

# My Life in American Studies – Memories and Expectations

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Dear colleagues, dear students,

I am now in that phase of life when old people like me tend to reminisce and give account. Since my long academic life was committed to American Studies, I wondered how this came about, and although I am aware of the inevitable mix between coincidence and symbolic self-construction, I believe that my career was rooted in certain moments of experience: a seminar on Melville, the physical exposure to “America,” and the significance America had for me from childhood on. I also believe that a temperamental affinity to an idea of democracy built on communication led me to embrace the democratic belief that is at the core of American Studies. At the same time, my own process of disillusionment ran parallel to the critical redefinition of American Studies that has characterized the development of the field during the last forty years or so. In what follows, I have tried to reflect on my original enthusiasm, and on where I stand now, in an effort to be realistic and optimistic at the same time.

It is now sixty-six years ago that I became a student of American Studies (*ein Amerikanist*) in the summer of 1957 – although, to be honest, what I *really* studied was not American Studies in the interdisciplinary sense that is now dominant, but “American Literature” at the English Departments, first of the University of Mainz, then at the University of Freiburg. American literature was then – in the late fifties and early sixties – still part of large English departments, like almost everywhere else in Germany and Europe. It was also usually taught, in rather small seminars, by young American guest professors, Fulbright professors mostly, still at the beginning of their academic careers.

However, my *real* life as an Americanist *actually* began a year later, in 1958, at the Freie Universität Berlin, with a seminar on Herman Melville. Until then, my first major had been Germanistik, my second, Anglistik; but Melville made me switch from German to American literature. Melville's novels – especially *Moby-Dick* – were new and more exciting to me than anything I had read till then, so that I didn't have to think twice: As with Saul on the way to Damascus, it was an experience of instant conversion.

There were other reasons as well. Firstly, *Germanistik* was an overcrowded field: I remember an advanced seminar on Goethe's *Faust* with two hundred participants. In contrast, my Melville seminar had about ten. Secondly, the *Germanistik* professors were all German and inaccessible, many of them tainted by their ideological affiliation with the Nazi past. Instead, my *Amerikanistik* professor was American, in his mid-forties, strict, authoritarian, even irascible (he had been commander of a destroyer during the war in the Pacific), but willing to interact with his students on a level of personal respect as long as he saw us seriously committed to the subject he taught. For me, his seminar was a revelation *and* a lesson in democratic behavior: a self-confirming experience of intellectual exchange, perhaps even a glimpse of a utopian republic of letters where everyone is equal on account of his/her interest in intellectual matters. It was so different from what I had experienced previously in other contexts of German academia that I decided to continue my studies in Berlin as an intellectually reborn *Amerikanist*.

But, perhaps, there was also another motivation driving my switch to *Amerikanistik*. I belong to a generation that still experienced WWII – I was nine years old when the war ended. From their trucks and tanks, friendly American soldiers had showered us children with Hershey bars and packages of Wrigley Gum. Later, as an adolescent, I remember how much I wanted to be part of a society, a country, a culture, a history one could be proud of and not ashamed. "America" had become something of a cultural ideal during those postwar years – an ideal of youth and individual freedom, more an object of dreams and images than an object of observation and knowledge (see Maase). To be sure, there were people who argued that this idealized "America" was imposed on postwar (West) Germany by the United States as well as by political and economic necessities. But if so, this imposition was readily accepted by a guilty nation as a golden opportunity to become democratic and thus, somehow, morally more accept-

able. As someone who grew up in the fifties and whose life – not only his academic life– was shaped by the fact, and even more so by the fiction (as well as by the fictions) of America, I may be forgiven if I make use of personal memories to advance my argument.

One of the benefits of studying *Amerikanistik* in those days was the good chance of receiving a Fulbright Fellowship for staying a year at an American university. In my case, it was – perhaps because I was Catholic – the University of Notre Dame, somewhere in the Midwest, close to Lake Michigan, not far away from Chicago. Reaching New York Harbor by ship in September 1960, after over a week of transatlantic crossing, was awe-inspiring. (Indeed, those were the times you could still feel like Columbus when you had a Fulbright Fellowship!). New York – with its skyscrapers, its pushing and hurrying crowds, its great diversity of races and faces (how boringly homogeneous German faces were in comparison!) – New York was an overwhelming manifestation of a truly new world, like no other city I had seen before. For a whole week I explored Manhattan, crisscrossing it open-mouthed, getting lost in strange neighborhoods, staring at people and faces of different color, walking across Brooklyn Bridge (a bridge that Hart Crane, on whom I was going to write my dissertation, had ecstatically celebrated in his poetry as a symbol of cultural unity [see Crane 45-46]); or taking the Staten Island Ferry back and forth across the bay, with eyes fixed on the magnificent Manhattan skyline.

My train ride to South Bend, Indiana, gave me a first sense of American distances – a sense that deepened during the many trips I took through the whole country afterwards. Ah, for the experience of American Space! (The poet Charles Olson has written about this in *Call Me Ishmael*, his great book on Herman Melville [see Olson]). I remember hitchhiking through Texas on the way to California with a driver who went consistently thirty miles or more above the speed limit – and yet the car seemed to be standing still in a landscape that didn't change – only, way ahead, one could see the dark funnel of a tornado leisurely crossing the highway. But that was at the end of my stay. Going to South Bend on a fast train from New York to Chicago came at the beginning. I still remember the first “submarine” I ate when changing trains in Buffalo, and the African American conductor announcing, or rather, singing out, the stations on the way: “Útica, Uticàa.”

South Bend was in economic depression because Studebaker, the big car-manufacturer, had closed shop and unemployment was high. But I'll never forget that moment of shock when, walking down South Bend's Main Street one evening, I was suddenly pulled into a house. Yet, I was neither being robbed nor kidnapped but wordlessly invited in that manner to a Polish wedding that lasted all night

long. Never since have I danced so much Polka! It was a breath-taking introduction to the warmth, joy, and generosity of immigrant life. (In fact, it was as if I personally experienced the first chapter of Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* [Sinclair 1-22]).

The University of Notre Dame, my American *alma mater*, was still a small Catholic university, then, but with great academic ambitions: Its greatest ambition was to become the Harvard of the Midwest. It had also a great football tradition, except that, in this particular year, the "Fighting Irish" had a terrible season under their coach Joe Kuharich, and I remember the slogans students had sprayed on the sidewalks of the campus: "To hell with academic excellence."

I did mostly graduate work but also had to advise and calm down over-excited undergraduates who provided me with many insights into the inner life, the sexual fantasies and rituals of male adolescents in the Midwest. (Notre Dame was still an all-male college, then, and separated by a dangerous freeway from St. Mary's, a girls' college – I was told that many lost their lives crossing!) But primarily, I had to teach German to majors in the Sciences. One of them very generously invited me to spend Christmas with his family in New Orleans. He was a very smart and pious young man, full of the legends, romances, and race prejudices of the South: He had collected several locks of General Lee's hair and told me how and why the South had lost decisive battles against the Yankees. (He also drove me to some of the great slaveholder mansions of the Old South.) He was a romantic and a well-educated racist as much as a fervent Catholic. Becoming a missionary to Africa was his highest goal in life.

Although the year I spent in the United States was memorable for many different reasons, it made me also realize that "America" was not as ideal a place as I had hoped it would be. I noticed a lot that made me wonder – the facts of segregation, for instance, which I saw, without letting them "sink in," on a bus ride I took down South. During a stop somewhere in Alabama, I discovered myself in a bathroom surrounded by Black men and shortly afterwards, wanting to have a cup of coffee, I noticed that I was the only white person in a room full of Black people. They looked at me suspiciously, if also with some curiosity, perhaps thinking I was a Freedom Rider – those were the early years of the Civil Rights Movement – whereas I had been simply naïf and, blinded by my own need to believe, unaware of the restrictions and discriminations of Southern life.

I believe that my ideal America was saved by John F. Kennedy. I had seen his debates with Nixon on American TV, later his victory in the presidential election of 1960 and, in January 1961, his rhetorically crisp and idealistically bright inaugural address. Two years later, in 1963, I (and my new American wife together with thousands of others) followed him through the streets of Berlin, from the Schöneberger Rathaus (where we listened to his famous speech) to the Freie Universität. His murder and, later, in 1968, the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and of Martin Luther King Jr., each of them accompanied by revolts in many ghettos of the country; the massive student protests *against* the war in Vietnam and *for* Civil Rights, culminating in the march on Washington in the same year, and the shooting of protesting students at Kent State University a few years afterwards: these were stations in a long process of disillusionment.

If the American historian Fritz Stern (who left Nazi Germany for the United States) wrote about the five Germanies he had known (see Stern), I could speak of at least four Americas I have taught as a mediator of American literature and culture to several generations of German students. Of course, some would say that it never *was* four different Americas but had always been the same United States of racial conflict and capitalist exploitation – that the only thing that *had* changed was *my* image of it as well as the image(s) that a changing “America” projected of itself.

## II

From my Fulbright year in the United States, I came back to a new organizational structure of my field of studies in (West) Berlin: “American Literature” was no longer a branch of the Freie Universität’s English Department but had become part of a new Institute of American Studies, soon to be called the John F. Kennedy Institute, consisting of eight different sections, one of them being the section of “American Literature,” plus a great library originally financed by the Ford Foundation. This new institute was modelled on a concept of area studies that united, under one roof, specialists of several faculties committed in their research to the study of the United States. The new institute was founded partly in response to the Berlin crisis of the early 1960s and the building of the Wall in August 1961. (Just returned from the United States, I witnessed the confrontation of Russian and American tanks at Checkpoint Charlie while a huge crowd watched in fear and silent fury the slow erection of the Wall. The Americans would have to *do* something, wouldn’t they? Could this be the beginning even of the next World War?)

Although the Kennedy Institute brought representatives of several disciplines together, they were by no means interacting as part of one coherent discipline called “American Studies.” On the contrary, the borders between disciplines were sharply drawn and there was only a minimum of cooperation between them. When I joined the German Association of American Studies in 1968 (fifteen years after its foundation), most of its members were literary scholars – although there were also some historians and still fewer political scientists who felt rather uncomfortable in such a predominantly philological environment and feared a loss of status in their respective faculty if they were too closely associated with *Amerikanistik/Amerikastudien*. (Although, one should keep in mind, that the founders of the German Association were well-known historians and political scientists such as Arnold Bergstraesser and Theodor W. Adorno (see Ickstadt and Krakau).

The German Association had always been more open and less hierarchical than its English equivalent. It had invited the participation of assistants, even of students, to its annual meetings. The rebellious sixties and seventies made the Association even less of a professors’ club. In a second step, those new lower-rank members aimed at a redefinition of “American Studies” as an interdisciplinary field, as something more than just the study of American literature. During the early 1970s, protests against the aesthetic purism of the still dominant School of the “New Criticism” became vehement. Literary texts were now discussed within larger social and historical contexts, or placed within the theoretical frameworks of Frankfurt School Marxism, social history, anthropology, semiotics, or psychoanalysis. The established canon had, by then, increasingly come under fire – together with the academic establishment that defended it. You all know that this canon was eventually enlarged to include texts by minority groups that had formerly been excluded from it: African American literature, Native American, Chicano, and literature by women, among others. But I also remember an early student strike at the Kennedy Institute for putting Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* on the reading list (before the idea of a canon and a reading list were shelved altogether). *Sister Carrie*, now a quasi-canonical text of American realism/naturalism, was then considered “sub-literary” according to New Critical standards, its at times sentimental prose being too close to the language of best-selling popular literature.

In the course of these developments, I myself, even though previously dedicated to the reading and studying of literature *only*, had become a member in a research team at the University of Munich that studied German working-class culture in Chicago from 1860 to 1910, funded by the German Research Foun-

dation and mentored by the prominent American social historian Herbert Gutman. American Studies, with its concept of interdisciplinarity, had all-of-a-sudden become an avant-garde field that threatened to undermine the traditional demarcations of disciplines and faculties. In the wake of the Vietnam War, a younger generation of German Americanists felt in tune with their American colleagues' quest for an alternative, more democratic America. At the same time, they protested – as part of a larger student movement – against established German university traditions and the collective suppression of Germany's Nazi past during the 1950s.

By then, an older generation of German American Studies scholars had become increasingly disaffected with these post-Vietnam developments of the field. They had previously either tied their own personal and academic reinvention during the postwar years to the idea of "America" (especially, if they had a Nazi past to [dis]remember); or, as former escapees from Nazi Germany who returned to what they hoped was a new and democratic (West) German Republic, had dedicated their academic lives to implanting "the seeds of democracy" firmly in the minds of German students and intellectuals. And yet, they had great difficulties with the violent anti-authoritarian protests of the young, many of them their brightest students. (In this connection, I remember two memorable occasions: First, the transformation of Rudi Dutschke from a rhetorically stiff SDS functionary to an inspired speaker to the student masses in the wake of the killing of Benno Ohnesorg by Berlin police, in June 1967; and second, the equally impressive impact Herbert Marcuse had on a [until then] fairly unpolitical student crowd in a discussion with Richard Löwenthal about Vietnam – and the conversion of the student audience from Löwenthal's gospel of liberalism to the prophet of more radical changes.)

In the United States, apart from efforts to fill in the blank spots of literary and historical memory (the literature of minorities, the slavery past, the imperialist wars), the most determined attack by young American Americanists was directed against the nationalist definition of the field itself. Its very name, they believed, implied an American exceptionalism from which even the field's founding fathers, Henry Nash Smith and Leo Marx, had not been immune (so that later, these founders felt compelled to admit their ideological blindness [the foundational texts and their revisions are listed in the Works Cited]). To overcome this inherent chauvinist bias became, from then on, an obsession that drove the "New Americanists" of the 1980s and after to purge the field of any cultural concept based on "organic" unity. It was subsequently replaced by "a dynamics of difference," i.e., by the concept of a decentered and discontinuous ensemble of conflicting cultures. The old holistic paradigm was said to have become "inoperative" and was to be replaced

by a cultural model that embraced heterogeneity. From then on American Studies, especially in the United States, was marked by what Don Pease and Robyn Wiegman called “the conscious effort to break up the field.” (Not, as they argued, *one nation, one field* but many fields according to America’s cultural diversity [Pease and Wiegman 10]).

“The heart of American Studies is the pursuit of what constitutes democratic culture,” the historian Alice Kessler-Harris argued memorably in her presidential address at the annual meeting of the American Association of American Studies in 1991 (Harris 310). I admit that it took me some time to comprehend that American Studies – unlike other academic disciplines (especially in Europe) – implied a reformist commitment beyond the confines of academia “to reunite the ‘scholar’ and the ‘citizen’ in a truly democratic society,” as my colleague, Günter Lenz, once phrased it (293). In any case, the “pursuit of what constitutes democratic culture” was to be conceived as an ongoing process that questioned dominant notions of representativeness in each of its phases. It moved American Studies away from any concept of cultural unity toward the study of a “pluralization of cultural worlds” and thus also to an ever-increasing diversification of the field, not only along the lines of ethnicity and gender (or any other kind of diversity) but also toward a greater diversity of theories and approaches. At the same time its emphasis shifted from literature to related cultural fields, such as the arts, film, different areas of popular culture, and the media. But perhaps most important was replacing a national focus by a transnational redefinition of the field, with the implication that even when its emphasis was on national or local matters, its frame of analysis and reference should be comparative.

To be sure, United States American Studies had been established during the early 1940s in order to put an underrated yet genuine and homegrown American democratic culture on the academic map against the quasi-colonial power of English Literature and its large departments. It was, however, for this very reason that it could, in the 1950s and after, be easily instrumentalized in the larger context of the Cold War when the value of American Culture, as the “true” expression of American democracy, was quasi officially discovered. It had been victorious over the forces of Fascism and had thus become an asset and a model, an important export article (think of Jazz, Rock & Roll, jeans, or Abstract Expressionism) and a valuable asset in the struggle to assert and establish American influence abroad against the pressures of Communism and the Soviet Union.

The many American Studies associations founded in Western Europe and elsewhere during the fifties with substantial financial help from the United States Information Service (USIS), and the rapid institutional expansion of American Studies in Asia and Europe (especially in West Germany at the frontier of the Cold War), makes this alignment between the new discipline and an expansive American cultural policy obvious in retrospect. When an USIS official somewhat brutally told me in the late-1990s – I had, by then, become president of the European Association of American Studies (EAAS) – that the agency would “sunset” American Studies since the Cold War was over and won, I realized for the first time that, in having promoted American Studies for more than thirty years with undiminished enthusiasm, I had also been a useful pawn of American foreign and cultural policy.

Therefore, in the eyes of some critics, I was a typical representative of a first postwar generation of Americanist scholars in Europe who had been successfully “brain-washed” by cultural agents of American foreign policy. Although I found this argument offensive, I also recognized an element of truth in it. And yet, it did not make me regret what I had taught with so much professional dedication as a professor of American literature and culture, perhaps because – as I explained earlier – as an adolescent during the fifties, I had a psychological need to feel emotionally tied to a country with a history *seemingly* free from burdens like those of the recent German past. My colleague and friend Winfried Fluck later called this “our [generational] romance with America” (“American Studies” 90).<sup>1</sup>

The impact of the Vietnam War and the revelations of a long history of racism considerably cooled that “romance with America” *abroad*, as much as it questioned an elevated national self-image *at home*. In fact, American Studies, the academic field that had made “America” its object of inquiry, did not just *follow* this accelerating process of disillusionment but acted as its *very motor*. In questioning again and again dominant notions of what America *really* was, and who could claim to belong to it, American studies developed a powerful dialectic that made it abandon any totalizing perspective and instead emphasize the richness of the marginal and particular (be it of race, class, or gender). This push away from the universal and “holistic” led to the discovery of a plurality of American literatures

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1. Also see Fluck’s “The Humanities in the Age of Expressive Individualism and Cultural Radicalism,” pp. 49–68.

and cultures, to the discovery of new texts, new frameworks and categories of analysis, new border crossings, as well as, concomitantly, to the creation of new departments of (and *within*) American Studies. All this has surely diversified the field but also eroded its foundation to some extent.

### III

I have profited from these discoveries – many of them eye-opening and enriching – but tried to withstand the centrifugal pull toward unlimited diversification. Mainly because, as a German (and European) Americanist, I have tried to look at American literature as an *entity* in spite of its perceived *diversities*. Therefore, a concept of national coherence still informs my approach to the study of the United States and its literary culture – although I am aware that, in addition, it must also be discussed within a larger, a comparative, or transnational frame.

Yet, I insist that literature is *dialogically* oriented: it is created and read not only within a particular group (to the exclusion of others) but *between* groups – even if they are politically or socially apart or set against each other. The idea that the reading and writing of literary texts follows ethnic, race, or gender divisions may respond to the ideological, or, even more, the emotional needs of a conflicted society, or follow the dynamics of an ever-greater differentiation into separate academic fields, eventually, into separate departments. Yet, it has held only limited appeal for me since I see literature as always able (even eager) to cross those very lines of separation by virtue of its curiosity *about*, and imaginative empathy *with*, the Other – a curiosity that is stronger than the desire to belong to, even to be embedded in, a particular group. That is precisely why literature can radically question and overcome limiting certainties, even the certainties and restrictions of identity politics.

I am aware that this view is partly due to the privilege of an outside position. Non-American Americanists should be committed to studying the United States as an object in front of their very eyes, and I am wary that the German Association (whose chairman I once was some thirty years ago) or any other European Association of American Studies forgo that advantage when they follow the example of their American peers too closely. From our position, we see our American Other differently than do our colleagues within the United States who are determined to escape the premises as well as the rhetoric of the discipline's nationalist foundation in the thirties and after.

For the European (or any other outside) observer, however, the United States is yet a national phenomenon that has to be analyzed and explained. The questions we raise from a position outside are different from those raised from a position within. I am arguing for a comparative approach, realizing that the slightly oxymoronic idea of a “transnational” American Studies may provide the conceptual frame for a diverse and only loosely structured field where multiple observer positions are interconnected via their comparative focus on the United States as an object of research.

During the last two decades, American Studies in the United States has recognized, at least to some extent, that it might profit from an outside view in order to break through the confines of its self-absorbed preoccupations. Inversely, European American Studies might gain from reflecting on their own different national experiences and positions (on questions of immigration, for instance, or of cultural pluralism, or racism) while studying the United States. It is entirely possible that here, too, might be a genuine division of interests that could have diverse “Futures of American Studies” as a consequence (see Ickstadt, “American Studies” 543-562; Ickstadt, “Americanization” 148-160).

But despite all these tendencies and efforts to break up the field, or to imagine different modes, structures, and futures of American Studies, I am not completely convinced that the holistic national approach has become *totally* obsolete. Does that make me a believer in American exceptionalism, after all? Possibly, although I don't really think so. There are many aspects of America's history and culture that make it different and quite particular in its contradictions, self-projections, and self-deceptions. Ever since the mid-nineteenth century, American artists and intellectuals have perceived America's otherness against an overbearing European culture as grounded in its democratic principle – in the belief that the Declaration of Independence *does* make a difference, as Herman Melville once wrote to his publisher (Melville 80). This conviction with its concomitant emphasis on the “common” and the “everyday” has been the motor of American aesthetic innovation ever since. It has given impulse to a great many different (often antagonistic) aesthetics – from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* to William Dean Howells realistic fictions, to William Carlos Williams's or Langston Hughes's trust in the poetic resource of ordinary speech, even to the deconstruction of textual hierarchy in Gertrude Stein's poetic prose: the linguistic democracy of each word having equal weight.

It also accounts for the alignment of democracy and the arts in John Dewey's pragmatist aesthetics with its emphasis on a continuous process of innovation and reform: "Need and desire – out of which grow purpose and direction of energy – go beyond what exists," he writes (Dewey 227). "They continually open the way into the unexplored and unattained future" (ibid). Thus, they constitute an evolutionary drive toward what Ralph Waldo Emerson called "this new yet unapproachable America" (Emerson 485) – an America, dynamic and always in a process of becoming. Although the power of this aesthetic ideology rooted in the democratic principle may now be close to exhaustion, it has worked as a creative incentive far into the twentieth century. It has certainly empowered American modernism – *informed* its theories and *formed* its practices. It makes its various manifestations peculiarly American without making them exceptional.

#### IV

And yet, I have often asked myself, what is left of my original commitment. Is it still worthwhile to dedicate oneself to American Studies? To this, I would emphatically say yes. Because it is still an amazing country, full of contradictions, whose innovations either by capitalism or the resistance against it, by its democratic aesthetics or the drives of its consumerism, for better or for worth, influences our lives. We embrace it and fight against it at the same time – but in any case, we have to analyze and understand it. Its literary impact has perhaps diminished, although I still meet people – not only of my generation – who proclaim that reading Melville had changed their lives.

And my own faith in democracy still derives from that Melville-seminar of sixty-five years ago much more than from the political reality of the United States itself. Since then, my American wife has taught me to believe in the down-to-earth approach and the do-it-yourself tradition that have been so dominant in American life and are surely worth sharing transculturally. If we despair of contemporary politics, of the persistent power of the many varieties of Trumpism in the United States and the many right-wing resurgences in Europe, we should also think of the counterforce of democratic networking that took Georgia away from Trump in 2020 – and, despite many rightwing machinations, continued to keep him away in the last midterm elections and, hopefully, will continue to do so also in 2024.

Democracy, to be sure, is based (or should be based) on a firm and sacrosanct political infrastructure of rules and rituals beyond the power of special groups and their agents. As we all know, this is *not* the case. Yet, democracy is also more than political infrastructure (important as that is). It stands for a personal attitude of respect toward others, an open state of mind, an open way of life, as well as a willingness to turn words into deeds. I associate it specifically with John Dewey's belief (utopian and yet pragmatic) that he proclaimed movingly as his credo and his testament in "Creative Democracy," an essay he wrote in 1939 when he was eighty and his country (the world in general) in a state of crisis – with fascism firmly established in Europe, the second World War of the century already underway, racial hatred unbroken in America, and Roosevelt's New Deal under increasing domestic pressure.

"What was once created and inherited through fortunate circumstances has now to be re-created by conscious, determined and creative effort," Dewey argued. "For a long time, we pretended that democracy would perpetuate itself automatically, as a kind of political mechanism that will work as long as citizens were reasonably faithful in performing political duties." But "to get rid of the habit of thinking of democracy as something institutional and external and to acquire the habit of treating it as a way of personal life is ... to realize that democracy is a reality *only* as it is indeed a commonplace of living..." (Dewey 220-228).

It is a wonderful essay and surprisingly relevant also in our own time when democracy is again existentially in doubt everywhere, when Dark Money and the forces of resentment and nationalism are hollowing out the very rules and principles on which democracy is based. Dewey's words of faith may just be that: *words*. Yet, for *him* words were never separate from deeds. The faith in democracy he kept throughout his life should thus also become the basis of everything *we* do.

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