

[¶ 2.1]

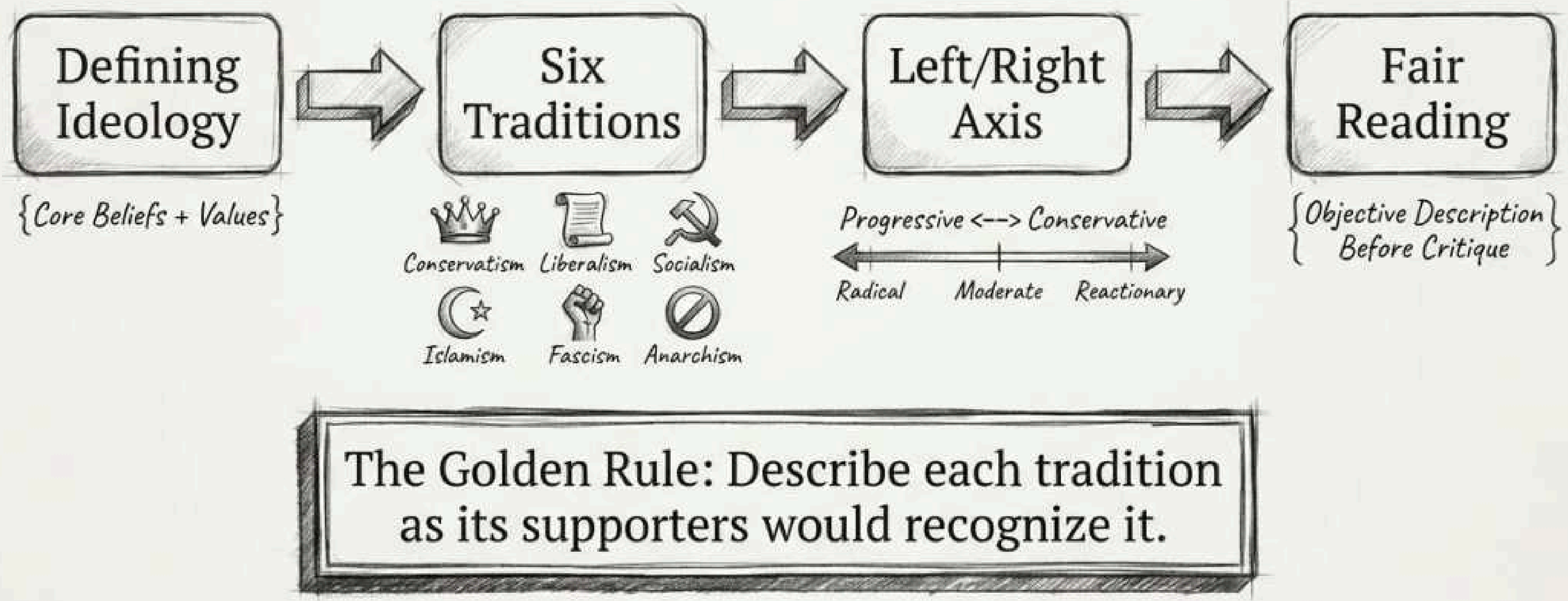
Ideas and Ideologies

Liberalism, Conservatism, Socialism, and Beyond

- Definitions
- Six Traditions
- Frameworks
- Application

POLS 101 B – Lecture 2

[¶ 2.2]



The Golden Rule: Describe each tradition as its supporters would recognize it.

* No ideology is presented here as definitively correct. Criticisms will follow fair descriptions.

The Anatomy of an Ideology

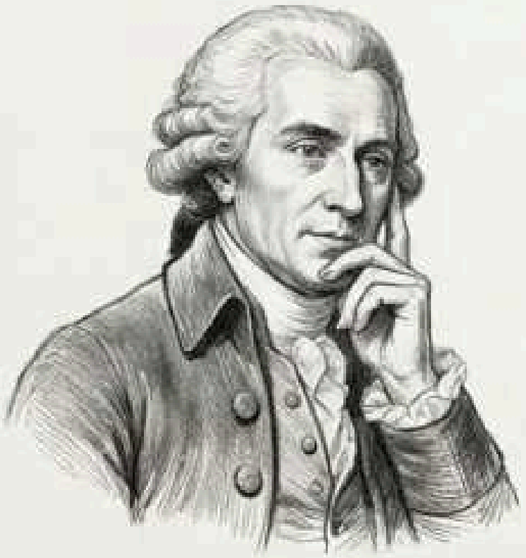
[¶ 2.3]

$$I = f(D, V, P)$$

D = Description
(How the world works)

V = Values
(How society ought to be arranged)

P = Program
(Action plan to bridge the gap)



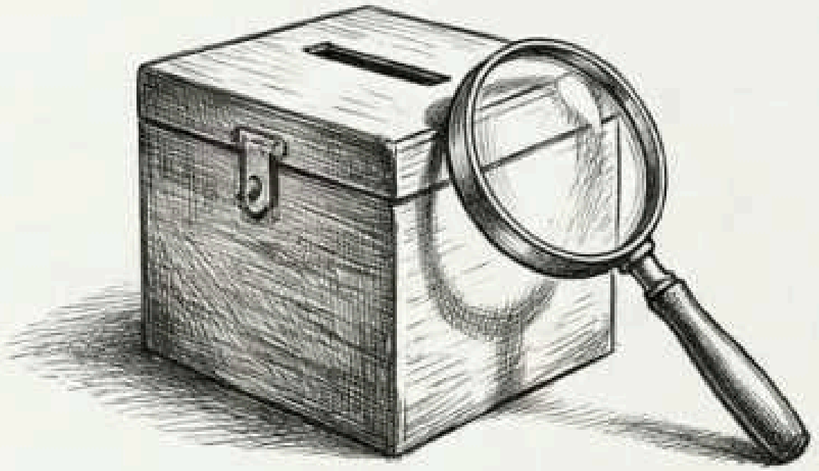
Coined ~1796 by Antoine Destutt de Tracy to build a "science of ideas."

Why Study Ideologies?

[¶ 2.4]

Utility:

1. Provides citizens a shorthand for navigating party choices.
2. Develops the critical skill of understanding rejected views.

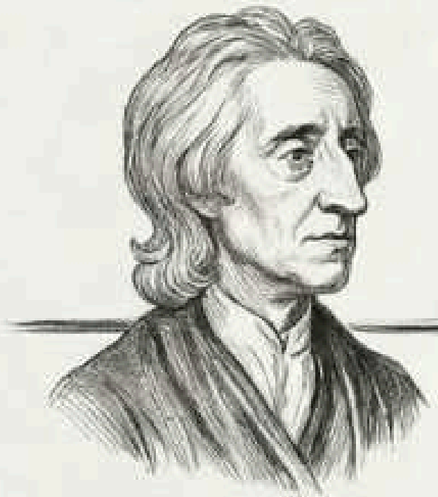


The Acid Test:
Can you describe a position so well that its own holders would say, '*Yes, that is exactly what I believe*'?

Only after passing this test is criticism considered fair.

Liberalism: The Primacy of the Individual [¶ 2.5]

{ Liberty, Equality before Law, Consent, Individual Rights, Limited Government }



John Locke



John Stuart Mill



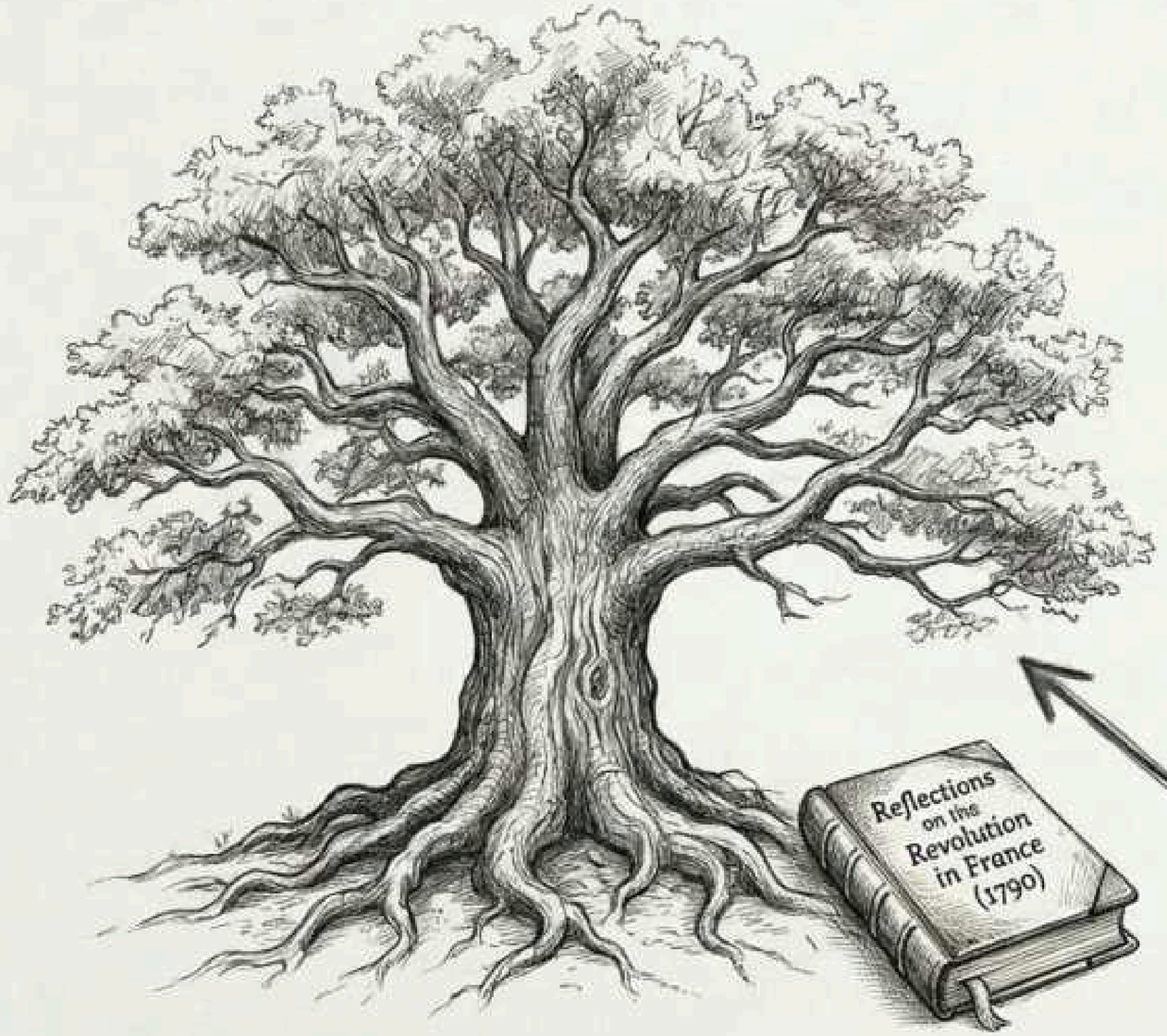
Immanuel Kant

Classical Liberalism
Free markets, small state

Social / Modern Liberalism
Larger state role to secure equal opportunity

⚠ Terminology Note: US ('Liberal' = centre-left) ≠ Global ('Liberal' = market-friendly).

Conservatism: The Wisdom of Institutions [¶ 2.6]



Core Philosophy: Values tradition, established institutions, and gradual reform.

Epistemological Stance: Distrusts grand, utopian plans to remake society due to the strict limits of human knowledge.

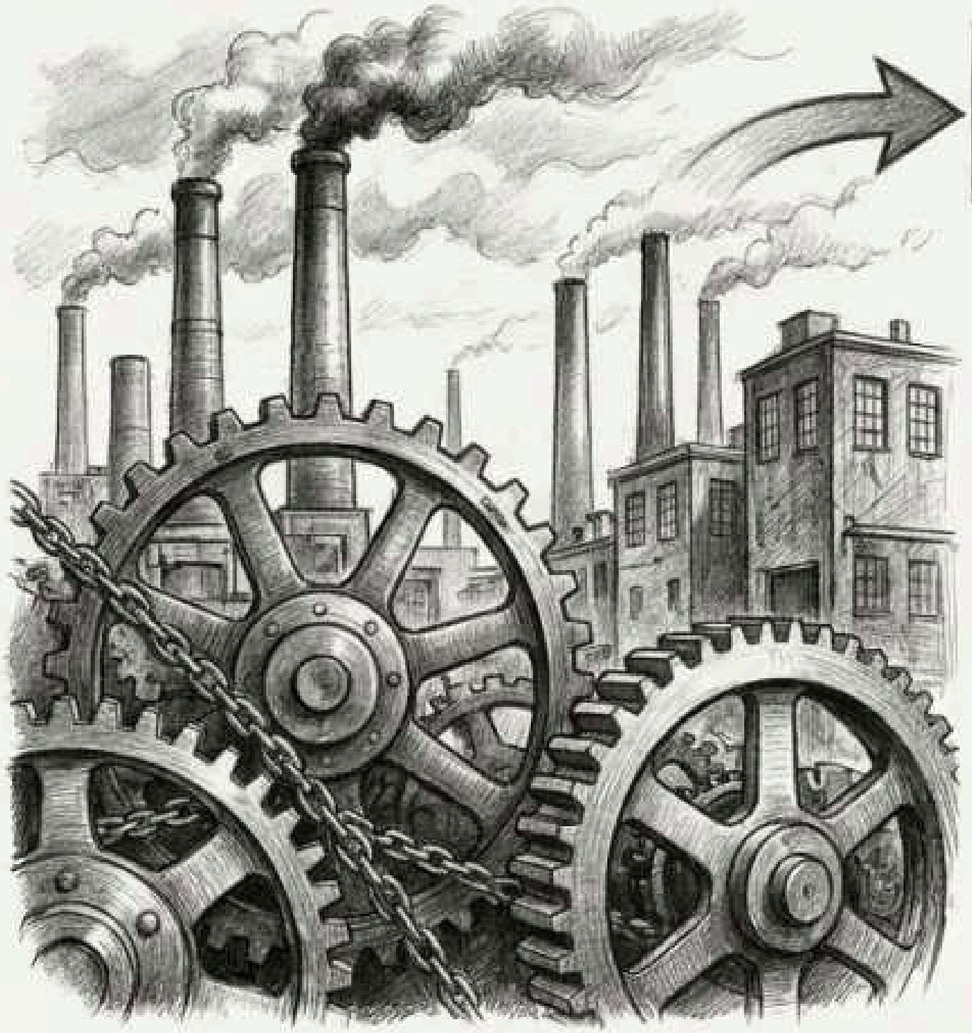
Varieties Matrix:

Traditional	Free-Market	Social

Not a rejection of all change, but a preference for change that grows organically from what already exists.

Socialism: The Drive for Equality

[¶ 2.7]



Origin: Industrial Revolution.
Catalyst: Marx & Engels, Communist Manifesto (1848).

Social Democrats: Elections + Markets + Tempered by Welfare State.



Revolutionary Marxists: Complete societal transformation via collective ownership.

Fundamental Restructuring.

The Communist State Debate

[¶ 2.8]

Critics' View

- One-party rule, systemic repression, economic failure.

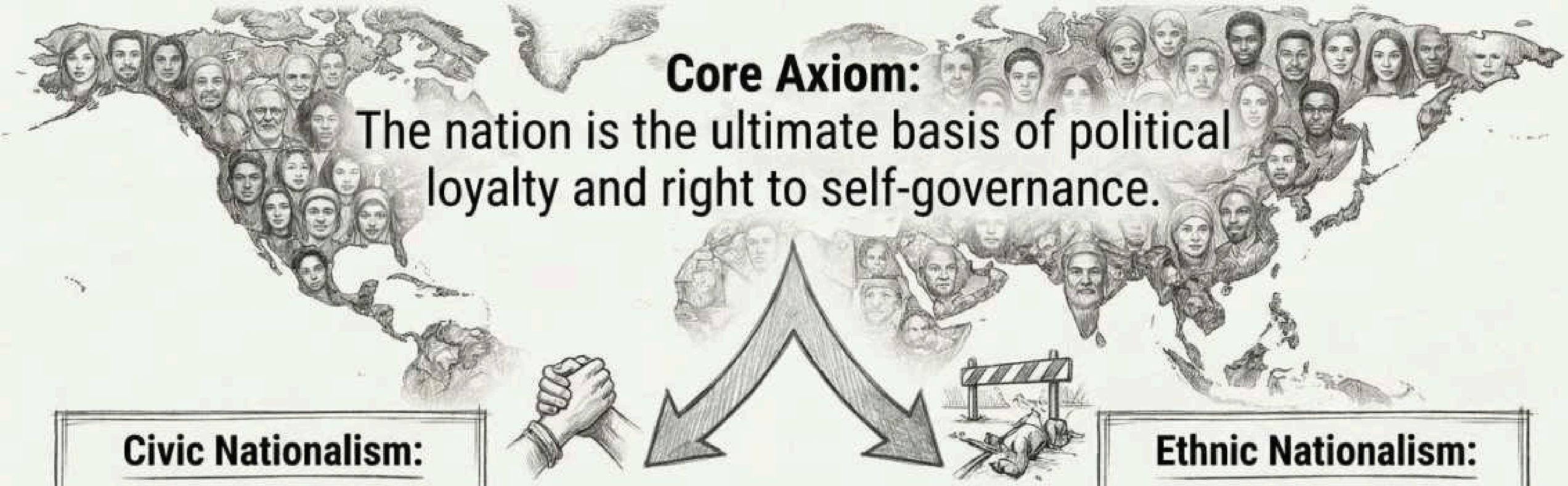


Defenders' View

- Ideals betrayed by leaders, or regimes faced overwhelmingly hostile external conditions.

The Political Science Approach:
Debates must be settled by empirical evidence from specific countries, not dismissed by ideological labels.

Nationalism: 'Imagined Communities' [¶ 2.9]



Core Axiom:
The nation is the ultimate basis of political loyalty and right to self-governance.

Civic Nationalism:
Based on shared citizenship and values.

Powers independence & unification

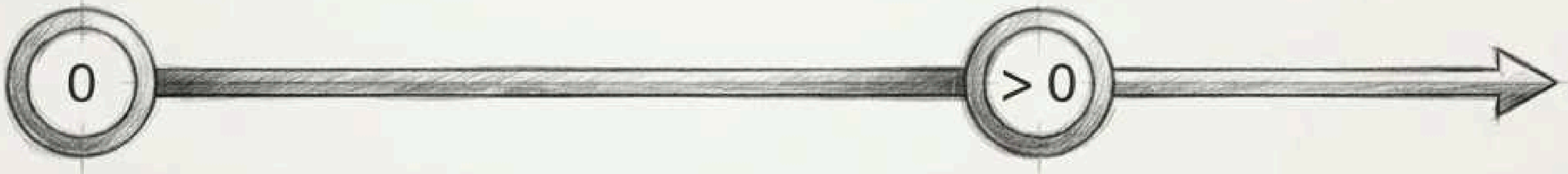
Fuels exclusion & war

Ethnic Nationalism:
Based on descent and ancestry.

Benedict Anderson's insight: members will never meet most of their fellow citizens.

Anarchism & Libertarianism

Individual liberty placed above all other values.



Rejects all coercive rule; relies strictly on voluntary cooperation. (Proudhon, Kropotkin)

Accepts only a minimal, "night-watchman" state strictly to protect individual rights. (Nozick, 1974)

Coercive State Power

Beyond the Classic Formulations

¶ 2.11



Feminism

Focus: Structural analysis of gender and power dynamics.



Environmentalism

Focus: Politics strictly bound by ecological limits.



Religious Ideas

Focus: Influenced movements across faiths (e.g., European Christian Democrats).

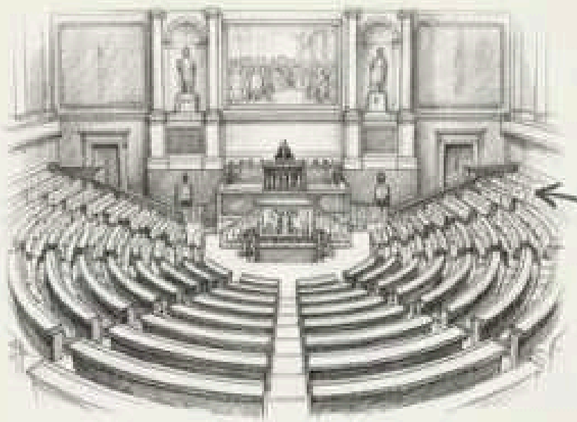


Fascism

Focus: Radical, ultranationalist, authoritarian. Studied today as a historical warning; rejected by the mainstream.

The Geometry of Left and Right

[¶ 2.12]



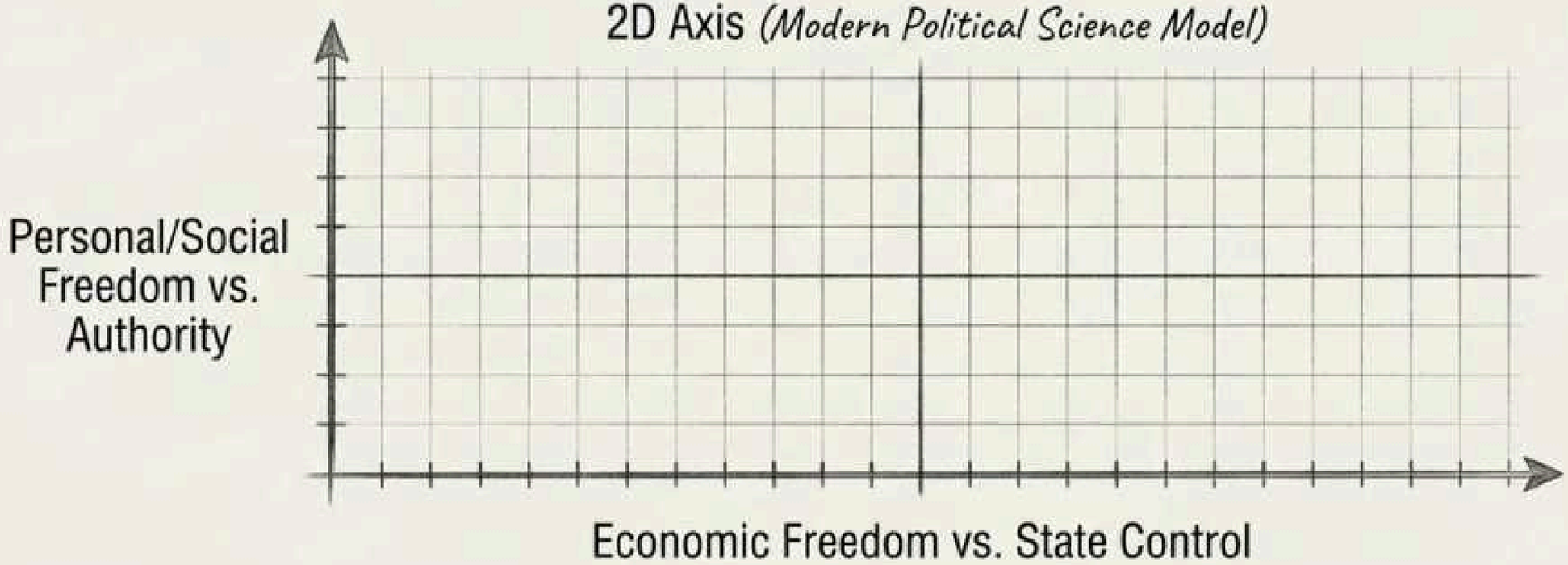
Origin: 1789 French National Assembly (King's supporters sat on the right).

1D Axis *(Historical)*

Left
(Equality / Larger State)

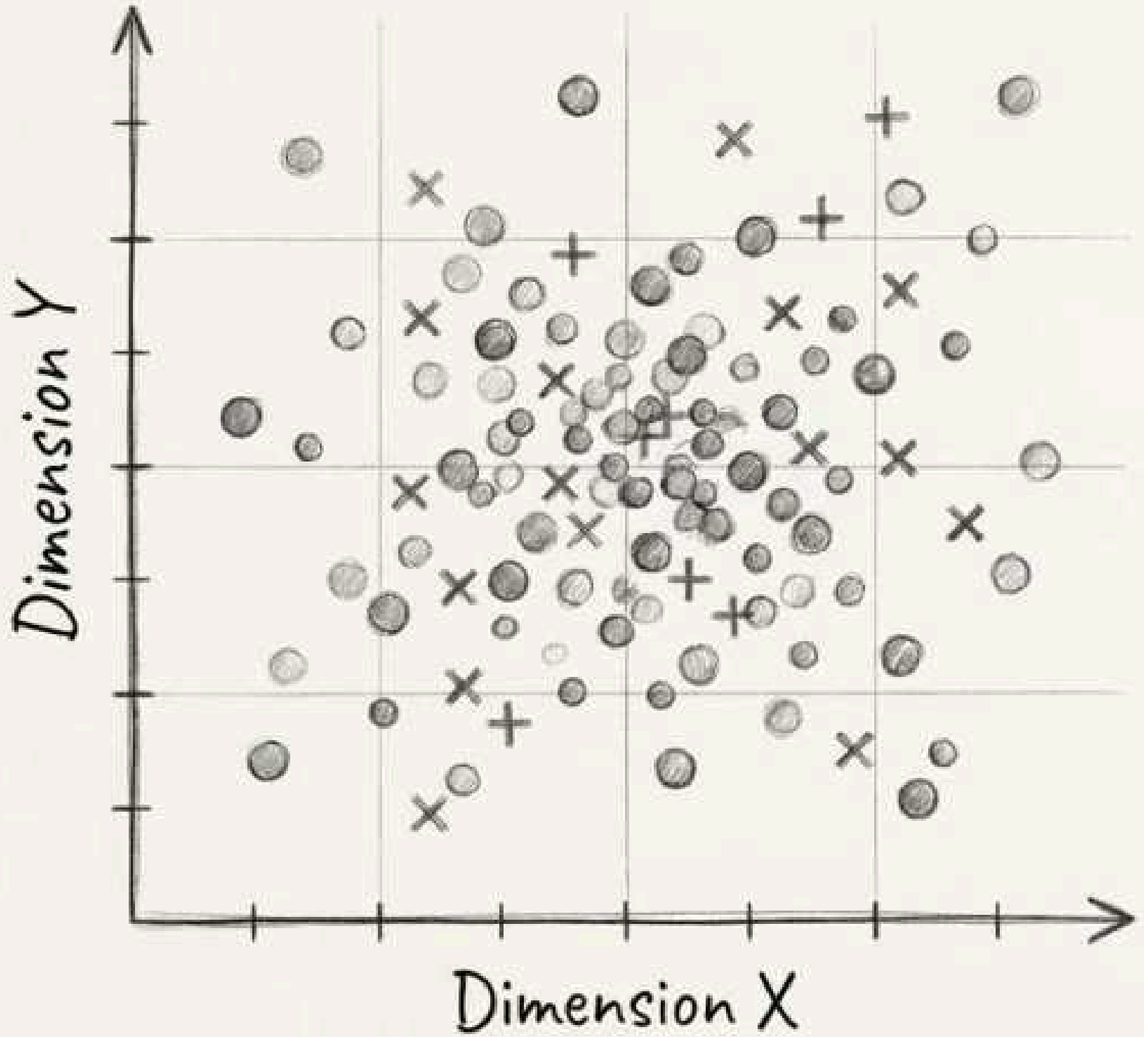
Right
(Tradition / Order / Markets)

2D Axis *(Modern Political Science Model)*



[¶ 2.13]

Limits of the Spectrum



Ideological Blending: Individuals constantly mix and borrow (e.g., pro-free market AND pro-strong welfare).

Geographic Variation: The exact same label shifts meaning across borders.

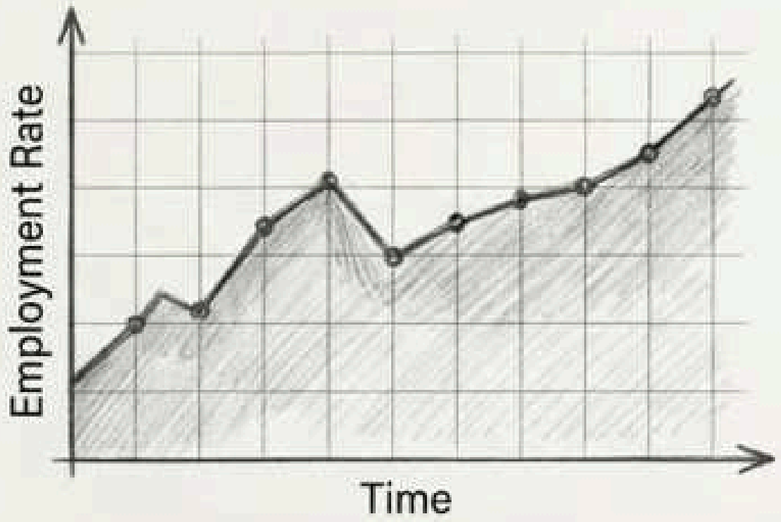
The Converse Finding (1964):

Philip Converse demonstrated that most citizens actually lack tightly organized, totally consistent belief systems.

Facts vs. Values

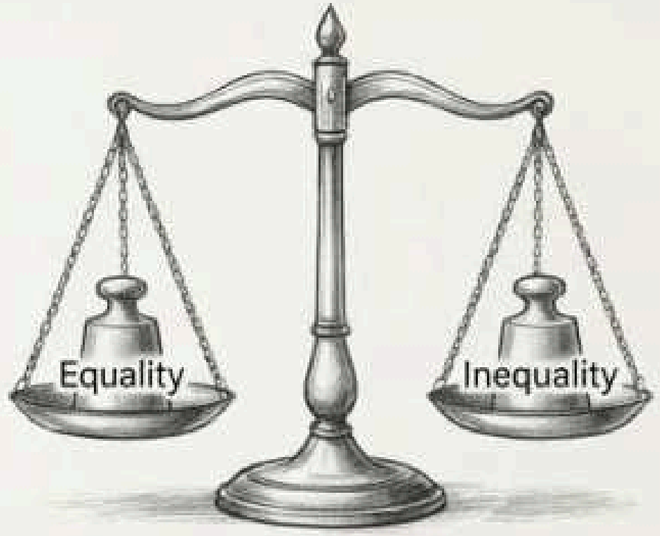
[¶ 2.14]

Empirical Facts



E.g., What happens to employment when a minimum wage rises? (Can be narrowed by gathering evidence).

Normative Values



E.g., How much inequality is morally acceptable? (Cannot be solved purely by data).

Synthesis:
Ideologies bundle both. Political science uses facts to inform value debates, but cannot dissolve the value differences.

Intellectual Habits for Fair Reading

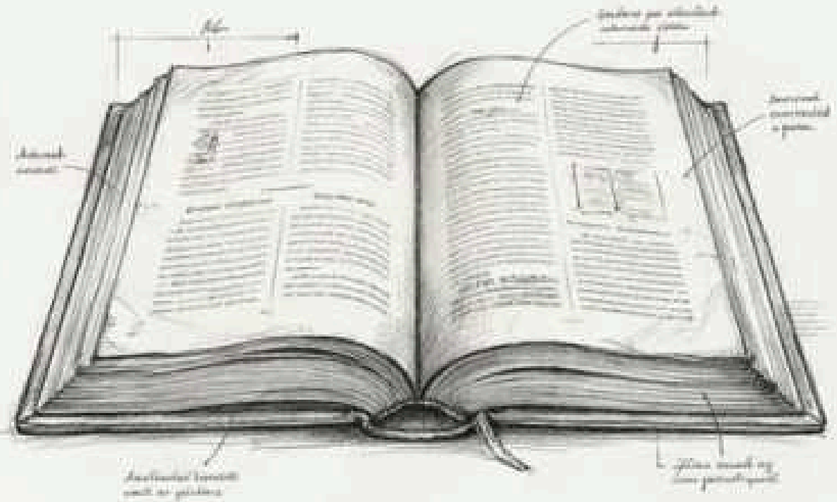
[¶ 2.15]

Step 1: Read Primary Sources.
Avoid relying on summaries written by opponents.

Step 2: Steel-Man.
State the absolute strongest version of a view before criticizing it.

Step 3: Check Rhetoric.
Watch closely for descriptive labels weaponized as insults.

Step 4: Embrace Complexity.
Recognize that people combine commitments and evolve over a lifetime; pure examples are rare.



Application: The Realities of Governing

[¶ 2.16]

$$G_{wd} = M_p + T + S_{pub}$$

Legend: { Wealthy Democracies = Private Markets + Taxes + Public Services }

Context:
Pure ideologies rarely govern. Real parties borrow freely from multiple traditions, resulting in mixed economies.

Core Insight:
Looking at what governments actually do over time reveals far more than what their written platforms claim.

Lecture Exercise: The Empathy Test

- ☐ Step 1: Choose one ideology you personally find unconvincing.
- ☐ Step 2: Write strictly three sentences describing it so perfectly that a loyal supporter would completely agree with you.
- ☐ Step 3: Write one thoughtful criticism that this same supporter would have to take seriously.

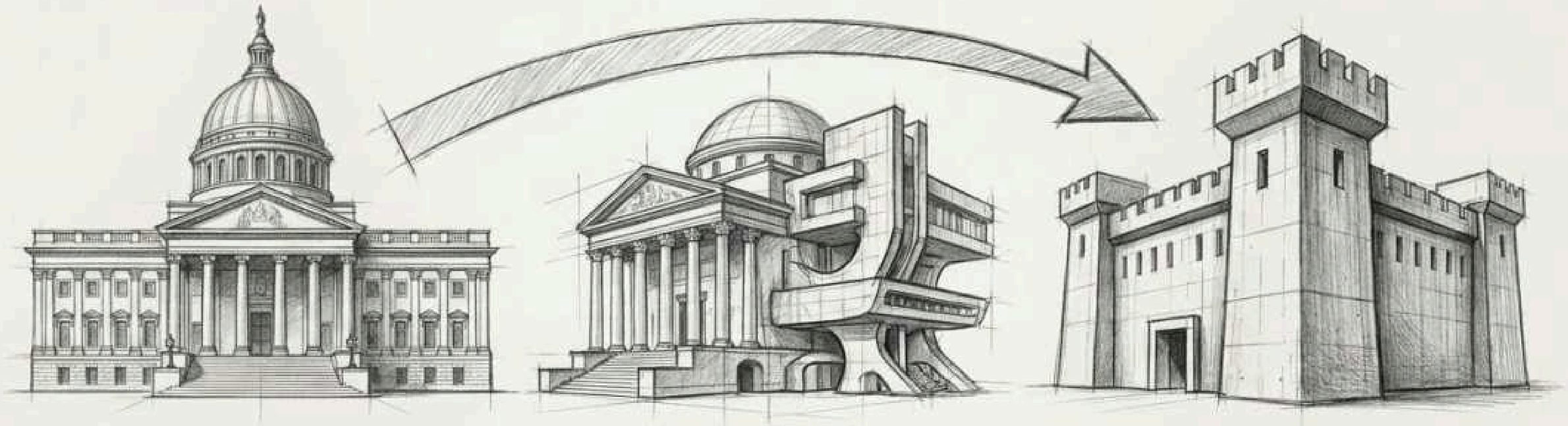
Reflection: How did completing this exercise shift your perspective?



Looking Ahead to Lecture 3

[¶ 2.18]

Next Topic: Organizing Government



Left Building:
Democracies
(Consent-based institutions)

Middle Building:
The complex, gray-area mixtures existing between the two extremes.

Right Building:
Dictatorships
(Coercive frameworks)

End of POLS 101 B – Lecture 2.