

## The Thrawn Rickle (54)

A Commentary by

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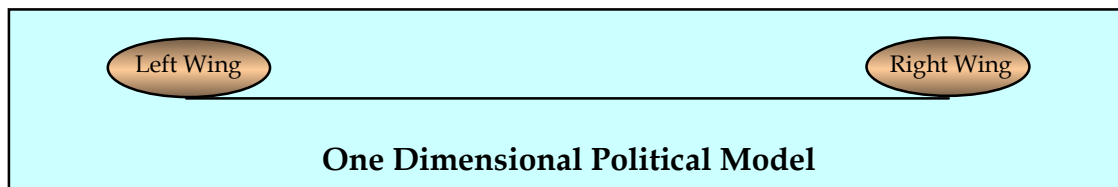
(From old Scottish: thrawn = stubborn; rickle = loose dilapidated heap)

### Political Hyperspace

*The Political Spectrum Reexamined*

A highly respected friend whose origins lie outside the United States recently observed: In America you have no viable political Left Wing; what you do have on the Left consists of crazies and unstructured anarchists. In my country we have no viable Right Wing; what we have instead is a bunch of low-life criminals and pathological dictators.

Underlying my friend's statement is a simple assumption that the political spectrum is linear — in effect, a line stretching from "Left Wing" at one end to "Right Wing" at the other. This begs the question of what the terms "Left Wing" and "Right Wing" really mean, so our discussion meandered off into this perilous territory.



According to my friend, common knowledge holds that Marxist economic theory is "Left Wing," whereas Friedman Free-market economics is "Right Wing."

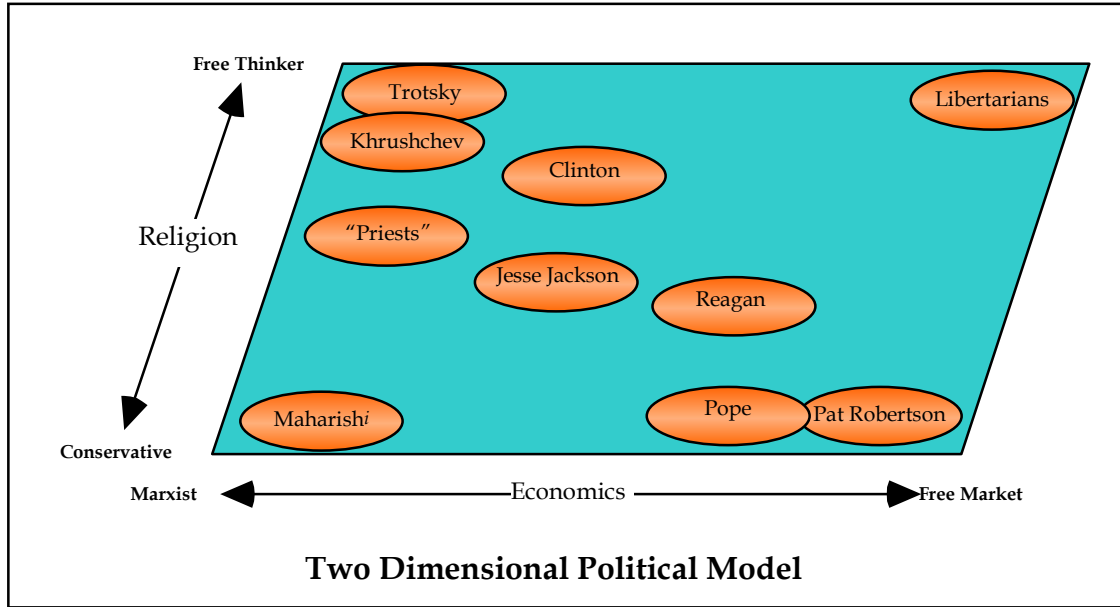
What about Pat Robertson, I asked. "Right Wing," my friend answered.

The Pope, I asked. "Right Wing," my friend answered. Firmly held religious beliefs typically are "Right Wing."

What about the Nicaraguan priests killed by "Right Wing" death squads, I asked. Obviously "Left Wing," my friend answered.

But you cannot have it both ways on a linear spectrum. We quickly concluded that, at least in the case of the unfortunate priests, the spectrum consisted of a plain, **not** a line. So we added religion as a dimension, with one extreme being dogmatic religious conservatism irrespective of specific creed or religion, and the other extreme being free thought without religion.

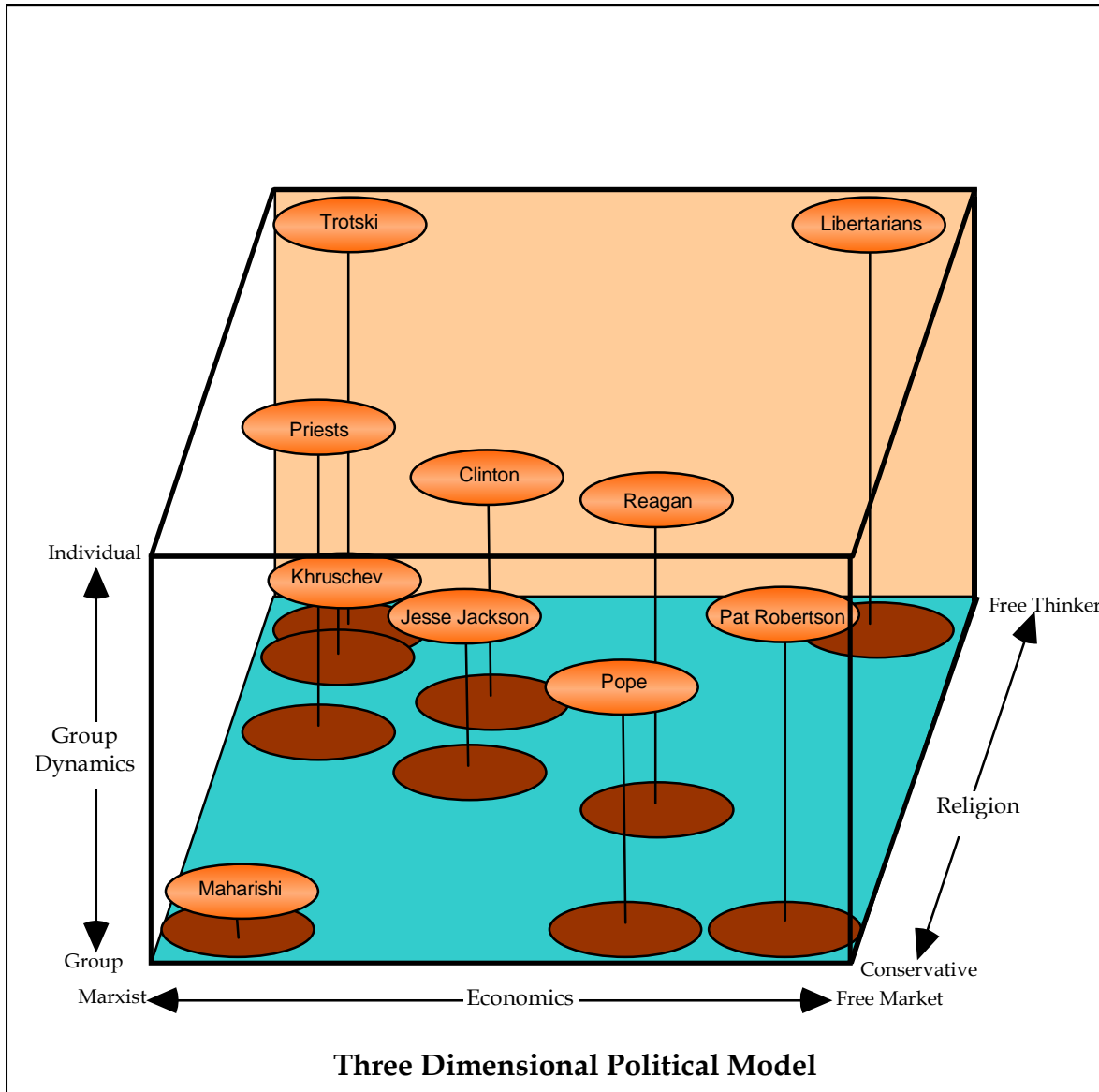
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Then we proceeded to add other names into the political plain to see how they fit. Interestingly, Jesse Jackson, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton wound up fairly close to one another.

Obviously, we could have chosen another parameter for the second dimension. Upon doing this, we could see that, in effect, we had created a three-dimensional model, a cube where each of three faces displayed the possible combinations we could construct within the planar model.

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We chose to let group dynamics be the third dimension, defined by the degree to which individuals are characterized by, and treated according to their individual traits as opposed to the traits of the group to which they belong. For example, at one extreme an Italian-American would be described strictly in terms of the stereotypical characteristics popularly ascribed to this ethnic group. At the other extreme, the same individual would be described without any reference to ethnicity.

Now it is possible to see some of the more subtle differences between a Reagan and a Clinton. Clinton is more to the left (there's that word again), further back, and lower, whereas Reagan is more to the right (oops), closer to the front, and higher. In this model, it is also perfectly clear that the directions are completely arbitrary, but no matter how each axis is laid out, the relative positions of the players remain the same.

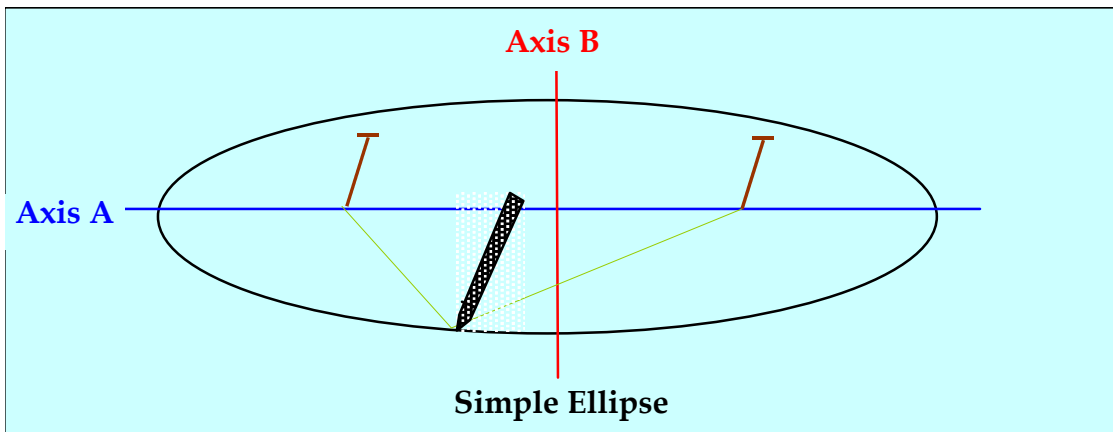
As before, however, the choice of specific parameters is arbitrary; other determining factors are equally important. For example, the degree of local governing autonomy is an important factor — it is the theme of the great discussion between Jefferson and Hamilton, “States Rights” versus “Federal Government,” At least as important is the absolute amount of government, ranging from anarchy or complete lack of government at one end to total deterministic government at the other. Another related factor is the degree to which religion controls government.

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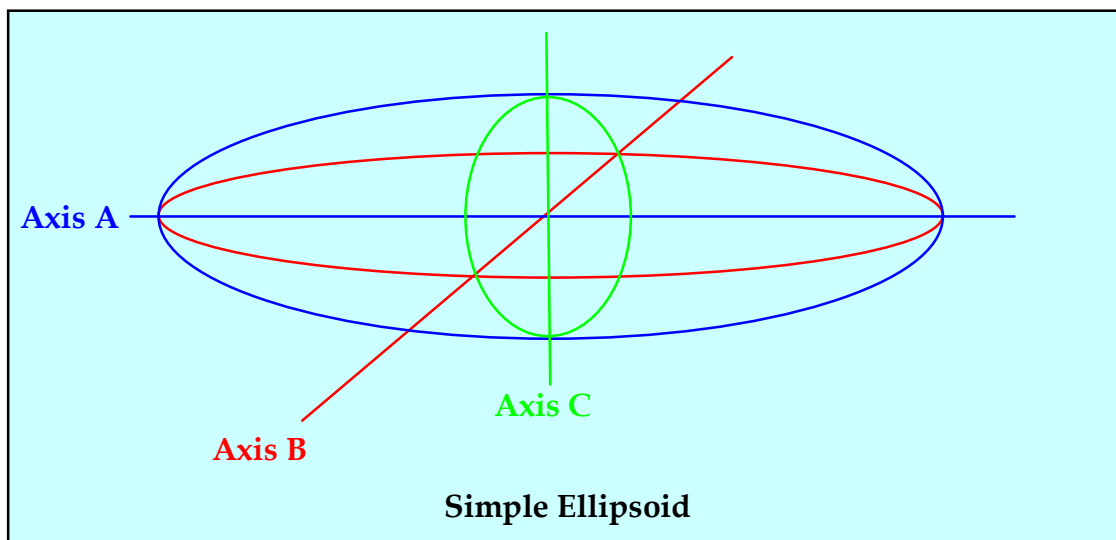
We have discovered that within a three dimensional model, any designated political position can be defined by a point located somewhere within a cube. The position of any point in this space carries three intrinsic political values that have real meaning in the real world. One position can be compared to another with a far more realistic chance of finding areas where compromise is possible, where working together is feasible.

It is an easy matter to add more dimensions to a mathematical model, since multi-dimensional calculus is well understood. It is another matter, however, to expand a visual model beyond three dimensions. And yet, the three dimensional model offers such insight that the urge to expand this principle to additional parameters is almost irresistible.

To add the next three dimensions a brief excursion into high school geometry is necessary. A simple ellipse can be constructed by placing two pins in a piece of paper, connected by a string that is at least somewhat longer than the distance between the two pins. Using a pencil, stretch the string and draw a “circle” around the two pins. If you do it right you will have created a “perfect ellipse.” If you use a string of fixed length and vary the distance between the two pins, you will create ellipses that are more or less “round” as a direct function of the distance between the two pins. Move the pins together, and you create a circle, which is simply a special form of an ellipse.



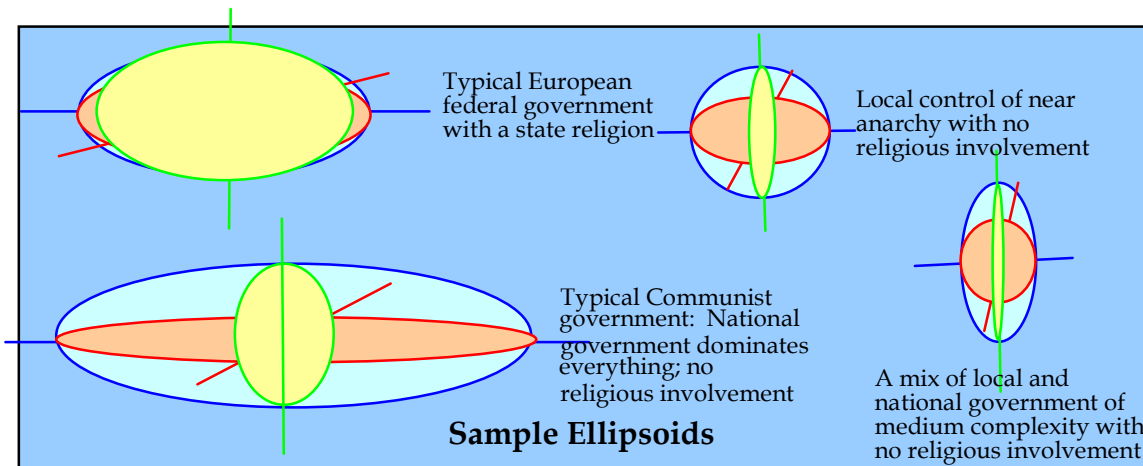
Notice that the ellipse has both a long and a short axis. If we create a second ellipse just like the first and rotate it around the long axis for ninety degrees, we have a “wire diagram” of an ellipsoid — which relates to an ellipsoid as a sphere relates to a circle.



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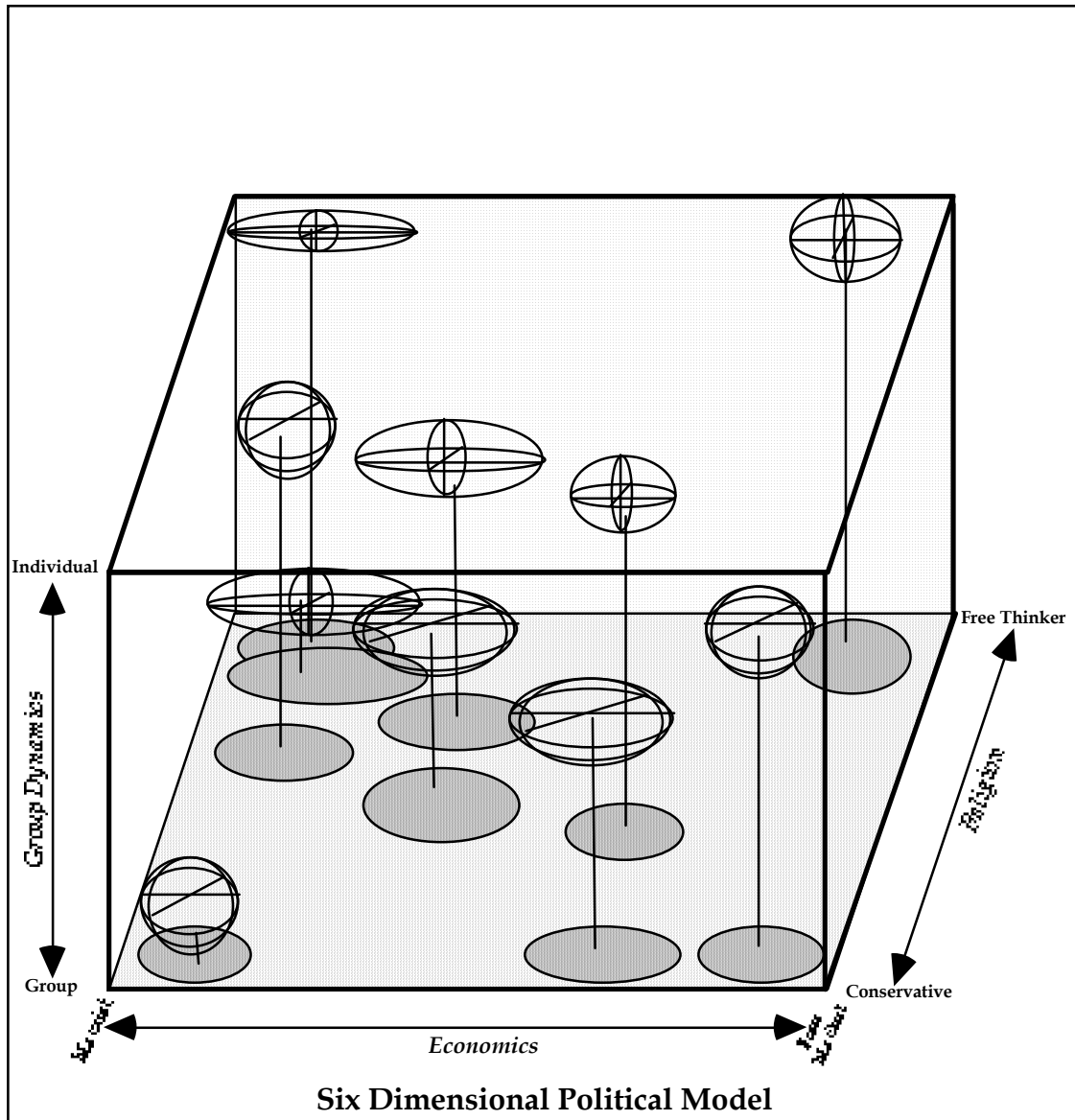
In doing this, we have, in effect, defined three ellipses which are characterized by three distinct measurements (like the three measurements of a cube), and so we have found a way to represent three additional dimensions within the three dimensional space we created earlier. Instead of a point floating at a specific reference in space, we now have an ellipsoid floating at that point. Ellipsoids can differ in length (axis A), width (axis B), and height (axis C), and these differences result in distinctly different shapes that are clearly recognizable. Keep in mind that the actual measurement is not the length of the axis, but the distance between the two points on the axis that defines the ellipse. Thus one extreme will be a perfect circle, while the other extreme will collapse the ellipse into a straight line that is exactly equal to the line between the two points; but since we lose a dimension this way, we simply set a maximum distance between the two points that is less than the length of the “string.” An ellipsoid with all measurements at their minimums is a perfect sphere. By definition, an ellipsoid with all measurements at their maximums is a perfectly symmetrical ellipsoid of some arbitrary size.

Now define **axis A** as degree of local governing autonomy, where one hundred percent local control is a circle; **axis B** as the absolute amount of government, where anarchy is a circle; and **axis C** as the amount of religious control over government, where zero control is a circle.



When these differently shaped ellipsoids are placed into the three dimensional space we already defined, it becomes possible to differentiate with ease between six different political parameters which form the political viewpoint of an individual.

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Finally, with very little additional mental stretching, we can color the ellipsoids. Three parameters define color: hue – violet through red following the rainbow sequence (violet, blue, green, yellow, orange, red); saturation – how intense the color is (for example, the color red can range from a washed out pink to an intense, vivid red); and brightness (brightness can range from dull and lifeless to fully fluorescent and vibrant).

Three parameters represented by hue, saturation, and brightness might be: hue – type of government, ranging from totalitarian to democratic; saturation – ownership of means of production, with state ownership at one end and private ownership at the other; brightness – degree of bureaucracy, with full “statism” at one end, and full participatory democracy at the other.

All the parameters used in this discussion are arbitrary. The key here is developing the ability to apply nine distinctly different parameters to an individual or a group in order to ascertain what one individual or group has in common with another, where compromises are possible, where lie insurmountable differences. In this hyperspace

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representation of the political spectrum, each point of view is characterized by three degrees of color, by shape, and by spatial position.

With a little practice, an individual can be visualized as an ellipsoid with a certain coloration, located in space. Using the parameters contained in this discussion, for example, a very strong libertarian would probably be a bright, vibrant, red sphere located in the upper back right corner of the cube. Clinton might be a dull, medium intensity yellow/orange ellipsoid shaped like a baked potato located near the middle of the cube. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, on the other hand, would be a bright pale violet oblate spheroid (flying saucer shaped) located near the lower left front of the cube. Although widely separated in space and color, the Libertarian and the Yogi may find common ground in their two overlapping shape parameters. Unfortunately, except for their mutual lack of religion, Clinton and the Libertarian have little in common, and there is essentially no overlapping with the Yogi either. Jesse Jackson is a medium-bright orange slightly elongated oblate spheroid located between Clinton and the Yogi. Shape and position allow him to get along with the Yogi, shape and color allow him to get along with the Libertarian, but only position gives him access to Clinton.

Performing hyperspace analysis to other individuals with whom Clinton either must associate or with whom he would like to establish compromises clearly shows that Clinton may have the wrong combination of color, shape, and location to be effective as president. Obviously, the more specific one gets, the more contrived the outcome will be, but for a general understanding of why the political scene functions as it does, hyperspace analysis offers significant insights.