

Funding the Future

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Every economy runs on light. That is not a metaphor – it is physics.

Without light, there is no life. Without life, there is no labour. Without labour, there is no economy. Yet modern economics behaves as if energy, health, and human limits do not matter.

In this Boxing Day video – part three of my Christmas series on light – I explain why labour is transformed solar energy, why burnout is an energy failure, why infinite growth on a finite planet is impossible, and why fossil fuel capitalism is about power, not necessity.

Light reconnects economics to life itself – and forces us to rethink wealth, growth, and what an economy is actually for.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9fhIFH9wCA&si=HCMR7NkZIYmSoJHF>

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=eakct-1a0060f-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

Welcome to Boxing Day, and this is the third in our series on light, which I'm producing over this Christmas period in 2025.

Today, I want to talk about the economy, because every economy runs on light. This is not a metaphor; it is physics.

Without light, there is no life.

Without life, there is no economy.

Without light, there is no health.

Without light, there is no wealth, however we define it.

Almost all usable energy on Earth comes from the sun. Agriculture depends on it directly. Wind and water are solar-driven. Fossil fuels are stored ancient sunlight. Light underpins everything and transforms it as well. Light can even be seen as metanoia, that thing possessed of transformative power that changes everything.

Human labour is transformed solar energy.

Food becomes muscle, thought, and care.

Workers cease to be abstract inputs; they are biological systems with limits.

And all of that matters because, at present, economics does not see the world that way.

Economics too often treats labour as a cost. Physics tells us that it is an energy process. Exhaust people, and systems fail, is what physics says. Burnout labour, and productivity collapses. This is not ideology; it's reality, but our economists, and most especially our politicians, forget this to our cost. When they're talking about why systems fail, they forget that it's all because of the failure of that interaction between light and us.

Growth economics also ignores physics. It treats the planet as just another variable. Energy is simply one of those things that is provided to us free of charge, according to neoclassical economics. But it isn't like that. Energy is not substitutable. You cannot deregulate sunlight. You cannot financialise thermodynamics. Limits exist, whether markets like them or not. And infinite growth in this world is a fantasy. You cannot, literally, grow forever on a finite planet. That's not pessimism, it is arithmetic. Ignoring this reality has created crisis and denial.

The truth is that a lot of the narratives that are being put forward as if they're true, but which aren't, are all about politics. We do not lack energy; we lack fair access to it. Energy poverty is a political choice, and so too is fossil fuel dependence. Power explains persistence, but persistence in this case in pursuing the wrong policy.

Fossil fuel capitalism is a perfect example of this. Fossil fuels represent concentrated control over energy, and that, of course, created wealth and vast amounts of it, but it also created dependency, and renewables threaten this centralised power. Renewables

diversify the control of energy; we could all make our own. Resistance to renewable energy is therefore political and not technical. Light decentralises control, and that means that we have to rethink wealth - because wealth is not money; it is the capacity to sustain life. Energy access determines that capacity.

Distribution matters more than accumulation in that case, and energy transition is social transition. It must be planned, it must be just, and it must be democratic. This is critical when we talk about how we're going to manage net zero. It isn't just a technical process. But what this means is that our economy is not disconnected from physics; that's a fantasy. Light reconnects economics to life itself. But in doing so, it points out that this is where the radical power for transformation within our world really exists.

We have that capacity to change what and how we do, and we could, and there is no purely financial economy that flows from this understanding. In fact, that is one of the most important points I'm making of all in this particular video. There is only light, used, delayed, diverted or denied. That is what the economy is actually about. But that's also why claiming the light for ourselves is so important, and that will be a theme of videos to come.

Previous posts in this series:

- * [**Why light matters this Christmas**](#)
- * [**Christmas and the gift of light**](#)

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