

*From Science To Policy*

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The life cycle of scientific thought goes something like this. The very first event is a simple observation. This happens long before the classic testing of any hypotheses. What happens next is up to the imagination of the scientist. That person has to imagine an explanation so that he can test it. This phase is quickly followed by investigation, discussion, even argument.

Finally, there is the publication of scientific papers. These are reviewed by other scientists, which often leads to more argument and so on. Eventually, the paper is published and becomes a formal part of the science. So far, so good.

From these papers, often voluminous papers, arise one or two paragraphs in textbooks. Years of study are boiled down into statements written at an eighth-grade level.

The generalizations drawn from these paragraphs then give rise to platitudes.

Enter a new player in the process; the Non-Governmental Organization. The NGO, more often than not, will take the platitudes and convert them to fund-raising promotions to be included in everything from door-hangers to magazine articles. The general public, being more familiar with the NGO than the scientific literature, accepts NGO statements as inarguable facts, thus transforming the platitude into dogma.

Dogma, unquestioned and unchallenged, makes the final metamorphosis into rote and the divergence is complete.

In the scientific world, eventually an observation is made that contradicts the spewing of rote and the cycle begins anew. In the non-scientific world, these challenges are labeled as coming from 'deniers.' The tiny bits of remaining science, the rote dogma, and the governmental policy-makers become, if you will, a backwater eddy in the flow of knowledge.