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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 belief in science or application of science to any issue is called ‘POSITIVISIM’ because of the positive response to science that happened as a result of a change in the socio-cultural milieu of the time.

The Socio-Cultural milieu in which positivism grew is called the renaissance and the enlightenment period. It is called a renaissance period because it marked a period when people started a revolution of return 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. The Aeon prior to the renaissance period was called the dark ages because it was the time religious belief reigned supreme. Sociology and Comte is being regarded till date as Father of Sociology and Social Sciences in general.

Positivism rejects theoretical speculations that are not based on facts of experience as a means of obtaining knowledge.

Social science is an area of study dedicated to the explanation of human behaviour, interaction and manifestation, either as an individual in a society or collectively as a group; including the institutions, norms and mores such interactions created.

Social sciences seek to employ the method of science in the investigation of social phenomena taking the human person as object of study. The Philosophy of Social science arouse out of the curiosity that the central focus and the propelling motive of Social science maybe impossible or unachievable due to methodological mismatch.

To understand this problem with Social science better, we 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 cause. That is, to explain why event A is the cause of event B which is the effect. What does the principle of cause and effect mean?

Francis Offor explains this point in the following words:

‘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. Put differently, the principle states that for every event ‘B’ can always be explained by reference to the activities of event ‘A’. This is the principle that underlies the method of explanation in science.’

Offor further explains that ‘by employing the scientific method in social investigation, the social sciences seek to explain the cause of action involving human agents’. For example, let us assume Mr A makes this statement upon seeing some of his friends who demanded to know why he punched one of them at a gym. The man says: ‘I punched him because I was angry’

Everybody will agree that the reason why the man punched his friend is because he was angry. In other words, anger is the reason or the cause for punching his friend. This explanation pretends the words ‘reason’ and ‘cause’ can be substituted for one another without any loss of meaning, even when we see causation from purely mechanistic angle as presented by Nagel above. When applied to human activities, the problem becomes deeper.

One way to solve this problem is to accept reasons are not causes but motive or intent. A good example of this is the case of a man who went to supermarket to buy canned beef. The why he went to supermarket is to get canned beef. Another problem is that, if reasons are causes, then getting the canned beef must of necessity come before going to the supermarket since causes always precede the effect they caused.

Another problem with the project of social science is that, according to Max Weber, methodology of science is 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 behaviour with which natural science is known to deduce their principles and laws.