DAUDA GBEMISOLA KHADIJAH

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HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE {GST 114}

**QUESTION**: write a review on Chapter 8 (Philosophy of Social Sciences) of Temidayo D. Oladipo and Noah O. Balogun’s “History and Philosophy of Science”. In not more than two pages.

The success recorded in natural science in the 18th and 19th 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 out their opinion on matters unrelated to science. 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 sciences 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. It was called the renaissance because it marked a period when people started a revolution of return to their Greek heritage of using reason in matters of public concern and not the dictate of religion as it was in the age prior to this time. The period before this was known as the “Dark Ages” because it was the time religious belief reigned supreme. The dark ages was a time when men and women were burned on stakes because the churches found them guilty of sorcery or witchcraft and diseases were viewed as direct consequences of sins and idolatry. The intellectual community at the time saw this as a big threat to human happiness and survival. So they adopted a method used by ancient Greek philosophers such as Aristotle and Socrates, among others by infiltrating literature with the benefit of using reason to arrive at a justified conclusion. This gave raise to Romanticism. The classical period of Romanticism gave rise to humanism and naturalism, and works of art and literature produced during this period are referred to as classics.

The scientific approach to things grew out of philosophical approaches to issues, but science was restricted to study of natural phenomena because it was the only material that was believed to behave in a regular and predictable manner. That was until the coming of French Social Philosopher, August Comte. He was of the opinion of that society behaves in a regular pattern much like material things and this behavior can be studied and somewhat accurately prediction can be made. This is the beginning of Social science, especially sociology and Comte is regarded as the Father of Sociology and Social sciences in general.

Positivism rejects theoretical speculations 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 seeking enterprise, but however irrespective of the shortcomings of positivism, let us explicate on the idea of social science it birthed. Social science is an area of study dedicated to the explanation of human behavior, interaction and manifestation, either as an individual in a society or collectively as a group; including the institutions, norms and mores such interactions created. Some of the disciplines in the social sciences include: sociology, psychology, political science and economics. The history of this discipline dates back to the early philosophers, historians and a host of other social thinkers such as Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, etc. The incongruity stem from the fact that human beings do not behave in exact way objects of natural sciences behave. Social sciences seek to employ the method of science in the investigation of social phenomena taking the human person as object of study.

To understand the problem of reason and cause in social sciences better, we need to understand that one of the essential features of science and scientific explanation is to provide a casual or correlational connection between an event and its cause. Fredrick Offor explains 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.*” A way to solve this problem is to accept reasons are not but motives or intent.

Another problem with the subject of social sciences is the problem of human beings as an objects of study in social sciences. The methodology of science, according to Max Weber, becomes inapplicable due to the fact that the object of study in social sciences is man, a rational being with freewill, emotions and other sentient features that come into play in his action or reaction. A good example is the law of demand and supply in economics which predicts that human as a rational being will buy least when the price high and buy when the price is low.