



Leadership on Trial: An Existentialist Assessment

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Abstract: The importance of leadership in society calls for a continuous attempt to improving on leadership studies so as to build societies (in all its constitutive units) that are humane. This paper, therefore, engages in the perennial dialogues of leadership development vis-à-vis leadership performance from an existentialist paradigm in making a case for a more holistic and viable prescription for effective and functional leadership.

The existentialists are notorious for their redefinition of *Husserlian Phenomenology* in which the *Transcendental Ego* escaped to the world of loneliness where it only serves as an impartial and uninterested observer of human events. From the pedestal of the *Transcendental Ego*, the Existentialists pulled it down to the world of empirical reality where the *Transcendental Ego* becomes an

interactive, interested and interwoven reality with the other realities of the world.

Putting this in the context of leadership, contemporary leadership performance, both in the political and the corporate (organisational) worlds, reflects a Husserlian disinterested *Transcendental Ego* in which both public and corporate policies are shaped first and foremost for the interest of the political and the corporate leaders and their compatriots. Public interests thus suffer in the hands of private interests. In politics, for instance, the battle for political power (retaining power at all cost) replaces the quest for effective and efficient service delivery, which should be the hallmark of politics. Looking at the corporate world, corporate executives'/leaders', rewards sometimes overshadow the need to maximise profit for the shareholders while still embracing corporate social responsibility. Several pieces of evidence of corporate frauds explain organisations' fraternisation with window dressing and creative accounting so as to cover up the fraudulent acts of some corporate executives. The fall of Enron, Arthur Andersen, WorldCom, HealthSouth, Freddie Mac, American Insurance Group (AIG), Lehman Brothers, Halliburton, Xerox, Tyco International, Rite Aid, Peregrine Systems and etc. are cases in point, therefore providing a good basis for an existentialist intervention in leadership studies.

Thus, this paper engages secondary data with some empirical facts; and also employs some fundamental themes of existentialism in zeroing in leadership in all sectors, specifically, – political leaders, corporate (organisational) leaders, community leaders etc. It concludes that existentialism provides a viable and instructive platform for an ethical, humanistic and pragmatic leadership.

Keywords: Existentialism, Leadership, Organization and Politics

Introduction

One of the most discussed subjects since the beginning of the 20th Century is the concept of leading or leadership. In the 21st Century, leadership has dominated almost all public and private inquiries such that it has grown to become a wide area of discourse. In contemporary times leadership is a sought-after appellation even for those who do not have an idea of what it is.

Hunter (2004:14) posits that "a search on Amazon.com reveals more than 280,000 titles on leadership and management! Tens of thousands of

pages are written about leadership in magazines and journals each year. Three-quarters of American corporations send people off to leadership classes each year and spend an estimated \$15 billion on training and consulting for those on their leadership teams." This implies that a lot of investments have made on building a viable platform for effective leadership. A lot of universities globally have Centers or Institutes of Leadership Studies, the corporate world invests in training their workers for leadership positions, political rulers take courses, workshops and seminars in the art of

political governance in order to demonstrate leadership acumen.

Thus, in order to effectively put leadership on trial while suggesting some fundamental tenets and themes of existentialism, this paper covers five areas namely, the introduction, the statement of the problem, literature review, the theory that empowers contemporary leadership styles, empirical facts of failed leadership and finally discussion and recommendations.

Statement of the Problem

Despite all the investments in leadership training and development on the platforms of research institutes, books and journals publications, seminars, workshops and conferences, we are continuously confronted with *leadership gaps* till date. One current and unpardonable finding is the fact that there is also a gap between the teaching of leadership and the practice of leadership. In other words, leadership trainers and lecturers demonstrate a little capability of leadership. It is the paradox of "*do as I say but don't do as I do*".

Thus, this leadership *trial* is for both those in quest of developing leadership capabilities and the leadership trainers and teachers. Thus, the leadership gap is not just in the corporate world and the political sphere. We call to question the idea of leadership in the educational sectors, especially in the leadership industry today. Some scholars have pursued this urgent call for authentic leadership, by implication the existentialist contribution to leadership studies in their research.

Among them is Northouse (2010:205) who holds that "Upheavals in society have energised a tremendous demand for authentic leadership. The destruction on 9/11, corporate scandals at companies like WorldCom and Enron and massive failures in the banking industry have all created fear and uncertainty. People...long for bona fide leadership they can trust and for leaders who are honest and good".

While Lawler & Ashman (2012) employ Jean-Paul Sartre existentialist analysis of human person, this paper employs the wider scope of existentialist scholars such as Don Miguel De Unamuno's idea of immortality, Karl Jasper's concept of self-awareness as the foundation of human existence, Martin Heidegger's *Dasein (Being) and death*, Gabriel Marcel's philosophy of intersubjectivity, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of man as an embodied being – being-in-the-world and lastly Jean-Paul Sartre's idea of authenticity and freedom.

Literature Review

Leadership: A Conceptual Discourse

Newstrom & Bittel (2007) see leadership as the process of influencing and supporting others to follow you and to do willingly the things that need to be done. Leadership has also been defined as "a process of social influence through which an individual enlists and mobilises the aid of others in the attainment of a collective goal" (Chemers, 2001: 376). From these definitions, leadership as a process of influence takes place within a group

and lastly focuses on goal attainment. Such conception of influence has to factor in the context of positive influence towards the achievement of positive goals. Leadership is not just about the influence it has to do with positive influence. However, it is worthy of note that negative influence will definitely produce negative behaviour in the followers. A leader should ensure that he or she elicits positive influence. For Owen (2011), leadership is not about position: it is about what you do and how you behave. The predominant theme in virtually all definitions of leadership is that leaders deal in the currency of influence but via motivation and enabling rather than coercion (House & Javidan, 2004; Martin, Epitropaki, Thomas & Topaka, 2010; Yukl, 2010).

Bennis (1989:13) cited Gardener's submission that "leaders have a significant role in creating the state of mind that is the society. They can serve as symbols of the moral unity of the society. They can express the values that hold the society together. Most important, they can conceive and articulate goals that lift people out of their petty preoccupations carry them above the conflicts that tear a society apart, and unite them in pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts."

This is important in the light of Sankar's (2003) claim that the character of a leader is more important than charisma in influencing his/her vision, goals, strategies, core values, choices, judgment and behaviour. For instance, leaders whose personalities

are characterised by a high degree of narcissism are driven by intense needs for power, wealth and prestige. Such leaders with this kind of personality disorder can favourably elicit a high performance from the followers through the three features of bad leadership namely:

- i.) Managerial tyranny;
- ii.) Strategic bullying and
- iii) Outright manipulation of followers.

Warren Bennis gave three reasons he feels leaders are important in our world today.

- i. First, they are responsible for the effectiveness of organisations.
- ii. Second, the change and upheaval of the past years have left us with no place to hide. We need anchors in our lives, something like a trim-tab factor, a guiding purpose. Leaders fill that need.
- iii. Third, there is a pervasive, national concern about the integrity of our institutions (Bennis, 1989: 15).

In a like manner, he went on to posit that the followers hold *trust* as a fundamental requirement from their leaders. It follows that people's commitments to an organization or to a national leader or any vision or goal at all are products of the level of trust they repose on the leader. Thus, we can argue that the effectiveness and the commitment of followers or employees to organizational goal and vision is a product of the level of trust they have in their leaders. Owen (2011) noted that people expect the behaviours or traits listed as flagged

from the leaders of their organization or country:

Ability to motivate others

- i. Vision
- ii. Honesty and integrity
- iii. Decisiveness
- iv. Ability to handle crises (Owen, 2011)

These good qualities are expected from an ideal leader. However, research has shown that the concept of influence in relation to the definition and description of leadership sometimes does not show that influence can be negative.

Derailed / Dysfunctional Leadership

Influence can be both positive and negative hence the dark side of leadership becomes a prominent area of research. In reality, this interest in the dark side dates back to the early 1890s, when early work on leadership derailment or failure (Ghislieri & Gatti, 2012: 261). Later, the concept of bad leadership comes back to the literature of leadership studies again. The list of leadership derailment has expanded accommodate the toxic leadership (Lipman-Blumen, 2005), negative or evil or 'dark side' of leadership (Conger, 1990), abusive or destructive leadership (Higgs, 2009). According to the researchers by Benson & Hogan, 2008; Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007, 'Bad leadership' corresponds to a general worsening in performance (Ghislieri & Gatti, 2012: 261). As noted by Hogan, Curphy & Hogan (1994) proposed that bad leadership depends on extreme levels of certain personality traits such as ambition (which in extreme becomes constant competition) or, conversely,

agreeableness, which can result in inappropriate conflict-avoiding behaviour when carried to the limits (Ghislieri & Gatti, 2012: 262). The import of this is that personality traits affect the leadership style that is in practice in the group, organisation and the society at large. The derailed or dysfunctional leaders are the product of personality disorder such as narcissism (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Kets de Vries, 1995).

Bad leadership, for instance, resulted from an unresolved sense of self, an unrealistic idea of one's power and the fear of losing it (Ghislieri & Gatti, 2012: 262). Kets de Vries (1995) holds that leadership is the exercise of power, and the quality and consequences of leadership depend on the ability to exercise power (cited in Ghislieri & Gatti, 2012: 262). Both in the corporate and the political worlds, there have been several demonstrations of the abuse of power. This is mostly due to the fact that citizens, as in the case of political leadership, and followers or shareholders, as in the case of the corporate world, are nothing but mere objects to be used for the personal advancement of the leaders. Constructive narcissists have greater self-confidence and ability to cope with frustration and are thus better able to keep up a relationship, the *reactive narcissist* and *self-deceptive narcissist* can show more *problematic behaviour* in dealing with their *followers* (Ghislieri & Gatti, 2012: 262).

Existential Philosophy: A Lenticular Discourse and the Application to Leadership Studies

Existentialism is a reaction to both the Hegelian idealism and the Husserlian phenomenology in which the human person is merely an abstract entity. For the existentialists, Man's existence precedes his essence meaning that man has no predetermined existence but is endowed with the capacity and the capability to create and recreate his essence. The uniqueness of this philosophical movement is that Man is returned to a central place in the universe. It is like the Copernicus revolution in astronomy. As noted by Omoregbe (1998: 93), "Before Copernicus (1475 – 1543), it was generally believed that the earth was at the centre of the universe and that the sun and all other planets were moving around the earth. But Copernicus reversed this view by showing that it was the opposite, that it was the sun that was at the centre of the universe and that the earth and other planets revolved around the sun."

In that same order, the existentialist philosophers theorize about the individual human person and his existential realities as against the universalism or better put the abstract existence of man. The French philosopher, Emmanuel Mounier [1905-1950] once characterised existentialism as 'a reaction of the philosophy of man against the excesses of the philosophy of ideas and the philosophy of things' (Gardiner, 1988:89). Kierkegaard specifically theorised on the particularisation, individualisation and uniqueness of the human person. It is worthy of note that "following

Kierkegaard, the existentialist philosophers focus their attention on the individual man and his life experience rather than abstract concepts that are unrelated to human life" (Omoregbe, 1999: 39). As noted by Sartre, "the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders" (Sartre, 1973: 28).

Man as a Being-in-the-world

Man is the king of the world. The world exists for the sake of man. The world and everything in it must serve the purpose and help man to realise himself given that he does not have a predetermined existence. The existence of all other things in the world is only meaningful in relation to man's realisation of his destiny, his uniqueness and his authenticity. Karl Jaspers observes it thus: "*when I become aware of myself I see that I am in a world in which I take my bearings*" (Jaspers, 1974: 158). Man is in a world in which his life can only have meaning. All the socio-economic, political, religious and cultural institutions in the world exist primarily to help man realise himself. These institutions are only meaningful if they serve the interests of man and not those in control of them.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty succinctly puts it thus:

The world is not an object such that I have in my possession the law of its making; it is the natural setting and the field for all my thoughts and all my explicitly perceptions...man is in

the world and only in the world does he know himself. When I return to myself from an excursion into the realm of dogmatic common sense or of science, I find, not a source of intrinsic truth, but a subject destined to be in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: xi)

The world is the natural setting where man's thought and activities can be given expression. Man is destined to be in the world. We are back to the same argument again that man should naturally find fulfilment in the world. Therefore, the institutions in the world must assist man in realising himself. According to Omoregbe (1999: 82) "Things in the world are seen by man only in relation to himself, either as useful to him or as harmful to him, either as tools which he can use or as obstacles in his way."

In the same vein, Jean Paul-Sartre holds that "*Without the world, there is no selfhood, no person; without selfhood, without the person, there is no world*" (Sartre, 1956: 104). There is a symbiotic relationship between the world and man. However, Joseph Omoregbe noted the instrumental nature of the world to man's self-discovery, self-development, self-actualization and self-fulfillment. According to him, "the world is instrumental to man, for man uses it to realise his possibilities and fulfil himself. The world exists for man and "all the things in it are instruments which man utilises for his own self-fulfillment" (Omoregbe, 1999: 43). This again reinforces the claim that all the institutions in human society should serve as the tools for the

advancement of man's self-fulfillment in this world.

This position of the existentialist negates Machiavelli's claim that the purpose of politics is the acquisition of political power and the retention of that at all cost. Machiavelli never withdrew his statement that the end justifies the means. His proposal to the prince holds that in the time of peace he should prepare for war. For Machiavelli, The Prince should avoid the practice of moral virtues and religious beliefs but should encourage his subject to do so in order to foster the possibility of getting their loyalty even though he suppresses and oppresses them.

In line with this, Friedman's proposal that the purpose of business executive is to maximise the profit for shareholders within a legal framework without possessing any other responsibility to the larger community displaces man from the centre of economic institutions.

Man as a Being-with-others

Karl Jaspers underscores the importance of intersubjectivity or better put the interpersonal relationship in man's realisation and actualization of himself. According to him,

Against my self-will, against the accident of my empirical existence, I experience myself in communication. I am never more sure of being myself than at times of total readiness for others when I come to myself because the other to comes to himself in our revealing struggle (Jaspers, 1974: 173).

For him, as cited above, against our self-will, we encounter the being of

others, especially in communication. Our humanity is only visible in relation with the humanity of others. Others realise themselves in relating with us. According to Sartre, “*the fact of the other is incontestable and touches me to the heart*” (Sartre, 1956: 261). From Sartre’s position, it is clear that one’s life is interwoven and only meaningful in respect of other humans.

Thus, “for the existentialist, the awareness of the existence of the other is not by inference or analogy but part of the awareness of our own very existence. We discover “ourselves as existing with other people and our being as a being-with-others” (Omogegbe, 1999: 44). This defines the individuality of man. In pursuit of the good of man, Karl Jaspers argues against paying lip service of the concept of mankind. In today’s political thought, Jaspers would disagree with the concept of the masses being treated as a universal concept used to describe the citizenry of a nation-state.

The leader’s existence is only meaningful in his interaction with the followers. Therefore, we can sufficiently argue that the leader has no superior existence outside his interactions with those who work with/for him.

Gabriel Marcel amplifies this thus:

The other as other exists for me only insofar as I am open to him (insofar as he is a thou), but I am only open to him insofar as I cease to form a circle with myself within which I somehow place the other, or rather, the idea of the other; for in so doing the other becomes the idea of

the other, and the idea of the other is no longer the other as such, but the other qua related to me, as fragmented, as parceled out or in the process of being parceled out (Marcel, 1935: 155).

The existence of others is an imperative for our existence. One’s existence is only meaningful so long as one recognises the existence of others. Joseph Omogegbe recasts Gabriel Marcel’s proposition thus: “*The more I recognise the personality of the other, the more I enhance my own personality, and the more I am present with the other, the more I am present to myself. To recognise the personality of the other implies to make oneself available to him and be ready to him attention. To “refuse to make oneself available to the other is to refuse to recognise his personality”* (Omogegbe, 1999:77). The implication of this for leadership is that it is the existence of the followers that gives meaning to the existence and the operation of the leader. Thus, a leader, in any sector or unit (political leadership, corporate/organisational leadership, educational leadership, community/social leadership, spiritual leadership etc) should recognise that leadership is a privileged responsibility accorded to him/her and the followers deserve a better treatment than being treated as mere statistical variables. This calls for the selfless pursuit of organisational or national goals without destroying the followers’ capacity to realise themselves and achieve their personal goals.

According to Jaspers, “*The man who loves mankind does not love at all, but one who loves a particular human being does*” (Jaspers, 1974: 173). The implication of this is that man individuality must be considered in our interactions, policies and decisions. Thus, it is important to note that man's individuality should be considered when one considers strategies of motivation which is in tandem with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs which emphasises the differences in man's motivational needs.

Man as Being-towards-death

Even though we cannot provide a widely accepted and empirically based intellectual proof or ground for the idea of ‘life after death’, the existentialists' debate about the meaningfulness and meaninglessness of death calls for the need for positive, authentic and ethical leadership which considers the transient nature of human life. This idea of the transient nature of human life should be developed in corporate leaders, political leaders, social/community leaders the sense of responsibility. This understanding should promote the culture of not attaching a premium to the acquisition of the things of this world at the expense of the wellbeing and welfare of the followers. The several corporate frauds and embezzlement from the national treasury of several nations by their political leaders and public office holders are the proofs that these leaders have not come to understand that death ends of our acquisition.

Understanding the imminence of death, our lives should be used in the service of our fellow man instead of pursuing transient things of this world that we will abandon in this world. According to Unamuno, the idea of death should form the basis of ethics in man. He puts it thus:

What I wish to establish is that uncertainty, doubt, perpetual wrestling with the mystery of our final destiny, mental despair, and the lack of any solid and stable dogmatic foundation, may be the basis of an ethic (Unamuno, 1954: 261).

That man is unsure of his end or his final destination outside this world of Spatio-temporal existence should spawn the idea of man becoming humane to his fellow man. Man should elicit good behaviours towards other men and the community at large knowing that he is a being-unto-death and he is not certain of his experience outside this world whether it will be in pain or gain derived from his actions in this world. While addressing the central place of death in human life, Unamuno holds that the thirst for immortality is the very essence of life. Man's quest for power, fame and wealth is in relation to his quest for immortality which is rooted in man's greatest instinct of self-preservation. All corrupt practices in both the corporate and the political worlds are all attempts at immortalising himself. However, Man cannot escape death; therefore, he should use his temporal life to help others live better. He should not use his life to obstruct the existence of others.

For him, both morality and religion are inseparable and are based on feelings rather than reason as proposed by Socrates and Plato who argued that morality is the function of reason and identified virtue with knowledge (Omeregbe, 1999). There is also an extensive debate between Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre on the meaningfulness or the meaninglessness of death. According to Heidegger (1973:289), *"Death is a way to be which Dasein takes over as soon as it is. As soon as a man is born, he is old enough to die"*. The reality of death is that it is part of man's existence and a child that is born today is old enough to die. For him, death reveals the individuality and peculiarity of man because every man has his own life to live and his own death to die. Heidegger (1973) argues further that death promotes self-awareness in man and man becomes aware of his freedom to die and his concomitant responsibility. He further argues that death is the final cord in human existence that confers meaning to man's life. Death reveals man's finitude.

Contrarily to Heidegger's idea of death being an experience that gives meaning to human life, Sartre (1956) argues that death is absurd and that that which terminates the life of man cannot be a source of the meaningfulness of man's life. In Jean-Paul Sartre own words: *"Thus we shall conclude in opposition to Heidegger that death, far from being my peculiar possibility, is a contingent fact which, as such, on principle escapes me and originally belongs to my facticity...Death is*

never that which gives life its meaning. It is, on the contrary, that which on principle removes all meaning from life. If we must die then our life has no meaning because its problems receive no solution. It is "absurd that we are born, it is absurd that we die" (Sartre, 1956: 545).

Existentialist Foundation of Group Theory of Leadership

The theory that captures the existentialist ideal in leadership studies is the group theory. Leadership exists in the context of group existence. The concepts of influence, vision/goal, motivation and mobilisation are only relevant in the context of group association. According to Hogg (2001), leadership is a relational property of groups; leaders can't exist without a group of followers and followers can't exist without leaders (Thomas, Martin & Riggio, 2013:7). This calls for respect for the dignity of the followers since their existence legitimises the existence and the relevance of the leaders. At this point, it is safe to argue that leadership is a meaningless concept without the group/followers. According to Thomas, Martin & Riggio, (2013: 7), by emphasizing the nature and the quality of the relationship between leaders and followers, this theory of leader-member exchanges (LMX) was the first to stress that leadership was not just a top-down process, but it is a reciprocal relationship in which leaders and followers mutually influence each other (see Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Martin et al., 2010). The leaders' identification with the group

is the thrust of social identity theory in leadership studies. Thus, Agbude, Excellence-Oluye and Godwyns-Agbude (2014), argue that lack of social identity within the group context explains leadership misbehaviour or bad leadership of most African states. More so, it is worthy of note that it is not just the leader that influences the followers; the followers also influence the leader.

Empirical Facts of Leadership

Derailment

Corporate Leadership

The under listed corporate frauds are cases that justify that the gap between the 'I' and the 'thou' is wider. These corporate leaders used their shareholders and the workers for their personal financial aggrandisement. In the West Management of Scandal of 1998, \$1.7 billion was reported in fake earnings. The company falsely increased the depreciation time length for their property, plant and equipment on the balance sheets. The Founder/Chairman Dean L. Buntrock and his other top executives were said to have engaged in this corporate fraud. Arthur Andersen as the auditing firm was an accomplice in this fraud.

In Enron Scandal, 2001, shareholders lost \$74 billion, thousands of employees and investors' retirement benefits were squandered by the CEO Jeff Skilling, former CEO Ken Lay and their accomplices. They perpetrated this by keeping huge debts off balance sheets and were exposed by an internal whistleblower Sherron Watkin. Arthur Andersen, as the auditing firm, was also found

guilty in the Enron Scandal. Skilling was sentenced to 24 years in prison while Ken Lay died before serving his time in jail.

Worldcom Scandal of 2002, Bernie Ebbers, the CEO, was the main culprit. The company inflated their assets by the sum of \$11 billion resulting in loss of jobs and \$180 billion in losses for investors. This was done by underreporting line costs by capitalising rather than expensing and inflated revenue with fake accounting entries. The corporate fraud was discovered by the internal auditing department. Ebber was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment for fraud, conspiracy and falsification of documents. Worldcom Scandal led the US Congress to introduce Sarbanes-Oxley Act which is an embodiment of rules and regulations for corporate entrepreneurs.

Lehman Brothers, a global financial services firm, hid more than \$50 billion in loans disguised as sales. The executives and the company's auditors were the culprits. They created the impression that the company had \$50 billion more cash and \$50 billion less in toxic assets. This company eventually went bankrupt.

In 2008, Bernie Madoff Scandal came up as one of the pieces of evidence of leadership failure in the business world. The company, through Bernie Madoff, his accountant, David Frierling and Frank DiPascalli, tricked investors out with about \$64.8 billion through the largest Ponzi scheme in human history. Bernie Madoff, the CEO of Bernard L. Madoff Investment

Securities LLC which as a Wall Street Investment firm, told his sons who in turn reported him to SEC and was arrested the next day. Madoff was sentenced to 150 years imprisonment and \$170 billion restitution. Friehling and DiPascalli were not left out in the jail terms. In 2009, Satyam Scandal is quite alarming. It falsely boosted its revenue by \$1.5 billion. It was an Indian IT services and back-office accounting firm founded and chaired by Ramalinga Raju.

Political Leadership

What follows from here are cases of mismanagement of national treasury of countries by their political leaders.

Nigeria

Chief Bode George was arraigned by EFCC alongside five other suspects (Aminu Dabo, Olusegun Abidoye, Adullahi Tafida, Zanna Maidaribe, and Sule Aliyu) on a 163-count charge (truncated to 68-count charge) that bordered on an alleged misappropriation of Nigeria Ports Authority (NPA) funds to the tune of N85 billion, and inflation of contract costs contrary to Section 22(3) of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act, 2000. Bode George was sent to one and half years imprisonment (<http://dailyreviewonline.com.ng>).

India

As of December 2008, 120 of India's 523 parliament members were accused of crimes, under India's First Information Report procedure wherein anyone can allege another of committing a crime. Many of the biggest scandals since 2010 have

involved very high-level government officials, including Cabinet Ministers and Chief Ministers (Wikipedia, 2014 from

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corruption_in_India). Thus, the question of political corruption is not limited to some countries; it seems to cut across the countries in the world.

The United States of America

Over the past forty years, power, money and greed have corrupted our elected government officials at every level. What is most alarming is that the blatant corruption running rampant in Washington is actually being tolerated by the American people. Unfortunately, members of both parties act as if their jobs are nothing more than a big political game. They are so focused on insulting the other side and getting their own agendas passed that they forget who they are supposed to be working for: the United States public (Moreland, 2014 from <http://economyincrisis.org/content/political-corruption-on-the-rise>). In addition, Willian J. Jefferson, a Democrat lawmaker is a case in point of political corruption. In August 2005, the FBI seized the sum of \$90,000 in cash from him. He was convicted of 11 counts of bribery and was sentenced to 13 years on November 13, 2009, and his Chief of Staff Brett Pfeffer was served 7 years imprisonment (Friedman, 2014).

Former New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin became the latest American politician to be sent to jail for abuse of power, following in the footsteps of former Detroit Mayor Kwame

Kilpatrick and onetime Illinois Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr. Despite such high-profile convictions, most Americans see political corruption as a problem that plagues the developing world far more than the U.S. The truth is more complex: It's certainly the case that paying bribes is a lot less common in the U.S. than in Nigeria or Bolivia, for example. But when citizens are asked if corruption is prevalent in their country, they're thinking about a lot more than bribes. They are more concerned about whether government and the political system is fair or stacked against them. And on those grounds, there are good reasons to think the difference between the U.S. and developing countries isn't very big at all (Kenny, 2014 from <http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/articles/2014-07-14/corruption-is-perceived-as-greater-where-income-gaps-are-big>). Senator Jim Traficant of the United States was charged and found guilty on 10 felony counts of financial misappropriation and was sentenced to 8 years in jail and expelled from the House in the year 2002 (<http://www.CNN.com>, Law Center, April 12, 2002)

There are cases of political corruption and display of leadership dysfunctional and derailment that litter the pages of newspapers across the world from developing countries to developed countries.

Discussion and Conclusion

Gabriel Marcel posits that "*It has become increasingly evident to me*

that the claim to 'encapsule the universe' in a set of formulas which are more or less rigorously related is absurd (Marcel cited in Languilli, 1971: 334). As noted by Omoregbe (1999), Marcel argues against every attempt to reduce human beings to mere functionaries. Marcel decries the attempt and the practice of depersonalising man by reducing man to a mere functionary accessory in modern civilisation. In his book, *Philosophy and Existence*, Marcel argues that the world in which individual human beings are seen only in terms of their functions is a broken world, a world in which the individual tends to appear to himself and to others as an agglomeration of functions. In a broken world human beings are depersonalised and their human dignity is ignored (Omoregbe, 1999: 76). Derailed leadership, negative leadership or bad leadership depersonalises the followers and relate with them in terms of the functions they perform in the organisation, group or society. Some of the few cases of corporate and political corruption cited above are products of toxic leaders who only use the followers as the means to their own ends.

Just as the existentialists argue, man is a being-with-others thus; his existence is only relevant in the context of others' existence. Man has no moral justification for exploiting others or assuming a magisterial position above his fellow men since his life is only meaningful in relations to theirs. Thus, leadership is a *privilege* accorded to the leaders by the followers both in the corporate

and the political worlds. Leadership as a *relationship* between the leaders and the followers must be understood in terms of symbiotic existence where the followers are not defined as mere functionaries and tools in the hands of the leaders. Policies and strategies must not be used to exploit them given that they confer meaning to leadership on the existentialist ground.

In the same vein, man is a being-in-the-world and must not be treated as mere articles in the world. Sartre holds that man gives meaning to the world and we can, therefore, argue that every institution put in place must be for the interests and benefits of man. All the basic structures of the society must not be inimical to man. The leaders of these basic structures and institutions must, therefore, see themselves as having responsibilities to man – advancing the dignity of the human person and not destroying it.

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Lastly, the questions of man's finitude, thirst for immortality and final death, call for the need to consistently maximise our existence, not in terms of greedy acquisition of material wealth but that of adding value to man's dignity. It was on the basis of this, Unamuno (1954) holds that moral living should derive from our uncertainty of life after death.

The appeal for pragmatic, humanistic, ethical, positive and authentic leadership that promotes the well-being of the followers hangs on these three themes of the existentialist philosophers. Leadership is brought to trial and on the basis of the existentialists' conceptions of man and the existential realities he finds himself, we appeal for leadership that does not depersonalise, dehumanise, disorganise, disorient and destroy man's dignity.

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