

**BOOK REVIEW: PETER FRANCIS FENWICK, THE  
FRAGILITY OF FREEDOM: WHY SUBSIDIARITY  
MATTERS (CONNOR COURT, 2014)**

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Peter Francis Fenwick's 'The Fragility of Freedom' is an important and challenging book. Many have expressed a yearning for a more fulfilling society which more effectively promotes and supports traditional values - diligence, prudence, justice, duty, charity and responsibility. Few have articulated so convincingly a constructive approach to achieving such a society.

Fenwick presents an analysis of why the current protocols of the democratic process have failed to create the community that we desire. He draws upon the work of a number of philosophers and economic theorists – the brief summaries of the work of six of those who perhaps most inspired him are a useful inclusion – and outlines the destructive outcomes of a system in which those who seek to gain or retain political power make promises to those individuals or groups who can assist their quest. Yet, these promises can only be delivered by unsustainable increases in government debt. His analysis resonates stridently as we reflect on our disappointment at the quality of recent electoral campaigns.

Issues that are particularly interesting in the book includes his critique of the response of the United States to the global financial crisis (which he regards as both incredibly damaging and immoral) and of the threats to

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the international monetary system from interventions such as ‘quantitative easing.’

Fenwick’s thesis for developing a more equitable and sustainable society centres on the principle of subsidiarity, where responsibility for the community’s wellbeing is embraced primarily by individuals, by families and by those community groups that are closest to those who need support – the antithesis of the prevailing view that welfare should be controlled and delivered by a central government.

This book will be of great interest and relevance to all who believe that democracy deserves better and can be better than its current manifestation.