

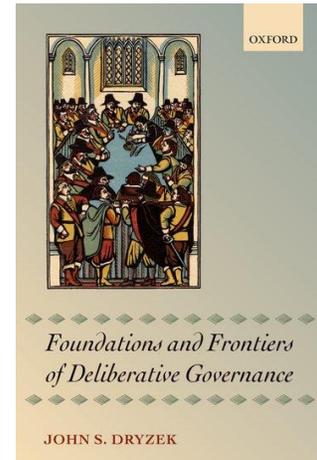
John S. Dryzek with Simon Niemeyer, **Foundations and Frontiers of Deliberative Governance**, Oxford University Press, 2012, 229 pp., \$29.95 (paperback).

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In its ascension to proverbial heights, the “deliberative turn” has profoundly altered democratic theory. While theorists continue to challenge the meanings behind this turn, deliberative concepts have rapidly proliferated across numerous academic fields. Consequently, the discombobulated efforts of these theorists, researchers, and practitioners underscore the importance of rhetorical scholarship. As deliberative democracy continues to influence a wide range of topics, the ability of rhetoricians to effectively translate competing deliberative perspectives in ways that inform attempts to turn theory into practice will become more important than ever.



An excellent example of this scholarship can be found in John Dryzek’s **Foundations and Frontiers of Deliberative Governance**. Dryzek provides a comprehensive account of deliberative democracy in theory and practice today. The book’s central aim is to synthesize “the discussion of foundations and frontiers to demonstrate how they can be joined in a coherent systemic view of deliberative democracy and its many applications” (p. 17). In order to accomplish this task, Dryzek presents his book in four parts.

In Part I, Dryzek describes the history of democratic theory and highlights, in particular, the deliberative “turn” in research since 1990. Dryzek succinctly characterizes the changes in democratic theory throughout the 21st century, focusing on the attention paid to institutional forums, political systems and interactions, practical applications, and empirical investigations. Dryzek then defines the features that enable deliberative democracy and reflects on the organization of deliberation itself.

In Part II, Dryzek carefully constructs his views on the foundations of deliberative democracy—legitimacy, representation, communication, and consensus. Dryzek first describes legitimacy as a normative value that suffers from problems of scope and representation. Dryzek proposes an emphasis on discourse as a means to better understand contestable issues and the legitimacy of decisions. Dryzek continues with communication and rhetoric, which he eloquently defends as an essential element of democracy. Finally, Dryzek presents his argument for a meta-consensus as a way to resolve pluralist concerns with deliberative democracy. Part II develops Dryzek’s central arguments, which will be discussed in more detail below.

Part III focuses on the new frontiers of deliberative democracy. Dryzek applies and evaluates the potential of deliberative democracy, as described in Part II, to these frontiers. Dryzek’s engaging analysis

captures a litany of contemporary situations with vivid and effective examples. Dryzek seamlessly weaves together previously developed concepts like legitimacy and representation to demonstrate the utility of deliberative democracy in various governance networks. Dryzek then explores the deliberative role in the democratization of authoritarian states. For Dryzek, the most important point is that thoroughly understanding the capacity of deliberative democracy may prove insightful for transitioning democracies. The importance of this capacity also exists in minipublics. Dryzek argues that deliberative features of minipublics encourage competence (teaching) and help to displace symbolic politics (learning). In turn, these lessons empower participants at the macro level. Dryzek concludes with an investigation in global politics.

In Part IV, Dryzek provides a chapter-by-chapter summary of the book. Though Dryzek's writing is generally clear and precise, the book benefits from a conclusion that adds a sense of completeness. Dryzek tends to raise a lot of questions, and Part IV demonstrates his commitment to discussing the answers, or at least potential answers, to these questions. Readers will likely find this attention to detail refreshing.

Foundations and Frontiers of Deliberative Governance also contributes significantly to deliberative scholarship. John Dryzek is an important figure in deliberative democracy research, and the book centralizes his recent scholarship. The book also adds to the horizontal expansion of deliberative democracy in practice through minipublics, governance networks, democratization of authoritarian states, and global politics. In terms of vertical expansion, Dryzek further develops the concept of discursive representation and builds his arguments for a meta-consensus. The criticisms of deliberative democracy will likely continue, but Dryzek provides new momentum to contemporary interpretations that maintain fidelity to deliberative democracy.

The core of Dryzek's arguments emerge in Part II. The first foundation, legitimacy, plays a prominent role for deliberative scholars. Dryzek argues for an approach to deliberative democracy that emphasizes the contestation of discourses. A discourse is "a shared way of comprehending the world embedded in language. In this sense, a discourse is a set of concepts, categories and ideas that will always feature particular assumptions, judgments, contentions, dispositions, intentions and capabilities" (p. 31). According to Dryzek, the process of representation would benefit from focusing on discourses rather than simple "head counts." As a consequence, discursive representation can enhance legitimacy. Dryzek also foreshadows later arguments by indicating that a discursive turn could rebut the pluralism critiques often launched against deliberative democracy. In terms of legitimacy, Dryzek argues that a "discursive legitimacy is achieved to the extent a collective decision is consistent with the constellation of discourses present in the public sphere" (p. 35). A discursive legitimacy is therefore judged by the extent to which an agreement resonates with discourses.

Dryzek continues by examining representation as the second foundation of deliberative democracy. Representation closely follows the foundation of legitimacy. Since democracy entails "the representation of discourses as well as persons, interests, or groups," Dryzek seeks to "show how it can be accomplished in practice" (p. 43). Building on the contestation of discourses, Dryzek forwards an idea he calls the "Chamber of Discourses," an institution that would resemble Congress. Rather than hosting

representatives of citizens, however, the Chamber of Discourses would host representatives of discourses. The goal of such an institution, for Dryzek, is to create an institutional deliberative forum. Unfortunately, readers will likely struggle to imagine the actual implementation of such a notion. Dryzek even acknowledges this reaction and devotes more time to providing a meaningful illustration of an informal Chamber of Discourses. Public figures today (e.g., Bono) represent discourses that resonate within the public space. Of course, a collection of these representatives may prove entertaining, but their role as informal representatives does make a powerful argument for the importance of legitimate representation. Dryzek, though ambitious, makes it clear that the foundations of deliberative democracy are very real and relevant today.

Dryzek moves on to investigate communication as the third foundation of deliberative democracy. Dryzek navigates all the way from Plato's lingering critique of rhetoric, to Habermas' commitment to reason, to democratic theory's perpetual problem in application, and finally arrives with an accurate picture of democracy today. That picture includes obstacles that necessitate persuasion. These obstacles take shape through expanding social divisiveness, increasing social injustice, and the widening gap between the public and the empowered spaces. The value of rhetoric, then, manifests in its ability to communicate public opinion to empowered spaces, to stimulate expression and reflection, to bridge differently situated groups, to penetrate misconceptions through irony and metaphors, and to provide the means for marginalized voices to overcome disadvantages in rational argument. Dryzek further explicates this value of rhetoric with an array of powerful examples from Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela to the hole in the ozone layer and climate change. Dryzek skillfully demonstrates the critical importance of rhetoric in deliberative democracy.

Last, Dryzek focuses on consensus as the fourth foundation of deliberative democracy. Dryzek ambitiously attempts to merge together pluralism and consensus based on his development of deliberative democracy. After detailing some relevant themes of Habermas, John Stuart Mill, Popper, and Rawls, Dryzek turns to contemporary critiques of deliberative democracy. In particular, Dryzek highlights arguments by Mouffe and Young to explain how the current critiques of deliberative democracy revolve around an apparent conflict between pluralism and consensus. To Dryzek, these values are not mutually exclusive, and Mouffe and Young should be considered deliberative democrats.

Dryzek makes such a bold claim based on his conceptualization of consensus. For Dryzek, there are three kinds of consensus. The first, normative consensus, "refers to agreement regarding values driving the decision process; the second, epistemic consensus, refers to the judgmental aspect of preference formation;" and the third, "preference consensus, pertains to the degree of agreement about what should be done" (p. 94). Each has a counterpart. "Normative meta-consensus" refers to the "agreement on recognition of the legitimacy of a value, though not extending to agreement on which of two or more values ought to receive priority in a given decision" (p. 96). "Epistemic meta-consensus" refers to the "agreement on the credibility of disputed beliefs, and on their relevance to the norms that define the issue at hand" (p. 98). "Preference meta-consensus" refers to the "agreement on the nature of disputed choices across alternatives" (p. 99). Given this typology of consensus, Dryzek argues that deliberative democracy preserves pluralism at the simple level of consensus while achieving consensus on one or more of the meta-levels.

Dryzek's insightful view of consensus seems straightforward, but his explanation of meta-consensus in discursive terms loses some of this clarity. Dryzek argues that the acceptance of some consensus by pluralists, like Mouffe's acknowledgment of ethico-political rights, demonstrates the potential to merge consensus and pluralism under the banner of deliberative democracy. While Dryzek acknowledges that Mouffe would still consider any meta-consensus political and therefore contestable, Dryzek counters by arguing that his discursive meta-consensus is a hegemony not unlike Mouffe's "enemy/adversary" distinction. Rather than developing this argument in more depth, however, Dryzek merely references the absence of Mouffe's response. Dryzek asserts that Mouffe refuses to endorse contestation of the enemy/adversary distinction by pointing simply to her silence on the question altogether. This is perhaps one instance where Dryzek could invest more time and evidence to develop his argument. Unfortunately for the reader, this gap comes at the critical moment of Dryzek's analysis that attempts to join deliberative democracy and pluralism. Nevertheless, the author clearly advances his thesis that "whatever we want deliberative democracy to do, the task will be facilitated by the degree to which a deliberative system can generate free and reasoned meta-consensus" (p. 85).

Ultimately, Dryzek's biggest challenge lies in the degree of ambition he brings to the task. His impressive attempt at constructing a comprehensive account of deliberative democracy predictably leaves some stones unturned. For example, the reader is left to wonder how Dryzek's understanding of the private might implicate the production and distribution of discourses. More generally, Dryzek's emphasis on defining what deliberative democracy is omits a fruitful discussion of what deliberative democracy is not. Dryzek briefly mentions the "danger is if deliberative democracy is everything, maybe it is nothing" (p. 207). Given the earlier appeal to rhetoric as a tool for difference and marginalized voices, readers might imagine that deliberative democracy includes the occasional use of deception, strategizing, poetry, and private experience. Unfortunately, Dryzek forgoes this opportunity to distinguish between good and bad forms of rhetoric. Of course, these problems may be inescapable collateral damage from the magnitude of the task at hand.

Foundations and Frontiers of Deliberative Governance provides a thoughtful and concise depiction of deliberative democracy today. Dryzek successfully balances deliberative democracy in theory and practice today. The book contributes to a systemic view of deliberative democracy, while carefully handling modern criticisms. Dryzek deftly challenges the reader to conceive of deliberative democracy in terms of its many applications. This book reads well but requires some familiarity with the field. *Foundations and Frontiers of Deliberative Governance* will prove to be a useful referent for future deliberative democracy research.