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## **CFI NE Ohio Officers**

Acting President - Monette Richards

VP of Programming - Mark Tiborsky

Secretary - Brent Bowen

Treasurer - Jackie McCaman

Board members at large:

Paul Woodring

Mel Vye

Wayne Beckley

## **CFI NE Ohio News And Views**

Thoughtful articles, letters, reviews, reports, anecdotes and cartoons are welcomed. Submit in electronic format to editor Brent Bowen at [bbowen1005@aol.com](mailto:bbowen1005@aol.com), or by mail to CFI NE Ohio News & Views, P.O. Box 2379, Akron OH 44309. Contributions for the October, 2019, issue must be received by Sept. 15, 2019.

## **Philosophy The Focus of Upcoming Programs**

Attendees at CFI NE Ohio's upcoming programs will be treated to philosophical themes, including a two-parter on logical fallacies and cognitive biases that could yield both insight and reflection.

But first, at our July meeting, we'll look at a philosophy that focuses on ethics. Former CFI NE Ohio President (and founder) Brent Bowen will be giving a presentation titled "Stoicism: An Exploration" on Wed., July 10, 7 p.m., at the Independence Library (6361 Selig Dr.).

Stoicism is an ancient philosophy that formed around 300 BCE in Greece, peaked during the era of the Roman Empire, and then faded during the rise of Christianity. It has, however, found resurgence in recent decades, becoming popular with high profile people in Silicon Valley and Wall Street. People like Bill Gates, Warren Buffet and Jeff Bezos are often described as following Stoic principles. In this program, Brent will cover the key principles of Stoicism, its strengths and weaknesses, and how it applies to current daily life.

Brent founded the Free Inquirers of NE Ohio (now CFI NE Ohio) in 1995 and served as the organization's president for 13 of its first 15 years. He has also been the newsletter editor for the past 13 years. Last summer, he presented a talk entitled "Naturalism: An Exploration," which described the philosophy of naturalism, a cornerstone of secular humanism, in layman's terms. He will approach Stoicism in the same manner, noting that Stoicism doesn't fit neatly into secular humanism but does share certain attributes. Brent is now retired after a career that included 23 years of selling books and audiobooks to public libraries in a four-state area.

In August, the focus will turn to the Logic branch of philosophy with a guided discussion led by VP of Programming Mark Tiborsky. Join us on Wed., Aug. 14, for the topic of "Reasonable Reasoning: Logical Fallacies and Cognitive Biases, Part 1."

Discourse today, perhaps due to the prevalence of social media and "instant news," seems to be riddled with an increasing amount of fallacious argumentation. Even secular humanists, freethinkers and skeptics – who for some time have fancied themselves as purveyors of truth – are not immune to cognitive biases and the use of logical fallacies when arguing on the side of their convictions. ALL of us have fallen prey to these illogical means of thinking and arguing at one time or another... sometimes without even realizing it. In the general public sphere, the illogical argumentation ranges from the use of semi-truths (assertions that contain grains of truth, but with certain key details distorted or left out entirely), to "truthiness" (when perception and "feel" supersedes fact) to the use of downright falsehoods (which can be especially toxic).

For this discussion on Aug. 14, we'll be exploring some of the more common forms of fallacious argumentation, along with the biases that often precipitate their use. Mark Tiborsky will be providing background mate-

# Message From the President



Monette Richards

Change does not happen without organization and community building. It's an important piece of what we do. It's hard and, often, thankless work. Identifying a mission, organizing events, finding venues, spreading the word, getting people involved, keeping people interested, while keeping in line with said mission are all small parts of the big

picture of what leaders do.

Not many step up to be that leader. Not many are willing to spend their free time to volunteer, at their own expense, to help make the world a better place. So, when they do it is important to identify them and recognize the work they do.

Center for Inquiry Northeast Ohio understands that importance. We understand the need to shine the light on the people willing to make the sacrifice, the people who make our own work that much easier, that much more successful.

So every other year we choose someone whose dedication and drive have moved them to make a difference in people's lives. We've recognized educators, local volunteers and organizational leaders. We've thanked them for their work, their compassion, their desire to make the world a better place.

This year, we are proud to recognize Marni Huebner Tiborsky, a founder and leader of not one, but two local secular organizations. Marni formed the Cleveland Freethinkers as a social Meetup group in 2009, and the group has since expanded to more than 1,500 members over the last decade. She has been working for 10 years to build a welcoming community for human beings to question, examine and dissect all things religious, all things political, all things philosophical, all things cultural and even all things scientific.

In 2013, she organized the Northern Ohio Free-thought Society, a chapter of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. In her words, "I wanted to make a difference and see a more out-of-the-closet secular society and world where discrimination based on

lack of religion is ancient history, along with constitutional abuses in government and taxpayer funded institutions."

There is hardly a person involved in the Northeast Ohio secular movement who has not come across some of Marni's accomplishments. A force in her own right, she has worked to bring equality for atheists, to stop constitutional violations and to foster a welcoming community of freethinkers.

We hope you will set aside the evening of Fri., Sept. 20, to help us honor Marni for all she has worked for and accomplished. Joining us as a guest speaker for the evening will be Margaret Downey. In recognition of the passage of the 19th Amendment by the House and Senate in 1920, and by the work of women toward equality for themselves and for all atheists, Margaret will be speaking on "The History of Women Suffragists."

Margaret is the founder of the Freethought Society, Anti-Discrimination Support Network, Mentor Connection, Tree of Knowledge, Helping Hands Committee, and the Thomas Paine Memorial Committee. She is also a past board member of the American Humanist Association, Scouting For All, The Humanist Institute, and the Thomas Paine National Historical Association. Margaret is a current board member of the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

Look for details on registration soon. A buffet dinner will be served.

Please come help us say thank you, Marni, for being such a strong part of our local community. Thank you for your passion, your compassion and your willingness to do the hard work. We are all better for having you as a part of our lives.

Humanism Award Banquet  
 Fri., Sept. 20, 7-10 p.m.  
 Educational Service Center of  
 Northeast Ohio  
 6393 Oak Tree Blvd. Suite 300  
 Independence, OH 44131

# I Am A Scientific Humanist. Now What?

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By Vern Westfall

After 50-plus years of indoctrination, dubious acceptance, doubt, disbelief and finally outright rejection, I emerged from my religious chrysalis morphed into a scientific humanist.

Now what?

Where do I go to confirm my disbelief?

At first, missing Sunday conformational meetings was like breaking a habit, like reaching for a cigarette after having quit smoking. Now, I don't miss the self-confirming sermons or droning songs and especially don't miss the overwhelming mix of colognes and perfumes wafted throughout the pews by worshipers using their "schedule of worship" as a fan. I also don't miss hearing the same biblical stories retold over and over trying to wring one more drop of moral significance from them. I now no longer feel like an invisible supreme being is always watching, and I am no longer threatened by a minister's warnings that some thought or behavior I may have overlooked will send me to Hell.

What I do miss is the intellectual interactions of a mutually supportive group. Other than sitting at a bar, where everyone turns their back on the real world for a few moments to discuss the inane, there are few organizational alternatives open to an unrestricted discussion of ideas.

When an organization defines itself, it also defines what it is not. The more restricted the inclusive definition, the larger portion of the general population it excludes.

The Center for Inquiry (CFI), so far, seems to be an exception. CFI defines itself as an open forum dedicated to reason and discovery that supports humanitarian and environmental causes, science and research. CFI opposes militant and subversive evangelism and organizations that subvert facts or substitute faith for facts. CFI is, however, tolerant toward and open to more passive religions and beliefs.

Now, when I hear church bells, I realize that I have chosen to exclude myself from a restrictive set of faith-based requirements. I have chosen to look outward rather than inward for answers and realize that where religious individuals gather to confirm their common beliefs, CFI meets to share ideas and broaden the perspectives of its members.

I now realize that it was not a lack of belief that caused my conversion, but a rejection of the narrow views imposed by an ancient religion in favor of the broad perspectives exposed by our explorations into Nature. I converted not because I rejected religion, but because discoveries regarding the constituents of matter and of the commonality and diversity of life, widened my perspectives. I now realize that, instead of excluding myself, I have stepped outside the dubious circles of faith into a much larger and more inclusive group called humanity.

Looking back, I see the narrow demarcations of faith limiting discussions to sacred meanings and the church doors as symbols of intolerance. When I made my exit and assumed a secular life, (instead of continuing to hide from reality in the safe shadows of religious promises), I stepped out of the shade and joined an all-inclusive congregation. Instead of losing my ethics and my moral compass, I discovered that reality demanded even more of me than religious dictates.

The only time I feel excluded now, is when I attend a church or a religious event to honor a friend or relative, or when I substitute "Moral and Kind" for "Under God" when reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. It is during these moments that I feel my obligations to my fellow humans, all life, and our planet most strongly, and think of the responsibilities that our advanced state of awareness imposes. The responsibilities of Nature's most advanced aware forms are much simpler than the many metaphorical dictates of ancient religious writings, and include mandates to: "Explore and learn." "Be of good council." "Be a good steward."

Comments and questions to: Vern Westfall, [vernauthor@gmail.com](mailto:vernauthor@gmail.com).

## Book Review: *The Uninhabitable Earth*

THE UNINHABITABLE EARTH by DAVID WALLACE-WELLS

I have done much writing and book reviewing in this venue about global warming and I am now doing more again. It is because, as great as the political catastrophe we have today is, the damage to our lives from the changing climate will be greater still. It is not a far-off thing; we are well into the beginning of a perilous time for humans and most other species on the planet. Scientists have much to say about this, but they are already busy doing science. So we can turn to talented journalists who bring all the data collected by scientists together for a comprehensive view. Such a journalist is David Wallace-Wells, whose book *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming* brings together the changes that will be happening and interacting together.

His first words, “It is worse, much worse than you think. The slowness of climate change is a fairy tale, perhaps as pernicious as the one that says it isn’t happening at all...” send a chill up the spine. It is human nature to adapt to adversity and tell ourselves that things will get better, someone will fix it. But that is not what is happening: “In fact, more than half of the carbon exhaled into the atmosphere by the burning of fossil fuels has been emitted in just the past three decades... this means we have now engineered as much ruin knowingly as we ever managed in ignorance...This is not a book about the science of warming; it is about what warming means to the way we live on this planet.” It is not a book for the faint of heart.

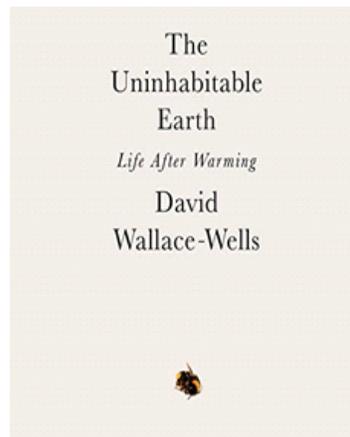
Even if we were now to somehow cease all greenhouse gas production, the earth would still warm: “Some amount of further warming is already baked in, thanks to the protracted processes by which the planet adapts to greenhouse gas. But all of those paths projected from the present – to two degrees [warmer], to three, to four, five or even eight – will be carved overwhelmingly by what we choose to do now.” We haven’t done well up to now: “We have already exited the state of environmental conditions that allowed the human animal to evolve in the first place.” We have not conquered nature, “we have only provoked it, engineering first in ignorance and then in denial a climate system that will now go to war with us for many centuries, perhaps until it destroys us.”

Until that possible fate, if we don’t do enough, there is no going back to anything resembling “normal.” “[W]e have not yet begun to contemplate what it means to live under those conditions – what it will do to our politics and our culture and our emotional equilibria, our sense of history and our relationship to it, our sense of nature and our relationship to it, that we are living in a world degraded by our own hands, with the horizon of human possibility dramatically dimmed.”

We think we have been making progress but what we have done is mostly talk. “Market forces have delivered cheaper and more widely available green energy, but the same market forces have absorbed those innovations, which is to say profited from them, while continuing to grow emissions. Politics has produced gestures of tremendous global solidarity and cooperation, then discarded those promises immediately.” We have the ability to avoid climate change but lack the political will, and delays will make all the difference in the world.

Some may believe that we can deal with warming problems when they arise. All you have to do is turn on a weather report to see that this is not possible. As I write this, massive flooding is taking place in the South and more rain is forecast for already flooded areas. This is not the new normal; what follows will be worse. Insurance companies know this all too well: “Climate change may not only make the miles along the American coast uninsurable, it could render obsolete the very idea of disaster insurance; by the end of the century, one recent study showed, certain places could be struck by six different climate-driven disasters simultaneously.” And, century’s end would by no means be a stopping point, depending on what we do now.

We have recently experienced some of the worst forest fires ever to occur in our country, and what used to be called “fire season” has become a year-round occurrence in California. “In California, a single wildfire can entirely eliminate the emissions gains made that year by all of the state’s aggressive environmental policies. Fires of that scale happen now every year.” 2018, not even covered by this book, was the worst year ever for forest fires in California, with 1.8 million acres burned. The trend-line is already easy to see.



## Book Review: *The Uninhabitable Earth* (Continued)



“The fires should be terrorizing enough, but it is the cascading chaos that reveals the true cruelty of climate change – it can upend and turn violently against us everything we have thought to be stable. Homes become weapons, roads become death traps, air becomes poison... In a four-degree-warmer world, the earth's ecosystem will boil with so many natural disasters that we will just start calling them 'weather.' ” Some, though, still take no notice of the danger: the president of Brazil promised last year to open the rain forest to development. Can public outcry stop him?

Freshwater is another problem which is already bad in some areas such as Africa, India and the Middle East, but North America is also beginning to see some problems, and places like Phoenix are preparing for more. We here in Ohio should not feel secure, living next to a large body of fresh water. The pollution from runoff and probably warming of Lake Erie was responsible for an algal bloom that put dangerous toxins into drinking water. Many areas of the country are depending on underground aquifers, supplying a fifth of our water needs: “the Ogallala Aquifer in part of the Texas Panhandle lost 15 feet [of depth] in a decade, and is expected to drain by 70 percent over the next fifty years in Kansas. In the meantime, they're fracking in that drinking water.” With a growing global population, demand for water is expected to grow by more than 50 percent in 30 years.

The oceans are warming. That statement alone should give us shivers. Most of our oxygen comes from the oceans, and one fifth of our protein. A substantial reduction in these could spell disaster. The oceans are also a modulating effect on climate, absorbing a quarter of the carbon emitted by humans. There are limits, though, on the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> that the oceans can take up, especially when warmer water absorbs less. Warming has caused a migration of fish to colder polar waters and the increased carbon dioxide has acidified the oceans to the point that coral reefs are dying. “This is very bad news, because reefs support as much as a quarter of all marine life and supply food and income for half a billion people.” Then, too, there is ocean anoxification taking place; growing dead-zones where there is not enough oxygen dissolved in the water to support life, due to warming and also agricultural runoff.

When an atom of carbon “burns,” it combines with two atoms of oxygen, thus removing that oxygen from further use. “That doesn't mean that we are at risk of

suffocation...but we will nevertheless suffer. With CO<sub>2</sub> at 930 parts per million (more than double where we are today), cognitive ability declines by 21 percent.” Of course, with fossil fuels like coal and oil, burning is never complete, so every year millions of tons of particulates are released into the air. “Pollution has been linked with increased mental illness in children and the likelihood of dementia in adults.” There are many diseases associated with air pollution.

Disease will also come from an unexpected area: “There are now, trapped in Arctic ice, diseases that have not circulated in the air for millions of years – in some cases, since before humans were around to encounter them. Which means our immune systems would have no idea how to fight back when those pre-historic plagues emerge from the ice.” In 2016, a boy died and 20 others were infected with anthrax from thawing reindeer carcasses emerging from the permafrost. Warming is also causing disease-carrying insects to migrate to other regions – diseases like yellow fever, Zika, Lyme and malaria. “Scientists guess the planet could harbor more than a million yet-to-be-discovered viruses. Bacteria are even trickier, and so we probably know about even fewer of them.”

There will be economic disaster: “In 2018, the World Bank estimated that the current path of carbon emissions would sharply diminish the living conditions of 800 million living throughout South Asia. One hundred million, they say, will be dragged into extreme poverty by climate change just over the next decade... What climate change has in store is...not a Great Recession or a Great Depression but, in economic terms, a Great Dying.” This will all be because of the problems previously described. In the U.S., “2.4 million American homes and businesses, representing more than \$1 trillion in present-day value will suffer chronic flooding by 2100,” and there will be “the warping of train tracks or the grounding of flights due to temperatures so high that they abolish the aerodynamics that allow planes to take off.”

In this double-length review, I am not even able to discuss the wars and conflicts that warming will spawn. Please read the book.

*Reviewed by Wayne Beckley*

# Mark Your Calendars



## Special Events

### VINO FINO

Sat., July 20, 6 p.m.-?

Winery at Wolf Creek

2637 S. Cleveland-Massillon Rd., Barberton

### Annual Summer Picnic

Sun., Aug. 18, 1-5 p.m.

Old Walker Shelter

Portage Lakes State Park

4357 State Park Drive, Akron

### CFI NE Ohio Humanism Award Banquet

Fri., Sept. 20, 7-10 p.m.

Educational Service Center of NE Ohio

6393 Oak Tree Blvd., Independence

## Monthly Programs

### “Stoicism: An Exploration”

By Brent Bowen

Wed., July 10, 7-8:45 p.m.

Independence Library

6361 Selig Road, Independence

### “Reasonable Reasoning, Part 1”

By Mark Tiborsky

Wed., Aug. 14, 7-8:45 p.m.

Garfield Hts. Library

5409 Turney Rd., Garfield Hts.

### “Reasonable Reasoning, Part 2”

By Mark Tiborsky

Wed., Sept. 11, 7 p.m.

Richmond Hts. Library

5235 Wilson Mills Rd., Richmond Hts.

## Café Inquiry Socials

(All socials at Beef O’Brady’s,  
3712 Darrow Rd., Stow)

Mon., July 15, 6:30 p.m.

Mon., Aug. 19, 6:30 p.m.

Mon., Sept. 16, 6:30 p.m.

## Long-Winded Answers Meetings

(All meetings at Panera Bread,  
2855 W. Market St., Fairlawn)

Tue., July 9, 6:30 p.m.

Tue., Aug. 13, 6:30 p.m.

Tue., Sept. 10, 6:30 p.m.

## Philosophy The Focus of Upcoming Programs

(Continued from page 1)

rials and recent/current examples to use as “jumping off” points for discussion.

The August meeting will be held at the Garfield Heights Library (5409 Turney Rd), starting at 7 p.m.

With August marking part one of the discussions on logical fallacies, it seems only logical that part two would occur in September. Join us on Wed., Sept. 11, 7 p.m., at the Richmond Heights Library (5235 Wilson Mills Rd) for “Reasonable Reasoning: Logical Fallacies and Cognitive Biases, Part 2.” For this second installment, we’ll be focusing on some of the more obscure (but still prevalent) logical fallacies and biases. See you there!

### **We’re Number One! Really!**

By Hemant Mehta (Excerpted from “Nones Are Statistically Tied for the Largest ‘Religious’ Group” at patheos.com)

According to just-released 2018 data from the General Social Survey, “Nones” are now the largest single “religious” demographic in the country (23.1 percent), statistically tied with Catholics (23.0 percent) and just above evangelical Christians (22.5 percent).

While the single data point may not tell you much ... the “No religion” [trend line] just keeps getting higher and higher, apparently pulling people from mainline Christian denominations and maybe some evangelicals, too.

According to Professor Ryan P. Burge of Eastern Illinois University, this trend shows no sign of slowing down.

“The unaffiliated have had a much more dramatic trajectory, starting at just 1 in 20 of GSS respondents back in 1972. The nones experienced big jumps in 1993 and 1998, and have added, on average, 1-1.5 percentage points every 2 years for the last 10 years.

“Their continued growth has been well-documented and at this point, expected. The big finding in 2018 is that those of “no religion” are now as common as evangelicals, both about 23 percent of the population.

“The difference between these groups is not statistically significant at this point; but I see no reason to think that the nones will level off anytime soon. If the nones maintain their growth while evangelicals stagnate, it is statistically inevitable that those of no religious faith will be the largest group in America in the next five years.”

Given that the two largest religious denominations in the country - Catholics and Southern Baptists - are facing sexual abuse scandals that could go on for years to come, I wouldn’t be surprised if people who still believe in God leave those denominations altogether.

The next step has to be figuring out how to convert more of those “Nones” into a voting bloc that cares about issues like church/state separation and civil rights. Having more of us makes no difference if conservative evangelicals punch above their weight at the ballot box.

# CFI-NE Ohio Annual Summer Picnic

**Sunday, August 18, 1-5 pm**

Open for CFI - NE Ohio members and their guests



Please RSVP by August 15  
to Paul Woodring at  
[pww57@hotmail.com](mailto:pww57@hotmail.com)  
or call 330-807-7653, and  
please mention what dish or  
dessert you will be bringing.

**Portage Lakes State Park  
Old Park Walker Shelter  
4357 State Park Drive**

## **FOOD (New Format)**

This year, the picnic is a potluck affair. Please bring a side dish or dessert. CFI NE Ohio will provide meats, buns, condiments and beverages. If you have special dietary needs, please bring whatever is suitable.

## **Directions**

The shelter is located between Rt. 93 and Main St in Akron.

### Traveling East on Rt. 619:

State Park Dr. is on the right, just before you cross the bridge.

### Traveling West on Rt. 619:

State Park Dr. is on the left, after you cross the bridge.

# Annual VINO FINO

Saturday, July 20  
6 pm - ?  
The Winery at Wolf Creek

Join fellow humanists for food, drinks and conversation in the beautiful setting of the Winery at Wolf Creek, at 2637 S. Cleveland-Massillon Road in Norton. You are invited to gather at 6 p.m. or later.



CFI - NE Ohio will provide snacks, but you must purchase beverages at the winery. Members can bring snacks to share if they wish.

## Driving Directions to Winery

### FROM THE NORTH:

As of 4/19/19 the bridge directly to the north of the winery is closed. The quickest detour is listed below.

Take I-77 South to SR 21 South, continue south. Exit at Rt 261, turn left/east to Cleveland Massillon. Turn left on Cleveland Massillon Rd, continue 1.2 miles. The Winery at Wolf Creek entrance is on the right after passing a great view of the upper vineyard.

### FROM THE SOUTH/EAST/WEST:

From I-76: Take exit 14 and head north on Cleveland Massillon Rd, continue 1.5 miles. The Winery at Wolf Creek will be on the right.



For more information, please contact Monette Richards  
at [mo@froglabs.com](mailto:mo@froglabs.com), or (330) 338-8432.