

Do the "Triage" and "Lifeboat Ethics" Apply to the Philippines? - MabuhayRadio

Written by Cesar Torres

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The "Triage" from John L. Seitz, "*Global Issues*", states "A forecast of doom for the future of humanity has led some authors to recommend policies designed to deal with such situation. One called "triage" was discussed in *Famine 1975!* by William and Paul Paddock. Triage is a procedure that was used in World War I when doctors in battle field hospitals had to decided which of the many wounded would receive the limited medical care available.

The wounded were divided into three categories. The first were those soldiers who were only slightly wounded and, although in pain, would probably survive even if untreated. The second category consisted of soldiers who were seriously wounded that even if they received medical attention, they would probably die. In the third category were soldiers who were seriously wounded but who could probably be saved if the doctors treated them. It was to the last category that the military doctors first turned their attention.

The Paddock brothers recommended that the United States place countries of the world who were requesting food aid into three categories similar to those in the triage procedure and give aid only to those countries in the third category, that is, to those which would have a good chance of progressing to a state of being able to survive by their own efforts if they received some aid."

"Lifeboat ethics" is a policy suggested by biologist Garret Hardin in a world of desperately poor-and-overcrowded countries. Mr. Hardin used the metaphor of lifeboats at sea, some of which are threatened to be swamped by people in the water trying to get in. According to Hardin, the people in the lifeboats that are not completely filled, have three choices.

The first is to take in everyone who wants to get on board; but that would lead to the lifeboats being swamped and everyone drowning.

The second choice is to take on only a few to fill the empty seats; but that would lead to the loss of the small margin of safety and make for a very difficult decision as to which few will be selected. The third choice is to take no further people on board and to protect against boarding parties. Hardin saw the rich nations of the world as being in partially filled lifeboats and the poor nations as being in overcrowded boats with people spilling into the water because of their inability to control their population growth.

Mr. Hardin recommends the third choice for the United States. He admits this is probably

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unjust, but recommends that those who feel guilty about it can trade places with those in the water. Goodwilled but basically misguided efforts by the United States to aid poor countries suffering the long run. The emergency food aid contributes to a larger population eventually and thus a deeper crisis in the future" (pp 210-212).

My thoughts:

1. Are the United States and other rich countries seriously concerned about the plight of the poor countries, including the Philippines?
2. If some gut-wrenching initiatives are undertaken in the Homeland – imposing the rule of law, a gut-wrenching prevention for the nincompoops and the plunderers not to be elected to power and authority, a bureaucracy and an administrative system working efficiently, the creation of a broad united front among those groups screaming that they are the Vanguard of the oppressed, a more potent organization of just a significant and critical number of the 11 million Filipinos in Diaspora to focus their attention, share their skills and whatever resources they can muster for the homeland, so that they can help in draining the swamps that breed rebellions, fanaticism, and martyrdom, is their even a need to think about "Triage" and "Lifeboat ethics"?
3. The programs of Howie Severino of the lives of the poorest of the poor, of humans severely incapacitated due to malnutrition, of homeless children, of young women prostituting themselves for a ganta of rice and children smoking drugs to assuage their hunger, of families sleeping with the dead in the graveyards, I wonder if the powerful in the Homeland are still affected by such misery?

Comments, anyone? # # #

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