

Name : SAMUEL COVENANT CHIDINMA

MATRIC NO: 19/ LAW01/244

The sociocultural 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. The words of the Pope was the final authority on any matter, be it political, social or intellectual. Romanticism gave rise to humanism and naturalism, and works of art and literature produced at this time were also regarded as classic. Bertrand Russell puts this more succinctly when he said that the period of history which is commonly called modern has a mental outlook which differs from that 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.

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. 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.

Positivism rejects theoretical speculations that are not based on facts of experience as a means of obtaining knowledge. Positivism declares false, all propositions that could not 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 Conceptions of ideal knowledge seeking enterprise. First of this problem is observation upon which the basic justification of positivism came is laden with error. These include the fact that:

- 1) Observations are concept - laden
- 2) Observations are hypotheses laden
- 3) Observations are theory- laden
- 4) Observations are value- laden
- 5) Observations are interest- laden
- 6) Observations are laden with culture- specific ontologies

However, irrespective of the shortcomings of positivism, let us explicate on the idea of social science it birthed.

Although, the history of the discipline dates back to early philosophers who wanted to study how society works such as St Augustine and the 14th - century historian Ibn Khaldun; down to Karl Marx, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Emile Durkheim and a host of other social thinkers. However, it was Auguste Comte that is regarded as the father of social science.

Social science seek to employ the method of science in the investigation of social phenomena talking the human person as object of study. The objectives of such endeavour include:

- 1) Discovering and manipulating if possible, the laws governing most of human behaviour
- 2) Understanding humans in both historical and cultural development context and factors responsible for such development
- 3) Advancing beyond arm chair philosophy, the knowledge about the characteristic temperament and associated behaviour of a person or group, or that exhibited by those engaged in an activity.

However, the philosophy of social science arose out of the curiosity that the central

focus and the propelling motive of social science may be impossible or unachievable due to methodological mismatch. In other words, there exist an incongruity in using method of scientific enquiry to study human and his society.

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 casual connection between an event and its cause. 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. According to this account, for anything to be the cause of another, the cause and the effect must:

- 1) The two events must occur in approximately the same location
- 2) Be temporally related such that the cause precedes the effect in time just as the effect must follow continuously from the cause
- 3) Have an asymmetrical relation on that the occurrence of the alleged cause must be the 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 it's own occurrence.

Francis Offor explains 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' in the universe, there is always a cause 'a', such that b can always be explained by reference to the activities of event 'a'. This is the principle that underlines the method of explanation in science "

Offor goes further to assert that, "by employing the scientific method in social investigations, the social sciences seek to explain the cause of action involving human agents".

One way to solve this problem is to accept reasons are not caused but motive or intent.

Another problem is that, if the reasons are caused, then getting the canned beef must of necessity come before going to the supermarket since causes always precede the effect they caused.

Nonetheless, there are some other scholars who insist that reason that 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 ultimate causal power which lies in human and that ascribing casual power to inanimate things and objects in the physical world may be too naive of us.

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 into play in his actions or reactions. All these factors undermine the notion of predictability of behaviour with which natural science is known to deduce their principles and laws.