*Bettina Hollstein**

Shifts in the Semantics and Forms of Corruption[1]

Developing a Research Agenda**

In my contribution, I will show how the concept of corruption changed over time, departing from its meaning in antiquity and developing to normative concepts in modernity. Different disciplines (law, politics and economics) focus on specific aspects of the concept of corruption, namely on legality, democracy and transactions, all of which will be considered here. In conclusion, I want to develop a research agenda from a pragmatist point of view for a situational concept of corruption and differentiate, according to the problems under discussion, different dimensions of corruption.

Keywords: Concepts of Corruption, Situational Perspective, Pragmatist Economic Ethics

Wandel von Vorstellungen und Formen der Korruption – Künftige Forschungsfragen

In meinen Beitrag möchte ich zeigen, wie sich die Vorstellungen von Korruption über die Zeit verändert haben – beginnend mit der Antike bis hin zu normativen Konzepten der Moderne. Unterschiedliche Disziplinen (Rechts-, Politik- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften) haben spezifische Aspekte des Korruptionsbegriffs betont, nämlich Legalität, Demokratie und Transaktionen. In meinem letzten Abschnitt möchte ich von einem pragmatistischen Standpunkt aus künftige Forschungsfragen für ein situatives Konzept von Korruption entwickeln und entsprechend der jeweiligen Forschungsprobleme unterschiedliche Dimensionen von Korruption unterscheiden.

Schlagwörter: Korruptionsverständnisse, Situative Perspektive, Pragmatistische Wirtschaftsethik

1. Introduction

Corruption seems to be a phenomenon we can find everywhere, in different times, places, cultures and societies and always connected with specific normative

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claims. But despite the ubiquitous use of the term corruption as something bad for societies the semantics of corruption are not so easy to grasp. »[T]he line that separates undue influence and legitimate policy advocacy is often blurry« (Benning 2007: 173). What do we mean by corruption? In what way does corruption present a problem for ›good societies‹? How does corrupt behaviour affect the ability of people to live a good life? What should we learn about corruption?

In my contribution, I want to clarify these sorts of questions. Corruption is a phenomenon very helpful to exemplify how societies describe themselves or others as ›good‹ or ›bad‹. The critique of corruption has always been related to programmes trying to change social life for the better. My methodology starts with a clear separation of two aspects of corruption: the critique of corruption as a specific discourse on the one side and the practices of corruption as they can be empirically observed in different contexts on the other side.[2] In this contribution I will more specifically focus on the semantics of corruption – therefore on the meaning of this concept in different European discourses starting from antiquity up until our days.

My thesis is that by looking at the changes of the meaning of this term we learn a lot about the conceptions of ›the good‹ in the concerned society and also about the unconscious intuitions we have about corruption which are often embedded in our cultural memory without being reflected explicitly. The way societies speak about corruption tells us something about the »moral background« of these societies (Abend 2014), and therefore about the general background that makes it possible for subjects to act in a corrupt or in a non-corrupt way. I will try to show this by making the following steps: first I will look at the concept of corruption in pre-modern times, and then try to grasp the changes that occurred with modernity (the »Sattelzeit« as Reinhart Koselleck (1979) puts it). One specific change seems to be the differentiation made in different disciplines, and that's why in the third step I will look at the concept of corruption from an interdisciplinary perspective. Finally, I will try to clarify what we learn out of this for a research agenda on corruption today.

2. The Concept of Corruption in Pre-Modern Times

Corruption has its semantic roots in the Latin term ›corruptus‹ which means brackish, rotten, bad, broken. It is always related to deterioration. In a physical perspective, it means decomposition and rottenness; in a moral perspective, it means impairment of integrity, virtue, or moral principle (c.f. Merriam-Webster 2005: 281), the decay of institutions, laws or constitutions (c.f. Engels 2014: 165 f.).

Aristotle wrote a text »De generatione et corruptione« in which he emphasizes the procedural character of being (Aristoteles 2011). Corruption, in his view, is the most important precondition of creation. It is not only a change of the same

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2 I follow in this regard and in the description of the historical discourses Engels (2014).

substance he observes, but the generation of something new that implies as a precondition the »corruption« (decay) of the old (c.f. Buchheim 2011: XIX). Creation and corruption happen at the same time in an interrelated process with direction given by nature (c.f. ibid.: XXV).

In the realm of the political, corruption describes an imbalance between private interests and the common good of the community. Greek and Roman authors dealt with corruption as an individual failure endangering the whole public order (c.f. Engels 2014: 174). Based on Aristotle's theory of political science, the Roman historian Polybios developed a circular model which presupposes that every form of government has an ideal state which tends in time to corruption, induced by the egoistic tendencies of the rulers. The benevolent monarchy develops into a despotic tyranny. This will be replaced by a revolution of benevolent rulers installing an aristocracy. This in turn will develop into a selfish oligarchy without respect for the common good. A revolution made by the people then leads to democracy but this will also pass when the mob takes power to install an ochlocracy. At this point a benevolent single ruler can be a good solution – leading again to monarchy. The cycle then starts again. Corruption is the precondition for the creation of a new – a better society (c.f. ibid.). Corruption in this perspective is bad, but inescapable and necessary for change.

This aspect of necessity and inescapability is also central for the theological conception of corruption. The Vulgata, the Latin bible spread over Europe, names ›corruption‹ as the state of men since the fall of man: »Homo corruptus est«, as Augustine terms it (Rennstich 1990: 41). Men must sin and die and corruption characterizes the physical as well as the moral deterioration of human beings (c.f. Engels 2014: 168).

But what do we know about the *practices* of corruption in pre-modern times? On the individual level corruption entails preferential treatment, venality, corruptibility and bribery; on the social level, it relates to practices such as patronage, favouritism, clientelism (c.f. ibid.: 166). Since all these practices are not always normatively blamed in every situation I will use the term »network policy«[3] for above mentioned practices which are described in a more or less *objective* way. When they are named as *corrupt* practices, then a *normative* judgment is given (c.f. ibid.: 14).

Wolfgang Reinhard gives the definition of network policy or micro politics as techniques of power where individuals or groups acquire an advantage against an abstract common good (c.f. Reinhard 2011: 634 and Engels 2014: 29). The characteristics of these practices are threefold: 1) they concern minority interests; 2) they are organized through networks; 3) they are not regulated by institutions, but regulated informally (c.f. Engels 2014: 30). Each political process may include network political practices. The latter are not always termed as corruption, but

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3 I rely on Wolfgang Reinhard who speaks of »Mikropolitik« and shows that the moral appraisal of these practices changes over time and that the accusation of corruption is itself part of these practices (c.f. Reinhard 2011: 635 and 1996: 312).

corruption is always realised through network political practices (c.f. Engels 2014: 31).

3. Corruption and Modernity

With the period of Enlightenment, the semantics of corruption changed. Three traditions of thought are relevant for this.[4] Let us first look at the tradition of the *French Enlightenment*, especially Rousseau: corruption was a diagnosis of the time and had to be abolished, in his view, in order to develop an enlightened society. Three changes were crucial for the understanding of corruption in this perspective:

a) Corruption was no longer related to the fall of man and therefore not inevitable. This laicisation of corruption opened also the possibility to resolve corruption not only at the Last Judgement, but through manmade progress, induced by education.
b) The cyclical model of corruption was abandoned. The search for mechanisms that could stabilize just regimes became important.
c) The last innovation of the concept of corruption made by the Enlightenment is strongly related to the two aspects already mentioned. Corruption became part of a specific relation to the future. Corruption was part of the old, the past which had to be left behind.

The second important tradition of thought at this time was *republicanism*. At the core of this conception was the assumption that a community can only be as good as its citizens and their virtues. In this perspective, the problem of corruption has to be resolved by the virtues of the citizens. This conception of republicanism is, for example, important for the economic ethics approach of Peter Ulrich (2009).

Liberalism, the third tradition we are looking at here, chooses another way. Not virtues, but the interests of individuals are central to organize society. This conception was especially successful in the realm of economics. Through the »invisible hand« described by Adam Smith (Smith 1903 [1776]: 2.9), private interests lead to public or common good. In this conception, corruption was a system that obstructed the liberty of markets. Not self-interest per se was corruption, but only self-interest obstructing others.

Looking at the practices of corruption, we must say that network policy is not a phenomenon of the pre-modern era, but on the contrary modernity was on the one side realized through network policy practices and that modernity allowed an increase in network policy on the other side (c.f. Engels 2014). One important aspect of modernity is the conceptual differentiation of primary spheres (public and private) and of specific systems (juridical, political or economical for example) in which the concept of corruption was defined in different ways as exemplified in the next chapter.

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4 For the following see Engels 2014: 175ff. and also Bluhm/Fischer 2002.

4. Corruption from an Interdisciplinary Perspective

In each disciplinary system, we find slightly different concepts of corruption. The *juridical* concept is shaped by the specific laws regulating corruption for the concerned institution. In German law, we do not find any legal definition of corruption, but sanctions for corrupt behaviour, especially bribery and venality (c.f. Schuler 2012: 43, Beulke 2001: 738ff.). This is a quite narrow interpretation of corruption. In the year 2003 the first comprehensive and international anti-corruption convention was concluded by the United Nations (the UNCAC). It targets the protection of state institutions, stability, rule of law and justice and it criminalises corruption, trading with influence,[5] unjustified enrichment and money laundering in the public as well as in the private sector (c.f. Schuler 2012: 50). This concept of corruption is much broader and much nearer to the political or historical concept of corruption presented below.

The UN Convention represents a continuation of the anti-corruption convention of the OECD which came into force in February, 1999 and which put legally an end to the usual practice in Germany of getting a tax reduction for bribes paid in foreign countries (c.f. Pies 2008: 83). Though with the annual tax law in 1996 the possibility to reduce taxes with expenses for bribery by companies was lifted, in practice this law had no consequences. Only in 1999 the tax reliefs were banned in connection with the decree of the law to fight international bribery (c.f. Leyendecker 2007: 15). Decisive for this change at the juridical level was pressure from the USA, in which already in 1977, by the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, corruption abroad had been forbidden. The interest of the USA was to impose anti-corruption regulations at the international level, increased above all by the fact that they did not want to disadvantage US companies in the market competition.

The fight against corruption appears to be easier in the USA because the Anglo-American Common Law permits the punishment of corporations, which is not possible in the German legal system. Indeed, there are good reasons to see in companies also subjects of responsibility (c.f. Neuhäuser 2011). The changed rules of the game also led in Germany to a slight Americanization while dealing with corruption (c.f. Leyendecker 2007: 17). Even if the term corruption is not defined in German law, through international law projects the issue of corruption has become central in recent years.

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5 *Trading in influence* is defined in the UN convention (UNCAC) in article 18 as follows: »(a) The promise, offering or giving to a public official or any other person, directly or indirectly, of an undue advantage in order that the public official or the person abuse his or her real or supposed influence with a view to obtaining from an administration or public authority of the State Party an undue advantage for the instigator of the act or for any other person; (b) The solicitation or acceptance by a public official or any other person, directly or indirectly, of an undue advantage for himself or herself or for another person in order that the public official or the person abuse his or her real or supposed influence with a view to obtaining from an administration or public authority of the State Party an undue advantage« (United Nations 2004).

The *political sciences* see the concept of corruption as an abuse of entrusted power to private use or advantage (c.f. Schuler 2012: 43). This concept is not restricted to illegal practices such as bribery. Also, practices with no financial motives and practices that are not illegal can be corrupt, such as patronage, nepotism etc. (c.f. Delorio/Carrington 1998: 545). Morlok pleads for a broad concept of corruption in order to capture all practices that restrict equal political opportunities. Especially lobbyism, trading with influence and financing of political parties are problematic in western democracies (c.f. Morlok 2005: 139ff.). Powell names four principal meanings of corruption: illegal behaviour in the sphere of politics such as bribery; improper or unethical governmental practices like patronage; conflicts of interest on the part of public officials; and political behaviour that is nonresponsive to the public interest (c.f. Powell 1976 [1940]: 231). Normally, corruption relates to the abuse of roles, powers, or resources found within public bureaucracies (c.f. Johnston 2011: 480). But even the relation to public administration or the political sphere is contested, leading to a concept of corruption that includes all unethical behaviour: »The term corruption is used with reference not only to politics and the public administration but also to personal life and business. It may refer to the perversion of any accepted standard« (Pinto-Duschinsky 2011: 474). Corruption becomes such a broad concept that can be used to blame everything.

Using the most frequent, broad definition of misuse of entrusted authority for private gain (Mungiu-Pippidi 2015: 12f.), corruption indices are an instrument in the political realm to condemn corrupt practices in specific countries. The best-known index is the anti-corruption index CPI (Corruption Perception Index) of Transparency International (TI), which was developed by Johann Graf Lambsdorff (then an intern with Transparency International, now a professor of economics in Passau with a focus on economic theory).[6] This index and the press relations of Transparency International shape the concept of corruption in public discourses. The problems that organizations such as the World Bank had with the implementation of projects in countries with high corruption were the trigger for the formation of Transparency International (c.f. Eigen 2003: 23ff.): the largest nonprofit organization dedicated to the fight against corruption, and crucial to making the larger public more conscious of this issue. The World Bank, which had long ignored the phenomenon of corruption after World War II, took a paradigm shift and set up a special independent unit which has since examined several thousand cases (c.f. Leyendecker, 2007: 16). While combating, corruption was seen by the World Bank in earlier times as interference in internal affairs, this paradigm shift was realised about 1996 by James Wolfensohn, the 1995 World

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6   The CPI was developed in 1995 (with only 42 countries) and immediately received a great deal of media attention; thereby increasing information has been brought to the staff of Transparency International, which could thus improve its index (c.f. Eigen 2003: 116). According to the website of Transparency International in 2016, 176 countries and territories were listed. Link:
https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016#table (last accessed on July 27, 2017).

Bank President (c.f. Eigen 2003: 59). Wolfensohn announced the new policy of the World Bank and IMF in October 1996. This shift can be described as a change on the institutional level to a broader concept of political corruption. The concept has been expanded further for western democracies: In democracies corruption »involves duplicitous violations of the democratic norm of inclusion« (Warren 2004: 328). Corruption has therefore become a main issue in political discourses – relating to the specific norms of the concerned entity – and even a core issue for parties and governments, at the risk to lose its conceptual clarity.

In *economics,* the concept of corruption is focused on transactions, namely illegal exchange (c.f. Varese 2003 [1996]: 124). But while the aspect of a voluntary transaction is central for most economic definitions and helps to differentiate corruption from extortion,[7] the aspect of legality is not mandatory. Most definitions rely on the fact that a practice is not allowed, but these infractions can relate not only to legal rules, but also to social norms (c.f. Schmidt/Garschagen 1978: 565). »The term implies that there is a natural or normal standard of functioning or conduct from which the corrupt state of affairs or action deviates« (Philp 1998: 674). Ingo Pies draws a distinction between obstructive corruption (Belastungskorruption), meaning corruption that obstructs firms or individuals, on the one side, and passed-on-corruption (Entlastungskorruption), which means that costs are passed on to the community, normally the tax payers. Obstructive corruption means that officials increase the prices of public services for firms or for individuals as in the case of so called *petty corruption*. In the case of passed-on-corruption the corruption-rent is shared between the official and the firm to the disadvantage of a third party (namely the tax payers). In the first case, there is a conflict of interests between the two parties (the firm that pays the bribe and the official who gets it). That means that the official needs to be covered by his superiors – corruption becomes a top-down phenomenon. In the second case, a harmony of interests prevails which needs secrecy. This form of corruption represents a local bottom-up phenomenon (c.f. Pies 2008: 121). Obstructive Corruption has often the form of *grand corruption* we acknowledge normally through the media. »Grand« does not (only) mean a great amount of money that is transferred, but refers to the level where this corruption takes place. It points to persons with decisive power. This term is often equivalent to political corruption. Examples for this sort of corruption are activities as shown by the German technology firm *Siemens* (c.f. Graeff et al. 2009; Wolf 2009). Over several years Siemens systematically paid bribes to foreign officials in order to acquire projects. The harmful effects of corruption have been summarised by Pies as follows: on the one hand the private actors (firms) cause misallocations through escape strategies. For example, they reduce investments, or they invest only for a short time perspective or they escape into the black market. On the other hand, the public actors that accept bribes cause misallocation through rent-seeking, which means increasing income without corresponding activities. To do this they increase regu-

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7 Heywood names for example extortive corruption together with transactive corruption as part of concepts of corruption (c.f. Heywood 2004 [1985]: 177).

lations (and have in this case more possibilities to ask for bribes for additional ›services‹). They privilege expensive investments for construction projects, increase the part of income or expenses generated by the state, and finally they privilege in the budget prestigious projects instead of projects for long term finances for health and educational questions (c.f. Pies 2008: 70). While in the 1970s corruption was seen in economic theory as a possible mechanism to open markets and to start a process of economic growth, this changed in the 1990s. Today in discourses of economists, corruption is seen as leading to a reduction of the general productivity, to a reduction of the national income, to slower growth, increasing inequality and poverty and lower levels of health and education. »Contemporary research demonstrates that corrupt payments do not usually further efficiency, at least if one takes a systematic view« (Rose-Ackerman 2006: XV). The main discourse concerning corruption in economics and beyond has shifted to the combating of corruption. »Now, it is generally agreed that corruption is detrimental to economic, social and political development« (Kubbe 2015: 23).[8]

5. Forms of Corruption – A Research Agenda for Economic Ethics

The starting point of the proposed research agenda is the insight that corruption is based on corrupt *practices and actions* (Kubbe 2015: 172ff.). In a pragmatist action-theoretical perspective,[9] as developed by Hans Joas in his »Creativity of Action« (Joas 1996), it is central to analyze the *contextual situation* of actions. The logic of the situation is also often the starting point for economic analyses investigating the incentives for corruption. But specific problems may be the consequence: »[T]he dominance of economistic analyses of the role of incentives in decision-making has given rise to proposed institutional fixes that are too abstracted from reality to gain purchase. That dominance was partly prompted by a misplaced assumption that market-based liberal democracies would become the modal regime type following the collapse of Communism« (Heywood 2017: 45). Hence, the analysis of corruption has to be differentiated for specific times, regions and forms of corruption.[10] As we have seen, concepts of corruption have changed over time and have become more and more important in different discourses in the last 20 years. For a differentiated analysis of corruption, it is now

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8   In Kubbe (2015) a broad overview of the relevant research literature is given.

9   I use this theoretical framework in order to develop a pragmatist economic ethics (c.f. Hollstein 2015a). In this perspective, special attention is given to the analysis of the situation, to habits and routines, to emotions and narratives (c.f. Hollstein 2015b).

10 Since corruption occurs in different settings, places or in different types of activities, Adam Graycar and Tim Prenzler suggest to break corrupt events into analytical units by identifying Types (i.e. bribery, extortion, misappropriation etc.), Activities (i.e. appointing personnel, procurement etc.), Sectors (i.e. Construction, Health, Tax administration etc.) and Places (Countries, Regions, Workplaces etc.) (TASP) (2013: 11).

important to differentiate specific forms of corruption as grand and petty corruption.

Cases of grand corruption were characterised by the fact that not only individual interests played a role but also a corrupt system or network entangled with the interests of the firm, with jobs etc. It is not necessary that one takes money for his own to be corrupt: all persons are corrupt who achieve advantages for themselves to the disadvantage of the community. Corrupt is also a person who does not care for laws in order to have advantages for his personal career. An insider explained incorrect activities of the managers of Siemens in this way: they thought they had a mission. They moved between *hybris* and a belief in fighting for a good cause. Obviously, they thought of themselves as being »untouchable« (Leyendecker 2007: 122). Beside *hybris* and belief, another aspect seems to have been crucial for the corrupt practice of paying bribes to foreign officials: these *routines* were not adapted to changed legal regulations. The boundaries between crime and cleverness are sometimes small. Siemens entered the New York stock exchange market in 2001 and had to know that now other regulations would be ruling the game (c.f. Leyendecker 2007: 95).

On the other side – the side of bribes – we find normally a process of passing on costs to the community – typically the tax payers. Such cases of grand corruption brought Peter Eigen – as he states himself – to dedicate himself to the fight against corruption. He quotes an example of a telecommunication project in Ivory Coast that was not allocated to the cheapest supplier but to a supplier who obviously paid bribes. The veto of the World Bank didn't help since a private bank provided the credit for this ridiculously expensive project (c.f. Eigen 2003: 30).

A very distinct case of ›grand corruption‹ was the bribery of the employees' union at Volkswagen, because in this case the issue was not bribing decision makers to get orders but rather their own employees' representation, in order to get an atmosphere in the firm that was friendly for the employer (c.f. Leyendecker 2007: 154ff.). But even in this case the aim was to influence decision makers for the company's own advantage.

Grand corruption is often used synonymously with political corruption. The damage caused by this form of corruption is much more than a misallocation of resources. In fact, it results also in a loss of trust in decision makers and in the mechanisms of decision in society (c.f. Kleiner 2006 [1992]: 10f.). In a dynamic perspective,[11] there is also to take into account the formation of self-enforcing vicious circles. The phenomenon spreads through imitation and creates further non-efficient allocation until corruption becomes endemic. These processes are proven by empirical studies which show in a comparative perspective for different countries a more or less stable distribution of corruption with two paths. There are on the one side countries with a high level of corruption and on the other side countries with a low level of corruption – but not many countries in the middle, because especially when corruption is high it tends to stay very stable (c.f. Herzfeld 2004: 17ff.). Comparative studies reveal income as a central variable to

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11 For dynamics between corruption and economic growth see Jansen 2005.

predict levels of corruption, but the studies do not say much about causality. Two main conclusions can be drawn: »First, corruption is closely related to GDP per capita and to human capital. These correlations are consistent with the economic and human capital theories of institutional development, but the correlations could also be driven by reverse causality or omitted variables. Second, for a given level of income, the extent of corruption still varies greatly. The cross-country evidence suggests that this variation can partly be accounted for by the degree of market and political competition« (Svensson 2005: 29f.). Here we find an important field for further research concerning the mechanisms and situational preconditions leading to corruption.

The companion to grand corruption is *petty corruption*, also named bureaucratic corruption. This sort of corruption relates to everyday corruption with relatively small amounts of money being paid in contacts between people and officials or services such as hospitals, schools, local administrations, tax offices etc. Using the example of India, Akhil Gupta shows how petty corruption leads to a systematic discrimination against poorer parts of the population, who cannot afford this form of corruption but are more than others dependent on public services (c.f. Gupta 2012: 24). At the same time, they lack cultural capital (for example the ability to write) to deal with officials and social capital (for example networks that would be able to organize protest) (c.f. ibid.: 109). »Corruption is a systematic form of oppression precisely because it acts uniformly on the population that lacks the income to pay officials« (ibid.: 33). A central problem here is that corruption shapes how poorer people see the world (Weltsicht), especially the state and the government (c.f. ibid.: 35). The stories about everyday corruption have characteristics of a narrative: there is a central subject, a series of incidents that change the former situation and an explication (the moral of the story) (c.f. ibid.: 76). Corruption of lower officials is only a part of a corrupt system that includes also higher levels of governance. It is only a link in a chain of corrupt practices (c.f. ibid.: 91). Bureaucratic and political corruptions are therefore closely related to each other.

»The system of corruption ties the political and administrative branches of the state together in the generation of this perverse outcome« (ibid.: 92). Critique articulated out of civil society can represent a corrective aspect. In India, for example, competition between political parties and the activism of urban middle class movements have done more to address corruption than the World Bank or TI (c.f. ibid.: 106). The motives of persons in these movements, the role of culture, common values and civil virtues are of great interest for the critique of corruption in all its forms. How different forms of corruption are interlinked and which forms of protest are successful in combating it seem to present other interesting questions for research.

These two forms of corruption (grand and petty corruption) can be related to the notions of passed-on-corruption and obstructive corruption as explicated in the economic discourse of Ingo Pies. By reconstructing corruption as a prisoner's dilemma, the results of changes in the situation framed by incentives can be analysed. Changes of the *incentive situation*, for example by changing the law

enforcement system, could be another focus for future research (c.f. Pies 2008: 128). Pies points to the fact that the probability of detecting corruption is not very high, so the dissuasive effect of penal law might be not very high as well, especially as the victim of corruption – the tax payer – does not know that he is a victim (c.f. Pies/Sass 2008: 145).

Because of this systematic difficulty in detecting corruption, it is important to protect whistle blowers, who give information from inside about corrupt practices of firms to the general public. Though, it is important to know about the motives of a whistle blower. Leisinger states that whistleblowers are generally well educated and well paid long term employees concerned about the future of the firm (c.f. Leisinger 2003, cited by Leyendecker 2007: 217). For the protection of whistle blowers, a specific *culture* that values integrity is necessary (c.f. Graycar/Prenzler 2013: 138). Therefore, a change in *social norms* and *informal rules* is necessary for effective protection (c.f. Kubbe/Engelbert 2018).

Finally, Josef Wieland, a researcher in economic ethics in Konstanz, differentiates four types of corrupt *actors* (c.f. Wieland 2006): (1) the cynic who knows that what he is doing is wrong, but who thinks that in this job things must go this way; (2) the second type, who thinks that bribes compensate him for hard work for the firm; (3) the third type, who knows about relativity of norms and thinks that he is situated above the law – a sort of untouchability is about him; and (4) the last type, maybe the most interesting one, is the player. He bets on the future and knows that one day or another he will be caught, but he loves the risk.

(1) The first type fits the fact that corruption is sometimes seen as belonging to specific countries and regions. The presupposition is that in these specific countries it is not possible to make business deals without corruption. Peter Eigen contests this opinion and declares that while of course it is true that in some cultures gifts and helping the family are important, yet paying dictators or powerful officials huge amounts of money to take wrong economic decisions is not accepted – in any country of the world (Eigen 2003: 13).[12]

(2) The second type relates to the fact that especially persons with good performance are likely to become corrupt, because they are trusted (c.f. Bannenberg/Schaupensteiner 2007: 61; Leyendecker 2003: 69f.) and in some cases, feel a sort of loyalty to their company. An example is the case of Alexander von Zitzewitz in the Infineon case – the manager took 85,000 EUR and destroyed 20 years of hard work.[13]

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12 »Bribery is universally shameful. Not a country in the world which does not treat bribery as criminal on its law-books. (…) In no country do bribetakers speak publicly of their bribes, or bribegivers announce the bribes they pay« (Noonan 1984: 702) (I owe this reference to Michael Assländer).

13 »Von früheren Infineon-Mitarbeitern, die sein Ausscheiden bedauerten, hat er zwar viel Zuspruch bekommen, doch selbst die Rückkehr in eine Position weit unterhalb der Spitze ist ihm derzeit versperrt. Wem der Ruch der Korruption anhaftet, gilt mittlerweile bei vielen Unternehmen als Aussätziger. Durch einen ›fatalen Fehler‹, sagt von Zitzewitz, habe er sich ›die Anerkennung aus zwanzig Jahren harter Arbeit kaputt gemacht‹. Ihm sei ›nicht wohl‹ gewesen, als er das Geld angenommen habe, aber er

(3) The third type can be found in the Siemens case. Spectators described some managers as greedy, cynical, self-satisfied, and feeling themselves as untouchable. They had lost the notion of right and wrong.[14]

(4) For the last type I do not have any example. It would be interesting to look at concrete cases of corruption and to check if this classification helps or not to analyse corrupt behavior and to prevent it.

In my contribution, I have shown that the concept of corruption changed over time – starting with a broad meaning in antiquity as a necessity of nature and history to a normative concept aiming for a perfect society in modernity. The different disciplines (law, politics and economics) focused on specific aspects of the concept of corruption: namely on legality, democracy and transactions. In my last section I showed that from a pragmatist point of view economic ethics dealing with corruption have to use a situational concept of corruption and differentiate, according to the problems under research, different dimensions as to the forms of corruption, actors (including networks), institutions, habits (informal rules) and cultures.

In sum we need to do more research (1) on the relationship between the description of network political practices and the claims concerning corruption, (2) on the mechanisms and situational preconditions of and the connections between grand and petty corruption, (3) on situational incentives as well as culture and informal rules to reduce network political practices seen as corruption, (4) and on actors and their corrupt behavior and how that relates to different views on the world, society, the self and the transcendent.

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sei ›dem Reiz erlegen, unerwartet Geld in der Tasche zu haben, von dem niemand wusste‹ « (Leyendecker 2007: 50).

14 »(…) die Manager waren zu gierig, zu zynisch, zu selbstgerecht gewesen und die meisten von ihnen hatten sich unangreifbar gefühlt. Irgendwann jedenfalls war einigen von ihnen das Gefühl für Größenordnungen, für die Unterscheidung von richtig und falsch abhanden gekommen« (Leyendecker 2007: 10).

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