



Advance Fee Fraud Letters as Machiavellian/Narcissistic Narratives

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to reveal how advanced fee fraud letters include narratives that unveil a Machiavellian/narcissistic perspective. The paper analyses a sample of one hundred advanced fee fraud letters (or « Nigerian scams »), classified in six (6) categories: lottery scams, humanitarian gifts, abandoned money, business opportunities, deceased estate/last will, gold bars and diamonds. It presents scams as narratives that give us various perceptions about the present era. The paper gives details about some usual technical defects of advanced fee fraud letters. It draws a set of moral principles and values that are explicitly declared by fraudsters. Advanced fee fraud letters are reflecting a Machiavellian/narcissistic approach of human behavior and morality. They are not only attempts to steal victim's money, they are manifesting that fraudsters are using moral principles and values in order to increase their power over their victims.

Keywords: Advance fee fraud, moral principles, Machiavelli, narcissism.

Introduction

Prasad, Kathawala, Bocker and Sprague (1991) said that the number of computer crimes was on the rise and that there was a spreading variety of sophisticated misdeeds: viruses; physical damage or destruction (sabotage); financial deception, fraud and theft; intellectual property fraud and theft, and many other types of misuse, such as blackmail and extortion, theft of computer time, or manipulation of stock prices. Morris-Cotterill (1999, p. 213, 219) suggested that Internet does not create any new evil. Internet would only be a medium that could unveil already unacceptable behaviors in a different way. At least, if we consider the phenomenon of advance free fraud (or "Nigerian letters"), we actually know that at the real beginning, those letters were sent by regular mail or by fax. So, Internet has only facilitated the commission of such frauds. According to Guichard and Pastré (2005, p. 117-120), Internet is considered by criminal networks as an Eldorado, due to the quasi absence of the rule of law. Hackers are often operating in countries where there is no rule of law. But it is not always the case. Advance fee frauds are committed everywhere in the world, in developing and developed countries as well. Broadhurst (2006, p. 415-417) said that the transnational nature of cyber-crime mirrors globalization processes. Financial crimes have international ramifications. Either they need foreign

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collaborators, or they affect victims throughout the entire world. Advance fee fraud is more and more a transnational phenomenon. It implies a group of fraudsters who live and operate in various countries. For instance, the sender of the letter (Italy), the intermediary for further communication (Hong Kong), and the recipient (who actually receives the money: Netherlands) could live in three different countries.

Adomi and Igun (2008) well described the reasons why criminals are using cyberspace to perpetrate their acts in Nigeria. Indeed, most of those motives are still true in other developing countries:

- (1) the easy access to the internet; (2) the anonymity offered by internet; (3) the ability of cyber criminals to get e-mail addresses of individuals from various sources; (4) the belief that breaking the law online is less serious than breaking the law in the physical space; (5) the harsh economic conditions of the people could propel them to commit cyber crimes; (6) the inadequate law enforcement, or the lack of cyber laws (p. 718-719).

Those explanations of cyber-crime are not moral justifications of the phenomenon. An explanation is nothing but a basic link between a given behavior and its conditioning factors. It can never be used to morally justify any kind of conduct.

But organizations have their own responsibility in the way cyber-crimes are occurring in the organizational setting. As said Overhill (2003, p. 166), the degree to which an organization chooses to react to a presumed cyber-intrusion must be determined by the organization's policies and priorities on business continuity balanced against organizational policies and priorities on information security.

According to Broadhurst (2006, p. 412-414), we cannot exert an effective control of cyber-crime without a large cooperation between public and private security agencies - and even between international law enforcement agencies (Tan, 2002, p. 351). What is crucial is the role of communications and IT industries in designing products that could resist to criminal attacks and that could facilitate detection processes. Computer forensics is then a growing field of research and investigation. According to Bassett, Bass and O'Brien (2006, p. 30), specialists are required because of the growing phenomenon of cyber-crime. However, Tan (2002, p. 352) believed that what is more important is consumer education. We should certainly affirm that both kinds of intervention are socially necessary to combat cyber-crime. If people would be more informed about advance fee frauds, they would not become victims of scammers. And if they would no longer be victims available on the net, the crime itself would disappear.

According to Malgwi (2004, p. 147), advance fee fraud is by far the most prevalent crime in Nigeria. This kind of fraud is covered by section 419 of the Nigerian Penal Law (419 scams). Ahmed and Oppenheim (2006, p. 160, 171) studied spam mail and concluded that it is often impossible to identify the country where spam originated. They included in the same category (financial spam) mortgage and credit card offers as well as lottery scams and Nigerian letters. Mortgage and credit cards offers could be quite reliable, while lottery scams and Nigerian letters are fraudulent messages. The authors observed that financial spam was the category in which spam was sent most regularly. However, we are not able to know the proportion of lottery scams and Nigerian letters within the financial scam category. Glickman (2009, p. 463) suggested that advanced fee fraud letters reflected a basic cultural and social disfunctionality and a political and cultural success syndrome implying corruption and political patronage.

In this paper, I will deal with advanced fee fraud letters as narratives. I would like to unveil the Machiavellian/narcissistic perspective scammers seem to adopt.

Content Analysis

Adogame (2009, p. 561) said that many advanced fee fraud letters (those written in English) are characterized by grammatical errors, so that it seem that such messages were probably hurriedly drafted (probably in internet cafés). Zook (2007, p. 68) said that the geographic 419 spam operations are continuously changing and that the geographical strategy generally implies that victims are located in a given country, spammers in another, and finally the money is collected in a third country. 419 scammers come from all over the world. Ultrascan (2008, p. 14) presented the top 10 active resident scammers (in 2007): United States (6200: 1st); Canada (3310: 3rd); United Kingdom (2520: 5th). The top 10 active resident scammers list includes North-American countries (Canada, USA), European countries (Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, and United Kingdom), African countries (Ghana, South Africa) and only one Asian country (China). The victims of advanced fee fraud letters are businesses and individuals as well. The top 10 losses suffered (in 2007) by companies and persons (in millions US) included United States (830; 1st), United Kingdom (580; 2nd), France (235; 6th), and Canada (158; 10th). The top 10 losses list was constituted by North-American countries (Canada, USA), European countries (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom) and Asian countries (Australia, China, Japan).

There are seven general characteristics of advance fee fraud scams: (1) the authoritative position: according to Chang (2008, p. 76), many fraudsters take the identity of an expert, or an advisorial or authoritative position. In that way, they wish that victims will focus their attention on the proposal itself rather than question its validity; (2) the mix of truths and lies: sometimes, fraudsters present true facts (related to existing organizations or to historical facts), but they mix them with fraudulent assertions; (3) the motive for writing to the victim: Chang (2008, p. 77) believed that the more successful fraudulent messages are those in which they present a compelling reason; (4) the need for victims to react very quickly: we could often observe that those "proposals" are presented as "a rare or one-off opportunity that highlights its scarcity", observed Chang (2008, p. 78); (5) the "confidential" nature of the message: sometimes, messages are said to be "very secret and confidential". It is particularly the case when the fraudster takes the identity of a high government official, assumed Viosca, Bergiel and Balsmeier (2004, p. 12); (6) the promise of large sums of money for the victim: Salu (2004, p. 161) said that fraudsters usually promise to give "between 30% and 50% of the money to be transferred"; (7) the international ramification of fraudsters: according to Akinladejo (2007, p. 323), advance fee frauds have international ramifications, with victims and fraudsters from all over the world. Fraudsters operate in complicated cell structures and have a lot of important connections in the world's financial system. Advance fee fraud has been globalized. It actually uses the means of globalization in order to extend its influence.

Scams are Narratives

The advanced fee fraud letters I have analyzed have been sent between January 2005 and January 2010, either to me, or to persons who have put such letters on websites

dealing with Nigerian letters². I would classify them in six categories: (a) Business opportunity (N= 29): without details (9); about business funds (9); about Government funds (11); (b) abandoned money (N=26); (c) deceased estate/last will (N=21); (d) humanitarian gifts (N=9); (e) lottery (N=13); (f) gold bars and diamonds (N=2). I will further analyze the contents and structure of advance fee fraud letters as narratives.

Contents of the Narratives

As to lottery scams, the average amount is 1,083,000\$, while the median is 850,000 \$. Most of the narratives (7/13) gave the Batch/ticket numbers of the winner. In many cases (5/13), selection processes were realized through e-mail addresses. There are two well-known companies that were mentioned in given narratives: Microsoft (twice) and Yahoo (once). One of the characters of the story has a well-known family name: Van Gogh!

As to humanitarian gifts, the average amount was 8 million \$ (median: 7.2 million \$); the proportion that would be given to the victim is 15% (average and median). Narratives referred to different countries, such as Russia, Iran, Israel, Kuwait, and Nigeria. But for the humanitarian gifts themselves, they would have to be given to Bulgaria, Cameroun, Liberia, Mozambique, Algeria and Malaysia. Only one well-known company was mentioned: Chevron-Texaco. Only one former politician was included in a given story: Corazon Aquino, former President of the Philippines. The owner of the Bank Hapoalim (Israel), Mrs Shari Arison, was also included in a scam dealing with humanitarian gifts.

As to abandoned money, the average amount is 18 million \$, while the median is 15 million \$. The proportion that would be given to the victim is between 25% (median) and 39% (average). Nigeria is very often included in such narratives (9/25). Among the other countries mentioned, there are Scotland, Egypt, Benin, Burkina Faso, Jamaica, South Korea, Ivory Coast, Indonesia and Togo. Two well-known politicians were included in some narratives: Yasser Arafat and Saddam Hussein. Moreover, there are two major companies scammers were referring to: Citibank and Chevron/Texaco.

Other scams are focusing on business opportunities. The average amount is 24.3 million \$, while the median is 21 million \$. The proportion of the money that could be given to the victim is between 25% (median) and 28% (average). A lot of African countries are mentioned in those narratives, including Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Liberia. The name of four well-known people is included in given narratives: Robert Mugabe (former President of Zimbabwe), Mwai Kikaki (President of Kenya), Charles Taylor (former President of Liberia), Mikhail Khodorkovsky (former CEO of Ioukos, a large Russian oil company) and Farida Waziri (Head, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission of Nigeria). One well-known company is included in such scams: Nescafé.

Finally, as to deceased estate/last will, the average amount is 34.4 million \$, while the median is 22.5 million \$. The proportion that would be allocated to the victim is between 19% (average) and 20% (median). Two countries were mentioned more than three times: Ivory Coast and Nigeria. Two others were mentioned twice: Sierre Leone and Irak. The name of two well-known politicians was included in some narratives: Jose Eduardo dos Santos (President of Angola) and Charles Taylor (former President of Liberia). A scam focusing on deceased estate was referring to « Chief Vincent Williams, Chairman and CEO of the Sierra Leone national Gold and Mining Corporation ». In advanced fee fraud

² SvbizLaw.com (Silicon Valley Business Law, Law Offices of Thomas Gross); Nigerianletters.com (Scam Letters Archive); FraudGallery.com

letters dealing with deceased estate, fraudsters refer sometimes to well-known national and international organizations, such as the Central Bank of Thailand and the International Monetary Fund.

The Structure of the Narratives

Nigerian scams (or « advance fee fraud letters ») are narratives that give us various perceptions about the present era. Their structure often reveals a will to ground the fraud on historical roots. Four aspects of scams should then be highlighted. Scams could be perceived as « paper beings » (Roland Barthes, 1994). The narrator of the narrative (« who speaks ») is not identical to the person « who writes » the narrative. The author of the narrative (fraudster) cannot be confused with the narrator of the narrative. In other words, the narrator is himself (herself) a character within the narrative. The narrator is part of the imaginary world that is created by the narrative. Here are the four basic components of advance fee fraud letters as narratives.

Firstly, the "symbolic actor" (the sender). The fraudster is creating a new self: either a person whose tragic life could give rise to the victim's compassion (the figure of sadness), or a person whose social status could make the victim more open to the offer (the figure of social status), or even someone who is well-known on the national or international scene (the figure of glamour). Most of the time, the choice of tragic events or individual names has historical roots. Such events or names are thus integral parts of the history of a given society. Its helps to make the victim more comfortable with the offer. Even the countries mentioned in the scams are those that are either related to recent important events or strong symbols of poverty (so that potential victims could feel compassion for these people). On the 28 countries mentioned in the sample, the focus was on Africa, with a much lesser emphasis on Middle East and Southeast Asia. Countries from Eastern Europe, Western Europe and the Caribbean were rarely mentioned in the sample.

Secondly, the argument for writing to the victim. That's the weakest aspect of the scam. Most of the time, the arguments put by fraudsters are unreasonable. Three different paths are used by fraudsters in order to make the victim more comfortable with the offer: (a) the presence of a well-known individual, company, national or international organization that has a very good name (the "white knight") ; (b) the presence of individuals whose corrupt past activities could explain the money involved in the scam (the "ugly actor"); (c) the presence of an unknown actor, someone who is probably unknown by the victim (the "unknown actor"). For instance, the Minister of Finance of Nigeria. In many cases, the names are not the right ones.

Thirdly, the offer itself. It could largely vary from scam to scam: business opportunity, deceased estate/last will, lottery, abandoned money. The structure of the offer will vary according to the type of scams.

Fourthly, the trap. Here, some fraudsters are more aggressive than others. Some ask for the victim's bank account numbers, while others are more subtle and refer to the driver's license numbers. Indeed, the various kinds of scammers do not have the same strategy. Some are searching for results in the very short term, while others try to "get the fish" in the long-run.

The potential victim should take attention to some usual technical defects of advanced fee fraud letters: (1) typographical and grammatical errors ; (2) the various e-mail addresses: for instance, a scam talked about a lottery which is held in the Netherlands, while the e-mail address of the sender (Mrs. Einke De Vries) referred to Argentina. Another scam for a

lottery that is held in the Netherlands includes an e-mail address coming for a drugstore which is located somewhere in Italy. A business opportunity scam could refer to the "Halifax Bank of Scotland" (with a mail address in UK), while the victim should respond through an e-mail address that is located in Hong Kong; (3) the unreasonable elements of the story: if you do not have bought a lottery ticket, you cannot be a winner; (4) the phone numbers given in some scams often did not refer to the same country than the country declared by the fraudster; (5) in some scams, the last name of the sender is put before the first name (as it is often the case in Asian countries), while the sender has a common English name.

Those four basic characteristics of advance fee fraud letters unveil the structure of fraudsters' narratives. They also reveal to what extent fraudsters use their imagination in order to set up the best conditions to get « collaborative victims ». Advance fee fraud letters are communicational activities that distort reality and history. The authors of the narratives are lying and manipulating their victims. Advance fee fraud letters are basically narratives that are full of « bad faith » (Sartre, 1943), insofar as the authors of the narratives are using a false identity in order to get their victims' money.

A Machiavellian/Psychoanalytical Approach of Advanced Fee Fraud Letters

Nigerian scams (or « advance fee fraud letters ») usually express a deep concern for good human relations and often reveal "moral principles and values" which are declared by the sender (the fraudster). Such principles and values tend to be socially acceptable. Ricoeur (1983, p. 125) said that imitating action means fore-understanding human action and its symbols and temporality. In any kind of narratives, human action is imitated and reproduced within the story itself. But in doing so, said Ricoeur (1983), we are projecting a fore-understanding (fore-critical understanding) of human action. Indeed, advance fee frauds imply some narratives that imitate human (historical) actions, while conveying a fore-understanding of human action and its contemporaneous symbols. This (uncritical) fore-understanding of human action and of its symbols (sometimes drawn from historical events) is constituted by some "moral principles and values". Such principles and values are used in order to get the victim's consent.

Here are some good examples of such principles dealing with good human relations or moral issues:

Good Human Relations

Three elements are often integrated in advance fee fraud letters. Their aim is to facilitate good human relations with the potential victims: (1) the prestige of the sender : "Honourable Minister of Finance, Federal Republic of Nigeria"; "Dr."; "Rev."; "Engineer", "Diplomatic General Officer". Very often, fraudsters try to make a powerful impression on the victim's imagination: "I am Prince Fayad W. Bolkiah, the eldest son of Prince Jefri Bolkiah, former Finance Minister of Brunei, the tiny oil rich sultanate on the northern coast of the island of Borneo in eastern Asia. I will save your time by not amplifying my extended royal family history, which has already been disseminated by the international media during the controversial dispute that erupted between my father and his step brother, the sultan of Brunei, Sheik Muda Hassanl Bolkiah"; (2) an appeal to good human relations, as based on mutual trust: "Though I have not met with you, I believe one has to risk confidence to someone to succeed sometimes in life"; (3) an appeal to the prestige of the victim: "I got your contact information from a business directory in

Johannesburg Chambers of Commerce and Industry". The dialectics between the sender's renowned personality aspect and the victim's prestige is used to establish good human relations with the potential victims. This stage is particularly important. It must be successful if the fraudster wants to go ahead with the next steps of his fraud stratagem.

Moral Principles and Values

The next four elements are emphasizing the necessity to get rid of some objections the potential victims could have in mind : (1) a strong criticism of Government: *"I personally don't belong to such school of thought that proposes that such fortune be given to the government because it is cheating and is possible that the top government officials for their own selfish interest could divert the fortune"*; (2) the fear to be under police supervision: The following letter was supposedly written by Mr. Robert S. Mueller, FBI Director: *"This is officially inform you that it has come to our notice and we have thoroughly investigated by the help of our Intelligence Monitoring Network System that you are having a Legal Transaction with one Rev. John Irwin of the Federal Ministry of Finance, Nigeria. During our Investigation, it came to our notice that the reason why you have not received your payment is because you have not fulfill your Financial Obligation giving to you in respect of your Contract /Inheritance Payment"*; (3) an appeal to the victim's compassion : *"Mr. Haffez Al Sadique died as a result of torture in the hand of Saddam Hussein during one of his trips in his country Irak"*; *"The lives and future of my family depends on this fund as such. I will be grateful if you can assist us"*; *"I requested to my boss for an increase in salary. He was so upset that he nearly sacked me despite my ten years of dedicated service. However, he succeeded in giving me an indefinite suspension. Within my moments of suspension, I was so desesperate..."*; *"I am Mrs Suha Arafat, the wife of Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader who died recently in Paris. Since his death and even prior to the announcement, I have been thrown into a state of antagonism, confusion, humiliation, frustration and hopelessness by the present leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the new Prime Minister. I have even been subjected to physical and psychological torture"*; *"I'm in a hospital in Russia where I have been undergoing treatment for esophageal cancer. I have since lost my ability to talk and my doctors have told me that I have only a few weeks to live. It is my last wish to see this money distributed to charity organizations and NGO anywhere in the World in helping human race"*. In another scam, the fraudster seem to be orphan (young adult) and would like to become the "new daughter" of the victim (this scam was also sent to a Canadian website called "Wish Canada Internship Working Holidays Recruitment"); (4) an appeal to the victim's religious beliefs: In that case, advanced fee fraud letters are conveying symbolic thought, insofar as they are characterized by a twofold intentionality, as said Ricoeur (1962, p. 194): both the literal intentionality (implying the triumph of conventional truth over the natural sign itself) and a spiritual intentionality aiming at a given human situation in face of the sacredness. Gadamer (1976) said that a symbol is making present what is neither self-evident, nor actualized. Symbols replace reality that could not be directly apprehended. However, added Gadamer (1976), symbols do not explain the basic nature of their objects. That's why we must know them and try to deepen our understanding of the reality they are representing. The religious terms used in advanced fee fraud letters generally come from monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Look at this example drawn from a scam: *"My Dear Brother in Islam....Thanks for your cooperation, May Almighty Allah Guide us all Alright"*. The following example is much more explicit about the theological basis of the fraudster' intent and the extent to which a symbolic thought is involved in the core of the message:

"It is by the grace of God that I received Christ, having known the truth; I had no choice than to do what is lawful and just in the sight of God for eternal life and in the sight of man for witness of God & His Mercies and glory upon my life... I want a person that is God-fearing who will use this money to fund churches, orphanages and widows propagating the word of God and to ensure that the house of God is maintained. The Bible made us to understand that blessed is the hand that giveth. I took this decision because I don't have any child that will inherit this money and my husband's relatives are not Christians and I don't want my husband's hard earned money to be misused by unbelievers. I don't want a situation where this money will be used in an ungodly manner. Hence the reason for taking this bold decision. I am not afraid of death since I know where I am going to. I know that I am going to be in the blossom of the Lord. Exodus 14, vs 14 says that the Lord will fight my case and I shall hold my peace".

The moral principles and values we could find out in advance fee fraud letters are presented in order to favour an "ethical climate of mutual understanding" between the sender (fraudster) and the potential victims. The creation of such an ethical climate of free communication between the sender and the potential victims is a decisive factor. Any advance fee fraud letter will be useless if it cannot elaborate a narrative that does not convey or artificially create such an ethical climate of understanding and communication.

The Machiavellian contents

Nigerian scams (or « advance fee fraud letters ») include messages that are basically false and deceptive. They manifest a Machiavellian approach of the victim: using everything that could help to get the victim's money. The end justifies the means, said Machiavelli. Of course, Machiavelli's philosophy was elaborated in order to define the lessons any Sovereign should remind if he wants to safeguard his powerful influence on the people. A scammer cannot be considered as "Sovereign". However, we suggest that scammer have integrated Machiavellian worldview. Indeed, the basic Machiavellian principle ("the end justifies the means") implies the following specific components : (1) using moral principles for safeguarding one's power: Machiavelli (1980, p. 155-192) believed that a sovereign could use moral principles or put an emphasis on good human relations with his subjects (citizens) in order to safeguard his power over them. Scammers are embracing the same philosophy. That's why we find out "moral principles and values" in their scams. Scammers use moral principles and values in order to manipulate and deceive their victims. Such principles and values are either culturally induced, or socially grounded, or even religiously defined. Morality is then only a tool to maximize their profit. Fraudsters are using moral principles and values in order to increase their power over their victims. In that way, we could say that scammers are enhancing a Machiavellian way of life. Using moral principles and values as a tool of deception is indeed revealing how scammers seem to adopt a Machiavellian worldview. Machiavelli said that in some situations, conforming ourselves to virtues would be disastrous, while acting in according with some vices will provide us security and wellbeing (1980, p. 156). He thus adopted both a consequentialist approach and a relativistic perspective. For instance, the Sovereign should use his own faith in order to get the admiration of the people, said Machiavelli. In other situations, he should not use prayers or any religious belief because it would not be productive to do so. Machiavelli was thus a consequentialistic philosopher, although (unlike other consequentialist ethical theories) the principle of moral action is itself dependent on circumstances (a pure ethical relativism); (2) not being hatred by people: according to Machiavelli, the Sovereign should avoid to be hatred. Although he could not be admired

and loved by most of the people, what is most important is not to be the object of their hatred.

A Sovereign should never be perceived by his people as someone who is disgusting or someone who could never be loved by anyone (1980, p. 162-163, 172). Scammers tend to attract victim's compassion. In that way, they search for a positive perception of what they seem to be. Moreover, Machiavelli insisted on the fact that the Sovereign should seem to have some qualities, whether it is his reliability, his humanitarian feelings, his firm respect of the rule of law, his religious beliefs (1980, p. 166). That's precisely the kind of messages that scammers would like to convey in their Nigerian letters; (3) the primacy of "what-seems-to-be": Machiavelli believed that in most of the cases, human judgment is rooted in the appearance (what someone seems to be rather than what he (she) is (Machiavelli, 1980, p. 167). Scammers are focusing their fraud stratagem on the principle of appearance; (4) the importance of safeguarding secrecy: according to Machiavelli, the Sovereign is continuously acting in secret. This is precisely the way scammers are undertaking their criminal actions. Those four Machiavellian principles are not exhaustive. Indeed, Machiavelli's political philosophy implies many other important aspects. But when we are looking at the attitude of scammers as it is translated in their advance fee fraud letters, it is striking to observe that they seem to adopt a Machiavellian worldview.

The Psychoanalytic Interpretation: Narcissism

In his *Metamorphosis*, Ovid (43 B.C- 17) describes the story of Narcissus. Ovid has found out the main psychological laws behind narcissistic pathological personality. Firstly, Ovid made clear that Narcissus will live a long life "if he does not discover himself". It means that when Narcissus will be aware of his distorted perception of his self, he will tend to destroy it, and thus to adopt self-destructive behaviors. Secondly, when Narcissus saw his face in the water, what he loved was a bodiless dream. Seeing the beauty of his face, Narcissus felt a strong desire for himself. Thirdly, Narcissus put his arms in the water, but was unable to seize what he saw. It means that he has no direct access to his ultimate beauty. Narcissus did not understand that what he saw is nothing but the shadow of reflected form. Narcissus believed he is the reflected form itself. He was not deceived by his own image. Fourthly, Narcissus felt in love with himself. He cannot tolerate not to see his ultimate beauty. He always wanted to see the beauty of his face. His self-image then became his ultimate concern.

According to Lasch (1981, p. 69, 77), narcissism seems to be the best way to make our anxieties less suffering. The modern life implies such a new appearance of narcissism. It has very deep implications. As said Lasch, in spite of his deep pain, Narcissus owns many traits that could insure his success within bureaucratic institutions: manipulating personal relationships, discouraging the development of deep personal connections between people, providing an inner feeling of security and self-esteem. Narcissism is not purely an absolute self-love. It is rather the impossibility for oneself to get in touch with his or her own self. It seems paradoxical that the narcissistic personality has an idealized view of his (her) self, while being unable to get in touch with his (her) true self. But what is idealized is only part of the whole self: it is considered as if it was the whole self. The reality is quite different. The other components of the self are so disgusting for the narcissistic personality that the person cannot tolerate to be confronted to them. The feeling of inferiority is so strong that narcissistic personalities develop an idealized view of their self in order to repress the awareness of their real ("disgusting") self.

Kernberg (1979, p. 187) said that narcissistic personalities are focusing on greed, exploitativeness and the desperate need to any kind of social and emotional involvement. Kernberg (1980, p. 25) gave a more precise list of psychological components of a narcissistic personality: (1) a feeling of greatness; (2) an extreme egocentrism (an integrated grandiose self); (3) an absence of consideration or empathy for others' situation; (4) a strong feeling of envy towards those who have things that the narcissistic person does not own, or just because others seem to be happy in their daily life; (5) the incapacity to understand others' complex emotions; (6) the capacity of not taking others' feeling of sadness and mourning into account; (7) sometimes, the strong and conscious feeling of insecurity and inferiority which could alternate with feelings of greatness and fantasies of omnipotence. Freud (1986, p. 42) said that one part of self-regard is the residue of infantile (normal) narcissism, while another part arises out of the omnipotence which is corroborated by the fulfillment of the ego ideal.

As said Adler (2000), a feeling of superiority is indeed reflecting deep feeling of inferiority. The only way to avoid despair (about himself or herself) is to have an idealized (reductionist) view on his (her) self. The only way narcissistic personalities could tolerate the existence of their self is to have an idealized form of self. Such an attitude could have very disastrous consequences. According to Adler (2000, p. 69), the desire for superiority goes hand in hand with a feeling of inferiority. Our existential struggles mirror such a desire for superiority. However, when there is a feeling of self-discrediting, such existential struggles are blocked. There is a "complex of inferiority" when the feeling of inferiority is manifesting permanent effects in one's life (Adler, 1950, p. 85). Adler (1964) explained that narcissism occurs when a person has excluded social relationships or when he has never focused on them. In that situation, nothing is left for experience, except the way the person is experiencing his own personality. The narcissistic personality is solving his life problems focusing on his personal interests. Such permanent exclusion of others implies a deep lack of social interests. Adler added that narcissism implies of feeling of weakness which originated from a feeling of inferiority.

Aubert (2009, p. 168) said that this feeling of inferiority induces self-destructive behaviors. Indeed, narcissistic personalities could find extremely difficult to have relationships with others. If their friend, lover or colleague idealizes their self, there will be no problem. However, when narcissistic personalities face others' different views or opinions, they will feel them as threatening their own inner security. When they do not share the same views or opinions, narcissistic personalities will perceive others' views or opinions as a direct attack to their self. Others will become enemies to destroy in order to safeguard the integrity of their idealized self. Because narcissistic personalities often exert some kind of power (formal or implicit) within a given organization, they will use any means to get rid of such enemies. They will try to annihilate those who have threatened their inner security. And unfortunately, because of their talent to manipulate people, they will often reach their destructive and cruel purpose.

But others can never deepen their relationships with narcissistic personalities. If they try to do it, they will face an iron wall. Narcissistic personalities confuse admiration with love. But they are unable to face any kind of relationships that could imply any other attitude than admiration of their self. Narcissistic personalities will try to integrate good values or qualities they have observed in others' attitude. They are not full of jealousy. Rather, insofar as they have an idealized view of their self, they simply cannot tolerate that others have some good values or qualities they would not own. But when they are integrating

others' qualities or values within their self, they are indeed using them in order to improve the way they exert power over others. Narcissistic personalities are power-focused personalities. Power seems to give them concrete evidence that their idealized self is their real self. This is precisely the connection point with Machiavellian thought. Lasch (1981, p. 78) said that Narcissus will conform himself (herself) to social norms since he (she) fears to be punished in case of transgression. But he (she) sees himself (herself) as being basically dishonest. Narcissistic personalities believe that if others are honest, it is only because of external pressures, particularly the fear to be punished. If such fear would disappear, we could observe the real (dishonest) personality of people. In other words, narcissistic personalities seem not to be concerned with others' situation. They only focus their attention on their personal concerns, their self (their indifference towards others, even towards those who love them), so that they fall in a deep state of existential loneliness. Even those who love them are used as means to improve the idealized view of their self. Rather than improving or enhancing their self, such an attitude tends to devalue it. Narcissistic personalities tend to destroy the self they have idealized. Even if they use cruelty, manipulation and power relationships in their daily life, they will not be able to make disappear their deep feeling of inferiority. Their focus on the power they could exert over others is a way to maintain an illusion about their real self. Narcissistic personalities cannot tolerate to be united with another than the I. The I is their unique reality. Any other reality must be destroyed in order to make possible for the I to have permanent reign, or to remain an eternal reality.

The whole structure of advance fee fraud letters generally implies that the sender's false ego is deified or considered as an absolute reality, or equivalent to historical figures of the twentieth century. Narcissistic aspects of such letters could be found out in the following components: (1) the prestige of the sender: his job position, or any other family or business life connections; (2) the wonderful or unusual character of the events in which the sender was involved: such events, as they are explained in details, aim to emphasize the influential aspect of sender's personality; (3) the great soul of the sender: the whole narrative usually put the emphasis on the sender's generosity, so that the receiver should understand that the sender has a really great soul. That's another way to put light on the sender's grandiose soul. Every component of the advanced fee fraud letter is making clear that the sender's ego is extraordinary, so that the receiver will feel blessed to have received that letter. Of course, we cannot know if actually those senders have narcissistic personalities. We can only observe that the way they have built their letters is reflecting a clear focus on their grandiose self. It could only be a technical characteristic of such letters. But it could also reveal more psychological traits of the senders (fraudsters). Future research about fraudsters using advance fee fraud letters could help to identify to what extent they have narcissistic personalities. However, what is striking to observe is the fact that advance fee fraud letters are full of signs that the sender magnified his own ego. Do fraudsters feel a deep complex of inferiority characterizing narcissistic personalities? Of course, in most of the cases, we do not know if it is the reality. On the other hand, if we look at their messages, they reflect a narcissistic state of mind. The basic question is then the following: Do advance fee fraud letters imply to develop narcissistic messages? Or, do they mirror a psychological trend of fraudsters who write such letters? In other words, narcissistic contents of advance free fraud letters could be either the effect, or the cause of the fraud stratagem.

Conclusion

Regulating the phenomenon of advance fee fraud is not an easy task. Scammers have worldwide ramifications, so that it is often impossible to find them. Tan (2002, p. 347) said that cyber-criminals are often difficult to identify since they committed their crimes at the very long distance from their victims. Sometimes, the country in which they live and/or have their criminal activities does not have strong criminal laws against cyber-criminality. Criminals have the advantage not to feel subjected to the rule of law. Criminal laws play their role "after the fact". In other words, criminals have created some new tricks, and laws are adopted or modified in order to prohibit such behaviors. It could take one or two years, and even much more, for enacting or modifying such new criminal laws. In the meantime, fraudsters will have created new tricks that are not covered by existing laws. However, international cooperation between regulatory agencies and police would help to reduce the intensity of such fraud. But it is not a panacea. In the long-run, citizens must be more aware of fraudsters' tricks and traps so that they will delete all Nigerian scams they will receive. Educating people is quite efficient in the long term.

In the next years, advanced fee fraud letters will certainly continue to be sent through e-mail. Awareness-raising activities among "vulnerable social groups" (such as old people) could help to reduce the damages. People should better know the tricks and main defects of advanced fee fraud letters, so that they will not respond to such letters. Even governments should help their citizens to better know fraudsters' traps. Making people more aware of the phenomenon of advance fee fraud letters would help to prevent the expansion of such fraud. In the long-run, awareness-raising activities remain the basic solutions to the growing importance of advance fee fraud letters.

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