Introduction: Dallmayr’s “Letting Be”

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“From all mountains I look out for fatherlands and motherlands; but home I found nowhere,” Zarathustra states. “Strange and a mockery to me are the men of today to whom my heart recently drew me; and I am driven out of fatherlands and motherlands. Thus I now love only my children’s land, yet undiscovered, in the farthest sea: for this I bid my sails search and search.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

This volume of essays is presented as a festschrift to honor Fred Dallmayr on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday. Gathered here, the authors celebrate Fred’s life, his lifetime of scholarship, and the rich contribution of his thought and writings to political theory, to comparative political theory, to political science, and to philosophy. The range and scope of the scholarship represented by these assembled authors reflects Dallmayr’s own astonishing breadth of scholarship. In an intellectual career that spans nearly fifty years, he has written eighteen books, edited more than a dozen others, and has contributed many journal articles and book chapters.¹

This scholarly output presents an imposing challenge to those who would introduce and explain his work. How does one introduce a thinker who has engaged the broad spectrum of ideas of Jürgen Habermas and Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault and Charles Taylor, Jacques Derrida and Abdolkarim Soroush—not to mention phenomenology, philosophy of language, critical theory, hermeneutics, deconstruction, and a rich collection of non-Western thinkers, both classical and contemporary? Moreover, the last
decade has seen Dallmayr’s works expanding into the developing field of comparative political thought. His most recent books, *Beyond Orientalism* (1996), *Alternative Visions* (1998), *Achieving Our World* (2001), *Dialogue among Civilizations* (2002), *Peace Talks—Who Will Listen?* (2004), and *Small Wonder* (2005), weave discursively across the old historical and geographical borders of thought, crossing North and South, East and West, ancient and modern. These works place non-Western political thinkers—Gandhi, Confucius, Ibn Rushd, and many others—into multilayered interplays of consideration about justice, peace, democracy, law, rights, globalization, and politics itself along with the canonical thinkers and approaches of Western political philosophy. How, indeed, can one fully comprehend and introduce the complexity of Fred Dallmayr’s thought?

And, yet . . . . The quotation from Nietzsche that serves as this introduction’s epigraph, although cited by Dallmayr in an early work in support of what might then have been called “practical ontology,” equally speaks to the “cosmopolitical” efforts at the center of his more recent thinking. For, despite the daunting range and the complexity of his many themes, topics, and inspirations, an utter integrity, a common framework of concerns, and a unifying, scholarly approach thread his many works into a compelling political theory.

That theory, of course, should in no way be considered a system. From the beginning Dallmayr has been critical of programmatic ideas and the ideologies, the micro- and macro-certainties, and the closures of thought that systematic theories engender. Quite differently, the turns of theoretical effort that run through his many books are—perhaps like the light steps so praised by Nietzsche’s Zarathustra—open, discursive, wondering, rigorous, and adventurous. Thinking, Dallmayr repeatedly tells us, revolves between the one and the many, between identity and difference, between *Heimat* and what is *unheimlich*, between the deep familiarities of *Lebenswelt* and the luminous but provocative otherness of what the poet Eichendorff called *schöne Fremde*—beautiful strangeness. Moreover, Dallmayr’s goal is never a resolution or end to openness, wonder, discourse, rigor, and adventure, but rather an enrichment of the same in ever-widening circles of engagement and reflection. Much more than a matter of epistemology, the implications of his vision point toward imperatives for subjectivity and sociality, ethics and ontology, politics and civilization.
A hermeneutical quality was ever evident in this. The discursive, open-minded interplay between identity and difference coupled with the ongoing enlargement and enrichment of identity through difference, processes which define the hermeneutic circle, are also hallmarks of Dallmayr’s thought. But, it would be a mistake to see Dallmayr’s hermeneutical “letting be” only in terms of its openness to and delight in the interplay of difference. It would be equally mistaken to understand his sense of the corresponding hermeneutical enlargement and enrichment of identity as seamless or enclosing. His is a hermeneutics of a different kind, which he explains by distinguishing his thought from the much-admired hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer:

In *Truth and Method* Gadamer at one point expresses the central maxim of philosophical hermeneutics: “To recognize oneself (or one’s own) in the other and find a home abroad—this is the basic movement of spirit whose being consists in this return to itself from otherness.” But clearly this maxim engenders, and needs to be complemented by, another maxim: namely, the challenge to recognize otherness or the alien in oneself (or one’s own).²

Dallmayr’s “letting be,” much akin to his reading of Martin Heidegger’s “letting Being be,” should be construed neither as a conservative acceptance of self-identity nor as a nonengaged indifference to difference. Instead, endeavoring to privilege neither identity nor difference, the hermeneutic circle for Dallmayr must also be one of thoroughgoing critique and praxis.³ And, indeed, what joins together Dallmayr’s many essays and explorations, what inheres within his “cosmopolitan” understanding of the contemporary world, and what lends his analyses their imperative is this same “letting be.”

**Critical Phenomenology, Language, Practical Ontology**

In the late 1960s, Fred Dallmayr began to turn in his intellectual work from the field of comparative politics toward political theory.⁴ He had completed a doctorate in law in his native Bavaria, then came to the United States in the late 1950s and earned a doctorate in political science at Duke University.⁵ The fruit of his turn included pieces on Thomas Hobbes, existentialism, ethics,
and Leo Strauss, but perhaps the momentum of his research in those years concerned critical theory, phenomenology, and the idea of the social sciences.

The methodology debates that rocked the English-speaking circles of the social sciences in the late 1960s and early 1970s—perhaps partly in response to Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, published in 1966—invited theorists to reconsider a perennial question: how knowledge of others is possible. In the United States the reconsideration centered around several theoretical landmarks, some of which were canonical elements from the classics of social science, including Max Weber’s *Verstehen* and Wilhelm Dilthey’s distinction between the historical and the natural sciences. Others were then more recent, such as Peter Winch’s use of E. E. Evans-Pritchard’s Azande research to argue for radical limits to human science or Alfred Schütz’s attack on behavioralism for its unacknowledged reliance on the notion of the lifeworld. To some extent these same methodological debates and explorations of the philosophy of the human sciences also were background for the development of key features of Dallmayr’s thinking.

The ideas of Jürgen Habermas also came to be part of these explorations. Dallmayr was among the handful of scholars at the center of introducing the thinking of Habermas to an American academic audience. Habermas was, of course, already a prominent partisan in the somewhat earlier wave of the Methodenstreit that had swept through German academia in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Against those in the methodology debates who—following Winch or Schütz or similar thinkers—were arguing for sweeping limits to the possibility of enlightened human sciences, Habermas had insisted on the possibility of such science through the use of rigorous theoretical and practical critique. Habermas’s famous debate with Gadamer regarding hermeneutics during this period seems in many ways to have framed the discussion for Dallmayr’s different consideration of these questions and issues then emerging. With the Habermas scholar Thomas McCarthy, Dallmayr organized in 1977 an edited volume of materials in social theory and the philosophy of the social sciences that addressed varying approaches for how knowledge of others is possible and could be “scientific.” Not only Habermas’s critical theory, but also hermeneutics, *Verstehen* theories, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and lifeworld are part of that volume’s collection.

Dallmayr’s own thinking regarding these themes plainly embraced the openness, the tolerance, the intellectual and ethical humility, the decentered
subjectivity, and the consciousness-constitutive roles that world, history, and sociality played in approaches such as phenomenology and hermeneutics. Yet, at the same time, Dallmayr passionately endorsed aspects of critical theories such as Habermas’s for their promise to unearth, raise to consciousness, and critique these same deep, often hidden, and repressive constitutive structures. Dallmayr’s direction, accordingly, was to pursue an approach for the human sciences, politics, and ethics that joined openness with critique, understanding with emancipation.

His subsequent book, *Beyond Dogma and Despair* (1981), illustrates his efforts. Subtitled *Toward a Critical Phenomenology of Politics*, the book’s various considerations of authors and approaches are deployed toward balancing critical theory and phenomenology, while also challenging elements of both approaches that might undercut or preclude such balancing. Dallmayr, for example, criticizes what might be called the “Cartesian” or “Enlightenment” exaggerations in some critical theories of the emancipatory qualities of reason. Conversely, Dallmayr, drawing much from the analysis of the critical theorist Karl-Otto Apel, questions the thinking of those like Winch, for whom the human sciences offer no hope of either emancipation or critique. Between these extremes, Dallmayr explores the possibility of an approach that facilitates what he believes is theoretically and practically viable from the concerns of both sides: critical phenomenology. In an introductory passage, Dallmayr explains that he wants to draw on both critical theories and phenomenology with an aim “to combine their strengths or merits while avoiding their shortcomings.” Regarding phenomenology he hopes to avoid an approach that “leans in the direction of a purely descriptive exercise” or “that is both normatively and politically ‘neutral.’” The remedy for such leaning, he indicates, is for phenomenology somehow “to marshal the resources of critical reflection and judgment” found, for example, in critical theories. And yet he goes on to make it clear:

[C]ritical reflection cannot or should not be viewed as self-sufficient, for that would conjure up the peril of “critical criticism” or of narrowly rationalistic “apriorism.” To gain its bearings and to avoid self-enclosure, critical thought must hearken back to the lessons of “phenomena” and of concrete experience, remaining alert to pre-reflective underpinnings of reflection, or of the linkage of thought and non-thought. In this manner, critical judgment and the study of phenomena are related in a precarious
balance, neither side being able to claim primacy or to provide a secure primordial starting point.\textsuperscript{10}

In key chapters of \textit{Beyond Dogma and Despair}, Dallmayr offers perspectives on the possibility of this “critical phenomenology” that speak to both the limits of understanding and historicism on one hand, and the limits to reason and critical epistemology on the other. Enzo Paci’s critical phenomenology, Paul Ricoeur’s depth hermeneutics, and especially Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological, open-ended dialectic are given special attention. And, as always for Dallmayr, the ethical and political implications of these revolutions between critique and openness, emancipation and understanding, are never far from his considerations.

Within a short period, however, a slight shift in Dallmayr’s terms and his approach to these issues is evident. The shift is subtle; he speaks of a theoretical perspective that “might be labeled \textit{critical post-phenomenology}; but it might also (and perhaps better) be described as \textit{practical ontology}—provided \textit{ontology} is not confused with an ontic objectivism and the term \textit{practical} is not narrowly or exclusively identified with subjective intentional activity.”\textsuperscript{11}

The poststructuralist thinking of Jacques Derrida and of Michel Foucault, references to which were becoming prominent in Dallmayr’s writings during this time, may in some way have raised certain concerns for phenomenology’s purported proclivity for complaisance and even naive positivism. Yet the understandings of intersubjectivity and decentered subjectivity that characterize many phenomenological considerations of human agency remain a centerpiece of Dallmayr’s \textit{Twilight of Subjectivity}, which he wrote during this period. There, in his consideration of Alfred Schütz’s thought, for example, Dallmayr lauds Schütz’s natural attitude phenomenology, the intersubjectivity of Schütz’s conception of the lifeworld, and especially Schütz’s move away from the capitalized subject of Edmund Husserl’s more transcendental approach, but he worries that such phenomenology does this only “at a price,” including the loss of “normative standards applicable both to the validation of cognitive claims and to the justification of social practices.”\textsuperscript{12}

\textit{Twilight of Subjectivity}, however, also evinces an obverse worry about critical theory and its “rationalist proclivity.” That proclivity, Dallmayr explains, is all too often wedded to teleological or utopian hopes for rational subjectivity. In the work’s appendix, especially, Dallmayr takes to task any
critical theory that looks to find in the processes of critique a teleological emancipation from what one unfortunate critical theorist called “the slime of history.” “The conception of critique as the termination of natural or historical conditions appears both untenable and obnoxious: stripped of its pre-reflective beginnings reason turns either into idle curiosity or an instrument of domination. On the level of praxis, emancipation construed in this manner vitiates the formation of character; for where should human responsibility and care be practiced if not in concrete communities?”

Dallmayr’s presents practical ontology, with its decentered (but not abandoned) subjectivity, as oscillating between the more extreme directions of phenomenology and critical theory. He quotes from Merleau-Ponty’s The Visible and the Invisible, for example, maintaining that “[w]e do not have to choose between a philosophy that installs itself in the world itself or in the other and a philosophy that installs itself ‘in us.’” We need not choose, Dallmayr glosses, “between an internal and external perspective” wherein choosing either perspective would leave world and person, object and subject, other and self isolated and opposed. Indeed, we ought not choose between such alternatives because, continuing with Merleau-Ponty “these alternatives are not imperative, since perhaps the self and the non-self are like the obverse and the reverse and since perhaps our own experience is this turning round that installs us far from ‘ourselves,’ in the other, in the things.”

Dallmayr was invited to present in the spring of 1981 that year’s address as part of the Loyola Lecture Series in Political Analysis at Loyola University in Chicago, which subsequently became the basis of his book Language and Politics (1984). Practical ontology, while not explicitly addressed in the work, is nevertheless what patently is at stake in the context of language’s obvious ontological and pragmatic dimensions. The preface, indeed, invokes the twinned Aristotelian definitions of humankind: zoon politikon and zoon logon ekhon—the latter of which Dallmayr interprets in the fashion of Heidegger (for whom, famously, “language is the house of Being”) as a being endowed with language. Language and politics are not only inseparable, but their multilayered connections have the character of practical ontology. Dallmayr’s wide-ranging consideration in the work surveys ordinary language philosophy, constructivists, hermeneutics, semiotics, deconstruction, the Vienna Circle, ideal speech situations, structuralism, and more. Chomsky, Husserl, Searle, Wittgenstein, Saussure, Gusdorf, Derrida, Apel, Quine, Arendt,
Ryle, Lévi-Strauss, Frege, and many other theorists are weighed. Nevertheless the edges and conditions of practical ontology within the context of the consideration of language and discourse are at the center of Dallmayr’s analyses.

Richard Rorty’s and Michael Oakeshott’s theories are illuminated as one such edge: radical “polyphony.” Rorty’s *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, at the time only recently published, had invigorated theorists’ renewed interest in language.17 Michael Oakeshott’s writings had greatly influenced academic political theory through criticism and interpretations from such scholars as Sheldon Wolin and Benjamin Barber, among others.18 The conception of language in the thinking of Rorty and Oakeshott, according to Dallmayr’s analysis, was utterly open (utterly polyphonic) in that meaning was merely an ad hoc determination of pragmatic utility by any speaker. As such, a certain attractiveness is evident from a political perspective suggesting, as it does, the possibility of untrammeled tolerance and liberality. Conversations would “exhibit no privileged speakers, no ‘lead instruments,’ no first and second strings.” No one “would have the final word—mainly because there is no such final word.” So utterly pragmatic as to deny the ontological dimension of language, though, Dallmayr argues that were Rorty and Oakeshott right, then language would be doomed to drift into “empty rhetoric,” “idle chatter,” and “disconnected soliloquies,” much like the Babel metaphor that Oakeshott himself put to use in several essays.19

A second edge to practical ontology explored by Dallmayr in *Language and Politics* is evident in his consideration of Paul Ricouer’s transcendental hermeneutics and Jürgen Habermas’s then recent theory of universal pragmatics. “Transcendental” and “universal” might be construed as signaling a worrisome “uni-phonie” insistence or even closure in these theories. Dallmayr, interestingly, does not entirely agree. Although he endorses Karl-Otto Apel’s criticism of the “rationalistic reconstruction” process that was so central for Habermas’s universal pragmatics, he nevertheless also accepts the transcendental or universal aspirations of approaches such as Ricouer’s hermeneutics and Habermas’s universal pragmatics.20 Hermeneutics, moreover, receives Dallmayr’s warmest attention. Drawing much inspiration from Heidegger, Dallmayr stresses the “clarifying” operation of the hermeneutic circle in its spiraling between preunderstanding and interpretive clarification. He follows Ricouer’s hope for a “highest task for hermeneutics,” which he calls “critical exegesis or the ‘critical function’ of hermeneutics.”21
Finally, a third edge to Dallmayr’s own approach is evident in the book’s consideration of poststructuralist theories of language. Such theories begin with profound suspicions of universal or transcendental aspirations, such as Ricouer’s. Critical exegesis as deployed, for example, in Foucault’s genealogy or Derrida’s deconstruction aims not at clarification, but at problematizing confidence in clarity itself. Most importantly, hermeneutics’ hoped for enrichment or enlargement of identity (or even Bildung) through the assumed universal possibilities of language would be denied if, as poststructuralists maintain, “words are weapons” or discourse is but a deployment of relations of power. Referencing the analysis of Hayden White, who calls these radically poststructuralist theories “absurdist,” Dallmayr balks at the extremes of such thinking. Agreeing with White, he notes that these “absurdist critics tend to cultivate an abnormal if not pathological brand of exegesis.”

Critical Encounters

Language remains a recurring focus of Dallmayr’s thinking, central for understanding his conception of “letting be” and the cosmopolitical. After Language and Politics, however, he returns in the 1980s more forcefully to the issues of critique, subjectivity, and modernity. Dallmayr’s Polis and Praxis (1984), Critical Encounters (1987), and Margins of Political Discourse (1989) in many ways are organized as a three-sided comparison of poststructuralist approaches, critical theory approaches, and hermeneutics/lifeworld approaches. Heidegger’s thinking is increasingly brought to the foreground in these studies as Dallmayr begins more directly to articulate his emerging idea of practical ontology.

The praxis or practical aspect of his practical ontology receives weighty attention. Most important for Dallmayr is that such praxis be carefully distinguished from the emphasis on an individual, rationalistic, acting subject, which has been the prominent theoretical understanding of practice in the Western tradition, especially in the modern era. He takes up Heidegger’s thought as his principal lens through which to study the issue. Yet his is not that generic interpretation of Heidegger that commonly overweighs the importance of Being and Time. In Polis and Praxis, offering a perceptive analysis of Heidegger’s works, Dallmayr suggests three rough stages in the trajectory of Heidegger’s thinking over his lifetime: a “decisionist” (or vaguely
existentialist) early stage culminating perhaps in 1930; a middle period in which subjectivity is decentered in the history of Being; and a third stage beginning about the time of the Letter on Humanism (or perhaps, as Dallmayr also suggests, with Heidegger’s 1936 lectures on Schelling and freedom), wherein even Dasein is understood within “letting Being be” or, phrased differently, within “the destiny of Being.”

Heidegger’s post-1930 thinking, within which such terms as “act,” “will,” and “cause” are more ontologically understood, seems in many ways consistent with the practical ontology that is the hallmark of Dallmayr’s own thinking at this time. Dallmayr notes that Hannah Arendt, too (especially the Arendt of The Human Condition), found inspiration in Heidegger’s post-1930 writings. In an early chapter of Polis and Praxis, the ideas of Arendt and Heidegger are compared with the thought of Michel Foucault, and the three thinkers are to some degree positioned against Habermas’s arguments. Organized in this way, they are presented with sympathy and with an emphasis on their similarities. Central in Dallmayr’s presentation is the “agonistic” dimension that he discerns in each of the three thinker’s approach. He writes in the book’s introduction:

Together with Arendt and Foucault, I view politics basically as an “agonal” undertaking—that is, as a tensional, serious-playful contest revolving around the quality or excellence and ultimately the very “point” of political life. Using slightly different vocabulary, politics can also be described as the cultivation of a particular interhuman “practice”: namely, the practice of “friendship”—a term denoting not so much personal intimacy as a public relationship steeped in mutual respect and a willingness to let one another “be.”

Dallmayr uses his consideration of the agonistic in Foucault, Arendt, and Heidegger, moreover, to telegraph his growing concern with the direction of Habermas’s critical theory and its then formulation around the idea of communicative action. In this, he follows threads from earlier remarks by Habermas regarding Arendt and Heidegger and brilliantly anticipates and ripostes Habermas’s subsequent criticism of Foucault and other poststructuralists as “neoconservatives” and “positivistic.” Dallmayr insists against Habermas that these thinkers offer prospects for compelling critique and, far from being tacitly conservative, point toward the possibility of enriching the
human condition (the *polis* of Dallmayr’s book’s title) in the sense of a unique pluralism “based on mutual respect.” And that respect, he quotes from Arendt, would be “not unlike the Aristotelian *philia politike*” in that it would not be one of “merger and identity.”

In his subsequent book, *Critical Encounters*, Dallmayr sharpens the focus of his differences with Habermas. Arguably, Theodor Adorno at this juncture replaces Habermas as Dallmayr’s principal partner in conversation with critical theory. But, advising his readers that he intends to more clearly profile his own thinking and to accentuate the differences he has with other thinkers, Dallmayr here takes pains also to more sharply distinguish his own practical ontology from the more Kantian aspects of Hannah Arendt’s agonal *polis*; from the less rigorous or less critical aspects of phenomenologies and hermeneutics; from the positivist aspects of neopragmatisms that may too quickly settle (or even close) around what “sells”; and from the “anti-humanist” (or better the “anti-cosmopolitan”) extravagances of poststructuralists. No other book among his many titles is as revealing of Dallmayr’s theoretical efforts.

An intriguing consideration of *Bildung* in *Critical Encounters* offers perspective and leverage for many of these comparisons. Commonly translated as “education,” the German word also evokes classical humanistic aspirations for personal formation toward maturity and for the enriching of ethnos and ethos, as well as a sense of caring for civilization and its continuation. At many levels and in complex ways (theoretical, pragmatic, aesthetic, and ethical) a particular understanding of *Bildung* lies near the heart of Dallmayr’s thinking. Dallmayr raises the matter in *Critical Encounters* within his assessment of the famous 1981 Derrida–Gadamer encounter in Paris, and in conjunction with an argument that Gadamer’s hermeneutical approach remedies two worrisome tendencies in Derrida’s poststructuralism and deconstruction.

One such tendency derives from what Dallmayr suggests is deconstruction’s stress on “rupture and radical otherness” by which it “seeks to uproot and dislodge the inquirer’s comfortable self-identity.” Carried to extremes, such measures would likely militate against rich participation with others in common ethical, cultural, political, or civilizational endeavors. Given its suspicion of common endeavors and its insistence on the incommensurability of ever-transient self-identity, moreover, deconstruction may also incline, as a second tendency, toward solipsism and escapist disengagement from the
world and others. Gadamer’s hermeneutics, Dallmayr contends, offers an approach that is more engaged and participatory, holding open the aspirations of Bildung.

His [Gadamer’s] Paris comments presented “the capacity of understanding” as a “basic human endowment which sustains social life,” while the possibility of consensus was described as prerequisite of “all human solidarity and the viability of society.” Seen from this perspective, social and political interaction clearly requires ethical engagement or the reciprocal display of “good will”—though an engagement which in its more intense or accomplished modes, makes room for non-intentional playfulness. This combination or sequence seems to me to be the gist of “Bildung” or of public education and culture. Again, Gadamer deserves praise for having rescued this notion from its contemporary oblivion or effacement. “Viewed as elevation to a universal or common vista,” he writes in Truth and Method, “Bildung constitutes a general human task.” The task requires sacrifice of (mere) particularity for the sake of something common or universal—where sacrifice of particularity means, in negative terms, the curbing of desire and hence freedom from the object of desire and freedom for its objectivity.30

Dallmayr values deconstruction for its insouciant unmasking or unearthing of hidden structures, repressions, hegemonies, and similar closures of discursive interactions. He edges away, however, when with its “emphasis on discontinuity and fragmentation” it “shades over into a celebration of indifference, non-engagement, and indecision.”31

The discursive, engaged, and yet open Bildung for which Dallmayr hoped, however, must be considered carefully. While the concept reveals in Dallmayr’s thought fascinating affinities and potential pathways from which to survey the political theory literatures of civic virtue, religion, civil society, local community, and so forth, he does not fully elaborate the notion as it relates to either his practical ontology or cosmopolitan ideas. Furthermore, Dallmayr certainly does not embrace fully the universal or metaphysical dimensions of the concept as it has been traditionally presented, or even the slightly more limited versions suggested by the hermeneutics of not only Gadamer but also Ricouer. A revealing illustration of Dallmayr’s unique take is
evident in his review of the arguments of Alasdair MacIntyre. MacIntyre’s *After Virtue*, at first glance, would seem in many ways to be in some harmony with Dallmayr’s concerns regards Derrida’s deconstruction. After all, MacIntyre stresses the importance of continuity, ethical and intellectual formation, and the virtues of fully participating in common moral and civilizational efforts. Yet, Dallmayr’s difficulties with MacIntyre’s thesis are legion, beginning with an utterly sweeping indictment of the metaphysical teleology on which MacIntyre’s thesis rests. “Virtue,” Dallmayr writes, “cannot be grounded on ‘heteronomy’ nor ethics be construed as an external fiat imposed on man.” Bildung, as it were, ought not (cannot) be a process of formation from above nor a squeezing of humankind into some predetermined order—historical or teleological.

Dallmayr’s 1989 *Margins of Political Discourse* continues the elaboration and exploration of these themes. The paired concerns against order and disorder so palpable in his considerations of MacIntyre, Gadamer, and Ricouer vis-à-vis poststructuralism resurface in chapters on “Eric Voegelin’s Search for Order” and most keenly in Dallmayr’s analysis of so-called “postmodernism” in the book’s central chapter “Postmodernism and Political Order.” Somewhat in parallel with his critique of MacIntyre in *Critical Encounters*, Dallmayr finds theoretical harmonies between Voegelin’s approach and some hermeneutical theories, including Paul Ricouer’s. Further, he finds Voegelin’s interpretations of ancient thinkers, particularly Plato, to be sensitive and revealing. Nevertheless, Dallmayr expresses much hesitation with Voegelin’s ultimate contention that a privileged moral order in consciousness and in history depends on a dualistic (albeit unresolved) metaphysical order that corresponds with Christian Revelation. Indeed, with less hesitation than was evident in *Critical Encounters*, in *Margins of Political Discourse* Dallmayr expresses appreciation for difference and disruption. Favorably citing Bernhard Waldenfels, for example, he maintains that in the present condition “[w]hat is needed here is a preservation of differences, a tolerance of ambiguities, and at the same time a resistance to forced unity.” Indeed, almost in response to Voegelin’s consuming search for order, Dallmayr insists on the need for maintaining an appreciation for what is not order. But his sense of this need is modulated in an interesting way: “We must distinguish between ‘disordered’ or disorderly in the sense of a rule violation governed by the binary matrix of an order, and a rule-less or unravelled dimension on the other side of
order which we may call the ‘unordered.’”35 The need for differences and toleration of ambiguities, for Dallmayr, would invoke not a celebration of the “disordered” but instead a reverence for the “unordered.”

This distinction is also in evidence in Dallmayr’s sympathetic, but measured, assessment of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.36 Laclau and Mouffe argue for poststructuralism as the basis for a positive political theory, but also eschew the anarchism that so many other scholars have surveyed from that approach. As the book’s title suggests, the endeavor weighs linkages between poststructuralist thinking and socialism, and includes in its pages many reconsiderations of traditional socialist thinkers in light of poststructuralism. Dallmayr’s hesitations, however, center around what he considers to be formulations of Laclau and Mouffe that take their bearings from disorder rather than the unordered:

Small wonder that on such premises antagonisms begin to shade over into total conflict—as happens in a passage which finds the “formula of antagonism” in a “relation of total equivalence where the differential positivity of all . . . terms is dissolved.” Flirtation with nothingness is also evident in the statement that experience of negativity is “not an access to a diverse ontological order, to something beyond differences, simply because . . . there is no beyond.”37

Margins of Political Discourse, however, also signals an emerging element in Dallmayr’s thought. The idea of “cosmopolis” had been a minor theme in Dallmayr’s writings at least since 1984. The pluralism, respect, friendship, and “letting be,” for example, that Dallmayr explored at the heart of Polis and Praxis also coincided with one of his first uses of the term “cosmopolis,” which he there associated with a global arrangement of “closeness and distance” that “can curb the arrogance of State-centered force.”38 In Margins, though, cosmopolis moves to the forefront. For the ancient Stoics the term had designated a universalized polis, not of this world but of spirit, in which all of humankind were equally citizens, equally subject to the transcendental law of the “cosmic city,” and which properly served as criterion and inspiration for earthly politics, law, and government. Dallmayr’s use of the term “cosmopolis” pointedly refers not to a separate, perfect realm. For him, it points instead toward immanent practices and efforts to rethink the politi-
cal in the contemporary world that would cross over the usual margins of Western thought. A chapter on Mohandas Gandhi, for example, hints at the broader directions Dallmayr’s thought would subsequently move. But a fulsome elaboration of his understanding of cosmopolis would not appear for a few years.

Indeed, the publishing of Hugo Ott’s *Martin Heidegger* and, more significantly, the publication and translation of Victor Farias’s *Heidegger and Nazism* in the late 1980s, impressed on Dallmayr a more immediate task. 39

**Dallmayr and Heidegger**

Heidegger’s writings have long been inspiring and provocative for Dallmayr’s own thinking and rethinking. In Dallmayr’s early books, such as *Twilight of Subjectivity*, Heidegger’s thought was instrumental in the analysis of the pathologies of Enlightenment individualism, rationalism, and subjectivity. More importantly, Dallmayr’s key theoretical argument from those years, the argument for decentered subjectivity, owes much to his theoretical mining of Heidegger’s post-1930 writings.

Heidegger’s thinking was also of central importance for Dallmayr as he gradually refined, over the course of several decades, his own distinctive ontological attitude: namely, “letting be.” It might well be argued that a contrail of sorts can be discerned in the wake of Dallmayr’s writing on this point, evident from his engagement and reengagement with Heidegger’s works through the decades. Earlier books and essays, where the attitude or approach was best described as “critical phenomenology,” used Heidegger’s thinking to balance a more phenomenological perspective against the overly epistemological and even rationalistic excess of various critical theories. Likewise, Heidegger’s thinking was presented as if to remind critical theorists and life-world advocates that critique and understanding, if Heidegger is right, are characteristic features of “letting Being be.” As Dallmayr reoriented the focus of his thought toward “practical ontology,” however, Heidegger’s ideas move to a more foundational place. Spurred perhaps by thinkers like Derrida, Dallmayr’s presentation of Heidegger’s importance at this point is no longer so much about epistemology, such as understanding others or even clarifying the constitution of consciousness. Rather, it is for rethinking the
possibilities and responsibilities of praxis (especially understood politically, ethically, and civilizationally) without reliance on either classical or Enlightenment models of subjectivity and agency.

In Between Freiburg and Frankfurt (1991) and The Other Heidegger (1993), Dallmayr takes this another step and in so doing nudges his developing understanding of “letting be” toward what at this time he calls “critical ontology.” Where previously the stress was either on using Heidegger’s thought to balance critical theory or on finding in Heidegger’s understanding of Being a common ground for critique, practice, and understanding, the stress now swings toward the inherently critical character of fundamental ontology itself.

In the introduction to Between Freiburg and Frankfurt the argument is put squarely. Heidegger from the first, we are told, “did not champion a substantive or objectifiable ontology but rather a mode of radical questioning unsettling received answers; to this extent, his ‘fundamental ontology’ involved simultaneously a program of critical “deconstruction” [Destruktion] aimed at traditional philosophical doctrines and worldviews.” Heidegger’s, in other words, is defined as a “critique-engendering ontology.” In one sense, of course, nearly all Heideggerian scholars would agree with Dallmayr’s new terminology. The fundamental ontology at the center of Heidegger’s thinking, even before 1930, is presented in the context of Being making a “caring” issue of itself. Dallmayr agrees, noting that “Being for Heidegger was never a doctrine or positive proposition but rather a question or problem,” and indeed that for Heidegger “a central view of ‘being’” was its “‘openness’ toward otherness or unfamiliar horizons.” Where Dallmayr breaks new ground, however, is in his claiming that “Heidegger’s work can be seen as [a] primary exemplar of a perspective combining ontological reflection with post-Kantian (not subject-centered) critique.”

Still, certain theoretical hesitations concerning Heidegger are highlighted as they bear on Dallmayr’s hoped-for critical ontology. The writings of the critical theorist Theodor Adorno, with special reference to Adorno’s Negative Dialectics, are deftly employed in this regard. Most important among Dallmayr’s theoretical hesitations is Heidegger’s own apparent hesitancy to unleash or deploy the critical dimension of his fundamental ontology. Following Hermann Mörchen’s observations on this, Dallmayr argues that “the ’weakest’ point in Heidegger’s work—in light of his own ‘understanding of
being’—is the fact that his neglect of the ‘concrete tasks’ of social and political life, his ‘untimely’ attitude à la Nietzsche, may be construed as an ‘escape from a concrete immersion into temporality.’” In this, Dallmayr shares a concern raised by many critical theorists who perceive in Heidegger’s thought an unfortunately gentle treatment of what is, of reality’s status quo, as if the world were already redeemed and reconciled. Nodding in this direction, Dallmayr recommends Adorno: “One of Adorno’s most relentless objections—which supporters of Heidegger should carefully heed—is the charge of an ‘affirmative’ stance blindly endorsing existing conditions or the ‘powers that be.’ Perhaps, in cultivating his social distance, Heidegger did not always sufficiently guard against the peril or lure of this stance.”

Between Freiburg and Frankfurt was published almost simultaneously with the appearance of Hugo Ott’s Martin Heidegger and Victor Farias’s Heidegger and Nazism, but it preceded the notoriety of l’affaire Heidegger in the early 1990s, which was ignited in Western intellectual circles by the works and subsequent indictments on the part of such authors as Richard Wolin. Together the arguments of these various books compile a case detailing Heidegger’s purposeful endorsement of and participation in National Socialism. Moreover, persuasive theoretical arguments are advanced by some for affinities between themes in Heidegger’s own writings (especially, but not solely before 1933) and aspects of his involvement with National Socialism.

In the charged and sometimes polemic atmosphere of those years, Dallmayr wrote one of his best-known books, The Other Heidegger. The work is neither an apologia nor an effort to look away from, deflect, or soft-pedal any indictment of Heidegger’s participation with the Nazi Party. Instead, as Dallmayr puts it in the preface, his ‘concern is to lay out for political theory a broader portrayal of Heidegger’s thought, “a more complex picture, akin to a multilayered tapestry—a tapestry in which his fascist involvement is one (easily the most deplorable) strand, but not the only and not even the dominant one.” Within this broader portrayal, Dallmayr’s thinking nevertheless is guided by several landmarks in Heidegger’s writings: the then recently published Beiträge zur Philosophie (along with his 1936 Schelling essay on freedom), the Zollikon Seminars, the Letter on Humanism, and several of Heidegger’s interpretations of Hölderlin’s hymns. Spanning the period from immediately after Heidegger’s infamous rector’s address to 1945, these writings, Dallmayr suggests, “adumbrate a broadly ontological perspective of
'letting-be’ in which different elements or modalities of being are related without mutual intrusion,” “granting each other space in the interstices of presence and absence, arrival and departure.”

Dallmayr’s own “letting be” is lent fresh perspective, accordingly. In his brief review of the Beiträge, for example, a work that Heidegger himself described as a groundwork for a new beginning in his thought, Dallmayr points to terms that he believes are insightful for comprehending where Heidegger was heading: “awe,” “reserve,” “reticence,” “premonition,” and “renunciation.” Dallmayr’s reading of these terms finds them at odds with fascism’s valorization of “will” and at odds with the closures of thinking that define all ideologies. Awe is associated with wonder. “Reserve,” Dallmayr relates, “is said to form the midpoint between awe and reticence, which is not so much shyness or bashfulness as the willingness to ‘let being be’ in whatever mode it may happen or occur (particularly in the mode of absence or withdrawal).” He goes on to say:

Premonition, or surmise, opens the view to the dimensions of disclosure and concealment, and specifically to the sense of being’s withdrawal or its happening in the mode of refusal, or self-refusal (Verweigerung). Once being is seen to happen as or through refusal, a refusal heralding not vacuum but an absent mode of presencing, then human acceptance of this refusal can only take the form of renunciation (which signals not rejection or indifference but a radical type of engagement).

Dallmayr’s parenthetical insertion that describes such “letting be” as “a radical type of engagement” should be provocative. Heidegger himself admitted in the Beiträge of worries that his thinking would be construed as “cowardly weakness.” Indeed, why does not such “letting be” more likely devolve into mere disengagement or, worse, a quiet sinking into the unrippled pond of familiar identity? Dallmayr’s responses to such questions are many, but none are perhaps as compelling as those that surround his take on Heidegger’s 1942 lectures on Hölderlin’s poem Der Ister.

Der Ister is an archaic name for the Danube, the storied river that connects Occident and Orient, poetically connects modern Europe with its Hellenic roots, and that has its source in Heidegger’s Swabian homeland. Hölderlin’s poem speaks of these linkages and crossings in terms evocative of Odysseus’s fated wanderings from East to West and back, while also convey-
ing gratitude for the river’s opening of the heartland of Europe for building and dwelling. Dallmayr, following Heidegger, embraces the conjoining of the crossings, the ever-shifting and wandering character of the river, and the hope for homecoming. For him “the stream means a journey or wandering that incipiently heralds an impending homecoming or the possibility of ‘being at home’ (Heimischsein).” Such “[h]omecoming,” such “letting be,” Dallmayr translates from Heidegger, must ever be “a transit through other otherness.” Crossing borders between East and West, antiquity and modernity, by Dallmayr’s account, “letting be” is neither complacent nor uncritical, but instead a rigorous but light-stepping sojourn between dwellings and distant lands, with homecoming not a promise but a hope.

Cosmopolitics

In the mid 1990s, following the publication of The Other Heidegger, Dallmayr began more purposively to address his thinking to the themes and issues of comparative political theory, elements of which had always had much interest for him and which had been explored in key essays of previous works. Although his engagement with such themes would come, gradually, to encompass his intellectual efforts, it would be incorrect to interpret comparative political theory as an abrupt theoretical turn in Dallmayr’s thought. The continued working through of his idea of “letting be,” which began with his critical phenomenology in the 1970s and was always near the center of his efforts, remains central to his writings and analyses of the last decade. Indeed, his fervent interest in non-Western thinkers, and his auspicious considerations of these thinkers and ideas against the background of Western philosophy and political theory, can well be understood in itself as the “homecoming through otherness” of “letting be.”

Yet still, changes of emphasis and a difference of ambience in the new works cannot be overlooked. Gadamer’s thought and philosophical hermeneutics in general begin to be given more prominence and more authority in Dallmayr’s writings. Emphases on the agonal character of “letting be” are muted and more hope is entertained for progress in easing bitterness and mediating conflict. A slightly greater lean toward embracing difference may also be discerned. By no means do such shifts of emphasis convey an endorsement of the hermeneutics of consensus let alone one of universal understanding,
but titles that speak of “global village,” “peace,” and “achieving our world,”
even if understood in the context of the critical dimension of “letting be,”
hint at implications that deserve to be carefully weighed.

The breakthrough book for this refocusing of Dallmayr’s thought was
*Beyond Orientalism* (1986), which appeared a few years after *The Other Hei-
degger.* The title, of course, is in reference to Edward Said’s well-known *Ori-
entalism* (1979), which argued that Western cultural and social scientific
studies of the Middle East effected a regime of knowledge that hegemonically
reified the cultures of the region (even for Middle Easterners’ own self-
understanding). Endeavoring to explore “beyond” Said’s careful analysis of
orientalism, Dallmayr assesses alternatives to the approaches of traditional
cultural and social scientific studies. In particular, something like “letting
be” hints at the possibility of radical appreciation of cultural difference, non-
hegemonic understanding, while also—in part because of its appreciation of
difference—demanding a thoroughgoing critical attitude. Called here a “her-
meneutics of difference,” Dallmayr elaborates the concept by revisiting the
Gadamer/Derrida comparison that had been so theoretically formative for
his earlier *Critical Encounters.*

Put simply, such a hermeneutics of difference would eschew the identity-
closing “fusion of horizons” associated with hermeneutical theories that beg
overcoming of difference. Like Derrida’s deconstruction, difference not only
is tolerated, but endorsed and preserved. Yet, unlike many interpretations of
Derrida’s deconstruction, conflict among difference is muted and localized
understandings across the margins and edges of difference are possible and
additive.* Beyond Orientalism* presents several case examples that Dallmayr
believes illustrate how something akin to this hermeneutics of difference
might work, including an exegesis of the work of the philosopher and Indolo-
gist Wilhelm Halbfass and a consideration of affinities between Heidegger’s
later philosophy and Indian mysticism. Nevertheless, even though *Beyond
Orientalism*’s hermeneutics of difference remains utterly consonant with the
direction of his previous studies, the book also reconnects with translocal-
ized hopes for harmony and peace (while respecting difference) that were
broached in Dallmayr’s earlier, tentative steps toward what he called “cos-
mopolis.” Accordingly, the last portions of the book survey an idea of a mul-
ticultural world that would be democratic and, ostensibly, nonhegemonic.

Such translocalized hopes, arguably, were inspiration for *Alternative Vi-
sions* (1998), which continues and accelerates Dallmayr’s interest in looking
beyond Western thought for a richer and more persuasive response to the intellectual hegemony that he associates with Enlightenment rationalism and subjectivity. Indeed, Western intellectuals with whom Dallmayr is otherwise quite sympathetic, such as Theodor Adorno and Edward Said, are chided for what might be termed their “conservative” and passive reluctance to move beyond merely abstract critique and European/American modes of analysis. As heirs to the Enlightenment West’s suspicions of faith and tradition, such thinkers are profoundly handicapped in their ability to recover or value the salient lifeworlds of the non-Western world or even the nonsecular elements of traditional lifeworlds in Western societies themselves. The upshot, Dallmayr contends, is a worldview that abandons all that is not explicable (within the contours of Enlightenment rationality and subjectivity) as unresolvable “non-identity.” In the introduction, he cites Michel Foucault with approval regarding the present need to “resist the blackmail of the Enlightenment” wherein one is forced to choose between identity defined by Enlightenment rationalism and the non-identity of mere “irrationalism.”

Drawing from a reading of Gadamer’s hermeneutics that recommends proceeding “from the vantage of situated modes of self-understanding,” Dallmayr’s argument here more strongly emphasizes local difference than had Beyond Orientalism. The critic of the Enlightenment, Johann Gottfried Herder, provides Dallmayr a perspective on the process of such a hermeneutics in which the circle would not move in abstraction or generalization from local difference toward transcendental understanding, but instead by circling down ever-more richly into particular difference with the hope of ontological discovery. Such an approach, Dallmayr anticipates, would yield the possibility of movement toward the subtitled “global village,” while not “damaging the integrity of local lifeworlds” via assimilation from above. Avoiding the counter-Enlightenment (and therefore, Enlightenment-inspired) trope of romanticizing so-called authentic traditions or escaping from the allegedly gray disenchantment that many critics associate with the momentum of modern Western rationalism, Alternative Visions instead advocates a broadening discourse among a world of lifeworlds in which the Western is simply not privileged and all lifeworlds are affirmed, not assimilated, but still share an equal respect in a cosmopolitical, global village.

The rub, naturally, is how this might be done. In Achieving Our World (2001), Dallmayr offers a provocative litany of suggestions. As he relates in the preface, “this book seeks to explore or uncover viable interconnections or

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linkages between elements of our world, linkages that might be conducive to some kind of mutuality, reciprocal recognition, and peace." 56 His thinking here, moreover, crystallizes around specific, pragmatic proposals: democratic practices (not only within and among the institutions of nation-states, but also beyond the limits of the modern nation-state); cosmopolitan law, rights, and institutions; a cosmopolitan Bildung or civic culture; and so forth. Surveying such ideas, Dallmayr refers to a broad spectrum of thinkers and writings, including David Held, Anthony Giddens, Elise Boulding, Stephen Toulmin, Richard Falk—even Immanuel Kant’s Zum ewigen Frieden. How such cosmopolitan projects would emerge, how they would find efficacy outside the contemporary age’s relations of power, and how they would not compromise local lifeworlds and identities are questions for which Dallmayr’s answers are tentative. But, straightforwardly, the direction of his interest is toward global, multicultural, cross-cultural arrangements, for which the proper metaphor perhaps lies somewhere between mosaic and orchestra.

Friendship, the compelling and frequently explicit theme in Achieving Our World, might well be more than metaphorical for Dallmayr’s own understanding of the cosmopolitical. A surprising move against the thinking of Derrida on the topic of friendship (in conjunction with friendlier interchanges with Thomas McCarthy and Calvin Schrag) reveals much. Derrida’s account of friendship, showcased in his book Politics of Friendship, reflects the basic tenor of well-known deconstructive arguments and stresses the self’s uncompromising incommensurability with the other, such that friendship appears as radicalized, nonintrusive, and nonreciprocal respect for the ever distant other. 57 In response, Dallmayr evidences instead sympathy for Aristotle’s philia. “If people are friends,” he quotes from the philosopher, “they have no need of justice, but if they are just they need friendship in addition; and the justice that is most just seems to belong to friendship.” 58 Lamenting that already such “ancient notions like ‘concord’ (homonoia) or ‘communion’ (consensio) have been increasingly problematized if not entirely eclipsed” in the emergence of Western civilization’s conception of self and other, Dallmayr worries that Derrida’s thinking absolutizes the problem. 59 Derrida’s “friendship as noncommunity,” he writes, with “[i]ts goal ‘not to give in to proximity or identification, to the fusion of you and me,’ but rather ‘to place, maintain or keep an infinite distance within good friendship,’” would dismiss any hope for the concord so needed for genuine praxis.
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and shared social practices. Dallmayr continues: “The costs or negative side effects of this dismissal—thematized under such labels as ‘anomie,’ ‘world-alienation,’ and ‘trahison de tous par tous’—are not entirely ignored, and occasionally even deplored, but without any effect on the general orientation.”

Friendship (indeed “self-transgressive friendship”), as well as considerations of self, other, and their relationship are also threads that run through Dallmayr’s subsequent book, Dialogue among Civilizations (2002). The title echoes the former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami’s 1998 United Nations resolution, which was itself something of a response to Samuel Huntington’s perceived “clash of civilizations.” Dallmayr opens his book with a few lines from Hölderlin’s poem “Remembrance”:

But good is it
To have dialogue [Gespräch] and to talk
About the heart’s thought, and to listen much
About the days of love,
And about deeds that have happened.

He reiterates Heidegger’s gloss of these lines, noting that “dialogue, for the poet, involves not only speech and counter-speech, statements and rejoinders, but also a kind of world-disclosure: namely, the opening-up of a space or shared matrix holding the speakers silently together.”

That “space” represents Dallmayr’s hope. Not enmity, conflict, and the “clash” cited by so many as the way to a new world arrangement; Dallmayr instead proposes “space” for mutual world-disclosure through dialogue and discursive openness. Such a process, wherein all speakers and listeners are mutually enriched and matured in a “shared matrix” of world-disclosure, ought be recognized, he thinks, as the hoped-for “civilizing process for our global age.” The hermeneutical quality of such a “civilizing process” is unmistakable and, indeed, familiar names such as Ricouer and, even more, Gadamer are recommended in the book. But, this “civilizing process” is more than just a way of knowing or even of Bildung. Civilization has its etymological roots in the Roman civitas, as in a book Dallmayr describes as “magisterial”—Augustine’s Civitas Dei, or City of God. Accordingly, he speaks of the “civilizing process” in such terms:

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Whatever its other dimensions, the emerging global community will also be a “city”—though not on the model of the nation-state—governed by fair rules of conduct and attentive to the demands of good (responsible/accountable) government. Above all global civil life will have to nurture the virtues of practical-political citizenship; that is, commitment to social justice and the rule of law, and a willingness to shoulder the sobering demands of civic “prudence” (*phronesis*). In addition, however, attention needs to be accorded to civilization’s corollaries or supplements, speaking to us in their distinctive registers. In sum, civilizational dialogue will have to be a multi-lingual discourse carried on in multiple tonalities, including the tonalities of politics, religion, philosophy, and ecology.65

The Roman *civitas*, of course, is what the Greeks called *polis*—and for the classically educated Dallmayr, the linkage is surely automatic. And, in this, an intriguing convergence of his ideas presents itself. The “civilizing process,” which is at once thoroughly associated in *Dialogue among Civilizations* with dynamics of discourse and with the “letting be” that had long been center stage in Dallmayr’s theory, is a process integral with his increasingly prominent hopes for *cosmopolis*.

Toward the end of the volume, in an essay entitled “What is Self Rule? Lessons from Gandhi,” many of the elements of this convergence become apparent. The essay begins with reflection on Gandhi’s famous *Hind Swaraj*, focusing on the Hindi word “swaraj” or self-rule. Following Gandhi, Dallmayr stresses the multiple imperatives of *swaraj*: freedom, independence, self-restraint, maturity, self-reliance, and being true to oneself. In Gandhi’s usage, the term becomes freighted politically, psychologically, religiously, and philosophically with implications for home rule, democracy, Indian identity, law, pluralism, but especially with the idea and practice of passive resistance toward liberation. Dallmayr reminds us of the multiple scales on which to weigh these aspects, which even for Gandhi went far beyond independence from England—establishing a multicultural democracy, encouraging religious toleration, turning inward to lay down a new constitutional order, or looking outward for a world arrangement of pluralist but mutually supportive self-determination. Thus, conveying tonalities that include home with self-reflection, while equally invoking the measure of ongoing self-
transformation for authenticity, swaraj resonates with the critical and practical dimensions of Dallmayr’s understanding of “letting be.”

Moreover, a crucial aspect of his hoped-for cosmopolitical progress is also lent fresh perspective. Conceived not as a progressive imposition of an abstract or universalized identity, the “shared matrix” and its “civilizing process,” instead, must be akin to the practice of swaraj, in the sense of enhancing different authenticities but demanding “self-rule.” Quoting Charles Taylor at length, Dallmayr agrees that such “authenticity points us towards a more self-responsible form of life” that, as Taylor says, “opens up an age of responsibilization.”66 With Taylor and Gandhi, Dallmayr insists that the hoped-for “civilizing process” is not a dream. Through practical efforts, hearts and minds can be changed, and ground can be gained—at least for a while.

PEACE

One of Dallmayr’s most recent books (noting, however, that two more are in process), Peace Talks—Who Will Listen? (2004), builds on the Gandhi-inspired hope for not dreaming, but “doing” swaraj and for substantive progress through practical efforts to change hearts and minds.67 Written against the backdrop of the United States’ war in Iraq, his book is an eloquent and compelling plea for peace—and, from so many vantage points, his thoughts here frame anew the “letting be” that has been so near the heart of his thinking throughout his intellectual life. It is a book, of course, of political theory and politics; but, equally, Peace Talks is a book of philosophy, prayer, and poetry. It praises what Norberto Bobbio (much like Jane de Chantal and Gandhi) recommends as “little virtues,” such as meekness, gentleness, littleness, simplicity, and perhaps even extending to what Erasmus called “folly.” And, at its heart, Dallmayr’s Peace Talks endorses a measured vision of nonviolence. Citing Lech Walesa, Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Vaclav Havel, and Nelson Mandela, he calls on the world’s intellectuals, instead “of joining the champions of realpolitik,” “to join the great humanitarian benefactors of the last century and to champion, whenever and wherever feasible, the course of nonviolence and satyagraha.”68

Peace “talks,” he says, referring to the opening line of Erasmus’s The Complaint of Peace. But, more powerfully, it calls. Speaking again of a “civilizing
process,” he reframes the term: “The difficult task is that of ‘civilizing humanity’: that is, of channeling inclinations and desires in the direction of justice, goodwill, and friendliness. To this extent, peacemaking is never finished. The plaintive voice of Peace remains forever ‘calling’: calling us to a promised dwelling place.”

Those of us who know Fred Dallmayr perhaps have some inkling of what he means by “a promised dwelling place.” At once, the word “dwelling” reminds us of Fred’s breathtaking reading of Heidegger’s “dwelling poetically” and of the Bildung of Heidegger’s “Building Dwelling Thinking.” It reminds us of Dallmayr’s thoughtful readings of Hölderlin’s “Der Ister,” of Hannah Arendt’s vita activa, of Aristotle’s philia, of Gandhi’s swaraj, of Zarathustra’s “children’s land,” and of Heraclitus’s invitation to join him at his stove because “Here, too, gods dwell.” We know, too, that the “promised dwelling place” of which he speaks must also somehow be a city (civitas, polis)—a city of little virtues, friendliness, nonviolence, noisy with discourse, yet listening for peace, and “letting be.”

Notes

1. See the Dallmayr bibliography in this volume.


6. For example, see Dallmayr’s edited volume, Materialienband zu Habermas’ Erkenntnis und Interesse (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974).


10. Ibid., p. 4.


12. Ibid., p. 5.

13. Ibid., p. 287.


16. Ibid., p. ix. The traditional interpretation of *zoon logon ekhon* is “rational creature.” Dallmayr and Heidegger understand *logos* to mean “word” as well as “rational thought.”


21. Ibid., pp. 143–44.


25. Ibid., p. 9 With the emphasis on “be,” he references Heidegger’s “letting Being be.”

26. Habermas’s *Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag), where these criticisms were leveled, was not published until 1985.


28. I remember attending a Dallmayr seminar on Heidegger at the University of Notre Dame in the winter of 1981, where at one point, in conjunction with his exegesis of Heidegger’s “Building Dwelling Thinking,” he expanded at length on *Bildung* and its central place in Heidegger’s post-1930 and particularly his post-1945 thought.
Dallmayr’s own sensibilities in this regard seemed very much in keeping with his account of Heidegger’s understanding of Bildung.

30. Ibid., pp. 156–57. The quotation is from Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*, p. 13.
41. Ibid., pp. 56, 54.
42. Ibid., p. 31.
47. Ibid., p. 10.
48. Ibid., p. 98.
51. Dallmayr’s *Beyond Orientalism*, the chapter “Gadamer, Derrida, and the Hermeneutics of Difference.”
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53. Ibid., p. 2.
54. Ibid., p. 7.
55. Ibid., p. 132.
60. Dallmayr, ibid., p. 164. The quotations are from Derrida’s Politics of Friendship, pp. 64–65.
65. Ibid., p. 30.
68. Ibid., pp. 130–31.
69. Ibid., p. 21.

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