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## Deliberative Democracy

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It is sometimes assumed that voting is the central mechanism for political decision making. However, the contributors to this volume focus on an alternative mechanism – decision by discussion or deliberation. These original contributions include case studies based on historical and current instances of deliberative democracy, normative discussion of the merits of deliberation compared with other models of collective decision making, and studies of the conditions under which deliberation tends to improve the quality of decisions. This volume takes a realistic approach: rather than assuming that deliberative democracy is always ideal, the authors critically probe its limits and weaknesses as well as its strengths.

Jon Elster is Robert K. Merton Professor of Social Science at Columbia University.

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## Cambridge Studies in the Theory of Democracy

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Edited by Adam Przeworski  
*New York University*

“It is not current politics but democracy as a form of government that I seek to describe,” James Bryce wrote in 1921. The goal of this series is to reinvigorate theoretical reflection about democracy by exposing it to the full range of historical experiences under which democracies have flourished or floundered. Our ambition is to understand what makes democracies work and endure. How do they promote normatively desirable and politically desired objectives, and how do they peacefully handle crises that occur when such objectives are not being fulfilled? We intend to ignore artificial divisions among different approaches, by drawing simultaneously on classical political theory, modern analytical methods, and comparative empirical research. We hope that our conclusions not only will offer some guidance for countries that are still in the process of developing democratic institutions, but also will provide a means of understanding the deficiencies of the well-established democratic systems.

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## Preface and Acknowledgment

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Most of the essays in this volume were first presented at a conference at the University of Chicago in April 1995. One paper discussed at the conference, “Modeling Deliberative Democracy” by David Austen-Smith, is not included in the volume because the author preferred not to submit a revised version. As will be clear from several of the chapters, his paper had a considerable impact on the debates.

I thank the University of Chicago for financial support of the conference.

J.E.