

**Ethical Principles of Community, Stewardship and Compassionate
Paternalism in Public Health: The Case of the Philippines**

Rogelio P. Bayod
Erikka June D. Forsuelo
Alex D. Niez
Cor Jesu College, Digos City

Abstract

Public health programs and policies of a state have to be accepted by the majority of the people before these can be successful since some of these programs and policies may favor one over the other and infringe people's rights and liberties just to promote public safety. In utilitarian societies, the state's primary concern is to ensure the most significant benefit to the majority, even if, in the process, some rights, liberties, and privileges of the minority will be jeopardized. In libertarian societies, the state's authority is limited to ensuring that the members of the population enjoy their natural rights to life, liberty, and property and to defend the citizens from external aggression. The liberal societies agree with the libertarians that the state's main function is to protect individual freedoms but reject their thesis that the state's legitimate power is restricted to protection of these rights and concur with the communitarians that the state should also protect the welfare of its citizens. While a liberal state supports the promotion of public goods and services, its primary concern is protecting individual welfare. It does not adequately consider the shared commitment of communities and cultures to safeguard and secure collective goods. This paper will argue that for a country with diverse cultures and values such as the Philippines, a healthy interplay of the ethical principles of stewardship and community, as well as compassionate paternalism, must be considered in the crafting and implementation of public health programs and policies to be able to address the different needs of individuals without jeopardizing the collective needs of the community, especially during and after a pandemic.

Keywords: *Public Health, Stewardship, Community, Compassionate Paternalism, Covid-19
Pandemic*

Introduction

Health matters to all of us. We want to be healthy to be able to work for the realization of our dreams and desires in life. That is why in matters of public health, the state should implement a mechanism for free, wide-range and inclusive participation and consultation of the different sectors, groups and individuals in the deliberations for policy and program formulation and implementation. What is public health? The Faculty of Public Health of the Royal Colleges

of Physicians of the United Kingdom defines it as “the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through organized efforts of society.”¹

In the crafting and implementation of public health programs and policies, it is important that there will be fair and publicly accountable decision-making process.² However, the concept of what is fair decision-making process is already difficult to achieve even in normal circumstances as people will have different interests, desires and agendas in life. How much more during times of public health emergency situation such as during pandemic? How can we ensure fair, transparent and inclusive decision-making process during *the* pandemic situation? To complicate the issue even further, how can a country with limited resources, economically diverse, politically and morally divided ensure fair and inclusive decision-making process as regards to the allocation and distribution of resources, rights, and opportunities to its constituents pertaining to health care programs and services during public health emergencies?

The goal of this paper is to offer an ethical paradigm that decision-makers in the country might consider as regards to public health planning and implementation of programs and policies, most particularly during and after a pandemic outbreak. To be able to achieve this, the paper attempts to make assessment on the different ethical and philosophical paradigms such as utilitarianism, libertarianism, liberalism, and communitarianism that have been influential in matters of policy and program implementation of different societies in the world. After identifying their strengths and weaknesses, the paper will then proceed to discuss the need for a healthy interplay between and among the ethical principles of stewardship, community or solidarity, and paternalism that might guide public health decision-makers in the making and implementation of programs and policies that will address the diverse needs of individuals and groups especially during and after a pandemic.

Ethical Approaches to Public Health

Since public health involves organized efforts of the society to prevent disease and promote health and wellness of the population, ethical theories or approaches are important to ensure that decisions made in this area adhere to the standards and principles of moral reasoning given the different contexts and circumstances.

Utilitarianism and the Greatest Good for the Greatest Number

Utilitarianism is the leading example of an ethical theory that might be thought to solve bioethical problems and dilemmas on public health matters by the straightforward application of its ideas.³ The basic idea of utilitarianism is to ensure that in every action the result or the consequence will give the greatest benefit for the majority of the population. In short, it asserts

¹ Nuffield Council on Bioethics, “Public Health: Ethical Issues” *Faculty of Public Health of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom* p.5 (2007): accessed June 16, 2021, http://www.fphm.org.uk/about_faculty/what_public_health/default.asp.

² Norman Daniel. “*Is There a Right to Health Care and, If So, What Does It Encompass?*”, *A Companion to Bioethics, Second Edition*, ed. Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 369.

³ Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer, *A Companion to Bioethics* (UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 15.

that the “value of every act is grounded in the consequences”.⁴ In every situation, the utilitarian would insist that policies and programs, as well as decisions made in matters of public health, will have to bring the best possible outcomes or consequences for the greatest number of people. The motive or the reason behind the action or decision matters less in the determination of whether the act is good or bad.⁵ Being consequentialists, utilitarians think that the consequences that are relevant to the goodness or badness of actions are consequences that increase or diminish the utility or welfare of all those affected.⁶ If public health decision-makers are to decide what should be done in a particular case, they will simply calculate the likely effects of the possible actions and choose the one that will give the greatest benefit for the majority of the citizens. But what kind of benefit that would be? Different people have (a) different definitions of benefit that results from decisions pertaining to their health. We will take, as an example, the decision of the government to put the entire country into Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As we already know, during the recent ECQ, border lockdowns and curfews were imposed. Arguably, the aim of the government and public health experts in implementing that decision is for the greatest number of the population to be safe from acquiring the virus. Surely, they are concerned of the health of the majority of the population. However, health is not just an absence of a disease, in this case, the absence of Covid-19. Some people may consider themselves healthy if they are given the freedom to do what they love doing such as shopping, partying, going to the beach, drinking with friends, gambling, and the like. Thus, the ECQ that hampers their desires to move and be with their friends, can be considered as a factor that will cause them to be unhealthy and might affect their total well-being. For the majority who are poor, they also need to work to have food on the table. Some of them live and work in a “no work, no pay” scheme. Hence, lockdowns and curfews that hampered their desires to move and go to their workplaces can be considered as promoting their death rather than their health.

Despite the problem in its application to the different issues and contexts, it cannot be denied that utilitarianism would like to ensure the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people. Lockdowns and curfews, as well as implementing quarantine and isolation of people who have the virus from the rest of the population, are necessary to protect the health and well-being of the majority. Thus, in the case of a pandemic, a utilitarian state usually favors isolation and quarantining.⁷ The implementation of policies became problematic in the Philippine setting because there will be more people who will be affected and that, the government does not have enough money to sustain the daily needs of those who are affected of the lockdowns and curfews. Hence, if we are to reject utilitarianism and its straightforward application to public health issues, what will be our other alternative?

Libertarianism and the Primacy of Individual Rights

Another issue that is fundamental to public health programs and policy implementation is the relationship between the state’s authority and the position of individual and intermediate

⁴ Christopher Ryan Maboloc, *Applied Ethics: Moral Possibilities for Contemporary World*, Revised Edition, (Davao City: SMKC PrintShoppe, 2018),15.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Kuhse and Singer, *A Companion to Bioethics* (UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 86.

⁷ Nuffield Council on Bioethics 2007: *Public Health: Ethical Issues*, p.5

bodies such as institutions, churches, schools, and companies that are governed by its rules.⁸ This is very important because the issues of public health are closely linked to the issues of justice and peace. The right to health care is basically a requirement of justice.⁹ The libertarians like Nozick believe that the fundamental rights to property including rights to personal assets such as talents and skills, are violated if the state forces individuals to provide and contribute something for the welfare of society.¹⁰ The libertarians hold dearly their rights to life, liberty and property and that the authority of the state in these rights is just to ensure that they are able to enjoy them without restriction from others.¹¹

The libertarians value so much their individual rights that they do not want the state to interfere in their private affairs. Aside from its role to defend the country from external aggression, the state's legitimate activities comprise only to ensure that political institutions provide authoritative statements of individual rights, judicial institutions to determine the violations of these rights, and the penal institutions to punish those who violated these rights.¹² The libertarian state does not see the promotion of the welfare of its population as its proper role so it provides little support for the different public health programs and policies except for those that are essential for the enjoyment of the rights of its citizens.¹³

Although some libertarians may recognize an "imperfect" duty to act beneficently or charitably, this duty is only a matter of individual discretion¹⁴ and not imposed by authorities. But the state cannot also impose a kind of restriction to those who are willing to help the poor for doing so is also a violation of their individual freedom. The promotion of public health by contributing something for the health and welfare funds basically depends on the individual choice of the citizens to be charitable. If people contribute to the social security fund or social welfare fund to be given to the poor during emergency situations, it is solely because they decide to be generous and not because the state requires them to contribute through taxation, pledges, and others. People who are denied of charity have no right also to claim it from the state or from anybody else.

During the onslaught of Covid-19 when the majority of the poor need food and cash assistance because of ECQ and lockdown, in a libertarian society, they cannot expect the government to give them the necessary aid. They cannot also demand from other charitable institutions to look after them and be responsible of their needs. If and when the government leaders become oblivious of their needs, all they can do is pray to the heavens that the great spirit will touch their hearts to show compassion to the needy. After all, the assumption in a libertarian society is that they are poor because they don't make use of their rights and freedom to make their lives better and to prepare for emergency situations.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Norman Daniels, "Is There a Right to Health Care and, If So, What Does It Encompass?", in *A Companion to Bioethics, Second Edition* ed. Helga Kushe and Peter Singer (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 364.

¹⁰ Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, (Cowley Rd, Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1974)

¹¹ Nuffield Council on Bioethics, "Public Health", *Ethical Issues* (UK: Cambridge, 2007), 13.

¹² Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, (Cowley Road, Oxford UK, 1974)

¹³ Nuffield Council on Bioethics, "Public Health", *Ethical Issues* (UK: Cambridge, 2007), 13-14.

¹⁴ Daniels, "Is There a Right to Health Care" *Is There a Right to Health Care and, If So, What Does It Encompass?*, *A Companion to Bioethics, Second Edition*, ed. Helga Kushe and Peter Singer (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 369.

Some have argued that the difficulty of coordinating and ensuring the delivery of aids and assistance to those in need might justify the state's coercive measures¹⁵ to pressure institutions and individuals to contribute for the common good. Others also argued that even libertarians must recognize some forms of welfare rights,¹⁶ and resist any weakening of property rights at the core of their view.¹⁷ Thus, those who are in dire need of medical, financial, and other forms of assistance during public health emergency situations will have to wait for the government and other institutions to respond to their needs.

In fact, imposing ECQ and lockdown even during a pandemic are already considered by libertarians as grave violations of their individual rights to live, to enjoy life, to attend to their businesses, works and other activities and transactions. Forcing them to give something to charitable works and to social security fund to aid the poor might add insult to the injury. For the libertarians, government leaders, health insurance companies, and employers must not require individuals and employees to contribute something to be insured as this must be voluntary on the part of the individuals and employees. If they cannot be pressured to contribute something for their own health insurance, how much more in contributing money for the health insurance of others? Since the government should not fully intervene in the market, hoarding and profiteering actions of companies through selling medical and other health care supplies at a higher price compared to the prevailing market price might also not be regulated. As we can see, all these dreadful scenarios will be very detrimental to the poor especially during pandemic.

Liberalism and Equality of Opportunity

New illnesses continue to beset the Philippines which expand the medical and health care needs of the citizens. But the Philippines does not have enough budget to provide the health care needs of the citizens. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic reveals the poor health care system and programs as well as the resource of the country to ensure the public health of all the citizens. But to be healthy and to live in a healthy environment is a right. However, a right to health care would yield to endless claims on the scarce resources of the country.¹⁸ Safeguarding these extensive health care needs and rights of all the citizens which may result in violating some rights of the others is incongruous with the libertarian state's main function to ensure that there is no infringement on the individuals' rights to life, liberty, and property. However, the right to health can be an enabling condition for the exercise of other rights necessary in the pursuit of a good life. The person's health or well-being enables him to explore life free from vulnerability and exploitation.¹⁹ When a person is healthy, he can make use of his talents and skills to pursue his life goals whereas, if he is ill, he cannot take advantage of the many opportunities in the

¹⁵ Allen Buchanan, "The right to a decent minimum of health care," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 13 (1984): 55-78.

¹⁶ J. Sterba, "From liberty to welfare," *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol 11(1985): 285-305.

¹⁷ G. Brennan and D. Friedman. *A libertarian perspective on welfare: Income Support: Conceptual and Policy Issues*, ed. P. G. Brown, C. Johnson, and P. Vernier., (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield., 198)

¹⁸ Hugo Tristram Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Bioethics* (Oxford: University Press, 1986)

¹⁹ Robert Goodin, *Reasons for Welfare: The Political Theory of the Welfare State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988)

society. A right to health care can be also considered as a right to equality of opportunity.²⁰ This approach is congruent to Rawls's conception of justice as fairness.²¹ Rawls's theory of justice is applicable to the issues of health care since equality of opportunity is an important principle for Rawls's theory of justice.

For Normand Daniel, "the central observation underlying this account of a right to health care is that disease and disability restrict the range of opportunities that would otherwise be open to individuals".²² Because a normal human being has a range of functional capabilities in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domain, health care provides him plenty of opportunities to improve his life and contribute something to the society. Thus, health care whether in the form of public health protections or medical care aims to keep people as functioning normally as possible.²³

We can infer then that the right to public health care also aims at justice. Other philosophers aside from John Rawls also advance the view that equality of opportunity for welfare or advantage is a requirement of justice.²⁴ For Sen, it is equality of capability.²⁵ This implies that in planning and in implementing the different health care programs, policies, and technologies, the state should ensure the promotion of equality of opportunities as well as capabilities among its citizens. For instance, if through medical programs and policies that are open to all, the normal capabilities of people would be enhanced, they can be more productive citizens in the society. Equality of opportunity accounts for a vast expansion in terms of the moral requirements on health care systems practices.²⁶

However, the concept of equality of opportunity encounters a lot of challenges not only in the planning but also in the implementation of health care programs and policies in many countries, especially during a pandemic. In most cases, the prioritization of health care programs and policies is directed towards the front liners, politicians, and their friends, as well as some rich individuals and professionals who are expected to contribute more in the resolution of the problems. The poor and those that cannot contribute much are second in the ranking of priorities except maybe in terms of food rationing where they are the number one priority in many countries. In most cases, persons with disability or impairment are the most neglected sector in terms of health care programs, services, and policies.²⁷

In a poor country like the Philippines, there might be issues of injustice when we talk about equality of opportunity and also capability in health care systems and practices. For instance, in terms of providing personal protective equipment (PPE), vaccination, and other health care needs, those who have contributed much in the society in terms of their knowledge, skills and talents such as medical doctors, nurses and other front liners, are given the first

²⁰ Norman Daniels, *Just Health Care* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

²¹ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971)

²² Norman Daniels, "Is There a Right to Health Care and, If So, What Does It Encompass?", in *A Companion to Bioethics, Second Edition*, ed. Helga Kushe and Peter Singer (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 365.

²³ Ibid.365

²⁴ Richard Arneson. Equality and equal opportunity for welfare. *Philosophical Studies* 54 (1988): 79–95.

²⁵ Sen. *Inequality Reexamined*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992)

²⁶ Sabin and Normand Daniels, "Determining medical necessity in mental health practice". *Hastings Center Report*, 24/6 (1994): 5–13

²⁷ Christopher Ryan Maboloc, "Who is the Most Vulnerable During a Pandemic? The Social Model of Disability and the Covid-19 Crisis", *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics*, No. 4 Vol. 30 (2020), 158-161

priority. In some cases, the politicians and their friends were also given special treatment given their status as also front liners. But for John Rawls, this form of injustice is allowed as long as those who are worst-off will get the most desired benefit of this social arrangement.²⁸ Needless to say, when the medical experts are healthy and well, they can continue to provide the services needed to save those who are sick.

At the earlier stage of the pandemic in the country when plenty of medical front liners died and decided to quit from their job, it became a problem of the government to retain them from their job, alive and well. The role of the government is crucial in this arrangement. Unlike the libertarians who do not welcome state interference in the attainment of distributive justice, the liberals rely so much on the state mechanism to ensure this. For Rawls, justice is the first virtue of social institutions.²⁹ It is the duty of the government then to promote justice and fairness in the society.

To be able to achieve justice and fairness, the liberals put individual rights and liberties as a matter of priority. The liberals argue that there is justice if individuals are given equal rights and freedom to pursue their life goals. For them, individual rights and liberties cannot be violated in exchange or in favor of economic opportunities. But during emergency situations like a pandemic where a lot of people are hungry and in need of cash, some people may be forced to trade-off some of their rights and liberties in favor of economic advantages such as aids, jobs, scholarships, and the like. In fact, many poor people in the Philippines may choose to stay at home and sacrifice their rights and freedom if they will be assured of government aids and subsidies during the entire duration of lockdowns. The problem is that when people are asked to stay at home without giving them enough subsidies to survive, they would clamor for their rights and freedom to go out and work to have food on their table. During the Covid-19 pandemic it is also evident that some individuals chose to sacrifice their individual rights for the common good.

Communitarians and the Primacy of the Common Good

Communitarians disagree with both the libertarians and the liberals in their conception of a free and autonomous self. Communitarians think that man is not totally free. He is always attached to his social realities and environment. Thus, his conception of what is good, right, and just is very much influenced by his family, culture, and the environment. Christopher Ryan Maboloc contends that the idea of the common good for the communitarians refers to the notion of what is of value for a particular group of people and not for a specific individual.³⁰ In this sense, Maboloc adds, “the idea of the common good precedes the notion of the self.”³¹ For the communitarians, therefore, because the self is always defined by its context- the individual is not totally free.³²

This is basically true among Filipinos and most especially, among the indigenous peoples in the Philippines. For most Filipinos, it is their community or family that decides for their

²⁸ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971)

²⁹ *Ibid.* 3

³⁰ Ryan Maboloc, *Applied Ethics: Moral Possibilities for Contemporary World*, Revised Edition (Davao City: SMK PrintShoppe, 2018), 41.

³¹ *Ibid.* 41

³² Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: University Press, 1985)

future. We can take as an example a choice of profession or career to pursue. We found out that among the college students in our school, the number one determinant of their career choice are their parents. We believe that this is also true to some other schools and colleges in the country. It is even more evident among the indigenous peoples because they are basically communalists or “communists” by nature and by practice.³³ They live in a community and that their identity is closely attached to it. These people are willing to sacrifice their individual right for the sake of the betterment of the whole community. During disasters and pandemic, they share what they have to their community. They are duty-bound to promote the common good.

However, as Maboloc argues, communitarians are rigid in terms of their view of the state because they would like that the state must implement a kind of system or social arrangement that is determined by the concept of the common good.³⁴ In this sense, the state and its institutions should prescribe and teach the citizens what is good, just, and right. This poses a challenge not only to the citizens but also to the state leaders to be good exemplars of these values. In the context of public health programs and policies, these people expect that the state will promote the common good and not their individual desires and interests. When the state leaders fail in this aspect, these people may not only lose their trust and respect to them but might also do certain actions which can be detrimental to their political career and ambitions.

Community, Stewardship, and Compassionate Paternalism in Public Health

The support and viability of public health programs and policies depend heavily on the way the government leaders exercise their political mandate to ensure the safety and well-being of the citizens, while providing enabling environment for the people to participate and put their trust in their leadership. These environments should be able to adequately address people’s will, desire, individuality or autonomy, and how conflicts should be resolved when mismatch occurs.³⁵ The success of public health programs and policies is also dependent upon the ability of the decision-makers and implementers to motivate people to change their attitude and behaviors that predispose them to dangers and illnesses through mechanisms and processes that the local people accept, understand, and respect. Furthermore, in the context of quality health care in the time of pandemic, quality is based on whether the care is safe, effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient, and equitable.³⁶ The fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken almost a million lives, the support of the community to ensure proactive healthcare programs are very important. In addition, community support for the frontliners who have been risking their lives to ensure that everyone is safe and protected is also crucial. With deliberate effort, these experiences can be

³³ Rogelio Bayod, “The Future of the Environment and the Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines Under the Duterte Administration”, *Social Ethics Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Special Issue, (2018),229-253.

³⁴ Ryan Maboloc, *Applied Ethics: Moral Possibilities for Contemporary World*, Revised Edition (Davao City: SMK PrintShoppe, 2018), 42.

³⁵ Nuffield Council on Bioethics, “Public Health: Ethical Issues” Faculty of Public Health of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom p.23 (2007): accessed June 16, 2021, http://www.fphm.org.uk/about_faculty/what_public_health/default.asp.

³⁶ Abrams, Elissa M., Alexander G. Singer, Marcus Shaker, and Matthew Greenhawt. "What the COVID-19 pandemic can teach us about resource stewardship and quality in health care." *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice* 9, no. 2 (2021): 608-612.

used not only to inform our preparedness for future pandemics and national emergencies but also to hasten the evolution of care these significant people provide every day to maximize value in health.

The Principle of Community and the Value of Solidarity

Public health programs and policies must embrace the ethical principle of community and the value of solidarity. What is required is a value that expresses the way that people can also benefit as members of a community when the health needs of other members are addressed. For example, in a community where there are plenty of malnourished children or old people who are sick with tuberculosis and other contagious diseases, providing their needs will benefit the whole community. When the children's nutritional status will improve, they can concentrate on their studies. The parents can also focus on other priority needs of the family. When tuberculosis and other contagious diseases are cured, the whole community will be safe.

The value of community and solidarity is also fostered when the implementers of the health programs and policies consult and engage the local people, especially the community leaders. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Philippine government implements social amelioration program through cash and food assistance to help the poorest of the poor. The agency that is mandated to distribute the assistance is the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). However, there had been complaints of unjust distribution because those who are supposed to receive the assistance because they are members of the poorest of the poor were not able to receive because they are not in the "qualified" lists of beneficiaries based on a survey conducted by DSWD sometime in 2015.³⁷ The local officials were just following rules. However, in some *Barangays* (villages) in Mindanao where members of the DSWD personnel coordinated and consulted the local leaders, there are success stories in the distribution of assistance. For instance, there were two *Barangay Captains* (Local Chief Executives) in Davao del Sur who divided the cash and food pack assistance with the consent of the people in the presence of the DSWD team so that everyone in their *Barangays* will receive based on their degree of needs. As we can see, community and solidarity are practiced here by talking to and engaging the people. In the end, everyone is happy and satisfied in these two barangays.

In other communities, we have heard from the local radio news that some people who are qualified for the assistance did not claim what is supposed to be theirs, instead, they instructed the DSWD to give the amount to those who are in dire need saying that they can still manage their finances. Such gesture is also evident among local people during our engagement after a series of earthquakes that jolted Davao del Sur. When we went to the community to reach out to them and deliver some goods, some of them refused to get all the goods (rice, canned goods, noodles, potable water, and even tents) and got only what they badly need during that time because they wanted that those who are in dire need must be the priority.³⁸ This clearly shows that the spirit of community and solidarity is very much evident in many provinces in the Philippines most particularly in Davao region. Aside from their burning desire to really help each other, *Dabawensyos* also said that they are also inspired by the call of President Rodrigo Duterte

³⁷ Rogelio Bayod, "Recognitive and Redistributive Claims in Covid-19 Outbreak", *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (2020), 136-143.

³⁸ Ibid.

(PRRD) to help each other through the spirit of *Bayanihan*.³⁹ However, this is not the case in some other parts of the country. People's trust in leadership during crisis situation is indeed very crucial for the success of the implementation of programs and policies.⁴⁰ This crisis that we are currently experiencing is concerned with public health policies and the credibility of each administration, possibly further accentuating the existing divisions and lack (or presence) of political trust in each country. As such, the question is not about rallying with 'our' leader against an 'other', but of assessing whether our President really has our own best interests at heart and/or the competence to steer the ship in troubled waters.⁴¹ Citizens who trust government mandates and protocols most likely comply with the law and more likely, they have the higher inclinations to agree with the policy measures of the government which are geared towards the promotion of the common good. This implies that when the citizens have trust to their leaders, they will not only follow policies that are mandated to them, instead, they will also make their own initiatives to contribute to the value of community and solidarity in their respective places for their own sustainable development. It is therefore imperative that trust of the people towards the government is crucial to voluntary compliance with government policy, which can increase citizens' tolerance of measures might disrupt their comfort zones and way of living.

The Principle of Stewardship and Caring for Each Other

The concept of stewardship means that states have responsibilities to look after the needs of the people both individually and collectively.⁴² This means that as stewards, state leaders and decision-makers should see to it that the different needs of the people (both individuals and groups) are met through the assets and resources of the state while also ensuring that these assets and resources will not be consumed by these particular people or groups of people in one community. In the context of public health, the principle of stewardship gives expression to the obligation of states to provide conditions that allow people to be healthy, especially in relation to reducing health inequalities.⁴³

As stewards of public health, the states should take an active role in promoting the health and wellness of the community. Public health programs and policies should actively promote health such as providing appropriate access to medical services according to their individual and collective needs, establishing programs that promote healthy lifestyle like good nutrition and supporting the opportunities for exercise and meditation, as well as protecting the natural environment which is essential in the promotion of health and wellness of the citizens. As a principle of justice, solidarity has the purpose of protecting the human dignity of each and every

³⁹ Ian Garcia. "Unity in times of Adversity", Accessed, April 25, 2020, www.mindanaotimes.com.ph

⁴⁰ Darryl Macer, "Wearing Masks in COVID-19 Pandemic, the Precautionary Principle, and the Relationships between Individual Responsibility and Group Solidarity", *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (2020) 131.

⁴¹ Altiparmakis, Argyrios, Abel Bojar, Sylvain Brouard, Martial Foucault, Hanspeter Kriesi, and Richard Nadeau. "Pandemic politics: policy evaluations of government responses to COVID-19." *West European Politics* (2021): 1-21.

⁴² Nuffield Council on Bioethics, "Public Health", *Ethical Issues* (UK: Cambridge, 2007), 25

⁴³ Ibid.

human life, in the reality of our interconnectedness and mutual vulnerabilities.⁴⁴ In serving the constituents, welfare of the people comes first and this means having to live with sacrifices because this is one of the duties and responsibilities of our leaders. Hence, public officials, ideally, by all means has the responsibility to protect the lives of the people living in the community. It is the recognition of human dignity, vulnerability, and interdependence that calls for persons and the communities they form to commit to mutual flourishing.⁴⁵ The idea that when the human vulnerability is taken into consideration especially in times of pandemic, people also recognize the sincere leaders who are also strong decision makers. When these people are taken care of and attended to, they learn to value the essence of service to humanity that disregards personal interests. This means that solidarity requires, as a matter of justice, that both individuals and institutions be committed to promote the good of each and every person.⁴⁶ Solidarity therefore entails, in the context of global health justice, a shared commitment, among all global health stakeholders and institutions, to uphold the good and the flourishing of each individual in every community. The leaders protect the interest of its constituents by making sound decision making and take on the command responsibility that whatever happens, whether it leads to unsatisfactory results, he/she would still think of the best interest by acting as accountable stewards of the people who believe in his/her capacity to lead.

The Principle of Compassionate Paternalism to Ensure Fulfillment of Obligation

In one of the articles of Bayod (2020), he argued that in times of crisis, strong leadership is very much important.⁴⁷ He further explained in that article that a strong leader is like a strict but compassionate father⁴⁸ who ensures that people do their duty and obligation for the betterment of society based on their talents and capabilities. As a father who is considered as the head of the family, the state leader, in this case, the president of the country, should do his police functions and responsibilities to ensure public health and wellness. Police officers are needed to ensure safety and order and proper implementation of programs and policies.

However, in this paper, we use **POLICE** as an acronym for **P**lanning, **O**rganizing, **L**eading, **I**nitiating, **C**ontrolling and **E**valuating. As a compassionate father to the nation, the president has to initiate **p**lanning as regards promotion of public health and wellness. He needs to **o**rganize his team very well by identifying the **SHAPE** (**S**kill, **H**eart, **A**ttitude, **P**ersonality and **E**xperiences) of the people he wants to be part of his team and not just get anybody without the necessary qualifications. During crisis and public health emergency situations, he needs to **l**ead his team and his entire flock well by **i**nitiating different activities and reforms to ensure people's needs are well-provided and they are well-informed about the situation. He also needs to **c**orrect

⁴⁴ Thana Cristina de Campos, *The global health crisis: ethical responsibilities*. (Cambridge: University Press, Vol 36, 2017).

⁴⁵ Sarah-Vaughan Brakman, "Guiding principles of community engagement and global health research: Solidarity and subsidiarity." *The American Journal of Bioethics* 20, no. 5 (2020): 62-64.

⁴⁶ Sarah-Vaughan Brakman, "Guiding principles of community engagement and global health research: Solidarity and subsidiarity." *The American Journal of Bioethics* 20, no. 5 (2020): 62-64.

⁴⁷ Rogelio Bayod, "Ethics of Care and Philippine Politics During Covid-19 Pandemic", *Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (2020): 69-76.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

those who are violating protocols and policies and doing corrupt activities even if they are members of his inner circle. Lastly, he needs to evaluate their different programs and policies vis-à-vis the different needs of individuals and communities. An effective public health response to a rapidly-moving pandemic such as the COVID-19 requires consistent participation and collective action across communities in addition to broader public health interventions.⁴⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of a policy area where we may expect that personal experience with the pandemic would initiate people in the community to strictly follow protocols to keep themselves, their loved ones, and their surrounding safe given the immediate and vivid policy changes both in the national and local level.

If families sometimes get into conflict because of individual differences and interests of the members, how much more in bigger societies where people have different motivations in participating in different social circumstances and activities. Aside from different motivations, individual members in a society have their own individuality even if they are members of the same group. To reconcile the importance of individuality with the obligations of the state to guide us towards prudent behavior, a modified version of paternalism is suggested.⁵⁰ For us, this modified version of paternalism is compassionate paternalism. How we make this functional in our society? For example, with regard to pension or health insurance arrangements, a libertarian society might argue that whether or not people wish to make contributions should be up to them, and that no one should be forced to accept regular deductions from their income.⁵¹ A paternalist, on the other hand, might argue the opposite and view compulsory deductions as justified, because they are important for future needs and emergencies.⁵² Compassionate paternalism would suggest that there must be deliberation about policies that establish standards in which value judgments about what is good for one's life should be based. However, individuals can still have the option to take the lowest standard. So, in the case of pensions and insurances, deductions should still be made, but people have the option to make alternative arrangements.⁵³ Insurance solutions covering the economic consequences of pandemic outbreaks would be desirable, because insurance indemnity payments cover losses without leading to future burdens, neither for the beneficiaries, as it would be the case through providing loans, nor for the taxpayers who have to finance crisis-related government spending.⁵⁴ In the case of a Third World country, like the Philippines, insurance can either be a choice or an option due to the economic conditions of the people. Those who are under the poverty line would opt to secure food in their tables before anything else just to get through the day. It might be a distressing situation but it is also manifest reality. The principle of compassionate paternalism should also take into account that decision makers have their own biases. In fact, there are times when they don't perform perfectly rational in their analyses and decision makings. However, as they design policies that

⁴⁹ Gadarian, Shana Kushner, Sara Wallace Goodman, and Thomas B. Pepinsky, "Partisanship, health behavior, and policy attitudes in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic," *Plos one* 16, no. 4 (2021): e0249596.

⁵⁰ Gerald Dworkin, "Paternalism", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2002, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/paternalism/>.

⁵¹ Nuffield Council on Bioethics, "Public Health", *Ethical Issues* (UK: Cambridge, 2007), 24

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler, "Libertarian paternalism is not an oxymoron", *University of Chicago Law Review*, 70 (2003):1159–1202.

⁵⁴ Gründl, Helmut, and Fabian Regele, "Pandemic insurance through pandemic partnership bonds: A fully funded insurance solution in a public private partnership", SAFE Policy Letter, No. 86 (2020).

impact a large number of people, it's even more important that biases are kept in check to keep the balance and ensure fulfillment of obligations.

Conclusion

In whatever kind of ethical paradigm that public health programs and policies are framed, some individuals or groups of people benefit the most by making their lives easier than others. The libertarian's emphasis on individual choice can only be fair if all people have the same abilities and capacities to make decisions. But since there are arbitrary factors that put one either superior or inferior than the others, the libertarian conception is not fair. That is why Rawls, in his principles of justice allows inequality as long as the disadvantaged people or groups will benefit the most.

But the communitarians also disagree with Rawls especially in his conception of the self. For the communitarians, Rawls's theory still puts so much emphasis on individuality. Although there are strong arguments in utilitarianism which favor government programs and policies that will contribute to the aggregate welfare, it is still problematic especially in a highly pluralistic society such as the Philippines because there will be minority groups that will be further marginalized.

This paper contends to strike a healthy balance between the principles of community, stewardship and compassionate paternalism to be able to address the gaps mentioned above. The principles of stewardship and community will not support highly coercive policies for public health. These principles can be applied to communities that are evidently helping each other and supporting the programs and policies of government to public safety, health, and security. Whereas, the principle of paternalism will be applied to individuals and groups who continue to defy the government's programs and policies related to public health, safety, and security. But they should be exercised compassionately. This means that the government should continue to use diplomatic means like engaging these people through crucial conversations and dialogue to let them understand the importance of the programs and policies not only to themselves but also to the general population. But in the occasion that these people continue to rebel against the government and will pose a real danger to public order, the government will have to exercise "calculated discipline and punishment" to correct their deviant behaviors. These schemes of discipline and punishment must be laid down during consultations and planning and agreed upon by the public.

Lastly, the coronavirus pandemic has created a natural experiment in which elected officials must make urgent and far-reaching policy decisions in a domain where they often have no personal experience or expertise, and where available information is limited, uncertain, or so dated as to be of questionable relevance.⁵⁵ Therefore, the public health officials and government officials' initiative in their early action to promote social distancing is seen to be a strong determinant of great concern in the course of the pandemic. This cannot be made possible if people from the community will not cooperate and will also not do their part by simply adhering to and following basic protocols. For John Stuart Mill and his followers, freedom is essential for the development of each person's individuality, the attainment of truth, and the development of

⁵⁵ Christopher Adolph, Kenya Amano, Bree Bang-Jensen, Nancy Fullman, and John Wilkerson, "Pandemic politics: Timing state-level social distancing responses to COVID-19." *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 46, no. 2 (2021): 211-233.

new and more enriching lifestyles. It is, therefore, a most fundamental social value. Persons must be left free to make their own choices about how they will lead their lives, even if these choices are considered reckless, stupid, or otherwise "bad" choices by others. Moreover, the ability to make choices that promote our well-being is a capacity one acquires and improves only through practice.⁵⁶

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⁵⁶ Manuel Velasquez, Claire Andre, Thomas Shanks, Michael J. Meyer, and M. J. Meyer. "The common good." *Issues in Ethics* 5, no. 1 (1992): 623-635.

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