

SUMMARY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

(A BRIEF SURVEY)

Chapter 8 of the book, History and Philosophy of science by Temidayo David Oladipo and Noah Opeyemi Balogun starts by identifying that the success recorded in natural science in the 18th and 19th century was so enormous on the social and intellectual life of the then people of Europe that they trusted the words of *scientists* to the extent of seeking their opinion in matters completely unrelated to science such as law and forensic evidence. It moves on to state that the positive response of science happened as a result of a change in the *socio-cultural* milieu of the time; this explains why belief in science or application of science to any issue is called '*positivism*.'

The *socio-cultural* milieu in which positivism grew is called the '*renaissance and the enlightenment period*.' The aeon prior to the *renaissance period* is called the *dark period* because it was the time the religious belief reigned supreme. It also pointed out the final authority of the *Pope* on any matter; be it political, social or intellectual. However, the intellectual community saw it as a very big threat to human happiness and survival, then began to infiltrate literature with the benefit of using reason to arrive at justified conclusion just as; Socrates, Plato and Aristotle did. This became known as the '*classic period of romanticism*.' The term *romanticism* gave rise to *humanism* and *naturalism*. Works of art and literature produced at that time were also regarded as classic.

Bertrand Russell, a British philosopher puts romanticism more succinctly when he said; "*the period of History which is commonly called 'modern' has a mental outlook which differs from that of the medieval period in many ways*". From this, the diminishing authority of the church, and the increasing authority of science were very important.

Around this time, the thought was that scientific approach to looking at things grew out of the philosophical approach to looking at them, and science was restricted to the study of natural phenomena because it was only the material that was believed to behave in a regular and predictable way. This was so, until the French social philosopher, *August Comte* introduced a new point of view. His belief was that society behaves in a regular pattern, much like material things and this behavior could be studied and relatively accurate predictions could be made. This was the beginning of Social science. Comte is still regarded till date, as the *Father of sociology and social sciences in general*.

WHAT IS SOCIAL SCIENCE?

The book further says that *Social science* is an area of study dedicated to the explanation of human behaviour, interaction and manifestations, either as an individual in the society or collectively in a group; including the institutions, norms and more of such interactions created. Examples of disciplines in Social Science include; Psychology, Economics, Political science, Sociology etc. Social science seeks to employ the method of science in the investigation of social phenomena taking the individual human, as the object of study. The objectives of this endeavour include:

- ✓ Understanding humans in both historical and cultural development, context and factors responsible for such change,
- ✓ Predicting human behaviours based on the pattern of interaction, belief system, social norms and other factors influencing human behaviour,

- ✓ Influencing human behaviours by grooming it into a socially desirable conduct and channelling collective effort towards development,
- ✓ Discovering and manipulating if possible, the laws governing most of human behaviour etc.

THE PROBLEM OF REASONS AND CAUSES

In trying to understand the problem of social science, the book explains that there is the need to understand that one of the essential features of science and scientific explanation is, to provide a causal or correlational connection between an event and its causes, that is; to explain why an event A is the cause of an event B, which is the effect. In respect of this, for anything to be the cause of another, the cause and effect must:

1. have an *invariable or constant relation*; in the sense that whenever the alleged cause occurs, the effect must also occur;
2. be *spatially contiguous*, meaning that it must be at approximately the same location
3. *be temporally related* such that the cause precedes the effect in time just as the effect must follow continuously from the cause; and
4. have an *asymmetrical relation*. The occurrence of the alleged cause must be an actual event, such that the effect must not be part of the original conditions that are necessary and sufficient for its own occurrence.

‘THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN PERSON AS OBJECT OF STUDY IN SOCIAL SCIENCE’

According to Max Weber, the 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 come into play in his action or reaction. For instance, the law of demand and supply in economics which predicts that human as a rational being will buy less when the price is high and buy more when the price is low as a result of the market forces. However, it has been observed by economists themselves that these laws do not apply all the time since man does not behave rationally always. In fact, in recent years, Capitalists have been able to manipulate consumer behaviour to the point that it is doubtful if these laws apply any longer. For example, the constant increase in demand of products like; iPhones and accessories, despite the increase in price of it. The law of demand and supply does not seem to work here as consumers have no choice. Now, if a supposed scientific law is neither absolute nor held in most instances, in an attempt to criticise social science, should it still be referred to as scientific laws of economics?

End of summary.