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Kant's Ethical Position and the Problem of Corruption in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Kant's Ethical Position and the Problem of Corruption in Nigeria is aimed at making evident the prevalent nature of corruption in Nigeria and suggests the possible means of tackling the cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of the nation, negatively affecting the development of the country in almost all spheres of human endeavour. There is an urgent need for eradication of this menace, or at least reduce it drastically. Efforts have been made without bearing many fruits because those efforts were not anchored on a particular philosophy. As a result, this work calls for the adoption of Immanuel Kant's Ethical Position, especially his categorical imperative as a vibrant and working philosophy in a quest for the eradication of this misnomer. By so doing, a sense of duty, goodwill, moral law, justice and fairness should be embraced by all Nigerians as a way of tackling this hydra-headed monster called corruption in the nation. Some of the methods employed in this work include: analytic, historical, textual, and contextual. Word count: 167.

Keywords: Categorical Imperative; Corruption; Ethics; Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is at the basis of the problem of Nigeria ranging from social, religious, moral, cultural, academic, economic, and, in fact, almost in all sectors of human endeavour as a nation. No country in the world is immune from corruption. That notwithstanding, the rate at which corrupt practices thrive in Nigeria is not only alarming but devastating. The

polemical nature of this is that the more it is talked about, the more intense it becomes. The unimaginable and herculean situation in the country ranging from hunger to a high level of poverty among the citizenry, religious crises, insurgency, economic and political unrest have all been attributed to the high rate of corruption in the nation. Apart from the looting of the nation's treasury, bribery in almost all segments of the nation's economy; dishonesty for instance, as part of corrupt practices, neglect of duty, exploitation, injustice and lack of fairness in the country are on the increase on daily basis. By implication, corrupt practices are more or less culture in Nigeria.

Greed, poor youth empowerment, poverty, and unemployment among other things have been identified among the causes of corruption in Nigeria (Igiebor 2019). This work, therefore, advocates for Kant's ethics, especially his category imperative as a workable philosophy and indeed a veritable instrument in tackling the problem of corruption in Nigeria. To achieve this, it is considered necessary to define those basic concepts that form the crux of this research.

CLARIFICATION OF SOME BASIC CONCEPTS

It was a famous dictum of Aristotle of Stagira (384-322 BC): "*Initio disputandum est definitio nominis* - For any discourse to be meaningful, it must begin with definition of terms" (Quarantotto 2020). Some of the basic concepts that form the heart of our work are defined in the paragraphs below.

Ethics just like philosophy itself does not have a univocal or generally acceptable definition. As a branch of Philosophy, ethics studies the morality of an action which can be right or wrong, good or bad, and in fact, it studies the norms of human behavior. From the etymology, ethics derives from the Greek word "ethos" which means "custom". It shares an equivalent meaning with yet another word "mores", which means "customs" or "habits". Sometimes the two words are used interchangeably with "customs, habits and acceptable ways of behavior of an individual or a community" (Uduigwomen 2009, p. 1).

The term position is employed here to mean a point of view or standpoint. It means a point of view adopted by a person or an individual. The problem, on the other hand, is a situation in human affairs when people are challenged or faced with difficulty which could be intellectual, physical, social, material, spiritual, psychological, cultural, environmental, and so forth. Without problems, both the person and the society can hardly develop, grow, and rise to the level of maturity. The world is advancing vigorously in scientific discoveries and technological advancement especially in this 21st century because of problems encountered by man in ancient, medieval, and modern times. *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines a problem as a question raised for inquiry, consideration, or solution; a source of perplexity, distress, or vexation; difficulty in understanding or acceptance (Mash 2020, p. 926).

Corruption is another keyword used in this work. Corruption derives from the Latin word '*corrumpo*' which means "to decompose", "to disintegrate or to lose value, to become putrid and useless." *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* defines corruption as an act of dishonesty or an illegal behavior aimed at using public office for one's private gain. Corruption means impairment of integrity, virtue or moral principle, depravity, decomposition: inducement to wrong by improper or unlawful means (as bribery); a departure from the original, what is pure or correct (Lea et al., p. 260).

A BRIEF PROFILE OF KANT

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was a Prussian philosopher of Scottish descent. He was born at Königsberg and studied at the University of Königsberg where he had his doctorate. Königsberg fell into Russian hands at the end of World War II, but it was originally the capital of East Prussia, the base of Prussian power before the growth of Berlin, and in Kant's time it remained the administrative center of East Prussia (Förster 2010). It was also a business, legal, military, and educational center with many connections to the rest of Europe.

Kant's father, Johann George Kant (1683-1746), was a harness maker, and his mother Anna Regina, a housewife, was an educated and pious Christian. The Kants were adherents of Pietism, a reformer movement within Lutheranism, which placed great importance on personal faith and conscience. Immanuel Kant, the second oldest and the first son among the four of the nine children, was very bright, and with the help of the leading Pietist pastor of Königsberg, Franz Albert Schulz, he was able to attend the leading school in the city, the Pietist Collegium Fredericianum, in the age of 8 to 16. Pietist theology was taught at the school, and besides it offered rigorous training in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and French, logic and the history of philosophy, history, and geography, arithmetic, geometry, and trigonometry (Hirsch 2020). Textbooks of Christian Wolff, who was the dominant philosopher of Germany at that time, would be extensively consulted and studied. Kant borrowed many aspects of the outward organization of his critical philosophy from his great predecessor Christian Wolff.

Kant's mother died when he was 13, which left his family in reduced circumstances. But Kant was nevertheless able to enroll at the University of Königsberg at the age of 16, the average age for starting university in those days. Schulz and the Pietists intended Kant for the ministry, but at the university, he did not matriculate in theology, law, or medicine, instead of pursuing an unrestricted course of study in classical literature, philosophy, and natural science. Kant's university teachers offered a broad introduction to contemporary European philosophy and science. Among his teachers of philosophy, Martin Knutzen was very influential. Knutzen was influenced by both Pietism and John Locke's empiricism as well as by Wolff. He was very critical of the Leibnizian-Wolffian rejection of interaction among bodies as well as between minds and bodies in favour of the theory of pre-established harmony and was also an enthusiast for Newtonian Physics and contemporary astronomy. He was also exposed to other philosophical and scientific influences – Aristotelian ethics and logic, English literature and British empiricism, the new phenomenon of electricity and liberalism, and humanism in politics.

Kant left university in 1746 without receiving the usual degree of Magister, although he had completed the dissertation, the *True Estimation of Living Forces*, which was eventually published in 1749. It was primarily a scientific work, attempting to mediate between Cartesian and Leibnizian conceptions of force. After two more years in Königsberg, Kant was forced to resort to the livelihood of many other intellectuals in his time, namely, work as a household tutor. He spent the years 1748 to 1754 for such employment with upper-middle-class or noble families in the vicinity of Königsberg. In 1755 after he returned to the city he published in rapid succession three Latin treatises that earned him the delayed master's degree, the doctoral degree, and the right to teach at the university. He lectured in his *alma mater* and subsequently became a well-known professor of Philosophy. Kant is one of the greatest moral philosophers, and indeed one

of the greatest philosophers of all times. His main works on ethics include: ‘*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*’ and ‘*Critique of Practical Reason*’.

THE PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

There is no place in Nigeria where the problem of corruption is not felt or experienced (Aboh & Effiong 2019). It suffices to say that no segment of human endeavour in Nigeria is free from corrupt practices. Being an ethical and moral problem, corruption is a global phenomenon through the findings of this paper are restricted to Nigeria. Those activities that go contrary to the moral law, norms, and acceptable standards by the people of Nigeria are corrupt practices in the nation (Edet 2015). Corruption takes diverse forms and shapes in Nigeria. Right from families, some children are preferentially treated among their siblings by their parents. In the institutions of learning some students gain admission with poor or no results, while some who even score higher marks are not considered at times because of their religious or cultural affiliation or background (where they come from). To instantiate these claims, Uzochukwu (2005) brings to our consciousness that, “In the year 2000, Transparency International surveyed the corruption levels of 90 countries including Kenya, Cameroon, Angola, Nigeria, Cote-d’Ivoire, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal, India, Venezuela, Moldova, and others. In the end, Nigeria was seen as the most corrupt in that ranking because the country occupied the 90th position in terms of transparency. Nigeria was the most corrupt country in the year 2000. In 2001, Nigeria was ranked the second-most corrupt nation in the world out of 91 countries, falling only to Bangladesh. This shows that corruption in Nigeria improved by one step when compared with that of 2000” (Uzochukwu 2015).

There is exploitation in almost all sectors of Nigerian society. A case in point is where children of poor parents are taken to the township by so-called rich uncles and aunts with the agreement that such children would be enrolled in school. Unfortunately, some of them end up being hawkers or ‘working machines’ for their so-called uncles and aunts. Respect for duty and human dignity is gradually becoming a poem in the nation. Embezzlement or misappropriation of public funds is on the increase. Lecturers, for instance, from some parts of the country are not promoted or evaluated based on the same standard as lecturers from the other regions. Appointments in government are often based on tribal or religious sentiments and affiliation, and not based on merit or competence just to mention a few.

The most troublesome of all these experiences is that various governments in power in the nation have introduced different measures to arrest this situation. As disheartening as it is, some of these governments turn out to be more corrupt than the already existing corrupt persons and practices they set out to tackle. Similarly, in his work, *Analysis of Corruption in Nigeria: A New Paradigm for Effective Control*, Dike (2005) argues, “One is corrupt when one’s behaviour goes contrary to established rules or deviates from the formal duties of a public role, because of private gains which could benefit the individual, his/her close family, private clique and could be in form of pecuniary, physical or status gratification. Such behaviour may include bribery, the use of reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust; nepotism, the bestowal of patronage because of ascriptive relationship rather than merit; misappropriation, illegal appropriation of public resources for private use” (Dike 2005, p. 64). Corruption has, in fact, become a reoccurring decimal in Nigeria.

WHY IS IT THAT CORRUPTION THRIVES IN NIGERIA?

Corruption thrives in Nigeria for so many reasons. The most outstanding of the reasons is that some of the people fighting corruption in Nigeria are damned corrupt themselves (Essien 2008; Osuala & Nyok 2018). Critics of corruption do worse when they are eventually tested by giving them some appointments to showcase in practical terms corrupt-free administration in their areas of jurisdiction. Again, corrupt means are often used in fighting corruption in the nation. Among the reasons why corruption thrives in the nation is that a good number of Nigerians so much value and encourage material possessions more than honour and integrity. People who live a life of honesty, probity, accountability and reverence to the moral laws are not often rewarded or at least encouraged for doing the right thing. At best they are called all sorts of names showing that they are either cowards or failures in their works of life (Uzoigwe 2016, p. 3).

In the political arena, those politicians that siphon public funds either through misappropriation or outright looting are praised or shown to be smart as if to say that the society sanctions it. Supporting this view, SaraChukwuaka (2017) adumbrates: “It is not surprising why corruption thrives in Nigeria because moving from families to communities, churches and various groups in the Nigerian society in general, people are honoured based on how much money or material possessions they have, or they can show that they have, or give no matter how much money is acquired. Some politicians for instance, who loot public funds are given warm reception and chieftaincy titles in their villages, and even religious titles in some churches indirectly promoting corruption (p. 79). Some family members see their children as failures or at best not making enough efforts compared to their contemporaries who indulge in all sorts of atrophy to make wealth. So, this unhealthy and unnecessary comparison is an indirect way of encouraging corrupt practices in the country. Had it been that those who make wealth through embezzlement and other forms of corrupt practices are least respected and recognized in the society, it would have been a serious case of discouragement to those who have already, and those who desire to join in perpetuating corrupt practices in Nigeria.

SOME OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN IN NIGERIA

It is an ethically and morally sound maxim of significant import that he who goes to equity should go with clean hands. The very first attempt to extricate corruption in Nigeria was during the administration of Late General Murtala Mohammed. He inaugurated the Assets Investigation Panel (AIP) and began the fight against corruption starting from all the then-military Governors in the country (Akinlo & Owoyemi 2012). Unfortunately, when the Panel embarked on their duty, all the military Governors under General Gowon’s administration and some other public officials were indicted. The most encouraging of this bold step was that the report was not only made public in an open broadcast through the media, but his administration dismissed and confiscated the assets of the culprits. Anderson (2016) commenting on the effort made by Murtala Mohammed to get Nigeria rid of Corruption writes: “The dearth of Murtala Mohammed was a big setback to the anti-corruption crusade he began on a good footing using his fellow military officers as a take-off point” (p.19).

This must-have also propelled Maduagwu (1996) to posit that, “Murtala Mohammed must be remembered as the only Nigerian leader who was determined to stamp out corruption from the public office in the country” (p. 15). No doubt, Murtala Mohammed

was courageous to fight corruption in Nigeria, and as it were, Maduagwu (1996) made a very important point. However, this work does not subscribe to Maduagwu's view that Murtala Mohammed was the only Nigerian leader who made effort in that direction as this paper makes evident.

The administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari introduced Ethical Revolution Commission (ERC), but was not much committed to fighting corruption (Ogbondah 2000); and so, the commission died a natural death. General Muhammadu Buhari's administration in the Second Republic established a tribunal to bring corrupt practices to a stop in the country. Similarly, some scholars have argued that what is happening in the present Buhari's administration (from 2015 till date) proves that the efforts at tackling and fighting corruption in the nation in the Second Republic were the brainchild of Brigadier General Tunde Idiagbon who was the Vice President to Buhari. Stanley Dennis (2020) puts it this way:

The level of corruption in Nigeria since the second coming of Muhammadu Buhari as the president of the nation opens to sight that Idiagbon was really the man behind the giant strides of the Second Republic in an attempt to fight corruption. The current Buhari administration cannot do anything in fighting corruption because they are richly corrupt themselves. The high point of their corrupt practices is deceit and telling Nigerians lies in a broad-day light. It is unfortunate (p. 7).

The War Against Indiscipline (WAI) of General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida administration was simply an effort in futility because he who goes to equity must go with clean hands (Agbaje & Adisa 1998). Naturally, Nigerians were not expecting a miracle from such political gymnastics. Yes, you cannot use indiscipline to fight indiscipline. Minus-minus is a plus in mathematical logic.

Before Nigerians could know what was happening Chief Olusegun Obasanjo emerged as the President of the nation from prison. How on earth could any logically sound person be convinced that such an administration would succeed in fighting corruption? Obasanjo administration (1999-2007) signed into law Anti-Corruption Bill that necessitated the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). When the amendment of the Anti-Corruption Bill was concluded by the National Assembly to make a provision for the Office of a Special Counsel, President Obasanjo while signing the document said: "I personally endorse the idea of a Special Counsel because it means that no Nigerian, from the President to the lowest is exempted from being investigated under the law" (Bagudu & Ihonvbere 2004, p. 332).

From the above statement, it becomes clear that the issues of fighting corruption by some of the Nigerian politicians is easier said than done because for more than eight years Obasanjo left office no investigation has been carried out against him, even when such an issue is raised, it dies overnight. Supporting this view, Oyinlola (2001) articulates: "An analysis of anti-graft/anti-corruption laws in Nigeria shows that corruption will continue in spite of the law because the perpetrators do not fear any consequences" (p. 201). It has to be pointed out that Anti-Corruption Bill that was signed into law in Nigeria on 13 June 2000 has borne no significant fruit. Even the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) inaugurated on 29 September 2000 as an offshoot of the Anti-Corruption Bill is simply "tales by the moon light".

As this segment of the findings is concluded, it is not out of place to recall that, “The stain of corruption did not spare anti-graft agencies as former Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Ibrahim Larmode, was accused of fraudulently diverting over N1tn proceeds from corruption recovered by the agency” (Adeyemi 2016). This is one of the major reasons why corruption remains persistent in Nigeria. The people who are called to solve the problem are later found out to be the real problem to be solved.

One of the most shocking experiences Nigerians had during President Goodluck Jonathan Administration (especially from 2011-2015) was the diversion of funds meant for the purchase of military equipment into individual accounts. The “Dasukigate” was not only an eye-opener but further instantiates the claim that corruption is the bane of Nigeria’s growth and development. On 14 December 2015 Sambo Dasuki and his accomplices misappropriated 2.1 billion dollars meant for the purchase of arms to tackle Boko Haram in Nigeria (Nigeria's Dasuki 'arrested over \$2BN Arms fraud, 2015). On November 10, 2020, Dasuki’s accomplice said he spent 2.2bn for prayers against Boko Haram- EFCC witnesses (Nigeria's Dasuki 'arrested over \$2BN Arms fraud, 2015).

An Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) witness, Adariko Michael, on Wednesday, alleged that two companies belonging to a former General Manager of the NNPC, Aminu Baba-Musa, received N2.2 billion. Mr. Michael made this known while testifying on day two in the trial of former National Security Adviser (NSA) Sambo Dasuki, in the alleged two billion dollars arms deal in an FCT High Court. The witness, who is an EFCC investigating officer, was led in evidence by the EFCC counsel, Rotimi Jacobs. He alleged that the amount was part of N5 billion approved for the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) for 2015 gubernatorial and state House of Assembly elections. The EFCC charged Mr. Dasuki, Baba-Musa, Acacia Holdings Limited and Reliance Referral Hospital Limited with a 32-count charge bordering on misappropriation, criminal breach of trust, dishonest release and receiving various sums of money from the ONSA (Agency Report 2020).

In this present Muhammadu Buhari Administration, Ibrahim Magu, who was the Chairman of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), alleged to have diverted some funds recovered by his commission. It is during the Buhari administration that ‘snake’ swallowed the money in Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) office, and ‘monkey’ in turn swallowed millions of naira meant for the good of the public in the north (Osuala & Nyok 2020). The rate at which those at the helm of affairs in the governance of Nigeria at the State and Federal levels handled Covid-19 fund and palliatives meant for the poor, and how they were diverted to private use was expository to the high rate of corruption in the nation (Stanley 3). To further instantiate this clam,

On 6 July 2020, Ibrahim Magu was arrested at the Wuse II office of the Department of State Services on Monday afternoon, and he is currently undergoing interrogation at DSS Headquarters in Aso Drive, according to a report. In December 2010, the Police Service Commission (PSC) found Magu guilty prejudicial to state security – withholding of EFCC files, sabotage, unauthorised removal of EFCC files and acts unbecoming of a police officer, and awarded him severe reprimand as punishment”, the Sahara Reporters website cited a report released by the Department of State Services in 2016 (Anadolu Agency 2020). The EFCC is a Nigerian law enforcement agency that investigates financial crimes such as advance fee fraud and money laundering. Nigeria’s EFCC was established in 2003 in part as a response to pressure from the Financial Action

Task Force on Money Laundering after the group named Nigeria as one of the 23 countries that were uncooperative in the global fight against money laundering. But according to Transparency International, Nigeria was not fighting corruption. There needed to be a structure different from police and ICPC (Independent Corrupt Practices Commission) because Nigeria currently ranks 146th out of 180 countries scoring a miserly 26% despite the 17 years of the anti-graft agency. But, even now, the EFCC does not fight corruption on the scale that's needed, "Damilola Adebayo, a Lagos-based policy expert, tells *The Africa Report*" (Adeshokan, 2020).

In a similar report, it was noted that "Magu is currently occupying a residence rented for N40m at N20m per annum. This accommodation was not paid for from the commission's finances, but by one Umar Mohammed, a commodore retired, a questionable businessman who has subsequently been arrested by the security service," the DSS report 2016 said (Erezi 2020). The investigation panel of the EFCC further raised alarm at the magnitude of corrupt practice orchestrated by its former boss thus, "Magu enlisted the Federal Capital Development Authority to award a contract to African Energy, a company owned by the same Mohammed, to furnish the residence at the cost of N43m" (Erezi 2020).

It has to be recalled that in 2015 and 2016 the Senate rejected Magu's appointment as substantive chairman of EFCC, and he remained there in acting capacity till his suspension and eventual removal from office in 2020. In all these, Yusuf noted that "whether Magu is finally indicted or the ruling party sweeps the findings of the panel of investigation under the carpet like some other related findings of some corrupt politicians who have their godfathers at Aso Rock Villa, one thing that has been established is that Magu's hands are not and cannot be 'completely' clean and it is indeed unfortunate" (18).

KANT'S ETHICAL POSITION

In Kant's ethics, he demonstrates that only one thing is good without qualification, and that is goodwill. Kant contends that it is only goodwill that is intrinsically good. It is only goodwill that is unconditionally good. Every other good needs to be qualified because it can become bad when misused. Intelligence is good but when it is misused it becomes bad like in the case of using it for a crime. Wealth is good but it can be dangerous when misused like using it to purchase weapons to destroy lives and property. For Kant, goodwill is the will that acts for the sake of duty. Kant distinguishes between "acting for the sake of duty" and "acting according to duty" (Ramet 2019, p. 184). To act for the sake of duty (or to act from duty) is to act not because one hopes to gain anything from the action, not because one feels like just doing it, or because one has a natural inclination to do such things but purely out of reverence for the moral law. In other words, it means doing something because the moral law demands it, even if one stands to lose materially from such action. To act according to duty, on the other hand, is to act out of prudent considerations for one's interest (Omogegbe 1993, p. 220).

Similarly, Kant goes about his ethical and moral position from his ideas about moral law and the categorical imperative. For him, the moral law is a categorical imperative that unconditionally obliges all men without exception. It is not based on anything external to the rational will; otherwise, it would not be categorical and unconditional because the will can always say "No" to anything or any offer outside itself (Omogegbe 1993, p. 225). The human will (i.e man's rational will) is the source of moral law because moral law is categorical and because man has free will. The moral law is a self-imposed law. It then

follows that it is man's rational will that imposes on itself the moral law, which Kant calls "the principle of the autonomy of the will." The will is not compelled or motivated by anything outside itself to obey the moral law; it obeys because it is its own law.

On the other hand, the categorical imperative as the imperative of morality is absolute and categorical and nobody can be exempted from it. It is also called an "apodictic practical principle" (Kant 2002, p. 78). As it were, Kant gives different formulations of the categorical imperative as follows: (1) "Act only on the maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law". (2) "I am never to act otherwise than so that my maxim should become a universal law." (3) "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature." (4) "So act as to use humanity both in your own person and in the person of every other, always at the same time as an end, never simply as a means." (5) "So act that your will can regard itself at the same time as making universal law through its maxim." (6) "So act as if you were always through your maxims a law-making member in a universal kingdom of ends." From the above, it is important to note that Kant's ethics and morality are encapsulated in his categorical imperative. These positions of Kant did not go criticized.

SOME SCHOLARS' OBJECTIONS TO KANT'S ETHICAL POSITION

From what has just been said, Kant's ethics is not without some criticisms just like some other ethical principles and positions. In his Work on *Critique of Kant*, Wilson (2005) writes: "Kant did not make a provision for situations where there is conflict of duties" (p. 13). Ozumba (2008) argues that, "An act can be morally good even if such an act is not motivated by duty" (p. 138). On his own, Rex (2013) indicates that "Kant did not only glorify duty but went further without giving moral worth to an act done on the basis of sympathy" (p.62). This view has a close similitude with the position held by Egbai (2014) who disagrees with Kant for exalting duty to the extent of not giving moral worth done as a result of inclination or sympathy (p. 88). Similarly, in his work, *Introducing Ethics: Trends, Problems and Perspectives*, Uduigwomen (2006) made a revelatory remark that "Kant has been criticized for attempting to establish equivalence between the term, "goodwill", a "natural quality" and the word, "good", a non-natural quality" (p. 57). And so, there is evidence of conceptual misconception.

The above criticisms show that no philosophical principle or theory is so sacrosanct that some criticisms cannot be leveled against it. However, despite all those criticisms Kant's ethical position still holds sway. This paper strongly holds that Kant's categorical imperative is a tool that if consciously and conscientiously employed and applied by Nigerians the problem of corruption will be drastically reduced if not completely eradicated. Kant's position on duty has a moral insight of timeless validity. His view that the moral worth of an act is derived or obtained when an act is carried out as a result of duty is a vital principle as well as a moral tool such that if applied and sincerely lived out by Nigerians will help fight corruption. When for instance, children, youths and adults in Nigeria accept and live duty-conscious life they will learn to take moral decisions irrespective of who might be involved.

If the so-called uncle or aunt in our analysis above who went to the village and took a poor widow's child to the township understands that it is their duty to enroll that child in school as they promised the parents or parent of that child such a child would not turn to work machine or sex hawker as some of them turn to be in the process of hawking goods like mineral and sachet water for their uncle or aunt. The same applies to the elected

officeholders who receive a monetary allocation to develop their constituencies if they know that they owe it as a duty to use the money meant for the development of their constituencies for that purpose and not for their selfish gains.

A JUXTAPOSITION OF KANT'S ETHICAL POSITION AND THE PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

I wish to point out that analyzing Kant's ethical position without bringing in at least one ethical theory will be doing Kant a disservice. It is so because ethical theory like deontologist was developed in line with the Kantian ethical view. Again, because corruption as human activity has moral and ethical implications, it is nice that humans employ an ethical theory for clarity and precision. Deontologism as an ethical theory holds that some acts are naturally obligatory and binding on us (Ochulor 2012, p. 177). Taking misappropriation of public funds for personal gains in the public offices in Nigeria as an example, this act goes contrary to the natural law and right reason that one should appropriate what is meant for the good of the public for the individual benefit at the expense of the common good. In line with Kant's ethics or moral philosophy, "corruption is seen as an immoral or morally bad action because it goes against the supreme moral principle and natural sense of duty that goes with it" (Ochulor 2012, p. 178).

Employing Kant's thought, "Act only on the maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (Homan 2020, p. 85). It is indeed incontrovertible that no one would like corruption to be adopted and practised as a universal law. Nobody would wish that others would appropriate what also belongs to him for their selfish and personal gains. Going further, another maxim says, "Act as to use humanity both in your own person of every other, always at the same time as an end, never simply as a means". According to Kant (2002), the moral law forbids any man to be used simply as a means to an end. No man would like that he is used as a means to an end. Highlighting further on this, Omoregbe (1993) writes: "This must have influenced Karl Marx's strong protest against the exploitation of man by man. It is an offence against human dignity to use a human being simply as an instrument to attain one's ends" (p. 224).

Using Kant's third categorical imperative to drive home our point, "a moral agent is subject only to laws which are made by himself and yet are universal". In this place, Kant brings in the idea of the autonomy of the will. This principle of the autonomy of the will is what Kant called "the supreme principle of morality" (94). It is "the sole principle of all moral laws and all corresponding duties" Also in Kant's postulation about "kingdom of ends" he said,

The concept of every rational being as one who must regard as making universal law by all maxims of his will, and must seek to judge himself and his actions from this point of view, leads to a closely connected and fruitful concept-namely, that of a kingdom of ends (Kant 2002, p. 95).

By the kingdom of ends, Kant means the union of all rational beings who are ends-in-themselves and both makers and subjects of universal moral laws.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

It is considered necessary to posit a question that will help us to analytically conclude this reflection. Is it within the capacity of Nigerians to overcome corruption? The answer to the above question is in the affirmative. Yes, it is within the capacity of Nigerians to

overcome corruption. This research strongly holds that there is nothing man cannot achieve provided that man has the willpower, commitment, courage, skills, resources and other things it takes to achieve it. It begins from within. Nigerians must first and foremost begin with a genuine desire and personal commitment to do away with corruption. It will then be accompanied by mental reconstruction and attitudinal change. Nigerians should be made to understand that a good reputation is far better than material possession and that the former is a higher value.

Nigerians should individually and collectively work together for the promotion of the highest good. For Kant, the highest good is the complete conformity of the will with the moral law and the happiness that is proportionate to such conformity (2002, p. 96). Again, critical analysis shows that the ultimate principle of Kant's ethical position is his categorical imperative which is deontological oriented. The core thesis of this imperative is that the moral worth of an action is duty-bent. Nigerians should also learn to live a life of contentment because a contented man or woman can hardly take what belongs to him and others alone.

It has been established from our findings that corruption permeates every aspect of the life of Nigeria as a nation. It is also discovered that Kant's ethical position notwithstanding the attacks of some scholars against it stands as a veritable tool in checkmating this herculean problem to the nation. When Nigerians adopt the principle of respect for duty, respect for the moral law, imbibe and adopt honesty and goodwill as a culture, and see justice and fairness as a necessary condition for mutual living, corruption will be a talk of the past. Even though Kant did not use the word justice and fairness as I present it above, however, it is implied in his ethical position of the categorical imperative, because a man or woman of goodwill will invariably act based on justice and fairness. This work, therefore, maintains that the ethical position of Kant should be enshrined in the moral and ethical topics in our schools starting from nursery/primary schools. Let such principles like work for the sake of duty, goodwill, and respect for the moral law be explained to pupils with the vocabularies that are within their age limit and experience, and still retaining their meaning and purpose with the explanations given to those in post-primary and tertiary institutions. Teachers must accompany it with good examples.

In my opinion, it is within the capacity of Nigerians as free and moral agents to do away with corruption. Corruption thrives in Nigeria because it is not sincerely frowned at so as to serve as a deterrent to those who would wish to follow suit. It requires determination and sincere commitment to fight corruption in Nigeria. Again, those who are in the government setting up anti-corruption panels and bodies must ensure that they are not corrupt themselves, especially when they see their responsibilities in government as a duty. They must see it as a duty they owe Nigerians to carry out their responsibilities devoid of corruption. Yes, Ralph W. Emerson as cited by Wilson (2005, p. 16) says: "if you think you can you can, if you think you cannot, you can't, this is an inexorable, indisputable law".

With this kind of mindset and disposition employing Kant's ethical position, an impact can be significantly made in tackling the problem of corruption in Nigeria. This paper further suggests that those in public and private offices who genuinely do their best to live corrupt-free life should be celebrated by their families, communities, government and even in their various Churches the same way some corrupt Nigerians are honoured. This will serve as a counter-reaction to celebrating corruption in the country. If this is

conscientiously done, corruption if not completely eradicated, at least, will be drastically reduced in Nigeria.

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