

The Brisbane Network -- Communicating Ideas of Living During Covid 19

Overview Agenda on the What and How of Big Ideas

Brisbane Meetup Intellectual Network

28 March 2020

3.00 PM to 5.00 PM

I have no agenda for this online gathering except the principle of working through intellectual details together for common understanding. In these desperate times we need to work together for common goals. I have invited everyone in Brisbane who is concerned for ideas in living, all with history and intellectual tradition, to come together online to be able to express our big ideas and how we should communicate across the city.

Such an overview agenda has focused on big ideas for living in the times of a global pandemic. That focus goes to ethics, but it crosses over all areas of the big ideas – politics, society, psychology, and history. It has two parts. There is ‘what’ of the big ideas. Here as the intellectual historian I can guide the discussion by showing, at the outset, what are the frameworks across the Brisbane Meetup Intellectual Network. Secondly, there is the ‘how’ of the big ideas. What we have seen this week has been the challenge of mixed messages and a lack of clarity in sets of complex ideas behind political decisions. I have already put out a [blog post](#) which addresses this question.

The ‘What’ of the Big Ideas

A summary table might be helpful to start with, and it is located in the Appendix. Considering a sweep of philosophical history, I have identified 37 ideological frames in which you can identify big ideas as a focus on ethical thought. Each frame relates to a known philosophical school of thought. What I am looking for is the intellectual coverage of the Brisbane Meet Up scene against the wide range of scholarly ethical thinking. In relation to 26 ideological frames or philosophical schools of thought, there was not a Brisbane Meet-Up group which could be said that focuses on the belief system in question (including ‘anti-systems’). This leaves eight Brisbane Meet-Up groups where there eleven ideological frameworks in play:

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1. Brisbane Humanist Club of Friends
2. Brisbane Stoics
3. Brisbane Meetup Intellectual Network
4. Brisbane Purpose of Life in Buddhism
5. Building Emotional Intelligence
6. Coffee and Freethinkers
7. Gentle Thinkers: The Brisbane Meetup for Intellectual Debate
8. The Philosophy Café

Most of the Brisbane Meet-Up groups, though, will relate, at some time, to any of the 37 systems (including 'anti-system'). Thus it is worth considering all possible frames, following roughly the origins in ancient or modern first articulations of thought:

1. **Family Piety:** Family loyalty is most likely the first articulated frame in ethical thought.
2. **Man is the Measure of All Things:** The idea of relations soon follows, and the measure becomes human experience or culture.
3. **Important Consequences:** That action or relations has consequences of ethical behaviour.
4. **Mutual Conversation:** As a consequence, 'relating' requires mutuality in communication.
5. **Self Interest:** To communicate, a person needs to 'know thyself', and immediately interest arises.
6. **Stoic Calm:** For clarity of thought on one's interest, the emotions have to be calmed.
7. **Pleasure is Good:** Calming nerves, brings the idea of the good, since it has a pleasurable response.
8. **Selfless Welfare of the Other Person:** One important pleasure is the interest of the other, even as it diminishes self-interest.
9. **Suspend Judgement:** How do we decide between self-interest and the interest of the other? We have to suspend judgement, even to be able to decide.
10. **Act Virtuously** (eudaimonia): Judgement is best from stepping back and looking at a life of action. Has life flourished (defined by virtues)?
11. **With Ideas from Many Systems Contextually:** On the other hand, maybe we cannot stand back, and must judge matters on a case by case basis (casuistry).
12. **Common Good:** However, we can recognise a good which is common to everyone.
13. **The Natural is Good:** The common good is in the natural order of things.
14. **Divine Command:** The Good is not the natural, but God (Good = God).

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15. **Gamble on Trust & Not Moral Laxity:** Following the good, is following 'God', which may not be the divine entity 'out-there'.
16. **Internal Awareness:** The 'divine' voice of the good is inside you (not 'out-there')
17. **Common Sense:** This internal awareness of good is common to all.
18. **Principles or Ideals:** Sense is not always commonly perceived and internal awareness is the categories of the mind (i.e. concepts that organise principles and ideals).
19. **Duty to Reason:** Reason is the supreme concept that holds everything together, and so we obligated to it.
20. **Social Good:** Everything does not necessarily hold together, and we compete for social goods; and yet this means the good requires choices for the benefit of society.
21. **Only Suffering:** Society is an illusion, only suffering is our reality.
22. **Biological Disposition:** Reality is the natural order, but an order that evolves, and what we are naturally disposed to do is the order of the good.
23. **Good for Social Majority (Workers) Against the State:** Society is not illusion but it is controlled by the State; the good is evolving beyond the State to the benefit of workers.
24. **Good for Social Majority (Workers) Evolving in the State:** Society is not illusion but is the community, at times, controlled by the State; the good is evolving with the State to the benefit of workers in community.
25. **The Utility of the Common Good:** Good is for the benefit of all, not just 'workers', and it can be calculated so the majority benefits.
26. **Without any State Authority:** The State is the problem for the Good, it must be immediately removed.
27. **Power Beyond the Good (Better?):** What is 'Good' is what is beyond the categories of 'Good and Evil', and it lies in power relations.
28. **High Culture is the Good:** The best power relations are the best of culture.
29. **What Works:** The categories of the mind has only caused confusion on the Good, the Good is what works.
30. **No Explanation, Only Descriptions:** The Good is only what we feel.
31. **There is No Essential Good:** The Good is beyond any essence, it is the meaning we construct.
32. **No Harm:** Whatever schema we work with, the Good must do no harm.
33. **Moral Reasoning Without Casuistry:** Beyond the failure of a schema, we do reason morally but we should reason on broad principles of critical thinking, not on applied ethics (casuistry).
34. **What We Are Thinking in Terms of 'Morality':** The answer does not lie in any schema of philosophy (to justify the argument of the Good), but describing the moral condition in our psychology.
35. **Communicative Rationality:** Reason does not hold everything together but is the fundamental element of communication; this way we know the Good in relating.

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36. **Feminine Caring:** The fundamental element of the Good is caring, which is best seen in the feminine condition.
37. **Without Obligation or System:** All elements are drawn from our existential condition, we should relate the Good without a sense of obligation or beholden to a system.

See the Appendix for a fuller guide.

The 'How' of the Big Ideas

The 'how' is the realm of political decisions. I am not going to say much here. It is not one of my main fields of expertise, but the list above often relates to political ideologies, and it is the insight to the 'how' of big ideas. The global pandemic will be a challenge to our thinking on our democratic way of life, not necessarily to destroy it, but hopefully to be able to think through on our systems of government. This involves understanding the justification of government, whether we agree or not. It is also is currently relating, in the public discourse, a big question of the relationships between the individual, community, and the State.

For discussion.

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APPENDIX

Ideological Frame	Brisbane Meet-Up	System Name	Lead Philosopher	Lifetime
Family Piety	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Role Ethics or Neo-Confucianism or Familialism (Family Values)	Confucius	BCE 551-479
			Louis de Bonald	1754-1840
			Hozumi Yatsuka	1860-1912
			Frank Knight	1885-1972
			Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn	1909-1999
Man is the Measure of All Things	Brisbane Stoics ; Brisbane Humanist Club of Friends	Moral Relativism or Cultural Pluralism	Protagoras	BCE 490-420
			Herodotus	BCE 484-425
			Sextus Empiricus	160-210 AD
			Baruch Spinoza	1632-1677
Important Consequences	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Mohist (State) Consequentialism or Rule Utilitarianism or Two-Level Consequentialism	Mozi	BCE 470-391
			John Stuart Mill	1865-1868
			R. M. Hare	1919-2002
Mutual Conversation	Brisbane Meetup Intellectual Network ; Gentle Thinkers: The Brisbane Meetup for Intellectual Debate	Socratic Dialogue (variants of philosophical conversations)	Socrates	BCE 470-399
			Xenophon of Athens	BCE 431-354
			Marcus Tullius Cicero	BCE 106-43
			Boethius	477-524
			Owen Barfield	1898-1997
			André Gide	1869-1951
			Richard Rorty	1931-2007
Self Interest	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Ethical Egoism	Yang Zhu	BCE 440-360
			Aristippus of Cyrene	BCE 435-356

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			Aristippus the Younger	BCE-380-?
			Henry Sidgwick	1838-1900
Stoic Calm	Brisbane Stoics	Stoicism	Zeno of Citium	BCE 334-262
			Seneca the Younger	BCE 4-65 AD
			Marcus Aurelius	121-180
			Albert Ellis	1913-2007
			Lawrence C. Becker	1939-2018
Pleasure is Good	Most hobby and dining Meet Ups in Brisbane ; Brisbane Classics Books Meetup	Hedonism or Epicureanism	Aristippus of Cyrene	BCE 435-356
			Epicurus	BCE 341-270
			Pierre Gassendi	1592-1655
			Walter Charleton	1619-1707
			François Bernier	1620-1688
			Charles de Saint-Évremond	1613-1703
			Ninon de l'Enclos	1620-1705
			Denis Diderot	1713-1784
			Thomas Jefferson	1743-1826
			Frances Wright	1795-1852
			Jeremy Bentham	1748-1832
			Stephen Greenblatt	1943-
			Christopher Hitchens	1949-2011
			Michel Onfray	1959-
Selfless Welfare of the Other Person	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Golden Rule', Christian Ethics	Jesus of Nazareth	4-33 AD
			Francisco de Vitoria	1483-1546
			Leonardus Lessius	1554-1623
			Richard Cumberland	1631-1718
			Samuel von Pufendorf	1632-1694
			H. Richard Niebuhr	1894-1962

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Ideological Frame	Brisbane Meet-Up	System Name	Lead Philosopher	Lifetime
			Dietrich Bonhoeffer	1906-1945
			Paul Ricœur	1913-2005
			John Howard Yoder	1927-1997
			Glen Stassen	1936-2014
			Stanley Hauerwas	1940-
Suspend Judgement	The Philosophy Café	Skepticism	Pyrrho of Elis	BCE 360-270
			Aenesidemus	c. 1st century AD
			Sextus Empiricus	160-210 AD
			David Hume	1711-1776
			Max Stirner	1806-1856
			Friedrich Nietzsche	1844-1900
			J. L. Mackie	1917-1981
Act Virtuously (eudaimonia)	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Virtue Ethics	Aristotle	BCE 384-322
			Niccolò Machiavelli	1469-1527
			David Hume	1711-1776
			G. E. M. Anscombe	1919-2001
			Philippa Foot	1920-2010
			Alasdair MacIntyre	1929-
			Paul Ricœur	1913-2005
			Amartya Sen	1933-
			Stanley Hauerwas	1940-
			Rosalind Hursthouse	1943-
			Martha Nussbaum	1947-
			Julia Annas	1946-
			Lawrence C. Becker	1939-2018
			Roger Crisp	1961-
			Michael Slote	?

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Ideological Frame	Brisbane Meet-Up	System Name	Lead Philosopher	Lifetime
With Ideas from Many Systems Contextually	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Applied Ethics (Casuistry)	Aristotle	BCE 384-322
			Joseph Alleine	1634-1668
			Richard Greenham	1535-1594
			George Gifford	1548-1620
			William Perkins	1558-1602
			Paul Laymann	1574-1635
			William Ames	1576-1633
			Antonio Escobar y Mendoza	1589-1669
Common Good	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Ethics of the Public Benefit or Commonwealth	G. E. Moore	1873-1938
			Peter Singer	1946-
			Aristotle	BCE 384-322
			Plato	427-424
			Thomas Aquinas	1225-1274
The Natural is Good	Most hobby Meet Ups in Brisbane based on moving through the natural environment	Ethical Naturalism	Niccolò Machiavelli	1469-1527
			John Locke	1632-1794
			Aristotle	BCE 384-322
			Jean-Jacques Rousseau	1712-1778
Divine Command	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Divine Command Theory	Augustine of Hippo	354-430
			Duns Scotus	1266-1308
			William of Ockham	1285-1347
			Søren Kierkegaard	1813-1855
Gamble on Trust & Not Moral Laxity	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Fideism	Blaise Pascal	1623-1662
			Søren Kierkegaard	1813-1855
			William James	1842-1910
			Ludwig Wittgenstein	1889-1951
Internal Awareness	Most hobby Meet Ups in	Ethical Intuitionism	Francis Hutcheson	1694-1746

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Ideological Frame	Brisbane Meet-Up	System Name	Lead Philosopher	Lifetime
	Brisbane based on the idea of 'soul'		Henry Sidgwick	1838-1900
			G. E. Moore	1873-1938
			H. A. Prichard	1871-1947
			C. S. Lewis	1898-1963
			Robert Audi	1941-
Common Sense	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Common Sense Realism	Thomas Reid	1710-1796
			Adam Ferguson	1723-1816
			James Beattie	1735-1803
			Dugald Stewart	1753-1828
			Thomas Jefferson	1743-1826
			Archibald Alexander	1772-1851
			Charles Hodge	1797-1878
			James McCosh	1811-1894
			Archibald Alexander Hodge	1823-1886
			B. B. Warfield	1851-1921
			John Gresham Machen	1881-1937
Principles or Ideals	Brisbane Meetup Intellectual Network	Deontological Ethics	Immanuel Kant	1724-1804
			Thomas Nagel	1937-
			T. M. Scanlon	1940-
			Roger Scruton	1922-2020
Duty to Reason	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Kantianism	Immanuel Kant	1724-1804
			Karl Marx	1818-1883
			Karl Popper	1902-1994
			John Rawls	1921-2002
			Jürgen Habermas	1929-
			Thomas Nagel	1937-
Social Good	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Social Choice Theory	Adam Smith	1723-1790

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Ideological Frame	Brisbane Meet-Up	System Name	Lead Philosopher	Lifetime
			John Rawls	1921-2002
Only Suffering	Brisbane Purpose of Life in Buddhism	Pessimism	Arthur Schopenhauer	1788-1860
			Friedrich Nietzsche	1844-1900
			Albert Camus	1913-1960
Biological Disposition	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Evolutionary Ethics	Herbert Spencer	1820-1903
			William Graham Sumner	1840-1910
			E.O. Wilson	1929-
			Michael Ruse	1940-
			Richard Joyce	1966-
Good for Social Majority (Workers) Against the State	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Communism	Karl Marx	1818-1883
			Vladimir Lenin	1870-1924
			Sidney Webb	1859-1947
			Beatrice Webb	1858-1943
Good for Social Majority (Workers) Evolving in the State	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Fabian Socialism or Keynesian Ethics	R. H. Tawney	1880-1962
			John Maynard Keynes	1883-1946
			Hugh Dalton	1887-1962
			G. D. H. Cole	1889-1959
			Harold Laski	1893-1950
			Richard Crossman	1907-1974
			Jeremy Bentham	1748-1832
The Utility of the Common Good	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Utilitarianism	John Stuart Mill	1865-1868
			Peter Singer	1946-
			Peter Kropotkin	1842-1921
Without any State Authority	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Anarchism	Peter Kropotkin	1842-1921
Power Beyond the Good (Better?)	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Perspectivism, Trivialism	Friedrich Nietzsche	1844-1900
			Michel Foucault	1926-1984

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Ideological Frame	Brisbane Meet-Up	System Name	Lead Philosopher	Lifetime
High Culture is the Good	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Aristocracy	Friedrich Nietzsche	1844-1900
What Works	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Pragmatism, Pragmatism	Charles Sanders Peirce	1839-1914
			William James	1842-1910
			John Dewey	1859-1952
No Explanation, Only Descriptions	Building Emotional Intelligence	Descriptive Ethics or Emotivism	Charles Stevenson	1908-1979
			A. J. Ayer	1910-1989
			Lawrence Kohlberg	1927-1987
There is No Essential Good	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Existential Nihilism	Arthur Schopenhauer	1788-1860
			Friedrich Nietzsche	1844-1900
			Søren Kierkegaard	1813-1855
			Jean-Paul Sartre	1905-1980
			Albert Camus	1913-1960
No Harm	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Harm Principle	John Stuart Mill	1865-1868
Moral Reasoning Without Casuistry	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Analytic Philosophy	Stephen Toulmin	1922-2009
What We Are Thinking in Terms of 'Morality'	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Moral Psychology	Frank Chapman Sharp	1866-1943
			Lawrence Kohlberg	1927-1987
			Jonathan Lear	1948-
Communicative Rationality	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Discourse Ethics	Jürgen Habermas	1929-
			Karl-Otto Apel	1922-2017
Feminine Caring	COULD NOT LOCATE GROUP	Care Ethics	Carol Gilligan	1936-
			Nel Noddings	1929-
Without Obligation or System	Coffee and Freethinkers	Post-Structuralism' (but not necessarily 'Post-Modern')	Emmanuel Levinas	1906-1995
			Bernard Williams	1929-2003

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