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[The Island of Doubt](#)

An irregular exploration of the struggle between the power of rational discourse and the scientific method on one hand, and the forces of superstition and dogma on the other. Mostly regarding climate change, though.

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Profile



James Hrynshyn is a freelance science journalist and communications consultant based in western North Carolina, where he tries to put degrees in marine biology and journalism to good use.

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Inspiration

The Demon-Haunted World:
Science as a Candle
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The Doubter's Companion:
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Skeptic Magazine: www.skeptic.com

Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal: www.csicop.org

A poem by Yehuda Amichai:
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Author's site: cyamid.net



*Penetrating so many secrets, we cease to believe in the unknowable. But there it sits nevertheless, calmly
licking its chops.*
--- H. L. Mencken

By doubting we come to inquiry; and through inquiry we perceive truth.
--- Peter Abelard

Undisguised clarity is easily mistaken for arrogance.
-- Richard Dawkins

As for evolution, it happened. Deal with it.
-- Michael Shermer.

*"There is no need to sally forth, for it remains true that those things which make us human are, curiously
enough, always close at hand. Resolve, then, that on this very ground, with small flags waving, and tiny blasts
of tinny trumpets, we have met the enemy, and not only may he be ours, he may be us."*
--Walt Kelly

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Posted on: April 29, 2010 9:43 AM, by [James Hrynyshyn](#)

One last look at Judith Curry, before I shut down the Island of Doubt and launch my new blog tomorrow. I, and many other climateers, remain fascinated by what she has to say, largely because we've never seen a respected climatologist be so publicly critical of her peers and so tolerant of the pseudoskeptics, but also because what she's talking about goes straight to the heart of the battle.

The latest volley comes in the form [a comment at Keith Kloor's Collide-a-scape blog](#):

The people slagging off on McIntyre, Watts et al. have probably spent no time over at their blogs or made an effort to get to know them personally and understand what makes them tick. Or to talk to the scientific skeptics like Christy, Michaels. Or talk to the libertarian think tanks, like CATO and CEI. Well, i've made that effort, and therefore I think I know alot more about the what the "deniers" are really like than the people accusing me of naivete, who have drawn premature conclusions because somebody found some sort of obscure link to an oil company. Well, if any medical researcher who got funds or otherwise engaged with pharmaceuticals was demonized like those linked even in some obscure way with an oil company, well medical research would come to a screeching halt.

So do people really think that the likes of Steve McIntyre, Anthony Watts, Fred Smith, etc. just roll over and slobber all over me because i post on their blog or send them an email? Hardly. It wasn't exactly easy to convince them that i wasn't say a Gavin Schmidt equivalent. But the barrier can be breached (and I have breached it with a number of skeptics, i certainly haven't tackled morano), they sort of trust me at this point as someone who is honest, and I am making a much more informed assessment of these people and what makes them tick than the people that accuse me of naivete.


Joe Romm does a [good job explaining](#) why this is such a surprising thing to post, insofar as the references to McIntyre and Watts are concerned. I'll add my thoughts on the subject of the think tanks.

I am not familiar with all the back-and-forth between Curry and her critics -- there's been too far much to read on that score. But if Curry is implying that CATO and CEI are sincere, intellectually honest skeptics who understand and respect the scientific process instead of disingenuous propaganda machines, then I beg to differ. And I question whether she has bothered to examine their positions all that well.

The Competitive Enterprise Institute has shown [no respect for the science](#), producing televisions that can only best be described as deliberate efforts to misrepresent the work of leading climatologists, and drawing scathing rebukes from same. I even had a blog correspondence with the CEI's Marlo Lewis, who claimed his organization hadn't actually said what it most definitely had. There's simply no way to grant the CEI the credibility that Curry implies it deserves.

CATO take pages from the same playbook, [rotating the findings of peer-reviewed science](#) through 180 degrees in full-page newspaper ads that tried to argue "the case for alarm regarding climate change is grossly overstated." Again, I find it impossible to grant the people behind such tactics the benefit of the doubt. The only way you would supply scientific references that actually contradict your claims is if you knew most readers will trust you instead of checking to see if the science says what you say it does.

Like Romm, Tim Lambert and many others who were disappointed by Curry's apparent embrace of the pseudoskeptical think tanks and like-minded bloggers, I think Curry hasn't spend as much time in the trenches as she thinks she has. It's not much fun when you realize that one side is dominated by people who just don't fight fair, but that's the way it is.

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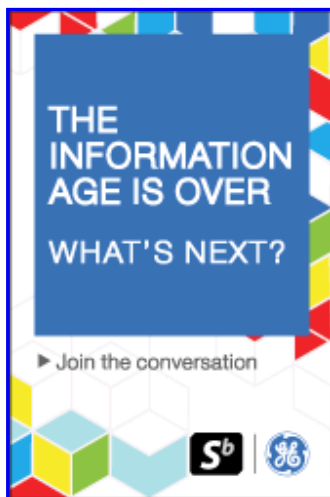
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