NAME: IVOKE BEATRICE CHINONSO

MATRIC NO.: 19/SMS01/014

DEPARTMENT: ECONOMICS

COURSE: HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE (GST 118)

A REVIEW OF CHAPTER 8

In the 18th century scientists were highly consulted even on matters that were not related to science such as law and forensic evidence, this was because of the success recorded in natural science in the 18th and 19th centuries which was extensively beneficial to the social and intellectual lives of the people of Europe. Therefore, belief in science or application of science to any issue is called positivism. The social environment in which positivism thrived was called the renaissance and the enlightenment period because it was a period when people started a revolt to return to their Greek heritage of using reason when matters of public were concerned and not the order of religion. The previous age before the renaissance period was called the dark age because that was when religious belief reigned supreme. The pope was the final judge on all matters. During that time, people were burnt at a stake when accused of witchcraft, and illnesses were believed to be a punishment for sin. The educated community saw this as a threat to happiness and survival, so they started using reason to arrive at justified conclusion. According to Bertrand Russell, a mental outlook differs the modern period from the medieval period, two important points are the diminishing authority of the church and the increasing authority of the science. Scientific approach to things was as a result of philosophical approach to issues, though science was not allowed to study natural phenomena because only material things were believed to behave in a certain manner. This was until a French social philosopher, August Comte, thought otherwise. This was the beginning of social sciences, and August Comte is regarded as the father of social sciences and sociology. Positivism considers theories that could not be solved or verified by experience false. One of the short comings of positivism is observation which can be laden with error: observations are concept-laden, hypothesis-laden, theory-laden, value-laden, interest-laden, laden with culture-specific ontologies. Social science is an area of study dedicated to the explanation of human behaviour, interaction and manifestations. Some social science disciplines are economics, sociology, etc. the following philosophers were also interested in studying how society works: St Augustine, karl marx, Thomas Hobbes, etc. Social science uses scientific method to investigate social phenomena taking the human person as an object of study. Some of the goals such endeavours are: 1) to understand humans in both historical and cultural development, and the factors causing such development. 2) discovering and if possible being in control of the laws governing human behaviour, etc.

The main focus of social science may be impossible to achieve as a result of methodological mismatch. It appears to be unsuitable to use scientific enquiry to study human behaviour. This is because human beings do not behave the same way that objects do.

The problem of reasons and causes

In social science an important feature of scientific explanation is to provide a reasonable relationship between an event and its cause. For example, there is a need to explain why event ‘F’ is the cause of event ‘G’ which is the effect. According to David Hume and Ernest Nagel, for anything to be considered the cause of another, the cause and effect must; a) have a constant relation, meaning that whenever the cause occurs the effect must also occur. b) the two events must occur in approximately the same location or be related by a chain of events that are closely linked, etc.

According to Francis Offor, the principle that underlines the method of explanation in science states that an event invariably occurs due to the fulfilment of a set conditions. For every event ‘G’ there is always a cause ‘F’. Francis also says that “by employing scientific method in social investigation, the social science seeks to explain the cause of action involving human agents”. A way of solving this problem is to accept that reasons are not causes but motive or intent. Though some scholars such as Robin Collingwood still insist that reasons can be treated as causes.

The problem of a human person as an object of study in social sciences

According to Max Weber, the methodology of science becomes inapplicable because the object of study in social science is man, and man happens to be a rational being with freewill, desires and emotions. All these factors make predictions of behaviour which natural science uses to deduce principles and laws difficult. A good example of this is the law of demand and supply in economics.