



The Promise of Democracy: Political Agency and Transformation

Fred Dallmayr

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Presentation of a new, ethical vision of democracy built around self-rule, civic education, and ethical cultivation.

A new ethical concept of democracy as the cultivation and practice of civic virtues in a pluralistic setting is presented in this thoughtful and wide-ranging study. Drawing upon such figures as Aristotle, Montesquieu, Hegel, Dewey, Heidegger, Arendt, and Lefort, Fred Dallmayr emphasizes the need for civic education and practical-ethical engagement in all societies aspiring to be democratic. With reference to Middle Eastern societies and especially Iran, Dallmayr explores the possible compatibility between democracy and Islamic faith. In a similar vein, he discusses the strengths of Gandhian and Confucian democracy as possible correctives to current versions of “minimalist” democracy and the cult of laissez-faire liberalism and neoliberalism. Addressing how to instill a democratic ethos in societies where corporations and elites exercise a great deal of power, *The Promise of Democracy* presents an inspired vision of democracy as popular “self-rule” in which ethical cultivation and self-transformation make possible a nondomineering kind of political agency. Against this background, Dallmayr casts democracy as a “promise,” making room for the unlimited horizons opened up by a new understanding of liberty and equality.

“...the book contains seeds of thought on the issue of religion, identity, and politics vitally in need of reflection in light of the need to generate collective action in the global political arena.” — *Philosophy in Review*

Fred Dallmayr is Professor of Philosophy and Political Science at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of several books, including *Beyond Orientalism: Essays on Cross-Cultural Encounter and Margins of Political Discourse*, both also published by SUNY Press, and *In Search of the Good Life: A Pedagogy for Troubled Times*.

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