



dtHed

meets

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D1 — In 2013 Timothy Morton publishes *Hyperobjects*, a book by which our album is inspired. (To get an idea of what a hyperobject is, think about global warming, which is: non-local, viscous, extended in time, etc. etc.). In his book Morton also makes various examples of hyper-music, ranging from *My Bloody Valentine* to *The Well Tuned Piano* by La Monte Young. (If you're interested in listening to some examples, [here's a mixtape made by the guys at Noi](#) with a selection based on the examples mentioned by Morton in his book). Now, without necessarily knowing in detail what Morton says in his book, if you were to imagine a hyper-music, what features should it have in your opinion? Why?

My mind turns to the idea of music not as an object at all, but as a continuously unfolding process. In particular, to me an important feature of this kind of music is that it does not come from its makers as a final, unchanging, perfect artefact, but is instead made anew for each listening session by the living process instilled within it.

Of course, in some sense all music is like this. As every listener brings their particular backgrounds and dispositions to the music, they experience it in their own unique way. But here I'm talking about this in a more literal sense, which is the sense also invoked by Umberto Eco in his discussion about "Open Works": The artist leaves the piece open in some aspects, so it may take different concrete forms in different situations.

In practical terms, this type of hyper-music requires a departure from the 20th century notion of distributing music as recordings — concrete grooves on a record or bytes on a disk that engrave an unchanging facsimile of the music. A lot of my own work is about finding ways to free music from this notion, by building software-based generative processes into it on the one hand, and by making it interactive and open to influence by the listener on the other.

D2 — The other main theme of dTHEd is neurodiversity. For neurotypical people, imagining the life of a neurodiverse person is extremely complex, on the verge of being impossible. It is therefore legit to wonder whether it would be possible for neurotypical people to actually step up and create art inspired and functional to neurodiverse people. In your opinion, what could be done and how should it differ from normal art for neurotypical recipients? Does it make any sense to try to create art with such premises or should we believe that art in its vastness can already satisfy everyone, as diverse as they might be?

I think it does make sense to create art with such premises. I believe one way to approach this might be via exactly the kinds of open works I was describing earlier. One can imagine a musical or artistic system that is capable of producing a multitude of different realisations, and then that system also coming with a means for diverse people to realise it in the way that works for them, which could include realisations for different neurological makeups.

Another interesting question here is the line drawn between art on the one hand and design on the other. When people talk about art, it is often framed as a single individual or group realising their personal artistic vision. The focus of attention is on the maker. I'd contrast this with design, where the discussion is all about finding the best possible outcome for the specific situation and people that will use the object or system being designed. The focus of attention is on the user/viewer/listener/recipient. Any artistic vision the makers have needs to be modulated by this prime directive of "fit for use". Perhaps in musical works, we could borrow some more ideas from the world of design, where there exists a large set of tools for putting the receiver and their needs and desires in the center of the creation process?

D3 (from Luigi Monteanini) — We expect machines to match or even excel better than humans (whatever this may mean), but at the same time we keep on considering them as pure machines for calculation. What do you think of this?

An engineering-oriented part of my mind wants to think that something being a pure machine for calculation does not mean it shouldn't be capable for the whole spectrum of human, or even superhuman experience. Via symbolic representations, anything can be expressed as calculation, and in some sense we might also be pure machines for calculation ourselves.

In practice though, I'm not really expecting, nor wishing for machines to excel us in something like musical or artistic expression. They are getting better and better at mimicking this, and we will be seeing more and more situations where we can't tell the difference. But if you think of music as communication between minds as I do, it also matters what kind of mind is behind the music. A statistical model of musical structure is not a mind. You can't connect to it personally. It's nothing but a tool. So while machines will, and already do, excel humans in many things, to inject meaning into the process it takes a human being that uses the machine as a tool.

The question I pose is: With the increase in power of artificial intelligence technology, we are facing a growing number of ethical questions about what research should be conducted and what to do with new findings. Do such questions also apply to art and music technology? Is there such a thing as unethical music? If so, how does one steer music technology towards ethically sound waters?