NAME: Okuntade Olayemi Elizabeth

COLLEGE: Social and Management Sciences

DEPARTMENT: International Relations and Diplomacy

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COURSE TITLE: History and Philosophy of Science

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ASSIGNMENT TITLE: Review

QUESTION: In not more than 2 pages, do a review of Chapter 8 of Temidayo D. Oladipo and Noah O. Balogun, History and Philosophy of Science: A Brief Survey. Ibadan: Hope Publications, pages 86-95.

The success in natural science in the 18th and 19th century was so good that the Europeans started trusting the scientists and even went to them in times of need. The renaissance and the enlightenment period is as a result of the socio-cultural milieu in which positivism grew. It is so because of the fact that it marked a period when people started a revolution to their Greek heritage of using reason in matters of public concern and not the dictate of religion as it was in the age prior to this time. Due to the fact that the people committed sins, they were punished for it with diseases. This happened in the classical period of romanticism. Bernard Russell also said that the period of history which is commonly called ‘modern’ has a mental outlook which differs from that of the medieval period of many ways.

August Comte a French philosopher was of the opinion that society behaves in a regular pattern much like material things and this behavior can be studied and somewhat accurate predictions made. Positivism believes that all propositions that cannot be solved by experience are due to a high degree of abstract nature. This is the beginning of social science.

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 including the institutions, norms and mores such institutions created. August Comte is the father of social science. The objectives of social science are; being able to predict human behavior based on the pattern of interaction, understanding humans in both historical and cultural development context, influencing human behavior and so on.

Ernest Nagel presents David Hume’s exposition of the notion of causation in a bullet form which is endearing to the analysis. Francis Offor says 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. He also says that by employing the scientific method in social investigation, the social sciences seek to explain the cause of action involving human agents. There are some scholars that insist reasons can be treated as causes. One is Robbin Collingwood who argues to the extreme that reasons are not only causes but they are the ultimate casual power to inanimate things and objects in the physical world may be too naïve for 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, desires, emotions and other sentient features that will come into play in his action or reaction. These are factors that are used to predict the behavior with which natural science is known to deduce their principles and laws. For instance, the law of demand and supply which says that human as a rational being will buy less when the price is high and buy more when the price is low. It is with this that the law of demand and supply came about (the higher the demand, the higher the price and vice-versa).

Economists have noticed that these laws do not do anything to man as they behave rationally all the time. In fact, in recent years, capitalists have been able to manipulate consumer behavior to the point that it is doubtful if these laws hold any longer.