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ABASIATTAI EMMANUELLA ANIEKANABASI

GST 114: HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

ASSIGNMENT: REVIEW OF CHAPTER 8 OF TEMIDAYO OLADIPO AND NOAH BALOGUN'S "*HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE, A BRIEF SURVEY*".

CHAPTER VIII: PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (AND APPLIED SCIENCES)

The Origin of Social Science:

The chapter begins with establishing a connection between the study of philosophy and the study of social science. Apparently, natural science recorded such successes in both the eighteenth and nineteenth century that people began to give value to the words of scientists. They sought their opinion on matters unrelated to science, such as law and forensic science.

The socio-cultural milieu in which positivism grew is called the renaissance and the enlightenment era. It was given its name because it marked a period when people started a revolution of return to their Greek heritage of using reason in matters of public concern, rather than the dictate of religion (as it was in the dark ages). The renaissance period promoted the rediscovery of classical philosophy, literature and art. The dark ages (which preceded the renaissance period) were a time men and women were burn at stakes for being found guilty of witchcraft and diseases were said to be direct consequences of sin and idolatry; thus causing the church to wage countless wars aimed at exterminating the heathens. At that time, there was in existence an intellectual community which saw that the activities of the church served as a serious threat to the happiness and the survival of human beings. So, they began to infiltrate literature and music with the benefits of using reason to arrive at justified conclusions just as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

This became known as the period of romanticism. It birthed humanism and naturalism. Works of art produced by this time were also regarded as classics. According to Bertrand Russel, "The period of history which is commonly called modern has a mental outlook which differs from the medieval period in many ways. Of these, two are the most important; the diminishing authority of the church and the increasing authority of science".

Scientific approaches to things grew out of philosophical approaches to issues, but science was restricted to the study of natural phenomenon because it was the only material believed to behave in a regular and predictable manner. However, that was until a French social scientist, August Comte, thought otherwise. He was of the opinion that society behaves in a regular pattern and these behavioural patterns can be studied in order to bring up predictions that could possess some level of accuracy. Hence, positivism was formed. It was

a theoretical system which rejects theoretical speculations that are not based on facts of experience as a means of obtaining knowledge. It declares false all propositions that cannot be solved by experience such as metaphysical statements.

Social Science:

Social science may be defined as an area of study dedicated to the explanation of human behaviour, either as an individual or collectively as a group. A few disciplines under social science are economics, sociology and psychology. Examples of social philosophers are Thomas Hobbes and Emile Durkheim. Social science seeks to; predict human behaviour, understand humans in both historical and cultural content, influence human behaviour positively, as well as discover and manipulate the laws governing most of human behaviour.

However, there is an incongruity in using scientific methods of inquiry to study human beings and their society. This is because man is a conscious and rational being and may not behave in the same pattern. This is where the principle of effect, which was developed by Ernest Nagel, comes in. It states that 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
- Have an asymmetrical relation

There were two instances of the problem of cause and effect, the second one being much clearer. It showed how the cause and effect could be easily substituted in the case of a man who went to the supermarket to buy canned beef. The cause here is to buy canned beef, and the effect is going to the supermarket. However, if he gets there and does not find canned beef but proceeds to buy a soda drink, then can one say that the cause has changed after the effect has taken place? Thus, some scholars such as August Comte and J. S. Mill have argued on whether it is not better to leave reason as motive, drive or intent and not cause.

Another problem regarding social science is that, according to Max Weber, the 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. For example, take the law of demand in economics. It states that 'the higher the price, the lower the quantity demanded and the lower the price, the higher the quantity demanded ceteris paribus'. However, this may not always be the case. For instance, there are some android and iPhone applications that are necessary if you want to make use of the phone adequately. Some may need regular and compulsory updates which will require the user spend large amounts of data, as it is the currency of the internet nowadays. The law of demand and supply does not take action here, as the users have no choice.

