SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 8

This chapter talked about the enormous success recorded in natural science in the eighteenth and nineteenth century to the point that the then people of Europe started consulting the scientist on issues which are unrelated to science and this is due to the change in the socio-culture milieu of the time. The period in which positivism grew on socio-cultural milieu is known as the renaissance and the enlightenment period and this is called so because it marked the period in which people started a revolution of return to their Greek heritage. The aeon prior to the renaissance period was called the dark ages because it was the time in which religion reigned. IT was the time in which women and men were burnt alive because they were guilty of witchcraft or sorcery. The church also waged several wars against the heathens. The community and this time saw this as a big threat to human happiness and survival. This then gave rise to the romanticism period, then the romanticism period gave rise to humanism and naturalism.

After this period, scientific approach to things grew out of philosophical approach to issues, but science was restricted to study of natural phenomena because it was only material that was believed to behave in a regular and predictable way. This was so until August Comte a French social philosopher. He stated that human beings can be studied because they behave in a regular pattern much like material things. This marks the beginning of social sciences especially sociology and Comte is still regarded as the father of sociology till today. Positivism rejects theoretical speculations that are not based on facts of experience as a means of obtaining knowledge.

Social science is an area of study dedicated to the explanation of human behavior, interaction, and manifestation, either as an individual in a society or collectively as a group. Some disciplines include sociology, economics, political science etc. although the history of the disciplines dates back to early philosophers who wanted to study how society works. Social sciences seek to employ the method of science in the investigation of social phenomena taking the human person a s a subject. There exists an incongruity in using method of scientific enquiry to study human and his society. The incongruity stems from the fact that human beings do not behave in exact way objects of natural science behave. A stone is not a conscious being, so it may behave in a regular and thus predictable way when pushed. However, a man has a conscious and rational being may not have behaved in the same pattern.

To understand the problem of reason and cause, one must understand that one essential feature of science and scientific explanation is to provide a casual or correlational connection between an event and its cause. That is to explain why the cause of one event is the cause of another. A man known as Francis Offor stated that “The principle of cause and effect states that for every event in the universe, there is a set of conditions such that if the conditions are all fulfilled, then the event invariably occurs. Put differential, the principle states that for every event ’B’ in the universe, there is always a cause ‘A’. such that ‘B’ can always be explained by reference of event ‘A’. This is the principle that underlies the method of explanation in science”. There are some scholars who insist that reasons can be treated as causes. One of such scholars is Robin Collingwood who argues to the extreme that reasons are not only causes but they are the ultimate casual power which lies in human and that ascribing casual power to inanimate things and objects in the physical world may be too naïve of us.

Another problem with social science is that, according to max weber, methodology of science becomes inapplicable due to the fact that the object of study in social science is man, a rational being with freewill and other sentient features. Take for instance the law of demand and supply in economics which predicts that human being will buy less when the price is high and buy more when the price is low. It is on this basic assumption of rational behavior that the law of demand and supply was formulated. The higher the demand, higher the price but the higher the supply, the lower the price. This is also referred to as market forces. However it has been observed even by economists themselves that these laws do not hold all the time since man does not behave rationally all the time since man does not behave rationally all the time. Also in recent years’ capitalist have been able to manipulate consumer behavior to a point that it is doubtful if these laws hold any longer. Now if a supposed scientific law is neither absolute nor hold quite often, should we continue to call it a scientific laws of economics?