

It's A Win For The Stupid

It's a win for the bully
It's a win for the jocks
It's a win for the arseholes
It's a win for the cocks
It's a win for the ignorant
a win for the mean
It's a win for the selfish
It's a death of a dream

It's a win for the stupid x 4

It's a win for the conman
It's a win for the spin
It's a win for the sinners
with nothing within
It's a win for the brainless soulless morons
It's a loss for the innocent who've yet to be born

It's a win for the stupid x 4

Dunning Kruger x 4

In the echo chamber you are played for a dupe
In the echo chamber you are trapped in a loop
In the echo chamber you are trapped in your head
And the only things you're hearing are the things that you said

It's the death of the dialog,
the death of calm,
It's the death of civility,
the death of grace.
It's the death of humanity,
a basket case.

It's a win for the stupid x 4

Originally this track was called ADHD, and the chorus went "I got A D H D". I was half way through the track, and then Donald Trump was elected. I needed to vent, so I did a quick

subject matter pivot. The ADHD idea is now on the pile of ideas that might be picked up again in the future.

The main riff uses the old metal trick of the "tritone", but with the added drone being the distinctive shoegaze / drone pedal tone with the other bits moving underneath it. The Tritone is the most used interval in metal, because it sounds the most dissonant and the most evil. Though oddly, because it is the most used in metal, and metal is one of the most popular genres in history, it now sounds normal. Sadly, it looks like we've greedily sucked all the evil out of it and now it's basically about as threatening, as banal, wallpappy and innocuous as a major third. Now, [these four chords](#) used in every single pop song of the last twenty years are the real evil.

The running time comes in precisely at the magical three minute mark (3:03 in fact). I believe that a "pop" track should be able to say everything within three minutes. That is just enough time to make some structure, to make something memorable, and to play around with a brief solo or something. Nothing else is needed. Rather than being easier to produce a shorter track, it is actually harder. It is like attempting to pack an entire essay into a single sentence. It takes some ruthlessness to get to the point where you can strip stuff away to keep it within 3 minutes. You have to get rid of good loops, good lyrics, good intros, good outros, all must be mercilessly culled and chucked in the trash. This is how you can tell I'm not a very good writer yet, because I drone on and on. If I was a good writer we'd be done by now.

Three minutes means it's tight and honed. Three minutes is not enough time for things to sag. Because actually the difference between amateur music and professional music is not that amateur music doesn't have any ideas in it, or that it sounds bad, or that it's out of time or out of tune. All these things are now easy to ensure. Music technology will look after all those things for you. What technology can't do (yet) is edit your track down to three minutes.

Sagginess is the thing that fills me with fear when a new musician asks me for feedback on their track. Even before I have heard it I know that their track will at some point sag, it will limp and it will be flaccid, and this will be discomfiting, and I won't know what to say. The track, of course will be "OK" it will sound very much like music. It is music that anyone would be happy to listen to and they would say "this sounds really like music, well done, you are clearly a musician!". It will have a few nice bits in it, it will sound more or less cleanly produced. It will be fine. But no one cares about fine. They want amazing. So the beginner will, naturally, want to know what they could do to the track to make it better, to

make it amazing. What's the magic fairy dust that is needed? What do they need to learn over the next year or so? How can I haz amazings?

And it is so hard to explain that they just have to stop the thing from being saggy. Because sagginess is something I have spent so many years trying to eliminate, and still struggle with, and that I've never known how to explain the mechanics of. I don't feel qualified to tell you how to not make your tracks sag, because almost everything I ever make sags. I still listen to my tracks and force my head into a kind of simulated semi-excitement to try and prop up the slumpy bits with a few wishful thinking toothpicks. This never works.

So of course I'll try now, in the spirit of pedagogical altruism, and also in the spirit of explaining this once and for all so that I can avoid an personally embarrassing situation next time someone asks me what they think of their track.

Ego and Intervention

You know when you listen to something and then it gets stuck on repeat without you knowing? Then ten minutes later you realise that it's been going on, like, For... Ever... ? You know that feeling that "no one's in control"? It's a kind of meaninglessness that oozes out of the sound, it sounds like no one is home, it sounds like the music in a hotel lobby, or something autogenerated. It sounds like a shop window display looks at night. It is the sound of arbitrariness. Like the music is spinning away in the void of deep space zombielike and nobody is listening or feeling anything. This is kind of what electronic music sounds like when you're not very good at it yet. The problem is something like... that you have not yet learned that every single aspect of the thing has to serve some purpose related to every other part of the thing. You have not yet learned that music is not just adding stuff like you would add food to your plate from a hotel buffet. You have not yet learned that you cannot rely on repeating sounds to do your work for you, but conversely you have not yet learned that you cannot rely on your own ego's interventions as a substitute for The True Majesty of Pure Untouched Sound.

In "reasonably competent beginner"'s music there is simultaneously too much of the musician in there and too little. This statement sounds self contradictory and meaningless so I'll attack that again. When Picasso sticks some handlebars on a saddle to make a bull, somehow it still looks like a Picasso. There is virtually no skill involved, there is virtually none of the artist's decision making involved, and yet a distinct iconic statement is produced nonetheless. The sound of your music should be similar. You should make hardly any "decisions" whilst making a track, you should not attempt to exert your will on it, and

yet the track, taken as a whole, should be entirely an expression of your will. More specifically, your will averaged over the course of your musical career. Since most of the stuff that emanates from you in the course of making music emerges from things you have absorbed unconsciously, the music you produce will in the most part be determined by what you have learned and absorbed and have no conscious control over. There's very little your conscious mind can do *in the moment* to improve upon these years of experience, so it's best not to try too hard. And don't whatever you do, try to *think*.

You *think* that if you just tweaked everything and made it "right" then the track will be great, that's not exactly how it is: tweaking things is indeed half the story, but it's the least important half. As a beginner, you might think you need to touch everything and put it where you want it to go, but if you try that there is too much interference, too much fiddling, the sounds cannot breathe, so you are intervening too much. At the same time, as a beginner you also lack the technical fortitude to wrestle endlessly until something is right. There is a conflict here: you need to be so committed to your work that you are *willing* to spend three days on a single 1/16th note, but yet you must avoid such distractions, and such impositions of your ego, like the coronavirus.

I have made tracks where every single sixteenth note has been individually edited and tweaked. And yet I believe they still work, they somehow stayed alive and spontaneous. That is because I managed to get into a mental zone where the editing was subconscious, and only the overall effect of what I was doing was important. It was almost as though my brain had split into two separate consciousnesses - one handling the detail, the other handling the funk. I believe that this ability to separate the physical, emotional part of music and the technical, detail part of music and suspend them simultaneously in your head is probably the most important single skill in electronic music production. This was such a peculiar state of mind that odd stuff happened, for instance I would start to hear voices. After four hours of being in the microsound zone it felt like my inner monologue had nothing to do anymore, so it just went off and did its own thing for a while. I would hear comedy stereotypes and impressions of other people going on, again separate from the other two consciousnesses doing the editing and the structuring of the sounds, and then some other part of me sat just watching all this unfold. Pretty weird.

The parts that build your track should appear as natural as a branch making up a tree, there's no sense that [branches have been "stuck onto" a tree](#) - they're just there, grown out of the tree, they *are* the tree. But yet the track *as a whole* should appear completely "made by you" and completely personal - simultaneously like the track has always existed, like the

number four¹, but also like only you could have ever made it, like your fingerprint or your DNA.

Very often I get the feeling from beginners music (and for sure my own on bad days) that the opposite is true: the parts seem artificially, deliberately placed and manufactured, but the whole seems out of control and contingent.

The example I would try to give is the guitar solo in this track. It might be completely the wrong example, and the wrong track, but we're here now.

I admit, I love doing guitar solos. I used to like solos with many, many notes. Notes galore. That didn't end well. We'll talk about that one later (as my driving instructor used to say in the heat of one of my screw ups). So it is with irreverence with regard to my own musical history that I here play a solo that has just one single note. Just bashed over and over. Just pure idiotic stupidity shining out of my brain. Nothing in there but NAN NAAANNAANNNA NANNAAANA. I'm weirdly proud of this dumb-ass guitar solo and I think it's the best bit in this track. There is a focussed, exasperated, moronic energy there. It is, dare I say, punk. Obviously I don't think it's musical brilliance. It doesn't result from musical skill, it doesn't result from a conscious decision to be smart and do something cool, it was just what came out on the spur of the moment, faithfully expressed my utter frustration, and seemed to fit the track. It is dumb but it is right, it fits the world of the song (the vocals are all on that same single B note too), it fits with the singular, lobotomized, idiotic rage that we're all experiencing, and yet I don't think many other people in the same situation would have made the decision to do a single note guitar solo. Of course, single note solos are a common thing, I certainly haven't *invented* that. There's even an [Adam Neely video about them on YouTube](#). Maybe I'm just deluding myself but, it is still a "Cursor Miner style" thing to do and because of my fingers bending the note it still sounds like me playing that guitar.

Sometimes you think about a part of your track and say to yourself - this bit makes the whole track work! OK, great, well done, nice bit you got. But now your job is to make *every single thing or concept* in your track be that bit that makes the whole thing work. Even the bits of the track that aren't the best bit need to be the best bit, in that if the listener really focuses on that, they discover some new joy and satisfaction from it. Sadly, very few of my tracks reach that exalted state, but on a good day I get some way there.

¹ Not like the number nine, which always seemed a bit of an afterthought to me.

Doing It Again

Doing it again is dangerous. There is a high chance that you will simply fail *again* and there's nothing more dispiriting than that. The number of times I've been trapped in a loop of ever more stilted, self conscious and questionable vocal takes...

I used to *never* do anything again, religiously. First take, best take, only take. Zen painting. If something sounded crap I would just chuck it and do something else entirely. This had the effect of keeping the creative momentum moving forward. I think the art of bailing out is an excellent one to master. Maybe it is possible to create an album constructed entirely of bailouts? It could be called "The Financial Sector".

As time went on and I became more experienced, and more intimately versed in my own failings, I learned to judge when something is just rubbish, and when something has genuine potential but I have simply underperformed. So now, with my cruel-but-fair talent-spotter's hat on, I can take a cold hard look at something lame and say either "you haven't got what it takes, I'm sorry", or "sonny, I'm gonna make you a star". This is of course, much of what a producer's job consists of, knowing when someone can do better, and coaxing that out of them, and knowing when they can't and to surreptitiously massage the music to avoid that inconvenient truth. This is difficult when you're working with a band, but when you're working with yourself it can be equally fraught. So to this end I have developed multiple "hats" or even multiple personalities with which to tackle the various issues.

So back to "sagginess": I had to redo the first verse's vocals because they were saggy. My producer self (he is called Tony, of course) gave my vocalist a bit of a pep talk. This is what he said:

"You're starting off kinda crappy and then building up over a few lines, which sucks! I don't wanna hear that. I don't want this song to suck in the first ten seconds. I don't want this song to immediately hit you in the face with suck. The kids are just gonna turn the damn thing off and go play Nintendo. You don't want the first line to sound like you just got out of bed. It sounds like you're auditioning for Dawn of the Dead. You sound like you just picked up the phone whilst being caught wanking in a phone box. You gotta come in *strong*, buddy. The first line of the vocals is always absolutely essential to nail, my friend, and it's the hardest bit, because sometimes peekaboo Limeys like you need a second or two for your voice to find its feet. Yes, I'm the goddamn producer and if I say voices have feet then voices

have fucking feet, OK? Your job is to find them, and place them firmly on the ground, but also hit the ground running. So what I wanna see is you dancing around to get into the track, and shout a few things, hip-hop style, to get yourself hyped up enough. Seriously. Say “yo” a couple of times. You think I’m kidding, I’m not, say “yo”. Say it like you mean it. You’re not doing that. I haven’t heard a single “yo” come out your pathetic little face. What, am I wasting my time here? If I don’t see a fist pump and hear a “yo” within the first two bars then we’re packing up and going home. Your throat should come in all guns blazing, and if I say that a throat can have guns then it can have guns OK? Machine guns. Dirty great battleship guns. I wanna see your yo-face on the end of a battleship gun muzzle with a voice with feet that hit the ground running, OK? TAKE 12”.

And so on. An extended powdery nasal inhalation is often heard from the producer’s booth after these pep talks.

Vocals are really hard, and embarrassing and time consuming, so why do I bother? Because Tony says I have to, that’s why. A coke-addled tyrant with terrible taste in man-jewelry yells in my face otherwise, and he’s the one paying for the Eurorack modules, and is a fundamentally terrifying individual, so what choice do I have?

A friend who listened to this track was surprised that the voice was so different from mine. People often express surprise at the fact that my musical character is different from my real life character. The fact they are surprised surprises me. I am somewhat less surprised. In fact this is more or less the entire point of show biz isn’t it?

There are two characters in this song, the one in the chorus being very different from the verse. The chorus character is Advert Man. Advert Man is a Top Gear man’s man style voice of annoying adverts that try to sell you trivial things in the most overconfident and over-enthusiastic way possible. There are many tricks to making your voice sound more confident and more persuasively energetic. Louder, deeper, with more exaggerated pitch modulation and with a strong downwards pitch sweep at the end of every sentence. This downward sweep is a signal that what you have just said is authoritative. It is the exact opposite of the annoying “upspeak” that, like, blights the speech of younger generations? Upspeak signals to other people that what you’re saying is wrong². I never use these confidence tricks in normal life because I consider them to be manipulative. Since this song is about manipulation, Advert Man was the perfect character to wheel out.

² Uncoincidentally, most of what these kids say is in fact wrong [Mike].

There is in fact research that shows that the stupider you are, the more confident in your own opinion you become. This phenomena is known as the [Dunning Kruger effect](#). This is one of those marvelous pieces of research which scientifically proved something that every smart, sensitive person had long suspected, but were too unsure of themselves to ever discuss with anyone. It's also great when a piece of science becomes popular knowledge, and becomes a meme in popular culture. I think the fact we now know this to be a fact, and have a handy shorthand to describe it, makes culture as a whole smarter. Another thing I like about "Dunning Kruger" is how percussive the syllables are. This is why I have used the words as a chant in the bridge section of this track. The phrase seems to perfectly rollick along with the stupid wonky section. The 6/8 time signature is the stupidest of all time signatures, some people call it "clown-step", so clearly there had to be a section in this which was like an expression of the stupids Dunning-Krugging away. This section is what I would call an "extreme intervention". At some point when making a track I will become aware that the track is too cohesive and formulaic, and I will have to intervene with something extreme and stupid. This time signature swap out is just such an intervention.

The verse voice is more of a Johnny Rotten style whine. I've always loved Mr Lydon's skinny, snarky, sarcastic vocals, and the reason I use one of these vintage Shure microphones whenever I play live is because I saw the video for [God Save The Queen](#) and thought Johnny Rotten's mic looked totally awesome. Its anachronistic vintage sheen perfectly juxtaposes Punk's anarchistic irreverent sneer. I've been using that same microphone for every gig since 2004, and it's become something of a trademark. But actually the main reason this mic is awesome is that it has an extremely convenient on/off switch on the front, and in most of the clubs I play in, and the amount of distortion I use, it's the only thing that can prevent horrendous screeching feedback. I still don't own the gold version, though. One day it will be mine.

Incidentally, don't go thinking that you and I are exempt from the Dunning Kruger effect. There's an extremely high chance that the stuff that you don't know much about, you will have an extremely strong opinion on. The more you find out about it, the less sure you will become. The DK effect surely also applies across different subjects. The most complex and intricate of subjects, with the trickiest problems, subjects that most humans can barely grasp the complexities of and know next to nothing about, will be exactly those that they have the strongest and most confident opinions about. Which brings us neatly back to politics, and brings to mind our dear friend, Mike Trollfield.

Rant Time!

Now this is one article where the rant blew up and is many orders of magnitude longer than the bit about the track. It comes with the ranty nature of the track I guess. And the fucked up nature of the times we live in.

So I hereby warn you that Mike is about to be insulting, inflammatory, controversial and offensive. The gloves will be off. He believes Brexit et al has entitled him to go here. He is wrong. But then aren't we all? Dunning-Kruger aside, It was so, so cathartic to write. I'm sorry.

The Echo Chamber (Are we getting stupider?)

I'm sure you feel at times as though the world is getting stupider. I *feel* that too, but don't actually believe that it's true. I think the world is getting smarter every day. The reason it might look otherwise is because information technology has brought broadcasting-to-the-masses to the masses. In the past if you wanted to spread information you had to either be a rich aristocrat with a coterie of personal messengers, or become a monk and write out books by hand. The number of people 'online' in any country was a few thousand, and upload bandwidth was severely limited by the huge amount of time and effort it took you to draw those splendidly ornate gilded capital letters that started each chapter of your weighty mono-tome.

Then came the printing press, which meant ordinary people could get books. Yay! Also triggering a hundred years of religious conflict across Europe. Boo! But ordinary people didn't write books. You needed a bit of extra specialised knowledge to write, and you also needed to persuade a publisher to print your book, and you needed to be good enough that people would tell other people about your book. Roughly the same filtering process then applied to content that made its way onto Radio and TV. A small, selected number of people had the means to spread information nation- or worldwide. So the number of people download-online was millions but the number of people upload-online was still a few tens of thousands.

Now we have the internet. Anyone can *see* anything they like. And anyone can *say* anything they like. Which is great. Except that we've lifted the lid on non-writers' writings, non-filmmakers' videos and non-thinkers' thoughts. The internet is like cultural heat that

has melted the intellectual tundra of humankind, resulting in an immense outgassing of imbecilic-methane. That dumb methane was already there, it just never got released into the noosphere before. In other words, the quality of the *average* thought might be still rising, the quality of the *best* thoughts are certainly rising, but the quality of the average *transmitted* thought has plunged dramatically.

The trouble with this is that, if you're stupid, you have a tendency to think transmitted thoughts. It is tough to come up with thoughts of your own, so you tend towards the level of what's being broadcast. In other words the fact that the average transmitted thought has become dumber means that the dumb have become dumber, because they are now in their dumb echo chambers listening only to the dumbness of their fellow dummies.

On the other hand, people can enter smart echo chambers and become smarter. I don't know which tendency is more prevalent, we have a pessimistic tendency to say its the dumb one, but again, the dumbness of the past is invisible to us because stupidity tends not to leave traces in our culture. Yet the smartness of past intellectuals is highly visible. Everyone has heard of Shakespeare, Da Vinci, Newton. They left traces which were preserved. Swilliam Shitspeare who wrote lots of plays about poo is not remembered (though his comedies are somewhat better remembered than his tragedies). The smartness of the present is invisible to us because it's too new and too smart to be immediately understood. In the end the dumbness is just noise, and there will be a smart signal in that noise that is the one that persists and develops over time. Your job, my friend is not to look at all the noise and feel depressed, but to lock on to the signal and ignore the rest.

It'll take some time for things to return to equilibrium after this outgassing. But when the dust settles I imagine, on average, we'll be better off for it.

In a similar way, I do not believe that we are more in a "filter bubble" than we used to be. I think the opposite. I actually think we are far *more* exposed to those outside our bubble than pre-internet. The reason it feels like the opposite is that we didn't even *know* we were in a bubble before. That's how bubble-like our bubble was. One example, the election of George W. Bush came as a genuine surprise to me. I really didn't know America was that dumb until that happened. America, to me, was basically Star Wars, Hip Hop, the Empire State Building, SR-71 Blackbirds and Apollo 11. In other words cool stuff made by smart people. And then, all of a sudden, the dunderbelly was revealed.

My view of the echo chamber is that many of the echos are inverted echos. It's not that we simply hear our own opinions reflected back on us. It's that we hear the inverse of our opinions reflected back on us from people we hate, and this makes us even more

determined to say the exact inverse of that even louder, and so on. Even if the polarity is flipped each time, it still results in howling, feedback. The left and the right are more polarised, yes, but this is actually because they are locked in an ever more intimate death-embrace.

Even if social media had just enabled stupid people to broadcast things that would have a negative effect on our collective intelligence by creating noise. But there is an additional dynamic which tips the whole thing over the edge. This is the fact that it stupidises *all* of us, even the smartest. Why? In a later chapter Information Addict we'll find out.

There is such a thing as “up”: Ken Wilber

In Winston Churchill we briefly came across Ken Wilber³. He has brilliant, powerful, helpful ideas, unfortunately his actual writing is somewhat verbose and intensely academic. It would be great if someone could distill them to a single accessible volume. Anyway, he depicts humanity going through a number of stages of development. At any one point in time there are varying numbers of people at every stage. You only need to think about children growing up to see this is true. He claims (with evidence) that 60% of the world's population is still at the ethnocentric, mythological stage of development. The internet has brought these people into our vision, where previously they were invisible. However, there are also more and more people at higher levels of development.

The next stage up (and he stresses that it is *up*) from stupid, er, Ethnocentric is "rational". This is where many of us are now, and the foundations of modern western culture rest upon rationalism, i.e. the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment. But it's worth remembering that people at the "rational" stage are still only 20% of the population or so... The crazy thing is that the level of personal development that modernity implies is still only attained by a minority of the world's citizens.

The next stage is "pluralistic" - the postmodern, relativistic, multicultural values that are right now, in general, in the ascendent in the humanities, the media, and liberal arts. The one after that is "Integral" where you are developed enough to see all the others as necessary stages in a wider development. The reason Wilber has to vigorously defend his thought is that those at the pluralistic stage are incapable of admitting that there are levels with any differences in sophistication or worth, Ken is controversial because he says that the higher levels really are *better*.

³ There might actually be room inside Churchill to fit several Ken Wilbers.

Very soon, Ken predicts, the number of people at the "integral" stage will reach a tipping point at around 10% and then we, as a culture, will move to the integral stage. During my finer moments I consider myself to be at this stage, but of course I slip down a few rungs every so often. Indeed, one of the features of the model is that it is the slipping back of a certain stage that leads to its disintegration and the progression to the next. The postmodern, pluralistic, progressive left is currently in the process of *regressing* to the tribalistic/ethnocentric, and this is seen by Wilber as a sign that we are about to transcend beyond it.

My ideal is to write at the integral level, and produce music at the integral level. And hopefully I can go further into what this actually means later.

So the most important thing for now to grasp about Wilber's way of thinking is not the categorisations themselves, but more to acknowledge there *is* a hierarchy, with levels that are fundamentally better or higher than previous levels, but at the same time refuse to treat the lower stages as evil or wrong, because how can a necessary stage of development be wrong? It would be like trying to build a 100 storey building without the bottom 90 storeys, it just won't stay up. Or telling a three year old that they're stupid and evil because they said "caught" instead of "caught" (I'm absolutely down with the three year olds here, it should totally be "caught").

So the work to be done is getting the population as a whole to gradually proceed up these stages of development, without denigrating or demonising them in the process.

It is interesting that the people at each stage below integral are quite happy to label some levels as bad but not others. For example the "rationals" will happily call the "animist" societies primitive and backward, but the "pluralistic" level will find that to be terribly insulting, and then oppose themselves to rationalism, and for sure the "pluralistic" greens will be happily label the "ethnocentric" reds as imperialist motherfuckers. Each level *reacts against* the ones before, and yet absorbs and encompasses it. Again, all the stages are necessary, none are intrinsically evil (though evil things may happen at any stage) but the higher stages are indeed higher, and worth striving to attain, and it is worth actively putting policies in place that shift society upwards.

I return to this point again and again throughout this book, because I think it is one of the biggest misconceptions in contemporary society. The dominant narrative on all sides of the political divide seems to be that things used to be fine in the past, and now they have gone wrong. I have a few ideas about where this idea comes from, but it's certainly not from real history, or real evolutionary biology, or any actual facts. It seems to have just emerged

spontaneously from a culture that has lost faith in itself. We'll get back to this in "Stand up for Science".

But for now, just for fun, let's run with the crowd in thinking that things used to be fine, but now they are fucked.

Why Smart People Are Not Fun

In case you will be thinking from this that I'll be loving the intellectual elite so much here, and that my idea of fun is to join Mensa, and kiss smart-arse with a load of self-congratulatory brainiacs. No, not really. They're a pretty insufferable bunch.

Over the past few years I've been to lots of academic conferences with lots of smart people, and it gets pretty tedious to be honest. I wouldn't say I've met many really amazing personalities or made great lifelong friends. Of course, I have come across a handful of people who inspired me, and made me think they could be a role model, but the number is pitifully small considering how brilliant being "smart" is meant to be, and considering how fantastically interesting the subjects we are studying are, or *could* be if they weren't drained of their enjoyment by smart people.

I rarely meet an ultra-smart person and think "Ooh, cool! I'm inspired! That's where I want to be in ten years time". A lot of smart people are strangely boring and lifeless. The reason for this is that a large part of smartness comes from cognitive control - your frontal lobes are very good at orchestrating what goes on in the rest of your brain. This is a perfect recipe for finding solutions to tricky problems that require multiple steps of reasoning, but also a perfect recipe for being a monotonous noid. Smart people are incredibly unspontaneous. They hardly ever just dick about for the fun of it. Being in a room full of academics feels kind of like sitting in a bath full of dead fish. Smart people will take a topic full of wonder, fascination and surprise and will think the life-juice out of it. To a certain extent, intelligence is distilled anti-fun.

I come out of the last talk of a five day conference and I want to fill my underpants with jelly, inflate a condom full of amyl-nitrate, stick it on my head, jump up and down and sing "I'm woo woo stupid I'm woo woo stoopid hey hey look at me I'm woo woo stoopid" for three hours until I'm shaken all the tedious cogitating out of my poor exhausted and oppressed mind. And that's just the talks, nevermind the fucking "networking". I miss hanging out with musicians to be honest. Good old stupid musicians.

In the presence of smart people there is also this constant fear of saying something stupid. Smart people have a huge intolerance for silliness or incorrectness, and this up-tightness stifles the kind of fun free-flowing banter-style conversation that "normal" people have. I miss talking bollocks with normal people. I hate having to carefully vet all the normal random arse that I say and censor out anything that sounds dumb. I hate going home after an event and realising that I've said something way more moronic than anyone else who was present.

It may well be the case that many smart people are not really smart, they have simply learned to behave like other smart people, and have blended in, chameleon-like, by dint of the fact that they never say anything stupid. They are pseudo-smart. All you need to be pseudo-smart is to never make mistakes. What they don't understand is that mistakes are the engine of creativity. A well analysed mistake is worth a million unquestioned bits of knowledge.

My favourite smart people are the opposite of this. They are constantly being stupid, apart from when it really counts. Take the Pythons for instance, clearly they were all extremely smart, their humour was intensely clever, but they were also some of the silliest people who ever lived. It is no coincidence that many of the silliest smart scientists have been Physicists⁴. The further you get away from proper science, the more the pseudo-smart people can flourish, because there are fewer and fewer tests of whether you are smart or not that don't depend on other people being fooled into thinking you're smart.

The taboo against mistakes is hugely limiting when it comes to actually having a decent conversation. Really, it can be awful, especially if you have a predilection toward social anxiety, at one point I was seriously considering never going to another conference ever again. The only way to get out of this up-tightness is by everyone getting very drunk. Which of course, is the real reason people go to conferences. Alcohol is a great leveller, in that it turns *everybody* stupid, and then you can finally loosen the hell up.

Maybe people feel the same when with me? I hope not. I assume I come across like a complete wally most of the time. On the other hand I don't really do small talk, I tend toward big talk, and I imagine that can become oppressive at times. Whilst I am silly, I do notice that I'm constantly trying to be silly in an intensely clever-dick manner. Maybe I'm an insufferable smart arse. Apologies if so. But hey, buy me a few beers and it'll take the edge off.

⁴ Quantum Information guru Seth Lloyd for example, is frikkin hilarious, possibly our generation's answer to Feynman, but crossed with Professor Wornstrom from Futurama...

Being smart isn't really that fun a lot of the time. Being correct about things means eliminating things that are wrong - and that is a dull, tedious, often repetitive process. The first thing you learn when doing science or engineering is how hard it is to be right. How hard it is to really *know* something. You struggle endlessly to eliminate errors and bias, and in the process become a crushing bore. If you come across some nice beautiful wickedly silly inspired wrongness you need to squash it out of existence, and that can be soul destroying. My job is smack bang in the middle of engineering and music, and oftentimes there's something brilliantly musical and weird that emerges from some engineering wrongness, but because we're engineers and because we're "smart", we get rid of it. This makes me sad, this frustrates my inner musician, and frustrates my inner buffoon.

I like being silly *way* more than I like being smart. Silly and proud.

So I think there is plenty of room for stupidity in the world, if we insist that everyone has to be clever and correct all the time, our world would become a monotonous energy-sapping rigmarole of eternal pedantry. A dreary, academic, rigorously 100% correct-at-all-times world is not what I want. So, go and be stupid and silly and idiotic whenever you get the chance, but here's the caveat: *only if it seems safe to do so.*

What I yearn for is for people to develop the ability to be silly about small shit that doesn't matter, but smart about the important things when it does matter, when it counts, Like, um, voting. At the moment we seem to be doing the precise opposite.

You Think You're So Clever...

Do I? I honestly don't know. Actually I don't think I'm *so* clever, however much "so" is. I'm clearly more intelligent than average, but that's not hard is it? You can flip a coin, and 50% of the time that coin will be smarter than the average coin. I'm no genius. In some regards I'm smart, in other areas of life, I'm an absolute numpty. If I blag being smart at all it's more due to the fact that I happen to be curious and interested in the sort of things that genuinely smart people are interested in. I enjoy reading books that clever people write, I try to imitate clever stuff that people do, I try to learn neat tricks from them. I have been fortunate that I have been able to hang out with smart, talented people and some of what they do has rubbed off on me. I find clever stuff more interesting than stupid stuff, and I have managed to get my head into the habit of bothering with it. I try to do a lot of interesting and varied things, I enjoy solving puzzles, I enjoy making things and figuring things out, I try to arrive at the truth, I try to be creative, I try to understand the world.

I think *trying* to do these things is equally important if not more important than sheer innate intelligence. My brain itself doesn't have much raw power. At work I'm consistently bamboozled by sheer complexity, and often out-thought by smarter colleagues than me. In conversation I repeatedly come out with utter bollocks. I'm shit at chess. Ask me the first word that pops into my head, and that word will be "duh?".

If you believe the IQ tests, then in a room of two hundred random people I will probably be the smartest. But then this also means there are 35 million people in the world smarter than me, which is the entire population of Poland. No, it's not specifically that every one in Poland is smarter than me, and everyone in every other country is dumber, it's just that *number of...* oh, never mind, you're probably too stupid to understand.

But for the occasional (admittedly extremely useful) flash of insight, my brain actually works quite slowly. That's fine. It's not a competition. It's not me vs. Poland. I'm really not such a smart guy, but I do at least *try*. Trying is important. And this is one danger around what ideology we choose to apply to intelligence. Because stupid is easy and smart is hard, if we make it OK for people not to at least *try* to be smart and/or rational, people will get stupider, and they will do stupid things... with disastrous consequences.

If you only ever stick to things that you're good at, it's very easy to get the impression that there is only one kind of intelligence. If ever I need taking down a peg or two, I need only to look at my progress in learning the language of my adopted country. I share my German class with some other developers, an HR person, and two of our office cleaners. If you would stereotype this situation according to the prejudice that programmers are "smartest" of this bunch, you might get the idea that us smarty-pants devs would find learning German easy and the cleaners wouldn't. Ha! The sad truth is they wipe the floor with us (not literally). True, there are certain tasks in learning a language that us nerds seem particularly good at - learning the rules that are logical and then extrapolating from them and predicting how they would *logically* interact. Fine. But there is *so much more* to learning a language than that, most of it makes no bloody sense to me whatsoever, and I'm basically sat there utterly bamboozled. In fact, I've more or less given up, and that makes me sad and ashamed. And this *is* intelligence as much as programming is. And there are far more kinds than that, emotional intelligence, physical intelligence, improvisatory intelligence, practical intelligence, loving intelligence, social intelligence, you name it. In fact I would say that almost all human skills, of which there are huge varieties, could be classed as a form of intelligence. Furthermore, in a later chapter we will find out that being a cleaner is in fact the hardest cognitive task that an intelligent agent can possibly undertake.

Systems Are Smart, People Aren't

Another thing you learn from doing science or mathematics is that smart people aren't actually smart enough to do that stuff unaided. Just like our eyes aren't sharp enough to see other galaxies, or bacteria, our naked minds aren't sharp enough to think on their own. Just like we need optical tools to see better, we need cognitive tools to think better. If you, as a scientist, don't use these tools properly, then you're pretty much as dumb as everyone else. Much of being smart is simply going through an algorithm that some other smart person came up with, and that other smart person was only smart because they were using another tool... and so on.

We tend to overrate individual smartness compared with the smartness of our culture. We constantly forget that we are all standing on the shoulders of giants who were actually made of other dwarves standing on other giants made of dwarves. This could be because the top dwarf often insists on wrapping a long raincoat around himself and pretending he's a giant.

Systems, methods, traditions, neat tricks, books, data, institutions: culture. *Culture* makes us smart. This is why the recent erosion of faith in scientific culture, and indeed western culture in general, is so worrying. We need to be smarter than ever, and yet both Uppists and Downists want to question the only culture that ever really got anyone seriously smart? It shows a spectacular lack of respect and gratitude for the millions of people who came before us, tried their best to be smart and hence built this civilization that we completely take for granted.

So having accepted that culture makes us smart, that now liberates us from two horrible errors in thinking. It liberates us from thinking that some people are *magic* people that are born smart, and everyone else is hopeless and disposable. It also liberates us from thinking that even the most pathological of cultures is just as smart as the most progressive.

So now, after having been as kind as I can be, now, it is with a weary sigh and some trepidation that I cede the keyboard to my good friend and enemy, Mike Trollfield. Mike is the chairman for the "Entrepreneurs for liberty" thinktank and the deputy chairman of the "Scientists for Strategic Euthenasia" group, and a founder member of the offshoot of Mensa that was formed when some Mensa members realised Mensa was a stupid idea.

Warning: the stupidity of other people is Mike's favourite subject bar none, he will get *on one*.

Stupid Voters: The Cognitive Crisis

Mike Trollfield

So here we come to the crux of this song, which Cursor Miner has avoided in his usual cowardly conflict-avoiding fashion. The crux is that stupid people are *winning* democracy.

Very often I read that we shouldn't think of Trump or Brexit voters as stupid. Well, now. Well well now. Welly well now then now. Deep breath. Now.

One clear statistic is that level of education correlated very strongly with voting preference in both cases. Ah, but isn't that because education correlates with income, and it was the poor that voted for Trump and Brexit? No, even if you control for income, education still comes out as a separate predictor. Ah, but uneducated doesn't necessarily mean stupid does it? Strange, then, that we should spend 11% of GDP on something that will leave people just as stupid as when they started. The human brain is a learning device, some learn, some don't, and the reason I write this article right now is that I believe that learning, and intelligence are quite vital for practically everything we care about, including democracy.

Our venerable democratic institutions rest on the foundation that the demos is made up of upstanding, mature adults who will carefully deliberate over all the political options, and exercise their democratic right in the ballot box with informed, fair-minded and considered reasoning. Uh oh.

It would appear that our venerable institutions rest on a flimsy fantasy fairy-fib. Oh dear.

And yet we must pretend it is not a fantasy, because democracy, because equality. When an academic presented [a paper about how the population were not, in fact, cognitively able to sustain democracy](#), the paper was widely described as “shocking”.

I'm not really sure what “shocking” means any more. It used to mean that the content of what someone is saying was surprising in a bad way. Now I think it means that the content of what someone is saying is blindingly obvious, but the fact that they're saying it out loud in public is surprising in a bad way. Oh dear, again.

To suggest that voting for an obviously inferior option on a ballot paper may be a sign of some cognitive disadvantage is seen as deeply suspicious, it is deemed a sign of fascistic

tendencies. It is perceived to be an utterly unacceptable, elitist, snobbish, tyrannical and dangerous opinion, and is never uttered in public discourse, on pain of excommunication. And yet we all know, and talk in private, about the fact that this is the case. Isn't this just so bizarre? Why have we, a culture that used to pride itself on calling things how they are, arrived at this huge cognitive dissonance? Are we wrong to talk like this in private? Why is this taboo? Well, let's take a look. A long and harrowing look.

First: how else would you flag up the ineffective cognitive functioning of a voter? First - this voter is unable to use either reasoning or research to ascertain whether the information they are receiving is true or false. Distinguishing reality from confabulated tosh is, I would argue, one of the principal purposes of a creature's well functioning brain, an organ whose job it is to create a predictive *model* of reality, with the creature's survival chances more or less completely dependent on the veracity of that model. Second: the voter has no grasp of history, or indeed any current events that have unfolded more than about two weeks ago. This voter doesn't even have to have read a book, they could have just remembered these things happening, or have seen them on the news, or maybe at a stretch remember learning at school. Again, an operational memory, I would say, seems like a fairly basic cognitive function. Even plants have memory. Remember: you need a memory. Third: this person is unable to take a perspective outside of their own, and incapable of thinking about large political issues from a higher and more objective standpoint than their own specific needs and wants. This ability to take others' viewpoint, or "perspective taking" is a very basic stage of cognitive development that should normally take place when a human (or at least the *Homo Remainus* subspecies of human) is around two and a half years old. Fourth: this voter is extremely easily manipulated by other more powerful people into doing things against their own interest. Again, not being manipulated is another vital role for an operating faculty of intelligence. It really doesn't seem to be the case that Trump, Boris Johnson and their ilk seem particularly smart... their manipulative populist tactics are completely and utterly transparent to most thinking people. And if you fall for it, it's because you are not a thinking person.

So if a voter has utterly failed on all four of these counts: distinguishing truth from lies, remembering the past, taking different perspectives, and avoiding manipulation, then I don't really see what more you need to question their intelligence.

And this isn't just my inference from voting behaviour. Now, thanks⁵ to social media, you can see stupidity unfold *in real time*, you can *interact* with cretinousness first hand, and reconfirm to yourself that it is indeed genuine bonafide 100% proof fatuity. Over and over

⁵ Thanks social media. You're a chum.

again, if you happen to become embroiled in some flame war between leavers and remainers, you will witness the leavers get intellectually humiliated. They are consistently and reliably obliterated in arguments. It's excruciating to watch. It's painful because it's such a struggle to hammer basic facts into their heads, but it is also painful because I do actually feel for these folks' humiliation. Having the rhetorical shit beaten out of you online is not a nice thing to happen to anybody, and I feel sorry for them. And yet, they keep coming back for more. They're like that character in [Kids In The Hall](#) bar fight sketch, who stands no chance whatsoever, he gets punched so hard he flies about a mile, but half an hour later turns up asking for yet more. But the most painful thing of all is that I know that I, and everyone I care about, are completely at these moron's mercy next time the polling booths open for business.

At the original time of writing, Boris Johnson had just made an utter cock out of himself in parliament. He had tried to shut down parliament illegally, been defeated on all seven of the votes held since he came to power, had united a good part of his own party against him, and was driving Britain at full speed toward utter chaos.

In a sane world Boris and his extremist Brexiteer wing would have been laughed out of town within days. And yet, the great British public delivered him the biggest majority in decades. Please, please, please, can we call this for what it is now? You can argue about how the electoral system is suboptimal, you can argue about the tabloid press' mind control apparatus, you can try to find some flaw in the system and then declare the whole thing rigged, but the fact remains that idiots vote idiotically, and the fact that they have enough votes to carry the day in any kind of electoral system is a massive problem.

Can you not see that this is not a constitutional crisis, this is a cognitive crisis? It is getting harder and harder to not see that.

Before we descend into actual insults (rest assured dear reader that we shall return to them), it's helpful to distinguish the notion of immutable character traits from behaviour. We are all stupid, in that we all do stupid things. We all make stupid mistakes. Some days I'm smart, some days I'm dumb. If I alight from a train with my laptop still on it (yes I've done that), then I've been stupid. If I temporarily mistook a bottle of home-distilled Palinka for water and boiled an entire kettle of it, then I've been stupid (I did precisely this on my summer holiday in Hungary). If you've believed what was written on the side of a Leave campaign bus, or fallen for some fake news about the Treaty of Lisbon, or convinced that the earth is flat, or refused to vaccinate your child, you've have been very very fucking stupid. That doesn't necessarily mean that you are *fundamentally, irredeemably* stupid or

evil, or racist, or indeed fundamentally or irredeemably anything. It just means you have been stupid.

I am reminded of a pub conversation I had with a friend who taught in a school in Tottenham, who had to deal with a lot of challenging behaviour. The pupils would say "it's no good, I'm just bad". And he would try to get it into their heads that *they* were not bad, it was their *behaviour* that was bad. This was because there are quite a number of studies that show that if you teach children that character is not immutable, they learn faster, adapt quicker, and behave better. So *calling* people stupid, *branding* them stupid to their core is definitely counterproductive. But maybe saying they *did* something stupid is not to be shied away from, in fact it should be encouraged, if not enforced. There really should be some penalty for getting things completely and utterly fucking wrong.

The trouble with persons is they take everything personally. When you tell someone they've made a bad decision, they will immediately assume that you are attacking their character. All of the confusion stems from fundamental philosophical notions of self, free will, personality and so on. The important thing to remember is that you can *learn* to be smarter. You can learn how to think.

So, maybe rather than labelling MAGA and Brexit voters stupid, let's just say (at least publically) that they've done a stupid thing.

Those Who Stand Up For Stupid Are Also Stupid

So, again. You, I, our families and friends, and everything about civil society that we care about, its all being held hostage by a bunch of people who cannot fucking operate their own fucking minds.

This is an emergency.

We *absolutely have to* disenfranchise these people while there is still time. Yes, that's right we either need to wrest the vote away from morons immediately, or forcibly demoronify them.

I mean, CHRIST, have you *seen* the current president of the United States? Have you? Did you notice that? Have you heard him talk? Have you read what he actually says? Can you actually *look* at that horrible, horrible man and seriously think to yourself that we can let

democracy continue in its current form? Really? Seriously? How exactly will the world survive if we do that?

Try to imagine it. People really, really do go into voting booths and tick the box next the most fucking irritating cunt that we've ever seen in our entire lives... and I'm meant to say, yeah, that's OK? Democracy's OK. IT'S NOT OK. I'm meant to say those voters were exercising some fundamental right they have? What right is that exactly? Did I somehow skip over the page in Thomas Paine's book that talked about THE INALIENABLE RIGHT TO BE A BRAINIALY RETENDED TWOT-WIT?

Every day I have to contain my rage. Seeing those blonde cretins on the front page of every news site is like having a huge fat buzzing fly in the room where I am trying to work. I try to ignore it. I will attempt to be patient. I will say "No, that's fine, let it buzz, I am *zen*". One minutes thirteen seconds of placid serenity elapses, at which point something *suddenly snaps* and I am roaring with rage and smashing everything in sight with a rolled up newspaper. Every day leaders democratically elected by this stupid process fuck my world up a little more. Every day I have to read about the exploits of people who are doing a worse job than I would do, a worse job than anyone I would choose to do that job to do, and a worse job than anyone who would be chosen by anyone who I would choose to choose that person would ever do. I've slapped my forehead so often that the skin has calloused and rucked up and I look like Worf from Star Trek. And I make music technology for christ's sakes, I make things that go *bleep*. I don't know anything about this politics shit, and yet I'm a zillion times more qualified than the people running the fucking world. How? A better system would be to choose leaders at random, because these hapless dwints are so thick your decisions are WAY WORSE THAN RANDOM.

But I can hear you pathetically scrabbling at my window, itching to defend The People. A little voice inside your heading is squealing, "Nooo, the poor peeeple. A bad man made them do it!". You supposedly smart and compassionate people stand up for stupid people, because you feel you have to in order to be a nice person. You will say that it was still only a minority that voted for the populists: it's only a third of people, right? Oh, that's fine then is it? So if only a third of the people completely ruin the planet then it's not *completely* ruined. Even though it is. OK, yeah, it's a minority, but if it's a minority that repeatedly wins elections, then we still have a *bit* of a problem, wouldn't you admit? You will say that if *everyone* just voted then things would be OK. Little does it cross your mind that the people who don't vote are manifestly cretinous too, and you can tell that by the fact that they don't vote.

You will then make excuses for idiotic votes by explaining it in terms of a reaction or a protest vote against austerity. This reading of events maintains that populist voters are “protesting” against an “elite” that has “failed” them. And the Left's narrative is that it is neo-liberal policies that have failed them. Your little squeaky voice again: “Aww, the poor wickle poor people, it’s the only voice they have! Who can blame them if they shout little angry?”. Bullshit. It’s the only voice you and I have as well, isn’t it? And yet you manage to use that voice to say at least vaguely sensible things. I think that these supposedly smart, compassionate apologists are making a fundamental mistake. They're trying to dress up a stupid vote as being somehow justified *given* what those people have been through. Like the recession-to-fascism pathway is now so historically well established, who are we to blame people if they take it? “Give me more stuff or the social security system gets it!” or, “Don’t raise my taxes or I’ll vote for Hitler again!”. Effective negotiation tactic, right?

But can this be the reality? Is this actually what's going on? Does that narrative make any sense? Or is it just the Trots trotting out the same tired threadbare narrative that they’ve been trotting out for the last 170 years? Let's remember that it is the Tories and the Republicans and all those other right wing micro-fascists who are getting into power again and again and again. So somehow the voters lashing out against austerity are voting for more tax cuts for the rich. Yup. Their “protest” vote hands more power to the people who were exploiting them in the first place. I'm sorry but I don't see how this makes them look less stupid.

Populism is generally (though certainly not exclusively) a right wing phenomenon. If there was a backlash specifically against neoliberal austerity then surely our really-not-retarded-honest-guv voters would have voted *leftwards*? Maybe? Don’t you think that if your story bore any relation to reality at all then something different might have happened from the last seventy times this exact same thing has happened and left you wondering “hey, what happened?”? Jeremy Corbyn is as left a lefty an option as our generation has ever had in our lifetimes, it's not like the voters don't have the option any more. And yet, nope. No sir. I hate billionaires so much that I read their papers and do everything they tell me to, governor.

It is a mistake to see these shock election results as somehow justified, due to fall-out from the financial crisis, when it is obviously not justified by that. The financial crisis surely played its part, simply by making people angry, but people are now saying that they *would be willing to be worse off* if they could get more control over immigration. So how is that anything to do with feeling impoverished or exploited? Ohh, man, I’m so angry about being poor that I’m going to vote to make myself poorer. Could this spectacularly cunning strategic thinking *explain* why you’re still poor?

The only way I can make this fairy story work is by saying that the dumb are smart enough to see that if a left wing government gets into power then they'll grant more political power to dumb people, which would be a *bad* idea, so they vote to make sure that the smart elite maintain control. But then that would mean that dumb people are pretty smart, so I guess this reading of events is disproved by contradiction.

Sometimes, Stupid People Might Have a Point

So I declared that standing up for stupid people is stupid. Nevertheless, I will now attempt to do exactly that. Maybe this is a stupid thing to do. But it's the only way I can see to avoid giving up on humanity, and I'm kind of stuck with them so I have to try.

The more likely story is that the backlash is directed *against* that which comes from the left i.e. political correctness. This seems pretty obvious and yet the Left went through all kinds of yogic contortions to avoid admitting it. Of course, people are fucking sick of it. This is the main reason Trump got elected. This is the main reason Britain is leaving the E.U. *This* is the explanation that makes complete sense. There is no contradiction here.

The left are willfully ignoring the fact that the protest vote is against the spiraling insanities of political correctness, and in particular against high levels of immigration. It simply does not compute for some people that people would really think like that, so they try to dress it up as something else.

"Normal" people do, of course, see it as having gone "too far", and no, they're not just racists, I think they do have some semblance of a badly made point. And no, I'm not racist when I defend them and admit they have a point, and no it's not racist to say it's not racist that they have a point. And before you come back at me again, no, it's not racist to say it's not racist to say it's not racist that they have a point. And no, it's not racist to try and deny accusations of racism. And it's not racist to get upset about being called a racist. The fact that real racists do exactly this is not my problem. Deep breath. Let's enter the belly of the beast.

People like you and I are fine with immigration. Only a stupid person could object to free movement, right? My default attitude is the more diversity the better. A Nepalese restaurant next door? Yes please. A Brazillian street party? Bring it on. An Inuit hairdresser? Sign me up. A North African percussion workshop? Fuck yes, lay those

complex time signatures on me, Ahmed⁶. But I started to wonder about immigration in the early 10's as, amongst other things, it seemed that there was just a massive backlash waiting to happen. It later turned out that there was a massive backlash that had been waiting to happen.

One small moment was that where I lived, Walthamstow high street, one of the longest in Europe, lost its last non-halal butcher around 2013. Again, us internationally minded liberal types do not feel threatened by this kind of thing, but I do actually think it's understandable that some people would. Especially if they were stupid. I don't condone it, but I completely understand it. People who have lived in Walthamstow their entire lives have seen the high street utterly transformed, and now the shops cater for people different from you. All of a sudden your group are in the minority, and you feel threatened. And in case you find that British white people could think of themselves as a "minority" a ridiculous notion, in another small watershed moment, also in 2013, white British people did indeed become the minority in London (Hey Mike, sorry to fact in here, but that was mainly because they had willingly moved out to the surrounding counties for a better quality of life [Ed.]).

You aren't threatened by the ubiquity of Halal butchers, of course. To feel threatened by these things is in reality ridiculous. Why would it matter to *you* that white British people are in the minority in London? Why should it matter to you what particular slaughtering technique method your bacon, uh, no bacon anymore, shit, lamb was subjected to? People can live where they want, right? They can kill strict subsets of animals however they want, right? Who cares? But seemingly a lot of people (and sheep) *feel* this as a threat, instinctively. And you can say it's morally wrong, but it's none the less instinctive for that. Evolution has programmed them to feel tribal and territorial about their home countries, and unfortunately they don't have the metacognitive competence to tell the difference between their feelings and reality. If, as a basic person, you care deeply about British culture, then you don't want to see it replaced by foreign ones in "your" capital city. If you, as a basic person, walk down an English high street and no one is speaking English, you freak out. Immediately, you're told by smug liberals that freaking out about this stuff makes you the worst kind of person possible. And then you *really really* freak out. And then the

⁶ Yikes, is it "OK" to characterise cultural diversity as just a variety of commercial services? Dude, I don't fucking care. No, it's not OK, probably. But then nothing's OK anymore is it? When was the last time you looked around and said hey, things are really okey dokely. Let's keep everything OK by being super OK. Let's have ourselves a big old OK party to celebrate how OK everything is. No. It's not OK. Even the fucking OK sign is not OK now. An alt-right troll-meme that you completely fell for hook, line and sinker, and again, proves they are far more clued up on how the human mind works than you are. The last ship that was "OK" sailed in 2016, and now everything is CLEARLY FUCKED, so I'm not gonna wring my little paws over what's fucking "OK" or not. OK?

smug but yet self hating liberal Hipsters will, in their turn, take over Walthamstow high street, the Halal butchers all turn into artisanal cereal cafes, and the circle of mutual resentment is complete.

If basic people vote with their feelings, and they feel they don't like foreigners, and they also are told their feelings are evil, then you have a time bomb of cretinousness waiting to go off.

Is it wise to tell those people their instinctive feelings are immoral? Is it sensible to brand a knee jerk feeling as calculated and malicious? Is it fair to tell them that their community and culture are not worth trying to preserve? Is it wise to treat inbuilt, innate primate instincts of territorialism and tribalism as utterly taboo? Is it sensible to tell people that what feels like common sense to them is basically just National Socialism in disguise? Is it reasonable to tell me that because I am trying my best to understand their thinking that I too am some kind of Nazi dogwhistler? What frequency do Nazi dogs respond to, exactly?

When "the man in the street" objects to something on the basis that it goes against "common sense" it's fair that the onus should be on the other party to provide a decent explanation, and a decent bundle of evidence as to why the counter-intuitive thing is true. And much of the time the received wisdom regarding what is "not OK" fails to do this. What actually happens is that things are made unacceptable without any coherent explanation at all. The explanation given actually requires a quite hefty quantity of sophisticated (and self-contradictory) ideology to be bought wholesale beforehand. Not only that, but something becomes taboo, and then from that point on to question the reasoning behind the taboo becomes unacceptable too. So not only are the general populace told to believe something that goes against their common sense, they're also vilified when they even ask why. And this isn't just an accident, the far left employ this move strategically, in fact "questioning our particular form of anti-racism is racist" is now virtually written into their political operating manual. In other words, we are sleepwalking into inquisition-style laws against heresy. And it doesn't actually matter that the heresy laws *initially* seem innocuous and seem to genuinely prevent something bad happening, once the barrier is in place it will act as a shield to prevent any attempt to stamp out any corruption that emerges in the future. And if such an indemnity exists, then corruption will inevitably emerge.

Political correctness has *zero* appeal to most people's feelings, because their feelings are telling them the opposite, and there is zero appeal to rational explanation either, because that would immediately reveal that some of the rules they're being told to obey have no basis in anything resembling rational thought. Oh, and them being ridiculed, patronised and insulted isn't going to make them more sympathetic to your cause either.

The educational system used to pick out people who got something wrong and make them sit in the corner with a dunce hat on. I think that technique of trying to ridicule people into becoming smarter is counterproductive, to say the least. Its no longer used in decent schools to teach stupid kids, so why would we use it in politics to try to teach stupid adults? When does ridicule work? When it is your community ridiculing you. But that depends heavily on who you consider your community. The rural right don't consider the urban left part of their community, clearly, so ridicule didn't work, and will never work. No matter how ingenious Stewart Lee (Cursor Miner's favourite stand up comedian, *of course*) makes his meta-ridicule, he'll never successfully de-stupid a single brain with it.

We can wheel out stats about how we need immigrants for the labour force. We can wheel out stats about how it's the people that live in areas with the most immigrants that are most positive toward immigrants. These are all lovely juicy stats. They reliably bring out from our middle-class gatherings a knowingly incredulous chuckle at the stupid. But that's not really what this is about, it's more about "feeling" at home in your own home, and stats don't do feels. Some personality types are deeply conservative, tribal, territorial, and suspicion of anything new or foreign is the default mode. They are just like that, and even though I dislike that attitude immensely, I really wonder if it is wise to just try and repress it and make it taboo? Making things taboo generally just drives them underground and toxifies them. And it is perhaps strange that the same people who argue for the decriminalisation and de-stigmatisation of drug use would argue for the criminalisation and stigmatisation of politically incorrect attitudes. Isn't it the same deal? Casual drug use doesn't *inevitably* lead to heroin addiction, and casual racism doesn't inevitably lead to pogroms. Hey, if people are just gonna be racists anyway, we might as well tax it and use the tax to fund rehabilitation centres for the really pathological cases. Wouldn't that be more *progressive*? Isn't it time to admit that prohibition is a failed policy in both areas? Isn't the war on racism doomed to exactly the same fate as the war on drugs and the war on terror?

As much as Cursor Miner may have a crush on hip progressives such as Ocasio-Cortez in the U.S. and Yanis Varoufakis here in Europe, I think their stated analysis of the roots of populism isn't telling the whole story. If the progressive movement cannot acknowledge that people are pushing back against political correctness, and pushing back against multiculturalism, then their movements are going to be exceedingly fragile, if not counterproductive. Cursor Miner voted for Varoufakis in the last election, yeah he seems a hip guy, and argues brilliantly for a more compassionate and more rational economic system. But he also argues for *completely open borders* which is an utterly foolish Ostrich-like stance to take: legs apart, head in the sand, let them all in. It'll be fine. Don't

worry everyone, Islam is just liberalism in disguise, just wait and see. You are really just going to ignore the whole thing? You will really set the acceptable number of migrants at infinity, and expect everyone to be happy with that? How sustainable is that attitude? Where will you be in twenty years time if you double down on that policy? How powerful will the backlash be then?

Elsewhere I have argued that you shouldn't let the threat of the far right change your own policies, and yet here I seem to argue that we need to head off that threat by "appeasing" them by controlling immigration. Maybe I'm contradicting myself. But funnily enough, this isn't the *far* right we're talking about, *controlled immigration* is not a *far* right policy, and that's not the only reason one would argue against open borders. Normal, relaxed people can see the potential disruptiveness of open borders, its not just a binary choice between open borders and xenophobic fascism. You can be a *xenophile* and yet argue for controlled immigration, you can be a *xenophile* and argue for the preservation of your own culture, there's absolutely no contradiction there. In fact the converse position is somewhat contradictory, you are a *xenophile* *because* you see the value in diverse cultures, and yet you would open borders, and displace millions of people from their original cultural environment, and disrupt communities and cultures in your own country. I argue elsewhere that interesting cultural fusions are not just a random mix of random people, they require at least some boundaries, traditions and cultural identities. Something's not really adding up. The reason it's not adding up is that the entire notion of a happy middle ground has been destroyed, you must be for one extreme or the other.

My other nagging question about migration is whether moving to a new land to seek one's fortune really makes people happy at all. Like, actually *happy*. Most of the data about what makes people actually happy shows that things like having a close network of family and friends is more of a factor than wealth or political environment. So moving away from your social networks for the sake of better wages is *exactly the opposite* of what you should be doing if you want to be happy. Again, your liberal values run up against what the actual research shows⁷.

I married an immigrant to the UK. We are now both immigrants⁸ in Germany.

Am I a happy immigrant, now I have freely chosen my city based on standard of living and a good career? Not sure. I do have a great job and I'm living in a brilliant city. But I *really* miss my home, and I hardly ever see my oldest friends, and it is a massive faff to get to see my

⁷ The [actual research](#) shows migrants *are* happier [Ed.]

⁸ Yes I am proud to use that word rather than "Ex-Pat". "Expats" are people playing golf in Costa Del Sol. If I ever become an ex-pat I intend to commit Hari Kiri with a 9 iron in front of the clubhouse.

family⁹. I feel a bit isolated and dislocated. I don't feel like I belong to the city or the country where I live. I don't speak the language very well or identify with the culture. I well up pathetically when I see a red post box in a TV murder mystery. I don't read the German newspapers or watch German TV. I don't like the food much. The supermarkets suck. I keep getting told off for breaking mysterious rules by grumpy old people. I'm rootless. I quote Blackadder and I just get blank looks. My wife didn't find a job¹⁰, her career was stalled, and the wage from the job I moved here to get still needs to support two people. And then there's all the extra flights and carbon I emit to take to get to and from home. The only pride I feel is in having managed to escape Britain within moments of it going down the toilet... It seems linguistically appropriate that I had to move to Germany to really experience Schadenfreude to the full.

Many of the Eastern Europeans we know who moved to London didn't end up happier or wealthier. They were earning more, sure, but spending it all on the ridiculous rent. They failed to find close relationships in a community. They end up isolated, unrepresented. They missed their friends, their family, and they missed their home country. Do I feel a glimmer of that now?

There's also the fact that increased choice does not mean increased satisfaction, in fact the opposite. Berlin's pretty cool. But maybe I'd be happier in Barcelona? Or Bristol? Or Budapest? Or Boston? Or Brighton? The more footloose you become, the more FOMO for other places beginning with the letter B you feel. B, the stupidest note of all.

I'm not talking about desperate Syrian refugees here, obviously. We do obviously have a duty to look after people fleeing pathological situations. If someone turned up at your door saying they'd just escaped a kidnapper and desperately needed food and water, do you slam the door in their face? No. On the other hand you don't leave your door wide open 24 hours a day. When I lock my door to go out to the shops I'm not thereby accusing every single person living in my town of being a criminal. Refugees make up a quite small proportion of migrants, as do criminals. But to mention statistics is somehow to miss the point isn't it? People will say "you can persuade anyone of anything with statistics!", as if the entire mathematical field of statistics is the problem, when the real problem is that people are terrible at thinking statistically.

The debate is especially puerile in America and Australia, countries with massive amounts of space that are almost entirely populated with immigrants. On the one hand you get people with decidedly European surnames claiming they've been there forever and it's

⁹ And in fact it has been effectively impossible for 9 months now.

¹⁰ She's got one now [Ed.].

“their” country. Umm. You kinda haven’t, and it kinda isn’t. And on the other you have people saying that a bunch of foreigners turning up never had any negative repercussions on the people already living there. Ummm. They kinda did. Both viewpoints are historically hilarious. Immigrants are indeed the backbone of American power. How many Jews on the Manhattan project!? But I wonder if that was as a result of an “open borders” policy? A boat full of dishevelled randos turns up at Ellis Island, they queue up, are asked to open up and say “aaaah” and those with the healthiest tonsils get bussed off to their very own hut at Los Alamos. Is that how that happened?

Restricting anyone’s movement *seems* draconian and repressive. It’s an interesting question now that the world has seen the biggest restriction to movement since the modern era, whether our attitudes to migration will be different when we emerge. Whatever happens, it doesn’t mean you have to pretend that free movement is utterly without drawbacks. There *is* fall out. Communities do become atomised. Cultures do clash. Migrants are less able to stand up for their own political rights, can be underpaid and provide more profit for employers¹¹.

I find it strange that many of us do question the relentless sacrifice of more traditional signifiers of personal wellbeing in pursuit of money and career prospects... and yet refuse to see how economic migration is often exactly such a sacrifice. People can see the disruptiveness of economic globalisation, but refuse to see how economic migration is part of that disruption.

I’m well aware that literally *all* of the above arguments, indeed the set of all possible arguments, are regarded as racist “tropes”. To even consider them is to reveal yourself as having the worst possible internal motivations. Because real racists latch on to these arguments as rhetorical battering rams they become toxic. But if when arguing against them you end up contradicting yourself... then what?

Obviously I have to stop here, briefly, lest people get the wrong impression. What do I *really* think? What does Mike Trollfield think when he’s not being *inflammatory*? Well, ultimately, I feel immigration is a fairly minor issue, affecting very few people in proportion to the whole population of countries. It has been blown up out of all proportion by racists¹², and then blown out of all proportion by antiracists in response. Which is odd, because it

¹¹ Mike, this is more a problem with global inequality rather than migration. Workers in China can drive your wages down too, so the problem to solve is low wages globally, not locally but as this problem is far too hard for any single institution to tackle, we continue to argue over irrelevancies - Ed.

¹² Probably something to do with the tiny minority of immigrants who did literally blow themselves up out of all proportion.

has nothing to do with race, actually, besides being a hot button topic for racists. If you think it's more important than any other of the pressing political problems of the day, then you are probably the victim of some kind of parasitic extremist single-issue ideology. And, oddly, that goes for people both for and against it.

What I really think is this. If you really hate foreigners, you should be against *tourism*, not immigration. There are about 30,000 immigrants into the UK in a year. London sees 30 *million* tourists a year. And let's face it, tourists are like a zillion times more annoying than immigrants, right? We should throw those clueless selfie-snapping Primark-shopping waxwork-ogling Lloyd-Webber-whistling¹³ twerps out first. I think this is something both Leavers and Remainers can all get behind. Tourists are the foreigners we can *all* hate, 100% guilt free. So I think rather than scapegoating the people who actually work for Britain's infrastructure we should scapegoat the dumbasses clogging it up by standing on the wrong side of bloody escalators and lurching between lame "fashion" outlets at their zombie-snail pace all down Oxford Street. Let's be honest, isn't your city a far nicer place without them right now? Tourism is the elephant in the room. Though, quite frankly if all the elephants that people are now saying are in the room really are in the room, then human immigration is the least of our worries.

In the end, the real way you can tell an *actual* racist isn't by probing their views on the technicalities and tradeoffs of immigration policy, it's by waiting to see how long it takes them to bring the subject up. During a conversation with a stranger about a topic (say, the traffic), if within the first three sentences they start complaining about how immigrants are making (say, the traffic) worse, then you know you have a real racist on your hands. It's simply the only thing they ever think or talk about. It is the telescope through which they view the entirety of the cosmos. Their entire brain has become saturated with a single toxic meme. They are like those ants who catch the Cordyceps fungus. You have chatted to them in the late stages of the parasitic life-cycle. They are about to climb some tall building, erupt a huge xenophobic horn-like fruiting body from their forehead, and explode millions of racist spores onto the urban breeze. These people should be contained in a sterile, isolated environment with low humidity (Dubai, for example).

¹³ Or substitute anywhere else: Curry-wurst chomping, Alexanderplatz-thronging, Berghain-queuing, Checkpoint-Charlie-selfieing... every great city has had it's beating heart clogged by vast sclerotic deposits of fatty moronic yokels. Send 'em back where they came from I say.



A racist

Racism exists. It is common. Obviously. And the fact that it's *so* obvious is somehow peculiar. I have heard people who really have, in actual, like, real *reality*, uttered the actual sentence "I'm not racist but I hate Pakis" and seemed to truly believe that both halves of that sentence can be true. It makes my brain hurt with a dual horror at how horrible people can be and also how illogical. Whenever I hear the "I'm not racist but..." thing I always wish I had the balls to say "I *am* racist but... I think that all humans deserve to be treated with equal open minded respect and universal humanistic love, regardless of ethnicity or skin colour". What in practice happens is that I'm just rendered speechless.

The fact that real racism is so blatant, so offensive and so easy to diagnose makes it especially perplexing as to why people are so eager to categorise manifestly non-racist things as being racist. I'm perfectly sure that there is some twisted postmodern justification for claiming that my sentence "I think that all humans deserve to be treated with equal open minded respect and universal humanistic love, regardless of ethnicity or skin colour" *is* actually a denial of my "positionality", and conclusive proof of my own racism. The dividing line, for me, has always been quite clear, and yet many have ambitions to redraw and obfuscate that line in outlandish and baffling ways, ways that make achieving their stated aim, that of reducing racism, a million times harder. But that is a minefield for another rant, another time.

Malicious Smartness

Bigotry plays a part in Brexit, obviously, but I'm reminded of the sketch by Stewart Lee where his grandmother is complaining about "Political Correctness gone mad" but it turns out she's really complaining about health and safety regulations. This is what the protest vote is about - a general cloud of "new annoying things that confused old people don't like"

that are imposed on them from the outside and they don't really know where they come from. The slightly smarter people on the left will blame neoliberalism, the slightly smarter people on the right will blame political correctness and nanny-statism, the dumber on both sides will blame the E.U. but the fact is that it's ALL THAT dumped into a big vague bag of whinginess. A nebulous ball of grievance that has been painted blue with yellow stars by vested interests and the gutter press, and whorled up into a howling blast by social media echo chambers.

Stupid people are having a hard time dealing with the complexity of modern life, and they're voting to make things simpler. Brempt/Truxit is, at heart, a protest vote against complexity. And who can blame them? If life continues to get more complicated, which they inevitably will, we'll *all* be floundering around and lashing out like this soon. We are all too dumb to cope with the massive complexities of advanced technological society and as AI becomes more pervasive this will issue will explode (more on A.I. in a later track).

We are *all* increasingly at the mercy of concentrated balls of malicious smartness. This is in effect what we have with Silicon Valley: a technical elite with a terrifying amount of power over a bamboozled, non-technical underclass. And they (or should I perhaps say *we?* *Evil nerd-chuckle*) gain this power via intelligence and expertise.

I would love to think that, given the same education and upbringing as Jobs, Brin, Bezos, Gates etc. anyone in the world could become a tech billionaire. But thrice nay: first there is some genetic component of intelligence that could slow you down enough to not quite make it, and second, and by *far* the biggest factor, most of it is just the luck of the draw. Right place, right time, right upbringing, right friends, right opportunities, right human weakness to exploit on a massive scale. All these random probabilities multiply and all are playing a part in freak successes. We do need to stop rewarding both these kinds of luck so exorbitantly, not pretend that there's some "gumption" that these people have that literally anyone could just suddenly employ at a moment's notice to whip themselves up a global tech empire. "If you layabouts just *decided* harder, then you too could gain a virtual monopoly over every single human social interaction!". No, not really. Nevertheless, it's a fact that the people who work in the tech industry tend to be smarter than average, and then that smartness is hugely leveraged by the technological power they have. Before the average Joe has caught on to what the hell they're up to, it's too late, all your data are belong to them.

The real question of how to keep people from being manipulated by populists isn't so different from the question of how to prevent anyone who could be in various positions of ignorance at any time from being manipulated by corporations, who are ultimately just

concentrated agglomerations of smartness in a particular area. The way to make a profit is to become smarter than anyone else at doing X, so that people who are currently X-stupid will need to pay you for your X. This is fine, it works very well for everyone with things like CPUs, where the smartness required to make them work is immense, and the smartness required to evaluate whether they work for you or not is very small (“is my computer fast or not?” is a very easy thing to ascertain). It doesn’t work so well when the evaluation of how good the thing is takes an equal amount of expertise. Take the terms and conditions page on software licenses for instance. Who among us is smart enough to understand fully the implications of clicking accept on these documents? Who actually has the fucking time to read that shit, let alone the time to understand the implications? Answer: only the people whose full time job is to write them. So we have a situation in which a few smart people can hold the rest of the world hostage via their expertise. And somehow achieving this position of knowledge supremacy is seen as “success”.

No, extracting cash from people dumber than you is not success. It’s just bullying.

The old free-market idea that we all just make fully informed rational decisions is nonsense. In the CPU case it's very easy to get informed, in the social media case it's effectively impossible. Indeed, many business models are based around *selecting* stupid people to exploit. It always used to mystify me as to why spam email was so painfully transparent and idiotic: the enlightening answer is it's *designed* to be obviously fake to anyone of reasonable mental competence. Hence the scammers can weed out people who might have enough sense to bail out later on in the scamming process. They then are left with only the truly feeble-minded to prey on, making their jobs much easier. Politicians have exploited exactly the same trick. I had the strong feeling that conservatives diatribes in parliament are specifically angled toward the cognitively disadvantaged, so they can maintain an easily manipulable voter base. They are playing to the gallery, but the gallery is not any of the reasonably well informed people in parliament, it's the twonks outside. This is perhaps, why allowing television cameras inside parliament was a bad idea.

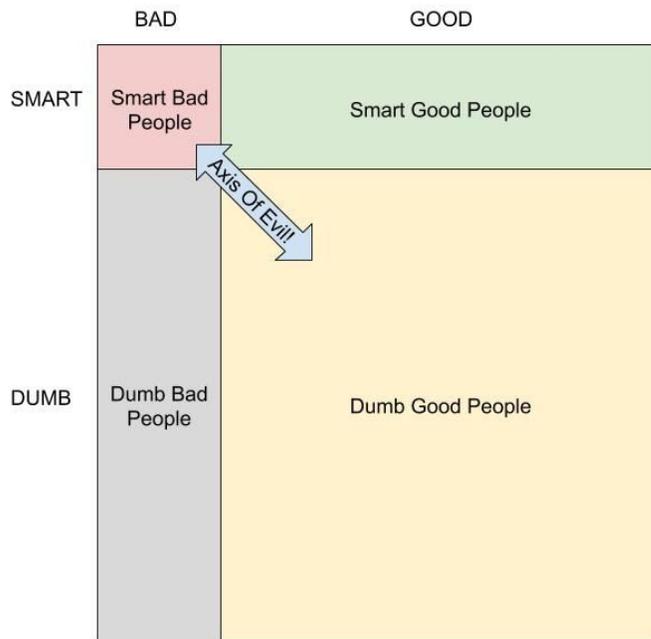
Transparency that can be manipulated ends up being the opposite. If you can completely alienate anyone who can think for themselves, you've made your job easier. Is this a conspiracy? Probably not, it's just the way things will evolve if nothing is done to stop it.

Very often a company's “competitive advantage” (AKA nugget of malicious smartness) is purely in how to manipulate people. For example advertising. Advertising is the art of making things look better than they really are in a way that doesn't reveal that you're trying to make things look better than they really are. This makes me wonder how corporate customers make their decision of which advertising firm to go for to advertise their stuff. Presumably they look through that company's advertising material, and if

they're rapidly persuaded by their bumf then they get suspicious that the advertising firm isn't as good as it says it is. But then the fact that the advertising company is rubbish in reality and yet their marketing material makes them look great would imply that the company was brilliant. Which would then mean that they were rubbish. Which would make them brilliant. Huh.

Getting back to the subject, the denial that stupidity is a disadvantage very much erodes human rights. I think people have the *right* to not be exploited by those smarter than them. If you have learning difficulties, you are vulnerable. If a tiny technical elite becomes disproportionately adept at learning, the whole world becomes vulnerable. The question is how can we protect the dumb from the smart? Certainly not by denying there's any difference between the two.

As far as I see it, the world can be simplified into four quadrants (see diagram). You have two dimensions, one of moral standing and one of cognitive ability. This results in one quadrant of dumb, bad people in the bottom right, there's no hope for them so let's move on. The next quadrant is smart, good people on the top left, these are the people keeping the show on the road, basically. There are more dumb people than smart people, but on the other hand there are more good people than bad people. So in theory things should be good. Except they're not.



As you can see from the diagram, the key dynamic is whether the smart evil people (who are a tiny minority) can manipulate the good stupid people (who are the majority) into doing the stuff they want. And this is where the populists are winning and the Uppists are losing - the smart evil people have been reasonably successful in getting perfectly well meaning but slightly dim folks to go along with their schemes, whilst the the good smart people have, of late, just left the good dumb people to fend for themselves. Because somehow the smart good people have started to think that it's "not OK" to admit that other good people are dumb or tell them how to think¹⁴, this leaves the highway to hell wide open.

In fact the axis of evil loops round a bit as it's only the stupidest of the dumb good people that the smart-evils are going for. On the other hand, the smart-goods would do well to target the smartest of the good dumb people, which is why "dumbing down" is such a terrible strategy.

There are many fronts in the culture war, but I think this one may be the most crucial.

¹⁴ Taught *how* to think not *what* to think.

Qualifying For The Vote, Seriously?

In the end, a perfect liberal laissez faire meritocracy seems to give you a kind of kind of cognitive underclass, exploited by a cognitive elite. And yes, I'm really uncomfortable with saying that. I don't want any kind of goddamn underclass, which is why I'm for a strong welfare state, tight corporate regulation, and decent, free, and *assertive* education. If our education system produces many people who vote for whoever the corporate newspapers tell them to, then that education system's a failure. If the education system produces many people that are refusing to vaccinate their children, then it's a failure. If the education system produces deniers of climate change or darwinian evolution then it's a failure.

If you want a functioning public sphere, you need a minimal level of smartness in the participants. There has to be a cutoff point where we can say, no your view is *not* valid and won't be counted. No, you cannot participate if you can't think properly. We provided you, via public education, in good faith, with all the tools you need to be able to develop your own critical thinking practise. If by the end of that process you still can't do it, then you don't make the cut: if you don't even know what you're voting about, your vote is void.

I worry that the liberal fear of authoritarianism has led to a failure to maintain the cognitive acuity of the populace, and this inexorably leads us to authoritarianism. Massive fail.

Denying people the vote is tyrannical, you say? Well, in Poland some people are voting to take the vote away from women, including a significant number of women. Go figure. And this in a country where literally every single man and woman is smarter than Cursor Miner. So fortunately there's no need to be tyrannical or undemocratic, the halfwits seem quite happy to tyrannise themselves. My suggestion is that we do indeed take those Polish lady's votes away, but *only those who actually voted to have their votes taken away*. If you want a despot, then maybe your wish should come true, if you vote for populist demagogues, then you should suffer them, but why should anyone else? You could even have a *fake* demagogue option without the bother of unleashing the real demagogue, the morons wouldn't know the difference... Similar to that one really retarded answer amongst the four options on Who Wants To Be A Millionaire, there would always be one option on the ballot paper that's designed as a numpty trap. If you tick the box for Cunty McRacistFace you're out of the game. Simple solution, no? After all, the ancient Greeks, who invented democracy, never were as foolish as to extend it to *just anyone*.

So the suggestions that in order to solve big problems like inequality and global warming via *more* democracy seem bone headed. Wake up! That doesn't help anything unless you can disrupt the channels that the smart evil people have to control the dumb good people. Just handing more power to the dunderheads doesn't change that axis of evil in the slightest. The more influence idiots have, the more leverage the evil geniuses have via them, and the less likely it is that any of these problems will be solved.

Soooo many banalposts saying words to the effect of "Don't let the Tories blame ordinary people for the botched response to the pandemic! It's all the Tories fault! Yay the people!" when the inescapable reply is that you can blame the people for the Tories, so however you try to slice it you *can* blame the people for the poor response to the pandemic. If you incompetently vote for an incompetent government, then incompetent responses to crises is what you get. My diagnosis of this self-contradiction is that people are trying to mix compassion with causality in some weird way. It is actually perfectly possible to blame someone for something and still feel compassion for them. It is possible to care about someone but admit that they cannot take care of themselves.

People like to wheedle on about transparency and accountability in democracies. Whilst failing to notice that the body supposedly in whom the power should rest - the voters - are subject to neither. You can vote as perversely and selfishly as you like without fear of repercussions. Maybe it would also be a good idea to actually make voters accountable for their actions¹⁵? For example, if you voted for Brexit, maybe you should pay for it? I already lost a ton of money thanks to Brexit, thanks to the weakening pound, and it hasn't even really started yet. Can I demand reparations? If Poland (those cunning brainiacs) can [demand war reparations](#) from innocent Germans eighty years after the fact, then why can't I demand reparations from people who are *obviously* guilty right now? Hmm, well I guess because Brexit voters just aren't smart enough to earn enough money to make up what they've cost the rest of society. Pow! Now we really are down at mean and dirty insults aren't we. It had to happen.

Eventually the left's attempt to make excuses for "the average voter" starts to look more and more like their desperate attempt to retreat into a weird fantasyland where everyone is nice apart from the rich.

¹⁵ Mike, public accountability for voting is a terrible idea. It would just strengthen the dynamic of public shaming which you yourself claim is corrupting the public sphere. There are good reasons why political opinions should be private, because otherwise social pressure too easily becomes tyrannical. Transparency is a tool that can be abused like any other.

The authoritarian, selfish, narcissistic, boorish, loutish, STUPID right wing leaders coming into and retaining power all over the world (Trump, Johnson, Salvini, Orban, Putin, Morawiecki, Modi, Bolsonaro, the list seems to grow every year) are doing so via democratic processes. In other words, democracy is not a magic button to press to make everything great. Whatever made western societies great, it wasn't just democracy, it was something else, it was in fact the rational, humanistic, scientific worldview that was held by the intellectual elite, which was the greatest intellectual elite in history. Democracy happened along as a *symptom* of that intellectual greatness, not a cause. Democracy is a symptom of rationality. Egalitarianism is also such a symptom, and yet it could also be its downfall.

Yes, democratically elected demagogues are using psychological tricks and corrupt financial power to win elections, but ultimately these tricks are obvious to any one with half a brain, and the voters who fall for it clearly have far less than half a brain. If you can't admit that then I consider you to be part of the problem. Because unfortunately Stupidity Is Not The Exclusive Preserve Of The Right, as I, Mike Trollfield, will now struggle, once again, manfully, in the face of all odds, to demonstrate.

Slippery Slopes Vs. Avalanches

Going back to the taboo around Stupid. Digging deeper, I think the real problem some people have with labelling people as stupid is that they feel the need to deny that there are any differences in ability, intelligence or talent across the population at all. And this has emerged out of notions of "equality" that the left love so much. Now coming up here's a tangled web of a sentence: it seems we are in the contradictory situation of not being able to call people who resent us calling them racist racist, and not being able to call the people who are angry about us calling them stupid stupid, due to precisely the same ideology that made them furious in the first place. And if you can't understand that sentence then you might be part of the problem too.

Let's cut to the chase here and finally, gleefully, wantonly, submit to Godwin's law.

Let's say that what people are really afraid of is that if we brand more than half the population as being of below average intelligence (facetiousness aside, this can actually be the case, average doesn't mean median remember?), then we're one single dark-net shopping binge away from wearing long leather coats and loading them into gas chambers.

If we admit some people are "superior" to others, then we're going to become Nazis. Right¹⁶ ?

Well, if denying reality is the only way to stop Holocaust 2.0 then we're in a right pickle, aren't we, comrades? Let's try to break the road-to-dumbo-Auschwitz argument down a bit. Full disclosure: I'm setting up a jack-booted straw man here. Our goose-stepping scarecrow reasons as follows:

Step 1: People have differing cognitive abilities. It's hard to deny this.

Step 2: There seems to be a testable *general* intelligence measure. This can be challenged, and has, but nevertheless IQ is a fairly stable, testable construct, and turns out to be roughly 50% genetic 50% environmental¹⁷. It is a fairly good predictor of success in life.

Step 3: "Intelligence is a fundamentally desirable trait". A bit more complex now we're getting into notions of *value*, but still fairly solid. This sounds sketchy and elitist, until you think what general intelligence *gets* us - and it gets us the ability to accomplish all the complex things that we value as a society. Many things we cherish as humans arise from our intelligence: science, art, law, engineering, morality, planning, cooperation, comfort, pizza, the list is pretty damn long. So intelligence embodies many of our values, not everything of course, but enough to be confident that it's a really good thing to have.

Step 4: If intelligence is a desirable trait, then we should aim to increase the prevalence of intelligent behaviour (again, it will ring alarm bells in your head until you realise that education aims to do exactly this). If you value something, then it would be bizarre and perverse to not work towards having more of it.

¹⁶ Spoiler alert: not right.

¹⁷ Debates about the heritability of intelligence continue. But the evidence seems to point to intelligence being between 50% and 80% heritable. That's a lot, not everything, but a lot. Clearly giving up on providing good education to people of all abilities, just because they have innate differences, would be insane. Providing social environments that give people opportunities for cognitive development can still tweak that remaining 20-50% variation that comes from their environment, that is still transformative and should be a top priority. I don't really know what the logic is that says because some people are less intelligent than others we should give up on them. If anything it is the reverse because they need more help. It's another 'slippery slope' argument that isn't actually a slope, and probably isn't slippery. Getting into the nitty gritty of how that 50% -80% heritability figure is obtained would take a lot of time, and you could debate all the nuances of methodology. But just ask yourself this question: if intelligence is not heritable, then how did it evolve? How did humans evolve to be smarter than chimps (and rabbits and wasps and sphagnum moss) if their respective DNA contains *no* genes that affect their smartness? There must be variation in these genes otherwise there could never be a gradual increase in intelligence in our evolution. To think otherwise is to accept a form of creationism. Accepting that, it would be exceedingly bizarre to find that the genetic variation within our species ends up producing no variation in innate cognitive abilities. It would be an incredibly weird coincidence.

Step 5: We need to treat less intelligent people like unfeeling inferior subhuman scum. We'll measure their skulls, steal the little stuff they have, sterilise them, impose a cutoff limit for IQ beneath which we'll probably torture and kill them or something. We'll edit our genomes so that we all become soulless clones.

Did you spot the incorrect step in the argument? Maybe go over it once more. Do you think the end point of this slippery slope is so abhorrent that we should put up a fence a couple of steps early just to be on the safe side? Shall we say that intelligence is not such a big deal just to whittle down the number of people who blithely wander into step 2, slip up on a Swastika-shaped banana skin and plummet off the edge of step 4? Or better still let's deny that intelligence has any meaning at all, so that people never even start at step one, and refuse to even start along the path of making any value judgements about anything whatsoever? Yes, that'll help, rather than risk that a naughty person will make the erroneous step 5, let's just stop everyone from thinking about it *at all*.

This method of argument is very similar to the "buffer zone" excuses that some nations make for conducting land-grabs. They consider their enemies to be too close to their borders, so they grab a bit of "enemy" territory in order to form a buffer zone. There are a whole bunch of too-obvious-to-explain reasons that this tactic never achieves the stated aim.

I have a better suggestion - we should draw the stop line at the step in the argument that blatantly makes no sense whatsoever, and this way we can actually talk honestly about what's good and bad in this world.

We're right to be *cautious*. I agree there. Looking at how we treat our less intelligent planetary colleagues, i.e. animals, we are right to be worried that beings who are recognised as "less able to reason" might get treated like shit. But really, the battle that needs fighting there is to try stop treating animals like shit, NOT ask them what they think about the pros and cons of international fucking trade regulations.

Just because I believe that my cat is fundamentally less intelligent than me, doesn't mean I will exploit, torture and exterminate my cat. I love my cat dearly. But it did take her about a year to work out that doors don't always open via pushing, sometimes you have to pull. I mean, fair play, she got the hang of it in the end, but I'm fairly sure that I could have reached the same conclusion in considerably less time. She's smart enough to know the trick that if a mouse (or a string) runs behind an object then you can run around to the *opposite* side so you can catch it when it comes out. But she also tries a similar thing for

birds that hop off the edge of a TV screen, she ends up going looking for them round the back. So, I'm smarter. But that doesn't mean I'm cuter, does it?

Actually the reasoning I presume Nazis, colonists, evil empire builders and that bunch usually follow would proceed in exactly the *reverse* order in their Zoom meetings:

Step 1: (After much fumbling to select the correct audio input) We want to kill a bunch of people and steal those people's stuff, and hence become more powerful. Power is what it's all about (everyone nods).

Step 2: But we're only a small gang of psychopaths, so we really need to persuade normal sane people to do step number 1 for us (everyone tuts and looks concerned. Someone turns off their amusing Oktoberfest background that suddenly seems inappropriate to the gravity of the situation).

Step 3: We'd better label those "others" inferior so that it doesn't seem so bad when normal people are told to kill them and steal their stuff (murmurings of approval, a few thumbs-ups appear on in the chat).

Step 4: Hey Reinhard, you're still muted.

Step 5: Stupid's a good insult, we'll use that! (a clamour of likes, claps, heart-swastika emojis)

Step 6: Let's tart it all up a bit with some fancy talk about improving the human race (Universal agreement, motion is approved... but the meeting still drags on for twenty minutes as the most horrendous sociopaths in human history still have difficulties trying to *finally solve* the problem of saying goodbye to one another).

It seems strange to me that we spend all our time second guessing the covert power-fueled hidden agenda of our current rulers, whilst we accept the stated motivations of the most evil regimes in history at face value. They wanted to improve the human race. Sure they did. They stuck to their guns and didn't let annoying things like power, corruption or pesky wars let them take their eyes off the ball, right? And Hitler wouldn't *make stuff up*, surely?

Nazism was way more concerned with pseudoscientific notions of "racial purity", "weakness" and "strength" and various other bullshit notions, rather than IQ. In fact the Nazis were *opposed* to IQ testing, and even if they had done it and done it right, they may well have found that the people they thought were inferior scored pretty decently, so how would that compute? Stalin too considered IQ testing "bourgeois". But then it involved people sitting down, using a pen, and not getting shot for more than ten minutes, which were all terribly bourgeois, imperialist things to be caught doing.

So I claim that the slippery slope argument that the IQ-phobes are worried about slopes in the complete opposite direction. And now it seems we're running at full pelt down this slope in order to avoid what we thought was at the other end of it. Actually I would say the analogy of a slippery slope should be upgraded a little, a better analogy for Nazism would be an avalanche.

The flaw that a lot of these slippery slope arguments share is that they are grounded in a single historical example. I.e. the rise of Nazism. If you read a history of Germany in the 30s, it would appear that Nazism was a snowball that, once given a tiny nudge via an elitist ideology, rapidly gathered momentum and swept all before it in an avalanche of hatred. Yes, that is correct... in that particular instance, the events had such a trajectory, which is the most famous example precisely *because* everything was swept before it. But what about all the other balls that were nudged that didn't gather momentum? All the other shitty, elitist ideologies that didn't conquer most of Europe? You didn't read a book about them, did you? Maybe it's not the ideologies themselves doing the heavy lifting, maybe it's the conditions under which they spread? It's herd immunity and social distancing all over again.

If every single instance of judging people and ranking them according to some value judgement led in a few short years to totalitarian tyranny as per Nazi Germany, then every single country in the world would now be firmly under such regimes. If every single culture that has ever been mildly racist or tribal or prejudiced against out-groups inevitably became Nazis, and the slope really was that slippery, then every country in the world would now be ruled by Nazis, because mild forms of judgmentalism and casual prejudice exist everywhere, amongst all cultures¹⁸, all classes and amongst all races at all points throughout history, including Britain and America.

In the twenties, the average person in Britain or America was probably just as prejudiced as the average German. Consider Churchill, again. It was something *else* that fueled that prejudice, and turned it from being something mundane, shitty, unthinking and stupid, into something terrifyingly powerful, hateful and apocalyptic. Germany in the thirties was in a highly chaotic and unpredictable situation, it could just as easily have turned into a totalitarian *communist* state. It really could have gone either way. The Fascist ideology was hateful, yes, but it wasn't the ideological content that provided the momentum to the hate, it was the humiliation, poverty and resentment of the German populace.

¹⁸ Fortunately prejudice genuinely did decline over time, not via suppression of ideology but via education, intellectual progress and the rationalist humanist values of the enlightenment which quantitative investigations into things like IQ tests naturally emerged from.

Oh, and the stupidity. Lets not forget that one. Hitler came to power in a democracy, remember.

What I'm getting at here is that concentrating your political firepower on defeating all the tiny nudges of miniscule *potential* snowballs of tyranny will not prevent some snowball somewhere from gaining momentum and causing destruction. Because it's not the everyday noise of small-scale prejudice (or the scientific discovery of inconvenient facts) that *causes* the giant destructive avalanches, it's more the wider environmental conditions, the fact that there's a massive amount of snow on a whacking great steep slope, ready to blow. Eliminating everyday language slip ups that betray one's subconscious biases, or eliminating awkward scientific results that could, conceivably, be used by Nazis to justify their abhorrent policies is *not* the way to prevent the next avalanche of totalitarianism. Because those things are not what gives energy to the avalanche, environmentally speaking. This is actually a tricky point about causality. It can be a single pebble that starts an avalanche. But is that pebble the "cause"? It's not clear. If it wasn't for that specific pebble, some other pebble would probably come along. To really prevent avalanches you need big fences that span and secure the entire slope, not just a horde of amateur vigilante Pebble Police looking around at the top for any toppling tiddlers that might trigger something off. Indeed, it might be some mis-step of one inexperienced pebble policeman that sets the whole damn thing sliding anyway.

So what would be the equivalent of a huge amount of snow that would be the potential to cause an avalanche? Well, spiraling levels of inequality is absolutely one, but surely the incessant assault on common sense and scientific reality from the intellectual Left is another.

I'm not claiming that it's impossible to abuse the notion of intelligence, or that IQ tests are totally reliable, or that there is a tendency for people to equate mental ability with moral worth. There are many worrying fallacies about IQ. Intelligence is not a monolithic property, intelligence is *not* fixed and unchangeable, intelligence is *not* a measure of your worth as a person. It is inevitably a multi-faceted, immensely complex phenomenon. It is quite possible that we have no idea how it works. But this is the kind of the point - the debate is difficult, the issues are thorny, the worrying fallacies are out there, but the abilities are real, we have to deal with this stuff and not just erect ideological police tape around the whole area.

Mike Trollfield

Keeping Factful

Wow, Mike, just wow. That was... a ride.

So Mike has gone full gutter press columnist on us (you what? Can you really not tell the difference?: Mike), and yes, I let him do it. And this is deliberate.

So I guess, even at this early stage in the album, it may be time to come clean about what's going on here. My intention was to break the fourth wall with regard to the music, and instead I've let rip what appears to be, well, you tell me what it appears to be... I guess I will now have to break the fourth wall with regards to that too. So why have I dressed myself up as a mean, uber-rationalist uber-insulting person called Mike Trollfield? Why have I given so much column space to some views that I would find, if not evil, at least distasteful? Why would I, who desperately want to contribute something positive to the world, contribute instead brutally negative slaps in the face to myself and my milieu? Why have I run the risk of getting myself and all my music cancelled? Many of these rantings are borderline unacceptable to my peers, and unacceptable to me. So why bother?

I'm willingly going over to the other side (I'm on *your* side you muppet!: Mike), sitting there and viewing the world through their eyes for a bit. This could be termed purple-pilling. You red pill, then you blue pill back. Or something.

Once you have let go of your tribal affiliations it's quite easy. It is dangerous, but I consider it necessary, otherwise you are incapable of seeing the stupidity of your own tribe, and all you're left with is blind, partisan conflict.

We on the left invariably assume that people who hold right-wing views are either evil, or manipulated, or both. We rarely say that some people might think that way because they actually believe those things to be good and right. I don't know what proportion of those on the right who would, if you scratched the surface, be acting purely in bad faith, but I would guess it was actually rather small. I still believe in the fundamental goodness of people. Mike does too, his vitriol notwithstanding, his four quadrant diagram above shows this. Most people are good, most of the time. People can be misguided in what they consider good and right, but unless you understand *exactly how* those people are misguided you will never be able to understand what you are supposedly fighting against. And *assuming* they are evil and/or manipulated will probably not reveal the truth of what motivates people's political thought. So don't do it. Yes I know Mike did it, but Mike's allowed because he's not

me, right? You see how this works? Mike makes mistakes that are the mirror image of my mistakes and we both end up a little wiser. Possibly.

Since it has become so easy to grab a snippet of what someone says and use it to besmirch their character, I have deliberately invented another character to render such a tactic meaningless. I do this in order to try to decouple discourse about how to make a better society from character judgements. Mike is an invented character. Cursor Miner is an invented character. Robert Tubb is an invented character. The person who sings the verse of this song is an invented character with an invented voice, the person who sings the chorus of this song is yet another character with an invented voice. You too are an invented character, and you too have invented your voice, although you have done this so gradually over so many years that it feels like you really are a natural integral whole, and you might well try to deny any artifice or outside influence.

We shackle these imagined identities to ourselves, and we shackle our political views to those identities, and thereby we stupidize ourselves. We wrap ourselves as thickly as we can in protective layers of bias. I'm trying to de-stupidize myself by inventing strong opposition to myself. I will probably fail. Judge any of my characters any way you like, but don't let it distract you from the issues at stake.

Yes, if you search for research on IQ you will immediately find yourself some god awful ugly right-wing trollfest bullshit site. Such is the internet. But then you have a choice - *react against* that ideology and be controlled by their narrative, or keep your trust in facts, research and reasoned debate.

We all know about the tendency on the right to only believe the facts which support their world view, and it is blatantly ridiculous. But don't imagine the left are immune from this, don't imagine that *you or I* are immune from this. *Everyone* does it. Confirmation bias, and my-side bias sit right at the top of the list of dumbnesses hardwired into the human brain. And that includes mine and it includes yours. Mike is my attempt to triangulate a less blinkered view of the world. Mike is my pet psychology experiment on myself and on you. It could, like numerous psychology experiments, go horribly wrong and deeply traumatise the participants and the experimenters alike, but we'll see.

If a fact seems unpleasant and shocking, we try to deny it. Fingers in the ears, la la la. This is how we all operate. But try and swim against that tendency. If you refuse to admit that any right-wing thought contains any truth at all, or worse if you only see fit to believe the facts that seem "nice", then you have been defeated on three counts - first you have lost the moral high ground that honesty and veracity gives you, second you have enabled

recruitment for toxic ideologies by making them look more rational and realistic than your alternative, hence more attractive to people who value freedom of thought and speaking honestly who are important people to have around. Third you have built an factually incorrect model of the world which, besides just being plain wrong, prevents the formulation of successful social policy that can deal effectively with the actual problems, which was the whole point of left-wing politics in the first place. So don't do it.

I believe that it is only by maintaining our hold on the truth that we can defeat toxic ideologies. If you simply define yourself against them, then all you will ever be is a punching bag, a kind of background for their figure, a kind of vapour that moves around the outside of evil but never actually has any effect upon it. Simply saying the inverse of what bad people say doesn't make you a good person, instead it gifts them a quite spectacular amount of control over you. We must define a positive vision of the future, or we'll have it defined for us.

So, to haul though Mike's argument again, people are scared that if IQ tests reveal some people as being less able to make good decisions than others, we then "have been given an excuse" to implement horrific discriminatory policies. But we still don't, clearly. Why on earth would that follow?

A diverse spectrum of cognitive abilities exists, it doesn't even matter who lands where on that spectrum, it doesn't matter what genitals land where on that spectrum, it doesn't matter what socioeconomic bracket falls where in that spectrum, all kinds of people could have all kinds of differences in ability and we need to deal with this rationally, humanely and compassionately, regardless of how the stats play out. Furthermore, since cognitively disadvantaged people are easily manipulated by smart, actually evil people, giving stupid people more power than they deserve is, in reality, handing power to the type of people who really will end up at that horrendous last step they arrived at in the Wansee Conference Call.

Presumably people's ultimate motivation here is to defend the disadvantaged. This may be the (good) intention but it is not the result. You do not defend the oppressed by denying the reality of their oppression, similarly you cannot defend the disadvantaged by denying the reality of their disadvantage. Categorising all disadvantages as oppression does those who are genuinely disadvantaged no favours. The liberal 'hands off' approach that lets people be as scientifically illiterate as they like is not good for those people, or the society they live in. And let's face it, in our recent pandemic stress test, the more enshrined in a culture is the precious "freedom to be a retard", the worse that country suffered.

By refusing to admit that some people are less able to make sense of their world, the more able are neglecting their duty of care. By liberally allowing people to opt out of using their brains properly, and allowing the cognitive advantages of others free reign, we permit huge inequalities, and a massive social burden of cleaning up the fall-out from people not able to make rational decisions in the interest of themselves or the common good. "All men are created equal" by God, is a noble claim that unfortunately turned out to be false. This egalitarian assumption that supposedly gives us a "level playing field" when it comes to making our way in life gives us anything but. It gives us a playing field where the smart completely outwit the not-so-smart and gather disproportionate amounts of wealth and power.

I think, as this tumultuous decade unfolds¹⁹, if we can admit to ourselves that some need to up their game, or have it upped for them, then we will be in a better and more honest place. The smart need to look reality in the eye and agree that some people's game needs to be upped. Because, unfortunately, we don't have time to tit about anymore. We require a certain level of collective intelligence to get the planet through this century in one piece.

I believe that in a just society, the strong should help the weak. An ideology that claims, against evidence, that all are equally strong will put that project in serious jeopardy. Such an ideology is itself stupid.

Tune In Next Week For ...

So hopefully we might be able to tear ourselves away from the idiocy of the world for a little while and talk about music again. We can take a break from Mike's negativity and return to something a bit more uplifting. We can take up the theme of the smartness of our culture, sing its praises, and we can Stand Up For Science. Yay!

¹⁹ If you think things will blow over and settle down, you are mistaken. Watch with horror as history unfurls.