



Book Review. Bennet, D., Bennet, A., & Turner, R. (2022). *Unleashing the human mind. A consilience approach to managing self.* MQI Press.

Arthur Shelley^A

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Founder, Intelligent Answers

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Unleashing the human mind is an exceptional book on the relationship between life and identity, what it means to be human, and learning. The book takes readers on a deep and wide exploration of how learning is an essential element of who we are and how we engage with the world. Its purpose is to elevate us to be able to see the opportunity to move humanity into a new golden age. Central characters in this book, the "mind-brain" and "self", are described to highlight how learning is far more than just an academic endeavour. The authors draw on a broad range of disciplines, including neuroscience, emotional intelligence, experiential learning, management, knowledge, critical thinking, complex adaptive systems, sensemaking, decision-making and more, to describe a comprehensive approach to self-development. The interdisciplinary approach they call the Intelligent Complex Adaptive Learning System (ICALS) enables learners to "manage SELF" across physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.

The term "unleashing" is insightful because it highlights that our mind can be the source of holding us back (past patterns), and yet opening it up is the key to developing yourself for the future. Understanding one's self, who you are, why you arrived here and whom you want to become are important foundations of preparing yourself for the future. *Unleashing the human mind* takes us on a deep and broad developmental journey, starting with understanding what it means to be human through to how to best prepare for new beginnings in an ever-changing world. Along the way, we explore chapters on environmental currency, contemplating the future, a new theory of learning, thoughts and thinking, SELF as the ground of learning, heart-mind entrainment, extended reach, the spiritual nature of the expanded human, the gift of humility and looking from the inside out. Each chapter takes us to a higher level of awareness, capability, and state of being, enabling richer engagement with our complex world.

The foundation of this growth journey is the Intelligent Complex Adaptive Learning System (ICALS), shown in Figure 1. ICALS builds on aspects of key cognitive parameters identified in the work of Kolb, Dewey, Lewin, Piaget and Zull, environmental influences (both human and physical), and the power of the self-conscious mind to learn through

developing knowledge of meta-learning. The five key modes of learning and developing self through ICALS are:

Concrete Experience (grasping through apprehension), with sub-elements: sensing, feeling, awareness, attention, and intuition.

Reflective Observation (transformation via intention), with sub-elements: understanding, meaning, truth and how things happen, intuition, integration, and looking for unity.

Abstract Conceptualization (grasping via comprehension), with sub-elements: concepts, ideas, logic, problem-solving, creativity, building models and theories, the anticipation of the outcomes of actions, control, rigour, and discipline.

Active Experimentation (transformation via extension), with sub-elements: act on the environment, focus attention, object-based logic, heightened boundary perception, and sensory feedback to the brain.

Social Engagement (grasping through direct comprehension; transformation via association). Social support sub-elements include open mind, risk-taking, willingness to listen and learn, reducing stress and fear, creating resonance with people and ideas, and contributing to the evolution and sculpting of the brain. Social interaction sub-elements include accelerating learning and creativity, enhancing understanding, meaning, truth and how things work, developing a shared language, and supporting the use and understanding of concepts, metaphors, anecdotes and stories.

This approach to developing SELF provides a comprehensive foundation for becoming the best version of you (Figure 2). It opens your mind to consciously choose as you become more aware of the many possibilities that life offers. Thirteen core areas of neuroscience research findings weave their way throughout the text, supporting the success factors and skill sets needed for the complex adaptive systems that we are to live and thrive in the changing, uncertain, and complex world of today and tomorrow. These areas include the unconscious, memory, emotions, stress, creativity, mirror neurons, anticipating the future, social support, social interaction, epigenetics, plasticity, exercise and

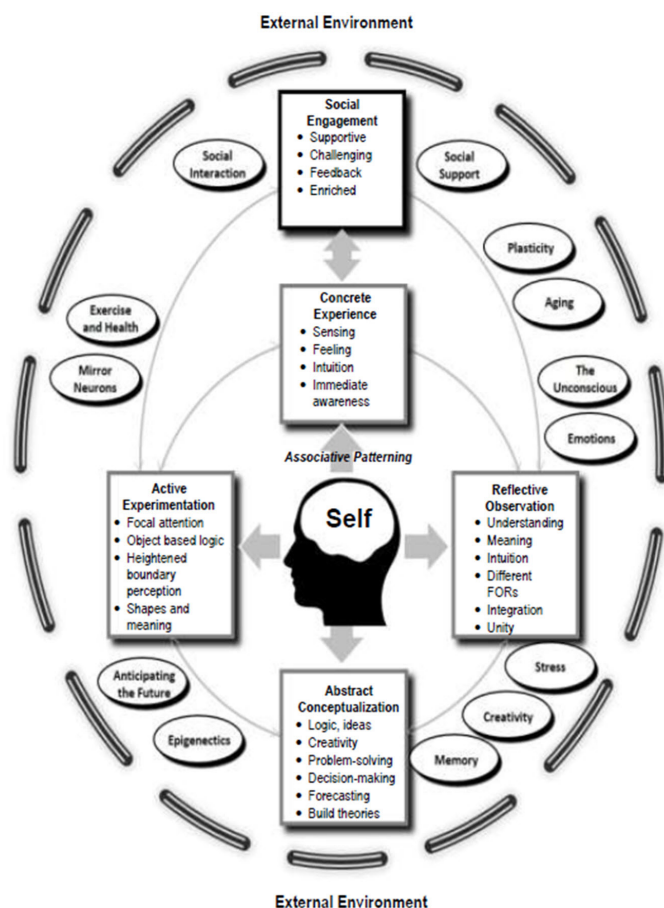


Figure 1. ICALS Framework (Bennet, Bennet and Turner 2022, p vi).

health, and ageing. As these learnings unleash our minds, it becomes clear that the solutions and possibilities of life are found *within* ourselves by ourselves through the power of learning. As the internationally-renowned physicist Dr. Florin Gaiseanu voices in the Foreword: "It is the mastery of the authors of this book to open the reader's mind and soul, thus offering the opportunity for the content of this live transmission to be discovered and interpreted in the most appropriate way by each reader ... only the reader's desire is needed to let him/her self be seduced by this wealth of wisdom, generously placed at the reader's disposal."

The afterword brings key insights into a simplified structure showing the interdisciplinary nature of rich learning, the ICALS Consilience Framework. The visual embeds ICALS as the centre of four constructs—consilience, complex adaptive systems, epistemology and constructivism—proposing this as a new foundation for learning going forward. *Unleashing the human mind* offers far more than can be expressed in this short review. It is a tome that you will benefit from referring to regularly as you proceed on the strategic planning of your

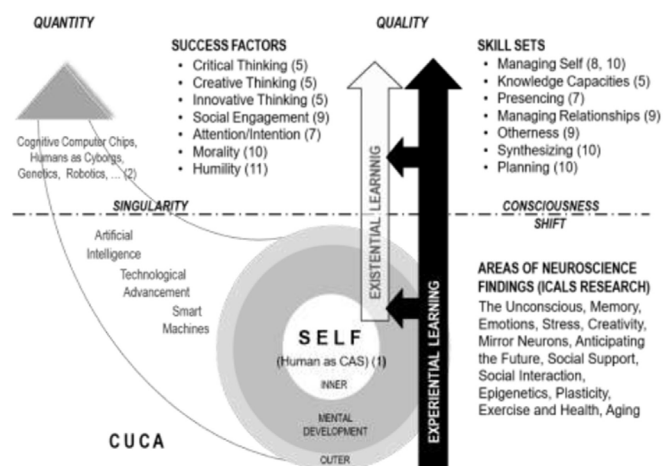


Figure 2. Factors influencing development of SELF (Bennet, Bennet and Turner 2022, p 76).

future possibilities. The book is 421 pages, including eight appendices, a comprehensive subject index, 23 figures, 14 practical tools, 796 endnotes, and 560 references. The book is available as a free ebook and in a hard-cover print version. *Unleashing the human mind* is the most comprehensive and enlightening book I have read on learning for the future. Elevating experiential learning to the existential level, it reinforces the social and spiritual elements of our personal and professional journeys of "becoming" who we can be. Once we acknowledge that being human is a constant experience of learning for adaptability, we can comprehend why all the factors discussed in this book are interdependently influencing our success in learning and, therefore, in leadership and in life. The authors explain how seemingly different disciplines and philosophies are inherently connected in advanced learning, including thinking, beliefs, feelings, knowledge, co-creation, spirituality, and a deep conscious awareness of SELF. This book offers you the opportunity to expand your mind and motivate you to learn in ways you perhaps never realised are possible (should you be prepared to invest in applying the shared insights). As the authors state, in learning and life, "you are a verb, not a noun"!