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Politics as a vocation in the African context? An African theological engagement with Max Weber

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Author:
Kefas U. Kure[1]

Affiliation:
[1]Department of Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology, Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Kefas Kure,
umkefas32@gmail.com

The German sociologist, Max Weber, argued that politics has to be taken as a vocation just like other fields of academic and professional engagements. He did this by reconsidering his earlier view on ethics of conviction, which he thought does not hold sufficient promise to address the political atmosphere of his day. To consolidate this proposal, Weber proposed an ethic of responsibility which, for him, carries some great promise to advance politics as a vocation. In this article, however, I engage with these thoughts and proposals by Weber in order to deduce some lessons on how politics could be considered as vocation. This was thought to carry some promise in the African context of political engagement in reducing misappropriation, mismanagement, and wastefulness of both human and material resources. This article concludes that taking politics as a vocation would enhance the placement of value on human lives over things as it is the case in the African context.

Contribution: This contribution would ensure that individuals intending to take politics as a vocation have a different view of politics other than amassing wealth, but to render service to humanity.

Keywords: Max Weber; political vacation; ethic of responsibility; public theology; Africa; Nigeria.

Introduction

We live in a time where the quest for position and power have become the ultimate aspiration for many human beings. The efforts to attain the height of leadership, especially politically related positions, creeps deeply into human imagination that sometimes everything goes; the end justifying the means; people are used as means to satisfy the aspirations of others. Sometimes it involves assassination of character, blackmailing of the other in the guise of portraying the image of another. In fact, even attempts of eliminating others for the sake of power acquisition is no longer strange in the time that we live in.

One of the reasons for such character assassination and blackmailing could be the loss of conscience towards the other. Humanity is being used to enhance things instead of using things to enhance human well-being. This continued inhuman treatment of human beings is consistent with what Moltmann (2019:4) observed that 'human life is in danger not because it is mortal but because it is no longer loved, affirmed, and accepted'.

While the above-mentioned events continue to cause pain and hardship on others, they have become a gateway where other people gain their selfhood, power, popularity, and self-image at the expense of others. These few others referred to here are the influential personalities, primarily the political class with power to make decisions that affect society. Particularly in contexts such as Africa, the majority of political office aspirants go to the extent of making empty promises which are never fulfilled all in the quest for climbing a political leadership ladder.

The above assertion regarding African political class has been buttressed by De Villiers (2010:273) who demonstrated how some extreme examples of 'African dictators chose to leave moral principles completely out of politics, reducing their political rule to a brutal power struggle in which political opponents were cruelly persecuted and oppressed'. Such instances happened and continue to happen in most African countries with one of the reasons being the attitude at which they get to those political offices which, in the long run, determines or influences how they play politics and lead those they promise to represent in the parliament.

However, such an attitude of politicians is not peculiar only in the African context; similar instances took centre stage in Germany during the time of Max Weber, which I shall examine in the following sections of this article. Weber, amongst many of his writings, wrote extensively

about politics where he eventually presented his powerful speech entitled 'politics as a vocation' (De Villiers 2018:VII) which is the point of departure in this article.

This article, therefore, presents firstly, Weber's view on taking politics as a vocation just like other professions. The view is contextualised to the African context through an African theological lens to argue that politics be taken as a vocation in the African context. The idea proves to hold promise in the African context when considering the features that Max Weber outlined that such an individual who desires taking politics as a vocation must take into consideration.

Secondly, I will argue how contextualising Weber's idea in the African context could help to address the perils that the African political scenes dwindle in. Finally, I will suggest some features for consideration, just like Weber did in the German context, that could help any politician in the African context who desires taking politics as a vocation.

Max Weber and the post-war German politics

As part of his quest for sanctity in the political landscape of Germany during his lifetime, Max Weber accepted to deliver a paper to a group of students[1] in Munich that has become a key point of departure of his political thought over a century ago. Whimster (2019)) asserts, by 1919:

[G]ermany had fallen into chaos following the signing of the Armistice with armed uprising of the political left and right, and the constitutional and political collapse of the German Empire following the abdication of Wilhelm II. (p. 347)

This speech was delivered as a way of reviving lost interest in politics that the young generation had developed, particularly after the war. Perhaps that the students 'had to reorient their lives' (Laiz 2019:224).

According to Pellizzoni (2018), the speech aimed to:

[W]arn the young university students against the dangers of political extremism, be it marked by an excess of idealism or an excess of realism, which is often an inversion of the former. (p. 5)

It also aimed to clarify the importance and attraction of political leadership in the contemporary disenchanted world, and to keep citizens from succumbing too easily to their desire for answers (Rasch 2005:437). In considering this critical concern, Weber reluctantly accepted the invitation to speak after some attempts to refuse the invitation. In fact, one of the reasons why he agreed to talk on politics as a vocation in the early 1919 'was to pre-empt the participation of Kurt Eisner, the radical headman of the Bavarian government' (Laiz 2019:224). That reason increased Weber's uneasiness

(Turner 2019:382) that he took the challenge to speak about the impending German political society of his day.

During this speech, Weber re-emphasised his earlier assertions on ethics of conviction but went further to focus on ethics of responsibility which, for him, was more appropriate to revive the loss interest in politics that the young people of his time had developed.[2] Citing Ralf Dahrendorf, Bruhns (2019:317) insists that the motive for the speech on politics as a vocation was 'for the urgent and grave concern that the new German democracy might succeed'. Weber's aim is to buttress to his listeners what engaging in politics with a right philosophy requires. He adds that it entails, 'striving to influence the distribution of power between and within political formation' (eds. Lassman & Speirs 1994:316). Such a task could successfully be carried out when the politician becomes intentional in seeking the well-being of the people of who he or she represents.

Ethics of conviction, for Weber, seemed to hold not much promise to address what he considered the problems in German politics of his day (Ferrera 2018; Pellizzoni 2018). However, he proposed the ethics of responsibility to suggest how politics should be taken as a vocation just like other professions by stating the demands that are required. One of such demands is what Villa (1999:541) suggests that 'those who can state that they love their city (nation or cause) more than their souls are ready to pursue politics as a vocation'. Doing so, in Weber's thought, would ignite sensitivity among politicians who would know not only what is expected of them as representatives of the people, but to act in accordance with the provision of the constitution that they have sworn with an oath to protect and uphold.

Such presumption as the above happens only in ideal situations where there is understanding of responsibility over blaming which, of course, rarely occurs within a context where professionality is not taken seriously. This perhaps could be the reason why Weber opined that politics has to be taken as a vocation just like other professions. For this reason, Weber considers two categories of politicians the pointing out of which would help our understanding of political vocation that he advocated.

In Weber's opinion, the two categories of politicians are: occasional politicians and part-time politicians (eds. Lassman & Speirs 1994:317). Firstly, occasional politicians consist of all who post ballot ships or express will in some similar way, such as voicing approval or protest at a political meeting, making a political speech. For many people, he adds, this is the entire extent of their involvement in politics. The second category of politicians are part-time politicians. He describes them as those local political agents and committee members of party-political associations who, as a rule, only carry out this activity if circumstances require it, and who do not chiefly 'live from' this activity, either in a material or in an ideal sense.

These two categories of politicians made it possible to bring the involvement in political affairs to an adventure that

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1.Between 1917 and 1919, Weber tried to entice students into his view of university teaching and into the understanding of the relation between science and action, including political action that was embodied in his own life philosophy. He deployed his attempt to seduce students because he considered them to be the future of Germany and also because he thought that they were jeopardised by circumstances of their modern times and the radical ideologies propagated by a variety of prophets in and outside the University (Laiz 2019:224).

2.Read further about this in Kure (2020b).

concerns every individual despite the variation in the level of activeness. The category at which an individual belongs (either occasional or part-time) determines their attitude towards politics. Either of these attitudes determine whether the individual lives *off* or *for* politics (Weber [1919] 1946), the concept which Weber outlined that I shall mention in the following section. Living 'for' or 'from' politics are the two determinants towards Weber's argument for political vocation. To be more specific, what does it take an individual to accept taking a vocation in politics?

Max Weber and vocation in politics

The vocation in politics, just as in other professions, has laid down criteria that any intended person must consider. While it involves taking further responsibility in some cases, other instances require critical re-evaluation of what is already obtainable. In the case of Max Weber and his argument that politics be taken as vocation, there are focal points to ponder which are helpful in assessing the qualification of the politician intending taking politics as a vocation. Weber ([1919] 1946:17) insists that politics as a vocation lies where the objectivity of purpose begins, where the exercise of political power encounters axiological polytheism (a metaphor that Weber draws from John Stuart Mill). This implies why Weber in his Munich lectures of 1919 disclosed the concerns of the adventure of taking politics as a vocation.

Describing such an individual as an authentic politician, Weber ([1919] 1946) states that he or she must see social reality as 'an irrational world of undeserved suffering, unpunished justice, and hopeless stupidity'. To this irrationality, Ferrera (2018:272) attests that 'the choice of the political profession as (authentic) vocation reflects a mixed attraction to an unease with this tragedy of irrationality, as well as a desire to affect it, to create meaning'.

The conquest of power is important, but only as a means, a precondition for taking in one's hands the leading strings of historical events, shaping their development. This meaning to be created relates to establishing equitable distribution of materials which aim at cushioning the effect on the people being represented in the political parliaments. This is like what Lassman and Speirs (1994:316) refer to when they said engaging in politics entails 'striving to influence the distribution of power and within political formation'. Such ideology differs significantly to power politicians who aim at amassing public wealth for themselves with less or no interest in equitable distribution of resources. One implication of that is the outright subjection of others who depend on such decisions.

While the equitable distribution of power and resources sounds good perhaps specific attitudes of an individual to ensure its realisation. In fact, Fitzi (2019:362) submits that 'politicians deal more with compromises and defeats rather than with success'. Therefore, Weber ([1919] 1970) describes any person who enters politics as someone who contracts with diabolical powers. This suggests that a political vocation is associated with power to make adequate decisions that enhance one's political territory.

Hence, taking a political vocation (Palonen 2019:336) requires a politician's competence and willingness to deal with the chances of different shares of power, not only in the sense of politicking in favour of some ends or opposing the projects of adversaries. Not to even talk of taking mere decisions in favour of some political godfathers. Hence, he concludes that 'competent politicians can be only persons who master the repertoire according to each situation' (Palonen 2019:340). Yet, Bruhns (2019:325) asserts that vocation in politics for Weber demands that a politician must first be a genuine human being where the ethics of conviction and the ethic of responsibility mutually complement each other, and secondly, to have the strength not to give in when faced with the failure of all hopes.

The person who lives cautiously of the above prospectus is fit and ready to take up a political vocation else they do the opposite of politics. Politics in this sense, therefore, entails promoting national interest, promoting human well-being, and enhancing the recognition of human dignity. However, the opposite of politics is the service of interested parties, of vested interests.

The attitude of power politicians leads them to feed themselves at the expense of others. Those are the politicians that Weber describes as those living from politics. Living for politics entails total dependence on the proceeds that come from therein. They fail to notice that politics, in its noblest sense, is something more than just power politics. Ferrera (2018) adds to this discourse stating that:

> [P]olitics is a vocation born from a two-fold normative choice: choosing a *cause* to serve and choosing to *transform* such service into the overall mission of one's own existence, the source of one's feeling of dignity and freedom, one's calling. (p. 272)

Such politicians, Lassman and Speirs (1994:317) described as those who 'strive to make it into an enduring source of income'. To them, politics is a sure way of getting out of their financial trouble. Otherwise stated, politics is a source of enrichment which is done at the expense of others–a typical form of politicians in the African context that I shall discuss later in this article.

However, the second set of politicians that Weber took notice of are those that live 'for' politics. These categories of politicians are those who must be 'economically independent of the income politics can give'. This means simply that the politician must be wealthy or have private means which yield an income from which he or she can live (eds. Lassman & Speirs 1994:317). By implication, these are categories of politicians whose concern is in rendering service to the benefit of the populace. Politically speaking, they are altruistic in their dealings. They are leaders with a vision to enhance the integrity of human lives through their political influence. In a word, those are leaders with a vocation.

Leaders with a vocation must see to it that above all, national life, in its composite entirety, remains viable, durable, sustainable, even at the expense of their own personal causes (Ferrera 2018:273). Those are politicians with an understanding of a vocation. They aim more at building up professionality in politics than only considering what they get out of politics. Their quest is on living for a cause which, in this case, implies being responsible to the core. Firstly, they are responsible for pursuing national interest even at the expense of their personal causes. Those are the politicians who understand responsibility. This, as Ferrera (2018) attests:

> [P]olitics as a vocation implies an additional choice, not only the original decision to devote oneself, body and soul to a sphere and, with that decision, an axiological choice, but also the choice between the ethic of ultimate ends and the ethic of responsibility. (p. 274)

Following the above conversation, one could dare to argue that taking politics as a vocation entails paying particular attention to ethical responsibility of what is contained therein.

Arguing from the perspective of the ethic of responsibility over the ethic of ultimate ends specifies why emphasis should be made on the former rather than the latter in two ways. Firstly, the ethic of responsibility is programmatically geared towards directly affecting this (imperfect) world, achieving 'success' in the pursuit of causes that are ethically justified (they are chosen with a view to making the world 'better') (Ferrera 2018:274). In this case, a responsible politician uses a complex purposive strategy aiming at 'successes' evaluated in terms of the contextual and contingent unfolding of the whole strategy. Secondly, the ethic of responsibility is the only one suited to the means that are specific to that sphere: the coercive resources monopolised by every political community and made available to its leaders (Ferrera 2018:274).

In addition to the above, Lassman and Speirs (1994:331) affirm that 'honour of the political leader consists precisely in taking exclusive personal responsibility for what he does, responsibility which he cannot, and may not refuse or uphold unto others'. This is like what Bonhoeffer (2005) meant in his ethics while talking about vicarious representation. Bonhoeffer described any attempt to refuse acting or speaking when one is expected as an outright act of irresponsibility. Such a person with failure to take responsibility for either their actions or inactions does not erase them from the responsibility either. With these two points raised, the ethic of responsibility is placed with superiority above ethic of conviction, particularly in the quest for advancing politics as a vocation.[3]

The emphasis on refusal to take responsibility here could be connected to the inappropriate perception of what a vocation one has got to exhibit. Take for instance as a parent, the responsibility to raise one's children, largely in the majority contexts, rests on their shoulders. The point of departure is in

accepting such realities but also capable of exhibiting the task. In the case of politics, once a politician has not discovered their purpose and has no goals to aim at, it becomes hard to accept responsibility for their impending failures. This is certainly the realities, particularly, African political display as I shall discuss in the following section.

The nature of political practices in the African context

The African context has had different connotations over the time[4] which, on several occasions, is often misunderstood. To clarify the misconception of who Africans are and what the continent is composed of Maluleke (2005:486) brings some insights. He posited that when talking about Africa, one must note that 'Africa is vast, complex, and differentiated. We should never pretend to speak representatively and comprehensively about all of Africa'. Such an introductory note about Africa is helpful to prevent uncritical presentation of Africa, on the one hand, which also influences the way issues relating to Africa are discussed, on the other hand. Politics is the focal point of this article. Relating it to the African context is cautiously taken.

This is because, as Maluleke affirmed above, there is no one Africa. This implies there is no one specific concept that is perceived in equal measure within the African context. The diversity therein suggests plurality of how each individual nation state operates. However, there are also similarities, particularly with the way politics is displayed. For the sake of clarity, I shall be referring to Africa as a continent in a more generic sense, but specifically mention specific regions where applicable.

As argued by Ebegbulem (2012:221), 'it is not disputable that Africa is the poorest continent in the world, and the richest in terms of natural resources'. However, such beauty and riches have fallen into the hands of leaders without clear vision to enhance the dignity of lives in the continent. Such conditions which the majority African people find themselves in have caused millions of people a true sense of humanity so much so that many see no meaning in living anymore. One of the reasons for this tragedy is the 'insincerity and insensitivity of leaders to the needs of the ordinary people who they have been elected or appointed to serve them' (Ebegbulem 2012:221). Instead of serving the people, De Villiers (2010) asserts that the majority of these leaders are more interested in enriching themselves once elected, by exploiting available public resources rather than improving the plight of the poor. Furthermore, the concern of majority African politicians rests on 'self-gratification rather than improving human wellbeing which results in abuse of power and opportunity rather than human and national interests' (Kure 2020a:2). No wonder, De Villiers (2010) posits that there is an alarming high rate of politicians and government officials who suddenly become

3.Read further in Kure (2020b:136).

4.Described as the poverty capital; as a continent with poor infrastructure; a continent bereft of basic human needs. Masango's (2002:707) Africa is viewed as a place plagued by corruption, dictatorship, military coups, rebellious leaders, greediness, misuse of power, incompetent leadership, politically as well as economically ineffective and suspicious leaders who undermine their own democracies' etc.

rich as soon as possible – willing to cross the line of immoral behaviour and become involved in corruption.

The above highlights are indicators of why majority of the politicians in the African continent have so embraced places of power and authority. There are high number of politicians who have been in places of power for years[5] and, despite no feasible improvement, they continue to clamour for more power. Sadly, these individuals continue to have supporters who subscribe to their styles of leadership. Those supporters have been blindfolded so much that they place less value on themselves and others, and have become deluded to what they truly are: humans, and how they ought to be treated: with dignity.

However, things continue to happen this way because, I suspect, such leaders have successfully replicated their insensitive conscience into the minds of their gullible followers. With the overall argument of this article, namely, politics as a vocation, it could be gathered that the crop of politicians in majority parts of Africa are yet to understand the concept of vocation in politics. That does not only make this article relevant but also a challenging task. Until I venture into making the proposal for a vocation in politics, it is worthwhile to bring into conversation a specific context: Nigeria, to serve as a microcosm for the flow of the rest of the article.

Like it was said above regarding Africa as a whole, the tragedies are not different from a specific context of Nigeria. It is no longer a surprise that 'despite the long years of independence, Nigeria is still battling with the problem of good governance' (Mercy 2015:293). The leadership style in Nigeria being characterised by 'lack of direction, neglect and drift, fraud and insensitivity to the plight of the citizens' (Ebegbulem 2012:221) has become a norm to the political class. Politics has, indeed, become the easiest way to being rich provided that the end justifies the means. One of the reasons is that the majority of politicians venture into politics without a concrete game plan of what to do or how to go about doing it. Such lack of preparedness leads them to immoral behaviour of amassing public assets at the expense of the poor majority. Such a crop of politicians cannot be said to have understood the vocation therein politics that Max Weber argued from the German perspective. For when political participation is understood adequately, and the politician understands their responsibility to the people he or she is representing, a change in perspective would likely set in.

However, the question to ponder about on this issue of political vocation in the African context, perhaps in Nigeria, is this: how would the concept of vocation in politics be conveyed and understood when there is already a dominance in assuming politics as a sure way to getting riches within a

5. An example is the former Zimbabwean president who had to be forced out of power (see Masango 2002). Others include the president of the Republic of Cameroon, Paul Biya, who has been in power for some years while the country dwindles into sad conditions such as insecurity and many others.

shortest possible time? To attempt answering this question, I shall provide a thesis to argue that taking a vocation in politics is possible in the African/Nigerian context, and could help to curtail the culture of wastefulness, and mismanagement of abundant human and material resources found in the continent.

Politics as a vocation in the African context?

The discussion in this section focuses on the possibilities that politics could be considered as a vocation in the African context. The vocation in politics in this sense would mean a change in certain stereotypes that have since held the nature of leadership in the African context that is hostage – both during the military era and now in democracy.

Despite the rich historical account, the continent remains backward in terms of leadership, particularly political leadership. What could be the cause of this? Does it mean there is no concrete understanding of what political leadership entails in Africa? Or does it mean there are no capable persons to take African political leadership out of the mess it has been into? Or, still, are there no sufficient resources to build infrastructure so that Africans could live fully and truly as humans with dignity? The answers to these questions will be provided in this section and in the remainder of the article.

Considering the nature and attitude of politicians highlighted above, one wonders what gives them motivation to join politics. Clearly, one could assume that such politicians have their quest for political participation resting on self-aggrandisement. They have close to no concrete plan for human and societal development through political representation. Rather, their involvement in political action centres around themselves. For such politicians, Weber (1968) describes as those without:

> [P]olitical imagination, without ideas or ideal intuitions, will for all his/her life remain a person who would better remain clerk or a technical official because he/she will never be truly creative in politics. (p. 296)

How, then, could such politicians, through their political participation, become a source of hope to those they had vowed to represent? The above-mentioned politicians currently at the helm of affairs in most African countries have nearly failed to emulate a few selfless leaders who lived before them with the positive impacts they made. Examples of those models include Nelson Mandela and the Former Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa. Rightly described as charismatic leaders, De Villiers (2018) asserts that:

> [T]hey played an important role in ensuring a peaceful transition to the new democratic society by proclaiming the message of reconciliation and instigating programs to bring about reconciliation in society, and who, through their personal reconciliatory attitude and behaviour, set an inspiring example to the people of South Africa. (p. 226)

The above examples could be taken as representatives from countless others in the African continent of leaders who paid the ultimate price for the cause of individual states during their time. Such kinds of leaders whose quest for human and societal development and progress outweighs their personal interest could be considered as vocational leaders who had causes to achieved. On the contrary, such kinds of leaders are in dire need in the majority of many Africa's political theatres at present. The reason being that most contemporary politicians in the African context have an engrossed quest for 'selfish gains and ambitions over nation-building' (Umaru 2020:131).

Also, in the case of Nigeria and some other African states, how could politicians with such ideology of wealth accumulation make laws that would guarantee free and transparent political participation? Finally, in the specific case of Nigeria, how could politicians whose thoughts, plans, and actions are on selfish interest ever think of abolishing a neo-political colonialism that is solely dominated by the 'big and the rich'[6] politicians. Those are politicians that Weber, in his lecture on politics as a vocation, described as those who live off politics. These are the people, Weber attests, as those whose strivings rest in 'making politics a permanent source of income' (Weber [1919] 1946).

However, to import Max Weber's idea of politics as vocation to a context like the African, the abovementioned ideologies would have to undergo some form of re-assessment or, even re-formulation. That way, a new form of political involvement would be required with a crop of politicians having new perspectives toward political participation. Learning from Max Weber, I take the section below to make a proposal for a political vocation in the Africa context, what should be considered. Secondly, when politics is understood as a vocation in the African context, there are chances that the culture of misappropriation and mismanagement of both rich human and natural resources could be minimised.

This would be made possible when, in addition to taking a vocation in politics, the ethic of responsibility that informs what the vocation in politics entails–the intended politician to know his/her responsibility to self and for the people they are representing.

Talking about a political vocation in the context of this paper applies to leadership responsibility. This necessitates a willingness to accept responsibility for one's actions and inactions in the political sphere. When it comes to political representation, a responsible representative who understands their calling into politics demonstrates with caution and readiness to answer for why they make certain choices.

6.This idea is easily understood in Nigeria as 'godfatherism'. It is a political ideology that has been in place which provides access to political participation within those that have been in politics. One way of doing that is the awkward registration fee for aspiring politicians who desire to run for political offices. The idea of these godfathers is that they have the money to sponsor candidates of their choice even if those candidates were not acceptable by the majority. Secondly, they influence what those candidates would do when they are eventually elected or appointed. That way, the political control continues to rotate amongst them with no meaningful impact. Their interest, however, rests on living above those they vowed to represent and serve.

De Villiers (2018:228) suggests that in instances where making responsible decisions is difficult, 'the most responsible thing to do to enhance ethical living could be simply to denounce and resist such attitudes and the views on which they are based'. Those choices which are supposed to be made on behalf of others but having nothing to impact the intending target are cautiously considered. In such cases, the politician becomes liable to answering questions for their action or inaction. The ability to be that vulnerable, however, would become the first step toward having a new and a different understanding of political representation.

Such are politicians, Weber (1968) adds, who understand that entrance into a political office is considered an acceptance of a specific obligation of faithful management in return for a secure existence. Those would be politicians who do not see their ascension to political positions as a means to abuse power at the expense of others. Rather, they recognise that it is a responsibility that demands giving account for one's actions or inactions. Those politicians who would discover and live by such understanding fall under the category of those who Max Weber described as living *for* politics.

They do not rely solely on the proceeds of politics, nor should they be denied their wages. The difference that they make is this: they do not aim at enriching themselves with proceeds from politics at the expense of others. In other words, they are determined to ensure change in the status quo. Such politicians are invited to an understanding that 'their ethic ought to be sensitive to consequences and not blindly and destructively devoted to convictions' (Rasch 2005:237). This, I would say, is the first step towards actualising politics as a vocation in the African context.

The second point to consider in taking politics as a vocation in the African context would involve dealing with cultures and traditions that hinder progress and prosperity of society. Described as people's way of life, African persons are embedded in cultures and traditions that have become tools for societal moral decline. One example from the Nigerian context is in the way of dealing with corruption. The culture of honour and shame does more harm than good in the context of engaging with corruption in Nigeria. From a religious point, when someone belonging to one religion is indicted of corruption, it is considered a religious hunt.

Similarly, to the communities, a known corrupt official becomes a celebrated champion simply by sharing the proceeds. These predicaments fall back to what Umaru (2020:37) describes as 'failure in moral upbringing'. They continue to happen because immoral behaviour has been polished as a better option to the moral values. Hence, the scenario leaves, particularly the younger generation, to see the decline in moral conduct as a new way of life. To think of bringing a change in this regard, Umaru (2020:38) suggests that societal moral decay could be revived when societal vices are treated as theft with adequate punishment administered to perpetrators irrespective of their identity.

The third factor that a vocational politician in the African context needs to consider is the fact that political participation is not the shortest route to enrichment but an opportunity to serve and provide leadership. If responsibility is understood as answerability, it makes leaders servants of the people they lead. This is because the led are given the right to demand answers for actions or inactions of the leader who, in turn, must provide the answers else he or she is considered irresponsible. In the capacity of a politician who seeks to undertake politics as a vocation, the usual norm would have to change. This norm is seen in most African states as politicians using political offices as a medium to enrichment with little to no leadership provided. Such politicians, Max Weber ([1919] 1946) suggests 'must be economically independent of the income that politics would bring to them'. Yet, that is only possible in a context where such politicians understand an ethic of responsibility.

Talking of responsibility as a prerequisite for a political vocation calls for commitment to a cause. The cause here refers to the ability to condone that politics involves 'the burden of working with moral demons' (Barbalet 2021:66). This makes the task of political vocation a daunting one which requires mental and psychological maturity. The politician in this sense requires discernment when making political decisions. It is for that reason, Fitzi (2019) warns young people who want to dedicate their life to politics because they feel the call to become politicians to be willing to deal with those basic conditions of their future profession. Clearly, he insists that:

> [T]heir juvenile passion must be able to transform itself into a mature habit, making them professionals of politics who think in the terms of political realism, though without completely jettisoning the purpose for which they originally took up their post. (Fitzi 2019:362)

On a similar note, Bruhns (2019) admonishes that the emphasis is not the person who has a vocation to be a politician. Rather, how it is achievable to have professional politicians with genuine leadership qualities.

Those leadership qualities include the ability to discern and make decisions. Simply put, the ability to take responsible decisions (Kure 2020a). Thus, an indication for the cause in political vocation requires responsible decisions and actions when working with moral demons (the essence of politics). This requires matured minds to go through such processes while maintaining their integrity and those of others.

We must also consider the strength of the parliaments in the African context where these vocational politicians are expected to operate. This is because the parliament plays a great role in the attitude of politicians and what they do with regards to public office and facility. With the nature of participatory politics in some parts of Africa, particularly, Nigeria, one would imagine if the parliamentary leadership were doing enough to curtail the practices of politicians in terms of their performances for human good. Also, it could

be contended that outright failure to adhere to the African concept of misbehaviour with regards to public interest is not considered.

It can be argued that most of these parliaments in the African context are, according to Weber, 'weak'. Beetham (1989) describes the weak parliaments as that which encourages politics of an ideological tone in which the consequences of policies are never adequately considered. Such parliaments allow for laxity for poor performance since it neither produces personnel nor training for political leadership. Within such a political context, the idea of political vocation hardly finds a way to stay. Unfortunately, that is what comprises the majority of African parliaments.

To talk of political vocation in such a context, however, relates to deconstruction of weak leadership structures by instituting the strong ones. These strong leadership structures are those capable of providing a 'forum for open criticism and the difference of personal freedom against the secrecy and power of bureaucracies' (Beetham 1989:275). The individual who desires taking politics as a vocation in such a context must face the challenges of the day and say, 'in spite of all' (Turner 2019:378). Such is a person who has a calling for politics.

From an African point of emphasis, while linking the centrality of the chief's dependence on the council of elders in African culture and tradition, Bujo (1998:20) sees this as a good starting point to curtail poor political performance. He reminds us that once the chief disregarded the welfare of the community and thus suffocated life, the people could gather in the name of the ancestors and depose him as their chief. Thus, Bujo concludes that this should be a lesson which today's African politicians could take to heart.

The chief in the context of this article could be considered as the politician who is chosen/elected to represent a constituency. Once there is failure in performing his or her due responsibility, the community, as Bujo suggests, should keep aside all sentiments, and depose such an individual from their acclaimed position. This could be a good starting point to bringing in sanity in African politics where politicians would learn taking political positions as a responsibility they must bear.

From a Theological point of emphasis, Africa's notorious religiosity as propounded by Mbiti (1969:1) seemed to have little to no influence in the upholding moral standards amongst majority African politicians. Instead of being a medium for peaceful coexistence and development, religion has turned into being a propeller for division in parts of Africa, particularly in the Nigerian context. This complicates Mbiti's notion of being notoriously religious if it does not contribute meaningfully to human well-being and societal development, including bringing sanity in the political processes. It then suggests that politics when played properly plays significant roles in society. As Jev (2014:159) declared, 'politics being one of the fundamental endeavours of human

life, conflicts can be minimized when individuals or groups are given the opportunity to accomplish both individual and group needs'. In the context of this article, conflict, seen at different magnitude in the African context, could be minimised when we have politicians who consider the human well-being above selfish gain and interest.

Conclusion

The possibilities of taking politics as a vocation in the African context has been argued in this article. Firstly, the article took as a point of departure Max Weber's proposal in Germany during his lifetime that has become key in many political discussions in modern times. This proposal was conceived to meaningfully apply to the African context whose political scenes are like those of Weber's day. As a result of this seeming connection, this article arrived at some resolutions about the possibility that politics could be taken as a vocation in the African context with specific considerations. Hence, the article concludes on some findings as below.

Taking politics as a vocation in the African context carries some promise which when properly implemented could help to transform the current political structure we see. This is possible when intending politicians understand that political vocation is about responsibility. Responsibility for action and inaction taken on behalf of those they vow to represent where particular attention is given to the enhancement of human well-being. This idea largely includes the meticulous management of human and material resources for the flourishing of society. This way, the culture of uncontrollable waste and misappropriation is given adequate attention.

An emphasis in political vocation promises a reawakening of interest in public, particularly, political engagement in the African context as it did in the German context of Weber's day. This is important when intentional positive discourses are organised with the intention of enlightening the younger generation of Africans regarding new political ideologies different from what is currently considered uninterested.

Finally, the article submits that politics as a vocation is a call for commitment which involves being altruistic in terms of service delivery.

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