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Some time ago, Eric posted comments about the attitude he thinks we should take toward the #MeToo movement and, by implication, toward similar movements, and to the left as a whole. He urged us to take what he called a "balanced" approach.

As far as I can see, what a "balanced" approach is depends on one's perspective. I believe that I have a "balanced" analysis of the #MeToo movement, but it is far more critical of that movement than I believe Eric's is. Rather than starting with my feelings about the #MeToo movement, I'd like to try to explain my reactions to it in the broader context of other recent and current left-wing movements.

Despite a concern about many of the issues these movements have been raising, I find some aspects of these movements, and of the left as a whole, very disturbing.

A year or so ago, the historian Josh Zeitz wrote a piece for Politico.com that compared the student movement of today with the student movement of the 1960s. He focused on the Free Speech Movement at the University of California at Berkeley in 1964, which he seemed to take as emblematic of the 1960s student movement as a whole. Zeitz was struck by the fact that

in launching the Free Speech Movement, students at Berkeley fought to free themselves from the tutelage of the campus authorities, insisting that students had the right and the ability to act, and to be treated, as adults rather than as children. Specifically, students were demanding the right to engage freely in political activity in support of causes (at the time, primarily the Civil Rights movement) of their choice. This was a direct challenge to the "in loco parentis" self-conception of the campus authorities, the notion that these authorities had the duty to act in lieu of the students' parents.

Zeitz found this stance to be contrary to what he saw as the attitude of the contemporary student movement. Rather than demanding that the authorities allow students to be and to act as adults, the recent movement was demanding that the campus authorities protect students from the rigors of contemporary society, that is, the students were insisting that the campus authorities act as stand-ins for their parents. Thus, one of the central demands of the movement was that the campus authorities ban "extremists" from speaking on campus. Another was that the authorities provide them with "safe spaces" and that they otherwise protect them from what one university professor termed "micro-aggressions", actions, even words, that students perceive to be racist, sexist, and/or otherwise offensive, no matter how slight these might be. In response, campuses around the country have adopted extremely strict speech and behavior codes that have resulted in many people — professors, other campus personnel, and students — being brought up on charges before various types of disciplinary committees. Of course, there should exist procedures through which campus personnel or students who commit criminal acts (such as racial or sexual assaults) can be brought up on changes and subject to appropriate penalties, but that is a far cry from insisting that anybody and everybody who makes a comment that another person merely perceives as being racist, sexist, or just insensitive should be hauled before a disciplinary committee and sub-

exist if it is created and supported by the overwhelming majority of the world's people. Short of that, we will only get what we now have, or perhaps something worse.

Eric might not consider my attitude to be "balanced." It is certainly not the approach we took in the 1960s and 1970s. But times have changed. The movements and the left have changed. I have changed, and my politics have changed. Among other things, I am much more aware of the existence and dangers of authoritarianism and totalitarianism, including, and in particular, on the left.

Perhaps the attitude I have outlined will render us irrelevant, incapable of tactically "intervening" in the contemporary movement. However, it is how I feel. Are there others out there who feel as I do?

ject to censure, suspension, expulsion, or termination. To Zeitz, the contrast was striking. In the 1960s, the students involved in the Free Speech Movement were demanding free speech. Today's students are demanding that the authorities limit speech, that they legislate what can and cannot be said. This is consistent with various reports I've heard in recent years that the political atmosphere on many campuses is stifling, as liberal and leftist students, professors, and university administrators attempt to enforce "Political Correctness" on others.

I found Zeitz's analysis both insightful and convincing (as far as it goes). It suggests that much of the recent and perhaps current movement among students is, to some degree, authoritarian. Of course, those of us who were involved in the movement of the 60s remember very well that while the student movement of that era may have started as a quasi-libertarian one (remember SDS's "participatory democracy"?), it did not remain so. Specifically, SDS and most of the left movement as a whole ended up being sharply divided into competing factions, almost all of which were authoritarian in the extreme, militant supporters of totalitarian regimes and authoritarian/totalitarian movements. Despite this, because the movement of the 1960s, however it began, soon became focused on opposing US imperialism and its various manifestations (the war in Vietnam, the invasion of Cuba and the ongoing hostility to the Castro regime, the Cold War generally), the movement's attitude toward the US government and its agencies, the US ruling class, and American-style capitalism in general was extremely hostile. The authorities it supported were those who ruled other countries (Russia, China, North Korea, North Vietnam, Cuba, Algeria, etc.) and those who led national liberation struggles in the Third World. In contrast, today's movement fights to convince or even force campus authorities, and by extension authority as a whole (including the federal government), to use its muscle to impose liberal-left students' demands and political beliefs on others.

The authoritarianism that characterizes the student movement can be seen in other recent movements. Take the Black Lives Matter movement. It is undoubtedly true that Black people, and particularly young Black men, have been and continue to be victims of brutal and arbitrary police repression, particularly, a willingness, even eagerness, on the part of many police officers and police departments around the country, to shoot and/or otherwise kill Black people. The struggle to stop this deserves to be supported by all decent-minded and socially-concerned people. Despite this, the leaders of the Black Lives Matter movement seemed to go out of their way to alienate people who were not absolutely in lock-step with their slogans and methods. As an example, I refer to an incident that occurred on one campus, I believe in one of the southeastern states, which I believe to be indicative of the movement as a whole. In response to an incident of racist abuse of some kind (I don't remember the details), a dean issued a statement to the campus denouncing the incident and the individual or individuals who perpetrated it. She concluded her statement with two slogans: (1) Black Lives Matter! (2) All Lives Matter! Outraged, the Black Lives Matter movement and its allies on the campus raised such a stink about the dean's use of the slogan "All Lives Matter" that she was forced to resign her position. Apparently, she had not been informed that, according to the Black Lives Matter movement, to say that "All Lives Matter" is the equivalent of saying that Black lives really don't matter.

There is something absurd about the insistence that to say that "all lives matter" automatically means to say that Black lives do not matter. But more than the absurdity is the authoritarianism implied in the attempt to control precisely how people express themselves, and therefore, how they think. I certainly believe, very strongly, that "Black lives matter", but I also believe, very strongly, that all lives matter. Not only are these ideas not counterposed, they are integrally connected. My support for the struggle against police (and system-wide) violence

Sanders' presidential campaign and implementing his statist program, via executive action if necessary.

Perhaps it is just my old age and my cynicism talking, but I am actually afraid of this movement. Despite the fact that I share many of the current left's concerns and agree with many of its demands, I do not want this movement to succeed. I don't want it to grow. For this reason, I have, for some time now, described my political position as being "on, but not of, the left." I despise the current left, and virtually all its tendencies. This includes the contemporary anarchist movement. Most of the younger anarchists I have met seem to me to be as ignorant, as arrogant, and as authoritarian as the explicitly statist leftists. True, as anarchists, their goal is not the seizure of state power, as is that of the reformist and the revolutionary statist left organizations. But by their attitudes and their stances, they feed the same authoritarian, even totalitarian, atmosphere. They are, if anything, even more fervent in promoting some of the absurdities of "identity politics" than the liberals and statist leftists.

Please do not misunderstand me. I do not now, and never will, consider myself to be a conservative. I despise the conservatives and the entire right-wing movement. It is as bad as or worse than the left. But I do not like or support the left. For me, it is not a question of "critical support." I do not want it to gain state power in hopes that, in so doing, it will somehow expose itself. What I would like to see, and if possible help build, is a movement that exists in a totally different political dimension than the traditional left-right spectrum. Call it "up" (or even "down"). It is for freedom and justice, for a humane world. It does not seek to impose its views and its "solutions" through the state, whether "capitalist" or "socialist". (To me, as an anarchist, there are no good states.) I would like to see a movement that seeks to win people to its views by discussion and persuasion, not by coercion, not by shouting people down, not by denouncing all who disagree as fascists, idiots, ignoramuses, or class (or race/gender) enemies. The world I envision can only

regimes. They denounced all who thought differently as fascists, agents of imperialism, dupes, ignoramuses, or idiots. As is obvious today, these people were completely deluded. But when their world and everything they believed in collapsed, very few of them, if any, thought to do some serious reading, to look back at what they believed, to think long and hard to try to figure out what happened and how they could have been so blind. Most hardly even blinked but kept on thinking and acting as they always had, and denouncing all who disagreed with them.

I do not exempt my own generation from this critique. The blind adulation of Cuba, China, Vietnam, and for some, even Russia. The shouting down of all who dared criticize the regimes and leaders they idolized. The militant embrace of Marxism, Leninism, Stalinism, Maoism, Guevarism. The denunciation of all who disagreed with them (including us, who at least were anti-Stalinist, and we represented a tiny, tiny portion of that left). Do I need to go on?

If anything, I think today's left is worse. Although many leftists of our generation did not read much, today's leftists, like just about everybody else in this society, read even less, a lot less. But beyond the ignorance (and the arrogance) is the fact that the authoritarianism of the movement has become even more salient. At least the political activists of the 60s were opposed to university administrators and to the US government and its agencies. Today's left is so statist that it looks to the US government as its potential ally; it seeks to win it over to its causes. To today's socialists, "socialism" means the government, the existing capitalist state, taking on ever more social tasks. Look at Bernie Sanders, look at the DSA! Their solution to everything is the federal government expanding its role, assuming ever more roles and taking over ever larger sectors of society: Medicare for All; the Green New Deal. To today's socialists, "seizing state power" means supporting Bernie

against Black people is part (a very important part) of my support for the struggle to create a better, more humane, more peaceful world for everybody. Black lives matter BECAUSE all lives matter; all lives matter BECAUSE Black lives matter.

Moreover, the tactical idiocy of this stance of the Black Lives Matter movement is mind-boggling. It seems virtually designed to offend anybody and everybody who is not already in complete agreement with the movement and its tactics. How can one expect to win allies from among other sectors of the population by explicitly rejecting the slogan "All Lives Matter"? How does the movement expect Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, and working-class white people to respond to this? All fair-minded people ought to be particularly concerned to convince all those, including white people with racist attitudes, who do not yet understand the peculiar situation Black people have faced and still face in this country, that justice and freedom for Black people does not necessarily come at the expense of other people. The idea that the Black struggle for justice and freedom necessarily comes at the expense of other people, particularly white people, is the line — the analysis, politics, and overall ideology — of the organized racists, the white supremacists, the white nationalists, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Nazis! Whatever their intentions, the stance of the Black Lives Matter movement in fact supports and promotes the analysis and ideology of the racists.

One might write this off as a minor tactical difference between the Black Lives Matter movement and people who see the issue as I do. But, given what happened to the dean of the university I referred to above, is there any reason to believe that I or anyone else who thinks as I do would be listened to if I attempted to explain my point of view to the members of the movement? More likely, I would be run off, if not beaten up, if I were to express my position in their presence.

I sense the same authoritarian tendencies in the #MeToo movement. It is my firm understanding that a fundamental

demand of the movement is that "all survivors are automatically to be believed." I understand where this is coming from. I recognize that it emerges out of a situation in which, for far too long, women who have claimed to have been raped, assaulted, groped, touched, harassed, or discriminated against have not been listened to; instead, they have been accused of "making a mountain out of a molehill", imagining the events in question, whining, and acting hysterically, and have been debased, denigrated, dismissed, or ignored. But to go all the way over to the other extreme, to insist that every woman (and not just women) who claims to have sexually assaulted or molested is automatically to be believed is, to me, ridiculous. Some people in some situations lie, bend the truth, or do not necessarily remember things accurately. Not everybody is honest; not all women are honest. There are all sorts of reasons why people lie, but the fact is, they sometimes do. So, to me, to insist that all women who claim to have been sexually assaulted are automatically be believed is absurd.

The other side of this is that to believe this and to insist on this is to deny those accused of carrying out such attacks of even the semblance of democratic rights and due process. It's to take a step backward from the level of democratic rights that have become the generally accepted norms of modern society. In fact, it means going back to trials for witchcraft, or to take something more recent, the methods of totalitarian police states, under which merely to come from a certain class means that one is automatically presumed guilty and subject to imprisonment, exile, years in a concentration camp, or shot in the back of the head. Although they may not realize it, to the degree that the #MeToo movement insists on this position is the degree to which the movement is authoritarian.

In this case, too, the tactical idiocy of the position is astounding. It runs the risk of alienating all people, including long-time supporters of women's rights (including women), who do not fall completely in line with the #MeToo movement's position.

But beyond this, like the other examples I have cited, it reflects a very deep-seated, and to me rather frightening, strain of authoritarianism in the movement. "Our way or the highway!" "If you are not 100% with us, you are against us; you are an enemy." "If you doubt any of us, you are perpetrator of male supremacy", a supporter of the patriarchy.

I might be willing to write all this off as a question of tactical differences and to see this in the framework of "critical support" for the movement. But I am prevented from doing so largely because of a visceral reaction, a deep fear in fact, of what this and other current liberal-left movements represent. This is made even stronger by the fact that the authoritarianism I sense in these movements is shared by the broader left. Several things strike me about the current left organizations and the left as a whole.

One is their ignorance; another is their arrogance. Very few people know anything. They don't read books; in fact, they don't read much of anything at all. They watch TV or read an article or two on-line. Yet, they run around absolutely convinced that their view of the world is right, that their analysis of what's going on is correct, and that their proposals to address the situation are the only ones worth considering. I certainly don't think this is something new about the current left; much, if not most, of the left always has been like this. I remember the left-wing activists of my parents' generation (including my parents) who were absolutely convinced that the Soviet Union and the other "socialist countries" were, if not paradise on Earth, at least truly progressive societies that were fighting fascism, ending economic and social injustice, and liberating workers, oppressed nationalities, women, and eventually, all of humanity. They denounced as vile lies and slander the reports in the capitalist media about the complete lack of democratic rights in these societies, about forced collectivization, the show trials, the forced labor camps, the deportation of entire ethnic groups, and all the other atrocities committed by these bestial