

Affinity between Poetry and Philosophy: Investigation of Muzale's *Nakuomba*

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Abstract

Poetry is a literary work which, as other genres of literature, performs two main functions in the society, educating and entertaining. In so doing, poetry, like philosophy, questions existing concepts and ideas, clarifies them, critically analyses those concepts and ideas and formulates a world view in a logical manner. Also, poetry, just like philosophy, is filled with wisdom which if accepted and utilized by the society, is likely to enhance socio-economic and political development. This paper is of the view that what philosophy and poetry do is similar to the extent that philosophy and poetry can be treated the same. That is to say, poets are philosophers of some kind. To present that, the paper analyses philosophical values of Muzale's *Nakuomba* poems.

*Ushairi ni kazi ya fasihi ambayo, kama tanzu nyingine za fasihi, una dhima kuu mbili katika jamii, kuelimisha na kuburudisha. Katika kutimiza dhima hizo, ushairi, kama ilivyo falsafa, huhoji dhana na mawazo yaliyopo, hufafanua, na kuhakiki dhana na mawazo yaliyopo katika jamii, na huunda mtazamo mpya wenye mantiki zaidi. Aidha, ushairi, kama tu ilivyo falsafa, umejaa mambo mbalimbali ya busara ambayo kama yatakubaliwa na kutekelezwa na jamii, yanaweza kuleta maendeleo ya kijamii, kiuchumi na kisiasa. Makala haya yanaibua hoja kuwa ushairi na falsafa zina majukumu yanayofanana sana katika jamii kiasi kwamba ushairi na falsafa huweza kuchukuliwa kama vitu vinavyofanana sana. Hii ni kusema kuwa, washairi ni wanafalsafa kwa namna fulani. Ili kubainisha hilo, makala yanachambua masuala mbalimbali ya kifalsafa yanayobainika katika mashairi yaliyomo katika diwani ya Muzale ya *Nakuomba*.*

1.0 The Concepts “Philosophy” and “Poetry”

Scholars agree that the word philosophy has no universally accepted definition; philosophers are not in agreement about what enterprise of philosophy should be – its nature, scope, method limitations and so on (Makumba, 2005; Okolo, 2007). However, Okolo (2007) contends that the term can best be conceptualized based on its etymology. The same is argued by Madumulla (2009) who presents that concepts can best be defined by looking at their etymologies. Therefore, etymologically, philosophy is considered to be derived from a Greek word “philosophia,” which is made up of two words “philo-” which means “love of” and “sophia” which means “wisdom or knowledge” (Makumba,

2005; Borruso, 2007; Okolo, 2007). Philosophy, therefore, entails pursuit of knowledge. Okolo (2007:6) adds that philosophers, among other issues, ask the following questions: what is the meaning and purpose of life? Is reality something physical or something grasped by mind alone? What is the relationship between mind and the body? What is the true nature of justice? Can mankind be both free and subject to authority? Therefore, he concludes that philosophy is an examination of the basic questions concerning mankind and the purpose(s) of existence.

Poetry, just like philosophy, is not easy to define. As Macgoye (2009:2) maintains, etymologically the word poetry originates from Greek scholar, Aristotle, who in his monumental book, *Poetics*, used it to refer to imaginative work of art that uses language. The word is said to have started to be used around 400 A.D. in Athens relating it with inspirations from Muse, mysterious religions and orgies related to Bacchus, the god of drink, and Pan, the goat-man whose name we still recollect in the word panic. The annual deaths and resurrection rites of Adonis, sometimes called Tammuz, were also often referred to in Poetry.¹ In the early days of its inception, the term poetry was generic; it was used to refer to literature in its general sense. We observe, for instance, Aristotle and his teacher, Plato, whenever they wrote about imaginative literature, they used the word 'poetry'. That is evident in Aristotle's monumental book which despite of dealing largely with dithyrambic drama which were rampant by then (see Mutembei, 2012), it derives its name from poetry and is called *Poetics*. Since then scholars have taken interest in defining poetry and what is it all about. Shabaya et al (2009:1) summarize some of the definitions given by various scholars as follows: "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions recollected in tranquility" (William Wordsworth); "poetry is the sound of human speech at those times when it comes close to the speech of angels and the speech of animals" (John Wain); "poetry is the best words in the best order" (Samuel Taylor Coleridge); "poetry is news that stays news" (Ezra Pound) and "a poem begins in delight and ends in wisdom" (Robert Frost). Other definitions are: "poetry is that which is more philosophical and of a high value than history" (Aristotle); "poetry is words set in delightful proportion" (Sydney) and "poetry is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth" (Shelly).

¹ These are quoted from Macgoye (2009:77). Though many scholars agree that the word originates from Athens yet the role of Muse and inspiration in poetry and literature at large is questionable. Many scholars today agree that poetry is a result of man's struggle against nature and it is basically a human creation (see Senkoro, 1988).

In his preface, Mnyampala (1975) defines poetry as a composition which uses words filled with wisdom and that it is the best composition in guiding the universe. He goes further by identifying five kinds of poems according to guidance and knowledge they offer. These include poems which ask questions about ordinary issues, poems which assess issues of happiness and sadness, educative poems, religious poems, and poems questioning serious issues about life (Translation is mine). That means poems can explain what happiness is, how it is achieved, what sadness is and what can be its causes. They can also assess the goal of human life, life after death and how to attain good life after death. Abedi (1954:1) on the other hand defines poetry as words basically filled with wisdom; it is the best thing in guidance of the universe. He argues further that a poem can satisfy one's desire (*of knowledge*) and make a person feel relaxed (*after his desire for knowledge has been fulfilled*) (Translation and emphasis are mine). Furthermore, El Kiim (1985: vii) adds that wisdom presented in poetry is extra-ordinary. In these definitions, we obviously see that both, poetry and philosophy, present wisdom and can be guidance to the society.

2.0 Major Concerns of Philosophy

Before describing the affinity between philosophy and poetry it would be important to discuss a bit the major concerns of philosophy and relate them with those of poetry. Makumba (2005) and Borruso (2007) present that the major concerns of philosophy can be seen through its branches. They present further that philosophy branches into metaphysics, natural theology, epistemology, cosmology, logic, ethics, among other branches. While metaphysics tries to understand why things are, and what they are, natural theology (which is also called theodicy) is a branch of metaphysics which studies cause of things, God. Among the major themes of natural theology are demonstration of the existence of God, the problem of atheism, the question of the cognoscibility of God, and those regarding his operation with its consequent relation to creation. Epistemology on the other hand investigates knowledge while cosmology studies material universe. Cosmology studies the nature, structure and origin of the universe in its entirety. Logic studies rules of thought that leads to truth. It examines things by reasoning and critical thinking while ethics is the study of human behaviour, both personal and social (Makumba, 2005; Borruso, 2007).

These branches of philosophy and the concerns therein tell us that men have desire to know everything about their world and life. Philosophy, through its branches, therefore, attempts to satisfy that desire of knowledge. Philosophers acquire knowledge through critical thinking. They reassess the society's points of view of several issues related to their being and propose a new conception of them which seems more appealing and

plausible. Throughout history, philosophers have been questioning several matters and proposed a new outlook which in most cases has challenged the existing one. In support of this Descartes (1985:193-194) presents that at the beginning of philosophy, the seeker after truth must, once in the course of his life, doubt everything, as far as possible. This is supported by Husserl (1967:27-32), among others, who insists on the natural stand point being “bracketed” in order to concentrate on the essences of things. Makumba (2005:31) adds that in his phenomenological reduction, Husserl calls for the bracketing of the objective world by which we take on the “disinterested spectator” attitude and suspend our judgment of the validity of its claims and other related claims. Philosophers have challenged the presence of God and his powers arguing that if God is powerful and he hates evil why evil still exists? That means if we believe that God is able to do anything and that He does not want evil to prevail on earth why can't He take that evil away? Since He is said to be powerful, that would sound obviously logical to occur but because that does not occur, philosophy reassesses the powerfulness of God and His relation with evil. Regarding this Makumba (2005:29) says:

But philosophy is human knowledge of things, which is more perfect than ordinary knowledge or belief. The philosopher desires to perfect his knowledge of things by means of his natural powers of observation and thought, and not just by believing what others say...Philosophy makes use of both ordinary knowledge and the knowledge obtained from particular science, examining the degree of certainty that they attain in each particular case. In its ultimate causes, it uses reason and follows the rules of logic, which are valid for all human knowledge.

Not only that but also philosophy may be understood by examining its material object. According to Makumba (2005:27), unlike particular sciences which concentrate on the study of some specific aspects of reality, philosophy studies all aspects of reality, the totality of things. Mbiti (1969) perpetuates that while chemistry studies matter, biology studies human beings, political science studies politics, economics studies economical forces, linguistics studies language structure, sociology studies human society and culture, theology studies human religion etc., philosophy studies everything. It studies matter, human beings, politics, economical forces, languages, human culture, religion and all other aspects of reality.

Generally speaking philosophy questions existing ideas and concepts, clarifies them, analyzes those ideas and concepts, critically evaluates them, formulates new ideas and outlook (formulate a world view) and create awareness to people. Philosophy starts by questioning why things are the way they are and then explains what can be said about

several those things. After that it evaluates critically those concepts and, where need be, rejects or corrects them to create a new outlook to those ideas and concepts. The ideas and concepts questioned, clarified, analyzed and critically evaluated and the world view formulated are general; they cover all aspects of life contrary to what is done by other disciplines and sciences.

3.0 Affinity between Philosophy and Poetry

The affinity between philosophy and art, including poetry, has been described since the emergence of philosophy. Philosophy has a specific branch that deals with artistic works which is called aesthetics. Aesthetics, apart from other things, finds answers for such questions like what art is, and what nature, conditions and consequences of arts are. It investigates the important features of artistic works and assesses their meaningfulness to the society. It is because of this, Okolo (2007) confidently presents that there is a strong affinity between philosophy and literature, which is one of the types of arts. Okolo (2007:1), however, contends that affinity between philosophy and literature is a neglected benefit that not much has been said about. This claim is evident in that despite aesthetics being a philosophical study of art, it was basically centered in fine and performing arts such as music, drama, dance, painting, sculpture, architecture and print-making, to mention a few (see Makumba, 2005:55-56). By implication, Okolo was calling for a “new” outlook of examining the relationship between philosophy and arts. He was calling for a study to assess an interface between philosophy and literature. Okolo presents further that philosophy and literature engage in similar speculation about good society and what is good for humanity. He adds that philosophy and literature, equally offer critical evaluation of existing and possible forms of political arrangements, beliefs and practices and create awareness for the change. They are thus theoretical disciplines concerned with raising social consciousness. This is also supported by Mulokozi (1996:18) who presents that literature has had a philosophical function. He says:

Some literary works attempt to describe a certain philosophy of life. Such philosophy is called by other scholars ‘truth about life’ although not every ‘truth’ is universally accepted (translation is mine).

Poetry just like philosophy, tries to uncover such issues like where is human being from? Why is he in this world? Does God exist? If so, how does He look like? How powerfully God is? Also, poetry asks if there is life after death? How can several issues in the world such as love, justice, humanity, and the like be explained? In general, poetry tries to guide peoples’ world view. Generally, poetry and philosophy have strong affinity.

The first and foremost affinity between poetry and philosophy is on their definitions and functions. As presented earlier, philosophers were seen as wise men and what was said by them was considered to be wisdom (Makumba, 2005:26). The same thing has been seen in the definitions of poetry. Most of the definitions of poetry consider poetry as a literary composition filled with wisdom (see Mnyampala, 1975; Abedi, 1954).

Another interface between poetry and philosophy is seen in their perception of things. Poetry, just like philosophy, assesses the existing outlooks and finds a better explanation of things. That means poetry seeks to challenge the current baseless outlooks. The same thing is said in relation to philosophy (see Makumba, 2005).

Apart from that, another thing that shows the interface between philosophy and poetry is their subject matter or material object. As we have presented earlier, philosophy, unlike other disciplines, studies all things. The same is seen in poetry. Poetry investigates everything and presents a better understanding of them. It investigates and explains things related to day-to-day life, political, economical, social and cultural issues. To be specific we can say, poetry investigates and explains politics, society, language, psychology and religions, to mention a few. Therefore, poetry is more than political science, sociology, linguistics, psychological sciences and theology. Okolo (2007) argues that, although there is strong affinity between philosophy and poetry, the interface is not frequently explored. This article intends to respond to Okolo's call of a need to explore the affinity between poetry and philosophy. In so doing, the article focuses on Kiswahili poetry as a case study specifically by examining Muzale's *Nakuomba* poems.

4.0 Muzale's *Nakuomba* Poems as Philosophy

Nakuomba is a collection of poems composed by Henry Muzale (2006). Having published widely in linguistics and Bantu linguistics, Muzale comes up with a publication in literature which he names it *Nakuomba*. Thirty nine poems found in this book are divided into four sections, namely, "Vijana na Huba" (Youth and Love), "Binadamu" (Human being), "Maisha" (Life) and "Kumbuka" (Remember). The poems in *Nakuomba*, just like philosophy, questions several existing ideas and concepts, clarifies and analyzes them, critically evaluates those concepts and creates a new outlook to those ideas and concepts. The next subsections present how *Nakuomba* reflects a philosophical thinking. We will also present how ideas in *Nakuomba*, just like in philosophy, are general without being pinned to any one discipline.

4.1 Questioning of the Existing Ideas and Concepts in Muzale's *Nakuomba*

Muzale's *Nakuomba*, just like philosophy, questions several existing ideas and concepts. Such concepts include "what is true love?" "What is humanity?" "What

is life and the ultimate goal of human life?” Also, it questions the existence of God, his powers, death and life after death. Very similar questions have drawn the attention of philosophers over time. Questions in *Nakuomba* revolve around the branches of philosophy outlined in previous section and the general concern of philosophy as a discipline. That is to say, *Nakuomba* is not only questioning existing ideas and concepts but it is also engaging itself in questions that philosophers have been asking for ages. In his book, *Nakuomba*, Muzale (2009) clearly puts out his stand that people should not accept everything; they need to firstly question those things and critically analyze them before they can decide. This stand is seen in the poems “Ewe Binti” (You Lady) in page 43 and “Mwafrika” (An African) in page 112 as quoted below:

(1)

1. Ni lazima uchungue, uwajue kwelikweli	1. You must investigate, make sure you know them precisely
2. Na kisha ukachambue, waongo na wa ukweli	2. And then scrutinize, the liars and the honest people
3. Tofauti uzijue, wapole hata wakali...	3. Be aware of the distinctions, between the humble and harsh ones...

(2)

1. Mwilio kubadilika, unafurahia nini?	1. Change of your body, how does it make you happy?
2. Na nywele za kubandika, ukafanane na nani?	2. And the wigs on your head, so that you look similar to whom?
3. Huo wanja unapaka, utakuletea nini?...	3. The kohl you smears, what will it bring to you?
4. Hayo unayoyapaka, asili yake ni nini?	4. Those things you smear, what is its origin?
5. Wajua yalikotoka, au waiga kinyani?	5. Do you know where are they from, or you just aping?
6. Madhara yakikufika, utamlilia nani?	6. When you will be affected with them, who will you cry to?

These two poems present Muzale’s stand that we need to question everything before we arrive at a conclusion. This is typically a philosophical approach of looking at things. Therefore, generally, *Nakuomba*, questions various ideas and concepts before arriving at conclusions as evident below:

4.1.1 *Nakuomba* Questions Love

Nakuomba questions what is love? What does it mean to love? How does true love manifests itself? What is the relationship between love and money, and so on. This is obviously seen in the poems, “Mapenzi ya Pesa” (Money-based love) and “Haki ya Nani?” (Whose Right?). These two poems show clearly that the

author is aware that the society recognizes the existence of love. The author however questions: What is love all about? What are the qualities of love? Why do we love? Who do we love? There are many other questions. This author does not take existence of concept “love” for granted. For instance, the author questions: if love exists why then people with money are the ones who are loved most? In other words, he is asking why poor people are hated, mistreated and abused? The author therefore, wants society to reassess whether love is natural or motivated by other factors. This is clearly seen in the following stanzas:

(3)

1. Ukishazitaja pesa, watu macho huwatokea	1. Once you mention money, everybody become attentive
2. Kwa vijana ndiyo hasa, tamaa kali yawaka	2. Especially youths, they long much to have money
3. Wanadhani kuwa pesa, ni mapenzi na baraka...	3. They think that money, is love and blessing...
4. Kwa vijana wa kisasa, vyote viwili wataka	4. To nowadays youths, they want both of them
5. Mapenzi pia na pesa, kwa pamoja huvishika	5. Love and also money, they hold them together
6. Huku pesa ukigusa, pendo rohani kuweka...	6. If you have money, you also have love...
7. Mnazitumia pesa, kama silaha mabwana	7. Gentlemen you are using money, as a weapon
8. Mwajua kuwa mapesa, huwazuzua vijana...	8. You know that money, captures youths...
9. Maskini hana hisa, kwa maisha ya kupenda	9. Poor people have no share, in love life

4.1.2 *Nakuomba* Questions the Meaning of Life

Another thing that *Nakuomba* questions is the meaning of life. The poet is aware that society knows that there is life but he questions what does it mean to live? What is the cause of life? What are the basic principles of life? The poet is of the view that life is a very complex phenomenon which is surrounded with several complex questions. He propounds questions like: Why are human beings not equal? Why are there classes of people and why are we born males or females? Other questions are: why are other people educated while others are not? Why some people die while young while others die at old age? Why some people have disabilities while others do have not? Moreover, the poet asks, why are some poor while others are very rich? Why are some people married while others who are beautiful and well mannered are unmarried? Why are some people suffering throughout their lives while others do not? The poet presents that some people can have similar behaviour/ability and exposed to very same environment, circumstances and situations but end up differently. Some of them will be rich while others are poor, some of them will reach high levels of education while

others won't and some will succeed in life while others will not. Muzale asks why it is so, while those people were exposed to the very same situations, have similar ability, were sent to the same school with the same teachers and so on and so forth. The author is of the view that life is very complex than what that society perceives. All these are evident in the poem "Maisha" (Life) in page 78:

(4)

1. Mabingwa nawauliza: hali vipi duniani?	1. I ask specialists: what is life?
2. Utadhani miujiza, au ni kama utani	2. It is like a miracle, or like a joke
3. Kweli ninaona giza, hayapiti akilini	3. It's really like am in a darkness, it does not bring sense
4. Maisha yanishangaza, yanavyokosa kanuni	4. Life amazes me, the way it has no formula
5. Wapo walo na vilema, vya mwili na akilini...	5. There are those who are disabled, physically and mentally...
6. Wamejaa matajiri, mafahari wa mijini	6. There are plenty of rich people, famous in towns
7. Watembea kwa magari, wanavuma kama nini...	7. They own motor vehicles, they are very famous...
8. Wapo walio na kazi, mijini na viwandani	8. There are those with employment, in towns and industries
9. Na walio viongozi, wakaoo jukwaani...	9. And there are leaders, who appear on stage...
10. Wasiokuwa na kazi, nao wapo mitaani...	10. Unemployed people, are also in the streets
11. Wapo wenye furaha, kila siku burudani...	11. There are happy ones, who enjoy daily...
12. Wapo wenye mashaka, mioyo yenye huzuni...	12. There are those with problems, their hearts filled with sorrow...

4.1.3 *Nakuomba* Questions the Existence of God and His Powers

Furthermore, Muzale's *Nakuomba* questions about God and His powers. This is seen in the poems "Imani" (Faith) in page 107 and "Kifo" (Death) in page 117. In these poems, a poet urges the society to revisit their conception of God, His existence and powers. In these poems Muzale brings back the same philosophical question on the existence of God. See the following lines:

(5)

1. Kimesibu kitu gani, maovu kuongezeka?	1. What has happened, evils have increased?
2. Watu kukosa imani, dunia kuharibika?	2. People to have no faith, the world to be distorted?
3. Tumlaumu shetani, au kuna mhusika?...	3. Should we blame the devil, or who is responsible?...
4. Ubaya na ushetani, vimezidi kupambika	4. Evil and Satanism, have increased so much
5. Wema uko mashakani, maovu yanachemka	5. Kindness is in stake, evils are plenty
6. Hata huko mawinguni, wanalia malaika	6. Even in heaven, angels are crying
7. Amefaulu shetani, au Mungu karidhika?...	7. Has Devil won, or God is satisfied?...
8. Imetoboka imani, shetani amefunguka?	8. No more Faith, devil is freed?

9. Mungu anafanya nini, au hana malaika?	9. What is God doing, or He has no angels?
10. Na mitume kazi gani, au wamefadhaika?	10. And what are prophets doing, or are also confused?

In these lines Muzale re-examines many things related to the existence of God, his ability and powers. He also examines religion and its roles. Also, he points out that religion is not performing its tasks as what society thinks it does. He argues further that, while society perceives religion as something sacred that will lead people to heaven, religious leaders and believers do a lot of evils (see the poem Maisha “Life” in data 6 below). What Muzale does here has no difference to what is done by natural theology, one of the branches of philosophy.

(6)

1. Nao vinara wa dini, baadhi watetereka	1. Even the religious followers, some are backsliding
2. Washangaa waumini, imani yawatoroka	2. Followers are puzzled, faith is disappearing
3. Mimbari waparamia, kauli safi zatoka	3. They jump on the altar, they give good words
4. Jioni ikifika, makanzu yawachomoka	4. When evening comes, robes are taken off
5. Hodi hodi twasikia, kitu gani wanataka!	5. We hear people knocking, what do they want!
6. Magari ukipekua, mdomo utaushika...	6. If you search their cars, you will be startled...
7. Kasisi wataka nini, kwa nini wahangaika?	7. What do reverends want, why aren't they settled?
8. Nawe shehe una nini, macho yanakuchomoka?	8. And what is wrong with you Sheikh, that makes you wonder?
9. Mtawa yule muhuni, vipi anarukaruka?	9. That monk is a hooligan, why is he misbehaving?
10. Maisha sasa utani, au enzi za dhihaka?...	10. Life now is a joke, or is it a satirical era?...

4.1.4 *Nakuomba* Questions Death and Life after Death

Furthermore, *Nakuomba* understands the society's conceptualization of death and life after death but it does not take that perception for granted. It questions why do people die? Who dies? Is there life after death? If there is, how does it look like? Who will live which life or will we all live the very same life? Is that life similar to the one we are living now? All these questions and other related ones are seen in poems like “Imani” (Faith), “Kifo” (Death) and “Siku ya Mwisho” (Doomsday). *Nakuomba* investigates the meaning of death, its possible causes, whether it is caused by God or what, and life thereafter. The author points out further that everything in the world dies but he asks when will death itself die? Such questions are, for instance, seen in the following stanzas of the poem “Kifo” (Death):

(7)

1. Kifo mali ya nani, tupate kumsakama	1. Death is who's property, so that we can deal with him
2. Kifo asili ni nini, tuweze kuiandama	2. What is the source of death, so that we deal with it
3. Kifo huamuru nani, tukamkate mtama	3. Who orders death, so that we fall him to ground
4. Kifo cha kifo ni lini, au lini kitahama?	4. When will death die, or when will it shift?
5. Kifo cha nani Muumba? Twambie twakulilia	5. Who created death, God tell us- we cry to you
6. Kifo ni wewe uliumba, kama ninavyosikia?..	6. God, did you create it, as I hear from other people?
7. Kifo hauna mpango, au sijaugundua?	7. Death, don't you have a plan, or I have not realized it?
8. Kifo hauna malengo, au hayajatimia?..	8. Death, don't you have objectives, or they have not yet been fulfilled?..

Nakuomba presents further that although people die everyday yet others are born. The poet, therefore, asks whether there will be a day when all the people in the world will be dead. He further questions that, how will the doomsday be and if at all that day will come. He questions everything about that day and life after death in general. He asks, for example, if people are dead how will they rise from death in doomsday? He also asks how will a person who had been eaten by a lion rise from death? Again, he asks how those people who had died of incurable diseases, such as AIDS and the like, will be cured and rise from death? These are clearly seen in the poem "Siku ya Mwisho" (Doomsday):

(8)

1. Maswali mengi kichwani, akili yanizunguka	1. Many questions in my heard, my brain is confused
2. Majibu mengi ni duni, sijaweza kuridhika	2. Many answers are poor, I am not satisfied
3. Nataka jibu makini, pasipo kubabaika	3. I want a better answer, which leaves no doubts
4. Hiyo siku ikifika, nami nipate okoka...	4. So that when the day comes, I can also be saved
5. Watu na viumbe hai, siku moja hutoweka	5. Humans and living things, perish one day
6. Kwa kilicho na uhai, bwana kifo atafika	6. Everything with life, will face death
7. Waumini wanadai, ipo siku kufufuka	7. Religious people claim, there is a resurrection day
8. Hiyo siku ikifika, kwa vipi watafufuka?..	8. When the day comes, how will they rise from death?..
9. Akili yanizunguka, yananipata mashaka	9. My brain is confused, I am filled with doubts
10. Hiyo siku ikifika, vipi dongo kufunuka?	10. When the day comes, how tombs will be opened?
11. Maelezo nayataka, elimu ya kufufuka	11. I need explanations, on resurrection education
12. Walozikwa kwa miaka, na mimba zilizotoka	12. Those buried in years, and aborted

13. Ajuza walozeeka, wenye mamia miaka	pregnancies
14. Hiyo siku ikifika, ni yupi atafufuka?	13. Very old people, with many years
15. Juma kaliwa na simba, naye Kabula kawaka	14. When the day comes, which one will rise up?
16. Na Ruta mlo wa mamba, majini ametoweka	15. Juma was killed by a lion, and Kabula was burnt to ashes
17. Mariam kawa pumba, bomu lilipolipuka	16. And Ruta was eaten by a crocodile, he has disappeared in water
18. Hiyo siku ikifika, wangapi watafufuka?...	17. Mary turned to ashes, when a boom exploded
19. Walemavu wa viungo, na wale walovunjika...	18. When the day comes, how many people will rise from death?...
20. Hiyo siku ikifika, ni wapi watatibika?	19. Physically disabled, and those with broken organs...
21. UKIMWI na malaria, kwa mamia tumezika...	20. When the day comes, where will they be cured?
22. Siku hiyo ikifika, wote wataburudika?	21. For AIDS and malaria, we have buried many...
	22. When the day comes, will all enjoy life again?

5.0 Clarification and Analysis of Ideas and Concepts in Muzale's *Nakuomba*

Okolo (2007:7) contends that the main concern of philosophy is with ideas. He contends further that, in order to assess these ideas and find out if they should be accepted, modified or rejected, it is necessary to understand clearly the terms used in conveying them. This is what is seen in *Nakuomba* where after asking questions about several existing ideas and concepts, *Nakuomba*, just like philosophy, clarifies and analyzes those ideas and concepts. The poet is obviously taking side with Okolo (ibid) that clarification and analysis of concepts is important business as most of the misunderstandings arise from inaccurate deployment of words. The poet, just like Okolo (ibid) is of the view that ordinary language is responsible for philosophical problems because it obscures meaning. To do so, Muzale, just like what other philosophers do, undertakes analysis of language. It is thus seen that, *Nakuomba* clarifies in a different perspective, words which were seen by the society to be common. Such clarifications of concepts seen in *Nakuomba* are: love (see the poems "Yalonipata" - That faced Me), "Mapenzi ya Pesa" (Money-based love) and "Haki ya Nani" (Whose Right), humanity (see the poem "Utu" (Humanity) and "Maisha" (Life), *ulevi*² (see the poem "Ulevi") and leadership.

² In Kiswahili, the word "ulevi" is perceived as excessive drinking of alcohol (i.e. alcoholism). But Muzale's "ulevi" in *Nakuomba* also means addiction to something. A person who is addicted to something is called "mlevi."

As for clarification and analysis of the concept love we see that *Nakuomba* gives some qualities of love in poems “Yalonipata” (That Faced Me), “Mapenzi ya Pesa” (Money-based Love) and “Haki ya Nani” (Whose Right). In these poems the poet describes love as a true feeling in the heart that has nothing to do with money or/and sexual intercourse. In the poem “Yalonipata” (That Faced Me), for instance, he says that people can have affairs without engaging in sex. He presents here that, true love waits for the right time. Again, in the poem “Mapenzi ya Pesa” (Money-based love) the poet clarifies that although the society associates love with money yet love is a natural phenomenon that happens to any human being, the poor and the rich. As these lines reveal:

(9)

1. Mahaba siyo mapesa, vipi tunababaika...	1. Love is not money, why are we confused...
2. Mapenzi siyo mapesa, acheni kubabaika...	2. Love is not money, don't get confused...
3. Mapenzi yakiwa mapesa, yanaibua uvundo...	3. When love is based on money, it caused many problems...
4. Mapenzi bora si pesa, pesa huzaa utwana...	4. True love is not money, money leads to enslavement...
5. Wale wasio na pesa, nao wataka kupenda	5. Those with no money, also need love

The poet also clarifies that love depends on time and it is something which is neither shared nor divided. What he is saying here is that, you can love a person today but hate him/her tomorrow; love is not something permanent. He also presents that love cannot be divided equally among two or more people. He is also of the view that love is not synonymous to marriage. Not only that but the author also clarifies that marriage, which many people believe goes hand in hand with love, good behaviour and beauty (Van Pelt, 1971; Ayisi, 1972), has no formula at all. For instance, a beautiful lady cannot be married while the ugly one can get married. This is clearly seen in the poem “Haki ya Nani” (Whose Right) and “Maisha” (Life) as quoted hereunder:

(10)

“Haki ya Nani” (Whose Right) page 54

1. “Mapenzi yana mnato, yamekosa katikati	1. “Love is attractive, there is no middle line
2. Yanafanana na moto, yategemea wakati	2. It is similar to fire, it depends on time ³
3. Kuyagawanya ni ndoto, usawa kamwe hupati...	3. It is not dividable; there will be no equality...
4. Hata kama una mali, ya kuwatunza mamia	4. Even if you have wealth, for taking care of many women
5. Nao moyo wa kujali, na nguvu kama ngamia	5. With the caring heart, and camel-like powers
6. Nawaomba kutegua, kitendawili cha ndoa	6. I request you to uncover, a marriage riddle

(11)

“Maisha” (Life) page 80-81

1. Kuna maisha ya penzi, kuwa na wako mwandani	1. There is love’s life, to have someone you love
2. Aliyelifuma penzi, linalofaa rohoni	2. Who has found your love, appropriate to your heart
3. Anaruka kama panzi, furaha tele mwilini...	3. He/she flies like a grasshopper, and feel very joyous
4. Maishani kuna ndoa, mapenzi tele rohoni...	4. In life there is marriage, heart filled with love...
5. Wengine vichwa vyavimba, fikra tele kichwani	5. Others have their heads aching, with a lot of thoughts
6. Kwa kuwakosa wachumba, upweke uso kifani	6. For not getting fiancées, they are so lonely
7. Japo miili wapamba, mwezi hawajabaini	7. Even though they decorate their bodies, they have found no lucky
8. Ingawa sala waomba, mshenga haji nyumbani...	8. Although they pray, go between has not come yet...
9. Muone pale Ashimu, anatamba kama nini	9. Look at Hashimu, he struts proudly
10. Ameoa yake timu, na kuwajaza nyumbani	10. Has has many wives, living with them at his home
11. Wanawake kemukemu, karibu na ishirini	11. A lot of women, they are nearly twenty
12. Na bado anatamani, apitapo mitaani	12. And he still desires another one, when walks in streets

³ Among traditional African societies, firewood was the main source of fire. Usually fire from firewood was not uniform; sometimes it was so strong some other times was weak depending on the amount of firewood, wind and other factors. So this kind of fire was seen to have been changing over time. Therefore when love is compared to fire it means that love changes over time, today it can be strong but tomorrow can be weak.

6.0 Critical Evaluation and Formulation of the World View in Muzale's *Nakuomba*

The poet in *Nakuomba* evaluates critically ideas and concepts. It is seen in this book that, having questioned the society's conception like love, life, God, humanity, and clarifying and analyzing them, *Nakuomba* critically evaluates them before proposing a new view of them. For instance, having seen that many societal members believe that marriage is associated to love, good behaviour, wealth and beauty (as presented in Van Pelt, 1971; Ayisi, 1972). Muzale asks, why then some men, have good behaviour and wealth but still they do not get married to those ladies they love? Again, he asks if for a woman to be married has to be beautiful and have good behaviour why some beautiful and well behaved ladies are not married? He questions further that, if marriage is something to do with love, why some people are married to many wives? How can one person love all those women? We have seen this critical evaluation of issues related to love in the poem "Haki ya Nani" (Whose Right) (page 52-55) and "Maisha" (Life) (page 78-86).

Moreover, *Nakuomba* does the same to the society's conceptualization of death and after life. It analyzes the matter by arguing that if a person has died due to incurable diseases how then can such a person rise and live again? How can a person who has died and his/her body turn into ashes get back to life? How can a person who had been torn into pieces by lions or crocodile live again? How can pregnancies that did not even reach the stage of complete human being, rise again and live like a complete human being? Again he asks, while some people die others are born daily how then will it be possible for the world to have nobody in it? These questions lay on the fact that logically and scientifically those things are far from possible.

After ideas and concepts have been critically evaluated and found to have problems hence a need for them to be modified or rejected, a new world view is formulated. Macgoye (2009:13) presents that poetry seeks a synthesis out of conflicting ideas and emotions (*and formulates a new world view*) (emphasis is mine). This is what is seen in Muzale's *Nakuomba*. After questioning the society's view of the concept love, giving its clarification and critical evaluation of the concept *Nakuomba* presents what love ought to be. In the poems "Mapenzi ya Pesa" (Love based on money) and "Haki ya Nani?" (Whose Right?), Muzale presents that love is different from desire. A man can desire to make sex with a certain woman but that does not mean that he loves her. He also distinguishes love, marriage, sex and money, that love does not manifest itself in marriage, sex or money. Not everybody we love, we get marriage to them; not everybody we

sex with, we love them; and not everybody we love has money. “Love” that has been anchored in money and properties is filled with problems and is nothing but enslavement. He thus warns people not to love for money or wealth. This is seen in the following stanzas of the poem ‘Mapenzi ya Pesa’ (Love based on Money): (15)

1. Mapenzi yakiwa ya pesa, yanaibua uvundo...	1. When love is based on money, it brings problems...
2. Enyi walio na pesa, kwanza wajua kupenda?	2. By the way, those with money, do you know how to love?
3. Mnazitumia pesa, kutugeza makinda	3. You use money, to turn us into kids
4. Hata kama una pesa, ninaweza kukuponda	4. Even if you have money, I can challenge you
5. Pesa zenu zanyanyasa, punguzeni yenu inda...	5. Your money mistreats people, reduce your meanness...
6. Mapenzi bora si pesa, pesa huzaa watwana...	6. True love is not money, money produces slaves...
7. Penzi si wingi wa pesa, penzi ni roho kupenda...	7. Love does not depend on money, love is in the heart...
8. Penzi likiwa la pesa, ipo siku litavia...	8. If love is based on money, there is a day it will be stunted

Furthermore, Muzale’s *Nakuomba* formulates a view on the existence of God and his powers. Having questioned the society’s view of God and his powers, giving clarification and doing a critical evaluation of it, Muzale arrives at a conclusion that God has nothing to do with evils, bad omens and death. Muzale challenges a society’s view that God is responsible for allowing those things to happen. Muzale also contends that death is very powerful than any human being and may be than God, that is why it still persists. He also urges the society to review their conception of religion as it seems not to fulfill what the society think it fulfills. He shows that religion is like a ‘forest’ where people hide their mistakes and that it is there to serve human interest. This is evident in poems “Maisha” (Life) in (18) and “Imani” (Faith) in (5) and (6).

On the question of life after death, Muzale is of the view that it is something complex than the way it is presented by the society. Having questioned, clarified and critically evaluated how afterlife is possible. Muzale clearly points out that the doomsday and afterlife in general, are far from the fact. He sees no possibility of people died of incurable diseases like AIDS to live again since they died because of lack of cure to the disease. He also sees no possibility of people died of bombs and their bodies turned to ashes to live again since it will be completely impossible for the ashes to turn back into human being. Even if that would be

possible, it would be scientifically impossible for the dead person to come back to life. The same applies to those deaths caused by being eaten by lions and crocodiles. Muzale, therefore, urges for a new outlook of death, afterlife and resurrection. This view is clearly presented in lines 7-8 and 15-17 in (8). For example, the poem says:

“Though religious people claim that there is a resurrection but how will that be?
Juma was killed by a lion, Kabula was burnt to ashes, Ruta was eaten by a crocodile
and he has disappeared in water and Mariam turned to ashes when a bomb exploded.
How then will all these rise from death?” (Translation and emphasis are mine).

We saw in the previous subsections that another interface between poetry and philosophy is their subject matter or material object. By this, we said that philosophy and so poetry, unlike other disciplines, studies all things. Poetry investigates everything and presents a better understanding of them; it investigates and explains things related to day-to-day life, political, economical, social and cultural issues. We thus argued that poetry investigates and explains politics, society, language, psychology and religions, to mention a few. We argue further that poetry, therefore, is more than political science, sociology, linguistics, psychology, sciences and theology. Therefore, we conclude that poetry is a socio-political, economical and cultural philosophy.

7.0 Conclusion

Generally speaking, *Nakuomba* shows a high level of presenting philosophical arguments on various issues of life. This paper argues that poetry is a socio-political, economical and cultural philosophy of a particular society it deals with. This is due to the fact that, from its definition, to its form and content, poetry proves to be a philosophical piece of writing. Therefore, poets are very important people in the society as they question the existing ideas in the society, clarify those ideas, evaluate them critically and formulate a world view. Poetry shapes society's thinking in various issues related to their day-to-day activities ranging from social, political, economical to cultural. That is to say, if our society will give poetry impetus it is likely to develop socially, politically, economically and culturally. A call is made for well trained societal members to compose philosophical poems that will carter the society's needs.

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