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REVIEW OF CHAPTER 8

Chapter 8 of Temidayo D. Oladipo and Noah O. Balogun, History and Philosophy of science: A Brief Survey. Ibadan; Hope Publications. Pages 86-95. Talks about PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND APPLIED SCIENCES.

 The success recorded in natural sciences 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 scientists and even sought their on matters unrelated to science such as law and forensic evidence.

 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:

1. Understanding humans in both historical and cultural development context and factors responsible for such development or change.
2. Being able to predict human behaviour based on the pattern of interaction, belief system, social norms and other factors influencing human behaviour, especially in relation to economic and political activities. Etc

 However, the Philosophy of social science arouse out of the curiosity that the central focus and the propelling motive of social science may be impossible or unachievable due to methodical mismatch.

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’ 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 underlies the method of explanation in science.

 Offor 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. To make this clearer, let us imagine Mr A makes this statement upon seeing some of his friends who demanded to know why he punched one of then at a gym. The man says: ‘I punched him because I was angry”.

 Nearly every body will agree that the reason why the man punched his friend is because he was angry. In other words anger is not a reason for punching his friend.

If the reason for something can be many but the cause of something cannot be, to what extent can we take reasons as causes?

 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. We can say the reason why he went to the supermarket was to get canned beef. If we go with the substitutions thesis, we will say the cause of his going to the supermarket is to buy canned beef. In other words, the intent motive which is to buy canned beef is the cause and going to supermarket is the effect. However, what if he gets to supermarket and could not find canned beef and thus he buys soda drink? Would we say the cause changed after the effect has already taken place?

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.

 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 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.