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The success recorded in natural science 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 opinion on matters unrelated to science such as law and forensic evidence. This positive response to science happened as a result of a change in the socio-cultural milieu of the time and this explains why belief in science or application of science to any issue is called positivism from then on. The socio-cultural milieu in which positivism grew is called the renaissance and the enlightenment period. The aeon prior to the renaissance period was called the dark ages because it was the time religious belief reigned supreme. The words of Pope was the final authority on any matter.

It was a time the people were burned at stake because they were found guilty of witchcraft or sorcery, diseases were said to be as a result of sin and idolatry. However, the intellectual community at the time saw this has a big threat to happiness and survival. In arts and music were hidden Greek worldviews too. This became known as the classical period romanticism. Romanticism gave rise to humanism and naturalism, and works of art and literature produced at this time were also regarded as classic. The period of history which is commonly called “modern” has a mental outlook which differs from that of the medieval period which includes the diminishing authority of the church and the increasing authority of science. Discipline, intellectual, moral, and political, was associated in the minds of the men of the renaissance with the scholastic philosophy and ecclesiastical government.

The effect of the manoeuvring was overwhelming. Science was restricted to study of natural phenomena because it was the only material that was believed to behave in a regular and predictable way. A French social philosopher called August Comte was of the opinion that society behaves in a regular pattern much like material things and this behavior can be studied and somewhat accurate predictions made. This is the beginning of social sciences especially sociology.

Positivism rejects theoretical speculations that are based on facts of experience as a means of obtaining knowledge. There are a lot of problems with this conception of ideal knowledge seeking enterprise. One of these problems is observation upon which the basic justification of positivism came is laden with error.

WHAT IS SOCIAL SCIENCE?

Social science 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 including the institutions, norms and mores such interactions created. August Comte is regarded as the father of social science. Social sciences seek to employ the method of science in the investigation of social phenomena taking the human person as object of study. 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 methodological mismatch.

THE PROBLEMS OF REASONS AND CAUSES.

One of the essential features of science and scientific explanation is to provide a casual or correlational connection between an event and its cause. For anything to be the cause of another, the cause and effect must have an invariable or constant relation, be spatially contiguous, be temporally related and have an asymmetrical relation.

Francis Offor explains that 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. 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”.

Reasons and cause can be substituted for one another without any loss of meaning. 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 problems is to accept reasons are not causes but motive or intent. Some scholars like J.S. Mill, T.M. Newcomb and August Comte have argued on whether it is not better to leave reason as motive, drive or intent and not cause. 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 causal power to inanimate things and objects in the physical world may be too naïve of us.

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 the natural science is known to deduce their principles and law. Take for instance the law of demand and supply in economics which predicts that human as a rational being will buy less when the price is high and buy more when the price is low. The law of demand and supply was formulated on this basic assumption of rational behavior: The higher the demand, the higher the price, but the higher the supply the lower the price. This is also referred to as market forces. The law of demand and supply does not seem to work in capitalism as consumers have no choice.