

The Perpetual Motion of Fools

It is the nature of free-thinking activists to consider almost anything, and this is good. The danger arises when they get so focused – so invested in – a particular theme that opposing rationality becomes an enemy.

I have heard many clever and enthusiastic things about free energy. Some claim it is waiting in the aether, some use the term “zero point”, a few quote snippets and buzz-words from Stephen Hawking or Albert Einstein, and many wind up in hocus-pocus.

I have heard testimonies of magnetic things that spun or oscillated for days with no energy input, but I always ask the question: “Was it lighting a lamp, running an electric motor, or heating anything?” Low friction is one thing, but energy output is another.

Law One of thermal dynamics states that energy can be changed, but not created or destroyed. Call me narrow-minded, but I believe this as much as I believe gravity. You simply do not have energy out without energy in – none the less, some of the innovations attempting to violate this law are fun, and some are even thought-provoking. I even came up with one of my own that had me worried for awhile.

The least clever yet most common is to have a car with an electric motor that drives one wheel. One of the other wheels powers a generator that sends electricity back to the motor as it travels. I try not to sound too condescending as I explain it to people – most of these people are not really stupid, but smart still doesn't seem to do them much good.

If your 100 hp motor was 90% efficient, you would actually apply 90 hp to the motion of the car (assuming there were zero losses in gears, tires, and that the wind was traveling at the exact same speed and direction as you were). This would feed 90 hp into a generator that we will assume is also 90% efficient. So now we have 90% times 90%, times 100 hp, which would be about 81 hp of electricity going back into your motor. Last time I checked, 81 hp was less than 100 hp (OK, so I *am* condescending).

Without me offering you the benefit of my calculations, waste your time on this one: Let's say you inflated a 1 cu.ft. volume balloon under 100 feet of water. This balloon will yield significant energy as it floats towards the top. Will it yield more energy than it took to inflate the balloon? I had to work on this one for awhile, but I'll let you guess my answer. Oh, and don't forget that the balloon expands as it travels upwards through the water, increasing its buoyancy.

The most-clever one I have seen involved a Freon engine and a heat pump. This guy had a team of engineers, videos, literature, and investors that were about to rock the world – if they could just raise another couple-hundred thousand. Anyway I could calculate it there were indeed more BTUs out than there were BTU in (a BTU. is a British Thermal Unit, equal to the energy required to raise one pound of water one degree Fahrenheit). I'm ashamed to admit it, but it took me a couple days of intermittent pondering and calculating to finally arrive at the big “Duhh”.

Enough of this, as long as three facts are understood:

1. It is a waste of time to mess with “energy” you can't explain and calculate.
2. There is enough “non-mysterious” free energy everywhere that there is no need to worry about the mythical stuff.
3. Some of you will waste your time and life pursuing these things anyway.