

THOUGHT NEWS
A QUEST FOR
DEMOCRATIC
COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

This paper presents an analytical framework for a reading of the *Thought News* project as an attempt to democratize the means of mass communication. The project was a creative endeavour of a former journalist Ford, and the American pragmatists, Dewey, Park, and Mead to set up an accessible newspaper about

complex social processes. Because of its emphasis on the conditions of information diffusion as integrative and on the possible social bearing of theoretical knowledge, the project represents a typical nineteenth century reflection on mass communication. In this sense, it is comparable to the contemporaneous theories of Tarde and Schäffle, who similarly sought to improve the performance of the press. Arguably, central concerns of the project have not been obliterated by the new communication technologies, but persist instructively for our present uses of them.

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Introduction

Invention is usually understood as making use of some novel means to meet existing ends, like solving an existing problem. Accordingly, means of communication do not by themselves shape our goals, but merely shorten the process of achieving them. Yet, this image may also be reversed, in the sense that the transformation of existing means may depend on inventing or redefining our goals. When goals involve complex social ideas, like democracy, the value of information, or the role of news, their reformulation should seem both startling and far-reaching. This paper offers an analytical illustration of the thesis that this second type of inventiveness is incredibly valuable and may lead to insightful inquiry into complex social concerns, especially when they relate to the means of mass communication. Based on a disputable episode in the history of journalism – the so-called *Thought News* project in the late nineteenth century coordinated by a group of pragmatist scholars was to result in a philosophical newspaper that would report “thought” to the wider reading public – I want to argue that there are good reasons for endorsing a reflection of assumed, tacit expectations regarding the uses of existing means of communication.

Thought News – according to the standards of its own time – was an idealistic project, inherently seeking to democratize the means of communication. It was premised on the assumption that the printed press is a social resource with a greater potential than the reading publics had experienced. In other words, whether the press can be used more ambitiously depends on assessing its performance relative to the possible goals of democratic reform. I will argue that the *Thought News* project was in essence an experiment with the printed press as a communication technology. I propose such reading, because I think the project may offer a lesson about the means of mass communication and the way we use them. For this reason, the title of this paper contains a pun about a seminal essay of pragmatism, *The quest for certainty*. Its author, John Dewey, the main contributor to the *Thought News* project, argued that “insecurity generates the quest for certainty,” but certainty itself is never achieved and security of knowing can only be provisional (Dewey 1980, 254). I believe that the same argument applies to communication technology. Moreover, this argument is becoming increasingly relevant, since contemporary communication technologies rapidly expose the insecurity of human life.

That the uses of the means of communication are not given in advance may presently be a commonplace argument, indiscriminately applicable to any means of communication, but it was novel at the end of the nineteenth century. Namely, a systematic, scholarly analysis of communication technology begun only in the late eighteenth century, when its normative implications for equality and democratisation become problematic (Flichy 1995; Feenberg 1999). The *Thought News* project was an early attempt to raise this issue at about the same time when it was also pressed forward in Europe (see Hardt 1979). Thus, the project may be meaningfully interpreted in relation to contemporaneous European thought about links between press and society.

There are striking similarities between the planned newspaper and theoretical ideas in Germany and France of the time. John Durham Peters (1989), for instance, outlined a possible linkage between this practical undertaking and Gabriel Tarde’s

ideas about the press in his *Les lois de l'imitation* from 1890. In addition, there are clear parallels between *Thought News* and a theory of the press by a late nineteenth century scholar, Albert Schäffle (1881). While Tarde undoubtedly exerted a strong influence on Park and Dewey, the contribution of Schäffle's ideas cannot be firmly established.¹ In any event, the idea of transforming the uses of the printed press places the *Thought News* project firmly among late nineteenth century concerns about mass communication.

The *Thought News* Project

Thought News was supposed to be a philosophical newspaper, variegated in its interests, and accessible to a general readership. Although the newspaper was never actually published, its preparation between 1889 and 1892 in Ann Arbor, Michigan gave rise to ideas, theories, and social diagnoses that left a lasting imprint on communication studies (Peters 1989; Hardt 1992, 55-56; Schiller 1996, 22-25; Splichal 2001, 1-11). The initiative for the project came from a New York journalist and a stock-market reporter, Franklin Ford, who observed that the late nineteenth century America lacked "systematic social investigation that could serve industrial, business, or political ends." His idea was to set up a "great new scheme in which 'intelligence', information ranging from economic forecasts to metaphysics, would be made readily available to guide anyone in their practical business endeavors" (Ford cited in Feffer 1993, 83). The integral part of Ford's "great scheme," was a newspaper that would report "thought."

Ford's futuristic vision probably would have quickly been forgotten, if it did not encounter the developing pragmatist social philosophy of John Dewey, Robert Ezra Park, and George Herbert Mead, who then taught at the University of Michigan and for whom commitment to its realisation provided, in retrospect, a memorable personal as well as philosophical experience. Even skeptical interpretations of the *Thought News* project emphasised a significant fact that it took place when Dewey's and Park's ideas turned into mature expressions (Westbrook 1991; Matthews 1997; Conde 2000). Preparation of the project and further development of early ideas about the newspaper continued from 1889 until the spring of 1892. During that time, Dewey, Park, and Mead eagerly engaged in planning the newspaper and exchanged considerable correspondence. On several occasions, their plans were announced in local newspapers, making their commitment generally known.

The participants in the project shared the conviction that it was a revolutionary undertaking, aimed primarily at changing existing conceptions of the role of news, information, and their influence.² Biographers are unanimous in their assessment that its preparation was vital for the participants, and that it substantially changed their subsequent perceptions of social issues (see Matthews 1977; Rauschenbusch 1979; Lindner 1996; Westbrook 1991). Park, for instance, who had previously worked as a journalist – after obtaining his university degree under Dewey's supervision – was at a professional crossroad before he joined the *Thought News* project. He actually wanted to move into business, but the energetic preparation of the newspaper restored his "interest in journalism" (Rauschenbusch 1979, 18). Mead, on the other hand, arrived at the University of Michigan from his studies in Germany to prepare for a later career in newspaper publishing. According to David Miller (1973,

xvii), Mead's correspondence with a friend, Henry Castle, clearly reveals this plan and it is likely that he continued his academic career because of the termination of the *Thought News* project.

While there are obvious conceptual links between the project and Park's later theories of the press, or his criticism of news, the project left an even more complex philosophical imprint on the work of John Dewey. His participation contributed to a shift from his earlier, idealist philosophy. Putting philosophical ideas to work and combining theory with practice, which defined the nature of the projected newspaper, became a cornerstone of his social and political philosophy. Dewey was, therefore, very interested in making deeper trends, processes and forces of everyday life – which may be revealed by sophisticated social scientific or philosophical analysis – accessible to a general audience. Lavine's (1989, lxii-lxiii) introduction to a selection of Dewey's writings from this period mentioned that his participation in the *Thought News* experiment was an important springboard for transforming his political and social philosophy. The latter received a new impetus in the course of planning the newspaper.

Thought News was to be a national newspaper, devoted to news, opinions about the news, and forecasts of available choices for people with different lifestyles. According to Park's restatement of Ford's initial idea, the newspaper was projected to focus on the "long-time trends which recorded what is actually going on rather than what on the surface of things merely seems to be going on" (Park cited in Rauschenbusch 1979, 21). Coverage in the newspaper was planned to be as useful as possible, rather than entertaining. In the last pre-publication announcement Ford wrote that *Thought News* would be a newspaper:

which shall treat questions of science, letters, state, school and church as parts of the one moving life of man and hence common interest, and not to relegate them to separate documents of merely technical interest; which shall report new investigations and discoveries in their net outcome instead of in their overloaded gross bulk; which shall note new contributions to thought, whether by book or magazine, from the standpoint of the news in them and not from that of patron or censor (announced in University Record for April 1892, cited in Feffer 1993, 36).

Despite numerous announcements in the local media – written mainly by Ford and some by Dewey – the projected newspaper was never published. According to Park's autobiographical notes, the first issue was readied, but never printed. Aborting the project was, in Dewey's retrospective, a consequence of it being "an over-enthusiastic project which we had not the means nor the time... and doubtless not the ability to carry through ... the *idea* was advanced for those days, but it was too advanced for the maturity of those who had the idea in mind" (Dewey cited in Matthews 1977, 23). It is my impression that terminating the project was a consequence of an increasing divergence of Ford's and Dewey's views regarding its scope and nature. Park remained closer to Ford's vision and kept in contact with him even after the project ended (Rauschenbusch 1979). Undoubtedly, however, the project gave its participants important insights into the social significance of news and mass communication, and it is, in this sense, relevant to explore its philosophical and conceptual foundations.

Pragmatist Application of Philosophical Ideas

The *Thought News* experiment took place when Dewey's philosophy was taking a decisive turn. His input into the project was arguably dominant, and the development of the project was, therefore, also an early test of his new philosophical doctrines. Most notable was his shift from an earlier, Hegelian idealism to a version of pragmatism, for which philosophy is rooted in the everyday experience, where it must find and try to improve "problematic situations." In an announcement about the newspaper in *The Detroit Tribune* (April 13, 1892), Dewey plainly outlined his new emphasis. "When philosophic ideas are not inculcated by themselves but used as tools to point out the meaning of phases of social life they begin to have some life and value" (Dewey 1969, lxii).

The *Thought News* project enabled Dewey to insert his new philosophical ideas into a practical undertaking and to collect the results and consequences of his ideas. According to Dewey, this experience had an immediate impact on his work – as acknowledged in his *Outlines of a critical theory of ethics*, published in 1891 (Dewey 1969), where the crux of the argument was that a moral life should be defined as a development of human freedom, and that scholarly ideas and theories may have significant bearings on the social and political life of the day. In his introduction, Dewey acknowledged that he owed his insight into "the treatment of the social bearings of science and art" to Ford (Dewey 1969, 239). Dewey also mentioned his indebtedness in a letter to William James in 1891, when he wrote that his insight about the relevance of "practical organization of intelligence" stemmed from Ford (Dewey in Perry 1935, 59).³

Refashioning Social Role of the Press

The philosophical discourse during the preparation of *Thought News* involved a wide variety of concerns and conceptual abstractions. I will more closely scrutinize two aspects: (1) bringing scientific methods closer to journalism, and (2) the notion of integrative diffusion of information. Indeed, these two topics may be deduced from Dewey's social philosophy, which stresses that philosophical or theoretical ideas must be put to work in existing social conditions, yet they had a separate significance within the project. It is not difficult to find further developments of these points in Dewey's later works and those of Park. The latter specifically conducted his research on the notion of "big news" and on the idea of dissemination as societal integration during the preparation of the *Thought News* project (e.g., Park 1938; also Matthews 1977; Conde 2000, 14-63). Thus, *Thought News* provided a context for a more systematic reflection of dilemmas concerning the practical bearings of ideas, the uses of intellectual information in everyday life, and its struggle to grasp the movement of social trends. Interestingly, they overlap with that part of theoretical heritage of pragmatism, which has been witnessing a revival (Langsdorf and Smith 1995; Bybee 1999).

Rethinking Journalism

The process of rethinking journalistic practice derived much of its strength from the idea that *Thought News* should connect scholarly or expert insights with the daily life of citizens. Park was convinced (Rauschenbuch 1979, 21) that this was a

revolutionary transformation, although its specific contours were not unambiguous to contemporaries. Shortly after the newspaper was first publicly introduced, Dewey explained to his colleague, Henry Carter Adams:

The so-called independent newspaper doesn't differ from the partisan newspaper save in the line of its comment upon facts and in not "editing" its news columns quite as much. But it has the same idea of what news is and the same methods of reporting it. Now Ford's idea is not that of simply "telling" the truth—(i.e.) the idea of the "independent" newspaper—but that of finding out what the truth is; the inquiry business in a systematic, centralized fashion (Dewey to Adams 29 April 1889)⁴.

The *Thought News* vision of journalism emerged from a critique of accepted journalistic practices and related reporting to the social origins of events rather than to events themselves; with a more contemporary analogy, the newspaper was planned to explain rather than merely describe social reality. It was assumed that problematic particularities of journalism could be resolved by resorting to theoretically sophisticated, yet accessible writing. But as Dewey admitted to Adams, the project offered no definite image of a new journalist, but rather an incentive to find one.

Integrative Diffusion of Information

The *Thought News* project was planned with the ambition to foster an intelligent cohesion of knowledge in the existing chaos of information by offering continuous coverage of social trends and latent activities in society. The projected newspaper was supposed to "organize intelligence." Ford and others believed that this was achievable by centralizing the dissemination of information, from which a new cohesion of the fragmented social reality could be achieved. The premise for this idea was that available technologies of communication (press, telegraph, and telephone) were mechanically advanced enough to secure physical connections, whereas the printed press would provide its symbolic or intellectual counterpart. Dewey later returned to this theme by criticizing the so-called "mechanical age" in *The public and its problems* (1988), where he argued that "we have the physical tools of communication as never before, /but/ the thoughts and aspirations congruous with them are not communicated, and hence are not common" (Dewey 1988, 324).

Perhaps not so exposed but quite important was the treatment of a gap between local and national social contexts. Namely, the idea to centralize the organization of intelligence contains a normative point that this gap becomes dysfunctional, if it is not coupled with attempts to productively cushion its inhibiting breaches. Its premise is that the habitual dynamics of the local life are more likely to be appreciated on a broader level if they are presented as a result of a sophisticated analysis. This is also an embryonic feature of Dewey's more mature political philosophy – that democracy starts in the context of local communities and that its necessary ingredient is a coherent and organized public, which is attentive to common concerns in daily life. *Thought News* was planned to be the nation's vehicle of imagination about intellectually integrated localities. In this respect, the newspaper would earn "the authority of intellectual forces over all other social authorities" (Ford cited in Matthews 1997, 22).

For the *Thought News* project, the problem of collecting information was delegated to science, but its diffusion was assigned to the economy of demands. It was a guarantee for the project participants that both sides of the process would be carried out in an equally pedantic manner.

The philosophy of Thought News ... was a synthesis of the collectivism of organic social theory with the individualism and activism of the American tradition. The tradition of social organicism tended historically to be linked with conservatism; and the Comtean notion of the sociologist as a social priest-physician advising the Ruler left little room for democratic participation. But Thought News was to communicate the organicist awareness of structure and functional interrelatedness to an educated citizenry which would seize the understanding given by this knowledge to make intelligent and viable changes in structure (Matthews 1977, 28).

A Nineteenth-Century Quest for Democratic Technology

The predominant interpretation of the *Thought News* project is that it was a failed business plan, based on an incomplete conception of journalism and a misunderstood process of mass communication, but that some interesting, albeit unrealistic, ideas about public life were developed in the course of its preparation. Such interpretation is particularly widespread in the scholarship on Dewey. Besides offering an innovative approach to the production of news and serving as a catalyst for theoretical ideas, the *Thought News* project is deemed a blatant failure. The burden of the blame is placed on Ford's unrealistic and megalomaniac expectation. His persuasiveness is explained with Dewey's susceptibility to the unconventional views (e.g., Westbrook 1991; Feffer 1993; Lavine 1989). Conversely, scholarship on Park is, in general, quite sympathetic and appreciative of the experience (e.g., Matthews 1977; Lindner 1996; Conde 2000).

This predominant interpretation remains partial and unsatisfactory. It misses the central value of this endeavor and focuses too narrowly on its practical aspects. The *Thought News* project was essentially an experiment with mass communication that was to bring forth a solution to the quest for a democratic technology. Dewey and Park, specifically, were convinced that the newspaper was, in principle, able to remedy a condition of society, expressed, for instance, in their critical diagnoses of fragmentation. According to Dewey, who commented extensively on the project to James, discussions (with Ford) about the newspaper outlined the following questions: "(1) the conditions and effects of the distribution of intelligence, especially with reference to inquiry or the selling of truth as a business, (2) the present (and past) hindrances to its free play, in the way of class interests; or (3) the present conditions, in the railway, telegraphy, etc. for effectively securing the freedom of intelligence, that is, its movement in the world of social fact; and (4) the resulting social organization" (Dewey in Perry 1935, 518).

Peters (1989) suggested that the *Thought News* project, while immersed in progressivist social philosophy, expressed a pervasive need for new systems of social representations, applicable to the conditions of an increasing spatial dispersion of society. The envisioned newspaper could build up the lost spatial bond to integrate local communities *in communication*. *Thought News* would fulfill a spatial function. "The revolution Park dreamed of as a young man was not merely a step forward in

journalistic objectivity. Nor was Dewey's interest sparked solely by the dream of disseminating the results of scientific inquiry to the public. Either view misses the imaginative horizon in which they were working. They were trying to find alternatives to *material force* as the constituent of society" (Peters 1989, 254; emphasis added).

In their hope, participants of the *Thought News* project shared Schäffle's views of the press (1881; 2001). Schäffle, like the pragmatist philosophers in Michigan, thought that the press needed a substantial reform, and he attributed, in part, its anomalies to the drawbacks of the social sciences. While he was primarily interested in freeing journalism from the influence of capital and other centers of power, he also wrote about ways of introducing intellectual coherence to a fragmented society by developing symbolic means of communication and material resources for their realisation. In addition to personal systems of symbolic expression, he systematically analyzed phenomena of material symbolisations (*Realsymbolik*), which included also the printed press (Schäffle 1881, 351-370; Schäffle 2001; see also Hardt 1979). For Schäffle – whose organicist theory of society derives from Herbert Spencer – the press was a complex nerve center with an enormous amount of information circulating through it, according to the needs of the audience (Schäffle 1881, 369). The press was mainly a "transmitter" to Schäffle and its central function was that of disseminating information to spatially dispersed localities. Ideally, the press would be leading and organizing the intellectual life of society, bringing its distant parts closer together.

Perhaps even more striking is a similarity between the *Thought News* project and Tarde's views (1890/1921; 1989). As for Schäffle, Tarde's notion of diffusion finds its best representation in the printed press – an idea later adopted by Park (1938). His seminal book, *L'opinion et la foule*, written during the infamous Dreyfus affair in France, presented the press as a revolutionary social force. He talked about human history before and after the invention of the printed press and suggested that the difference includes a systematic presentation of the local to a wider audience, "the work of journalism has been to progressively nationalize and even internationalize the public mind" (Tarde 1989, 81). Diffusion of information through the press results in an intellectual interconnection of readers, virtually joined in a public or in a nation. Tarde's idea was that this process of intellectual fusion was operative in the course of ordinary discussions, in which individuals engage freely without an agenda. "The press unifies and invigorates conversations, makes them uniform in space and diversified in time. Every morning the papers give their publics the conversations for the day" (Tarde 1989, 92).

Tarde, Schäffle, and the *Thought News* project also share a predisposition for an organicist theory of society. Tarde's *L'opinion et la foule* contains a metaphor of the newspaper as a mechanical device, which sucks information from society and then pumps it back into society (Tarde 1989, 81). This is very close to Ford's perception of the press as a sophisticated steering mechanism, or to Schäffle's notion of the press as a nerve center. Accordingly, just like pragmatists in Michigan expected that accurate presentation of social trends might be a solution for journalism, and just like Schäffle lamented about the inability of the social sciences to present solid explanatory results, Tarde had noted the power of the press to forcefully portray social developments. "It is possible to observe that certain newspapers daily present

graphical curves which express movements of different values from the stock exchange and also of other variables which are useful to know. Relegated to the quarter of the page, these curves tend to invade on other parts of the newspaper" (Tarde 1890/1921, 146). Tarde was fascinated with the potential of statistical analyses and he speculated that their use was like employing a sophisticated social sense organ.

Given the focus of these concerns on the factual representation of social forces and trends, Peters (1989) and Carey (1989, 271) called Dewey's and Park's position "a response to the crisis of social representation." Knowledge about society could not successfully accompany the development of its technical and social achievements, and it was even less available as an integral part of societal self-reflection. *Thought News* was planned to enable a more egalitarian distribution of information, or of knowledge. Contrary to Schäffle's expectation, this mechanism was firmly rooted in the economic mechanisms of a free market of information.

There is no spontaneous transition from a diagnosis of the fragmented society at the end of the nineteenth century, when social phenomena seemed dispersed and disconnected from one another, to the specific use of the printed press as a mechanism for distributing systematically gathered information under the aegis of a centralised organisation of social research. Thus, the integral assumption of the *Thought News* project was that communication is the primary organizing principle of social life. To these nineteenth century theorists of the press, mass communication was primarily a process of information diffusion, whose normative strength rested in linking dispersed segments a society. This emphasis was preserved also in Park's later work. His *Reflections on Communication and Culture* (1938) elaborated on the social relevance of diffusion, which was analyzed separately from acculturation, the concept of lighter, emotionally charged and imaginary contents, for instance represented by films.

In contrast to Schäffle and Tarde, the pragmatist conception of diffusion is expressly future-oriented. Most likely, this was an extrapolation of the stock-market experience, where a high degree of accurate and reliable information was sought in figures, statistics, and long-term trends or fluctuations of marketable quantities. As rethinking journalism proceeded along these lines, it is possible that the thin line between explanation and prediction would play a role in shaping its outlook. By further comparing these three, late nineteenth century conceptions of the press, it is obvious that the *Thought News* project is most systematically concerned with finding new possible ends for improving the human condition; it is the most inventive, and least descriptive in outlining the social role of the press.

Conclusion

Douglas Kellner recently suggested (2000, 279), that because contemporary technologies of communication, such as global computer networks and advanced broadcasting, brought into question accepted notions of public life, existing democratic potentials require revitalisation. Most directly, the problem concerns our normative understanding of the public sphere as a realm of association. Social change commanded by our uses of these new technologies is so profound, Kellner argues, that it invites us to redefine our present conceptions of communication in ways – similar to Brecht's or Benjamin's visions of democratic potentials of radio or film, or to Dewey's views of a philosophical journal as a comprehensive information

dissemination device (Kellner 2000, 279). These further examples of transformative reflection on the means of communication epitomize Kellner's broader point that the technological revolution of our time "involves the creation of new public spheres and the need for democratic strategies to promote the project of democratization and to provide access to more people to get involved in more political issues and struggles so that democracy might have a chance in the new millennium" (2000, 281).

Reference to these three attempts to refashion the means of communication (the press, radio, and film) in the present context contains more than merely an historical underpinning. Kellner's argument highlights three defining moments in setting up concepts for the study of communication during a comprehensive technological development, and which constitute an integral part of its intellectual history. Dewey's, Brecht's and Benjamin's vision are a reminder that the means of communication are open to continuous redefinition and, moreover, that it is important to maintain an interest in the possibilities for transformation. Just like Brecht (1932/1993) introduced a notion, now paradigmatic, of participatory mass communication, by envisaging radio as a two-way communication device, so the effort of Dewey and his colleagues to set up an innovative newspaper proved instrumental in outlining dilemmas of information diffusion, reception, and influence. The *Thought News* project deserves attention because its conceptual aspect was closely tied to an immediate dedication to the production of practical results.

In some sense, these three idealistic considerations – judged by the standards of their own times – share an inherent aspiration to secure the increasing democratization of the uses of communication. *Thought News* appears just slightly earlier, but it is still firmly rooted in the nineteenth century with its plan to integrate and organize intellectual potentials through the working of the press, which does not specify other emerging communication technologies, like the telephone and radio, for instance. "Indeed, the nineteenth century saw the birth of those machines on which today's communication systems are based: the telegraph and then the telephone, photography, the gramophone, the motion picture and radio" (Feenberg 1999, 3).

Herein also lies the answer to why the pragmatists' quest for democratic communication technology failed. Invention and implementation of new technologies continuously change existing means and, thus, invoke reflections about the ends. In Dewey's vocabulary, communication technologies continuously generate uncertainty in human experience. The remedy, relative to Kellner's argument, is that new, innovative social spaces of participation should always be sought. This is also the reason why Dewey abandoned in his later writings his quest for democratic communication technology and, instead, shifted his attention to its uses. In *Freedom and culture*, he explained that "the very agencies that a century and a half ago were looked upon as those that were sure to advance the cause of democratic freedom, are those which now make it possible to create pseudo-public opinion and to undermine democracy from within" (Dewey 1991, 114). This does not mean for the later Dewey that democracy had little to do with technology. On the contrary, Dewey's theory of democracy was still closely connected to its technological underpinnings (1988). His mature discussion of communication in its technical aspects, however, fell short of specific proposals to reform print or broadcast media.

Yet, it seems that Dewey, to some extent, took technology out of the “means of communication” as he came to believe that the intellectual power of communication processes is quite sufficient to enable a self-reflecting integration of society. While this problematic situation is maintained by Dewey’s discussion of the public, there is a sharp discrepancy between his earlier and later answers to the problem.

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Notes:

1. This interpretation is quite possible, in part because one of the participants – G. H. Mead – concluded his studies in Germany immediately before the project was initiated.
2. *Thought News* was also supposed to bring financial benefits to its publishers, and there are suggestions (e.g., Feffer 1993), that Ford’s persuasiveness with Dewey, Park and Mead was based on the promise of pecuniary profits. On the other hand, from Park’s correspondence with Clara Cahill it is clear that he was genuinely convinced of the revolutionary implications of the project (see Rauchenbusch 1979, 23-25). Dewey’s correspondence to H. C. Adams and W. James also leads to the conclusion that *Thought News* project was primarily fuelled by a motivation to depart from the accepted practices of mass communication.
3. It is interesting to mention in connection with the *Thought News* project that at about the same time, when its publication was planned, Dewey was also involved in the preparation of another journal, the *Inlander*, which he founded together with F. N. Scott in 1891. This literary periodical addressed primarily University of Michigan students, where he taught at the time. The editors of *Inlander* promised to offer the best “literature” on broader issues, contributed by members of the local academic community. Dewey frequently contributed to the journal and remained one of its two editorial advisors.
4. A letter of John Dewey to Henry Carter Adams (correspondence of John Dewey – log number: 1889.04.29 (00443); archives, Center for Dewey Studies, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University. Interestingly, for Park the central concern of the project was merely to achieve “more accuracy” in reporting the news (Rauschenbusch 1979, 18).

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