

The Uncivil Society - “The John Dewey Experience”

The Uncivil Society in association with Suburban Utopia Projects presents it's twelfth release “The John Dewey Experience”.

American Philosopher John Dewey posits that education and learning are social and interactive processes, and thus the school itself is a social institution through which social reform can and should take place. In addition, he believed that students thrive in an environment where they are allowed to experience and interact with the curriculum, and all students should have the opportunity to take part in their own learning.

Inspired by these ideas, Gorilla X draws from a wide range of Dewey's writings and explores the ideas of how democracy and social reform are inexorably bound to the process of state mandated education. Dewey makes a strong case for the importance of education not only as a place to gain content knowledge, but also as a place to learn how to live.

Musically this project was inspired by the Monks seminal recording “Black Monk Time” and aspires to create a similar “steam roller of sound”. Although thematically akimbo to the intent of the project, the cover of “Mr. Pharmacist” is a homage to my father and the vocation he dedicated his life in service towards.

Track List:

- 1) Traditions v. Progressions
- 2) The Need for a Theory
- 3) Criteria of Experience
- 4) Social Control
- 5) Nature of Freedom
- 6) Meaning and Purpose
- 7) Progressive Organization of Subject Matter
- 8) Experience: Means and Goals
- 9) Counter Argument #3
- 10) Mr. Pharmacist

“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.”

— John Dewey

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Traditions v. Progressions

We think in terms of opposition
Beliefs are formed as either-or propositions

This extreme intrinsic duality
eliminates possibility from reality

When forced to compromise
Extremes are difficult to exercise

Yet, when it comes to practical matters
When paradigms are in tatters
And circumstance compels
us to find common ground

Traditions impose ideas
from above and outside

Progression comes
from expressions
Aligned by heart and mind

We retreat to the safety of theory
Where any query can be argued as truth

Need for a Theory

Education is a process
designed to suppress
our natural inclinations

The subjects and matters
Derived from bodies of information
Seemingly assembled without relation

The knowledge and skills
you will understand
Is how to follow rules
Conform to standards
How to obey time
Meet deadlines
Regurgitate Schemes
Identify patterns of organization

In the twelve year course
Of mandatory education
You will be shaped
by time and schedule

So we can replicate
And perpetuate
The rules of order
That are already in place

Criteria of Experience

Culture creates conditions
That assume our future
will be much like the past

Through Instruction
and Discipline
We are taught
skills, conduct and ideas
from previous eras

Transmitted in the now
with intent to last
The praxis of this interaction
Forms factions In our minds

Knowledge
is Assimilated from surroundings
Learning
is gleamed through acquisition
Of what is already understood

This criteria of Experience
Lies in opposition
to cultivating an individuals
identity and experience
Through free activity

Social Control

How many have learned to hate learning?

How many acquired skills through drills?

How many came to associate discovery with boredom?

How many found their experience so foreign to their life they quit caring?

How many simply acquiesced control?

What if we learn to identify the factors that create containment?

What if we learn to take self control?

What if we cultivate learning that rejects established patterns?

What if we created our own social controls?

How many have accepted the necessary levels docility, receptivity and obedience
To be determined for survival?

What if we let go of this social control?

Nature of Freedom

We play games
Games have rules
Rules make conduct

Without rules there is no game
Without the game
there are no winners (or losers)

If rules are part of the game
And no rules, means no game
Can we construct Different rules
To play a different game?

Yet as long as this game goes on
with reasonable fluidity
And the players feel
Like active participants
Who are not submitting
to an external imposition
Then the game will go on and on
Conduct becomes conditioned

You see, revolt only occurs
when someone on the other side
is perceived as being unfair
And the individual who
is imposing their will
Makes the game unfair to play

Without the game what do we really have?

The deck is stacked
The dice is loaded
The field is slanted
And The sides are mis-matched

Meaning of Purpose

A slave can be defined as a person
Who executes the purposes of another

The aims and methods of instruction
Is to prepare the young
for future responsibility
And success in life

Rules, Order and Patterns
Forced organization overrides concerns

Through learning
the Discipline of acquisition is reinforced

Through navigating
organized bodies of information

Forms the skills
Which in turn become
evidence of comprehension

Multiplied actions
Of manifested conformity
Through standards
That prescribe normality

Progressive Organization of Subject Matter

Organization and relations
Are defined through interactions

Both principles are abstract
Only concrete in consequences
Which result from application
Far reaching fundamentals
Dependent upon interpretation

Objective Conditions
Experience promotes growth
By implication
These conditions
Of observation
Of memory
Of information
Have been procured from others imagination

Anything can be called a study
Arithmetic, history, geography or science
Are all derived from materials which at the outset
Fall within the scope of ordinary life experience
Yet are abstractions at their core

Multiplied actions
Of manifested conformity
Through standards
That prescribe normality

Experience: Means and Goals

To accomplish ends for both
individual and society
Experience must be controlled

Methods are employed
To shape the possibility of growth
And to limit what you encounter

Find possibility in the ordinary
Celebrate the failure you will experience

Be bold to walk your own path
Through your own mind

Do not be afraid of the danger you may find
That resides in the dark corners of your mind

See through artificial created fear of the unknown
Embrace your inner other

Experience
Experiment
Develop your own direction

React against the standards
Reject others aims
Modify the prescribed methods
Celebrate your own gains
Create the rules for your own game

Counter Argument #3

O fortune
Like the moon
changeable,
ever growing
and waning;
hateful life
now is tough
and then soothes
on a whim;
poverty,
power
like ice.
Fate and empty;
turning wheel
bad status,
health fades
overshadowed
and secretly
you plague me too;
now through the game
My naked calvata.
When health and power
not now; the affected
and disabilities always on duty.
In this hour without delay
pluck the strings;
Because fate everyone weep me!

Mr. Pharmacist

Mr Pharmacist
Can you help me out today
In your usual lovely way
Oh Mr Pharmacist I insist
That you give me some of that vitamin see
Mr Pharmacist
Dear Pharmacist won't you please
Give me some energy
Mr Pharmacist
Hey Mr Pharmacist
I'll recommend you to my friends
They'll be happy in the end
Mr Pharmacist can you help
Send me on a 'delic kick
Mr Pharmacist
Dear Pharmacist use your mind
You better stock me up for the wintertime
Mr Pharmacist
Hey Mr Pharmacist
Words cannot express
Feeling I suggest
Oh Mr Pharmacist I can plead
Gimme some of that powder I need
Mr Pharmacist
Dear Pharmacist I'll be back
With a handful of empty sack
Mr Pharmacist

Liner Notes:

One morning last fall, at my son's school he showed me a mushroom patch that had grown near the entrance. The next day we brought a mushroom guide to school to identify what was growing. Once he was able to identify what he was experiencing he excitedly ran in to show his school friends pictures. The children then ran outside to look at the mushrooms and connect their experience in nature to the knowledge presented in the pictures. To see first hand how the children were excited and naturally curious. I realized that learning through discovery is easy and dare say fun. We make learning hard by having it conform to standards and be prescribed by rules rote and repetition. For me, to see the rapid embrace of artificial intelligence to gain experience to be deeply troubling. This disconnect is manifesting through youth - heck my own children are more happy interacting with their screens than experiencing life in analogue.

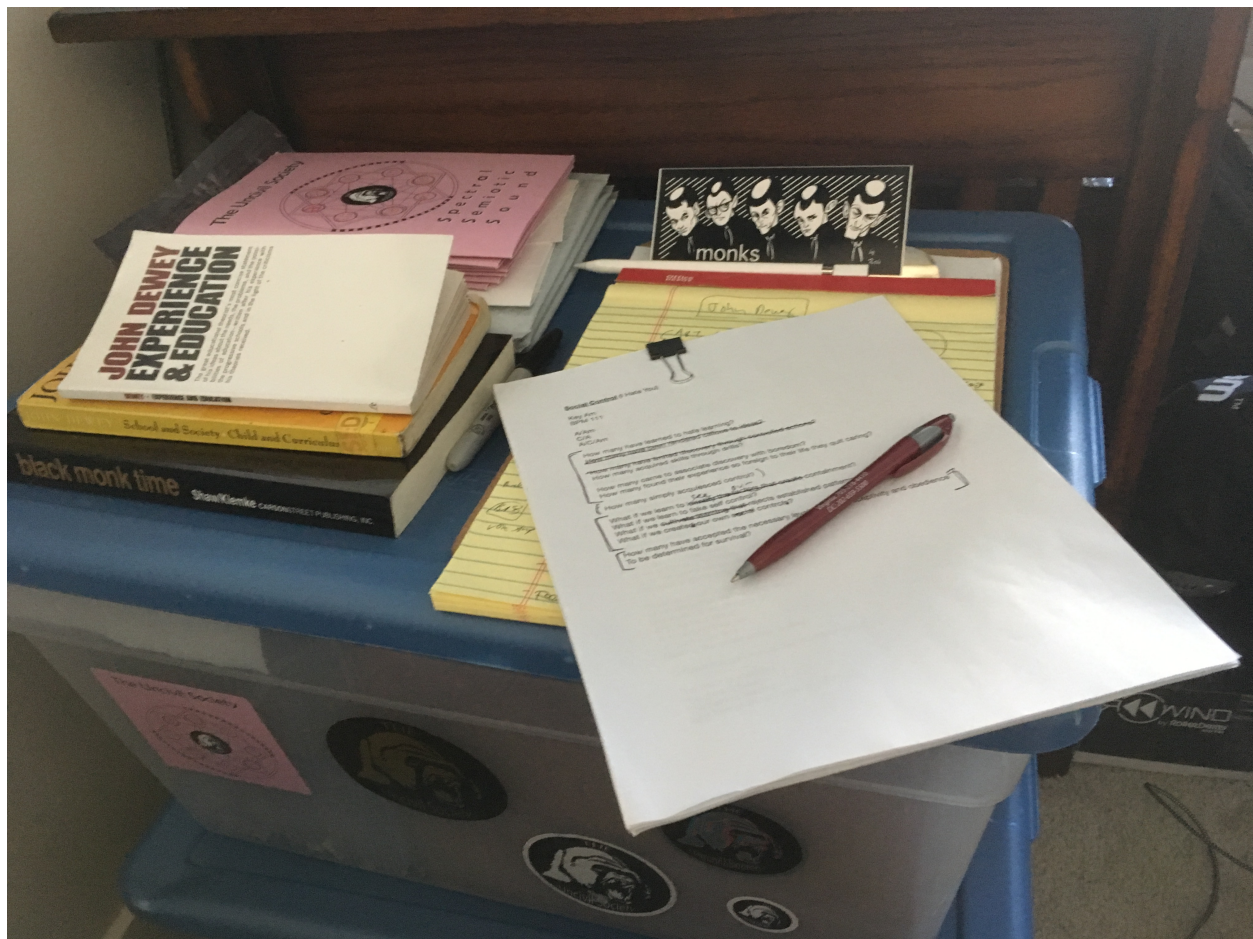
John Dewey's philosophy is about learning by doing through play and having. This project explores the notion that Dewey espoused - of learning through experience and play. In researching the lyrics for this record I read a wide range of John Dewey books, including: "Experience and Education", "Art As Experience", "Democracy and Education", "School and Society" and "Child and Curriculum". Although his writing is a bit windy and overtly gendered, many of his core ideas ring true to this day.

Musically this project draws deeply from the Monks a quintessential band from the 1960's. The first time I heard of the Monks I was about ten years ago. In performing my duties as a student teacher, I felt obligated to encourage all students to succeed. While I admonishing a high school student for having a low grade in my class. She patiently feigned attention through my barrage of incessant questions about missing assignments and tests. After I was done, she held out a CD and said "honestly I could care less about any of that stuff that you are talking about, but this music is literally going to change your life." She put the disk on my desk and went back to her seat. True to her word, I didn't get any work from this student for the rest of the year. Because she had reversed the power dynamic on me in such a profound manner that I didn't listen to the disk out of spite for the rest of the school year. When I did finally listen to it, she was right, it did change my life, and dare I say, I cared a little bit less about missing work and quizzes.

In researching the music this project I read Thomas Shaw and Anna Klemke's biography "Black Monk Time". It was interesting to learn about the band's formation, growth, evolution and break through of discovering feedback and how they transmuted into a new revolutionary sound. From their experience and discovery they became liberated from being a cover band and found their own voice and identity. In many ways their experience validates the process of art and experience that John Dewey describes. Were they flawed? Absolutely! Has their lyrical ideas aged well? The protest songs? Yes! The rapey tinged ditties? Not so much. But does the idea of discovering a truly unique artistic expression through experience resonate deeply with me? Completely!!! This notion manifested when in laying down my initial test tracks I

overtightened my D string on the banjo and it popped. Embodying the spirit of Gary Monk, when swinging my banjo back and forth I discovered the loose string added a clink and clank counterstrike to the feedback. While creating this project I included adding a tube preamp for the vocals. It was interesting to learning how to adjust to a sound that you knew was warmer yet having to accept it because I was not accustomed to the smoother frequencies. This project also encountered the limits of GarageBand, while working on several songs a message informing me that I was at the processing limits of the program appeared. This made me accept that I may need to seek a more robust platform for not only recording, but also mastering future work. I exported the project to Adobe Audition and attempted to try my hand at mastering the project. As a life long learner, I am excited to learn the next step in the production process.

While producing this project, my father got sick. He worked as a pharmacist for over 45 years. This cover, although thematically not cohesive to the lyrical exploration of this project, the song emotionally resonated with me. To honor him I recorded this song. Ironically the lyrical content reinforces exactly why I did not choose to peruse that vocation - much to my dad's chagrin of having a father son drug store. Not only would I have most likely bankrupted the business by feeding habits of myself and what ever orbit of junkies that would have been attracted to the gravity of access of hospital grade pharmaceuticals I would have had access to.



Thank You:

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