

Chapter 8: Philosophy of Social Sciences and Applied Sciences

The success that was recorded in natural sciences in the 18th and 19th century had a huge influence on the intellectual and social life of the people of Europe, which made them trust the words of scientists. This positive or optimistic response explains why belief in science and application of science is called 'positivism'. The time in which this positivism grew can be called renaissance and enlightenment period. This period was called renaissance period because it marked a revolution of return to their Greek heritage of using reasoning and not the dictate of

religion. The age before that time was called 'dark ages' as religious beliefs were the most supreme. The Pope had final authority but eventually, the intellectual community saw this as a peril to human happiness and survival. So they started writing literature to prove the benefits of using reason to arrive at justified conclusions, just as Socrates and Plato. This became known as the classical period of romanticism, this gave rise to humanism and naturalism. Discipline- intellectual, moral and political- was associated in the minds of men of the Renaissance with the scholastic philosophy and ecclesiastical government.

The scientific approach to things grew out of philosophical approach to issues, but it was only restricted to natural phenomena because it was the only material that behaved in a natural and predictable way. August Comte, a French social philosopher, thought otherwise. He was of the opinion that society behaves in a particular pattern much like material things and this behavior can be studied and predicted. This made the beginning of social sciences, especially sociology. August is now named the father of social sciences and sociology.

There are a lot of problems that come with observation,

some of which include;

> Observations are value laden

> Observations are concept laden

> Observations are hypothesis laden

> Observations are theory laden

> Observations are interest laden etc...

Social Science is the Scientific study of human society and social relationships. It is an area of study dedicated to the explanation of human behavior, interaction and manifestations, either as an individual in a society or collectively as a group, community. The disciplines in social sciences include sociology, psychology,

economics, political sciences, archaeology and anthropology. There are different objectives of this aim and they include; understanding humans, influencing human behavior, predicting human behavior, , etc.

Problems of reason and causes

For anything to be the cause of another, the cause and effect must:

- Have an invariable or constant relation
- Be temporarily related
- Be spatially contiguous
- Have an asymmetrical relation

To make this void, let us imagine Mr. A makes this statement aloft seeing some of his friends who

demanded to know why he punched one of them at a gym. The man says "I punched him because I was angry". Nearly everybody will agree that the reason why the man punched his friend is because he was angry. In other words, anger is the reason or the cause for punching his friend. This explanation pretends the words 'reason and cause' can be substituted for one another without any loss of meaning, even when we see in causation from purely mechanistic angle.

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.

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

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 action or reaction. All these factors undermine the notion of predictability of behavior with which natural science is known to deduce their principles and laws. Take for instance the law of demand

and supply in economics. It is on the basic assumption of rational behavior that the law of demand and supply was formulated. However, it has been observed even by economists themselves that these laws do not hold all the time since man does not behave rationally all the time. Now, if a supposed scientific law is neither absolute nor hold quite often, The question then is "Are we to continue to call it scientific laws of economics"?