# MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES AROUND THE WORLD

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CHAPTER 1

# Birth and the Spreading of a "Meme"

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In 1983, I published *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences.* At the time, I was a full-time research psychologist living in the Cambridge-Boston area. I divided my time between two research sites: the Boston Veterans Administration Medical Center, where I worked with and studied individuals who had suffered one or another form of cortical damage, and Project Zero, a research group at the Harvard Graduate School of Education that focused on issues of human development and cognition, particularly in the arts. My own work at Project Zero examined the development in children of various skills in several art forms. I had been trained as a developmental psychologist, in the traditions of Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Jerome Bruner, and I thought of myself as belonging to, and addressing, that segment of the scholarly community.

Had I not worked in tandem with these populations—normal and gifted children, on the one hand, and once-normal individuals who had suffered brain damage—I would never have conceived of MI theory (as it later came to be called). Like most laypersons and most other psychologists, I would have continued to believe in the IQ orthodoxy: there is a single thing called intelligence; it allows us to do a variety of things more or less well, depending on how "smart" we are; we are born with a certain intellectual potential; this potential is highly heritable (that is, our biological parents are the principal determinants of our intelligence); and psychometricians can tell us how smart we are by administering some form of intelligence test.

But every working day, I was exposed to striking exceptions to this orthodoxy. I encountered brain-damaged individuals whose language was grossly impaired

but who were able to find their way around unfamiliar settings; I observed brain-damaged patients who were lost spatially but could carry out all manner of linguistic tasks. Analogous double dissociations could be observed across the cognitive spectrum. I was so intrigued by such phenomena that in 1975, I published *The Shattered Mind: The Person After Brain Damage.*

Much the same anomaly cropped up in my studies with children. A young person might be excellent in poetry, fiction, and oral expression but have difficulty in drawing even a passable person, plant, or airplane. A classmate might be an excellent draftsman and yet have difficulty speaking, writing, or reading. Such ideas began to be expressed in my 1973 book, *The Arts and Human Development,* and my 1980 book, *Artful Scribbles.* Again, this pattern of dissociations did not comport with the orthodoxy that I had absorbed as a child growing up in the United States in the 1950s and as a student of developmental and cognitive psychology in the 1960s.

This vague intuition that "something is rotten in the state of intelligence theorizing" would probably have remained unredeemed had it not been for a Dutch philanthropic organization, the Bernard Van Leer Foundation. In 1979 the foundation presented a generous grant to the Harvard Graduate School of Education to elucidate the question, "What is known about the nature and realization of human potential?" A big question—I used to quip that it was "more of a West Coast than an East Coast question." In the event, I was asked to prepare a synthesis of what had been determined about human cognition from the biological, psychological, and social sciences.

## BIRTH OF THE THEORY

Some years before, I had sketched the barest of outlines of a book called "Kinds of Minds," but that project had never been launched. Receipt of five years of generous support from the Van Leer Foundation gave me an invaluable opportunity. With the help of several gifted research assistants, I surveyed a wide literature about cognition, including studies in genetics, neuroscience, psychology, education, anthropology, and other disciplines and subdisciplines. This survey not only strengthened my growing intuition that cognition was not monolithic; it also provided the hard empirical evidence with which to substantiate this claim.

Two steps remained. The first was what to call these dissociable human faculties. I considered a variety of labels and finally determined to call them "human intelligences." This lexical turn has offended some ears, and it still generates an underscore when I type the word on my computer. But it had the advantage of drawing attention to the theory, in part because it poached on a territory that had hitherto belonged to a certain kind of psychologist.

(Never underestimate the backlash when you step on the toes of a group that sees itself as all-knowing.) I am pretty sure that I would not be writing this Introduction twenty-five years later had I written precisely the same book but called it "Seven Human Faculties" or "Seven Cognitive Talents."

The second step entailed a definition of an intelligence and a set of criteria for what should count as an intelligence. I came to think of intelligence as a biopsychological potential to process information in certain ways in order to solve problems or create products that are valued in at least one culture or community. More colloquially, I thought of an intelligence as a specially tuned mental computer. Whereas standard intelligence theory posited one all-purpose computer that determined one's strength across the landscape of tasks, MI theory posits a set of several computational devices. Strength or weakness in one does not predict strength or weakness in another. What I had observed in dramatic fashion in brain-damaged individuals, what Oliver Sacks and Alexander Luria have written about with poignancy, is in fact the human condition. What we typically term "intelligence" is really a combination of certain linguistic and logical-mathematical skills, particularly those that are valued in a modern secular school.

As for criteria, these followed from the several disciplines that I had been surveying. As I laid it out in Chapter Four of *Frames of Mind,* an intelligence fits eight criteria reasonably well:

1. Potential isolation by brain damage
2. The existence of idiots savants, prodigies, and other exceptional individuals with jagged cognitive profiles
3. An identifiable core operation or set of operations
4. A distinctive developmental trajectory, culminating in expert performances
5. An evolutionary history and evolutionary plausibility
6. Support from experimental psychological tasks
7. Evidence from psychometric findings
8. Susceptibility to encoding in a symbol system

I consider the set of criteria to be the most original and the most important feature of MI theory. Anyone can generate additional intelligences, but unless they fit some criteria, the positing of an intelligence becomes an exercise of the imagination, not a work of scholarship. Interestingly, neither supporters nor critics of the theory have paid much attention to the criteria. From the beginning, I made it clear that application of the criteria was to some extent a matter of judgment. There is no iron-clad rule for determining whether a candidate intelligence does or does not fit the criteria. That said, I have been

very conservative in adding to the list of intelligences. As itemized in the next paragraph, in twenty-five years, I have added only one intelligence and am still on the fence about it.

As for the intelligences themselves, I have already mentioned the two that are typically valued in modern secular schools and are invariably probed in intelligence tests: skill in language (linguistic intelligence) and skill in logical-mathematical operations. The other intelligences are musical intelligence; spatial intelligence; bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (using your whole body or parts of your body to solve problems or to make things); interpersonal intelligence (understanding of others); intrapersonal intelligence (understanding oneself); naturalist intelligence; and a possible ninth intelligence, existential intelligence (the intelligence that generates and attempts to clarify the biggest questions about human nature and human concerns).

On a scientific level, the theory makes two claims. First, all human beings possess these intelligences; put informally, they are what make us human, cognitively speaking. Second, no two human beings—not even identical twins—possess exactly the same profile of intellectual strengths and weaknesses. That is because most of us are genetically different from our conspecifics, and even identical twins undergo different experiences and are motivated to distinguish themselves from one another.

## INITIAL REACTIONS

When I introduced MI theory, I fully expected that it would be read, analyzed, and critiqued primarily by psychologists. In fact, the theory proved of interest primarily to educators (and to parents and the general public as well). This locus of interest fascinated me because there was relatively little about education in the book. And just because I had written nothing about the educational implications of MI theory, readers were free to make what uses they wanted.

Indeed, MI theory became a kind of Rorschach (inkblot) test of the reader-educator. Some saw the theory as about curriculum, others about pedagogy or assessment. Some thought that the theory was particularly relevant for gifted children, others for those with learning disabilities. Some used the theory to argue for homogeneous grouping and the utility of tracking, others for heterogeneous grouping and the elimination of tracking. You can see some of these contrasting predilections expressed in the chapters that follow. What was interesting is that none of these ideas was endorsed in *Frames of Mind.* Rather, readers used the book to support ideas that they had already favored for other reasons. Again, you can discern this trend in subsequent chapters of this book.

Not immune to what the market was telling me, I began to think about educational issues and to consider ways in which MI theory might be useful

to educators. I also paid attention to the particular applications that educators were making and began to communicate directly with educators who had an interest in the theory. By the mid-1980s, I was in contact with the eight teachers who were shortly to launch the Key School (now the Key Learning Community) in Indianapolis, by all accounts the first MI school in the world (see Chapter Twenty-Four). And by the late 1980s, I had had considerable contact with Tom Hoerr, then and now the head of the St. Louis New City School, who used MI ideas in a way quite different from the teachers at the Key Learning Community (see Chapter Twenty-Five).

Because I had not put forth educational goals of my own and because I was intrigued by the multifarious ways in which the theory was being drawn on, I did not address this issue of an "MI education" for a decade. Finally, when I encountered a use that I particularly deplored, I spoke out. I went on television in Australia to denounce an educational program that, among other things, listed the various ethnic groups in a state and mentioned the intelligences that they had and the ones that they lacked. Of course, this was pseudoscience (as well as veiled racism) and deserved to be labeled as such. Fortunately, the program was cancelled shortly after.

## MISUNDERSTANDINGS

I also began to delimit some of the common misunderstandings of the theory, including ones that were prominent among educators. In a 1995 article, "Reflections on Multiple Intelligences: Myths and Realities" (1995) and in subsequent publications, I cautioned educators on several points:

- An intelligence is not the same as a sensory system. There are no "visual" or "auditory" intelligences.
- An intelligence is not a learning style. Styles are ways in which individuals putatively approach a wide range of tasks. An intelligence is a computational capacity whose strength varies across individuals.
- An intelligence is not the same as a domain or discipline. A domain or discipline is a social construct. It refers to any profession, academic discipline, hobby, game, or activity that is valued in a society and features levels of expertise. Skill in a domain can be realized using different combinations of intelligences. And strength in a particular intelligence does not dictate in which domains it will be brought to bear.
- People are not born with a given amount of intelligence, which serves as some kind of limit. We each have potentials across the intellectual spectrum; the extent to which these potentials are realized depends on motivation, skill of teaching, resources available, and so forth.

- An individual should not be described, except in informal shorthand, as a "spatial" person, a "musical" person, or "lacking interpersonal intelligence," for example. All of us possess the full spectrum of intelligences, and intellectual strengths change over time through experience, practice, or in other ways.
- There are no official MI or Gardner schools. Many principles, goals, and methods are consistent with the principal assertions of MI theory.

## MAJOR EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

After two decades of considering the educational implications of MI theory, I have concluded that two are paramount. First, educators who embrace MI theory should take differences among individuals seriously and should, inasmuch as possible, craft education so that each child can be reached in the optimal manner. The advent of personal computers makes such individuation easier than ever before; what was once possible only for the wealthy (personal tutoring) will soon be available to millions of learners around the world.

Second, any discipline, idea, skill, or concept of significance should be taught in several ways. These ways should, by argument, activate different intelligences or combinations of intelligences. Such an approach yields two enormous dividends. First, a plurality of approaches ensures that the teacher (or teaching material) will reach more children. Second, a plurality of approaches signals to learners what it means to have a deep, rounded understanding of a topic. Only individuals who can think of a topic in several ways have a thorough understanding of that topic; those whose understanding is limited to a single instantiation have a fragile grasp.

## THE MI MEME

But of course I do not own MI theory. To use Richard Dawkins's term, MI is a meme—a unit of meaning, created at a certain place and time, that has spread widely in the past quarter-century. Initially it spread around educational circles in the United States. But soon it ventured abroad, and it became an item of discussion and application not only in schools, but in homes, in museums and theme parks, places of worship, the workplace, and the playground.

The goal of this book is to examine the way in which the "MI meme" has been apprehended and applied in a number of countries around the world. In 2006 Branton Shearer organized a symposium on multiple intelligences in global perspective at the American Educational Research Association meeting in San Francisco. In the wake of that symposium, the editors decided to invite

individuals, most of whom were educators, to write about how MI ideas had been understood and applied in their school, community, region, or nation. To our pleasure, nearly everyone who was invited accepted our invitation. Lesley Iura, an editor at Jossey-Bass, lent her enthusiastic support to the project. Then in March 2008, a majority of the authors journeyed to New York City to discuss the ideas that they were developing in their papers. The papers were completed by the summer of 2008, and this resulting book followed shortly after.

## THE GENERATION AND SPREADING OF A MEME

Once the "meme" of MI was created and began to spread in the United States, the question was whether it would be short-lived, like so many educational fads, or whether it would have a longer half-life, and if so, how broadly and in what forms.

I was both surprised and gratified to see the extent to which the meme spread. The MI meme was probably spread chiefly by books—translations of my books and more practically oriented books like those authored in English by Thomas Armstrong, David Lazear, Linda and Bruce Campbell, and many others, ultimately appearing in several languages. In my 1999 book *Intelligence Reframed,* the list of primary and secondary sources took over thirty-five pages, and today, even with powerful search engines, it would not be possible to list all of the works spawned in the "MI industry."

In 1995 the publication of Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) catalyzed an unexpected turn of events. Goleman's book, which generously cited my work, had a worldwide influence unequaled by any similar work in recent memory and qualitatively greater than any of my writings. His ideas were more accessible than mine, and often our works were confused with one another. In fact, sometimes we ourselves were confused with one another. In Latin America, I was frequently asked to sign copies of Dan's book. A whole industry developed around the assessment and training of what came to be called "emotional intelligence," or EQ. In the subsequent decade, the writings about multiple intelligences were complemented by books on a dizzying array of candidate intelligences: sexual intelligence, business intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and financial intelligence, to name just a few. Indeed, once the MI and EQ genies had been let out of the bottle, there was no way in which to limit the written works, training sessions, and media presentations done under the umbrella of a pluralistic view of intelligence. (If you doubt this claim, test it out on a search engine.)

Going beyond the United States, an indigenous coterie of authors arose. In China, for example, there are dozens of books about multiple intelligences by persons unknown to me. Other writings, such as popular articles in journals

any other developed country, has long been organized around an elite set of schools that select attendees on the basis of measures of linguistic and logical intelligences. The possibility that MI ideas may be of help in dealing with individuals who are not smart in the traditional sense has not been widely embraced—at least not yet!

Although I used to think that the idea did not take hold in the Soviet Union because of economic reasons, there is so far little evidence of interest in the post-Communist Russia. I think that, like some of "old Europe," Russians think that they have education pretty well worked out and may see little reason to consult an American psychologist-turned-educationalist (and perhaps they are right). If it were not for the heroic advocacy of Michaela Singer, it is unlikely that my books would be available in Romania, and so far as I know, they are only rarely available in other former members of the Soviet bloc. My writings are widely available in Scandinavia and the Netherlands, in the Swedish and Danish languages, as well as in English. Individuals in these northern European societies seem to accept the idea of multiple intelligences, but a sense of stretch and discovery is less evident, perhaps because promoting MI ideas in a progressive educational terrain is akin to pushing a door that was already ajar.

In the past few years, I have noted two phenomena. One is that many educators in India are discovering MI ideas and are seeking to implement them. I suspect that as with China, the increasing affluence of the country and the opening of many for-profit schools has catalyzed interest in ideas that have already become trendy in the more developed countries. I also note a steady stream of people writing from the Middle East, including from Iraq and Iran, but not much interest at the ministry or publication level except in Israel. (Note, however, Thomas Armstrong's report of Islamic madrases that embrace MI ideas [see Chapter Two].)

In addition to the influence of authors or individual promoters, memes can be spread by charismatic institutions or powerful practices. Self-declared MI schools in the United States and abroad can prove to be a powerful Petri dish for spreading the ideas. In their twenty years of existence, the Key Learning Community in Indianapolis and the New City School in St. Louis have had thousands of visitors, many from abroad. These visits can have a powerful effect. When visitors from Norway attended the opening of the MI Library at the New City School, they pledged to open an MI library in their country and have just carried through on their pledge. Media that carry MI stories can exert great influence. When *ABC-TV News* and *Newsweek* featured the Key Learning Community, millions of persons learned about MI educational experiments. Happy Cheung's publications and broadcast have had similar reverberations in China. The existence of institutions based on MI ideas, such

and, eventually, doctoral theses (by 1999, according to Clifford Morris, a Canadian scholar and archivist, there were over two hundred theses), also spread the wisdom. Note that there was discussion in psychology and other scholarly disciplines, but by far the bulk of the dissemination occurred in educationally oriented writings, even as criticism was heavily skewed to academics, such as John White in the United Kingdom, who seems to have devoted a sizable proportion of his career over the past decade to inveighing against MI. We might credit White and a few other authors with putting forth a meme to counter the MI meme, whether that meme be a reversion to a single intelligence or a proposal for another way of thinking about a plurality of intelligences.

Individuals can be very important in spreading ideas. Zhilong Shen was a big force in popularizing the ideas in China. My own trips to China over the years, and presentations by other colleagues like Jie-Qi Chen and Happy Cheung, also played a role. In 2003, a major conference on MI in Beijing attracted thousands of participants and hundreds of papers. In addition to the influential MI school that she founded, Mary Joy Canon-Abaquin presided over a huge conference in the Philippines in 2005 that honored individuals who had deployed their intelligences in ways that benefited the broader society.

Sometimes MI ideas were introduced along with other complementary ideas and practices. In Ireland, Áine Hyland and her colleagues combined the perspectives of MI and a Project Zero initiative called "teaching for understanding," and these efforts exerted influence at both the secondary and tertiary educational levels. In Scotland, Brian Boyd, Katrina Bowes, and the Tapestry group have been catalytic in linking the arts and creativity using the MI framework. Through contact with present and future teachers, the development of curricula and assessments, and the conduct of empirical research, Myung-Hee Kim and her associates in South Korea have familiarized much of the educational world (and many outside it) with the ideas of multiple intelligences.

Those who embraced MI were not always as successful in their home territory. Tim Brighouse featured MI ideas in the educational authority of Birmingham, England, but the ideas rarely traveled to other jurisdictions. The MI Society of Japan has been active for a decade and has warmly greeted my family and me in Japan on a number of occasions. But in comparison to Korea and China, Japan has proved quite uncongenial to the MI meme. I cannot know why, but I suspect that as a whole, the Japanese population is reluctant to think psychologically (as opposed to sociologically) and to recognize and honor individual differences. Also, the Japanese educational system has been seen as excellent for many years, and that consensus may have reduced the temptation to tinker with it. My books are translated into French, but to my knowledge, there has never been a strong advocate of these ideas in France, let alone an MI society or MI school. It is relevant to mention

as the Explorama in Danfoss Universe, has exposed families and businesspeople to MI ways of thinking, even if these individuals never encounter the "MI meme" per se. Assessment instruments—qualitative ones, like Spectrum in Scandinavia, and quantitative ones, like the MIDAS in East Asia—spread the MI meme as effectively as books or soapbox speakers. Similarly, instruments designed for special populations, like the DISCOVER approach of June Maker and colleagues, introduce MI ideas beyond mainstream circles.

It is relatively straightforward to do a travelogue, to mention the places where MI ideas have taken hold and where they have not, and to speculate about the carriers of the ideas. But this *tour de horizon* raises two related and more searching questions: Why are certain regions more receptive than others? and What messages is MI bringing to these disparate soils?

## The Nature of the Soil

It is useful to think of MI as a new plant (all the while being careful not to stretch the analogy too far). Having blossomed on its home soil, its seeds are now borne to distant terrains. The new soil, however, can be so resistant, so alien, that the seed cannot take hold, and it simply dies.

It may be that the soil is already so stocked with other seeds and plants that there is no room for any additional flora. Often schools and institutions are so busy, or so self-confident, or so beleaguered, that they show no interest in any new ideas or practices.

Or the soil may be so impoverished, so lacking in nutrients, that it cannot absorb any new living matter. I suspect that there are some institutions, regions, and even entire societies that lack resources to attempt anything new, to attend to any new ideas or practices.

At the opposite end of the continuum, some seeds grow naturally and easily in a rich but hitherto sparsely stocked terrain. An MI seed has little trouble in sprouting in a well-resourced environment that has long been receptive to ideas like individual differences, teaching in multiple ways, a focus on arts and creative activities, and so on. These institutions can embrace MI ideas, but they may not be much affected by them. They can rightly say, "We are already doing this, we are happy to wear the MI banner, but [to coin a phrase!] you have simply brought tulips to Holland."

Of course, there are also false positives. As Mindy Kornhaber and colleagues have observed, many places claim to be carrying out MI practices and may even feature banners, slogans, and the like. And yet shorn of the appurtenances, such institutions look indistinguishable from ones that have never heard of MI and ones that are in effect uniform schools (featuring a single way of teaching and assessing). These places may believe that the soil is receptive, but in fact the soil cannot, for whatever reason, actually absorb the seed. So to speak, the seed dies on the vine but continues to cling there,

deceiving those who cannot see the difference between pudo and genuine MI practices.

Of most interest are those places, institutions, and liders who initially offer resistance to MI or initially understand MI in the rst superficial way. Using our analogy, these places at first prove quite resistnt to the MI seed. And yet, over time either the ground becomes friendlie to te seed, or a mutant version of the MI seed is able to take hold and entualy flourish in the initially hostile environment. I am reminded of a poinant anecdote featuring Pat Bolaños, the charismatic founder of the Key Lrnin Community. At the fifteenth anniversary of the school, she addresse a lae supportive audience gathered in a concert hall in downtown Indianaplis. fter thanking the many who had supported Key over the years, she deared "And finally, I'd like to thank the six superintendents who have been i Indinapolis since we first thought of the school. Without your steadfast opositin, we would never have achieved anything!"

## Why MI Takes Hold in Certain Sos

As the progenitor of the idea of multiple intelligence, I liketo think that its intrinsic power, beauty, and truth have accounted forits success in various venues. And in fact, I think that many advocates oMI ae attracted to the idea on the basis of its merits. Yet for an idea like N to oread in various regions, to go beyond the advocacy of a precious fe, thee have to be reasons that appeal to a wider group. In reviewing my on exeriences and observations over the past twenty-five years, I have identied fur factors that stand out.

**Rediscovery of Traditions** In some cultures, there is belie that certain norms or practices, valued in the past, have been ignod orminimized in recent years. In Japan, for example, the formal schools an appenticeships of an earlier era featured many practical arts and crafts (seChaper Seven). By the same token, the Confucian tradition in China recogned awhole gamut of competences that distinguished the educated person[see hapters Four through Six). The Diné group in the American Southwestused o honor various craft traditions, and approaches like the DISCOVERmethd devised by Maker allow a recognition of these practices and their ssocited cognitive and sensory faculties.

Sometimes this renewed embracement of traditionalvalue can lead to unexpected and even humorous effects. In China in2004 I attempted to discover the reasons that MI theory had taken suchhold The mystery was cleared up by a journalist in Shanghai who said to e, "Dr. Gardner, in the West, when people hear about the idea of multiple itellignces, they go directly to what is special about *their* child, to discovehis c her 'unique

genius.' In China, by contrast, the multiple intelligences are simply eight talents that we must nurture in every child."

**A Desire to Broaden Curricula, Pedagogy, and Assessments** In many regions of the world, there has been a steady narrowing of the curriculum, so that it highlights the STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), while giving short shrift to the arts, physical education, and certain of the humanities and social sciences. MI can be a useful vehicle for broadening the remit of education: to include subjects that address the several intelligences and ways of thinking, as well as teaching methods that speak to individual differences, and assessments that go beyond standard, short-answer language-and-logic instruments (see Chapters Eight, Twelve, Fourteen, Fifteen, Twenty-Four, Twenty-Five, and Twenty-Nine). Even when the focus remains on science and mathematics, an MI approach can open new possibilities for mastery (see Chapters Fourteen and Nineteen).

**A Desire to Reach Underserved Students** Even as the curriculum has tended to narrow in recent years, so too in many regions, curricula are addressed to average or typical students; there has been relatively little effort to help students who fall outside the mainstream. Accordingly, MI ideas have been used widely in special education (Chapter Eleven), gifted education (Chapter Twenty-Seven), and the education of traditionally underserved students (Chapters Thirteen, Sixteen, Eighteen, Twenty-Three, and Twenty-Six). Alas, this laudable aim can be abused. Too often have I heard a specific ethnic or racial group described as "having" certain intelligences and "lacking others." There is no scientific warrant for such a statement, and considerable damage can be done in its wake.

**An Affirmation of Democratic Practices and Values** Nowadays, few if any countries in the world would declare that they are opposed to democratic values. Even the most authoritarian of countries call themselves democracies, indeed even incorporate the word *democracy* into the country's current name. And yet truly democratic practices are often elusive. Schools are often authoritarian institutions that stifle debate, controversy, and individual points of view—light-years away from democratic communities whose members participate in decision making and governance. In several of the chapters in this book, we see clear indication that those involved in MI education are dedicated to providing a model of a democratic institution in a soil that has been hostile to these ideas—for example, in Argentina (Chapter Twenty-One), Colombia (Chapter Twenty-Two), the Philippines (Chapter Nine), and Romania (Chapter Nineteen).

## THE POLICY LEVEL

Many times these goals are put forth by individuals or single institutions that simply want to make changes at the local level. But as some of the chapters document, more ambitious efforts have been launched to alter practices on a wider scale. In England, Scotland, China, and Norway, for example, MI approaches are explicitly promoted as an alternative to practices that are currently regnant but are seen by some as shortsighted, counterproductive, or even destructive. At times, even in these countries, policies are announced that seem more congenial to MI approaches. Not surprisingly, supporters of MI are quick to embrace these reformist inclinations (China, Korea, Scotland, Turkey). So long as ministers of education around the world are focused largely on the comparative performance of countries on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)[1] examinations, we can expect that supporters of MI will mount counterefforts. And in the event that these supporters find themselves in policymaking positions, they will attempt to institute policies that are more "MI friendly."

I am still mystified by one development. A few years ago, a colleague visited Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. In a major library there, he saw only two books in English. One was Michael Moore's *Stupid White Men.* The other was *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences.* I cannot help wondering how these two memes managed to plant themselves in such seemingly resistant soil.

## CONCLUDING NOTE: THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL

The theory of multiple intelligences was developed by a psychologist; it was initially a proposal of how we should think of individual minds. This way of thinking initially proved most congenial to individuals who themselves have a psychological perspective on the world and who are excited rather than threatened by the idea of a plurality of individual differences.

I was surprised to see how this "inside psychology" meme spread quickly to education, first in the United States and then abroad. I was surprised by the staying power of the meme. And I am surprised that this meme has begun to be of interest to those in the policy realm, thus melding the personal and the political. It is striking that an idea that arose as an account of how the human brain/mind evolved and how it is organized today could end up joining forces with movements that give more voice to individuals and promote more democratic classes, schools, and perhaps even societies. I would like to think that this combination would please John Dewey, an American philosopher and psychologist who was perennially rooted in both the personal and the political.

Still, it is salutary to remember that the idea of multiple intelligences remains a minority view in psychology and that most schools around the world remain uniform schools, where a narrow group of topics is taught in the same way to all children and where modes of assessment are unadventurous, to say the least. My own view—or perhaps, to be more accurate, my own hope—is that the new digital media will allow so much individualized education in the future that the meme of multiple intelligences will be taken for granted. Should that be the case, the authors in this book will deserve considerable credit for sustaining and enriching MI ideas and practices in the interim.

## Note

1. A triennial worldwide test of fifteen-year-old schoolchildren's scholastic performance for the purpose of crosscultural school learning comparison.

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