

The Case For Fully Automated Anti-Woke Roganist Space Communism

The Crossroads of the Left: Joe Rogan or the SJWs

The left, especially since Brexit and the election of Donald Trump, has often and splendidly gotten off on framing our society's options in Rosa Luxembour's singular terms: "transition into socialism or regress into barbarism." Whether or not the choice is as sensational and stark as that, in putting things so, though, the left is getting quite a bit ahead of itself. As many events surrounding Bernie Sanders' divisive socialistic presidential campaign are again showing, socialist politics itself stands at a crossroads. Though this crossroads has often been hazy, in the last week, it has found a clear-cut and perfectly distilled embodiment: Joe Rogan or social justice culture.

On January 23, Rogan, the former comedian and hugely popular podcast host, [said that](#) he will "probably vote for Bernie" on his show, in what could be read as an endorsement. Following that, the Sanders campaign retweeted a video of that clip, signalling that it accepted and welcomed that. Since then, many progressives and radical leftists, including prominent organizations such as the [Human Rights Campaign](#) and [MoveOn](#), have called on Bernie Sanders to reject Joe Rogan's endorsement, due to his purported track record of saying things that are offensive to minorities, and his having provided a platform to the oh-so-baleful voices of the alt-right or far right, such as Milo Yiannopoulos, Gavin McInnes (founder of the Proud Boys) and Alex Jones.

We live in a perennial torrent of the left trying to cancel something or the other. So from one perspective, there is nothing unusual about any of this. However, there is something encapsulating and pivotal about this particular instance of trying to have Bernie Sanders, for all that he champions, cancel Joe Rogan, for all that he stands for, in the name of social justice, for all that it entails. The Sanders campaign may have danced around this landmine diplomatically, not disavowing Rogan's support (and with that, hundreds of thousands of potential voters Rogan has sway over) while continuing to foreground Sanders' commitment and record of taking injustice and oppression seriously. Still, this affair elucidates a crucial and increasingly unavoidable divide for socialist politics in the US and beyond.

What ethos will accompany and amplify socialistic ideas in the coming decades? Should socialistic economic ideas and policy approaches break away from the cultural politics of the left? What would such a dissociation look like, and how might it take place? These are the questions posed by the controversy about whether Bernie Sanders should distance himself from Joe Rogan.

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It may be true that more than anyone in the US, Joe Rogan speaks for the people. The number of subscribers to his podcast—7.3 million on YouTube as of the end of January 2020—itself indicates this, but more substantively, so do his views: He has interests outside of what could be called the mainstream, but he's not a snob. He's not a normie, but he's not quite a hipster. He likes smoking pot and eating venison. He thinks the government should prevent corporations from having too much power, provide some social services, and address climate change. He supports the Second Amendment. He thinks political correctness is going way too far, and he says the occasional stupid thing. He's not intellectual, but he is thoughtful; he's not righteous, but he is honest.

Now, Bernie Sanders himself doesn't significantly embody the dispositions of political correctness, wokeness, etc., and Rogan connects with his social democratic ideas, as has now been made explicit with the endorsement. This compatibility had already led to Sanders appearing on Rogan's show in September of last year, in what represented a bit of a watershed moment of independent online media engaging in better journalism than mainstream media; [the episode](#) has 11 million views on YouTube as of the end of January 2020.

Overall, it is unsurprising, even if many progressives are disconnected enough from reality to have been flummoxed by this, that Rogan endorsed Sanders, and that the Sanders campaign welcomed that. Rogan, in sum, has more opinions that would be considered "left" rather than "right."

But wokeness, today, is a faultline brimming with complicating frictions of seismic proportions. On account of them, Rogan is not a proper leftist, and would himself not self-identify with the label "progressive" or "leftist." Indeed, he is quite actively critical of contemporary social justice in a way that many on the left have dubbed him a right-winger, even though the misgivings he expresses—against the idea, for example, that gender identity is entirely about one's feelings about gender, or that talking of biological differences between the sexes [is cryptofascist](#)—are probably shared by the majority of Americans, including the majority of those with otherwise predominantly left-of-center opinions.

Strong enough, indeed, are his qualms about political correctness and the establishment liberal spirit that though Elizabeth Warren's policy ideas go in the same direction as Bernie Sanders', he has not had her on his show. This is because, especially since Kamala Harris' ship never sailed, Warren has been the torchbearer of mainstream left identitarian and woke politics. (It isn't just a "liberal establishment" thing. Sure, her weaponization of identity and half-baked oppression may be perfectly in line with the values of MSNBC and *The New York Times*, but using lingo such as "Latinx" to court the Hispanic vote, which is the kind of politically correct and inclusive but ultimately hollow performativity that Joe Rogan is seen to stand in sharp contrast to, comes out of and is perfectly at home in more radical quarters of the left.)

Instead, apart from Sanders, among current Presidential contenders, Rogan has had [Tulsi Gabbard](#) (three times) and [Andrew Yang](#) as guests, two other candidates that aren't associated with wokeness. Gabbard may be the most devil-may-care candidate in the Democratic pool (now that Marianne Williamson has dropped out), having much virtue but relatively unconcerned about signalling it, a temperament quite at odds with the cautious and sometimes calculating rhetorical approach of someone like Warren or Buttigieg. Yang [has spoken explicitly](#) of the dangers of identity politics. There is a certain temperament that Rogan gravitates toward, and it just isn't that of the liberal elite and the social justice left.

Indeed, in another interview on his show with fellow comedian and commentator Jimmy Dore, Rogan [stated that](#) Elizabeth Warren, Joe Biden and Pete Buttigieg had asked to be guests. He turned them down. He explained himself thus to Dore: "I like Tulsi and I like Bernie, that's it. Everybody else can eat shit." (It is odd that Rogan didn't mention that he liked Yang; they certainly seemed to have great camaraderie during the interview, were introduced to each other through a mutual friend, Sam Harris, and as will be explored ahead, the two have great compatibility. Perhaps the omission wasn't conscious.)

But as we have now seen, the distaste goes both ways. Bernie Sanders-esque socialistic ideas are clearly not incompatible with the temperament and worldview of Joe Rogan. But the left, where Bernie Sanders' politics and campaign are most at home, has wanted Sanders to repudiate Rogan. The progressive left would much rather not support a candidate who is associated with an anti-PC, ideologically heterodox character like him. Likewise, people like Rogan, who aren't cultural leftists but want to see an active role played by the government in fixing many of our problems, are thoroughly distrustful of woke establishment types such as Elizabeth Warren. Rogan, and many other people who are uneasy about Warren, may end up voting for her against Trump, just as most on the left will vote for Sanders if he gets the nomination, even if he doesn't speak out against Rogan. But ideally, each of the camps wants a certain kind of political and economic approach to be undertaken without alliance with the other camp.

Certainly, the broadly socialistic approach could be undertaken with either, exclusive camp, which is why it is at a significant fork in the road. Socialism and the socialist movement are currently part of the superorganism of the left, which also includes its more cultural organs of the social justice movement. Socialist ideas and policies are framed in the same terms of justice, equality, upliftment and empowerment that guide much of social justice politicking about inclusivity, diversity, privilege, sensitivity, etc. However, the socialistic policies that are adjacent to this culturally left realm—from various ways of redistributing wealth, providing certain social services via the state, holding corporate power in check and addressing the climate crisis—needn't be associated with that cultural constellation.

One can well consider those reasonable policy goals without, for instance, also believing that one oughtn't to make conventional and arguably commonsensical assumptions regarding people's gender pronouns, or that the white mortality crisis is a function of white privilege ([a](#)

[viewpoint published in *The Lancet*](#), one of the world's foremost medical journals), or that it's so awesome that Goldman Sachs [is now only going to](#) take companies public if they have at least one woman or minority on their boards. One needn't be woke—indeed, one can be explicitly anti-woke—in asking the following, basic question: What kind of governance can best oversee and coordinate, to the extent necessary, the complexity of planetary systems—human, nonhuman and posthuman—so as to maximize the common good?

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A politics is going to arise to answer this question. It is already growing on the right in the form of national conservatism, which, for the unacquainted, can be oversimplified not inaccurately as “It strikes conservatives that they can use the state for the good of the nation.” There is a lively ongoing dialogue on the right in this current, in the US centered around *American Affairs*, and involving figures such as Yoram Hazony and Peter Thiel. It is too early to say whether this will come to be the dominant tendency on the right, although, to the extent that Donald Trump's populism is adjacent to or serves as a barometer for the prospects of national conservatism, that possibility must be taken seriously.

The question is, will there also be a successful politics that is interested in the broad project of coordinating planetary complexity for the greater good—but doesn't think that strong borders, traditional families and robust businesses are among the important ends of that vision? In other words, will that which we call “the left” remain a force in the coming climate?

The biggest factor in determining this may be how it proceeds on the divide encapsulated by this recent brouhaha: Should a democratic socialist spurn Joe Rogan? Or put more generally: Should the left choose to pursue its destiny in alliance with social justice movement progressives and radicals, or should it pivot toward bedfellowship with a wider and ideologically more messy segment of humanity?

From a quantitative standpoint, it may be that Sanders was right to not have snubbed Rogan. Sure, many on the left have found Bernie Sanders to be inadequately woke, and after the antics by the liberal media and Democratic establishment to depict Sanders as having been a misogynist to Elizabeth Warren, this may be the straw that breaks the camel's back, prompting many progressives on the fence between Sanders and Warren to seek refuge in the excruciatingly woke oasis that can only be presumed is Warren's camp.

But Rogan, again, has over 7.3 million subscribers on YouTube. His reach is vast, and more so is the trust he has nurtured; in all likelihood, more than 7.3 million people see him as a good guy whose heart is in the right place and who looks at things the right way. Of course, it will not be the case that all his subscribers and fans will vote for Bernie Sanders now. Still, the number among them who wouldn't have thought about voting for Sanders, but who will at least consider it now, may still be in six figures, if not indeed in seven—a nontrivial endorsement, quite likely more important than that of *The (Failing) New York Times*, which gave its jointly to Elizabeth

Warren and Amy Klobuchar. It is quite possible that out of these, those who end up voting for Sanders will exceed the number of progressives who were planning on voting for Bernie Sanders, but have now been dissuaded from doing so by this association of his with the [“transphobic bigot”](#) who has [“devoted his life to normalizing hate groups.”](#)

Such calculations may have been considered by the Sanders campaign in its tacit refusal to distance itself from Rogan. Still, despite this refusal, by no means is Sanders abandoning his traditionally leftist base, and by no means is the broader socialist current breaking with the broader left superorganism by outright parting with the social justice warriors. The organizational infrastructure of the socialist left is quite well integrated with the broader social movement left. Sanders himself is a dyed-in-the-wool leftist; equality and justice are paramount for him, he just happens to think social democratic policy is the best way to affect that for minorities as well as majorities. He has taken Rogan’s endorsement, but will not overassociate. He will continue to be involved with social justice movements and vibes, even if spurning identity politics and not going into the deep end of crazy wokeness. Indeed, the demands from the left for Bernie Sanders to reject Rogan’s endorsement are largely demands for a symbolic gesture that reinforces the in-group identity of the left; the fact that Joe Rogan, and now maybe a number of his fans, support Bernie Sanders makes no difference to the political and ethical project Sanders is a node within. Sanders may not have snubbed Rogan, but the overall situation remains that the left isn’t embracing the Joe Rogan subscriber demographic.

Looking at the matter only quantitatively, for the left to remain a force in the Western political climate, this may be the correct decision. If the socialist movement goes in a decidedly anti-woke direction, it will lose a lot of its support—from the radical or movement left as well as from the liberal and progressive establishments. Moreover, while right now the number of Americans against wokeness is greater than not, many of them wouldn’t vote for a socialist anyway; many of them may be Republican or Libertarian voters. While most of the woke want Medicare For All, the same isn’t necessarily true of those who aren’t woke, or are averse to wokeness. Joe Rogan may be an anomaly in this respect, and there just may not be enough people like him for socialist policy—without the conservative ethos from the right—to be attempted electorally without the social justice base. It may seem, then, that to remain a force in directing what the world is like, the correct choice for the left would be to stay cozy in its existing character, with its social justice base. But (*sniff, sniff*) what if the opposite were true?

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It may indeed be the case that it would be a mistake for the goals of socialism to be undertaken by the left superorganism. There are two parts to this argument. First, that wokeness and association with the social justice left will detract from the odds and efficacy of implementing programs that aim to coordinate substantive and systemic changes to the present order of things. Second, that association with engaging with ideologically heterodox wings of society that happen to stand at odds with the woke left will enhance such odds and efficacy.

Starting with the first, given the relative ease of establishing further norms of identity politics and gestures of political correctness as opposed to implementing hefty socialistic programs such as Medicare For All (let alone a Green New Deal), the former may well find greater prevalence if a leftist is in power. To the extent substantive socialistic policies are difficult, “praxis” for diversity and inclusivity may increasingly serve as the release valve for the left’s aspirations to be affecting its agency. At least during campaigns, a candidate can keep attention on her or his substantive social programs. But if these programs face challenges of various kinds when actually in power, the thrust may shift more toward woke politicking.

Moreover, the nature of the programs that the left comes up is itself affected by its involvement with the woke or progressive left. The left that is attached to social justice movements is the traditional left of the twentieth century, and follows the modes and conventions of this period. For example, when associated with the *union*, which exists in complement to the (labor) *movement*, both of which proceed from an ethos (among other possible ones) of opposing *inequality*, the left’s inclination is to campaign for raising wages for the working class, raising taxes on the wealthy, or guaranteeing full employment. However, such policies may not make as much sense in today’s economic conditions. They may instead set off other dynamics that weren’t as perilous in the period preceding the 1970’s, when the left was last strong and cohesive. It’s because socialist left politics is still understood as an exercise in preventing the suffering of the worst-off and ensuring that (presumably agency-deprived) people have their needs met that it focuses on raising wages, and avoids talking about automation and a post-work society (which only Andrew Yang is willing to do among current Democrats).

The point can be made at a general and more abstract level: There are certain beliefs that the left works with, embodied in different leftists in different combinations. A few of these are: Individuals within a given group are more similar in the problems they share than they are different; the suffering of groups is because of oppression by other groups; the oppressed have a keener sense of right and wrong than the unoppressed; insofar as oppression is encoded in systems and institutions, the way to deal with it is by empowering groups, making them conscious of both their marginalization and their latent power, and organizing them to confront the members of the oppressor or privileged group have power ceded to them; representation and inclusion are facets of power; the “praxis” of groups acting in concert, expressing their power or building it, is the most efficacious way to making social progress; progress itself is primarily defined by strides toward equality and justice; dignity also is defined foremost by equality, but also by having a secure, stable and safe place in society; the list can go on.

There is truth to a lot of these beliefs, though there’s also a lot of truth to the world that isn’t captured by such tenets of the left. However, regardless of the extent to which these beliefs are accurate, the problem is fundamentally one about how we conceptualize the relation between theory and practice, or science and technology. The common understanding of these things is that a scientific theory is formed, and then technology follows based on that. But that isn’t how technology works—of a natural-scientific or a socio-political kind. Much of scientific truth is

created by tinkerers making things work and then people noticing patterns between how things work in retrospect—induction, in other words, not deduction.

How does this pertain to the efficacy of orthodox leftist methods? The point is that the modes and strategies—the technology—of politics on the left were created in the 19th and 20th century only secondarily in accordance with some beliefs; primarily, the political technologies of the left were created because they worked at accomplishing certain goals that real people in the real world had. Protests worked, and became A Way Of Doing Things, when and because collectives had power. Full employment schemes worked when and because the full productive power of capitalism could make good use of a full workforce. National-level social programs worked when capital could be controlled and organized from the top down within a national economy. There were certainly theoretical beliefs that coexisted with these forms of praxis. But possibilities and choices made about praxis affect the theory that is formed around them. Indeed, because of the (historically contingent) success of these modes of praxis, the beliefs they coexisted with grew stronger, came to take on the appearance of truth, and have ultimately become gospel for the superorganism of the left.

That is the situation that stands now—the left, driven by these beliefs that attained truth in large part because of the workability of its praxis in a given place and time, is now trying to follow the same praxis in keeping with such “truths.” To the extent this superorganism, including both the socialist left and the social justice left, exists intact, this epistemology stays alive. But the world has changed, and in trying to do the same things in a different world, the cart is well in front of the horse. The left, out of ossification in its inherited frameworks, is a project in wasted opportunity cost; ultimately, the odds and efficacy of politics aiming to coordinate the world’s complexity, in a nonconservative direction, for the greater good, is being diminished.

The juxtaposition of this to Joe Rogan, serving as synecdoche for the larger nonleftist demographic, may already be clear, and with that, the second part of this argument. Joe Rogan doesn’t operate with beliefs that buttress programs and praxis that don’t work. It isn’t that he doesn’t care about justice or equality or inclusivity or grassroots power. It’s that he doesn’t exclusively think in terms of political programs that have utmost fidelity to these ideals. As is clear from his interview with Bernie Sanders, he wants to see a healthcare system that isn’t owned by insurance companies, he wants corporations to be taxed fairly, he wants the fossil fuel industry and pharmaceutical industry to be taken on, and he wants to see corporate money out of politics. He also realizes we don’t just need some simple fixes to our systems, after which we can keep going as normal. As he said during his interview with Andrew Yang, while discussing the shifts in our economy and the despair they are already causing in our society, [“It seems that there needs to be some sort of a massive rethinking of civilization itself.”](#)

Joe Rogan, and the significantly large and largely sidelined mass of other people who think like him, realize that things have to change very fundamentally and drastically in our world, and that politics is needed for that—but contrary to the left, since they don’t carry the self-limiting epistemological baggage of the left, they are predisposed to *think fresh*.

What kind of disposition, after all, does not want to talk to Elizabeth Warren, Joe Biden and Pete Buttigieg, but wants to hear from Bernie Sanders, Tulsi Gabbard, Andrew Yang *as well as* Gary Johnson, Elon Musk, Edward Snowden, Eric Weinstein, Jordan Peterson and Gavin McInnes? There probably isn't a single person who is a fan of all these people, and there lies the point. His is a disposition toward hybridity, patchwork and political and economic innovation. It is a disposition that is against doing the same, monolithic things with government and the market and planning that have gotten us into an extinction event, rising sea levels, rising mortality and all sorts of travesties and tragedies in between. This disposition may not be sold on top-down planning in the way most leftists are, but it is open to exploring new ideas, because hell, it realizes, are we in myriads of messes.

It's certainly also a disposition that is strongly against whimsical dogmas of political correctness and against being forever affixed in paroxysms of aggrievement. But that's just the disposition that people who want to do big things in the world should be gravitating toward: Joe Rogan and those like him mean business, and want to move with intent to break macro-level status quos. All in all, if the goal is to fix dysfunctional aspects of our society through political means while going about an imaginative, radical "rethinking of civilization," bringing in the hearts and minds of the Joe Rogans of the world would, in the long run, be a huge positive. Even if there are currently fewer people among the un-woke who would support left-ish programs than among ~~the vampires~~ the woke, it would still be worth the while for the unwoke-but-alive to be won over to the project.

Andrew Yang's campaign is worth paying attention to in this context, as an example of a different direction socialistic ideas could go in. Yang is most known for his signature policy, the Freedom Dividend, a form of universal basic income whereby all American citizens would receive \$1,000 from the federal government every month. But the sensibility that this policy emerges from—a forward-looking concern about AI and automation, and a trans-ideological concern for the breakdown of American psychosocial fabric that is as willing to discuss the unique problems being faced by men and white people as it is to discuss those faced by women and communities of color—is far from the typical ethos and focus of the left. Furthermore, the broader sensibility with which he seems to approach politics in general—atoms, bits and cheer, it could be called—deviates from left orthodoxy or the orthodoxy of politics as conventionally done in general: from his pointing toward a post-work society, to his unabashed emphasis on adaptation, along with mitigation, when discussing the climate crisis, to his generosity in speaking highly of his rivals, to his highly data-driven approach in crafting policy, to even, it could be said, what is betokened by his being the only male candidate to not wear a tie on the debate stage.

The vector that Yang is pulling forth, while leaning left, is one ultimately transversal to the left-right spectrum. If Joe Rogan endorsed him, it is unlikely there would be that much rancor from progressives about him disavowing such an endorsement, because he isn't seen as The Progressive or Socialist Left's Guy in the way that Bernie Sanders is. Still, his concerns can be

described in those same general terms as those of more conventional social democrats: What kind of governance can best oversee and coordinate, to the extent necessary, the complexity of planetary systems—human, nonhuman and posthuman—so as to maximize the common good?

Given, then, that Yang doesn't carry the baggage of the left but still is ultimately trying to solve the same problems at the institutional and systemic level, it makes sense that Rogan was led to speak about "rethinking civilization" when talking to him, and not while talking to Bernie Sanders. Yang is the candidate who, unencumbered by the assumptions and limitations of doing "left politics," is most thinking of political strategies and visions in accordance with reality as it is. When Sanders discusses income inequality or the healthcare cartel of the US, he is certainly connected to and talking about real things. But he's not *getting at reality as such*. On the other hand, when Yang discusses the despair felt by people due to not just particular ways in which the economy is rigged, but due to how human society at its very foundation is changing, he is much more proximate to the essential chords of our reality.

It is only when social consciousness is brought in touch with such essential chords that one is prompted to think and feel, "We really need to rethink civilization here." Fully-automated luxury space communism, in other words, isn't going to emerge from social democratic politics, but from an ideologically unkempt, heterodox and savvy political bent that flouts given scriptures and grand narratives.

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Thus exists the choice for the radical, structurally transformative politics that "the left" has so far been the vehicle of: Stick to its status quo and out of demographic expedience and epistemological inertia hold on to its baggage, exemplified today in its cultural politics, which might work for electoral success, but probably won't work for accomplishing the best outcomes; or, cast off the baggage of socialist and social justice politics that is out-of-sync with the deepest anxieties and desires of the coming decades, and conduct political and economic innovation which, while not fitting neatly into left schema of Proper Praxis, may perhaps best enable the noblest visions of the left.

It is likely that the leftist brigade behind Bernie Sanders will continue to stay with its current approach and choose to retain the cohesion of the leftist superorganism. It would hardly still be "the left" if it did otherwise. "The left" is only "the left" in association with "progressive" organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign and MoveOn, and orthodox socialist publications like *Jacobin* and *Current Affairs*, which, even if remaining at a yard's distance from the excesses of wokeness, still frame their arguments in terms of the same hackneyed binaries and narratives that are ostensibly meant to serve the exploited and oppressed. Were it to seek its goals with frameworks and coalitions transversal to those following these binaries and narratives, it would have departed from the left-right plane, and would be another superorganism altogether.

Could this happen? There is a chance that if Trump wins in 2020, then much as Bernie Sanders' 2016 set the agenda for what the Democrats are talking about this time, Andrew Yang's current campaign may do so for 2024. But it is questionable whether Sanders' conversations would have achieved dominance if the social body of his politics wasn't adjacent to, if not intimate with, the social body and the ethos of wokeness, the dominant ideology of liberal-left politics in the last several years. Given the dominance of the two-party system in the US and the proximity of the Democratic apparatus to the social justice coalition, at least from this vantage point four years out from the possibility, it seems doubtful there could be a Democratic frontrunner on a current overtly apart from social justice progressivism. Yet it could happen.

But the Joe Rogan affair has encapsulated and illuminated the fork in the road vividly. Even if it is unlikely that the left will shed its cultural baggage and recreate itself, the line etching out the choice for politics seeking to transform our institutions and systems has clearly been drawn. The fork must be taken. Either this transformation will be attempted by those comprising the existing superorganism of the left, with its worn out tenor and ethos, unwilling to let go of its evermore far-fetched resentments and refusing to form a coalition with those who do not fall in line with its laundry list of woke affirmations. Right now, more institutional power, from political organizations to the media to the nonprofit industrial complex, lies with this camp. Or the challenge will be undertaken by a camp with a disposition to rethink civilization in the Rogan-Yang vein.

There may just be more of humanity, and even more spirit, vitality and imagination, waiting to be enlisted to the latter camp. This disposition is growing, and if it coheres into a superorganism in-and-of-itself, it will hardly be "the left" as we've known it. What a relief that would be. Society may or may not be standing at a crossroads leading to either socialism or fascist barbarism, but socialism certainly is standing at a crossroads: barbaric benightedness or society.