

AN EXAMINATION OF THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

There is no perfect society anywhere; as to be human is to be limited, finite, challenged and subject to the vagaries of life. While many societies have come to terms with the innate challenges of man, by trying to refine and regulate behaviours that are injurious to the proper functioning of the society, others have simply acquiesced to the challenges and see such as the normal ways of life. Nigeria is taken to be one of the most corrupt portions of the world, as corruption across all spheres of the state has stagnated the country in so many fronts. Though many efforts, some which were really not well thought out, have been made to confront the hydra-headed problem of corruption in the country, such have not yielded any appreciable gains; rather, corruption seems to be getting more footholds. It is in the light of the failure of previous efforts, that this work suggests a different approach - the philosophical approach - in order to arrest the problem holistically, rather than battling the symptoms, which previous efforts had been geared toward.

Keywords: Corruption, Nigeria

Introduction

If there is any word that is trending now in our political atmosphere, more than any other word and phenomenon, it is corruption. A former British Prime minister, David Cameron, even labeled us a ‘fantastically corrupt’ nation. It has permeated every aspect of our national life; that it is so profoundly endemic as to be termed systemic. Chinua Achebe in his incisive book, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, succinctly captures its pervasiveness, when he said that keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt, is akin to stopping a goat from eating yam (38). The erudite Achebe further avers, “My frank and honest opinion is that anybody who can say that corruption in Nigeria has not yet become alarming is either a fool, or a crook or else does not live in this country” (37). Corruption has, unabashedly, assumed the valence of a sub-culture, with its debilitating miasmatic undercurrents of decay and despair in the land.

No area is spared its sprawling tentacles; not even the most sacred of spheres. The country itself is a case study on corruption: corruptly cobbled together by the British, and left to perpetually grope in the dark, with stultifying polarities that hinder its very advancement. Until very recently, our prime position in Transparency International’s Perception Index (of corrupt nations) in the world was constant. We were constantly fighting for first and second positions, with only our neighbors, Cameroun, intermittently beating us to the top spot on one or two occasions. It is still not a cause for celebration that we are now said to be only

better than such failed and rogue states like Libya, South Sudan, Afghanistan, North Korea, Iraq, Somalia, Guinea Bissau, etc; the slimy bunch.

Howbeit, like every word that has entered popular usage, a cliché sort of, it has soon become lost in the quick sands of nuanced interpretations. It has acquired a baggage that seems to detract from its original meaning and has become increasingly limited in application. If you ask an average person what he or she understands by the word corruption, there would be a greater propensity to level it to political sleaze; greatly boosted in our shores by the media war waged over political personages and grand poobahs of the former political dispensations on alleged pillage of our common patrimony. But is corruption only limited to stealing of money by politicians?

What then is Corruption?

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines corruption as, “dishonest or illegal behavior especially by powerful people (such as government officials or police officers)”. This definition of corruption by Merriam Webster is too narrow, as it still falls within the narrow narrative of limiting corruption to political office holders and agencies of government. Of course, this definition of corruption would sit very well with us; where the very germane ways of gauging corruption, first hand, is through the actions and inactions of politicians and our near criminal police force. As if to expand on its otherwise narrow and restrictive definition of the concept, the dictionary goes further to define corruption as: “something that has been changed from its original form”. Definitely, the latter definition of corruption expands its horizon and incorporates other acts that fall under the spheres of the concept. The definition sort of synchronizes with the etymological ambience of the word.

Corruption is derived from the Latin word, *corruptus*; which itself is a past participle form of, *corrumpere*, meaning to abuse or destroy. This is the combination of the intensive prefix, *cum*, and the verb to be, *rumpere*: which means to break. Therefore, the original meaning of corruption had to do with the abuse of something entrusted to someone or a destruction or decay in the nature of a being. In the philosophical circles, the eternal Plato regarded the physical world as being basically corrupt; since it is a decay in the nature of the formal aspect of being-the spiritual (Stumpf, 78). He had earlier conceived the primary mode of being as being spiritual: the material or the physical world is only an imitation of it. One of his students, Aristotle, employed the word as an opposite term to generation; that is, the process of bringing something new into the world of being, in his work, *De Generatione et Corruptione* (Theodore Scaltas, Online). Thus, Aristotle viewed corruption as a process of ceasing to be or passing away of being. He saw change as a sort of corruption: since it involves a transition from the nature of a being to new forms; from potentiality to actuality. Invariably, Aristotle did not see corruption as something intrinsically bad: something can change into something better and vice versa.

Therefore, from the foregoing, it is very pellucid that the term corruption is all encompassing and is not limited to the political arena, as it is being made to look nowadays. It could be used to describe all negative changes in the nature and being of things in varied contexts. It applies to politics, as well as religion, social, educational, economic, etc milieu.

Facets of Corruption

Corruption has arrested so many areas of our national advancement. It has reduced the nation to a sorry and gory state and sight, and an object of mockery in the international scene. People of other nationalities are always uneasy whenever they have anything to do with Nigerians; there is always that hunch one is in for some deceitful ride when dealing with a typical Nigerian. It has bred distrust and lack of patriotism on the part of many in the country. This is because, according to Udo Etuk: “corruption negates the spirit of hard work in a population; for why should some toil and sweat for a pittance while others are landing millions in their bank accounts without moving a limb? Corruption contradicts the spirit of patriotism because where the true patriot would give his life for his nation; the corrupt person would sell it to enrich himself without batting an eyelid” (2004: 136).

As stated earlier, the reality of corruption is variegated; it is pervasive in all areas of life, without any exception. Within the political arena, for instance, receiving and giving bribe is a form of corruption, since it detracts from standard practices (the standard here being what ought to be, since some standard practices could be faulty and compromises the essential, as well as making one gain undue advantage over other persons. Similarly, Whereof the laws of the land enshrine certain principles, in a pluralistic society, over the sharing of political offices; non adherence to such principles and restricting appointments to one’s ethnic group, religious and political associates, and even family members is still corruption, because it involves a change from the laid down principles of statehood and injustice to those who are marginalized. Without justice, St. Augustine would say that States are nothing, but gangs of criminals on a large scale.

Padding of budgets, compromising laid down standards, imposition of candidates on the electorate during sham elections, muscling of opposition, disobedience to court orders, etc are all forms of corruption. So also the electorate who are always ready to collect few cups of salt, rice, beans, garri, wraps of Indian hems, bottles of hot drinks and money from crooked politicians in order to give them quick access to political offices, stupidly corrupt. Likewise falsifying records; birth certificates, school certificates, tax returns etc. in order to get manipulated (some would say ‘elected’) into public offices. It is not limited to embezzlement of money alone.

There is also corruption even at the domestic level. A wife, who inflates the market list to fleece the husband of extra funds and takes advantage of his ignorance about the prices of goods, is equally as corrupt as a minister who pads and inflates

budget. If such a dishonest woman is given the opportunity to serve in government as official, she would transport such a tendency to a larger scale and steal the treasury to nadir. A seller in the market, who uses wrong and manipulated measurements and tools to cheat his unsuspecting customers, is equally as corrupt as any thieving politician. A filling station owner, who manipulates the meter to cheat buyers, is equally as corrupt as a government minister who rips off the common treasury with his or her sleaze. A parent, who pays the teachers and commissions certain agents (candikot, as we call them here) to help his or her child pass exam has not only corrupted the child, but has also further corrupted the system. Funny enough, such irresponsible and morally challenged parents would later turn around and blame the system as being corrupt! A child who is brought up by being shown that he/she can make it in life through bribery and corruption, really needs a dramatic encounter, like that of St. Paul on the road to Damascus, not to be irredeemably corrupt throughout his/her lifetime.

A teacher, who believes that he can only make it quick in life, by being bribed for grades and exploiting his students, in all ramifications, is as corrupt as a thief-which is actually what he is. Our education system is so compromised that some wayward and morally bankrupt teachers openly inform their students that they are open for bribes and sexual romps with the unserious female folks for grades. Sometimes they deliberately fail students who refuse to buy their poorly researched and plagiarized textbooks unabashedly. Equally, a student who is not willing to study (helped by irresponsible parents and guardians, who are ready to bribe those concerned), but is willing to cheat his or her way through school, is not only involved in corruption, but also mortgaging his or her future. Such students only end up swelling the ranks of the unemployed because they are literally unemployable. Anyway, in our present day Nigeria anything is possible: even a blind man with no driving skills could be employed as a driver, based on quota system, religious, ethnic and political connections, ahead of a clear-sighted and fully qualified one with no connections! Any wonder why mediocres are still manning sensitive political, economic, social and religious posts in our country?

A man or woman, who has tried everything and failed, but believes that establishing a church is the surest way to make it in life through some hocus pocus, is as corrupt as the compromised system he/she would be ranting against. There is a very pervasive atmosphere of corruption, if not worse, in the area of religion, as there is in the political arena. Someone, who engages in religion for the sole purpose of acquiring wealth by exploiting the superstitious and ignorant minds of the poor masses, is as corrupt as the worst Nigerian paunchy and beer-bellied politician. A pastor, imam, priest, ifa, abia idiong or whoever, who comes up with fictitious schemes and stage-managed miracle charades to line his pocket, is involved in corruption. A religious body where promotion, sharing of privileges and appointments are done on the bases of ethnicity, cronyism, cliquism, sycophancy, Do ut Des, witch-hunting, scores-settling and sheer wickedness, rather than merit, only mirrors and sacramentalizes the corruption in the larger society; and has no moral authority to condemn the thieving, compromising and

corrupt politicians. Such malfeasance is no less corrupt because it is done by supposedly 'men of God'. If anything, it is actually the worst form of corruption; since, according to Thomas Aquinas, "corruptio optimi pessima", the corruption of the best is the worst.

A church leader that manipulates elections in his church to plant his pliant stooges in sensitive church positions has no moral ground to condemn the corrupt politicians and election officials who connive to rig elections. Any religion that places acquisition of wealth and building of physical edifices over the salvation of souls is a corrupt religion that has lost its ontological status and mission. Sacrilegiously, such crooked religious men disguise their wickedness, foibles and fables as the promptings of the Holy Spirit, which one must obey without questioning, and see such as the will of God. They have arrogated to themselves the role of interpreting the mind of God and have, therefore, become spiritual tyrants and dictators. Corruption is also pervasive in the moral atmosphere. In fact, there is a close link between corruption and morality: Corruption is the infraction of some moral postulates which all must obey in order to have a just and peaceful society. Adultery, fornication, and all forms of sexual misconducts are also aspects of corruption, since they involve deterioration in the state of moral lives and religious demands. Likewise deceit, not keeping promises and all the gamut of dishonesty are all forms of corruption. Therefore, corruption is multifaceted and cuts across all strata of our society.

The War against Corruption in Nigeria

In all fairness, though corruption walks on all fours in the country, there have been attempts at curbing it, notwithstanding how jejune some of those attempts have been. Various governments across the ages have always come up with various ways and methods to tackle the almost national sub- culture. Funny though, during the era of military misadventure, each succeeding junta always pointed at the prevalence of corruption as one of the reasons they ousted the previous government in power; only to surpass their predecessors in the graft. Historically, the first attempt at fighting corruption in the country was in 1966, when the military toppled the politicians of the First Republic accusing them of corruption. Corruption was given as one of the reasons that necessitated the coup against the inept and rudderless political actors, who had run the country aground with their incompetence, chicanery, brigandage, and all sorts of misdemeanors.

The counter coup that produced Yakubu Gowon, though they initially mouthed against corruption, became enmeshed in the cookie's pie themselves. That period was a period of free for all, as the head of state then, Gen. Gowon, said at the time that the problem of the country was not money but how to spend it. Whatever effort, if any, that was made to fight corruption, was a mere charade; as the military and their civilian collaborators had a field day with the national coffer and robbed it blind under false pretenses. The administration of Murtala Mohammed that ousted the Gowon regime sought to weed out very corrupt elements in the civil service that had made kickbacks and bribery as the official policy of a

decadent civil service. Through sheer force and brutality, he succeeded in maintaining a semblance of normalcy that could not last, because there was no holistic approach to address the issue frontally.

John (396), holds that the Shagari administration that succeeded the Murtala/Obasanjo regime brought back corruption on a grander scale; “kick-backs” (or illegal commissions on capital projects), illegal oil sales, and profits from commodity trade became the order of the day. These and many other corrupt practices boosted by the cluelessness of the President and his team of kindergarten and incompetent officials. It was an era of anything goes; over-inflation of contracts, importation of worthless goods - like sand, brooms into the country, and all forms of sleaze held sway. Ironically, the Shagari administration initiated a war against corruption; in what he called “Ethical Revolution”. As observed by Nkeonye Otakpor, Shagari’s Ethical Revolution was patently hollow, because he (Shagari) failed to understand the overt import and contradictions involved in such a fight against corruption. The government of the day thrived in corruption. Otakpor summarises Shagari’s ethical revolution as “A case of using an invidious term with no rational attempt made to justify the application. It failed before it got off the ground. Not only was its leadership insincere, the lack of political will in addition to lack of moral purpose, combined to make the so- called revolution a myth” (16).

It is apparent from the above that the administration of Shehu Shagari was simply chasing the wind, since it failed to ground the fight on firm foundation with the opposite commitment and sincerity such a crusade requires. As if to demonstrate the insincerity of the administration, the election of 1983 was so brazenly rigged that it became one of the main reasons that Muhammadu Buhari as military Head of State used to topple the clueless and corrupt administration. The Buhari/Idiagbon administration that toppled the corrupt Shagari administration came up with its own war against corruption; it inaugurated what it called, War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAI-C). With strong brutality in the enforcement, the war brought momentary sanity into the country, as delinquent civil servants reported early to work; and the soldiers forced people, sometimes with horse whips (koboko) to stand on queues for some services.

The rampaging madness and corruption that characterized the Shagari administration were largely curtailed. Nevertheless, in spite of its high horse standing, the Buhari/Idiagbon administration itself became mired in corrupt practices; like the 58 suitcases of smuggled drugs, Kangaroo trials, favoritism, etc, which informed the regime to be toppled by Ibrahim Babangida and his fellow soldiers of fortune. The succeeding Babangida administration not only released those who were convicted of corrupt practices by the Buhari regime, it unofficially enthroned corruption as a state policy. According to Otive Igbuzor in an Online work, the Babangida administration was unique in its unconcerned attitude about corruption amongst the ranks of public officials; it seemed as if the administration existed so that corruption could thrive.

No doubts about it, corruption in Nigeria reached its zenith under the Babangida administration. It was really laughable when the regime came up with anti-corruption crusade, under the banner of MAMSER - Mass Mobilization for Self-Reliance, Social Justice and Economic Recovery - which was no more than a comic attempt for his boys and cohorts to have avenue to enrich themselves and lull the unsuspecting public. It was not for anything that Babangida himself was called 'the evil genius'; a name he particularly took a liking to. His trickery and chicanery also earned him another nick-name, 'Maradona' - named after the legendary Argentine footballer that mesmerized his opponents with unequalled dribbling skills. The locust years of Sani Abacha made no attempts to pretend that it was against corruption. It just became a national way of life, with only the unfortunate ones who had grouse with the despot framed up for elimination.

Following the return to so called civil rule in 1999, the Obasanjo administration saw corruption as the one critical virus he needed to tackle in order to set the country on the path of sustainable growth and development. To this effect, one of the first bills he sent to the national assembly was the Anti-Corruption Bill. In 2000 the Anti-Corruption Bill was passed into law as the Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Act, 2000. He established the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2002. For all his efforts, it was however clear that there was no sincerity of purpose on the part of Obasanjo, as he used the anti-corruption agencies to beat his political opponents, including members of his own party, into line. Those who had issues with him, had the EFCC unleashed on them like attack dogs. The Musa Yara'dua and Jonathans' administrations were not too concerned about fighting corruption; it was a classic case of allowing a sleeping dog to lie, though in this case it was causing a great havoc.

While campaigning for office, the current President, Muhammadu Buhari, harped on the war against corruption as one of the cardinal points of his administration. Much to the credit of the administration, a lot of noise and awareness has been made about the pervasiveness of corruption in the country. He has been a brand ambassador of the national sub-culture, as per wherever he travels; he has not been averse to tell his hosts how corrupt his country is. The war against corruption by the administration is basically against presumed corrupt members of opposition party, the PDP, and judicial officers suspected of being sympathetic to them. As aptly captured by Shehu Sani, a Senator from the ruling APC party, corrupt individuals who are not close to the Presidency are tackled with insecticide, while corrupt elements within the Presidency are treated with deodorants. With all the media hype, no single conviction has been obtained by the government on those apprehended for corruption. Most of the wars against corruption by this administration are media wars against opposition parties, while identified corrupt elements within the administration are left in peace.

A Philosophical Approach

Plato, in his famous Epistle, underlined the importance of philosophy in curbing social ills thus:

At last I came to the conclusion that all the existing States are badly governed and the condition of their laws practically incurable, without some miraculous remedy and the assistance of fortune; and I was forced to say, in praise of true philosophy, that from her height alone was it possible to discern what the nature of justice is, either in the State or in the individual, and that the ills of the human race would never end until it is either those who are sincerely and truly lovers of wisdom come into political power, or the rulers of our cities, by the grace of God, learn true philosophy (vii).

From the above dictum of Plato, it is obvious that philosophy has a lot to offer in the proper running of the society, and in righting the wrongs thereof. As earlier hinted by Nkeonye Otakpor, the fight against corruption in Nigeria is not grounded on properly thought-out means; rather, agencies and bodies, as well as campaigns against corruption are waged with the most dubious and flippant of intentions and means. To this end, there is a necessity that a different outlook be factored into the fight in order to have better outcomes, otherwise we would still be dancing in circles. One of the definitions of a mad man is he who keeps doing a particular thing in a particular way and expecting a different outcome, which in all honesty describes the Nigerian approach against corruption.

At any rate, when we say a philosophical approach, what actually are we hinting at? There are many who are not at ease with the mention of philosophy: anything philosophy sounds odd and uneasy to them. Philosophers and their predilections are always viewed with consternation. In this light, W. Halverson has this to say about philosophy: “Scientists and technicians do things that help produce the necessities and comforts of life; doctors and dentists work to alleviate human suffering, athletes and musicians provide enjoyable entertainment - but what do philosophers do for their fellow men? They speculate and dream and talk nonsense and undermine the faith of men. Anybody who wants to amount to anything in life will do well to leave philosophy alone“ (6-7).

The above is the general view of many who are not at ease with philosophy and philosophers. They are largely seen as noise makers and people who are far removed from the nitty-gritty of daily existence. Unfortunately, such a view is not limited to the uneducated; even the highly educated still see philosophy as mere theoretical discipline that has no bearing in reality. This view seems to also be shared by those with a scientific inkling as observed by Bertrand Russell: “many under the influences of science or of political affairs are inclined to doubt whether philosophy is anything better than innocent but useless trifling, hair-splitting distinctions, and controversies on matters concerning which knowledge is impossible” (1967: 89). Nevertheless, the same Bertrand Russell is quick to point out the centrality of philosophy in the general scheme of human existence:

If all men are well off, if poverty and disease had been reduced to their lowest points, there would still remain much to be done to produce valuable society; and even in the existing world the goods of the mind are at least as important as the goods of the body. It is exclusively among the goods of the mind that the value of philosophy is to be found; and only those who are not indifferent to these goods can be persuaded that the study of philosophy is not a waste of time (The Problem of Philosophy, 89-90).

Therefore, it could be seen, as evident in Bertrand Russell's above submission, that it is impossible to do away with philosophy; in spite of the distaste many have against its very being. However, though philosophy is always looked upon as the leeway that could throw insightful light into the teething problems of the society, some do not always see the views of the philosophers as being germane to the contexts of societal problems. According to the famous African sage philosopher, Odera Oruka: "Up to now it has been common for many people to regard a philosopher with suspicion and for philosophers to refrain from making judgments in certain issues lest they be accused of pretending to know what they ought not to know. Many people who know and care little about philosophy view a philosopher as a dreamer who cannot say anything sensible concerning the problems of life" (34). However, in spite of the protestations of many over anything philosophy, many have not failed to see the usefulness of the discipline in the affairs of life. In line with this, Kwame Gyekye avers:

The abstract level at which the philosopher operates is intended to offer him a vantage point from which to beam his analytical searchlight on the inarticulate and woolly beliefs and thoughts of men so that the abstract reflections of the philosopher need not- could not- detract from the relevance and value of the philosophical enterprise in the search for answers to at least some of the problems of human society (4).

It is at the abstract level that philosophy operates; not that its abstract indulgence bears no practical imports to the affairs of the human society. The most distinguishing characteristic of man is rationality, which is at the level of abstractness, and which clearly sets him apart from other animals. Not bringing the abstract component of his being into practice when doing anything can only spell doom and retrogression. Therefore, to adopt a philosophical approach entails giving a place to reason, logic and calculation in human endeavour, since, according to Peikoff, "Man chooses his values and actions by a process of thought, ... he needs the guidance of abstract principles both to select his goals and to achieve them" (74).

Therefore, to cast aspersions on philosophers and philosophy is to mock what it is to be properly human. It is generally accepted, almost tacitly, that philosophical solutions and approaches are anchored on reasonableness and some standards of

coherence. Explaining a philosophical approach further, Moore and Bruder have this to say: “philosophical solutions require logic and critical thinking skills, discussion and expression” (11). It is no rocket science to know that whatever is consistent, logical and well-thought cannot but be normal, appropriate and functional.

Therefore, the philosophical approach to the fight against corruption would be holistic, reasonable, logical, consistent, thorough and dispassionate. It would look at the root causes of corruption- which may include the conditions of existence of those who engage in corruption: do people take to corruption because there is no other way out? Such approach is necessary because there are varieties of reasons that could attenuate the culpability of those who engage in corrupt practices. Sometimes people could take to corruption as outlet for their pent up feelings and frustrations by the political system, because, as observed by Bertrand Russell in *Principles of Social Reconstruction*; “it is not only material good that men need, but more freedom, more self- direction, more outlet for creativeness, more opportunity for the joy of life, more voluntary co-operation, and less involuntary subservience to purposes not their own” (31).

Again, to deny a people the basic necessities of life and cart away the common good, while expecting them to live according to the unjust laws of the land, is to attempt to square the proverbial circle, which obviously will result in nullity. To this end, a philosophical approach would look at the whole picture so as to know how to frontally confront the issue. Most of the laws made to combat corruption in the country are not well-conceived and based on reality. Most of the times, such laws lack practical applicability and become mere flatus vocis, that is empty words, as Fidelis Okafor would describe such unenforceable laws (2000: 75). Udo Etuk, in writing about such whimsical and unserious laws aim at combating corruption in Nigeria cites an instance:

Consider that one of our pretentious military regimes enacted a law decreeing twenty- one years in prison for anyone who was got caught in examination malpractice. I do not have the figures for the number of persons jailed for this offence; yet you and I know that from primary to tertiary institutions of learning, examination malpractices proliferate, sometimes aided and abetted by those who ought to be the custodians of examination integrity (77).

Udo Etuk (2000: 79), goes further to cite an instance he witnessed in which a particular lecturer was made to look like the culprit and an idiot when he caught a student red-handed in examination malpractices, and insisted the student be punished. Unfortunately, partly due to the unenforceable nature of our laws and the insincerity of those who should be the custodians of laws, we make nonsense of the fight against corruption in our country. Proper studies and rigour should be brought to bear when enacting laws that will curtail corruption in the polity. The context of the operability of such laws should also be taken into consideration

because, as Osita Eze would have it: “The substance of the law will in the final analysis be determined by the nature of the socio-economic system, the level of development of productive forces and is invariably influenced by the total belief system, including religion, which has evolved as society developed” (22).

By adopting a philosophical approach, which is the only approach that would ensure success in the fight against corruption, pertinent questions would be asked before enacting laws to combat the menace; otherwise no appreciable success would be made. A philosophical approach would ensure that the war is fought consistently; there would be no sacred cows: it will eschew the current lopsided war against corruption and distinguish genuine fight against corruption from personal vendetta. All criminals would be treated fairly and with recourse to just code of justice; one set of thieves would not be hanged in the public domains, while another set of thieves who are connected to the government of the day are openly celebrated and crowned as princes and princesses of the State. The philosophical approach would allow the agencies charged with apprehending criminals to be truly independent; freed from the apron strings and whims and caprices of the government of the day, as is currently the case. Such agencies should be consistent, thorough, dispassionate and perform their duties not based on inclinations, but on the imperatives of their job description.

Apart from adopting the philosophical approach, professional philosophers should not rest on their oars and become ensconced in the comfort of their working environment; but should call the attention of all concerned on the need to live a more moral and reasonable existence. As advised by Okafor: “On our part as philosophers, we should continually prick the conscience of our fellow citizens- whether they are lawyers, security officers, public servants, or government officials- by our constructive criticisms. As often as possible, we as thinkers and think tanks should seek a forum where we can engage our lawmakers, law-officers, security officers, public servants and government officials in dialogue” (81).

Not only must the political actors and all citizens adopt a philosophical and moral disposition in our dealings, the professional philosophers should not be silent- assuming that they themselves are not also enmeshed in the gyre of corruption. It is therefore enjoined on everyone to be up and doing against corruption, since it affects everyone and all are victims and culprits in varying degrees. It is in the nature of existence for things to always go wrong in their natural states due to limited resources, knowledge, intelligence, rationality and above all, limited sympathy, according to a British philosopher, Warnock (17-23). Therefore, it is required of all to cultivate the life of virtue, the philosophical life.

Conclusion

Any attempt in fighting corruption that is solely concerned with running after thieving politicians, though it is a fitting thing to do, will not work or address the

issue frontally, unless there is a determined efforts by all and sundry to do the right things all the times. It is really ironic when people applaud politicians, who are equally neck deep in corruption, when they witch-hunt their opponents in the name of fighting corruption. Even the process of fighting corruption itself could also be corruption. The attitude of shielding corrupt cronies from the searchlight of a compromised anti-corruption agency and going after political opponents is nothing short of corruption itself and abuse of State powers. Some are even pressurizing the President to publish names of those who embezzled public funds in order to shame them. Imagine this: if the names of those who have been involved in corruption were to be published, including those who have cheated on their partners, collected and given bribes in places of work, helped their children to cheat, help rig elections, taken advantage of those under them, misappropriated money, go late for work, cheated in different scenarios, lied about their age, lied to gain advantage, compromised standards, broken their vows, cooked up records, cut corners etc; how many of such enthusiasts will be open to see the list?

One's guess would be that, like the Biblical elders who left the scene after Jesus bent down to write something on the ground, following their taking of the woman who was caught in the very act of adultery to him, no one would like to be embarrassed. One is here not endorsing the stealing carried out by stupid and corrupt politicians, but only imputing that the corruption bedeviling our country is much deeper than that. We are all too eager to condemn the corruption in the larger society, while we are neck deep in various forms of the malfeasance. This gives credence to one Ibibio wise-saying: Akemum ke esak (only those who are caught are mocked). Corruption thrives where it is tolerated and not seen as an aberration.

We should not be comfortable with it, in any form or guise. Its flourishing owes very much to the breakdown of the cultural and religious value systems that have no binding force. If all should adhere to the demands of their religious demands and commitments, the issue of corruption in all its ramifications, would be whittled down to the barest minimum. If we are committed to the basic principles of honesty, justice, fidelity, equity; appreciation of competence, hard work, fair play and treat others as we wish to be treated, the issue of corruption would be seriously driven to the closets of infamy where it rightly belongs. As Plato rightly noted, the society is individuals' writ large; we need to mend our moral lives in order to act morally at all times and affect the moral atmosphere of the larger society. We need, in the words of Frederick Nietzsche, to revalue our values and live accordingly.

Wealth and success should not be celebrated at the detriment of hard work, honour, good name, fair play and justice. Unfortunately, our value system is wide off the watermarks and encourages corruption. We are all too eager to celebrate those who have made it successfully without questioning the means they came by such. A typical Nigerian politician or worker, who serves well with honour and dignity, without throwing misappropriated government or his organization's money around on frivolous projects and hangers on, is seen largely as a failure, compared to a

thieving one; who steals government money and throws it around. The latter is celebrated and honoured; given various and humungous titles, called saviours, leopards, lions and have various oceans, rivers, markets, streets and other edifices named after them; not only by the secular society, but also religious groups. Such attitude does not innately encourage honesty, since it celebrates wealth and fame ahead of honour, dedication, passion and hard work. We really need to revalue our values and develop a sense of shame about certain things we openly celebrate as success. There is honour even in the face of failure and poverty.

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