educated their daily decisions–, I wanted to develop a way to explain in a layperson's vocabulary the complexity of organizational dynamics. Controlled field observations, formal studies and organizational experience in different fields, have contributed to such an end. It is my hope that the reader will find this content easy to understand and absorb.

Among many other factors affecting organizational activities, I identified eight common reactions, which I call “ego forms” that greatly interfere with relationships at work. In this handbook, I discuss those ego forms: what they are, what they cause, how they are activated, how to identify them, and how to deal with them.

I should mention that most of my professional life and higher education took place in East Asia, specifically in Taiwan and Mainland China, within very wide and dynamic multicultural contexts. While living in either country, I traveled for pleasure and work to thirty other countries in the Americas, Europe, Russia, East and SouthEast Asia, and Africa; and interacted (for a wide range of purposes) with people from over eighty cultural backgrounds. Hence, this handbook is tinted with my personal experience conducting social and professional cross-cultural interactions within those settings.

This second edition also includes my still-short experience in Portugal, a country that holds many



behavioral similarities with Taiwan and Mainland China during the mid nineties. I will speak of these similarities in a different future publication, but the assumption in regards to such behavioral similarities is that they depend on the level of development. I am currently conducting research in this and other European countries and should be publishing something in that regard in the future.

It is my hope that the content in this handbook will help the reader reach a better understanding of how human factors, specifically the ego, affect interactions at work, and that such an understanding would contribute to making those interactions better, which in turn might contribute to sustainable organizational success, more fulfilling work processes, a happier life at work and anywhere else.

Although the subtitle of this handbook suggests that it is intended for organizational decision-makers, it suits anybody who, at work or outside the office, is greatly influenced by others, which is pretty much each one of us. So this handbook is useful for everybody. My advice is to read each ego carefully, and while reading, keep your own organizational or personal contexts in mind so that you will be able to successfully apply this knowledge to your specific cases.

Below, I include important definitions in regards to organizational outcomes.



## **Stability.**

Let's use a hurt little toe and a walk in the park as an analogy of what stability is and how it may affect the functioning of an organization and hence the outcomes.

Imagine yourself with a broken or hurt little toe. "*Nothing is more insignificant in the human body than a little toe*", some people may say. Well, it depends on the task. If we are planning to take a walk in the park, that small part of the body will make a big difference in how we perform.

When there is pain in a little toe, while walking, you have to put more weight on the other toes and on the other foot; you also twist or bend the hurt foot in order to perform the move, which puts more pressure on the joints and gravitational forces pull the interconnected parts off their center; this compromises stability. An unstable body will not be able to walk neither properly nor for too long.

The same applies to organizations where one or several parts don't function well; it will not be able to perform properly for long periods, because it is not stable, hence limiting its opportunities for growth.

## **Performance.**

This concept is simple. It refers to how an organization

functions as a whole. Performance might be also understood as partial, where some departments or divisions do well while others don't. However, in this handbook, I take a holistic view of the organization. In such a view, if one part of the organization does not function well, it will, at some point, affect the functioning of the whole.

Think about it in terms of our walk in the park. Nothing could be easier to perform for a person with no physical limitations. But, even when the rest of the body is healthy and strong, if a little toe is broken, or hurt in anyway, that easy walk in the park would turn into a painful one. This person will feel the pain all over his or her body because the rest of it would have to modify its normal position to compensate for that little part that is not functioning well. That person, as a whole, will not perform well on the walk. To summarize, performance in this handbook refers to how an organization functions as a whole.

### **Growth.**

This concept refers to advancements or improvements that make us better at what we do, bigger, healthier, stronger, happier and perhaps more influential.

Think again about our walk in the park analogy. How far you can walk and how much you would enjoy the walk will depend on whether or not there is pain,

### 3. Author's Preface

anywhere in your body while you walk; while you move forward, that is.

If all your body parts are functioning well, the walk will be a pleasant one; but if there is one body part not functioning well, the little toe for example, the experience will be bad and it will limit the distance you can keep moving, the number of calories you will burn and everything else good that results from a long and pleasant walk in the park.

[Read the full handbook](#)



LEAVING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES ASIDE,  
EGO PAIN DISRUPTS RELATIONSHIPS  
TO THE POINT THAT PEOPLE STOP  
COOPERATING FOR GOOD.

(elsewhere in this handbook)

# 4

## EXECUTIVE'S PREFACE

Christian Martin

President & Treasurer Carl Zeiss Inc.,  
ZEISS Group. New York, U.S.A.



“BEING A MANAGER BY TITLE  
DOES NOT MAKE US LEADERS AT THE  
SAME TIME.  
BEING A TRUE LEADER IS ULTIMATELY  
DECIDED  
BY THE PEOPLE ONE LEADS!”

(Carl C. v. Rabe)

When I first heard that Miguel was writing a book about Egos, I was curious on the spot. When I found out that this is about Egos at working places and how they affect organizational performance, I was even more interested. And here I am, a few months later, writing the preface of the book.

I've known Miguel for the past five years (to the time of the first edition), and he's not an ordinary but extraordinary person. Not only does he have a great know-how and skills in theoretical academics, he also has a vast experience in practical work and life applications, which comes from his notable personal path of life.

Having been in various global management and leadership functions over the past fifteen years, I was genuinely interested in what Miguel had discovered about Egos at work in his studies and observations.

The Ego: what does it mean? Ego is the Latin word for the English "I". It puts the "I, myself" in the center of a human individual's thinking and behavior. It seeks the individual's rather than the group's wellbeing.

It's important to note that this book does not deal with Freud's psychoanalytic theories of the Id, the Ego, and Super-Ego, nor with Machiavelli's thesis that egocentric behavior could be tolerated as long as the ends justify the means, but it attempts to give a practical guidance regarding how different types of the Ego at work influence individual behavior, what consequences come

with them, and how to overcome and deal with them.

In an organizational context, we often speak of one person being the supervisor of or superior to others. We imply that the superior or manager is above and better than other co-workers.

Many might think, yes: A Manager is above others in the hierarchy of an organizational structure. But does this make him superior to others? Does it make her better?

While it is true that an organizational hierarchy sets a certain order to tasks and responsibilities, one cannot, and should not, mistake this as the superiority of one person over another. If this becomes the case, the effect of such an applied Ego at work will become negative for the working relationship and finally the organizational performance.

Who has not seen people at work with a big Ego? Those who believe the earth is not spinning around the sun but both sun and earth are spinning around them; the ones who know it all, who have seen and done it all.

While having a fair amount of self-esteem is good and helpful, stretching and over stretching it to the extent that it becomes a purely self-centered Ego will be harmful to organizational performance and success.

Too much of an Ego makes us blind. It makes us blind to the shortcomings that each of us has. It makes us



overestimate our capabilities. Yes, I write “us” because the Ego is not just a Manager’s thing, but rather a conscious and subconscious part of ALL of us.

In this handbook, Miguel unravels the mystery of “Egos at Work” that apply to all of us being managers, first-line employees, and co-workers at the same time.

Looking a bit deeper into the matter: The Ego is described as a defense and attack mechanism that comes with the risks and stress of perceived or real threats, uncertainty, and acting on stereotypes. Once the threat, or the perception of threat, disappears, the ego rests.

However, in today’s VUCA environment the Ego becomes even more apparent as there has never been more Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity. These components increase competition for resources, power, and appreciation. Which in turn puts more stress and risks on both leaders and team members alike.

Miguel’s studies and observations have identified eight forms of Ego, and several forms of Ego can be activated all at once. The eight egos are like eight shields-weapons activated depending on the situation. Remember, we are dealing with interpersonal relationships, so there are always two sides of the interaction: the defending side, which he calls “ego defense” and the attacking side, which he calls “overpowering ego reaction” or “ego attack”.

He distinguishes the following 8 forms of Ego: Superiority Ego, Seniority Ego, Generation Ego, Industry Knowledge Ego, Skills Ego, Network Ego, Gender Ego, and Culture Ego.

When one is reading about the different Egos, where they come from, how they arise, what causes them, and how to deal with them as a business leader, it all seems so obvious. Obvious it is, but only once it is written down and presented in clear structures.

Miguel managed to write down his observations in a summarizing and enjoyable manner. The handbook is what it is called: a book that gives practical guidance about how to understand, detect and deal with Egos in a working environment. The author has spiced it up with real-life examples and cases, which he has experienced in his more than twenty years of living and working in a multi-international context.

When I first heard about the title of the book “8 Egos”, the question snapped to my mind whether the eight egos are like the “7+1” sins of bad leaders? Would it be a book about eight bad habits that must be avoided?

Miguel has carefully dismantled my initial thoughts and questions. Throughout the book it becomes clear that these Egos, per se, are not negative for individuals or organizations but – if managed well – can become a source of great benefits.

Reading this handbook you will learn more about



what it takes to manage the Ego, YOURS and that of OTHERS around you, no matter whether they are your employees, colleagues or bosses. To those in leadership functions, understanding and being able to deal with Egos is not an option but a necessity to enable and foster organizational performance and business success! Enjoy the reading!

“WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT AN ORGANIZATIONAL HIERARCHY SETS A CERTAIN ORDER TO TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, ONE CANNOT, AND SHOULD NOT, MISTAKE THIS AS THE SUPERIORITY OF ONE PERSON OVER ANOTHER.”

(Christian Martin)

[Read the full handbook](#)



# 5

## INTRODUCTION

INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS  
DEPENDS MORE ON  
COOPERATING WITH OTHERS  
THAN ON OUR  
INDIVIDUAL CAPABILITIES.

Yes, market dynamics determine how organizations manage their short, mid and long-term actions.

Yes, public policy affects whether or not an organization is able to reach its goals as well as create and sustain profitable development.

And yes, macro environmental issues (natural or human-made) such as economic crises, warfare, rain, earthquakes, pandemics such the one caused by the Covid-19 and the like, affect organizational stability and lifespan.

All those aspects are external factors upon which business organizations have little or no control at all. The following common Chinese saying encompasses this organizational reality: “计划赶不上变化” (jihua gan bu shang bian hua). This saying expresses the fact that all plans are ultimately affected, and at some point determined, by sudden human or environmental changes. Nothing is more accurate when it comes to organizational processes, where the only constant is change.

What really matters in terms of how successfully we deal with sudden changes is how well prepared we are; and in order to be prepared, we have to look into several internal factors that affect our ability to react quickly and effectively to sudden or unplanned situations.

Some of those factors are tangible, such as capital, machinery, or infrastructure; others are intangible such as the content of communication, knowledge, culture, personalities and the ego. Yes, the ego.

**Continue reading from book.**



6

THE EGO

3

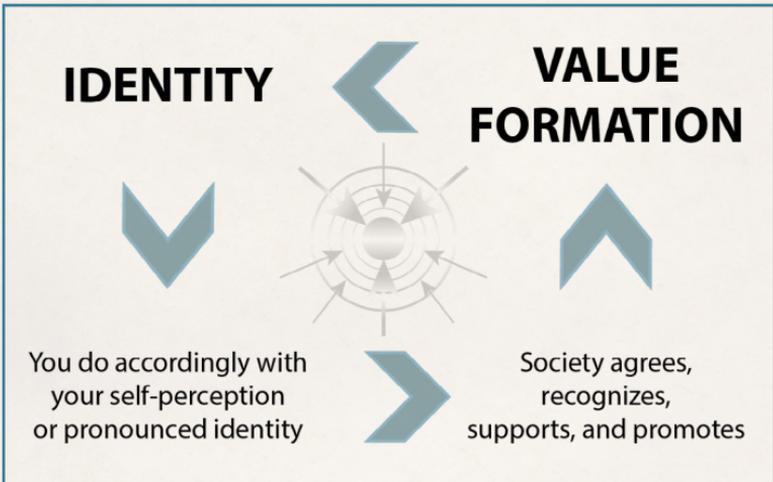
INSIDE THIS BOOK

“KNOWING OTHERS IS INTELLIGENCE;  
KNOWING YOURSELF IS TRUE WISDOM.  
MASTERING OTHERS IS STRENGTH;  
MASTERING YOURSELF IS TRUE POWER.

(Allegedly by Lao Tzu in the Tao Te Ching)



# Εγώ (Egó)



## **Ego Formation, Value and Identity Model.**

This model represents the dynamic nature of ego formation and maintenance, which leads to acquiring identity and hence individual and collective value.

**Space intentionally left blank.**

In simple words, the ego (the Greek word for the English “I”) is the biological, social and evolutionary “executive department” of the mind that functions by helping us adapt, make sense of the world, and have consistency and identity. It exists in the conscious mind, which means that we are aware of it at all times. The ego is then the self: “I.”

Most of the time, when acting on the basis of our ego, we don’t call it ego because it sounds “egocentric,” which has a negative social connotation; and as a social defense mechanism, we do not want to be associated with anything negative. So, we normally call it anything else but ego.

The same as the superego (deep-rooted ideas or high rationality) and “id” (unconscious mind, or instinctual element of the human psyche), the ego is always with us. We never leave it at home. Never!

These three elements, ego, id and superego, first

introduced by Sigmund Freud, and further developed by Ana Freud and other psychologists, form the “psychological persona”.

The Ego does not just appear; it develops in an “epigenetic” manner, which means that it changes as we evolve through life. Erik Erikson brought this term – epigenetic – into the psychology literature in his Theory of Ego Psychology.

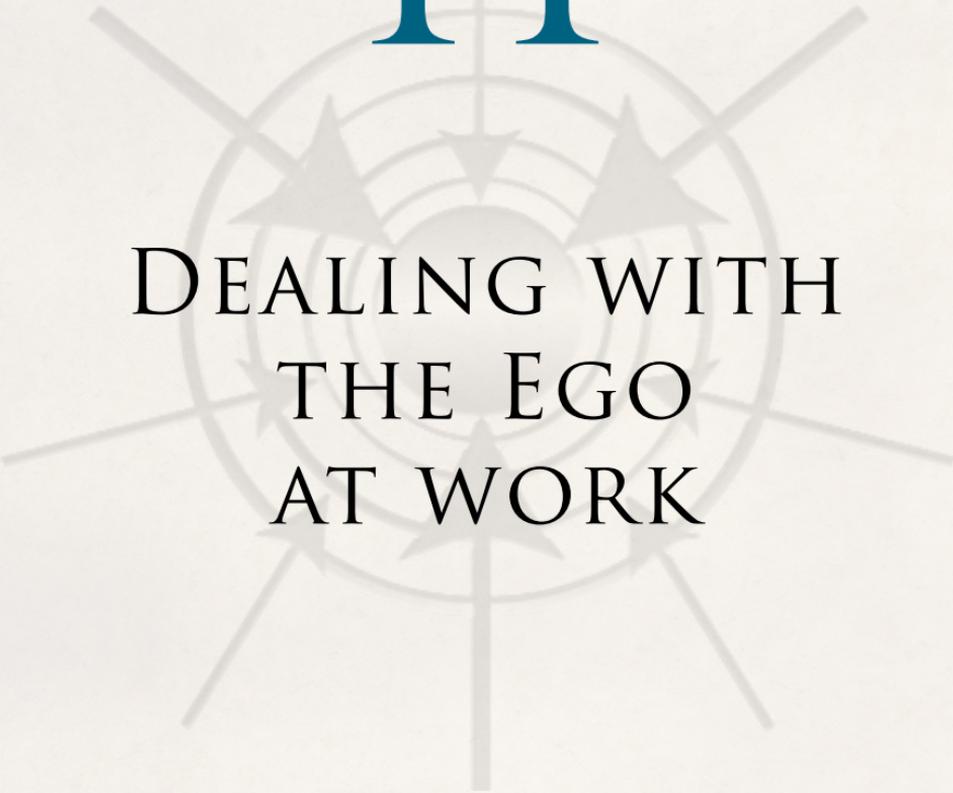
This epigenetic nature of the ego implies that, as we move from one stage of life to another, and our strengths in society evolve –either weaker or stronger–, our ego changes accordingly. For example, during our teenage years, our ego actions or reactions may be based on our sports capabilities or physical attractiveness or abilities; during our adulthood, the ego moves to professional skills; later in life, wisdom or legacy is what constitutes our ego. Sports, professional skills, wisdom, and legacy among others are our strengths or focus areas at different stages of life and so they constitute the different egos with which we moderate our interactions with others throughout our lifetime.

**[Continue reading from the handbook.](#)**



INSIDE THIS BOOK

# 11



DEALING WITH  
THE EGO  
AT WORK

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FIRE CAN WARM OR CONSUME,  
WATER CAN QUENCH OR DROWN,  
WIND CAN CARESS OR CUT.  
SO IT IS WITH HUMAN RELATIONS:  
WE CAN BOTH CREATE OR DESTROY,  
NURTURE OR TERRORIZE,  
TRAUMATIZE OR HEAL EACH OTHER.

(Allegedly by Bruce D. Perry)



The first step in developing our capacity to deal with the ego at work, and to understand why the ego manifests in work settings, is to keep in mind that, normally, we work under some kind of pressure. It is this pressure element that activates our defense mechanism. It also lowers our tolerance for the consequences of someone else's mistakes.

At work, we are under a certain level of stress at all times, whether it is a deadline, an annoying co-worker, customers' complaints, long working hours, not reaching the sales target, a narcissistic CEO, messed up organizational systems, or our personal life. To make things more complicated and stressful, at work, we never have absolute control of the final results, not even of our own working time. We depend on others. Hence, we have to compromise the "I" and concentrate on the "we", which is not always easy and adds to the stress factor so pervasive at work.

The second aspect in developing our capacity to deal with the ego at work is to keep in mind that how a message is delivered influences the strength and length of ego reactions, which is further influenced by who delivers the message and to whom. Here, the form, not the content of communication matters the most. The form is the first impression; attention to the content comes after.

I will not go deep into corporate communications in this handbook, but it's worth mentioning that since the ego is partially emotional and partially rational, the way in which we communicate with others is key to lessen its intervention. The form of a message (tone of voice, choice of words, etc.) stirs emotions earlier than the content. Again, let's keep in mind that the context matters for how we interpret a message.

**Continue reading from the handbook.**

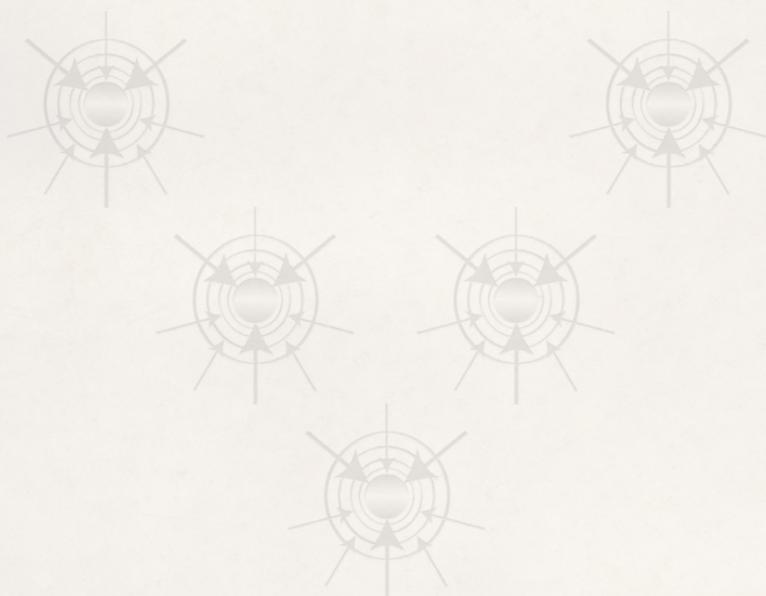


The 8 Egos.

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# THE 8 EGOS



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INSIDE THIS BOOK

1. SENIORITY
2. SUPERIORITY
3. GENERATION
4. INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE
5. SKILLS
6. NETWORK
7. GENDER
8. CULTURE

IT IS THE MARK OF AN EDUCATED MIND  
TO BE ABLE TO ENTERTAIN A THOUGH  
WITHOUT ACCEPTING IT.

(Allegedly by Aristotle)

**Continue reading from the handbook.**



LIFE IS GOOD!

[Read the full handbook](#)

## **8 Egos at Work**

A handbook for better leadership  
and a happier, more productive, life at work  
and anywhere else.

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Second Edition (e-Book).

## 8 EGOS AT WORK

Dr. Miguel A. Cerna is a behavioral scientist and cross-cultural conflict analyst. He moved from El Salvador to Taiwan in 1995 and to Mainland China in 2010, where he conducted his doctoral research in Organizational Cross-Cultural Conflict Management.



As a child, he used to spend long hours daily observing people, and thinking about the reasons behind their facial expressions and body movements. Later, with the intention to find out where behavior comes from, he first looked into psychology, where he discovered the influence of emotions and society on behavior, which brought him to cognitive behavioral and social psychology.

In his early adulthood, he traveled extensively to thirty countries and interacted professionally and socially with people from over eighty cultures. This exposure educated him on his incorporation of culture into the formula of human behavior.

In the process of becoming a multicultural person himself and a polyglot, he witnessed how people from different cultures speak of and use money, and how the possession or lack of it influences behavior, which brought him to his writings on behavioral economics. He later dived into the neurology of behavior. Together, these areas of knowledge greatly contributed to finding out the root cause of behavior, to which he has dedicated his life.

By the publication date of this handbook, he is Managing Partner at Verve and lives in Portugal, where he was displaced due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Unable to return to his home country, he's used this time to write and publish on different subjects including human behavior and globalization as well as deepen his involvement in the development of systems for better human communication.

