



# Foundations of Social Choice Theory (Studies in Rationality and Social Change)

Jon Elster, Aanund Hylland

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The essays in this volume, first published in 1986, examine the philosophical foundations of social choice theory. This field, a modern and sophisticated outgrowth of welfare economics, is best known for a series of impossibility theorems, of which the first and most crucial was proved by Kenneth Arrow in 1950. That has often been taken to show the impossibility of democracy as a procedure for making collective decisions. However, this interpretation is challenged by several of the contributors here. Other central issues discussed in the volume include the possibility of making interpersonal comparisons of utility, the question of whether all preferences are equally to be valued, and the normative individualism underlying the theoretical tradition. Criticisms of social choice theory are advanced and suggestions for alternative approaches are developed.



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