

# Why light matters this Christmas

<https://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2025/12/24/why-light-matters-this-christmas/>

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This is the first in a six-video Christmas series exploring light, not just as a festival symbol, but as a political and economic necessity.

Light has always meant understanding, truth, and freedom. Darkness, by contrast, protects power and privilege.

In this video, I explore why learning is never neutral, why ignorance is often designed, and why economics that cannot be explained cannot be trusted. If democracy requires informed consent, then light is not optional; it is essential.

This channel exists to shed light on political economy. At Christmas, that feels like exactly the right place to begin.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sx6Auou\\_L4U?si=IWFzv0ZCb92xfGhz](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sx6Auou_L4U?si=IWFzv0ZCb92xfGhz)

This is the audio version:

[https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=87htf-19fe306-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo\\_link=episode\\_page&btn-skin=c73a3a](https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=87htf-19fe306-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:

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Hello and welcome to this, the first in a series of six videos that I'm making, which will run right across the Christmas period of 2025.

There's a common theme to this series, and that is light. Why? It's not just because it's Christmas, although Christmas, like other religious festivals at this time, is a festival of light.

Nor is it just about this being around the solstice, although the link is obvious.

This is about light in so many ways: understanding, messaging, energy, power, and insight. Light and being human are inseparable, and so it is for political economy too; that's what I want to explore this Christmas. So let's start, as the saying goes, right at the very beginning.

Light is one of humanity's oldest and most powerful metaphors. Across cultures and centuries, light has meant understanding, insight, and truth. To be in the dark is not just to lack information; it is to lack power, agency, and the ability to choose. That is why light matters politically and not just poetically.

Light has also been about learning. When we talk about learning, we almost always talk about "illumination"; we "see the point," we "shed light" on a problem, or have a "moment of clarity."

We talk about the Dark Ages simply because we do not know what happened, and not because, of course, they were dark. That language is not accidental.

Learning is the process of making what was hidden visible. It's said that sunlight is the best disinfectant for a reason. Understanding changes what is possible.

The story of Plato's Cave still matters in this context. I won't run through the whole thing; look it up if you don't know the whole story that he related thousands of years ago. But what Plato described was people who were chained together, sitting in a cave with their backs to the entrance and with a fire behind them, with shadows playing out on the wall that they could see, which they then thought were their reality. Their freedom, of course, began when they turned round towards the light. Crucially, that process was painful and disorientating. They were challenged in a way that learning often does. But once you see, you cannot unsee, and that was the point that Plato was making.

Knowledge in this sense is therefore not neutral. We can't pretend it is because, well, it never is. It just is something that empowers, and power is never neutral. Every society prescribes as a consequence what will be taught, explained, or obscured, and those decisions reflect power, and not accident. Ignorance is frequently designed as a result.

There are things that illustrate this. For example, complex tax systems are not accidental. Financial opacity is not inevitable. Economic language that excludes most

people is a deliberate choice, and darkness always protects privilege, whilst light threatens it.

Economics talks about things in a way that is obscure, and that is to resist having to explain what is going on to the public. Models are used instead of meaning, authority replaces understanding. "I'm an economist, you are not. Trust me," is what becomes the argument, even though it's a poor one and one we should not accept.

This is not about enlightenment, it's about technocratically chosen darkness. And who benefits from not being understood? If people do not understand money, debt, or public spending, they are easier to frighten, easier to mislead, and easier to govern against their own interests. Confusion is politically useful for many politicians.

And that's true about democracy as well. Democracy is not just about voting; it requires informed consent. People must understand the choices they're offered. Without light, democracy becomes performance. With light, it becomes participation.

And in this context, education is imagination. It's not just about acquiring skills; it's about empowerment. It allows people to challenge authority, and that, of course, is why true education is so often resisted. Light always unsettles power.

There is, behind all this, a moral claim, and to withhold understanding is a moral failure. To obscure truth is a political act. Light is not a luxury; it is a condition of freedom. Knowledge is, therefore, ethical.

We need to bring this back to economics. If economics cannot be explained, it cannot be trusted.

If policy cannot be understood, it cannot be legitimate.

Light is the minimum requirement of democratic economics. Anything less is rule by darkness. Learning is not, then, about cleverness. It is about refusing to live in the dark. We are being kept in the dark.

The purpose of this channel is to shed light on economic understanding. Light should be the first care of any society, and it is owed to everyone. That is why understanding the significance of light is so important in political economy.

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