

# Funding the Future

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I have published this video this morning. In it, I note that politicians like to pretend that we live in a binary world. It's us or them, they suggest. But the real world is really not like that, so are they doing us a massive disservice by pretending that politics has to work that way?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyX-lZSaIVo?si=DSZD6tJEct3jdquF>

The audio version of this video is here:

[https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=afh3v-16b10c1-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=c73a3a&font-color=&logo\\_link=episode\\_page&btn-skin=ff6d00](https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=afh3v-16b10c1-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=c73a3a&font-color=&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=ff6d00)

The transcript is:

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I often wonder why we live in such a binary world.

If the standard narratives that are often used in our society were to be true, you would think that most of the time we are faced with decisions that require us to choose between left or right, City or United, one political party or another, and even right and wrong.

The truth is that the world is, in the vast majority of cases, nothing like this.

Left or right rarely seems to be an appropriate description of our politics these days. As a consequence, tribal loyalty to most of our parties appears to be very hard to

generate, which is reflected in their ever-declining memberships.

In addition, if we're really interested in football, the choice between City or United, or whatever other alternatives suit your preferences, are not as important as a few like to make out.

Even when it comes to right and wrong, we need a whole judicial system to determine what this might be, and even then, we allow for appeals because judgements might be incorrect.

In other words, we live in a world where uncertainty is normal, and little is really black or white, and there are, instead, a very wide variety of shades of grey.

If this is the world that we really live in, but our politicians like to pretend that it is otherwise, the question to ask is, are they really doing us a service?

The question is genuine because I am well aware from my experience of meeting many politicians over nearly five decades now that most of them know that the world is nothing like the one that they seek to project to us. In truth, most of the time, politicians from all parties seek to find common ground on which they can agree because that is the normal mode of human behaviour, precisely because, much of the time, lots of us are able to do precisely that. We do, in fact, know of the exceptions when this cannot be achieved precisely because they are exceptional.

Let me stress, though, that I have not offered these thoughts for some abstract reason. That is rarely, if ever, my purpose. I have done so because I believe that our politics would be substantially improved if our politicians were forced to accept that the binary pretence that they seek to create, which is reinforced in the case of the UK by the oppositional structure of the House of Commons, and even the existence of an Official Opposition, should be laid aside.

If we are to really tackle the problems facing this country we have to stop pretending, for example, that the private sector or the state in isolation has all the answers to our problems when that is obviously not true. We get best outcomes when they work together.

Likewise, to presume that one political party is possessed of all wisdom and the other is not is obviously false. That is not only because there are at least 14 political parties currently represented in the House of Commons, it is also because the reality is that most of them are capable of coming up with at least some good ideas at least some of the time, although I might make an exception in the case of Reform and their allies in Northern Ireland.

And the fact is that the people of this country know that. Very few of us have had any substantial faith in any of our political leaders for some time. We have even less

confidence in many of those who they have appointed to their cabinets.

And there have been many occasions when even party loyalists have been heard to whisper that someone in another party might make a good member of the government, with Caroline Lucas being the person about whom this was said most for very many years.

In that case, what people really want from the political system is something quite different from what they are now being offered.

They want a frank recognition from politicians that none of them know the answer to all the questions.

They want to see those politicians working to find the solutions that are appropriate for our society.

They know that this will require compromise, and at present, they're profoundly frustrated that so many politicians are apparently unable to accept this necessity.

They also want politicians to take a long-term view, knowing that their period in office might be limited but that they should consider the consequences of their actions after they have been in office.

And most of all, they want the diversity of views that exist in society to be reflected in decision-making so that as many people as possible can feel that their views are reflected in those of the government of the day.

None of this is, of course, likely when a first past-the-post electoral system is in operation. That system is intended to reinforce binary decision-making, and as such, it is at the heart of our political malaise.

If we were to have a proportional representation system, with the inevitable consequence that coalition governments were likely, the whole idea that compromise is a necessary goal to achieve would be embedded within our politics.

I believe that is what people want. We are living in a country that is clearly ill at ease with itself, its politicians, our political system and its ability to represent the variety of views that exist within each of the countries that make up the UK. In a political system that cannot adapt to embrace our diversity of opinions, we are destined to remain alienated, dysfunctional, and inappropriately governed.

If nothing in life is truly binary, and very little is, then it really is time that our politics embrace nuance. Until it does, it will fail us.