

# Radical Centrism

## & the Redemption of Secular Philosophy

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Radical Centrism is a new approach to secular philosophy

# What we will cover

- The Challenge of Secular Philosophy
- An Overview of Radical Centrism
- A new Interpretation of Civil Society

# Why I care

- Immigrant
- Physicist
  - S.B., MIT '88 (Bitter Magnet Lab)
  - Ph.D., Caltech '95 (BEPC)
- Storyteller
  - Boston Consulting Group
  - Apple Product Marketing

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I am not:

A practicing scientist  
A trained philosopher  
A political activist  
A thorough scholar  
Entirely awake

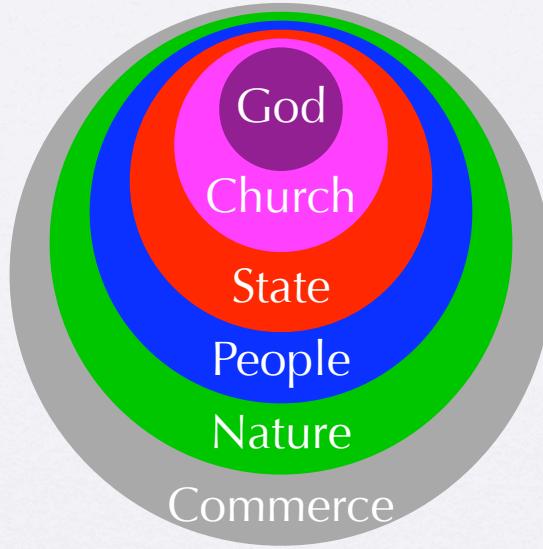
# Secular Philosophy

- Philosophy
  - “How we think about how we think”
- Secular
  - Centered on humanity
  - Free of external absolutes
- *Appears* to work better than theology
  - e.g., capitalism, science, democracy

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Defining philosophy vs. theology. The challenge is that secular philosophies (economics, epistemology) seem far more successful than theology, which is often taken to mean that theology is at best irrelevant, and worse a hindrance to modernity.

# Medieval Theocracy



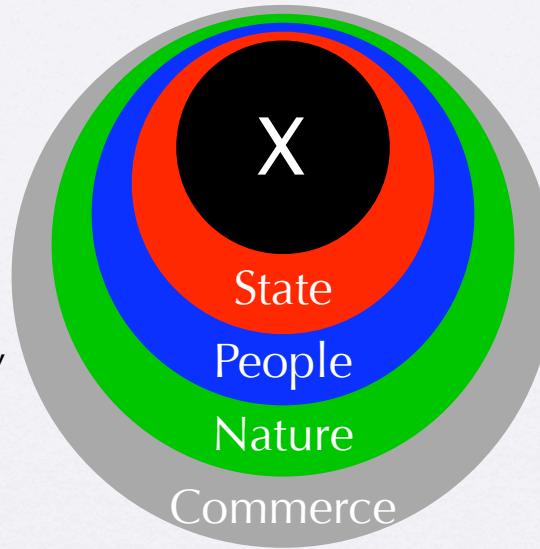
→ Reformation

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Exhibit A: A theocratic view of the world

# Secularism

Democracy  
Science  
Capitalism



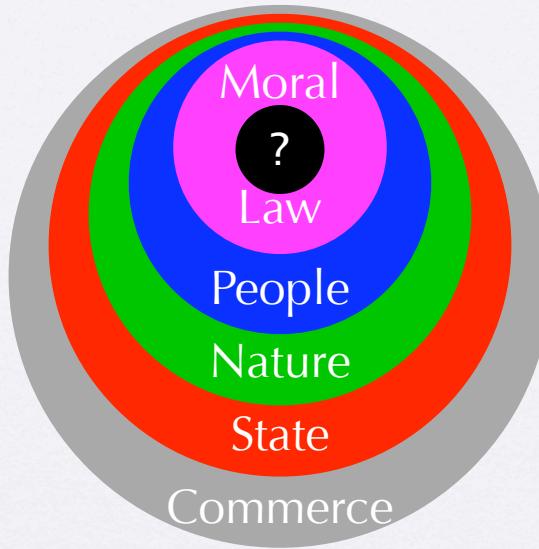
Relativism  
Naturalism  
Materialism

→ Nihilism

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Secularism removed the constraints of theocracy. On the positive side, this led to many great innovations. On the negative side, it led to a progressive destruction of meaning.

# Secularism Redeemed



→ Radical Centrism

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My proposed solution is to recover a coherent vision of Moral Law as the organizing principle of modern life, without requiring explicit metaphysics or theology.

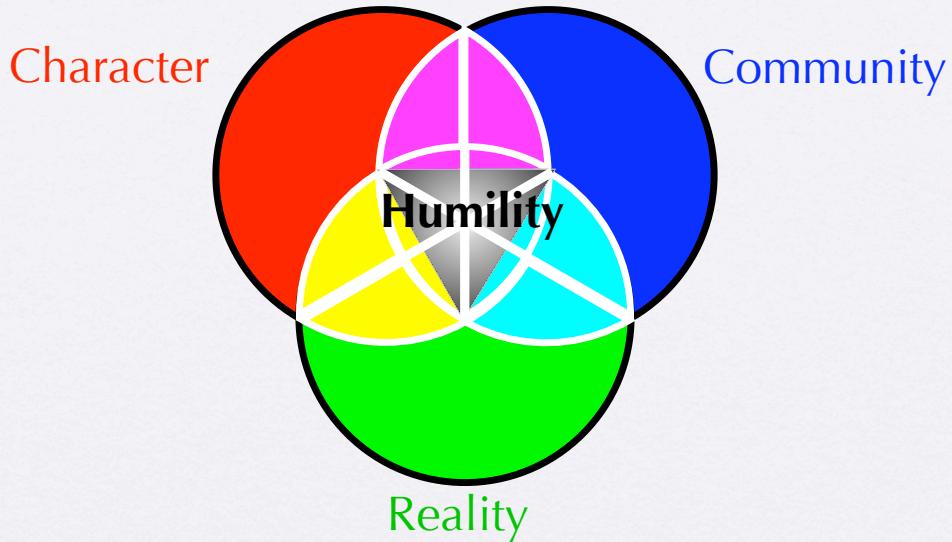
# Radical Centrism

- Unifies complementary truths around a philosophy of Moral Law
  - General revelation (not Grace or Gospel)
- Defines a minimal set of shared assumptions needed to support modern civil society
  - Deliberately incomplete and open-ended
- Still secular (no explicit metaphysics)

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Just like the Gospel needs to be articulated to different cultures and times, I believe the Law also needs to be incarnated into each culture.

# The Radical Center



→ Ground Rules of Civil Society

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These four components - Reality, Character, Community & Humility - make up Radical Centrism. Together, I believe they form a new basis for governing civil society.

# Reality

- I believe beliefs matter
  - Truth is absolute
  - Knowledge is relative
  - Value is complex
- Shared understanding of Reason

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The first precept is Reality, describing the nature of Truth and Knowledge, which defines the limits of Reason.

# Character

- I believe in Conscious Moral Choice  $\mu$ 
  - Conscious in Knowledge to estimate consequences
  - Moral in Wisdom to optimize total value
  - Choice in Freedom to find alternatives for creating or rewarding value
- Shared understanding of Will

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The second precept is Character, based on the idea of Conscious Moral Choices, which shapes our view of decisions.

# Community

- I believe value needs to be
  - $x$  created
  - $\rho$  recognized
  - $v$  normalized
- Shared understanding of Good

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The third precept is Community, based on the idea of the exchange of value, which defines a morality.

## Community (cont.)

- $\chi$  The best human act  
is the Conscious Moral Choice  $\mu$   
to use my resources  
to create value for others
- $\rho$  The next best act  
is to reward others  
as they create value for me
- $\nu$  Relative value  
is best determined  
by honest collaborative inquiry  
into competing alternatives

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We use the labels Chi, Rho, and Nu to refer to creating, recognizing, and normalizing value.

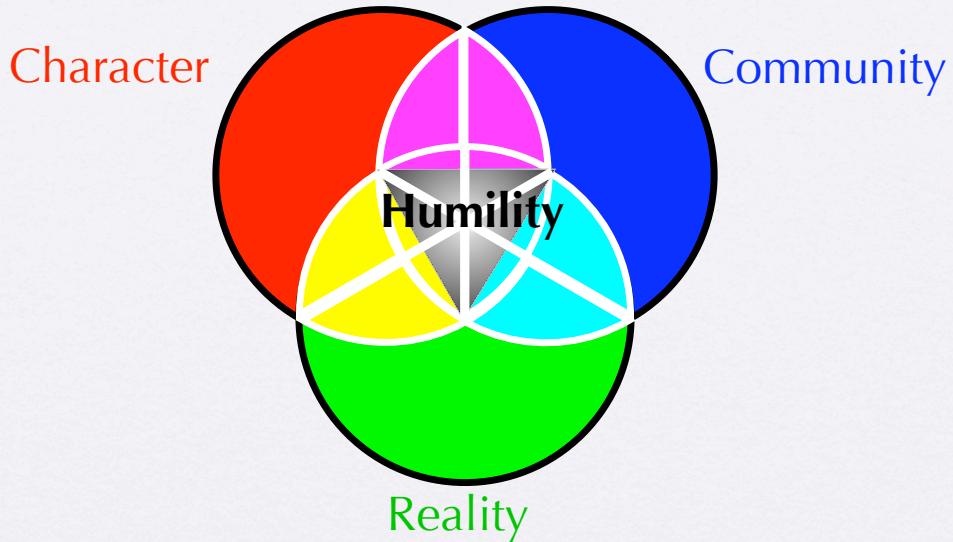
# Humility

- I believe everyone wants to believe they are good
  - The Wise examine Character
  - The Wicked shrink Community
  - Fools deny Reality
  - & All of them are me
- Shared understanding of Evil

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The last precept is Humility, which comes from realizing everyone wants to be good -- even though we're not.

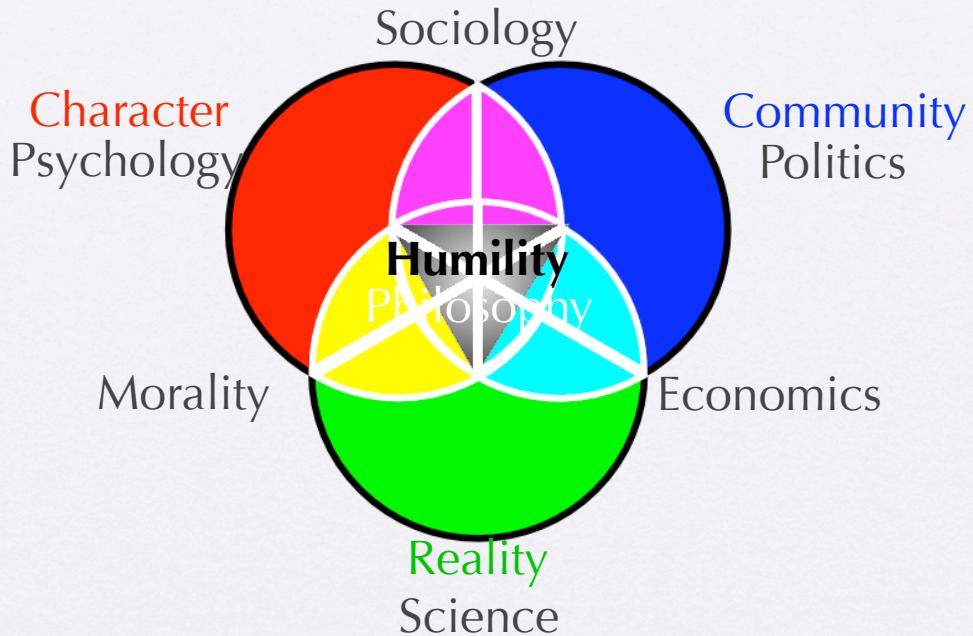
# Applied Radical Centrism



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These four pillars provide a common framework for understanding a wide range of different phenomena.

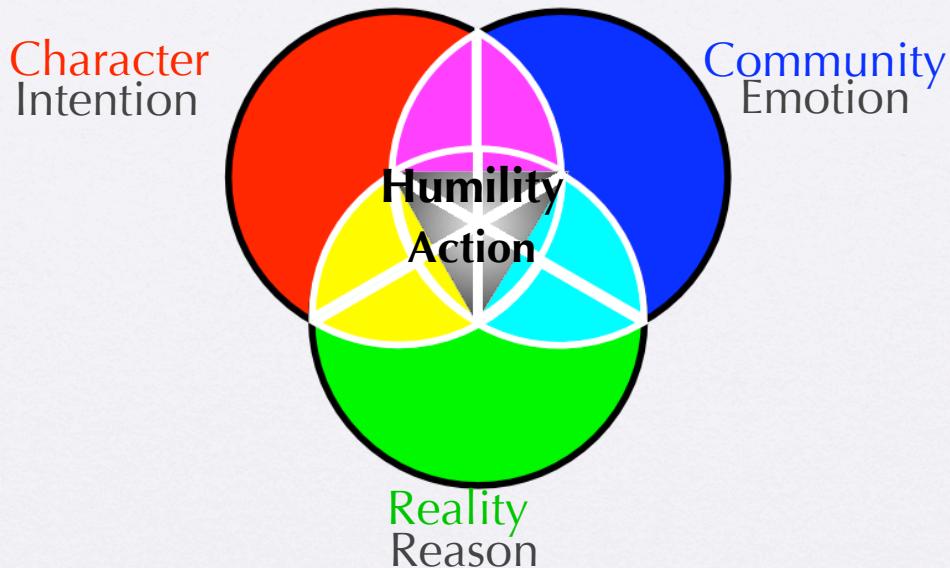
# Facets of Radical Centrism



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Radical Centrism is a holistic view of the world, acknowledging the importance of Science in understanding Reality, Politics in understanding Community, and Psychology in understanding Character. It views Economics as the bridge between Reality and Community, Sociology as the bridge between Community and Character, and Morality as the bridge between Character and Reality. However, underlying all this is the core philosophy of Radical Centrism, which provide a coherent set of shared assumptions which tie all these together.

# Radical Centrist Psychology

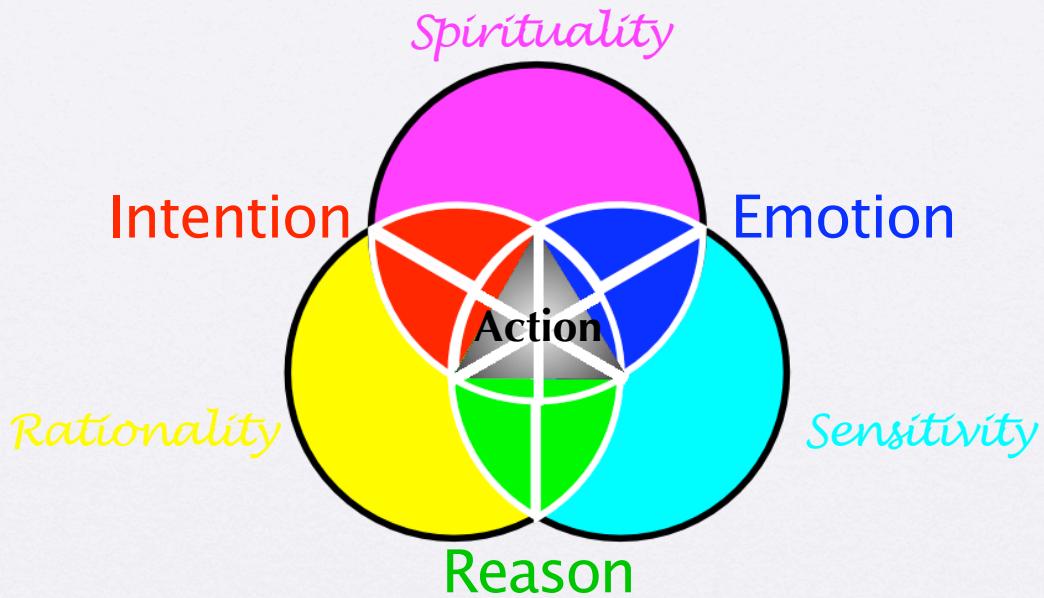


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We can then identify psychological aspects associated with each concept. Internally, we apprehend Reality through Reason, Character through Intention, and Community through Emotion. Action then grows out of the interplay between Reason, Intention, and Emotion, and the imperfection of this dynamic is the reason for Humility.

As shown in the diagram, the three primary aspects are not entirely distinct, but neither can any one be subsumed by the others. In this sense, Radical Centrism can be considered a triadic philosophy (as opposed to monist or dualist), though it still affirms an underlying unity.

# Worlds of Experience



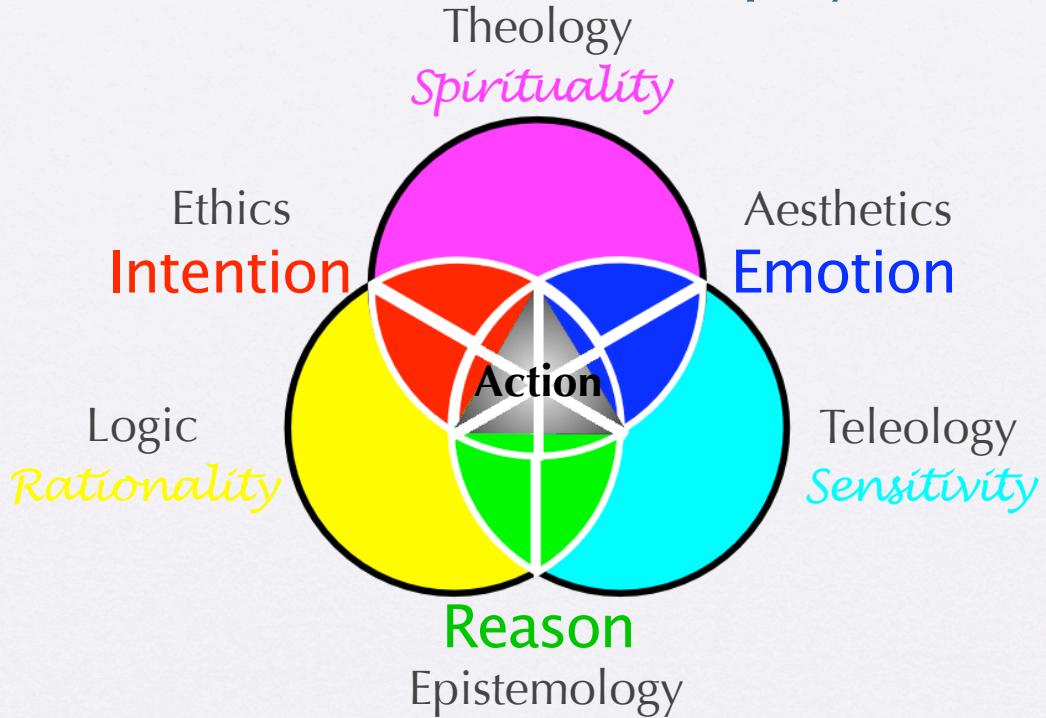
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Conversely, the three primary aspects can be viewed as the focal points of three different ways of experiencing the world.

- Rationalism links Reason and Intention.
- Intention and Emotion are bridged by Spiritual experiences
- To be Sensitive is to connect Emotion and Reason

To a Radical Centrist, all three of these are equally valid and complementary ways of experiencing the world, unlike the one-sided rationality of moderns, sensitivity of romantics, or spirituality of mystics. Put another way, we assert that all three worlds (material, logical, and spiritual) are equally real (and equally incomplete).

# Faces of Philosophy



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This also provides an interesting framework for understanding the different aspects of philosophy, as reflecting the different areas of human experience.

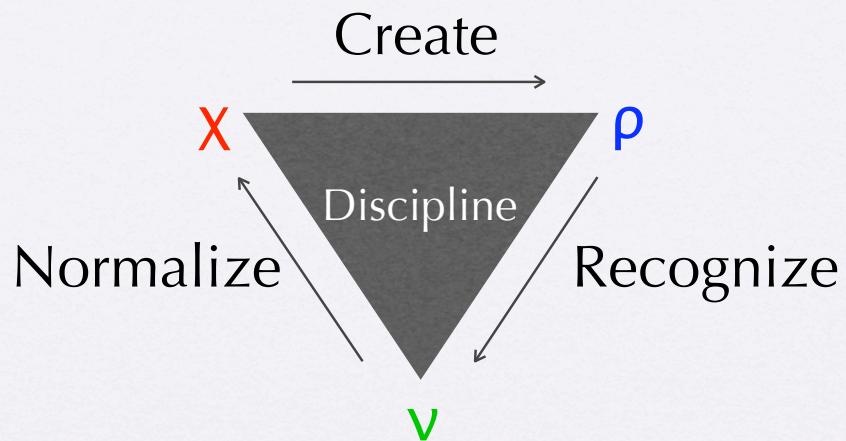
# Moral Value Cycles

- Alternative basis for modern institutions
  - $\mu$  rather than rationality or self-interest
  - Provide a unified framework across disciplines
- Contain both absolute and relative values
  - Each context defines a local standard of value
  - Evaluated against global standards for  $\chi$ ,  $\rho$ , &  $\nu$

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The basis of behavior in Radical Centrism is moral value cycles.

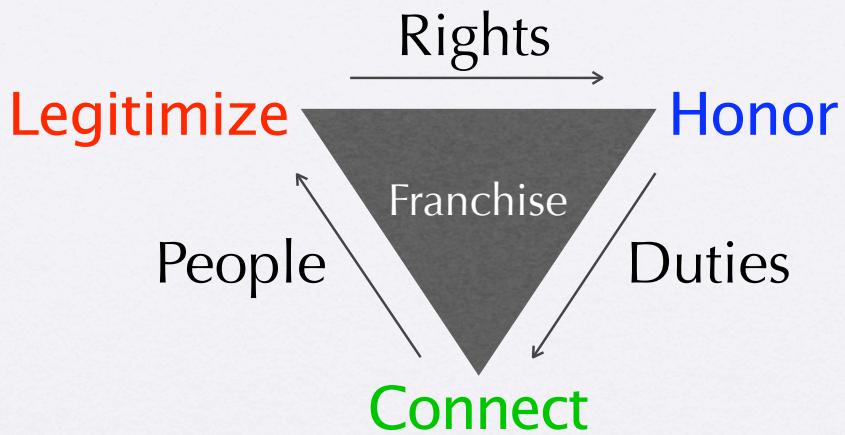
# The Moral Value Cycle



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The core concept is communities creating, recognizing, and normalizing values.

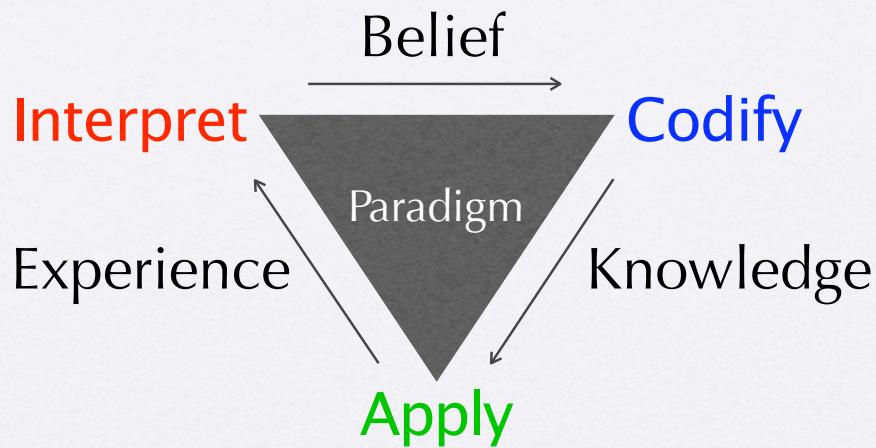
# Application: Politics



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In politics, franchise is an emergent property out of the interaction of people, rights & responsibilities

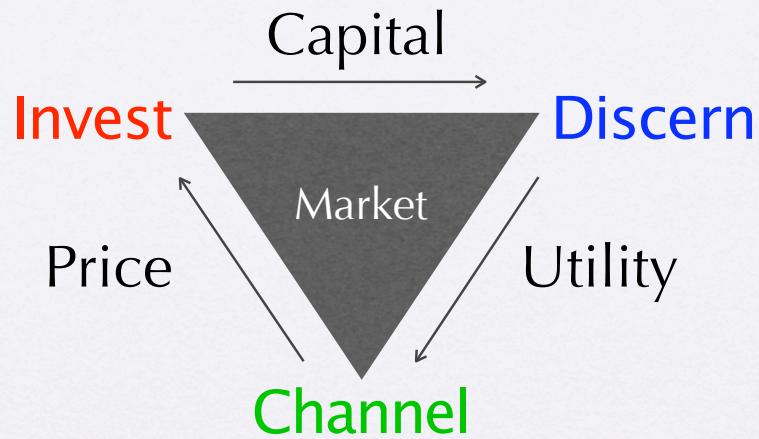
# Application: Epistemology



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In epistemology, knowledge is codified belief, and belief is interpreted experience, under a paradigm which both shapes and is shaped by them.

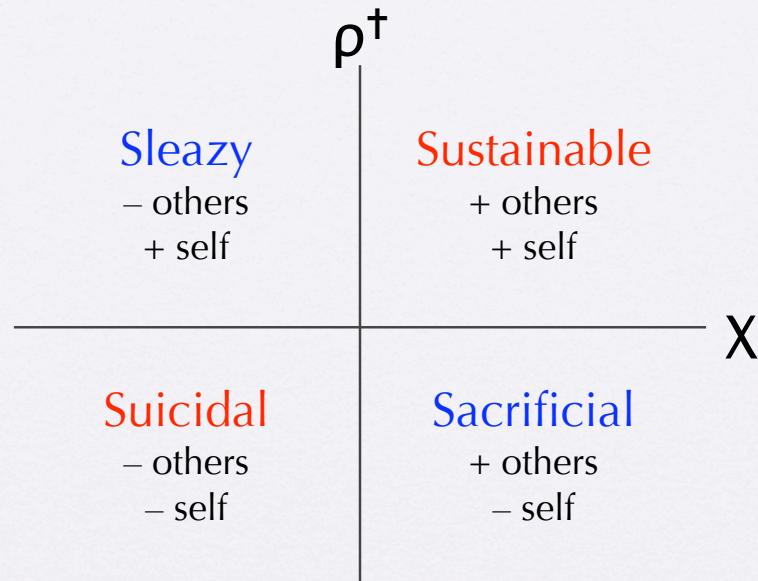
# Application: Economics



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Economics is also driven by a moral value cycle, where capital, price, and utility all act as proxies for moral value.

# Value Quadrants



→ Beyond Selfish or Altruistic

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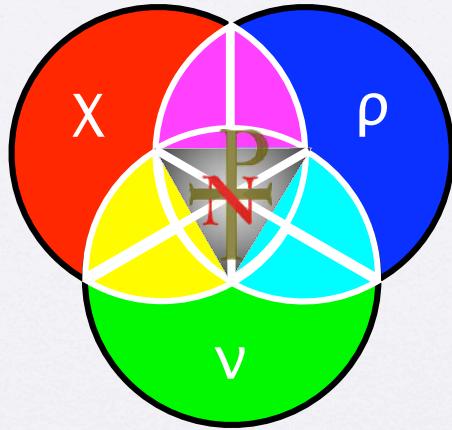
The uniqueness of Radical Centrist economics, vs. neo-classical capitalism or Marxism, is dramatically illustrated by this chart. The Right tends to pretend the blue squares don't exist, while the Left ignores the Red. For us, the question is not whether people are inherently selfish -- or whether that is good -- but whether they are creating value for others.

# Summary

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To wrap up...

# Radical Centrism

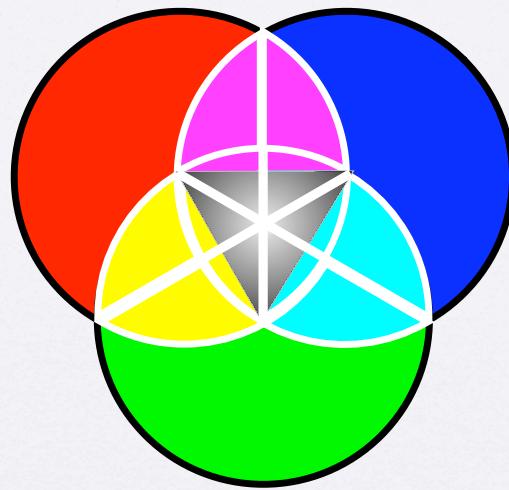


- Provides a:
  - Metric for truth
  - Process for knowing
  - Motivation for wisdom
- Explains the success – and weakness – of secularism
- Opens the door for religious dialogue

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The hope is that Radical Centrism will define a process that ever-expanding communities can use to pursue knowledge and wisdom in a moral context. In particular, it intends to provide a neutral (yet moral) context for dialogue within or between religious communities. And ultimately, to redefine the very concept of secular philosophy, and the foundations of Western Civilization.

## Q & A



<http://RadicalCentrism.org>

# The End

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