

THE PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA; FALLING BACK ON KANT'S CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVES FOR SOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

Every human society yearns for development in its human capital, social infrastructure, culture, economy and other indices. This desire for development will remain far-fetched if there is uncontrolled and endemic corruption. This is the situation commonly observed in Nigeria and some other African countries. We have argued here that there is indeed a problem of corruption in Nigeria and that this problem is pervasive and crippling to the economy, politics, governance, morality and other spheres of social life in Nigeria. This paper argues that adherence to the tenets and principles of Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative will provide a way of escape from the deadly grip of corruption on Nigeria and Nigerians. The categorical imperative calls man back to the preservation of humanity and the dignity of the human person rather than a mere attempt to use men as means to some end. The paper adopts hermeneutical, analytical and critical methods to arrive at the conclusions..

Keywords: Corruption; Categorical; Imperative; Morality; Humanity

Introduction

Societies grow and develop when the human resources within them are mobilized optimally directed by merit, and the natural resources found in them are amassed with the intention of meeting the needs of all within that society irrespective of class or privileged conditions. The good of all is most important and this drives everything that everyone does at all times. When the good of a privileged few becomes more important or prioritized; or the general good becomes defined in the terms of a privileged class' interest, then corruption becomes inevitable.

By the verdicts of different organizations, both national and international, including Transparency International, Nigeria is rife with corruption. Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index places Nigeria among the most corrupt countries of the world at 26/100 (CPI 2024). Manifestations include bribery, nepotism, embezzlement, and infrastructure decay. It is also observed in degenerating moral aptitude to serve people making it difficult to find persons with principles that take corruption head-on and are ready to die while doing so. It shows itself in an educational system that is fraught with managerial incompetence and inefficiency resulting in diverse forms of malpractice that eventually produces badly formed graduates.

The tendency for corruption to do harm to individuals and societies is evidenced in the that Nigeria finds itself at the moment politically, economically, militarily, educationally, even religiously, there seems to be stagnation, uncertainty and decay. The goodwill of those officials of government who desire the good of all is more often truncated by the problem of corruption.

The destructive abilities of corruption suggest that there is need to continually look at it with the intention of giving a workable solution or cure to it. In time past different administrations and governments had attempted to combat it but it always appeared that their efforts either aggravated it or made the perpetrators to change their modus operandi.

In order to solve this problem, this work believes that the problem of corruption is moral or ethical hence needs an ethical solution. We think that what eventually manifests as corruption begins as an ethical misnomer that considers other men and the society as well as public office as a means to an end - that of self-enrichment. To check this therefore, we are suggesting the reorientation of the Nigerian public using Kant's Categorical Imperatives which admonish all to see other men as ends in themselves. When this is done and assimilated, then there can be individual moral checks that will inhibit the further growth and spread of corruption.

The Nature of the Categorical Imperative as a Moral Law

In this section, we shall attempt an exposition or exegesis of Kant's concept of the categorical imperative from the corpus of literature available especially as contained in the main work of Kant on ethics; *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), translated by James W. Ellington in 1981. The central focus of Kant's ethics as well as this work, is the categorical imperative and a better understanding of the categorical imperative would make the accomplishment of the objectives of this work less cumbersome, particularly in expressing it as the foundation for the eradication of corruption in Nigeria.

The nature of the concept of the categorical imperative enables us as rational beings to avoid wrong doing. Such propositions necessarily mean that a particular act or kind of act ought not to be carried out under any circumstance. This implies that there is no restriction to the applicability of such propositions. The phrase "one ought not to..." is distinguished from "one is not to..." The former carries with it a moral code that is universally predicated while the latter carries with it a code that is not morally binding and lacks a universal character. In other words, it is subjective in character. The "oughtness" entails a derivation from no particular source with no set goal for accomplishment. That is, it is not carried out for any particular sake other than for the sake of itself. Thus, the "ought" to be differentiated from the "is". The "ought" to express moral necessity rather than teleological purpose. The former is good intrinsically. Suffice it to assert that the phrase "one ought not to..." forms the central point of the meta-ethical theory that establishes Kant as an extreme moral objectivist.

In his book *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), Kant presents the categorical imperative as the philosophical concept central to his moral philosophy and to the modern deontological ethics. Thus, a categorical imperative denotes an absolute, unconditional requirement that exerts its authority in all absolute, unconditional requirements in all circumstances. And it is both required and justified as an end in itself. The categorical imperative obviously, as we shall see, can be conceived as specific rules of duty antecedent to the fundamental principle of autonomy which we shall examine in due course.

Ed. L. Miller describes Kant's categorical imperative as the most famous and important concept in the history of ethics. For him, it is the fundamental principle of morality. He believes that it is more accurately, a criterion or test by which we make sure our actions are moral. These actions are motivated by a good will or performed out of duty (479). He explained that sometimes the categorical imperative is referred to as the principle of universalizability, since it asks us whether we can "universalize" our actions, that is, whether we would demand that everyone else in similar circumstance act in accordance with the same rule as we would. He asserts that the categorical imperative is a command. As a command, "it addresses and constrains our will, which it recognizes might not always gladly pursue what it ought". Also, as a command, the categorical imperative reckons with our natural perversity and distinguishes between doing something because one ought to and doing something because it is a command (479-480)

The categorical imperative as shown here, challenges our morality to seek to hold up the dignity of man before anything else. Man should not be seen as something to be "used" to achieve an aim. From the above, one can obviously infer that actions within the confines of categorical imperative are unqualified or unconditional. That is in the case of what is to be morally good, our actions should not conform to the moral law, but must also be done for the sake of the moral law. In this case, categorical imperatives do not present actions as means to any other end; actions are rather presented as objectively necessary. The categorical imperative commands a certain action without making its condition some purpose to be achieved by it.

In the second section of the *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant gives a concise definition or explanation of what a command implies and what an imperative implies. According to Kant, the representation of an objective principle insofar as it necessitates the will is called a command (of reason), and the formula of the command is called an imperative. He notes that:

All imperatives are expressed by an 'ought' and thereby indicate the relation of an objective law of reason to a will that is not necessarily determined by this law because of its subjective constitution (the relation of necessitation). Imperatives say that something would be good to do or to refrain from doing, but they say it to a will that does not always therefore do something simply because good to do represented to the will as something good to do (24).

From the above, it implies that the idea of good in Kant's ethics is determined by the will by means of representation of reason and not by subjective cases, but objectively on grounds valid for every rational being (universalizability). Accordingly, imperatives are only formula for expressing the relation of objective laws of willing in general to the subjective imperfection of the will of this or that rational being, example, the human will. Thus, the dependence of the faculty of desire on sensation or material things is called inclination, which accordingly always indicates a need. It is pertinent to note that in the case of an action done from duty, regard must be given not to the interest in the object but only to the interest in the action itself and in its rational principle.

To further explain the tenets of the categorical imperative as a moral law Kant adds that, if "an action is represented as good in itself, and hence as necessary in a will which of itself conforms to reason as the principle of the will, then the imperative is categorical (25). It is that which represents an action as objectively necessary in itself, without reference to another or purpose. This kind of action according to Kant, holds as an apodictic practical principle. Put in different form, Kant expresses that

the categorical imperative is limited by no condition, and can properly be called a command since it is absolutely and practically necessary. This is not far from saying that the categorical imperative is the only imperative, which immediately commands a certain conduct without having as its condition any other purpose to be attained by it (26). In another simple way, Kant explains further that the categorical imperative “is not concerned with the matter of the action and its intended result but rather with the form of action and the principle from which it follows. What is essentially good in the action consists in the mental disposition; let the consequences be what they may be called that of morality” (27). Thus, it is only the moral law that involves the concept of necessity that is unconditioned and indeed objective, and hence universally valid. In this case, commands as conceived by Kant are laws, which must be obeyed, that is, must be followed even in opposition to inclination.

Presenting Kant's ethics, Joseph Omoregbe explains the categorical imperative as a command. In his words, Omoregbe describes the command as that:

Which is not a means to another end, and what it commands is good in itself. It commands actions not as means to ends but as good in themselves. It admits no exception; no 'if or condition is attached to it. Hence it obliges all men without exception. This is the moral imperative, i.e., the imperative of the moral law. The imperative of morality is absolute and categorical and nobody can be exempted from it ("Intellectual Giant but Moral Dwarf" 115).

In this connection, the categorical imperative is synonymous with the moral law. The moral law for Kant is simply stated as: 'Act only according to the maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law'. Kant posits that this law stated above is the only categorical imperative. There is no doubt that this moral law has other formulations, which shall be considered later.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to examine the categorical imperative as a moral law in detail. Cornman and Lehrer have identified three features in an attempt to explain the moral law. These features according to them are:

1. A moral law prescribes what ought to be.
2. What ought to be done is to bring about whatever is the highest good.
3. A will that acts out of respect for moral laws is the highest good (486).

Considering the above, we can conclude that there is just one thing that the moral law prescribes and that is acting out of respect for moral laws. Significantly, two implications are derived from this. Firstly, there is only one moral law, given that only one thing is prescribed. Secondly, since the moral law requires that we act out of respect for itself, it is said to be unique considering all other basic ethical principles. While other laws or principles prescribe what acts we should do, Kant's moral law prescribes how we should do any act. Thus, the particular action prescribed by a law does not in any way make it a moral law. In other words, the content of any law in particular does not make it a moral law. Any particular law, which consists only of some particular content, embedded in a law-like form is moral. It is the law-likeness of a law, which makes it moral. Thus, any law that merely expresses this law-like form of laws instead of something else is a moral law.

Suffice it to say here that prescriptive laws are distinguished from explanatory laws such as scientific laws in that, they are expressed as imperatives about men's actions. However, moral

imperatives have no restrictions and do express the form of lawfulness. In other words, for moral laws, there are conditions that must be met for it to be applicable. This makes it an unconditional categorical imperative with universal application. In this connection, acting out of respect for the moral law itself, entails that we act out of respect for universal and unconditional lawfulness. Cornman and Lehrer explicitly stated that, "The moral law requires that whenever we decide to do something, we should decide to do it solely for the reason that doing it is consistent with what universal and unconditional lawfulness requires" (487).

Approaching this from Kant's perspective, universal and unconditional lawfulness entails that the principle we actually base our decisions on which Kant calls "maxims" should have the form of universal and unconditional laws. The categorical imperative as a moral law therefore permits us morally to act on a maxim only if our decision (will) to act on it is consistent with our willingness to make the maxim a universal and unconditional law governing the actions of everyone including ourselves found in similar circumstances.

Finally, the moral law transcends every experience and as such it is formal and intrinsic. As intelligent beings, we all have access to the same universal moral law as categorical, applying to situations. To say it is imperative implies that it is commanding and authoritative (257).

The ideals of the categorical imperative, except for the name, are not really new to Africa. The Ubuntu philosophy has similar ethical framework as the categorical imperative, seeking the ethical and communal wellbeing of all members of society rather than the diversion of the public good to personal benefits. Ngcetane-Vika and Pule argued that adherence to the principles of the Ubuntu philosophy, which is a culturally-rooted African ethos emphasizing communal values, interconnectedness and ethical leadership, can help in curbing corruption in leadership (3755-3770). Ubuntu philosophy, like Kant's categorical imperatives, is a necessary ethical tool for checking corruption in Africa. However, the categorical imperatives are more universal in practice and reach as it addresses all of humanity not just a certain ethnic cleavage. Ethnocentric biases often becloud judgments when anti-corruption campaigns are engaged in so the more universal the theory underlying the anti-corruption campaign, the better it can be.

Corruption as a Problem in Nigeria

In seeing corruption as a problem of Nigeria, it is worthwhile to trace the origin of the problem to the confusion surrounding the meaning of the term itself. Sometimes it is difficult to have a uniform or unanimous definition of the term; hence it means many things or nothing at all to different people. It is because of this that people engage in corrupt practices arguing that such are not corrupt practices from their own cultural perspective. For instance, Ochulor et al., exposed the fact that corruption may carry different meanings to different people depending on their cultural orientation (92). The cultural relativist tone of this does not however suggest that there may not be a definition of the term. What it rather suggests is that similarities among cultures could be brought together to keep our analysis of the term in question.

Having said this, we can attempt a definition of corruption. Uzochukwu Mike defined it in his article "Corruption in Nigeria: Review, Causes, Effect and Solutions" as the dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power typically involving bribery as well as the embezzlement of public funds for personal use and any other act which is considered criminal according to the law of a particular society. Uzochukwu's definition of corruption is fraught with different problems. In the first place,

which is common in different definitions including that of Transparency International, corruption is seen to be basically a crime perpetrated by public officials. This will be an erroneous way of looking at corruption. We need to understand that corrupt officials are products of corrupt cultures and corrupt societies. Embezzlement and stealing in the public domain shows that the private and family domains are compromised and failing because they are the foundation for character formation of every individual.

The other problem that is inherent in Uzochukwu's definitions is seeing corruption as a crime only when it is condemned by the law of the land. This means that insofar as the law is not forthcoming, then the crime could pass for a corruption-free one. This is one of the problems that continues to allow corruption to plague Nigeria today. Certain actions that amount to corruption in other countries are condoned in the immunity clause of the constitution of Nigeria therefore allowing public officials to do all kinds of corrupt practices. It is based on this that this paper believes that the laws of a particular country may not be adequate in determining what can qualify as corrupt practices. A people with tendencies to corruption may likely leave lacunas within their laws to engender corrupt practices. This legalistic view of Uzochukwu's overlooks pre-legal ethical breaches, akin to Kant's a priori duties.

Inspired by the definition of corruption given by the World Bank, Omenka holds that it depicts a situation where pervasion of integrity or state of affairs takes place through bribery, favoritism or moral depravity, when at least two parties have interacted to change the structure or processes of society or behavior of functionaries in order to provide dishonest, unfaithful or defiled situations. He went further to hold that it is characterized by:

inflation of government contracts in return for kickbacks; frauds and fabrication of accounts in the public service; examination malpractices in our educational institutions including universities; the taking of bribes and perversion of justice among the police, the judiciary and other organs for administering justice, and the various heinous crimes against the state in business and industrial sectors of the economy, collusions with multinational companies such as over-invoicing of goods and foreign exchange swindling, hoarding and smuggling (39-40).

This definition like the earlier one, also considers corruption to be mostly concerned with the public domain. This is troublesome as it tacitly absolves the private realm and the actions and activities which are promoted from there and manifest in the public domain. It is in this line that this paper argues that every anti-corruption campaign must have as its target both the public and private domains, this is so because the activities in these often have cross-carpeting effects. In order to avoid these definition issues Ochulor et al saw it as involving a rotting, destruction, decomposition or disintegration of social mores or ethos which may or may not impinge on the wellbeing of the society in general (93). This definition is somewhat more encompassing than some others that see corruption as merely involving the stealing or misappropriation of public funds. It traces the source of the motivation for stealing, which is moral or ethical.

Possible Causes of Corruption in Nigeria

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2024, corruption is widespread and it is clear that no region of the world is immune to the perils of corruption. From the

foregoing, it shows that Nigeria is not alone in the problem of corruption. Various countries have one form of corruption or another occasioned by different predisposing factors. However, the factors predisposing these countries to corruption are varied and multifaceted. The following could be said to be some of the factors that predispose Nigeria to corruption:

- 1. Failure of Traditional Institutions:** Traditional institutions in pre-colonial societies, like age grades, cults, village councils, etc. served as checks on the moral excesses of their members. With the intrusion of westernization and the attendant western education, the ties that held members to the decrees of these organizations and maintained some moral sanity including how they make money and create wealth have gradually loosened, hence people no longer pay allegiance to these checks that were provided by these groups and which proved invaluable in directing the actions of their members even in matters that were considered private.
- 2. Failure of the Family System:** Before this period of a seeming breakdown of the family system, families had a name to protect, hence were interested in how their members made money or wealth. Cases of family members and villages rejecting their members because of their questionable character were common in the days of old. Nowadays however, family members see it as opportunities to turn their family fortunes around when they steal from government coffers or engage in any other corrupt practices. And this is done with full support from their families. People often get mocked when they return home on retirement without displaying signs of opulence from what they stole while in office. This deplorable moral situation was captured by Anchovur et al when they posited that parents support their children's acts of corruption instead of rebuking and correcting them hence reinforcing corruption at the family level. Similarly, parents and guardians model corrupt behaviours to their children and thereby teach them firsthand the acts of corruption. (58). The effects of not also checking the rot in the family and the informal sector can be very dire to the fight against corruption. Also speaking on this, Oladipupo Ipadeola argued that “the existing body of knowledge on corruption in Nigeria tilts to its public, state-centric, official, micro and bureaucratic nature, to the neglect of the private, societal, unofficial, macro and informal side. The informal side of corruption, which has often suffered neglect from scholars and public affairs analysts, has far more reaching consequences on the state, than the widely acclaimed public corruption” (5). To properly tackle the menace of corruption therefore, we must pay attention to the family which has a pivotal role in character formation and the moulding of an ethical man.
- 3. Failure of Educational Institutions:** Educational institutions provided moral backing to the families' attempts to make a morally sound individual. These institutions gave reasons for hard work, moral uprightness and stringent uncompromising pursuit of success. These have all changed as these institutions now direct pupils and students on how to cheat in examinations, steal from the public and bribe one's way through life thereby denigrating the virtues of hard work.
- 4. Ineffective Anti-corruption Mechanisms:** The non-effectiveness of the anti-corruption campaign of Nigerian governments derives from both weak institutions of government and government's inability and (or) unwillingness to sanction acts of corruption. Omenka pointed this out when he joined Shamija in accusing successive governments of exhibiting reluctance

in dealing with corruption among public officials in Nigeria (41). Several scholars have alleged that the anti-corruption fights in Nigeria turn out to be fights against political opponents as there are always cases where members of the party in power perpetrate huge corrupt practices without being brought to book.

- 5. Poverty:** This is one of the most outstanding factors that cause corruption. According to Omenka, poverty serves as an inducement to corruption among Nigerians because an average Nigerian clamors for a way to opt out of the gross lack of material needs and to cope with daily living. As he puts it "in a situation where there is inadequate wages and non-payment of salaries in most cases to workers, corruption provides a means of augmenting one's legitimate income (41). It is sometimes difficult to successfully speak against corruption when people are thronged with deprivation and merciless poverty. This situation keeps corruption pervasive in Nigeria.

Attempts at Curbing Corruption in Nigeria

There was evidence of corruption in the political life of Nigeria as far back as the pre-independence period and in the First Republic. Nnamdi Azikiwe was investigated in 1944 for questionable practices concerning his connection with the African Continental Bank. Similarly, *Adegoke Adelabu* was investigated in the Western region in connection with corruption charges and in the northern region, some native authority officials were also accused of corrupt practices necessitating some laws to curtail such practices (Akpan 35-37).

The administration of General Gowon is said to have witnessed high level of corrupt practices and little or no serious steps to ameliorate them. This was one of the reasons given by the Murtala/Obasanjo administration for toppling it in 1975. The Murtala administration sacked a lot of public officials who had been accused of corrupt practices.

The administrations of General Obasanjo and Alhaji Shehu Shagari showed varying number of corruption cases, but corruption was deemed pervasive during the administration of Shehu Shagari. This was given as the main reason for the toppling of this government by General Buhari in 1983. This administration with its "War Against Indiscipline and Corruption" convicted and brought many public officials to book for corruption related offences.

According to Enweremadu, corruption became apparently legitimized and legalized during the Ibrahim Babangida administration of 1985-1993. There was little or no checks on corruption as corruption became seemingly a policy of state. This was continued in the administration of General Sani Abacha without any restraint (3).

The Obasanjo administration of 1999-2007, witnessed various corruption scandals leading to the loss of huge sums of money and desecration of political institutions. It was during this administration that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission (ICPC) were created to curtail cases of corruption in public life in Nigeria (Adedire & Adeyeye 37)

During the Goodluck Jonathan administration, the government made use of the EFCC and the ICPC to tackle cases of corruption. However, it is widely held by some scholars that the administration paid only lip service to the fight against corruption as graft and embezzlement were rife among ministers and other public officials. Only political opponents were hunted by the EFCC

and the ICPC. The insincerity of the anti-corruption fight during the Jonathan administration has been laid bare by the inquests of the current Buhari administration which has uncovered fraud and embezzlement in alarming scales that was perpetrated during the Jonathan period (Akpan, 36). Adedire and Adeyeye described the corruption in the Buhari and Tinubu era as “massive” and with “impunity” (37).

Historical antecedents till date have shown that corruption has refused to be curtailed by government anti-corruption models so far used against it because of different reasons including collusion, insincerity of officials and the fact that the government has given the impression that corruption can be fought only by the government. It is in view of the persistence of the cankerworm of corruption that it becomes necessary to show the way forward by introducing Kant's categorical Imperative as a way forward and a panacea to this national calamity.

Using Kant's categorical imperative to solve the problem of Corruption in Nigeria

Kant's categorical imperative has within it certain key characteristics that have the propensity, when applied, to solve the menace of corruption in Nigeria. Some of these include the following:

- 1. Universalizability:** Immanuel Kant encouraged every human being to understand that his actions are not limited to particular places and periods or situations but are universal in character. In other words, every action that a man carries out should be capable of replication at other times and situations. For instance, a parent that strives to help the child to pass the Senior Secondary School Examination by paying mercenaries and bribing examiners is also saying that every parent should do same and every student in that position should do same. If the said parent, at another instance, happens to be a law enforcement agent or an examiner, he would not be morally right to decry examination malpractice because he had legislated for it sometime in the past. It would also be morally wrong for that parent to believe that other parents should not indulge in examination malpractices because he had already legislated otherwise.

Applying this to the problem of corruption in Nigeria would mean bringing the activities of both government functionaries and the general public to adhere to Kant's first formulation of the moral law. According to him, we ought to “act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time, will that it become a universal law” (421). Most cases of corruption are manifestations of the desire to grab at all cost and also ensure that others do not do same. Those that steal from the country or others do not want to be stolen from. In other words, they do not want their actions to be universal laws. Introducing the elements of universalizability into the reasoning and consciences of Nigerians has the potentials to make would-be corrupt people to consider the result of their actions if they were to be made universal laws of nature. No one would want to steal if every other person is obliged by that law, to also steal from him.

- 2. Dependence on Goodwill:** Kant used various ways to explain the importance of goodwill in the realm of ethics and morality. In the first section of his Groundwork, Kant asserts that “there is nothing that is possible to think of anywhere in the world, or indeed anything at all outside it, that can be held to be good without limitation, except only a goodwill” (28). He believed that every action that reasonable or rational people carry out passes the test of morality if it is seen

to have emanated from goodwill. It is this goodwill, according to him that makes men not to be mere instinctual animals but truly moral beings.

Corruption and the rot and affliction that come in its trail are clear indicators that the perpetrators do not do it with goodwill. The actions by all indications are fuelled by selfishness, greed and wickedness against humanity. To curb the monster of corruption in Nigeria would need Nigerians, especially public office holders to be guided by goodwill in every action and reaction rather than the desire for appeasement of personal, family or ethnic cleavages. Until goodwill, as explained by Kant, guides every facet of Nigerian life, all anti-corruption fights will continue to turn out mere facades or political persecutions.

3. Preservation of Sanctity of Humanity: Kant believed that actions of humans as rational rather than merely instinctual beings can only be judged moral or ethical if they are meant to protect the sanctity of human person. For actions to be moral, they must treat man in all cases as ends in themselves and not merely as means to an end. It would amount to an immorality for instance, for a man to use money that was meant to meet the health needs of others in society for self-enrichment. Similarly, depriving others of entitlement and deserved emoluments in order to become rich smacks of using humanity as a means to an end and falls short of Kant's ethical principles. Within Kant's ethical system humanity is so important that it should be treated as such. Corruption uses men as means to ends and deprives them of the sanctity they indeed deserve.

4. Preponderance of Duty over Self Preservation and Aggrandizement: One of the concepts that plays a pivotal role in Kant's ethics is duty. Actions gain their moral worth by being entirely products of duty rather than self-preservation or blind chance, sentiments or instincts. In his critique of Practical Reason, Kant argued that “morality is not properly the doctrine how we may make ourselves worthy of happiness” (227). The way to happiness ultimately is to act in accordance with duty and not to be hedonistic in inclination.

One of the greatest promoters of corruption is the inability of Nigerians to do their duty without expecting immediate gratification. Duty in Nigeria, in most cases, is not done for duty sake, as Kant would have it, but is seen as an opportunity to loot the treasury, establish tribal hegemonies and conquer political enemies. This has helped to heavily retard development in Nigeria true to the words of Will Durant who contended that placing duty above beauty and happiness makes us cease to be beasts and begin to be gods (210). The prevalence of corruption and the rabid desire to grab for oneself what belongs to all scarcely makes us different from the community of beasts.

5. The Efficacy of the Law: According to Kant, “everything in nature works in accordance with laws. Only a rational being has the representation of laws, i.e. in accordance with principles, or a will” (Groundwork 214). Until Nigeria can have stringent and heavily punitive laws that truly outlaw corruption and corrupt practices as well as individuals and institutions that are willing to execute the laws without fear or favour, there can be no end to the menace of corruption in Nigeria.

The laws in Nigeria as they stand, appear to have been drawn to foster corruption and pamper offenders. Laws that can hinder corruption are such as stop the very act and significantly punish those that indulge in it. Presently, Nigerian laws fall short of these characteristics hence

are merely “amputee laws” which prove impotent in the fight against the menace of corruption.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Nigerian society reels and writhes as corruption eats away its strength like a dreaded virus. Virtually every area of life in Nigeria suffers significantly from the harm that corruption continues to do. Development and proper growth appear far-flung as resources fall prey to the claws of corruption. This paper has shown the harm that corruption does, the reasons why it continues to abide and how the ethics of Immanuel Kant has within it the solution to the problem of corruption in Nigeria.

While agreeing with any critic who may contend that these principles are more theoretical than practical, we are also of the opinion that these principles can be domesticated in Nigeria in order to bring this through, the following needs to be taken into consideration:

1. Mass communication agencies should continue in the campaign for individual responsibility in the fight against corruption. The fight against corruption can only be won when individuals get involved and become committed. Governments are faceless and cannot prosecute it effectively.
2. Politics should be made less-attractive by slashing of salaries and allowances of political office holders. Their financial activities before and after office should continually be under the public glare. The strengthening of the Code of Conduct Bureau will enhance this and it will ensure that only those who want to offer duty for duty sake alone come to office.
3. There should be an overhaul of the laws dealing with corruption in Nigeria. In fact, corruption should be categorized under murder and armed robbery and offenders should be treated as murderers and armed robbers. Laws should be couched with foundations of universalizability to prevent having “sacred cows” who will somehow manipulate or maneuver the law.
4. The part of the constitution that prevents the prosecution of political office holders should be repealed. This will make political office holders and seekers to be more careful while in office.
5. The mass media and indeed the public should aim at dissipating the attention that is given to luxury and material possession in the society. Families, age grades, churches, mosques, neighbors, etc. should seek to know the sources of wealth of people instead of blindly venerating them, thus encouraging corruption.
6. Young people in school and the family should be taught the virtue of hard work and honesty while warning them against the evil of corruption. This will mean checking the menace of examination malpractice since this is their earliest contact with corruption. It is believed that when these are put in place the fight against corruption would be done successfully and Nigeria can indeed be on the path to progress. To facilitate this, modules on Kant and the categorical should be incorporated into the curricula of schools and colleges.

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