The Absolute Political Spectrum

THE PREDICAMENT:

The first paragraph of Ernest Becker's Pulitzer-Prize winning masterpiece, The Denial of Death, reads: "In times such as ours there is a great pressure to come up with concepts that help men understand their dilemma.There is an urge toward vital ideas, toward a simplification of needless intellectual complexity.Sometimes this makes for big lies that resolve tensions and make it easy for action to move forward with just the rationalizations that people need.But it also makes for the slow disengagement of truths that help men get a grip on what is happening to them, that tell them where the problems really are."

It is not audacious to point out that the political discourse in America is extremely flawed.The key, then, is to ascertain the best way for explaining exactly how and exactly why it is flawed.Depending on vested interests, tribal loyalties, subscriptions to this or that dogma, and miscellaneous sentiments on various matters, such pertinent questions will be answered in very different ways.But here's the "catch": The reasons that the discourse is flawed and the reasons for such divergent explanations stem from the same problem.Both proceed from a defective conceptual framework.

The framework is CONCEPTUALLY defective because it is based on a distorted depiction of the so-called "political spectrum".As conventionally conceived, the political spectrum is a left-to-right line segment—with the ends labeled communism / socialism and fascism / corporatism respectively.It is as if one extreme were the antithesis of—and thus the furthest thing from—the other.

On the conventional spectrum, we're told, Republicans are slightly to the right of the alleged "center" while Democrats are slightly to the left of the alleged "center"… and "centrists" are, by default, those who split the difference between the two major political parties.The spectrum, then, is essentially a function of whatever the platforms of the two major parties happen to be at any given time.

In this scheme, rather than a spectrum explaining anything about the parties, the parties dictate the spectrum.Therefore, the "scale" is a catch-22.It's as if the thermometer's calibration were itself a product of the temperature.Due to this

arrangement, the division between the so-called “left” side and the so-called “right” side is, for the most part, arbitrary.In other words, the political taxonomy is merely **a byproduct of the prevailing political norms**—and is thus question-begging.

The main distinctions are therefore (often haphazard) **social constructs**.That is to say: The conventional categories derive from an amorphous political concoction rather than a formally defined taxonomy.Consequently, rather than being scientifically derived, categorization is the product of whatever movements / policies that happen to dominate the scene.Such categories are amenable to provocative theater, but they do not help us understand the nature of any given political movement / policy.

The result of this specious paradigm is that what a category happens to be is relative to whatever the two major party platforms happen to be.Exactly **what makes** the right “the right” and the left “the left” remains vaguely defined, and largely subjective…thereby avoiding any actual explanations.The consequence of this arrangement follows logically: Any political debate is forced to transpire in what is called the “Overton Window”: the delimited scope of acceptable positions that one can plausibly take—at any given time—according to what the major parties demand.

Thus, in America, the narrative doesn’t explain the parties; the parties control the narrative—leaving no objective standard by which to evaluate the parties or their policies.The Democrats assess the Republicans in terms of the Democratic platform; the Republicans assess the Democrats in terms of the Republican platform; and everyone ends up talking past each other—at cross-purposes.As a result, very little ever improves.

It is a general maxim that no worthwhile debate can transpire without the interlocutors first establishing a common ground.That is: a debate’s point of departure must be agreement on the well-defined, explicitly articulated terms on which the entire discussion shall be predicated.Such axioms must, by definition, exist independently of the debate—lest each interlocutor proceed from a different set of basic assumptions.(Vacuous platitudes and empty bromides don’t count as axioms.)

If we argue over whether or not a “cow jumped over the moon”, both of us must agree on precisely what is meant by “cow” and “jump” and “over” and “the moon” (i.e. establish necessary and sufficient conditions for each salient term).Otherwise,

we're just throwing buzz-words around, and resorting to sophistry in order to sway the audience to our "side".So ABSOLUTES must be established prior to either side even begins to formulate its arguments.

The conventional spectrum fails to do any of this.The current (fatuous) arrangement works splendidly well if all one is concerned about is partisan warfare (i.e. party loyalty)—whereby the triumph of one's own camp is treated as an end-in-itself.Here, the summum bonum of a party is its own aggrandizement, involving the promotion of the interests that serve that end.The "catch" here, though, is that—by indulging in this scheme—the public debate can only ever be couched in terms of the sparring of those designated camps.In other words: All metrics are relative to THAT MATTER.

Here, the most fundamental conditions of any worthwhile debate aren't satisfied—though the argument makes for captivating theater.Up until now, most "political junkies" have been perfectly fine with this arrangement.

The upshot of this paradigm is that the RIGHT end of the Overton Window is able to dictate HOW FAR to the right the Overton Window itself is positioned.This is due to a kind of gravitational pull, whereby the tendency is for policy to perpetually migrate to the right (even as the left-right distinction is maintained with respect to the OW).This rightward shift is obfuscated by the conventional spectrum, as things are couched exclusively within the OW.(The right-flowing "current" will be explained forthwith.)

Here in America, the right wing is thereby able to "rig" the Grand Narrative by casting it in its own terms.Right-wing demagogues routinely decry what they call "the left"—a label that designates not THE left, but anything to THEIR left—thereby tacitly dictating the parameters of the debate.The consequence of doing this is straight forward: When one is extremely far to the right, then that which one demeans as "the left" can itself actually be "right-wing"…but just LESS right-wing than oneself.

All the while, the lesser-right-wing party devotes most of its time and focus to **defending itself from the far-right wing** (finding itself implicitly apologizing for always being perhaps too far to the left).The de facto alternative to the ultra-right wing, the Democratic Party, essentially competes within itself to be as right-wing as possible without turning off its non-right-wing constituents TOO much.Meanwhile, in order to mobilize support from its "base", the right-most end of the debate need only compete for the winning title: Who is the furthest to the right?

The skewed taxonomy that is typically employed doesn't reflect this drastic asymmetry (nor does it reveal the tidal pull involved).Such an arrangement has molded public discourse in America since the 60's.This has been done so as to accommodate right-wing thinking that—in a healthy society—wouldn't be given even a moment's attention by serious people.Meanwhile, there are no objective standards by which to ascertain what any given policy actually entails or what its credence might actually be (independently of its effect on the partisan turf war).

This arrangement is not only stupendously misleading, but positively antithetical to the gleaning of any understanding of what is genuinely conducive to civil society.Meanwhile, the conventional narrative elides **the reasons** that certain things might be more conducive to democracy than certain other things.So not only is the electorate systematically prevented from seeing THAT certain things are more (or less) democratic, but it is systematically prevented from being able to see WHY this is so.The conventional spectrum allows the debate to be sabotaged by the debate's impresarios without the sabotage being noticed.(Generally, illusions don't announce themselves as illusions—which is the entire point of an illusion.)

In order to recognize this systemic dysfunction, one must "get outside" the narrative in which America is so thoroughly ensconced…and think of things in terms other than those endemic to that incumbent narrative.In other words, one must rise above the conventional terms of the debate, and think of things in an entirely new way.

NEW EXPLANATIONS:

The REAL spectrum, we come to find, is actually not linear.That is to say: It is not a line segment with a pole at each "end" (each of which is equidistant from a presumably neutral "center").Moreover, the REAL spectrum is not a (myopic) window that dictates the boundaries of the debate—as if it offered the entire universe of possibilities.Alas, the Overton Window gives us a range where each end presumably represents the presumptive extremes…when, in reality, that is not at all the case.The REAL spectrum wouldn't constrain the debate, but would illustrate the entire universe of possibilities—irrespective of what anyone happens to think about any given issue.(Thus, all things can be seen in terms of their place in that universe.)

Instead of the **relative** standards indicative of the conventional spectrum, the REAL spectrum is based on **absolute** standards—standards by which all positions may be objectively assessed.Here, relativism plays no role.The REAL spectrum can therefore

be referred to as the Absolute Political Spectrum.The APS reveals that what are conventionally considered the far-left and the far-right are actually not the analogue of one another.

On the APS, policies are defined in objective terms that place them at certain points in the universe of possibilities—and place them at certain points **for important reasons**.As it turns out, various positions are nothing like what they are often portrayed to be.This sheds light on not only WHAT is wrong with the U.S., but WHY it is wrong and—thus—what must be done to rectify things.(This is all predicated on the assumption is that we are all striving for a maximally civil society.)

The APS is best represented as a lop-sided circuit on a (two-dimensional) plane.It is a circuit in which the "extremes" converge on a single (terminal) point—a point that is positioned on the ultra-far-right of that plane.The circuit is asymmetrical because one can only go so far "to the left" before exhibiting right-wing characteristics:

- Highly-concentrated power (power that is leveraged to do things other than serve the public interest, resulting in drastic socio-economic stratification)
- Cult-like thinking / behavior (hyper-dogmatism, groupthink, tribalism)
- A free-for-all of self-aggrandizing power structures vying for ever-more power (i.e. lack of ROTA by a disinterested / meta-market governance mechanism—the sine qua non of which is to serve the public interest)

While such dysfunctions (i.e. anti-democratic elements) take various forms, taken together they all ultimately entail a certain KIND of regime—**regardless of the path taken to get there**.The REAL spectrum must show THAT this is so as well as show WHY this is so.

There is a "too far to the left" on the APS, but it soon becomes "too far to the right"—as history has demonstrated time and time again.In other essays, I've dubbed this peculiar left-to-right transition the "Bolshevik Turn" (BT), named after what happened following the Bolshevik Revolution.Following WWI, Russia underwent the BT when Lenin came to power—thus paving the way for Soviet-style "communism" (which, in spite of pretenses, is properly understood as a RIGHT-wing phenomenon).That event was analogous to what occurred in France pursuant to the French Revolution almost 13 decades earlier.

The kind of transformation indicative of the BT involves a horrifically dysfunctional mutation that must be accounted for on a REAL political spectrum.The BT entails the emergence of a regime (via a process that is often instigated by a movement-with-noble-intentions) that ends up becoming just another version of the very thing it (initially) sought to transplant.A REAL spectrum must reflect this phenomenon.

The cause of such an occurrence is the penchant—under certain conditions—for what I call the “Robespierre Syndrome” (named after the horrific Jacobin version of the BT that occurred in the later phase of the French Revolution).(For more on the “Bolshevik Turn” and “Robespierre Syndrome”, see my essay, “The Robespierre Syndrome”.)

The “convergence” feature of the APS also accounts for more recent phenomena.When the U.S.S.R. slowly started to “liberalize” (i.e. democratize) in the late 80’s (under Gorbachev’s reforms), the regime started to migrate to the left (back to the “true center” of the APS: the democratic equilibrium).When Boris Yeltzin (representing Russia’s plutocrats) was allowed to seize power, he—predictably—reverted back to a right-wing regime that was worse than the one it replaced.(Russia under Gorbachev was improving.)The point here is that if we compare pre-Gorbachev Russia to post-Gorbachev Russia, we’re simply seeing two different forms (brands) of a right-wing regime: Soviet-style “communism” vis a vis the plutocracy of the current Russian Federation.

We can find explanations for other phenomena as well.A slow reversion “back through” the BT can be seen in what has been happening in China for the last generation—a gradual liberalizing process that has ushered in a State-controlled version of capitalism.The current Chinese regime is an odd hybrid of “communistic” elements and crony-capitalistic elements.This can be represented on the APS.Once represented, it can be shown what needs to be done to further render China a genuine democracy.

The ultra-right-wing convergence point exists, by definition, extremely far off to the right of what could be legitimately called “the true center” (a.k.a. the democratic equilibrium) at what is the point **0,-n** (as we shall see).That is to say: the furthest-right point (2n,n) is positioned further off to the right than the furthest-left point is to the left—because that is the nature of the REAL left-right dynamic.The circuit, then, is not symmetrical.As we shall see, the right-most point is a vertex while the left-most point is the apogee of a vertical curve (where the BT takes place).

Understanding this, we find that it is possible to go “too far left” simply because doing so ends up fostering the conditions for a radical-right-wing outcome.And so we see that many regimes that have been erroneously categorized as “left wing” are, in fact, radically right-wing (though often operating under the aegis of left-ist rhetoric): Leninism, Stalinism, Maoism, the Red Cambodians, and—during its early stages—even a totalitarian theocracy like North Korea’s Juche.Such regimes are different from fascism only in branding, not in substance—as the APS clearly shows.(After all, the antithesis of civil society is what it is, regardless of pretenses.)

Meanwhile, genuinely “progressive” States have proved to be the epitome of civil society.Such States consistently preside over the most genuinely democratic, stable, un-corrupt, and healthy nations.That is to say, they offer the most widespread quality of life—ensuring the greatest degree of social justice.To wit: cases of the most civil societies all exhibit—roughly—the same fundamental characteristic…so a REAL political spectrum would have to account for this.A legitimate political model would, of course, show two things:

- WHERE this “ideal” point exists vis a vis all the other points
- WHY it exists in such a relation to all other points

This means showing **what it means** to vary from that point, **why** such variation happens, and what that variation **entails**.

Such an illustration requires non-relative reference points (i.e. positions based on formal definitions).That is to say, all possible positions are defined by common standards of assessment—**objective** standards—that don’t depend on acceptance of any given position.In sum: The parameters of the model must be ABSOLUTE.

To seriously discuss ANY regime or ANY political movement, three basic metrics must be taken into account:

1. (Elements of) cult activity
2. Power concentration / distribution
3. Economic collectivism / laissez-faire (i.e. socialization vs. privatization)

The first has various facets:

- Systematic hyper-dogmatism
- Systematically orchestrated groupthink
- A sacred code / doctrine (i.e. formally systematized dogma).This includes fealty to—and compliance with—the anointed catechism.

- Demands for loyalty to—and possibly deification of—the designated tribe / institution (e.g. tribalism).This can, of course, involve demagoguery / idolatry (the deification of a charismatic leader).

The second takes into account the following:

- Self-perpetuating systems of domination, marginalization, and exploitation.This involves top-down control by a cabal of well-positioned “insiders” over everyone else (typically for the benefit of the former at the expense of the latter).
- Structural inequalities (e.g. barriers to entry, entrenched private interests, a privileged “cast” presiding over a subaltern population, and the socio-economic stratification that this entails—something that is inversely proportional to the incidence of merit-based mobility)
- Oligarchic elements (e.g. plutocracy, corporatism, monarchy, etc.)

The third involves both the DEGREE of State involvement in the economy as well as the KIND of State involvement.That is to say, it must reflect both the qualitative and quantitative character of the society’s governing mechanism (or lack thereof).

An ABSOLUTE political spectrum (i.e. a model that represents these metrics) is required in order to formulate any worthwhile political theory.Until we have such a model, our political discourse will continue to be based on a severely flawed conceptual framework (e.g. arbitrary categories and a misleading political taxonomy).

Introducing the Absolute Political Spectrum (APS):

The APS exists as a closed curve in two-space.It circumscribes (i.e. doesn’t intersect) a “center” at coordinate **0,0** (the intersection of the x and y axes).There are four key points along this circuit:

- The “far-left” position (on a vertical continuity) at (–n, 0)
- The “bottom-most” position (an equilibrium point) at (0, -n)
- An inflection point to the “far-right” at (n, 0)
- A point of convergence at the ultra-far-right (on a discontinuity) at (2n,n)

This last point is a vertex—the epicenter of what is essentially a “gravity well” (as we shall see).This point will be called the “totalitarian convergence”.

NOTE: The “2” in the coordinate of the convergence point (2n,n) is actually an arbitrary coefficient.It is something significantly greater than 1, though not significantly greater than 2.(The exact proportion here doesn’t matter in order to illustrate what the APS needs to illustrate.)This value correlates with the degree of the curve’s “skew”—which is more a quantitative issue than a qualitative issue.For simplicity’s sake, since the **form** of the APS is based on qualitative considerations, we can reasonably assume that the convergence point is double the distance from the center (along the x-axis) that **n,0** is.Ergo: 2.

We thus have four key sections of a complete circuit: the curve-segments between each of those four points:

- The “bottom” part of the circuit is the locus of points on the radius n (from **0,0**) for all values of y < 0.This is an up-side-down semi-circle from **0,-n**, continuing down through **–n,0**, then up to **0,n**.Ergo two (continuous) curve segments meeting at a “center” (at **–n,0**).
- The “top” part of the circuit involves two converging curves: one starting at **–n,0** and sloping drastically to the right, up to **2n,n**; the other starting at **n,0** and sloping up to **2n,n**. (Later, I refer to these as the upper and lower surges.)

The x and y axes of the diagram represent the metrics enumerated above.The x-axis measures two metrics in tandem:

- The degree of cult activity (e.g. theocratic elements) starting at x = 0 and increasing as x increases.
- How “laissez-faire” the economic policy is: starting at nil (x = -n) and increasing as x increases up to 2n.

These two metrics don’t directly correspond, but end up roughly correlating when regimes are represented on the APS.So they are consolidated along the same dimension.(It is, of course, entirely possible for cult activity to exist with minimal “laissez faire” economic policy; and it is certainly possible for extensive “laissez-faire” economic policy to exist without much cult activity.But such scenarios needn’t concern us with regard to the two-dimensional APS.Consolidating them along one axis, as we shall see, is unproblematic simply because top-down control is top-down control, regardless of the context.)

The y-axis measures the degree of power concentration (i.e. top-down control, involving control over the many by the few).The degree of power concentration starts at nil (at y = -n) and increases as y increases.

Let the x-axis be called the “nominal meridian” and the y-axis be called the “libertarian threshold”.The former gets its name because it is the longitudinal line that defines the “ideal” when $y < 0$ (i.e. the equilibrium point at $x = 0$ where power is maximally distributed).The latter gets its name because it defines the absence of a governing mechanism (i.e. a State) while distinguishing between two ways a robust governance mechanism may be formed (more and more liberally for $y < 0$ vs. more and more illiberally for $y > 0$).Both axes, then, are crucial thresholds: the x-axis acts as the libertarian threshold and the y-axis serves as the nominal meridian.

Put another way, the position along the x-axis (the x value of a coordinate) pertains to the degree of collectivization / socialization vs. privatization / capitalization.The nominal meridian represents the threshold separating hyper-socialization (for all points where $x < 0$) from hyper-privatization (for all points where $x > 0$).The more negative x is, the more collectivized / socialized the economic system is; the more positive x is, the more laissez-faire / capitalism-based the economic system is. (Meanwhile, the higher x is above 0, the stronger the gravitational pull of cult activity becomes, as we shall see.)

In sum: To the right of the y-axis (the nominal meridian), the economic policy becomes ever-more laissez-faire (i.e. Neoliberal) while the element of cult activity increases.To the left of the y-axis, the economic policy becomes more “collectivist” (for $y < 0$, the element of cult activity remains nil).Meanwhile: The degree of cult activity starts at “nil” on the nominal meridian and increases as x increases from $x = 0$ to $x = 2n$.

In terms of the governance mechanism, we may refer to the position along the y-axis (the y value of a coordinate).The libertarian threshold represents the point at which there is no State.Variations from this threshold (“up” or “down”) indicate an increasingly robust governance mechanism of some kind.All points where $y > 0$ represent the degree of centralized power (in the form of an authoritarian mechanism: top-down-control with no bottom-up coordination).By contrast, all points where $y < 0$ represent the degree of centralized coordination (in the form of a robust State with distributed, bottom-up power).(Meanwhile, as we shall see, the higher y is, the stronger the gravitational pull of power-concentration becomes.)

Above the libertarian threshold (i.e. for points where y > 0), BOTH capitalism AND socialism lose their meaning.It is only for points where y < 0 that capitalism and socialism are salient categories.Above the libertarian threshold, the initial mode of power concentration becomes a moot point: highly concentrated power is highly concentrated power, regardless of the form that it takes.

TWO KINDS OF GRAVITY:

There are therefore two gravitational pulls at play: a lateral one emanating from x = 2n (that of absolute cult activity) and a longitudinal one emanating from y = n (that of absolute concentration of power).The intersection of these two extremes is the vertex at **2n,n** (i.e. the gravity well that defines the worst possible scenario: the totalitarian convergence).The confluence of the gravitational pulls, then, is to the right of the nominal meridian.

The epicenter of the gravity well is at the vertex of the circuit (2n,n).The pull of the gravity well reaches to all positive values of x and to all values of y above -n.(As already stated: to the right of the nominal meridian is the “cult activity” gravitational pull.Above y = -n is the “power-concentration” gravitational pull.)Naturally, as one gravitational pull increases so does the other—as cult activity and power concentration feed off of one another.(The exception to this is the area where both x and y are negative, as only the gravitational pull of power concentration exists there.)The closer one gets to the totalitarian vertex, the stronger each pull becomes.

The gravitational pull of power-concentration begins (at nil) at y = -n…and increases gradually up to the libertarian threshold (at which points it reaches an “event horizon”, as will be explained below).There, the power gradient brings the power structures to a kind of “critical mass”—an essential “point of no return”, whereby the power concentration becomes almost impossible to reverse (short of a revolution).

From the unique equilibrium point (–n,0), there is a subtle tendency to migrate in one direction or the other (due to the gravitation pull of power-concentration)…and to the right (due to the gravitational pull of cult activity).Once a migration starts in either direction, it is difficult to reverse.But there is a stronger tendency to move rightward, due to the confluence of TWO gravitational pulls.

By illustrating things in this way, we see that, in order to migrate toward the optimal point (0,-n) from the right, one must go against two gravitational pulls (namely: the confluence of the gravitational pulls of cult activity and of power concentration).This

is a key point that demonstrates why regimes tend ever-more rightward once they start down the rightward path.The gravitational pull of power-concentration explains why regimes initially shift rightward once they undergo the Bolshevik Turn, then are also pulled rightward shortly thereafter by the gravitational pull of cult activity.(With Robespierre Syndrome, it is a “chicken or the egg” scenario whether power concentration leads to cult activity or vice versa.For the purposes of the APS, power consolidation precedes the introduction of cult activity, as we say with Robespierre’s formation of The Cult Of The Supreme Being.

There are two “event horizons” (one horizontal, one vertical) for each of the two gravitational pulls—each intersecting…and culminating at the gravity well located at the totalitarian vertex (2n,n).The “event horizons” are the lines at which it becomes very unlikely that a gravitational pull can be resisted any longer (the point at which reversing the direction of the movement along the circuit becomes close to intractable).

- The libertarian threshold doubles as the horizontal event horizon (for the “vertical” gravitational pull of power-concentration).
- The vertical event horizon (for the “horizontal” gravitational pull of cult activity) is the line at x = n.

The portion within both “event horizons” is where x &man

THE PREDICAMENT:

The first paragraph of Ernest Becker’s Pulitzer-Prize winning masterpiece, The Denial of Death, reads: “In times such as ours there is a great pressure to come up with concepts that help men understand their dilemma.There is an urge toward vital ideas, toward a simplification of needless intellectual complexity.Sometimes this makes for big lies that resolve tensions and make it easy for action to move forward with just the rationalizations that people need.But it also makes for the slow disengagement of truths that help men get a grip on what is happening to them, that tell them where the problems really are.”

It is not audacious to point out that the political discourse in America is extremely flawed.The key, then, is to ascertain the best way for explaining exactly how and exactly why it is flawed.Depending on vested interests, tribal loyalties, subscriptions to this or that dogma, and miscellaneous sentiments on various matters, such pertinent questions will be answered in very different ways.But here’s the “catch”:

The reasons that the discourse is flawed and the reasons for such divergent explanations stem from the same problem.Both proceed from a defective conceptual framework.

The framework is CONCEPTUALLY defective because it is based on a distorted depiction of the so-called “political spectrum”.As conventionally conceived, the political spectrum is a left-to-right line segment—with the ends labeled communism / socialism and fascism / corporatism respectively.It is as if one extreme were the antithesis of—and thus the furthest thing from—the other.

On the conventional spectrum, we’re told, Republicans are slightly to the right of the alleged “center” while Democrats are slightly to the left of the alleged “center”… and “centrists” are, by default, those who split the difference between the two major political parties.The spectrum, then, is essentially a function of whatever the platforms of the two major parties happen to be at any given time.

In this scheme, rather than a spectrum explaining anything about the parties, the parties dictate the spectrum.Therefore, the “scale” is a catch-22.It’s as if the thermometer’s calibration were itself a product of the temperature.Due to this arrangement, the division between the so-called “left” side and the so-called “right” side is, for the most part, arbitrary.In other words, the political taxonomy is merely **a byproduct of the prevailing political norms**—and is thus question-begging.

The main distinctions are therefore (often haphazard) **social constructs**.That is to say: The conventional categories derive from an amorphous political concoction rather than a formally defined taxonomy.Consequently, rather than being scientifically derived, categorization is the product of whatever movements / policies that happen to dominate the scene.Such categories are amenable to provocative theater, but they do not help us understand the nature of any given political movement / policy.

The result of this specious paradigm is that what a category happens to be is relative to whatever the two major party platforms happen to be.Exactly **what makes** the right “the right” and the left “the left” remains vaguely defined, and largely subjective…thereby avoiding any actual explanations.The consequence of this arrangement follows logically: Any political debate is forced to transpire in what is called the “Overton Window”: the delimited scope of acceptable positions that one can plausibly take—at any given time—according to what the major parties demand.

Thus, in America, the narrative doesn't explain the parties; the parties control the narrative—leaving no objective standard by which to evaluate the parties or their policies.The Democrats assess the Republicans in terms of the Democratic platform; the Republicans assess the Democrats in terms of the Republican platform; and everyone ends up talking past each other—at cross-purposes.As a result, very little ever improves.

It is a general maxim that no worthwhile debate can transpire without the interlocutors first establishing a common ground.That is: a debate's point of departure must be agreement on the well-defined, explicitly articulated terms on which the entire discussion shall be predicated.Such axioms must, by definition, exist independently of the debate—lest each interlocutor proceed from a different set of basic assumptions.(Vacuous platitudes and empty bromides don't count as axioms.)

If we argue over whether or not a "cow jumped over the moon", both of us must agree on precisely what is meant by "cow" and "jump" and "over" and "the moon" (i.e. establish necessary and sufficient conditions for each salient term).Otherwise, we're just throwing buzz-words around, and resorting to sophistry in order to sway the audience to our "side".So ABSOLUTES must be established prior to either side even begins to formulate its arguments.

The conventional spectrum fails to do any of this.The current (fatuous) arrangement works splendidly well if all one is concerned about is partisan warfare (i.e. party loyalty)—whereby the triumph of one's own camp is treated as an end-in-itself.Here, the summum bonum of a party is its own aggrandizement, involving the promotion of the interests that serve that end.The "catch" here, though, is that—by indulging in this scheme—the public debate can only ever be couched in terms of the sparring of those designated camps.In other words: All metrics are relative to THAT MATTER.

Here, the most fundamental conditions of any worthwhile debate aren't satisfied—though the argument makes for captivating theater.Up until now, most "political junkies" have been perfectly fine with this arrangement.

The upshot of this paradigm is that the RIGHT end of the Overton Window is able to dictate HOW FAR to the right the Overton Window itself is positioned.This is due to a kind of gravitational pull, whereby the tendency is for policy to perpetually migrate to the right (even as the left-right distinction is maintained with respect to the

OW).This rightward shift is obfuscated by the conventional spectrum, as things are couched exclusively within the OW.(The right-flowing “current” will be explained forthwith.)

Here in America, the right wing is thereby able to “rig” the Grand Narrative by casting it in its own terms.Right-wing demagogues routinely decry what they call “the left”—a label that designates not THE left, but anything to THEIR left—thereby tacitly dictating the parameters of the debate.The consequence of doing this is straight forward: When one is extremely far to the right, then that which one demeans as “the left” can itself actually be “right-wing”…but just LESS right-wing than oneself.

All the while, the lesser-right-wing party devotes most of its time and focus to **defending itself from the far-right wing** (finding itself implicitly apologizing for always being perhaps too far to the left).The de facto alternative to the ultra-right wing, the Democratic Party, essentially competes within itself to be as right-wing as possible without turning off its non-right-wing constituents TOO much.Meanwhile, in order to mobilize support from its “base”, the right-most end of the debate need only compete for the winning title: Who is the furthest to the right?

The skewed taxonomy that is typically employed doesn’t reflect this drastic asymmetry (nor does it reveal the tidal pull involved).Such an arrangement has molded public discourse in America since the 60’s.This has been done so as to accommodate right-wing thinking that—in a healthy society—wouldn’t be given even a moment’s attention by serious people.Meanwhile, there are no objective standards by which to ascertain what any given policy actually entails or what its credence might actually be (independently of its effect on the partisan turf war).

This arrangement is not only stupendously misleading, but positively antithetical to the gleaning of any understanding of what is genuinely conducive to civil society.Meanwhile, the conventional narrative elides **the reasons** that certain things might be more conducive to democracy than certain other things.So not only is the electorate systematically prevented from seeing THAT certain things are more (or less) democratic, but it is systematically prevented from being able to see WHY this is so.The conventional spectrum allows the debate to be sabotaged by the debate’s impresarios without the sabotage being noticed.(Generally, illusions don’t announce themselves as illusions—which is the entire point of an illusion.)

In order to recognize this systemic dysfunction, one must “get outside” the narrative in which America is so thoroughly ensconced…and think of things in terms other than those endemic to that incumbent narrative.In other words, one must rise above the conventional terms of the debate, and think of things in an entirely new way.

NEW EXPLANATIONS:

The REAL spectrum, we come to find, is actually not linear.That is to say: It is not a line segment with a pole at each “end” (each of which is equidistant from a presumably neutral “center”).Moreover, the REAL spectrum is not a (myopic) window that dictates the boundaries of the debate—as if it offered the entire universe of possibilities.Alas, the Overton Window gives us a range where each end presumably represents the presumptive extremes…when, in reality, that is not at all the case.The REAL spectrum wouldn’t constrain the debate, but would illustrate the entire universe of possibilities—irrespective of what anyone happens to think about any given issue.(Thus, all things can be seen in terms of their place in that universe.)

Instead of the **relative** standards indicative of the conventional spectrum, the REAL spectrum is based on **absolute** standards—standards by which all positions may be objectively assessed.Here, relativism plays no role.The REAL spectrum can therefore be referred to as the Absolute Political Spectrum.The APS reveals that what are conventionally considered the far-left and the far-right are actually not the analogue of one another.

On the APS, policies are defined in objective terms that place them at certain points in the universe of possibilities—and place them at certain points **for important reasons**.As it turns out, various positions are nothing like what they are often portrayed to be.This sheds light on not only WHAT is wrong with the U.S., but WHY it is wrong and—thus—what must be done to rectify things.(This is all predicated on the assumption is that we are all striving for a maximally civil society.)

The APS is best represented as a lop-sided circuit on a (two-dimensional) plane.It is a circuit in which the “extremes” converge on a single (terminal) point—a point that is positioned on the ultra-far-right of that plane.The circuit is asymmetrical because one can only go so far “to the left” before exhibiting right-wing characteristics:

- Highly-concentrated power (power that is leveraged to do things other than serve the public interest, resulting in drastic socio-economic stratification)
- Cult-like thinking / behavior (hyper-dogmatism, groupthink, tribalism)

- A free-for-all of self-aggrandizing power structures vying for ever-more power (i.e. lack of ROTA by a disinterested / meta-market governance mechanism—the sine qua non of which is to serve the public interest)

While such dysfunctions (i.e. anti-democratic elements) take various forms, taken together they all ultimately entail a certain KIND of regime—**regardless of the path taken to get there**.The REAL spectrum must show THAT this is so as well as show WHY this is so.

There is a “too far to the left” on the APS, but it soon becomes “too far to the right”—as history has demonstrated time and time again.In other essays, I’ve dubbed this peculiar left-to-right transition the “Bolshevik Turn” (BT), named after what happened following the Bolshevik Revolution.Following WWI, Russia underwent the BT when Lenin came to power—thus paving the way for Soviet-style “communism” (which, in spite of pretenses, is properly understood as a RIGHT-wing phenomenon).That event was analogous to what occurred in France pursuant to the French Revolution almost 13 decades earlier.

The kind of transformation indicative of the BT involves a horrifically dysfunctional mutation that must be accounted for on a REAL political spectrum.The BT entails the emergence of a regime (via a process that is often instigated by a movement-with-noble-intentions) that ends up becoming just another version of the very thing it (initially) sought to transplant.A REAL spectrum must reflect this phenomenon.

The cause of such an occurrence is the penchant—under certain conditions—for what I call the “Robespierre Syndrome” (named after the horrific Jacobin version of the BT that occurred in the later phase of the French Revolution).(For more on the “Bolshevik Turn” and “Robespierre Syndrome”, see my essay, “The Robespierre Syndrome”.)

The “convergence” feature of the APS also accounts for more recent phenomena.When the U.S.S.R. slowly started to “liberalize” (i.e. democratize) in the late 80’s (under Gorbachev’s reforms), the regime started to migrate to the left (back to the “true center” of the APS: the democratic equilibrium).When Boris Yeltzin (representing Russia’s plutocrats) was allowed to seize power, he—predictably—reverted back to a right-wing regime that was worse than the one it replaced.(Russia under Gorbachev was improving.)The point here is that if we compare pre-

Gorbachev Russia to post-Gorbachev Russia, we're simply seeing two different forms (brands) of a right-wing regime: Soviet-style "communism" vis a vis the plutocracy of the current Russian Federation.

We can find explanations for other phenomena as well.A slow reversion "back through" the BT can be seen in what has been happening in China for the last generation—a gradual liberalizing process that has ushered in a State-controlled version of capitalism.The current Chinese regime is an odd hybrid of "communistic" elements and crony-capitalistic elements.This can be represented on the APS.Once represented, it can be shown what needs to be done to further render China a genuine democracy.

The ultra-right-wing convergence point exists, by definition, extremely far off to the right of what could be legitimately called "the true center" (a.k.a. the democratic equilibrium) at what is the point **0,-n** (as we shall see).That is to say: the furthest-right point (2n,n) is positioned further off to the right than the furthest-left point is to the left—because that is the nature of the REAL left-right dynamic.The circuit, then, is not symmetrical.As we shall see, the right-most point is a vertex while the left-most point is the apogee of a vertical curve (where the BT takes place).

Understanding this, we find that it is possible to go "too far left" simply because doing so ends up fostering the conditions for a radical-right-wing outcome.And so we see that many regimes that have been erroneously categorized as "left wing" are, in fact, radically right-wing (though often operating under the aegis of left-ist rhetoric): Leninism, Stalinism, Maoism, the Red Cambodians, and—during its early stages—even a totalitarian theocracy like North Korea's Juche.Such regimes are different from fascism only in branding, not in substance—as the APS clearly shows.(After all, the antithesis of civil society is what it is, regardless of pretenses.)

Meanwhile, genuinely "progressive" States have proved to be the epitome of civil society.Such States consistently preside over the most genuinely democratic, stable, un-corrupt, and healthy nations.That is to say, they offer the most widespread quality of life—ensuring the greatest degree of social justice.To wit: cases of the most civil societies all exhibit—roughly—the same fundamental characteristic…so a REAL political spectrum would have to account for this.A legitimate political model would, of course, show two things:

- WHERE this "ideal" point exists vis a vis all the other points
- WHY it exists in such a relation to all other points

This means showing **what it means** to vary from that point, **why** such variation happens, and what that variation **entails**.

Such an illustration requires non-relative reference points (i.e. positions based on formal definitions).That is to say, all possible positions are defined by common standards of assessment—**objective** standards—that don't depend on acceptance of any given position.In sum: The parameters of the model must be ABSOLUTE.

To seriously discuss ANY regime or ANY political movement, three basic metrics must be taken into account:

1. (Elements of) cult activity
2. Power concentration / distribution
3. Economic collectivism / laissez-faire (i.e. socialization vs. privatization)

The first has various facets:

- Systematic hyper-dogmatism
- Systematically orchestrated groupthink
- A sacred code / doctrine (i.e. formally systematized dogma).This includes fealty to—and compliance with—the anointed catechism.
- Demands for loyalty to—and possibly deification of—the designated tribe / institution (e.g. tribalism).This can, of course, involve demagoguery / idolatry (the deification of a charismatic leader).

The second takes into account the following:

- Self-perpetuating systems of domination, marginalization, and exploitation.This involves top-down control by a cabal of well-positioned "insiders" over everyone else (typically for the benefit of the former at the expense of the latter).
- Structural inequalities (e.g. barriers to entry, entrenched private interests, a privileged "cast" presiding over a subaltern population, and the socio-economic stratification that this entails—something that is inversely proportional to the incidence of merit-based mobility)
- Oligarchic elements (e.g. plutocracy, corporatism, monarchy, etc.)

The third involves both the DEGREE of State involvement in the economy as well as the KIND of State involvement.That is to say, it must reflect both the qualitative and quantitative character of the society's governing mechanism (or lack thereof).

An ABSOLUTE political spectrum (i.e. a model that represents these metrics) is required in order to formulate any worthwhile political theory.Until we have such a model, our political discourse will continue to be based on a severely flawed conceptual framework (e.g. arbitrary categories and a misleading political taxonomy).

Introducing the Absolute Political Spectrum (APS):

The APS exists as a closed curve in two-space.It circumscribes (i.e. doesn't intersect) a "center" at coordinate **0,0** (the intersection of the x and y axes).There are four key points along this circuit:

- The "far-left" position (on a vertical continuity) at (–n, 0)
- The "bottom-most" position (an equilibrium point) at (0, -n)
- An inflection point to the "far-right" at (n, 0)
- A point of convergence at the ultra-far-right (on a discontinuity) at (2n,n)

This last point is a vertex—the epicenter of what is essentially a "gravity well" (as we shall see).This point will be called the "totalitarian convergence".

NOTE: The "2" in the coordinate of the convergence point (2n,n) is actually an arbitrary coefficient.It is something significantly greater than 1, though not significantly greater than 2.(The exact proportion here doesn't matter in order to illustrate what the APS needs to illustrate.)This value correlates with the degree of the curve's "skew"—which is more a quantitative issue than a qualitative issue.For simplicity's sake, since the **form** of the APS is based on qualitative considerations, we can reasonably assume that the convergence point is double the distance from the center (along the x-axis) that **n,0** is.Ergo: 2.

We thus have four key sections of a complete circuit: the curve-segments between each of those four points:

- The "bottom" part of the circuit is the locus of points on the radius n (from **0,0**) for all values of $y < 0$.This is an up-side-down semi-circle from **0,-n**, continuing down through **–n,0**, then up to **0,n**.Ergo two (continuous) curve segments meeting at a "center" (at **–n,0**).
- The "top" part of the circuit involves two converging curves: one starting at **–n,0** and sloping drastically to the right, up to **2n,n**; the other starting at **n,0** and sloping up to **2n,n**. (Later, I refer to these as the upper and lower surges.)

The x and y axes of the diagram represent the metrics enumerated above.The x-axis measures two metrics in tandem:

- The degree of cult activity (e.g. theocratic elements) starting at x = 0 and increasing as x increases.
- How “laissez-faire” the economic policy is: starting at nil (x = -n) and increasing as x increases up to 2n.

These two metrics don’t directly correspond, but end up roughly correlating when regimes are represented on the APS.So they are consolidated along the same dimension.(It is, of course, entirely possible for cult activity to exist with minimal “laissez faire” economic policy; and it is certainly possible for extensive “laissez-faire” economic policy to exist without much cult activity.But such scenarios needn’t concern us with regard to the two-dimensional APS.Consolidating them along one axis, as we shall see, is unproblematic simply because top-down control is top-down control, regardless of the context.)

The y-axis measures the degree of power concentration (i.e. top-down control, involving control over the many by the few).The degree of power concentration starts at nil (at y = -n) and increases as y increases.

Let the x-axis be called the “nominal meridian” and the y-axis be called the “libertarian threshold”.The former gets its name because it is the longitudinal line that defines the “ideal” when y < 0 (i.e. the equilibrium point at x = 0 where power is maximally distributed).The latter gets its name because it defines the absence of a governing mechanism (i.e. a State) while distinguishing between two ways a robust governance mechanism may be formed (more and more liberally for y < 0 vs. more and more illiberally for y > 0).Both axes, then, are crucial thresholds: the x-axis acts as the libertarian threshold and the y-axis serves as the nominal meridian.

Put another way, the position along the x-axis (the x value of a coordinate) pertains to the degree of collectivization / socialization vs. privatization / capitalization.The nominal meridian represents the threshold separating hyper-socialization (for all points where x < 0) from hyper-privatization (for all points where x > 0).The more negative x is, the more collectivized / socialized the economic system is; the more positive x is, the more laissez-faire / capitalism-based the economic system is. (Meanwhile, the higher x is above 0, the stronger the gravitational pull of cult activity becomes, as we shall see.)

In sum: To the right of the y-axis (the nominal meridian), the economic policy becomes ever-more laissez-faire (i.e. Neoliberal) while the element of cult activity increases.To the left of the y-axis, the economic policy becomes more “collectivist” (for $y < 0$, the element of cult activity remains nil).Meanwhile: The degree of cult activity starts at “nil” on the nominal meridian and increases as x increases from $x = 0$ to $x = 2n$.

In terms of the governance mechanism, we may refer to the position along the y-axis (the y value of a coordinate).The libertarian threshold represents the point at which there is no State.Variations from this threshold (“up” or “down”) indicate an increasingly robust governance mechanism of some kind.All points where $y > 0$ represent the degree of centralized power (in the form of an authoritarian mechanism: top-down-control with no bottom-up coordination).By contrast, all points where $y < 0$ represent the degree of centralized coordination (in the form of a robust State with distributed, bottom-up power).(Meanwhile, as we shall see, the higher y is, the stronger the gravitational pull of power-concentration becomes.)

Above the libertarian threshold (i.e. for points where $y > 0$), BOTH capitalism AND socialism lose their meaning.It is only for points where $y < 0$ that capitalism and socialism are salient categories.Above the libertarian threshold, the initial mode of power concentration becomes a moot point: highly concentrated power is highly concentrated power, regardless of the form that it takes.

TWO KINDS OF GRAVITY:

There are therefore two gravitational pulls at play: a lateral one emanating from $x = 2n$ (that of absolute cult activity) and a longitudinal one emanating from $y = n$ (that of absolute concentration of power).The intersection of these two extremes is the vertex at **2n,n** (i.e. the gravity well that defines the worst possible scenario: the totalitarian convergence).The confluence of the gravitational pulls, then, is to the right of the nominal meridian.

The epicenter of the gravity well is at the vertex of the circuit (2n,n).The pull of the gravity well reaches to all positive values of x and to all values of y above -n.(As already stated: to the right of the nominal meridian is the “cult activity” gravitational pull.Above $y = -n$ is the “power-concentration” gravitational pull.)Naturally, as one gravitational pull increases so does the other—as cult activity and power concentration feed off of one another.(The exception to this is the area

where both x and y are negative, as only the gravitational pull of power concentration exists there.)The closer one gets to the totalitarian vertex, the stronger each pull becomes.

The gravitational pull of power-concentration begins (at nil) at y = -n…and increases gradually up to the libertarian threshold (at which points it reaches an “event horizon”, as will be explained below).There, the power gradient brings the power structures to a kind of “critical mass”—an essential “point of no return”, whereby the power concentration becomes almost impossible to reverse (short of a revolution).

From the unique equilibrium point (–n,0), there is a subtle tendency to migrate in one direction or the other (due to the gravitation pull of power-concentration)…and to the right (due to the gravitational pull of cult activity).Once a migration starts in either direction, it is difficult to reverse.But there is a stronger tendency to move rightward, due to the confluence of TWO gravitational pulls.

By illustrating things in this way, we see that, in order to migrate toward the optimal point (0,-n) from the right, one must go against two gravitational pulls (namely: the confluence of the gravitational pulls of cult activity and of power concentration).This is a key point that demonstrates why regimes tend ever-more rightward once they start down the rightward path.The gravitational pull of power-concentration explains why regimes initially shift rightward once they undergo the Bolshevik Turn, then are also pulled rightward shortly thereafter by the gravitational pull of cult activity.(With Robespierre Syndrome, it is a “chicken or the egg” scenario whether power concentration leads to cult activity or vice versa.For the purposes of the APS, power consolidation precedes the introduction of cult activity, as we say with Robespierre’s formation of The Cult Of The Supreme Being.

There are two “event horizons” (one horizontal, one vertical) for each of the two gravitational pulls—each intersecting…and culminating at the gravity well located at the totalitarian vertex (2n,n).The “event horizons” are the lines at which it becomes very unlikely that a gravitational pull can be resisted any longer (the point at which reversing the direction of the movement along the circuit becomes close to intractable).

- The libertarian threshold doubles as the horizontal event horizon (for the “vertical” gravitational pull of power-concentration).
- The vertical event horizon (for the “horizontal” gravitational pull of cult activity) is the line at x = n.

The portion within both “event horizons” is where x > n and y positive: the area above the libertarian threshold and to the right of x = n.This is essentially a “point of no return”…short of a complete revolution (eradication of the incumbent power structures).Power tends not to want to dissipate itself, as those with power will tend to use that power to preserve that power.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE GRAVITATIONAL PULLS:

The APS thus intersects the x-axis at absolute socialism (–n,0) and at absolute capitalism (n,0): left-wing and right-wing “libertarianism” respectively.The former point represents an untenable utopia of Stateless absolute socialism (i.e. libertarian socialism, a.k.a. anarcho-syndicalism).The latter point represents another untenable utopia—that of Stateless absolute capitalism (i.e. an absolutist laissez-faire market economy, a.k.a. anarcho-capitalism).

Both utopias are untenable as they exist on a threshold that acts as an “event horizon” for the power-concentration gravity well: in their attempt to (ostensibly) avoid power concentration, they create it.(A small agrarian commune, or Kibbutz, can sustain itself at **–n,0**; but a post-industrial, large-scale society can not.)The (alleged) point of aiming for the chimerical panacea of “liberty” at both –n,0 and n,0 is to maximize “freedom”.However, as y increases from –n, the gravitational pull of power concentration grows, making the realization of either utopia intractable.In a sense, Karl Marx’s ideal is untenable for similar reasons that Ayn Rand’s ideal is untenable—even as both strive to avoid totalitarianism / exploitation.

The vertex at **2n,n** represents absolute power-concentration / top-down control in conjunction with absolute theocracy.Thus, moving toward it along either path (from “the left” or from “the right”) entails ever-more concentrated power and ever-more cult activity.

Here’s the key: Once the libertarian threshold is breached (as y approaches—then breaches—0), the regime crosses an event horizon and is therefore pulled inexorably toward the power-concentration gravity well at y = n (from either one end or the other, as the case may be).When this happens at x = -n, it involves the Bolshevik Turn (BT)…and follows the rightward path to **2n,n** under the auspices of “socialism” (we call this Statism).When this happens at x = n, it involves a path to the right under the auspices of “capitalism” (we call this corporatism).Both rightward surges converge at the same point.In other words, Statism and corporatism lead to the same thing: the totalitarian convergence.

Put another way: The avenue to the vertex (2n,n) from **–n,0** involves increasing HCP in the form of State power.Meanwhile, the avenue to the vertex from **n,0** involves increasing HCP in the form of private (i.e. corporate) power.**Either way**, starting at the nominal meridian, the element of cult activity (x) increases toward **2n** as power becomes ever-more concentrated (as y increases).Meanwhile, the economy becomes increasingly laissez-faire / corporatist (the private interests of the powerful rule more and more, while the public interest plays less and less of a role).

MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE CIRCUIT:

The circuit intersects the y-axis at two points:

- At the point of equilibrium between hyper-socialization and hyper-privatization: the ideal of civil society (0,-n).This exists on the nominal meridian, and may be called the “democratic equilibrium”.
- At a point that is some fraction of y = n (along what could be called the “upper surge” to the ultra-far-right).

The first point exists at a place of homeostasis (as it exists outside of the two gravitational pulls).That second point represents a position after the BT has taken place—and is merely a point along a rightward “surge”.This is a point of transience, as it exists within the event horizon of the power-concentration gravity well AND at the onset of the cult activity gravitational pull.So the only significant thing about this particular point is the onset of cult activity after Robespierre Syndrome goes into full throttle (as we saw with Lenin after the Bolshevik Revolution).

0,-n represents the ideal of civil society—what is conventionally called “liberal social democracy”.This is a condition achieved when social / economic justice and other democratic ideals are maximized **by keeping power sufficiently distributed while having a sufficiently robust governance mechanism**.The key is that this “true center” is a point of EQUILIBRIUM: the medium between hyper-socialism and hyper-capitalism.It exists on the edge of both gravity wells.Here, y = -n because power is maximally distributed (while coordination is centralized in a robust State).This is far from the libertarian threshold because it is a maximally robust State.Since y = -n (power concentration is minimized), it is the maximally robust LIBERAL State.

We can note here that one of the “tricks” of the far-right-wing in America is to conflate the robustness of a state for totalitarian characteristics.The key, then, is to distinguish the robust-ness of a State from the degree of power concentration.The

democratic equilibrium involves a State that is maximally robust IN A CERTAIN WAY, while maintaining maximally distributed power. Again the nominal meridian (for y < 0) represents the condition where there is the optimal mixture of capitalism and socialism (a prudent degree of laissez-faire economic policy), and nil cult activity.

The (vertical) line at x = -n represents absolute socialism (nil cult activity, as it is to the left of the nominal meridian).The (vertical) line at x = n represents absolute capitalism (and high cult activity, as it is significantly to the right of the nominal meridian).Keep in mind, the convergence point at x = 2n represents maximum (absolute) cult activity (with any element of “capitalism” becoming a moot point).

The (horizontal) line at y = -n represents the anti-Statist (liberal / democratic) robust State.The (horizontal) line at y = n represents the Statist (illiberal / authoritarian) robust State (or a **de facto** State if the power structure is in the form of corporate power).The libertarian threshold represents conditions where there is (essentially) no State: the two forms of anarchy already mentioned.

In other words, **above** the libertarian threshold, the increasingly robust governance mechanism is based on increasingly centralized power: top-down control of the many by the few (as opposed to a widely-coordinated effort).By contrast, **below** the libertarian threshold, the increasingly robust State is based on a universal cooperative based on centralized governance…yet **de**-centralized (i.e. distributed) power.(This relates to the distinction made by Alexis de Tocqueville between “governance” and “administration”, the former appropriately centralized while the latter appropriately localized.)So: Above the x-axis (i.e. the libertarian threshold), the role of the governance mechanism increases in an illiberal way; below the x-axis, its role increases in a liberal way.

The more a deviation from the equilibrium point (0,-n), the stronger the gravitational pull becomes: whether ventures toward hyper-socialization or toward hyper-privatization.In **either** direction, there is a mirage on the horizon (at y = 0): anarcho-syndicalism (absolute socialism) and anarcho-capitalism (absolute laissez-faire economics).Let’s review the nature of these mirages:

In each case, there is posited a chimerical panacea of “liberty”—a destination that is eminently tempting to pursue.But, as with all mirages, reality doesn’t correspond with the vision.In the absence of a stable system of ROTA (i.e. a “disinterested” meta-market mechanism of regulation, oversight, transparency, and accountability that operates strictly for the public interest), unchecked power structures will tend

to fill the vacuum.This is why corporatism is a form of HCP rather than of democracy…AND it is why extreme collectivism creates a system of HCP rather than a genuine “socialist” commune (unless it is done on the scale of an agrarian Kibbutz).

Therefore EITHER libertarian ideal (left OR right) is a seductive illusion that involves an augmenting of the concentration of power—though with alternate pretexts.In either direction, by striving to prevent oligarchy in a misguided way, a movement ends up (unwittingly) setting the stage for oligarchy.Be it a “dictatorship of the proletariat” or a “free market” free-for-all, the outcome is the same: breaching the event horizon at libertarian threshold.Both visions promise empowerment to “the people” and end up creating oligarchic power structures instead. In both scenarios, HCP is (inadvertently) augmented in the name of “liberty”.

The equilibrium point at **–n,0** (the ideal of civil society) is the only point that exists outside of (though on the cusp of) the two gravitational pulls.Here, cult activity is minimized, power is maximally distributed, and an economic medium exists where socialized infrastructure / services and a free market (i.e. private enterprises) **operate in concert**—**each in a delimited domain**.It is under these (optimal) conditions that genuine democracy can flourish.Establishing (in general terms) the optimal conditions for civil society must be done before any political discussion can proceed.The APS helps us do that.

The area to the right of the nominal meridian contains the intersection of two gravitational pulls: that of **cult activity** (for $x > 0$) and that of **concentrated power** (for $y > -n$).The former is a rightward pull; the latter is an “upward” pull.At any place to the right of the nominal meridian, the two work concurrently.

NOTE: To reiterate, the nature of the economic system has no necessary connection with the degree of cult activity; but for the purposes of the APS, the two can be consolidated along the same dimension—and thus be assumed to roughly coincide.Technically, we may graph the APS in three dimensions, keeping all three metrics separate, but this isn’t necessary for most “real world” cases.

The coincidence of these two metrics (the element of cult activity and the element of laissez-faire economic policy) is justified due to the symbiosis of the different elements of right-wing movements.Indeed, cult activity itself involves two different aspects: hyper-religionism and hyper-nationalism (which are themselves symbiotic). (For more on this, see my “Understanding The Right Wing”.)The only discrepancy

here is that the degree of cult activity starts (at nil) at x = 0 and increases rightward…while the spectrum of laissez-faire economics starts (at nil) at x = -n and increases rightward.

As already stated, the Bolshevik Turn (BT) happens near **–n,0** (i.e. where a leftist movement goes so far to the "left" that it intersects the libertarian threshold).At this pivotal point, the movement breaches the "event horizon" of power-concentration's gravitational pull—and can't help but surge rightward (into cult activity) even as the concentration of power increases.The Robespierre Syndrome occurs around this point—thereby inaugurating a drastic rightward lurch (soon taking on elements of cult activity while the regime becomes more oligarchic).Even after a movement has initially migrated to the left, this inevitably happens once the movement goes far enough left to breach the libertarian threshold (as we saw with both the French and Bolshevik Revolutions).

It is at that critical point (near **–n,0**) where Marxian ideals become what we've come to know as "Marxism" / "Communism".The BT entails the inversion of a humanist cause into its antithesis.It is an abrupt transformation typically instigated by mass hysteria **in conjunction with** the introduction of oligarchic elements: **elements that invariably form in the absence of a robust State**.(The BT could also be called "the Jacobin Detour".)This involves the drastic retro-version of an initially left-ward movement to a right-wing regime.The APS reflects this.The conventional spectrum does not.

EXAMPLES:

The upshot of graphing most political phenomena in the manner outlined above is simple: most movements in history can be explained in terms of this model.Once we can agree on the model itself, the discussion becomes: What specific policies entail being at the ideal point (0,-n)—the point at which all measures of societal weal are maximized?This "true center" is established **first**, then questions about how to get there may be posed.Therefore, all debates / arguments would be a matter of figuring out what brings society closer to the democratic equilibrium: **0,-n**.

To illustrate how this model can account for most political phenomena, we can list roughly where certain iconic cases would be positioned along this circuit.To do this, let's call the curve-segment between **–n,0** and **0,-n** "the left" and the curve-segment between **0,-n** and **n,0** "the right".We can call the path leading from **–n,0** to the vertex at **2n,n** "the upper surge" and the path leading from **n,0** to the vertex at

2n,n “the lower surge”.**–n,0** would be the “far left” while **n,0** would be the “far right”—both untenable utopian ideals.**2n,n** is therefore the “ultra-far right” (i.e. the totalitarian convergence) where fascism / totalitarian theocracy and Soviet-style “communism” become one in the same thing (e.g. North Korea, the Khmer Rouge, Orwell’s INGSOC, etc.)

Today, the only notable examples of nations lying slightly to “the left” are the nations of Scandinavia, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.Yet some (including me) might argue that this is essentially **0,-n**.Canada, Switzerland, and New Zealand are also very close to this ideal point.

Nations on the upper surge include Venezuela and Cuba (still primarily on the left, yet exhibiting signature traits of Robespierre Syndrome) as well as Maoist China, Stalinist/Soviet Russia, and the GDR (which were to the far-right along this surge).Chavez’s Venezuela and Castro’s Cuba are peculiar cases simply because they’ve managed to remain on the left end of the upper surge without degenerating into full-fledged totalitarian states.In a way, this is quite remarkable.

Nations on “the right” are ubiquitous, as this is where the majority of the world now exists.The marginal right (still relatively close to **0,-n**) includes Austria, Belgium, France, and Germany.Slightly further to the right are Brasil, Italy, and Spain.Further still is the U.S.(The entire Overton Window of the U.S. exists along the right curve-segment, with the G.O.P. being eerily close to **n,0**.)

BOTH “fascist” regimes (Jacobin France, Nazi Germany, and—to a lesser degree—the plutocracy in modern-day Russia) AND close-to-totalitarian theocracies (Grand Ayatollah-ruled Iran and Afghanistan’s Taliban) exist on the lower surge—as they are essentially two versions of the same underlying phenomenon.North Korea’s Juche and Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge can be placed at **2n,n** (i.e. directly on the totalitarian convergence).Again, though exhibiting signature differences, ALL these regimes share key elements that put them on this curve segment.

Once a movement gets far enough along **either** surge toward **2n,n** (i.e. sufficiently close to the vertex), the two surges become virtually indistinguishable.Here, which curve-segment the regime happens to be on is a moot point: HCP is HCP and cult activity is cult activity—regardless of the form it takes.Most tyrannical dictatorships (Baathist Iraq, Quadaffi’s Libya) and despotic military juntas (Myanmar, Somalia,

and the DR of Congo) and theocracies / monarchies (the Saudi regime and the regime in Qatar) exist somewhere in this far-right region (close to the totalitarian convergence).

History's great mistakes are thus readily explained: 20th Century "communism" sought the untenable utopia at **–n,0**…while Neoliberalism and free-market fundamentalism (Randianism, the Chicago School of economics, the Austrian School of economics, Neoliberalism, etc.) sought (and still seek) the untenable utopia at **n,0**.Both kinds of ventures ultimately lead toward the same point (**2n,n**) if carried to their logical extreme.

One caveat is worth mentioning: Technically, different elements (aspects, facets) of a regime can simultaneously exist on different points along the APS, as nations are highly complex phenomena.Generally, though, the overarching features of any given regime put it on a particular segment of the APS.

LESSONS OF THE APS:

Among other things, the present model accomplishes three important tasks that no other political model can.First, the APS shows not just THAT ultra-right-wing and ultra-left-wing converge, but WHY they converge.Second, it not only shows that a State may become robust in two different ways, but in two diametrically opposed ways (and why one way is preferable to the other).Third, it shows what makes the right wing "right-wing" and what makes the left wing "left-wing".In other words, it posits the objective standards by which such categories are defined.The upshot of this is that we can see WHY right-wing scenarios are undesirable and HOW going too far to the left leads to undesirable outcomes (via the Robespierre Syndrome).

The French and Bolshevik Revolutions demonstrated that quantum leaps on the circuit are possible if there is a significant enough perturbation to the system.Thus, in each case, we saw a monarchy upset, only to be transplanted with a different form of oligarchic / top-down control (by having overshot 0,-n and gone too far to the left, thereby leaving a power vacuum).

Only the APS shows WHY both the right-wing and left-wing libertarian ideals involve chimerical panaceas of "liberty".BOTH anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho-capitalism are based on untenable utopian visions.NEITHER can LOGISTICALLY actually involve the romantic outcome that they purport to embody.In both cases, a system is caught in a gravitational pull that brings it inexorably toward the totalitarian convergence: **2n,n**.

The APS reflects that cult activity and power concentration go hand in hand.(As for WHY the two are symbiotic, please see my “Understanding The Right Wing”.)This is a crucial point in formulating any political theory.

Lastly, the gravitational pulls show us WHY a participatory, deliberative democracy is predicated on the polis being pro-active and civic-minded…and that civil society is lost insofar the polis is re-active / passive-minded and narcissistic.Movement “upward” along the circuit involves **re-activity**: allowing the tidal pull of power-concentration and the allure of cult activity to take their course.“Reversing” that process involves more of a quantum leap: pro-actively replacing high-y elements with low-y elements—something that goes constitutionally against the nature of the (incumbent) high-y-type institutions.

By using this model to explain political phenomena (namely, the nature of particular movements and policies), there will be no more DECLARING BY FIAT that something is (too far) right-wing or (too far) left-wing.With the APS, there are objective standards by which such things may be ascertained.Therefore, there are objective meanings to “left” and “right”—meanings that would be insolubly relative where we to think of such things in terms of the conventional spectrum.

THE NEW DEBATE:

Understanding this model, we can then have a meaningful discussion about what is properly socialized (part of the public domain) vis a vis what is properly part of the free market (within the private sector).Does a civil society require UPH (universal public healthcare) or universal access to a high quality education?How are structural inequalities and socio-economic stratification minimized?How can social injustice be mitigated?In sum: What, exactly, does **0,-n** ENTAIL?

Those who sought a Stateless absolute **socialism** (Kropotkin, Bakunin, Rocker, Proudhon, etc.) or those who simply thought that absolute socialism was possible without becoming oligarchic (Marx and Engels) erred too far to the left.Meanwhile, those who sought a Stateless absolute **capitalism** (von Mises, Hayek, Friedman, Rand, Rothbard, the Chicago School, etc.) erred too far to the right.

When those who are far to the right accuse Progressives of paving the road to “tyranny”, it isn’t enough to point out that it is wrongheaded.We must have a model that shows WHY this is wrong-headed.The APS allows us to say that this accusation involves portraying a move away from **n,0** and toward **0,-n** as somehow movement

closer to **2n,n**.We find that doing so typically requires portraying **n,0 AS 0,-n** …and portraying any measures to bring about **0,-n** as tantamount to inaugurating **–n,0**. (This is a combination of a “bate and switch” and a straw man argument.)

Indeed, by (deliberately) moving rightward from **0,-n** to **n,0** (in the name of “economic freedom” and “private enterprise” and “property rights” and “small government”), a movement is paving the way for tyranny.While such a move stems from a (legitimate) concern about too much HCP in the form of **state** power, it opens the floodgates for an excess of the **other** form of HCP: highly-concentrated PRIVATE power.Such a misguided endeavor to bolster “liberty” brings society closer to the totalitarian convergence (2n,n).The APS illustrates that, in an effort to stymie oligarchy, such a project sets the stage for it.

Here’s the catch: Rationalizing such a project requires painting **0,-n** as **–n,0**.In other words, one depicts the **empowerment of** people via the State as its antithesis: government **control over** people…thereby confusing (calculatedly or unwittingly) the two opposite kinds of governance mechanisms: liberal and illiberal.The APS shows us all of this; the conventional spectrum does not.

With regard to the APS, we can ask pertinent questions:

What is the degree of cult activity involved here?Is there super-patriotism or national chauvinism afoot?What is the degree of power concentration in scenario X vs. scenario Y?Is anyone being systematically marginalized?Exploited?Under those circumstances, is there genuinely equal opportunity?To what extent does merit-based socio-economic mobility really exist?Are there barriers to entry for certain people?How?Why?To what degree is disenfranchisement allowed?What are the neighborhood effects of this or that phenomenon?Are there any negative externalities entailed by this or that private venture?If so, where do we draw the line?Is this or that allocation of public funds most conducive to the common good?By passing a particular piece of legislation, cui bono—ultimately?

For any given question, are we basing our answers on sanctified dogmas or on categorically universal principles?

With the conventional spectrum, not only are such questions not answered, **they are almost never even posed**.With the APS, we see that these are the most important questions to ask about any political movement / policy.

>

Faux intellectualism has become a big business in America—which has severely degenerated our public discourse.As we've seen time and time again, when "knowledgeable" is unwittingly employed as a euphemism for "ignorant", severe problems arise.All too often, entertaining is misconstrued as erudite—a perception that misleads the audience into endorsing ridiculous positions even as it provides a lucrative career for the entertainer.(It's safe to say that if we lived in a well-educated society, almost every celebrity pundit currently dominating media would be out of a job.Their ample market-share, it would be revealed, is predicated on widespread ignorance.)

Each one of us encounters the following question: Who is worth listening to and who isn't?We often answer this question in different ways—depending on the criteria we use to measure credence.The "catch" is that there are legitimate criteria and illegitimate criteria.Some of us are on the right track; some of us are well-intentioned yet stupendously wrong-headed.And for some of us, our standards have become so low as to be question-begging.

Elucidating the A-B spectrum may help us be more discerning.

The importance of being able to distinguish between genuine scholars and academic frauds can't be over-emphasized.The distinction is colossal—analogous to the difference between bona fide journalists and professional bloviators (i.e. celebrity political pundits).After all, a charlatan is a charlatan, regardless of the context of his celebrity.So long as we listen to charlatans (while under the impression we're heeding sage counsel), we will continue to be woefully misled.

EPILOGUE: The Rationalizations of True Believers:

Instead of seeking to understand why the vast majority of scholars are "liberal" (and secular, and cosmopolitan, and humanist, for that matter), right-wing ideologues diligently try to explain the trend away.They chalk it up to a nefarious conspiracy of X (where X is the epithet du jour).That is, they invoke whatever derogatory scare-term is currently en vogue: "communist" or "infidel" or "heathen" or "socialist" or "anti-American" or "intellectual elitist".

Conservative commentators simply rationalize the inherent NON-right-wing nature of scholarship as some kind of "bias" that "infects" both journalism and academia. (This often involves what psychologists call "reaction formation", as when Angelo Codevilla calls Progressives "the ruling class" while keeping a straight face.)

It is, of course, no coincidence that the most educated people in society are overwhelmingly positioned to the so-called “left” on the conventional political spectrum…while the greatest minds in the world are almost entirely Progressive (i.e. secular / cosmopolitan / humanist / intellectual).The (very notable, and very few) exceptions prove the rule.It is no wonder that this obvious trend has become a contentious issue in conservative circles: It irks right-wing ideologues to the point of distraction.After all, THEY want to be the smart guys—just as they were deemed “the best and brightest” in LBJ’s proto-Neocon cabinet.

The wisest of us are Progressive.The explanation for this trend couldn’t be clearer: Erudite people and great thinkers understand the world…and tend to exhibit at least a modicum of intellectual integrity.Invariably, then, they will converge toward a point that reflects a genuine understanding of the world.The apparent anomalies to this overwhelming pattern (the type B academics) can be almost entirely accounted for by instances of intellectual capture.

The tragic proliferation of B-types accounts for the emergence of conservative “think tanks” (i.e. propaganda-factories).Upon scrutiny, we come to find that the prevalence of right-wing propaganda depends on systematically-enforced intellectual capture.

Someday, we can pray, mainstream media will pay more attention to A-types while rendering B-types irrelevant to our public discourse.In the meantime, it is incumbent upon all of us who care about Truth to be discerning with who we listen to and who we ignore.

* I’ve already evaluated a list of some of today’s popular political pundits and propaganda-mongers, such as Frank Luntz, Mark Levin, Karl Rove, and Bill Kristol, who are the most egregious cases of charlatanry (for an extensive list, see my Right-Wing Impresarios).To illustrate the contrast, let’s note a dozen of the best contemporary social commentators:

Steve Coll

Chris Hedges

Lawrence Wright

James Carroll

Louis Menand

Kevin Phillips

William Greider

David Kay Johnston

Thomas Frank

Matt Taibbi

Jeremy Scahill

Naomi Klein

John Cassidy

James Surowiecki

Jane Mayer

These are journalists of the highest caliber—the benchmark by which all commentary can be measured.

Richard Hoftstadter may well be the epitome of the great commentator of the 20th Century.One can contrast the caliber of Hoftstadter's disquisition with the banter issuing from popular talking heads of the present day—be it on network news, or in the pages of right-wing propaganda rags.The juxtaposition between most of today's celebrity pundits and real journalists is as striking as the juxtaposition between type A and B academics.

Even the higher quality commentators (Eleanor Roosevelt, George Orwell, Molly Ivins, Robert Kuttner, Mark Shields, John Nichols, Hendrick Hertzberg, Gore Vidal, Bill Moyers, Barbara Ehrenreich, Tavis Smiley, Joan Walsh, Chris Hayes, Glenn Greenwald, Eric Alterman, Robert Reich, etc.) are light-years beyond most of the celebrity pundits that dominate MSM.Again, the former are almost entirely Progressive, while the latter are generally right-wing.This is no coincidence.The reasons are quite clear.

amp;gt; n and y positive: the area above the libertarian threshold and to the right of x = n.This is essentially a “point of no return”…short of a complete revolution (eradication of the incumbent power structures).Power tends not to want to dissipate itself, as those with power will tend to use that power to preserve that power.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE GRAVITATIONAL PULLS:

The APS thus intersects the x-axis at absolute socialism (–n,0) and at absolute capitalism (n,0): left-wing and right-wing “libertarianism” respectively.The former point represents an untenable utopia of Stateless absolute socialism (i.e. libertarian socialism, a.k.a. anarcho-syndicalism).The latter point represents another untenable utopia—that of Stateless absolute capitalism (i.e. an absolutist laissez-faire market economy, a.k.a. anarcho-capitalism).

Both utopias are untenable as they exist on a threshold that acts as an “event horizon” for the power-concentration gravity well: in their attempt to (ostensibly) avoid power concentration, they create it.(A small agrarian commune, or Kibbutz, can sustain itself at **–n,0**; but a post-industrial, large-scale society can not.)The (alleged) point of aiming for the chimerical panacea of “liberty” at both –n,0 and n,0 is to maximize “freedom”.However, as y increases from –n, the gravitational pull of power concentration grows, making the realization of either utopia intractable.In a sense, Karl Marx’s ideal is untenable for similar reasons that Ayn Rand’s ideal is untenable—even as both strive to avoid totalitarianism / exploitation.

The vertex at **2n,n** represents absolute power-concentration / top-down control in conjunction with absolute theocracy.Thus, moving toward it along either path (from “the left” or from “the right”) entails ever-more concentrated power and ever-more cult activity.

Here’s the key: Once the libertarian threshold is breached (as y approaches—then breaches—0), the regime crosses an event horizon and is therefore pulled inexorably toward the power-concentration gravity well at y = n (from either one end or the other, as the case may be).When this happens at x = -n, it involves the Bolshevik Turn (BT)…and follows the rightward path to **2n,n** under the auspices of “socialism” (we call this Statism).When this happens at x = n, it involves a path to the right under the auspices of “capitalism” (we call this corporatism).Both rightward surges converge at the same point.In other words, Statism and corporatism lead to the same thing: the totalitarian convergence.

Put another way: The avenue to the vertex (2n,n) from **–n,0** involves increasing HCP in the form of State power.Meanwhile, the avenue to the vertex from **n,0** involves increasing HCP in the form of private (i.e. corporate) power.**Either way**, starting at the nominal meridian, the element of cult activity (x) increases toward **2n** as power becomes ever-more concentrated (as y increases).Meanwhile, the economy becomes increasingly laissez-faire / corporatist (the private interests of the powerful rule more and more, while the public interest plays less and less of a role).

MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE CIRCUIT:

The circuit intersects the y-axis at two points:

- At the point of equilibrium between hyper-socialization and hyper-privatization: the ideal of civil society (0,-n).This exists on the nominal meridian, and may be called the “democratic equilibrium”.
- At a point that is some fraction of y = n (along what could be called the “upper surge” to the ultra-far-right).

The first point exists at a place of homeostasis (as it exists outside of the two gravitational pulls).That second point represents a position after the BT has taken place—and is merely a point along a rightward “surge”.This is a point of transience, as it exists within the event horizon of the power-concentration gravity well AND at the onset of the cult activity gravitational pull.So the only significant thing about this particular point is the onset of cult activity after Robespierre Syndrome goes into full throttle (as we saw with Lenin after the Bolshevik Revolution).

0,-n represents the ideal of civil society—what is conventionally called “liberal social democracy”.This is a condition achieved when social / economic justice and other democratic ideals are maximized **by keeping power sufficiently distributed while having a sufficiently robust governance mechanism**.The key is that this “true center” is a point of EQUILIBRIUM: the medium between hyper-socialism and hyper-capitalism.It exists on the edge of both gravity wells.Here, y = -n because power is maximally distributed (while coordination is centralized in a robust State).This is far from the libertarian threshold because it is a maximally robust State.Since y = -n (power concentration is minimized), it is the maximally robust LIBERAL State.

We can note here that one of the “tricks” of the far-right-wing in America is to conflate the robustness of a state for totalitarian characteristics.The key, then, is to distinguish the robust-ness of a State from the degree of power concentration.The

democratic equilibrium involves a State that is maximally robust IN A CERTAIN WAY, while maintaining maximally distributed power. Again the nominal meridian (for y < 0) represents the condition where there is the optimal mixture of capitalism and socialism (a prudent degree of laissez-faire economic policy), and nil cult activity.

The (vertical) line at x = -n represents absolute socialism (nil cult activity, as it is to the left of the nominal meridian).The (vertical) line at x = n represents absolute capitalism (and high cult activity, as it is significantly to the right of the nominal meridian).Keep in mind, the convergence point at x = 2n represents maximum (absolute) cult activity (with any element of “capitalism” becoming a moot point).

The (horizontal) line at y = -n represents the anti-Statist (liberal / democratic) robust State.The (horizontal) line at y = n represents the Statist (illiberal / authoritarian) robust State (or a **de facto** State if the power structure is in the form of corporate power).The libertarian threshold represents conditions where there is (essentially) no State: the two forms of anarchy already mentioned.

In other words, **above** the libertarian threshold, the increasingly robust governance mechanism is based on increasingly centralized power: top-down control of the many by the few (as opposed to a widely-coordinated effort).By contrast, **below** the libertarian threshold, the increasingly robust State is based on a universal cooperative based on centralized governance…yet **de**-centralized (i.e. distributed) power.(This relates to the distinction made by Alexis de Tocqueville between “governance” and “administration”, the former appropriately centralized while the latter appropriately localized.)So: Above the x-axis (i.e. the libertarian threshold), the role of the governance mechanism increases in an illiberal way; below the x-axis, its role increases in a liberal way.

The more a deviation from the equilibrium point (0,-n), the stronger the gravitational pull becomes: whether ventures toward hyper-socialization or toward hyper-privatization.In **either** direction, there is a mirage on the horizon (at y = 0): anarcho-syndicalism (absolute socialism) and anarcho-capitalism (absolute laissez-faire economics).Let’s review the nature of these mirages:

In each case, there is posited a chimerical panacea of “liberty”—a destination that is eminently tempting to pursue.But, as with all mirages, reality doesn’t correspond with the vision.In the absence of a stable system of ROTA (i.e. a “disinterested” meta-market mechanism of regulation, oversight, transparency, and accountability that operates strictly for the public interest), unchecked power structures will tend

to fill the vacuum.This is why corporatism is a form of HCP rather than of democracy…AND it is why extreme collectivism creates a system of HCP rather than a genuine “socialist” commune (unless it is done on the scale of an agrarian Kibbutz).

Therefore EITHER libertarian ideal (left OR right) is a seductive illusion that involves an augmenting of the concentration of power—though with alternate pretexts.In either direction, by striving to prevent oligarchy in a misguided way, a movement ends up (unwittingly) setting the stage for oligarchy.Be it a “dictatorship of the proletariat” or a “free market” free-for-all, the outcome is the same: breaching the event horizon at libertarian threshold.Both visions promise empowerment to “the people” and end up creating oligarchic power structures instead. In both scenarios, HCP is (inadvertently) augmented in the name of “liberty”.

The equilibrium point at **–n,0** (the ideal of civil society) is the only point that exists outside of (though on the cusp of) the two gravitational pulls.Here, cult activity is minimized, power is maximally distributed, and an economic medium exists where socialized infrastructure / services and a free market (i.e. private enterprises) **operate in concert**—**each in a delimited domain**.It is under these (optimal) conditions that genuine democracy can flourish.Establishing (in general terms) the optimal conditions for civil society must be done before any political discussion can proceed.The APS helps us do that.

The area to the right of the nominal meridian contains the intersection of two gravitational pulls: that of **cult activity** (for $x > 0$) and that of **concentrated power** (for $y > -n$).The former is a rightward pull; the latter is an “upward” pull.At any place to the right of the nominal meridian, the two work concurrently.

NOTE: To reiterate, the nature of the economic system has no necessary connection with the degree of cult activity; but for the purposes of the APS, the two can be consolidated along the same dimension—and thus be assumed to roughly coincide.Technically, we may graph the APS in three dimensions, keeping all three metrics separate, but this isn’t necessary for most “real world” cases.

The coincidence of these two metrics (the element of cult activity and the element of laissez-faire economic policy) is justified due to the symbiosis of the different elements of right-wing movements.Indeed, cult activity itself involves two different aspects: hyper-religionism and hyper-nationalism (which are themselves symbiotic). (For more on this, see my “Understanding The Right Wing”.)The only discrepancy

here is that the degree of cult activity starts (at nil) at x = 0 and increases rightward…while the spectrum of laissez-faire economics starts (at nil) at x = -n and increases rightward.

As already stated, the Bolshevik Turn (BT) happens near **–n,0** (i.e. where a leftist movement goes so far to the "left" that it intersects the libertarian threshold).At this pivotal point, the movement breaches the "event horizon" of power-concentration's gravitational pull—and can't help but surge rightward (into cult activity) even as the concentration of power increases.The Robespierre Syndrome occurs around this point—thereby inaugurating a drastic rightward lurch (soon taking on elements of cult activity while the regime becomes more oligarchic).Even after a movement has initially migrated to the left, this inevitably happens once the movement goes far enough left to breach the libertarian threshold (as we saw with both the French and Bolshevik Revolutions).

It is at that critical point (near **–n,0**) where Marxian ideals become what we've come to know as "Marxism" / "Communism".The BT entails the inversion of a humanist cause into its antithesis.It is an abrupt transformation typically instigated by mass hysteria **in conjunction with** the introduction of oligarchic elements: **elements that invariably form in the absence of a robust State**.(The BT could also be called "the Jacobin Detour".)This involves the drastic retro-version of an initially left-ward movement to a right-wing regime.The APS reflects this.The conventional spectrum does not.

EXAMPLES:

The upshot of graphing most political phenomena in the manner outlined above is simple: most movements in history can be explained in terms of this model.Once we can agree on the model itself, the discussion becomes: What specific policies entail being at the ideal point (0,-n)—the point at which all measures of societal weal are maximized?This "true center" is established **first**, then questions about how to get there may be posed.Therefore, all debates / arguments would be a matter of figuring out what brings society closer to the democratic equilibrium: **0,-n**.

To illustrate how this model can account for most political phenomena, we can list roughly where certain iconic cases would be positioned along this circuit.To do this, let's call the curve-segment between **–n,0** and **0,-n** "the left" and the curve-segment between **0,-n** and **n,0** "the right".We can call the path leading from **–n,0** to the vertex at **2n,n** "the upper surge" and the path leading from **n,0** to the vertex at

2n,n “the lower surge”.**–n,0** would be the “far left” while **n,0** would be the “far right”—both untenable utopian ideals.**2n,n** is therefore the “ultra-far right” (i.e. the totalitarian convergence) where fascism / totalitarian theocracy and Soviet-style “communism” become one in the same thing (e.g. North Korea, the Khmer Rouge, Orwell’s INGSOC, etc.)

Today, the only notable examples of nations lying slightly to “the left” are the nations of Scandinavia, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.Yet some (including me) might argue that this is essentially **0,-n**.Canada, Switzerland, and New Zealand are also very close to this ideal point.

Nations on the upper surge include Venezuela and Cuba (still primarily on the left, yet exhibiting signature traits of Robespierre Syndrome) as well as Maoist China, Stalinist/Soviet Russia, and the GDR (which were to the far-right along this surge).Chavez’s Venezuela and Castro’s Cuba are peculiar cases simply because they’ve managed to remain on the left end of the upper surge without degenerating into full-fledged totalitarian states.In a way, this is quite remarkable.

Nations on “the right” are ubiquitous, as this is where the majority of the world now exists.The marginal right (still relatively close to **0,-n**) includes Austria, Belgium, France, and Germany.Slightly further to the right are Brasil, Italy, and Spain.Further still is the U.S.(The entire Overton Window of the U.S. exists along the right curve-segment, with the G.O.P. being eerily close to **n,0**.)

BOTH “fascist” regimes (Jacobin France, Nazi Germany, and—to a lesser degree—the plutocracy in modern-day Russia) AND close-to-totalitarian theocracies (Grand Ayatollah-ruled Iran and Afghanistan’s Taliban) exist on the lower surge—as they are essentially two versions of the same underlying phenomenon.North Korea’s Juche and Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge can be placed at **2n,n** (i.e. directly on the totalitarian convergence).Again, though exhibiting signature differences, ALL these regimes share key elements that put them on this curve segment.

Once a movement gets far enough along **either** surge toward **2n,n** (i.e. sufficiently close to the vertex), the two surges become virtually indistinguishable.Here, which curve-segment the regime happens to be on is a moot point: HCP is HCP and cult activity is cult activity—regardless of the form it takes.Most tyrannical dictatorships (Baathist Iraq, Quadaffi’s Libya) and despotic military juntas (Myanmar, Somalia,

and the DR of Congo) and theocracies / monarchies (the Saudi regime and the regime in Qatar) exist somewhere in this far-right region (close to the totalitarian convergence).

History's great mistakes are thus readily explained: 20th Century "communism" sought the untenable utopia at **–n,0**…while Neoliberalism and free-market fundamentalism (Randianism, the Chicago School of economics, the Austrian School of economics, Neoliberalism, etc.) sought (and still seek) the untenable utopia at **n,0**.Both kinds of ventures ultimately lead toward the same point (**2n,n**) if carried to their logical extreme.

One caveat is worth mentioning: Technically, different elements (aspects, facets) of a regime can simultaneously exist on different points along the APS, as nations are highly complex phenomena.Generally, though, the overarching features of any given regime put it on a particular segment of the APS.

LESSONS OF THE APS:

Among other things, the present model accomplishes three important tasks that no other political model can.First, the APS shows not just THAT ultra-right-wing and ultra-left-wing converge, but WHY they converge.Second, it not only shows that a State may become robust in two different ways, but in two diametrically opposed ways (and why one way is preferable to the other).Third, it shows what makes the right wing "right-wing" and what makes the left wing "left-wing".In other words, it posits the objective standards by which such categories are defined.The upshot of this is that we can see WHY right-wing scenarios are undesirable and HOW going too far to the left leads to undesirable outcomes (via the Robespierre Syndrome).

The French and Bolshevik Revolutions demonstrated that quantum leaps on the circuit are possible if there is a significant enough perturbation to the system.Thus, in each case, we saw a monarchy upset, only to be transplanted with a different form of oligarchic / top-down control (by having overshot 0,-n and gone too far to the left, thereby leaving a power vacuum).

Only the APS shows WHY both the right-wing and left-wing libertarian ideals involve chimerical panaceas of "liberty".BOTH anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho-capitalism are based on untenable utopian visions.NEITHER can LOGISTICALLY actually involve the romantic outcome that they purport to embody.In both cases, a system is caught in a gravitational pull that brings it inexorably toward the totalitarian convergence: **2n,n**.

The APS reflects that cult activity and power concentration go hand in hand.(As for WHY the two are symbiotic, please see my “Understanding The Right Wing”.)This is a crucial point in formulating any political theory.

Lastly, the gravitational pulls show us WHY a participatory, deliberative democracy is predicated on the polis being pro-active and civic-minded…and that civil society is lost insofar the polis is re-active / passive-minded and narcissistic.Movement “upward” along the circuit involves **re-activity**: allowing the tidal pull of power-concentration and the allure of cult activity to take their course.“Reversing” that process involves more of a quantum leap: pro-actively replacing high-y elements with low-y elements—something that goes constitutionally against the nature of the (incumbent) high-y-type institutions.

By using this model to explain political phenomena (namely, the nature of particular movements and policies), there will be no more DECLARING BY FIAT that something is (too far) right-wing or (too far) left-wing.With the APS, there are objective standards by which such things may be ascertained.Therefore, there are objective meanings to “left” and “right”—meanings that would be insolubly relative where we to think of such things in terms of the conventional spectrum.

THE NEW DEBATE:

Understanding this model, we can then have a meaningful discussion about what is properly socialized (part of the public domain) vis a vis what is properly part of the free market (within the private sector).Does a civil society require UPH (universal public healthcare) or universal access to a high quality education?How are structural inequalities and socio-economic stratification minimized?How can social injustice be mitigated?In sum: What, exactly, does **0,-n** ENTAIL?

Those who sought a Stateless absolute **socialism** (Kropotkin, Bakunin, Rocker, Proudhon, etc.) or those who simply thought that absolute socialism was possible without becoming oligarchic (Marx and Engels) erred too far to the left.Meanwhile, those who sought a Stateless absolute **capitalism** (von Mises, Hayek, Friedman, Rand, Rothbard, the Chicago School, etc.) erred too far to the right.

When those who are far to the right accuse Progressives of paving the road to “tyranny”, it isn’t enough to point out that it is wrongheaded.We must have a model that shows WHY this is wrong-headed.The APS allows us to say that this accusation involves portraying a move away from **n,0** and toward **0,-n** as somehow movement

closer to **2n,n**.We find that doing so typically requires portraying **n,0 AS 0,-n** …and portraying any measures to bring about **0,-n** as tantamount to inaugurating **–n,0**. (This is a combination of a “bate and switch” and a straw man argument.)

Indeed, by (deliberately) moving rightward from **0,-n** to **n,0** (in the name of “economic freedom” and “private enterprise” and “property rights” and “small government”), a movement is paving the way for tyranny.While such a move stems from a (legitimate) concern about too much HCP in the form of **state** power, it opens the floodgates for an excess of the **other** form of HCP: highly-concentrated PRIVATE power.Such a misguided endeavor to bolster “liberty” brings society closer to the totalitarian convergence (2n,n).The APS illustrates that, in an effort to stymie oligarchy, such a project sets the stage for it.

Here’s the catch: Rationalizing such a project requires painting **0,-n** as **–n,0**.In other words, one depicts the **empowerment of** people via the State as its antithesis: government **control over** people…thereby confusing (calculatedly or unwittingly) the two opposite kinds of governance mechanisms: liberal and illiberal.The APS shows us all of this; the conventional spectrum does not.

With regard to the APS, we can ask pertinent questions:

What is the degree of cult activity involved here?Is there super-patriotism or national chauvinism afoot?What is the degree of power concentration in scenario X vs. scenario Y?Is anyone being systematically marginalized?Exploited?Under those circumstances, is there genuinely equal opportunity?To what extent does merit-based socio-economic mobility really exist?Are there barriers to entry for certain people?How?Why?To what degree is disenfranchisement allowed?What are the neighborhood effects of this or that phenomenon?Are there any negative externalities entailed by this or that private venture?If so, where do we draw the line?Is this or that allocation of public funds most conducive to the common good?By passing a particular piece of legislation, cui bono—ultimately?

For any given question, are we basing our answers on sanctified dogmas or on categorically universal principles?

With the conventional spectrum, not only are such questions not answered, **they are almost never even posed**.With the APS, we see that these are the most important questions to ask about any political movement / policy.