

Interactive comment on “Methane release from gas hydrate systems during the Paleocene-Eocene thermal maximum and other past hyperthermal events: setting appropriate parameters for discussion” by G. R. Dickens

M. Huber

huberm@purdue.edu

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Dear Jerry,

It's terrific to see a formal (re)statement of these very important ideas that continue to be influential and important more than 15 years after they were proposed. On an initial read (I may have more comments later) I was puzzled by the following statement:

"It is important to re-emphasize two concepts concerning this potential explanation for the PETM $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ excursion (Dickens et al., 1995, 1997a; Dickens, 2000, 2003).

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.....Second, the primary impact of CH₄ release from a geological perspective would be addition of CO₂ to the ocean and atmosphere, and modification of water chemistry, particularly a drop in pH and dissolved O₂. This is because CH₄ is rapidly oxidized to CO₂ in the ocean or atmosphere. There has never been a suggestion that CH₄ inputs from the seafloor entered the atmosphere and drove climate change during the PETM."

As a small point, I assume that by "There has never been a suggestion" you mean, that you have never suggested that. Certainly a read through the literature indicates that some people have had that interpretation. Right?

As a more central point, and maybe this is just because I am a terrible geochemist and I'm not following the argument, my reading of your 1995 paper indicates to me that you suggested exactly this scenario (bottom of page 970):

"Atmospheric CH₄ concentrations also might have increased during the onset of the LPTM if ebullition of CH₄ was an important process during hydrate dissociation. The elevated atmospheric CO₂ (and CH₄) concentrations then might act as a positive feedback for further climatic and oceanic warmth."

So, at least at the end of this paper, after very duly avoiding saying that CH₄ made it into the atmosphere throughout the rest of the paper, you speculated that ebullition occurred and CH₄ in atmosphere (derived thereby from hydrate dissociation) warmed the atmosphere. Isn't that exactly what you say in this paper, was never suggested?

I'm hoping that you can clarify this obvious point of confusion for me. Thanks.

-Matthew Huber

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