

Confucius in Uganda: The Ethical Minister of State

by Chloe Schwenke, Ph.D.

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Introduction

In February of 2006, Kenya's Finance Minister David Mwiraria resigned amidst allegations linking him to a multi-million dollar corruption scandal¹. Hardly a political lightweight, Mwiraria had personally overseen the management of East Africa's largest economy for the last three years, and is a close friend of Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki.

Although he is the first official to step down over revelations about the "Anglo Leasing" scam in which contracts went to a phantom firm, Mwiraria is not alone. He is one of four senior figures accused by Kenya's former anti-corruption chief John Githongo. Githongo also named Kenyan Vice-President Moody Awori², Energy Minister Kiraitu Murungi, and the Transport Minister Chris Murungaru. President Kibaki has already dismissed Transport Minister Murungaru, and Energy Minister Kiraitu Murungi followed Mwiraria's example and also recently resigned.

An initial review of the documentary evidence provided by Githongo provides a compellingly persuasive argument that these four individuals, along with various junior officials, were directly involved in fraudulent tenders worth nearly US\$200 million. The formerly respected Finance Minister, credited by many Kenyans with leading a turnaround in the economy after decades of decline, now faces the shameful necessity of preparing his legal defense against accusations that he knew about some

¹ The alleged fraud involved the procurement of a police forensic laboratory and a passport equipment system to supply hi-tech passports.

² The Public Accounts Committee of the Kenyan parliament has made 16 recommendations, the first of which says that people involved in the Anglo Leasing scandal should be prosecuted. The report claimed that Vice President Awori's statement to the committee was "misleading". The vice-president previously said that as a government minister, he had nothing to do with "technical matters" like contracts that he claimed were the responsibility of senior civil servants. Instead, he has blamed his staff for researching and drafting his misleading parliamentary speech.

of these fraudulent contracts and participated in a cover-up. If these allegations are found to be true, what will this mean to Kenya?

In terms of conclusive analysis, proving corruption allegations against a few senior ministers or even the Kenyan vice president – while cause for profound concern – would still not be an adequate indicator of the overall state of democratic values or governance aspirations in Kenya. It would, however, raise interesting and important questions – questions also relevant to neighboring Uganda. For example, do the current rules of the political game, characterized by entrenched patronage systems and the popular glorification of wealth and power – no matter how acquired – act to “select out” only those persons who are willing to play by these rough rules, ignoring moral principles to instead brazenly pursue self-interest? Is the political culture of East Africa simply too hostile and undeveloped to provide political “space” for senior level leaders who aspire to ethical performance? Put another way; is the goal of transformational leadership at ministerial level in East Africa a fool’s hope, or a realistic and necessary target?³

While the ministerial misdeeds in Kenya are prominently displayed for the world to see, Uganda also has its own deep questions regarding the ethics of its own senior ministers, and these concerns have an impact on the future for good governance and even state stability in Uganda⁴. It is not the purpose of this paper to pursue these allegations in any detail, but for those conversant with public affairs in Uganda, the mere mention of the Global Fund will call to mind the Ugandan ministers in question⁵. Kenya does not bear its shame alone.

³ Of course many other important questions also arise in this context. While not within the scope of this paper to address, one may question whether there exists in Uganda or Kenya a base of popular demand for ethical ministerial leadership. Alternatively, one may also consider the level of cynicism and the low expectations among the electorate for public-spirited, ethical leadership among ministers. Similarly, there are important concerns about the corruption of the social values and culture of these two countries, such that immoral but materially successful, powerful “big men” have become exemplars of popular aspiration – do Uganda and Kenya get the quality of ministers that they ask for?

⁴ Uganda has recently been placed in the 21st position of “fragile states”, one of the worst rankings of any African state and the worst among the East African states. See The Fund for Peace (2006). The Failed States Index. *Foreign Policy*. **May - June 2006**: 50 - 59.

⁵ These ministers, including Uganda’s Minister of Health, Jim Muhwezi and State Minister of Health Mike Mukula were the subject of Justice Ogoola’s recent commission of inquiry that investigated the causes that led to the suspension of funding worth millions of dollars by the Global Fund for AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis. The commission quizzed 130 Ugandan government officials and members of civil society over allegations of financial mismanagement and nepotism.

The unethical performance of ministers extends to more than being caught in the act of pilfering the treasury. Arguably there is an even more compelling ethical standard that ministerial performance should be measured against. The state of affairs in Uganda is dramatically better than two decades ago, yet when assessing the limited progress made to date in alleviating the deaths, suffering, and misery of those in extreme poverty, ending the war in the north, or affording genuine opportunities for Ugandans to join in the development of this country, many Ugandans may decide that the standards of performance and achievement have been unacceptably slow and uneven. “Unacceptable” may be too soft of a judgment, and perhaps many Ugandans will decide that the level of progress made to date in these critical areas is morally deficient, or even simply immoral. While it is common for Ugandans to place greatest responsibility for leadership on the president, the role of the ministers is not to be underestimated. Ministers are the political leaders of the key institutions that have been created to lead development, provide essential services, protect the rule of law, sustain economic health, connect Uganda to the regional and international community, and defend the rights and freedoms of all Ugandans. Certainly ministers must be effective managers, but they also need to be effective, inspirational, and visionary leaders. There are important differences between management and leadership, and between leadership and rule, as will be discussed later in this paper.

The economic, social, and moral demands for ethical ministerial leadership in Uganda are strikingly clear. If we accept that the demands of human development, well being, and enjoyment of basic human rights dictate that the standards of governance and the quality of services of Uganda’s ministries must improve, what can be done to find or foster the requisite leadership to champion such necessary changes? Where should Ugandans look for public-spirited governance, and who is best positioned to advocate for such a change in leadership style within the ministries? How can the accountability of ministers be improved, so that Ugandans can secure the kind of senior leadership able to achieve the results that Ugandans deserve? And, particularly important at this time of cabinet reshuffling, what responsibility does President Museveni have in selecting his ministers, and in setting their terms of performance?

The standard of leadership that is being described tangentially through the many questions above is that of *transformational* leadership. This paper explores that concept of leadership within the realities of Uganda, with a particular focus on leadership at the ministerial level, and arrives at a sobering but still hopeful conclusion: those Ugandans who address the good governance agenda by assigning greatest priority to the fostering of transformational leadership at the level of ministers – just one step below the apex of national leadership – are likely to be frustrated. A rapid change in the well-entrenched senior leadership patterns, and the achievement of those social changes that are necessary to tackle the major development and service delivery problems that confront Uganda, are certainly worthy of pursuit, but the status quo will not easily be changed. This doesn't mean that the model of the ethical minister of state has no relevance in Uganda, only that this ideal should be approached pragmatically. Reform is both possible and necessary, but it will take time and determination.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this paper directs the enquiry of leadership away from the consideration of leadership as a means – moral or otherwise – to ask the framing question: *leadership for what?* Where are we being led, and where do we want to be led? While the ideal of the ethical, peaceable society remains the most important goal of any civilized society, this important objective remains obscure, poorly discussed, and ill-defined in Uganda. Until such time as the people of Uganda demand – loudly and persistently – for an ethical standard of leadership to drive Uganda to achieve morally valuable goals, it is absurd to expect any Ugandan minister to pursue such an agenda. But what type of leadership would be needed for ministers to become as morally effective as they are politically successful? The answer may lie in part with the concept of the transformational leader.

Transformational and Transactional Leadership

To begin, it is necessary briefly to attend to terminology, by describing the generally accepted moral and amoral attributes of an authentic transformational leader, and to compare this form of leadership with transactional leadership.

The moral character of leadership is a common theme in the literature on leadership. As noted by B.M. Bass and Paul Steidlmeier, and others before them,

there appears to be a consensus that the ethics of effective and authentic moral leadership depend upon three key attributes: 1) the moral character of the leader, 2) the ethical values that characterize the leader's vision and program (as accepted or rejected by the electorate), and 3) the moral qualities of the processes of social ethical choice and action that leaders and followers collectively engage in. This form of leadership is inextricably tied to moral values; authentic transformational leadership is characterized by its high moral and ethical standards.(Steidlmeier 1998)

According to Bass, Steidlmeier, and Avolio, the components of transformational leadership are four: charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration:

If the leadership is transformational, its charisma or idealized influence is envisioning, confident, and sets high standards for emulation. Its inspirational motivation provides followers with challenges and meaning for engaging in shared goals and undertakings. Its intellectual stimulation helps followers to question assumptions and to generate more creative solutions to problems. Its individualized consideration treats each follower as an individual and provides coaching, mentoring and growth opportunities.(Steidlmeier 1998)

Transformational leadership is commonly compared to the more common model of the transactional leaders, who typically use promises, praise, rewards – as well as threats, negative criticism, fear, and disciplinary actions – to achieve the desired actions and behavior from their followers. David Boje refers to these as modal values, or values of the means, contrasted to transformational leadership's focus on the end-values such as liberty, equality, justice, compassion, and human flourishing. (Boje 2000)

Effective leadership is usually a blend of both transactional and transformational leadership, and the character and legitimacy of both aspects of leadership have deep roots in moral theory and ethics. Transactional leadership is more closely associated with the leader's pursuit of self-interest, as transactional leaders typically view followers and constituents as means to their own ends, yet the legitimacy of this form of leadership still depends on honesty, respecting promises, providing genuine incentives, exercising fairness in the distribution of rewards and benefits, and affording to others the same degree of opportunities and freedoms that one grants to oneself.(Steidlmeier 1998) Transformational leadership, to the contrary,

is morally grounded in the leader respecting each follower or constituent as an end in himself or herself, and not as a means to the leader's ends. While the transformational leader has a strong sense of self and a vision that she wishes to pursue, that sense of self is situated in the context of community, family and friends – and accepts the possibility that the welfare of others or of the whole community is generally more important than the welfare of the leader herself. The transformational leader appeals to choice and not to coercion; followers are invited and inspired to embrace ideals with commitment, to pursue creative solutions, and to exercise moral discretion. Transformational leadership seeks to generate change within the hearts and minds of followers, while transactional leadership concentrates on managing results, no matter how these results are achieved.

Bass and Steidlmeier, together with Carey, Solomon, and Hollander, warn against the possibility of the pseudotransformational leader, and differentiate between moral and immoral transactional leadership:

To bring about change, authentic transformational leadership fosters the modal values of honesty, loyalty and fairness, and the end values of justice, equality, and human rights. But pseudotransformational leadership endorses perverse modal values such as favoritism, victimization, and special interests and end values such as racial superiority, submission, and Social Darwinism. It can invent fictitious obstacles, imaginary enemies and visions that are chimeras. Likewise, transactional leadership is moral when truth is told, promises are kept, negotiations are fair and choices are free. It is immoral when information harmful to them is deliberately concealed from associates, when bribes are proffered, when nepotism is practiced, and when authority is abused. (Steidlmeier 1998)

The “Virtuous Leader” Ideal

Corruption is a word that commands attention, but integrity is the often-neglected “other side” to that coin. We are frequently pointed to examples of corrupt behavior; the stereotypical “ethically challenged” minister of state is all too familiar. We read about such persons regularly in the newspapers (yet we seldom see them actually brought to account in the courts!). However, the previously mentioned other side of that coin – integrity and virtue – demands a closer look. The virtuous minister of state is a well-established stereotype in ethics, arising prominently first out of Confucian thought. This model is explored in more detail below, but other noteworthy models of the virtuous, transformational, leader of integrity also exist. They include

Plato's "*philosopher king*", the wise *moral sage*, the humble *populist* (a self-effacing exemplar of virtue who is raised by popular demand to leadership, e.g. Nelson Mandela), or the *wise and benevolent ruler*.

It may seem at first curious in the largely Christian and Moslem country of Uganda to introduce wisdom derived from Confucianism, which originated in China over 1,500 years ago. Yet Confucianism is less a religion (and certainly not a competing religion to those in Uganda) than a code of ethical behavior for all humans everywhere⁶. Of particular relevance to this paper, the teachings of Confucius were very much focused on the qualities of ethical leadership and the problems of good governance:

The Ruler himself should be virtuous, just, honest and dutiful. A virtuous ruler is like the Pole-star which, by keeping its place, makes all other stars to evolve round it. As is the Ruler, so will be the subjects. (Confucius 2004)

The essence of the teachings of this ancient sage may be summed up in one word – *Jen* – roughly equivalent to our concept of social virtue. Confucius placed greatest emphasis on the cultivation of character, purity of heart and goodness of conduct, and he was very interested in the virtues that are essential to the maintenance of peace and social harmony: benevolence, kindness, care, compassion, charity, magnanimity, sincerity, respectfulness, altruism, diligence, and goodness. (Dominguez 2006)

While we commonly hear from economists and others that humankind is essentially greedy and self-centered, or from religious people that humankind is essentially sinful, Confucius offered a more positive view of human nature. According to Confucius, humans are fundamentally good, and are naturally inclined towards the pursuit of goodness. Confucius argued that the closest we can come to achieving the perfect expression of our innate goodness is demonstrated by those we call sages or saints, but he believed that every person should attempt to reach for this ideal by leading a virtuous life, by possessing a noble character, and by doing his or

⁶ Confucianism has no church, no clergy, and no theology on the worship of God or gods, or life after death. It was founded in China by Kung-futze, "master Kung", known as Confucius (551-479 BC).

her duty unselfishly, honestly, and with sincerity. To Confucius, the princely person pursues and maintains his or her virtue, while the inferior person hungers only after material comforts. The princely person is just, while the inferior person expects rewards and favors. The princely person is dignified, noble, magnanimous, yet humble, while the inferior person is mean, proud, crooked, and arrogant.

Confucius had something specifically to say about the qualities of a minister of state, which remains relevant to this day. As stated by Confucius:

Let me have but one minister, plain and sincere, not pretending to other abilities, but with a simple, upright, mind; and possessed of generosity, regarding the talents of others as though he himself possessed them, and, where he finds accomplished and perspicacious men, loving them in his heart more than his mouth expresses, and really showing himself able to bear them and employ them: such a minister will be able to preserve my sons and grandsons and my people, and benefits likewise to the kingdom may well be looked for from him. But if it be his character, when he finds men of ability, to be jealous and hate them; and, when he finds accomplished and perspicacious men, to oppose them and not allow their advancement, showing himself really not able to bear them: such a minister will not be able to protect my sons and grandsons and people; and may he not also be pronounced dangerous to the state?(Confucius 2004)

What Confucius is describing, so very long ago, are the attributes of what we now call a transformational leader, but Uganda's society is not a product of Confucian values. Arguably, Uganda has few if any models of ethical leadership at the ministerial level that align with such noble values, or that indicate this elevated state of moral development, so how is this example relevant to the realities of Uganda? This question raises an even more profound question – why should any Ugandan minister be moral? For that matter, why should anyone? This is a question that both consequentialist and deontological theories wrestle with extensively, yet from the perspective of virtue ethics the question itself is avoided by the premise that it is human nature to want to seek a meaningful life, and that a central method of pursuing this goal is to develop one's character through acquiring an elevated level of moral awareness. Such an ethical sensibility incorporates such virtues as caring about the kind of person we are, and facilitating (or at least not impeding) the efforts of other persons to become the kind of persons that they wish to become. As Christine

McKinnon argues: “The motivation to act in ways which are taken to be ethically admirable arises naturally out of the sensibility.”(McKinnon 1999)

Few Ugandan ministers, of course, are likely to be self-aware moral agents, nor virtuous persons, and such probably is the case in every country. Yet we are interested in the transformative leader as a moral ideal, and how such an ideal could serve to raise public expectations of good governance, and become a common indicator of leadership qualities. We should consider, therefore, what constitutes such an ideal senior leader’s character, starting with being a moral agent. A moral agent, as a morally autonomous person, is generally perceived to be a person who is morally aware – who cares about moral values, exercises critical evaluation in selecting which values and principles to be guided by, chooses moral ends, selects the means by which to pursue such ends, and ultimately holds himself or herself accountable for any actions taken, and for the direct consequences of such intentional actions. Moral agents are moral thinkers; they have progressed in their moral development beyond the stage where all decisions are strictly self-interested.(Cooper 2004)

Bass and Steidlmeier are unequivocal about the moral attributes of an ideal transformative leader. They argue that such a person is notable by her inner moral compass; he or she is morally mature and committed both to the individual moral development and growth of each of his or her followers, as well as to the larger moral good of society. He or she sees and fosters the best in people – not only their good works, but also their character virtues. As Bass and Steidlmeier state: “The heart of the moral enterprise is the development of good character, which is defined by commitment to virtue in all circumstances”. (Steidlmeier 1998)

If the ideal of the transformative leader is framed in the language of virtue, arguably the best approach to explore this ideal further would be to employ virtue ethics. In the past decade, there has been a resurgence of interest in virtue ethics, with important contributions from scholars such as G.E.M. Anscombe, Christine McKinnon, Alasdair C. MacIntyre, Ian Maitland, and Michael Slote, among others. Virtue ethics, with its roots in the ethics of Aristotle, Plato, and the Stoics (and later religiously situated by Thomas Aquinas) once dominated moral philosophy. Up until the time of Thomas Hobbes and Machiavelli, when moral pessimism replaced moral

optimism, the concept of the virtuous person was the primary focus of ethical discourse. Under this ideal, the virtuous person attended to self-interest, but through the exercise of such cardinal virtues as temperance, justice, prudence, and courage, he or she placed the interests of others and of society as a whole as greater moral obligations.

Machiavelli disputed not the existence or influence of virtue, but instead questioned its relevance to the demands of survival in a violent, conflict-ridden world. Hobbes considered virtues, as well as such moral judgments as what is good or bad, as matters of preference, and he placed them at the service of self-interest while arguing that the effacement of self-interest was unnatural. (Pellegrino 1989)

Many other moral thinkers, from Friedrich Nietzsche, Bernard Mandeville, John Locke, David Hume, Lord Shaftesbury, Francis Hutcheson, and Ayn Rand, either dismissed or significantly reinterpreted the role and usefulness of virtues. In some cases virtues were even presented as vices, new weight was given to the moral legitimacy of the pursuit of self-interest over all other interests, and it was suggested that virtue be subordinated into something that brought pleasure or happiness to the moral agent, but served little other purpose. Through such criticism, virtue ethics fell out of the mainstream of modern Western rationalism, yet it remained very much alive in the domain of religious studies. (MacIntyre 1984)

Some moral thinkers did come to the aid of virtue ethics, with Ralph Cudworth, Henry More, Joseph Butler, and Richard Cumberland arguing that virtuous acts were both reasonable and valuable. In the more recent resurgence of interest in virtue ethics, thinking about virtues goes in new directions, often trying to link virtuous character and altruism to psychological or even genetic factors more than to philosophical ones⁷.

Virtue ethics continues to suffer, however, from its inability to define the concept of virtue itself. While giving significantly less weight to the rational

⁷ One of the leading current applications of virtue ethics is as a component of business ethics. With the renewed emphasis upon leadership in both strategic management and business ethics, the ideal of the morally virtuous business leader has assumed prominence, and may offer some insights in the context of political leadership.

application of moral rules, principles, codes, or values, virtue ethics still does not explain the mechanism by which virtue helps us to resolve moral dilemmas.

Pellegrino points out the problem of circularity inherent in the major premise of virtue ethics when he notes that the “right and the good is that which the virtuous person would do, and the virtuous person is one who would do the right and the good”.

(Pellegrino 1989) To break this circularity, either “right and good” must be defined, or we must define what constitutes the “virtuous person”.

Pellegrino raises yet other concerns with virtue ethics:

Further difficulties include the relations of intent to outward behavior. Is good intention a criterion of a virtuous person? How do we determine intention? Can a good intention absolve the agent of responsibility for an act which ends in harm -- a physician telling a patient the truth out of the virtue of honesty, and thereby precipitating a serious depression or even suicide? Few are virtuous all the time. How many lapses move us from the virtuous to the continent, incontinent, or vicious category? How does virtue ethics connect with duty and principle based ethics which give the objectivity virtue ethics seems to lack? (Pellegrino 1989)

These criticisms are persuasive to an extent, and current virtue ethicists are devoting considerable effort to addressing them. While it is not within the scope of this paper to pursue the merits of these arguments further, it is this author’s conviction that the quality of the actions of morally autonomous persons – which includes transformative leaders – is determined in large measure by the character of the person choosing the action. Character also shapes how one perceives and defines a moral problem and how one decides which moral values and principles, as well as amoral facts, are relevant to the prevention or resolution of such problems. Whether a leader is motivated by self-interest or altruism may not affect the value of the outcome of her decision, yet it is an important determinant in the assessment of leadership quality over time. Virtue is an important constitutive element of a good minister of state.

From the perspective of virtue ethics, character matters. Becoming a virtuous person – or a virtuous minister of state – is more than an exercise of selecting certain values and principles, and rejecting others. Good character is a product of excellent moral and intellectual attributes, but there are also many other traits and qualities that lead to the development of virtuous character. Successful moral leadership results from a conscious and disciplined process of building a character of integrity and

virtue, occurring within and for a community. At the end of the day, that character matters to us; we want our ministers – as persons of virtue – consistently and dependably to know what is right and good, and to be able to explain and model this to their employees in their ministries in language and actions that are persuasive and inspirational. We want to be assured that such leaders are doing the right thing for the right reason, that they are timely in their handling of moral problem solving, and that they are accountable to us for what they do.(McKinnon 1999) These qualities apply particularly to ministers who lead the major institutions of governance – and they are instrumental to the results achieved by such ministries.

The Experience of Senior Leadership in East Africa

To many, including some of Africa’s most notable political leaders, the continent is in decline, both developmentally and morally. President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria places the blame for this decline squarely on poor leadership.(Africa News Service 2000) Indeed, leadership in Africa has never been more under scrutiny, and so far, the results are far from heartening – yet the wringing of hands is hardly the place to leave such an examination. As Salim Ahmed Salim, the former OAU Secretary-General stated:

As we move in the new century and Africa faces up to its challenges, it is important that the leadership factor is given due attention. The role of leadership needs to be clearly understood, appropriate modalities of nurturing and appointing dynamic leadership have to be developed, and also critical is the need to foster accountability and transparency in the exercise of the leadership function.(Africa News Service 2002)

It is significant to note that even Salim Salim calls only for “dynamic leadership”, with only a passing reference to the moral attributes of accountability and transparency. This is a far cry from advocacy for the moral ideal of a transformational leader of virtue.

With the notable exception of Nelson Mandela, models of virtuous senior level transformative leadership in Africa are rare. The recent political history of Uganda and Kenya demonstrates the presence and impact of poor – and often immoral – leadership in stark terms, well removed from any sense of moral virtue.

In Eric Masinde Aseka's excellent and comprehensive survey of leadership, *Transformational Leadership in East Africa*, he describes a pervasive sense of alienation of leaders from their followers in Uganda and Kenya, an embedded system of economic plunder of national resources by leadership, and a record of electoral processes resulting in the selection of what he terms "devious political characters", who have frustrated the development of the essential institutions that these countries need to achieve progress. Aseka summarizes his views as follows:

East African leadership, with the exception of Nyerere to some extent, has failed to weave the fabric of civility in its organizational quests. It allowed its ethnicised leadership ambitions, goals and demands of ethnic entitlement and its coercive subjection of other communities to lead to political malpractices. (Aseka 2005)

A closer look reveals unsettling findings, with what Aseka calls an emphasis by leadership on "power over" instead of "power to". The political and social culture became far removed from Aseka's "fabric of civility"; in the words of B.A. Ogot: "Ethnicity was politicized and widespread thuggery, bribery and intimidation became established as part of the social culture". (Ogot 1995) In East Africa the rigging of electoral processes have become the norm, and throughout this region there are numerous examples of multiparty democracy being more about the manipulation of tribal sentiments, and less about offering true choices of differing political and social visions for the future. Despite the presence of charismatic leaders such as Jomo Kenyatta or Julius Nyerere, in East Africa it is the *transactional* model of leadership at the top and at the ministerial level that is the norm. Unlike transactional leadership in more developed countries (which is linked more closely to the exercise of bureaucratic power), the transactional leadership of East Africa maps more closely to Max Weber's traditional authority framework – the domain of the feudal prince. (Boje 2000)

A feudal patronage system is hardly an environment conducive to, or indicative of, the cultivation and flowering of transformative and virtuous leadership, particularly at the top levels of the political power structures.

Evaluating Leadership – Virtues or Values?

In early April of 2006, the World Bank sponsored an important conference in Oxford, England: The World Ethics Forum: Leadership, Ethics and Integrity in Public Life. This event attracted over 250 participants – including presidents, prime ministers, and prominent thinkers – from over 70 countries. More such events will follow, including a large international conference on development ethics (which includes issues of leadership) here at Makerere University, this July⁸. This recent international attention to the moral dimensions – particularly integrity – of senior leadership has stimulated a vibrant international dialogue, and even gone some way towards raising expectations for improved ethical performance of governments. People are differentiating leadership from management, and are defining leadership in the context of the vision-driven development of the human spirit, and the deepening of public morality. Managers do things right, while leaders do the right thing, to borrow from Safty's succinct classification. (Safty 2003)

As previously discussed, it is generally regarded that one of the most notable features of authentic transformative leaders is that such leaders are self-aware, autonomous moral agents, cognizant of their moral choices and intentions, and of their accountability for the consequences of such choices. This moral core to transformative leadership raises an immediate concern – what values and virtues comprise this moral core? To what extent are such values universal or relative? How does such leadership address the tension that exists between conflicting universal and relative values? And what role does virtue play in this mix?

To understand better the leader's motivation to do the right thing, her ability to resolve moral conflicts between competing values, and to unpack the many moral attributes of leadership, the analytical lens of virtue ethics may offer valuable insights. The theoretical challenge that virtue ethics confronts in this context is to create

⁸ The Seventh International Conference on Ethics and International Development, "Accountability, Responsibility, and Integrity in Development: The Ethical Challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa and Beyond" will take place at the Faculty of Arts at Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, from July 19-22, 2006. It is sponsored by the International Development Ethics Association, the Ethics and Public Management Programme at Makerere University, and the Department of Ethics and Integrity of the Office of the President, Uganda. Funding is provided by the World Bank, DFID (UK), the Ford Foundation, Finland, the University of Berger, and Carleton University.

plausible linkages and integration within the concept of the virtuous character between moral values and moral behaviour, between principles and character, between moral awareness and the motivation to behave in a morally admirable (or at least morally permissible) way, and between self-interest and altruism.

The effectiveness of ministerial leadership is arguably linked directly to these values and virtues questions. If ministers are to be judged by their virtuous character, an assessment is needed of their ability to provide consistent and reliable moral guidance, to inspire moral growth in followers, to uphold and internalize core moral values, and to shape public morality first within their ministry, and then beyond. Through such an assessment, ministers are challenged to find ways within their portfolios and responsibilities to bridge between competing interests (and legitimate self-interest) to craft a persuasive and credible common ground where such competing interests find their greatest convergence and harmony.

Perhaps the most significant role that virtue plays in the ethics of ministerial leadership is to elevate the concept that the virtuous minister to a higher standard than normally understood – indeed, to an ideal that has the power to inspire and guide. The genuine minister of virtuous character doesn't merely subscribe to ethical principles and moral values, or only apply such values to ethical decision-making; instead, the ideal virtuous minister internalizes and embodies these values within his or her character. The life of virtue is a disciplined, reflective, diligent life, molding one's character on the basis of carefully considered values, life experiences, and access to a wide variety of moral resources. "Virtuous" ministerial leadership, to be sustained over time and to be consistent over a range of applications, springs from this internalized moral core, whereas simple moral ministerial leadership is less deeply grounded and perhaps more intellectually – even strategically – situated.

Virtuous character in ministers is subject to consistent public scrutiny, but there are no empirical measures appropriate to establish a "virtue quotient". Qualitatively, however, people tend to know (and respect) virtue when they see it. A virtuous minister traditionally would sacrifice almost anything to protect his virtue; at the first sign of public doubt regarding his virtue he would resign so that this

challenge to this prerequisite qualification for any office of public trust could be examined without impediment, and all doubt removed.

Virtuous ministers also project a simple but compelling message, which is an inspiration to many followers: *virtue is its own reward*. There is clarity as to what motivates a virtuous minister to assume a position of leadership; such a minister is not seeking external or material advantage, but instead is answering an internal calling. This ethos may best be illustrated by a source far removed in time and space:

For Confucius, the moral sage (*shengren*) is the key person in bringing about personal righteousness and social justice. A superior person (*junzi*) is a moral person, who walks the moral way and attempts to practice virtue through self-cultivation. Both the sage and the superior person live under the restraint of virtue and aim to transform society accordingly. (Steidlmeier 1998)

From the Confucian view, transformative ministerial leadership is a matter of virtue more than value, of modeling an internalization of ethics and virtues. The consistency and pattern of behavior of such a leader over time speaks to his virtue more than his words, in stark comparison to the modern moral “flip flop” style of ministerial leadership, as it accommodates itself to changing political trends. While still distasteful to many, it is now commonplace for ministers to adopt politically strategic positions (or to rely on advisors to “spin” their positions to this end), offering expedient moral justifications, or no moral justifications at all for their political decisions.

While the image of the virtuous minister as a source of inspiration and guidance is appealing, many Ugandans are certain to criticize such a view as remarkably naive. The forces of self-interest, materialism, and the lust for power are all too evident; what chance does the model of a virtuous leader’s life and guidance have to constrain capitalistic values that so persuasively promote greed and self-interest? What relevance does such an unreachable ideal have for Uganda?

Is this ideal truly unreachable? History refutes this assertion. Authentic transformational leadership, founded upon leaders generally regarded as virtuous, has achieved radical results, overturned the status quo, and advanced new ways of thinking – arguably even established a new sense of public morality. While the

definition of what constitutes “virtue” varies (often considerably) over historical time, leaders beginning as far back as Moses, Ramses II, Alexander the Great, Martin Luther, and more modern examples such as Charles Grey, James Madison, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and arguable even Mao Tse-Tung together provide solid evidence that “what is” doesn’t necessarily preclude achieving “what ought to be”. The history of virtuous ministers is not as well illuminated as that of such legendary presidents and supreme leaders, but many virtuous leaders have their place in history.

The key to the validity of the moral, transformational minister’s challenge to the immoral status quo is that the virtue must be authentic. The force needed for radical positive change sufficient to overcome vested interests in the status quo is force of character, not intellectual argument. If the virtue of the character that drives this force is found to be wanting, superficial, or fraudulent, the force quickly dissipates as trust is shattered. As Bass noted: “The trust so necessary for authentic transformational leadership is lost when leaders are caught in lies, when the fantasies fail to materialize, or when hypocrisies and inconsistencies are exposed.” (Bass 1990)

If we come to regard the virtuous character of ministerial leadership as a desirable social objective, worthy of nurture, what can be done to measure and promote virtuous ministerial leadership? Perhaps the broader cultivation of character, or what Carlsson calls “personality development”, may present a worthy avenue of investment of public resources. While liberal thought eschews such notions as character education in public schools, fearing that to pursue such an agenda would threaten individual freedoms to define value preferences, it may be time to revisit that objection. Uganda may have an overriding interest in articulating a range of virtues that are worthy of cultivation, and in finding effective ways to accomplish this. As Carlsson argues:

Personality development must be central in the project of leadership transformation. Values and norms largely determine a leader’s style of leadership. The talents of the leader are part and parcel of the leader’s personality. (Carlsson 1998)

A People-Driven Ideal of Virtuous Leadership

Adel Safty makes an important distinction, relevant to Uganda, between a ruler and a leader. Leaders, after all, can be immoral yet still be highly effective in pursuing a vision, and motivating their followers – one need not think any farther than Idi Amin, Saddam Hussein, or Adolf Hitler. Safty’s distinction is hardly without precedent, however. James MacGregor Burns in 1978 argued that leadership which is amoral is not leadership at all, neither transformational nor transactional. Burns held that “naked power wielding coercive” dictators are *rulers* with no moral purpose, and should not be classified as “leaders”.(Boje 2000)

Safty, like Burns, believes that an authentic leader is distinguished as someone with a higher moral purpose, while a ruler lacks this quality. A ruler is someone who exerts his will through force, fear, intimidation, exploitation, or deceitful manipulation:

From the dawn of history, leadership of all humanity has been either the call of the prophets, or the exclusive purpose of empires. The former relied mainly on moral authority, the latter principally on sheer physical force. One is more evocative of norms and principles and thus is closer to our conception of leadership, while the other stresses control and subjugation, akin to our view of rule. (Safty 2003)

Our brief historical overview would indicate far more of the empire than the prophet, the ruler instead of the leader, among the history of ministerial leadership in Uganda. Moral authority and the ideal of the virtuous leader is not often associated with the ministers of Uganda, and very little (if anything) is written or discussed in terms of the president holding his ministers to such a standard. Many argue that Uganda has had a serious deficit in moral ministerial leadership, and that there is very little to be done about it, given the prevailing atmosphere of pessimism and loss of popular legitimacy in the institutions of governance, particularly in Uganda. Others argue that the very nature of a patronage system of governance runs counter to the possibility of virtuous (or even moral) ministerial leadership.

Perhaps there is a different way to the flowering of public morality and moral – even virtuous – ministerial leadership. Perhaps there are several ways. Perhaps

thinking from the top down is counter-productive, and bound to lead to disillusionment. Perhaps it is time to change the rules of the game, so that a different set of differently oriented, differently qualified persons stand a chance at assuming ministerial leadership – not soon, but hopefully soon enough.

Safty has mused about such lists of “perhaps”, and is an articulate advocate for just such an alternative approach, which he terms “people-driven moral leadership”. Safty derives considerable satisfaction and moral comfort from the recent wave of pro-democracy movements, people-led, that have swept through Central and Eastern Europe. He draws attention to the catalytic role of civil society in raising both moral awareness and moral expectations among the general populace. Safty’s conviction is that:

...people are rising to the challenges of leadership, doing the right thing, consolidating common values, and promoting human development. Leadership is no longer the monopoly of corporate chiefs, army commanders, or politicians. Leadership has become a people’s business. Leadership, in effect, is being democratised. (Safty 2003)

How can people-driven moral leadership be organized, such that it influences the character of ministerial morality? Civil society has a major role to play in this context, and already there are some organized initiatives within Africa that have begun, which may create a pattern for many similar initiatives to follow. The African Leadership Capacity Development Project (ALCD), for example, is a program intended to provide capacity development projects entailing education, training, information, and network-based support to young Africans from diverse backgrounds who demonstrate strong leadership potential. This program’s mission is directly focused on enabling young people to grow into transformational leadership roles, addressing issues of leadership vision, ethics, knowledge, sophistication, resourcefulness, creativity, and access to global resources.

A Global African Professionals/Experts/Scholars/Intellectuals Network has also recently been established, with one of its several objectives being to facilitate discussion and the dissemination of ideas about leadership and governance (among other topics). It is intended to nurture and provide intellectual support and mentoring to emerging leaders of Africa, to assist in the establishment of "African Leadership

Information Centres" in African countries, and to hold annual international "African Leadership and Progress" Conferences⁹.

There is also the recently formed (but entirely virtual) African Leadership Institute (AfLI), under the patronage of Archbishop Tutu, which is focused on identifying Africa's future leaders and offering them a platform for leadership learning and application. AfLI's goal is to create and support a network of future leaders across Africa¹⁰.

African universities are also initiating courses on leadership, which – like Makerere University's masters degree program in leadership – include comprehensive exposure to the moral and transformational dimensions of leadership.

These are small institutional beginnings to the solution of a monumental leadership challenge, but they are well-conceived, earnest small beginnings. While we wait for these efforts to take root and grow, civil society can do much to raise the subject of morality in governance, to sponsor dialogues where people have an opportunity to articulate their values regarding an ethical public sector, and to recognize and celebrate those public servants who are examples of morality and virtue. They exist here in Uganda, and their example is the most persuasive argument of all in support of the achievability of morality in government.

Conclusions

The history of Uganda's ministerial leadership is replete with moral failure and lack of moral virtue – and probably with unsung moral heroes as well. Many of Uganda's prominent past or current political leaders are or have been authoritarian, arguably with a questionable allegiance to the principles of democracy, and some may even have a disdain for their follower's aspirations to be treated as dignified human beings. Such ministers are easy to identify; this type of authoritarian leader in Uganda adopts a transactional patronage style of politics, dispensing rewards and punishments to self-interested followers, with both minister and followers operating solidly in

⁹ See www.africanprogress.net/leadership_capacity.htm for more details on these initiatives.

¹⁰ See www.alinstitute.org/ for more details.

Kohlberg's *Preconventional Level* of moral development¹¹. Evidence of ministerial leadership that is authentic in its social consciousness, and committed to the cultivation of positive moral values more appropriate to Kohlberg's Conventional Level, is largely absent in these most senior echelons of power. Transformational leadership patterns are even more rare, being situated more clearly in Kohlberg's Post-Conventional Level where principles of universal justice and transcendent moral purpose prevail. Transformative leadership grounded in the virtuous character of the minister, as distinguished from transformative leadership supported by attention to moral values, would be found in this Post-Conventional Level. (Kohlberg 1971)

Transformative leadership, whether grounded in the virtuous leader or the leader attentive to moral values, is not without its critics. As noted by Steidlmeier and others, there are those who see transformative leadership as an exercise in the manipulation of sentiment and emotions instead of an appeal to reason. Boje argues that transformational leadership promises to be emancipatory, but does little to deliver marginalized peoples from command and control governance. Other critics worry that the force of personality of such leadership can distort democratic deliberations and override necessary checks and balances. The response to such criticisms, which I share, is that the power of inspirational and morally centered leaders to overcome narrow self-interest, greed, and exploitation rests with the identification and harnessing of the power of shared moral values, a common purpose, and a clear commitment to the welfare of all. In Bass and Steidlmeier's words:

Truly transformational leaders, who engage in the moral uplifting of their followers, who move them to share in the mutually rewarding visions of success, who enable and empower them to convert the visions into realities, should be applauded, not chastised. (Steidlmeier 1998)

The quest for morally centred ministers, or – more ambitiously perhaps – for virtuous ministers is unlikely to bear fruit in the current underdeveloped democratic processes in Uganda, where a system has evolved to create and sustain top leadership that is largely transactional in character. If transformational leaders are to be

¹¹ Lawrence Kohlberg argued that human moral development occurs in three stages, beginning with a “preconventional stage” when people are primarily morally self-interested, and motivated only by the possibility of rewards or the threat of punishments. People at this level have little or no allegiance to socially defined values or aspirations, and are not morally aware agents; they are unable to make morally responsible decisions about their actions.

identified, nurtured, and succeed in the rise to power and influence as ministers and senior leaders in Uganda, both the demand and supply sides of the equation require attention. Public morality, and the expectations that the public holds for ethical leadership, must be freed from cynicism, pessimism, and lethargy. Through expanded opportunities for structured dialogue on the ethics of leadership, and through related measures to raise moral awareness, a new popular consensus on the need and urgency for ethical – even virtuous – ministerial leadership may be stimulated.

Simultaneously, the ethically oriented middle level leadership, and the youth of Uganda generally, should be challenged by a well-articulated and widely disseminated ideal of the virtuous transformational leader. Moral exemplars already exist in Uganda, but to be influential to the shaping of public morality they need to be identified, publicised, and celebrated. Finally, attention must continue to be placed on Uganda's institutions of governance, so that moral awareness can be strengthened, ethics training made relevant, and integrity fostered.

Advocating for the return to the ancient Confucian ideal of the virtuous leader, or at least supporting aspirations for a new form of moral ministerial leadership in Uganda, is intentionally bold. The status quo of immoral rule by self-interested leaders does not go away by thinking timidly. A culture of ministerial (and higher) leadership that allows poverty, violent conflict, under-development, and bad governance to continue in Uganda for so long must be challenged and changed. New transformational leaders are needed to lead the key institutions of Uganda's political and social governance, able to craft inclusive visions for a different and better direction, motivated by genuine care for their fellow citizens, and empowered with the ability to inspire, uplift, and lead their followers.

Not rule, but lead. Perhaps even lead with Confucian virtue.

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