

Abomination in politics: An Analysis on Youth's Political Participation using Harry Frankfurt's Concept of Bullshit.

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Abstract: The development within the society is a product of dialectical process. The continued tension of thesis, antithesis and synthesis is a manifestation of an active social order. Politics is one of the expressions of dialectic where people in the society deliberates for their well-being. Apart from expression of dialectic, politics is also one of the vital activities in the society for it holds power. In this social activity, youth took their part by voicing out their sentiments believing that the voices can contribute for the welfare. In this sense, there is a tension whether this participation of the youth in politics is accommodating or not. This opus will venture to the stand where the political participation of the numerous youths is not cooperative to the integrity of politics. This effort is not devaluing the opinions of the youth but it only encourages the truthfulness and correct way of participating in the world of politics. The stand will be justified by paralleling it to Harry Frankfurt's idea of bullshit and bullshitters where he gave meaning to bullshit as misrepresentation of truth. The parallelism between the reckless participation of numerous youths in politics and Frankfurt's philosophy will present a constructive criticism that hopes to elevate the value of youth's right conduct and honest activity in politics. This study tends to justify that numerous youths are bullshitters in the realm of politics and it must be suspected and suspended for it abolishes the discreteness and integrity of politics.

Keywords: Youth, Political participation, Harry Frankfurt, Bullshit, Bullshitters

I. INTRODUCTION

The social media platform is one of the prominent sources of information about the present occurrences in our society. This has been magnified since the pandemic (COVID-19) happened. The supremacy of social media platforms can be seen in the manner of how individuals become more active and concerned in daily life activities from serious to mundane things. People, especially the youth, most of the time express their opinions, share their knowledge regardless of its depth and breadth and fearlessly post their comments and sweeping statements about anything that catches their interests. This reign of technology gives them an open access to participate and power to raise their voices to high heavens. However, looking at the other side of the coin, these youths' undaunted participation in serious matters particularly in the field of "politics" should be looked upon closely and certainly, should not be taken lightly.

The above premises are based on the fact that the youths' naivety poses challenges in terms of morals and refinement. Their active vocal involvement should be tested in order to clear their intentions and more importantly, to avoid misrepresentation of truth. The possibility of being a bandwagon is always present in their activities and therefore, may create an atmosphere of abomination and rude social relations. Their way of participation in politics may create an ambiance of devaluation in mutual respect and social values.

This opus is a debunked against the participation of the youths in political affairs for it is believed that their partaking in this undertaking cheapens the dignity of the matter in contention, which is supposed to be dominated only by honorable intellectuals. Indubitably, their way of contributing or sharing their personal political views on social media is not always grounded on truth and their intentions are doubtful if it is genuinely for the welfare of the society. Thus, this paper will give a highlight and explore the philosophy of Harry Frankfurt on "Bullshit". It shall be used as a lens to illuminate the premise that the youths' participation in politics are, in Frankfurt's term, "bullshit" and that the said group of people are "bullshitters" which weakens the ideals of politics. This work is designed to promote a better way of social engagement whose ultimate objective is to foster values and civility. This study could also be a stepping stone to formulate another philosophical idea that can contribute to the library of wisdom.

II. YOUTH

Youth is a group of fledgling people in the society. They are the future hopes and future leaders of the society. Youths are the presenter of new cultural beliefs for as they grow older in the community, they posit new ideas that can only be seen in their specific generation. Youth is always characterized by their potentialities especially in the fields of creativeness and new set of thinking. They challenge the current cultures and practices with their empirical generalizations. The creativeness and persistence of the youths in merging their beliefs are one of the foundations of social development in the society. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, they define youth as a period of transition from the dependence of

childhood to adulthood's independence. That's why, as a category, youth is more fluid than other fixed age-groups. Yet, age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly in relation to education and employment, because 'youth' is often referred to a person between the ages of leaving compulsory education, and finding their first job. (Affairs, 2008) Furthermore, The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. (Affairs, 2008) In the given definitions of what youth is, this paper focuses on the specific generation of youth which was called the Generation Z.

Pew Research Center stated that anyone born between 1981 and 1996 (ages 23 to 38 in 2019) is considered a Millennial, and anyone born from 1997 onward is part of a new generation. (DIMOCK, 2019). Furthermore, since the oldest among this rising generation are just turning 22 this year (during 2019), and most are still in their teens or younger, we hesitated at first to give them a name Generation Z, the iGeneration. (DIMOCK, 2019) It was called iGeneration for its rise during the prevailing time of technology or technological world. Unlike other generations such as the boomers, millennials and alike, GenZ are spooned by societal norms of connection through technology. A writer Eric Geiger claimed that they (GENZ) are the first generation to be born into our constantly connected world where social media and screens are the norm. They are digital natives; meaning digital communication is not something they have had to learn. It has always surrounded them. (Geiger, 2018) Following the idea, technology has been the means of Gen Z in terms of social relations from different internet platforms.

They took control of that advantage to learn about things in this digital world. This technology has been a way for the Gen Z to engage in social activities and for this reason, they freely impart some new sets of ideas that eventually becomes a standard of thinking. It is evident that Gen Z dominates the technology and since they are on the top of the hill, they are producing mindsets through the use of different electronic platforms that debunk or modify some present practices. It is the technology that somehow mediates between a persistent body of new ideas and the current paradigm. Technology as a means in this digital world, monopolizes the beliefs and practices or even the values in the society.

III. POLITICS

Man's action always resides in what he values. Values are something good like an image of interest where one will be satisfied or benefit in having it. It may be seen in materiality or intangible feelings like pleasure. However, there is a true and deep value or good that attracts mankind to exercise an act and that is happiness. It is in happiness that one soul is fulfilled and content for it is the end (termination) of every action. In happiness, it doesn't only reside in materiality but it refers to a higher order such as a good life or

virtuous life. Following the line of thinking, Man's action is always embedded in his desire to be happy (good life).

Ancient thinkers like Plato and Aristotle will also tell the same. In the book of Louis Pojman and James Fieser, they claimed that Plato and Aristotle distinguish happiness from pleasure and speak of a single ideal for human nature; if we do not reach that ideal, then we have failed. Happiness (from the Greek eudaimonia, literally meaning "good demon") is not merely a subjective state of pleasure or contentment but the kind of life we would all want to live if we understood our essential nature. Just as knives and forks and wheels have functions, so do species, including the human species. Our function (sometimes called our "essence") is to live according to reason and thereby to become a certain sort of highly rational, disciplined being. When we fulfill the ideal of living a virtuous life, we are truly happy. (Louis Pojman, 2019) Nevertheless, the individual has a diverse understanding and perspective about happiness that is why there is a tension in a community or society.

Aristotle even claimed that there is very general agreement; for both the common person and people of superior refinement say that it is happiness, and identify living well and doing well with being happy; but with regard to what happiness is they differ, and the many do not give the same account as the wise. For the former it is some plain and obvious thing, like pleasure, wealth or honor. (Aristotle, 1925) This conflict within the society could overpass some of the rights and morals of the individual and for that same reason, there is a need for a government. Since the government (authority) was being established, the activity that connotes development and harmony is called politics.

Politics is the center character between the government and people for it mediates between the citizen and the power holder. There is no specific or definitive definition of what politics truly is for it presents a lot of functions. According to Andrew Heywood, Politics is defined in such different ways: as the exercise of power, exercise of authority, the making of collective decisions, the allocation of scarce resources, the practice of deception and manipulation, and so on. (Heywood, 1997) However, the commonality behind the definitions of politics is all about the social engagement of the people in society that focuses on just and humane society. Furthermore, it contains power, leader, authority and protection.

This politics is the central and crucial activity in the society for in this activity is where harmony, development and power reside. Aristotle and Hanna Arendt both agreed that politics is a moral structure of activity in society. In Politics, Aristotle declared that 'man is by nature a political animal', by which he meant that it is only within a political community that human beings can live the 'good life'. From this viewpoint, then, politics is an ethical activity concerned with creating a 'just society'; it is what Aristotle called the 'master science'. (macmillanlearning.co.uk, 2021) Furthermore, in a

tradition dating back to Aristotle, politics has been seen as a noble and enlightened activity precisely because of its ‘public’ character. This position was firmly endorsed by Hannah Arendt, who argued in *The Human Condition* (1958) that politics is the most important form of human activity because it involves interaction amongst free and equal citizens. It thus gives meaning to life and affirms the uniqueness of each individual. (macmillanlearning.co.uk, 2021)

In seeing politics in a moral and noble perspective, it is therefore a culture of decency and diplomacy. It preserves its dignity in discretion for politics whose sole purpose is to safeguard the system and order in a community or society. It is the responsibility of the individual to be modest in social engagement to protect the pride of the said activity.

IV. HARRY FRANKFURT’S PHILOSOPHY OF BULLSHIT AND BULLSHITTERS

Bullshit is one of the undefined words before Frankfurt’s arrival. It (bullshit) was generally known only as an expression from negative nor positive feelings. It sometimes takes account as a bad word because it expresses something negative indirectly. It seems that no one really devotes time to determine or analyze the specific function and meaning of the word bullshit for people settled from its mere presentation than to its real meaning. One of the great thinkers namely Harry Frankfurt tried to philosophize and raise the value of the word bullshit. According to his essay *ON BULLSHIT*, most people are rather confident of their ability to recognize bullshit and to avoid being taken in by it. So, the phenomenon has not aroused much deliberate concern, or attracted much sustained inquiry. In consequence, we have no clear understanding of what bullshit is, why there is so much of it, or what functions it serves. And we lack a conscientiously developed appreciation of what it means to us. In other words, we have no theory. I propose to begin the development of a theoretical understanding of bullshit, mainly by providing some tentative and exploratory philosophical analysis. I shall not consider the rhetorical uses and misuses of bullshit. (Frankfurt, 2005).

The exploration of Frankfurt in the word bullshit was not relevant to a stylistic twisting the word for the intention was not to play meaning but to expose its function and nature. It was stated from the published article of Lars J. Kristiansen & Bernd Kaussler that: Frankfurt endeavors to not only theorize the conceptual dimensions of bullshit by probing defining the term but also seeks to distinguish bullshit from other forms of dishonesty—lying in particular—by examining bullshit’s relationship with truth. (Lars J. Kristiansen, 2018) It was also cleared by Frankfurt himself in his essay that “My aim is simply to give a rough account of what bullshit is and how it differs from what it is not, or (putting it somewhat differently) to articulate, more or less sketchily, the structure of its concept. (Frankfurt, 2005) So, the scheme of Frankfurt’s philosophy on bullshit is to expound its nature and proper usage. He saw an interest in bullshit for he believes that the

world is composed, if not, full of bullshit and bullshitters (a person who is bullshitting) specially in culture. His philosophical journey for truth gave also a factor on his interest in examining bullshit for it is in Frankfurt’s world relevant to the topic on truth. This bullshit devalues and distorts the truth and its glamor.

He defined bullshit as similar to bluffing. In this, we say that bullshit is a misrepresentation of truth. It may; at glance, be similar to lying but Frankfurt made a major distinction between the two. According to him, it does seem that bullshitting involves a kind of bluff. It is closer to bluffing, surely than to telling a lie. But what is implied concerning its nature by the fact that it is more like the former than it is like the latter? Just what is the relevant difference here between a bluff and a lie? Lying and bluffing are both modes of misrepresentation or deception. Now the concept most central to the distinctive nature of a lie is that of falsity: the liar is essentially someone who deliberately promulgates a falsehood. Bluffing too is typically devoted to conveying something false. Unlike plain lying, however, it is more especially a matter not of falsity but of fakery. This is what accounts for its nearness to bullshit. (Frankfurt, 2005) With this, he tried to emphasize that bullshit as a misrepresentation is not about lying but more on fakery. The bullshitter is not someone who deceives people or lies to people but someone who expresses himself without rooting from truth or false.

This pertains to the fact that bullshit prioritizes expression of thoughts over the truthfulness of the thought. It was cleared by Frankfurt that for the essence of bullshit is not that it is false but that it is phony. In order to appreciate this distinction, one must recognize that a fake or a phony need not be in any respect (apart from authenticity itself) inferior to the real thing. What is not genuine need not also be defective in some other way. It may be, after all, an exact copy. What is wrong with a counterfeit is not what it is like, but how it was made. This points to a similar and fundamental aspect of the essential nature of bullshit: although it is produced without concern with the truth, it need not be false. The bullshitter is faking things. But this does not mean that he necessarily gets them wrong. (Frankfurt, 2005) Petter Naessan further cleared the idea of Frankfurt in his article stating that Frankfurt makes an important distinction between lying and bullshitting. Both the liar and the bullshitter try to get away with something. But ‘lying’ is perceived to be a conscious act of deception, whereas ‘bullshitting’ is unconnected to a concern for truth. Frankfurt regards this ‘indifference to how things really are’, as the essence of bullshit. Furthermore, a lie is necessarily false, but bullshit is not – bullshit may happen to be correct or incorrect. (Naessan, 2022).

Another major distinction between lying and bullshitting is that lying is always grounded on the truth while on the other hand, bullshitting is not. A liar cannot hide something that he doesn’t know. A liar is more analytical than a bullshitter because a liar crafts his truth to deceive people while a bullshitter recklessly shares his sentiments

disregarding its root. Frankfurt in his essay stated that in order to invent a lie at all, he must think he knows what is true. And in order to invent an effective lie, he must design his falsehood under the guidance of that truth. On the other hand, a person who undertakes to bullshit his way through has much more freedom. His focus is panoramic rather than particular. He does not limit himself to inserting a certain falsehood at a specific point, and thus he is not constrained by the truths surrounding that point or intersecting it. He is prepared to fake the context as well, so far as need requires. This freedom from the constraints to which the liar must submit does not necessarily mean, of course, that his task is easier than the task of the liar. But the mode of creativity upon which it relies is less analytical and less deliberative than that which is mobilized in lying. (Frankfurt, 2005) Moreover, it is impossible for someone to lie unless he thinks he knows the truth. Producing bullshit requires no such conviction. A person who lies is thereby responding to the truth, and he is to that extent respectful of it. (Frankfurt, 2005) With this, Frankfurt distinctively imposed that bullshit is not sort of lying but more on misrepresentation of truth and belief.

The problem of being a bullshitter posits danger in the community. The thoughtless expression of bullshits rampantly influences people to be more bullshitter since bullshits are apparently and seemingly relevant. This prevailing scheme of technology was taken for granted by the bullshitters to spread bullshit in technological platforms. With this unfortunate reality, the value of truth and values are gradually deteriorating.

V. YOUTH'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AS BULLSHIT

In this paper, it was mentioned above that the subject youth refers to the generation z. Gen Z used media platforms as a means in participating in the occurrences in the society especially in politics. With the help of technology and their advancement, they easily get access to information that grants them a mere idea which they root in giving sentiment. In David's manuscript, it was mentioned that the political participation of the youth can thus take many forms ranging from the conventional democratic politics to more creative, novel and remarkably distinctive contemporary generation, shaped and influenced as it is by their specific socio-political contexts and global social movements. And with the massive penetration of cellular phones, Internet, social networking sites, blogs and other ICT inventions in the everyday life of Filipinos, politically active youths have used these technologies in their engagements, civic and political wise. (David, 2013) This awareness and participation in politics made a reformation impact in the society. It gives a new brand of reformation compared to the past. The political participation of youth seems plausible at glance but it inevitably posits a lot of danger and problems. The youth's political participation must be suspected for a lot of youth's engagement doesn't promote welfare in the society. Reckless

engagement and bandwagonism are the categories which made political participation problematic.

Reckless engagement is one of the elements of the said political participation. Youth with their young minds participates in ways which devalue the integrity of politics. The characteristic of contrary to discipline creates a culture of hate and sarcasm which undermines the noble activity of the intellectuals. Using social media as a means to politically participate in the society and with their advancement in technology, their ideologies were followed by a lot of people from different generations. In this sense, the nobility of the activity is gradually degrading and becoming a rule of the brutes where people lower the standard of decency.

This political participation is a regression on history. People are gradually going back from history of being unrefined and not history repeating itself. Following the claim, recklessness of youth in engaging in politics could be paralleled and contextualized as Frankfurt's meaning of bullshit. This political participation is more on toying the mind than reforming. The reckless engagement doesn't mean lying but more on bullshitting where they engage in politics without following any guidelines on how the system works. The said partaking disregards the truth for its sole purpose is to give an opinion about the matter. Furthermore, it enables mind culture to devalue the integrity of grounding on truth and the truth itself. One of the accounts of Petter Naessan, he interpreted Frankfurt's philosophy and said that bullshit may happen to be correct or incorrect. The crux of the matter is that bullshitters hide their lack of commitment to truth. Since bullshitters ignore truth instead of acknowledging and subverting it, bullshit is a greater enemy of truth than lies. (Naessan, 2022) With this contextualization, this bullshit political participation of youth as bullshitters should be compromised for its posit dangers by promoting a semi-barbaric attitude that destroys and devalues refinement. It encourages hate and disinformation rather than reforming mere intent. This reckless engagement could be classified as bullshit for the bullshitters bullshits the politics.

One of the central problems of political engagement of youth is bandwagonism. Bandwagon was defined by an article as a cognitive bias that causes people to think or act a certain way if they believe that others are doing the same. For example, the bandwagon effect can cause someone to adopt a certain political ideology, because they see that other people in their social circle have adopted the same ideology. (Effectiviology) This culture of bandwagon effect is evident in social media platforms. It affects the users and encourages them to delve in issues despite not knowing the truth. Since the youth are more advanced and into social media, there is a high possibility that they cultivate and at the same time provide bandwagonism. It is the main attitude where trends provide a standard of morals.

Youth being as young in the industry of social activities specially in politics, the aptitude of being gullible from the

trends are at high. In one of the scholarly articles, it was said that as individuals normally believe in the correctness of others' online comments when a large group of people shares the same opinion and information through the comments, bandwagon effect is said to be triggered as the individuals tend to follow others' beliefs (Chaiken 1987; Sundar et al. 2008). As a result, these collective voices or perceived others' views from the online comments influence the information perception such as perceived credibility (Kim 2015) as the information endorsed by the majority can trigger the bandwagon heuristic. (Choon Ling Kwek, 2019) Following the line of bandwagon effect especially in social media platforms, political participation must be suspended and should be skeptical for chaos, abomination and disinformation are on the line. This insolence to politics by grounding on trends could be examined as bullshit in Frankfurt's term. The bandwagon paradigm humiliates the value of truth and at the same time decry the integrity of politics. The characteristic of bullshit is an embodiment of this bandwagonism for it disregards truth and encourages delusion that affects the community. In the notion that politics is an event of the intellectuals that promotes welfare in a society, the engagement must be honest, meaning grounded on truth and have the high respect in diplomacy and refinement. The political participation of youth in both social media or physical engagement is highly encouraged for it brings prosperity to the society. However, being skeptical should not be neglected because a lot of youth destroys and violates the glamor stand point of politics by devaluing the truth and refinement. The political involvement of youth is reasonable but the way of engaging must be suspected for bullshits are always present.

VI. CONCLUSION

This work gives an emphasis to the prevailing political attitude of the youth that undercuts the value of truth and politics. The engagement within the society such as reformation, political awareness and contribution to the welfare of the society are encouraged for the said movement are the vital elements for the social progress. This paper was not meant to silence or invalidate the voices of youths but it encourages them to put in proper and correct ways of engagement that preserves the integrity of social activities. The political movement of the youth like reckless engagement and bandwagonism are categorized as bullshit. The youth who bullshit in the society especially in politics are bullshitters that become the reason for social regression. The culture of hate,

sarcasm and bandwagonism of bullshitters in politics today is a stigma to the age of civilization and diplomacy.

Upon paralleling the political participation of the youth to Frankfurt's philosophy, it calls out the following problems:

A lot of youth are bullshitters for they tend to devalue the dignity of truth and politics where the intention was not to reform the society but to bluff and present a mere idea of being active and socially relevant.

The youth's political participation which is rooted from a trending stand point that creates a paradigm of abomination and baseless standpoints are considered bullshits for they are the enemy of truth.

Lastly, youth being a bullshitter can be the reason for social regression because they assert a new model of semi-barbaric and brutish engagement using social media platforms as a means for their personal ends.

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