

Going Halfway: Climate Reports Ignore the Full Evidence, and Therapists Ignore Grief Recovery

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Abstract

This paper draws a parallel between climate-science reporting and “grief” work. The corporate media, governments, and paid climate scientists report only a portion of the evidence with respect to climate change. Similarly, many practitioners of the grief trade fail to propose grief recovery on behalf of their clients. In both cases, the transfer of fiat currency from the ill-informed to the better-informed serves as potential motivation.

My initial article published in this journal compared the historical approach of the medical profession with contemporary reporting about climate science, taking to task the corporate media, governments, and paid climate scientists (McPherson 2019a). Specifically, I pointed out that the belief in a positive future, or hope, is not useful when presenting a patient with a terminal diagnosis. Wishful thinking is no route to recovery and it might interfere with the ability of a patient to complete relationships during her final days. Hospice is a particularly effective strategy for palliative, end-of-life care. As a result, hope has been largely abandoned by medical doctors in favor of the truth, no matter how bitter. The medical community has largely moved beyond hope in favor of evidence. By indicating society is currently pursuing a similar route with respect to climate science, the article suggested hospice as a strategy for addressing the near-term demise of *Homo sapiens*.

This paper reports on the effects of another comparison: reports about climate science and “grief” work. Just as the corporate media, governments, and paid climate scientists report only a portion of the full evidence with respect to climate change, I observe many practitioners of the grief trade going halfway with their approach. While most reports within the realm of contemporary climate science ignore self-reinforcing feedback loops (Rocha et al. 2018) and the aerosol masking effect (Rosenfeld et al. 2019), thereby indicating that reducing greenhouse gas emissions will help preserve habitat for humans, many practitioners of the grief trade indicate that acceptance is the final stage of grief. This approach is consistent with Kübler-Ross’ well-known work (1969). Unfortunately, it fails to acknowledge the notion of grief *recovery*.

I know only two entities that promote grief recovery: The Grief Recovery Institute (<https://www.griefrecoverymethod.com/>) and a workshop I co-created (<https://www.onlyloveremains.org/>). Recovering from grief allows us to resolve and then move

beyond our past, thereby living fully in the present. In their *Grief Recovery Handbook*, James and Friedman (2009) provide an excellent set of pragmatic exercises to enable the grief-recovery process. These exercises have been modified for application in the realm of anticipatory grief at large scale in the *Only Love Remains* workshop (<https://www.onlyloveremains.org/>).

Keeping the Information and Money in the Hands of the Few

Precluding full information is among the many strategies by which the fully informed are able to extract fiat currency from the masses. This serves as one possible motive underlying the relative absence of grief recovery from conversations about grieving. Just as ignoring feedback loops and the aerosol masking effect encourage the uninformed masses to leave fossil fuels untouched, therefore unconsumed, so too does ignoring the potential for recovery from grief facilitate the transfer of money from the uninformed masses to those with access to information. I will address each of these two factors below, beginning with the consumption of fossil fuels and then pointing out the parallel with the grief industry.

As William Stanley Jevons pointed out in *The Coal Question* (1865), attempts to conserve a finite material produce the opposite outcome expected by most people. Rather than reducing overall consumption, “conservation” shifts consumption from one group of users to another. This phenomenon has come to be known as the Jevons paradox, and it explains why the corporate media and governments desire the masses to forgo the use of fossil fuels. After all, every calorie of energy unused by most of us is used by wealthy individuals. That most people have never heard of the Jevons paradox more than 150 years after Jevons’ book was published indicates the importance of keeping this information hidden from public view. That the aerosol masking effect is seldom reported despite its awareness since at least 1929 (Ångström 1929,

cited by Charlson et al. 1992) similarly indicates the importance of keeping this knowledge hidden from the masses. I have been studying climate change for more than 35 years, and I first discovered Ångström (1929) and Charlson et al. (1992) in June of 2019.

Convincing the masses that something can be done to slow or reverse abrupt, irreversible climate change encourages the masses to forgo consumption of fossil fuels. Admitting to the masses that the situation is irreversible doubtless would discourage them from leaving the fossil fuels untouched. This is one means by which the calories unconsumed by the ignorant masses are left to the informed, presumably wealthy individuals.

Just as knowledge of Jevons paradox and the aerosol masking effect prevent individuals from consuming fossil fuels, remaining in the process of grieving facilitates the transfer of money from the grieving to the informed “therapist.” Those who are mired in their grief, even if they believe themselves to be periodically within the acceptance stage, constantly seek the expertise of a therapist or counselor. Being “stuck” in grief not only impairs recovery by the grieving individual, it also facilitates the ongoing, seemingly never-ending transfer of money from the grieving person to the informed “therapist.” Once the grief-recovery process is complete, there is no need for continued transfer of funds. As such, grief recovery benefits the formerly grieving individual, sometimes at the monetary expense of the “therapist.” The parallel with full knowledge of self-reinforcing feedback loops and the aerosol masking effect is obvious: In both cases, those with full knowledge are capable of exploiting those with access only to partial information.

If this conclusion appears to paint humanity with a dark brush, please consider the “shadow” we all carry within us. As Carl Jung wrote (1938), “Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual’s conscious life, the blacker and denser it is.” Shortly

thereafter, in the same text, Jung writes about the shadow, “if it is repressed and isolated from consciousness, it never gets corrected.” We have long ignored the dark side of humanity, and I suspect Jung would conclude the unaddressed -- and of therefore uncorrected -- shadow of humanity has become very black and dense.

Creating and Implementing Planetary Hospice

I briefly addressed the importance of implementing hospice at the level of 7.7 billion people in my earlier work (McPherson 2019a). This daunting task is perhaps the greatest we have ever faced as a species. Beyond definitions with respect to hospice and palliative care, I am left only with individual behaviors that present no solutions befitting the magnitude of the societal challenge. These include, for example, honesty, respect, compassion, attention to aesthetics, forgiveness, grieving, and attention to a “bucket list.”

Each of these individual behaviors can be exhibited in many ways, and I have argued that these behaviors are worthy of pursuit even without a short-term, terminal diagnosis (McPherson 2019a). Indeed, living fully with gratitude seems reasonable in light of the terminal diagnosis each of us received at birth. Nonetheless, scaling up appropriate actions at the level of society remains a mystery to me. I call upon all readers to propose and discuss relevant actions in light of this great challenge before us.

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