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Corruption as a Social Phenomenon: Philosophical Analysis

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***Abstract.** The article is devoted to the generalization of knowledge on the social phenomenon of corruption. The scientific approaches were analyzed in the*

study of the social phenomenon of corruption. The essence and content of this concept are clarified. The theoretical basis of the study was the works of N. Machiavelli, T. Hobbes, M. Weber, J.-C. Wake, E. Cassirer, M. Foucault, P. Berger and T. Luckmann and others. It was considered following political, legal, socio-economic and psychological approaches to the study, which confirmed the interdisciplinary nature of the studied phenomenon. It was also paid attention to such ethical categories as: goals, motives, values, attitudes of employees. The methodological basis was applied historical, socio-philosophical analysis, content analysis of publications in scientific publications and periodicals, the principle of systematicity, analysis and synthesis. It was sharpened attention on traditional, «idealistic philosophical», «revisionist» and «Marxist» approaches. The purpose of the study was to carry out a substantive analysis of the social phenomenon of corruption. Representation of the interpenetration and synergy of different sciences (disciplines) on corruption, using an interdisciplinary approach. Development of recommendations for using an approach that involves strengthening interaction and mutual enrichment of tools for obtaining new scientific knowledge.

Also was given examples of anti-corruption strategies in some countries (Singapore, USA, Germany, Egypt, UAE). As a conclusion, it was noted that most researchers consider corruption to be a source of disorganization, «pathology of society». At the same time, just a few of research pay attention to the dynamics of this social phenomenon, taking only how corruption becomes a problem in the eyes of society. Finally, let us recall that corruption is also a tool capable of providing vertical mobility to those social groups, or rather, their representatives, for whom other opportunities are closed.

Keywords: *corruption, «white-collar crime», «pathology of society», anti-corruption strategies, structural approach, interdisciplinary approach.*

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***Анотація.** Стаття присвячена узагальненню знань щодо соціального феномену корупція. Проаналізовано наукові підходи у дослідженні соціального феномену корупції. З'ясовано сутність та зміст даного поняття. Теоретичною базою дослідження стали роботи Н. Макиавелли, Т. Гоббса, М.Вебера, Ж.-К. Вакє, Э.Кассирера, М.Фуко, П. Бергера и Т. Лукмана та інших. Були розглянуті: політологічний, правовий, соціально-економічний та психологічний підходи у дослідженні, що підтвердило міждисциплінарність досліджуваного феномену. Також було приділено увагу таким етичним категоріям як: цілі, мотиви, цінності, установки службовців.*

Методологічною базою стали історичний, соціально-філософський аналіз, контент-аналіз публікацій у наукових виданнях та у періодиці, було застосовано принцип системності, аналізу та синтезу. Було загострено увагу на традиційному, «ідеалістично-філософському», «ревізійністському» та «марксистському» підходах. Метою дослідження було здійснення змістовного аналізу соціального феномену корупції. Репрезентація взаємопроникнення та синергії різних наук (дисциплін) про корупцію, за допомогою міждисциплінарного підходу. Розробка рекомендацій щодо використання підходу, який передбачає посилення взаємодії та взаємозбагачення інструментарію для отримання нових наукових знань.

Також були наведені приклади стратегій боротьби з корупцією у деяких країнах (Сінгапур, США, Германія, Єгипет, ОАЕ). Як висновок було зазначено, що більшість дослідників вважають корупцію джерелом дезорганізації, суспільною «патологією». У той самий час небагато хто звертає увагу на динаміку цього соціального феномену, враховують тільки те, як корупція стає проблемою в очах суспільства. Зрештою, нагадаємо, що корупція також є інструментом, здатним забезпечити вертикальну мобільність тим соціальним групам, точніше, їхнім представникам, для яких закрито інші можливості.

Ключові слова: *корупція, «білокомірцева злочинність», «патологія суспільства», антикорупційні стратегії, структурний підхід, міждисциплінарний підхід.*

Introduction. The history of human civilization is rich in examples of corruption, which confirms the indispensable presence of this phenomenon in all human cultures and civilizations. It should be noted that corruption has been condemned at all times, but this has not prevented it from penetrating almost all spheres of modern society. Solving the problems of effective counteraction to corruption largely depends on how correctly and deeply its essence is understood.

Clarifying the essence of corruption is a relevant topic both in theoretical and practical terms. The essence of corruption must be determined taking into account the fact that it is a multifaceted phenomenon with negative consequences in the social, economic and political spheres of the life of the state, and cannot be reduced to a specific offense.

The social essence of the phenomenon of corruption is manifested in the fact that it has social conditioning (a product of social life); has a significant impact on the most important social processes; has historical origins and is global in nature. The social essence of corruption is also manifested in the fact that this phenomenon (its manifestations) receive legal and moral assessment from the state and society.

Corruption as a social phenomenon exists within certain institutional frameworks in which economic, political, legal, and social processes influence it, and corruption, in turn, influences economic and political security.

Methods of the research. In the basis of the methodological approach applied in the course of the conducted socio-philosophical analysis, we consider it necessary to use structural, functionalist and systemic approaches due to the fact that corruption, being an element of social reality, has an inherent cultural component.

In this context, we propose to consider the study of the phenomenon of corruption systematically and in the following aspects: historical as study in the context of the past, present and future; social-philosophical as study of the influence on public life and relationships; psychological as study of the mechanisms of the emotional-volitional component.

Also, when considering the phenomenon of corruption in the context of political, legal, and socio-economic aspects, it is important not to miss categories such as goals, motives, values, attitudes, and emotions of civil servants, which makes it possible to obtain a holistic understanding of corruption as a systemic phenomenon.

It is important for understanding that determinacy of an individual's choice of a corrupt behavior model are the ideas of the scientific works of W. Thomas, who

introduced the concept of «definition of the situation». Any independent act of behavior, carried out at one's own discretion, is always preceded by a stage of its consideration, deliberation, which we call the definition of the situation. Not only specific acts, but also the entire life strategy depend on the definition of the situation. In the scientific works of K. Marx and M. Weber, E. Cassirer, M. Foucault and other authors was reflected a theorizing the processes of determinacy of values and norms of the social environment.

In our opinion, corrupt behavior is based on the rational-economic goal-setting of individuals. In his works P. Bourdieu [4] wrote about existence of an internal struggle for power and specific «capital» (capital is not only the result of rivalry, but also a means of achieving goals). At the same time, it is noted that individuals, competing with each other, have different capital, which ultimately determines their chances. Thus, we consider it possible to include the following types of capital identified by P. Bourdieu [4] among the types of capital that determine corruption in various spheres: economic capital (money, material resources), social capital (favorable connections, acquaintances, influence), symbolic capital (prestige, fame, name, origin). A special place in the study of the mechanisms of individual perception of reality belongs to P. Berger and T. Luckmann. The theory of sociology of knowledge developed by them is based on the assertion that the entire set of ideas about reality that exist in society is based on ordinary, everyday knowledge.

The tools of this type of research are well known and are quite popular today in various areas of management practice: statistical analysis; sociological research (methods of participant observation, sociological survey, questionnaires, interviews, expert measurements); document analysis; content analysis of publications in periodicals and on the Internet.

The accumulated theoretical experience provides the opportunity to consider a wide range of determinants of the phenomenon of corruption and, despite the

complex composition of the subject of research, the low level of development of the topic, allows us to understand the most significant causal connections between the cultural and social aspects of society.

The purpose of the article: analyze of scientific approaches in studying the social phenomenon of corruption; generalize the existing knowledge about this phenomenon. To represent the interpenetration and synergy of different sciences (disciplines) of corruption using an interdisciplinary approach. To prove that using of this particular methodological approach involves the development of integration processes, increasing interaction, and mutual enrichment of tools for obtaining new scientific knowledge.

Results and Discussion. As for the historical aspect, when analyzing various periods of social relations and available information about corruption, it is worth considering that corruption is a complex social phenomenon, the historical roots of which go back to ancient times and are associated primarily with the custom of giving gifts to leaders or priests in order to gain their favor and support in solving emerging problems in their own selfish interests.

Corruption began to flourish in the era of the decline of antiquity, when such state officials appeared about whom it was said: «He came as poor man to the rich province, and left as rich man a poor province» [6, p.123].

The first ruler who is mentioned as a fighter against corruption was Urukagina, the Sumerian king of the city-state of Lagash in the second half of the 24th century BC. Despite demonstrative and often cruel punishments for corruption, the fight against it did not lead to the desired results.

Initially, corruption was more of a moral issue. In particular, in the book «Corruption. Ethics and Power in Florence in the 1600s-1770s» Waquet Jean-Claude wrote that in the period in question, the discourse on corruption was not about the state, but about human nature [23, p.11].

As human society develops and socio-economic formations change, corruption ceases to be only a moral problem. It begins to penetrate into all spheres of social life, into the organs of state governance, including politics. Therefore, corruption began to be viewed as «damage» and the decay of power.

According to the definition of N.Machiavelli, corruption is the use of public opportunities for personal gain. In his work «The Prince», giving exhaustive characteristics of the advisers of sovereigns, he, in particular, emphasized:

«There is one infallible way to find out what an assistant is worth. If he cares more about himself than about the sovereign, and in every matter seeks his own benefit, he will never be a good servant to the sovereign, and the latter will never be able to rely on him» [20, p. 75].

According to T. Hobbes, «corruption is the root from which flows, at all times and under all temptations, contempt for all laws» [12, p. 87].

There has always been an inverse relationship between the proper use of power and the spread of corruption; whenever power has been used appropriately, corruption has decreased [26].

Corruption accompanies power, as the British politician Lord Acton remarked, «Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely» [28].

As for the social aspect, namely the study of the impact on public life and relations, here it is necessary to proceed from the definition of corruption itself. Corruption (Latin: *corruptio*) means bribery; bribery and venality of public and political figures, government officials and officials. To corrupt (Latin: *corrumpere*) is to bribe someone with money or other material goods. In scientific, educational, publicistic literature, in some regulatory and political documents there are various definitions of corruption.

In the most general sense, corruption can be defined as the use of an official's position for personal gain. Practice shows that today corruption manifests itself in various forms. Among them are bribery, extortion, protectionism, lobbying,

nepotism, illegal distribution of public resources, illegal privatization, unjustified provision of preferential loans and orders, illegal financing of political parties and public organizations, etc.

Corruption is a «disease of society», which, poisoning various spheres of social life, is a direct threat to the national security of any state, as it suspends their development. In addition, the latter has a negative impact on public consciousness and reduces the authority of the state in the international arena [22, p.79].

The *economic approach* analyzes corruption as an illegal mechanism of socio-economic exchange - chrematistics (Aristotle) between representatives of power and business, which has a certain value and economic feasibility for them. The *political science approach* interprets the phenomenon of corruption as an attribute of the functioning of power (its bureaucratic institutions) under various forms of political governance, studies the effects of corruption on socio-political processes in historical retrospect. In the historical context, corruption was a technology of rapid, unfair, illegal enrichment and strengthening of a small number of social groups - the oligarchy... In the *social psychological context* of neo-Freudianism, Kirchner L. investigates the reasons for a tolerant attitude towards corruption, who emphasizes that tolerance is more inherent in communities in which collectivist attitudes are widespread: collectivism promotes bribery by reducing individuals' perception of responsibility for their actions. At the microsocial level, a corrupt organizational structure is formed in corrupt institutions, with its inherent defensive strategies of rationalization and "ethical blindness"

According to social identity theory, an individual may internalize corrupt patterns of behavior that are prevalent in the group to which he or she has become a member. If the corrupt leadership of such a structure is removed, its members may continue to act in accordance with the corrupt patterns [17, pp. 30-42].

One of the shortest modern definitions belongs to J. Senturia: abuse of public power for the sake of private gain. At the same time, it remains unclear whether this

act is legal or illegal, whether it offends public opinion, undermining the sense of justice, whether it has measurable consequences (increases public good or, on the contrary, harms public welfare) and/or an intangible result (loss of trust) [24, p. 481].

Researches G. Myrdal and S. Rose-Ackerman (as well as many others) noted the hidden, secret nature of the action as an important feature of corruption. What is not hidden from the public eye and is acceptable from the point of view of society has nothing to do with corruption [24, p. 481].

It must be acknowledged that, to this day, there is no satisfactory definition of corruption as a social phenomenon, from the point of view of most researchers.

A more complex classification was proposed by M. Johnston. He identified several types of corruption: bribes of officials in the trade sector (for selling illegally produced goods, overpricing goods, etc.); relationships in patronage systems, including patronage of "bosses" based on regional, family, and party principles (a phenomenon described by M. Weber and then R. Merton); friendship and nepotism; as well as the so-called crisis corruption, caused by the fact that entrepreneurs are forced to work in conditions of extreme risk, when decisions of government bodies can lead to significant changes for business and therefore these decisions become the subject of trade [13].

There are several approaches to studying corruption. The first is the traditional, «idealistic-philosophical», also known as «moralizing» or «conventional». Probably the most famous representative of this approach was K.Friedrich. He viewed corruption as behavior that deviates from the norms prevailing in the political sphere and is conditioned by the motivation to obtain personal gain at the expense of society [10].

The tradition of analyzing corruption as a deviation of the elites is continued by D.Simon and D.Eitzen. They justify the necessity of such an approach by the fact that the term «white-collar crime» is not adequate to the essence of the phenomenon - the institutionalization of immorality, amorality and scandalization of the country.

Another direction is the «revisionist» school of corruption analysis, which is associated with the works of researchers of the problems of third world countries. Most political scientists and sociologists consider corruption to be a disease of developing societies, a result, consequence and/or manifestation of unfinished modernization and poverty. Representatives of this school, for example, Jose Abueva [1], David Bayley [3], Nathaniel Leff [15], Colin Leyes [16], spoke out against the one-sided-negativistic approach to corruption as a social pathology. On the contrary, they argued that corruption can perform positive functions in terms of integration, development and modernization of «third world» societies.

The orthodox «Marxist approach», in which corruption was considered the main vice of capitalism, lost its significance due to the collapse of communist regimes and the general recognition of the fact of widespread corruption in them. Perhaps a new view of corruption is connected with the concept of the social construction of reality by P. Berger and T. Luckmann, who argue that although reality is socially defined, its very definition is embodied in specific individuals and groups who create this definition.

Researchers S.Chibnall and P.Saunders, applying this approach to the analysis of corruption, identified it as a classification of behavior obtained as a result of negotiations, rather than a quality inherent in a certain type of behavior. They demonstrated how the interpretation of the same action can change depending on the specific social context and the stock of knowledge [7].

Thus, corruption is currently a multi-aspect, multi-level, systemically organized social phenomenon. In favorable conditions, it turns into an alternative to law and morality. It actively influences public consciousness, forms moral and legal attitudes in society that are beneficial to itself, determines the legal culture and moral climate in society. Corruption is considered by researchers as a phenomenon, the reproduction of which is due to several groups of factors: imperfection of economic institutions and the system of political decision-making; underdevelopment of

competition, monopolization of certain sectors of the economy, state control over the resource base, low level of development of civil society, inefficiency of the judicial system.

Anti-Corruption Strategies: International Experience

Singapore's anti-corruption strategy is rigorous and consistent, based on the «logic of corruption control»: «efforts to eradicate corruption should be based on the desire to minimize or eliminate the conditions that create both the incentive and the opportunity to incline an individual to commit corrupt acts».

In October 1990, the President of the *United States* signed Executive Order 12731. The order states: The civil service shall be treated as an activity from which no personal or other financial interest may interfere with the faithful performance of the duty. Civil servants shall not engage in financial transactions involving the use of classified government information or the use of such information for personal gain. Employees are expressly prohibited from soliciting or accepting gifts of any kind from any person or group of persons seeking to solicit them for any official action, having any business with them, or carrying out activities regulated by the agency in which they serve.

A pressing issue in the fight against corruption is maintaining official secrecy. In *Germany*, a civil servant must keep information and facts that became known to him/her in the course of his/her work secret even after his/her term of service has expired. Without permission, a civil servant does not have the right to testify or make statements on such facts (cases), even in court. Permission of this kind is given by the head of the service or, if the service relationship has been terminated, by the last head of the service. Information for the press may only be given by the board of the institution or a civil servant authorized by it. The law establishes the duty of a civil servant to declare criminally punishable acts that became known to him/her.

Corruption and other forms of social injustice became one of the main causes of the "Arab Spring" of 2011, the echoes of which the world is still experiencing.

The specificity of the state's approach to building an anti-corruption policy in the conditions of the rent-based class society that has developed in *Egypt* was especially clearly manifested during the reign of President A.-F.Al-Sisi, because he came to power on the wave of a revolution, one of the main and well-articulated demands of which was the eradication of corruption.

There has been an expansion of the regulatory framework for anti-corruption policy, within the framework of which the anti-corruption focus set out in Article 218 of the new Constitution of Egypt adopted in 2014 is of fundamental importance, as is the constitutional establishment of the status of the Central Audit Organization, which is «responsible for monitoring the funds of the state, public officials and other bodies». Other notable steps in this direction were the adoption of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy in 2014 [25, p.6]; the approval of the Code of Conduct for Civil Servants [25, p.7]; the amendments to the Illegal Income Law in 2015, expanding the powers of the Illegal Income Control Authority [5]; Amendments to the Egyptian Penal Code in 2018 criminalized the act of accepting a bribe by a foreign official or an official of an international organization, as well as giving a bribe to such a person [8].

In the *UAE*, there are several special units in the prosecutor's office and the police that directly deal with monitoring financial crimes. There are also separate bodies at the federal and emirate levels (Audit Institutions). Strict triple punishments have been introduced, implying a prison term, a fine, and reimbursement of stolen goods to the budget. There are three legal systems in the country: Sharia, continental law, and the British system for regulating free economic zones. Only the last two deal with financial crimes. The famous Dubai International Financial Center has its own financial crime regulator. The UAE is one of the leaders in the fight against local practices, including the hawala system [9, pp. 135-137], having secured the criminality of this form of banking back in 2004. International conferences on the joint fight against this system are held here annually. The Emirates were the first of

all countries in the region to secure the protection of "whistle blowing" (the opportunity to report corruption and not be held accountable).

Unresolved aspects of the corruption problem

Indeed, the methodological arsenal with which scientific schools operating in the field of socio-humanities entered the 21st century requires updating, supplementing with the achievements of related scientific schools - psychological, philosophical, political science and a number of others. Economic sciences will be able to work ahead, identify modern tendencies and trends of development and fully fulfill their mission only on the condition of a qualitative update of the methodological foundations of scientific research. And a component of such an update, undoubtedly, is the mastery of modern research methodology and the fullest use of the potential of an interdisciplinary approach.

Taking into account the above, attention should be focused on the need for comprehensive study of the subject of research, namely, the coordination of the conditional doctrinal model with the actual manifestations of corruption, in particular its forms of expression such as *general social*, a set of characteristics of corruption that relate to the attitude towards this phenomenon and its consequences in society, the spread of corruption and anti-corruption propaganda.

Economic, a set of economic manifestations of corruption and its impact on the redistribution of material wealth between different states and social groups.

Legal, a set of legal manifestations as measures or instruments of society's response to corruption phenomena and countermeasures to maintain corruption and preserve the corruption system in the legal sphere

Psychological, a set of individual reactions of members of society to manifestations of corruption or actual opportunities that arise in them due to the use of corruption tools.

Moral (or immoral), the spread in society of norms of behavior that relate to ideas about honesty and incorruptibility and are of an extralegal nature, as well as attitudes towards them.

Conclusions.

The combination of methodological techniques and methods of various sciences in the studied field with the achievement of a single comprehensive practically significant result ultimately implies the existence of a single generalized methodological tool, which in the context of this study can be called a «polyscientific synthetic method». Thus, in particular, not only the direct study of the principles of preventing and combating corruption should be carried out, but also their impact on social relations with the establishment of an empirical correlation regarding the dynamics of such impact.

To summarize the above, we can conclude that *sociologists* view corruption as a «social relationship» that is expressed in the violation of socially accepted norms of behavior and social well-being. Many sociologists view corruption in the context of historical, social and cultural factors, as a consequence of conflicts between different social groups and different values in society.

Economists view corruption as a form of social exchange, and corruption payments as part of transaction costs. A number of economists define corruption as one of the main sectors of the economy, living by its own special laws. In the history of any ethnic group and state, there is room for studying the history of corruption and the fight against it.

Within the framework of *historical science*, corruption can be viewed as both an organizing and a disorganizing factor in the development of society. In the conditions of a strong state, corruption disorganizes the legislative and executive powers; in the conditions of the «time of troubles» corruption and the shadow economy replace the functions of state power and organize (criminalize) society in their own way.

The subject of corruption research within the framework of *psychological science* can be defined as the patterns of genesis and functioning of corrupt behavior of a subject of state power

Most of the mentioned researchers consider corruption to be a source of disorganization, a «pathology of society». At the same time, only a few researchers pay attention to the dynamics of this social phenomenon, take into account how corruption becomes a problem in the eyes of society. Finally, we recall that corruption is also a tool capable of providing vertical mobility to those social groups, or rather, their representatives, for whom other opportunities are closed.

Corruption cannot be eradicated by force. Of course if it is possible to eradicate it at all. Corruption will flourish as long as it is profitable and convenient. And it is convenient for too many people, including both criminals and quite peaceful population, trying to make medicine more effective, service more quality, vacations more accessible, and their work more profitable with the help of bribes and gifts.

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