

Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy (Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought)

By James Bohman





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How can we create a vital and inclusive pluralistic democracy? Public Deliberation offers answers to this question by showing how democratic theory and democratic practice can be remade to face new challenges. Arguing against the skepticism about democracy that flourishes today on both ends of the political spectrum, James Bohman proposes a new model of public deliberation that will allow a renewed expansion of democratic practice, even in the face of increasing pluralism, inequality, and social complexity. Bohman builds on early Critical Theory and on the recent work of Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls (while taking into consideration criticisms of their work) to create a picture of a richer democratic practice based on the public reasoning of citizens. Starting with a pragmatic account of how deliberation actually works to promote agreements and cooperation, he develops a realistic model of deliberation by gradually introducing and analyzing the major tests facing deliberative democracy: cultural pluralism, social inequalities, social complexity, and community-wide biases and ideologies. The result is a new understanding of the ways in which public deliberation can be extended to meet the needs of modern societies.



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Editorial Review

Review

"... mandatory reading for anyone, undergraduate through faculty, wishing to be well grounded in the philosophy of democratic renewal." A. B. Cochran, Choice

"James Bohman sharpens the case for deliberative democracy by identifying'dialogical mechanisms' that make reasons persuasive and by showing howthose mechanisms sustain the plural and dynamic character of 'publicreason.' He then convincingly deflates the claims of skeptics who holdthat democratic deliberation is wildly utopian in modern politiescharacterized by cultural pluralism, socio-economic inequality, and institutional complexity. In the process Bohman draws with sophisticationupon work in political thought, philosophy, and social science. Public Deliberation is a first-rate work of political theory." James Johnson, Political Science, University of Rochester

About the Author

James Bohman is Danforth Professor of Philosophy at Saint Louis University. He is the author, editor, or translator of many books.

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