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ASSIGNMENT

In not more than two pages, do a review of chapter eight of Temidayo D. Oladipo and Noah O. Balogun*, History and Philosophy of Science: A Brief Survey. Ibadan:* Hope Publications, pages 86-95.

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 matters 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 called positivism from then on.

The socio-cultural milieu in which positivism grew is called the renaissance and the enlightenment period. It is called a renaissance period because it marked a period when people started a revolution to 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 aeon prior to the renaissance period was called the dark ages because it was the time when religious belief reigned supreme. It was a time when men and women were burned at stake because the church has found them guilty of witchcraft and sorcery. Diseases were said to be direct consequence of sin and idolatry, so the church waged several wars to exterminate the heathens. However, the intellectual community at the time saw this as a big threat to human happiness and survival. So they started infiltrating literature with the benefits of using reason to arrive at justified conclusions such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle used to do.

The effect of that maneuvering was overwhelming. Scientific approach to things grew out of philosophical approach to issues, but science was restricted to the study of natural phenomena because it was only the material that was believed to behave in a regular and predictable way. Not until a French social philosopher called August Comte thought otherwise. He was of the opinion that society behaves in a regular pattern much like material things and this behavior can be studies and somewhat accurate predictions made. This is the beginning of social sciences in general. Positivism rejects theoretical speculations that are not based on facts of experience as a means of obtaining knowledge. Modelled on empirical sciences which provides it with a methodology, positivism declares false, all propositions that could not be solved or verified by experience such as metaphysical statements due to a high degree of abstract nature.

However, irrespective of the shortcomings of positivism, let us explicated on the idea of social science it birthed.

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 more such interactions created. Disciplines in the social sciences: sociology, psychology, economics, political science, archeology and anthropology.

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. In other words, there exist an incongruity in using method of scientific enquiry to study humans and his society. The incongruity stem from the fact human beings do not behave in the exact way objects of natural sciences behaves.

The Problem of Reasons and Causes

To understand this problem with 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. That is, to explain why event A is the cause of event B which is the effect. But first, what does the principle of cause and effect mean. 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 sciences 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 in play in his reaction or reaction. It is on this basic assumption of rational behavior that the law of demand and supply was formulated. Now if a supposed scientific law is neither absolute nor hold quite often, should we continue to call it scientific laws of economics.