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QUESTION: REVIEW CHAPTER 8 IN THE BOOK: HISTORY AND PHILOSPHY OF SCIENCE; A BRIEF SURVEY BY TEMIDAYI DAVID OLADIPO AND NOAH OPEYEMI BALOGUN

CHAPTER 8: PHILOSPSHY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (AND APPLIED SCIENCES)

The success, growth and development of the Natural Science and its practitioners placed Science on a pedestal of importance. It gave Science a standing in the socio-cultural milieu of that time, which gave birth to the concept Positivism. That is the application of science to any issue, whether or not it is within the known scope of science. This period is known as The Renaissance Period or The Enlightenment Period, basically a period of revolution and self-discovery for the people of that time. Part of this revolution included the struggle of power between the Religious community and the Intellectual community over the weight of influence exerted by each over decisions and overall mindsets of the people then. The Religious community attributing everything to the Scriptures, including world disasters and crises, while the Intellectual community sought to give the individuals their own mind and it accomplished this task. Since the Church had a lessening hand of authority over the decisions the concept Individualism was birthed. Due to this, the opinion of Science began to be so highly valued that it was asked its opinions in matters which didn’t even concern it. However Science was restricted to its study of natural phenomena, because it believed that only these materials could behave in a regular and predictable way. That was until a new argument showed up. A French philosopher by the name of August Comte, argued that the behavior of humans if studied properly can bring forth somewhat accurate behavioral patterns among the human species. Comte is known as the founding father of the Social Sciences, in specifics Sociology till date. This sub-branch of Science was birthed from the thinking of Comte, who before he was a Social Scientist, was first and foremost a Scientist. That is to say he also thought along the lines of a Positivist. This concept frowns at theoretical speculation which has no factual basis. It is modeled in the way of the empirical sciences, which deals with methodology and laws. It also starts out with observation which has its own glitches in its thinking. It is filled with hypothesis, theories, value, interest, concept and it cannot be denied that those observing are humans which have prejudices which can compromise the observation results.

What Is Social Science?

This is an area of study dedicated to the explanation of human behavior, interaction and manifestations, either as an individual in a society or collectively as a group; including the institutions and norms such interactions created. Disciplines under the study include, sociology, psychology, economics, political science, archaeology and anthropology. Its practitioners run down through ages, from the early philosophers such as St Augustine an the 14th century historian Ibn Khaldun, to the present day social scientists like Karl Marx, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Emile Durkheim and a host of others. The Social Sciences also have laid out objectives to accomplish during their scientific journey, these include:

* To understand humans historically and culturally along with the factors responsible for change and development.
* To be able to interpret human behavior according to its behavioral influencing factors, especially in relation to economic and political activities.
* To be able to influence human behavior to a desired channel and influence collective effort towards development.
* To discover and manipulate (if possible) the laws governing most of human behavior; and
* To advance beyond armchair philosophy and delve into the characteristic temperament associated with the behavior of a person or group or those engaged in an activity.

The genesis of the study’s problem is deeply rooted in the study itself. That is to say it sits in the undeniable consciousness and rationality of the human species, which is very different from the in-animated characteristics of natural materials/phenomenon.

Its first problem is the problem of Reason and Cause. Here there has to a correlational connection between an event and its cause. The summarized explanation given by Francis Offer helps us understand the detailed analysis of David Hume. It simply states that for every event in the universe there is always a cause which can be explained by reference to the event. An example of this is as thus; Mr A punches one of his friends and when asked why he made the statement “I was angry”. The statement on first look follows the above principle but on further insight it is discovered that he could have also punched his friend in a case of happiness or teasing. This procured the question that if a reason for an event is so many and the cause isn’t, is it still safe? So an alternative was suggested, that is instead of calling it reason it can be switched to a more human sensitive word such as motive or intent. Comte and T.M Newcomb are considering it but a scholar Robin Collingwood still believes that reasons can be treated as causes.

Its second problem is that of the Human Person being the object of study. Karl Marx has attested that the methodology of the Pure Sciences cannot be used here as the specimen is a human person who is rational, with the desire for free will, with emotions, hence making it difficult to undermine man’s predictability to be static. For example The Law of Demand and Supply, which simply states that the higher the demand, the higher the price but higher the supply the lower the price. But even recent year economists have confirmed the change in consumer behavior. It explains how the capitalists have found a way to manipulate the system and leaves the consumer without a choice. An example is in the case of the smart phones. These devices make use of “data” which is the currency of the internet so they are forced to buy both. Simply, the long term economic law doesn’t work here.

Basically, scientific laws cannot work in this study as human beings are being with faculties of rational reasoning and thinking.