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- [Archives](#)
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- [RSS](#)
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### Profile



Ed Brayton is a journalist, commentator and speaker. He is the co-founder and president of [Michigan Citizens for Science](#) and co-founder of [The Panda's Thumb](#). He has written for such publications as The Bard, Skeptic and Reports of the National Center for Science Education, spoken in front of many organizations and conferences, and appeared on nationally syndicated radio shows and on C-SPAN. Ed is also a

Fellow with the Center for Independent Media and the host of [Declaring Independence](#), a one hour weekly political talk show on WPRR in Grand Rapids, Michigan.(static)

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- [James Hanley](#) on [Farah v Elliott, Round 3](#)
- [Steve Bowen](#) on [Badass Quote of the Day](#)
- [eric](#) on [More Barton Bullshit](#)
- [Eamon Knight](#) on [More Barton Bullshit](#)
- [Uncle Bob](#) on [More Barton Bullshit](#)
- [Matty](#) on [Farah v Elliott, Round 3](#)

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- [Badass Quote of the Day](#)
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- [Santorum Borrows Liberal Slogan](#)
- [Einstein the Creationist](#)

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- [John Scalzi](#)
- [The Pryhills](#)
- [Temperantia](#)
- [Rev. Spork](#)
- [Electric Commentary](#)
- [Two Aarons](#)
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- [November 2010](#)
- [October 2010](#)
- [September 2010](#)
- [August 2010](#)
- [July 2010](#)
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- [February 2008](#)
- [January 2008](#)
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- [October 2004](#)
- [September 2004](#)
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- [June 2004](#)
- [May 2004](#)
- [April 2004](#)
- [March 2004](#)
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## **Other Information**

Ed Brayton also blogs at [Positive Liberty](#) and [The Panda's Thumb](#)

Ed Brayton is a participant in the Center for Independent Media New Journalism Program. However, all of the statements, opinions, policies, and views expressed on this site are solely Ed Brayton's. This web site is not a production of the Center, and the Center does not support or endorse any of the contents on this site.

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## **Farah v Elliott, Round 3**

Posted on: April 19, 2011 10:03 AM, by [Ed Brayton](#)

This is really becoming funny to me. The [latest salvo](#) from Joseph Farah against Salon writer Justin Elliott is a breathless article revealing Elliott's "ties" to -- *gasp* -- George Soros.

WND has learned Elliott was a contributor to CampusProgress.org, an online publication that is part of the Center for American Progress. In 2007, Elliott was named "Contributor of the Year" to the Center's publication.

The Center for American Progress reportedly was founded in 2003 with seed money from Soros, who also donated \$3 million to the center's sister, the Project Action Fund. Its mission states the group is "dedicated to improving the lives of Americans through progressive ideas and action."

The funny thing to me is that Farah, I'm sure, genuinely thinks that he has now conclusively debunked and disproved everything Elliott said about the Worldnetdaily. He's applied the "liberal" label and tied him to the right's favorite boogeyman and, in his mind, that's all he has to do. No need to respond on the substance at all. It's the argumentum ad labelum, perhaps the most common argument used in politics.

And it isn't just conservatives who do this. Liberals do it with their favorite boogeyman, the Koch brothers. Anyone who has ever worked with any group that the Koch brothers have funded is labeled -- and considered defeated -- in much the same way. And I'm sure that lots of people who are tied to the Koch brothers are, in fact, advocating very bad ideas that support their interests.

But guess what? Those groups have also produced some really, really important research on really important issues that liberals love too. The Kochs have funded both the Cato Institute and the Reason Foundation. And while there is undoubtedly much to disagree with in the output of those organizations, there's also a good deal to

support.


Cato has consistently opposed foreign military adventures, warrantless wiretaps and other unconstitutional policies in the war on terror, the expansion of executive power, torture and extraordinary rendition and the abuses of the war on drugs. Reason has for years included Radley Balko, a good friend of this blog, and his brilliant and crucial work on the militarization of law enforcement, DNA exonerations and nearly every aspect of our broken criminal (in)justice system.

So the mere fact that one has worked with an organization that is funded by does not do anything to actually indict the work they do or defeat the arguments they make. The argumentum ad labelum fails for both sides.

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2



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## Comments

1

OK, so not everything funded by the Koch brothers is evil, but it's not for lack of trying:  
[Koch-Funded Climate Skeptic's Own Data Confirms Warming](#)

Posted by: Herod the Freemason | [April 19, 2011 10:25 AM](#)

2

Does this also include the Gnu Atheists who often denigrate any person or work that's ever been funded by the Templeton Foundation?

Posted by: [Chris Lindsay](#) | [April 19, 2011 10:30 AM](#)

3

*Liberals do it with their favorite boogeyman, the Koch brothers.*

Um...the difference here is, the Koch Brothers have supported causes far more demonstrably evil than Soros ever has. And that's where your latest false-equivalency argument fails.

*Those groups have also produced some really, really important research on really important issues that liberals love too.*

...while trashing and demonizing those very same liberals at the same time, thus undermining their support for liberal causes. And we're supposed to thank them for that?

And such institutions have consistently undermined their own credibility by supporting truly idiotic and evil causes like the gold standard, radical tax and service cuts, and insane deregulation, all of which have been proven to benefit the rich at the often catastrophic expense of everyone else.

There's no comparison between Soros and the Koch brothers. The latter are consistently evil and dishonest, and their pseudo-intellectual sock-puppets have consistently done more harm than good.

Posted by: [Raging Bee](#) | [April 19, 2011 10:34 AM](#)

4

The argumentum ad labelum fails for both sides.

It fails both for Soros and the Koch brothers, but that doesn't mean that it is a logic fallacy *per se*. There are funding entities out there that exclusively support projects tied to some very selective, extremist agenda, and in these cases I see no problem holding the mere fact of being funded by such an entity against a person or organization - Focus on the Family, for one example. (There are others, on both ends of the political spectrum - although more densely concentrated at the right end.)

Posted by: Phillip IV | [April 19, 2011 10:40 AM](#)

5

#2 Far as I know, the arguments against Templeton are against its mission statement, if you will. That being, blur the line between science and religion (in other words, bring science down to the level of religion).

Something of note I noticed the other day, Brian Greene has been funded by Templeton. Can't say I've ever seen him speak in favor of religion, nor have I seen any Gnu's tear at him for taking the money.

Posted by: Uncle Bob | [April 19, 2011 10:41 AM](#)

6

Re Raging Bee @ #3

The Koch brothers, who by the way are both unbelievers, also funded, in part, the NPR series on human evolution in which the producers were accused of downplaying and avoiding mention of anthropogenic global warming.

Posted by: SLC | [April 19, 2011 10:44 AM](#)

7

OK, so not everything funded by the Koch brothers is evil, but it's not for lack of trying:

Umm, since they are not only trying, but succeeding in funding opposition to pointless foreign wars, the war on drugs, and unconstitutional expansions of executive powers, your statement is quite the non-sequitur.

the difference here is, the Koch Brothers have supported causes far more demonstrably evil than Soros ever has

Not that I think Soros has funded anything *evil*, but what have the Koch brothers supported that is "demonstrably" evil? That is, as opposed to just wrong-headed?

Full disclosure: I was approached by reps of the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation at a conference recently. I asked them if he was one of "the evil Koch brothers," and they just laughed and said, "yes, he's one of the evil Koch brothers." The Foundation funds such things as speakers for classes, of course those who promote a pro-market/libertarian view. I fully intend to hit them up for some money for a speaker for my political economy class this fall. So I have officially sold my soul to the devil(s), and the Koch brothers will now be controlling everything I ever say in the future, in the classroom, on my blog, on this blog, and, I assume, in the privacy of my own home. All of my oral and verbal comments for the foreseeable future will be pre-screened for Kochian orthodoxy.

Posted by: James Hanley | [April 19, 2011 10:49 AM](#)



8

It is at least valid in the case of scientific funding, where studies have shown [Funding Bias](#).

This obviously isn't the same as the six-degrees of separation that Glenn Beck plays on his chalk board, but it is a real issue.

Posted by: Dennis N | [April 19, 2011 10:52 AM](#)

9

*...what have the Koch brothers supported that is "demonstrably" evil? That is, as opposed to just wrong-headed?*

If a cause or idea has been PROVEN both wrong-headed and harmful to innocent people, then continued support for that cause is evil.

*I fully intend to hit them up for some money for a speaker for my political economy class this fall. So I have officially sold my soul to the devil(s)...*

So I noticed. What else could explain why an otherwise intelligent regular to this blog would stoop to the transparently dishonest arguments you've used to defend the Cato asshats and their failed ideology?

Posted by: [Raging Bee](#) | [April 19, 2011 10:56 AM](#)

10

*but what have the Koch brothers supported that is "demonstrably" evil? That is, as opposed to just wrong-headed?*

[The Koch Brothers and Climate Science, Redux](#)

Posted by: Herod the Freemason | [April 19, 2011 11:05 AM](#)

11

*Does this also include the Gnu Atheists who often denigrate any person or work that's ever been funded by the Templeton Foundation?*

Do you have examples of specific work being denigrated simply because it was funded by Templeton, without any mention of the substance? I believe Myers and Coyne tend to raise specific objections.

Posted by: Taz | [April 19, 2011 11:10 AM](#)

12

Doctor: I take it we're expected.

Lillith: Oh I think Death has been waiting for you for a long time.

Martha: Don't worry Doctor. I know how to handle this. Creature I name thee, Carrionite.

Lillith: **\*\*gasps\*\***, **\*\*smirks\*\***

Martha: What did I do wrong, was it the finger.

Lillith: The power of a name only works once. Observe. I gaze upon these bag of bones and now I name thee Martha Jones.

Posted by: Thethyme | [April 19, 2011 11:23 AM](#)

13

And such institutions have consistently undermined their own credibility by supporting truly idiotic and evil causes like the gold standard, radical tax and service cuts, and insane deregulation, all of which have been proven to benefit the rich at the often catastrophic expense of everyone else.

Details please, which specific policies advocated by either Cato or Reason have been implemented and proven (rather a strong term but I'll assume you mean supported by evidence rather than mathematical certainty) that these benefited the rich at the catastrophic expense of everyone else.

Follow up questions

What is the proof, can I read it somewhere?

How was the think tank in question connected, did they draft the policy, act as cheerleaders once it was announced or simply advocate something vaguely similar.

I may sound sarcastic and I am but I do also genuinely want to know.

Posted by: [Matty](#) | [April 19, 2011 11:30 AM](#)

14

@Herod,

I said "evil, not just wrong-headed." If you're going to claim that disputing AGW goes beyond wrong-headedness to actually being evil, the burden is on you to provide an argument. We're not talking Naziism, Stalinism, Pol Potism, genocide of the Native Americans, or the Tuskegee syphilis experiments here. Those things are indisputably, self-evidently, evil. Disputing AGW is not so self-evidently evil; not at all indisputably in the same class as those things.

Posted by: James Hanley | [April 19, 2011 11:38 AM](#)

15

The Koch brothers also gave millions to the ACLU.

Posted by: tim | [April 19, 2011 11:41 AM](#)

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