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**CORRUPTION AS AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PROBLEM.
REFLECTIONS BASED ON THE PAPAL DOCUMENT ON
TRANSPARENCY, CONTROL AND COMPETITION IN PUBLIC LIFE**

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Abstract: Contemporary scientific research on corruption is increasingly confined to the economic dimension. This narrow point of view has led some scholars to see corruption as a factor contributing to social progress. Progress itself is equated with economic improvement and an increase in wealth. Such reasoning, however, appears incomplete and, consequently, does not correspond to the truth about society and man, especially his natural and deepest needs. A broader view of corruption, meaning one that goes beyond what is "quantifiable" and takes into account philosophical and theological arguments, clearly indicates that corruption is evil. This evil causes a corrupt person to ignore transcendent values and God. As a consequence, it is the cause of a man's depersonalization, their "integral regression." In the light of the research carried out, the statement that corruption destroys the "social fabric" not only means the loosening of social relationships, but mainly destroys the person who is the basic unit of this "social fabric." Corruption destroys man and society. Recognizing it as a social good is the result of an "anthropological error." As a result, a theory built on the basis of such erroneous premises has the hallmarks of an ideology.

Key words: corruption, anthropology, social life, interdisciplinary, anthropological error.

1. Introduction

One might suppose that in contemporary social culture, which appears to be highly developed, there is no room for corruption, and in turn is often perceived as primitive. However, one does not have to be a very careful observer to see that it is otherwise. Corruption is still practiced (Transparency International 2020).

A direct inspiration for reflecting on corruption is the papal apostolic letter on governance in the Vatican (Francesco 2020b). Although the document does not pay much attention to corruption, it nevertheless draws attention to it and names the activities that destroy the social and personal life of many people. The problem of corruption that Francis evokes without explaining in detail why it is evil was a call to make such a comment based on his document.

Another argument in favor of the need for an in-depth exploration of the topic of corruption is the current pandemic situation. The resulting changes in the economy, and above all in the sphere of supply and demand, are the causes of the disturbance of the social order. This is visible in less trust and interpersonal cooperation. An almost inevitable consequence of such a situation is focusing on one's personal needs and the willingness to meet them regardless of the axiological and moral values of the means used. The "suspension of democracy" and a "dormancy of healthy competition" are very real features of the post-pandemic society (Krastev 2020). This situation appears to create a "potential corruption risk space." All this makes corruption a current issue.

The fact that the Pope once again draws attention to corruption shows its importance for the functioning of interpersonal communities and the personal lives of individuals, including how it impacts their salvation. Keeping this in mind, corruption has become the subject of theological and moral research, whose primary tasks are to answer questions concerning how to live, what to do and what to avoid in order to "gain eternal life?" (Mt 19:16) (Ioannes Paulus II 1993, nos. 6-8). This means that the theological and moral analyzes undertaken here are to answer the questions of how corruption affects human perfection and how to achieve the meaning and purpose of one's existence (Mroczkowski 2011, 35-55).

According to the assumptions of personalistic moral theology, it is extremely important to refer to the concept of the integral development of the human person, in which one's relationship to truth, goodness and beauty is of great importance, as well as to the problem of the "social fabric," whose basic unit is the human person. At the same time, the meaning of truth, good and beauty is not presented here, but adopted as

an assumption resulting from a metaphysical thesis that has long had a permanent place in academic research (Krapiec 1959, 5–39). The thesis that the fundamental element of the "social fabric" is an integrally understood person is treated similarly (Nagórny 1997, 101–54).

There is no consensus among researchers as to how corruption affects society or even the life and integral development of individuals. Some people assess it positively: they see it as a factor stimulating economic progress and a tool conducive to natural social selection and in effect, creativity. Others consider it to be a practice inconsistent with the nature of society and man. Consequently, they perceive it as an obstacle to the development of both the community and specific people. Demonstrating the correctness of the latter position is the main goal of this study. The second is to show how corruption destroys people and the "social fabric" naturally created by people, something necessary for their development. Another goal is to show that anthropology is the cornerstone for evaluating corrupt activities. It is about showing the extent to which man's vision influences this assessment. The final point of the study will define corruption based on the results of the previously presented analyzes.

2. Corruption as a "Positive Value"?

Some researchers, using tools appropriate to their science, conclude that corruption is a positive value. Their scientific research lacks instruments that can state the existence of its adverse effects. It should be noted that this does not have to be related to the researcher's pro-corruption beliefs. Here, we are only concerned about the effects of scientific analyzes carried out using clearly established research tools, whose selection gives specific opportunities to explore the problem and leads to unambiguous conclusions. Moving through their "narrow" research areas, scientists conclude that there is no reason to see corruption as an abuse of power, let alone usurping it. Nor should it be perceived as trespassing one's powers or competences. It should be simply seen as a skillful use of one's position in order to achieve a particular interest. Such action is an expression of resourcefulness and creativity. Therefore, it is good for people because it gives them the opportunity to achieve their goals. It also brings tangible benefits, most often financial. In this way, it contributes to the economic growth of society, if we consider that one of its determinants is the increased wealth of individual people and groups (W. Walczak 2018, 12).

The results of "narrow" research do not provide the basis for considering corruption as axiologically questionable. This is due to the fact that the axiology they refer to does not refer to metaphysics or theology, but is based only on calculations. Therefore, some economists and business theorists, based on "quantifiable" premises, believe that

corruption is an acceptable, or even positive, phenomenon. Their value system is based on the fact that they stimulate economic development by introducing non-standard competition that forces innovative thinking and action. These are a source of innovation. Above all, corruption as a value stems from the fact that it allows the institutions and people who use it to access what they would not get in a "traditional" (non-innovative) non-corrupt society (Svensson 2006, 99–103). Moving only in the space of economic losses and gains, it is easy to come to the conclusion that corruption is an extremely desirable and lucrative value for people who gain tangible benefits, achieve spectacular financial success, have a guaranteed career and development opportunities (W. Walczak 2018, 36).

Comparing the above-mentioned thoughts with the results of sociological research, which show that corruption is a factor that is always relevant in relation to all social creations having a hierarchical structure with elements of management and delegation of powers (meaning more or less all complex organizations), it is not difficult to conclude that it is an ordinary, and even in some sense necessary, element of social life (Zotkin 2015, 201). For some, this even appears to be obvious. Criticizing it appears to be striking the very nature of society. In this context, the call to combat corruption obviously loses to the call to come to terms with it and learning to function in a corrupt society.

3. The Dangerous "Anthropological Error"

The above-presented vision of corruption and its assessment appear to be correct only when we confine ourselves to financial and business premises. Yet, a broader view that takes into account arguments that go beyond economic and political thinking, including the specificity of a human person, causes that the results of our inquiries also change. The need for a broader perspective results from the fact that man as a person does not limit his or her existential space only to the material world and the finances related with it. One cannot be fully content even when they are most successful in the economic sector. Man is more than just matter. Also, the sphere of one's life involves more than just finances. When searching for true fulfillment, a human being should, therefore, look more broadly (Wyróstkiewicz 2013a, 40–53). Essentially, this is a question about the value of corruption. We cannot simply stop at how it influences the immediate material benefits of man and society, but one must ask how it influences the integral development of the former and the progress of the latter.

Therefore, getting to know people turns out to be important for research on corruption. The social life in which corrupt actions take place cannot be understood without reference to man, without actually understanding man or knowing about human nature; without knowing about man's inscribed possibilities, needs and limitations (Ioannes XXIII

1963, 258). This is because man is society's keystone and basic factor, the goal of social life. He is also its main creator. (Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II 1966, no. 25).

Researchers undertaking interdisciplinary reflections on man have no doubts that he, being a personal being, and therefore qualitatively different from other creatures living on earth, is not only the central figure, but is also the purpose and meaning of creation's existence (Wyróstkiewicz 2013a, 40–53). That is why all of creation should be seen from the perspective of salvation history that focuses on man and his fulfillment in time and eternity; it sees man as the focal point of creation (Gózdź 2019, 113–20). Therefore, if man's salvation is to be the criterion for assessing the value of all realities and actions, this also applies to corruption, which should also be evaluated through salvation history.

In this way, the problem of corruption ceases to be an economic issue and becomes an anthropological issue that requires interdisciplinary research to be resolved. A real interdisciplinary dialogue is necessary (one which will be discussed in more detail later). Emphasizing selected anthropological theses while ignoring others in reflecting on social life, especially its purpose according to anthropology (which is a fundamental issue for researchers dealing with corruption (W. Walczak 2019, 34–37)) appears to be an "anthropological error", whose effects are obvious for both the theory and the practice in building social life (Ioannes Paulus II 1991, nos. 13 and 41–43). This "anthropological error" consists in the random treatment of knowledge about man and recognizing it as the final decision on the basis of which an irrational social theory is built. Its promotion does not serve the integrally understood good of man and society, but only the personal interests of the people who proclaim it. In this way, the theory of the beneficial values of corruption acquires the features of an ideology (Chlewiński et al. 1993, cols. 1409–1411).

Although from the point of view of a "narrow" scientific discipline (such as economics), where the results of research conducted in its field are complete, in relation to knowledge about man and social life as a whole, and especially the purpose of these realities, they turn out to be fragmentary. If, however, these partial decisions are considered final, it is easy to make mistakes, causing misunderstandings and errors. Thus, the problematic nature of contemporary research on corruption is not that "narrow" studies are imprecise or flawed, but that, although they are fragmentary by nature, they are seen as final resolutions. As we know, the goal of human life and the existence of society goes beyond what is measurable and "quantifiable." This goal must be explored by looking broadly at man and his existence. One should use many areas of science that recognize man as the subject of their research. The dialogue between scholars is an ordinary way for science to function and the only way to find the truth, and increase our resources of knowledge (Życiński 2003, 69–79; Ioannes Paulus II 1989).

The above statement is about real dialogue, which implies trusting others and respecting their heritage; it forbids considering the achievements of one science to be more important and then neglecting others. Only in this way can a person discover the truth about the world as a whole and get to know himself and the surrounding reality better. Otherwise, he is forced to be left with partial information or be content with what appears to be the truth. However, since his rational and truth-oriented nature will not allow him to be satisfied with this, he will keep searching. If, however, he chooses not to enter into a dialogue, he will be doomed to build false concepts (Ioannes Paulus II 1999, nos. 25–34 and 100–104; M. Walczak 2016, 114–25).

At this point, it should be clearly stated that the above reflections do not diminish the value of research in the field of various "narrow" scientific disciplines. Every detailed research output is valuable and answers questions about how some part of the world works. However, this cannot be the only source of knowledge on the basis of which moral imperatives and worldviews are built (Wyrostkiewicz 2019, 15–20). Such action would mean an attempt to build an ideology which, although it may have scientific roots, goes beyond the field of science, becoming a tool not only of intellectual enslavement (Chlewiński et al. 1993, cols. 1409–1411). Wherever normative conclusions are drawn up, interdisciplinary research is needed, including those fields that will open the way to effects that cannot be achieved by applying one "narrow" discipline; we need a multi-angle view while maintaining our personal scientific identity. Otherwise, doubtful or even wrong conclusions are not only possible, but even inevitable (Wyrostkiewicz 2019, 15–21). In order to avoid them, we need a "core metaphysical basis," which makes reference to sciences competent in making a rational exploration of transcendent spaces (Zadroga 2018, 131–69).

4. The "Metaphysical Core" of Research on Corruption

Applying the fields of philosophy and theology makes it possible to study and describe the purpose and meaning of human actions, as well as their impact on the fate of the acting person, a fate that is only to a certain extent achieved through mortality, but also goes beyond it and is fulfilled in eschatological times (Nowosad and Wyrostkiewicz 2005a). It is worth adding that the theological view of human action is thoroughly personalistic. This means, *inter alia*, emphasizing the fact that a human being is a person and only as a person can she or he find fulfillment (Kowalski 2005, 385).

Affirming a person, every person and the whole person, is a natural and inalienable need of the human-person. It is a need whose only proper response is love, and it is the only way to satisfy this need (Krajewski 2010, col. 900; Mroczkowski 2012, 276). From an anthropological point of view,

without love, man is unable to be or fully feel that they are a person, that is, a free being who fulfills himself in relationships; who, living in the truth about self, others and the world, accomplishes good whose culmination is affirming the person (Dziuba 2005, 328–29). Thus, love is the realization of one's pro-existence, that is, "being for others" or "being for someone." This pro-existence is an expression of the fact that man was created "in the image of God" (Gen 1:26–27). It is considered by personalists as one of humanity's fundamental features. By acting in the spirit of pro-existence, man truly fulfills himself. He becomes more and more like the Creator and works according to God's plan. This means that thanks to pro-existence, the whole world functions properly, according to its natural rhythm (Najman and Szymik 2012, cols 439–441; Słotwińska 2017, 87–103).

The consequence of the above way of thinking is the thesis that one cannot talk about true happiness or fulfillment in such a way that would mean harming another person or treating them in an subjective way. Therefore, this means that whatever the contribution of corruption may be in the field of economic growth or the immediate personal benefits for selected individuals, it can never be considered a real social or personal value. It will never become a true good because it causes too many negative effects in both of these areas.

In this context, it is worth pointing out that corruption is an attempt to build happiness based on the possession of goods or power. More broadly speaking, it is entirely based on a specific exclusivity. This, in turn, is incompatible with the Catholic vision of happiness that comes not from possessing anything, but from being close to God. True happiness is found not in satisfying one's preferences, but in seeking the good of every person and affirming them for who they are due to their dignity (Francesco 2020a).

Personalistic anthropology has no doubts about what is incompatible with a love that expresses pro-existence (the essence of which is affirming a person) or what does not lead to the actual fulfillment of a human-person, but may only cause temporary subjective satisfaction (Wojtyła 1999, 63–65). By nature, these can at most be goods that are pleasant (*bonum delectabile* or *delectans*) or useful (*bonum utile*); although each of these is a good (*bonum*), they do not rank at the top of the hierarchy of goods and, therefore, achieving them by nature cannot be equated with personal fulfillment. Therefore, even if there is talk of a genuine good, be it pleasant or useful, which is completely moral, it cannot be regarded as an end in itself; even the potential recognition of corruption as a pleasure or useful good would not warrant considering it a priority value for a person's integral development. *Bonum delectabile* or *utile* cannot be the only tools and criteria for a person's ultimate fulfillment. They can only join the process of accomplishing the meaning and purpose of human existence. This is the case when achieving this good, meaning giving pleasure (to yourself or someone) or acquiring a "useful tool;" it is just,

meaning a *bonum honestum*, since it relates to a person's true good (Nowosad and Wroblewski 2005b, 147-48). Although in the metaphysical sense, each of these goods appears as an independent reality (Krapiec 1988, 190-91), from the point of view of moral theology, this situation changes. It stems from the fact that moral theology does not speak of good as such, but of action aimed at doing what is good (or evil). The good recognized by metaphysics for the moralist is one of the goals (*finis*) of the action (Nowosad and Wroblewski 2005a, 131).

However, there is no breach between metaphysics and moral theology. Both claim that only *bonum honestum* can be an objective good. In contrast, *delectabile* and *utile* are subjective in nature. Pleasure and utility acquire the hallmarks of an objective good (that is, a real good in the field of a moralist's interest) when they are consistent with the proper good. This means that the fairness of an action is a condition for recognizing pleasure and utility as good (Krapiec 1988, 189-93; Nowosad and Wroblewski 2005b, 147). For a moralist, an action aimed at pleasure or utility is good when it shows the hallmarks of a morally good act. This means that the analysis of the sources of morality (*fontes moralitatis*) of this activity aimed at obtaining pleasure leaves no doubt that one is dealing with an activity whose final effect (*finis operis*) and the intention of the acting person (*finis operantis*) are consistent with man's ultimate goal and become the tools for a person's integral development, or at least do not oppose this development (Nowosad and Wroblewski 2005a, 131). Corruption, as noted previously and something which should be emphasized once again, does not fall within the realm of the moral good. The basic premise on which such a conclusion has been built is the attitude of people participating in corrupt practices towards other people. Corruption is wicked by nature, it always means treating another person wrong.

We can look at the above issue from another point of view. If, in accord with what was mentioned above about metaphysics and moral theology, a person's good ranks among the highest level of goods achieved and produced by man, then acting against the good of a human person (against affirming them) is wickedness and moral evil that ranks high on the hierarchy of evil (Nowosad and Wroblewski 2005b, 147). These are the hallmarks of corruption. Because of them, a man becomes a tool that enables another person to achieve satisfaction. Corruption appears to be the cause of evil, and it is considered to be "advanced" evil. In accordance with the metaphysical understanding of evil as an "existential breach," when it arises and spreads, it "takes the place" of good without letting good develop (Krapiec 1988, 197-203). This applies to both the spheres of one's personal and social life. In the latter case, it even "structures" itself by creating structures of evil, sometimes called *structures of sin* in theology. They are a kind of social "anti-virtue." These structures make doing good

difficult, and sometimes even impossible (Ioannes Paulus II 1988, nos. 36–38; Mariański 1998, 19–32).

It is worth emphasizing that such generating of moral evil as shown above (and thus also the guilt that is its consequence, including responsibility for this evil) applies to both sides of the corrupt activity. Each of the "contractors" is for the other simply a tool needed for obtaining some other good.

The satisfaction in a person accepting the corrupt proposal is important for the person making it, insofar as it influences achieving the goal that they set out to achieve. The true good of the "recipient" does not matter here. It is worth emphasizing that the "recipient" also treats his "benefactor" subjectively, as an object, meaning as someone who proposes corruption. Ultimately, he does not care if the latter achieves his goal, but only uses them to achieve something which, under ordinary (non-corrupt) conditions, would be impossible to achieve, or at least difficult to achieve. A corrupt person does not do something for his "bidder." He does not want to affirm the other person. Nor does the corrupt person undertake action because the goal that they have in mind is honorable and worth supporting. The primary motivation of a corrupt person's work is to receive the promised fee. Achieving the goal by the person proposing a corrupt plan is only a tool used to obtain a "donation."

When talking about how people are treated by other people involved in corruption, one cannot help but pay attention to the injustice that affects those who are seemingly beyond the reach of corruption. As a result of corrupt activities, they lose out on opportunities for obtaining something good. Instead, these goods are given to a person unfairly privileged as a result of corruption.

In the light of the above reflections, there can be no doubt that corruption is incompatible with whatever is good, and it can be assumed that a corrupt person is convinced that he or she is doing something good. They would not be doing it otherwise. A healthy person does not harm himself or others. The self-preservation instinct does not allow for this. Moreover, man does not condone evil because of "the trace of God" existing in him, which guides him towards what is good. When considering corruption to be good, one can perceive the effects of inadequate knowledge (being far from the truth) or impulsive action, in which instincts and emotions play a greater role than reason (Wyrostkiewicz 2013b, 51–54).

The theologian also sees the effects of original sin in actions that go against the natural pursuit of what is good. It involves a kind of "anthropological error" inherited by all people. It distances a good man's nature from the supernatural. Lack of co-thinking with the Creator becomes the reason for decisions inconsistent with God's plan, namely, bad deeds that harm man and society (Bartnik 1993, cols. 286–287). This also applies to corruption. Original sin appears to be one of the reasons for

choosing it. Catholic theology draws attention to yet another issue. A potential reason for corrupt activity may also be drawing closer to Satan. By resigning from the truth, man opens up to Satan's "whispers," which are the cause of sinful actions (Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II 1966, nos. 13 and 25). It is Satan who sows "evil weeds" into "God's good field" (Mk 13: 24-43). Being the "father of lies" (J 8:44), he is the natural opponent of the truth. Thus, he introduces man to the area of the untruth, which makes him perform evil acts with the conviction that he is doing something good (Wyrostkiewicz 2013b, 49-53).

In view of the above, one source of corruption is distancing yourself from God. This is done by distancing yourself from the supernatural and focusing on material things, while considering them to be your main values. When there is less and less room for God, there is less room for the truth; where there is less truth, there is less of God. In this situation, space is created for Satan, who acts through untruth based on the effects of original sin. This state of accompanying Satan makes it difficult for a person to grow in humanity. It means distancing oneself from God and distinguishing yourself from God. Finally, it means specifically entering into a specific relationship of "Satan's sonship" (Gózdź 2019, 449-66). This means that distancing oneself from God is not only the cause, but also the effect of corrupt activities. Whoever practices corruption risks losing God's sonship by becoming a son of Satan.

Philosophical and theological studies lead to the conclusion that the "devilish power" that a man who distances himself from the truth succumbs to consists in the relationship between lies, hatred and destruction. It is a denial of Jesus' "being for others" in favor of being selfish and "being only for oneself." Satan, who exists in an "anti-personal" way, introduces chaos into the life of man and the world, and even the entire order of being. While a person expresses himself and realizes himself most fully through love, the "anti-person" does this through the breakdown of values, escaping from trust and adopting chaos and lies (Mroczkowski 2000, 292). Satan also instills these needs in those whom he has "adopted as sons." He consistently depersonalizes them.

The analysis of corrupt activities carried out above leaves no doubt that it reveals the elements that are characteristic of satanic activity. This mainly speaks about the lack of truth, the destruction of trust and the introduction of chaos. Thus, the theological perspective allows us to call corruption the devil's activity. This clearly corresponds to the words of Pope Francis, who describes corruption as blasphemy against God and a betrayal of His vision of the social order and a person's genuine happiness (Francesco 2016).

The above-mentioned situations and actions related to corruption, apart from the fact that they testify to the lack of truth in the life of the person who implements them, also clearly indicates their internal disorder. This, however, should not be reduced to "simple lack of

discipline." It is worth noting that someone is cut-off from beauty, something which is expressed, among others, by order and adequacy (Stróżewski 2003, 186–89). Taking this into account, one cannot come to a conclusion other than that entering into the field of the corrupt activities means leaving behind the area of the beauty. Here we can see the same relationship that is shown in the relationship of corruption towards good and truth: the more corruption there is, the less truth, goodness and beauty and the more evil and destruction.

Corruption is an unquestionable example of a reversal of the hierarchy of values that does not match human nature, and this leads to the fact that "to be" is less important than "to have;" a person's value is based on what he "has" and not in who and what he "is." Man's nature gives priority to "being" alive. This is what "having" is to serve. At the same time, it is not about rejecting "to have," which is not bad in itself. Evil here consists in the wrong hierarchy of values, that is, putting "having" above "being." Actions performed according to this inverted hierarchy bear the hallmarks of morally evil deeds (Ioannes Paulus II 1988, no. 28). Putting "having" over "being" is also the primacy of matter over spirit, inconsistent with the nature of the world (Wojtyła 1999, 66–69).

The above reflections make it possible to unequivocally state that corruption is an action and a situation in which "having" becomes the cause of detriment to "being." This detriment applies both to those who come up with a corrupt proposal and those who accept it. Consequently, corruption is clearly evil. This is so not because of the will to have or to achieve different goals, but because of rejecting the truth about the nature of society and man, and in particular ignoring the anthropological truth about its "internal parameter." All this results in focusing on material issues and considering them as the basic (or even the only) criterion for development and happiness. Christian theological anthropology as well as modern social and human sciences unequivocally reject such reductionist points of view (Ioannes Paulus II 1988, no. 27).

Corruption is also evil because it cannot be reconciled with really affirming every human being. In it, one can see selfishness and treating others as objects. This, in turn, is never conducive to actual social development and integral human development (Ioannes Paulus II 1988, nos. 28–32).

Concentrating on "having" and the disordered pursuit to possess things is contrary not only to Catholic social teaching, but also to modern economics that applies personalistic anthropology. This concerns a kind of "charismatic" economy, which is not only about calculating financial profits, but also making material goods a real tool for the integral development of people living in the world (Bruni and Smerilli 2008, 35–46; Zadroga 2018, 151–88).

5. Corruption Destroys the "Social Fabric"

A popular finding from research on corruption is that it destroys "the fabric of society." Sociological literature often points out that this destruction of the "social fabric" is visible in social regression (Lewicka-Strzańska 2018, 8). This corresponds to the statement established in the social teaching of the Church that corruption is one of the most serious degenerations of interpersonal relationships (Pontifical Council for Iustitia et Pax 2005, no. 411). Clear symptoms include a decline in trust among people and institutions (especially public ones) with individuals and institutions focusing on their personal interests (Lewicka-Strzańska 2018, 8).

Interdisciplinary research on corruption allows us to go beyond the well-established research patterns characteristic of sociology, and consequently we discover that the destruction of the "social fabric" cannot be limited to spoiling or destroying the bonds linking individual elements of this "fabric" that favor its development. We must also draw attention to the destruction of the units, meaning individual people. Destroying the "social fabric" not only destroys relationships, but also individual people. Corruption causes their personal regression, meaning their depersonalization, which is a process opposite to the integral and natural development of a human being (Nęcek and Nagórny 2005, 474–75). A human person is subject to the law of ambivalence, according to which she or he can succumb to spiritual destruction to the point of creating a kind of "anti-person." Man is dynamic: either he develops or enters into regression. Man's nature does not allow him to be a *constans* (Bartnik 2010, col. 905).

Destroying the "social fabric" through corruption means changing the quality and identity of the whole "fabric," its basic units and the relationships between them. Corruption causes society to cease to be a community of persons (*communio personarum*), but they become a group of beings functioning side by side, whose priorities do not include such values as truth, goodness and beauty. The "social fabric" (that is, the dynamic "organism" bearing the marks of *communio personarum*) can only be created by human beings who are fully human (, 206–9; Nagórny 1997, 149–54). Therefore, in a situation where individual people exhibit a low "personalistic factor," the existence of a real and strong "social fabric" is seriously hampered. In extreme situations, the existence of "anti-people" makes life almost impossible. This is how the identity of the "social fabric" changes: it reduces a community of people to a group of dependent individuals focused on accomplishing their particular, and often selfish, interests.

6. Conclusions

The above analyzes clearly show that the problem of corruption is primarily an anthropological issue. To properly understand it, it is necessary to properly understand man, to be aware of the meaning and purpose of his existence and the ways to achieve all of this. Anthropology appears to be a fundamental element in research on corruption. It is the vision of man that understands the meaning and purpose of his existence that constitutes the appropriate and necessary perspective for evaluating his actions and their effects.

Comprehensive interdisciplinary research shows that corruption is the destruction of the "social fabric" understood as a dynamic "organism" with the features of a community (*communio personarum*). However, it is primarily about destroying man by isolating him from the fundamental transcendent values of truth, goodness and beauty. A person who resigns from keeping these depersonalizes himself, that is, he moves away from his natural purpose and meaning of existence, therefore, departing from true humanity. In such a situation, the relationships it builds are also "less and less humane." Therefore, they become a place where pathological actions that are incompatible with human dignity and morality arise. These include corruption that affects both the corrupt and the corrupted.

It is impossible not to see a spiral of evil in all of this. A person involved in corruption loses a proper relationship with transcendent values. This, in turn, makes their actions, as well as their consequences, also characterized by inconsistency with truth, goodness and beauty.

An important point for our conclusion is identifying the space in which corruption takes place. Looking at it from a distance, without delving into detailed data, requires linking it primarily with politics and the economy (Pontifical Council for Iustitia et Pax 2005, no. 411). However, undertaking a more detailed exploration leads to the conclusion that it concerns various groups in which there are certain dependencies and influences (W. Walczak 2018, 26–27). This in turn means that any group of people, even the smallest, can be a potential source of corruption. Even in a small team, the current possibilities and needs of individual members always vary. There is always someone who has something to offer, and someone else who needs something, and a reason can be found to pursue unjust covert agreements and informal privileges.

In the light of the above, it is possible to re-describe and define corruption from the point of view of personalistic anthropology. There is talk about it wherever one can see objectively unjustified exclusivity. It is expressed in favoring a selected person or group. It takes place on the basis of received or expected benefits that cannot be obtained while maintaining objectivity and justice.

Such unfair granting of privileges distances man from truth, goodness and beauty. This, in turn, results in the depersonalization

("dehumanization") of the person who, thanks to living according to these values, becomes more and more humane, ever constantly becoming the image of God who is Truth, Goodness and Beauty to the highest degree. By distancing oneself from these values, the basic unit of the "social fabric," meaning the human-person, is destroyed. Consequently, it causes weaker relationships among "depersonalized" people who, abandoning the reference to transcendence, focus on what is measurable and quantifiable; they prefer worldly matters over the spirit, and "having" rather than "being". On the other hand, an action which is cut off from the category of pro-existence focuses on self-interest and thus becomes selfish. This, in turn, is an action against love, which is the basic tool linking the "social fabric" (Nagórny 1997, 203–72), and it becomes another element destroying it. Corruption destroys people and the community. Therefore, it cannot be considered good. Any attempt to make it a tool of progress is built on an "anthropological error" and comes dangerously close to becoming an ideology.

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