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## Preface

This book has a very simple point. Almost everything you know about intelligence--the kind of intelligence psychologists have most often written about--deals with only a tiny and not very important part of a much broader and more complex intellectual spectrum. It deals with *inert intelligence*. What's that! According to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Third Edition, 1992), inert means: "1. Unable to move or act...not readily reactive with other elements." Inert intelligence is what you show when you take an IQ test, or the Scholastic Assessment Test, or the American College Test, or any of a large number of similar tests used for college and graduate-school admissions. Many people do well on these tests, thereby showing impressive potential academic prowess, at least according to those who believe in the tests. But the intelligence measured is inert--it doesn't lead to goal-directed movement or action. As a result, these people's most impressive accomplishments may well be their test scores, or their grades in school. Those who can recall facts, who may even be able to reason with those facts, don't necessarily know how to use them to make a difference, either to themselves or to anyone else.

In this book, I will be concerned with inert intelligence only as it is related to what really matters in life: what I call **successful intelligence**. Successful intelligence is the kind of intelligence used to achieve important goals. People who succeed, whether by their own standards or by other people's, are those who have managed to acquire, develop, and apply a full range of intellectual skills, rather than merely relying on the inert intelligence that schools so value. These individuals may or may not succeed on conventional tests, but they have something in common that is much more important than high test scores. **They know their strengths; they know their weaknesses. They capitalize on their strengths; they compensate for or correct their weaknesses.** That's it.

Successfully intelligent people realize that no one is good at everything. Einstein wasn't. Lincoln wasn't. Da Vinci wasn't. Galileo wasn't. The idea that there is a general factor of intelligence that can be measured by IQ and similar tests is a myth that is supported only because the range of abilities they measure is narrow. As I will show, once you expand the range of abilities that are measured, the general IQ factor disappears.

There is nothing wrong with good test scores. I want to emphasize this: Good test scores don't preclude successful intelligence. But neither do they assure it. Indeed, some people with good scores become so enamored of those scores that they never develop the other skills they will need to be successfully intelligent.

I consider myself lucky. I'm a full professor with an endowed chair at Yale. I've won many awards, published over six hundred articles and books, and been awarded about \$10 million in research grants and contracts. I am a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and am listed in *Who's Who in America*. I have a terrific wife and two wonderful kids. Odd, then, that my greatest luck in life may well have been a failure. I bombed IQ tests when I was a kid. Why was that so lucky? Because I learned in elementary school that if I was going to succeed, it wasn't going to be because of my IQ. And I also learned soon thereafter that just as low scores on tests of inert intelligence don't preclude success, neither do high scores guarantee it. And from these lessons and the questions they raised, I would eventually begin my quest to explore and try to define the kind of intelligence that is an accurate predictor of success.

Some psychologists have finally started to recognize that there is more to intelligence than IQ. For example, Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence* is an examination of the emotional component of intelligence: how feelings affect thoughts and how to deal with them. Howard Gardner writes of musical, bodily kinesthetic, and a number of other kinds of intelligence. I can't possibly review in this book the many forms of intelligence that psychologists have proposed. Some of them are very specific, such as musical intelligence, which may be important in the lives of some people but matters quite a bit less to others. Here, I will focus on the kind of intelligence that matters to everyone in reaching important life goals, and that's successful intelligence.

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