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History and Philosophy of Science.

Chapter 8 :Philosophy of social science.

The success recorded in natural science in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was so enormous on the social and intellectual life of the then people of Europe that they started trusting the word of scientists and even sought their opinion on matters unrelated to science such as law and forensic evidence.

Positivism rejects theoretical speculation that are not based on facts of experience as a means of obtaining knowledge. There are a lot of problems with this conception of ideal of knowledge seeking enterprise. The first problem is observation upon which the basic justification of positivism came is laden with errors. These include the fact that:

- 1.observations are concept laden
- 2.observation are hypothesis laden
3. Observation are value laden

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

What is social science?

Social science is an area of study dedicated to the explanation of human behavior,interactions and manifestation, either as an individual in a society or collectively as a group; including the institutions, norms and mores such interactions created.

Social science seek to employ the method of science in the investigation of social phenomena taking the human person as object of study. The objective of such endeavor include:

- Understanding humans in both historical and cultural development context and factors responsible for such development.
- Discovering and manipulating if possible, the laws governing most human behavior.
- Influencing human behavior: grooming it towards socially desirable conduct and channeling collective effort towards development.

To understand the problem with social science better, we need to understand that one of the essential features of science and scientific explanation is to provide a causal and correlational connection between an event and its cause. That is to explain what event A is the cause of event B which is the effect. The principle although explication of causality goes back to David Hume, Ernest Nagel presents Hume's exposition of the notion of causation in a bullet from which is endearing to our analysis here.

Another problem with the projection 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 free will, desires, emotions and other sentient features that come into play in his action or reactions. All these factors undermine the notion of predictability of behavior with which natural science is known to deduce their principles and laws.