

REASSESSING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ARISTOTLE'S VIRTUE ETHICS

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Abstract

Nigeria has become synonymous with corruption. *Transparency International* ranked it among the most corrupt nations. Some Nigerians get involved in one form of corruption or the other and embezzlement of public fund and bribery has been identified as the dominant form of corruption in Nigeria. The large proportion of bribery and corruption in Nigeria is done to speed up administrative procedure that may be delayed for a long time or even stay there indefinitely thereby making bribery an effective means of facilitating administrative services. Considering all these, the question that comes to mind is, can bribery and corruption be taken as a universally accepted culture in Nigeria? However, Aristotle in his virtue ethics holds that an individual ought to exercise moral virtues so as to develop the ability to do the right thing, at the right time and in the right way. Taking inspiration from Aristotle's virtue ethics, this paper argues that unethical practice of bribery and corruption destroys personal virtues, leads to perversion of justice, encourages mediocrity and dehumanizes both the giver and the taker. The paper submits that individual exercise of moral virtue will assist in reducing corruption in Nigeria. This paper adopted the textual analysis and critical method.

Key Words: Aristotle, Corruption, Virtue Ethics, Morality and Nigeria

Introduction

Corruption is not peculiar to Nigeria, it is a global phenomenon. No country is totally free from all forms of corruption but the prevalence and sincere means of combating it is what differentiates one country from the other. Nigeria is a democratic country and is often referred to as the "Giant of Africa" because of its population and economy. Some are of the view that corruption is endemic in Nigeria; in fact it has become a culture in Nigeria. It is found in all sectors, be it in politics, civil society, judiciary, executive and legislative arms. Corruption has received various names like "grease the wheels", "scratch my palms" "scratch my back", "pay your dues", "Oga find me something", "shake body"; all these names are in a bid to clone acts of bribery and corruption. Bribery and corruption are moral issue because it involves right and wrong in human action. Globally Nigeria has the stigma of being ranked among the most corrupt countries in the world. Anywhere a Nigerian is seen outside the shores of the country he/she is seen as one capable of all sorts of fraudulent act. A friend narrated his ordeal at a checking point in one of the international Airports, where people from other countries were simply checked but when it got to his turn and he was identified as a Nigerian he was taken aside and thoroughly checked and investigated almost stripped naked. This shows the extent and the level Nigeria is rated in terms of corruption and also a show of the level Nigerians have degenerated to. According to Ocholor corruption "has affected Nigerians so adversely that they now think of morality as a concept that cannot be found in business, politics,

religion and socio-cultural relationship” (318) Corruption has been identified as the cause of our political, economic, security and social problems in Nigeria. This has made life miserable and uncomfortable for Nigerians in spite of our rich natural and human resources.

Since the return of democratic system of government in May 29, 1999 the Nigerian government has taken so many strategies to fight bribery and corruption and bad government. Amongst them are Public Service Reform and anti-corruption agencies like the, Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). In spite of all these agencies being in place corruption has continued to survive and permeate every facet of national life in Nigeria. When power left PDP to APC in 2015, one of the campaign promises of President Muhammadu Buhari was to fight corruption to death. Nigerians heaved a sigh of relief thinking that corruption will be minimized. It is amazing that corruption in Nigeria is not only found among the elites and political leaders but also among the average Nigerian. Among the members of house of Assembly and Representative, corruption is not farfetched; the former president of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo once said that the National Assembly is a den of corruption. It is the highest paid legislature in the whole world and the interest of some is nothing but to enrich themselves. Corruption in Nigeria is like a disease that moves from mother to child. People say, “ it did not start from me and it will not end with me”, every generation now accept it as a way of life. Unfortunately some of the persons placed in charge of agencies to fight corruption have been found to be guilty of the problem they were asked to fight. This shows that no one can be trusted anymore. It has affected the economic, political, social and development life of Nigeria and has remained a cankerworm that has refused to die. Its effects are evident in the pitiable state of our roads, in the health sector, education system, high rate of crime and fraud, election rigging, lack of basic amenities of life etc. Owing to these effects, corruption has been discussed at various levels, at conferences and seminars both local and international and by reputable scholars yet it seems like water being poured on a rock. This paper reassessing corruption employed Aristotle’s virtue ethics as a way of reducing the level of corruption in Nigeria. If individuals begin to exercise moral virtue as Aristotle advocate they will develop the ability to live a moral and corrupt free life and be able to do the right thing, with the right person, to the right extent, at the right time and in the right way.

Conceptual Clarification

Corruption is not easily defined and it has gained different definitions from different angles. Offering a comprehensive definition of corruption can be challenging. Etymologically corruption is derived from the Greek word “corropius” which means an “aberration” or a “misnomer”. There is a consensus that corruption is a cankerworm, a virus, unethical behavior and evil act. However, Andrig and Fjelstad see corruption as a “complex and multifaceted phenomenon with multiple causes and effects as it takes on various forms and contexts.”(4) Corruption is a global phenomenon that has the ability to take various forms. Coker quoting Osoba has it that “corruption is a global phenomenon with deep historical roots, although it manifests itself with significant similarities and differences in different societies.”(93) It can be seen in the form of bribe, power abuse, abandoning of work schedule, boycotting due process, keeping people waiting when you are supposed to attend to them in the office etc. Corruption is a dishonest or fraudulent act by one who is in power or entrusted with an important position.

Transparency International defines corruption as the “abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It can be classified as grand, petty and political depending on the amount of money lost and the sector

where it occurs.”(www.transparency.org) World Bank defines it as “the abuse of public office for private gain”. For President Muhammadu Buhari “it is the highest form of human right violation”. Corruption is an intentional act and a human behavior. It is intentional because it is a pre-mediated act by a sane person and a human behavior because it violates already established rules for personal motive. According to Chimakonam “corruption is not a monster or being but a behavior which is contrary to the oughtness of human action.”(303). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines corruption as “the misuse of public power, office and authority for private gain through bribery, extortion, influence, peddling, nepotism, fraud, speed, money or embezzlement.”(<https://www.un.org>) In all corruption involves stealing, dishonest dealings, bribery, money laundering, deceit, double standard, fraud, extortion, kickbacks, breaking rules/laws, nepotism, embezzlement, abuse of public office and property, criminal activities among others. Therefore corruption is any kind of insincere or unethical conduct by persons occupying positions of power or authority for personal benefits. It involves abuse of power or positions of authority for personal gain or breaking of laws to suits ones interest. It is an intentional act.

Kinds of Corruption

Political Corruption

This is corruption in the political system. This is seen among political leaders, members of the Senate and House of Representatives. This is seen when they make laws that benefit them, loot money and embezzle public funds.

Electoral Corruption

It includes hiring of thugs by political candidates to hijack ballot boxes, buying voters card to manipulate votes, coercion, giving people money to influence their votes, intimidation, election rigging and other means of interfering with the people’s right of franchise.

Educational Corruption

This is corruption in our universities, Polytechnics and Colleges. It includes sexual harassment of students by lecturers and university workers, giving grades based on sexual satisfaction or money, embezzling money allotted for funding universities and staff welfare by university management, sorting by students, admission racketeering, examination malpractice and forging of certificates.

Corruption in the Security Sector

This includes bribery to avert justice by the police, sexual harassment of young prison inmates, intimidation by military personnel, collecting bribes by security officers from drivers and car owners at check points and collecting bribes to allow substandard goods into the country and in the public market.

Bureaucratic corruption

This usually occurs in the public service system. “It involves bribery, nepotism, favoritism, looting, embezzlement, ghost workers syndrome, arbitrary recruitment, sexual harassment, black-mail, kickbacks, contracts award, forgery, fraud, etc.”(Chimakonam 309).

Corruption in the Churches

The churches are not free from corruption. It includes using tricks to take money from unsuspecting worshippers by pastors and reverends, over emphasis on financial contribution by pastors, embezzling churches funds, using diabolic powers in running churches by pastors, pastors engaging in adultery and fornication.

Business Corruption

This includes inflating the prices of goods indiscriminately, fraud, sales of substandard products, cheating and sales of expired goods.

Aristotle's Virtue Ethics

Aristotle developed "Virtue Ethics" in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle's interest was how we can live a fulfilled good life in the society. Virtue for him is the state of character; it is the disposition which makes a man good and causes him to perform his function well. A high moral life can be achieved by living a virtuous life and observing the mean between excess and defect. This will enable a man to perform an action with the right person, to the right extent, at the right time and in the right way. For Aristotle virtue is an internal disposition, a mind state through which virtuous acts emanate spontaneously. Therefore to be a morally sound person, one must have the habit or disposition of doing good always. It must be a habit one has to exercise and develop till it begins to spring out spontaneously. According to Aristotle "moral or ethical virtue is the product of habit."(34) For Aristotle virtue is gained by habituation, practicing virtue helps transforms them into habitual disposition. In his view virtue manifests itself in one's actions and motives, likes and dislikes. "For a man becomes just by doing just actions and temperate by doing temperate actions and no one can have the remotest chance of becoming good without doing them."(38) Exercise of morality in our everyday life is necessary for us to be moral. For Aristotle it is not enough knowing it but doing it, for there is a difference between knowing and doing the good. He likens it to the patient who listens to the physician carefully but follows none of the instructions. For Aristotle a man becomes virtuous by practicing good acts just like one becomes a good athlete by practice.

Virtue for Aristotle is not natural to man and that is why it can be altered by habit. In his explanation Aristotle gave example of things that are natural "it is the nature of stone to move downwards and it cannot be trained to move upwards, even though you should try to train it to do so by throwing it up into the air ten thousand times, nor can anything else that naturally behaves in one way be trained into a habit of behaving in another way."(Aristotle 33) Therefore virtue is not given to us by nature rather nature gives us the capacity to receive them and this capacity is made possible by habit. Although we are not born with virtue, we have the capacity to accept and perfect virtues within our lives in order to achieve the best life. Just like in arts, "men become builders by building houses, harpers by playing on the harp. Similarly we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts."(33) The actions through which virtues are formed are the same actions through which it can be destroyed. Just like we become builders by building well, we can also become bad builders by building badly. For Aristotle association and transaction with others makes us just or unjust. He maintained that: "our moral dispositions are formed as a result of the corresponding activities...hence it is incumbent on us to control the character of our activities since on the quality of these depends the quality of our dispositions."(34). For Aristotle knowledge of virtue enables us to act rightly, because our actions determine the quality of our dispositions, for us to be moral we must develop the proper character. To develop the proper character implies

developing the virtues, developing the virtues requires creating and living out moral habits. The virtues in us must be developed. Intellectual virtues comes from being taught while moral virtues comes from developing good habits, both are the result of our active intervention and participation over nature. For Aristotle “we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity.”(28)

Virtue does not spring up in humans by chance it is rather through habituation. Aristotle argues that when humans are not controlled they would always act towards vice because they are controlled by passion rather than reason. For reason to rule, passion should be subjected by reason because mere words cannot compel passion to bend rather force will. A question arises how do virtues arise in humans? Do virtues arise by chance? For Aristotle good laws are important for the development of virtue. It does not arise spontaneously but can be spontaneous when it has become one’s second nature. Virtue is acquired by habituation through education; once a man becomes virtuous by proper training he will automatically make the right decision.

Aristotle holds that virtue is neither emotion nor capacities but dispositions. For him virtue is excellence. Excellence renders the thing to which it belongs good and also causes it to function properly. He said: “excellence or virtue in a man will be the disposition which renders him a good man and also which cause him to perform his function well.”(39) Virtue and vice depends on us. Aristotle was interested on how to live a good life or be just in the society. Good life for Aristotle lies in doing those good acts (virtue) consistently and avoiding those bad acts (vice) It is through practice of such good acts not occasionally but consistently that one can be virtuous and live a good life in the society. To be virtuous one must follow and obey the laws. For Aristotle, moral virtue lies in the middle (mean). Mean is an intermediate position between two extremes, excess and defects are forms of failure while the mean is praise worthy. For him mean is the ability to know the right course of action, towards the right occasion, the right people, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right manner. Therefore excess and deficiency are marks of vice while the mean is virtue. Further Aristotle noted that not every action and emotion admits the observance of the mean. Some feelings and actions are intrinsically wrong, no amount of moderation can justify or make them good. He writes that:

Malice, shamelessness, envy and, of actions, adultery, theft, murder. All these and similar actions and feelings are blamed as being bad in themselves; it is not the excess or deficiency of them that we blame. It is impossible therefore ever to go right in regard to them—one must always be wrong, nor does right or wrong in their case depend on the circumstance, for instance, whether one commits adultery with the right woman at the right time, and in the right manner, the mere commission of any of them is wrong...But just as there can be no excess or deficiency in temperance and justice, because the mean is in a sense an extreme, so there can be no observance of the mean or excess nor deficiency in the corresponding vicious acts mentioned above, but however they are committed, they are wrong since, to put it in general terms, there is no such thing as observing a mean in excess or deficiency, nor as exceeding or falling short in the observance of a mean(41,42)

Moral virtue is therefore the mean between excess and defect. Aristotle observed that it is not an easy task to be good. For instance to get angry, give or spend money is not a difficult task but to “be angry with or give money to the right person and to the right amount and at the right time and for the right purpose and in the right way. This is not within everybody’s power and is not easy, so that to do

these things properly is rare, praise worthy and noble.”(46) However Aristotle gave us guidelines to get at the mean. First avoid extremes that are more opposed to the mean, secondly avoid errors which we are prone to and thirdly tread with caution when it comes to things that are pleasurable and pleasant. He realized that to get at the mean is difficult but he encouraged all to target at it. For Aristotle the mean cannot be the same for all and in all circumstances. This is the height of his ethics for realizing that universal and objective principles have subjective applications for different people in different circumstances. For instance, nutritionists always advise us to eat a balanced diet and eat well. The amount of food an athlete will consume cannot be the same for non-athlete. Also, if a widow gives #1000(one thousand naira) to charity when she has just #10,000(ten thousand) it is an act of charity but if by chance one gives her #1000,000 (one million naira) then giving #1000 is stinginess and a vice.

Aristotle maintained that disposition to choose the mean is an objective moral good, although different actions constitute the mean in different societies and situations. In this paper we are not defending Aristotle’s mean as a universal standard, but we agree that there is a close universal acceptance of the same moral virtues in all societies irrespective of their apparently various moral practices.

Causes of Corruption in Nigeria

Nigeria is a country blessed with rich mineral and natural resources. Nigerians are one of the happiest people despite the recent harsh economy experienced in the country, they are hard-working and have this extra-ordinary zeal to survive and excel in life against all odds. They hardly accept defeat or failure but always eager to break into new grounds and make meaning out of life where others see no meaning or reason to continue to strive. This virtue in Nigerians has been corrupted by corruption to the extent that some people see corrupt practices as the only way to survive. Some Nigerians have lost trust in hard work and merit; they see these virtues as things of the past. The impunity with which corruption takes place in Nigeria, forces one to ask, what really happened to Nigerians? Achebe on this adds that “anybody who can say that corruption in Nigeria has not yet become alarming is either a fool, a crook or else does not live in this country.”(37) How did this infection eat deep into Nigerians? How did we degenerate so low to the whims and caprices of corruption? Achebe further comments that ‘corruption in Nigeria has passed the alarming and entered the fatal stage; and Nigeria will die if we keep pretending that she is only slightly indisposed.’(38) To crown it all, this phenomenon is found both in high and low places, in public and private sectors, in petty and large enterprises and in everyday life of the people. It is found in the political system, business and education sectors, among security agencies and in the public service. It has risen to the level where every generation see it as a way of life, a norm, a culture and whoever sees it otherwise is being mocked, abused, punished and often intimidated and deprived certain juicy positions in the society. This moral breakdown in the character of some Nigerians has been attributed to many factors. They include.

Low wages/salaries and non-payment of salaries/wages

The public service is one of the victims of poor salaries, delay in payment of salaries. The worst of it all is that the salary is so poor that one wonders how they survive in this recession. For instance the salary of a university graduate is between #45,000 to #50,000 in the state civil service. How can a young man after university studies and youth service with high hope to help his family, get himself a new car, rent a good accommodation, assist his siblings achieve these with such a small pay.

Imagine if he is married with children. Even at the federal level is still not encouraging considering the economy of Nigeria today, everyday prices of commodities keep sky rocketing. One is not even talking about the price of fuel which keeps flying like wild fire while the monthly salary remains stagnant and rarely reviewed. All these responsibilities are meant to be taken care of with this meager salary. The worst situation is that often this poor salary and wages are not paid as at when due, workers are owed for months. In all sincerity what do you expect of a man that is being owed for about five (5) months to do, surely he will quickly respond to any call that will put food on his table and money on his palms. He will surely fall prey to any means that will provide him the financial need not minding if it is through a corrupt means. He will be forced to collect bribes, go against the law because the system is not fair to him. Another factor that is heartbreaking is the level of unemployment in the country; many young graduates have searched for job for years all to no avail. Some have tried several means, gone for many interviews they now prefer death than the suffering they are going through and this has led them to various crimes and corrupt acts. These ugly conditions make the ground smooth for corrupt practices.

Transparency/Accountability factor

Transparency is a factor some Nigerians dread, often a transparent man is seen as a man who does not know what is in vogue, he is often described as a foolish man. Transparency and accountability are seen as old fashioned. Some people are not open and do not consider rendering account for a project entrusted to them a worthwhile duty. They are afraid that if they render an accurate account they will have nothing to put into their pockets. In this connection they keep all their activities secret, and if anyone tries to investigate into what they are doing that person becomes an intruder and stands the risk of being eliminated. Corruption thrives in secrecy. The culture of giving fit back, report and account has been eroded by corruption. Those who try to be transparent and accountable manipulate figures, and put down things they never did in a bid to cover up things and embezzle fund being handed over to them. The development of any country rests on transparency and accountability. According to the speaker of house of Representative Hon Yakubu Dogara in his goodwill message: “transparency and accountability issues cut across tribe, religion, ethnicity, political party, country or origin, it is like environmental issues. So, once it’s taking place in Nigeria, it affects any other person even in any other part of the world.”(<https://oaugf.ng/news1/156>)

Greed

Greed has caused a lot of crisis in the world. In Nigeria greed is a major cause of corruption. Some people are motivated by the desire to acquire more and more wealth when they do not actually need that wealth. It is greed that makes political leaders to embezzle public and government funds meant for national development. It is greed that makes political candidates to rig election, do rituals, and commit murder in order to win election. It is greed that makes a pastor to use magical and devilish means to run a church and defraud the members.

Inordinate desire for wealth by some politicians and public servants

Wealth is not evil, it gives us some comfort in life but the means one pursues it remains a question for moral evaluation. Unfortunately in Nigeria what counts is the wealth or the money how you get it is nobody’s business. Inordinate desire for wealth has led a lot of people into corrupt practices. Some of our political leaders cater away with billions of dollars to international banks of Europe and America. The presidency, the legislatures and judiciary are not free from this practice. The desire for wealth goes beyond the political leaders and public servants; the ordinary citizen is also involved.

Some officials heading different ministries and parastatals divert fund meant for infrastructural development into their private bank accounts and personal projects while the ministries and parastatals remain in a dilapidated state. A newly employed staff comes in with the mindset that money is all we need and from the first day he starts looking out for ways to enrich himself, buy expensive car and live in a luxurious house. The culture of corruption has been entrenched in the Nigerian system since the advent of modern public service administration in the country such that corruption and fraud has become endemic in public and private sectors of the country.

Non-effective enforcement of anti-corruption laws

Our anti-corruption laws and agencies are not effective they are just there in principle but not in implementation. They are not respected, people flout them and get away with it. The anti-corruption laws and agencies operate in fear and favour especially when an elite or any high class citizen is involved. People are afraid of losing their lives in a bid to fight corruption, there have been cases of assassination of officials who vowed to fight corruption and uphold anti-corruption laws. Enforcement of anti-corruption laws in Nigeria is weak despite its strong legal framework. Some People give bribes and gifts to cross the anti-corruption laws, the judges and the judiciary also cannot be trusted.

Effects of Corruption in Nigeria

Series of studies have been undertaken on the subject of corruption and its negative effects. This is to be expected when one considers the havoc which corruption brings on any society where it strives. Corruption has been identified as the greatest obstacle to the development of Nigeria. Its effects can be seen in the various sectors of the country.

- It has led to decrepit infrastructure as seen in bad roads, inadequate and irregular power supply, and lack of basic amenities.
- Substandard Educational opportunities which includes poor staffing, poor laboratories, comatose libraries, poor lecture rooms, production of poor quality and unemployable graduates, and neglect of staff welfare.
- Poor health services amongst which includes inadequate health facilities in our hospitals, dilapidated hospitals, lack of qualified health care workers, high cost of medical services and limited number of medical practitioners.
- Absence of justice in the judiciary. Corruption has swallowed justice such that it can be bought with bribe. It becomes the question of the highest bidder.
- The poor and the elderly are neglected. No provisions is made for them in the society, projects like old people's home, free medical care to them and other grants will elude them.
- Environmental Pollution. Activities that promote environmental pollution will be seen thriving in the society.
- High rate of unemployment becomes the order of the day.

- Lack of confidence in government institutions. The security agencies like the police, the paramilitary and the military can no longer be trusted. This results to loss of lives and properties.
- Withdrawal of foreign investors, when a country is corrupt no one can be trusted and this will discourage foreign investors from investing in the country and those already invested withdraws their services and investments.

Assessing Corruption in Nigeria in the light of Virtue Ethics

Corruption is a moral issue because it involves human action. It is a human behaviour, a behaviour that runs contrary to laid down rules. It violates the oughtness of human action. It is a reality that Nigeria is corrupt, which is evident in many unethical behaviours seen in the country. It has reached to the height that some see corruption as a way of life in Nigeria; many others see it as the easiest means of getting rich. It is no doubt that corruption is a serious challenge to Nigeria which shows the drastic moral laxity and breakdown in the life of some Nigerians. Corruption radiates almost in all sectors of the economy and there are several cases to buttress this fact. The Nigerian parliament reported that \$6bn (£4bn) has been defrauded from fuel subsidy fund in the last two years. A report by the office of the Auditor General indicted a former Head of Civil Service of the federation, Mr. Stephen Oronsaye over #123 billion fraud perpetrated during his tenure between 2009 and 2010. In 2017 some judges and lawyers were indicted by the Department of State Services (DSS) for alleged corruption on inducements by litigants. When the case was investigated, they were found guilty of taking bribes. Recently Okoro reported that there was a case of #125m vanished cash in Federal College of Education Obudu, Cross River State (FCE Obudu) The case led the Governing Council of the college on December 15, 2017 to recommend a 3 months suspension for the Provost which will last from January 1 to March 31. The Bursar has been suspended since September 2017 over the same issue. According to the chairman Governing Council the Provost was asked to refund #25 million with deadline being March 2018. (www.sunnewsonline.com) The Nigerian Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) has been accused of many corrupt activities. Recently Senator Dino Melaye on 23rd January plenary session said that NNPC is allegedly involved in monumental corruption. According to him the statutory provision is that NNPC should domicile their account in Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) but rather NNPC and its partners opened an account with a commercial bank and the said bank has no bank verification number (BVN). In his words: "This morning, I draw the attention of the Nigerian Senate to a suspected colossal monumental corruption in NNPC. It is a known fact that once you have a joint venture, the account of such venture, should be domiciled with the CBN. But, in this case, that was not what happened...this account has no BVN and there have been periodic withdrawals. The last withdrawal from that account was to the tune of \$4 million. As I speak the balance of the account, as at today is \$137 million..." (www.sunnewsonline.com) These corrupt practices and more may have informed Olusegun Obasanjo the former president of Nigeria to write a letter to president Muhammadu Buhari advising him not to seek re-election in 2019 because Buhari in his view has failed Nigerians. He said the country has been caught in a web of "poor performance in government, poverty, insecurity, poor economic management, nepotism, gross dereliction of duty, condonation of misdeeds-if not outright encouragement of it, lack of progress and hope for the future, lack of national cohesion and poor management of internal political dynamics and widening inequality" (www.sunnewsonline.com) With several cases of corruption seen on our dailies one is forced to ask the mind bugging question: can corruption be eliminated or ameliorated in Nigeria? If yes, how?

Corruption can be curtailed in Nigeria. To start with, Nigerians needs an ethical re-orientation. There is need for a change of mindset. This re-orientation involves a comprehensive public education, enlightenment programmes on the nature of corruption and its negatives effects on the country and its citizens. This task must be undertaken by the federal government and brought down to all levels. Chimakonam testifies to this by saying that a “broad based re-orientation should be carried out to sensitize Nigerians on the danger, the short term and long term negative impacts of corruption both in the life of the country, the individual and the posterity at large.”(318) It should move down to schools (primary, secondary and universities) and public institutions federal, state and local levels. It will involve T.V shows, radio programmes, hand bills, pictures and seminars and conferences showing the evil of corruption, how culprits are punished and its effects on the society. Chimakonam concurred to this view saying that:

The virtue of hard work, dignity, integrity and honour should be taught both at school and at religious gatherings. And the nation shall ban all forms of recognition, award and titles for men with questionable integrity. When all these are implemented and a veritable way of honouring people with outstanding achievements that are ethically sound put in place, this orientation and culture of corruption will die a natural death, as no one will want to be a social outcast.(315)

Some Nigerians have adopted an erroneous mindset, corruption is seen as a way of life and this guides and directs their daily actions. Our people need to be re-educated on ethical values that promote patriotism and altruism which enhances virtuous acts. Altruism is a virtue that should be emphasized because it will drastically reduce self-centeredness which encourages individual participation in corruption. This re-orientation and change of mindset will not be an easy task but in order to achieve this, Aristotle argued that we need a constant practice of the virtues, just like we acquired corrupt acts by constant practice. Napoleon Hill agrees with us that “people tend to shrink from crime on their first contact with it. But that through the passage of time, as it sticks with them, they end up embracing it and living by it.” (cited in Chimakonam 315) With constant effort Nigerians will develop a positive mindset and begin to see corruption as a vice that should be avoided. Just like Aristotle in his virtue ethics argued that virtue is not natural to man but nature gives us the capacity to receive it thereby everyone has the potential of being good. Virtue emanates from repeated just and temperate actions. Nigerians will become free from corrupt acts by adopting a positive mindset which by repeated practice culminates in non-corrupt actions. “Again, we cannot forget that practice such as favouritism, nepotism, blackmail, bribery, contract scams, fraud, looting, rigging, embezzlement, forgery, impersonation, etc, are also some other vices which have taken root of acceptance in Nigeria. In order, therefore, that we may get rid of corruption which is the mother of them all we must have to purge them away by finding ways of replacing them with positive values.”(Chimakonam 316) For Aristotle it is not enough to have knowledge of the good but doing it is most important. In his view one becomes a good athlete by practice, a good builder by constant building; Nigerians can become free from corruption by practicing good and virtuous actions. When the mindset is changed through ethical re-orientation and Nigerians begin to practice patriotism, respect for one another, transparency, accountability and altruism, till the point that it becomes a habit then this fight against corruption must have been achieved. Just like Aristotle advised that we become just by practicing good actions Nigerians can be free from corruption by practicing non-corrupt actions. The unemployment saga is a major cause of corruption and is one of the areas where corruption is domiciled. Corruption has bedeviled employment processes in Nigeria, favoritism,

ethnic affiliation, employment racketeering, relationship factor has flooded the employment process. Ethical re-orientation which will lead to change of mindset is urgently needed. Mediocrity has taken over meritocracy, employment are now given based on the minister of the federal republic you know, ethnic affiliation, payment of bribes, relationship factor (friendship or family ties) these are all acts of corruption. As Aristotle argued we need constant rejection of such acts and constant practice of good and virtuous acts not occasionally but consistently. In this connection Chimakonam advised that “morality should be restored to its right place within the nation’s life system, through campaigns, speeches and programmes. The government should encourage non-governmental organizations to spring up and re-culture Nigerians in this area.” (317,318)

Adopting Aristotle’s “Golden Mean” can also be an effective means of stemming corruption in Nigeria. Aristotle would always say that: “virtue lies in the middle.” Mean, for Aristotle means an intermediate position free from excess and defects. In this direction wages and salaries should be at the mean. Low wages and salaries play an important role in encouraging corruption. In Nigeria, government workers both at the federal, state and local level are poorly remunerated, teachers at all levels (primary, secondary and university) are the worst hit considering their contribution to the society. The government has been insensitive to the plight of the workers and the current economic reality of the country. Aristotle’s Golden Mean plays an important role here; the government in order to fight corruption must place the workers’ salaries on the golden mean such that it will be equivalent to the present economic reality of the country. Malam Yusuf Ali (SAN) said that “poor remuneration and irregular salary payment exposed Nigerian civil servants to sharp practices and corruption”(www.dailytrust.com) It has affected them so much that some ask or collect bribe before rendering service to the public. Ezedike and Ariche in agreement to this point assert that: “in our offices today, people do not perform their officially assigned duties without demanding for some monetary gratifications from the beneficiaries. Even when they perform such duties before getting some compensation, they may only expect some gratifications in return after performing their lawful and remunerated duties” (464). In another direction one can imagine when last the salary scale was reviewed and this has been the cause of incessant strike action by Nigeria Labour Congress. Allowances and staff welfare packages are not given to them and this makes corruption attractive because they would want to get it at all cost even to the point of sharing it fifty fifty(50%) with the people in charge so long as he/she gets something. Sharing the same view Chuke asserts that:

It is a well- established fact bribery and corruption hold sway in any company where workers are poorly compensated. Most under remunerated workers are easily lured to bribery and corruption because their take home rarely takes them home and they strive to survive through corrupt practices such as bribery. They have the tendency to seek ways of augmenting their earnings from their workplace by engaging in fraudulent acts such as pen robbery, embezzlement, misappropriation, pilferage and other kinds of corruption. (487)

The government has remained insensitive to the present economic realities in the country. Workers have been agitating for an increase from the 18% minimum wage for so some time now and the government keeps promising without any concrete show of it. Fagbemi reiterated the Senior Staff Association of Statutory Cooperation and Government owned Companies position that “only an increment in minimum wage, provision of enabling environment and palliatives for the poor workers can curb or reduce corruption in the country.”(www.tribuneonlineng.com) Further the deputy

president NLC Comrade Peters Adeyemi said that “a serious government that will fight corruption must guarantee that the work force is paid wages commiserate with the responsibilities they rendered and must tally with the prevailing economic indices in the country.”(www.nigerianmonitor.com) In line with Aristotle’s mean, salaries and wages of Nigerian workers should be at the mean so as to reflect the present economic reality. This implies constant periodic review and adjustment to arrive at a realistic minimum wage that can sustain an average worker. It is obvious that the current minimum wage of 18% can no longer carry the average public servant. The prices of commodities keep going up each day. The same 18% minimum wage which was paid when a bag of rice was #7000 (seven thousand naira) is being received presently that a bag of rice cost as high as #20,000 (Twenty thousand naira) The minimum wage should be reviewed periodically and placed at the mean (devoid of excess and defect) to keep pace with the economic realities. This will curb corruption and boost high moral standard and work ethics and make corruption unattractive. The Aristotle’s mean can also be applied in our dealings in our various offices and in various capacities. It involves knowing what to do when faced with corrupt colleagues and when you are in a dilemma. It further aids in knowing the right course of action, at the right time, towards the right person, for the right purpose and in the right manner. For instance it aids to know when to reject gifts that are bribes in disguise, differentiate bribe from appreciation, for bribes come before the work is done while appreciation comes after you have done your duty. It further helps one to know when to report a corrupt case to avoid being indicted and to the appropriate personnel through the right means and channel.

Collection of bribes by some security personnel from motorists is worrisome. Sometimes some motorists in a bid to avoid the hostile way police take bribe from them have caused accidents and human lives lost. Motorists give bribes because they don’t want to pay fines for violating the road user requirement and traffic rules. Though this paper is not encouraging people to flout traffic rules or not to get their vehicle particulars up to date but it is arguing that the fines are too high and motorists instead of paying the high fine would prefer to give bribe. Imagine you are guilty of a fine of #5000 and you are asked to pay just #1000, definitely you will choose the lesser option. In Nigeria some of our fines are heavy. Government should make the fines moderate better still put them at the mean. Some fines are so heavy and motorists prefer to give bribes to police and members of the road safety corps than being taken to the station to pay fine. Customs impose heavy fines and levies on importers. The levies should be checked so that people can conveniently pay them than giving bribes. If the fines are at the mean (not in excess or defect) it will minimize the bribery that takes place on our roads. Again, sadly enough information concerning this levies are not known to the public and the officers give false information to the people. These fines and levies should be at the reach of the public to avoid getting false information from officers.

Shunning corruption is a choice we have to make as Aristotle posits that both virtue and vice depends on us. We should not allow association and transaction with others makes us unjust or corrupt. Self control and discipline is the watch word. Chimakonam opined that “since moral depravity is what engenders corrupt practices, it follows therefore, that an elevated moral life will quell participation in corruption” (314) Corrupt practices should be condemned in strong terms, corruption is theft and it falls among the actions Aristotle judged as intrinsically wrong and no amount of moderation can justify or make them good, they should be condemned and culprits brought to book. Here comes the task of our anti-corruption personnel’s and agencies to stand up to their duties and shun the idea of “sacred cows.” In this direction Achebe argues that “Nigerians are corrupt because the system under

which they live today makes corruption easy and profitable; they will cease to be corrupt when corruption is made difficult and inconvenient”(38) The EFCC, ICPC, the judiciary and other anti-corruption agencies should stand up to their duties and be more effective in implementing anti-corruption laws. If the laws are forced on virtue with strict supervision by law enforcement agencies corruption will drastically reduce in Nigeria because some Nigerians have shown that mere words cannot bend them to follow and obey the laws.

Conclusion

It is obvious that the level of corruption in Nigeria is high. It has eaten deep into the minds of some Nigerians and this is worrisome because of the havoc it has caused. It has been discovered that it is pandemic in Nigeria because some leaders and the followers are involved in one way or another. The irony is that the corrupt person often times does not see him/herself as corrupt but as one who is exploiting his opportunity, taking his share of the national cake and is often celebrated because of his wealth (ill -gotten wealth) Curbing corruption in Nigeria has not been as successful as imagined especially with president Muhammadu Buhari who promised Nigerians during his 2015 election campaign to fight corruption to death. This canker worm seem to have defiled all measures adopted to tackle it. To win the war on corruption the application of Aristotle’s teachings on virtues becomes indispensable. Without ethical reorientation, constant practice of the virtues and observance of the Golden Mean the apparent war on corruption in Nigeria will not be a complete success. Further, Nigerians need a change of mindset and practice of the virtues as Aristotle taught so that corruption can be eradicated or more so reduced to an insignificant or lowest minimum. All hope is not lost in this fight, corruption is a vice and to purge vice constant practice of the virtues becomes paramount. There is need for all to start practicing the virtues of integrity, self-control and discipline, justice, courage, wisdom, reliability, responsibility, selfless service, impartiality, punctuality to duty, love, moderation, openness, accountability, honesty, benevolence, charity, honour, commitment to duty, contentment, creativity, diligence, excellence generosity. Regular practice of these virtues consistently not occasionally will help in eradicating or ameliorating corruption in Nigeria.

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