

Pinker in *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* [2002] or, more recently, Kevin J. Mitchell in *Innate* [2018]. In this regard, an individual's genetic background is understood as interacting with the environment, with both determining personal development. Plomin does not deny the environment's role in determining 'who we are', but he reconsiders the interaction between the two. In line with the implications of 'nature of nurture', the individual is seen as actively shaping the environment, and even more so in adulthood, implying that there is not much space left for parenting or schooling in changing certain inherited psychological traits.

Similarly, the environment is considered as unpredictably affecting the individual, mostly based on unplanned, erratic events that happen in the non-shared environment. A question naturally arises. Does Plomin go too far in speculating on the implications of the findings? Arguments such as the irrelevance of parenting or the limited role of the type of schooling in determining psychological traits are difficult to accept, especially for social scientists that have been publishing several studies on the importance of these factors for a child's development.

Therefore, the book's main take-home message is the evidence that individuals are not born as a *tabula rasa*, as genes influence the way a person interacts with the environment. However, the role of the environment is overly reduced by Plomin. Not all interventions are useless in enhancing an individual's quality of life but more needs to be known on which are the most effective factors that can contribute to improving an individual's life outcomes. Therefore, how the environment interacts with genes is still open to debate. In this context, psychologists and social scientists can be motivated to build studies with more robust empirical evidence to support their claims, taking into consideration the possible confounder of genetic background

and the variations in which genes interact with environmental stimuli. First, this would enable studies on nurture, such as ones on the role of parenting or schooling, to build more robust findings and claims, controlling for the effect of genes. Second, how nature and nurture interact with each other in different national, institutional, and cultural contexts needs further explanation so that we can better grasp the various ways in which the two could determine certain psychological traits or outcomes in life across populations. Third, what seems clear is that the never-ending debate on nature and nurture still offers new insights and discoveries that can be particularly vivid in the contemporary academic debate. So, the latest findings and methods available can inspire further studies and conversations and lead to breakthroughs in the understanding of 'what makes us who we are'.

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James S. Fishkin: *Democracy When the People Are Thinking: Revitalizing Our Politics Through Public Deliberation*
Oxford 2018: Oxford University Press, 272 pp.

In this ambitious book James S. Fishkin tries to solve one of the biggest problems of modern democracies: 'How to engage the actual will of the people into the political process?' With *Democracy When the People Are Thinking: Revitalizing Our Politics Through Public Deliberation* Fishkin sets the stage for relevant questions that political science litera-

ture—in his opinion—has not paid enough attention to for a while. For this he goes back to the roots of democracy and democratic thinking, by building on the cornerstones of the democratic principles of ancient Athens and borrowing the philosophical concept of deliberation from John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas. His main concerns with the current state of democracy are (1) the way ‘the will of the people develops’ and (2) ‘the mechanisms by which that will is expressed’ (p. 2). His criticism is especially based on Bernard Manin’s diagnosis of ‘audience democracy’ (p. 5) and refers to Schumpeter’s reflections on the ‘manufactured will’ of the people, caused by elite manipulation of the public.

Fishkin separates the book into four parts. Part one introduces the reader to his thoughts on the current state of democracy and his aims in establishing deliberation as a central part in modern (more specifically US) democracy. For this he outlines a trilemma between political equality, deliberation, and participation, a problem he addresses later in the book with the idea of Deliberation Day. In part two, Fishkin starts by listing four criteria for popular control: inclusion, choice, deliberation, and impact (pp. 13–14). He furthermore establishes his four principles of democracy: ‘political equality, (mass) participation, deliberation, and avoiding tyranny of the majority’ (p. 23). Based on these principles he evaluates current forms of democracy (competitive democracy, elite deliberation, participatory democracy) and compares them with deliberative democracy in how they achieve these principles. In part three he delivers the key evidence for the validity of deliberative democracy by examining, in depth, four microcosmic examples of deliberative polling in California, Mongolia, Uganda, and the EU. In all four examples this microcosm consisted of a few hundred people that gathered over a weekend for deliberation in small groups and bigger plenary sessions, with the support

of moderators and competing experts. In evaluating these experiments, Fishkin lists eight criteria that need to be fulfilled for representativeness and good deliberation. He lists three criteria for representativeness: ‘1) demographic representativeness, 2) attitudinal representativeness, 3) sample size’, (p. 73) and five criteria for good deliberation: ‘4) the opportunity to engage policy arguments for and against proposals for action in an evidence-based manner, 5) knowledge gains, 6) opinion change, 7) whether or not distortions in the dialogue are avoided, 8) whether or not there are identifiable reasons for considered judgements after deliberation’ (ibid.). These criteria are Fishkin’s main tools to examine and investigate deliberative polls around the world and he argues that these are largely fulfilled in all of the examples presented to the reader.

Part four of the book is the most interesting. Here, Fishkin aims to design deliberative elements to be implemented into the US political process. This is also the part where the reader will find out if Fishkin’s theory can stand the test of reality. By building on the evidence from the third part, Fishkin addresses some of the main criticisms in an effort to disperse, for example, concerns about the risk of deliberative polling being biased towards the status quo or the opinions of the elite. Fishkin goes on to distance his ideas from the reflections of Rawls and Habermas, criticising the former for only engaging in theoretical and hypothetical thought-experiments and the latter for not offering any concrete institutional framework for putting the principles to work. Following discussions on implementing deliberative elements into the constitutional, candidate-selecting, and agenda-setting process, Fishkin goes on to elaborate on his main idea, Deliberation Day, a proposal that, in his opinion, could solve the aforementioned trilemma between political equality, participation, and deliberation by offering

deliberative polling on a national scale in similar conditions to the microcosm. By making it a public holiday and reimbursing people for attending, Fishkin aims to motivate every citizen to equally participate in a one-day deliberation event, which should fulfil the criteria he established in part three and finally offer the democratic legitimacy for deliberation to have a sustainable impact on the political process.

What is the potential behind Fishkin's idea? Fishkin's arguments fit onto a broad base of theory and evidence on the qualities of democracy, and the reader can turn to well established insights on public opinion and its manipulation by Walter Lippmann or Joseph Schumpeter and to research and theory on the effectiveness of and problems with modern democracy [Dahl 1956, 1989; Manin 1997; Przeworski 2018]. An important insight into the connection between public opinion and deliberation can be gained by applying Timur Kuran's [1995] theory of preference falsification to a very recent example of deliberation in the constitutional process, namely, the political discourse on liberalising abortion rights in the Republic of Ireland. When the criteria for good deliberation are fulfilled we can aim to minimise the distortions between public and private preferences by laying open people's actual private preferences, and de facto show actual public opinion, all on the condition that the deliberative design minimises social pressures and bias and effectively communicates the results to the greater public. The preference falsification could remain persistent during the debates since there will be a bigger audience and some participants still feel the social pressure and are uncomfortable voicing their actual opinion. However, when it comes to the final poll, the results of which will be communicated to the public sphere, the participants fill out anonymous judgement questionnaires. In this situation the participant will not have an incentive to falsify his or her

opinion. Therefore, we argue that the social pressure in this situation is less prevalent and following Kuran's argument we expect less preference falsification.

As to the question of how to scale up deliberative polls, Fishkin has set out to offer ideas on how to implement deliberative democracy on a larger scale in the US political process. We therefore now turn to the process of scaling up the method of deliberative polling. In the process of scaling up, we identified a number of barriers or problems along the way: costs, the quality of moderation and experts, the inertia of political institutions, and motivating people to participate. First and foremost, somebody has to *pay the bill* for deliberation. We have seen in the evidence presented by Fishkin how much effort it takes to achieve the 'good conditions for deliberation' (p. 73). There is a need to more carefully consider the feasibility of raising the funds for such a large-scale event. Furthermore, we are faced with the problems of organising enough moderators for the sessions and the very high number of competing experts that help citizens deliberate. There is valid concern that this could lead to lower-quality moderation and experts, which are very key elements in ensuring good deliberation. Apart from the problem of getting hold of enough personnel, we also see a problem with having the government instituting the moderation of the deliberative process, simply because we cannot ignore the partisan nature of government. This raises the concern that the current government can influence the process of deliberation through this channel, a scenario that does not seem unlikely, considering the motivation of those institutions to hold on to their power. We can observe evidence of this meddling of the government in the close relationship between the executive and the judiciary, as well as in attempts to change the electorate in one's favour (i.e. gerrymandering and excluding prisoners or former prisoners from the right to vote).

A further point we would like to address is the problem of sufficiently motivating people to partake in this democratic process, an activity that takes up even more of their time than the regular voting process. The typical tools to increase participation, namely mandatory participation and financial compensation, both raise serious concerns about the state of people's intrinsic motivation to participate. Crowding theory [Sandel 2012; Bowles 2016] offers valuable insights to understand how financial incentives can crowd out the individual's intrinsic motivation to contribute and participate. Fishkin seems to forget that material incentives do not always have a positive effect since it has long been known that rewarding or compensating people with money or material things can crowd out their intrinsic motivation [Warneken and Tomasello 2008; Belkin 2002].

As to the idea of a deliberation day, we reiterate the problem of identifying the challenges of financing such a big event. Not only will it be expensive to pay the organisational costs but also the compensation of the participants' salary will be an issue. Fishkin does not properly address this issue. The problem seems even larger, considering that one day of deliberation per year might not be sufficient to properly address the important issues on the agenda. Another important issue will be to organise enough moderators and experts for each poll. Fishkin's solution to this problem would be to educate a random participant as a foreman for moderation and debate and then invite experts from the different parties. We notice a major challenge in the assumption that the foreman will be able to act as an apolitical and balancing moderator while still participating in the deliberation, confronting the individual with a difficult dilemma. We now take a step back and start asking ourselves 'who is going to appoint the citizens that need to be trained as apolitical foremen?' This requires us to reflect on whether we need an

apolitical organisation that randomly invites people to have this opportunity or if this is even possible since this organisation has to be funded by the current government and that could likely lead to a bias in the interest of the incumbent. Or maybe we need to make it mandatory for citizens to take part in this process. In doing so we might fear that the motivation for participation and being truly interested in the job as a foreman might be crowded out owing to the feeling that this is a burden being placed on citizens by the current state. This concern about motivation can be extended to general participants and we are unsure if Fishkin's solution of creating a national holiday and compensating participants would be either effective or adequate. Regarding the matter of experts, we highly doubt that it is fitting to equate political party representatives with experts. It would be bold to assume that party representatives would act in an unbiased way since it might be hard for them to separate the interests of the party from the actual facts of the issues at hand.

Lastly, we point out the issue of inertia in political institutions as we do not believe that Fishkin's proposal offers an adequate solution for assuring the political impact of this deliberation, keeping in mind that this was one of his four criteria for popular control.

All in all, Fishkin's newest book offers a great insight into the problems of our current democracies and makes a good case for adding deliberative democracy to the political process. We do, however, see many challenges to scaling up the concept to a national level and we would conclude that Deliberation Day cannot solve the trilemma between political equality, participation, and deliberation.

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Surendra Munshi (ed.): *Democracy Under Threat*

New Delhi 2017: Oxford University Press, 221 pp.

This timely edited volume aims to map the endangered state of democracies around the globe, to understand the potential causes of this crisis from various angles, and to explore plausible solutions. To this end, it brings together twenty contributors from fourteen countries with various backgrounds—academics, counsellors, diplomats, journalists, and political leaders. The book consists of twenty essays, which are grouped into six parts. Following the editor's introductory essay, the first two offerings explore threats to democracy from the perspective of leadership and institutions. The third part examines the growing influence of authoritarianism in Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, East Asia, and

Turkey and Russia. Afterwards, in the fourth part, the book delves into three specific threats to democracy—populism, caudillism, and dynastic rule. The last two sections investigate whether the West has failed in preserving and promoting democracies around the globe, and what insights we can draw from two prominent leaders—Václav Havel and Mahatma Gandhi—who upheld democratic values both in word and in deed.

In the opening essay, Surendra Munshi directs readers' attention to the famous 'end of history' remark made by Francis Fukuyama in his 1989 article. He argues against this interpretation by fleshing out the relevant contexts such as the general decline of democracy and its immanent problems, including legislative gridlock and gerrymandering, the increasing attractiveness of authoritarian alternatives, and the 2008 global financial crisis, whose origins can be traced to the old democracies. This nicely sets the stage for the next nineteen essays. Since a short review cannot do justice to the full range of contributions made by this diverse book, I will introduce the key arguments of five essays I found particularly intriguing.

To begin, an essay by Shlomo Avineri points out four challenges to liberal democracy in the West—the mass-elite representation gap, the mismanagement of economic crises, the rise of social media, and the inadequately handled large-scale immigration crisis. He ascribes voters' alienation to an out-of-touch parliamentary elite oblivious to daily concerns and problems of the wider public. For instance, he points out that the liberal left shifted their concern from the socio-economic needs of the working class to other socio-cultural concerns, such as the environment, global warming, gender equality, LGBT rights, race, and post-colonialism. He rightly argues that the liberal left (particularly the middle class and academics) should get out of their comfort zone and re-orient