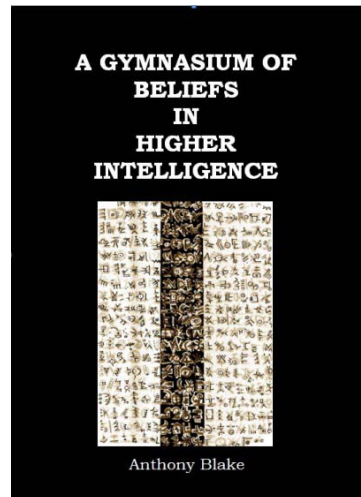


A GYMNASIUM OF BELIEFS IN HIGHER INTELLIGENCE

Anthony Blake



400 pages with diagrams and illustrations, extensive index and bibliography

DuVersity Press, January 2010, \$35 (USA) £20 (UK) 25 Euros
purchase of this book outside the USA through Anthony Blake
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This book follows on in the series Anthony Blake has produced exploring the ramifications of fourth way ideas in the context of the rapidly expanding and ever more complex world we live in*. It takes as point of departure the injunction John Bennett made in the 1960s that 'we should learn to communicate with higher intelligence'. This book explores attitudes and beliefs about higher intelligence in our confused and bewildered culture. The 'gymnasium' in the title is a mental one and the underlying premise of the book is that by becoming more free and flexible with our beliefs we need not be slaves to them but become more able to recognise and participate in the reality which transcends them.

The book begins with an exposition of why we can say our minds are illusions, based on Bennett's fundamental scheme of mental energies. It then goes on to explore three main categories of belief in higher intelligence: as inside people, as beyond us and as generated out of time itself. Illustrative ideas are drawn from numerous sources ranging from the ancient and occult to the recent and technological. In the final section the book circles down to land on the extraordinariness of our 'ordinary' experience.

The structure of the book around twelve beliefs or 'hypotheses' is based on a DuVersity conference held in Baltimore 1994.

'A Gymnasium of Beliefs' is designed in a special way that demonstrates a method of understanding. It can be read sequentially as an unfolding story or dipped into for stimulation and provocation. Fourth way ideas are explored in unusual ways and the author happily skips between spirituality, physics and literature. He embraces our modern rich informational environment and the clamour of its discordant voices to say that belief is always distortion but can become a flux of energy to vivify our assimilation of impressions. A pervasive theme is that every man or woman is a genius in his or her own right but this makes us responsible for what we believe.

The author says, 'I had to use a lot of words to say something simple but I couldn't just say this simple thing because it is beyond belief.'

* A Seminar on Time, Intelligence, The Intelligent Enneagram, The Supreme Art of Dialogue

REVIEWS

Review in *Parabola*, March 1st 2011 by Michael White of

A GYMNASIUM OF BELIEFS IN HIGHER INTELLIGENCE

Anthony Blake's latest book, *A GYMNASIUM OF BELIEFS IN HIGHER INTELLIGENCE*, appears to be the first modern philosophical text that uses the techniques of ring composition. Blake was well aware of ring composition from Mary Douglas's research. Simon Weightman, co-author of *RUMI'S MYSTICAL DESIGN*, was, like Blake, a long-standing student of John Bennett and the two share a long history. Consequently Blake knew of and applied the findings of these scholars and has resurrected the genre of ring composition in his newest book. He does so explicitly, although a reader who is untrained in synoptic reading would hardly recognize the technique. We are so trained in reading linear texts that the features that make his new book a ring are difficult to recognize without prior awareness and a special kind of reading. Blake does include a very helpful circular diagram, however, one that serves as a Table of Contents for a synoptic reading of the text.

Blake is well suited for this type of endeavor since he has published a detailed scholarly study of the Enneagram and worked with it for many years in the study of the Fourth Way. So putting things in a circle such that various points of the circle stand in relationship to other points is a familiar process. His text moves intentionally around a circle such that parallel points on the circle relate thematically. The text begins at the top of the circle and moves clockwise down to its lower point, which serves as the chiasmus where the most crucial themes are developed. After this, each segment of the text stands thematically related across the circle. The text moves around the circle, returning to its source, where it closes the circle, returning to where it began. It is a beautiful stylistic device that brings a new energy into the relationship of form and content.

At the beginning of his text, Blake goes to some pains to point out that "things are not what they seem to be," that "something is wrong." It doesn't take extraordinary vision to see that human beings are not doing a good job with the earth, with our global relationships among countries and among religions, and with fiscal affairs. Blake then proceeds to talk about higher intelligence, outlining many of its different manifestations.

Characteristics of higher intelligence, Blake says, are what the poet Keats called "negative capacity," or the ability to hold together two things that are opposites, without rejecting one or the other. Other characteristics are tolerance of mystery, the ability to practice concentrated attention, willingness to follow the scent of the infinite, and contentment with not reaching conclusions or having set explanations. He states that "beliefs are the antithesis of higher intelligence." The goal of higher intelligence, he contends, is to embrace the whole, and it is this ability that is at the heart of great art. The cultivation of higher intelligence is offered as an alternative to the type of intelligence that has created our current, untenable dilemmas. Blake contends that myths and metaphors are the stuff of higher intelligence.

He makes a sharp distinction between the reflexive self-consciousness that constitutes our sense of self, which he considers a social construct, and what he calls primordial or higher intelligence. The sense of identity we think of as ego, or self, blocks the awareness of higher intelligence, he says, and as long as you are centered in your own sense of identity, you are excluded from any gleam of higher intelligence. Consideration of the whole is a violation of “common sense” and is nonsensical from the everyday point of view. This non-linear, non-conceptual, non-judgmental awareness does not come naturally to most people and it must be trained; it requires practice and must be nurtured. He says that any experience from an individual perspective is necessarily limited and can only offer a partial view of the situation, and that personal opinion is highly prejudiced and is basically another form of superstition. In this light, to believe in anything is a gamble.

Higher intelligence encompasses all views and all approaches, according to Blake. It is based on acceptance or integration without rejection. It is a grand mosaic. Each perspective provides a facet or a glimpse of the truth, and to take any of these for the whole of the truth is the height of folly. One must give up on “being right.” Higher intelligence is a cure for the “right” virus that has infected our mental streams.

Blake talks about intelligence as the ability to “change in relation to change.” It is always in process, a moving target, and it is just this acceptance of change that sets the stage for creativity. This is the intelligence at work, when we feel the forces of inspiration, when there is something coming to us from outside the box. When consciousness can shift its focus from the individual habituation of the consensual trance of everydayness, there is an opening to higher intelligence. He lays out a diagram of intelligence going from what he calls Automatism up to the Witness. The steps along the way are marked by the development of intentionality, which is a necessary condition for the transcendental ego. As the transcendental ego develops, the person becomes the witness and gains impartiality and objectivity. Each step up the ladder of intelligence is an awakening that opens consciousness to a new perspective, a new way of seeing that is radically different, with a different orientation.

One of the paradoxes of higher intelligence is that as long as you are looking for it, you can never find it. Any effort toward acquiring it only blocks it further from your sight. Higher intelligence doesn't operate conceptually; rather than being analytic, higher intelligence is synthetic, it is “intimacy with experience,” without intrusion of reason or analysis. It is experience seen from the perspective of wholeness, not looking outward, but seeking inwardly.

The technique of ring composition allows for a new relationship between form and content. A GYMNASIUM OF BELIEFS IN HIGHER INTELLIGENCE echoes this style with a deliberate attempt to explore the possibilities of ring composition in a modern context. Unlike some of the ancient authors of ring compositions, Blake writes so that it is possible to follow the text linearly, but it is only when you read it synoptically that a whole other level of meaning becomes apparent. The form of the book is based on twelve points that are laid out on a circle so that there are six points on either side of the circle, with each of these twelve points as a chapter in the book. Each chapter takes a different aspect of higher intelligence as its theme. These twelve chapters are listed as twelve different beliefs about higher intelligence. The first is the belief that higher intelligence is a human birthright, inherent in each person; the second is the belief that higher intelligence is found only in exceptional people—in the genius, the hero, or the saint, in the person who exemplifies our highest potentials. Some chapters concern the fanciful, like the belief in hidden masters, and others the supernatural, taking God or the gods as the best manifestation of higher intelligence. As Blake moves around the circle, the beliefs about higher intelligence become more sublime, more subtle, and more poetic.

In a synoptic reading there is a chiasmus, a turning point, a place where you round the circle. In this book, when you complete the first six chapters you are at the bottom of the circle, where you find an exposition that goes outside the progression through the twelve beliefs about higher intelligence. This section of the text is called “Interlude—The Word” and falls between Belief Six and Belief Seven. This interlude is a phenomenological analysis of higher intelligence, examining what characterizes higher intelligence and its logic. Here the text points out characteristics like: realization of ignorance, of knowing that you don't know, and the capacity to withstand uncertainty and mystery without the compulsion to come up with an answer. This provides a climax for the first six chapters and a deeper context for the reading when he moves on to Belief Seven.

As you progress around the circle, moving from Belief Seven to Belief Twelve, there is a relationship across the circle to the parallel rungs. For example, Belief Six, about Extraterrestrials, is parallel to Belief Seven, which is about Supernatural Agencies; and Belief Eight, about Planetary Destiny, is across the circle from Belief Five, about the Noosphere. At the top of the circle, Belief One, about higher intelligence as a birthright, is opposite the circle from Belief Twelve, which presents the point of view of eternity. This creates a new component to form and content where the connection between the various aspects of the content are determined by the form of the text. Once the reader progresses through the twelve different beliefs about higher intelligence, there are two more sections of the book:

“The Foothills of Purgatory;” and the last section, “The Return.” Similarly, at the beginning of the book there are two introductory sections, “Setting Out” and “The Approach.” Synoptically, the first two sections relate thematically to the last two, so that you end up where you started.

Blake’s book is a tool for progressive disillusionment. For Blake, disillusion is a philosophical technique that brings balance between the subjective and the objective—a technique not unlike Descartes’ universal doubt. It works such that if you have a belief it can become a target for disillusion. There is a direct proportion between the strength of a belief and the anguish of its disillusion. Belief obviously falls into the subjective and the process of disillusionment is the avenue, the way, to move from the subjectivity of your beliefs to a more objective, more scientific, stance. Each of the twelve beliefs that form the core of the book is presented from the point of view of a believer, and an argument is made in its favor, with representatives of its tradition called to witness in its defense. Yet as you move from one belief to the next, to the next, to the next, questions arise: Can you hold more than one belief regarding higher intelligence, can these different beliefs support one another, does one encompass another or contradict it, is there a progression through them? These kinds of speculations are a snare Blake has set, and as you round the circle and pass through the chiasmus and then finally close the circle, it becomes clear that higher intelligence is not a belief nor an article of faith but rather a scientific perspective, a way of looking at things grounded by observation without identification. In this way the subjective becomes a screen for the objective, where the subjective can suspend personal opinions and prejudices and just watch, witnessing. He calls it, “that which sees,” without the need to “do.” It is impartiality, freed from the constraints of egoistic concerns, a “disciplined act of receptive attention.”

Higher intelligence has its own logic that is totally enigmatic to the logic of everyday life. It is nonlinear, nonconceptual, preverbal, active information. From the perspective of this higher logic, the conceptual mind of traditional Western logic appears to be trapped inside itself. Conceptual logic has a linear orientation and is based on the perspective of the subject/object duality. With Western logic, if something is true then its opposite must be false. To accept or sustain both is illogical. It is an either/or logic and there is no place for an answer that claims both. The logic of higher awareness, by contrast, is based on the perspective of wholeness.

As awareness expands to consider wholeness, you enter the realm of what Blake refers to as “creativity.” There is a proportional relationship between the holistic point of view and the level of creativity, he says: the greater the sense of wholeness, the greater the creativity. Creativity is synoptic, and writing in ring composition brings awareness into the circle and makes the reader participate in the creativity of the text.

In former times, the principles that P. D. Ouspensky called “long thoughts” were found in myth, in the creation stories, and in the stories of the golden age of humanity. Now science is the domain of the long thoughts, Blake says, as science looks back over greater antiquity than has ever been presaged, and deeper into space than our ancestors ever imagined possible. With this, the realm of revelation has likewise moved from religion to science, and if the unified theory, so sought after in quantum physics, is ever formulated, then science will claim ultimate truth as revealed in mathematics. Blake talks about quantum physics as a modern revelation, a new religion, a modern myth, complete with its own creation story: the Big Bang. This science allows thinking in new ways, he says—it has a place for ignorance and can accept uncertainty and paradox.

The formation of beliefs in personal identity and in possessions are the roots of illusion, says Blake, and it is only by disillusion from these beliefs that we develop higher intelligence. The sense of “I” and the application of our sense of identity to things outside ourselves—our possessions—blocks higher intelligence. It is compassion and love that break through this wall to overcome the illusion of identity and the illusion of possessiveness. Compassion widens the sense of self to embrace all living things and even the whole of nature. The self is an artificial construct that, from the perspective of higher intelligence, assumes very different proportions. The self is blind to eternity, unable to see beyond its own concerns and boundaries in time and space. Higher intelligence takes place in great time and opens to eternity, moving out of linear time into cycles of time. These cycles create higher patterns and a sense of scale far beyond the scale of perception of the self, and place the self in a higher order of awareness. Then the cycle of our life reflects these ever-greater cycles and is itself a fractal of them.

Blake outlines a number of possible avenues into the other order of higher intelligence. These include beauty and humor, skepticism and absurdity, dialogue and dance, compassion and love. Play, he says, is the “secret of the present moment.” Play exemplifies the purposeless purpose. Another royal road to higher intelligence is impartiality which, Blake goes to some pains to point out, is despised by all vested interests.

The final section of the book, the latch, brings us back to the beginning. It is titled “Coming Home.” Here Blake describes how the everyday mind is a bioelectric information processing mechanism that operates on reactive, habituated, conditioned responses. He says that number is our attempt to

partition nothingness, and that it is just this nothingness that is the prime condition for creativity.

The realization of nothingness, of annihilation into nothingness, is the mechanism to go beyond the self; it provides the energy needed to overcome the habituated patterns that make up the everyday self. The method of transformation from the mechanically reactive self to a realization of higher intelligence involves acceptance of nothingness. This is a very real sacrifice of the old self in order to come to the new self. It is a celebration of imagination and the acknowledgment that higher intelligence is not anything, is not a thing at all, but a process—a process of recognizing our own ignorance and becoming aware of our self as a part of a greater whole and being able to move toward that wholeness so that it is a continual starting again. Thus we find ourselves where we started.

READERS' COMMENTS

The genius's guide to life

IT CAN BE INSPIRING to believe that one—indeed *everyone*—is potentially a genius and that the higher intelligence long sought by deep thinkers of many different beliefs is actually within us.

Rather challenging, though, is the quickly sensed realisation that Anthony Blake tags his book a “gymnasium” for good reason: it gives early warning of the effort required to develop “belief muscles” to communicate with an intelligence beyond our ken.

This selection and analysis of ways believed capable of achieving such a goal is remarkable in giving credence to beliefs ranging from the wisdom of prehistoric ages to promising paths revealed by modern technologies. Furthermore, many seemingly dissimilar hypotheses are not only equally respected but shown to correspond; as an example, the esoteric meaning of some ancient teachings is related intriguingly to what we now know of DNA.

Defying the likelihood of jeers from determinists, Blake quotes physicist Paul Davies' declaration that “the cells in our bodies [. . .] contain genetic messages written by Mother Nature”. Blake glosses that this thesis maintains that our DNA contains “active” information implanted billions of years ago that is capable of generating insights as well as an evolutionary process “that results in bringing into existence organisms capable of ‘decoding’ such information”.

He views DNA as being a “mode of computational intelligence beyond our wildest dreams of artificial intelligence”, but cautions that we don't know to what degree intelligence is in our genes. Describing as naive any notion of finding a “clever gene”, he predicts science's “bungle” factor would come into play in attempts to improve the human race by genetic engineering.

The reader, Blake allows, is free to regard Nature as a high intelligence that receives instructions from a yet higher power. He also recalls the feeling of his teacher, J .G. Bennett, scientist, mathematician and philosopher, that Nature is scheduled to withdraw from controlling evolution and pass this enormous responsibility to humans. That opinion may cause some incredulity in view of Man's present state of being, especially as Blake admits that “we largely live in an impoverished world of perception”.

That is balanced, however, by his observation that some people “believe that evolution is moving us into the development of new organs of perception, which belong to the future of humanity, or even to a new ‘species’.”

Philosopher Immanuel Kant coined the famous “categorical imperative” but it is his term “purposeless purpose” that is used to support an argument that Nature, indeed the whole universe, *plays*—“it is not a machine”. This is linked to the art of dialogue when, according to quantum physicist David Bohm, a “free-floating” conversation “can give rise to a new kind of purpose”. Blake sees this as resonating with “the broad perspective of evolution taking place ‘at random’, giving rise to agencies of purpose such as ourselves”. Such ideas, he suggests, come from an order we have yet to understand.

On a similar note, he observes that Nature can be felt as teleological, as having ends or goals, but scientifically understood to be without purpose .

Yes, but what about that captivating notion of our elusive genius? One proposition, we learn, is that “every single individual is inevitably the bearer of unique genius” simply by existing in the genus of intelligence (*Homo sapiens sapiens*). Blake perceives this belief as “tantamount to saying that there is a creative spark in each of us”, derived from western ideologies valuing each human life and “the inherent equality between people”. A crucial condition, though, is that “we only truly exist when we choose to”, which requires an act of will. (Fortunately, *Gymnasium* enlightens us to the psychological and spiritual significance, in its field, of will, choice, breath, chaos, universal reciprocal maintenance, creative and unitive energies, memes, essence classes, explicate order, transposons, demiurgic intelligence, imagination, conscience, negative emotion, hyparxis, the present moment, recurrence, synergy and

many other terms you'd want to know about.

Another belief about genius is that it is inherent in us as "a higher faculty" but that higher intelligence arises only when "humans cooperate to form a group mind". Although groups of people "usually exhibit a lower form of intelligence than their individual members", Blake suggests that for a mutual enhancement "some way must be found to coalesce the diverse meanings the group might, in principle, articulate".

He comments that the idea of developing a relationship with one's genius occurs in the spiritual "guru" G.I. Gurdjieff's teaching "as the theme of 'objective reason'." Gurdjieff, the Fourth Way founder, claimed higher emotional and intellectual centres are always working in us humans but isolated by our distorted relationship to our inner selves. "We are all potentially geniuses at being ourselves while at the same time we appear to devote considerable effort to not being who we are," Blake says of this situation.

The hope is that "the sense of freedom all people have, however blighted, is a doorway of intelligence" if enacted upon, for "intrinsic genius [. . .] concerns freedom and not powers".

Despite his forthright expression of what he understands about beliefs, the author announces at the outset he "is making no claims whatsoever to having been vouchsafed some revelation about the truth of higher intelligence".

One may relate this to psychologist Maurice Nicoll's teaching that Good supersedes Truth, bearing also in mind Blake's definition of the word "good" in *Genesis* as being an inexact translation of a Greek word meaning *something that works*. On this basis he interprets the *Old Testament* text of God's declaring that the Creation is "very good" as meaning the world works very well.

Gymnasium too works well in making understandable what is regarded as an "impossible" subject. A method of getting to grips with its mind-flexing exercises is indicated by *Alice in Wonderland's* Red Queen: "Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast." Far from being altogether whimsical, this accomplishment is a clue to the possibility, if not necessity, of giving genuine consideration to more than one's own rusted-on convictions.

This is in line with the need for a conjunction of opposites that also permeates Blake's *The Supreme Art of Dialogue* (2008), based on formulating "structures of meaning". Fortunately, as well as seeing value in contradictory hypotheses, Blake is adept in separating sheep from goats.

In *Gymnasium* he divides the perspicacious "sheep" into a triadic zodiac of categories, Part One dealing with "Human Potential", Part Two "Non-human Agencies", and Part Three "Dimensions of Time". The first of the twelve steps to intelligent understanding is titled "Birthright", the intricacies of this family of beliefs being divided into informative essays exploring Conscience, Dharma, Genius in Everyone, Creativity, Compassion and Egoism, The Education of Intelligence, Genetics and Memes, Artificial Intelligence and Intrinsic Nature.

The other eleven orders of belief are grouped as Exceptional People, Cooperative Intelligence, Esoteric Groups, The Noosphere, Extraterrestrials, Supernatural Agencies, Planetary Destiny, Ancient Wisdom, Futurism, Immediacy (dealing with discontinuity, the discovery of now, poetry and a child of our time), and Eternity

As Blake has explored psychologies of belief for many years, the breadth of information that emerges from his review threatens to be overwhelming, despite being pared to the knowledge necessary to flex those muscles of comprehension. A desire to develop sensual, mental and emotional functions intensifies as an open-minded reader progresses through the book, thanks largely to the author's utilisation of Gurdjieff's "form and sequence" technique in his teaching and writing, which gives recipients of knowledge the chance of gradually transforming it by their own effort into understanding. —Bob Hunter, Brisbane, 2010

From David Salminen, Musician

Really, I just wanted to say how much I've been enjoying your new book. I hardly know how to express my enthusiasm for it! Perhaps my sense of connection is greatly enhanced because of our recent meeting – the Gathering. In any case, I feel really connected with your project, and have been moving through the book steadily – over half way through it now - not skimming, but really taking it in. It is truly "food" for me, and in a nutshell, it satisfies a long frustrated wish to discuss many left over issues - or loose ends, if you will - from J. G. Bennett's books and talks, and of course the Sherborne courses. Yet what is most satisfying to me about your book is that I feel you have succeeded in going way beyond your own oft-mentioned "footnotes to The Dramatic Universe" assessment (however apt that may have been in reference to some of your earlier writings) to something much more vast and inclusive. The subject of higher intelligence proves to be much, much bigger than any one genius or school (as if I need to tell you that!). In other words, as I've already mentioned to a number of people, the full title, "A Gymnasium of Beliefs in Higher Intelligence" seems to me to be exactly what you have created. And I

am finding that “working out” in that kind of a facility is very satisfying indeed.

As if our overlapping interests in music and consciousness were not enough, I have found myself creating my own customized index to your book. For instance (and these are highly personal – I wouldn’t expect them to necessarily make any sense to anyone else, including you): pp. 59-60 a hint or secret re meditation; p. 85 a connection to my feelings about nature; p. 124 the idea of a collective tuning device; p. 139 re communing with the stars, which is a big whim of mine these past several years; p. 142 a hint about healing; p. 159 a key to “waking up”; p. 162 an association to Albert Schweitzer and his tremendous claim “my life is my argument”. I mention a few of these references I have made for myself as an indication as to how I am “working” with this new book. I apologize again for the fact that out of context as they are, they would not necessarily make any sense to anyone else, and my point is simply to give you some indication as to how I am taking this information in and making something of it for myself.

And earlier today, on page 234, I find you making use of one of my favorite Mullah Nassr Eddin stories, about the graveyard and the horsemen! I myself have often re-told the story to others, in an effort to inspire a sense of the way we humans go in and out of different kinds of mutual connection.

A great book – it evidences your many years of continuing to work upon, digest, and build upon what your many teachers and colleagues have taught or suggested, or in many cases merely intimated - beginning literally a couple of generations ago... a couple of epochs ago... etc.

From the Diary of Robert Fripp May 28 2011

with [Anthony Blake's *A Gymnasium Of Beliefs In Higher Intelligence*](#)

Anthony Blake's work has informed & supported my own thinking for years & this is a valuable addition to ongoing brain-nutrition. *Higher Intelligence* is a volume I have keenly anticipated for several years. Wanting the opportunity to properly dig in, it has accompanied me to Washington.

I don't go to Blake to get answers, although sometimes I get them.

I don't go to Blake to have my thinking done for me, although his thinking goes to places mine hasn't arrived yet. I don't go to Blake to have my reading read, although Anthony has visited books currently waiting for my attention, plus a pile I haven't found yet. I don't go to Blake to get questions, although he helps me better articulate the questions I do hold, and then a few more. And this is a core reason why I come to Anthony Blake: he helps me find a better quality of question.

Higher Intelligence is a superb, informed overview of an impossible subject, the product of the author's long reflecting. It is also very readable without loss of breadth & depth.

Mostly, I read a book forwards; and occasionally, backwards. Here, I have accepted the author's advice & am dipping in wherever the topic-heading attracts me, or perhaps simply where fingers have turned to the pages where my eyes are needed.

From a Letter Received from Joseph Rael (Beautiful Painted Arrow)

I'm reading your book, Great Stuff. I capture in it all of the universal I tell on planet Earth. It has been said that great thinkers appear once-in-a-while when great changes are over-due. I continue to follow your work my friend. Be blessed always.

From architect Allen Roth

I have finished *Gymnasium*.

Your new book brings to light a previously unrecognized subject, in spite of the screamingly obvious fact that the varieties of Higher Intelligence, as you have encompassed them, permeate everything the we intentionally tries to do.

What artfulness in organizing and presenting you vast material! Everything you have ruminated over and written down before, must be the prelude to this book. Polanyi would jump out of his chair to applaud you.

I'm barely conversant in your field, but I fancy that I can I can recognize a masterwork. Pleasant reading experience, by the way.