

The Coming Storm, Part One: Peak Oil and You

By Mark Stavish

As oil crosses and holds at the \$60 a barrel mark it is no surprise to the average reader of this column that the industrialized nations, and those in the pangs of industrialization, are in for a rough ride. There is no doubt in this writer's mind that a social, industrial, cultural, and spiritual storm of unprecedented magnitude is heading straight for us, and the window for averting it is *nearly* closed. The source of this storm is legion, but its focal point is oil, or more precisely – the finite nature of petrochemicals. While there are those who say petrochemicals are not limited and are continually being produced, known as abiotic oil, the fact remains that we still consume them faster than they are being replaced. Research at producing oil from pig feces has suggested that natural oil can be created in a short period of time, but to date nothing has come forward that suggests this is a viable alternative either – maybe independent research is required. In the end, as of this moment, as James Howard Kunstler has so clearly and demonstrated in his book *The Long Emergency* (<http://www.hermeticinstitute.org/html/books-earth.html>), oil is industry and industry is civilization. Without high quantities of cheap, high quality oil, Western civilization will cease to exist as we know it, and the standard of living will drop to about that of Brazil or lower in those areas where oil is the basis for economic and cultural existence.

I have just come back from the Kutztown Pennsylvania German Folk Festival, recently renamed to the Kutztown Folk Festival to be in accordance with pressures of Political Correctness, and while I find the ideals of simple country life appealing, reality quickly hits when driving past the Amish farmer firmly behind his plow and team of horses. His day began at 5:00am or earlier, and goes non-stop until it is dark. Oil lamps provide light, but are used sparingly as the Pennsylvania Germans, or what remains of them, are still a thrift lot. Learning is limited to what is essential, reading and writing on an 8th grade level, and simple arithmetic. Farm life requires little else, and reading too much creates pride, as well as dissent. The scars of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) run deep, and over 300 years later, the ideals of pacifism, isolationism, humility, community, and worship are what has held them together as the world has changed, and at times spun out of control, around them.

Like the recent film *The Village* by M. Night Shyamalan one could almost wish to live in such an idyllic place, even with full knowledge of the deception needed to keep it in existence. But then every culture, civilization, church, group, profession, and even family has its stories, myths, and outright lies that are used to retain its existence. Anything we use as a source of our identity must be molded and made digestible. Material life is about limits, and overcoming them. It is a simple fact of life. In fact, from an esoteric point of view, it is the very reason for material life.

By identifying our limits we identify the areas we need to focus our attention on. This is not negative or defeatist, but simply good problem solving. In identifying areas of immediate and potential concern we are able to focus our emotional energy, rational

thinking, and imagination as a combined unit to: (1) solve the problem if it is immediate; (2) avoid it if it still potential; and (3) mitigate if it is in the early stages of manifestation. For us, here and now, the issues of Peak Oil are in the early stages of manifestation, and it is up to each of us to mitigate its effects by fully understanding the impact Peak Oil can or will have on us, and the limitations and consequences of each of the possible solutions presented.

By identifying our myths, or rather to be more accurate, the stories we tell ourselves to make the unacceptable acceptable, the bitter into the sweet, or the vice into a virtue, we can minimize or limit the inevitable expression of the shadow side of every great ideal – and let us be clear of this, the *Age of Aquarius* is about great ideals, in which the Shadow of Saturn is never far behind. These falsification of history, be it personal or collective, is to make each person it is concerned with a victor and therefore righteous, or a victim of often hidden and nefarious forces, and therefore righteous in their noble defeat. This kind of social codependency is at the root of many of our modern social ills. Each person, and group, must take full responsibility for their situation and not blame others or seek so-called historical justifications for their failures.

The reason for stating this point so clearly is because each of you is being asked to undertake a course of action. The action you undertake and its ultimate results are going to be a direct reflection of your ability to be honest with yourself, and in doing so, to see the long-term implications of individual and collective actions.

Technology is our friend, ally, and co-worker, and it is up to us to use it wisely. To believe that technology is evil, or holds any moral qualities is a subjective projection of our own insecurities. If civilization is to survive, progress, and prosper, we must re-evaluate our relationship to the earth, as well as our relationship to the technology and resources that are created out of it. Hermeticism holds an essentially positive view of material life, the earth, and has been at the forefront of scientific and technological advancement. It is nice to hold idyllic images of the alchemists of old kneeling before their furnaces in prayer, but it is quite another to attempt even the simplest spagyric operation without electric or gas heat. It is one thing to discuss the cost and overuse of modern medicine; it is another to die of a simple infection because the needed antibiotic wasn't available.

If one looks at the life expectancy, literacy rate, and even social freedoms of people in the pre-Industrialized world, it is clear that technology has distinct benefits. Without oil, and safe reliable birth control as one commercial product, the role of women will be immediately reduced to that of a pre-1960 level or earlier out of simple biological necessity. This does not even take into consideration disposable diapers; safe, nutritional, affordable, and easily available baby food, and vitamins. Freedom as we know it in the industrialized nations is a result of the free time, health, longevity, and safety that industry when properly used can offer us. While only 41, I still remember as a child having a coal stove in the kitchen, and ringer washer complete with hose hook-up, scrubbing board, and clothesline on the back porch as the 'dryer.' Heat was by coal, delivered monthly, and shoveled daily. These were still common in many areas of the

country, particularly those that suffered economic downturns in the 1950's and 1960's with gas and electric washers and dryers being new and expensive. Just doing laundry was labor intensive. Those of you who doubt it might want to view some of the recent television shows produced by the BBC and shown in the United States on PBS. Britain's version of Reality Television is to take families and put them living conditions reflecting earlier periods in life – for a year – with such titles as *1940 House*, *1900 House*, *Victorian House*, and *Colonial House*. If you want to get a look at what domestic life was like 60, 100, or 250 years ago go to: www.bbc.co.uk , or check your local PBS station's website.

Below you will find several links to sites addressing the issue of Peak Oil written by a well know authority on esotericism, John Michael Greer. Mr. Greer's writings on practical magic and translations of occult works have been the foundation for thousands of students for over a decade. He is currently the Grand Archdruid of the Ancient Order of Druids in America (<http://www.aoda.org/>). Consider what he puts forth, as well as how some of these ideas might be integrated into your life. In the next part of "The Coming Storm" we will discuss the pros and cons of various actions one can take on an individual and small group level. The final installment will be a call for *Hermetic Renewal* and how Hermeticism needs to look not to the Victorian period for its inspiration, but to the Renaissance, if it is to be a viable expression of spirituality in the decades to come.

The Coming of Deindustrial Society

<http://www.oilcrisis.com/whatToDo/DeindustrialAge>

Facing the New Dark Age: A Grass Roots Proposal

http://www.survivingpeakoil.com/article.php?id=facing_dark_age

The Long Road Down: Decline and the Deindustrial Future

<http://www.oilcrisis.com/whatToDo/decline.htm>

How Civilizations Fall: A Theory of Catabolic Collapse

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~wvtv/powerdown/greer.htm>

Druidry and the Future

<http://www.aoda.org/articles/Druidry.htm>

Part Two: The Options Reviewed

Part Three: A Call for Hermetic Renewal: The New Renaissance

Mark Stavish is the Director of Studies for the *Institute for Hermetic Studies*. Additional articles, editorials, and information can be found at: www.hermeticinstitute.org.

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