

Outline of Shaaban Robert's idealism

D. A. Masolo

The influence and dominance of Anglo-American philosophy since World War II has left the false impression that the philosophical ideas of thinkers can only be found in either the journals dedicated to the different aspects and branches of the discipline, or in the compendiums and treatises of their authors traditionally regarded to be philosophical within those traditions. I said "false," because it is hardly the case, yet the cultural bias and arrogance that came with colonial power left many people across the colonized world, especially in Africa, believing that philosophy had homes only in European languages and not in any one of their own. To be sure, style is one thing, and the thought content of a thinker's endeavors is a whole different matter. The Western colonial biases in defining what ought to be regarded as philosophy has led to the neglect or underrepresentation of the materials and content of philosophical education in formerly colonized countries and cultures. But this ought not be the norm, as experiential issues thinkers deal with, as well as the styles they present these concerns in, vary from tradition to tradition, and none of them is more valid than another. In what follows I sketch how Shaaban Robert's works can be read and reflected on, despite his unique and eclectic style, as works in social, moral, and even political philosophy. As he says it himself, a good text must be judged by the estimation of the audiences for whom it is written, and this can be the case only if the text appeals to, and stimulates their intellectual and emotional arousal, both of which are functions of the vernacular. Are English, French, German, Russian, Chinese, and any other language out there in the rest of the world, not just vernaculars to their respective native speakers after all? Similarly, and naturally for that matter, KiSwahili is the native language of all those people who consider it their native language through which they experience and think about the world.

Key Words: utu bora/utubora; kusadikika; adili na nduguze; watenzi wote; usawa; (u)radhia/radhi.

1. Preamble

I have enjoyed watching events held to honor Swahili culture and to celebrate those figures who have made the study of Swahili culture both interesting and rewarding as an area of study relatively neglected in African studies as compared to other culture-or-community-based scholarship. Recent

studies by and of Swahili writers and by non-African scholars who have opened up this tradition-rich platform of knowledge are making it possible to bring critical awareness to the centuries-old dynamics of the life practices of the people who identify as the Swahili, as well as of the literal complexity of KiSwahili as a language with multiple originary historical tentacles. In some cases, the politics of nation-building against those of ethnicity and territorial claims of autonomy have dwarfed scholarly attention to Swahili cultures and traditions. While the activities of the families and leaders of the Arab migrants and settlers-turned-political dynasty-founders of the region have been chronicled into history books, local actors, especially pioneers of resistance and intellectuals now claimed to have given this region its recognizable identity have not been given their due and deserved space. When recognized, they have not been fully accorded the right recognition. Shaaban Robert is one of these local intellectuals who have not been recognized, read, or discussed in a deserving manner. In this essay I propose to show what has been missed of Shaaban, given that he was far more than just the literary pioneer he is or is acclaimed to be. Such image—in the limited literary circles—tends to portray him only as a writer of local folktales. And given his style learned through the Madrasas, his stories mirror the style in such stories like *Alladin*, or *Elf Lela Ulela*, an influence that causes some scholars to claim that Shaaban was condescending or outright despising toward African cultures. But this might not be true. The likely the case is that Shaaban was exposed to, and chose to identify himself as culturally belonging to the Swahili community, perhaps on reasonable grounds. Although he may have been told of his Yao genealogy, he did not culturally know what this meant to him.

He was born in Machui where such genealogy did not impact his life in any significant way. However, both his parents, hence his ethnic roots, were known to trace to the Yao community. While little is known about his parents, or how they had arrived in Machui, a little village or town south of Tanga that the family called home, the Yao community is known to be found in the multi-nation region that covers part of southern modern-day Tanzania, northern Mozambique, and parts of south-eastern Malawi. According to J. W. T. Allen, the author of the 'Editorial Notes,' Shaaban "never identified himself as a Yao, but rather was one of those few [people] who always preferred to self-identify as 'the Swahili'" (Allen, J. W. T. quoted in Shaaban 1968: vi). This is interesting in at least one significant sense. Shaaban's preferred identity choice is intentionally cultural rather than ethnic. He appears to have given significance to practice as the way people should be identified. Anyone is a collection of their thoughts, beliefs, and behavior or actions, and this point pushed him to the sharp criticism of those whose behavior does not match how they want to be identified. While desiring to be seen as people who professed and propagated the Islamic faith, Arabs, and most who aligned with them, did not behave in ways—their racist scorn of Natives—that reflected the teachings of Islam, at least as he knew

it from his Madrasa teachers, and from his own reading of the Quran. I contend that Shaaban was first and foremost a critical thinker who, building on his observations of people's conduct as well as social relations at work and in everyday life, was driven to reflections on the racial identities and relations of the different people who populated the world he was born and grew up in. Although his own parents are said to have been Christians, Shaaban converted to Islam, the dominant religion of the region. The dominant political and socio-cultural situation during Shaaban's youth left the largely Muslim coast, including the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, far less catered for in the establishment and dispensation of modern education in contrast to the interior of mainland Tanganyika which was brought directly under the British-colonial and European missionary influence. The relations between the colonial state and the predominantly Arab coast whose allegiance was historically to Oman and the subsequent political powers of the Gulf were, to put it mildly, never warm. Based on these trends and socio-political dynamics of the time, it is likely that Shaaban's formal education and school experiences were limited, not by choice or personal inability, but by availability, to what today is equivalent to the four-year lower primary education which complemented taking lessons in the Madrasas and learning to recite the Quran. And while Quranic recitations may have left the imprint of poetic style upon him, Shaaban may have quickly noticed the contrasts, indeed contradictions, between the apparent unity or oneness of humans as God's special creation as proclaimed in the Quran, on the one hand, and the social and racial rifts, inequalities, hostilities, and discriminations between people of the different races and cultural practices. And the perpetrators of these evils were Arabs toward native Africans, and not the other way round. History lessons at the secular 'Skul,' usually under the District Education Boards (D.E.B), may have opened his eyes and mind to the reality of the historical-colonial migrations that brought non-Black people to the region, and the atrocities of the practices they were associated with. The vision of, and reflections on these contradictions drove Shaaban into his own philosophical insights. If humans are created equal, then what principles justify the injustices observed in both historical and present societies? He argued that if indeed humans are created equal—as he believed from his Quranic lessons—then what is good for one person or one community ought to be good for all, and, similarly, what is bad for one person or community ought to be bad and unacceptable for all, regardless of how they look or what they profess as faith. His works portray deep reflections on the universality of human nature, *Utu*, and their equality, *Usawa*, even if their bodily appearances, *Umbo*, and cultures, *Utamaduni*, may be diverse. For him, therefore—as we see in his brilliantly written *Kusadikika*—the diversity of appearances, and of cultures, do not increase for some humans the claims that address the fundamental values of human nature or diminish them for others. The differential claims and their social perpetrations based on race, gender, or social class are unjustifiable and ought

to be dismantled and replaced with different social orders based on the principles of the universality of human nature and equality of all humans without exception.

Socially and culturally too, Shaaban was aware, and he indicates, of the cultural inter-infiltrations between the peoples of the islands and those of the mainland. Who would have known, as narrated in *Utubora Mkulima*, that Sheha and Radhia were related after all? And how surprising this discovery was to Utubora? (Shaaban 1998: 58-59). This fact was only the more proof to Utubora that people are judged by their own character, and that character is built through the choices that one makes in life, which in turn determine one's fortunes, not one's relations. Although they were related—which we find out only toward the end of the story—Sheha and Radhia bore such contrasting characters. It is at least partly for this reason that Shaaban wanted to be identified only by the choices he made in life, including self-identifying as a 'Mswahili,' which he seemed to define solely on a cultural basis. While he is known to have been a practicing Muslim, Shaaban does not identify himself in his works as a Muslim, nor is any one of his heroes, male or female, lauded in their deeds as the function or result of their religious faith. Furthermore, he was critical of the shortcomings of both Islam and Christianity, as organized religious institutions, in respect to what they did, or did not do, to transform the lives of their followers. But this could also be read as indication of his view that religion is a personal matter between one and their God. What is important is how one lives a life based on rational convictions whose practical consequences are good and desirable for the individual concerned and the world in general. Hypocrisy is the character of an individual divided into two, one whose outward conduct does not reflect their convictions, or one who relates to different people differently based on who they are and the relations between him/her and them.

There is no doubt that Shaaban was a brilliant student both in the formal educational realm and also in the informal arena of the everyday, public socio-cultural and political arena as experienced in the events that characterized the society and region that he called home. Later, as we gather from his comments on foreign political figures or world events, we can infer that Shaaban, as already a brilliant learner, was very aware of some events of the global politics of his time such as the wars, the inequities, and the injustices that defined or drove them. He was also aware of the resistance movements for change against global historical injustices. To change the undesirable and intolerable socio-political states or conditions, action was necessary, and it had to start with a critique and awareness creation and spread through one formidable tool that he knew best: writing. No socio-political change, Shaaban argued in *Utubora Mkulima*, comes to people who do not act to effect, or to bring about positive socio-political transformation into the desirable conditions. Aware that not everyone is aware of, or is affected in the same way by those conditions that need change, nor does everyone know, or even care

about, what needs to be done to improve society. Most people are concerned only with their daily experiences such as where their daily food will come from. They lack critical awareness of the world and how it works. So, Shaaban argues, critical awareness of this type is the function of a higher level of intelligence and the capability to know and understand different types and levels of the good and their relations to daily experiences.

To give force to, and to sustain these sophisticated critiques, Shaaban crafted a depth in KiSwahili, firstly to perform his socio-cultural and political critiques, and perhaps only secondarily to dazzle his readers with good story-telling in never-before-seen styles. Because he knows his language well, and also reflects on his experiences as conceptualized within the broader social, cultural, historical, and political contexts of the time, he finds the best modes to express his critiques in accessible and enjoyable ways without losing the conceptual power of what he intends to say. Shaaban says it himself, that his primary reason for opposing translations, or writing for locals in foreign languages, was because he believed that writing must have the power to capture the reader's attention and draw her/him into getting involved in the subject-matter of the story. But because the majority of us—his readers and others—were not brought up with the habits of abstract thinking, his critiques still remain cryptic yet not too distant behind the story. This is why it is critical to read each and every line, every name of characters, and every locution, in Shaaban's texts with a careful and investigative eye, and listen to every story with an investigative ear and mind. It is not easy, as the targets of the critiques are both present yet also concealed at the same time. And finally, that in order to accomplish these goals, that is, to execute the critiques in a manner that was both incisive and also enjoyable as a reading at the same time, he crafted and used different styles—sometimes using an African story-telling style as in *Utubora Mkulima*, and *Siku ya Watenzi Wote*, and sometimes adopting an Arab style of allegorical imageries acting in an imaginary state, as we see in *Kusadikika*. Based on their themes or subject matter, Shaaban appears to direct these works at different audiences: the first two at Africans because they are about the rejection of oppression and a call to action for social change that leads to a democratic state and order, while the third is directed at multiple audiences, both villains and victims, because it is aimed at exposing the immorality and injustices of the self-imposing aristocracy and assumed but false racial superiority of the Arabs that stood then as obstacles in the path to the ideal state that restores justice for all, because all humans are morally equal as bearers of the universal *Utu*.

Then there is also a third tier of Shaaban's writing—not discussed here—that address, or teach, general moral principles, thus is open, as if in inference or conclusion from the above, to all readers. One work in this category is his *Masomo yenye Adili*. In addition to these philosophically-oriented works, Shaaban also wrote texts to explain the different textual styles. *Kielezo cha Fasili* ('Explaining Style,

Design, or Story Plot'), *Kielezo cha Insha* ('Explaining Essay Composition'), and *Sanaa ya Ushairi* ('Poetry as Art') are titles which could fall under this category. Shaaban's deliberate stylistic originality made him unique and accessible to readers from any and all walks of life, yet, at the same time, also above the casual reader who would only seek to enjoy the characteristic creative language use. I present Shaaban primarily as a philosopher who not only set out to critique the attitudes and practices of the socio-political elites of his time on the basis of his philosophical convictions and principles, but chose to do so in a language accessible to his people or readership while employing a literary style that resonated with what he himself called 'the spirit or humor' that was at the same time new and popular among the literal population of the region in which he lived and worked. The language and style would not only make the subject matter both accessible and intellectually engaging to his primary audiences or readership, its enjoyable narrative style would also make the subject narratable in story form to broader audiences. Thus, perhaps with the exception of *Kusadikika*, many of Shaaban's writings bear elements of African story-telling styles. *Kusadikika* bears this exception due to its complex conceptual nuances as well as layers of social categories that intersect in the socio-political reality of Tanganyika as a socio-political territory, but of the coastal strip in particular, and this in itself is a complex socio-political concept in the book as it blurs but does not ignore or negate the overlap between the Arab-dominated coastal region and the islands with their claimed autonomy and continued political allegiance to Oman and socio-cultural allegiance to the Arab world of the Gulf, on the one hand, and the territory of the British colony which covered the whole of the mainland but only in some intricate ways also the islands. It would be hard to untangle these delicate and complex layers of socio-political histories and their cultural productions while also trying to tell an enjoyable story.

2. The questions: setting up the subject matter

We all can relate to the divisions that define our political worlds. From taxes to freedoms, to public services, and to inequalities and other injustices in society, we all have different opinions on, or desires for how we would like the world we live in to be or to look like. Amazingly, despite their differences and contrasts, most such opinions profess that their goal is to make the world a better place. The problem, as spelled in the radical question "For who?" is that interests, and the means or modalities by which they are deemed realizable, seldom take the Other person or Other people, those on the other side, into consideration, especially when their interests seem to run counter to one's own. It is the realization of this deep-lying sense of self-interest in the behavior of mammals, humans included, that makes philosophy an interesting discipline, at least, and especially, as articulated in the goals of its social branches like ethics, social science, and political philosophy.

Why should the interests of other people matter to us? The answer to this fundamental question has been at the foundation of all moral traditions, both popular and also those produced by philosophers. The Ghanaian philosopher suggests that the realization of the unprofitability of this underlying natural inclination is what defines the human brain's difference from the brains of most other mammals—namely, that it stems the potentiality of irresolvable conflict by a drive to self-preservation through the institution of the what he calls the 'sympathetic impartiality' (Wiredu 1996: 29-33). We all desire organized lives, but sometimes we have fundamental differences about what an organized world means, or how it would be like. But we are able to imagine ourselves in one where all our interests are catered for. Now, if this is what applies to everyone, then, as likely happens in real life situations, then our interests, as imagined in our best possible world, come into direct conflict with the interests of others. The sympathetic impartiality is, then, not just the natural beginning of our moral thinking, it is also an expression of our realization of the fundamental equality of all humans.

'Treat others as thou would like them to treat thee' is a universal moral maxim, called 'the Golden rule,' and is found in most known cultures that expresses an ideal or virtuous conduct. In Western European thought and professional philosophy, it was popularized by Immanuel Kant, and subsequently became the pillar of virtue ethics. Kant elevates it to the level of what he called 'pure practical reason,' meaning he elevated this rule to a pure universal principle known as 'the Categorical Imperative' which is stated thus: 'Act as though the principle of your action was a universal principle.' Shaaban Robert, to whom it was not lost from the indigenous system and strengthened by Islamic education, defends this maxim in *Utubora Mkulima*. Because the conditions of rural life, one in which people generally self-employ, provides the conditions of equality where true moral principles emerge and become applicable in all sectors of life. Shaaban views this to present a contrast to the commercial settings where the social structures are hierarchized and thus are already morally prejudicial. But we see at the end of *Utubora Mkulima* that equality in these places is still possible, yet subject to manipulation into obstacles to moral ideals. One such obstacle to the moral ideal is jealousy and rivalry in society, an evil that can occur even within family structures and break it apart. I have recently written an essay on 'Virtue Ethics in the Philosophy of Shaaban Robert,' in which I argue that the 'corpus of his work in sum' portrays the need for virtues for everyone as the cure for moral infractions and the means to an ideal society and polity. I have also argued in the past (Masolo 2019: 40-72) that Shaaban's focus on virtuousness—a life built on virtues—spells his view of humans as communitarian, in contrast with the liberal-individualist view of humans in the social-political philosophy of John Rawls (1971), perhaps the most influential Western philosopher of liberalism.

The second question could be put this way: Should everyone organize only their own life and the lives of their own families? What is meant by 'organization' in these questions, so what would one do in organizing their life and that of their family? There are matters in your life as an individual that you would not like anyone else to be involved in—like deciding who to love or to marry, what kind of shoes or clothes to wear, or whether, or how many times to shower, and so on and so forth. These are personal preferences, and preferences are that we keep them so, that is, out of reach of other people's judgements. But we have seen that even some of these private-sounding matters have fallen under some kind of public scrutiny and control, at least sometimes. So you ask yourself: aren't there some things that I can do as a human being without anyone else's control or interference? If so, which ones are they, and why? And which ones are those things that I need, or would like to have, but require the role of someone else to organize? Why, and who should perform the task of organizing those specific things of our lives? Who identifies the 'person(s)' to perform those tasks, and what exactly can they do and not do in the course of performing those duties, and why—in other words, how, or what method do we use to identify such persons? What qualities should qualify such people to perform such tasks? How exactly shall or should they perform their duties? And how should I regard my relations to such people when they in the course of performing those appointed tasks—in other words, do they suddenly become superior to me, or what kind of conditions should be created to enable such persons to successfully perform their duties without causing harm to me, and without interference from me or any other person? How long should they be in those positions for, and why? Should their performance be assessed, and who will assess their performance, and how? What happens if they do not perform well? You can see, our social world bares an endless stream of questions pertaining to the interests of all people who share a defined space. Our interests are pursuable in the domain we share with other people, and so we need boundaries that define the limits that separate private spaces from the shared ones, and these limits are not only physical, but, significantly, also social. But we cannot have or enjoy them at the expense of similar interests of others. In other words, they are part of the public good. Now, these questions appear also to address the origin and meaning of this special kind of power—political power and, above all, awareness of its legitimacy as well as of its dangers, and therefore the need for its limitation and careful control by those who the use of the (political) power is intended to serve or benefit.

The above questions are about the public domain we all take for granted as something that comes about 'naturally.' In other words, humans are political animals, they are gregarious, hence the need for an orderly living with others whose needs will, by and large, likely be similar to those of at least most others. But that is just one layer of justification for public or political organization. Another layer, more

fundamental, regards what it is about humans that would not be well if there was no organized form of relations with others. This valuable thing about humans is probably what drives the need and vision for different social scenarios, whether they are moral or political. In other words, why do we need morals, or a political order? Answers to these two questions should articulate the most fundamental reason or value that justifies our beliefs about morals, or about which type of political order is the best or most suited. They co-exist, and compete as functions, i.e., the result, of the identified value, namely that living with others enables us to accomplish our potentials, and even to thrive in exercising our human qualities. And why do I say all these things in an essay about Shaaban Robert? Because he sees the two realms to intersect. One cannot be a good leader if they are not, first and foremost, morally good people. We apply to the public domain what we have calculated in the form of individual personal qualities. In sum, the above ideas are what drove Shaaban Robert to write some of the books he wrote. I say some, because his work is vast, although one gets deceived by the physical sizes of many of them, a matter which, in itself, also tells us something positive about Shaaban, namely that his unrivaled knowledge of KiSwahili allowed him to condense potentially larger volumes by packing complex ideas, sometimes whole theories, into few words, often in the form of carefully crafted personal names. *Kusadikika* is a perfect example of this craft. In it as in other story-like texts, including those written in allegorical form, he formulates value-laden ideas set in dialogical contrasts as arguments between characters to whom he assigned carefully chosen names coined from words designating concepts. Given the theoretical poverty of our colonial education, many readers are not equipped with the kind of conceptual sensitivity that leads to identification of arguments hidden behind what appear to be simple dialogues or conversations. A good example is Shaaban's *Utubora Mkulima*, which many casual readers will enjoy as a story of the adventures of an ambitious but appearing to be misguided young man who abandons a well-paying clerical job in a Clove trader's warehouse in Zanzibar to return to a remote rural community on the mainland Tanganyika where he basically suffers yet offers his free labor and engages in futile conversations about unhelpful abstract ideas with folks who do not understand him. Our education taught us to identify the actors of the plot, and the linguistic beauty of the story, period. In other words, we needed to take the story 'as told,' because the author was merely using his proficiency in the KiSwahili language to tell a fictional story, nothing more. That was how our education was set, and our teachers, both native and sometimes expatriate, knew no more either. Like us, our native teachers were not theoretically equipped either. And many of us have perpetuated this unreflective approach to African authors, especially those who were like Shaaban. Now, I cannot tell that our expatriate teachers did not know the theoretical content of Shaaban's stories, but if they knew, they wouldn't have told us because such theoretical content was subversive anyway. Against them!

The attitude of our expatriate teachers was that our native authors were not known to have gone to Makerere, or Nairobi, or London, hence they could not be deep thinkers. And we? We could not break down the texts right from their very titles. Worse still, the authors did not write in English. They wrote in their 'vernaculars,' the native languages related to non-reflective minds, so neither they nor their readership could have been sophisticated. Their achievement could not have been beyond, or other than in committing their stories to writing. The content, on the other hand, could not have been more than just folktales. These were the layers of the denigration of the native or indigenous writer, and we inherited all this colonial bias.

The social and political environment in which Shaaban grew and worked was complex, with layers of religious, racial, and political tensions. Navigating through these layers must have been daunting, most likely hampering the freedom of expression a commentator felt or knew they had in addressing some issues, or talking about, or saying them in those ways they may have deemed to be potentially precarious to their own and other people's interests. For Shaaban, then, writing in KiSwahili must have been not merely due to his not knowing another tongue, but also, conveniently and importantly, a strategy for navigating the multi-layered the political terrain—the Arab, and the European-colonial. Layers of foreign political authority in colonial Tanganyika included remnants of the influence of the Omani Sultans who had established their Headquarters in Zanzibar in 1840, then the Germans established their colonial authority there in 1891, before the British took over in 1918 and Zanzibar came under the British Protectorate when the Germans renounced their colonial territories for economic reasons following the end of World War I. All the while, however, Arab presence and commercial influence in the upper coastal region of Tanganyika including, and especially in Zanzibar, remained unperturbed. They conveniently accommodated settlers from India whose predecessors had been brought over as coolies by the British to help build the railway lines in East and southern Africa. Many of these Indian migrants stayed on after independence, and their descendants control much of the retail commerce on the mainland while Arabs dominated in Zanzibar and its sister island of Pemba.

3. Social, cultural, and political complexity of the so-called Swahili Coast

Despite the Union and apparent peace, the Arab factor remains a significant influencer in Tanzanian politics and cultural identity. This competition for political and cultural visibility and gain, especially between sections of the coastal people—especially those made up of Arabs and the in-between populations that choose to identify as or with Arabs—on the one hand, and those who identify as Black or indigenous, on the other, continues to play a delicate but significant influence on Tanzanian politics to-date. It puts obvious political and cultural pressure on those people who, like Shaaban or the

community he grew up in, identify as ‘the Swahili.’ What people do not realize, however, is the racial tensions that emerge from the claims and counter-claims on the region, and how those tensions play out in the thoughts and works of writers like Shaaban. What is crucially difficult—because it is sensitive and delicate to do without being seen to fan them further—is how to detect and call out these tensions, including how individuals, depending on how they identify themselves within this complex cultural melting pot, are ready to publicly admit their reality, thus causing them to describe some writers as significant and others as not, and influencing how they conceptually break down the contents of the texts of different writers. Sometimes it comes down to who is doing the analysis, and how the writer in question is ‘ethnically’ or culturally identified in the context of these political and cultural tensions. These matters make Shaaban Robert both special and contestable at the same time. Perhaps his pioneer writing in and subsequent transformation of KiSwahili into a formidable literary medium made him unassailable. And he obviously took advantage of this unique status.

Calling the Swahili Coast a cultural and political melting pot now almost sounds like a cliché that downplays the intensity of the tensions that define this region. While it might be considered a ‘normal’ social phenomenon in this region—extending to the Coastal strip in Kenya as well—to see Arab or Swahili households employ native Africans as domestic servants or shop stewards, the reverse is nearly unheard of, if not virtually impossible, at least not in public display. Why so, when privileges claimed by people of Arab descent ended with the attainment of independence? What about native Africans in Arab literature? These and other questions become a crucial window that opens up to Shaaban’s literary and philosophical world. It is clear that Shaaban’s experience living and growing up in Dar es Salaam, and later moving to make Tanga his home, and working in different departments as a civil servant within the colonial establishment (he was a Customs Officer; an Officer in the Department of Animal husbandry; an Officer in the Provincial administration in his hometown Province of Tanga; and lastly an Officer in the Department of Survey, also in Tanga) gave him the opportunity to observe, and perhaps also to experience these tensions first hand. How, then, could his work be only about folklore? Peeling back and finding the address of these issues in the pages of Shaaban’s work is a challenge because they are not treated in any single, identifiable text or place. Rather, Shaaban addressed diverse issues across all his works of diverse styles—poetry, essays, and allegorical stories, all of which require careful reading and analysis as opposed to superficial story or poetry reading like I hinted at with the example of *Utubora Mkulima* above.

4. The traces

Shaaban has an interesting autobiographical poem in *Koja la Lugha* (Shaaban 1969: 72-74). Here, Shaaban appears to intimate that there was racism in society, and perhaps even at his place of work, although he was personally not treated with racist scorn, bias, or insults. Yet, even here Shaaban sees it necessary to explain that his good and honest work proved to his employers and colleagues at work in the Department of Customs that “race was not a hindrance to equality” (Shaaban 1969: 73). The reciprocal respect and trust earned him a good name among his bosses and workmates alike, an occurrence that has only left them all with good memories both ways. This piece, it seems, was Shaaban’s address to perpetrators of racism toward people like himself that there was no character attributable wholesale to a group of people seen to be alike in any manner. Rather, character was a personal attribute that signifies in a consistent manner the unity between the inner self of convictions of reason and its outward manifestation in conduct. A person’s conduct tells publicly a story about their judgements and sense of responsibility over duties expected of them. And one deed doesn’t cut it, but when they are performed consistently in a certain manner, then they tell a story about their base and drive. Together, in that relational structure, they form one’s character.

We judge whether places are or are not good to live in by what we encounter as the general character of its people. Indeed, in *Siku ya Watenzi Wote* (Shaaban 1968: 2), pre-independence Tanganyika is described as an uncomfortable place that lacked freedom and equality, and we know that this was the reality in Tanganyika when Shaaban worked in the Customs Department. It was the Tanganyika where—as narrated as part of the cause of Utubora’s distress at the beginning of *Utubora Mkulima* which is a mirror of his own autobiographical descriptions of his drives or motivations in life as based on his experiences and observations—some people, meaning natives, Black Africans, were consistently derogatively referred to by their Arab neighbors or workmates, and by those others identifying themselves as such, as having pigmentation similar to tar. Although he had lived a relatively successful life that was admired and envied by many of his peers, still Shaaban knew that he lived in a world that was generally not a good place. So sometimes he wished, just by sarcastic speculation, that he was a black ivory, for he would have been accorded much higher value than Black Africans were thought to have. Or better still, again just by sarcasm, he wished his Master had taken him along with him as this would have saved him from the many hardships that they face collectively as Black Africans. He would have been clothed and fed, and then used his savings to buy his freedom back. But, he thought, all this would have placed him even lower in value than even the most black ivory that had ever existed. Why? Because his work, his services, “would only have been to the gain of someone else. Yet, all these evils were perpetrated by people who thought of themselves as being closer to God than us” (Shaaban 2003:

78-79). These references to the historical Arab interests in East Africa are heart-rending. It is with this kind of experiences that Shaaban grew skeptical about the sincerity of believers who, as a result of these contradictions between faith and action, made religion look worthless to the human good. There is an oblique reference to slavery and slave trade by Arabs who dominated the Indian Ocean slave trade for centuries before the arrival of the Portuguese who also practiced the same before the universal Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. How, in the face of this history, could any Black African see value in Islam, or trust Arabs in their dealings or general relations with each other since they saw Africans as objects?

5. In pursuit of a perfect world

Shaaban's experiences outlined above set him up to seek a better world, the best possible world in which those atrocities and tribulations would not occur or happen to anyone. Scholars concur that Shaaban's *Siku ya Watenzi Wote* (Mulokozi 1975) and *Kusadikika* (Khamis 2001) spell out Shaaban's idealism or utopianism. That is undeniable. I argue, however, that nearly the entire corpus of Shaaban's work was dedicated to articulating not just what this ideal state would look like, but also what it is not, and what it would take to attain it. The opening questions above about the justifications for moral and political order look misleadingly simple, but they are the questions whose answers greatly divide nations across the world. Even when people were to agree that all humans deserve any value or dessert p because of the justifying reason q , there is likely to arise differences, sometimes fierce ones, about which kind of specific conduct, or political arrangements, best lead to the attainment of p . The removal of q alone does not guarantee or lead to agreement about the nature of what ought to follow. I have argued that John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971) emerged as the West's philosophical response to the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The contrast was huge, not just because Rawls's book is a massive and very sophisticated text on distributive justice built on liberalism while that of Marx and Engels was just a small pamphlet that listed basic socialist principles, but principally because, while what they advocated was similar—*freedom, equality, and fairness* as interests of the individual—their respective suggested manners of attaining those values were poles apart. Similarly, while answers to our questions might not cause a fight due to their probable obviousness, the manners in which answers to them have been executed have been sources of political acrimony and pain to whole populations across history, and people still continue to debate and disagree daily about them. The Cold-War era divisions of the world, including the then-divided Berlin, may either not be remembered by future generations of world history, or will be too abstract by virtue of historical distance to relate to any real experiences the affected people of the time, just like the

present and future generations of Africans can or will hardly fathom the pain still felt by living older generations as a result of arbitrary colonial split and mapping of Africa. Shaaban's references to the plunder of Africa in search of ivory and slaves, both conceived by Arab traders as market commodities, suggests that he believed that moral wrong, especially those that filter down to regulating social relations, are unforgettable as scars in the history of human relations.

6. Equality, freedom, and a just society

Ethics and political theory are in service of basic values which we consider to be conceptually irrefutable or self-explanatory. Shaaban was not different in his belief that humans possess a certain basic value in service of which they ought not to be treated in certain ways that are incommensurate with this universal value—of *Utu*—while, in a negative angle, certain things ought not be denied to them for the same reason. We demand or condemn certain actions based on whether they deny or violate what is considered prescriptive in respect of this basic human value. That value gives humans fundamental rights we call human rights. The rights we claim simply by virtue of being human—having *Utu*. Then there are rights that humans claim to belong to them by virtue of membership to groups that possess these rights, or by virtue of meeting the conditions set for accessing those rights. But no such claims give one group claims of superiority over any other. In other words, according to Shaaban, *Utu* has neither metaphysical nor social gradations, thus it lacks any moral justification upon which one group would possess more of it than another group. Thus, as we see in *Kusadikika*, aristocracy has no moral justification whatsoever. Nor does race have it. Yet, in *Kusadikika*, both racial and aristocratic claims to Arab superiority come as a package. Shaaban has pretty clear ideas, not only of the basic human value, but also of how it—that is, *Utu*—defines an individual's rightful claims in society. But because Shaaban does not set a theoretically or conceptually systematic way of dealing with these matters in deductive format, any commentator is pushed to find and configure how and where the structure of deductive argument hides in the multi-style corpus, and then bring together, that is, systematize the conceptual elaboration. For example, while Shaaban uses *Utubora Mkulima* to critique the effects of the socially hierarchizing world of trade on the idea of self-worth and critical thinking of those who work within it by denying them the opportunity to relate themselves and their conditions to broader socio-political and moral issues, his critique of the ethics of conducting trade, or business ethics, occurs explicitly in *Adili na Nduguze*. Also, while *Utubora Mkulima* treats matters of human nature and human rights that are predicated on the peculiarity of being human, the moral and political implications of these are the subject of *Kusadikika*. *Ubor*a—that is, perfection—which stands as the basis but also the goal of *Utubora*'s endeavors, is not a given. *Utu bora* is not attained by any single action,

although it is the goal that directs the choices that one makes each single time. It is to be pursued at all times as a target that is conceptually visible only to those who approach life selflessly and extraordinarily. And the courage to make these choices, even in the face of adversity but in pursuit of a greater good for self and society, is therefore one of the virtues or character traits that humans ought to cultivate.

According to Shaaban, righting wrongs in society takes acts of great sacrifice and selflessness, thus social change requires bold or courageous action as opposed to idle talk and love of social and material comfort which are transient goods. This is how *Utubora Mkulima* starts. So, the question is: what are the socio-political conditions to which this vision applies? And the follow-up question is: who is Shaaban addressing? Who is Utubora's employer, in this figurative or representational standing in the social and commercial scenario that reveals the identities of the people who dominate this state of things? So, when Utubora rejects the status quo, what statement is he (Shaaban) making? If that is about the dominant coastal trade and its place in the broader socio-political condition of Utubora's time and space, how do we bring in the matters of business ethics in *Adili na Nduguze*? And finally, Shaaban explains that while change of any kind, but certainly socio-political change particularly, must start with a few individuals who understand the circumstances they live in, and then embark on the difficult task of convincing others who may not only lack the intellectual capacity to understand and appreciate that what appears on the surface of everyday life may not be the ultimate good worth of human nature, but, as a result of their ignorance, may also not be ready to make the sacrifices necessary to bring about change aimed at the ultimate good. Knowing this ultimate good is not given to little minds. And when it is explained to them, they may not comprehend either its nature or its true value, especially when they cannot relate it to immediate, visible results. Such are the matters of debate between Utubora and Bihaya, his former Nanny.

Ignorance and complacency are the arch enemies of change and ultimate good as they breed selfishness, individualism, shortsightedness, and superfluous lifestyle. What ensues from here on, through *Utubora Mkulima*, *Siku ya Watenzi Wote*, *Kusadikika*, and even *Adili na Nduguze* paint the picture of Shaaban as a communalist in relation to the social-philosophical discourses that characterized the period of the writing of these texts. Yet Shaaban is still pretty distinct from the main currents of that school of thought. Taken together in light of Wiredu's communitarian theory, the texts rest on one primary premise: We all have, not just the right, but also the duty, to participate, exhaustively, in every debate until we are convinced, on matters that affect our shared lives and experiences. This is a matter that Shaaban talks about with vigor when Utubora rebukes Bihaya for suggesting that his relocation to the Mainland would be a vain and costly sacrifice as she tried to dissuade him from the decision of

abandoning his employment in order to pursue a different kind of lifestyle. What is this lifestyle? And what would make it more attractive than the lifestyle that gave him income enough for living a life of comfort? My suggestion is to underline here the concept conveyed by the term 'comfort,' and why Utubora derides it in contrast to what he describes as: "a life in God's world as was experienced by his [Utubora's and, indeed, humanity's] ancestor Adam" (Shaaban 1998: 9). One can break down the concepts conveyed by these descriptions laden with references to specific values such as, in this quote, freedom as a fundamental human right. Utubora argues that the right to freedom surpasses many other values, even when he appears to dread the unknown future. Still, he argues the freedom to make mistakes is still freedom, and is still worth sacrifice. At this point, the dominant value is just one: freedom as willed by God—that is, from creation, or in human nature as was given to, and experienced by Adam. Certainly mythical, the reference to God and Adam are not only indicators of Shaaban's acquaintance with Islamic literature—not necessarily the belief content—but also signify a sense of what is the characteristic of human life by definition, or by its very nature—from creation, if you want, because we see the influence of religion (his own Islamic lessons, or the Christianity of his father, but it doesn't really matter at this point which specific religious influence is in play). Religion provides the lexicon for conceptualizing the idea of freedom as natural to humans. If this is the case, then any idea contrary to this understanding of freedom as something pivotal to human nature and condition of life must be something to be despised, something rooted in ignorance and therefore to be ashamed of, hence Shaaban's naming of his Nanny as Bihaya, thereby giving the name a contemptuous significance and status.

7. Even nature rejects and despises racism

We encounter another layer of obstacles to human freedom. It is found in Shaaban's characterization of Unguja itself. Obstacles to freedom are not just the trappings of materialism such as Utubora appears to experience by virtue of the employment he has and which gives him material comfort compared to many of his associates. Ability to access modern consumer goods because of one's financial ability was, and remains to-date, one of the greatest allures of modern economy, so individuals were judged by and against their peers based, first, on whether they had a job or not, and secondly on how 'well' they were doing based on their visible material comfort. On these terms, Utubora was definitely socially above his peers, and the conventional expectation was that he should have embraced this social visibility with pride. In his autobiography, *Maisha Yangu Na Baada ya Miaka Hamsini*, he says that his diligence at work made him likeable to his superiors, but also earned him envy from his fellow Africans. But in *Utubora Mkulima*, Shaaban reveals that while this financial advantage gave him a sense of personal

accomplishment, he did not view life in those narrow terms. The world was definitely bigger than that of the individual and his or her accomplishments, so accomplishment needed to be defined on the matrix of the quality of life in and for that bigger world. This kind of thinking was usually expected of people far older than Utubora was, but, Shaaban claims, if it takes intelligence to identify truths in the world, then there is no prescribed age at which one becomes intelligent enough to discern the world's truths, or rights and wrongs, so not only did Utubora show that he was different, his vision was indeed intelligent and unique. What counts is the kind of impact this vision can have on the lives of people. In other words, people needed liberation from several types of undesirable states and conditions of life, and executing change to bring about that liberation does not happen if people sat on their hands or only enjoyed personal accomplishments.

Although Shaaban's claim about the need for social action for the benefit of those in need of liberation from undesirable conditions may be seen primarily through the actions he ascribes to Utubora following his return to Tanganyika's mainland, his allusion to other social tensions and the resultant undesirable experiences are easy to overlook, or indeed to remain untackled. Why? Because they are the kind of issues that, due to their likely negative impact on the political domain, tend to be only quietly hushed. They are the racial issues that go as far back as Arab involvement in Eastern African slave trade to the near Middle East, a matter that was intensified by the transfer of the Headquarters of the Omani Empire by Said bin Sultan from Muscat in Oman to Stone Town in Zanzibar in 1840. Although unspoken, and despite the many decades since emancipation, racial tensions between the descendants of Arab settlers and native Africans have remained and continue, simmering underneath the fragile nature of the union (Tanzania). These tensions remain throughout the entire coastal strip of East Africa. Shaaban's search for a universally-defined *Utu* which carries a sense of moral equality of all 'before God,' and as enshrined in the freedom enjoyed by Adam as the ancestor of all humans, needs to be read as stemming from, and addressing the negative experiences delivered by these tensions. The idea and behavioral character of Makuu in *Utubora Mkulima* is a powerful punch at these tensions and their perpetrators because there Shaaban is arguing that religious faith alone, such as Makuu's Islamism, is not enough to make a person morally good, nor does faith alone change the world. Social change, or change from all those things that afflict humanity, cannot be spontaneous. It takes human good will, and the good will of many people, whether in the same community, nation, or the world at large to bring about needed change. And this can come about only when people become diligent, when they think critically about what and how to bring about change that improves quality of life and protects the environment for all. This observation could be seen as an oblique address to Muslims in general, and therefore, by implication, to those who conduct their lives explicitly by this

faith as ethnic Arabs or Arab-descended residents of the coastal region, in Zanzibar, and elsewhere. Shaaban's description of Unguja as a place or source of unbearable social weight is therefore significant. It is the kind of weight that denies those under it their Godly-given freedom. So Shaaban provides us with an interesting view of two obstacles to freedom: the trappings of materialism as exhibited in the tyranny of employers, and certain social conditions. One suspects Shaaban is complaining about Arab racism rampant in the Island conclave that was once the capital of the Omani Empire.

From here, then—and I leave other analytic details out—attention shifts to the idea of personhood that Shaaban considers as so categorically superior to any kind of earthly benefit that nothing should be allowed to trample or hinder it. This, *Utu bora*, is what is personified in, and characterized through, Utubora's choices in life.

Now, if what Utubora pursues is a characterization of the kind of values that ought to govern human experiences in a manner commensurate with the dignity bestowed by nature, then Shaaban's expository scheme is to define this ideal or perfect personhood, and then tackle, first, the kind of conditions that hinder it at the political level, and then, second, propose the ideal conditions under which humans can reasonably pursue and experience their potential. This scheme puts *Utubora Mkulima* ahead of *Kusadikika* and other texts like *Siku ya Watenzi Wote* and *Adili na Nduguze*. For a logical flow, the texts line up in that order as elaborations or sequels to the major two. By virtue of its title (*Adili na Nduguze*—Righteousness and Its Cognate Virtues), the latter, then, positions itself as an elaboration of Righteousness, Shaaban's primary or foundational virtue, and other, related morals. In this book, however, Shaaban's focus to show (argue) that righteousness applies also to doing business ethically. Shaaban is an idealist philosopher. His works—so deceptively small in material volume but conceptually so huge and complex—attract comparison with, and solicit similar critiques as, other works of social idealism as I primarily compare it to Kwasi Wiredu's work in this specific regard. A critique of the idea of 'democracy by consensus' as developed by Kwasi Wiredu can be simple, quick, and predictable. Yet such critique would be simplistic. According to its main observation, the modern world is so vastly different from those societies where direct or participatory democracy was practically ideal. Growth in human population everywhere today, and the ever-growing complexity of human needs and knowledge of them, makes the suggested pursuit of consensus in the management of large-scale public affairs impracticable. In other words, it is too idealistic, meaning that it promotes an unattainable perfect good. Instead, critics argue, the most effective political strategy for responding to needs is through strong political representation which, they believe, solves the imminent chaos that would emerge from the diversity of needs. It is a liberal view which assumes as false the idea of homogeneity of collective needs assumed by the communalist understanding of needs which they see

the idea of ‘democracy by consensus’ to fall under. Wiredu’s counter—because he is not a communalist in the sense implied by the said liberal critique—is, without implied pun, realistic. He argues (Wiredu 1980: 88 -98) that contrary to considering philosophical recommendations in socio-political pursuits as utopian for their assumed unattainability, human quest is, from a natural standpoint, invariably about ideals, understanding, of course, that the term ‘ideal’ or ‘ideals’ describes what is conceivable as ‘the best possible’ of what is in deliberation or consideration. No sane person consciously desires what they themselves know to be bad, just as no-one pursues what they know *a priori* to be unattainable. Aims are always directed at ‘the best conceivable,’ even if its characteristics are visible only in the mind and not yet ever seen in practice. The ‘utopian’ or ‘ideal’ works as a regulatory target, not a constitutive attribute or norm. if it were so, there would be no need for rules. This is the idea in Shaaban Robert’s *Kusadikika*, translatable loosely as ‘The Best Possible World,’ or ‘The Best State,’ or, yet, ‘The Ideal State.’ So he in fact starts the text by describing the world in (the) mind as ‘abstract,’ or, literally in Kiswahili, *Nchi iliyo angani* ‘the country, or state, in the air’ (Shaaban 1966). Compare this idea, curiously, with what Plato says, at the end of Book IX, of his already articulated vision of the nature of the (ideal) *Republic*: “...the city we were imagining and describing, the one that exists only in theory, for I don’t think it exists anywhere on earth. But perhaps,..there is a model of it in heaven, for anyone who wants to look at it and to make himself its citizen on the strength of what he sees. It makes no difference whether it is or ever will be somewhere, for he would take part in the practical affairs of that city and no other” (Plato 1992: 263). For Shaaban and Plato, separated by two millennia, the concern was to establish a guide for a structure and set of practices that would form the foundation of happiness for folks in the world of their time. For both of them, the structures and practices would, as the function of the virtue of justice, uphold, sustain, and enhance the prevalence of a certain state of things, including the political state and its governance, that sets those conditions that enable the pursuit and attainment of the all-round ideal worth of human nature or perfect personhood, *Utu bora* for Shaaban, and *Areté* in the ancient or classical Greece of Plato, and *Virtus* in the Greco-Roman world. There is excellence of purpose and function in the general or overall nature of humans, and there is excellence or virtue in human activities in every segment of human life, and the person who espouses and consciously lives by such virtues lives within the realm of what is expected of a rational being; she or he rescinds the temptations of living by the attractions of a beastly life (Masolo 2019: 40-72; Shaaban 1968: 21). Hence both authors provide the structure and moral nature of the ideal State that, although pursuable on earth, remains perfect only in the mind—*Kusadikika* for Shaaban, and the *Republic* for Plato. Its perfections guide conduct while remaining removed—up in the air—from actual or real social, moral, and political practices of humans here and there. Wiredu describes them as “*regulative* rather

than *constitutive*” (Wiredu 1980: 88). That is the whole reason and method for judging. We judge to commend, or to blame and admonish, all against a stated or perceived ideal. All judgements are regulative conceptual procedures.

8. Shaaban and the broader universe of moral theory

Shaaban does not say much directly about the meaning or significance of *Ubora* (perfection) like he does with concepts like *Utukufu* ‘Excellence,’ *Uvivu* ‘Laziness,’ *Usahibu* ‘Friendship,’ *Ujana* ‘Youth,’ and so on whose meanings he delineates in *Koja la Lugha* (Shaaban 1969). But he says there (Shaaban 1969: 2) that “meanings or concepts [or understanding] are referenced with words” (Shaaban 1969: 2). The idea of “perfection,” is often indicated only in relation to other concepts that this notion qualifies or describes, like in the now-familiar personal name or noun for character *Utubora*, which I have explained to have been coined from the two words, *Utu* ‘humanity, or human nature, or personhood’ and *bora* ‘perfect, or ideal,’ or, as he renders, *Tendo bora* ‘perfect, or ideal act, deed, or behavior,’ etc. In Greek culture the virtues or moral characteristics of ideal personhood were instilled to become the moral character of individuals from youth through a style of education called *paideia* and combined both theoretical and practical disciplines. And Greek moral ideals have become the subject matter of Western moral theory since then. Shaaban, on the other hand, believed in educational experience that focused on the practical moral life on the one hand, and practical education in the dominant communal economic production on the other. Shaaban believed in the latter as a recognition of the dominant resource—land and agriculture (Shaaban 1969: 34-35)—in the part of the world he hailed from while recognizing different economic practices like trade, or others, for other regions of the world due to differences in natural environmental conditions. Interestingly, although his ethical theory draws heavily from an Islamic background, Shaaban was always skeptical of the true relevance of religion to moral knowledge or virtuous living. Like I said above, Shaaban does not make moral praises of people due to their piety, or blame them for lack of it. In his view, knowing what is morally right and modeling one’s life accordingly is a function of secular intellectual virtue called *Adili*, meaning intellectual or rational diligence. It is the intellect that makes one a *Mtu*, and without it, a human being is just like a tree (Shaaban 1969: 8-9).

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, as I have said, Shaaban was a significant thinker whose thought has not received deserved attention and recognition for their true significance. While the other aspects of his work

receiving attention was also important, they have focused on Shaaban's influence upon Swahili culture's transition from orality to writing, and the style that emerged from his writing, rather than on the thinking this style was about. At that juncture, it did not matter whether the subject matter was delivered orally or in writing. I call this omission serious and a perpetuation of the stereotypical belief among foreigners, Arab and European alike, that Africans—by which I imply a racial distinction—were not capable of abstract, theoretical thinking. The result is a habit of bad readings of the works of folks like Shaaban by the very people for whom he was writing.

Indeed, finding and sustaining a trace of theoretical threads in Shaaban's work is not an easy task, and I have tried to show here that elements of his theoretical lines run through different works, and they are expressed creatively in the form of allegories and, sometimes, opaque sarcasms that are discoverable only when one asks the whys or motivations that would make Shaaban to sometimes use awkward renditions in storylines. Also, even with his solid philosophical stances, Shaaban does not use arguments understood in the Western sense where one would have to look through journal articles and treatises to find arguments, analyses, or treatise accounts. Thus, because of this difference, the key to understanding Shaaban is itself a critical approach that lifts the reader above the proper or character names, titles, and stories. This style, I have suggested, was Shaaban's own deliberate strategy for veiling his social critiques in an environment in which he was delicately positioned.

References

- Kant, Immanuel. 1981. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, transl. James W. Ellington. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company [original: *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 1785].
- Kant, Immanuel. 1996. *The Metaphysics of Morals*, edited by Mary Gregor, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [original: *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, 1797].
- Kant, Immanuel. 1997. *Critique of Practical Reason*, edited by Mary Gregor, and Introduction by Andrews Reath, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [original: *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 1788].
- Khamis, Said A. 2001. "Classicism in Shaaban Robert's Utopian Novel, *Kusadikika*." *Research in African Literatures* 32 (1): 47-65.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1978. "Manifesto of the Communist Party." In: *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker, 469-500. New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company.
- Masolo, D. A. 2019. "Crafting Ideal Conditions: 'Ubuntu' and the Challenges of Modern Society." In: *Ubuntu and the Constitution of Community*, edited by Ogude, James, 40-72. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Masolo, D. A. forthcoming. "Shaaban Robert's Virtue Ethics." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

- Mulokozi, Magabyuso M. 1975. "Two Utopias: A Comparative Examination of William Morris' *News From Nowhere* and Shaaban Robert's *Siku ya Watenzi Wote*." *Umma* 5 (2): 11-49.
- Ogude, James (ed.). 2019. *Ubuntu and the Constitution of Community*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Plato, *Republic*, Transl. G. M. A. Grube, Revised by C. D. C. Reeve. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Robert, Shaaban. 2003. *Maisha Yangu Na Baada ya Miaka Hamsini*. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki Na Nyota Publishers.
- Robert, Shaaban, 1998 (1968). *Utubora Mkulima*. London, Nairobi and Ibadan: Evans Brothers.
- Robert, Shaaban. 1966 (1951). *Kusadikika: Nchi Iliyo Angani*. Nairobi: Evans Brothers.
- Robert, Shaaban. 1968. *Siku ya Watenzi Wote*. Nairobi: Thomas Nelson and Sons.
- Robert, Shaaban. 1951. *Adili na Nduguze*. London: Macmillan (also, Dar es Sallam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1977).
- Robert, Shaaban. 1967. *Masomo yenye Adili*. Nairobi: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.
- Robert, Shaaban. 1973. *Kielezo cha Fasili*. Nairobi: Thomas and Sons (also, Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 1992).
- Robert, Shaaban. 1954. *Kielezo cha Insha*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press (also, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1966).
- Robert, Shaaban. 1969. *Koja la Lugha*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
- Robert, Shaaban. 1972. *Sanaa ya Ushairi*. Nairobi: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.
- Tutu, Desmond Rev. 2013. *God Is Not a Christian: Speaking Truth in Times of Crisis*. Johannesburg: Rider Publishers.
- Wiredu, Kwasi. 1996. *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Wiredu, Kwasi. 1980. *Philosophy and an African Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

D. A. Masolo is affiliated with the University of Louisville in Louisville, Kentucky where he has taught philosophy for more than twenty-six years. Masolo studied in Rome and has taught philosophy across three continents. His research interests and publications span such areas like History of Philosophy, African Philosophy, Africana Philosophy, Social and Political Philosophy, and Comparative Philosophy broadly construed in a global context. His publications include *African Philosophy in Search of Identity* (1994), *African Philosophy as Cultural Inquiry* (2000), and *Self and Community in a Changing World* (2010). Currently he is a researcher base at the J-P. Research Library in Siaya, Kenya. He can be contacted at: dismas.masolo@louisville.edu