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**MATRIC NO: 19/SMS01/015**

**DEP: ECONOMICS**

**COURSE: HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE (GST118)**

Chapter 8 of Temidayo D. Oladipo and Noah O. Balogun, History and Philosophy of Science: A Brief Survey talks about how the European people started trusting the words of Scientists because of the success recorded in natural science in the 18th and 19th century. The positive response happened as a result of a change in the socio-cultural milieu of the time and this explains why believe in 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 was called the dark period because it was the time the religious belief reigned supreme, i.e the Pope was the final authority 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. So they started infiltrating literature with the benefit of using reason to arrive at justified conclusion just as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle used to do.

Bertrand Russel, a British philosopher puts romanticism more succinctly when he said that “the period of History which is commonly called ‘modern’ has a mental outlook which differs from that of the medieval period in many ways”. Of these, two are the most important: the diminishing authority of the church, and the increasing authority of science.

It was said that, scientific approach to things grew out of philosophical approach to issues, but science was restricted to study of natural phenomena because it was only the material that was believed to behave in a regular and predictable way. But a French philosopher, August Comte said otherwise. This was the beginning of Social sciences and Comte is being regarded till date as Father of sociology and social sciences in general.

What is Social science? 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 mores such interactions created. Examples of disciplines in social sciences includes: psychology, economics, anthropology, political science, Sociology etc. Social science seek to employ the method of science in the investigation of social phenomena taking the human person as object of study. The objectives of such 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

One of the essential features of sciences and scientific explanation is to provide a casual or correlation connection between an event and its cause. That is, to explain why event A is the cause of event B which is the effect. According to this account, for anything to be the cause of another, the cause and 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; 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, 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 Sciences

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 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 do 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 actually apply any longer. For example, the incessant increase in demand of some products like iPhones, 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 not absolute, should the law of economics, which is a social science continue to be called “scientific laws”?