

“Corruption Crimes”: Between Conceptual Illiteracy and Instrumentality

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<p><i>The purpose of this article is to highlight the use of the term “corruption crimes” as a term situated between conceptual illiteracy and instrumentality. Within this framework, the epistemological implications of the use of this term are examined, along with related conceptual misformulations such as “criminological times of corruption” and “major corruption”, which fall within the same framework of conceptual illiteracy. The analysis demonstrates that these terms do not merely constitute lexical inaccuracies, but rather conceptual constructions of theoretical and methodological distortion, arising either from an inability to distinguish between concepts or from the pursuit of specific instrumental objectives. In this sense, a scientific approach to the phenomenon of corruption requires disengagement from such schemata and the reorientation of analysis to the level of its forms and their impacts on social coexistences.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Phenomenon of corruption, forms of corruption, conceptual illiteracy, homo corruptus, social coexistence, corruption crimes, epistemology.</p>
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1. Introduction

The Athenian philosopher Socrates maintained that, before individuals begin to engage in dialogue, they must first define the concepts they employ, so that mutual understanding may become possible. In the case of the phenomenon of corruption, this has not occurred. The discourse of the tragically unaware “corruption-talkers” remains persistent and resounding, exploiting the reflexive responses triggered by the mere hearing of the term “corruption.” This term refers to a phenomenon whose forms are found not in some, but in all countries of the world, irrespective of levels of economic development, modes of social coexistence, cultural paradigms, or historical periods. The phenomenon of corruption — this global collection of human acts which, through their impacts, are identified by the researcher as forms of corruption — is neither self-evidently “revealed” nor approached through the imposition of a Western cultural model. It is scientifically ascribed. The characterization of an act as a form of corruption within a given social coexistence cannot constitute an arbitrary judgment, nor one derived from the provisions of a legal text. On the contrary, it must be the outcome of a methodological process and the processing of data derived from the

definition of concepts, the ideal type of corruption, the population profile of homo corruptus, as well as the identities of the impacts of forms of corruption and the ways in which they are managed within a social coexistence.

2. The Phenomenon of Corruption and its forms

The use of the term “phenomenon” serves to describe that which falls within human perception, that is, the responses of an organism to internal and/or external stimuli. Every phenomenon that becomes perceptible to the human senses and subsequently, to the internal cognitive capacity of a researcher is transformed into an object of awareness through the forms it assumes. These forms constitute the foundational preconditions for the initiation of the process of knowledge acquisition regarding any given phenomenon.

Subsequently, the two critical dimensions of space and time are delineated, situating the phenomenon within a specific spatiotemporal relation. This relation is none other than that of cause and effect, with the latter interpreting the former on the basis, of course, of the intellectual capacity and experience of each individual, each potential researcher—

capacity and experience that enable the formation of reasoning processes through which the necessary systems of concepts are constructed. These systems, in turn, gradually constitute scientific knowledge concerning the phenomenon in question. [1] With specific reference to the phenomenon of corruption, the above process leaves no room for identifying the phenomenon with any of the forms it assumes in a given place and time. This issue of identification originates in the circulating definitions of the phenomenon advanced by international organizations or independent scholars, where the problem lies not merely in their form or scope, but in their scientific inaccuracy combined with their directed purposiveness. [2] Corruption is defined as the human phenomenon consisting of a set of forms, differentiated from country to country in terms of their sources of emergence, their dimensions and their outcomes. [3] This scientific definition ensures the methodological necessity of constructing a theory of study while, at the same time, avoiding the reduction of the complex reality of the phenomenon. It achieves both the conceptual isolation and the condensation of the existential parameters that constitute it and generate its forms within each distinct social coexistence. Furthermore, this definition, by providing the foundations for the development of a theory of the phenomenon of corruption, also indicates its autonomy—an autonomy that pertains to a purely scientific process. [4] A form of corruption is defined as that human act which, expressing the pursuit of an individual—the homo corruptus—produces an impact within the framework of a social coexistence. [5] This definition initially provides the outline of the constituent elements of a form of corruption and their typological configuration through the fundamental equation. [6] The constituent elements of a form of corruption include two homo corruptus, [7] their pursuits, their actions and the impact produced. The interconnections and developments of these constituent elements constitute the starting points for distinguishing and disentangling the phenomenon from its economic and criminological-legal confinements. Even those scholars who remain within such confinements overlook the fact that, for example, countries of common law do not prioritize the distinction between commercial and civil disputes to the extent that such distinctions are observed in civil law systems. Each form of corruption, as a spatially determined and temporally situated historical reality of pursuits and impacts, requires specific conditions in order for a human action to be defined as such—that is, to be positioned by a researcher within the field of the phenomenon's manifestations. [8] The fundamental epistemological issues from which the conditions, criteria and methodology for attributing the term “form of corruption” to a human action are derived are threefold: First, the issue of management, rather than “combating”, of

each form of corruption—a form of management that will be implemented and above all, experienced in its consequences by the very population that has, ultimately, generated this form of corruption. Second, the necessity of controlling purposiveness and unscientific reasoning both in attributing the term “form of corruption” to a human act and in the use of terms such as “corruption crimes” or in the identification of the phenomenon with any of its forms. [9] Third, the identities of the impacts of a form of corruption, which define the distinction between “management” and “combating”. Forms of corruption, therefore, as the manifestations of the phenomenon revealed by a researcher, are human acts that constitute an integral part of global human history. They do not constitute exceptions to this history within specific historical periods, [10] nor are they “products” of an unconditioned, arbitrary, and deliberate attribution by an interpretive subject acting as a theorist of corruption.

3. The use of the term “Corruption Crimes”

The term “corruption crimes” constitutes an unscientific and deliberately employed expression that demonstratively ignores the cultural differentiations found across the world, which are embedded in human acts that, although they may meet the formal criteria for being classified as forms of corruption, may nevertheless not be compatible with either statutory or customary law in different countries. It is a term that reflects a clear case of conceptual illiteracy, as it is not grounded in any scientific methodology or substantiation that would “justify” the confinement of an entire phenomenon and its forms within the narrow and rigid framework imposed by the term “crime”—a concept originating from the particularly strict scientific field of substantive criminal law. In this way, serious scientific concerns arise from the use of this term in relation to a human phenomenon such as corruption—a phenomenon that appears globally, in the sense of the multiplicity of its forms as human actions and their impacts. [11] These concerns are further reinforced as the term is transformed both into teaching subjects—serving as substitutes for marginally supported academic fields within higher education—and into screens that facilitate the exploitation of other forms of the phenomenon. Thus, the thinking of individuals becomes confined to the prominently projected forms of corruption, limiting their ability to perceive the conditions, structures, consequences, and management requirements of other forms, such as political corruption, corruption of profiteering, corruption of legislative overproduction, or corruption through digital manipulation—forms that are fully exploited by those who benefit from the systematic maintenance of this confinement. At the same time, the use of the term “corruption crimes” is supported by slogan-like rhetorical

confinements, such as “corruption is a scourge”, as well as by deliberate practices that substitute careful analysis with pseudo-scientific formulations, such as “criminological times of corruption” and “major corruption”. With regard to the formulation “criminological times of corruption”, a serious scholar of the phenomenon is compelled to question its epistemological foundations. What, indeed, does “criminological times of corruption” mean? A form of corruption constitutes a human act that originates in a pursuit and culminates in an impact. If it is assumed that the concept of time can be incorporated into these three stages—the emergence of the pursuit, the execution of the act, and the production of the impact—a series of epistemological questions arise: where exactly is the notion of time to be situated? At the stage of pursuit, of action, of impact, or at all three? How is this to be done and according to what criteria? What does the differentiation between the time of pursuit and that of the act or the impact produce and for whom? In the absence of even minimal answers grounded in a coherent scientific framework, there remains little doubt as to the combination of purposiveness and scientific triviality underlying formulations of this kind. It should be noted, of course, that the term “criminological times” is used to describe the temporal phases of the emergence, commission, detection, and attribution of responsibility—that is, the phases through which an act, already defined as criminal, manifests, evolves and becomes perceptible. For such temporal categories, which within criminology apply to acts already defined as crimes by criminal law, the question arises as to their unqualified juxtaposition with concepts that refer to phenomena, such as corruption. If, therefore, one assumes that the notion of time is to be incorporated into the three stages of a form of corruption—pursuit, act, and impact—the same questions inevitably re-emerge: where, how, and according to what criteria is time to be situated? What results does such an incorporation produce? The use of the concept of time might, perhaps, acquire meaning only in relation to specific forms of the phenomenon, provided that certain fundamental conditions are simultaneously met: first, that the human act has been clearly identified and defined as a form of corruption within a specific social coexistence and second, that this form has been incorporated into a legal framework that explicitly defines its modes of management. It thus becomes evident that there is no scientific foundation for the formulation of the general term “criminological times of corruption” in relation to a phenomenon and its forms, which logically precede any criminal or criminological evaluations. Such formulations do not merely constitute linguistic inaccuracies, but deliberate productions of theoretical and methodological distortions in relation to the phenomenon of corruption. In the same vein, the equally pseudo-scientific formulation

“major corruption” operates. How, here again, can a serious scholar approach such a formulation? One is compelled to pose a series of questions: has any form of categorization preceded it? On the basis of what criteria and according to what scale? Through what scientific methodology has such a scale—between “major” and, implicitly, “minor”—been constructed, and what exactly does it refer to? If, moreover, it is assumed that the conceptualization of “major corruption” is grounded in the scientifically weak basis of the “abuse of public office for private gain”, to which the term corruption is often reductively attributed, then does the supposed scale between “major” and “minor corruption” ultimately refer to gradations of a specific form of corruption—namely, abuse within the public sector of a given nation-state?

4. Conclusions

The use of the terms “corruption crimes”, “criminological times of corruption” and “major corruption” does not merely constitute a lexical inaccuracy, but rather an expression of conceptual and methodological distortion, which conflates the phenomenon with its forms. This distortion is fully embedded within the current of “diaphthorologismos”: a mode of perceiving and interpreting the phenomenon through its unscientific identification with rhetorically appealing forms, in the service of diverse interests. [12] The phenomenon of corruption—this global collection of human acts which, through their impacts, are identified by the researcher as forms of corruption—is neither self-evidently “revealed” nor approached through the imposition of a Western cultural model; it is scientifically ascribed. The characterization of an act as a form of corruption within a given social coexistence cannot constitute an arbitrary judgment, nor one derived from the provisions of a legal text. On the contrary, it must be the outcome of a methodological process and the processing of data derived from the definition of concepts, the ideal type of corruption, the population profile of homo corruptus, as well as the identities of the impacts of forms of corruption and the ways in which they are managed within a social coexistence. No form of the phenomenon of corruption can be understood, in terms of its origins, development and outcomes, through any legislative act, regardless of its nature. None whatsoever. If this were the case, the enthusiastic production of legislation across various nation-states would have led to effective management, at least with regard to those forms that have been subject to regulation. Forms of corruption, as human acts that originate in pursuits and culminate in impacts of varying magnitude, constitute a reflection of the actual conditions of coexistence within a given social formation and of its underlying cultural paradigm, within the globalized dimension of the

phenomenon. The critical epistemological issue for the researcher, therefore, lies in the criterion of truth—indeed, of scientific truth—concerning how and why a human act constitutes a form of corruption within a particular social coexistence and what impacts it produces. The search for this criterion necessarily takes place within the framework shaped by the generative pillars of the phenomenon and its forms: each particular mode of coexistence, each particular cultural configuration and each particular researcher. [13] Within this framework, truth—as the disclosure of whether and how a human act constitutes a form of corruption—refers to that knowledge which is constituted as a coherent synthesis of scientific substantiation, rational demonstration, and empirical certainty. The homo corruptus, as an extension of the logic and pursuits of the homo sociologus, the homo politicus, and the homo economicus, irrespective of the level of development, will always act in whatever way is possible in order to achieve their objectives. The transition to the inherent, in every individual, condition of the homo corruptus does not constitute a moral or criminal deviation, but a realistic choice. At the same time, however, the social coexistences to which individuals belong or with which they interact must respond to the impacts of this choice in a manner proportionate to their role, resisting conceptual distortions of the kind represented by terms such as “corruption crimes”.

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