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DEPARTMENT: LAW

COURSE TITLE: HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

ASSIGNMENT TITLE: REVIEW CHAPTER 8

QUESTION: In not more than two pages, do a review of chapter 8 of Temidayo D. Oladipo and Noah O. Balogun, History and Philosophy of Science: A Brief Survey, Ibadan: Hope Publications, pages 86-95

PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (AND APPLIED SCIENCES)

This chapter is basically talking about social science and its relation to science. It starts with the success that was recorded in natural science in the eighteenth and nineteenth century which was so great on the social and intellectual life of the then people of Europe which made them to trust the words of scientists and even sought their opinions on matters not even related to science. And 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 nay issue is 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 of return to their Greek heritage of using reason it matters of public consent and not the dictate of religion as it was in the age prior to this time. Positivism rejects theoretical speculations that are not based on facts of experience as a means of obtaining knowledge. Modelled on empirical science which provides it with a methodology, positivism declares false, all propositions that could not be solved or verified by experience such as Meta physical statements due to a high degree of abstract nature. There are a lot of problems with this conception of ideal knowledge seeking enterprise. First of these problems is observation upon which the basic justification of positivism came is laden with error. These include the fact that

Observations are concept-laden

Observations are hypothesis-laden

Observations are theory-laden

Observation are value-laden

Observations are interest-laden

Observation are laden with culture-specific ontologies

However, irrespective of the short comings 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 the society or collectively as a group; including the institutions, norms and mores such interaction created. Disciplines in the social science include: sociology, psychology, economics, political science etc. Although the history of the discipline date back to early philosophers who wanted to study how society works such as St Augustine, and the fourteen century historian Ibn Khaldeun; down to Karl Marx and a host of other social thinkers. However it was Auguste Comte that is regarded as the father of social science. Social science seek to implore the method of science in the investigation of social phenomena taking the human person as object of study. The objectives of such endeavor includes;

Understanding humans in both historical and cultural development context and factors responsible for such development of change,

Being able to predict human behavior based on the pattern of interaction, belief system, social norms and other factors influencing human behavior especially in relation to economic and political activities

Influencing human behavior; grooming it towards a socially desirable conduct and channeling collective effort towards development;

Discovering and manipulating if possible, the laws governing most of human behavior; and

Advancing beyond arm philosophy, the knowledge about the characteristic temperament and associated behavior of a person or group, or exhibited by those engaged in an activity

In order to understand the problems with social sciences, we need to understand that one of the essential features of science is to provide a causal connection between an event and its cause. According to this account, for anything to be the cause of another, the cause and effect must:

Have an invariable or constant relation in the sense that whenever the alleged cause occurs, the effect must occur

Be spatially contiguous, that is, the two events must occur in approximately the same location or at least be related by a chain of events that are spatially linked

Be temporally related such that the cause precedes the effect in time just as the effect must follow continuously from the cause

Have an asymmetrical relation in that the occurrence of the alleged cause must be 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.

Another problem with the project of social science is that, according to Max Weber, methodology of science becomes inapplicable due to the fact that he object of study in social science is man, rational being with freewill, desires, emotions and other sentient features that come into play in this action or reaction. All these factors undermine the notion of predictability of behavior with which natural science is known to deduce their principles and laws. For instance the law of demand and supply. However, it has been observed even by economist themselves that these laws do not hold all the time since man does not behave rationally all the time. Recent years, capitalist have been able to manipulate consumer behavior to the point it is doubtful if these laws hold any longer. Then if a supposed scientific law is neither absolute nor hold quite often, the question is if we should continue to call it scientific laws.