SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 8 OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE; A BRIEF SURVEY

Page 1 & 2 of chapter 8 talked about the success of natural science and its impact on people in the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe. At this time scientist where trusted and counted on fully for prove of evidence, forensics and law. The positive response the scientists received boosted the reliance and efficiency of science, which is known as Positivism. This era which the positivism grew is known as the renaissance and the enlightenment period. It marked the revolution of the Greek people against their theologian dictators. In this times, the pope was supreme having the final say of everything. This is somewhat kind of the divine command theory of the state. The intellectual ones and the philosophers of the age saw this as evil to humanity. They began to create awareness through methods of great philosophers like Plato and Socrates. The classical period of romanticism had music and arts from the Grecian views. This period gave rise to naturalism and humanism, work of art and literature as classical. Bertrand Russell stressed on that on the difference and mental picture of the medieval times and the modern times having it with the reduction of church activities and the increase in scientific exploration. Freedom from church authority led to individualism, anarchy. Yet discipline, intellectual, moral and political bearings were established in minds of the renaissance men. The approach of science remained strictly study of natural phenomena because it was believed to behave and yield through regular and predictable process. August Comte revoked this stating that processes used in scientific experiments can be used in the determination of the society too. This brought about social science. And he is recognised as father of sociology till date.

Positivism rejects theoretical speculations that are not based on factual experience as a means of obtaining knowledge such as metaphysical statements. Seeking knowledge has its own problems; first of these problems is observation upon which is the basic justification of positivism came is laden with error. They are go as observations are: concept-laden, hypothesis-laden, theory-laden, value-laden, interest-laden and finally laden with culture-specific ontologies. The knowledge of social science deals with the area of study dedicated to the explanation of human behaviour and interactions either as a group or individual in the society including norms and values created. Disciplines derives are known as sociology, psychology, economics, political science, archaeology and anthropology. All these disciplines exist courtesy of the early philosophers who craved to study society which are St. Augustine, Karl Marx, Thomas Hobbes, john Locke, Emile Durkheim and many others. Comte remains the father of social science. Social sciences employs methods of science in its investigation of social phenomena of individuals. They include in: understanding humans both historical and cultural development context and factors of responsible for such development or change, being able to predict human behaviour based on the pattern of interaction, belief system, social norms and other factors influencing human; shaping it socially desirable and collective efforts to development; discovering and manipulating if possible the laws governing human behaviour and finally advancing beyond armchair philosophy, the knowledge about the characteristic temperament and associated behaviour of a person or group, or that exhibited by those engaged in an activity. Curiosity and inquisitiveness is aroused by the philosophy of social science of errors achieved due to inaccuracy or mismatch of methodological process. In other words there is disharmony in the scientific method of enquiry to study human and his society. This incongruity or disharmony stem from the fact that human beings are do not behave in a regular and predictable way. Whereas an object like a stone is. Man remains conscious and rational however.

The problem of reason and causes introduces problems of causative factors and reasons in social sciences. That is to explain why event A is the cause of event B which is the effect. Accounts given state that for anything to be the cause of another, the cause and the effect must: have an invariable or constant relation in the sense that whenever the alleged cause occurs, the effect must also occur; be spatially contiguous, that is the two events must occur in approximately the same location or at least be related by a chain of events that are spatially linked, be temporally related such that the cause precedes the effect in time just as the effect must follow continuously from the cause; and have an asymmetrical relation in that the occurrence of the alleged cause must be actual event, which brings about the effect, such that the effect must not be part of the original conditions that are necessary and sufficient for its own occurrence. In Francis Offor’s explanation he said that the principle of cause and effect states that for every event in the universe there are set of conditions that fulfil an effect. This is the principle that underlies the method of explanation in science. He further asserts that employment of scientific method in social investigation, the social sciences seeks to explain the cause of action involving human agents.

In his example of reason and cause, Mr A is interrogated by some of his friends who desire to know why he punched one of them at the gym. He says he punched him because the fellow made him angry. In this evaluation one would still ask if he perform the action because he wanted to or it was a reflex. The main idea remains that for a cause there’s a reason. The reaction of the man wouldn’t have been any different if the man had made him happy I guess still using this using this thesis. The fact remains there can be different causes from one reason. The book cites another man who wanted to get canned beef so he went to the supermarket. The ‘reason’ here is the soda drink and the ‘effect’ is his movement to the market. But as he reaches the supermarket the canned beef is no longer available so he decides to get soda drink does that mean that the effect has changed after the initial reason had taken place? So there goes the plurality of events that can unfold from a single reason or idea.

Coming down to economics and market behaviour, reason and effect has being proven to hold little or no effect in the activities of today’s commercial world. The higher the demand the higher the price, the lower the demand the lower the price. And again the higher the supply the lower the price the lower, the lower the supply the higher the price. This has been the market forces law of all time but recently in this age, the market is no longer controlled by these forces of demand and supply as the economists have given a clear illustration in their proves. Capitalists and business magnates have controlled the market by making some effect and causes limited. Online subscriptions, data services and recharge of airtime and TV stations do not go with the demand and supply rule. If some people can’t pay up for their subscriptions because it’s too expensive it doesn’t change the price of the subscription because it is fixed and a non-perishable goods or it doesn’t have warranty. The chief of it all is that it is a sort of monopolistic service offered. So in this case the reason and effect those doesn’t say much. The bottom line remains if economics have proven failure in the scientific methods or it’s just the inability of the social science and economics to handle it?