Update on grand narrative

Just an update on this thing of new grand narrative.

I have been looking at material on grand historical narratives- their core elements- to further flesh out the shape of where human public consciousness has been oriented over the past and where human consciousness might be going now. This can be summed up in the two narratives of decline or progress. The past grand narrative that governed human public consciousness for millennia has been the narrative of decline. That there was an original golden age or time or purity and power or  vitality. Then humans committed an original error and consequently ruined things. Since then life has been in decline toward something worse and is headed for some future catastrophic end of all which will then result in the restoration of the original purity, power, or golden age with more vital human beings, restored to their original purity and power. But decline is the essential trajectory of all things in the old narrative.

It appears now that the Enlightenment birthed the discovery of the beginnings of an entirely new view of life, not as in decline, but as a trajectory of ongoing progress toward something better. This was the beginning of a radical break with the old narrative that had so long governed human consciousness. And yes,  Nisbet may have unearthed some earlier intimations of thought in the direction of progress views but they were not all that clear as during the Enlightenment. So Herb, here is your Tower of Truth moment occurring some four centuries ago.

And it was not all just about technological advancement or economic advancement. This occurred in concert with great advances in human consciousness and the human spirit related to increasing value for basic human rights. It was the beginning of a broader move toward a more  humane society or existence.

Modern thinkers have continued this movement toward a new grand narrative of progress. They do so with detailed data on long term trends that all show improvement. Simon, Lomberg, Easterbrook, Goklany, Ridley, Payne, Seabright, and many others have offered fascinating data here. But they still could benefit from work on a larger overall context to buttress their work. This could be more empirical and also more oriented toward basic issues of meaning (taking account of the Jewish thinker who argued that the impulse for meaning was the fundamental human impulse, even more foundational than the drives for food or sex or similar survival drives).

In this regard I think of the summarizing statement of John- “God is Love” (for those uncomfortable with the term God, substitute Universal Consciousness or Self, or universal Mind or Spirit or something similar). This is the most profound statement of human understanding and insight ever set forth. It encompasses all of reality as we know it. Whether fundamental physical reality and its emergence, formation and development or anything else. Why a universe friendly to life? Because of unconditional love at the core of all reality. It makes the fullest sense of all things. Why something? Where is it going? What is the point of it all? At the end of the day when we have shelved all the data that we have amassed on the physical world, we still want these fundamental questions of meaning answered also.

God is love will finally break the last vestiges of fear, despair, pessimism, and other darkening elements that continue to fester in human consciousness. Unconditional love is the most fundamental reality behind all else.

And it is not any form of love as we have known it. It is a radical  new form of love- unconditional. This overturns millennia of thinking on justice that has been oriented to punishment, revenge, retaliation and such. Tit for tat. This God is unconditional Love lets in a burst of inexpressible light that scatters all the shadows still lingering in public consciousness from millennia of old narrative perceptions.

Anyway, just some thoughts as we continue to tinker with this core narrative issue.