

Beyond raising the GDP: How books on philosophy, history, and law, and practices in the communications and movie industries have transformed humanity societies.

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Introduction

The question, **“Will another book on Aristotle’s Nicomachean ethics or marriage dynamics in the Victorian novel raise the GDP?”**¹ underscores the emphasis by market fundamentalist and STEM disciplines apologists on tangible, market-oriented products in the human quest for betterment. For example, drugs and vaccines used for the treatment of diseases such as COVID-19 and its predecessors, EBOLA, HIV/AIDS, and malaria, prove the indispensable place of science in human societies. Similarly, industrial and technological products, such as automobiles, electronics, cloths, and canned foods have the same effect. What have the humanities got to show? Answering this question requires an understanding of what constitute the essence of humanity. We learn from Roosevelt and Sen that humanity is at its best where there is human freedom in its broadest sense: people’s and personal freedoms/liberties (from oppression), social opportunities, economic freedom, religious freedom, security, and political freedom (political participation).² And in many of these areas, the humanities have made and will continue to make their marks. However, beclouded by what I call the “Isaiah prophesy” – in which although the humanities have made enormous contribution to development, many people’s appreciation of such contributions are dim by their

¹ Robert D. Newman, “What Will the Humanities Look Like in a Decade?” published in *Inside Higher Ed* (September 3, 2021) <https://robertdnewman.org/what-will-the-humanities-look-like-in-a-decade/> (1/9/2022).

² Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “The Four Freedoms,” cited by Donald M. Bishop, “The Four Freedoms Revisited”, in Nkpanom C. Ejituw, Foluke M. Ogunleye, Diri I. Teilano, and Edward O. Erhagbe (eds.), *The American society since the four freedoms* (Benin City: Mindex Press, 2005), 4; Amartya Sen, *Development as freedom* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc. 1999), 3.

inability or refusal to understand and perceive what is heard and seen. The purpose of this paper is to re-state the practical contributions of the humanities to development, as scholars have continued to engage the issue. Most of my examples are drawn from Nigeria, the country where I live in and on which I have more data. It is a synthesis of existing material.

Meaning and scope of the humanities and of development

Defining the humanities has both been elaborating in scope but central to all definitions is the focus on humankind. Accordingly, the humanities may be defined as those academic disciplines whose thematic focus is human beings.³ In other words, they “are closer to humanity” and provide a better understanding of “humans and the whole essence of being.”⁴ To elaborate, the humanities are

those fields of knowledge and learning concerned with human thought, experience, and creativity....all areas of research and learning that ask fundamental questions about the way individuals and societies live, think, interact, and express themselves.... the humanities involve the analysis and interpretation of evidence. But the subject matter concerns those aspects of the human condition that are not necessarily quantifiable or open to experiment...⁵

In the context of the above quotation, the humanities, like other knowledge systems, “do not exist on a remote intellectual island. They overlap with the social and natural sciences, enriching all fields of knowledge and inquiry.”⁶ To this extent, the liberal arts and all people-centered disciplines in the social sciences belong to the humanities. Examples include knowledge systems and fields such as “Literature, history, languages, cultures, philosophy, the arts....” anthropology/sociology, and religion.⁷ Others are theater/drama, music, media

³ Ayo Adewole, “Academic development.” In J. O. Ojoade and J. A. Ajayi (eds.), *University of Jos at 25* (Jos: Ehindero, 2000), 44

⁴ Toyin Falola, *The Humanities in Africa: Knowledge production, universities, and the transformation of society* (Pan African University Press, 2016), 86

⁵ Steven Wheatley and Theodra Lurie, *The first century: American council of learned societies, advancing the humanities since 1919* (Creative Print Group: 2019), 1.

⁶ Wheatley and Lurie, *The first century: American council of learned societies*, 1.

⁷ The Forum on the Humanities in Africa of the African Humanities Program, “Recommendations for Reinvigorating the Humanities in Africa”, University of South Africa (June 7, 2014), 4

studies, law; archaeology, psychology, economics, political science, international relations, peace, conflict, and development studies, among others.

Apart from being people-centered, each of these disciplines has its distinguishing features but all can be generally classified into two: basic humanities (knowledge for the sake of it; thrive more on debates than on replicative generalizations) and applied humanities (knowledge for application). In respect of the former, Falola has argued that, they “generate a consensus only for a limited time in history.”⁸ In respect of the latter, their outputs are practical in orientation.

There are several useful definitions of development but I chose the time-tested definitions offered by development Walter Rodney and Amartya Sen, as they are germane to my study. According to Rodney, for humanity, development has two components—an individual component and a social group component:

At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, and material well-being.... At the level of social groups...development implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships.... the increase in the ability to guard the independence of the social group.... A society develops economically as its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment [which is] dependent on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature (science), on the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology), and on the manner in which work is organized.⁹

Amartya Sen underscores the freedom component of development earlier on pointed out by Rodney. According to Sen,

Development can be seen...as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy....Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor

⁸Falola, *Humanities in Africa*, 71.

⁹ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1981), 3-4.

economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states...¹⁰

What people can positively achieve is influenced by economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers, and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education, and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives. These institutional arrangements for these opportunities are also influenced by the exercise of people's freedoms, through the liberty to participate in social choice and in the making of public decisions that impel the progress of these opportunities.¹¹

These definitions show that development is not only an economic category measured by quantitative indicators such as GNP per capita, the GDP or physical structures and products; but also has social, political, legal, and other dimensions, which are qualitatively measured.

The Humanities at the margin: the twenty-first century and earlier

Scholarly documentation of the treatment of the humanities indicates that industry and policy makers believe that this knowledge system has no significant contribution to development. According to Falola, the humanities, all over the world are always challenged to demonstrate their practical value and relevance to the development of society, or the market value of the degrees offered in these disciplines for their graduates.¹² The general belief outside the humanities disciplines is that the humanities are not practical and therefore their graduates lack job prospects and cannot create jobs. Accordingly, "Much of the public discounts the value of the humanities, considering the fields impractical and, therefore, profitless or even subversive because of their insistent questioning of all subjects."¹³ Hence, the marginalization of the humanities even in higher education institutions.

¹⁰Amartya Sen. *Development as Freedom* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1999), 3.

¹¹Ibid., 5.

¹²Falola, *Humanities in Africa*, 66.

¹³Wheatley and Lurie, *The first century: American council of learned societies, advancing the humanities since 1919* (Creative Print Group: 2019), 13.

Commenting in 2021 on the marginalization of humanities, Newman lamented that,

The number of humanities majors in colleges and universities has declined steadily and, because of supply-and-demand funding formulas, so has the number of faculty positions. Several institutions have eliminated departments like classics, once the cornerstone of a liberal arts education."¹⁴

Earlier on in 2014, The Forum on the Humanities painted a similar picture as follows:

In today's landscape of higher education and research in Africa, the humanities find themselves in a parlous state. Studies of literature, history, languages, cultures, philosophy, the arts, and other humanities subjects have been deprioritized by policymakers and even by some university officials. The humanities consistently appear at the bottom of any list of national goals, if indeed they appear at all.¹⁵

The narrative goes farther down in history. In 1988, the World Bank framed the argument as the irrelevance of university degrees for developing countries. The Bank instead suggested that investment in public tertiary education be stagnated and the growth and graduate production in "certain fields" be reduced. The "certain fields" that were "singled out for cut-backs are the arts and humanities."¹⁶ In the 1960s, The *Time Magazine* had raised the issue with Makerere University, which it accused of failing to graduate students in practical courses and therefore being insensitive to the needs of the peoples of East Africa. The Magazine

¹⁴ Newman, "What Will the Humanities Look Like in a Decade?"

¹⁵ The Forum on the Humanities in Africa of the African Humanities Program, "Recommendations for Reinvigorating the Humanities in Africa", University of South Africa (June 7, 2014), 3

¹⁶ Birgit Brock-Utne, "The role of higher education in Africa." Paper presented at the Nordic Association for the Study of Education in Developing Countries (NASEDEC), held at the Agriculture University of Norway at As, Jun2 16, 1995), 3

emphasized that vocational or trade schools should be the focus of African educational systems and not the building of universities.¹⁷

The emphasis on science and practicality Mazrui calls the “mystique of practicality” and the “mystique of science and scienticism”.¹⁸ In other words the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields had been promoted to the status of demigods of development and the humanities assigned low, marginal status. However, the generous attention to the STEM fields and the marginalization of the humanities stems from what I may regard as the “Mathew Effect.” The Mathew Effect, as conceived by Iruka Okeke, a scientist, refers to giving more to those in abundance and less to those in need according to a bible verse.¹⁹ In applying this verse to science, she shows how science scholars from the poor global south, with scanty access to research funds and credible publications, end up as collectors of biological samples for their colleagues in the global north, with abundant access to research funds.²⁰

The “Mathew Effect”, is well-demonstrated in industry and government handling of the sciences and the humanities in different countries. In Nigeria this is very glaring in government policies since the 1980s. These include the establishment of specialized Universities such as those of Science and Technology at Akure, Minna, Yola, and of Agriculture in Makurdi under the Ibrahim Babangida regime; the tilt in admission quotas in tertiary education at 60:40 ratio in favor of the STEM disciplines; TETFund scholarship and research grants awards also in favor of the STEM disciplines.

Just a few openings are created for the humanities such as the Nigeria prize for Literature instituted in 2005 by the NLNG (which also instituted the prize for Science); and also by the mobile networks: Glo and 9mobile.²¹ There is a government-based *Nigerian National Order of Merit (NNOM)* Award, instituted in

¹⁷Cited in Ali Mazrui, “Political theory and national involvement in East Africa.” In *Cashiers d’etudes africaines* Vol.9 No.36, (1969), 515-516 [515-526]. <https://www.persee.fr/doc/cea-0008-0055-1969> (pdf)

¹⁸Cited in Ali Mazrui, “Political theory and national involvement in East Africa”, 517.

¹⁹ Mathew 25: 29.

²⁰Iruka Okeke is cited by Steven Feierman, “Writing history: flow and blockage in the circulation of knowledge”, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1, (January, 2019), 4.

²¹ The prizes for Literature were instituted by LNLG and Glo mobile in 2005, while that of 9mobile was in 2013.

1979.²² However, this does not target the humanities only; rather, all branches of knowledge. Thus, the awards clusters are Science and Medicine, Engineering and Technology, Humanities, and Arts and Culture. In respect of scholarships, while there were over 361 scholarship opportunities for Nigerians locally and globally, in the 2020-2021 academic years; the humanities had only a total of 65+ scholarship opportunities.²³ In the twenty-first century Nigeria, the government introduced entrepreneurship, in Nigerian university curricular, as a General Studies course, aimed to address the problem of job creation by teaching undergraduates skill-sets outside the philosophical and theoretical knowledge their degrees offer. However, as pointed out in a Commissioned study for the British Council, the impact “is not yet known” of Nigeria’s initiative in making the study of entrepreneurship mandatory in all federal Universities.²⁴

The Nigerian experience was not an isolated case. Generally, across Africa, the humanities were in such a marginalized state that ACLS president, Gregorian called for “reinvigorating the humanities in Africa.” Towards this end, in 2007 Sandra Barnes and Andrzej Tymowski traveled to Africa and interacted with over 160 individuals in the university system: Vice-chancellors, senior and emerging scholars). They learnt about the state of the humanities and received advice on the possible areas that need intervention. Their findings showed that the development of humanities on the continent was “stymied” while the STEM disciplines were more privileged with funders priorities dictating research agendas.²⁵ Thus the need for humanities reinvigoration was empirically proven. This birth the African Humanities Program (AHP) with its focus on the basic humanities (2007- 2023).

There are parallels also in the developed countries, as different countries manifest the humanities predicament in different ways. In the US, for example, “After World War I, an emphasis on scientific knowledge influenced academic and funding priorities. The increased focus on the sciences, with no comparable investment in humanistic studies, seemed likely to marginalize the humanities.”²⁶

²² This was established by Act 53 of 1979 and is sustained by Act 96 of 1992, which amended Act 53 of 1979.

²³ <https://www.afterschoolafrica.com/scholarship/by-country/scholarship-in-nigeria/>(visited 18/03/2020)

²⁴ Tristan McCowan, “Can Higher education solve Africa’s job crisis? Understanding graduate employability in Sub-Saharan Africa”.A Commissioned Policy Brief for the British Council (2014), 8. Pdf version available at www.britishcouncil.org/education/ihe

²⁵ Sandra Barnes and Andrzej Tymowski, “Statement on the AHP assumptions and lessons learned” (June 2022).

²⁶ Wheatley and Lurie, *The first century: American council of learned societies*, 7.

Pioneer Foundations with some charity objectives such as the Rockefeller Foundation, were inclined towards “scientific philanthropy” and therefore “quickly generated investments in science and medicine.” The science bias of the charities worried some of the philanthropists who believed that such would “discourage the study of the humanities in our universities.”²⁷ In later periods, the American Academy of Arts and Social Sciences had to establish “the Humanities Indicator” aimed to update the public on new jobs, research, and funding opportunities. The basis of this was general concern that humanities lacked good career prospects. Surprisingly the results showed that humanities were doing better than originally thought. In Europe, as in many other countries of the globe, the humanities are given less recognition, attention, and funding than the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields.²⁸

Our products: the practical case of the humanities re-stated

Nowhere is the bible verse, Isaiah chapter 6 verse 9, which in part reads: “They will indeed hear but never understand, they will indeed see but never perceive”; more aptly demonstrated than in society’s refusal to recognize the practical values of the humanities. Theoretically and empirically, the contributions of the humanities to human development are all there for people to recognize and appreciate, both in the past and at present. While some are not packaged like tangible goods for the market, others are so package.

Theoretical discourses

Various scholars have amply shown the relevance of the humanities in development. At the theoretical level, Wheatley and Lurie, for instance point out that, “...By, exploring the foundations of aesthetic, ethical, and cultural values and the ways in which they may endure, be challenged, or transformed, humanists help us appreciate and understand what distinguishes us as individuals, as well as what unites us.”²⁹ Falola argues that, “the humanities are not only relevant to development, they are integral to it.”³⁰ He gives several examples as follow:

²⁷ Wheatley and Lurie, *The first century: American council of learned societies*, 7.

²⁸ Falola, *Humanities in Africa*, 97-99

²⁹ Wheatley and Lurie, *The first century: American council of learned societies*, 1.

³⁰ Toyin Falola, *The Toyin Falola reader on African culture, nationalism, development and epistemologies* (Austin, Pan African University Press, 2018), 394.

We generate ideas, we rethink development paradigms, we produce sustainable values, we review proposals and concepts and warn about those that won't work, we offer critical opinions, and we suggest how significant changes can be obtained. We combine various studies to develop collective understandings, we engage in critical thinking with respect to all strands of knowledge."³¹

In an earlier text, Falola argues that the humanities are closer to "development and the challenges of transformation", as they study and provide better analysis of conflicts/wars, peace, and the "basic units of society."³² In its contributions to this issue, the Forum on the Humanities noted that,

The humanistic disciplines have a clear practical value: they teach critical and analytic thinking while at the same time stimulating the imagination and promoting ethical values. Leaders need these skills to lead, to identify problems, and to conceive creative solutions. Citizens need them to participate actively in public life.

Yet the key contribution of the humanities goes beyond cultural education and training in analytic skills. Humanistic studies help ground national dialogue on urgent issues in enduring humane values. Technical and technological solutions today raise ethical questions that require public understanding and public debate. Humanities research and teaching illuminate the ethical principles that frame the discussion and provide examples of objectivity and fairness in dialogue.³³

Fwatshak summarizes these achievements as follows:

the liberation of humankind and management of contemporary human relations by means of producing ideas that led to many revolutions, by producing nationalist ideas and literature that

³¹Falola, *The Toyin Falola reader*, 394.

³²Falola, *Humanities in Africa* , 86

³³ The Forum on the Humanities in Africa of the African Humanities Program, 4

challenged colonialism and continues to challenge imperialism, by producing and promoting ideas about and the practice of human rights, by producing ideas about and the practice of good governance, by producing and promoting ideas about and the practice of literacy, by producing ideas about and the practice of peace-building and conflict resolution, among others.³⁴

The humanities in practice

Practical examples that illustrate the above claims and show the utilitarian value of the humanities in the transformation of society are in the areas social change, freedom, nationalism, resistance, communication, and entertainment, among others.

1. Social change: How books on philosophy birthed freedom and constitutional governments

Today, most countries live under representative governments and constitutions, which guarantee human liberties, rights, and freedoms. We owe this to revolutions birthed by ideas generated and published by humanities writers of old, including philosophers. As is well-known to historians, absolute monarchy, as it were in Europe before the French revolution; military rule or one-party dictatorship, as it were in Africa during the Cold War; and sit-tight regimes in North Africa, as it were in the Arab Middle-East and North Africa before the Arab spring; have mainly been replaced by one form of representative government (democracy) or the other in a majority of countries. Indeed, these and many more, great social changes that have occurred in the world—such as the French revolution, the Jihad in Hausaland, the Bolshevik revolution, and the Arab spring—were influenced mainly by the humanities writings. The French revolution was partly influenced by the writings of philosophers. Accordingly,

There had been growing in Europe, throughout most of the eighteenth century, what has been called ‘the revolutionary spirit. This spirit, a spirit of nationalist criticism and resistance to the

³⁴ Sati U. Fwatshak, “The 2016 economic recession and the Nigerian education sector: History, indicators, impact, and the road ahead.” In *Proceedings of the school of Arts and Social Sciences conference*, College of Education Gindiri, 2016, 9. [1-13]

established powers of the Roman Catholic Church, the absolutist monarchy, and the privileged nobility, was fostered particularly by the work of a remarkable series of French thinkers and literary men, the *philosophes*. The writings of men like Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot, and Rousseau were widely read in throughout Europe, and they themselves became European figures of eminence and influence.³⁵

Voltaire in his writings challenged basis of traditional beliefs and institutions; Rousseau made an argument for the relationship between citizens and leaders to be based on social contract; Montesquieu in his writings mocked the belief in idols, as well political and religious systems not based on secularity and the rule of law. As their literature in forms of book, journals, and so on were widely read in Europe, citizens demanded from their feudal leaders: **liberty, equality and the rights of citizens** and of their nations under a constitution.

In Feudal France, these ideas and demands led to the ten-year French revolution of 1789-1799. The revolution yielded the "Declaration of the Rights of man and of the citizens" by the Constituent Assembly of August 26, 1789, which was drawn from the writings of the philosophers and also from the American Declaration of independence in 1776. The 1789 declaration was to the effect that "men are born and remain free and equal in rights...these rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression."³⁶ The Constituent Assembly further guaranteed (i) due legal process (ii) legal equality (iii) freedom of speech, press, and from arrest. Furthermore, it established doctrines of national sovereignty, taxation by consent, accountability of public officials, and the principle of separation of governmental powers: executive, legislature, and judicial. the foundation of universal franchise by granting wide franchise for the first time, though only to the rich. It also abolished vestiges of feudalism.³⁷ The revolution generally led to the abolition serfdom and to the establishment of constitutional monarchy and representative government.

³⁵ David Thomson, *Europe since Napoleon* (Harmondsworth: Penguin books, 1966 (1978 R), 24.

³⁶ Thomson, *Europe since Napoleon*, 30.

³⁷ For details on the achievements of the Constituent Assembly, see Thomson, *Europe since Napoleon*, 30-33.

In what became Nigeria, the Jihad in Hausaland overthrew oppressive feudal regimes in Hausaland based on the writings and teachings of Usman dan Fodio who propagated a theocracy that, to the masses, looked better than the Sarauta system. Usman dan Fodio was a prolific writer. Three of his texts in respect of the Jihad and Islamic government are: *Talim al-Ikwan* (Educating the Brethren) deals with the un-Islamic practices in Hausaland; *Withiqatahl al-sudan*, which appeared in 1804, outlined 27 principles of the Jihad; *Kitab al-farqwas* an outline of the principles of Islamic government. The Jihad was, therefore, based on sound ideas,³⁸ the pursuit of which transformed Hausaland politically (with the establishment of emirates), and religiously (with the establishment of Islamic law).

The 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the establishment of the defunct Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1924, were based the writings of Marxists led by Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, among others. The cardinal point of Marxist thought was/is resistance to exploitation/oppression of man by man and the promotion of a free and just society. Although the revolution established Russia and the USSR as a one-party dictatorship, Russian society was transformed from monarchy and semi-feudalism to a socialist state based on Marxist principles.³⁹ The collapse of the USSR has not extinguished Marxist philosophy, as the struggle for freedom and social justice is a continuing one worldwide because social inequality still exists.

The Arab Spring of 2011 (in the twenty-first century) was based on ideas of democracy, human liberties and freedoms, as well as economic development. Arab countries were characterized by many long-reign, sit-tight regimes that governed badly. Ghadafi ruled Libya for about 42 years since 1969; Hosni Mubarak ruled Egypt since 1982. Arab regimes were generally autocratic, corrupt, unjust, and oppressive; practiced human rights violations by denying citizens their basic freedoms, as poverty was expanding.⁴⁰

³⁸ Muray Last, "Reform in West Africa: the Jihad movements of the nineteenth century", J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa*, Volume two (London: Longman, 1974 [1978], 5-14 [1-30].

³⁹ For details on the Bolshevik revolution, see J. N Westwood, *Endurance and endeavour: Russian history, 1812-1992* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁴⁰ Sati U. Fwatshak, "Digital technologies and the "community of tears": social media and global [in]security in the twenty-first century". Paper presented at the conference on *Humanities, security and social media* held at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife, 6-9 May, 2019).

With these profiles, anyone who cherishes freedom would appreciate how it was secured and that the humanities were the source.

2. History and the roots of African independence: How history books contributed to African nationalism and independence

Modern African states, though colonial creations, no longer live under colonial rule in its conventional sense. Local historians were part of this heroic legacy. The successes of the American war of independence and of nationalism in Africa owed much to the works of humanities scholars. While ideas of freedom delivered the United States from British colonialism, Africanist history delivered many African colonies from their European colonizers. According to Bethwell A. Ogot,

But even during the dark days of colonialism there were other historians, for example the traditional historians, African historians educated in the West and Western colonial critics such as Basil Davidson, who were writing different African or colonial histories. These historians challenged the imperial historiographical hegemony resulting in the 1950s into a *New African historiography*. In a sense, this new African historiography was a development of, and a significant factor in, the intensification of national liberation movements. In other words, it was a part of the decolonization process.⁴¹

How did Africanist history contribute to nationalism? Ogot states that, “The writings of the Africanist historians were proof-oriented: they showed that pre-colonial Africa had histories, cultures and ancient civilizations, political structures, great states, and various other notable achievements.”⁴² For example, K. O. Dike’s work, *Trade and politics in the Niger Delta*, was an encyclopedia of Niger-Delta, Nigerian, and West African pre-colonial history that discussed the power of pre-colonial African cultures, politics, economies, intergroup relations, agency, and British imperialism among others.⁴³ Other Nigerian historians of the 1950s and

⁴¹Bethwel A. Ogot, “African historiography: from colonial historiography to UNESCO’s general history of Africa”, and J. Ki-Zerbo (ed.), *UNESCO General History of Africa, Vol. 1; Methodology and African Pre-History* (Abridged edition) (Ibadan: Heinmann, 1990), 71.

⁴²Ogot, “African historiography”, 71-72.

⁴³K. O. Dike, *Trade and politics in the Niger Delta* [1956] (Ibadan: Bookcraft, 2011).

1960s beamed their searchlights on the colonial conquest, indirect rule or the nature of colonial rule.⁴⁴ Nationalist historical writings therefore endeared academic historians to the political elite fighting for independence at the political front. The result was the forging of an anti-colonial alliance between them. In the words of Adeoye, “during the anti-colonial struggle a commonality of interest was forged between the politicians and historians, for the latter supplied the counter colonial ideology which equipped politicians in the task of mental decolonization in pursuit of the larger goal of self-government.”⁴⁵ In other colonial jurisdictions like Senegal and Guinea Bissau, some of the frontline nationalists were also authors that brought intellectualism to nationalism. Examples were the literary giant, Leopold Sedar Senghor who expressed his nationalism through poetry – the popular negritude poetry that portrayed black as beautiful. His contemporary, Lamine Senghor fought colonialism using Marxist-anti-imperialist writings. In Guinea Bissau, the revolutionary nationalist, was Amilcar Cabral whose Marxist intellectual works on socialist revolution helped in mobilizing citizens’ struggles against the Portuguese.⁴⁶ Very few non-historians know these facts. Here again, the “Isaiah” prophesy plays out. Many people have heard that nationalists fought for our independence in Nigeria and in Africa, but they have not understood how it was done; they do not know that the humanities provided the lead. But this speaks to the fact that in a country like Nigeria, history was taken off the syllabi of Basic education, as the subject was replaced with Social Studies and Civic Education between 1983⁴⁷ and 2018.

3. Constitutional governments and human rights: How law books embed representative governments, guarantee freedoms and human rights.

Most of the close to 200-member countries of the United Nations are today governed by one type of constitution or the other, which contains various freedoms and human rights provisions. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations had established these rights. The Universal

⁴⁴Ayodeji Olukoju, “The crisis of research and academic publishing in Nigerian universities: the twentieth century and beyond.” Paper presented at the 28th Annual Spring Symposium on “African Universities in the twenty-first century” Organized by the University of Illinois/CODESRIA, held at Dakar, Senegal (April 25-27, 2002), 2.

⁴⁵A. O. Adeoye, “Understanding the crisis in Nigerian historiography,” *History in Africa*, 19(1992), 2 [1-11].

⁴⁶Fatou Jannah, “Marxist historiography in West Africa”, *Scholars Journal of arts, humanities and social sciences*, Vol. 4 (9A) (2016), 1011 [1010-1014].

⁴⁷C. B. N. Ogbogbo, “Historical Society of Nigeria: the study of history and the Nigerian nation.” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 24 (2015), 6-9 [1-13]

Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is essentially a humanities product that establishes the natural rights of all humankind such as dignity of the human person, equality, freedom, and security. These rights are elaborated upon in the thirty articles of the UDHR of which I briefly explain a few. By dignity of the human person is meant respect for human beings who should not be treated like animals. Thus, the relevant articles on this abolish brutalities such as torture in the treatment of human beings and also abolish slavery; instead, human liberty is enshrined. Legal equality establishes the equality of all before the law; freedom has various components including freedom of speech, association, movement, thought, belief, and others. The right to security is a call on the state to guarantee the security of lives and property of citizens.

Many countries have adopted and domesticated these in various their various national constitutions and laws. In Nigeria, for instance, Human rights occupies a prominent and distinct section in the 1999 constitution, where it constitutes Part IV.⁴⁸ Nigeria's earlier constitutions since 1960 have these provisions. In spite failures on the part of the state to fully help citizens actualize these rights in Nigeria, citizens have at one time or the other benefitted and continue to benefit from the constitutional provisions.

Sustaining our freedom and human rights as constitutionally provided has not been easy. It has involved citizens actions in courts, in political fields, in free speech, press, and criticism, and several other ways. Our courts and democracy are active, as citizens seek to claim their rights in event of breaches since the first republic. Everyone has unfettered right to the courts and where sued as a defendant or an accused, the right to fair hearing. Former National Security Adviser, Dasuki who was detained for about five years by the Buhari regime, as well as the deposed emir of Kano, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi (detained in March, 2020), regained their freedoms including freedom of movement in law courts under various legal provisions. For Sanusi, it was the constitutional provision of the right to freedom of movement. Following this, he relocated to Lagos from an initial confinement in Nasarawa State. Except for the lockdown in various states

⁴⁸Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended).

pursuant to attempts to stop the spread of the Corona virus (COVID-19), there was no restriction of movements in Nigeria.

During the 2019 general elections, over 90 political parties participated having been registered by INEC pursuant to the constitutional provision on the right to peaceful assembly and of freedom of association. In due recognition of press freedom, Nigeria since the ICT liberalization of the twenty-first century has a blossoming print and broadcast media. In academic publications and on the pages of newspapers, as well as in the broadcast media, government policies and actions are appraised and criticized. With these, and many more, how could anyone ask for the practical value of the humanities in development? Only those suffering from the Isaiah prophesy could do that; or may be because freedom is not sold, that is why it is not regarded as valuable.

4. Conflict/dispute settlement: how history and peacebuilding books and practices settle disputes, provide relief, and promote harmony in post-conflict societies

Nigeria and many parts of the world started and live with various types of crises in the twenty-first century. From the attacks on the US to the Jos crisis in September 2001; from Boko Haram to the Arab spring and the Syrian crisis; local and global security and peace remain threatened. The Nigerian country example is bogus, as the conflicts have been endless since the 1980s. They became more widespread, frequent, and intense in the new millennium. The new millennium opened with Militancy in the Southwest led by OPC and the resurgence of Niger-Delta militancy by various groups. The Boko Haram challenge since 2003, and especially since 2009 and the farmer-herder crisis since 2016, among others, have had serious devastating consequences: loss of lives and property and to human displacements.⁴⁹ The sad thing is that these crises reflect the failure of “our common humanity,” due to, according to Dakas, the country’s Weapons of Mass Destruction; namely, “the manipulation of religion, ethnicity and other sectional

⁴⁹ The Nigerian conflict and displacement literature is extensive. A few examples include: NIPPS special publications entitled, *Research reports on conflicts and integration in Nigeria* (Kuru: NIPPS press, 2003); Ogoh Alubo, *Ethnic conflicts and citizenship crises in the central region* (Ibadan: PEFS, 2005); Toyin Falola and Okpeh Ochayi Okpeh (eds.), *Population movements, conflicts, and displacements in Nigeria* (Trenton: AWP, 2008); and Jeji William David Puye, “The Nature and Management of Internally Displaced Persons in Northeastern Nigeria, 1999- 2017.” PhD Dissertation, Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, University of Abuja, 2018; Mohammed J. Kuna and Jibrin Ibrahim (eds.), *Rural banditry and conflicts in northern Nigeria* (Abuja: Center for development and democracy, 2016)

faultlines.”⁵⁰ Although there are commonalities in the conflict triggers, some distinguishing factors exist. For example, the Niger-Delta conflicts reflect age-long struggles of the oil-bearing communities for control of natural resources in their land, while farmer-herder conflicts reflect contestations for land-based resources by occupational groups practicing traditional livelihoods.

The African post-colonial state, particularly, Nigeria has always responded to the conflicts in two ways: suppression using maximum force and setting up of Commissions or tribunals of enquiry. These have never been sufficient to sustain the peace. Thus, the humanities usually take over, as the post-conflict situation is their domain: relief assessment, relief supplies, conflict resolution, peace and development work, among others, dominated by scholars and NGOs. During each crisis, the Nigerian Red Cross Society, for example, moves to conflict scenes and evacuates injured persons to the closest health facilities; afterwards, it engages in search and rescue and reuniting families. It also assesses affected communities, registers IDPs, and supplies IDPs with relief materials as provided by donors.⁵¹ Interestingly, these activities of the Red Cross are guided by international humanitarian law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Humanities scholars carry out research on the causes of conflicts and propose solutions to them.⁵² Scholars of peace and development are grounded in theory and practice of these concepts and provide tools for conflict resolution through dialog, mediation, reconciliation,⁵³ as the state also establishes post-conflict tribunals of enquiry. Various peace and development international and local NGOs⁵⁴ exist in various

⁵⁰Dakas C.J. Dakas, “Our common humanity: Towards harnessing Nigeria’s diversity for sustainable peace and development.” University of Jos 31st and 32nd Convocation lecture (December 6, 2019), 11.

⁵¹ I am a member of the Nigerian Red Cross Society, Plateau State branch and have participated in some of these activities during the crises in Plateau state.

⁵² See the texts already cited under conflict and displacement studies: NIPPS special publications entitled, *Research reports on conflicts and integration in Nigeria* (Kuru: NIPPS press, 2003); Ogoh Alubo, *Ethnic conflicts and citizenship crises in the central region* (Ibadan: PEFS, 2005); Toyin Falola and Okpeh Ochayi Okpeh (eds.), *Population movements, conflicts, and displacements in Nigeria* (Trenton: AWP, 2008); and Jeji William David Puye, “The Nature and Management of Internally Displaced Persons in Northeastern Nigeria, 1999- 2017.” PhD Dissertation, Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, University of Abuja, 2018; Mohammed J. Kuna and Jibrin Ibrahim (eds.), *Rural banditry and conflicts in northern Nigeria* (Abuja: Center for development and democracy, 2016)

⁵³ Among the best-known peace and development scholars in Plateau state is Professor Shedrack G. Best of the Department of Political Science, University of Jos. He has published volumes on this field of knowledge on the Plateau state and Nigerian contexts. He is the author of *Conflict and peace building in Plateau state, Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum, 2007), widely read and used by conflict, peace and development scholars and practitioners.

⁵⁴ In Plateau state, among the numerous NGOs are Dialog, Reconciliation and Peace (DREP), JDPC, Search for Common Ground, Child Protection Network (CPN). Some international NGOs in Nigeria include ICRC, UNICEF, WHO, and the UK’s *Save the Children*.

states of Nigeria working with affected communities—providing relief supplies, psycho-social support, new livelihoods, among others—based on their academic and practical experiences in humanitarian work. Much of conflict management and peacebuilding scholarship and activities are dominated by social scientists particularly those in Political science and Sociology, and to a little extent, Psychology. During the 2004 Plateau Peace Conference, various ethnic communities used the colonial historical publication, the Gazetteers of the Plateau Province to prove their indigeneship statuses in the state. The outbreak of conflicts is to the humanities the like the outbreak of killer diseases such as Malaria, Lassa fever, HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and the recent COVID-19. While the science-based victims manage, treat patients and ultimately find a vaccine for each disease; the humanities manage conflict victims and societies through research, dialog and reconciliation meetings, relief distribution, psycho-social support, new livelihood development, and peace advocacies, among others. With these profiles, of theoretical and practical interventions in humanitarian disasters by the humanities, only those suffering from the Isaiah prophesy will ask about the practical contributions of the humanities to development.

5. Live from London; for our understanding only: How media books and practitioners and Language Communication inform

In his 2021 advocacy article, “What Will the Humanities Look Like in a Decade?”, Robert D. Newman reflects on the future of the humanities. He argues that they need to focus on the crises of humanity not the humanities using multidisciplinary approaches.⁵⁵ This is quite appreciated, but the such multidisciplinary approaches are not in short supply.

The world is a beehive of activities or events carried or caused by human beings and nature. These include wars and other conflicts, the arrival of new products, social events like weddings and parties, educational and religious programs, natural disasters, science discoveries, and new knowledge. Information about such activities and events are disseminated to the world by media practitioners and individuals through the humanities-science and technology alliance.

⁵⁵ Robert D. Newman, “What Will the Humanities Look Like in a Decade?” published in *Inside Higher Ed* (September 3, 2021) <https://robertdnewman.org/what-will-the-humanities-look-like-in-a-decade/> (1/9/2022).

Agber and others have underscored the media-technology interdependence this way:

The media... is a communication channel in which different aspects of the society are expressed and demonstrated to the world...The media also interpret global trends at the different cultural, political, social and economic levels using what is popularly known today as "new technologies."⁵⁶

Kaior puts it more succinctly:

Gathering and packaging information for dissemination does not accomplish the job of mass communication...The channels by which the information gathered by persons such as the reporters, feature writers and editors gets to the consumers are known as mass media.⁵⁷

This is typical of the conventional or traditional media, which until the rise of the social media, held sway in information and communication flow through its control of the print and broadcast media houses.⁵⁸

How does the alliance work? Journalists who collect news items are mainly humanities trained, as newsgathering, writing, editing, and broadcasting are art forms, but the delivery of the news they gathered and produced is the domain of science and technology. The mutually-reinforcing alliance between the media practitioners and science and technology works this way. Conventional broadcast media practitioners gather the news, write, and edit it ready for broadcast. They broadcast the news using the traditional ICT: radio, television, or cable.

⁵⁶Kwaghkondo S. Agber, Philip Akpen, Olympus G. Ejue, and Adakole Oklobia, "Introduction: Globalization, media and popular culture." In Kwaghkondo S. Agber, Philip Akpen, Olympus G. Ejue, and Adakole Oklobia (eds.), *Globalization, media and popular culture in Nigeria, volume 1* (Lagos: Bahiti and Dalila publishers, 2016), xxiii.

⁵⁷Kaior Samule Akpede, "Mass media and cultural transmission in Nigeria: the role of the broadcast media." In Agber, Akpen, Ejue, and Oklobia (eds.), *Globalization, media and popular culture in Nigeria*, 5.

⁵⁸For a brief history of the Nigerian print and broadcast media see Akpede, "Mass media and cultural transmission in Nigeria: the role of the broadcast media." In Agber, Akpen, Ejue, and Oklobia, (eds.), *Globalization, media and popular culture in Nigeria*, 3-4.

Engineering crew at news and program broadcast stations enable the transmission of sound and images to a wider audience, as the world is reduced to a global village. The traditional print media practitioners also gather, write, and edit the news. Next it goes through the printing production processes with newspapers and magazines as the outcome. It is also important to note that, aspects of newsgathering are enabled by digital technologies. For example, capturing, storage, and retrieval devices such as digital cameras and recorders are used in newsgathering. With the rise of the social media, individuals create and share content on social networking sites. Thus, the world is suffering from information glut. Everyday people listen to or read one or more news items from the media in print or through broadcast technologies. They use the news form opinions; make decisions, as correct information is power. With these, why should the same people be asking about the practical contribution of the humanities to development? Such people are suffering from the Isaiah prophesy.

Like the mass media, the knowledge of a language or languages has been enabled by the humanities-science and technology alliance. Modern languages have been codified or their orthographies developed. Writing is an art but it depends on technologies: pen and paper; mass production of written materials is only possible with the use of machines. These make it possible for such languages to spread to other cultures. A language, as we know is a strong marker a culture and the means to access the culture and its owners.

To demonstrate the practical use of language, in accessing other communities, during WWII,

ACLS research-planning committees were recruited by the U.S. Army, Navy, State Department, and Office of Strategic Services, a new intelligence agency. Innovative methods of language-teaching developed by the ACLS Native American Languages Committee were the basis for the intensive Language Program that helped servicemen and women gain fluency in Chinese, Burmese, Arabic, and other languages.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Wheatley and Lurie, *The first century: American council of learned societies, advancing the humanities since 1919* (Creative Print Group: 2019), 9.

In the Nigeria army's fight against the Boko Haram insurgency, language has been used to code-name operation theaters. These include the *Operation restore order* (2011), *Operation Boyona*(2013), *Operation Zaman lafiya*(2013), *Operation lafiya dole* (July, 2015). Each of these conveys the contextual meaning of each operation.

Languages have also been serving science and technology. Each product has a brand name in a particular language; many products also have labels or instruction manuals/prescriptions written in one or more languages. Without the manuals, the efficient use of these technological achievements would be compromised or be defeated. These demonstrate the practicality of language, a humanistic field. Yet, those suffering from the Isaiah Effect ask for proof of the practicality of the humanities.

Made in Africa: How the movie industry entertains

What about the movie industry: Hollywood, Bollywood, Nollywood, Ghollywood? Here we also see the perfect mutuality across the humanities-science and technology divide. Nollywood of the Nigerian movie industry is a postcolonial development, particularly from the 1990s.⁶⁰ Notwithstanding its many shortcomings, it is now the third force to reckon with in the global movie industry,⁶¹ as its patronage is global. Like in the area of news production and broadcasting, video/film production is a combination of humanistic/technological fields. The text writers and editors are in the humanities or are using humanities approaches; many of the actors are studied Film/Theater or Drama at one place or the other. Film production however involves digital and other technologies.

Some people may not be watching Nollywood because of its limitations, but they may be followers of Hollywood or Bollywood. Whatever film one watches, is the product or original, humanities thought process that creates a story, either based on fiction, or reality. Films or videos entertain, inform and educate people; they help preserve our languages and cultures; they expose evil and stimulate

⁶⁰Adukwu Armstrong Idachaba, "The development of Video film in Nigeria: A retrospective account." In Agber, *et.al*, *Globalization, media, and popular culture*, 52-58.

⁶¹Toyin Falola, *The African diaspora: slavery, modernity, and globalization* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 282.

patriotism. These are practical demonstrations of the contribution of the humanities to development. The Isaiah prophesy has however blinded those questioning the practicality value of the humanities in development.

Conclusion

The humanities have and will continue to deliver development because their thematic focus is the human being. Historically, they are responsible for the social change so far achieved. We today live under various types of democracies, with constitutional guarantees of our liberties and freedoms/human rights. Before then, absolute monarchy, colonialism, military or one-party dictatorship had prevailed at different points in different jurisdictions. The writings of philosophers, historians, and literary critics stimulated revolutions and nationalisms or pro-democracy protests that pulled down the strongholds of dictatorships. The French and Russian/Bolshevik revolutions, the Jihad in Hausaland, and anti-colonial struggles derived from humanities literature calling for a free and just society. Humanities literature was the formula and catalyst for change like scientific formula is the basis for goods production by the sciences.

Just like epidemics of diseases break out in human society at different times, so do conflicts and wars. Scientifics treat and find vaccines to cure the ailments. In the same manner, the humanities have theoretical and practical ways of dealing with conflicts: dialog through meetings, conferences, workshops, peace advocacies; relief supplies, psycho-social support and others. Just as one drug does not kill all diseases or solve all health problems, so also is there no one-size-fits all solution to human problems. The humanities have other deliverables as well: In league with the science and technology fields, they produce news, films/videos, among others that inform, entertain, and educate. With all these achievements that are empirically-proven, the talk about the relevance and contributions of the humanities to development is nothing but the effect of the Isaiah prophesy.

What is to be done?

At the level of scholarship and practice,

1. The humanities should continue to play their developmental roles in society through research and publications and practical developmental activities that impact the lives of humanity. This means that our research

and publications should empirically investigate issues bordering on the causes and solutions to the human condition such poverty, illiteracy, development lag, conflicts; bordering on the promotion and sustenance of cultures and our common humanity, among others, and not just focus on academic promotion/career progression.⁶²

2. Our scholarship must be of the highest quality that fits into this description by the ACLS: "The work now being done by the current and rising generations of scholars brings new knowledge to society with uncompromising rigor, analytical acuity, and tireless research."⁶³ In other words, there is need in our higher educational institutions to "Set high standards for doctoral education, focusing as much on quality as on numbers, not discriminating against humanities doctoral candidates, their supervisors, and departmental mentors."⁶⁴
3. Furthermore, our writings should continue to speak truth to power, expose and resist dictatorship, bad governance, and defend our freedom. This was how change was achieved from the late eighteenth century to the twentieth century. And this is how to sustain our freedoms and liberties.
4. Practice interdisciplinary collaboration and curriculum review. In other words, the call by Newman in 2021 for interdisciplinarity should be taken seriously. The experiences and practices of fields such as Performing/Theater Arts, Mass communication and Journalism indicate that the disciplinary Berlin walls have to remain broken. Both the humanities and the science and technology fields are working for our common good. Historians outside Africa are for example working with biologists to make natural history thick; Some Nigerian historians known to me are working with scientist on genealogies, using the DNA, as another is working with geographers on migration routes, relating to traditions of origins of people. Other disciplines have similar narratives. Beside

⁶²Toyin Falola, *The ToyinFalola reader*, 394-397

⁶³ Steven Wheatley and Theodra Lurie, *The first century: American council of learned societies, advancing the humanities since 1919* (Creative Print Group: 2019), 13.

⁶⁴ The Humanities Forum, 3

collaboration is the need to bring innovation and creativity to our programs through constant curriculum review to reflect current or even future development. Indeed, “the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” This means the opportunities are limitless and it is time to close our book of Lamentations and explore that of revelations. I have moved on.

At the level of government/ the state, the following suggestions by the Humanities Forum in 2014 are still relevant and are worth repeating. Accordingly, there is need to:

5. include the humanities in funding programs for new knowledge production.
6. Include humanities scholars in policy debates on national issues.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ The Forum on the Humanities in Africa of the African Humanities Program, 3