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**COURSE TITLE: HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE**

**DEPARTMENT: LAW**

**QUESTION**

In not more than two pages, do a review of chapter 8 of Temidayo D. Oladipo and Noah O. Balogun, History and Philosophy of Science.

**Introduction**

The success required in natural science in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was so enormous on the social and intellectual life of the then people of Europe that they started trusting the scientists and even sought their opinion on matters unrelated to science such as law and forensic evidence. This positive response to science happened as a result of a change in the socio-cultural milieu of the time and this explains why science or application of science to any issues is called positivism from then on.

Positivism grew in the renaissance period. It is called so because it marked a period when people started a revolution of return to their Greek heritage of using reason to address matters and not religion as used in the dark age. Romanticism gave rise to naturalism and humanism. Scientific approach to things grew out of philosophical approach to issues but science was restricted to study of natural phenomena because it was the only material that was believed to behave in a regular and predictable way.

Auguste Comte, a French philosopher, thought otherwise. He was of the opinion that society behaves in a regular pattern much like material things and this results can be studied and somewhat have accurate predictions. This was the beginning of social science especially sociology and till date, Comte is still regarded as father of sociology and social sciences in general. Irrespective of the shortcomings of positivism, let us explicate on the idea of social science it birthed.

**What is Social Science?**

Social science is an area of study dedicated to the explanation of human behavior, interaction and manifestations, either as an individual in a society or collectively as a group. Disciplines in social sciences include: sociology, political science, economics, psychology, archaeology and anthropology. Although the history of the discipline dates back to the history of early philosophers who wanted to study how society works such as John Locke, Ibn Khaldun, Karl Max among others. Social science seeks to employ the method of science in the investigation of social phenomena taking the human person as an object of study. There exists an incongruity in using methods of scientific enquiry to study human and his society.

**The Problem of Reasons and Causes**

To understand this problem with social sciences better, we need to understand that one of the essential features of science and scientific explanation is to provide a correlational correction between an event and its cause. But first, what does the principle of cause and effect mean? Although explication of causality goes back to David Hume, Earnest Nagel presents Hume’s exposition of the notion of causation in a bullet form which is endearing to our analysis here. According to this account, for anything to be the cause of another, the cause and effect must: have an invariable or constant relation, be spatially contagious, be temporally related and must have an asymmetrical relation. Francis Offor assert that ‘by employing the scientific method in social investigation, the social sciences seek to explain the course of action involving human agents’.

One way to solve these problems is to accept reasons are not causes but motive or intent. Thus, some scholars like J.S Mill and Auguste Comte have argued on whether it is not better to leave reason as motive, drive or intent and not cause. Nonetheless, there are some other scholars who insist that reasons can be treated as causes.

**The Problem of Human Person as Object of Study in Social Sciences**

Another problem with the project of 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 a man, a rational being with freewill, desires, emotions and other sentient features that come into play in his action or reaction. All these factors undermine the notion of predictability of behavior with which natural science is known to deduce their principles and laws. Now, if a supposed scientific law is neither absolute nor hold quite often, should we continue to call it scientific laws of economics?