

Neel Mehta 1904377  
Ass 1, HPH 7010, KER

In this piece of work you make  
some interesting points, &  
present well considered claims in  
response to some of the key  
arguments within the selected  
texts. The work is well written  
and enjoyable to read due to  
the way you express certain  
sentences - with clarity & fluidity.  
With regards to the article in last  
issue, you would do well to  
relate some of the discussion to  
a reader of Brown. There is also  
some need to develop more by  
way to a critique, but I

read that. As an annotated bibliography you are up against a  
corpus, your description would  
be a useful resource to any prospective reader, and that  
would benefit from your evaluation  
of the texts, which at places are  
quite pointed.

HPPH7010

KNOWLEDGE, REASON AND REALITY, ASS 1

NEIL MESSAM, STUDENT NO: 1904377

ANNOTATED BIB.

Norman Swartz, *Laws Of Nature*, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy  
<https://iep.utm.edu/lawofnat/>

Link above provided in course materials for Knowledge, Reason and Reality module. There are no page numbers on the format supplied.

Norman Swartz says that the separation between two main theories on the laws of nature "marks one of the most profound gulfs within contemporary philosophy, and has quite unexpected, and wide-ranging, implications". He goes on to say that if we take sides in this debate, and adopt one theory over another, we are forced to give up "strong beliefs about the nature of the world".

Is the universe "a cosmic coincidence or driven by specific, eternal laws of nature"? Framed in this way, we are plunging into metaphysics and if readers have picked up this article because they struggle with metaphysics then we are given a toehold when Swartz makes a logical point early in his article,

If *scientific* laws are inaccurate, then – presumably – there must be some *other* laws

(statements, propositions, principles), doubtless more complex, which *are* accurate, which are not approximation to the truth but are literally true.

In a longer essay, we might discuss the strength of this point and its assumption that there is order in the universe, but for our purposes here we can see that Swartz gives us a basis for grounding our thoughts. This basis is the working assumption that there is a "sublime order over everything".

Well pointed out -

Swartz separates the main views on laws of nature into two: Necessitarian and Regularist. He says Regularists believe that laws of nature are "mere descriptions" and that Necessitarians believe, "laws of Nature are the "principles" which govern the natural phenomena of the world. That is, the natural world "obeys" the "Laws of Nature".

At the very least, the **Regularists'** Theory of Laws of Nature denies that Laws of Nature are 'physically necessary'. There is no physical necessity, either in laws or in nature itself. There is no intermediate state between logical necessity on the one hand and sheer contingency on the other.

**Necessitarians**, in contrast, argue that there is physical (or as they sometimes call it "nomic" or "nomologically") necessity.

Much later in the article, the relation between Necessitarianism and explanations that rely on God is shown in the form of a Regularist critique:

" Twentieth-century Necessitarianism has dropped God from its picture of the world.

Physical necessity has assumed God's role: the universe conforms to (the dictates of? / the secret, hidden, force of? / the inexplicable mystical power of?) physical laws. God does not 'drive' the universe; physical laws do."

Again, this may give us a toehold in understanding this area of metaphysics if we already feel we have an understanding of the concept of God's omnipotence. There is not room here to discuss whether it is fair to the Necessitarians to insert God into their argument, and whether this is a straw man objection from the Regularists.

Returning to the earlier parts of the article, Swartz lays out the areas where the two sides agree - the "five conditions necessary for a statement's being a Law of Nature." These are provided in an

explanatory table, where he shows that they agree that Natural Laws are "factual truths, not logical ones"; are "true for every time and place in the universe"; "contain no proper names"; are "universal or statistical claims"; and "are conditional claims, not categorical ones". He finishes by saying, "Are these five conditions *jointly sufficient* for a proposition's being a Law of Nature? Regularists say "yes"; Necessitarians, "no".

This neat summary of where the two sides differ leads Swartz on to enumerate the strengths of each side. He says that Necessitarians give examples which can be "explicated" only with reference to a "sixth necessary condition for laws of nature, namely, by positing natural (physical /nomic /nomological) necessity."

At this point the reader may need help. Returning to the very helpful table provided by Swartz, we could temporarily put the difficulties to one side and simplify it - if the table was Necessitarian it would have six sections, if Regularist, the table remains with five.

So what is this sixth condition? Swartz puts three examples in front of us to show the Necessitarians' point that these examples can't be explained without natural necessity.

His first is Popper's "Moa (a large flightless bird that lived in New Zealand)", which has been extinct for over a century, so we can say that the oldest Moa that existed gives us the truth in the proposition "no Moa lives beyond the age of  $n$  years". But, Swartz says, this is not a law of nature, it is "a mere accidental truth".

Let's return to Swartz' helpful table: The Moa example satisfies the five conditions in the table, but is not a law of nature.

His second example is false existentials, the simplest being "There is a river of cola", which satisfies the five conditions but cannot be said to be a law of nature as it's not physically impossible. So in order to make the necessary conditions for lawfulness a further condition would be needed.

The final example is "Doom vs. Failure", Swartz' example being if the earth had been destroyed in 1900 then the Wright Brothers would never have flown. The many people who contributed to that moment over the years would have been working on a project that was doomed - it would have been physically impossible without a planet. With the actual real history of the earth however, the people who had put all the work in the years leading up to Wright brothers flight were not on a project that was *doomed*, they had merely *failed* where the Wright brothers later succeeded. Not all projects that fail are doomed and Necessitarians do not want to collapse this distinction, and this they say requires physical necessity.

"When Necessitarians say of a claim – e.g. that someone has built a perpetual motion machine of the first kind – that it is physically impossible, they intend to be understood as claiming that not only is the situation described timelessly and universally false, it is so *because* it is *nomically* impossible.

In contrast, when Regularists say that some situation is physically impossible – e.g. that there is a river of cola – they are claiming no more and no less than that there is no such river, past, present, future, here, or elsewhere. There is no *nomical* dimension to their claim. They are not making the modal claim that there *could not be* such a river; they are making simply the *factual* (nonmodal) claim that there timelessly *is no* such river."

In stating the case for Regularists, Swartz describes the increasing realisation through the many empirical sciences that there is an "extensive sublime order in nature" which we've always had some partial knowledge of (tides, moon phases...) but since the scientific age it has become clear that it extends over everything.

"And so, alongside the older metaphysical question, "Why is there anything, rather than nothing?", there arises the newer question, "Why is the world orderly, rather than chaotic?" How can one explain the existence of this pervasive order? What accounts for it?"

Those of us that have difficulties with metaphysics might be grateful for being led into a core metaphysical question in this way, with the previous helpful little table help us feel we are in more mundane territory.

Swartz goes on to describe a principle objection to Necessitarianism - that it requires God, only in a different guise. He says that Regularists might say that God has been smuggled in, or just replaced with nomological necessity. This is a view they say should be rejected, and it's high time for an enlightened naturalistic view of science.

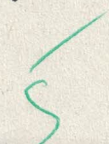
"The difference is, perhaps, highlighted most strongly in Necessitarians saying that the Laws of Nature *govern* the world; while Regularists insist that Laws of Nature do no more or less than correctly *describe* the world".

Returning to the Necessitarian objections to Regularism, the strongest point, Swartz argues, is that they remove a distinction between the accidental generalisation we saw with Popper's Moa and laws of nature (he uses "no massy object is accelerated beyond the speed of light"). This results in a collapse of the distinction between doom and failure, gives us an unlimited number of laws of nature, and false existentials turn out to be "*physically impossible*".

He says the Regularists' response to this turns on an understanding of the different meanings of "physically impossible".

What is physically impossible is not merely nonoccurrent or nonexistent. These events and states-of-affairs simply *could not* occur or exist. There is, then, in the Necessitarians' account, a **modal** element that is entirely lacking in the Regularists' theory.

This introduction of "modal" leads Swartz to provide a link to further reading. To keep it within the confines of the one article though, we can perhaps simplify (hopefully without misconstruing Swartz).



Regularists may put it this way: "It *is* so".

✓ Very good

Necessitarians may put it this way: "It *has to be* so".

Swartz describes the intuitive appeal of Necessitarianism with its explanatory force (natural laws explain events), whereas Regularists see no need as "vaguely circumscribed generalities have served us well for thousands of years[...]without even having the *concept* of nomicity," In short, we can, and indeed **do** several times each day, explain events without supposing that the principles we cite are in any sense *necessary*."

J.

Readers may query this claim, as it appears to rely on either evidence or intuition for assent, or to put it slightly differently, if we do not intuitively share the Regularists opinion that we do not see principles as *necessary*, then we'll need evidence. Swartz' article is perhaps too short an overview to provide this evidence, but without it a reader may fall on the side of the Necessitarians.

J's

Perhaps an example will bring this point out: Do we not hold some beliefs so strongly that they are in effect *necessary* beliefs? If someone removed their head but carried on chatting, with their body leaning against the window but their head on the other side of the room on a bookshelf, wouldn't this cause deep shock in us as observers? Is it believed *necessary* that a person's head is connected to their neck to carry on chatting? Would a Regularist chatting with the headless person calmly describe the situation as a previously unexperienced phenomenon?

In their defence, a Regularist might say that our example is impossibly absurd and unhelpful. But this appears equivalent to saying it is a necessary truth that a person's head has to be connected to their neck for them to carry on chatting.

The finer distinction that Swartz seems to bring out might perhaps be expressed as follows: the Regularist stands back from going as far as necessity, just slightly stands back enough. Perhaps in our example the Regularist might agree that it is necessary to have a connected head, but not

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nomologically necessary. To return to the simplification above: Regularists may put it this way: It is so. Necessitarians may put it this way: It *has to be* so.

Another example might bring out the Regularist position. If a Regularist hadn't turned the kettle on, but it started boiling the water, would she think nothing of it? Would she calmly *describe* a previously unobserved phenomenon of water boiling at room temperature; or would she assume that the switch was faulty? It seems likely that the latter would be her reaction, that the switch is faulty, demonstrating that there is a deeper commitment to expecting an order in the universe. The water boils *after* the kettle is switched on. A Regularist might respond that this *is* so, not that it *has to be* so. But truly, how committed is the Regularist to this view?

Does she really not have a total commitment to some of her beliefs, does her claim that we have not needed such a commitment for thousands of years really stand up? Consider the religious justifications commonly used over the years for wars, for genocide. These beliefs were so strongly held that they could be fairly described as necessary beliefs. Beliefs that it *must* be so (not merely that it *is* so), that this is God's will. The Regularist's account (that we have managed perfectly well for thousands of years without Necessitarian justifications) doesn't offer an explanation for where people *have* relied heavily on Necessitarian world views. To put it another way, we have equally managed for thousands of years *with* Necessitarian views. The historical use of either Necessitarian or Regularist explanations of our world is not an argument for their validity, but merely a description of their usefulness, or a description of their use.

To return to the metaphysical arguments, Swartz indicates that a difficulty with Necessitarianism is it "inverts the truth making relation", Tarski's theory of truth (or correspondence theory or the semantic theory) is "turned on its head", described by Swartz as a "monumental oddity".

"Necessitarianism requires that one imagine that a certain privileged class of propositions impose their truth on events and states of affairs."

Swartz indicates that another problem with Necessitarianism is its "unempiricalness", as pointed out in Hume's analysis of causality.

The "trump card" of the Regularists is, Swartz says, the dissolving of the problem of free will. Using Gresham's law as an example he returns to the Regularists' understanding of the descriptive value of the laws of nature, which in itself removes the Necessitarians' quandary of the laws' power to direct actions. We choose what we choose, freely, and the laws simply *describe* that choice.

"To make the claim even more pointedly: it is only because Necessitarianism tacitly adopts an anti-semantic theory of truth that the supposed problem of free will vs. determinism even arises. Adopt a thoroughgoing Regularist theory and the problem evaporates".

Swartz says that Regularists have no difficulty with the statistical nature of many laws of nature, but that this poses problems for Necessitarianism, with only Popper's unpopular theories to support them.

Swartz concludes his paper with the deeper differences between the two sides.

At some point explanations must come to an end. Regularists place that stopping point at the way-the-world-is. Necessitarians place it one, inaccessible, step beyond, at the way-the-world-must-be.

The divide between Necessitarians and Regularists remains as deep as any in philosophy. Neither side has conceived a theory which accommodates all our familiar, and deeply rooted, historically-informed beliefs about the nature of the world. To adopt either theory is to give up one or more strong beliefs about the nature of the world. And there simply do not seem to be any other theories in the offing.



Returning to the quote from Swartz above, one camp say the laws of nature describe the world, the other that laws of nature govern the world. It is a fine distinction, and one that may appear to readers to be psychologically dubious. Is the distinction so fine it might disappear from view? Do Regularists really truly not commit to that final step? Do they really not believe that it *has* to be so? Would not a Regularist be very deeply shocked to find that a law of nature had been broken? Or would she nonchalantly simply describe the new state of affairs?

To put this thought into context we could look at the oft-cited dawn of the age of <sup>E</sup>einsteinian physics when the earlier Newtonian laws of nature were dropped (or at least supplemented) at the moment that Einsteins prediction was proved. Kuhn talks of this - the pressures on an existing framework originally are small when data that doesn't fit is cast aside, but this pressure builds as more and more data doesn't fit the existing description of laws of nature, but it takes an alternative hypothesis for people to jump from the current view to the new one. The point being made here is that the alternative hypothesis (in this example the einsteinian physics) is required before the move away from the previous hypothesis is made. Is this because most people are really committed so strongly? Is it more a deeply held weltanschauung than a non-committal, casually held, working hypothesis? Is it psychologically possible for every Regularist to be so non-committal? It seems that too strong a claim is made for the psychology of *all* Regularists, as one Regularist who falters from the final position would disprove it. It would be handy for the reader if Swartz could tell us who is a Regularist.

Could you relate to your reading of  
Hume (on the idea of necessary connection)

Swartz has given us a strong article that helps us into the meat of the subject but its failing is not signposting the philosophers who exemplify each position. This would have been helpful in a few ways, by anchoring our previous reading to the discussion and giving us an idea where to read next and also in testing the claims made for each side by interrogating the texts of the advocates for each.

**A.P. Martinich, *Philosophical Writing* (London, Blackwell Publishing, 2005)**

How should students write? Those who have no difficulty in dealing with the complexity of philosophical issues and expressing them in high-scoring essays may not need *Philosophical Writing* by A.P. Martinich, but for the rest of us his book is very useful. He is the "Roy Allison Vaughan Centennial Professor of Philosophy and Professor of History and Government at the University of Texas at Austin" (back page) but nevertheless says in his book that he found the choice of a writing style was "tortured or nearly impossible" (pg.1) for nearly three decades. He offers his book for people who feel the same way.

A critical reader may immediately object to the very idea of being told how to construct a philosophy essay, may even say that philosophy and its range of expression is boundless, from Sartre to Kant, from Plato to Camus, from Ayer to Heidegger, from Derrida to Russell: who can say what philosophical writing is? Martinich may be able to dispense with this debate as he makes clear at the beginning of his book that his aim is to help those who are struggling, and from there they can develop their own styles, as long as they achieve precision, as he says, "The project is similar to teaching art students to draw the human hand. The first goal is accuracy, not elegance" (pg.1).

We can be grateful for such helpful hints as: good philosophical writing is grammatical; and, "the goal of analytic philosophy is the truth, presented in a clear, orderly and well-constructed way" (pg.4): Martinich says that "anyone can make a subject difficult; it takes an accomplished thinker to make a subject simple" (pg.4). He aims throughout his book for clarity, an aim he appears to achieve. He lays down many simple and helpful rules - for example we should skim an entire book or chapter before reading it carefully; aim not for persuasion, explanation or exposition but show that you understand "what the professor already knows" (pg.10) "by giving an accurate rendering of it" (pg.10). "It is not the

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professor's knowledge that is at issue, but the student's" (pg.10). In aiming to help us improve our writing (and marks) he goes into detail in every area he covers, for instance,

"If you use a technical term, then it is your term and you are responsible for defining it"(pg.11).

How does one present one's opinion in a way that maintains credibility? He claims that, "No philosopher should care how you *feel* about the existence of god, freedom, abortion or anything else[...]"(pg.13). "Thus the use of the phrase, *I feel*, is with rare exception forbidden in essays"(pg.13) and "Specific incidents in your life also have no place in your essay"(pg.13). Instead, we are advised how to re-phrase these incidents in the third person, "The more objective a person's standpoint the better"(pg.15). Theory is distinguished from intuition and advice is provided about where and when to give priority to each.

A good argument is defined: "a sequence of propositions"(pg.21); sound; valid and cogent arguments are distinguished with examples of all provided with an explanation of how not to confuse truth and validity. Propositional calculus is introduced, and a further distinction is highlighted (that between persuasive and cogent arguments), "The same argument might be cogent to one person and not cogent to another. All cogent arguments are persuasive to the person that recognises them". pg.33

Fallacies, consistency and contradiction ("consistency is not a guarantee of truth") pg.38 are covered, as well as the use of paradox:

"Anyone purporting to solve the problem must say which of the problems he thinks is false, and why; or he must explain why he thinks that all the propositions are in fact consistent, that is, how it is possible for all of them to be true even though they may not look consistent" (pg.39).

Contraries and contradictories are explained and delineated and, interestingly, the reader is advised not to attempt to create too strong an argument as this is more easily refuted. Essay structures are

suggested, as are techniques for composition such as profiting from one's own confusions by laying them out as supposed ideas before criticising them.

The chapter called "Tactics for Analytic Writing" contains much that is useful, for example showing that "analysis is analogous to definition" (pg.100) and that "when the terms of a disagreement are clear, debate about which side is correct is much easier" (pg.101). Despite this belief, Martinich does recognise that "This idea of analysis presupposes, however, that the object of philosophical analysis is understanding. Not all philosophers take this view; some regard the object to be *reduction*" pg.103. He also claims that "This explains the traditional philosophical preference for monism and dualism" (pg.103), citing Ockham's Razor. Techniques using dilemmas, scenarios and counter examples are set out and explained before he moves on to the *Reductio ad Absurdum*, where he raises a smile saying "Indeed, inventing an ingenious argument for a blatantly false proposition is the shortest route into the history of philosophy". pg.124

Readers seeking helpful clarity in Martinich's book will find it in abundance, but are not spared the philosophical quandaries that arise at every stage. The *Reductio* is just one example among many: "One standard is that a philosophical conclusion should not, if reasonably possible, contradict common sense, that is the generally shared beliefs of non-philosophers (pg.124). Readers might disagree with this, perhaps the example of Zeno's paradoxes provide timeless philosophical writings that contradict common sense.

Martinich finishes chapter five with a discussion and examples of dialectical reasoning before two chapters on content and form, returning to his own arguments in favour of clarity and conciseness. A helpful chapter on stylistic and technical approaches to introductions precedes some well-organised appendices not to be skipped over. A favourite among these is likely to be "Appendix A: Its Sunday Night and I Have an Essay Due Monday Morning", but the others are no less useful and concise for terms and techniques. Overall, a very helpful book for those of us that need it.

Yes.  
Develop  
this  
point.

Philosophy is written in so many ways: Nietzsche seemed to rant, Wittgenstein to ponder, Descartes wrote in a warm almost chatty way. Socrates didn't write at all, and a three page paper was a vanishingly rare example of Gettier putting pen to paper. But perhaps Martinich would prefer us to become proficient, elegant and precise before we aim so high. ✓

Nice conclusion

Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*, Princeton University

Insert date of Publication

[http://www2.csudh.edu/ccauthen/576f12/frankfurt\\_harry\\_-\\_on\\_bullshit.pdf](http://www2.csudh.edu/ccauthen/576f12/frankfurt_harry_-_on_bullshit.pdf)

Link above provided in course materials for Knowledge, Reason and Reality module.

Frankfurt's little book is set out as a preliminary exploration of a subject that he says "has no theory" despite there being "so much bullshit" (pg.1). He intends to set out the "structure of its concept". We will return at the end of this essay to anchor the discussion in current affairs, in an attempt to add weight to a subject that has been criticised by fellow MA students as being insufficiently philosophical. It could be argued that Frankfurt has identified a defining feature of philosophy in its pursuit of truth: philosophy exposes bullshit along the way, and in so doing may make truth more visible.

Frankfurt's first step is to compare bullshit, humbug and lying, and following another work on humbug by Max Black he asks a number of things: if the intention to deceive is necessary; is there a continuum (with bullshit along the line from lying) is pretentiousness a part of bullshit; what distinguishes lying from bullshit; what distinguishes humbug from bullshit; Is bullshit analogous to shoddy work?

✓

In addressing this final question we see where his article occasionally slips into puns ("The notion of carefully wrought bullshit involves, then, a certain inner strain". (pg.7)) He points out that bullshit can in fact take a great deal of work, for example in advertising and public relations which "are replete with instances of bullshit so unmitigated that they can serve among the most indisputable and classic paradigms of the concept" (pg.7). Yet, he says there is an attempt to get away with something, like the shoddy craftsman.

Many philosophers rely on at least a passing reference to Wittgenstein and here Frankfurt goes on to discuss in depth an anecdote by Fania Pascal:

"I had my tonsils out and was in the Evelyn Nursing Home feeling sorry for myself. Wittgenstein called. I croaked: "I feel just like a dog that has been run over." He was disgusted: "You don't know what a dog that has been run over feels like""(pg.8).

Frankfurt supposes that Wittgenstein may have been objecting to the misrepresentation in Fania's innocent remark, it was too specific, "too particular", unconnected to the truth. "What disgusts him is that Pascal is not even concerned whether her statement is correct." It is thus bullshit.

He then shows that "bull" as understood within spit-and-polish culture in the armed services is an instance of pointless or "unnecessary routine tasks or ceremonial" which are disconnected from legitimate activities much as bullshit is disconnected from the truth. Further trawling of sources of definition from old texts such as the Times Literary Supplement give Frankfurt the opportunity to refine away examples of what he thinks bullshit is not ("The focus of "insincere" or "untruthful is better but it needs to be sharpened" (pg.13)). He expresses a preference for "hot air" as an equivalent term (pg.13), "Bluff" is also liked (pg.14). A distinction is drawn between "false" and "phony", to draw out a quality of bullshit,

"The bullshitter is faking things. But this does not mean that he necessarily gets them wrong" (pg.15).

Frankfurt devotes space to the perceived differences between bullshit and lying and finds that the difference is important. People tolerate bullshit more than lies, he says, as it is less of a personal affront. Some detail he leaves for further study by others ("The problem of understanding why our attitude toward bullshit is generally more benign than our attitude toward lying is an important one, which I shall leave as an exercise for the reader" pg.15)), but he goes into depth using his analogy of the craftsman in order to argue that lies are intimately connected to truth, whereas bullshit is more free. The bullshitter is distinguished from the liar in that he "misrepresents what he is up to" (pg.16), so Frankfurt boils down the difference between the liar and the bullshitter to this: lies are tied to the truth, bullshit suits a different aim - that of disguising the intentions of the bullshitter.

What philosophy paper would be complete without reference to the ancient philosophers? *Indeed!*  
Augustine's eight types of lying includes just one that counts as the work of a true liar.

"What Augustine calls "liars" and "real lies" are both rare and extraordinary. Everyone lies from time to time, but there are very few people to whom it would often (or even ever) occur to lie exclusively from a love of falsity or of deception"(pg.18).

We might ask what basis Augustine uses to make this judgement, perhaps he heard confessions and formed his beliefs about people's intentions on that experience. Whatever the justification for this claim, Frankfurt goes on to reiterate the disconnect between the bullshitter and the truth, which he says is the greater threat to the truth than that posed by the liar.

He next asks why there is so much bullshit, answering that bullshit arises when a person is impelled to speak about something of which they have insufficient knowledge, often because we are all expected to have opinions on most subjects. He also blames it on "anti-realist" doctrines popular in modern culture, which result in a sceptical path towards being true to oneself. Instead of dedication

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to the ideal of "correctness", he says, people are more likely to aim for "sincerity". Frankfurt rejects this, as it relies on an indefensible assumption that reference to oneself is in some way more certain, and easy to access. His final excoriating line sums it up,

"Our natures are, indeed, elusively insubstantial —notoriously less stable and less inherent than the natures of other things. And insofar as this is the case, sincerity itself is bullshit"(pg 20).

Do you agree?

✓ good.  
His book led to many responses (many are assembled in *Bullshit and Philosophy* edited by Gary L Hardcastle and George A Reisch) and the subject appears an important barometer of current life. I think the subject is undersold, and that its more important to us all than this modest little book might lead us to believe. To place Frankfurt's discussion within current affairs I would suggest we anchor it to three points. The first point of reference would be the tragedy of the fire at Grenfell Tower in 2017. Shoddy professional standards across several stages of the refurbishment of the tower repeatedly crop in the inquiry. We hear that the architects tasked with signing off the fire resistance of the external facade made an assessment, and provided a conclusion, without actually *knowing* the fire resistance. This lack of connection to the truth fits well into Frankfurt's definition, and tragedy ensued. Interesting point.

The second point of reference I suggest is the treatment of Doctor Li Wenliang from Wuhan in 2020. The Ophthalmologist was on a chat group with other doctors and mentioned his concerns to them about symptoms he'd seen in a number of patients. The local police told him to "stop making false statements" and forced him to confess and retract his previous statements about a virus on the rise. The police clearly had no connection to the facts - their actions were entirely disconnected from truth, again making their actions bullshit on Frankfurt's definition. At the time of writing, we are yet to see the extent of the devastation that Covid-19 will cause.

Again,  
interesting application

A third point of reference comes up in Hardcastle - the reasons given for the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

There were no weapons of mass destruction. In taking us to war there was little concern with the truth, so it was perhaps inaccurate to describe PM Tony Blair as a liar, perhaps he was bullshitting.

This brings us back to an earlier part of Frankfurt's book, where he says that people are more tolerant of bullshit than lies. Perhaps we should not tolerate bullshit. ✓