

# How to be above average

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<http://youtu.be/xFXLABZMzSg>

According to Ronald Coase, if you torture the data long enough you can get it to confess anything you like, and one of the most common torture devices is the average. So one would do well to proceed with caution when confronted with the statistic that most people believe they are above average drivers, usually cited in the context of deriding the common man's capacity for self-delusion.

<http://youtu.be/FaTJGV1-6ts>

But think about that statistic for a moment longer: What does it mean to be an average driver? Obviously, if I have a healthy sense of self-worth and I get to pick what it means to be average I will choose a set of criteria that puts me firmly in the above average category. If you doubt the value of a healthy sense of self-worth in the context of driving I invite you to take a couple of trips with a nervous, insecure driver and reconsider your position...

<http://youtu.be/wCgd9pNRe9M>

This may make it seem like I like I am endorsing an "open" position where there are no objective measures of success, but this is not the case. What I am suggesting is not related to objective vs. subjective judgements, but internal vs. external judgements; it is more important to be confident in the work than to desire a predetermined result.

<http://youtu.be/0xKqaT2jGbo>

To see what I mean, and since it is Easter this week, let us consider the hymn tune "Christ lag in Todesbanden" (Christ lies in death's strong bands). This hymn, perhaps more than most others, has been the subject of a plethora of different harmonisations, Bach alone wrote 6 or 12 if you count each movement of the Cantata BWV 4 as a separate interpretation.

<http://youtu.be/Xc5dFn1HEN8>

I am not sure who would be so bold as to suggest which one of these arrangements is better than any other, and yet each interpretation consists of a series of choices between a large number of alternatives, and each of these choices represents a decision made by the composer on the basis of the other decisions made in the composition process. It is meaningless, therefore, to say that Telemann's version is better or worse than Bach's one, they are different works with different logics. Each represents the best possible choices given the web of other choices that that interpretation embodies, whether you or I like the outcome or not is an entirely separate question of aesthetic judgement.

<http://youtu.be/7FKP3c8UHwg>

Being a “good” driver is the same as being a “good” interpretation of a hymn tune. It is about being faithful to and cognizant of the desired outcome and consistently being able to make decisions which lead to that outcome in a way that is in keeping with the all pressures exerting their influence at any given moment. In that way each of the arrangements here is an above average effort, and every time you reach your destination safely with due respect for your fellow road users you have been an above average driver.

[http://youtu.be/Wlvt\\_mu9G0g](http://youtu.be/Wlvt_mu9G0g)

Trust me to find a way to connect the ethics of cutting someone off in traffic to the aesthetics of harmonisation...

[http://youtu.be/U\\_4YaZL-w54](http://youtu.be/U_4YaZL-w54)