

## Land, Labor and Capital in a Fresh Light

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For a young person venturing into economic life, the challenge could hardly be greater. The modern world increasingly relies on abstractions that have little to do with life. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in modern economics, whose starting point is far from actual experience in an abstruse world of abstraction, based on questionable assumptions. The tragedy, but also the opportunity, of this is that what we start by thinking about economics we fulfill by enacting, whether consciously or not. So if we think that the human being is just the most highly evolved animal, an unspoken assumption in much economic thinking, we create a world that treats the human being as one. But what if we think differently?

Abstract thinking splits the world in two. You are either against us or with us, Christian or Islam, Spiritual or Materialist, for-profit or not-for-profit, good or bad, dark or light. Such dualism leads nowhere; it only causes unending conflict without any possibility for resolution. The question is, how do we move beyond these polarities that everywhere face human experience? And specifically, how do we move our economic thinking and thus our economic actions to the next level?

If we look at how the human being is physically constructed, perhaps we can find clues to help answer this question. Generally speaking, each person has two feet, two arms, and two eyes. These pairs of legs, arms and eyes do not try to destroy one another, quite the opposite. By working together they allow us to perceive and navigate the physical world. We see this most distinctly with the eyes. With one eye we can only see in two dimensions. With two eyes working together, we gain depth of field and therefore perceive three dimensions. If we now try to apply this line of thought to the economic process what do we find? Firstly we must identify what the two analogous legs or eyes are. To do this we must begin by looking at what the starting point of economics is, what is its foundation? A short amount of reflection and thinking leads us to the obvious conclusion: Land. But by land, I do not mean property in the sense that we are accustomed to thinking today, but nature transformed by labor, commodities. Land or Nature as such has no economic value until it is transformed by human labor. So we now have the one leg.

What then is the other pole in the economic process that stands over and against Land? Capital. Capital in the sense that it is labor organized by intelligence, means of production. This pole is more difficult to think, so a short example is necessary to illustrate it: In a small town, people bring a bagged-lunch with them to work everyday. One spring day one of these people has the idea (intelligence) to organize a stand on the street where these people pass by every day on their way to work. The stand offers meals and drinks. Now, rather than bringing bagged-lunches to work everyday, they go to the stand. Thus labor that was previously done by everyone individually is now divided and re-organized through human intelligence.

Let's pause here to briefly reflect on where we have arrived at. We have identified two poles of the economic process as Land (nature transformed by labor) on the one hand and Capital (labor organized by intelligence) on the other. What is the third element in the economic process that unites these two poles? It is Labor, the activity of human beings that brings together the two Poles. As labor or intelligence, the human being is everywhere present in the economic process. The further stage of the economic process yields up excess capital that is no longer connected to the original activity it

derived from and must therefore be transferred to someone who will either consume the excess values or put them to further productive use.

So, just as we use two eyes working in harmony with one another to perceive three dimensions and thus navigate the physical world, so the linking of Land and Capital through the human being enables us to navigate the social world consciously. By then associating with one another to observe the results of everyone's combined activities, the most efficient allocation of excess capital can be consciously managed.

If we take the human being rather than abstractions as the departing point for our thinking, we can more easily move beyond polarized concepts to arrive at a dimension above them. From this higher vantage point we can then develop economic concepts and practices that are in tune with human experience. Today, the challenge modern economic phenomena present to humanity is: Think differently or you will be thought!