The Limits of Modern Psychology

I am incredibly cynical of how most people, our culture and professionals regard psychology. This isn't because I understand it and I can prove them wrong … it is because the methodology, concepts, and premises of most current thought is horrible.

Take depression. The understanding our culture has of depression I believe is probably worse than it was 200 years ago. This is because the tools and methods we use to understand the issue are highly limited and it is trying to evaluate a subject that is incredibly complex. We are able to see some small snippets of what is happening very clearly, and we start constructing ideas and models around these snippets. The problem is, we abandon much more robust theories that aren't as testable given the modern tools.

Whenever I hear people talk about chemical imbalances, gut flora or hormones I often want to stab them in their eyeball. These are snippets of isolated information that play into human behavior … but we really don't understand them in a robust and accurate way. These ideas are pieces in a very large puzzle that is incredibly intricate. Constructing models of reality and proclaiming the causal nature of human action based off of this sort of information is scientism at its worst.

Don't get me wrong. Sometimes we have to make choices based off of the best information we have. However, most of the time, we actually don't have to. Most of the time we can state the vast limitations of our knowledge. Most of the time we can take very modest courses of action. Most of the time we can we can proclaim that the best experts are merely slightly less full of shit than a layman. Unfortunately, government, labor unions, academia, grant money and self-interested actors in their respected fields have a lot of power, a lot of interest, and a lot of investment in their arrogance.

I don't have the answers. I have some interesting thoughts that I bullshit around with, but nothing more. However, I know damn well that the methods and tools of the "experts" are not nearly able to paint the picture most people believe it can.