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The Dewey Project

JO ANN BOYDSTON and JOE R. BURNETT

WE are deeply appreciative of the invitation by the Editor of *The Educational Forum* to describe what we think is an epochal event in the history of American thought; namely, the publication of the collected, definitively edited works of John Dewey. It is especially fitting that the report should appear in this place for, of course, "John Dewey" is the most familiar name in American education. It is a name that falls trippingly from the tongues of those who have read only sparingly what others have said of him, and even less what he himself said. As the target of both unrestrained praise and unreasoned attack, John Dewey is today too little known through the only authoritative medium that remains to us—his own writings. The breadth and depth of his influence in a number of fields, including education, have not yet been fully assessed.

The widespread lack of information as well as lack of perspective on John Dewey's broad competences and interests probably stems from the fact that most of us have known his work in only a few major books, usually related to our own particular interests (who

doesn't know *Democracy and Education*, for instance?). It has been difficult to grasp the immensity of his total output, as it is scattered through some 150 journals, many books, pamphlets, monographs, newspaper articles, addresses, class lecture notes, and untranslated lectures. In Europe it has long been standard procedure to collect the works of a man of Dewey's calibre into a uniform edition that can be productively studied by scholars. If such editions had been standard in this country as well, the diversity and scope of Dewey's work might have been apparent to more students earlier, and the reasons for the pervasiveness of his influence might have been recognized more clearly.

A systematic effort is now finally under way to collect into a uniform, definitive edition all Dewey's previously published works. This undertaking, started in 1961, is known as the Dewey Project, or more formally, Co-operative Research on Dewey Publications, at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale.

Before describing the difficulties and rewards of collecting and publishing Dewey's works, we should answer the frequent question, "How did Southern Illinois University become interested in supporting and pursuing such a venture?" The answer lies initially in a fortuitous coming together of several forces. In 1959, Dr. George E. Axtelle was retiring at New York University. A

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long-time devotee of Dewey's thought, Dr. Axtelle and two of his colleagues at New York University had been for a time discussing the merits of preparing a concordance of the terms Dewey used in his writing, an elaborate and detailed index that would help any student of Dewey's work put his finger on exactly the writings in which Dewey discussed certain concepts. When he was offered a Distinguished Professorship at Southern Illinois University, Axtelle made one of the conditions of his acceptance that he be given time to work on this idea. The person to whom he proposed this condition was a most receptive listener, a life-long admirer of John Dewey, Dr. John E. Grinnell, at that time Dean of the College of Education. Dean Grinnell accepted the condition with alacrity.

Once established in Carbondale, Axtelle communicated his enthusiasm to several other persons in key positions, persons who also had specialized insights into the problems of preparing a concordance—President Delyte W. Morris, Vice-President for Academic Affairs Charles D. Tenney (Professor of Philosophy and English), and Mr. Vernon Sternberg, Director of the Southern Illinois University Press. As it soon became apparent that a concordance could not be prepared in the absence of a collected edition, the possibility of preparing the collected edition began to supplant the idea of a concordance. With the support of the University administration and the cooperation of the University Press, the Dewey Project was initiated in July of 1961. Titles and ex-

act areas of responsibility were not formally established at the outset, but from the beginning Axtelle was in charge of the Project, and the authors of this article were associated with him, one full-time in Carbondale and the other long-distance from Champaign-Urbana.

Later, from among the distinguished philosophers and educators at Southern Illinois University and the University of Illinois, an editorial advisory board was formed and continues its work today: George E. Axtelle, now emeritus; Jo Ann Boydston; Joe R. Burnett; S. Morris Eames; Wayne A. R. Leys; William R. McKenzie; Francis T. Villemain; and Lewis E. Hahn, Chairman.

An imposing array of consultants from many fields visited Carbondale and talked with the Project staff and editorial board about plans for the edition.¹

¹ Some of these were M. H. Thomas, Dewey bibliographer, Princeton University; Max Fisch, University of Illinois; Richard P. McKeon, University of Chicago; Tsuin-Chen Ou, President of New Asia College, Hong Kong; Harold Taylor, educational consultant and former president of Sarah Lawrence College; George R. Geiger, Antioch College; Gail Kennedy, emeritus, Amherst College; the late Donald A. Piatt, emeritus, University of California at Los Angeles; George Dykhuizen, University of Vermont; Horace M. Kallen, New School for Social Research; Paul Schilpp, Editor of the Library of Living Philosophers; Robert McCaul, University of Chicago; John L. Childs, emeritus, Teachers College, Columbia University; George S. Counts, Southern Illinois University; Robert W. Clopton, University of Hawaii; Horace Friess, emeritus, Columbia University; Matthew Bruccoli, University of South Carolina, Director of the Center for Editions of American Authors; Lawrence Buckland, President, Inforonics Inc., Maynard, Massachusetts; and Herbert W. Schneider, emeritus, Columbia University, long-time associate and colleague of John Dewey.

Few answers were automatically available because few precedents, none exactly parallel, existed.

The first volume in the collected edition appeared in 1967. Why did six years elapse between the initiation of the Project and the publication of the first book? The answer to that question provides a number of possible guidelines for similar undertakings in the future.

Let us begin with the first problem faced by the Dewey Project advisory board, the magnitude of the corpus of Dewey's work. Consider the fact that Dewey had a publishing career of seventy years and that in each of those years he published many separate items. Most years his production ranged from several articles to as many as thirty—in addition to the publication of one or more books. In 1934, for example, both *Art as Experience* and *A Common Faith* were published, along with 26 articles. The year that Dewey's monumental work *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* appeared, 1938, he also published *Experience and Education* and twelve articles. And it might be mentioned that in 1938, Dewey was but one year short of his eightieth birthday!

The second problem which concerned the advisory board was also related to the corpus, because not only is the body large, it is decidedly complex in nature. Dewey's more than 750 articles appeared in 151 different journals; and, in addition to the kind of variation in length and subject matter one might expect in such a range, these articles display extreme variations in style, typog-

raphy, editorial treatment, and accessibility.

In roughly chronological order, the steps necessary to resolve these problems could be outlined as follows: (1) collect copies of all Dewey's writings, including revisions and variant versions; (2) study them to determine how much and what kinds of materials are involved; (3) establish a pattern or framework for the edition—logical (topical), chronological, alphabetical, or some combination thereof; (4) define the "universe" to be encompassed—should typewritten materials, radio broadcasts, committee reports, joint works, newspaper interviews, be included? (5) decide on the kind and amount of editing to be done, by whom, and the amount and kind of editorial comment to be made; (6) decide the size and general format of the volumes in the collected edition; (7) plan the contents of the new volumes by translating each page of published material into the size and shape of the new format; (8) establish editorial rubrics both for the Dewey material and for any new material to be included in the volumes. When decisions like these were made and recorded, the "work" could begin and books could actually be published. A number of commitments to pattern, to design, to format, were formally and irrevocably made with the publication of the first volume. The first volume published would establish a consistent pattern for the entire edition, and about five years were necessary for the preliminary phases that culminated in its publication. The first book, published

in 1967, was *Psychology*, Volume 2 of the initial five-volume series entitled *The Early Works of John Dewey, 1882-1898*.² That series, to be completed in 1971, includes: Volume 1: 1882-1888, *Early Essays and Leibniz's New Essays concerning the Human Understanding*; Volume 2: 1887, *Psychology*; Volume 3: 1889-1892, *Early Essays and Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics*; Volume 4: 1893-1894, *Early Essays and The Study of Ethics: A Syllabus*; and Volume 5: 1895-1898, *Early Essays*.

The collected works of Dewey will fill more than 45 volumes, 5½" × 8", each between 400 and 500 pages. Locating all the variant forms and reprints of Dewey writings is a task that will continue throughout the publication of the edition. However, the collection now housed at the Dewey Project offices is already the most extensive in the world; no other approaches it in completeness, legibility, or accessibility. The materials for all volumes in the edition are now "roughed" out and collected in cardboard covers awaiting final study, introduction, textual investigation, and editorial treatment. Several additional volumes will be needed for the final combined indexes which will, at the close of the publication period, at last fulfill the original goal of providing a concordance of the terms Dewey used in his writing.

Many of the decisions concerning size of the volumes, the use of an approxi-

mately chronological arrangement, the kind of paper and typography, and the materials to be included, were dictated by the nature of Dewey's published works and by the intended audience for the edition. In any other collected edition of a writer's works, these kinds of decisions undoubtedly would be different because the material and the audience would be different. But the key feature of the Dewey edition is one which probably should characterize future collected editions. That feature is the kind of editorial processes used to develop what are called definitive texts, and it is an approach to editing that bears closer scrutiny.

In the simplest terms, a definitive text is as close as possible in every detail to what the author himself intended the text to be—free of printers' errors, house-styling, editorial sophistications, or compositorial corruptions. A properly prepared text should not need re-editing unless and until some authoritative document not originally available comes to light. For example, if the original manuscript is not available when the definitive text is prepared, that text is necessarily based on the first published form of the materials. All corrections and revisions made by the author after his initial publication are woven into the texture of the original, making an eclectic text by following the same steps the author himself took in revising and correcting. If the original manuscript, or a marked galley proof, for instance, does later appear, the text may have to be re-edited. The closer to the author the available materials are, the more weight

² Volume 1, published in 1969 (\$15.00), Volume 2, published in 1967 (\$10.00), and Volume 3, published early 1970 (\$15.00) are available from the Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, Illinois 62901.

they must be given in editorial decisions. Textual scholars today agree that the "latest revised version" may, and probably does, incorporate not only revisions but a large number of errors that the author may have overlooked but which the conscientious editor must correct and explain his corrections.

The principles and procedures of thorough textual editing were adopted for Dewey's works on the premise that "minimal" editing is bad editing. A mammoth edition like this one requires large expenditures of time and money—so large, in fact, that the undertaking will probably not be repeated for many years. If it is "minimally" edited, it will nevertheless be widely used as the only collected edition available. Therefore the added investment in textual editing needed to make the edition definitive is justified. Moreover, although modern textual editing has been developed by editors in the literary field, the need for texts as accurate as careful scholarship can produce is even more critical in the disciplines treated by Dewey. How can the philosopher accept a faulty text if the literary critic cannot? Any person who has studied Dewey's published writings has noticed misspellings and typographical errors. Unless he is an editor, however, he has probably not stopped to consider the extent to which such a text may contain errors *not* so apparent. When a spelling error makes a new word, and worse, when the new word makes some sort of sense in the context, the student usually accepts the error as "authentic" Dewey. In Volume 1 of *The Early Works of John Dewey*, a

printer twice changed Dewey's "eternal values" to "external values," an example that is only one in an extensive list, and an example of a conceptual change that could start an extensive re-examination of Dewey's thought. The large number of corrections from "physical" to "psychical" and the reverse that were necessary in the proofreading of two of the Dewey volumes now in print serves to illustrate how a "simple" spelling error can alter an author's intent.

How does an editor go about determining what the author really intended the published material to be? How shall an editor deal with misspelled words, typographical errors, misplaced punctuation that alters meaning, carelessly quoted and undocumented source material, variant versions of the same work? Did the author himself make what now seems to be an error or was it made by the printer, changed by an editor, overlooked in proof?

These questions are central in considering *how* the editing of any work is to be approached. Several years ago, the Modern Language Association established the Center for Editions of American Authors. The Center's main goal is to assure and assist in the publication of definitive texts in collected editions of the works of such literary figures as Hawthorne, Melville, and Mark Twain. Persons working in the areas of descriptive bibliography (a field much broader and more highly specialized than the preparation of lists of references) and textual criticism drew together much of the information and many of the techniques known and ac-

cepted in textual editing to develop standards for judging whether a text is indeed "definitive." These standards relate to every stage of the editorial process—from the initial development of principles and procedures through multiple proofreadings. A representative of the Center is selected to inspect all materials used in preparing the text for the printer; his on-the-spot visit of two or three days allows him to evaluate the extent to which the Center's standards have been applied to the editorial work in progress. His detailed report to the Center helps decide whether the text should be awarded the Center "Seal" labeling it "an approved text." The volumes of *The Early Works of John Dewey, 1882-1898* already published bear the Center Seal—the only works outside the literary field to be so distinguished.

Many of the materials used in developing a definitive text are also important both for the record and for future students of that text—the publishing history of the books and articles, for example; the tabulation of variants among different versions of the same material; the complete list of changes made in the "copy-text" (the form of the material on which the edited version is based)—whether made editorially or adopted from some existing printed version.

Other kinds of materials that are compiled in the course of preparing the text have been included in the volumes published and will be included in future volumes as necessary. For instance, by searching out Dewey's sources—most of which he mentions quite casually—a

"Checklist of References" is compiled, giving bibliographic information about all the works from which Dewey quotes or which he merely mentions. Each of his quotations is also minutely scrutinized; a section entitled "Correction of Quotations" presents the original, correct form of any material from which his quotations differs. The quoted material in the Dewey articles is not changed, because it was on this form of the material that Dewey based his thought—but the variations from the original are available now for further study.

Each of the volumes is introduced by a member of the editorial advisory board who discusses the content of the materials: trends in Dewey's thought, interrelationships among his ideas, later developments heralded by earlier articles, and the impact of Dewey's work in a variety of fields.

As might have been expected and even predicted, work on the collected edition of Dewey's published materials led to an extension of the activities of the Dewey Project. Several peripheral and closely related undertakings should be described.

Because the straight chronological pattern selected for the edition allowed little insight into the various over-all topics treated by Dewey, a companion volume entitled *A Guide to the Works of John Dewey* has appeared. This work supplements the collected edition and provides a valuable topical bird's-eye view of Dewey's writing. The Guide is divided into twelve categories: Psychology; Philosophy and Philosophic Method; Logic and Theory of Knowl-

edge; Ethics; Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy; Aesthetics; Theory of Value and Valuation; Philosophy of Religion; Social and Political Commentary; Education; Critical and Historical Studies; and Chinese lectures. Each category is discussed in an essay by a Dewey scholar, and his article is followed by a listing of all of Dewey's writings in that particular category. This volume provides complete and detailed bibliographical information arranged by topics to help guide the student through the interrelationships between different areas of Dewey's thought and to help him evaluate each in Dewey's total intellectual perspective.

In August 1969 was published *John Dewey: A Checklist of Translations, 1900-1967*, an exhaustive listing of translations into all languages of Dewey's books and articles, by Jo Ann Boydston with Robert E. Andresen. A total of 410 independent translations into 35 languages of more than 60 Dewey items appear here, in addition to the first complete listing of Dewey's lectures in Chinese.

Most important for the future of Dewey studies are the collections of materials housed at the Dewey Project—manuscripts, correspondence, copies of all printings of all books, all articles and books about Dewey (both published and unpublished), in English as well as other languages, copies of all reviews of Dewey's works, copies of class lecture

notes, photographs and memorabilia, oral history interviews, and other related materials. Items not in current use, originals of manuscripts and correspondence, or materials of special importance—like Dewey's own copy of Aristotle's *Ethics*, with marginal notations—are housed in the University Archives at Morris Library, where they are properly preserved and protected, yet made available for research.

One of the most gratifying aspects of work at the Project has been the numerous gifts of materials such as those mentioned here by individuals who had them in their possession but who longed to have them housed with similar materials where they would be at once safe for posterity and at the same time contribute to a massive resource for Dewey scholarship.

Readers of this journal who wish to keep up-to-date regarding the work of the Project are invited to have their names added to the list of those who receive the *Dewey Newsletter*. Published semi-annually and now mailed to 3500 people, the *Newsletter* contains notes about the Project and other Dewey research in progress, an occasional brief article by or about Dewey, and similar items of interest to Dewey students. Requests for receipt of the *Newsletter* should be sent to: Prof. Jo Ann Boydston, Director, Dewey Project, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois 62901.