Name: Okari Tamunobelema

Matric. No.: 19/SMS09/056

College: Social and Management Sciences

Department: International Relations and Diplomacy

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Assignment: Summarize chapter 8 of Philosophy of Science

The success of natural science is one that had its climax in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth century Europe having great effect on both social and intellectual life. The change in socio-cultural milieu gave rise to the mass response of positivity and this positivism grew giving birth to the renaissance and the enlightenment period. The period was marked as a time when the people began a revolution to return to their Greek heritage.

Prior to this period the era was called the dark ages and it was characterized by vile treatment of the people as they were burned at stakes because the church found them guilty of witchcraft. Diseases were perceived as consequences of sin and idolatry. This made intellectuals in the society infiltrate literature with the benefits of the use of reason to arrive at justifiable results or conclusions as they perceived that the threat to human survival and happiness were the activities at the time.

The effect of this was the overwhelming of scientific approach to things that grew out of philosophical approach to issues, but the restriction of science to the study natural phenomena as it was only the material that was believed to behave in a regular and predictable way. The opinion of French philosopher, August Comte brought about the birth of social sciences especially sociology, this earned him the name “father of sociology and social sciences” in general.

The rejection of theoretical speculations by positivism is based on facts of experience as a means of obtaining knowledge. The opinion that metaphysical statements and other unverified or unsolved propositions are false by positivism due to their high degree of abstract nature. The problem with the concept of ideal knowledge seeking enterprises. These problems are the observation upon which the basic justification of positivism came is laden with error. They include the fact that observation is concept-laden, it is hypothesis-laden, it is theory-laden, it is value-laden, it is interest-laden and it laden with culture specific ontologies.

Social science is a field of study that explains the behaviour of an individual in relation to his society, a group of people, himself and other facets of human life. Social sciences are an embodiment of various disciplines such as sociology, economics, political science, psychology. It seeks to adopt the scientific method of investigation of social phenomena using humans as object of study. The objectives are understanding humans in both historical and cultural development context and factors responsible for such development or change, the ability to predict human behaviour based on the pattern of interaction, belief system, social norms and other factors influencing human behaviour, especially in relation to economic and political activities. Influencing human behaviour, grooming it towards a socially desirable conduct and channelling collective effort towards development. Discovering and manipulating if possible, the laws governing most of human behaviour. And advancing beyond armchair philosophy, knowledge about the characteristic temperament and associated behaviour of a person or group of people exhibited by those engaged in an activity.

The problems of social sciences are entangled in its features; this means in order for one to understand its problems they must understand its features. It has an invariable or constant relation in the sense that whenever the alleged cause occurs, the effect must also occur. It is especially contiguous which means the two events must occur r in approximately the same location or at least be related by a chain of events that are specially linked. It is temporally related such that cause precedes the effect in time just as the effect must follow continuously from the cause. And is an asymmetrical relation in that the occurrence of the alleged cause must be an actual event, which brings about the effect, such that the effect must not be part of the original conditions that are necessary and sufficient for its own occurrence.

Francis Offor explains that the principle of cause and effect states that for every event in the universe, there is asset of conditions such that if the conditions ate all fulfilled then the event invariably occurs. This means for every event in the universe there is always a cause. He further explains that by adopting the scientific methods in social investigation, the social sciences seek to explain the cause of action involving human agents.

Given the example in the chapter about Nagel and his friend it can be seen that there is a difference between reason, which is described as motive or intent and cause, which may be unintentional. However, some scholars insist that reasons can be seen as causes one of such is Robin Collingwood.

The problem of human persons as the object of study in social science according Max Weber is the methodology of science becomes in applicable due to the fact that the object of study in social science is man, a rational being with freewill, desires, emotions and sentient features that come into play in his action or reaction. All these factors undermine the notion of predictability of behaviour with which natural science is known to deduce their principles and laws.

The study of social science is one with various loopholes which contribute to its growth as it humans, which are versatile in nature and unpredictable. The use of scientific method emphasises mainly on the process of observation as application of pure scientific methods are ineffective considering the rationality and unpredictable nature of man.