17/ENG08/005

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GST 118 assignment

1. Summarize chapter 8 of History and Philly of Science: A Brief Survey by Temidayo David Oladipi, Noah Opeyemi Balogun

In the old days the words of the Pope was the final authority on any matter, be it political, social or intellectual. Diseases were thought to be direct consequence of sin and idolatry, so the church tried to exterminate unbelievers. However, the intellectual community at the time saw this at a big threat to human happiness and survival. So they began infiltrating literature with the benefits of using reason to arrive at justified conclusion. Bertrand Russell pointed the increasing authority of science led to the diminishing authority of the church. Then science was restricted to study of natural phenomena, until a French social philosopher August Comte opined 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, and August Comte is considered 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. Observations are concept laden, hypothesis laden, theory laden, value laden, interest laden.

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 interactions created. Disciplines in the social sciences include: sociology, psychology, economics, political science, archaeology, and anthropology. The history of the discipline is populated by thinkers such as Karl Marx, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Emile Durkheim.

The objectives of social sciences include:

1. Understanding humans in both cultural and historical development context and factors responsible for such development or change.
2. Being able to predict human behaviour based on pattern of interaction, belief system, social norms and other factors influencing human behaviour, especially in relation to economic and political activities.
3. Influencing human behaviour; grooming it towards a socially desirable conduct and channelling collective effort towards development.
4. Discovering and manipulating if possible, the laws governing most of human behaviour.
5. Advancing beyond armchair philosophy, the knowledge about characteristic temperament and associated behaviour of a person or group, or that exhibited by those engaged in an activity.

The Problem of Reasons and Causes

What does the principle of cause and effect mean? The explanation of casuality goes back to David Hume, Ernest Nagel presented 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:

1. Have an invariable or constant relation in the sense that whenever the alleged cause occurs, the effect must also occur
2. 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.
3. Be temporarily related such that the cause preceded the effect in time just as the effect must follow continuously from the cause and
4. 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 asserts that by employing the scientific method in social investigation, the social sciences seek to explain the cause of action involving human agents.

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

The problem with the project of social science, according to Max Weber, methodology of science becomes inapplicable due to the fact the object of study in social science is man, a rational being and freewill, desires, emotions, and other sentient features that come into play in his action or reaction. Whilst humans are thought to be rational creatures they are known to stray from rational behaviour, straying from the laws of demand and supply sometimes, which brings into question the honourability of social science laws.