**Lecture One: Social and Human Sciences: General Definition**

**Objectives:** Students are expected to:

* Understand the nature of social and human sciences.
* Understand the differences between social and human sciences.
* Differentiate between the various disciplines included under social and human sciences.

**Introduction**

Humans, along their existence have made innumerable attempts to understand themselves and the surrounding universe with all its mysteries. Consequently, they categorized their fields of enquiry and study into various domains each dealing with a given concept or area of interest. For instance, ***philosophy***, which means *love of wisdom* (in Greek), was concerned with asking and answering question, seeking knowledge and understanding human reality including all its components and issues. The history of philosophy dates back to the ancient times when *the Greek, Roman, Arab, Persian, Indian, and Chinese* philosophers were concerned with many fields and subfields of philosophy including: ***metaphysics, logic, ethics, epistemology***, etc.

Social and human sciences originated in the 19th century. Over time, they developed and evolved into academic fields of study to which many disciplines belong. In fact, there is no agreement on the classification of certain academic disciplines under the umbrella of social or human or other sciences. Although both social and human deal with Man in society, they differ in many aspects in relation to their focus and methods of enquiry. Social and human science play an essential role in the understanding the humans and their various relations in life and society.

**1. Definition of Social and Human Sciences**

* The field of ***social sciences*** is very important to humans in order to understand their existence and interactions in society. This elaborate and complex field incorporates a number of sub-fields. The latter are interrelated, and many of them have common features with the others. Scholars have defined the term ‘*social science’* in various ways:
* According to Charles Beard, “Social sciences are the body of knowledge and thought pertaining to human affairs as distinguished from sticks, stones, stars and physical objects” (As cited in Kochhar, 1984, p.6).
* James High defined social sciences as “those bodies of learning and study which recognize the simultaneous and mutual action of physical and non-physical stimuli which produce social reaction” (As cited in Kochhar, 1984, p.6).
* “The social Sciences, like other empirical sciences, try to explain two sorts of phenomena: events and facts” (Elster, 1989, p.3).
* “Social Science is a branch of science that deals with the institutions and functioning of human society and with the interpersonal relationships of individuals as members of society and also it’s a science (as economics or political science) dealing with a particular phase or aspect of human society” (Quadiri, 2013, p.1).
* According to Junaid Nadvi (2022), social science is defined as:
* A branch of science that deals with the institutions and functioning of human society and with the interpersonal relationships of individuals as members of society;
* (b) … the field of human knowledge that deals with all aspects of the group life of human beings;
* (c) a science, (as economics or political science) dealing with a particular phase or aspect of human society;
* (d) any discipline or branch of science that deals with the social and cultural aspects of human behaviour; it is sometime called behavioural science. (p. 9)

Social science is used as an umbrella term under which a number of disciplines are included. These disciplines are interwoven, and related to the other categories of natural and human sciences.

* The field of ***human sciences/humanities*** is an area of knowledge which ***equally*** refers to those disciplines which deal with the investigation of human activities and life for the sake of understanding many issues in relation to the reality of humans. Because human sciences enable us to learn about people, they help us to have deep insight into human behavior as individuals or in societal groups in order to improve our life and society and establish laws that govern human existence. However, the knowledge that these sciences produce is less reliable than that produced by natural sciences.

**2. Comparison between Social and Human Sciences**

The disciplines of ***social*** and ***human sciences*** are very much associated; there is much overlap between themas both study humans and their existence and relationships. They both attempt to provide solutions to various human issues; nonetheless, their methods and orientations are different:

* Social sciences are based on realities and evidence relying on the scientific method for the obtention of new knowledge about human behaviors and communities in various disciplines like: psychology, sociology, anthropology, political sciences, economics, geography, history, etc.
* Human sciences tend to understand, analyze and criticize human issues in a subjective way relying on assumptions and speculations and using the analytical approach. They include branches like: languages, religion, literature, mythology, philosophy, popular culture, music, arts, etc.

Both social and human sciences try to understand and provide insights into humans, their societies, and culture from different perspectives.

**Task 1**

Make a list of some prominent topics that constitute the subject of study in social and human sciences.

**References**

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