Society's Downward Spiral Must Play Out First

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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Society's sad and terminal state is not an abstraction of issues or dollars. It is the wasted human potential of the intelligent, charitable individual who is stifled and hemmed in. Yet, our many wonderful members of society are creatures of artificial "comfort." Convenience comes at costs such as cancer and heart disease that were rare diseases until the last hundred years. Forced by the present economy to be self-centered, we also suppress our creativity and innate potential for triumphing over a clear threat.

For the most part the modern human being labors in exchange for essentials handed over at whatever the market will bear. Food, shelter and clothing are not won or collected from nature, or in cooperation with helpful tribe members, but rather obtained in exchange for becoming a kind of slave. Neuroses from overcrowding are apparent, but none dare call it overpopulation.

The result of living this way, with little daily activity in healthy nature, is a weakened race unable to survive in the wild, much as a domesticated animal such as a dog would do poorly in a forest where the wolf belongs. Some humans are exemplary in capabilities and resolute spirit, but they are the small minority in a mass of humanity remarkably passive as disasters close in.

On our way like sheep to the slaughterhouse appears to be our fate. In past centuries and decades people were tougher and closer to the land, so when they got hungry enough they revolted and took what they needed. Today's people are confused about what constitutes real wealth and power, such that they may be sitting ducks for those who would take away further the freedoms and normal responses that should be present among healthy, strong humans. Unless people riot uncontrollably and breach the walls of the gated communities and fan out from there, they may be prey to urban social control mechanisms designed to remove the threat that the masses pose to those who may be sitting well in the countryside with a ready, sustainable food supply. Little of this will occur in societies far less petroleum dependent.

The more I travel and interact in this country, I get a bad feeling about living in a U.S. city today. To see a homeless person or deranged street person is to feel the failure that is U.S. society. It's just as clear when one meets an expanse of asphalt and cars; the terminal nature of our society is in our faces.

I want to live but they want me to die

I've got to give the best of myself

They only want me to lie

I gotta give the best of myself

They only want me to lie

- Warhorse, "Solitude" (from Mojo Magazine's compilation Heavy Nuggets 1968-1973 British rock songs)

The future can only get worse before it gets better, from an understanding of energy, ecology and social response to stress and deprivation. My feelings and outlook easily elicit "Nothing new! Join the club!" Yet there may be something more for me to say of some value to you. I actually bring good tidings, even if the prophetic "doom and gloom" stereotype works unintentionally as blinders.

The barren social wasteland is on its way to complete desertification; then the deluge.
Before this urban existence is washed away forever, we're experiencing historic intensification of alienation from nature and our fellow humans. The tribe is gone, the buffalo are gone, the salmon almost gone, along with the climate. But there's good news.

Having money and material things for security is rapidly expiring. The expiration date for consumer culture and materialism could be 2009, 2012 or later, but the exact date is not the point of this prediction. We can't claim it's far off if we're honest about observable trends. So it's time to get off our asses and separate ourselves from those who are constipated and are hopelessly in denial. The alternative is to take one's drug of choice to the extent one can afford, and revel in gratifying consumption such as a juicy steak.

The non-money culture has to begin now. Impossible? Well, maybe for you, so you must get out of the way and be bid

adieu. People have been extricating themselves from Babylon for a long time as individuals and small groups finding real community closer to nature.

Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of us live day-to-day routines of desperate existence. If anyone believes their life in an urban U.S. "community" is better than that, they're delusional. How can it be a delusion be when money buys happiness and freedom? Well, anyone ingesting plastics and radiation (most of us today) is getting screwed. We want to believe we're taking minute risks in exchange for techno-bliss. Piss on it and walk away from the fray. Those who have awakened do not need further explication or convincing. Preparedness for petrocollapse and climate chaos is the only sensible course.

Society's downward spiral must play out before positive social change kicks in, which it will -- like gangbusters. We pick up the pieces. Many columns and short stories from Culture Change have described this process in an as optimistic fashion as reality can merit. It is up to you to make it better or succumb to the tragic script others have written for humanity and all life as we know it.

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Culture Change Consulting for peak oil and post-collapse living:

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Further reading, courtesy Global Warming Crisis Council:

"Arctic air temperatures climb to record levels" Oct. 16, 2008, from Reuters:

alertnet.org