

Pushing Social Philosophy to Its Democratic Limits

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Abstract

Roberto Frega's *Pragmatism and the Wide View of Democracy* reformulates the question of democracy posed by our current historic conjuncture using the resources of a variety of pragmatic thinkers. He brings into the contemporary conversation regarding democracy's fortunes both classical and somewhat neglected figures in the pragmatic tradition to deal with questions of power, ontology, and politics. In particular, Frega takes a social philosophical starting point and draws out the consequences of this fundamental shift in approach to questions of democratic and political theory. This turn to social philosophy as a theoretically more sufficient conceptual vocabulary, extended in detail by Frega, raises questions regarding the work that a social ontology does in clarifying the role of economic and political approaches to democracy that are worth further exploration. Likewise, the practical proposals for moving beyond methodological nationalism with respect to forming publics for the sake of problem-solving, while providing a clarifying and fresh starting point, are still too beholden to models of agency and expressions of coordinated action that themselves are the very fruit of those systems which undermine democratic power in the first instance.

Keywords

democracy – social philosophy – social ontology – the commons – inequality – economics – Hilary Putnam – John Dewey

Any thinker willing to take up the project of articulating a response as to whether democracy is a viable option today can for good reasons and evidence be of at least two minds. There is no doubt democracy's prospects have dimmed lately from a geopolitical perspective and the rise of authoritarian

governments in supposedly 'safe', 'model' countries of parliamentary democracy is alarming. The list of countries experiencing anti-democratic change is familiar by now and several recent theoretical articulations of democracy's demise are notably introduced in the opening of the book under discussion here. On the other hand, there is also evidence of a great many mobilizations of peoples across the globe and concrete instances of expansion of franchise, rights, and recognition within contexts that evidence democracy's vitality.¹ We are a long way from Fukuyama's celebration of liberal democracy as the 'end of history' but not so far that both the ideal of democracy and multitudes of people engaging in struggles to realize ends endogenous to democracy's continued relevance that we should write the obituary of our 'democratic' age. Indeed, even the liberal half of Fukuyama's ideological victor, 'liberal democracy', though bloodied, remains unbowed in the practical struggles of many peoples striving for political change today insofar as 'rights' still have some meaning and force in political life. This is not to say that democracy's prospects are not tenuous. Nor is it to say that the dominant narratives of the progress of democracy of which Fukuyama is an extreme example, and with which Roberto Frega opens his discussion in *Pragmatism and the Wide View of Democracy*, are conclusive or not in need of serious reconstruction as the discipline of history widens its narrative resources to include the marginalized, the systematically excluded and the 'losers' contemporaneous and often indispensable to democracy's historical march.² Rather, we are at a crucial point where we can ask the question 'whither, democracy?' in as pointed a fashion as we have been able to for some time. The status of democracy, however, was not as secure as many narratives suggest prior to the recent resurgence of authoritarian right wing governments. Any critical analysis of the histories of supposedly safely democratic nations raises crucial and pointed questions about such a narrative. This is a point to which I will return.

I cast these remarks within this broad frame as *Pragmatism: the wide view of democracy* seeks to speak to both possibilities in interpreting democracy from our current position. The book's vision is not just wide in the sense of extending the norms of democracy into all corners of society, but also in the breadth of theoretical approaches the book challenges and enlists in developing the

1 In this sense, the valence of 'populism' remains ambiguous, from my perspective. It does not seem to cut *necessarily* in the direction of anti-democratic change, though clearly it has. It does seem, though, that there is good reason and evidence to at least suspend the quite popular judgment that populist movements are necessarily anti-democratic, especially when taking the global scope that this book suggests.

2 Roberto Frega, *Pragmatism and the Wide View of Democracy*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan) 2019. Hereafter this text will be cited parenthetically by page number.

argument in support of this vision. Frega aims to revivify and recast the potential for democracy to reconstruct itself to address the problems of our species globally, and to provide theoretical and practical resources for advancing this aim. All that follows in these comments should be understood in the sense of friendly emendations and questions. That some of the questions and analyses are pointed is because the need for pragmatic political and social philosophy to address them is keenly felt by the author as someone who shares Frega's belief that pragmatism provides the most sophisticated theoretical resources for navigating the descriptive, explanatory, justificatory, and practical necessities for such a project.

What are the ambitions of pragmatism? In what ways has classical pragmatism provided means to foster the realization of those ambitions? In what sense are they to be reconstructed in light of developments within our global situation and human predicament? Any democratic theory today that takes its philosophical orientation from pragmatism must be able to offer a clear response to each of these questions. In this sense, the pragmatic starting point is always constrained and enabled by the unique character and scope of the problematic situation or- to borrow a term of reference from international relations- the historical conjuncture, as it exists. Indeed, this insistence of pragmatism is often reduced to an 'anti-ideological' trait that has the unfortunate and mistaken consequence of thinking that a pragmatist approach always selects a middle ground between two practical alternatives suggested by ideologically opposed perspectives. This is a false reading of pragmatism.³ The state of global 'democracy' and the conceptual battery we have at our disposal given the history of inquiry of our species serve as both our theoretic and practical constraints *and* what enables reflection and action with regard to our

3 This tendency is unfortunately also exhibited by those who self-describe as pragmatists. For example, after his initial election much ink was spilled upon the question of whether Obama is a pragmatist or not. This is to put the cart before the horse. Rather, in privileging the "problematic situation" as the primary focus of inquiry, pragmatism in providing as robust and adequate a description of the situation then turns to a certain policy proposal to see if it is relevant to certain policies or individuals if one is interested in classifying their philosophical outlook. So, in terms of the question one would need to articulate the character of the problems associated with the 'dominant patterns' prevailing in the United States, among other facets of the problematic situation, and then turn to Obama to see if the proposed policy solutions can be adequately reflective of the normative commitments that are generally accepted as following upon a generally agreed upon set of norms that can be called pragmatist. In this sense, rather than being inherently conservative, the pragmatist can actually transform the supposed conceptual alternatives on offer, and instead of navigating an automatic *media res* between them, can instead tap into what would appear to be utopian from the two status quo alternatives, but is nonetheless realistic as a goal given the inadequacy of the alternatives on offer and the strength of its adequacy to the facts of the problem.

context. Frega makes a significant contribution to rearticulating the resources that pragmatism offers in redrawing the scope of democratic thought particularly in his thoughtful reconstruction of the utopian energy internal to such a view. The 'width' in his wide view of democracy extends across all areas of life, from the market, to administrative bureaucracy, to schools, and of course to politics, redefining the latter in the course of placing a primacy on the social dimension of human being. In this sense he takes up the first aspect of a Dewey-inspired theory of inquiry in terms of analytically defining and discriminating the features that make up the problematic situation to include humanity's species-being as well as the inherited political and social structures concomitant with human evolution. That is, in fulfilling the pragmatic dictum of inquiry to in the first instance get the problem right, and that fulfilling this dictum gets us 'far along in inquiry', Frega highlights both the need for historical and sociological reflections as well as an account of human agency, or philosophical anthropology. The latter he refers to as a social ontology and is a welcome contribution to drawing out the consequences of pragmatism for democratic theory. It does however, raise a question as to the metatheoretical position the book aims at with such a move.

Frega enlists a social ontology to undergird a shift to a democratic theory rooted in social philosophy. Social philosophy has more recently re-emerged as a contender to 'abstract' versions of political philosophies that are according to critics guilty of at least three faults. These political philosophies are so ideally oriented that their normative appeals become emaciated and abstract. They are too indebted to a model of practical reason bereft of the socially constitutive elements of our agency. And finally, democratic political philosophies that eschew the rationalist path in political philosophy become so empirically minded as to be blind to the ways in which the methods of description reify the object of inquiry in a scientistic way, draining the contextual and social specificities of democracy. When these deficits are corrected for, social elements are brought in that rectify the exclusion of historical, political, and economic elements that give a particular character to any practical reasoning context, avoiding striking the false note of theoretically abstracted and hypostatized traits of our agency to the exclusion of others. Dewey's term for such abstraction was 'apart thought' in his philosophy, and in this he carries on in the Hegelian spirit of attempting to root moral theory that ought guide political thought in the concrete ethical life of a community.⁴ The consequences for Frega's theory of democracy are fundamental as he combines this shift with a theory of democratic normativity that rests on three main pillars: 1) relational parity requiring

⁴ It is relevant to recall that the increasing prominence of social philosophy to critical theories of society has been heavily influenced by Axel Honneth. His understanding of the task of social philosophy is as a diagnosis and therapy of social pathology..

that “an individual’s position within a relation and the specific content of that relation do not depend upon one’s social status” (80) It is, importantly, “not what one has” that determines the relation “but how one is treated” (81). 2) inclusive authority requiring that “individuals be the authors of the decisions whose consequences they will undergo rather than their passive recipients” (81). and 3) social involvement: a “social unit’s capacity to involve members in a plurality of social practices, particularly those having in view some common good” (82). He distinguishes his view from three other strategies aiming to expand the scope of democracy; 1) from formal political structures into the wider society; 2) by rooting democracy in morality and moral concepts such as respect that institutions are obligated to promote; and 3) by privileging economic reproduction as a locus of democratic transformation, a strategy mobilized by a recognition of the interimbrication of the state, market, and society. Rather a ‘social theoretic approach to democracy’ reverses the priority of theoretical importance accorded the ‘social’ with respect to the ‘political’ and redraws the classificatory map of democracy rooting politics, morality, and economics in this social ontology based in interaction.

Insofar as Frega’s ontology is social, it can provide an understanding of human being as constituted by group membership, developing interests that are formed through group interaction, and provide justificatory support for the normative and institutional picture that he develops later in the text. In this sense, political and economic activities grow out of an ontological condition marked by these social constituents. Interestingly, Frega’s move here is to

describe[] the democratic norm in terms of the individual habits which are at play in everyday intercourse of the patterns of social interaction that give shape to our encounters with others in all walks of life, and the organization forms through which the democratic norm is realized anytime human beings come to interact on a regular basis as it happens within all types of social organizations and institutions (16).

In addition, a social ontology keeps the issues of both needs and the self-expressive character of humans at the heart of his democratic proposals and discussion of other democratic theorists. Indeed one of the great strengths of this work is to more fully articulate the ways in which bifurcating instrumental rationality and expressive articulation lead to nefarious consequences, most dramatically in this text in terms of his discussion of Jurgen Habermas’ theory of democracy.⁵ As we

5 For a treatment of this problematic bifurcation see Brendan Hogan, “Practices of interpretation: social inquiry as problem solving and self-definition” in *Pragmatismo e Ermeneutica*, Eds. Bussacchi and Nieddu, (Rome: Mimesis) 2020.

shall see in the conclusion of the paper, this ontological picture can be articulated using pragmatic resources and models of human agency that challenge some of the practical conclusions Frega offers.

By making the social prior to the political and the economic, Frega provides a vantage point by which to position political and economic proposals as to their claim for our allegiance in discussing proposed extensions of democracy. This move is resonant with several older elements of the larger tradition of 'Western' philosophy Frega works within, at least structurally, including the Aristotelian. That is, the work that a social ontology does in this text is to provide a kind of theoretical foundation from which to assess other models of how humans can solve their problems such that the ontological structure and the capacities therein can attain full expression and flourishing. It is of course granted that the pragmatist picture dispenses with the teleology of final ends and the reification of particular models of the soul that fund Aristotle's vision of the political animal's flourishing or in Aquinas' adaptation, the social animal. However, each thinker roots their normative prescriptions in natural or ontological features of the human being, including the necessary social structures for human flourishing. It is notable that Frega departs from and is critical of Arendt's Aristotelian picture in the text, which is a more recent example of privileging of the political dimension of human being.

Question on the Relation of the Social and the Political

A question arises, however, that follows upon redrawing the question of democracy away from a more rationalistic or individualistically inspired vision that rests either on republicanism or social contract theory and towards a picture of the relationship between politics and association with social interaction being primary to political relationships. One of the traditional ways of stating the between the political and the social as conceived here, is to ask the question "How does an inherited political system, specifically the laws (either secular or sacred) under which communities organize themselves shape the individual personalities that are the locus of 'the individual habits which are at play in everyday intercourse of the patterns of social interaction that give shape to our encounters with others in all walks of life ...'?" That is, the kinds of association and interaction available in the repertoire of any group are themselves funded by the kinds of norms and expectations that the laws have no insignificant power in fostering. By the time we are engaged in exercising and enacting the three norms listed above, we are already habituated into a kind of moral self-consciousness in part due to the political regime in which

we are raised and encultured. It's an old question, but one I think relevant here to the relationship between the political and the social, expressed in Plato, for instance, that different constitutions give rise not only to a differentiation of power and legal relations, but that this differentiation shapes the actual psychology and personality of the individuals living under those laws. An insight, incidentally, in tune with Dewey's own reflections on the relationship between class structure and the self-understanding of a people in his reflections on Aristotle and Plato.

One of the strategies Frega enlists to reorient the priority to the social is detailed in reference to "the persistence of the ancient regime" (107). The persistence of relations of domination in social interaction while the law and political organ of a community decree equality is well taken. And one might wonder if that fact could be inscribed within our social ontology in a more pessimistic vein as in Hobbes and Nietzsche, or, closer to the Hegelian tradition out of which pragmatism emerges, Marx. It is one of the strongest features of Frega's work that he enlists a strong battery of empirical accounts of this persistence in arguing for the need to reorient our understanding of democracy on the wide scope he suggests with the attendant emphasis on the social as an *explanans* for the *explanandum* of pathologies seemingly dispensed with by law but that nonetheless persist. In short, however, if the current situation, not to say the human predicament overall, is such that no social relationship takes place that is not mediated by the political framework in which it develops, and this has constitutive features to the personality of the individual, then the political is indeed personal and as such social. Put differently, does the social have the logical priority that is claimed by the pragmatic tradition, even if it clearly does not have a temporal priority in the elucidation of human agency? This, it seems to me, is a relevant fact to consider. If indeed we redefine the political in light of the social such that it is essentially an arena for adjustment of conflict of groups, institutions, and interests of the wider social ontological base, it still seems as though it is equiprimordial and not a subset of social relations. This is an especially poignant question as Frega retains a role for the state in discussing the institutional framework of a democracy of publics that are beyond the pitfalls of methodological nationalism. Even if we reconstruct the state away from its Westphalian underpinnings and transform its legitimacy as cashed out in terms of its problem solving capabilities and purposes, as an instrument of publics organized within and across national borders, it appears to me that the rule of law and its enforcement still remain a thorny question for the proposals Frega articulates going forwards, and are present in the articulation of our ontology. The democratic norms on offer address these issues. The question lies in locating the concept of politics with respect to an ontology at the base of a theory of democracy.

A social ontology, like the normative core of democracy it supports, is able to incorporate these elements at a philosophical level, and it serves as a reserve from which to draw some critical purchase as to how we might envision the next steps in the pursuit of a global democratic configuration. However, the elements of the social theoretic framework proposed provide an architecture of groups, associations, interactions, and institutions that never exist except permeated by such political elements as mentioned above, and indeed moral and economic elements as well. If indeed political concepts of order, value, roles, and authority are concomitant with any social community, then the move to depoliticize an ontological conception runs the risk of abstraction. This move can be made with respect to the other strategies centering on morality and economy as well. In other words, the saturation of social relations with political conceptions is a fact of social life, while the fact of association regardless of any particular political conception is evident, so is the presence of political, moral, and economically reproductive features constitutive of any social assemblage. Frega is aware of this, and his model is an attempt to respond to these features in an inclusive way with a wider conception of democracy rooted in the social ontology on offer. It does seem to me an opening for further discussion as to how a wider conception of the political, moral, and economic features of our being as is evidenced by many critics of the larger democracy narrative mentioned in the opening have argued.

To extend this point, we might see the same issue with respect to a moral conception of democracy. Frega writes, "In other words, the kernel of the pragmatist theory of democracy is sociological rather than moral" (113). This to me runs the risk of establishing a kind of false opposition in the metatheoretical account of how one cashes out the fact/value distinction and pragmatism's own insights regarding the norms which guide inquiry. If it is sociological and its strength relies on a philosophical anthropological account of the human species as a social, problem-solving animal, do the norms which guide successful inquiry become a placeholder for what would otherwise be considered a moral conception? Aren't problems of associated living themselves saturated with politics, morals, and economy at varying degrees of intensity and remove? In other words, are there relations that are ever merely social? Further, does an ontology along a conception that places the moral, political, social, and economic on equal footing have a better purchase on the human condition, and thus offer us a more robust account? I think that this is a question for pragmatism generally, and though I am deeply sympathetic to Frega's view here, his being the most sophisticated contemporary defense of a social theoretic conception of democracy on offer, I do think that a more differentiated notion of the relation of politics, morality, economics and the social dimension of humanity is worth pursuing at the ontological level. That said, one of

pragmatism's innovations is to receive the inherited articulations of philosophy and intelligent life generally- in this context democratic expansion of the registers of politics, morality, and economics noted above- and adumbrate the ways in which these theories are subject to a variety of philosophical fallacies, hypostatizations, and abstractions themselves. The question would then be one of integration at the ontological level.

The question of economy, or material reproduction, and its particular role in furnishing a more robust ontological conception are worth considering here as well, as the strategies Frega offers in his conclusion touch on them. I also see this is an avenue not only for ontological expansion in the spirit detailed above with respect to morality and politics, but also for articulating the problematic situation that funds hypothetical experiments in extending democracy globally in our context. That is, it does not require a full blown theory of historical materialism to acknowledge that associative life, politics, and morality are hugely inflected with values introduced by the transition to a capitalist system that has become globally dominant. Dewey was clear on the dominance of economic interests and conceptions in his context in a variety of places. However, as Hilary and Ruth Anna Putnam note, his 'allergy' to systems thinking as he understood it tended to oversimplification and ideological obfuscation. It seems to me that one can avoid those pitfalls and still recognize the dominant force of social change, power, and cultural homogenization as being overwhelmingly driven by economic considerations.

Nonetheless, social ontology serves a significant justificatory role in supporting the normative core of Frega's novel paradigm concept for democracy and is invoked as providing such support for other elements of the theory. The historical development of the species introduces changes in the nature of human beings insofar as they are historical creatures on a pragmatic account, and they make their own history. This includes their self-conceptions as famously evidenced in Rousseau, Marx, and many others. It is pragmatism's signature contribution in this regard to extend a fallibilist self-consciousness alongside the articulation of our own authorship of our history through inquiry and critique. Another striking virtue of Frega's view is his demonstration that the creativity and experimentalism at the heart of classical pragmatist ontology removes the hypostatizations that create deep problems for the other strategies of democratic expansion.

Practical Proposals for a Wide View of Democracy

In the opening I remarked that one of the virtues of Frega's text is accepting the challenge of a Deweyan approach to inquiry as beginning with an analytic discrimination of the elements of any situation, these being constitutive features

of the problematic crossroads at which democracy sits. Frega takes up this challenge at both a deep philosophical level with respect to his social ontology and at an empirical level with respect to his analysis of the democratic deficits that plague contemporary societies. However, in examining two of his main suggestions, I argue, a deeper critical basis from which to assess what are suggested as promising avenues for democratization leave these suggestions wanting. This is due to an insignificant recognition of existing global dynamics of inequality and development, dynamics that can only be attributed to a pragmatically understood conception of 'system'.

The philosophical questions raised about the differentiation of our ontology can be seen to have practical consequences in terms of how we prioritize our understanding of democratic action. Certainly Frega's expansion of democracy through his articulation of the role of experimentalism, habits, and creativity within institutions traditionally sequestered from democratic theory, specifically in relation to Habermas is, in my opinion, one of the most important contributions of the work. Indeed, in his integration of several key aspects of Roberto Unger's work, he mobilizes pragmatism in more radical and progressive directions than is often the case in recent pragmatic political theory, and recalls John Dewey's own formulations regarding what democracy requires in light of global crises in the 1930s. Specifically, Frega revitalizes Unger's utopian energies, extending the insights of other pragmatist thinkers such as Richard J. Bernstein and Richard Rorty with respect to the role of imagination and idealization in guiding practical alternatives to rectify social pathologies in the present. It is Frega's adoption of Unger's proposal to change property relations that deserves more reflection, as carrying out such a program would require reconfiguring the architecture of global political economy. It would also have direct bearing on his practical proposals stemming from his endorsement of Ostrom's work on the commons, on the one hand, and the problems with an insufficiently worked out concept of a transnational public sphere, on the other.

For Frega, Ostrom's work on the commons is a promising as a new model that can internalize norms restricted from market activities and sidelined from logics of economic behavior that maximize efficiency through the application of instrumental rationality in an individualistic and competitive environment. Frega writes

in this vast and rapidly evolving set of economic practices, the digital commons stand out as exemplary, as in this context new technologies are increasingly expanding the scope of non-market and non-state models of production and consumption, contributing in significant ways to the decommodification of work and consumption (350).

And while “the participatory economy harbors significant risks of domination and gives rise to new forms of exploitation” Frega forges ahead on their “democratizing potential”. (350)

It is his discussion of the democratizing potential of the internet as an engine of peer production that I think departs from several constitutive features of our global problematic situation that make his recommendation less persuasive than it might be. First, I would like to focus on the particular good produced that he takes up as evidence of this democratizing potential, knowledge. While Frega argues that the internet and in particular the communication of knowledge and information have transformative effects with respect to consumption and production, it does seem to me that their potential to introduce new forms of domination, exploitation and inequality are profound.

I would like to mention three reasons for caution as to the democratizing potential of the internet via peer production: First, for a variety of reasons, the outstanding fact of the contemporary situation is that since the introduction of the internet inequality has in fact increased, with a variety of studies of both scholars and NGOs attributing that to the digital divide. If we are to follow Frega in his rejection of methodological nationalism with respect to organizing and activating the democratic potential of the peoples of the world, then our estimation of the likelihood that one of his main vehicles for such democratization as it exists now will contribute to this must be cautious if not negative. It is arguably an agent of increasing disparities and disrupting stable forms of social interaction that have more salutary effects on the flourishing of individuals.

Secondly, the internet does not exist as a free-standing conduit of facilitation, in the empty air, as it were. It is a material phenomena whose architecture is as much conditioned and constrained by the powers governing natural resource distribution and productive capacity as any technology. Far from being a force for ‘dematerialization’ and collapsing space and time as often emphasized, the actual materials used and resources expended are staggering, as well as a tremendous contributor to the climate crisis. And these developments, as is well known, are as often directed by investment capital and corporate bodies as by governments making decisions ‘democratically’ according to the pressure of such monolithic enterprises. The mining of minerals, the laying of cables, the allocation of bandwidth, and the speeds provided for the sake of knowledge transfer are all distributed according to existing hierarchies of power, resources, and social roles. Large parts of humanity are not in any sense ‘netizens’ and have no regular access to online activity nor live in environments where such knowledge can serve as the ‘good’ that it does in the context of its origin. It would seem that 25 years of expansion of internet access and the ‘free’

flow of information would have attested to, in an aggregative manner, a reduction in global inequality. It has not. It would seem then that the logic of the internet and its democratizing potential is going much more the way of other development schemes with respect to extending infrastructure, investment, and access along the lines of the rhetoric of economic globalization being a 'rising tides that lifts all boats'.

Lastly, if we are to carry out the program of democratization beyond the methodological nationalism that Frega rightly articulates the aporias of, certainly the linguistic barriers to such exchange must be noted. English is the global *lingua franca* and rather than being a neutral medium, it carries within it its own logic of access, entry fees for participation, and educational infrastructure that is disparately distributed to say the least. All of this is to say that the evidence for placing such faith in the possibilities of peer production and knowledge exchange via the internet seems more than mixed in such an environment. And this is not to mention the environmental cost of the infrastructure, unequally distributed across the planet.

Likewise, the notions of normative entrepreneurship and the activation of consumers into engines that power 'private authority' for the coordination of transnational publics engaged in problem solving are unfortunately not as promising as presented. Before addressing them, I would just note that to model a transnational public enlisting the language of market actors is to already cede too much ground to the dominant picture of human agency wrought by the shift to a winner-take-all market society. As Dewey argued in the 1930s in *Individualism Old and New* as well as, perhaps more poignantly, in *Freedom and Culture*, different ages of social development are dominated by a theory and model of human nature that selects one feature of the full human dimension and hypostatizes it into the controlling feature of our agency to the suppression of others, and thus full human flourishing.⁶ It is precisely the effort that Frega makes to introduce a social ontology of an experimental species that remakes its institutions of material and symbolic reproduction along the lines of both instrumental efficiency and self-expression unleashing dormant human potential to remake the world with utopian energies that points up the tension between the norms of democracy and market-based agency. Employing the vocabulary of an entrepreneur for the source of our norms is to place normativity within a production paradigm entirely circumscribed by commodity relations. The activity of entrepreneurs as practiced in market environments is double-faced. On the one hand entrepreneurs do indeed enlist their imaginations amidst the means available to meet a demand

6 See John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New*. (New York: Capricorn) 1930, and *Freedom and Culture* (New York: Paragon) 1939.

that is not being met. On the other hand, entrepreneurship in these contexts is unabashedly motivated by the self-interest of accumulation that meeting a market 'need' results in. In addition, entrepreneurship is often married with the projection of needs that are fabricated within an entire machinery of persuasion. The market is ideally constructed to meet the people's needs, to give the people what they want. However, 'the market' spends an incredible amount of resources convincing people to engage their labor power and the monetary returns of that labor power to purchase goods that they in no way need and in fact goes against their human interests, both individually and collectively. It is unclear to me why this hallmark of capitalist 'value-creation' serves as the model for dynamic and creative normative change.

Likewise, an individual's power of consumption is radically disparate across the globe and to articulate it as a democratic action one would need to overcome the participation barrier of the means to consume. Otherwise, it is a vehicle where your status depends on what you have, as opposed to what you are. 'Prosumption' depends for its power on the ability to steer production via consumption choices. Even combining in networks of certification does not overcome the problem of those who have no power because of lack of resources. In fact, the resort to private sources of authority due to state failure is an achievement of the market and private corporate power. States did not fail on their own. The story of how states have fallen down on coordinating problems reveals large forces at work, often in coordinated fashion to prevent just such functioning of state autonomy on the representative model of democracy, a model Frega well notes as outdated. In this sense something like a genealogical reconstruction of the sort championed by Dewey that investigates the sources of our frustrated interests as a path to articulating new problem-solving experiments is necessitated. It seems to me the most promising hypothesis proposes that the capture of the legislative organs of parliamentary democracies in no small part by those large transnational capital operations has led to state failure in solving these problems. Turning to private citizens who then work with these same firms for the sake of addressing massive environmental problems, for instance, requires what can only be referred to as a deep faith, in spite of the evidence, that firms can operate in a stakeholder as opposed to a stockholder fashion. This is not to mention the elimination of competitive cross-pressures that will undermine that activity on an open market. The proposed mechanisms of rearranging the activities of various players in the economic landscape, deepened and theoretically reconstructed by Frega in novel ways, have nonetheless been around for years in various guises in discussions of corporate social responsibility, consumer coalitions, and debates over the role of corporate power in a global market system. It is my hypothesis that

there is a systemic reason they do not take, and that this is because of systemic pressures and powers at cross purposes to a wide view of democracy. In spite of these pointed questions and issues, Frega has made a deeply significant and creative contribution to pragmatic philosophy in a way that advances democratic theory across a variety of traditions by leaps and bounds.