

Ask A Genius (or Two) 69 - Conversation on Genius (6)
Scott Douglas Jacobsen, Rick Rosner, and Marco Ripà
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Scott: What are other aspects of the dynamic IQ test?

Rick: There's also the positive reinforcement. Somebody takes this test over and over and gradually, perhaps, improves. Another aspect of the Cooijmans model of genius is conscientiousness. Where if somebody takes your test over and over again, gets a little better, a little better, and a little better, on average over time, it may translate into more persistence in other areas of their lives. "If I can do this, then I can do other stuff." They have shown positive benefits from video games. People who work through incredibly challenging video games, where an average video game should take 60 hours to work through.

Marco: Take Tetris, for example, you can improve your Tetris abilities playing Tetris. I don't know if my test is the same as this. I don't know because I haven't played Tetris and kept track to say, "You're improving taking 10 tests" - say a standard deviation after 50 tests, I can't say this. If you improve a standard deviation after 100 tests, it would, in my opinion, be a problem. If you improve a standard deviation taking 3 tests. It would be quite strange and not so good to use them in order to identify very high IQ people. Obviously, Rick, you can take the test for free, if you're interested.

(Laugh)

Rick: I could take the test, but there's always the chance that I'll mess it up and ruin my reputation.

Marco: The ceiling is 172. Nobody has reached the top score. 2,000 people have tried the test. Nobody has achieved a perfect score.

Rick: That's an awesome number. A big problem is to get enough people to be able to norm it.

Marco: It is an online test. So, it is quite challenging to take an online test using a fake name with a made up address.

Rick Rosner: You'll know if Nick Nosner takes the test.

(Laugh)

Marco: The norm has been created using friends and so on. It is stable. More than 40 people, I have used their results. Those people, everybody has already taken a recognized test. We have about 130 zeta scores to create the norm.

Rick: That's great.

Scott: Two points, one, the main forms of genius that have been talked about are IQ based, whether Enrico Fermi, Einstein, Newton, or Richard Feynman. Those have been the names that have been coming up. As well, the tests that have been coming up have been IQ tests. What about other forms of genius, e.g. moral genius?

Rick: We haven't talked about creative genius. My kid is working with, and looking at, historic textiles. Jane Austen, the novelist, and her family put together a quilt with 3,000 pieces. I don't know what the relevance is, exactly.

(Laugh)

But if you're Jane Austen, her genius generated a bunch of novels that are universally beloved. Even though, she didn't live to age 42. She somehow came up with these beautifully balanced works that resonate 200 years later. Of course, she and her family would create this ridiculously awesome quilt.

Anyway, with mathematical or scientific genius, there's the idea that even without the genius science will churn forward and generate the same results, but, maybe, it takes a few years longer. But with creative genius, you have to imagine if Jane Austen was hit by a trolley or a carriage. We don't know if anybody would ever replicate her work. Einstein would have been replicated by Poincaré or some other dude, or dudette. Jane Austen might be unreplicable. In the future, I assume we'll have Jane Austen software that will generate pretty good Jane Austen novels. Anyway, we haven't talked about creative genius in fields where you're not trying to scientifically characterize reality. You're trying to do art.

(Laugh)

Marco: A couple geniuses I like, Newton for the math and Wozniak for the computer era. So, he had the creation of the Apple software and so on. The operative system that led to the development of the technology, which allowed the Skype we're using now. These geniuses, in my opinion, have contributed very much to the development of human beings.

Scott: Wozniak, Newton, and Jane Austen, any other thoughts on creative genius?

Marco: Darwin was a creative genius. In that era, evolutionary theory wasn't so close to their minds. Newton also was Catholic, if I'm not getting it wrong. He developed his theory and wrote a letter to the Pope asking why he reached that goal if it's not a problem with the religion. If the world is as to my calculations, let me assume the universe has this form, where is the error or the missing piece of the puzzle? For this reason, I choose Newton as an example of a genius.

Rick: Newton was a miserable guy. He was a mean guy. He was given away by his mom at 10. She married a new guy. Newton was given to a local person for many years. That probably didn't help his disposition or his mental health. Newton was a mess in certain ways. That leads to the area of comedy. With comedians, there is a common wisdom that you need to have a terrible early experience to give you a corroded view of humanity, and that makes for being a good comedian.

You can discuss about what you need to anneal to put potential geniuses through fire of miserable experience to come out with hardened genius on the other side. Probably not. Or with actors, if you look at the early lives of actors, their families moved around a lot. Like Tom Hanks, he went to like a dozen different schools. Actors always ending up in a new school developing new friends develop these fluid actor-ish personalities.

Marco: I choose Shakespeare and Dante Alighieri. They were also great geniuses in my opinion. Shakespeare was a genius in a horizontal way. He was able to embrace human beings as they are, really are. Alighieri was transcendental experience, starting with the human limited way of being and then going up and up reaching to the sky and the gods.

They are very different. Dante was 2 centuries earlier than Shakespeare. Shakespeare learned something from Dante, but developed a very different way of writing and also a different way of analyzing the world and humanity. It was very different. It is hard to make a comparison and say which was greater, in my opinion.

Rick: I've noticed. We talked about examples of people who died early. Shakespeare didn't live that long. Jane Austen didn't live that long. Newton lived for frickin' ever. I'd say the thing that is positively correlated with genius is having at least a normal lifespan, especially in the creative endeavours – not so much in math and science – or in the arts. In the arts, it helps to live a long life.

Scott: Any concluding thoughts? We opened with Marco. We'll close with Rick. Marco, what about the overarching discussion from tests to characteristics into minutiae like lifespan?

Marco: It is really hard to create a test to measure genius – to identify and measure genius potential and so on. Genius is a combination of abilities and aspects. It is a combination of perseverance, creativity, IQ. Different aspects such as luck and the team. Depending on the topic, the field, these aspects can be more or less important. For example, in mathematics, IQ, perseverance, and knowledge, etc., would be more important rather than in philosophy or letters. Shakespeare was a genius, but was focused on feelings and emotional aspects of people – analyzing them and creating a fast way to express these thoughts.

It was like a rock song for that period. So, the genius is different from the level of field and the period. Somebody who looks forward and is a step ahead rather than the other colleagues. It is harder to have a general definition of genius. It is hard to say if Shakespeare was greater than Einstein. I don't know. I can't say anything in this way. I am too small to give a judgment on Einstein or Shakespeare.

Scott: Thank you, Marco. And Rick?

Rick: I think Genius will become more common, more replicatable, as the world becomes more and more immersed in the sphere of computation and information, which isn't a terrible thing and it will give genius the opportunity to manifest itself in more and more unusual ways and

places. It won't just belong to the, historically, the greatest geniuses, who have tended to be seen as white men – as with a lot of stuff. It has been that kind of chauvinism, which, in the future, will be more perceived across a wider spectrum of humanity. It'll be more people having a shot at it, more different types of people will have a shot at it.

Scott: Thank you both for your time.

Rick: Marco, thank you, that was fun.

Marco: Thank you too, Rick. It is an honor for me to talk with you. Very thankful to Scott, for giving me this opportunity. Thank you very much.

Rick: Thank you, Scott. I'm going to go make myself presentable for my wife.

Scott: You both have my email. Anytime.

Authors



Scott Douglas Jacobsen
Editor-in-Chief, In-Sight Publishing
Scott.D.Jacobsen@Gmail.Com
In-Sight Publishing



Rick Rosner
American Television Writer
RickRosner@Hotmail.Com
Rick Rosner



Mr. Marco Ripà
marcokrt1984@yahoo.it
[*sPIqr Society*](#)
[*DynamIQ - Dynamic IQ Tests Online*](#)
[*Marco Ripà*](#)

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