Editor:

I agree with much of what Dr. Levinson has to say, especially with regard to the need for interdisciplinary approaches to studying intelligence. However, his claim that "the underlying mathematics [of statistical pattern recognition] capture[s] something fundamental about classifying sound patterns" is quite mistaken. Any causal phenomenon, from language to weather, exhibits statistical regularity; so, the fact that statistical analysis can be applied to sound patterns tells us nothing about sound patterns in particular. Moreover, I doubt that such analysis applies equally well to all levels in the "hierarchy of such patterns," in particular the conceptual or semantic levels.

Most importantly, one cannot even gather the statistics required by such approaches without first developing the models of the "different levels of linguistic analysis" to which Dr. Levinson refers. In other words, it is not the patterns in particular. Moreover, I doubt that such analysis is quite mistaken. Any causal phenomenon, from language to weather, exhibits statistical regularity; so, the fact that statistical analysis can be applied to sound patterns tells us nothing about sound patterns in particular. Moreover, I doubt that such analysis applies equally well to all levels in the "hierarchy of such patterns," in particular the conceptual or semantic levels.

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Letters

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