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Full Title: Leadership and the Invisible virtue: *hope* in challenging contexts

Running Head: Leadership and hope…

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<u>Abstract: Leadership and the Invisible virtue: *hope* in challenging contexts</u>

On 11 May 2000, the *Economist* ran a headline "*Hopeless Africa*", claiming that while

"brutality, despotism and corruption exist everywhere" "African societies, for reasons

buried in their cultures, seem especially susceptible to them". It added that, while Africa is

plagued by disease, warfare, poverty and natural disasters like floods and famines, "most of

the continent's shortcomings owe less to acts of God than to acts of man". In the same

edition, an equally pessimistic article, entitled "The heart of the matter" and partly

subtitled, "Africa's biggest problems stem from its present leaders…" claimed that "The new

millennium has brought more disaster than *hope* to Africa. Worse, the few candles of *hope*

are flickering away". Despite such '*hope*lessness', the article suggested Africa could change.

Ten years later, on 3 December 2011, the *Economist* declared that labelling Africa "the

*hope*less continent" was "regrettable" and that African economies were now "*hope*ful",

given better growth, productivity, trade etc. However, the Africa Progress Panel report

(2011), cautioned against both unwarranted pessimism and "the current wave of blinkered

optimism" (cited in the *Mail and Guardian* online. Downloaded 22 May 2012).

It is against this background and in the context of the global economy that this paper

reflects on the relevance and importance of the virtue of *hope* for leadership and of

fostering an ethos of *hope* in current business organisations. *Hope* is largely unmentioned in

the leadership literature, with greater attention given to many other virtues, leadership

traits and activities. *Hope* is also not universally praised by philosophers, nor always

prioritised in all world religions. The story of Pandora's box well reflects the less positive

view of *hope* as being deceitful and evil. Yet, Ernst Bloch in *The Hope Principle (Das Prinzup Hoffnung* (1938-1949) cited in J. Moltmann 1975 *The Experiment Hope* p. 30 ff),

argues that *hope* is vital and integral to human life, the "key to human existence", while Jürgen Moltmann in *The Experiment Hope* (1975, p.21) sees human beings as creatures of *hope* , unable to live without *hope* which "…is the breath of life".

This paper seeks therefore to understand what I would call the 'anatomy' of *hope* and to explore its meaning and significance for business leadership in contemporary times. It will also argue that ethical business leaders have a responsibility to foster an ethos of *hope*, particularly given the global and national contexts of today. As Napoleon Bonaparte said "A leader is a dealer in *hope*". However, without a greater awareness and understanding of *hope*, its significance as a key virtue in living a flourishing life and its importance in the context of leadership, it is unlikely that business leaders would be in a position to foster an ethos of *hope*.

KEYWORDS: hope, leadership, assumptions about hope, studies on hope, anatomy of hope, hope in an African leadership context.

Paper Title: Leadership and the Invisible virtue: *hope* in challenging contexts

It is not unusual for most of us to assume we know the meaning of such terms as *ethics, values, virtues, good* and *evil*. We take for granted that we understand the meaning of concepts like *faith, hope, love, integrity, wisdom* and so on. In general, this suffices, for we are seldom asked to 'unpack' our understanding of such concepts. However, this taken-for-granted understanding does not always serve us well when and if we *are* required to articulate our exact understanding of one of these terms. In the case of *hope* and leadership, we have an added difficulty: the leadership literature does not really mention '*hope'* and the silence suggests that either *hope* is irrelevant to leadership or it is assumed, taken-for-granted and so never mentioned. This is why, in considering *hope* in the context of leadership, our first step is to try to understand what we mean by *hope*.

This may be easier said than done, because, like the leadership literature, philosophy has also not given undue attention to *hope* over the centuries and has apparently left such considerations to the theologians and various others. As Lynch (1965, p. 21) observed: "We human beings, who need *hope* more than anything else in life, have written little about it." Bloch, who was not a theologian but a Marxist atheist, wrote *ThePrinciple of Hope* (1956) and noted that *hope* was not much studied prior to his work[i]. Schumaker (2003, p. 2) argued that *hope* was not a "dominant theme" in philosophy and was given only passing treatment by most philosophers whether in the past or present. Thus philosophers like Descartes, Hobbes and Locke said little about *hope*, though Hume, Mill and Kierkegaard gave it some

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attention. Kant believed it to be one of the four key questions which philosophers should examine.

Schumaker found this lack of attention to *hope* surprising, given that the contemporary context seemed to speak to the need for *hope* (2003, p. 2). He considered *hope* to be philosophically important because "it constitutes a fundamental and central mode of human existence; it is the principle driving force of the historical-temporal being *in via.* A human being without *hope* is like a walking corpse..." (Shumaker 2003, p. 2). Therefore, he argued that *hope* should not merely be relegated to the disciplines of sociology, psychology and theology. At the same time, he does point out that despite the tendency of many philosophers to ignore or marginalise *hope*, there were, in the 20th century, various analyses of *hope* from perspectives which included ethics, anthropology, phenomenology, politics, and metaphysics (Schumaker 2003, p. 3). These studies had a variety of foci such as *hope* as *not-yet-being; hope* as a passion; *hope* as different from 'desire' or 'expectation' and included nine German studies, four French, one Spanish and seven from the English speaking world.

So what can we learn about *hope* from those who have considered it or studied it carefully?

One of the first things we would learn is that there is a general agreement from the mid-20th century, that there was both a lack of and a need for *hope* in our society. Jacques Ellul

(1972, p. 89), in his work *Hope in Time of Abandonment,* talks of the necessity of "awakening people to *hope*"in a time when people have no *hope* and *hope* is absent. Schumaker (2003, p. 1) refers to the "severe" testing of *hope* as we entered the 21st century, to "pessimism"and to "a growing uncertainty about the future of human progress and the dignity of the human person". Bauckham and Hart (1999, p. 9) mention the "decline of secular *hope*" in the wake of the "demise" of the "myth of progress". This so-called "progress" and effort to "control" our future, spawned atrocities like wars, genocides, terrorism, torture and so on (see Bauckham and Hart 1999, p. 15). The outcome of all our so-called "progress", economic growth, and technological development, has not been human equality and, in fact, the sources of "secular hope" have all but dried up (Bauckham and Hart 1999, p. 18). If those in the post-modern era are to remain *hope*ful, there is a need for humans to once again believe in God who is the source of *hope* in or for the future (Bauckham and Hart 1999). JaquesEllul(1972), also believed *hope* to be centred in belief and relationship to God and it was Bloch, who observed that "Where there is hope, there is religion" although the existence of religion, does not always mean there is *hope* (cited in Moltmann 1975, p. 15). This latter remark seems to point to the "ambivalent relationship" between various religions and *hope* (Moltmann 1975, p. 15).

Secondly, we might learn that there are some challenges to our taken-for-granted notions of *hope* as a virtue and as being something good. The first such challenge lies in the fact that *hope* has not always been understood to be a good thing, despite what we may have assumed. This is well demonstrated in Greek mythology by the tale of Pandora, who opened Prometheus' box and

> …out of the box came everything evil which from that time on has plagued mankind: sickness, insanity, vices, and, the worst of all, *hope*. For deceitful *hope* which Prometheus had also locked up in the box restrained men plagued by these evils from putting an end to their suffering through freely willed death (Moltmann 1975, p 16) (italics mine).

We are probably not often confronted by the image of *hope* as "deceitful", although we may be familiar with the idea that not all *hope*s are necessarily virtuous. However, the notion of *hope* as fundamentally "evil" along with illness, madness and "vices" is not one which we are easily able to accept.

Another such negative sentiment on *hope* emerges from those who criticise the Christian notion of *hope* as distracting attention from real issues and their solutions (e.g. the Marxist view of Christianity). Such views hold Christian *hope* to be escapist, focused only on the "other world" with little engagement or relevance to the present. As Moltmann notes,

> For a long time *hope* has been counted among the affects and moods of humans and described only in psychological terms. Therefore its exchange rate has quite often fluctuated with the times. Spinoza thought that *hope* was always bound up with fear and that fear and *hope* betray the weakness of our souls. For many others *hope* was an opium for people who would like to escape reality and hence the most infantile form of the illusion principle (1975, p. 20) (italics mine).

While for most of us *hope* would not fall into the category of undesirable evil, deception or illusion, it does seem that *hope* has not only been neglected in certain disciplines and literature, but has also not enjoyed what we might refer to as a 'wholly good press'. As Lynch (1965, p. 22) observes: "*Hope* has, apparently, a bad reputation; few people want to

have anything consciously to do with it, much less write about it". In addition, given our contemporary context, we may well tend to agree with those who question the *grounds* for *hope* in the 21st century.

Given these reservations about *hope*, perhaps we need to consider if at least some of those who have undertaken a serious study of *hope* might confirm, even partially, some of our taken-for-granted notions that *hope* is a *good* thing, that we do have reasons for *hope* and that cultivating *hope* in a leadership context is both possible and our responsibility.

Such a consideration will firstly reveal that, while there is not necessarily agreement on whether *hope* is actually a virtue as assumed in Christianity (Häring, 1972; Gula, 1989; Peschke, 2004), or whether it is better referred to as an affection (Bloch, 1956), emotion (Bloch, 1956), an attitude (Macquarrie, 1978) or a passion (Aquinas), it seems, in fact, that humans have *hope* embedded in their DNA so to speak. This is borne out by the theologian Moltmann, in his work *The Experiment Hope*(1975)*,* where he stated that the human being is a "creature of hope" and, in fact, cannot live without hope for "It is the breath of life" (p. 21). This idea of *hope* as integral and vital to our existence is mentioned or echoed by many others including:

- Bloch (1956, cited in Guiterrez 1988, p. 123) who pointed out that only humans can *hope* and believed *hope* to be the most 'human' of our emotions, looking to the better, the broader.

- Lynch (1965 p. 31) who said *"Hope comes close to being the very heart and center of a human being"* (italics in original).

- Guiterrez who argued that *hope* is an emotion that "...emerges as the key to human existence oriented towards the future, because it transforms the present" (1988, p. 123).

- Peschke who calls it "a vital condition for human life" and states that "without hope a person cannot exist" (2004, p. 69).

- Maguire (2012, p. 57) who argues that the two necessities for a flourishing human life are respect and *hope*. He calls *hope* "the motor of the will" without which we become paralysed and broken.

It does seem then that there is agreement that *hope* is essential to human beings and to human life. Given this, we might ask whether there is a similar degree of agreement as to what we may understand of the *nature* of *hope*? In this respect, it seems to me that we must consider two aspects: what *hope* is and what it does. These two aspects are not easily separable and are often treated together in works about *hope*. What follows is an attempt to consider the insights provided by a very small selection of work on *hope* mainly from the 20th century, with the exception of Aquinas, who is mentioned because of his great influence not only on Christian theology and philosophy but also on Pieper whose work on *hope* is very significant.

Let us begin with a very cursory reference to Aquinas (1225-1274), the well-known thirteenth century medieval theologian and philosopher, who has influenced Pieper's work on *hope* and who considered *hope* to be a passion (a drive beginning in the body,) emerging from the "irascible appetite". *Hope*'s object is some type of significant and future *good* rather than a present or trivial *good*. In addition, *hope* is directed at "something arduous and difficult to obtain" (cited in Volf and Katerberg 2004, p. 78). For Aquinas, *hope* is one of the three theological virtues whose "object" is "God himself". That *hope* is one of the key virtues in Christianity is well known to most people Christian or not. But whether or not most people could articulate what the virtue means or how it applies to life is more doubtful. What Aquinas teaches us is that *hope* comes from our human nature, is directed to a future and difficult to obtain *good* and is ultimately transcendent: directed to God.

Bloch, by contrast, was not a Christian, but a Marxist atheist, (1956 cited in Gutíerrez 1988, p. 123). In his work on *hope* he suggests there are two types of *affections*: society's which are, for example, envy and avarice and *affections* of "expectation" namely *hope* (along with fear and anguish). While the "expectations" all "anticipate the future", *hope* is the most vital, the most "positive" and the most "liberating". The reason for this is that *hope* looks to what Bloch calls the "broadest and most luminous horizon". *Hope* is "not yet" but moves to become conscious and moves us to action. "*Hope* thus emerges as the key to human existence oriented towards the future, because it transforms the present" (1988 p. 123). Thus Bloch's understanding of the nature of hope incorporates both what it *is* and what it *does.* He therefore focuses not only on the future-orientation of *hope* and its importance for

human existence, but also on its motivating force, i.e. on what it *does* which is to motivate us to action.

Josef Pieper, a German Catholic philosopher and sociologist, did considerable work on *hope* beginning in the 1950s, in the wake of such traumatic and disturbing events as Hiroshima and Auschwitz. He was influenced by Thomas Aquinas, by Heidegger and by Marcel's and Bloch's writings on *hope* (1944 and 1956 respectively), and tried to develop a philosophy of *hope* based on the idea that humans are inclined and open to a "future of possibilities". He conceived of human *hope* as going from *not-yet-being* (minimal being) to *being-fulfilled* and distinguished between "ordinary hope" (those daily and often recurring *hope*s about all sorts of small things) and "fundamental hope". The latter is a deeper *hope*, possible despite *hope*s being previously disappointed. Such *hope* "sustains the person trapped in a limit-situation" by which Pieper means something like being on death row or having a terminal illness (see Schumaker 2003, p. 102). Such an understanding of the distinctions between these two types of *hope* is found also in other writers like Bloch and would be important to bear in mind in the context of leadership, given that both "ordinary" and "fundamental" *hope* are integral to human life and therefore would be part of the corporation as community. I will return to this later.

For Pieper human *hope* has six characteristics which can be "determined" "on the basis of ordinary language" rather than on the basis of "jargon or artificial terminology" (Schumaker 2003, p. 64). While it is not possible in a paper like this to examine each of these in detail, it

is worth noting them in brief as they, too, have relevance to our responsibility as leaders to foster *hope*. For Pieper, *hope*

- is accompanied by at least some *certainty and assurance* that what is *hope*d for is possible;

- the object for which we *hope* is "*a good*" i.e. it must at least have something good to it for the *hope*r;

- this *hope*d for object must also *not be easy* to get

- and *cannot be something which would happen in any case* (e.g. hoping day will come)

- it is *not within the control* of the one who is hoping and

- finally, *hope* is characterised by an "*attitude of expectant waiting*" (see Schumaker 2003, p. 65-66).

However, *hope* is not the same as *optimism* and both Pieper and Marcel argued this. *Optimism*, unlike *hope*, does not "penetrate to the existential and metaphysical depths of the person but remains on the surface" (Schumaker 2003, p. 84). It is characterised by a vague notion that everything will turn out for the best whether or not this is a reasonable thing to think. *Optimism* may be seen as a far more superficial or perhaps, even glib, notion than *hope*. *Hope* on the other hand emerges from hard situations or circumstances and contains at least some element of uncertainty, risk and fear (Edmaier cited in Schumaker 2003, p. 85). Pieper's work on *hope* enables us to understand *hope* as integral to human life, as oriented to something good for the person, as open to the possibility of what lies ahead and as offering us only limited certainty about what will be. As Schumaker points out:

"Human hope is intrinsically linked to the itinerant condition of human existence, which thus always implies uncertainty" (2003 p. 6).

Lynch (1965, p. 32), a Jesuit, also writes that *hope* is "a sense of the possible"; which means that despite the fact that what we *hope* for may be difficult to attain, it is possible. By contrast, *hopelessness* is characterised by "the sense of the impossible", by feelings of futility and by a sense that things are "too much" for the person (Lynch 1965 p. 48). This contrast gives us food for thought: leaders, in particular, would need to avoid creating an ethos permeated with elements of *hopelessness,* given our contemporary social, political and economic context. In a world where ethics often seems to be sidelined or ignored, where corruption, fraud and deception have become commonplace in both business and political contexts and where we are confronted with dire human suffering, much of which is the product of our current political and economic structures and practices, we are greatly in need of leaders who, despite the risks, uncertainties and difficulties can foster hope in the "sense of the possible".

Macquarrie (1978, p. 4), a Christian theologian, says *hope* is an attitude, a "disposition of the whole person", the opposite of which is fear. As in the case of Aquinas, he points to aspects of transcendence in *hope* as well as its importance for human freedom.

> *Hope* implies that there is, so to speak, an empty space before us that affords us room for
>
> action.....Where everything is foreclosed, there is no *hope*. Thus *hope* is inseparable from human
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> freedom and human transcendence (Macquarrie 1978, p. 8).

Therefore, where oppression reigns and freedom is denied, the human person is "destroyed" because he has no freedom and so no *hope* (Macquarrie 1978, p. 9).

Gula (1989, p. 177), also writing from a Christian perspective, contends that , "hope is not a passive virtue" but one based on God's love and Christ's resurrection, and enables us to live believing that those things which destroy "human well-being and fellowship can be restrained so that the possibilities for new achievements can be realised". *Hope* enables us to trust that the future holds good and "... is the source of our energy to respond creatively to new possibilities for recreating society" (Gula 1989, p. 177). We hear echoes of transcendence here as well as of *hope*'s moving us to action and even social reform. A similar orientation is to be found in Gutíerrez (1988), a well-known liberation theologian, who believes that while *hope* cannot give us knowledge of the future, its meaning is to be found in being "open" to that future, and in accepting the "gift" of that future. However, Gutíerrez believes the way we accept this gift is by being rooted in our present and by working for justice, human rights and peace. *Hope,* therefore, is not passive, but "fulfils a mobilising and liberating function in history" (Gutíerrez 1988, p. 125).

Finally a helpful addition to our consideration of what *hope* is and what it does, is provided by Smith's phenomenological perspective on *hope* (2004, p. 200). Smith notes the "hopelessness" of late modernity and the "apparent consensus" regarding "postmodern hopelessness", and then critiques two post-modern versions of *hope*, namely Derrida's and Rorty's, prior to presenting his own phenomenological account of *hope*. Both Derrida and

Rorty are critical of Christian *hope*[ii]. Smith's view is that Rorty demonstrates a "pragmatist" *hope* for the achievement of social justice while criticising Christian *hope* for focussing too much on the life hereafter. Derrida's stance reflects a Marxist and utopian *hope* for justice, while criticising Christian *hope* "for its political violence" (Smith 2004, p. 204). Smith maintains that while these two seem to show that *hopelessness* is not the only avenue for post-modernity, Rorty's argument lacks substantive grounds for *hope* and Derrida's fails to point out the object or content of *hope* and so "lacks determination". I will not here debate the merits of this critique of Smith's, but mention it in passing to contextualise Smith's phenomenological account of *hope.*

Smith believes that irrespective of content, "a phenomenological description of hope would distinguish five key structural elements of any hope..." (2004, p. 207). These are:

- the "*hoper*" (the subject who does the hoping);

- the *object* which is *hope*d *for* which points to a sense of expectation of what is good in the future;

- the *act* of *hope* which is a conscious hoping (and is not to be equated with hopeful actions like helping the poor);

- the *ground* of *hope* which can be within or outside the person who *hope*s and is the basis for differentiating between a *hope* and wishful thinking/illusions;

- *fulfilment,* which he sees as an "integral part of hope" (Smith 2004, p. 209).

Smith argues that in the case of Christian *hope* both the *object hoped for* and the *ground for* that *hope* are the same: i.e. God. On the basis of this *object-ground* "grid", Smith argues that the difference between Christian *hope* and that of *hope* in modernity and post-modernity lies not in *what is hoped for*, but rather in the fact that the "object *hope*d for lacks any transcendence" (2004, p. 211). In other words, the "locus" of *hope* in the modern and post-modern era shifts from the transcendent to a notion of *hope* to be fulfilled in this world. Given that the *ground* for *hope* is not transcendent, "...the confidence of modern expectation does not derive from anything like the providence or faithfulness of God but rather from the self-sufficiency of humans to realise their own *hope*s" (Smith 2004 p. 212). This "confidence" may be based on various foundations: rationality (Kant); dialectical materialism (Marx), the power of technology and the market (perhaps Fukuyama), but the ground is "always immanent to humanity and history" (Smith 2004, p. 212). The difficulty with basing *hope* on a non-transcendent foundation is that *hope* is lost when "these foundations" give way. This is a significant insight and points to the fact that *hope* rooted only in the human person and so-called human self-sufficiency, is limited rather than limitless and lacking a transcendent ground or object is, in the end, not sustainable.

Having considered the above perspectives on the nature of *hope,* let us try now to summarise something of what *hope is* as well as what it *does* because to foster an ethos of *hope* would seem to require that we understand both.

Let us begin with what *hope* is. While there are some notions of *hope* as evil or deceptive, there is general agreement that *hope* is essential to human existence and flourishing. Without *hope* we cannot act and can, in fact, die. *Hope* is future-oriented towards what we may call an object of *hope*. The latter holds promise of the good, is difficult, yet possible, to attain and is not within the control of the one who *hope*s. *Hope* looks to the better, the broader and is linked to trust that the better is possible. *Hope* may be divided into those *hope*s which are "ordinary" and focus on all sorts of small things which are characteristic of everyday life and "fundamental" *hope* which arises in difficult situations and, in fact, can sustain those caught in these limiting, even life-threatening situations. *Hope* is not to be confused with *optimism* which is a more general and more superficial notion. While *hope* is characterised by waiting expectantly, *hope*lessness, by contrast, is characterised by the "foreclosure" of possibilities, by a sense of futility, impossibility and of things being overwhelming. *Hope* is destroyed by oppression and denial of human freedom. The ground and object of Christian *hope* is transcendent: God. Secular *hope* has neither a transcendent ground nor object. Instead the ground is centred in human self-sufficiency, the object varies depending on the prevailing socio-political-economic orientation, but is confined to "this world". Structural elements of *hope* would include the *hope*r, the object *hope*d for, the act of *hope*, the ground for *hope* and fulfilment.

Having attempted to summarise what *hope is* and understanding its considerable significance for human life, let us try also to summarise what *hope* "*does*", bearing in mind that as leaders, our responsibility to foster an ethos of *hope* must be grounded in an understanding of both *what* we are fostering and *why* it is important to do so.

Hope is transformative, liberating and energising rather than passive. It transforms the present, unleashes human creativity and impels us to action including action leading to social and other change. It involves the whole human person and has been described as "faith and love on pilgrimage", an "internal dynamism" and an "energy" which encourages us to believe and love even when faced with despair (Dwyer 1994, p. 453). As Peschke (2004, p. 81-2) observes, *hope* enables humans to undertake and persevere in those things they aim for and must do even in difficult times. It is *hope* which provides the strength for suffering and it is *hope* which provides the impetus for change, for transformation, for reforming society so as to "create better conditions of life for humans" (Peschke, 2004, p. 85). *Hope* is generative, it sees possibility and enables us to create our future rather than waiting for it to come upon us and then reacting to it (Jaworski 1996, p. 182). Such creativity, change and reform are sorely needed in our globalised world today, which is characterised by problems and difficulties in the social, economic and political arenas that have been endlessly noted. We hear often that our world is characterised by grave economic injustices, by poverty, inequality, exploitation, violence, corruption, financial instability and environmental degradation. *Hope* is a powerful antidote to a merely gloomy outlook and allows us to look to that broader and possible horizon of a better world. Most important, it can and does motivate us to action to create this. This is indeed the responsibility of leadership.

If indeed *hope* is integral, vital and transforming in human life, we might ask where it is to be found and nurtured? The answer is simple: in relationship. As Lynch (1965, p. 24) argues: "*Hope* cannot be achieved alone. It must in some way or other be an act of community,

whether the community be a church or a nation or just two people struggling together to produce liberation in each other". Häring (1972, p. 30) argues in similar vein: Christian *hope* is "dialogical", is centred in relationships. It is this concept of relationship which provides a link between *hope,* leadership and the business corporation understood as a community of persons. This connection emerges if we argue that leadership too is centred in and on relationship. Ciulla (2004, p. 302) has observed that leadership "is a particular type of human relationship" characterised by such elements as power, influence, vision, obligation and responsibility.

Leaders are in relationship to their followers and have the power to foster or destroy an ethos of *hope* whether by what they say or by what they do or by the decisions they make or do not make. And it is regrettable that in our times and context the sayings and doings of too many business and political leaders are unethical or, as Ciulla (1995, p. 5) observes, "morally disappointing". We have had many instances globally and in Africa of this moral disappointment in our times: a disappointment which perhaps could be seen to steadily erode our *hope* that leaders can lead with integrity, wisdom and service and together with us create a better world whether in the business, political or social sector.

It is both sad and significant that on 11 May 2000, the *Economist* ran a headline "*Hopeless Africa*", claiming that while "brutality, despotism and corruption exist everywhere" "African societies, for reasons buried in their cultures, seem especially susceptible to them". It added that, while Africa is plagued by disease, warfare, poverty and natural disasters like floods

and famines, "most of the continent's shortcomings owe less to acts of God than to acts of man". In the same edition, an equally pessimistic article, entitled "The heart of the matter" and partly subtitled, "Africa's biggest problems stem from its present leaders…"claimed that "The new millennium has brought more disaster than *hope* to Africa. Worse, the few candles of *hope* are flickering weakly". The article presented an unflattering and bleak analysis of African leaders as products of their society which is characterised by poverty, dependence, and a lack of confidence. Such leaders "personalised" power, "undermined" state institutions, failed to distinguish between the party and the government, had a desire for power and control, mismanaged financial and other resources and needed to show that they understood the "common man" even while themselves being richer and more powerful benefactors. Despite such 'hopelessness', the article suggested Africa could change[iii]. However, that change would only be possible if African people regained their self-confidence.

Ten years later, on 3 December 2011, the *Economist* declared that labelling Africa "the *hope*less continent" was "regrettable" and that African economies were now "hopeful", given better growth, productivity, trade etc. However, the Africa Progress Panel report (2011), cautioned against both unwarranted pessimism and "the current wave of blinkered optimism".[iv] Good governance and resource management were still required, corruption needed to be countered and African leaders were called to "convert their new-found economic growth to opportunities and deliverables for their people"[v]

To ensure that all those living in Africa can live lives of human dignity and that growth benefits all persons not merely elites, leaders must meet the challenges posed by such critiques. One way of doing this is for leaders to take responsibility for fostering an ethos of *hope*.

What does this mean and how can this be done?

Firstly, what this means, is to try to apply an understanding of what I have called the "anatomy" of *hope* in our leadership contexts. This means understanding the differences between *hope*, optimism and wishful thinking as well as those between ordinary *hope* and fundamental *hope*. But perhaps more important than this, is to understand that for human *hope* to be sustainable, the ground and object of *hope* must be transcendent. This means having the humility to acknowledge that humans are not able of themselves to provide such *hope*: our history shows this as does the work done on *hope*. Mere immanent *hope* lacks the foundation of transcendent *hope*. Perhaps that is why the atheist Bloch acknowledged that the presence of *hope* indicated that there was an accompanying presence of religion.

Leaders must also try to bear in mind that *hope* looks to what is possible despite difficulties and that this future perspective of what *might be,* also transforms the present. The leader's responsibility lies in discerning that present and providing the vision of what can be in the future which will be good for those who look forward in *hope*. It is a leadership task to point

the way, to engage with and facilitate the development of followers and to take the necessary risks to move towards that future. Our context calls for Pieper's "fundamental" *hope* to counter our fears and mobilise us to take the necessary risks and action even in the face of our current difficulties and crises whether in social, economic or political life.

Perhaps, fostering an ethos of *hope* also means that what we need, in Africa and, indeed elsewhere, leadership for the common good, which ensures that resources are used for the benefit of all, not merely for elite groups. Business leaders could attempt such leadership in their own companies and in relation to their stakeholders. Such an attempt to create *hope* through a focus on all persons both participating in and benefiting from the common good, would at the very least counter self-aggrandising behaviour and serve as a role model to the wider community with whom business inevitably has a relationship. This would also serve to counter the erosion of trust in business which has been the inevitable outcome of the many examples of unethical corporate behaviour in recent years. Perhaps then, we would not have such television reports as one recent BBC newscast which asked whether fraud in business was now considered normal (May 2013). Such continued negative publicity for business does little to counter the moral disappointment in contemporary leadership of which Ciulla speaks (1995, p. 5).

Perhaps it is worth noting by way of conclusion, that a model of leadership which seems to resonate with the understanding of *hope* attempted in this paper, is that of Greenleaf's servant leadership. Here the leader is not the "big man" leader criticised by the *Economist*

as typical in the African context, but rather "servant" and "healer", whose priority is to facilitate the growth of persons in wisdom, respect, health and freedom. Such a leader has a broad span vision, is able to show the way to others and to inspire trust, leads by example and possesses the key qualities of intuition and foresight. Foresight begins with an understanding of the present, refers to the past and has the capacity to project to the future. A failure in foresight is, according to Greenleaf, an ethical failure (Greenleaf: 1977, p. 26). Such leadership builds community, is holistic in approach and respects as well as empowers the person. Perhaps the adoption of such a people-centred approach to leadership may help to develop that self-confidence which the *Economist* noted was missing in Africa's people. Jonathon Sacks (2000, p. 256) observed that self-confident individuals and societies are more generous than others, but "they are more likely to be self-confident, when they have a strong moral code, an ethic of self-reliance and a clear sense of their own identity".

Contemporary business leaders would do well to heed the calls to ethics and morality and by so doing, attempt to foster an ethos of *hope* that the good rather than the corrupt may be evidenced in our business environment and in other contexts as well. Leadership in business contexts is not only about ensuring that profit is made: the corporation or company or business enterprise is a community of persons who have more than mere economic needs. One of the essentials for such a community to function well is to have *hope*: without *hope*, the human person and human institutions are not sustainable.

Notes

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[i]His position was based "in a dialectical materialism….and in an interpretation of the left-wing Aristotelianism …" (Schumaker 2003, p.43).

[ii] The works cited by Smith (2004, 202-3) are Rorty, R. (1999). Philosophy and social hope. Penguin, New York and Derrida, J. (1994.) Spectres of Marx. Trans. Peggy Kamuf, Routledge, New York.

[iii]http://www.economist.com/node/333437. Downloaded 22 May 2012.

[iv]cited in *Mail and Guardian* online (Downloaded 22 May 2012).

[v]http://mg.co.za/article/2012-05-11-no-longer-the-*hope*less-continent . Downloaded 22 May 2012.

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