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19/LAW01/108

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GST 118: HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

APRIL 14TH 2020

Review of chapter 8 of Temidayo D. Oladipo And Noah O. Balogun, History And Philosophy Of Science: A Brief Survey.  Ibadan: Hope Publcations. (Pages 86-95).

The eighth chapter of *History and Philosophy of Science: A Brief Survey by T.D. Oladipo and N.O. Balogun* discusses the philosophy of social sciences. The history of science itself was discussed as an introduction to the topic. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Europeans began trusting scientists because of the recorded success of natural science at the time. This positive response to science happened as a result of a change in the socio-cultural setting of time. From this, the word “positivism” came to mean “the belief in science or the application of science to any issue”. The socio-cultural setting when these transpired is called the renaissance period or the period of enlightenment. This marked a time when reason, not the dictate of religion, was adopted in matters of public affairs. The era before the renaissance period was called the dark ages, when religious belief reigned supreme.

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 more such interactions created. Disciples that are regarded as social sciences include: sociology, psychology, economics, anthropology, archaeology and political science. August Comte is regarded as the father of social science, regardless of the contributions of earlier philosophers. Social sciences employ scientific methods in the investigation of social phenomenon. Social sciences aim at understanding, predicting, influencing and controlling human behaviour.

However, the main objectives and central focus of social sciences may be impossible or unattainable due to the possibility of methodological mismatch in its study. In other words, the application of the scientific method proves unreliable in the study of human and his society. This is because humans are conscious, rational beings with unpredictable behaviour in certain situations, the exact opposite of the objects studied in natural science.

Problems associated with the application of the method of science in studying human behaviour were identified. A key feature of science is that it provides a correlational connection between an event and its cause. Social sciences employ the scientific method in explaining the cause of actions involving human agents. This is not achieved easily because the meaning of the terms “reason” and “cause” are confused when applied to human beings.

Also, a human person as an object of study using the scientific method is an issue. According to Max Weber, the methodology of science becomes inapplicable with man as the object of study because man is a rational being with freewill, desires, emotions and other sentient features that come to play in his action or reaction. Most laws in social science are based on the assumption that man is a rational being and at such behaves rationally at all times. But it has been proven that these laws do not hold all the time since man does not behave rationally all the time. This raises the question if these laws should be called laws at all, if they are neither absolute nor hold quite often.