

## CHAPTER 8 (PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND APPLIED SCIENCES)

The positive response to science happened as a result of a change in the socio-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 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 their time. The aeon prior to the Renaissance period was called dark ages because it was the time religious beliefs reigned supreme. Diseases were said to be direct consequences of sin and idolatry so the church waged several wars to exterminate the heathens. However the intellectual community at that time saw this as a big threat to human happiness and survival. So they started infiltrating literature with the benefits of using reason to arrive at justified conclusion just as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle used to do. Romanticism gave rise to humanism and naturalism and works of art and literature produced at that time were also regarded as classic. Russell holds that "emancipation from the authority of the church led to the growth of individualism even to the point of anarchy.

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. Not until a French social philosopher called August Comte was of the opinion that society behaves in a regular pattern much like material things and this behavior can be studied and somewhat accurate prediction made. This is the beginning of social sciences especially sociology and Comte is being regarded till date as the 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. Modelled on empirical sciences which provides it with a methodology, positivism declares false, all propositions that could be solved or verified by experience such as metaphysical statements due to a high degree of abstract nature. There are a lot of problems with this conception of ideal knowledge seeking enterprise. First of these problems is observation upon which the basic justification of positivism came is laden with error. These include the facts that:

- ❖ Observations are concept-laden
- ❖ Observations are hypothesis-laden
- ❖ Observations are theory-laden
- ❖ Observations are value-laden
- ❖ Observations are interest-laden
- ❖ Observations are laden with culture-specific ontologies.

### **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 including the institutions, norms. Disciplines in social sciences include: sociology, archaeology, psychology, economics, political science, and anthropology. It seeks to employ the method of science in the investigation of social phenomena taking the human person as object of study. The objectives of such endeavor include:

- ❖ Understanding humans in both historical and cultural development context and factors responsible for such development or change
- ❖ Being able to predict human behavior based on the pattern of interaction, belief system, social norms and other factors influencing human behavior, especially in relation to economic and political activities
- ❖ Influencing human behavior; grooming it towards a socially desirable conduct and channeling collective effort towards development
- ❖ Discovering and manipulating if possible, the laws governing most of human behavior

- ❖ Advancing beyond armchair philosophy, the knowledge about the characteristic temperament and associated behavior of a person or group, or that exhibited by those engaged in an activity.

There exist an incongruity in using method of scientific enquiry to study human and his society. The fact that human beings do not behave in exact way objects of natural sciences behave.

### **The Problem of Reasons and Causes**

One of the essential features of science and scientific explanation is to provide a casual or correlational connection between an event and its cause. 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, that is, the two events must occur in approximately the same location or at least be related by a chain of events that are spatially linked
- ❖ Be temporarily related such that the cause precedes the effect in time just as the effect must follow continuously from the cause
- ❖ Have an asymmetrical relation in that the occurrence of the alleged cause must be actual event, which brings about the effect, such that the effect must not be part of the original conditions that are necessary and sufficient for its own occurrence.

Francis Offor explains that the principal 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. He goes further to assert that “ by employing the scientific method in social investigation, the social sciences seek to explain the cause of action involving human agents.” There are some scholars who insist that reasons can be treated as causes and one of such scholars is Robin Collingwood who argues to the extreme that reasons are not only cause but they are ultimate casual power which lies in human and that ascribing casual power to inanimate things and objects in the physical world may be too naïve for us.

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

Another problem with the project if 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 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. 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 but more when the price is low. It is in this basic assumption of rational behavior that the law of demand and supply was formulated. The higher the demand, the lower the price , but the higher the supply, the higher the price. This is also referred to as market forces. However, it has been observed that these laws do not hold all the time since man does not behave rationally all the time.