

Fr. Perozich comments —

Resorting to insults because I do not have the intellectual tools to make my argument is not OK. It is even more not OK when I have a position of power over others for whom I should love, care, and lead to Christ.

Unfortunately, it comes out of the heart and mouth automatically for human beings. It needs restraint.

Some use it to control others in order to make others conform to the personal opinions of the speakers.

Jesus did go after the leaders when they themselves refused to enter the kingdom and tried to prevent others from doing so; but He did not do so at every occasion of speaking and very specifically for their actions.

This sort of speech is telling about a person who appears to be manipulating with ad hominum abusive epithets rather than drawing people into love with the Savior.

I suppose I have to admit of being not only a victim, but also a perpetrator of such technique, which requires repentance and reflection.

<https://abyssum.org/2019/05/11/the-little-book-of-insults-used-by-francis-the-merciful/>

The Fine Art of Name-Calling

By [Francis X. Maier](#)

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The best way to hide the fact that you're a culture warrior is to accuse others, who don't agree with you, of being. . .culture warriors. As Saul Alinsky, patron saint of today's progressive politics, saw so clearly, **the most fruitful defense is a nasty offense; and preferably directed at persons, not merely their ideas.**

Writers at the *National Catholic Reporter*, for example, and across the Catholic left in general, have used this technique for decades – my former boss, Archbishop Charles Chaput, was a routine target – and they still do, with impressive skill.

Sure, it's a form of projecting your own ugly appetites and resentments onto others, and then blaming them for your own sins. And yes, moral hair-splitters will whine that such behavior is actually *calumny*, a species of lying; something Dante assigned directly to the *Inferno's* eighth circle.

But hey, all's well that ends well. Forgiveness is free when the "good guys" – i.e., your guys – win.

Here's the point: too often, **the Christian left tends to serve as a kind of religious "Me Too" movement within the larger stream of progressive activism**; not always, and not on every issue, but often enough to worry those outside the fold.

Obviously, not all the worry is fair. Social service is a duty of Christian discipleship. Over the past 125 years, papal encyclicals have outlined Catholic social doctrine and obligations in great detail. And of course, Christians who lean right can often be described, just as accurately, as a biblical farm team for conservative causes.

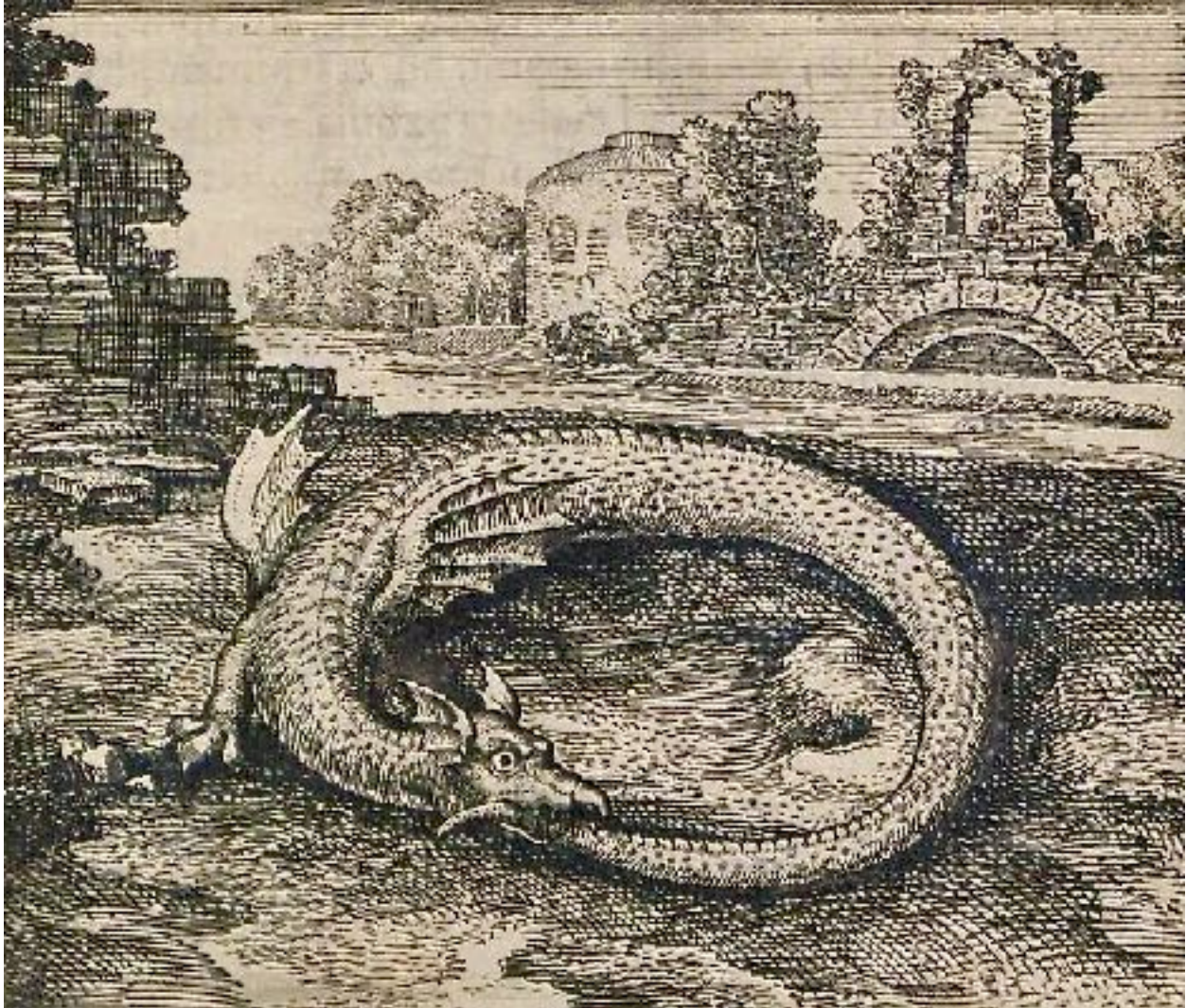
But "progressive" activism has an ideological coherence, an organic advantage, that the right typically lacks. The reason is simple. **Progressive politics has its own religious DNA, quite apart from any overlap with the Christian faith.**

In his essay "Ersatz Religion" ([collected here](#)), Eric Voegelin, the distinguished political philosopher forced to flee Nazi Europe, placed progressivism in the same family of zealous, gnostic, religion-like movements that includes Marxism, positivism, fascism, and national socialism. Each movement is a different but related face of the same underlying instinct. And that instinct always has the same defining characteristics.

As Voegelin argued, **the gnostic believer is unhappy with his situation. He's sure that his problems are caused by a badly organized world. He also believes "salvation from the evil of the world is possible." He concludes that, for salvation to arrive, the order of being must be changed through an historical process.**

He accepts as a matter of faith that the salvific process can be achieved through man's own efforts. Finally, "it becomes the task of the gnostic to seek out the prescription for such a change. Knowledge – gnosis – of the method of altering being is the central concern of the

gnostic”. . .along with a determination to impose that knowledge on society for its own good.



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This may seem a long way from the nature of today’s progressive Christian thought. But maybe not. The Italian Catholic philosopher, Augusto Del Noce, in his 1967 essay “On Catholic Progressivism” ([collected here](#)), noted that faithful Catholics seek “to bring the modern world into line with eternal principles” while respecting its unique character. But Christians operating under the “progressive” label often embody the “exact inverse, since they seek to bring Catholicism into line with the modern world.”

Del Noce was prophetic in sensing the attacks on Catholic theology in matters of sex that would flow from the 1960s’ cultural revolution. More than fifty years later, *Humanae Vitae* and *Donum*

Vitae are again under assault – this time, with perverse irony, from within the Vatican itself and its “Pontifical Academy for Life.”

Elsewhere, Del Noce **warned of “the replacement of metaphysics by sociology” and the slow bleeding out of transcendent faith into a positive, if flexible, system of ethics masked by relentless calls for compassion and an “obligatory anti-intellectualism.”** If this drift doesn’t sound familiar in today’s Catholic life, the reader has been asleep.

With telling edge, Del Noce argued that:

whereas a discussion with a rigorously Marxist intellectual is *possible*, it is not so with a Catholic progressive. Not because we despise him, but because he despises his critic, treating him already from the start as somebody who stops at mere formulaic intellectualism. Therefore one does not discuss *with* a Catholic progressive, but *in front of* him, just hoping that our arguments may provide an opportunity to stimulate critical reflection. [emphases in original]

It’s worth recalling that “doctors of the law” – so often reviled in recent years – had a rather generous hand in building and sustaining a civilization infused with a Christian soul. Some of them did, at least, know how to think; now something of a lost art. The very last thing anyone needs is a new, ersatz brand of Catholic thought, shaved of its hard edges, that amounts to camp-following a world so spiritually desiccated that it lacks even a pagan grasp of the supernatural.

In the annals of name-calling, epithets like “culture warrior” and “fascist” have a lot in common – a real family resemblance – as evidenced recently by our second, and now quite clearly “progressive,” Catholic president. As Lance Morrow has noted:

If there are fascists in America these days, they are apt to be found among the tribes of the left. They are Mr. Biden and his people. . .whose opinions have, since Jan. 6, 2021, hardened into absolute faith that any party or political belief system except their own is illegitimate, inhuman, monstrous, and (a nice touch) a threat to democracy. The evolution of their overprivileged

emotions – their sentimentality gone fanatic – has led them in 2022 to embrace Mussolini’s formula: “All within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state.” Or against the party. . . meanwhile their thinkers wonder whether the Constitution and the separation of powers are all they’re cracked up to be.

Hitler and Mussolini began as men of the revolutionary left, by the way; the very real-deal embodiment of “culture warriors.” In case anyone was wondering.

***Image:** *The Uroboros* by Matthäus Merian, 1617 [State Library, Berlin, Germany]. The drawing appears in Michael Maierus’ alchemical study, *Atalanta Fugiens*.