

One Dimensional Man

One Dimensional Man,
One Dimensional Man,
He can't do much but he does what he can,
One Dimensional Man.

One Dimensional Man,
One Dimensional Man,
Life is bland when you're only a strand,
One Dimensional Man.

Two Dimensional Man.
Two Dimensional Man.
Life in an architectural plan,
Two Dimensional Man.

Two Dimensional Man
Two Dimensional Man
Restricted to left right up and down,
that's Two Dimensional Man

But in three dimensions, you can dance and swoop, and pick a lovely flower.
In three dimensions you sing to pass the hour.

One Dimensional Man,
One Dimensional Man,
You can talk about tennis but he won't understand,
One Dimensional Man.

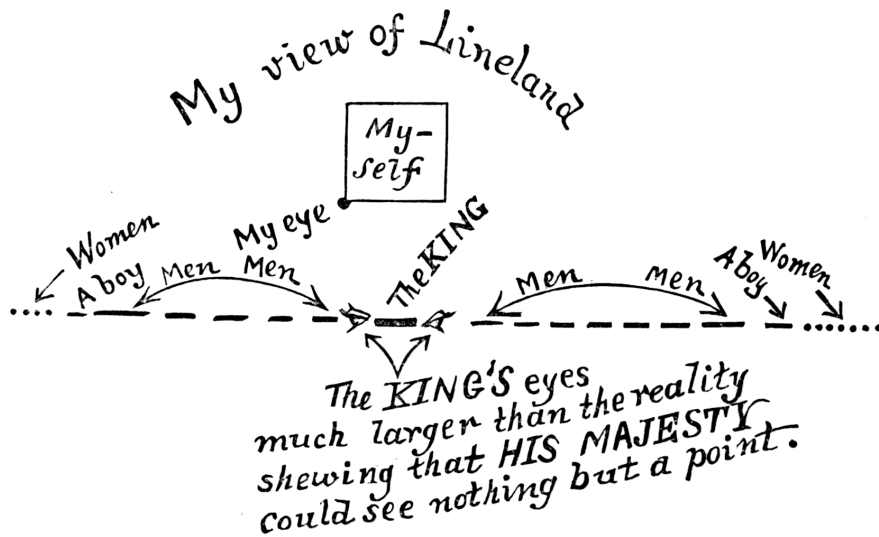
One Dimensional Man,
One Dimensional Man,
He's a slave to time, living life of the line,
One Dimensional Man.

Two Dimensional Man
Two Dimensional Man
Looks like he's been splatted with a frying pan,
Two Dimensional Man

But in three dimensions, you can laugh and joke and stroke a lover's hair.
In three dimensions, there's always space to spare.
Four dimensional man,
Four Dimensional Man!
Doctor who and... Peter Pan...,
Four Dimensional Man.

Five Dimensional Man!
Six Dimensional Man!
Seven, eight, nine, ten,
dance like that if you can!

This song was made back in 2014 or so. It was inspired by the wonderful short story "Flatland" by Edwin Abbot, but is also named after a book One Dimensional Man by Herbert Marcuse. I think I saw the latter book in the library in Queen Mary University, and instead of it suggesting in my mind a serious, heavy handed critique of western consumer capitalism (which is what the book in fact is), it suggested a little 1D cartoon character who was kind of existentially frustrated with his limited existence. So on the surface it's just a jolly song about maths, and the funny little beings that might live in different dimensionalities, but to roughly stay faithful to Marcuse there's a few sub-surface references to the alienations of modern life.



Abbot's drawing of Lineland. Seems like a pretty conservative place.

The question “where do your ideas come from” can be a dull or interesting one depending on your mood. Personally, I like having ideas, and I am indeed very interested in where ideas come from, both in a scientivian neurogizmoid sense, and also an artistipants sense. So yeah, I’m glad you asked, and happy to self indulgently go on about this for as long as you let me.

The word “inspiration” is from the Latin “to blow into”. The original meaning of the word was a reflection of the fact that inspiration was thought to be the breath of God. The ideas that popped into your head “from nowhere” clearly had to come from *somewhere*, and since God was the only other being around who was any good at creating anything, surely it must have been him. Perhaps, to a higher dimensional being like God, our brains are like flat pancakes with all their working exposed, and it’s quite easy for him to artfully blow new patterns onto it’s rippling surface. I don’t actually think this is such a stupid idea... though an idea that just popped into my head of starting Facebook for pets and calling it Fuzzbook doesn’t seem particularly divine. Anyway, what we used to think of as God we now think of as the subconscious mind. Which you might think is an unpoetic demotion, but is actually a *more* fascinating and wonderful topic.

One of the cliched, but yet most intriguing, places ideas come from is dreams. Dreams are the most direct, unfiltered communications from our subconscious

mind, and sometimes it decides¹ to communicate musically. Quite a few songs come to me in dreams. But this in no way means that these dream songs are marvelous works of genius. Sometimes, you wake up and that song that seemed brilliant in your dream will be utter rubbish in waking life. It'll seem like Radiohead when you're asleep and Coldplay when you're awake. Sometimes the song will have some strange, atmospheric aura in the dream which stays with you for a few minutes on waking but then completely evaporates, which is sad, because without that aura, the melody no longer seems interesting. More or less like when someone else tells you their "bizarre" dream they had: "Yeah I was in a supermarket. I was queuing for the checkout. My mum was there. It was like, *so weird*" no, it really doesn't sound weird, it sounds quite prosaic, in fact. Perhaps you only *dreamt* it was weird?

Sometimes you dream a joke that was hilarious in dream-land, but utterly dysfunctional in real-land, this too comes with a huge sense of disappointment on waking. All those laughs you had in there was fake brain-simulation fun, not real proper funny joke-fun. Songs you dream can be equivalently weird-dull, and intriguing-underwhelming. Or occasionally can become the most famous song of all time. A song that came to it's composer in a dream was Yesterday. The original working title of which was Scrambled Egg, which I like to think were the original lyrics in Macca's dream. He should have kept it that way in my humble opinion. Sing it to yourself: instead of "Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away", sing "Scrambled egg, dripped all down inside my trouser leg".

Some of the best and worst moments in my life have come on waking up. One of the worst was dreaming that I'd got off in spectacular fashion with the girl I'd been head-over-heels in love with, and waking up to find that it never happened, and the real girl was resolutely not interested again. On the other hand when I dreamed that a hideously psychotic being had taken over all reality and plunged me alone to a hell where the ocean was entirely made of rotting, mangled human beings, waking up to find everything normal again was a spectacular, blessed cosmic relief. You win some, you lose some. I can dream about making by far the best song I ever made, and wake up to realise that it was a sodden, formulaic lump of tripe. On the other hand I can be dreaming that I'm listening to

¹ Although I'm not convinced your subconscious ever "decides" anything, being the wishy washy, hand wavy kind of thing it is.

something cool on the radio, by a completely different band, and then wake up and suddenly twig with some cheeky relish that, mwa ha ha, *it's my song now*. Can't sue me for copyright infringement if you're stuck in dreamyland now, can you, suckers? Not much can traverse the interdimensional barrier that separates dreaming from waking, but *ideas* can, and songs can, and this makes them magical entities.

Sometimes I simply wake up with a song, decide I'm really too sleepy to get out of bed to record it into my phone, slip back into slumber and forget the thing ever existed. It's a tough call, when you're half asleep to decide if some random snatch of half nothing is worth getting up for. I mean, the golden breath of the Jungian collective unconscious giving birth to an absolute smasher of a song is nice and all, but remaining cosily snoozing away is pretty nice too. Sometimes I dream of more complex electronic music, but that is kinda impossible to jot down on a phone so it usually disappears into the ether, I do try to mouth the thing (extremely quietly so as not to wake my wife up) into the phone but on re-listening it's just bleary mumbly mush that it is impossible to piece together again, whatever genius lay within now impossible to reverse-engineer. I may as well have just got some more shut-eye.

The best state of all is half sleep. In this peculiar state you can use your brain's simulation capabilities semi-consciously. You can create proper, real, complicated genuinely polyphonic music real time in your head as you half doze and witness it happening quite clearly. This amazing mental state (hypnagogia, most famously employed by [Salvador Dali](#)) is rather difficult to engage deliberately, because let's face it you might be too sleepy to remember that you were meant to be constructively half sleeping. It would be *so* useful to be able to switch into this state at will, but there isn't really a drug that does this. Aphex Twin claimed he could write tracks whilst lucid dreaming. I wonder how much of that was just playing it up for the gallery, but it really does seem feasible, and technically there is the possibility that one day we could induce this state and then [read out the information](#) into the computer...

I used to work quite hard on lucid dreaming, and managed to do it occasionally, but I'd always end up going flying, because after all I can make fairly decent music in real life but I'm not so hot at flying.

So, dream or not, a phrase or word or a snatch of melody will pop into my head, from somewhere or other, and it will seem to have a certain click to it, usually a snipperty snappity rhythm combined with a fun concept. What makes a fun concept? Well one thing is that if it immediately seems like something that no one in their right mind would ever write a song about in a million years, I usually go for it. In other words, the dumber the idea, the more I am motivated. In a sense this is trying to challenge myself. Can I do something palpably absurd and get away with it? Can I take something ridiculous and make it cool somehow? Can I take that silly thing and somehow get away with playing it at a proper music venue to proper real people who turned up to listen to proper music? Can I live with myself afterwards?

“Getting away with it” has always been a fundamental motivation in my work. What does that mean? What does it mean to get away with something artistically speaking? Well, one thing is simply declaring *the* rules to be *your* rules. When I make a song, I leave clues in that song to tell the listener that I’m making this thing on my terms. I think that listeners can not only hear what you’re doing but they can also hear what you’re *trying* to do. And if you’re trying to do things according to someone else’s rules they can hear that. If you’re trying to do things according to your own rules they can hear that too, and to a certain extent they can absorb those rules as they listen. They can get on board with you, so to speak. So the key to making art is not to make sure each second of your thing is conforming to some rules you think that listeners will be judging you by, it’s coming up with your own vision of what’s good, and projecting that to the listener, and inviting them to see what you think is good about your thing with *your* eyes. And what could be fresher than seeing something through a fresh pair of eyes? What could be better than discovering a new notion of *good*? If the concept for a song is palpably stupid, something that only I would do, then this clearly communicates to the listener that I am not limited by the normal bounds of decency and sanity that other musicians are, and hence I am doing things according to *my* rules.

The second benefit of “getting away with something no one in their right mind would ever do” is that you stand at least half a chance of making something *original*. If there is an immediate and terrifyingly high barrier of revulsion to

making something, then the chances are that 99% of other people will have fallen or turned away at this barrier, which makes what's on the other side of that wall more unique and hence more valuable. Since humiliation and shame are huge and somewhat irrational barriers that stop people from doing perfectly enjoyable things, then very often willingly subjecting yourself to humiliation and shame will get you into that lush, fresh creative territory where inspiration takes flight. It is as if, when you idiotically set your hair on fire, this somehow persuades God to try and blow it out - and then bam! Breath of God. There's your inspiration right there. As my first ever musical hero sang: [ridicule is nothing to be scared of](#). An amazing proportion of my best received tracks started off as jokes.

Since I value creative diversity so highly, I think it's my moral duty to bring these stupid songs into existence, because let's face it, no one else will. Poor old One Dimensional Man would never forgive me if I denied him his, admittedly meagre, existence.

The next stage would be fitting the phrase to a melody. The phrase will already suggest a rhythm. The rhythm and the concept will already suggest something, and this process can be as simple as singing the thing out loud over and over, free-associating other lyrics, or just letting it rattle around in my head for a few hours. If there's no time to dig into it, I'll just grab my phone and make a quick recording. Or I'll pick up an acoustic guitar and play something basic on a single string and sing along.

If the song seems like it's going to be a "novelty" song², then it matters less whether the actual music that I'm writing is (a): cool or (b): even vaguely cool. Neither of those things matters at this point. I think this is because the music becomes subservient to the comedy and needs to do less artistic work to stand up on its own. Nevertheless, this lack of "pressure" on the music can actually really

² Novelty songs are the most critically slammed things in musical history, but I love them. Being branded "novelty" basically means that this song really has no business being a song at all. It is a temporary suspension of the rules of pop. It is the musical equivalent of a Newton's cradle, a Fidget Spinner or a jar of Ferrofluid, in that it is intensely captivating for a few hours, and then goes up into the loft and is then utterly erased from your memory. It was only by some freak accident that the silly bugger made it into your existence at all. I have a great fondness for these irrelevant but captivating items. If I can create a song which is both a novelty in the sense of being a mere inane trinket, and also a novelty in the sense that it is entirely new, then I have hit what I consider pay-dirt.

free things up and often the musical aspect will come good despite me putting less attention on it - it avoids the tendency to over complicate things. Sometimes dumb chord changes work the best.

And this is another deliberately stupid riff. As I said before, I love *safe* stupid, make no mistake. The stupider the better. One dimensional man is a bit “learning difficulties”, a bit “care in the community” as Andy Weatherall described my music as, and I like that.

I've done this song live a few times, and it's super fun to get people “doing the dance”. Because this is a song that has a dance. I think there should be more viral “everyone does the dance” songs along the lines of the Locomotion / Oh Sit Down / Saturday Night / Gangnam Style and so on, but there is perhaps scope for making them actually witty as well as moronic, there is also scope for giving people a bit more creative freedom too. The 1D dance consists of jumping up and down in one dimension, i.e. in this verse you can only do one single dance which is the Pogo. For the 2D dance you move around on a flat plane, i.e. you can do all sorts of dances but they're all kind of restricted, and it's very hard to do anything with your arms apart from kind of *flap* them. Finally, you are allowed to do *whatever you like*, (for some reason people immediately start “swooping” around all over the place like a slow motion ballerina), in the croony 3D bit. I think this somehow goes back to the old “music and movement” classes in 80's primary school where we were persuaded to pretend to be seeds and grow into trees along to some tinkly piano tunes.

This little routine worked out nicely when I played in the afternoon at the Latitude festival, as it's a “family” kinda festival. To my vague amazement, people of all ages were joining in with the dance and having fun. Nice. And the Latitude festival is very *nice*. I like the idea of making songs that can appeal to everyone at any time. I think, perhaps the walls that separate proper serious cool music for cool musos from the rest of humanity are unnecessary, I'd love to break them down, and these family festivals are a lovely way to achieve that. Alas, I still have these walls in my head. For some reason I still sort of divide the world into “people with the same music taste as me”: AKA the “good” people and everyone else: AKA the “evil” people. I know it's wrong but I just can't help it. The only solution to this terrible ingrained bigotry was to get into so many types of

music that I could slowly expand the circle of “good” people until it contained practically everyone. Which is, as far as I know, the only real way to overcome any kind of prejudice.

Degrees Of Freedom: Dimensionality In Musical Interfaces

Possibly the neatest thing (to nerd-me) about this song is how well it tied in with my PhD, even before I'd found the topic of my research. Who knows, maybe without this song I'd never have become Doctor Robert Hamilton Tubb³.

I ended up researching the difference between controlling synth parameters one at a time (1-dimensional controls) or many at a time (multi-dimensional controllers). When you play a traditional instrument, you have to control many things at once - amplitude, pitch, tempo, timbre, are all under your control simultaneously. When you operate a synth or a DAW in contrast, you are mostly operating a single dimension at once by turning one dial at a time. Now I had trouble working out how to show any effect of this change on creativity, but since this isn't a PhD thesis, now I can spout whatever baseless rubbish pops into my head. My hunch that drove my PhD research was too far out to ever put into writing, but might as well let it loose now. Ha! Freedom to be wrong! Enjoy!

My hunch was this: that consciousness is serial, and unidimensional. In other words what you experience as waking thought is a “projection” from a higher dimensional space (the highly parallel subconscious) to a lower dimensional space. This is why you can really only focus on changing one thing at a time. In other words, when you are editing with a mouse, altering one aspect of the music at a time, you are doing this consciously, and hence are operating in a low dimensional creative space, whereas if you play the piano, guitar or drums, there is far more going on unconsciously, and you are operating in a higher dimensional space. Now, whilst this theory is almost certainly utterly wrong, or so meaningless that it was “[not even wrong](#)”, it was nonetheless an intriguing jumping off point for many other research questions. And that was actually extremely useful. It is far more creatively constructive to form an *incorrect*

³ I like my fully entitled name as it is redolent of both the pseudonym of Beatles' drug doling dentist and also a peculiar character in an Edward Lear limerick. It was fully worth the four years of academic slog to achieve that exact nominative vibe.

hypothesis that inspires many interesting other ideas and experiments than it is to form a correct hypothesis that suggests no further avenues of investigation. People make fun of [Phlogiston](#) now, because it was a reputed substance that was created when something burned, it was the exact opposite of oxygen in other words, which is consumed when something burns. But actually Phlogiston was an incredibly useful step *toward* discovering oxygen, because it was so precisely and revealingly wrong. Only a minus sign had to be flipped. In other words, commencing research on the basis of a wildly over ambitious and nutty claim will enable you to make far more actual progress toward the truth than proceeding on the basis of a conservative, reasonable proposition; in exactly the same way that producing a song that is about some stupid little character will facilitate far more creativity than writing a song about some more “musical” topic like love. You may even arrive at a song that better expresses love. Which tiny moments of this song manage to do.

The unidimensionality of consciousness also applies when listening to music. *Consciously* we can only listen to one thing at a time, in that the spotlight of our attention is focussed in a narrow beam and highlights a single strand as being the focus. And yet, some part of us experiences so much more than that. Even if we are concentrating on a single thing within a piece of music, the rest of the stuff is still *there* in that it is still affecting your being in an intensely immediate way.

I often play this game to myself where I pick out some aspect of my environment that I was previously unconscious of. For instance, I just picked out the distant plane sound coming from outside. Mmm, flangey. What doesn't happen in this exercise is the plane noise “starting” in your mind, of course not, it was there all along. But I can safely say that I was not aware of the noise... or can I? Clearly one part of my brain was aware of it, or how else would I have been able to “pick it up”? There is a fascinating paper that puts forward the idea that the unconscious is not unconscious at all. In fact it is almost like a completely separate awareness, or more a *swarm* of awarenesses, living in your head alongside the dominant one, constantly spinning off of and rejoining. A bit like when you point a camera at a TV that is showing what the camera is seeing, and you see cascades of distorted copies of stuff spiralling off into infinity. The multiplicity of distorted copies creates intricate patterns, you can ask “which one

is the main one?" but it's kind of meaningless because the pattern is *fundamentally* built of multiple copies of itself. In the same way that [split brain patients](#) really do seem to have two separate sentient beings living inside them, even perfectly normal people contain multitudes of flickering, simultaneous awarenesses. Consciousness as we know it, or think of it, is at best a kind of net thrown over this swarm of thought to tie it into a coherent narrative... And multidimensional controllers, I conjectured, were a way to utilise more of this swarm, a way to unlock the parallelism inherent in the human mind.

Something I'm interested in doing with music is breaking out of that net. I'm interested in smashing my own narrative of what the hell I'm doing when I *try* to make music. I want to finally shut the grasping, prosaic, one-dimensional voice in my head up, and let my neurons do what they're best at. As Yoda says "do or do not do, there is no try". It strikes me that my conscious mind is always *trying* and I would rather just do. One of my cardinal rules is to never apply the word "should" to music.

So one thing I do sometimes is pick up the guitar and noodle around, but think of something else entirely. My fingers therefore just wiggle around on their own and do random stuff that I'm completely unaware of. At some point something will "emerge", in the same way that the sound of the plane emerged as it swam into my conscious awareness. Something that catches my attention. If it has something special then it *will* catch your attention. This form of composition is good for two reasons: firstly is incredibly easy and relaxing, and requires no conscious effort beyond merely picking up the guitar, secondly I think it taps into something deeper, something more holistic, something about your current mood, something about *where you're at* in the moment, rather than where you think want to be in the future.

The thing is, for me, this only really works with the guitar, I find it really difficult to reach this level of distraction and automaticity with electronic music, especially DAW software. Music technology can be *the worst* for placing demands on your powers of conscious reasoning. The only thing I can think about when using software is using the damn software, and there is no immediate channel from the subconscious through the mouse or keyboard. So my ultimate goal with my PhD was to think about ways to operate software that could become as

effortless as the guitar, and in the end it came down to a few issues: *throughput* and *practice*. Practice is the thing that wires up your subconscious mind to a thing that creates sound. Throughput is the bandwidth of the channel that connects the two.

Increasing throughput is perfectly possible, I showed that in my experiments. But, here's the catch: No one is willing to actually practice using a computer interface device. Ten thousand hours to master a new kind of multi-dimensional mouse? What, are you kidding? If something can't be used within the first thirty seconds it goes in the bin. If something appears to be the tiniest bit more difficult than moving a mouse or turning a knob, then you just fuck it off. If, by minute two, anything at all is in the least bit opaque or frustrating, you smash the damn useless thing with a hammer, set fire to the smithereens and write a furious one star review on Amazon.

No one is willing to put the work in to learn a multidimensional interface. So this is why computers and synths still suck. Basically, we won't put the work in to raise the unconscious fluency of interaction, and therefore we're stuck in a one or two dimensional world of consciously struggling away, pointing and clicking, step by step, button by button, for the rest of your life.

You can see this in real time in peoples gigs and YouTube performance videos. There's a regular interaction mode which I call "the flail" where someone's pointy finger hand is moving around about three inches above whatever device they're using. Trying to grab something... hand go grabby grabby... but what? Surely one of these mysterious nubules will make noise better? But which one? Grabby hand not know :(It's clear the brain wants to do something, and the hand wants to press something, but the hand's not clever enough to work out what the hell it needs to press, and the brain is away thinking about what it's actually trying to do musically, so the hand ends up flailing around like a blind, lost puppy. This is the sign of either not enough practice or bad interface design. Or both. I have devices that still induce The Flail after seven years of constant use. I should probably just sell them to some other dweeb to dither their desperate dangling digits over.

The thing is, because you *can* use software consciously, and because you *literally can't* play guitar consciously (at least not completely) then my hunch is that the fact that real instruments are multidimensional forces your conscious mind out of the way means that the multidimensional content of your subconscious is preserved in its journey from your brain into sound, instead of being flattened down by your conscious mind along the way. As you may well imagine, I never got anywhere near being able to *prove* this in my PhD, but I got closer than anyone else, and it seems to reflect a lot of what people say about their experiences with music making.

I claim there is a measure of how fluent an interaction is. It is the same as how good your internet connection is. It is “throughput” measured in bits per second. Your internet connection is maybe, unless you live in Germany, 100 million bits per second. The amount of information coming in through your eyes when watching HD video, i.e. from the computer to your retina, is about 5 million bits per second. The connection between your brain and your computer using a mouse, well that's about five bits per second. FIVE. Not five megabits, not five kilobits, just five itty bitty bits. What the actual? No wonder we would rather slob out in front of Netflix than actually do anything creative - the ratio in throughput is about a million to one.

It has been estimated that the throughput of a concert pianist is more like a hundred bits per second. Where does the 20x speed up come from? Two Ps: parallelism and practice⁴. They spend their 10,000 hours with an interface with 88 parallel channels and they can up their bit rate. Spending 10,000 hours practising a mouse will never ever get you there, because the parallelism is fundamentally limited to two degrees of freedom.

So what's the answer? Well one possible answer is hand tracking, for example using the Leap Motion. I achieved up to about 12 bits per second in my experiments with the Leap. And this was using only six degrees of freedom (up, down, left, right, roll, pitch, yaw) and with participants only practising for about three hours. I would estimate with a reasonable amount of practice with fully accurate twenty-dimensional hand tracking we could easily achieve an order of

⁴ It would be a neater phrase if it were the three Ps, but the only other P that concert pianists have is “ponciness”, and sadly, the causal link between ponciness and increased throughput is uncorroborated.

magnitude greater input speeds over mice and knobs and sliders and all this plodding technology that has remained unchanged since the sixties. And in this way we could finally make electronic music (or indeed any other digital artform) in a less painful, and more fluent way.

To be honest it bugs me somewhat that I think I have shown how we can vastly speed up computer interaction, and how to measure it properly, and yet this has not really achieved recognition. This is partly on me - the best work in the PhD is not published in highly regarded journals, is basically half finished, and is somewhat buried. But the ideas are there and they are strong ones. It turns out that in academia it is almost as hard to promote your work as in music. It's certainly way less corrupt, but ultimately all the same biases, issues of recognition and human social failings apply, which was a disappointing realisation for me.

Musical Tricks: He can't do much but he does what he can

So to continue to hack our way along the idea-to-song trail... This was one of those songs where I had the idea for the main refrain "One Dimensional Man", and the syllables of that phrase fell very naturally into a rhythm. Dan dan dadada dan. Every single phrase in any language has a natural rhythm of its own. If you say the words "one dimensional man" it will have that cadence, and whilst you don't always have to stick to the natural cadence, I find it helps.

And then as I say, the riff wrote itself. It just popped out effortlessly. Within the same amount of time it takes to play it, I had the riff. I really like it when that happens, who doesn't? Partly because it satisfies my romantic longing for tapping into some deeper level of creative intelligence... but mainly because it saves all the usual effort and angst, the teeth pulling and the hair gnashing. And supporting the "tapping into the sublime" theory: if a riff pops out effortlessly then often, on further analysis the pattern will turn out to be super relevant to the topic at hand! It really can be as if your subconscious has taken you initial idea, retreated to a mountain top for six months, pondering deeply upon the meaning of your stupid little concept, and then came back, wizened and skinny from it's harrowing dream-quest and plopped the results of it's journey in your lap. "There, it's yours now, it's perfect. Don't mess it up".

But alack and alas, it is still woefully easy to mess it up. In fact one of the most important things you could ever learn as a musician is exactly how not to mess these gifts from nowhere up. Because your ego *will* get in the way. Your ego will say, “thanks, subconscious-dreamquest-timelord-hermit-me, that’s a great riff, but wouldn’t it be better if I showed off my amazing wibbly wobbly trick in this bit?”, at which point your dreamquest-timelord-hermit subconscious self looks sadly and silently into your eyes and disappears in a puff of sparkling genie steam.

I would say this is the number two worst mistake any musician can make⁵. This is why we are always going on about spontaneity and vibe and all the rest of it - we simply create much better music when we allow ideas to emerge fully formed than when we consciously build them up piece by overthought piece. So the number one skill you can learn is a not-doing skill. You need an alarm bell going off in your head that tells you to leave something the hell alone. Or, if doing something is absolutely necessary, recognising specifically what was awesome about the idea you had, and agreeing to do everything in your power to preserve and magnify that and only that nugget of goodness until the track is finished.

So why do I say that this riff is relevant to the song’s concept? The main riff for 1D man is, appropriately, very “linear” - it moves by single semitones in an extremely one-dimensional fashion. The descending line moves one pixel at a time, like the snake in that old game that you used to get on Nokia phones. In my head, One Dimensional Man looks very like that snake, jerking along one block every eighth note. He’s probably just a line of pixels on a green-screen, but he maybe has two googly eyes at the front.

The first few seconds of the track were a deliberate attempt to make music that sounded as “small”, and claustrophobic as possible, like you were looking at a very tiny fragment of electro under a microscope. There’s also that little “blop” sound, that is the sonic equivalent of a zero-dimensional dot. The zero dimensional dot continues throughout all the verses and begins and ends the track, you can draw a line through those dots. One of the stupid childlike maths

⁵ Number one is, of course, having no taste.

questions that pops into my head is how can something with zero dimensions be something? A dot isn't much but it's still *something*, and if dimensions are the things that things can be something *in* then how can zero dimensional thing still be a thing? Who the hell can I email about this?

It's fun to give yourself a task that is completely different from usual, and since I spend so much time trying to make electro sound "big", it made a nice change to make it try and sound small. This is an oblique strategy that you can use in almost any situation - work out what it is you're incessantly trying to do, and then try to do the complete opposite. I can guarantee you'll get something interesting or enlightening out of it. And, obviously I had to make the voice as small, tinny and nasal as possible too. One of the things I like is that even though the lyrics are in the third person, you can kind of tell that the singer *is* One Dimensional Man, it's a distinct character in the same way that MC Winston is.

I like tracks where the vocals follow the riff in the dumbest and most direct way possible (probably a hangover from my metal days - Ozzy did this quite a lot). Therefore there is no harmonic content in the lines referring to one dimension.

When the 2D part of the verse comes in there is a vocal harmony that "opens up the space" a bit, the new part literally creates a harmonic *dimension* to the track, yeah? See where this is going? Then the 3D middle section introduces a further dimension, in that it is not quantised to a rhythmic grid, and played on acoustic instruments - thus opening up the "expressive" or "human" dimension. Here there's a bit of Scott Walker influence I guess. I also tried to get this section to appear grainy and black and white, like it was being played on an old gramophone. So in a way, even though the three dimensions are now opened up, some dimensionality has been lost: the full, deep human experience of the world that crooner guy is crooning about is actually now only a distant memory, just an old scratchy record echoing, revolving, abandoned in a soulless, technological, flat, binary void. Not only is it nostalgia, it's nostalgia that no one even feels anymore, echoing down a one dimensional tunnel of time. Thus I tried to embed or fold the three dimensional world inside the lower dimensional ones, in an M.C.Escher math-art optical illusion type fashion.

By opening up this third dimension you realise how far down the one dimensional timeline we have come since we really experienced a natural, full life, as sung about in those old crooner songs. Perhaps.

I do really enjoy doing this over the top crooner voice, even though I'm not actually a good enough singer to really carry it off. I think there's probably an alter-ego there too. This was the first ever outing for Crooner-Guy I think. He featured in much more of a starring role for Cunts In Their Cars, maybe he'll have a name and even a guest-writer slot in the book by the next album.

So then the last phase of the chorus loops, "the hour, the hour, the hour". Why? Because we're about to have the profound insight that the single dimension that our hapless hero lives in is *time*.

A slave to time, living life on the line

This song does somewhat tie into Marcuse's critique of uni-dimensional life. Again, by accident as I didn't read much of the book. Cough. Mike will explain why later.

"Living life on the line" means to put oneself in jeopardy, to risk everything. In this case, the pun is saying that the line that you put yourself on is the timeline. You jeopardise your living, felt conscious experience of life by transforming your time into something else, money, status, anything that involves directly comparing a *quality* you possess to other people or some imagined ideal immediately becomes a *quantity*. A quantity is a one dimensional thing. There is this sense that living quantitatively harms your ability to live qualitatively.

Every single moment of your one-dimensional day is blocked off into tasks, meetings, chores, commitments, pre-ordained activities. And all of this very often means to put your living experience, your spontaneous witnessing of the world, your sentience itself, indefinitely on hold. Life in an architectural plan.

One of the primary duties of the artist is to bring people back to their present experiences. Bring them away from worrying about the future, away from

ruminating on the past, away from grasping, planning, allocating, deciding and wanting, and back into the moment, back into the intricate enigmatic sensorama of the present. Listen in the now, experience in the now, be in the now. Every single piece of music I make attempts to do this in some way, indeed all music is in some way playing games with the Now.

As Alan Watts asks: What is the goal of listening to a piece of music? Is it to reach the end? Is it like running a marathon⁶? Is the last note when the pay-off is? Do you reach the end of your favorite album and think, “yes, I’ve *done it*. I’ve finished the whole dastardly thing. *Get in!*”? Not really.

And is the goal of life to finish it? Not really, if anything it is to avoid finishing it at any cost.

I’ve always had a deeply problematic relationship with time. A typical feature of my childhood would be turning up to school late, being given a detention, but turning up late for the detention too, which resulted in detentions for turning up late to detentions, eventually needing to see the headmistress about why I’d chalked up so many detentions, and then turning up late for the meeting with the headmistress. I thought I was the worst person in the world at timekeeping, but then one day I was fortunate enough to meet my darling wife.

What disturbs me is that the headmistress and everyone else seemed to think that time was the simplest thing in the world. Nope, nothing weird about time, sonny. “Just pull your socks up, Robert”: as if strategizing via conscious cognition as it advanced through an invisible and irreversible fourth dimension of space-time was as straightforward as raising the elasticated tops of my socks up my calves.

The biggest problem I had with time was “remembering” to do things. Everyone else seemed to have a magical inner alert that told them to do important stuff at the correct time. An incessant question was “Robert did you remember to do X?”, “No, I forgot” replies the befuddled Robert. Of course I hadn’t *forgotten*, I had only ceased to constantly remember. My problem was that in order to remember to do

⁶ As someone who enjoys running, actually I’d say even running a marathon isn’t about reaching the end.

a certain thing, first I had to remember that there was something to remember, but then how was I to remember that there was something to remember to remember? And of course, being involved in something else at the time, something generally less important but more interesting, I inevitably didn't "remember" anything of the sort.

Clearly, this has nothing to do with memory at all. Obviously if you asked me "can you remember being told to do X?" the answer would be yes. But that's a completely different thing from "can you suddenly, spontaneously remember X at time T, *no matter what else is going on at time T?*" of course I damn well can't, that would involve holding task X in my mind for every single moment from now until T, i.e. literally the only thing I'm allowed to hold in my awareness from now until T is X.

How in Chronos' name were people doing this shit⁷? It completely mystified me. The alternative to being "absent minded" seemed to be never actually being allowed to let your mind wander for a single instant away from repeating the mantra of your current to-do list. What if X is a week from now? Am I expected to stay awake till then, chanting under my breath "remember X, remember X, remember X"... and what if there were more items on the to-do list? What if you were doing something else on the to-do list whilst chanting the to-do list wouldn't that make you forget the rest of it? No one ever explained this to me. Resulting in yet more detentions. This is in the days before kids were reliably diagnosed with dyslexia and so on, perhaps I should have been diagnosed with dyschronia? Am I dyschronic? Can I blame it all on something else now please?

The best theory I could come up with was that other people were fundamentally more boring than me, and that being generally rubbish at normal stuff was an inevitable side effect of having a rich imagination. Thus I neatly set up an anti-enabling me-vs-the-world narrative that has hindered my progress in life ever since.

⁷ The thing I find persuasive about Greek mythology was that the Gods were absolutely awful people. Check out what [Chronos](#) got up to. Given the terrible messed up-ness of time, it makes sense to have a God for it who behaves like a complete dick. I tend toward the agnostic side of atheism in that I have no problem with the idea that there might a God, or Gods, it's just the idea that they are perfectly *good* that is far-fetched.

This is before the days of smartphones, which, as I may have mentioned here and there chapter, are a godsend for people like me. Computers may be infuriating, but they are jolly fantastic at almost everything I'm bad at, and I'm actually wholly grateful to live in this particular techno-dystopia. Let me count the many things I was bloody awful at, the importance of which miraculously vapourised as I reached adulthood:

- Time keeping, reminders (Bing! Do X! Annoying, but useful)
- Mental arithmetic (long division? What am I a *chip*?)
- Spelling, grammar (i before e except where there isn't... no, Christ no. The wiggly red line tells me all I need to know, thank you)
- Neat, joined up handwriting (what was the point of all that, now?)
- Calendars, knowing the day and the date (There it is on the top right. Sorted.)
- Storing and organising bureaucratic paperwork etc.
- Finding things

The list goes on. And it's a dull one. Computers do dull stuff, and I love them for it. In particular if you are the kind of person who incessantly makes small, stupid mistakes, the undo function is a godsend. Just think: undo didn't even exist until the nineties. Living without undo would be like living without anaesthetic or potatoes. Little slip ups that accumulate and make everything you do kind of shitty can just be undone the fuck back into the oblivion from whence they came⁸. This is one reason why I started making electronic music rather than playing guitar. I just got utterly brassed off with the recording process: playing a whole take perfectly, apart from one little tiny dumb mistake, restarting the take and making another dumb mistake somewhere else, doing it over and over and never getting any better because there seemed to be some rogue wire rattling around in my head that would just let off random spikes of electricity and make my hands spasm out some crappy bum note.

The glory of computers is that you can simply edit that stuff away, it's bloody marvelous. I'd like to propose a toast to editing things. To editing! Chink! And, if

⁸ In fact, there exists a parallel universe entirely consisting of typos, when you correct a typo it is thrown out of this universe and into that one. Whilst this is a disturbing concept in itself, the terrifying thing is that the typo beings are constantly trying to re-invade *our* universe. Writing a book or a computer program would be a breeze if Fuck-ups From Another Dimension weren't constantly attempting to colonise our nice orderly world.

you're paying attention, you'll notice we have arrived at the exact opposite of my PhD thesis I was talking about earlier about the "magic" of real instruments. So that stood up to scrutiny, didn't it? If you'll excuse me for a moment, I need to dig out my four hundred page opus and stuff it in the recycling bin, page by error-strewn page.

So yes. In a sense computers are *better* than real instruments because you can consciously edit all the bum notes and lazy habits that your unconscious spewed forth.

So, obviously there's a trade off here, it's a constant tightrope walk between everything sounding like landfill, and letting your OCD micro-edit the soul out of something. I believe that the sweet spot between fluidity and editability of music is a long way from being achieved. This is why I'm in the business of making music technology, in order to achieve that. For if it *is* achieved then the greatest pleasures known to humankind might be on offer.

Alas, the path to these pleasures seems ever longer: It seems the technologies we use are all locked in now. We can't change anything because we want everything to work the same because we know it and we're comfortable with it, and all the other technology depends on everything else working the same, and it's almost impossible to change because everything is old and stuck together like badly cooked spaghetti. Our sucky interfaces are legacy systems and maybe we have forever walled ourselves off from something that could have been better.

Admittedly, some things that I was *great* at also became obsolete with the rise of information technology, like my almost supernatural navigation skills are more or less obsolete now. Sometimes I'll deliberately get lost in some random part of the city and refuse to look at Google maps, just to revisit past glories such as suddenly emerging in a known part of the city exactly where I expected to. Yeeeah, the old man's still got it, I nod to myself as I pop out right next to the thing I was mentally aiming toward. So yeah, I was good at space but not with time. Ironic then that I became a musician, which is the art of manipulating time. Oops. Similar deal with my great eyesight and terrible hearing. But no: I claim that musical time is the *real* time, and the time of calendars, detentions, deadlines and bleedin' Post Office opening hours is a degraded, false, twisted

shadow of it, and I refuse to let that aberration sully my pure, spontaneous, musically-timed spirit!

My second problem with time is a little deeper, and one we all share. It is this: where the hell does it *go*? I've lived for a grand total of 46 years and done lots of wonderful things. But where *is* that stuff, exactly? If I do something fun this evening, where will that fun be tomorrow? Is it gone? Is it *destroyed*?

If destruction means anything at all, then it means to not continue to exist in time, in which case every single conscious experience ever is almost instantly obliterated in the most comprehensive fashion imaginable.

What if I have some brilliant fun and then forget that I had it? Will it be exactly as if I never had that fun? Is there any point in doing anything if the subjective experience of it is just going to be immediately incinerated?

This problem is particularly acute if the best moments of your life were in gigs, clubs, raves and house parties. Intoxicants being what they are, you can't remember a damn thing about any of it. What was the point? Should I have spent that time becoming a hedge fund whizz so that now, instead of a scanty handful of fuzzy recollections of 1% of a few banging raves, I had 100% (plus interest) of a huge stack of cash that I had accumulated from a lifetime's fancy financial footwork? Wouldn't that have been far more worth it? Maybe... but you can see what's coming... inevitably the joy of having and spending that cash would also get flushed down the U-bend of time as well, so there would have been absolutely no point in doing that either.

Nevertheless, I can safely *assume* from the recollection I have, that the best parties and gigs in my life were joyous experiences. That gives me, i.e. me *right now*, some vague sense of satisfaction. I may be losing my edge, but in the words of [the LCD Soundsystem classic](#), "I was there". Once upon a time, someone very closely resembling me had a goodly number of absolute stonkers. I guess that's a good thing. But again, it only gives me satisfaction when I remember to remember it, and one day even the ability to have those moments of recollection will be annihilated too. Oh.

So the past sucks, but the future sucks just as much, if not more. Anything could happen. And there's no way to predict it. Our future could be a living hell and there's basically no reasonable way to prepare. An adequate metaphor for our temporal existence would be running backwards at full speed through a field full of cacti, a few of which are fluffy, nice, tasty and beautiful, making excellent moisturiser, but most are covered in deadly poisonous spikes, but no, sorry, the rule is you absolutely can't turn your head round to see which one you're running towards. All those cacti, nice or nasty, instantly start fading into the mist as soon as you catch a glimpse of them passing. As would *you* if you ever stopped running. Bah! Screw time!

And yes, the current picture, in both Physics⁹ and Philosophy seems to be that our intuitive view of time is actually completely wrong. So, yeah, maybe young Robert sweating out his detentions had indeed got time wrong, but his parents and headmistress were also completely wrong too. Ha! In your face! Time is not as simple as all you all think it is, stupid grown ups. In fact it's NUTS.

How dare they give me a detention for turning up to school five minutes late when not even the greatest physicists and philosophers of all time know what time even *is*?! Have at thee, so-called "teachers"!

Maybe, if the universe really is some kind of eternal four-dimensional block, we are still *there* in the best and worst moments of our lives. In some sense they exist forever. All those instants of conscious joy floating, frozen, suspended glimmering moments of rave-bliss glowing forever. And maybe my twelve year old self is *still* sitting there in detention, morosely trying to work out the fastest way to write something a hundred times in his miserable sliver of eternally detained spacetime. Maybe. But for practical purposes those times are just *gone*, for better or for worse.

My third problem with time is that it just keeps disappearing faster and faster and faster. The fact that I started making music thirty years ago doesn't really bother me. The fact that when I recall the time that I had been making music for

⁹ There are many illusions, not least the seeming *direction* of time, and the seeming *flow* of time. Both of these are completely contingent on where in the universe you happen to be, in particular what the Entropy gradient is.

twenty years and that feels about three minutes ago fills me with utter terror. What? You mean I've got about four more of *those* left? That's nothing! And what is more, time will continue to keep getting faster still. So in terms of actual subjective normally timed life I've probably only got a few months left. Shit! I should do something... but what? In the time it takes me to decide what to do, the time on earth left to me will have halved. Nooooo! The few golden moments left to me are fluttering around my head whilst I frantically try to grab them, like the [insanely frustrating end game in Crystal Maze](#).

The other day I had the most peculiar sensation when looking at the pot of biro's we have on a living room table. We've accumulated quite a few biro's over the years. We don't do that much hand writing. There's a decent number of biro's sitting there, in that pot. It's a big wide pot, not just a jam jar or something. In fact, it's almost certain that we have *more than enough biro's to last us until we both die*. This is an extremely sobering thought. Pick up one of the transparent Bic ones, see that ink in there? Most of that exact ink will still be sitting there when I'm dead and someone is clearing out all my junk. Half these biro's will be tipped into my death-skip unexhausted, having failed to write todo lists enumerating tasks that I will never complete.

So maybe, given that my time left is so short, I should better *optimise* my use of it? Well, maybe, maybe not.

Optimitis

The second way we are living one-dimensionally is in the fact that we are increasingly spending our entire lives trying to optimise things.

If we dedicate our lives to maximising some single quantity X then we become slaves to time, because why would we spend any moment of our lives NOT trying to make as much X as possible? This is clearly a recipe for burn-out and an utter lack of spontaneity and joy. Therefore the things in the "3D" chorus (stroking a lover's hair, laughing and joking) are ostensibly the things in life that are not goal oriented, but nevertheless the most beautiful, joyful and important things in

our brief existence. The best moments in time are the ones when we're thinking about time the least¹⁰.

If we think in one dimension, i.e. a single measure of "success" then we become extremely limited beings.

In one sense I'm being obvious and referring to people chasing after money. Money is the single quantity that we all measure everything by. Everything is flattened down to a single dimension, which is the amount of money it costs. That wouldn't be a problem in and of itself, the problem is that we need more and more of this single dimension to feel that we are making progress, in a never ending cycle of dissatisfaction. Whilst this admonishment is all very worthy and wise, it should be noted that even without money, we would probably still be locked into a never ending cycle of dissatisfaction, it's just we wouldn't be able to slap a satisfying number on it.

So you could then argue that we should maximise happiness instead, which might be an improvement, but again it's just a single measure. Happiness may also turn out to be a very limited lens through which to view your life. And where you end up is constantly trying to measure how happy you are, and worrying about what you should do to make yourself the happiest. And whatever you do, you find you need to do more and more of that in order to maintain the same level of happiness. This is known as the Hedonic Treadmill. So then you end up reading the latest research on happiness to find out what you're doing wrong. But then this turns into a hedonic treadmill too. Must... learn... how to be happy... I'm now deeply unhappy with my average happiness level. Are there other things in life apart from happiness? Happiness is just a single dimensional quantity too, and must necessarily reduce things to simplistic versions of themselves.

So I think "affluenza" and consumerism and so on are in fact just examples of a wider class of problem which I would call "Optimitis" which is the obsessive desire to optimise every moment of your life in pursuit of maximising "something". It does matter whether that something is, money, happiness, the

¹⁰ Unless you are a physicist or philosopher who enjoys your job so much that you get so wrapped up in pondering the nature of time that you lose track of time.

hugeness of your kick drums, or the time it takes you to run 10k, whatever, if it's measurable is there's an app that will help you measure it, track it, and maximise it¹¹.

I currently find it impossible to just walk into a restaurant on a whim. I simply *have* to check it's Google maps star rating. Even if I'm in a pre-organised restaurant I can barely resist sneaking a peek. And you could argue that the rating really does help people find good restaurants, but it feels messed up that there's this constant nagging feeling that I haven't optimised my blasted restaurant experience. What if there was a better one JUST NEXT DOOR and we MISSED OUT? How can I possibly enjoy my meal now that there might be a point-two-star nicer meal sitting steaming away on a plate not even fifty yards away? It's astonishing how important finding the absolute best value cuisine humanly possible is, all of sudden it's *the* most important thing in your life. Any meal with the minutest scrap of imperfection is to be considered a complete and utter humiliating failure. Then, once your stomach is full, you scarcely think about the place again.

The other day I was thinking about what star rating I would give my entire life. It was difficult. My life would, I think, be definitely at least a three. My life is better than neutral. But four seems excessive, way too much hassle for a four, in general. Especially when I think of all that life I spent hungrily swiping around restaurant ratings on Google maps. I also have the nasty feeling that the second half of life will get at least one star fewer than the first half. Three and a half? But that seems like a cop out. Really? The entirety of my conscious existence as a unique, sentient carbon based lifeform, three and a half? What would it *actually* take to nudge it up to a nice, positive, four? But would you really like to hang out with a person who rated their life four stars or above anyway? They'd probably turn out to belong to some peculiar church.

So, beyond the simple, star rating, why not take slightly more time to give your entire life a proper customer review?

¹¹ There isn't an app that will measure the hugeness of your kick drum yet, but such a thing is surely on the way. And yes, our kick drums may indeed get more humongous and satisfyingly turgid as a result, but what else would be lost, my friends, what else would be lost?

“Arrived promptly. Would live again.” ****

“Instructions missing. Not enough screws provided” **

“I’d been looking for an existence for a while. As it was Christmas took the plunge. I was initially surprised at how easy it was to operate, but now seems stuck on one mode.” ***

“Something of an acquired taste. The dog seemed to enjoy it” ***

“Overhyped and overpriced. Avoid. Customer service is a joke! never answer calls!!!!” *

“I was in fits of laughter throughout” *****

“Nowhere near as good as the original” **

“The whole thing is synthetic and has a horrible plasticity smell. I got a organic alternative which is hugely better” **

Attempting to give your life a star rating is clearly ludicrous. And yet every so often someone will try to claim that life is either good or bad. So now, like Netflix infuriatingly did, we’ve downgraded our nice nuanced five-point scale to a mere two point binary yes-no thumbs up-down one. “My life isn’t worth living!” They say. Or “life is a gift” they say. As if the whole thing could be measured up against some completely neutral type of life which is the dividing line between gift and burden, worth it and not worth it. To them I say: OK, come back when you’ve given your life a star rating and a properly informative two page review and *then* we’ll talk.

It’s not even clear to me that “a life” forms a coherent entity at all. The thing is so huge and disconnected. That day at school I had on March the 30th 1986. Does that count in my rating calculus? Nope, I can’t remember a damn thing about it. There’s hardly any connection between this conscious moment now, those conscious moments then, and any conscious moments I will have as a pensioner regretting how stupid I was when I was doing all these forgotten things.

Using an app to gamify and track your exercise or whatever is fine, it's pretty darn nifty actually, but the trouble is the *mindset* becomes all pervasive. Optimising becomes a habit. It gets to the point where you can't just sit in a chair and daydream anymore, the sense you have to be doing something constructive instead is just too distracting. Which is I really miss the times when I could just piss about all day and not feel terribly guilty. One of the weird upsides of Coronavirus lockdown is that I actually took all that pressure off, at least for the first few weeks. It is now the top priority to just stay healthy, stay calm, and actually do as little as possible. Thank god. Sounds like an ideal existence. And as you might expect, when I took all the pressure off myself I was pretty productive, *spontaneously* productive¹².

Part of it's just getting old and boring. The older you get, the more "useful" you feel you need to be. As a child you are far less future oriented, you just do whatever pops into your head. When you're an adolescent you're concerned with appearing cool in the here and now. But when you're old you care nothing about being cool and everything about having functioning radiators and knee joints in ten years time. It's ironic that the less of a future you actually have, the more you worry about it. This phenomena arises because, as an old person, you have far more traumatic experiences in your past where you didn't prepare for something and you got humiliated. Each time something royally screws up that you *could* possibly have prevented (using your magic superpower of hindsight) you become more of a cowed, traumatised, fearful little busybody, running around making sure nothing of that sort ever happens again. But sod that, y'know? Actually, even the young people I know feel this way too. Why is that? Optimitis.

The kids say things like "I should be making more music", "I should be learning such and such". Should you? Really? Why? If you'd rather not do music then why force yourself? Why do you feel you *have* to? Why does it feel like a chore? If it's a chore you as well just do the dishes, or do some charity work, would probably be more useful than making *yet* more music... if the whole concept of music becomes a massive guilt trip hanging round your neck like a pungent pet

¹² Though I have to say that this "having more time on your hands" thing really never materialised, did it? Maybe there was more time on our hands, but we then kept spending twenty seconds washing it all off.

carcass then how high will your creative motivation be soaring, do you think? The reason I make music isn't because I think I should, it's because I have to. Something inside me tells me that it has to get out. If it stayed inside me it would be like those babies that are never born and are just carried around in the mother's womb causing all sorts of mysterious illnesses. No one wants to carry around a dead baby inside them do they? This is why I have absolutely no advice for someone who wants to "get into" making music. Either you *have* to do it, in which case you're probably already doing it, or you don't, and the whole thing will probably be a waste of time and money.

I think the concept of "should" should be banned.

Hmm. Let me rephrase that.

I think the concept of "should" is an unhelpful one. If we were, perchance, to eliminate "should", then our lives would be more peaceful and gratifying. My waking existence feels to me, more or less, like walking around in a buzzing swarm of annoying "shoulds". The only things that seem to eliminate the constant tickling and biting of the tiny should-gnats is making music, having sex or being drunk. This is the essential efficacy of Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n Roll - they are like mosquito repellent for nagging guilt about the things you think you think you *should* be doing. Actually, I would add a fourth item to that list, and that is well-prioritized to-do lists. Sex, Drugs, Rock 'n Roll and well-prioritized to-do lists. Why? Because a well-prioritised to-do list isn't about finding out what you should do (it's not a should-do list after all), it's about finding out which of those annoying should-dos that are fiddling and diddling around in the corner of your eye you can finally splat into oblivion. Maybe the way to make to-do lists more Rock 'n Roll is to call them "fuck-that lists". Here's what you do: make a list of shoulds, then take the most superfluous ones and you put them on the fuck-that list. What is left over is the to-do list.

If you sit down and ruthlessly work out what you definitely will and won't do, there are no more shoulds. As Yoda says, "Do, or fuck that, there is no should".

But look at me, won't you: even now, I'm typing away at this bloody sentence, trying to optimise my artistic output in some way. Trying to make my day

meaningful. Because I think I *should*. Trying to get my thoughts into the world for the sake of some doomed "[immortality project](#)". Part of it is about not looking back over my life and thinking I wasted it, and now I'm trying not to waste it. But dang it, I *did* waste it, and it was OK, I will inevitably waste the rest of it. If by "waste" you mean not optimising it to buggery and back. Yeah I could have achieved more. But that wouldn't *get* me anywhere, would it? Aaaaaahhhhg.

Ah, the old days. The days before Optimitis. I remember I used to be able to sunbathe, to lie in the sun doing absolutely nothing but enjoy the sensation of sun on my skin. I remember university days just playing pool, making tunes, drinking beer, getting stoned, shooting the breeze, doing sweet Fanny Adams. I remember sitting down, putting headphones on, shutting my eyes and listening to entire albums. Now I don't seem to be able to do any of that. Even doing nothing with someone else has to be organised and scheduled and agonised over. Socializing is healthy! God, I really *need* to socialise more, oh god, who should I socialize with? Which of my friends provides me with the most social nourishment units per hour so I can maximise my social nutrition quotient? At the weekend at home I seem to need to read a book or listen to a podcast or do something with my brain, because otherwise I feel I'm somehow wasting it. It's good to be productive, yes, but if productivity becomes an uncontrollable habit then it seems just as limiting as laziness. We shall return to the contradictory nature of laziness and hard work in Automaton.

To judge our lives, we often try to imagine ourselves on our deathbeds looking back over our existence. This strikes me as a very difficult exercise. I mean, it will be difficult objectively remembering and judging your life when you're lying in hospital semi-conscious, feeling like shit, with a bunch of tubes stuck in you... but even assuming you are 100% lucid, it is then difficult to project yourself from now to then and imagine yourself looking back on now. It would probably be easier to just try and judge what you're doing now *now*. Is now fun or not? And actually, when I judge my music making, or what I'm doing now, which is writing this blather, I say: yes I do very much enjoy it, and that is why I'm doing it. Not to look back on it as an achievement from my death bed, because that guy probably is probably fully occupied with coughing one last gobbet of phlegm out of his lungs.

But it has to be admitted that part of the fun is in trying to achieve something. It's a weird paradox that the most enjoyable thing about an achievement is the *progress toward* achieving it. Perhaps this is why this album has taken me more than ten years to make - it's simply far more pleasant to be progressing toward an album than to have finished it.

So, to wind all that back to the track.... that's another reason why this song's verses are electronic and the chorus is acoustic - because electronic dance music is suffering from *exactly* this obsessive compulsive optimisation disorder... Dance music is heavily optimised along a few very basic dimensions and that sometimes feels terribly boring and restrictive to me after a while, and that's why this particular album doesn't have much dance music on it. It turns out that to make your kick drum maximally punchy you should duck the rest of the track out when the kick drum hits. And so every single dance track now does this. And as a result it all sounds the same. One-dimensional.

And yet, of course, one of the most satisfying parts of the track is when the main 1D riff piles back in after the chorus. It's somehow a relief. Because, screw it, 1D is simple. It's fun. It's not complicated. You can just jump up and down to it. Maybe One Dimensional Man is more than three and a half stars happy in his world after all.

Rating Music

I think most of us would agree that trying to rate music according to a five star scale would be about as ridiculous as rating our entire living existence. But then many will immediately reach conclusions such as "music is simply a matter of taste" or "music is 100% subjective". The idea seemingly being that if you, the listener, turn up with your built in preferences, randomly stumble upon a collection of noises that makes you happy, then great. That makes the music "good" for you and you only, apart from all the other bundles of random preferences who have had the luck to encounter a similar positive feeling when they randomly stumbled upon those same collections of noises. Sorry, no. Again, this is something you're saying to try to be nice and liberal, but it's not what you

really believe. Some music is very much better than some other music and you bloody well know it.

It's not even clear to me whether anything can be 100% subjective. Yes, that's right, philosophers run around worrying about whether anything can ever be 100% objective and never stop to think whether the opposite could ever be true. Maybe you and I will never be able to exactly compare our experience of the color red. But we are still able to discuss it, we may still reach agreement on how a certain color of red goes nicely with a certain other shade of brown. And from that day forth our conversation will forever slightly tinge our apprehension of red. As soon as a thing becomes discussable and sharable and opined upon it is no longer 100% subjective - it becomes *intersubjective*. And music, and art, is essentially intersubjective. In fact I would go so far as to say that if music were 100% subjective it would be 100% pointless. For instance, the first time I hit a power chord with some overdrive it was, subjectively, the most awesome thing I'd ever heard. *Subjectively*, I could have stopped right there. *Subjectively* I could have hit that power chord for the rest of my life and declared it to be good. *Subjectively*, I should declare my last thirty years of artistic struggle utterly futile (as, sadly objectively, I also can). But clearly, something else was going on. Something was nagging me at the back of my brain, something was telling me that this, whilst good, could be better. And that "better" was somewhere out in the world waiting to be learned about - intersubjectively.

Music culture is built upon *shared* understandings of what is good, shared value systems. Different musical subcultures may have wildly varying notions of what is worth striving for. But that doesn't vaporise those notions of value, it doesn't make them mere "preferences" or "tastes" and actually, when it comes down to it, most of what we consider good about music is shared across all human cultures. The music of different cultures may have different scales, time signatures, cultural references and social functions, but it virtually all consists of rhythms, and tones, and those rhythms can be out of time or in time, and those tones can be considered appropriately tuned or not, and music can be fantastic or terrible and practically every human on the planet would be able to tell the difference given a decent introduction to the world of that particular music. And a good introduction is important, as values can evolve, and understanding is needed. We are not simply inert blobs with a set of sonic predilections instilled in us

from birth. We can learn, we can develop our appreciation, we can acquire tastes, we can absorb influences and values from one another. Some music takes a lot of education¹³ to appreciate, and some takes virtually none. But provided with however much context is generally required for appreciation of that music, anyone can learn to judge good from bad, and the goodness or badness is out there and it is real.

There are different dimensions of value. Different people weigh those dimensions differently. Some people say that if music has no melody, then it ain't no good. Some people say that if music doesn't tear your face off with incredible abrasive noise, then it ain't no good. I can appreciate both melody and face tearing noise. Which dimension would I rate higher? It depends on context. A great track can sound terrible when played in the wrong context. Doesn't mean it's not great though, and it doesn't then mean it's greatness is subjective. The understanding of context is wrapped up in the appraisal of worth. I've already taken context dependence into account when I shrewdly evaluate a piece of music. You, with your 100% subjective guff, have not.

I also believe that the more dimensions I can make a piece of music good in, then the better it is. I try to make a track work on many levels. Rhythm, melody, harmony, concept, message, lyrics, performance, humour, philosophy, self referentiality, accessibility, catchiness, originality, structure, momentum, etc. etc. Many, many dimensions. Some of these you and I share, some you have never heard of and wouldn't understand unless you were sitting in my head, some dimensions in your head I'm missing in mine, but nonetheless they are there, and if we should be so inclined, we could by some musical communication process absorb and acknowledge each other's value dimensions. So it's very nice if you can accumulate more dimensions over time, more and more interesting ways to appraise music, and then very nice indeed if you can make a track register highly on *all* these dimensions. Indeed if you made a track that was better than another one on all possible points, then surely it could then be said to be *objectively* better....? Hmm. Not so fast. I also fully acknowledge that a piece of music that just hits one particular dimension super hard can be equally

¹³ Education here could be anything that teaches you about music, I don't solely mean "academic" education. Raving your tits off for twenty years with a random assortment of nutters still constitutes a musical education.

awesome. I'm very certain that if you added more philosophical profundity to, say, Highway To Hell by ACDC, you would completely ruin it. If you added more harmonic complexity to Steps to Enchantment by Jeff Mills, you'd ruin that. It is well known that too much sophistication can deaden and hollow out music, and piling more and more dimensions of evaluation onto it might be just such a buzzkill. Indeed. But, you see, *knowing* this then, and having had many unpleasant experiences of wrestling with over sophistication traps, I sneakily add "managing that tricky trade off between naivety and sophistication" to my list of value dimensions and continue my merry multidimensional way.

So, in theory, if you gathered all possible dimensions of judgement, all possible contexts, and everyone's informed opinions, and weighted all of them against one another and summed everything up, you perhaps could get an overall intersubjective ultimate judgement of a piece of music. I believe a rating *could* exist. In practice this is completely impossible (there's new people being born... would you have to wait for them? And how much weight *do* you give to the opinion of ignorant idiots?), and besides I don't think it would be a particularly useful exercise, and then the question is how many possible opinions would you need to gather before you could call such a judgement *objective*? Maybe an infinite number. So yes, perhaps intersubjectivity can never become full objectivity, but that doesn't mean it is 100% subjective.

The question then arises in my mind: OK so we have a shared human understanding of musical value, fine, but then we're all just humans. What about non-humans? What about aliens? What about the beings that might pick up Voyager's golden disc? Will they think it sucks? Will it end up sitting buried amongst Roger Whittakon and Perry Comoid records in some alien charity shop? Or did Bach, Chuck Berry and the rest hit on some platonic dimensions of value that even aliens can dig? I'd like to think so.

How We Forgot "Experience"

Mike Trollfield

Herbert Marcuse was a dope, let me say that right off the bat. But, as I've been encouraged / instructed / blackmailed into writing something in the spirit of the

song, I guess Marcuse is right, in that our current Optimitis is a result of our modern industrial/post-industrial culture. Industrial culture can have big problems acknowledging the value of multi-dimensional subjective experience. Neo-liberalism is a good example of this. It has an interesting relation to liberalism in that it is a direct extension of it, but also a complete misunderstanding of it. The essence of Liberalism, for me, is the value and primacy of subjective experience, and the right of the individual to be given the autonomy and resources such that they can have the living conscious experiences they wish to have.

This central tenet of the Enlightenment is what gave rise to the industrial capitalist consumerist society we live in today. But in the process, a peculiar thing has happened to our attitudes to subjective experience. The mechanisms set up to enhance our subjective experiences, ended up devaluing them. And yes, you should indeed be reading this bit in [Adam Curtis](#)' voice, and ideally have [Burial's Forgive](#) looping melancholically away in the background.

First: The Great Humanist Enlightenment Project: Philosophers call to increase human flourishing, and enable humans to have more positive subjective experiences, unencumbered by religious dogma.

Next: To help arrange society to maximise human flourishing, we arrange the economy to maximise human material wealth. Very often our negative experiences are caused by lack of material things, this can be solved by setting into motion a cycle of ever increasing economic wealth. Seems legit.

Next: Positive subjective experiences are most easily administered if they are thought of in terms of the *experience of external material things*. Cars, fridges, foreign holidays, parachute jumps, buying new clothes, watching movies, gargantuan Star Wars Lego sets, boutique Eurorack modules etc. these become regarded as the things we enjoy, and things we strive to attain. The more *subtle* pleasurable mental states, being harder to predictably bring about, begin to seem intangible and even unreal in comparison.

Finally: Positive experiences are reduced to simply being a means to an end, the capitalist system rebrands positive experiences as "items to collect" in order to

demonstrate one's success within that system. The actual experiences themselves are secondary, or even forgotten entirely.

The classic grumpy old man whinge here, the behaviour that gives me this vibe most acutely, is when I actually go somewhere that is meant to be an "experience", such as the Grand Canyon. At these stunning locations, instead of *experiencing* the thing, people's chief objective seems to be taking photos of themselves in front of the thing. The experience was just a means to an end - and that end was the photographs with which to relive the experience that was *not* experienced due to the near 100% concentration on capturing the experience. Yes, I know, I know, "people live through the eyes of others" blah blah, that would be a very valid point *assuming* the eyes of others are not way too busy ogling their own selfies to oblige you living through them.

This is more than just moaning about wallies waving V signs and selfie sticks in front of the Taj Mahal (the most exquisite piece of architecture in existence, and the one that, interestingly, is most unlike its photographs when you get to see it in person). This is a question of how the only conscious beings in the universe are spending their conscious moments. Not *being* conscious, not appreciating consciousness, that's for sure. Are they really aware of their fantastic uniqueness? Their fragility? Their stupendously privileged place in the cosmos?

This profundity of existence is what looking at stunning natural wonders brings home to me. Standing next to the Grand Canyon brings home the astounding beauty of the universe, and how tiny and unique we are. You start to get a sense that you are standing on a massive zany-ass rock floating in space. Is it a question of ticking off something on the bucket list? Or gaining deeper insight into why you might want to have a bucket list in the first place? *Why should* we try to experience things before we die? *What are* the most valuable experiences? How exactly is it possible for a universe to experience itself?

What are we putting under this most extraordinary, precious and rarest of spotlights called consciousness awareness?

Pictures of ourselves. Again and again. All the time. Pictures of ourselves with our DIY achievements (shelfies), pictures of ourselves having exercised (helfies),

pictures of ourselves next to our most expensive prized possessions (welfies), pictures of ourselves consulting Ancient Greek Oracles (Delfis) and pictures of what appear to be deserted wildernesses but are in fact still pictures of ourselves because we are hiding somewhere in the background wearing camouflage (stelflies).

It could be that there is something fundamentally rewarding and profound about selfies that I just don't get. Maybe, in addition to my dyschronia, I also have dyselfia, and there is some basic human social connectiony thingamajig that will forever remain tragically severed in my mind. Never will I be able to truly experience the acute joy of snapping my enticingly puckered lips as I tilt my bonce winsomely in front of the Niagara Falls. Mine will be a hollow and ephemeral wisp-like existence as I float, fleeting and unphotographed past the wonders of the world. I will stride ignorantly and irritatedly through Times Square and utterly fail to notice the metacultural magnificence of capturing myself on my own small screen in front of more famous big screens displaying advertisements for newer, medium sized screens that I could then buy and then display to myself my picture of myself grinning in front of these screens selling other screens.

A well functioning economy used to be a means to an improvement in the subjective experience of its participants. Now it seems the subjective experience of workers and consumers is simply a means to a better functioning economy. More specifically, the means of the Liberal Enlightenment have been confused with the ends. You come across this kind of thinking all the time. [Here's Nick Stace](#), UK chief executive of The Prince's Trust is talking about higher levels of anxiety in young people caused by social media:

“Young people are critical to the future success of this country, but they'll only realise their full potential if they believe in themselves and define success in their own terms. It is therefore a moral and economic imperative that employers, government, charities and wider communities put the needs of young people centre stage.”

How annoying is that? And self contradictory? Anxiety is a negative subjective experience. Our society should be geared around making our subjective

experience less negative. Making people less anxious would be a nice goal, you don't have to justify that, economically. Anxiety should be being reduced *for its own sake*. And yet here we have a (well meaning) person implying that we need to reduce anxiety so that kids can grow up being functional contributors to the British economy. This shit really drives me up the fucking wall. It makes me way more anxious than I would have otherwise been. I just want to shout "WHAT DO YOU ACTUALLY THINK THE FUCKING BRITISH ECONOMY IS FOR?????" at the top of my lungs.

One of the classic scenes in the film *Metropolis*¹⁴ makes a powerful visual analogy between the industrial economy and the biblical god Moloch, who demanded children to be thrown into a fire, sacrificed to please the god. And it really seems that many people now believe that growing the economy is some kind of god, the ultimate reason we all do things, a being that demands human sacrifice. An exquisite example of this is people offering themselves up to be killed by the Coronavirus so that the economy can continue functioning, [as John Oliver says](#), the economy does indeed seem to have become a death cult.

That said, the debate over this issue has, inevitably, descended into drivel on both sides. My gang seems to be doubling down on this "human life is priceless" crap with regard to the economic fallout of lockdown. This position holds that *any* amount of economic damage is acceptable in order to save a single human life. Their mental model seems to be that "the economy" is just some parallel reality that hedge fund manager mates of the conservatives make profit from, and we could happily trash that and everyone would be better off. Have a longer-than-two-microseconds think about [this meme](#) for instance... So, obviously the chances of those seventy people that the guy sacrificed for the economy being of all ages and all in one family are miniscule, but let's take that aspect on good faith, it's just a metaphor for the fact that everyone is a member of *someone's* family. Fine, we get it. But... if you pause the thing and peer closely, you can see that all the members of his family that that guy would have killed to save the economy are wearing *clothes*, manufacturing of which is certainly part of the economy. They're walking down a *road* surrounded by *buildings* and *bicycle racks*, creation of which is also part of the economy, they have been

¹⁴ Wouldn't it be a shame if the greatest example of an art form was made only a few short years of said art form existing at all? With regards to *Metropolis* I think this might really be the case.

(seemingly copiously) fed with food that is also part of the economy. Their children have avoided perishing in infancy thanks mainly to advanced healthcare which is also part of the economy. In fact, without the economy, Daddy can't hug kiddie at end of heartwarming meme, because kiddie probably dead.

You do understand this, right? You do *know* perfectly well that a functioning economy gives the people you supposedly care so much about things they need, except for some reason you have to forget that fact because you feel you need to counterbalance the libertarian whackos on the other side. It is estimated that the 2008 financial crisis caused an extra 260,000 cancer deaths, so yes, considering that the lockdown recession is definitely more severe than that, we're very much in the Corona ballpark here, even with that single cause of death. Do I know exactly what level of lockdown optimises this tricky tradeoff? Of course not, I've no idea, but you *definitely* don't, and neither does anyone else, really, though I'm sure people are working on it. We'll know when all the data comes in in a few years, and maybe we'll all do a bit better next time.

"The Economy" is an exceedingly abstract concept used to think about the sum total of financially measurable human activity, this means that it is quite a hard thing to get your head round. A tearful dad hugging his child is far easier. So naturally the latter will seem more important than the former. Even as I write this sentence my mental imagery is saying - "Yeah! Hugs! I love hugs! Of course hugs are more important than some selfish men in suits shouting at different coloured numbers!". But the reality is that the economy is a *means* to more hugs. That doesn't mean we should give up hugs because they have no measurable benefit to the economy. That doesn't mean we should tell workers to shut up, get back to work and spread the virus because we need to keep the profits rolling in¹⁵. Doesn't mean we have to bail out all the airlines that have come begging yet again for yet more mythical-future-taxpayer money, whilst completely neglecting to refund the flights they cancelled. But it does mean we have to acknowledge that we all rely absolutely on this system, and we do need to make the tradeoffs between different causes of harm within it.

¹⁵ And those shareholder-types never hug anyone, not real people. They may stuff pillows full of fifty pound notes and hug *them*, but in heartwarming meme-land that doesn't count.

Similar means/ends confusions emerge in discussions about the arts. Every time someone makes a case for arts funding, or easier access for disadvantaged kids to the creative industries or whatever, they always wheel out soulless statements like "creative industries contribute 100bn a year to the UK economy" so it is "important to invest in the arts". Well yeah, that's a nice fat sum, whoopee doopee. But what is it GOOD FOR??? That money arises from the fact that people buy creative stuff because it's COOL and they LIKE it, it makes them FEEL GOOD, it maybe gives their life MEANING. And it's those feelings that are the reason that we need art and music. We need *money* in order to sustain *art*, not the other way round!

Even an [article in the Guardian](#) calling for increasing arts funding falls into the same trap:

"The British arts and creative industries, it is recognised, support the economy, are drivers of tourism, are a key part of how the nations are seen overseas, and may play a significant role in a post-Brexit future".

Christ! Go stick it! Who in hell's name really cares about any of that shit apart from the people who are being paid to justify it to ignorant philistines? What about

"The British arts and creative industries, it is recognised, are really pretty frikkin' cool to look at/hear/ touch / dance with / talk about /participate in / ponder upon"?

Or what about

"The British arts and creative industries, it is recognised, are some of the very few things that make living in that damp grey miserable arse of a country bearable at all".

The whole of the public sphere is trapped in this nationalist-objectivist madness. I think our culture is in genuine danger of becoming so obsessed with things being "useful" that we are forgetting what useful things are useful *for*. Yeah, useful things are useful but sooner or later the buck has to stop and the useful

thing needs to get used for something that *feels awesome*, otherwise it was all completely useless.

This attitude to Art is particularly acute in the Anglosphere. One of the things I warm to about continental Europe is that it seems to have a lot more respect for and interest in art and culture for its own sake, rather than as a means to an end. Every British musician doing gigs in Europe always noticed with curiosity that the gigs were far *nicer* than the ones in Britain. You got a proper dressing room, they made you nice food, people seemed to show respect for you instead of treating you like an entitled pain in the ass. It was like turning up and being greeted with “Oh ‘ello, you are ze *musician!*” from some madly arty breton-shirted enthusiast at the fantastically well-equipped local arts center, instead of being greeted by “Oh, *you’re* the musician” from the chronically standoffish sound man in the tiny dank basement of some stinky pub in Highbury. This, I think, is simply the expression of a general higher level of respect for culture in general, and indeed a higher level of respect for subjective experience.

But ultimately, aesthetic experience is hugely undervalued, everywhere. Apart from when it comes to buying nice furniture, in which domain, all of a sudden, people are willing to pay tens of thousands for a curvy seat, or a lamp that looks like a rhino or something. Whuh?

To be honest, I, Mike Trollfield, don’t actually care that much about other people. Despite what you seem to think, my politics *do* lean very much left, but that’s clearly not for the same reasons that yours do. The value that fuels your left wing politics is *care*, protection from harm. You care about other people you’ve never met, for some reason. Whilst I do care about people *a bit*, I don’t actually care that much. It’s not the main reason I advocate for progressive policies. The main reason is aesthetics. When I visit Denmark, and I see how society seems to operate there, I get a certain aesthetic sense from it. When I visit Chicago, I get another sense, when I visit Brazil, yet another. I find societies with strongly progressive socialist values more aesthetically pleasing than grotesquely unequal ones. I find a street where a gleaming skyscraper looms over desperate homeless people of an extremely specific ethnic group horrifically *ugly*. I find a society with free healthcare and well funded culture and education beautiful. I find a city with a vibrant art scene and carefully considered public spaces

beautiful, I find a city which unthinkingly ploughs massive multilane flyovers through filthy slums ugly. I find a city with interesting mixed use studio buildings surrounding cycle path lined canals pleasant, I find cities where the poor are forced to dump their filth into plastic-clogged canals unpleasant. The reason I want to live in a better world is because *I*, Mike Trollfield, want to live in a better world, one that pleases *me* better. To find inequality acceptable is not only a failure of compassion, but also a failure of actually being able to see your environment and judge it according to basic aesthetic sense. The same goes for environmentalism. A forest is beautiful, the wasteland that is left when a forest has been felled is hideous. And that simple fact should be enough to outweigh any supposed economic gains from felling that forest.

This sounds like the most snobbish, effete nonsense to you perhaps. What, you're saying your artistic judgements are more important than other people's suffering? No, I'm not. It's something far deeper than that. I'm saying that aesthetics, that visceral subjective judgement of *holistic sensory rightness* is a hugely important way of perceiving the world that we have been blessed with as a species. This sense includes and transcends instinctive knee-jerk empathy and/or sanctimonious virtue. It is a sense that can penetrate to the heart of things in an instant. It is a holistic, intuitive way of viewing the world that can drive progress in all areas, and it is almost unnoticed and unused in our current public conversation. It doesn't even have a good name, as far as I can tell.

I hear almost no one arguing for the fact that our world should be more beautiful, be more awesome, or be possessed of more grandeur, or be more splendid or more *inspiring*. They all argue that it should be better in one way or another, but what is better? All the betters they put forth are merely means to some end that is never really made clear. We need more jobs, but for what? We need more roads, to go where? We need less inequality, why? We need more justice, so that... what? We need to preserve nature, what for? I'm a freaky deaky navel-gazing arti-wonk, but for me the answer seems to be this: to increase the prevalence of aesthetically positive subjective experience in the world. The only way to assess the rightness of our values is an aesthetic one. The more of our lives we can spend engaged in beautiful, interesting, fascinating, profound states of mind, the better. I believe we are losing this aesthetic sense of life, our attention has narrowed down to focus on fragmented echoes of it. It is the poetic

nature of existence that is essentially why I believe my life that I have spent the majority of making music is not a wasted one. Because music is fantastic at engendering precisely such magnificent experiences. Something about the way we experience sound enables us to directly reconnect with this holistic, aesthetic way of engaging with reality.

Time is money, or is it the other way round?

When I was lucky enough to inherit a sum of money¹⁶ I spent it on *time*. Time to make music, time to hang out with friends and family, time to just wander around London with no particular objective in mind (apart from to flex my boss level, but sadly obsolete, navigation chops). Time was great. I *loved* the feeling of having time. I was a time millionaire. It was glorious. It was liberating. It was luxurious, it was the greatest possible privilege. Luxury money is excellent for precisely this reason. Time is money, but again, money only has value in that it buys time. Some people seem to believe time is valuable in that you can earn money during it. Those people are wrong.

The number of days you will be alive is in terrifyingly short supply, the number of digits in your bank account is, in theory, limitless¹⁷. You could argue that I should have saved that inheritance money for retirement, and if I was sensible I would have used it to buy a house, or some bitcoins¹⁸. Maybe, but in the end I made the call that my younger musician self deserved time more than my older self did. Noticing the effect of age on my creativity has vindicated this decision. Furthermore, time is now going so rapidly for me that there is a kind of time-inflation that wipes out any interest I would have been paid on that money, in other words the potential fun-value of having that much time diminishes rapidly over time. I would say that a 29 year old can have at least 10 times as much subjective funtimes on a given amount of money as a 65 year old. My 65 year old self would have probably spent it on motorised gardening tools or

¹⁶ For some reason it is considered vulgar to actually name sums of money. We spend all this time and mental energy attempting to ascertain exactly how much things are, and then when someone naively asks “how much was it?” we must get all coy and cagey, as if the question was supremely crass. To precisely enumerate how much money I inherited in pounds would be equivalent in intimacy of revealing the circumference of my genitalia in millimetres. I don’t get it. Not my rules.

¹⁷ Very much in theory.

¹⁸ Had I spent my inheritance on bitcoin on the day I first learned about it and thought “ooh that sounds interesting I should get some” I would now have fifty billion dollars.

something ghastly. So instead, I gave that money to my 29 year old self and thus far have not regretted it. Yet. There is still plenty of time and economic chaos ahead for recategorizing that decision as foolhardy. Miserable OAP me, with his paltry little pension, abandoned by a gutted social security system, may yet come to shake his leathery, soot-stained, fingerless-gloved fist at gay young fop me frittering his inheritance away at parties that OAP me didn't even get any coherent memories out of. We'll see.

Money is good because it lets us better organise the world in order to do things which we enjoy, period. If you start to view money as good in itself, or that human experience is only good in that it relates to how much money it can generate, then you have totally and utterly lost the plot. And in my mind that's the fundamental difference between liberalism and neoliberalism. Liberalism employs capitalism as an engine to support human flourishing, neo-liberalism uses human flourishing as a carrot to dangle in front of people to get them to further feed the capitalist system. As you may have gathered in Clean Energy, I'm not anti-capitalist. I think anti-capitalism is another simplistic binary brainfail. There may be better systems than capitalism out there, but if we get to those at all we'll do it by progressively tweaking capitalism, not by trashing it.

Capitalism vs. Socialism is another false binary, another false uni-dimension on which to skewer and barbeque your poor brain after having marinated it in tribal bias. Of course, a fully socialist society is a disaster. Of course, a fully capitalist society is a disaster. Of course, the best way to organise society is to apply both ideas in the most appropriate manner, i.e. capitalism for the rich, socialism for the poor. Not rocket surgery, is it? The *worst* way to organise society would be to apply both ideas in the most *inappropriate* manner, i.e. capitalism for the poor and socialism for the rich. Funnily enough, the latter of all these options is what's at the end of the muddy slope we have been slipping down for the past forty years. Cue another slow, sarcastic clap for us.

Capitalism is great at certain things. More efficient LEDs? Yep. Faster computers? Yep. More reliable engines? Yep. Cheaper synthesisers? Ooh, thanks Behringer, you wicked blood sucking tycoons, you. But then it's crap at other things. Profound art, music, culture? Meh. Education? Nope. Communication of useful

information and sense making via mass media? Don't even start. Spiritual wisdom? <Splutters tea all over keyboard>

In fact, Capitalism and Socialism don't seem to me to be opposing things at all, you can actually do a perfectly good job of justifying socialism using capitalist language: the state needs to pump money to those currently disadvantaged by the system in order that it can invest in those individuals who would otherwise be excluded from participating in the market economy, and the more people raised into the middle class, the better off your economy will be. The state is, in effect, a venture capital firm whose venture is the long term overall capabilities and well-being of the populace, which is one of the best investments an investor could ever make, right? And vice-versa, you can do a perfectly good job of justifying capitalism using socialist terms: The state needs to apply the right management of resources to give everyone what they need, and obtain from them the best work that can be obtained given those people's skills. To each according to his needs and all that... And, if it turns out that the best way to funnel many of these resources around is a decentralised, free market economy, then that is what you go with to do that job. This "best of both worlds" Keynesian approach was adopted fairly unanimously across the western world in the aftermath of WW2 and worked reasonably well up until the mid 70s, at which point, apparently for some reasons to do with gooey black liquid or something, neoliberalism spewed forth. I'm no economics expert, but it seems that it was more or less sorted, and it's a bit of a mystery why we just went and reopened the whole stupid can of worms¹⁹ again.

To dig beneath this dichotomy, we need to ask what are the incentives that make people act in ways that result in better or worse outcomes for humanity as a whole. Clearly, if we all act cooperatively, altruistically, and logically, everyone is better off. If we tend to act selfishly or irrationally, we are all worse off. The study of these trade offs is called game theory. The genius of capitalism *isn't* that it gets people to act altruistically, but that it creates a system by which acting selfishly is taken into account and hence the system is robust to bad actors. The tragedy of capitalism is that it *incentivises* selfish behaviour and in fact trains human minds to act more selfishly than they would have otherwise. Socialism

¹⁹ Could be a can of worms, could be a barrel of snakes. Maybe even a cave of dragons.

attempts to train people's minds in the direction of collectivism, but is completely at the mercy of the inevitable existence of bad actors²⁰. So the system we need has a combination of these attributes: the system we need is *robust to selfishness*, and yet *incentivises cooperation* at scale. I don't yet know enough about economics or game theory to know what this would look like or if this is even possible, but it's clear that we urgently need to try to find such a system, and it's clear that thinking about it in terms of socialism vs. capitalism or left vs. right or rich vs. poor will lobotomize us before we even start.

To be honest I've only read the first few chapters of Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*. I suspect that Cursor Miner just nicked the title just because it was a really good title. I found myself disagreeing with half the stuff I read, agreeing with the other half, then thinking a bit more and then disagreeing with that half too. Marcuse was one of those excitingly radical left thinkers who seemed to really believe that science and technology are tools of oppression. As soon as I read something like this I have an irresistible urge to stop reading. And then, since this urge *is* irresistible, I *do* stop reading. The only way you can make that sketchy thesis fly is by performing extreme mental gymnastics such as claiming that capitalism and science are the same thing, and that there was some magical state of innocence in the distant past when human life was absolutely perfect and right and lovely... It's also striking how little the social theorists of that time felt the need to back their claims up with, y'know, *data*. The book *One Dimensional Man* is a perfect example of the contorted nonsense that Neo-Marxists were forced to come up with when they were finally forced to admit that the U.S.S.R and China were actually really not very pleasant regimes to live under. Again it's this weird idea that progress is making things worse that we talked about in *Stand Up For Science*.

Nevertheless, there are surely some valuable points buried somewhere in the book, by all means read more of it than I did!

²⁰ It doesn't matter if 99.99% of the population are lovely and cooperative, if the system is fragile, all it takes is one psychopath to ruin the whole thing.

Jack Of All Trades, Master of None, The 80-20 rule

So, my genres are generally all over the place. I've never focussed on one particular style. This means that all the music I make is somewhat un-optimised. Because I spend time on so many different aspects of music, each specific aspect has room for improvement. So what, mate? Do you want me to spend my days fiddling with tiny details you'll probably never even hear, or do you want me to have some more cool, fun ideas?

The thing that cheeses me right off about the 80-20 rule is that it really means we're all wasting 80% of our lives on the last 20% of something, and 80% of the time that last 20% is probably not actually necessary. If only we could all decide to collectively lower our standards by 20% then we could all work one day a week. Think about that. Lower your standards by a fifth, get a six day weekend every bloody week. I'd jump at that deal like a shot!

This is part of the reason why I like skipping around in styles, I can get 80% of a musical style down in a year or two, and that's the fun part! That's the part when everything is new and fun and exciting and mind expanding. Do I want to be a classical guitarist practising eight hours a day for ten years just to get some tiny little nuance into my picking that only classical guitar aficionados will ever give a flying fortissimo about? Screw that! I want to do just enough classical guitar so I can grab a few neat chords, arpeggios, finger plucking techniques and a few expressive tricks, and go on my merry way and get on with some other new fun stuff. And I have the sense that the closer you get to the pinnacle in any particular skill, the less it relies on something you can do anything about. For example I heard an interview with the legendary classical guitarist Andres Segovia. He was asked what makes a *great* classical guitarist. I was expecting him to say something like having the soul of a dead matador's grandmother, or something arty and latin, but actually the answer was completely prosaic: he said you need strong, soft fingernails. And of course I look down at my thin, brittle, flaky little excuses for talons and realise I'm screwed. I can play *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* beautifully - with my *left* hand, but my right hand sounds like you have taken a running Hamster off of it's wheel and held it just above the strings to have a bit of a scrabble.

Similarly with dance music production, do I want to spend weeks tweaking and tweaking my track so that everything is as big and clean and punchy and shiny as possible? Sod that too. I'll get it 80% of the way there, just so that it doesn't sound lame, and then concentrate on something else, like making it actually fun or interesting or different in some way. It's got to the point that if I find myself tweaking something for more than twenty minutes I'll just pack in the music making for the day entirely.

In fact I would say that the 80-20 rule is becoming even worse in these optimistic stricken times. It's probably more like 95-5. I feel 95% of my life is spent tweaking tiny five percent details. Damn it all to hell, that's what I say.

And it's not like we're making bridges or medical equipment. It doesn't actually *matter* that you didn't perfect your track, nobody will die if you were slightly flat in the second line of the third verse²¹. We are the music makers and we are the dreamers of the dreams. We make the rules, remember, so why have we made a rule that everything has to sound prissily spotless? Plenty of artistic genres have just said no to that, so why can't we?

I think the reason human beings have this annoying tendency to waste their time on perfecting tiny details is because of our incredibly narrow beam of attention. Again, it comes down to the seriality of the conscious mind. When we are doing activity A, our minds become entirely absorbed in A. It is as if A was the only thing in existence, and it becomes cosmically essential that we do A perfectly, because after all A is what we do, A is what we *are*. Notice the "*am*", as in "I *am* washing the car". Washing the car is what you *are*. And of course whilst doing A, you discover something else (AA) related to A, also imperfect and

²¹ Having said that, one of the most peculiar bits of feedback I ever got was from a guy who said his friend had to completely stop listening to my music because it whipped him up into such a frenzy he was afraid he was *actually going to kill someone*. I'm not totally sure whether this is a good or bad review. If my music was, in fact, responsible for inspiring someone's murder then I guess that would be kinda bad. Deranged manslaughter is not really what I set out to inspire. If, once I had swept away all the stylistic and surface details of my output, and underneath all the fluff the essential spiritual core of all my work just said "KILL!" in big red letters, I guess I would feel the need to cease and desist immediately. On the other hand, that level of effect on someone's energy levels has to be regarded as rather impressive. In any case, now every time I trainwreck a mix and botch a set's momentum I reassure myself that it may have just saved some innocent person from being murdered.

unfinished, and of course you then become completely absorbed in perfecting AA. It is only after wasting an entire day, week, month, life, on AAAAAAA that we lift our heads, as if waking from a dream, and ask ourselves. Who am I, what do I want in life, what was A for again? Whatever happened to B? I think I would have really enjoyed B but I never ever got round to it. How sad. And it turns out that A was trying to completely paint some hard to reach corner of a fence at the back of your garden that no other human being will ever see, at least not for so many years that all the paint will have peeled and discoloured anyway. Or something equivalent. Maybe, just maybe, you should have taken the time to write a fuck-that list.

I am fortunate, in that I was born without whatever conscientiousness gland it is that secretes this weird sense of misplaced detail-virtue that makes people waste their existence in such a fashion. People do, of course, tell me off for not paying attention to details that they care about. In particular in Germany. I get told off by random strangers multiple times a week. I do, of course, always apologise profusely and Britishly, but secretly inside I chalk that up as perfectly acceptable collateral damage from having my fucking priorities straight.

So, I declare that if there are some imperfections in my music, it doesn't matter. I got over it as a creator, you can get over it as a listener too.

I also apply the rule to my live sets that I need to communicate to the audience that mistakes in live sets don't matter. If I cock up, I have a special grimace that I make that says "Yes - I cocked it up. That's OK. I am not up here on stage because I never cock anything up. I'm on stage because you will have a good time dancing to this stuff I'm making. Just because bits aren't perfect doesn't mean we can't have a good time anymore". I call it the "mess up face"²².

And this brings us back to one-dimensional man's obsessive optimisation - it comes at a *huge* cost in creativity. This is one thing I wanted to achieve in my

²²Smallprint: it should be noted that there is a limit on how many times you can use the mess up face in a single set and for it still to maintain its effectiveness. mess up face will not fix mistakes if the rest of one's live performance is also lame. Excessive alcohol consumption may induce a state of semi-permanent mess up face, in this eventuality a good hearty slap is recommended. Do not get into the habit of using mess up face when you make mistakes in normal everyday life, for instance during your day job as a heart surgeon.

PhD - some kind of proof that narrowing down your focus to optimising single dimensional parameters ruins "big picture" transformational creativity. Didn't get there in the PhD, obviously, but I reckon it does, and reckoning is good enough for this essay. Reckoning gets me 80% of the way there, and that's good enough for Captain Slapdash here.

The Ultimate Breakdown

The most dreaded cock up scenario for the artist of all is if something breaks and the whole club goes silent. The horror. People wake up sweating in the night over this possibility. Well, let me reassure you: it doesn't matter in the slightest. In fact I can now reveal that I have *deliberately pretended* that this has happened. I have mimed my equipment breaking down. I have faked the "hey, everything turned off suddenly" moment, and I have play-acted the "Oh, god what's happened" horror-struck face that normal human musicians would make when everything that is most holy and loud mysteriously dies.

Why in [Skuld's](#) good name would I do that? Because, my friends, this is the ultimate *breakdown*. What normal breakdowns in normal dance music do is take away the beat, or the bass, in order to build anticipation. But this is so very lame. We all know that the beat will come back in, don't we? Obviously. What kind of anticipation is that? The seasoned raver will reassure the wide eyed naif "Don't you worry about the bass, mate, arrr, it's always come back before, so it'll do it again afore long, don't you fret about thaat, wee laddie"²³. Not exactly suspense is it? The *true* breakdown is where stuff actually *breaks down*. The true breakdown is when everyone in the place genuinely has no idea if the beat will *ever* come back in or not. The true breakdown results in a room full of bewildered ravers, pilled off their nuts, fundamentally terrified that their hitherto fabulous time is fundamentally *over* in some deeply expensive and difficult to fix way. The true breakdown reminds people that a packed, dark, sweaty room without music is in fact a quite unbearable environment to be left standing like a lemon in. And of course, after some carefully judged amount of cable-fiddling time, joy of joys, the beat comes back in! Blessed day! Lo! The vibrations return! Behold,

²³ Twenty years of exposure to MDMA and stroboscopic lighting will turn you into a pirate. No one knows why.

and rejoice the sacred noise has graced our humble lives once more! The audience-folk are absolutely elated, and the biggest cheer of the night invariably erupts. The crowd is now deeply grateful for that horrible racket that only a few moments ago they had completely taken for granted.

And before you ask, yes, I have a patent pending, and also a registered trademark: Fakedown™.

Dance Like That If You Can

Of course it wouldn't be a Cursor Miner song unless it was carried to some ridiculous conclusion, and duly 4D, 5D men and more are all introduced at the end. I always enjoyed the bits in comedies like Monty Python or Fry and Laurie where there would be a sketch that just goes bonkers at the end having taken the premise and run with it to absurdity, busting the fourth wall to smithereens. I try to apply this to the endings of songs when I can.

This last bit came out of performing, it wasn't in the original. I think if I'd never performed the track, and never seen the way the audience responded, I don't think that cheeky more-dimensional ending idea would be there. The idea of course, is that people have spent the last few minutes dancing 1D, 2D and 3D and now they're forced to come up with some five dimensional dance moves. Some stop dancing, some just laugh, some give it their best shot (I salute those people), some weren't listening to the lyrics anyway. Admittedly, some audience members may actually have achieved the task put to them, but unfortunately my limited perceptual abilities were not capable of seeing them strut their funky 5D stuff. Have you done a seven dimensional dance move? Do you know someone who has? Do write in with your stories.

So, hey, you thought that whole last bit was Mike, didn't you? It seemed just that little bit edgy. But no, in fact it was I, mild mannered musician Cursor Miner, masquerading as Mike! Just to troll you all! Was I steel-manning or straw manning? You have no idea! Neither do I! What delectable fun!

So now it's *really* time to let our decidedly unwanted houseguest Mike Trollfield

properly let rip and ruin a perfectly nice little kids song about maths by going on about the same depressing culture war bilge he always goes on about, in the most drearily sarcastic way imaginable. Mike, can't you give it a rest? Is this going to be musically relevant this time, Mike? Wasn't this whole thing much better when you let me do the trolling?

Mike: Christ, you thought that was me? As if I'd give Herbert Marcuse the time of day. And quoting libwipe John Oliver? Gimme a break. And who the fuck is Burial? And where was my trademark signature font? Jesus man, you're screwing with my *brand*.

So, now then I, the real Mike Trollfield, would like to tell you all a story. So settle down, shut *up* and stop doing that stupid dance.

The Saga Of The Uppists And Downists: A One Dimensional Fable

by @Real Mike Trollfield

Once upon a time, you wanted to fly.

You thought you were just a crazy solitary dreamer, but eventually you bumped into other eccentric pioneers who want to fly too. Your little gang called yourselves the Uppists. You started a little research group to try and find out why we stay resolutely stuck on the ground, and how we might be able to fly one day.

But the rest of society took umbrage at your crazy project, and said: "Gravity is *natural*, gravity stops us from flying, God is clearly telling us flying is unnatural, unnatural means bad, we shouldn't be allowed to fly!". You and the Uppists started calling those people The Downists. The Downists were clearly idiots. You and the Uppists sensibly vow to never listen to anything they say ever again.

Over time, the Uppist movement, having attracted many smart, imaginative and ambitious people, grows into a political force to be reckoned with, but is in

constant cultural opposition to the Downists. Uppism speaks of itself as being at the opposite end of a *one-dimensional* spectrum. Good on the upwards end, bad at the downwards end. Indeed, it starts to regard Downism as so abhorrent (Downists, of course, being idiots, do all kinds of other ghastly things) that Uppism starts to *define* itself as being in opposition to the Downists. Considering oneself an Uppist becomes principally about being committed to defeating the evils of Downism.

Third wave Uppists start to take the approach that flying is *so* desirable, and Downists are *so* very awful and mean for not letting us fly, so anything that the Downists say must be bad, so every step of their argument must be bad too, and therefore gravity must not exist.

The trouble with Uppism then becomes that even admitting that gravity exists is seen as tantamount to being *against flying*. If you point out that a dropped rock will fall to the floor, you have *appeased* those that say we belong on the ground. If a bar of soap falls on your toe in the shower, you must carry on as if nothing had happened, a strained grin on your wet face, lest some voyeur observe your agony and take it for confirmation of the Omnipotence of Down. If you conjecture that gravity might be why the Moon orbits the Earth, then you're an apologist for Downists, everyone knows that the moon is kept in place with Lunar Privilege. You must loudly question the possibility of *all* attractive forces, because you think they might be a gateway drug for Uppist traitors defecting to Downism. Words like "heavy" and "uphill" and "fall" become taboo, to use this toxic language means you're enabling the Downists and "feeding into their narrative". You try feeding other things into their narrative, things designed to *clog* their narrative, expired credit cards, used tampons, chewing gum. But nothing seems to work. The Downists keep winning elections.

Not only that, unfortunately the Uppist research project aiming to build flying machines isn't going very well. For some reason the machines, which according to all the accepted theories shouldn't need any upwards force to suspend them in the air, just never get off the ground. Fast as buggery, but strictly land only. Since there's no scientific explanation for it, it must be the pilot's fault. Pilots, a bunch of knuckleheaded Jocks that behave suspiciously like Downists are letting cultural norms and downist stereotypes interfere with their ability to fly

perfectly good planes. And the stewardesses aren't much bloody help either. And why must we be endlessly told how to inflate life jackets when we never leave the tarmac?

You, in a flash of shocking insight, suddenly realise what's going wrong, and tell the Uppists: "Stop! I have a better idea: we Uppists could take into account the existence of gravity, and air pressure, the Navier-Stokes equations, and all the real things holding us back, and *build a flying machine that actually fucking works*"... but it's too late, because your speech implied that gravity was real, it's heretical. The Uppists throw you down to the bottom of a deep dark hole which you can't get out of, a humiliating punishment known as "being thrown up to the top of a deep dark pole which you could easily escape if you weren't blind to the suffering caused by Downism".

Once the Uppists have nailed their colors to the mast of agravitationalism, they are fully invested in suppressing the truth, and their problems really multiply. It's philosophical whack-a-mole now. All of a sudden, some scientist, let's call him Gordon Jeterson, goes massively viral amongst NeoDownists (who are the alt-right in disguise, geddit? Christ, do I have to explain everything?) on Youtube telling people that Gravity really does exist and there's a shed ton of reasons to believe it, then boom! Downist Victory! Uptards get OWNED. The prosaic facts and formulae of Gravity, now carrying the electrified aura of rebellious, transgressive, forbidden knowledge start trending like crazy.

The fact that Uppists appear to have connived to *cover up* the existence of gravity means that they now appear conspiratorial, corrupt and manipulative, and this drives thousands of young angry disillusioned men in the arms of down-infremacist groups, all now fervently believing that Uppism (which they now call Cover-Uppism) was a two thousand year old conspiracy to *turn off gravity* on our *pancake flat* earth and let the decent hard working Gravity-fearing Downists float off into space and suffocate.

Then things really get crazy. Some videos go viral of members of the Far-Up launching themselves off buildings and splatting on the pavement. Uppists look really stupid now. Then the Downists, with glee, realise that the Uppists have lost the smug, supercilious moral and scientific *highground* that they've held for so

long... The Uppists are hypocrites! Ha haaa! Then an Uppist splinter faction defects and starts believing that gravity is real, but actually artificial, a two thousand year old giant magnet built by the ancient Downist aliens to subjugate the...

I'm tired, you can take it from here.

Anyroad, at the end of the story, the Downists use their newfound lust for forbidden scientific knowledge to invent bomber planes and fighter jets, train up a load of brilliant female pilots, and of course conveniently abandon their prior no-fly principles in the rush to bomb the fuck out of those insufferable Uptard cucks. Then the Uppist cause, justice, and indeed truth itself are all fucked for ever. The End.

This is not our story. This is not our mono-dimension (can you take a guess which dimension we have been *handed?*). But yes, there's wrongness on all sides. Everyone is spouting bullshit now. Uppists, downists, leftists, rightists, innies and outies, everyone at the extremes of all these dimensions have let their tribal affiliations and one dimensional thinking deactivate their ability to reason.

When faced with the overwhelming complexity of the problems in the real world, we turn, first to a single dimension of what is better and worse. Next, we forget that this dimension is a continuum at all, and categorise things as Good and Evil. Everything we encounter, absolutely everything, must somehow fall into one of these two categories. Either something is good, unconditionally, all the time, or it's evil, unconditionally, all the time. Then we attach alternative labels to these categories. Left and Right. Up or Down. Red and Blue. Mac or PC. Underground or Mainstream. Us or them. With us or against us.

You know about this tendency. Everyone knows about it. It is common knowledge. And yet we're all still doing it. It would be mind numbingly boring if it didn't cause so much fantastically thrilling upheaval, violence and suffering.

The problem with blinding ourselves to evidence on the basis of our Uppist ideology is that it is handing to the Downists the most effective weapon the Uppists have - which is Truth. The Downists have a number of special weapons,

their unquestioning loyalty, their virulent memes, their willingness to manipulate and deceive, their ability to shut down thought via fear and rage and appeal to the dumbest common denominator, and they have *actual* weapons too, let's not forget that. But the one weapon they never really had was the truth, the scientific truth. Which is a weapon of awesome power. Indeed, the truth is the *only* weapon that remains reliably effective over timescales longer than a few decades. If we, the Uppists, with the best of intentions, start gently massaging the truth to fit our moral preferences, then we're lost. A cause for justice must have truth on its side, otherwise it's doomed to collapse in on itself, be undermined from the outside, or turn into a mad destructive parody of itself.

Mike Trollfield