**Why Deliberate?** Dr. Ricardo Blaug, 2010

* I don’t know what to do. In this I am not alone.
* We cannot solve our social problems.
* The growing crisis of elite governance.
* We are agnostic as to the ‘good’ for others.
* This is why we ask the citizenry – democracy.
* Elections and surveys harvest static, ‘pre-existing’ preferences.
* Treats preferences as stable, ‘out there’, as physical objects.
* Yet preferences are symbolic and social constructs, ‘encumbered’ by identity.
* Social world is human authored.
* It is both ‘out there’ *and* acts back on its producer.
* E.g. language must be learned but also changes us as we learn.
* This is rough ontological terrain.
* Preferences are not ‘out there’, not available in advance of…
* **Deliberation** = public argumentation.
* E.g. Our consciousness is dialogic – ‘internal deliberation’.
* Further e.g. We need to hear opposing views to ‘make up our minds’.
* This is not weak-mindedness, but is how we *make* our preferences.
* To do so, we need not only participation, but deliberation.
* To learn is both to make and discover.
* We deliberate because, given the nature of the social world, we *cannot* know in advance.
* Politics is not a science. The problem of its organisation can never be ‘solved’.
* Present participation is inadequate, and our democracy is hollow.
* Representative democracy is carefully structured that way – to *limit* participation.
* This is seen to enable elites to make decisions, unhampered by the citizenry.
* It is assumed that it is impossible for all to deliberate.
* This is the usual justification for (unhampered) representation.
* But representative democracy is failing.
* John Dewey – ‘the problems of democracy are best solved with more democracy.’
* Doing deliberation online affords possibilities of deeper, more deliberative democracy.
* Yes, deliberation is messy, imperfect, time-consuming and can conceal inequalities.
* But public argument is best suited for a world we can never completely know…