

mitigation. And meritocratic promises are endangered when extreme wealth inequality is transmitted from one generation to the next.

Robeyns discusses policies that would constitute the essence of a limitarian policy platform, acknowledging that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Her proposals build on the work of Anthony Atkinson's book *Inequality* (2015), Thomas Piketty's *A Brief History of Equality* (2021) and Isabelle Ferreras and colleagues' *Democratize Work* (2022). These include giving workers more rights over firms' strategic decision-making and restoring governments' fiscal agency by changing tax rules to limit the possibilities for tax evasion.

Introducing steep taxes on inheritance should also be high on the limitarian agenda. Robeyns suggests a limit of €200,000 on the total amount that can be inherited by an individual throughout their lifetime. The funds collected would be redistributed by the state to younger citizens so that everyone would "start their adult life without worrying unduly about how they will get by".

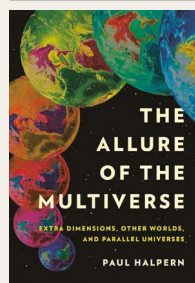
Looming over all these discussions is the ecological crisis and what limitarianism means on a planet with finite resources. In a dedicated chapter, the author ponders: "There is so much good that money above the riches line could do, if only it were used for addressing collective problems," such as climate change. Here, Robeyns argues that it would be politically and administratively easier to limit assets than to impose individual quotas to cap the appropriation of ecological resources, such as water or energy. Others might view the policies proposed by the author as equally difficult to introduce. The tough question of how to implement such limits in increasingly polarized and competitive electoral systems remains open.

Limitarianism is a thought-provoking read for all those interested in inequality. The French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, a founding text of political modernity in the eighteenth century, stated in its first article that: "Social distinctions may be based only on considerations of the common good." As billionaire wealth increasingly defines our era, it is time to engage in public debates about the point at which wealth concentration ceases to serve the common good. A starting place for this discussion is to ask ourselves when enough is enough: is it €10 million, or more, or less? Robeyns's original book sets out the proposals and logic to do just that.

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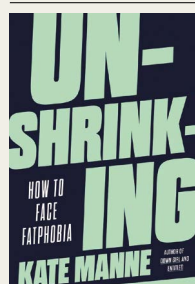
Books in brief



The Allure of the Multiverse

Paul Halpern *Basic* (2024)

The term 'multiverse' was coined in the 1890s by philosopher and psychologist William James, to describe a cosmos without distinction between right and wrong. Decades later, the word entered physics, owing to the 1950s many-worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics. Today, it is a source of controversy, says US physicist Paul Halpern. The multiverse, "with realms beyond direct detection", seems "antithetical to the goal of testability". But whether right or wrong, debating it is scientifically productive, Halpern maintains.



Unshrinking

Kate Manne *Crown* (2024)

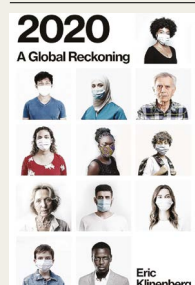
Researchers at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, studied the prevalence of six forms of implicit bias, and found that, from 2007 to 2016, fatphobia was the only one to worsen. As philosopher Kate Manne notes, fatphobia regards fatter bodies as being inferior to thinner bodies, "in terms of not only our health but also our moral, sexual and intellectual status". She spent most of her life trying to lose weight, until finally deciding to live as she wanted to. Her personal, unshrinking call to action should be widely read.



Not the End of the World

Hannah Ritchie *Little Brown Spark* (2024)

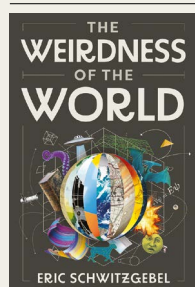
During her environmental-geoscience degree, data scientist Hannah Ritchie learnt about an endless series of depressing trends in global warming, ocean acidification and more. But now, as deputy editor of the online publication *Our World in Data*, she finds reasons for hope, as she explains in this fundamentally optimistic book on increasing sustainability. For example, global deforestation has been declining since the 1980s. She calls herself a "misfit scientist" because her team, rather than "zooming into a problem", learns by "zooming out".



2020

Eric Klinenberg *Bodley Head* (2024)

In 2020, New York City had the highest incidence of COVID-19 cases and fatalities of all cities. A "terrible misfortune", comments sociologist Eric Klinenberg, but a "blessing" for his research. His analytical yet moving account of the pandemic centres on the city but interweaves global evidence, drawing on virology, economics, sociology and the personal stories of seven individuals from five New York City boroughs. Its conclusion is disturbing: COVID-19 did not help the United States to "rediscover its better, more collective self".



The Weirdness of the World

Eric Schwitzgebel *Princeton Univ. Press* (2024)

"The universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose," remarked biologist J. B. S. Haldane. Philosopher Eric Schwitzgebel, paraphrasing Haldane, agrees. He opens: "The world is weird — deeply, pervasively so, weird to its core". His entertaining book of philosophy and science considers three topics: the cosmos's fundamental structure, the place of human consciousness in it and what humans should value. But he does not claim to offer definite answers. **Andrew Robinson**