

Mismeasurement

Nobody asked but ...

Science is fine, but logic is better. Ayn Rand often challenged, “check your premises!” (And if one automatically tunes out whenever the name, Ayn Rand, is mentioned, one needs to check one’s premises.) A bad premise should, logically, go into the round file, because you cannot do science on the absurd. Garbage in, garbage out.

The above is in response to Stephen Jay Gould’s book, *The Mismeasure of Man*. Although we can impute Gould’s main objective to be the debunking of Eugenics, my big takeaway is that you cannot make mud into ice cream simply by processing it enough — you cannot make the Earth flat through distorted observation of relevant facts. Nor can you make the absurd come true by incorrectly observing a poorly chosen set of facts or assumptions. And finally, you cannot make science elegant or eloquent or “settled” by surveying the wrong variables with inappropriate calipers.

— Kilgore Forelle