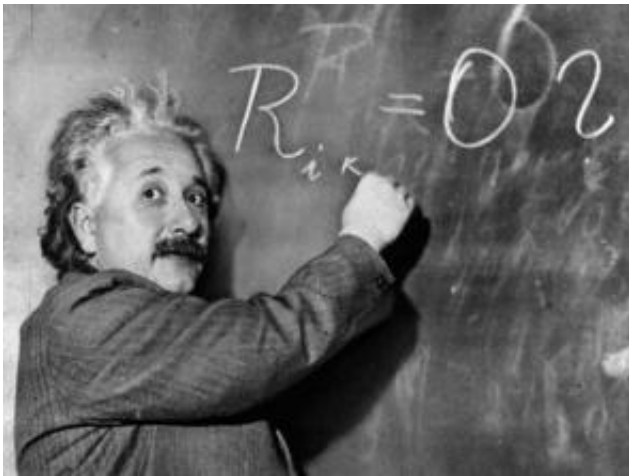


Expert psychologist suggests the era of genius scientists is over

January 31 2013, by Bob Yirka



(Phys.org)—Dean Keith Simonton, a psychology professor at the University of California, has published a *comment* piece in the journal *Nature*, where he argues that it's unlikely mankind will ever produce another Einstein, Newton, Darwin, etc. This is because, he says, we've already discovered all the most basic ideas that describe how the natural world works. Any new work, will involve little more than adding to our knowledge base.

Simonton's comments are likely to draw a strong reaction, both in and out of the [science](#) world. It's been the geniuses among us that have driven science forward for thousands of years, after all. If no more

geniuses appear to offer an entirely new way of looking at things, how will the human race ever reach new heights?

Simonton has been studying geniuses and their contributions to science for more than 30 years and has even written books on them. He also writes that he hopes he is wrong in his assessment, even as he clearly doesn't think he is. Sadly, the past several decades only offer proof. Since the time of [Einstein](#), he says, no one has really come up with anything that would mark them as a giant in the field, to be looked up to hundreds, if not thousands of years from now. Worse perhaps, he details how the way [modern science](#) is conducted is only adding to the problem. Rather than fostering lone wolves pondering the universe in [isolation](#), the new paradigm has researchers working together as teams, efficiently going about their way, marching towards incremental increases in knowledge. That doesn't leave much room for true insight, which is of course, a necessary ingredient for genius level discoveries.

Simonton could be wrong of course – there might yet be some person that looks at all that has been discovered and compares it with his or her own observations, and finds that what we think we know, is completely wrong, and offers evidence of something truly groundbreaking as an alternative. The study of [astrophysics](#), for example, appears ripe for a new approach. Scientists are becoming increasingly frustrated in trying to explain why the universe is not just expanding, but is doing so at an increasing rate. Perhaps most of the theories put forth over the past half-century or so, are completely off base. Modern science can't even explain gravity, after all. Isn't it possible that there is something at work that will need the intelligence, insight and courage of an Einstein to figure out? It appears we as a species are counting on it, even as we wonder if it's even possible.

More information: After Einstein: Scientific genius is extinct, *Nature* **493**, 602 (31 January 2013) [doi:10.1038/493602a](https://doi.org/10.1038/493602a)

Dean Keith Simonton fears that surprising originality in the natural sciences is a thing of the past, as vast teams finesse knowledge rather than create disciplines.

© 2013 Phys.org

Citation: Expert psychologist suggests the era of genius scientists is over (2013, January 31)
retrieved 24 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2013-01-expert-psychologist-era-genius-scientists.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.