

Yanny, Laurel & Energy

Do you hear Yanny or Laurel? Is the dress blue and black or white and gold? Are fossil fuels the greatest thing ever or are they a dire threat to the planet? Something weird is going on here.

Millions of people listened to a disembodied voice and heard something completely different.

Did you hear a woman saying Yanny or a man saying Laurel? Whichever it was, to you, there was no question it was one and not the other. Same thing for the blue and black or gold and white dress. It's one or the other and we are definite about which it is.

This weird psychological phenomenon got me thinking about how people perceive fossil fuels. When I hear oil, natural gas and coal I think "power" "progress" "products" "transportation" "innovation" "healthy living" "comfort" dozens of other things that are all good. I hear Laurel and I see a white and gold dress.

But there are other people who hear fossil fuels and they think "climate change" "dirty" "dangerous" "out-dated" and many other things that are all bad. They hear Yanny and see a black and blue dress. What's going on here?

Am I an optimist about energy while they are pessimists? Yes... but also no. When I hear "wind and solar power" the words that come to mind are "subsidized" "intermittent" "unreliable" "low density" "expensive" "ugly" and the list goes on and on. But, this one is a little tricky because I see solar as having more value as a niche player, while I think wind is mostly a disaster. However, when my counterparts hear "wind and solar" they think, "bright" "renewable" "futuristic" and "clean." The point is, they are optimists about wind and solar while I'm the pessimist.

It's confusing isn't it...completely different perceptions of the same thing?

Maybe it's a reality vs. fantasy thing. The reality I see is that when you want to get anywhere by car, truck, ship, plane or train... that takes oil—including that electric car that is mostly made of petroleum and is predominantly powered by coal and natural gas generated electricity. I see the inside of a grocery store where nearly all of the containers and wrappings are made from ethane that comes from natural gas. And I see coal-fired blast furnaces that make the steel that holds up buildings.

The other side fantasizes about a 100 percent renewable future where we no longer need to burn resources taken from the ground to generate electricity and power our modes of transportation. If the dreamers are being honest, they'll admit this future they imagine is pretty unrealistic. But, I will concede the power of imagination. Just think about showing a car, an airliner or an iphone to somebody living in 1850.

Their minds would be blown. The truth is... before you can make a fanciful world, you must first imagine what it would look like.

I guess what I'm trying to say here is I get it. People see and hear the same things, but these things present themselves very differently in different minds. What a fascinating psychological conundrum.

It's helpful though, isn't it, to know that another other being is experiencing the same things and yet their brains show them the opposite of what your mind shows you. I hear Laurel. I see a beautiful gold and white dress and I know fossil fuels are the most amazing physical gift humanity will ever know.

And then there are the other people... who need to spend a lot of time watching our videos.

For the Clear Energy Alliance, I'm Mark Mathis... Power On.



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