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Summary of chapter 8 of ‘history and philosophy of science(a brief survey)’ by Dr. David Oladipo and Dr. Noah Balogun

This chapter focuses on one of the branches of philosophy which is the philosophy of social sciences and applied sciences. The application of science on issues is regarded as **positivism.** This is because the positive response to science was due to the change in the socio-cultural milieu of the time. This positivism grew during the period of renaissance or the enlightenment period. Scientific approach to things grew out of philosophical issues; regardless science was limited to the study of natural phenomena because it was the only material that was seen as predictable and regular in the eyes of man. Comte brought up an opposition on the opinion that the society goes in a regular pattern in comparison to the material things and human behaviour can be studied and predictions could be acquired. **This brought about the birth of social sciences** where the father appears to be Auguste Comte in general (due to his opposition) and also is the father of sociology. Positivism is therefore regarded as the acquisition of knowledge strictly. Problems of observation tend to arise in the justification of positivism, these includes; the burden of concept, hypothesis, theory, value, interest and burden with culture-specific ontology.

Social science is an area of study which is devoted to the explanation of human behaviours, interactions and manifestations either as an individual or as a group. Disciplines found in social sciences includes: sociology, economics, psychology, political science, archaeology and anthropology. Philosophers like Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Thomas Hobbes and so on, wanted to study the mechanism of the society (how the society works or operation). The basic aim of social science is to adopt the method of science in order use man as an object of study. The Objectives of this endeavour are:

1. To understand humans historically, culturally and their dynamic nature
2. To be able to predict human behaviour
3. To influence human behaviour, grooming it towards a social desire
4. To discover and manipulating behaviour with the laws
5. To advance the knowledge about the characteristic of a human

Man is a rational being and therefore their pattern tends to differ. The problem of reasons and causes arises which in turn brings about the principle of cause and effect where event A is the cause of event B therefore for anything to be the cause of another the cause and effect must: i. have a constant relation on the principle.

ii. The two events would occur at the same time

iii. Temporally related

iv. Have an unequal relation such that the effect must not be part of the original conditions that makes the event to occur

Francais Offor explains the points above giving a clear view of the principle which underlies the method of explaining science. He goes ahead to assert that adopting scientific methods in social investigation, social sciences therefore seeks to explain the cause of the action. For instance, ‘I slapped him because i was annoyed,’ the reason for his action was his anger. Certain scholars have it that reasons can be treated as causes where the ultimate casual power lies with human but can be ascribed to inanimate objects.

The problem of a human as an object of study in social sciences arises. According to Max Weber, man being a rational being with many desires and freewill makes the method of sciences inapplicable. These factors of man make prediction uneasy for those studying. An instance can be through the principle of demand and supply where the higher the demand the higher the price but this principle doesn’t work in all matters for instance food is a necessity if you want to survive. Most foods will be expensive causing man to buy it despite the cause. Here the consumer has no choice but to purchase it.