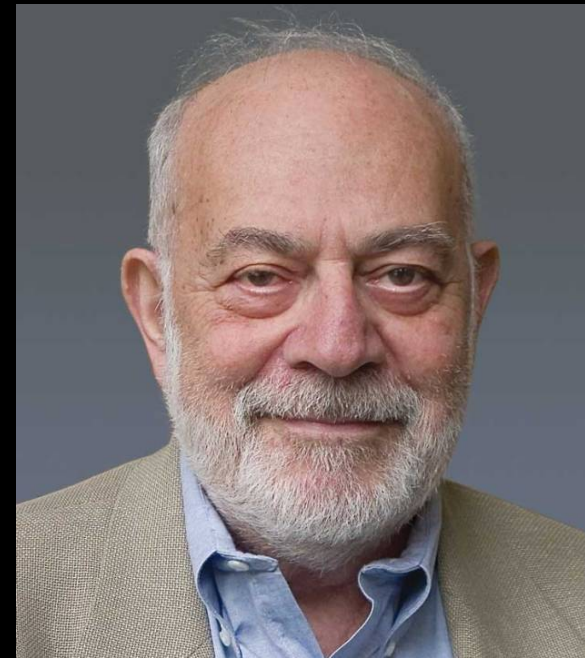
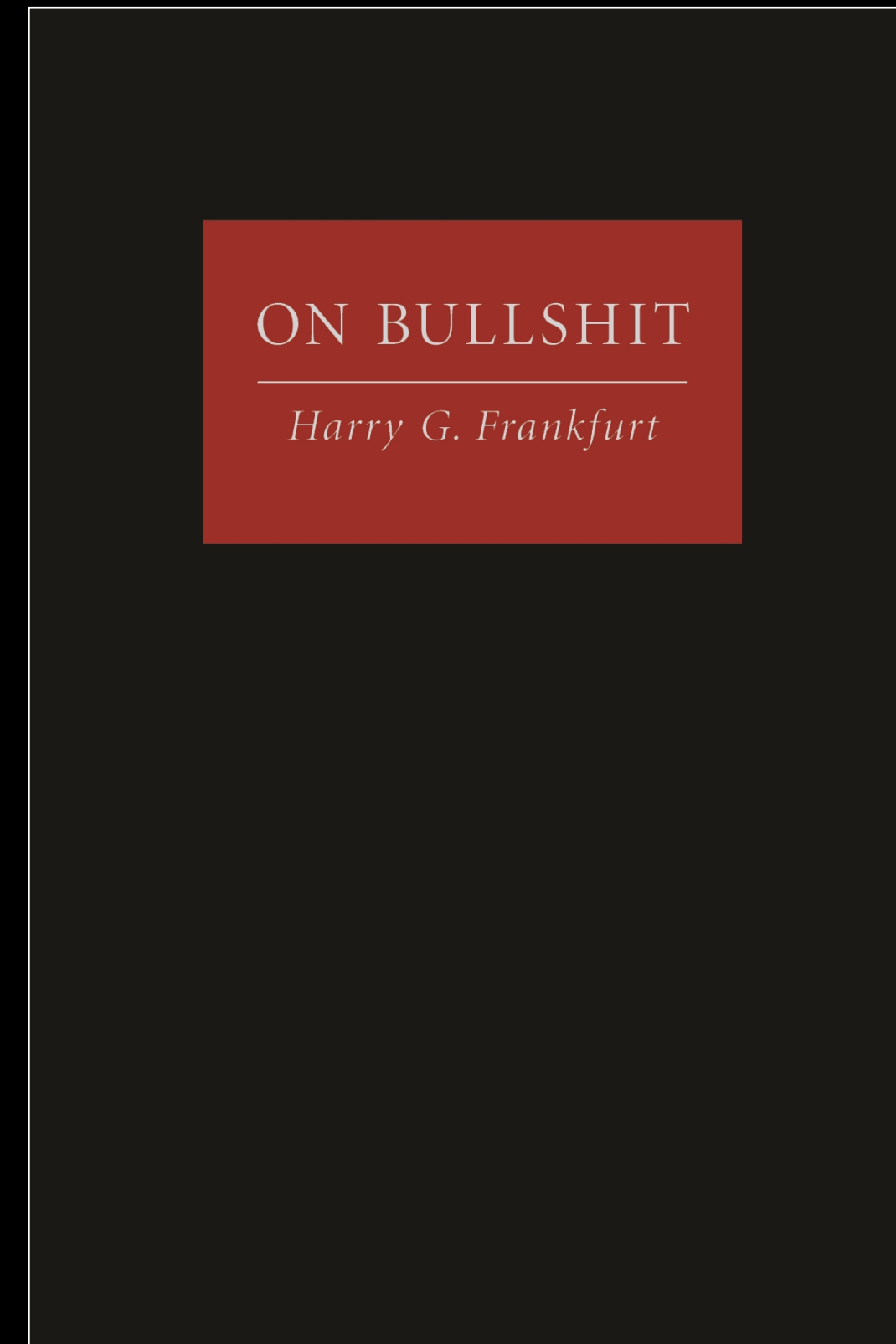


ON BULLSHIT

What it is, why it's lame, and how we can resist it



Dr. Harry Frankfurt, 1929–2023
Professor of Philosophy
Princeton University





Dr. Max Black, 1909–1988
Professor of Philosophy
Cornell University

**THE
PREVALENCE
OF
HUMBUG
AND
OTHER
ESSAYS**
**MAX
BLACK**

“HUMBUG: deceptive misrepresentation, short of lying, especially by pretentious word or deed, of somebody’s thoughts feelings or attitudes.”

Bullshit is not lying.

“HUMBUG: deceptive misrepresentation, short of lying, especially by pretentious word or deed, of somebody’s thoughts feelings or attitudes.”

Bullshit is performative.

“HUMBUG: deceptive misrepresentation, short of lying, especially by pretentious word or deed, of somebody’s thoughts feelings or attitudes.”

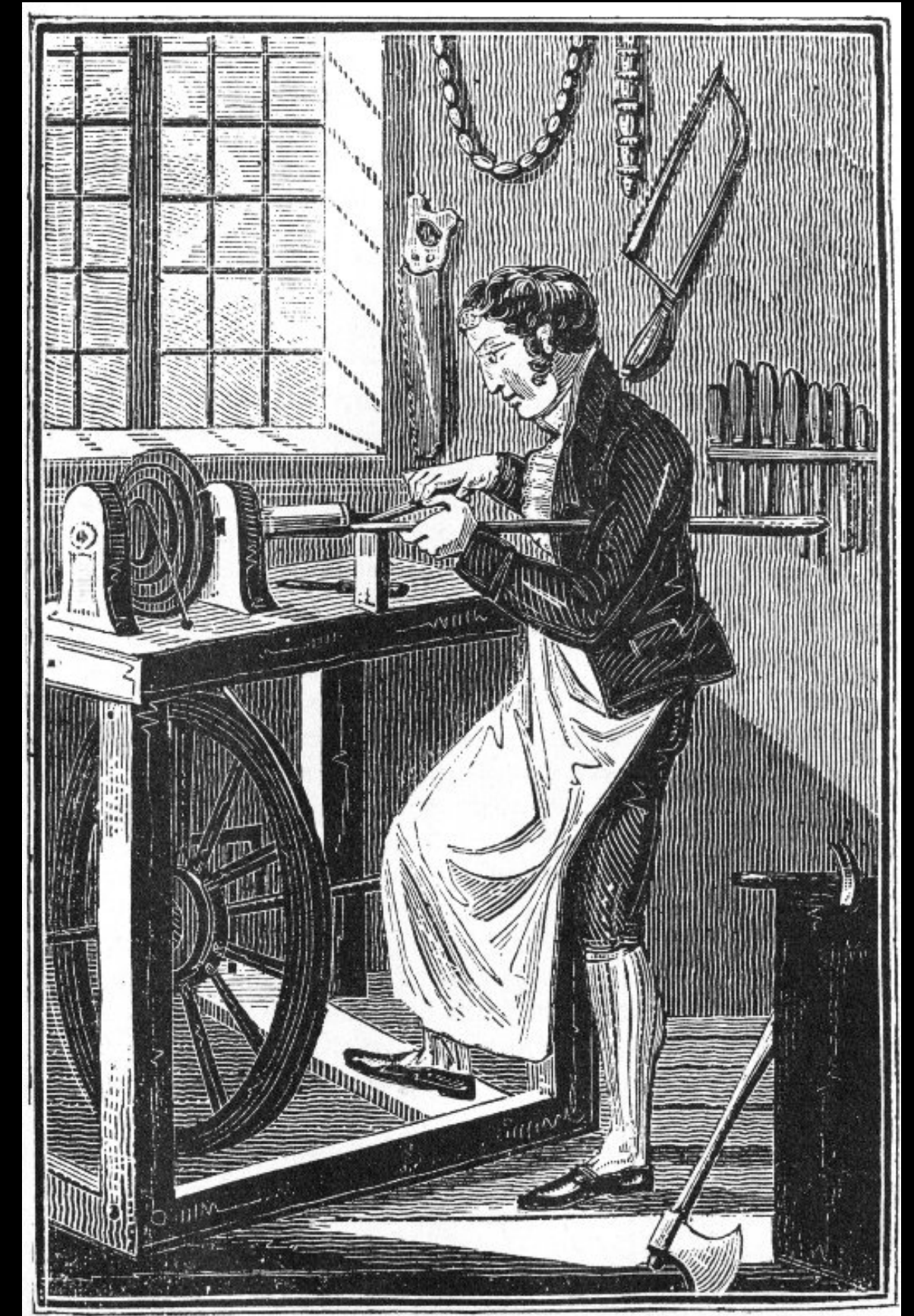
Bullshit is careless.

Dr. Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1899–1951
Professor of Philosophy
Cambridge University



**“In the elder days of art
Builders wrought with the greatest care
Each minute and unseen part
For the Gods are everywhere”**

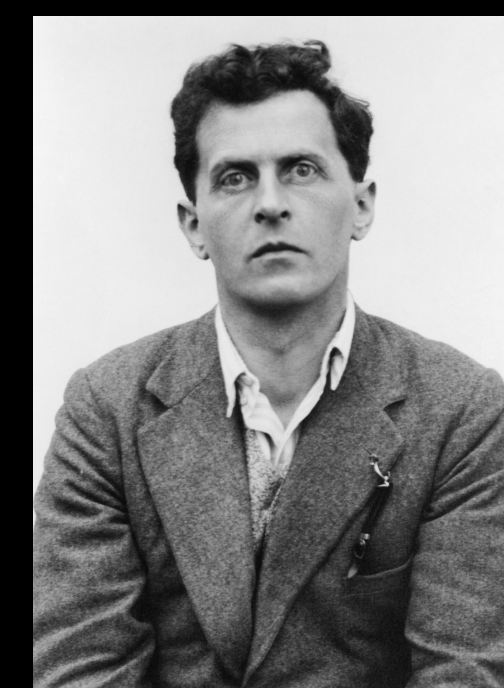
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

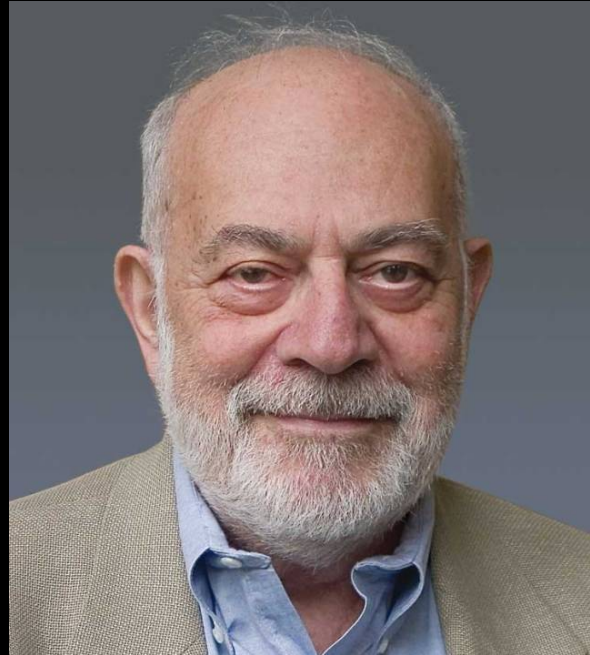




**“I feel like a dog that’s
been run over”**

WTF?





Frankfurt's Big Idea.

“It is just this lack of a concern with the truth, the indifference to how things really are, that I regard as the essence of bullshit.”

**It's not that bullshit is false,
but that it's meaningless.**

WHY BULLSHIT IS BAD.

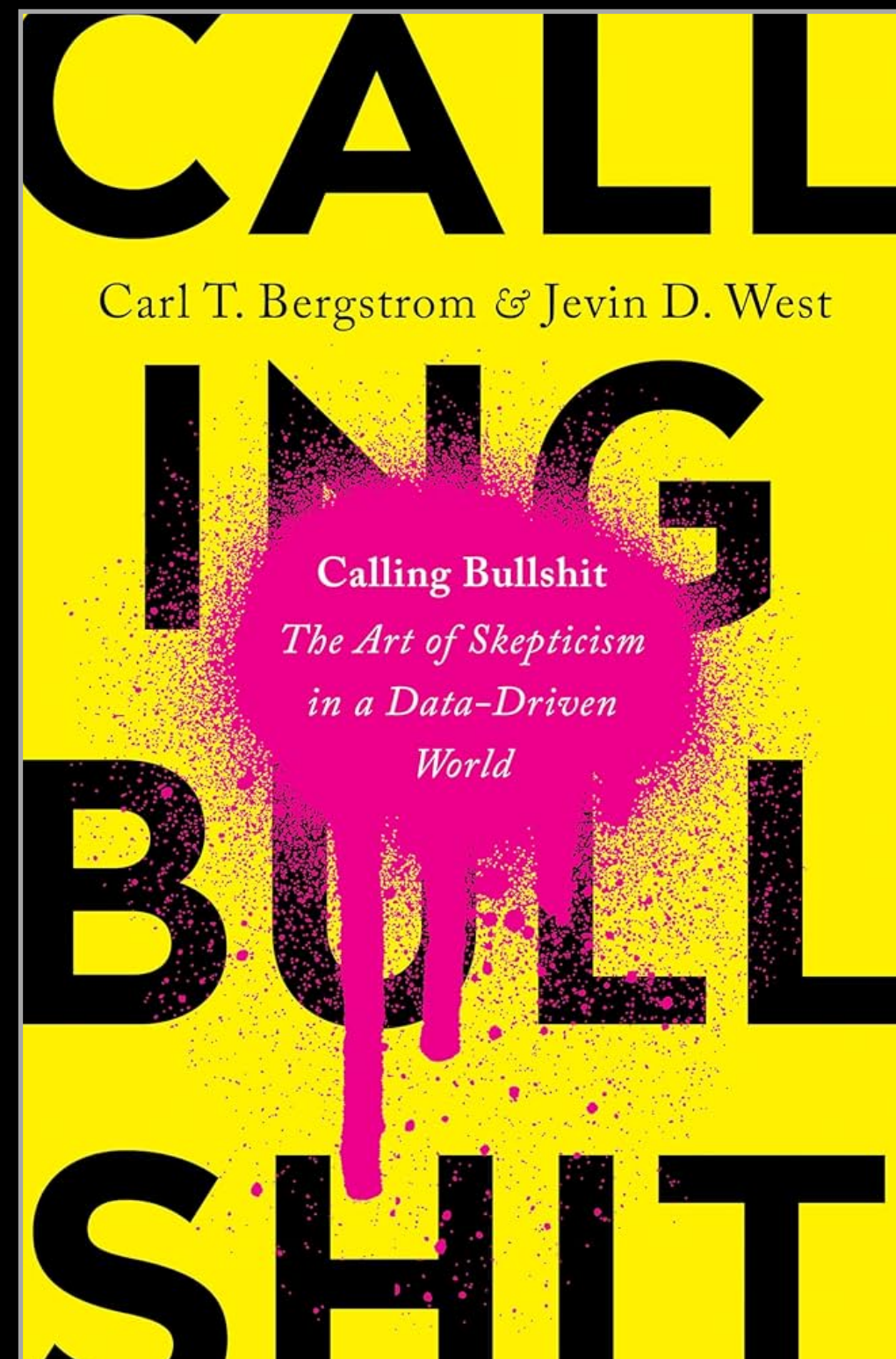


We're in the meaning business.

Bullshit destroys trust.

Bullshit is corrosive.





Statistical Bullshit
Calling Bullshit on Bad Statistics

Bullshit Charts
Is Statistical Bullshit possible when no numbers are involved?

Possibly the most widespread form of Statistical Bullshit is Bullshit Charts. Charts are meant to provide clear and easy-to-read information, but

<https://statisticalbullshit.com>

WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT.



Nail the obvious truth markers.

Avoid jargon.

Avoid data dumps, insight dumps, query dumps.

Craft a meaningful story.



The importance of idea-driven storytelling.



Stories are filters.



**Stories are built on a
Unifying Idea.**



**A story idea is
a proposition.**



**Stories are
Guiding Structures.**





**It's about your client.
Not about you.**

Ask yourself:
“Does this sound like bullshit?”

HOW WE'RE INCENTIVIZED TO BULLSHIT.



We're part of humongous systems.

So much data, so little time.

The Powerpoint/Bullet point trap

Overall societal malaise.

A performative culture.



Bullshit is fun.



IT'S TIME TO CUT THE SHIT.



The future is in meaning.



Thank you.