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**ASSIGNMENT**

**CHAPTER 8**

**INTRODUCTION**

The success recorded 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 words of 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 social-cultural milieu of the time and this explains why belief in science or application of science to any issue is called positivism from then on.

The social-cultural milieu in which positivism grew is called the renaissance and the enlightenment period. The effect of that manoeuvring was overwhelming. Scientific approach to things grew out of philosophical approach to issues, but science was restricted to the study of natural phenomena because it was the only material that was believed to behave in a regular and predictable way. Not until a French philosopher called August Comte thought otherwise. He was of the opinion that society behaves in a regular pattern much like material things and this behaviour can be studied and somewhat accurate predictions made. This is the beginning of social sciences, especially sociology 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 a society or collectively as a group; including the institutions, norms and mores such as interactions created. Disciplines in the social science includes: sociology, psychology, economics, political science, archaeology and anthropology.

Social sciences 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 development or change;
* Being able to predict human behaviour based on pattern of interaction, belief system, social norms and other factors influencing human behaviour
* Influencing human behaviour
* Discovering and manipulating if possible, the laws governing most human behaviour; and
* Advancing beyond armchair philosophy, the knowledge about the characteristic temperament

However there exist an incongruity in using method of scientific enquiry to study human and his society. The incongruity stem from the fact that human beings do not behave in exact way objects of natural science behave.

**The Problem of Reasons and causes**

What does the principle of cause and effect mean? Although explication of causality goes back to David Hume, Ernest 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 and effect must:

* Have a variable or constant relation in the sense that whenever the alleged cause occurs, the effect must also occur;
* Be spatially contiguous
* Be temporally related
* Have an asymmetrical relation

Francis Offor goes further to assert that, ‘by employing the scientific method in social investigation, the social science seeks to explain the cause of action involving human agents’.

One way to solve this problem is to accept reasons are not causes but motive or intent. Thus scholars like J.S. Mill, T.M. Newcomb 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. One of such scholars is Robin Collingwood who argues to the extreme that reasons are not only causes but they are the ultimate causal power which lies in human and that ascribing casual power to inanimate things and objects in the physical world maybe too naïve of us.

**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 man, a rational being with freewill, desires, emotions and other sentient features that come to play in his action or reaction. All these factors undermine the notion of predictability of behaviour with which natural science is known to deduce their principles and laws.