

The Crabgrass is out to get you!

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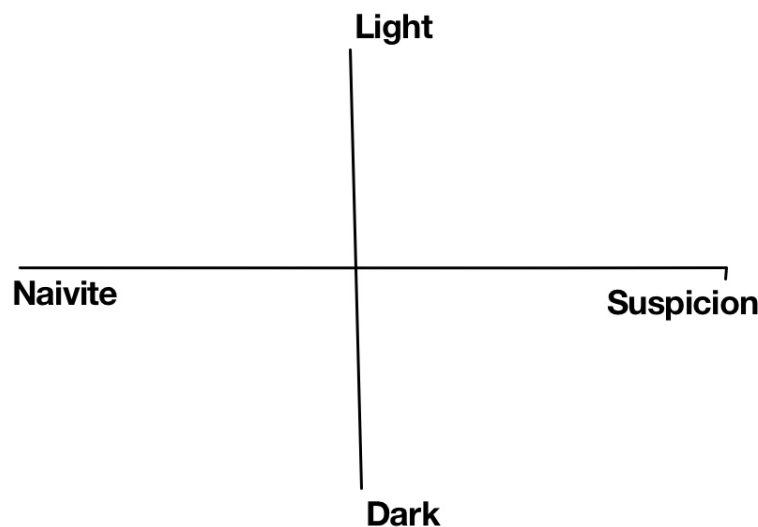
I was walking the labyrinth today (St. Luke's in this case) when my attention fell upon a weed on the path. It was not a very special weed, though once I noticed it I could not help but notice that there were more of them. Indeed, weeds, by their very nature are never solitary creatures but rather, if given an opportunity, will take over every square inch of habitable terrain. And again, by their nature, a weed grows where there is nothing else to compete with it, and it becomes a "pioneer species" which will thrive where nothing else will.

Some wit once said that the ability to write science fiction is chiefly the ability to regard the crabgrass with suspicion. Recalling this sage ancient observation, I then found myself musing on this seemingly cute and innocuous weed and its nefarious plan of world domination. The outline of a whole novel began to play out in my mind as a new and horrid example of a Singularity emerging, not of Artificial Intelligence which seeks to overwhelm its human creators, but a simple plant which achieves consciousness and becomes the Demon Weed, which will profligately overwhelm even us to become the apex species.



I then returned to walking the labyrinth and meditating upon suspicion. Suspicion is rooted in the belief that that which appears to be is a lie, a deception, and the truth lies in rooting out what is "really real" and not being deceived by what appears to be real. Much of modern American politics and culture is explained by this dark and strange tendency in American culture.

If suspicion is a problem, then what is the antidote to suspicion? Well, surely it must be naivité: to be able to see with the eyes of a child as Jesus reminded us. Yet, naivité is also condemned in scripture. The book of Proverbs has great long passages on the "way of the fool". Naivité when combined with stupidity as not what we are called to when we are called to live by faith. I began to see that the problem is not just suspicion versus naivité, but also whether they are tied to darkness or to light.



I began to see a chart, with an “x” axis between naiveté and suspicion, and a “y” axis between darkness and light: something like this:

There is both a dark and a light expression of both naiveté and suspicion. I recognized in this something which is wonderfully subtle and is reflected in scripture. I saw it playing out like this:

Scripture embraces the Holy Fool, where Jesus invites us to have faith as a child, to be guileless as doves and St. Paul enjoins us to become “fools for Christ”. It is the innocence which bathes in and exalts in the goodness of God. There is also an expression of suspicion which is rooted in the light where Jesus also calls us to be as cunning as serpents. It is the exercise of the gift of discernment, to see where God is present and active, and also where God is absent, the places where God is not, which is how early Christians defined evil.

We are not called to be foolish, nor to be paranoid. We can see expressions of that in those folks who believe that the world was created in 4004 BC from a literal reading of Genesis, or those who believe that Jesus is coming back soon to “rapture” us. (Wait until Advent and then I will unpack that).

Rather, we are called to find the place of balance where we can have the eyes of faith of a child where everything is new and wonderful and the grace of God blazes forth from every created thing and every child of God. It also means that we can see into the darkness and discern where God is and where God is not, and not to be taken in.

The centre place, where they meet, is faith.

Sometimes parishioners might notice me drumming my fingerprints together and saying “excellent, excellent” in a voice imitating Mr. Burns from the Simpsons. If you catch me doing that, you should know that I am rejoicing that my Evil Plot is unfolding according to plan. My “Evil Plot” is found in that place where naiveté and suspicion meet, while pretending that it proceeds from the darkness, while it really originates in the light.

My Evil Plot is simple: it is to see both of our communities, St. Luke’s and St. John the Divine becoming ever more radiant, filled with the light of Christ, and brimming with Faith, Hope and Love. In those communities the lost, and the wandering, fools and skeptics alike, walk into our midst and find that there is room for them in God’s plot.

The “cunning as serpents” part is it requires all of the gifts and insight that God has given to us over the years in order to become those radiant communities that God calls us to be. May it so be and become.

Though in the meantime ...

Watch out for the crabgrass.

Fr. Craig

