

## PRAISE FOR *PSYCHOLOGY GONE WRONG*

“Are you convinced by the latest claims about brain power, hypnosis, memory decline or the dangerous effects of video games? Are you tempted to waste money on a fancy new therapy and convinced that at least it can do no harm? Then read this book first and you may change your mind.”

—Professor Susan Blackmore

“This book is well worth reading by all those who appreciate the skeptical attitude and want to develop critical thinking skills – so important in today’s world flooded with informational noise, bombarding our brains from all sides. The book describes detailed analysis of abuses, dishonesties and frauds in some areas of psychology and related areas. This is not a book for psychologists only, it is a book for everybody who wants to progress their scientific thinking. There can never be enough skepticism and criticism.”

—Professor Czeslaw S. Nosal, psychologist

“The author had a simple goal that required enormous knowledge and determination: to reveal the areas of psychology and psychotherapy that promise results that can never be delivered. Witkowski wants to dismantle false claims and show that despite the abundance of pseudoscientific theories, increasing numbers of tinhorns and constant challenges to science – psychology remains a sound knowledge on human’s behavior. (...) Such books are rare – publications that help to distinguish fraudsters from genuine therapists. It’s reassuring that Tomasz Witkowski does not stop in his crusade against superstitions and stands for those who consider psychotherapy and psychology as science.”

—Jakub Winiarski, *Wiedza i życie*

“You might choose to agree or disagree with Tomasz Witkowski, but you cannot choose to ignore him. This book is definitely worth reading carefully! Witkowski, an enfant terrible of Polish social sciences, devoted this entire volume to contemplate the miserable condition of psychology.”

—Professor Dariusz Doliński, social psychologist

“*Psychology Gone Wrong* sketches a dark picture of intellectual abuse, scientific misconduct that harms—sometimes irreversibly—of those who are seeking help. Civilizational changes in recent years brought an increase of scientific swindles, not only in social sciences. We celebrate the anniversary of the cold fusion scandal, while renowned journals (like *Science* and *Nature*) recently were forced to retract several publications on miraculous microelectronic findings. All those scientific sins, hidden in the shadows, must be brought to daylight.”

—Professor Łukasz Turski, physicist

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Dr. Tomasz Witkowski** is a psychologist and science writer. He is the founder of the Polish Skeptics Club and specializes in debunking pseudoscience, particularly in the fields of psychology, psychotherapy, and diagnosis. He is the author of numerous books, dozens of scientific papers, and over 100 popular articles (some of them are published in *Skeptical Inquirer*). As an expert in science-pseudoscience issues, he is frequently called by the media to comment on frauds and abuses witnessed in psychology, psychotherapy, and other areas of scientific activity. In 2010, he was awarded Rationalist of the Year in Poland.

**Dr. Maciej Zatonski** is a surgeon and researcher, known for debunking unscientific therapies and claims in clinical medicine. He is actively involved in encouraging people to trust in scientifically proven therapies rather than trusting fairies, myths, and tricksters. He is the founder of the Polish Skeptics Club and a leader in public understanding of science in Poland. His struggle to clean up medical curricula from obsolete or bogus therapies was recently noted by the Polish Academy of Sciences. Zatonski is also known for promoting evolution and evolutionary sciences. He is an author of over 30 scientific papers, and over 40 popular science articles.

# PSYCHOLOGY GONE WRONG



**PSYCHOLOGY GONE WRONG**  
**THE DARK SIDES OF**  
**SCIENCE AND THERAPY**

**TOMASZ WITKOWSKI**  
**MACIEJ ZATONSKI**



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*Psychology Gone Wrong: The Dark Sides of Science and Therapy*

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*In the temple of science are many mansions, and various indeed are they that dwell therein and the motives that have led them thither.*

—Albert Einstein



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## INTRODUCTION

In his report on the state of the church from 1987, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, future pope, expressed his concerns that psychology posed a real threat to religion, that it was responsible for empty monasteries and superseded theology:

On the other hand, active orders and congregations are in grave crisis: the discovery of professionalism, the concept of ‘social welfare’ which has replaced that of ‘love of neighbor’, the often uncritical and yet enthusiastic adaptation to the new and hitherto unknown values of modern secular society, the entrance into the convents, at times wholly unexamined, of psychologies and psychoanalyses of different tendencies: all this led to the burning problems of identity and, with many women, to the collapse of motivations sufficient to justify religious life. Visiting a Catholic bookshop in Latin America, I noticed that there (and not only there) the spiritual treatises of the past had been replaced by the widespread manuals of psychoanalysis. Theology had made way for psychology.<sup>1</sup>

The future pope was not the only person to raise concerns on substituting religion with psychology. In 1977, Paul Vitz published a book entitled *Psychology as Religion*, where he argued that “selfism” (as he called the dominant trend in psychology) had replaced religion. Many similar books were published, including the book by William Epstein *Psychotherapy as Religion* – where the author shows that psychotherapists and their offices had replaced priests, preachers, churches and chapels in the United States.

Can psychology really have such a strong influence that a pope’s fears could be justified? Can psychology influence people’s lives as strong as religion and can it shape human lives according to its own assumptions? Are we as connected to psychology with such strong emotions as we are to religion? Do we devote so much attention to it?

In order to answer those questions, let’s try to look at our everyday lives through the eyes of visitors from another galaxy who just recently landed on our planet. What would they see? They would be stunned by the enormous popularity and spread of psychology. They would notice that most illustrated magazines have columns edited by a psychologist giving advice to readers. They would notice that many humans have scheduled appointments with their psychologists or psychotherapists. Some humans even spend a few hours every week in such offices! Our guests would notice that TV programs

often feature a local expert (a psychologist) who explains why somebody had killed, raped, defrauded money or committed suicide. They would notice – with great interest – that psychologists always appear AFTER some event took place in order to “interpret” what has happened, but that none of them actually accurately predict any upcoming events. In most bookstores, many shelves are overloaded with psychology support and advice. Celebrities usually discuss their psychological problems publicly and openly talk about therapeutic programs that they participated in. During social events, people exchange recommendations of various psychotherapists. Psychologists often show up at crash sites or in epicenters of natural disasters. They work at schools, hospitals, hospices, social support sites and human resource departments of most corporations. They can be found in the police and in the army, but also in churches, parishes and prisons.

Undoubtedly, these strangers from another planet must notice the omnipresence of psychology. They would most likely quickly conclude that its popularity must come from the enormous powers of this discipline. How could they justify such great fascination and trust that vast majority of representatives of our civilization put in it? How else could they explain the sudden (lasting barely a century and escalating in the recent decades) surge of psychological knowledge?

Those conclusions might be premature. Humankind has followed bizarre paths all too often in its history where representatives of our species showed a complete lack of rationality and common sense. Crowds of people were lost in the abyss of wars and revolutions driven by ridiculous ideas. Generations devoted their lives to defend values that turned out to be nothing but a mirage. Unfortunately, the popularity of a particular phenomenon does not necessarily confirm its practical value. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to take a closer look at psychology, look at the hands of academic psychologists conducting psychological research, take a peek into therapists’ offices and see what hides under the marketing slogans? Perhaps it is time – just as in a poker game – to say “call”?

We, the authors of this book have already done it. Many times we were simply astonished, sometimes terrified. If you are not afraid to shake your own beliefs about psychology and psychotherapy, we encourage you to follow in our footsteps.

In part one, titled “Fraudsters in the Temple of Science: Some Sins of Academic Psychology,” we present examples of one of the most dangerous scientific abuses: the creation of *false theories* with wide impact. Why do we consider them the most dangerous? Because science has a cumulative character. Scholars share their discoveries and publish findings of their research. Each scholar then has the right to use the accomplishments of others to state further hypotheses, to build new theories or to create tools used in practice – such as therapy. If a particular concept becomes highly recognized and widely accepted, other researchers use this concept as a sort

of figure of authority on the subject – just as rats do when following the leader of the pack. We act in the same way when we trust researchers, scientists and scholars. Such trust in and blind following of authority, as we will show in the Chapter 1 dedicated to eugenics, can even lead to crime.

But creating false theories, though dangerous, is not the only abuse. Later in the part one, we analyze other common sins committed by scientists – from forgeries and frauds, to plagiarism, to a common lack of attention to detail in research or in citing literature, to insufficient replications of research results, etc. At the end of the part one we will analyze the causes behind such conditions in academic psychology.

The products expected from science include all kinds of inventions, technologies, medicines, therapies, etc., that are made available to average citizens. This concept will be addressed in the second part, titled “Conquering Patients’ Souls: Sins of Psychotherapists.” It is dedicated to what psychology most often offers to their potential customers (patients) and what for many is the synonym of psychology – psychotherapy. We begin the second part with a description of psychoanalysis, created behind the walls of academic institutions and which deserves the title of oldest and most widely accepted (still!) psychological pseudoscience. Nowadays, the recognition and /or acceptance of pseudoscientific concepts occurs most often outside of the official academic system, or sometimes, during attempts to cheat that system. Chapters dedicated to psychoanalysis, the childhood myth and recovered-memory therapy show how, by imitating the academic system, these concepts gained the status of universally accepted and trendy concepts, despite being completely pseudoscientific.

In later chapters, we consider the essence of psychotherapy and discuss its efficacy; we will also show its negative aspects and the threats it carries. At the end of the part two, we will show a rather different perspective by considering what can be proposed as a replacement to therapy, and if therapy is at all necessary. Part two ends with an analysis of the causes of the current poor condition of psychotherapy.

Therapy and other forms of practical applications of psychology – despite their progressively more frivolous relation to dependable, fair science, have surprisingly significant market value. The activity of all sorts of therapists, personal development trainers, educators and coaches is a serious source of income and represents a significant but hard to estimate segment of the economy. As is every market-related activity, certain practices are important: market access, customer acquisition, competition, marketing, public relations, advertising, etc. In spite of the almost complete lack of regulations in the therapy industry, a global phenomenon known as psycho-business is unfolding rapidly. We dedicated the third part of the book, entitled “Beyond Control: Psycho-business” to this particular topic. This part also contains a description of a hoax that one of us conducted and published in the monthly periodical, *Charaktery* in 2007, revealing how easily pseudo-therapy can be

injected into minds of the public. This very hoax allowed us to reveal the relationships between academia and the world of psycho-business, to which we have dedicated the last chapter of the part three.

Many people and some institutions would prefer that the contents of this book never get to see the light of day, at least, not during their lifetime. Readers will find an excellent example supporting this claim in Chapter 8 of this book where we mention a time capsule on psychoanalysis – a collection of letters and other documents in the United States Library of Congress that is inaccessible until the twenty-second century. Similarly, specific documents that could reveal the history of institutions and people working on eugenics are hard to access. Further, access to many research results conducted at universities around the world is usually denied. This “no access policy” is not written anywhere, and yet certain research data is virtually impossible to review. During our work on this book, we stumbled upon various people and institutions that were annoyed by us digging into certain subjects, therefore some fragments of this book are literally written by life. Wherever it was possible, we have documented those events to our readers.

The first edition of this book was published in 2009 in Poland. Since that time, much has happened and changed in science. We have worked hard to recognize these changes in this edition. We removed many references relevant to Polish audiences that we believed would be of little interest to an English-speaking audience. In this edition, we tried to emphasize the problems typical for modern psychology on a global scale.

A global system of social control introduced in science via psychology is progressively less effective and allows more and more nonsense and frauds into the field. Sometimes it even encourages them, rather than prevent them. The goal of this book was not to seek sensations – we leave this to tabloid journalists. By writing and publishing this book, we were looking to achieve our personal goal: to safeguard the years of wisdom dedicated to exploring our specialties, research and educational work. We began our studies with the belief that science is able to deepen humanity’s understanding of the world around us. This fundamental belief that we share was tested numerous times by imposters wearing different masks. One of us is a doctor, the other a psychologist – often embarrassed by that fact, embarrassed because the representatives of this discipline around the world greatly abuse their positions and the trust put in them by society. Accusations against psychological studies or therapies are often valid and we must be able to hang our heads in shame. Being representatives of science, we do not want to spend our lives as con artists or members of a scam group; yet, we often feel this way as professionals in our field. It is also not our goal to personally rationalize years of our research and studies. We know that even an exceptionally critical analysis of our disciplines will leave a significant number of valid, concrete and extremely useful knowledge. Such a handful of knowledge is far more beautiful than

the magnificent walls of a university building made of Styrofoam and painted attractively.

Additionally, it is not our goal to undermine the essence of academic research and the images of reality derived from them. We would not want anyone to use the facts gathered in this book to ridicule certain academic perspectives or to use our examples to generalize to across the entire spectrum of science. These examples are meant to refer only and explicitly to the limitations of the societal system of science control. We ourselves continue to nurture our faith in one of the most beautiful ideas ever created in human minds: science. We do admit though, that sometimes keeping that faith is tremendously difficult.

The fundamental goal of this book is to describe and discuss the most spectacular misconducts and abuses, to point out the larger gaps in our control system, to make our audience aware of the negative occurrences in science, and of the new dangers and pitfalls that result from interactions between science, market and media. It is possible that this book will help to increase academic standards. Perhaps a few more people will ask therapeutic shamans a few uncomfortable questions before they use their services.

“In the temple of science are many mansions”... so let’s peek through the keyhole to the temple of science – specifically into the mansion with the big inscription over the front gate: *psychology – the study of the soul*.

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<sup>1</sup> J.C. Ratzinger and V. Messori, *The Ratzinger report*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 99-100.



**PART I**

**FRAUDSTERS IN THE TEMPLE OF SCIENCE:  
SOME SINS OF ACADEMIC PSYCHOLOGY**



## CHAPTER I

### IN SEARCH OF THE SUPER HUMAN: WANDERINGS OF EUGENICS

Why do makers of commercial film images pertaining to science rarely use their imagination? Why are they so often ignorant of history, the history of science in particular? Why, whenever a thriller movie is made, a “mad scientist,” usually a medic, chemist or experimental physicist, has to star in it? Some mutated organism escapes from mad the scientist’s laboratory, reproduces at an incredible pace, and threatens the entire human race. Or it could be an alien substance that allows humans to cross beyond their ordinary capabilities. Or a device that provides some sort of significant advantage that falls into the wrong hands.... The conventionality of those scenarios is unbearably boring to anyone who has ever had anything to do with science or to anyone who understands where some intriguing discoveries can actually be made. Why hasn’t a single director ever dared to put a truly intelligent character in the main role? What is wrong with a hero who has access to nothing but a pen and a piece of paper?

Psychologists are scientists who, until very recently, did not need anything more than a sheet of paper and a pen or a pencil to do all their work. With those simple tools, they have managed to create disasters that many directors and screenwriters wouldn’t even imagine. Some of those scientists armed with writing tools could even be charged with genocide. All this happened in the name of scientism, using simple tools such as the afore mentioned piece of paper, pencil and few columns of figures only.

It all started pretty harmlessly with a man who wasn’t even a scientist, although the methodology he adopted affected numerous scientists. Obsessed with quantifying anything and everything that he could see, and blessed with a bright, insightful mind, Francis Galton was looking for regularities and patterns everywhere he could. He used to count which people in the audience fidget in their seats trying to measure the spectators’ interest in the show. He counted waves during his baths to check if they formed any patterns. Most of his findings sound ridiculous now, but among them are some that proved to be actual correlations that survived up to today. Not many remember that it was Galton himself who established the basis for weather forecasting; he also discovered the fact that human fingerprints are unique and could be used to identify an individual.

Some of Galton's observations significantly affected other scientists, and in consequence, influenced the fates of hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. By analyzing biographical dictionaries, encyclopedias and the genealogies of 415 outstanding poets, artists, authors, scientists, explorers, judges and military officials, he concluded that the majority of them came from the same genealogical lines. Based on this observation, he postulated a hypothesis that we inherit more than only physical features (such as a color of our hair, height, etc.), also our emotional, intellectual and creativity-related traits. He calculated that 48% of the sons of those outstanding individuals, 7% of their grandsons and only 1% of their great-grandsons were also exceptional people. He published his observations in a work entitled *Hereditary Genius*.<sup>1</sup>

Galton did not stop there. From these observations, he drew the conclusion that human development, guided by a marriage control system that would pair together talented individuals, would yield talented people, just as it is done when breeding animals where farmers select the best individuals for reproduction at their own discretion. He decided to give a new name to this area of knowledge. The archives of University College London still hold a sheet the size of a palm on which Galton inscribed the Greek letters combining two words *good* and *born*. This is how the term *eugenics* originated – a word that inspired Galton's contemporaries and also the one word that became an obsession of his numerous followers. This one word was written into the credo of numerous institutions and broke the continuity of generations in the name of law, deprived thousands of basic human rights and brought death and misery to millions.

We do not want to put the entire blame on Galton. There were many historical reasons that contributed to spread of eugenics, but it was Galton's fault to draw far-reaching conclusions from insufficient and lacking research materials. It was his unacceptable impatience and desire to test his mere assumptions on a large scale. The imitators, adopters, successors and followers of eugenics are guilty of not conducting reliable investigation and research on heredity. They did not bother to verify or question Galton's hypotheses, did not try to replicate his results. Instead, they started a giant social experiment, an experiment in which psychologists played a significant role. After all, the enhancement of intellectual capabilities of the human race was at stake. In order to achieve this goal, a measurement of these capabilities was required. From that moment on, until today, the development of eugenics is inseparably connected to the history of measurements of human intelligence. The catastrophic campaigns that followed depended on the reliability of intelligence measurements provided by psychologists. All their methodological mistakes had significant and direct impact on thousands of people. Let's have a closer look at this marriage.

The first known attempts to assess intelligence were performed by Galton himself. During the International Health Fairs in the South Kensington

Museum, he had set up a booth where all visitors could test their intellectual capabilities for the moderate price of three pence. Approximately nine thousand men and women participated in this pioneering project. The tests measured the time it took for the subjects to respond to auditory, visual, or touch stimuli, and also to other aspects of sensory-motor functioning that could have been easily and precisely measured. Galton believed that intelligence is a general trait. He expected outstanding individuals to score better in all measurements. Unfortunately, specific measurements did not correlate with each other; there was also no correlation with independent indicators of intelligence. The project failed to produce the expected results and researchers were forced to develop intelligence measuring tests in a more direct way.

The first useful test measuring intelligence was developed in France in 1905 by Alfred Binet, a psychologist, and Theodore Simon, a physician. It was the first known public contract addressed to psychologists. As commissioned by the Ministry of Education, they prepared a test that consisted of 30 increasingly difficult questions, which allowed assessment of the intellectual capability of the person tested. Binet emphasized several times that the test results were not permanently conclusive, as a child's measured intelligence levels may change. He developed a unique set of exercises and teaching methods for children to improve their intellectual performance. Binet openly opposed the hypothesis of a hereditary nature of intelligence.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, his concepts soon got distorted and used for the purpose of eugenic "improvement" of the human race.

The German psychologist William Stern introduced the concept of the intelligence quotient (IQ) in 1912. He noticed that the intellectual age of a tested person accurately represents the intelligence of an individual only when it is related to the current, chronological age of a given person. Let's consider three hypothetical people: Peter, Mark and Mary. Assessment of their intellectual capability test indicated they were 10 years old. Let's assume their biological age is 20, 10, and 5 years, respectively. In such scenario Peter displays severe mental retardation, Mark has an average intelligence, and Mary is a genius. Therefore, Stern suggested that the ratio between the level of intellectual development and biological age would be much more accurate. He called this ratio an intelligence quotient. The popular abbreviation IQ was introduced later by the American psychologist, Lewis Terman, who further suggested multiplying the calculated ratio by 100 to express the quotient as a percentage and avoid inconvenient fractions. According to this formula that soon became broadly accepted, Peter's IQ was  $(10/20) \times 100 = 50$ , Mark's IQ  $(10/10) \times 100 = 100$  and Mary's -  $(10/5) \times 100 = 200$ . According to such representation, the intelligence quotient close to or equal to 100 represents average value of the current population at this age. In the case of an IQ lower than 100 we are dealing with mental underdevelopment and retardation, while results above 100 indicate progressively more capable and outstanding individuals.<sup>3</sup>

Binet's method of measuring intelligence and Stern's concept of calculating the intelligence quotient were welcomed in the US with great enthusiasm. Lewis Terman from Stanford University adapted the Binet-Simon scale, known today as Stanford-Binet, and it soon became a prototype for all IQ tests developed later. Intelligence tests soon fell into the hands of scientists blinded by various ideologies. Two psychologists are worth mentioning here: Henry Goddard from New Jersey and Robert Yerkes from Harvard University, (then the acting chairman of the American Psychological Association). They were deeply convinced that those tests measure intelligence as a permanent and congenital predisposition. It is also worth mentioning that they both were active members of eugenic associations. They spread a concept that was greatly opposed by Alfred Binet. They claimed that genetically inferior people represent a threat to the social, economic and moral condition of the country. Tests measuring intelligence became a tool for identifying, and consequently, for eliminating "inferior" individuals. Goddard and Yerkes were joined by Terman in 1916, who stated that the ultimate result of the common use of intelligence tests would be to free society from tens of thousands of mentally retarded people – African Americans and representatives of other racial minorities in particular.

Very quickly, the fact that measuring intelligence became possible provided the basis for the introduction of laws that enabled one of the most rigorously concealed events in modern history: the mass sterilization of thousands of people. A test result provided an "objective" basis for making a judgment on who had the right to reproduce. In over 30 states, laws were passed that allowed forced sterilization as a means of preventing the reproduction of people with low intelligence in order to support the "enhancement" of the human race. The first legal act that allowed sterilization was passed in Pennsylvania in 1905, but it was vetoed by the governor and never came into force. The first law became effective in Indiana in 1907. New Jersey followed track in 1911 and later the same year, the state of Iowa implemented a law depriving criminals, mentally retarded, and so forth of the possibility to reproduce. The sterilization bill passed in the state of Washington was appealed in the Supreme Court in 1912, but the court unanimously upheld its lawfulness, making reference to research on eugenics available at that time. The law passed in California in 1918 allowing compulsory sterilization, provided it was approved by a team of experts. The teams had to include a psychologist with a PhD, (at that time, Terman was one of a very few people who actually had such qualifications in California). A similar law passed in Virginia led to over 7,500 forced sterilizations in the years 1924 – 1972. A scalpel was in constant use, but the people subjected to these procedures were rarely aware of what was going on. Doris Buck Figgins, a young woman sterilized in 1928 against her will in accordance with effective legislation, was informed that she actually underwent an appendectomy. She finally discovered that she was sterilized in 1980: "I never knew anything about it... I am

not mad, just broken hearted is all. I just wanted babies bad....I don't know why they done [sic] it to me. I tried to live a good life."<sup>4</sup>

Since the first law was passed, by 1940, a total of 35,878 people in the United States had been sterilized against their will or even without their knowledge. At least, that is the number of cases that had been accurately documented. It was not the end, though. Today, the number of all sterilized people amounts to approximately 60,000. Not so long ago, between 1972 and 1976, hospitals in only four cities in the USA sterilized 3,406 women and 142 men, mainly Native Americans.<sup>5</sup> The numbers may be quoted endlessly, but they will never reflect the suffering of the victims of "science" built on insufficient or misinterpreted evidence. Compulsory sterilization of the mentally ill is rare nowadays (if practiced at all), but there are still some states where sterilization laws are in effect. In North Carolina for example, the laws were even updated in 1973, and then again in 1981.<sup>6</sup>

*Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free; The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.* This is the inscription with which the Statue of Liberty welcomes travelers disembarking from ships in New York. In 1912, a scary shadow appeared between the harbor and the Statue: the shadow of a psychologist obsessed with the idea of the improvement of the human race – Henry Goddard. Before they left the harbor, immigrants had to solve intelligence tests. Goddard's conclusions were that 79% of the Italians, 87% of the Russians and 83% of the Jews are mentally retarded. Publication of these findings not only fuelled the existing prejudices, but also led to tightening of immigration legislation. The Immigration Act of 1917 provided an option to reject people considered mentally inferior, barring them from entering into the US. In the same year, Goddard reported with pride that huge numbers of foreigners were deported because of their mental retardation. It happened thanks to the efforts of physicians who were convinced that intelligence tests may be used for detecting mentally impaired foreigners. Finally, the Immigration Restriction Act that passed in 1924 was a direct result of the lobbying of various groups and individuals opposing immigration from Southern, Central and Eastern Europe. The Act specified the annual number of immigrants from any country not to exceed 2% of the total population of immigrants from that country who were already living in the US in 1880, i.e., from the year prior to the wave of immigration from the Southern, Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>7</sup>

In the 1930s, hundreds of thousands of Jews, refugees escaping the extermination by Nazis, were seeking asylum in the United States. Many of them were deported back to Germany where they faced the nightmares orchestrated by the Nazis – faithful disciples and followers of American eugenicists. A significant number of those who were killed in the Nazi concentration camps could have survived if the 1924 Act had not been introduced; Terman, Goddard, Yerkes and other American psychologists who followed

are intellectually responsible for “scientific” foundations of the Immigration Restriction Act.

Uncritical application of tests prepared by psychologists blinded by eugenic ideas led to further distortions of reality. It was very soon “discovered” that black citizens were getting on average 60% worse scores than the white population. The application of tests developed by Yerkes, Goddard and Terman for the US Army demonstrated that 47% of white and 89% of black recruits demonstrated intelligence levels lower than average 13-year-old teenagers. Expelling them all from the Army would make it impossible for the US Army to participate in any military conflict!

The work of Yerkes, Goddard and Terman was continued by another eugenic movement activist, Carl Brigham, a psychologist from Princeton. His studies provided “unquestionable evidence” of the superiority of the Nordic race. The German eugenicists, initially lagging far behind the achievements of their American colleagues, turned out to be avid and enthusiastic students. They soon overtook the Americans by making the eugenic scenario of improvement of the human race come true not only by sterilization, but also by mass extermination of millions of people, wiping out entire nationalities and races, all based on solid “scientific” evidence from a handful of psychologists.

When we look at those events from a historical perspective, it seems obvious that Galton was too quick to introduce postulates based on weak hypotheses into real-life practice. We can see clearly, too clearly, the lack of sufficient research and evidence for the hypothesis of a hereditary nature of intelligence. The disputes in this regard continue today, and despite thousands of research studies in this area, we are still far away from any definite answer. Even very superficial knowledge of the structure and application of intelligence tests is enough to conclude that all assumptions of these eugenic psychologists were simply untrue because their research failed to take into account the cultural background of their test subjects. This horror, presented here in an extremely abridged way, should, however, teach us – psychologists – and teach us once and for all, the following rules:

1. One must not, under any circumstances, formulate any laws or rules when the evidence is hardly sufficient to form a hypothesis.
2. One must not present research results that may affect the lives of other people if we are uncertain that they were acquired in a reliable, repeatable, ethical and verifiable manner and with the best methodological standards currently available.
3. Any methodological ignorance that prevents the detection of errors in other scientists’ research and in conclusions formulated from such research is a burden solely on one’s soul.

It is not enough, we know, but it is better than nothing. Have psychologists learned the above lessons? We doubt it, as we continue to see great impatience in publishing findings that often only present preliminary results. Later in this book, readers will see that there are still millions of research

studies performed carelessly, without any attention to methodology, or by ignoring methodological standards completely. Methodological ignorance is common and tolerated in the scientific community. The majority of graduates in psychology are incapable of correctly interpreting results of simple surveys; only a few are able to pinpoint methodological errors. If this is the case, the horror may repeat itself at any time. Why? The majority of psychology textbooks do not even include the word “eugenics” in their indexes. Most of the aforementioned names are referred in textbooks, not in the context of a warning, but in the context of important milestones in the development of modern psychology. Last but not least, the popularity and spread of numerous pop-psychology concepts without any support or evidence derived from reliable research is more proof of the common acceptance and tolerance of methodological ignorance.

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<sup>1</sup> F. Galton, *Hereditary Genius* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), 317.

<sup>2</sup> R. E. Fancher, *The Intelligence Men. Makers of the IQ Controversy*. (New York, London: Norton, 1985), 100-104.

<sup>3</sup> A.M. Colman, *Facts, Fallacies and Frauds in Psychology*. (London: Hutchinson, 1987), 19-20.

<sup>4</sup> S. Noll, *Feeble-Minded in Our Midst: Institutions for the Mentally Retarded in the South, 1900-1940*. (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1996), 73.

<sup>5</sup> See: E. Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and American Campaign to Create a Master Race*. (New York: Dialog, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 385-411.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 63-87.