What Are IQ, EI, and CA?

The differences between intellect, emotion, and the ability to handle chaos.

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"Normal is an illusion. What is normal for the spider is chaos for the fly."
— Charles Addams

Intelligence Quotient

IQ is a measure of a person's mental ability to perform functions considered valuable. The metric was created at a time when eugenics was on the rise, and people were being ranked according to their race, age, gender, and cultural background.

In the early 20th century psychological semi-sciences were being applied to education and social engineering. The goal was to identify people most likely to outperform in a modern, Western society. IQ is useful in predicting how a person will perform on tests administered in schools.

IQ is not so much measured by IQ tests as it is defined by them. These tests do measure something. A person's IQ is stable over time as long as they don't try to improve their skills on these tests, but the tests are neither comprehensive nor intrinsic. You can improve your IQ score with training.

Those people who do the best on IQ tests are those people who think linearly, which is like the questions on the tests, and who respond receptively to being told they need to answer questions. The questions on IQ tests are narrow-minded and specifically focus on circumscribed, deductive thinking.

Creative people perform below what is expected of them because they are inclined to think differently, which means they distort the questions they're asked. People rarely value another person's distortion of their questions.

There are tests that purport to measure divergent thinking, and there is a generally accepted hypothesis that creativity requires a minimum level of intelligence. The idea that you need to be intelligent in order to be creative is called "the threshold effect."

> "Investigations of the relationship between intelligence and creative potential provide a scattered view: While some studies support a threshold effect, others report low to moderate positive correlations throughout the whole spectrum of intellectual ability… intelligence may increase creative potential up to a certain degree where it loses impact and other factors come into play."
> — **Emanuel Jauk et al.** (2013)

Creative people question tests, the questioners, and the context of being tested. One does not need to disparage or be annoyed by the IQ test to do poorly, one simply has to explore alternatives to the approach the test givers expect because, according to those who have designed the test, those explorations are a waste of time.

For example, when given a picture of a three dimensional shape and asked to rotate this shape and pick what would appear, the good IQ test taker will focus on the shape, take careful note, carefully define an axis, and carefully visualize the rotation in their mind.

In contrast, a creative thinker will imagine themselves sitting on this shape and what this reminds them of. Then they will imagine themselves traveling over a landscape, meeting other shapes, and perhaps hear a symphony of shapes and colors. They will leave the IQ question behind as uninteresting. They will spend their energies on other things and be told this reflects a lack of intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence

EI is an alternative notion of intelligence that distinguishes itself from IQ. The notion of emotional intelligence is both a reaction against the tendency of valuing people according to their intellect, and

the recognition that managing people and resources is rarely deductive, and needs another means of description.

Emotional intelligence emerged from the areas of business, management, and consulting and not from academics or personal ranking. EI is more a matter of being socially effective than being solution capable. In this regard, EI differs from IQ in its use, goal, and meaning. And where IQ is presented as something intrinsic to a person, EI is seen as a quality that can be developed.

From a pragmatic viewpoint, EI and IQ came from different perspectives and developed to satisfy different needs. This undermines any attempt to combine them into an inclusive measure of ability. We intuitively recognize EI and IQ as exclusive and necessary abilities, and we'd like to see them as complementary.

There are tests to measure EI. They are different from IQ tests in being qualitative, specific to a given culture, and based on social norms. Current EI tests distinguish these aspects: experiential and strategic emotional insight, and the perceiving, understanding, and managing of emotion.

It would be interesting to ask the hard questions about a person's EI, such as their ability to love, empathize, be creative, and achieve emotional stability. But in the current cultural context, these questions are considered to reflect prejudice, and so they're avoided.

Analyses revealed that EI was not related to IQ but was related, as expected, to specific personality measures like empathy, life satisfaction, and mood stability. There is no reliable or accepted measure or even definition of emotional intelligence. It's a convenient buzz word, but measurements of it are not taken seriously anywhere.

The value of measuring a person's EI is similar to the value of measuring a person's IQ. Three positive ways to use this information include:

1. Further developing the abilities of young people with high emotional intelligence.
2. Providing remedial help to those with low innate emotional intelligence.
3. Determining if a person's families and schooling helps or hinders their emotional skills.

Ranking of people according to their EI is more ill advised because EI is a biased, arbitrary measure. But then, so is IQ to some extent, still it's useful in some contexts nonetheless.

Chaotic Agility

Being able to navigate uncertainty involves resilience and foresight. It also involves conviction and commitment. Conviction is not commitment. The first means to be certain while the second means to be reliable. You can be committed to what is uncertain. In reality, nothing is certain, and that's why commitment is so important.

> "Far from automatically miring us in cognitive paralysis, uncertainty plays an essential role in higher-order thinking, propelling people in challenging times toward good judgment, flexibility,

> mutual understanding, and heights of creativity.. It is the portal to finding your enemy's humanity, the overlooked lynchpin of superior teamwork, and the mindset most needed in times of flux."
> — **Maggie Jackson** (2023), journalist

Chaos is discouraged. Prevailing against chaos is taken to be something akin to heroism which is appreciated but not commonly encouraged. This needs to change because greater chaos is emerging as a consequence of technology and communication. This will only increase.

I have invented the term Chaotic Agility, CA, because both IQ and EI fail to measure one's ability to learn. Both miss what I feel to be the main necessary skill which is to remain focused when your environment no longer makes sense.

Emotional intelligence briefly emerged as a measure of a person's ability to navigate complex situations, but emotions alone cannot manage chaos. Both IQ and EI provide a measure of a person's skill in managing themself, but not a measure of how well they can manage outside forces.

Learning is the process of creating order out of chaos. It precedes one's intellectual or emotional ability and it requires that a person be resilient. Resilience is one's ability to engage in chaos and confusion without losing a sense of balance or direction.

> "Resilience research is plagued with conceptual inconsistencies, particularly when considered across different contexts, not least because of the diversity of adverse situations across these contexts." — **Bryan et al.** (2019)

Psychologists define what they call Intolerance of Uncertainty (Boswell, 2013), and this is used to assess a person's tendency to become anxious, obsessive, or depressed. This focuses on emotional dysregulation and negative emotional affects rather than the positive qualities of resilience, flexibility, adaptability, and creativity.

Fear of the unknown underlies mental disorders. Intolerance of uncertainty is seen as fundamental to worry and anxiety pathologies. (Carleton, 2007). This focus on pathology rather than ability is typical of psychology and psychotherapy. The alternative approach of positive psychology has a smaller following probably because it offers less financial reward in our problem-focused culture.

> "Uncertainty tolerance is an important, well-studied phenomenon in health care and many other important domains of life, yet its conceptualization and measurement by researchers in various disciplines have varied substantially and its essential nature remains unclear."
> — **Hillen et al.** (2017)

It need not be this way, we can teach practical ways to try new things and encourage people to work at the edge of the known. Rather than fear the unknown, as is traditional, we can learn to embrace it.

From the unknown comes knowledge, discovery, creativity, novelty, and new opportunities. Positive things emerge from what we don't know, but they rarely come easily or quickly. They also do not come with any guarantee of safety.

This is perhaps the crux of the issue: in a world of rising insecurity there is less acceptance of the very behavior by which we find security, which is the questing behavior to consider ignorance and construct understanding.

IQ, EI, and CA measure skills that can be taught, but with differing means and to differing ends. Some innate skills underlie them all, and these too are learnable.

Focus, attention, and patience underlie the Western notion of intelligence. In contrast with emotion, intellect requires narrowness, specialization, abstraction, and disengagement from what is not immediately useful. In short, a high IQ requires narrow mindedness.

Emotional intelligence is holistic. It requires empathy, concern, and engagement. Things famously absent in the world view recently espoused by Elon Musk who commented, “The fundamental weakness of Western civilization is empathy.” (Wolf, 2025) His comment resurrects past and future nightmares of the machine age.

Chaotic Agility is quickly rising in importance. Our cultural and geopolitical worlds are at a mixing point unlike what our cultures and politics were designed to address. Before this time we were trading across borders, now we’re puncturing those borders and this leads to an entirely different reaction.

What was a situation of shared resources is becoming one of threatened resources. The chaotic result is driving people beyond the safe limits of their cognitive security. What was an open field of opportunity is now being seen as a crowded field of competition.

Chaotic agility might be thought of as the ability to learn without goals, or an ability to learn under stress. Learning without goals is how we learn through play, while learning under stress is how we surmount obstacles after we’ve committed to a path. Play comes naturally, surmounting obstacles does not.

No single skill enables a person to prevail over chaos. It involves various skills that involve one’s intellectual, situational, and emotional awareness, retaining executive, emotional, and perceptual focus. We learn these things by encountering the unexpected without external support. There is a safe way to learn this. And when you’ve learned this, you can be a role model for those around you.

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