Contrasting themes of grand narratives

Below are lists of contrasting themes of grand narratives- one the dominant narrative in human consciousness from the past (Old Narrative) and the other a new narrative based on what humanity has discovered over the past few centuries to be the true nature of reality and life. These themes express the background ideas that shape the basic human orientation toward life and influence human emotions, thinking, and responses to life.

Central to the new narrative is the long trajectory of the rising progress of life toward something better. This is undeniable. All of the history of life is evidence of this, as is the history of human civilization. Why it rises will make sense in terms of varied philosophical positions. Matt Ridley explains the rise in terms of his views of evolutionary theory. He notes well the varied steps and developing practices that promoted the ongoing rise. Others will explain the rising progress in terms of love seeking something better or the fundamental human desire for something better than what exists now. This impulse is behind all creativity and innovation. To find some solution to some disease or problem and to make life easier and better for oneself, one’s family, and one’s community or for humanity as a whole. Goodness, generosity, love seek expression through improving life and the human situation. This primal impulse cannot be contained. It will burst forth somehow to continue the rising progress of life toward something better than what exists now.

To put this in metaphysical terms- the core of reality and life is some transcendent Love that must find expression in life. This is the most plausible explanation. There is nothing angry, malicious, threatening or frightening at the core of reality and life. This too is central to a new grand narrative.

The list of contrasts below is to help show what exactly it is that we need to leave in terms of basic themes that inform our consciousness and sub-consciousness and shape our orientation toward life.

1. A. Old Narrative- Perfect origin, then a fall and subsequent decline toward something worse.

B. New Narrative- Imperfect origin, no fall, and subsequent continued rise toward something better. This progressing rise has been slow but steady over the long term. One can understand this further in terms of freedom. There is no coercion, but divine toleration and patience with human development (no Noahic impatience and destructive anger with human imperfection). People are free and responsible to make something better out of life. And it is always a work in progress. Such progress involves suffering and struggle as essential to learning. It is a free process because only genuine freedom can produce the genuine moral choice and goodness so valued by divinity.

1. A. Old Narrative- Devalues and demeans humanity as responsible for the fall and decline of life. Humanity is defiled, corrupt, dark and selfish, and destructive. This is the essential nature of being human.

B. New Narrative- Humanity as embodied consciousness is a wonder that is essentially love and light. Human persons are most essentially compassion (this is our true self). People are creative on balance, not destructive. We have not caused any fall or decline in life.

1. A. Old Narrative- Humanity as corrupted is responsible for causing a cosmic separation from God. This has led to rejection of humanity by God. If human rejection by parents/family has devastating impacts on people’s psyche, how much more devastating is the belief that human being are rejected by their Creator/Father.

B. New Narrative- There has never been any separation of humanity from God, no rejection by God. There is absolutely no evidence of such a separation accompanied by the ruin of nature (the sudden simultaneous emergence of death, thorns, sweat glands and crawling snakes in the fossil strata).

1. A. Old Narrative- The ruptured relationship with the divine requires a salvation scheme. This involves sudden divine intervention to restore what was ruptured based on theories of atonement (that blood sacrifice- violent suffering and death of innocent victim- is required to appease infinite divine requirements). Lost original perfection will be restored from outside of humanity. God will restore by overpowering action to clean up the mess humanity has made of things.

B. New Narrative- No salvation is required because no rupture has occurred. Life has since the beginning been about slow steady improvement, advance, development, and progress. Humanity is genuinely free and responsible for the improvement of life and the world. There will be no outside salvation scheme (divine intervention to rescue).

1. A. Old Narrative- Life and the world will soon end in some catastrophic collapse as punishment for the sin of humanity.

B. New Narrative- There is absolutely no evidence of any coming catastrophic collapse of life. All evidence points to ongoing rise and progress. All the long term trends support this trajectory of progress.

1. A. Old Narrative- Engenders guilt, shame, fear, pessimism and despair. It leads to hatred of self (being human), hatred of life and the world, rejection of these, risk averseness and endeavours to escape life. The old narrative fosters the attitude of longing for the past, preferring the old, preferring stasis to avoid further decline.

B. New Narrative- Engenders hope, confidence, self-acceptance as a wondrous creature, embracing of life, love, hope, confidence in the future. The new narrative fosters the attitude of seeking change and something new as essential to furthering progress into the open and limitless future.

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