



Nonsense, Lying, Bullshit

Respecting Truth and Clarity Matters

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PARMA 2023

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Bullshit

- There's so much of it we take it for granted
- What is it?
- Why so much of it?
- Why should we care?

What is it?

- vulgar slang
- *noun*: **bullshit**
- stupid or untrue talk or writing; nonsense.
- *verb*: **bullshit**; 3rd person present: **bullshits**; past tense: **bullshitted**; past participle: **bullshitted**; gerund or present participle: **bullshitting**
- talk nonsense to, typically to be misleading or deceptive.

What is it?

- Both a term of abuse and a phenomenon, category of speech and category of action
- A lack of respect for the truth
- Humbug: deceptive misrepresentation, short of lying, especially by pretentious word or deed, of somebody's own thoughts, feelings, or attitudes. -Max Black

Pretentious

Attempting to impress by affecting greater importance, talent, culture, etc. than is actually possessed.

The
DICTIONARY OF
cor·po·rate
bull·shit

An A to Z Lexicon of Empty,
Enraging, and Just Plain Stupid
Office Talk

LOIS BECKWITH

In the elder days of art

Builders wrought with greatest care

Each minute and unseen part,

For the Gods are everywhere -Longfellow

Thoughtful attention to detail as opposed to a
careless laxity, cutting corners.

Nonsense

-Ludwig Wittgenstein

“I’m sick as a dog”

- Not lies, but exaggerating the notion of feeling bad in a very specific and particular way
- This exaggeration and phrasing is clearly unconnected to a concern for the truth – not wrought with care
- Lack of respect/concern for truth/clarity
- Child’s play vs adulthood



Nonsense

- Exaggerated
- Outrageous
- Ridiculous
- Not legitimate

- Facebook, Twitter, TickTok
- Fake news

Nonsense can be harmless,
when it's not does that make it
bullshit?

Nonsense/Bullshit

- Unconnected to a concern for the truth = bullshit/nonsense
- Mindlessness without attention to facts or bothering to take accuracy into account
- It's not about making a mistake that should bother us, but the lack of care about getting it right when it matters: indifference to how things really are is the essence of nonsense and bullshit

**“JUST BECAUSE SOMEONE
IS HERE ILLEGALLY**

**DOESN'T MEAN THEY
BROKE ANY OF OUR LAWS”**



Clearly unconnected
to the truth

Biden on GOP Voting Rules

“The most serious test of our democracy since the Civil War.”

Is a voter ID law really comparable to when half the country left the union and more than 600,000 people died?

Nonsense or bullshit?

Bull vs Bullshit

- Tasks that are pointless or unnecessary
- Trivial, insincere, untruthful talk or writing, nonsense
- Hot air – without substance or content, emptied of all informative content, empty talk
- Talk that is not hot air/bullshit, demands facts or substance the bullshitter is in a way making a bluff as to what he is saying or representing



Donald J. Trump ✓
@realDonaldTrump

The Do Nothing Democrats should be focused on building up our Country, not wasting everyone's time and energy on BULLSHIT, which is what they have been doing ever since I got overwhelmingly elected in 2016, 223-306. Get a better candidate this time, you'll need it!

Bluff

- To bluff one's way through by talking nonsense
- Bullshit is a kind of bluff, closer to bluffing than lying
- Both bluffing and lying are misrepresentations/deceptions
- Both bluffing and lying are false or fake
- The essence of bullshit is not that it is false, but **phony**

Phony

- Counterfeit = phony
- Something is a counterfeit because of how it's made, not because of what it is (a purse is still a purse)
- So although bullshit is produced without concern for the truth, it need not be false
- Lying = to lie you must know what the truth is, or think you know in order to craft the falsehood/lie

Lying vs Bullshitting

- It is impossible to lie unless you think you know the truth, producing bullshit requires no such conviction
- The bullshitter is neither on the side of truth or false – the primary interest is in getting away with what he says
- The liar rejects the truth and its authority, the bullshitter pays no attention to it. Therefore, bullshit is a greater enemy of the truth than lies.

Bullshit is Unavoidable

- Circumstances may require someone to talk without knowing what they are talking about
- Society believes citizens should have opinions about everything
- Belief that sincerity overrides correctness (feeling vs knowing)



**Post-Truth
Politics
and the Rise
of “Bullshit”**

Marketing and Bullshit

Marketing targets feelings and emotions, not necessarily truth



Sincerity's Role in Bullshit

Correctness

- Truthful to the facts
- Truthful to reality

Sincerity

- Truthful to feelings of or about reality
- You can be sincere without being correct
- Sincerity is bullshit if based on falsehoods

Navigating the Bullshit

- Look for motive
- Where is the substance?
- Trust but verify
- Do the work

Do you know what you are talking about or are you just full of bullshit?

Who are you and why should I believe you?

Brandolini's Law:

The amount of energy needed to refute bullshit is always an order of magnitude larger than it took to produce it. Alberto Brandolini

Dr. Oz and Herschel Walker “fired by Biden”

In today's political climate bullshit isn't too far removed from misinformation, disinformation, and/or rhetoric

You have to do the work to get through it

DAPPR Test

- Date; unclear, out of date, within five years
- Author: unclear, unrelated, credentialed
- Publisher: blogs, unknown, scholarly journal, government
- Purpose: personal, entertainment, persuade/influence, unbiased scholarship
- Relevancy: research related to topic

Anecdotal evidence is not science,
and it is not evidence

Just because Niki Minaj said so doesn't make it true



The King of Obfuscation

“The Holocaust wasn’t about race”

-Whoopie Goldberg

Nonsense or Bullshit?

For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. James 3:2

Consequences of Bullshit

- Loss of credibility
- Loss of trust
- Subjective overrides objective
- Truth becomes irrelevant
- Reality/facts become malleable
- The world ends

“Masks are ineffective to
protect against COVID”
Anthony Fauci

\$2.7 billion lawsuit for
Fox News over rigged
voting machine claims

Bullshit is the Enemy of Gravitas

- Dignity, seriousness, solemnity of manner
- Composed or serious manner, worthy of respect

“Perhaps we can inject bleach to kill the COVID virus, almost like a cleansing”

“Sandy Hook is a hoax” – Alex Jones

The “dust up” that occurred on Jan 6 – Jack Del Rio

Desire the
truth,
even if you
are wrong

A black and white photograph of a person in a gym, viewed from a low angle, lifting a barbell. The person is looking upwards, and the background shows gym equipment and a high ceiling. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**bettering yourself
requires you to break
up with your bullshit.**

What Does This Have to Do With Safety/RM?

- HR action, “It’s close enough”
- This claim is as bad as the Catholic Church
- OSHA is going to come in here & shut us down!
- Evidence of IIPP effectiveness is no CalOSHA citations
- There’s no coverage for that
- You can’t put a sticker on a hard hat
- Covering up/minimizing exposure

The Safety/Risk Management profession must pursue truth, clarity, transparency and objectivity to maintain respect as a profession

“arm personnel so we can stop the shooter in seconds”

Professional Judgement

- Expert opinion testimony (based on experience and education)
- Required in many circumstances
- Creating hypotheses or theories
- Speculating about a situation or circumstance
(vaping deaths, mask use, COVID vaccines, COVID deaths)

Without careful attention and concern for the truth, professional judgement becomes nothing but bullshit, hot air, nonsense

Avoid the bullshit – do the work, learn the facts, learn to think critically, be prepared, or keep quiet!

If we lose the bullshit meter, then even nonsense can become truth

Bullshit:
see through it, stand above it,
don't spread it around!

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