Abstract: Human culture are related and interdependent, to gain a real understanding of human society we must have some knowledge of all its aspects. If we concentrate on some phases neglect others, we will have a distorted picture. Social science in today is a vast complex that no one student can hope to master all of it. Thus social science itself has been broken up in to anthropology, sociology, history, geography, economics, political science and psychology. Logically all knowledge is interrelated. There are inevitable problems in defining and cataloging social sciences. It is difficult to know where one social science ends and another begins. The whole body Social sciences are related to the natural sciences and the humanities. To understand history, it is necessary to understand geography, and in order to understand economics, it is necessary to understand psychology. Similar arguments can be made for all of the social sciences. So it is difficult to experiment in social science. Some people have insisted that it is not science. Except for the prestige carried by the word, whether we call the study of society a science is not important. We use the term science broadly to all systematic attempts to expand knowledge by applying the scientific method, then social science must definitely be included in the scientific family. What is really important is that social scientist have discovered many significant relationships that are sufficiently dependable to add greatly to our understanding of social behavior and to serve as useful guides in dealing with some social problems.

The difficulty of discovering relatively exact laws that that govern social life results from several circumstances. First, the things of greatest importance in our social life- satisfactions, social progress and democracy are not really measurable. Second society is extremely complex. It is difficult and usually impossible to find and evaluate all the many causes of given situation, though often we can discover the factors that were most important in bringing it out. Thirdly in every social situation there is the human element (Kundu,2009). An interesting characteristic of social science is that they are close to the humanities in their analysis of human interaction and the subjective world, but they apply the scientific method to their subject matter. All the social sciences at least in their inception, emulated the methods of natural sciences, and claimed the status of a science. Social science were dealing with the social environment and it is more complicated, and involves subjectivity, values, belief, moral and biases. Human experience is open to interpretation in myriad ways, both rational and irrational. In fact, the question of how to be neutral and objective in applying the scientific method in social science has been a matter of constant debate. This article tries to analyze theoretical approach in the midst of social scientific thinking.

Key words: Enlightenment, Positivism, Structuralism, Hermeneutic, Skepticism, Ontology, Deconstruction

INTRODUCTION

Every study can be divided in to two kinds of phenomena, natural and social. Natural phenomena exist without the intervention of people whereas social phenomena are something that exists only as a result of human interaction. When social behavior of human beings is explained and predicted with the help of scientific methods, the body of knowledge thus created is called social science. Generally we can say that Social science is an academic discipline concerned with society and the relationships among individuals. Within a society it is deals with the institutions and functioning of human beings with the interpersonal relationships of individuals as members of society.

To generate a topic in social science is a detective work every case began with a mystery, a question about social life. Just as a good detective work depends up on a well defined mystery, like a good topic in social science is led by appropriate clear cut questions. Adequate questions are the centre component of it because characteristics of a question help to create a concrete idea in our mind. Thus our question should be passable in social scenario. For this we must know about the current social scientific thinking and to scrutinize how these thinking developed through ages. Let us
examine the developments of scientific thinking in social science.

**Developments in Social scientific thinking**

One of the ways of distinguishing between the various coexisting and competing paradigms in social science is on the basis of delineating contentious issues relating to what are the proper methodologies for the study of society. The logic of enquiry adopted in research by social scientists is prompted not to a small measure by the theoretical and philosophical to which they subscribe. It is but natural that the academically inclined or action oriented social scientists and social worker will be inspired by methodologies more or less consistent with their theoretical, philosophical and praxeological predilections and dispositions. All these paradigms attempt to explain or interpret the complexities of multi-faceted social reality and indicate how to go about studying it, and in some cases, changing it. (Mukherji,2000)

Scientific thinking in social science was actually starts with enlightenment, “have courage to use your own reason” that is the motto of enlightenment (Kant, 1784). After that the entire social scientific thinking was moved around reason and humanism, through these social science claim the objectivity of science and it create a new wave in social science that is positivism.

The term positivism is generally associated with the orthodox paradigm of modern science that evolved in the west and gathered pace from the sixteenth century. A wide range of meanings is attributed to positivism and different version of it is posited in its sophisticated treatment. At the core of all versions is the idea that it is philosophy which both proclaims the suitability of the scientific method to all forms of knowledge.

The foundations of inductive and deductive methodology may be traced to Aristotle, who spoke of general explanatory principles derived from the observation of facts. The facts, in turn, could be explained by reasons deduced from the explanatory principles. Important exponents of positivism in the 13th century pre-renaissance period include Roger Bacon, William of Ockham, who emphasized the significance of observable data (Wallenstein,1997).

The 16th and 17th century renaissance thinkers and scientists like Galileo Galilee, Robert Boyle, Johann Kepler, Nicholas Copernicus, Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton were instrumental historically institutionalizing science by establishing the experimental method. This was the period when the clerical authority of the church was sought to be replaced by the experimental method of science. The new spirit of rationalism was forcefully expressed by Copernicus, Rene Descartes and Isaac Newton who rejected the divinely ordained laws of the universe in favor of those that modern science was capable of uncovering. Newton and Bacon were empiricists who advocated the observation of regularities and patterns in empirical data from which universal laws could be inferred. The new spirit of rationalism found an objective and presuppositionless observation, a basis for a knowledge which was based on certainty, as opposed to the autocratic dogma of clerics.

Positivism as a concept finds its major elaboration in the hands of Auguste Comte in his famous treatise Cours De Philosphie Positive. The father of sociology regarded Newton’s law of gravitation as a exemplar of science on which sociology should be modeled. He went to the extent of labeling sociology as social physics. While he asserted that ‘the first characteristic of positive philosophy is that it regards all phenomena as subject to natural laws’, he was nonetheless critical of empiricism ‘which interdict the use of any theory whatever’. He was quite explicit in his view that ‘no real observation of any kind of phenomena is possible except in as far as it is first directed, and finally interpreted by some theory’.

Comtean positivism was aimed at an ideal reconstruction of society, hence it did not divorce itself from the normative concerns of relating the science of sociology to society, a charge that surrounds positivism and is echoed by Wallenstein. Herbert Spencer tried to model sociology on the natural science of biology and developed a functionalist evolutionary social science. Emile Durkheim’s positivism was an ‘anti -naturalist realism since he held that social facts were different from natural facts… in that they are social representation… which can be examined without recourse to prior theoretical constructions.

Scientism or unity of scientific method posits that the method of natural science is universal and applies to all science including social science. This is also referred to as methodological monism. Positivistic naturalism implies three things: a) reductionalism, b) correspondence theory of truth, c) phenomenalism or objectivism. Positivism assumes the existence of an external objective reality which is constantly undergoing discovery of its scientific laws through the scientific method for a causal explanation of natural phenomena.
The challenge to positivism came from social science by questioning the hegemony of natural science over it. The rejection of the idea of the unity of subject matter which Popper initiated has been carried much farther in the debates and has led to the proliferation of paradigms in social science. With this is associated the question of different methodologies. In the light of this, we need to familiarize ourselves briefly with the major paradigms in social science that guide and influence our research. Hermeneutic tradition, the dialectical Marxist paradigm, post modernism and deconstructionism, the realist response to the both positivism and hermeneutic constructivism ends up with some contemporary debates. While positivism considers the nature of reality and reality of nature as something that has an objective existence independent of our experience, with science providing true representations of this reality with the help of causal laws arrived at by the scientific methods, in the hermeneutical tradition, reality is a meaningful social construction. There is no objective reality. Etymologically, the “hermeneutic” is associated with hermes, the messenger of the Greek gods and the interpretations of the communications. It has its methodological origin in the biblical interpretations of hidden meanings in the scriptures in the confrontation that took place between protestant theology and the established papal authority. With the enlightenment, hermeneutics shed its three occupations with biblical texts and generally acquired the status of the science of textual interpretations and of human meaning. Observation in the positive frame was not sufficient since meaning was no subject to simple description and explanation. (Delanty, 1997).

Two broad orientations had been identified within the hermeneutical tradition. The first, is characterized by objectivism, which claims that the study of human meaning may be conducted objectively, and the other characterized by subjectivism which denies the objectivity of science, which cannot transcend the cultural context.

Wilhelm Dilthey in the German historical tradition argued for a separation of human sciences from the natural sciences. For him lived experience constituted the distinct subject matter of the human sciences.

Max Weber broke from the classical hermeneutical tradition in combining both explanation and understanding in his methodology of the ‘ideal type’ which simplified reality by constructing models of rational meaningful actions, which, in turn, could be applied in specific context. He moved away from the interpretation of the text to an interpretative social science of social action. He believed in ethically neutral value free science and upheld the neo Kantian argument for the autonomy of social science.

Modern hermeneutics draws from Heidegger and Wittgenstein who gave linguistic turn to hermeneutics. Philosophy of consciousness was replaced by the philosophy of language. Reality is a linguistic construction and is context bound. Wittgenstein provided a theory of linguification of the social. He held that the meaning of language is defined by its use. Their subjective hermeneutics is opposed to a quest for objective knowledge and is characterized by relativism.

Gadmer made very important point that the interpreter cannot fully interpreted, because their world are not the same. There will always remains a ‘residue of untranslated subjectivity’, and he rejected the aspiration on the part of the interpreter to understand the interpreted better than he understood himself. Gadmer thus distinguished two kinds of hermeneutics. One, which operated at the level of acts of understanding embedded in everyday language and life of the interpreted, and the other, which involved the scientific method of understanding of the first by the interpreter. This is what is generally referred to as the double hermeneutic.

Paul Ricoeur developed a hermeneutic method in general theory of textual interpretation in which he argued that the text is open to a plurality of interpretations, for the truth of the text is the world it discloses. The meaning intended by the author is not meaning embodied in the text. Let us we can follow some dominant tendencies that characterize the hermeneutical approach.

Hermeneutic means interpretation. Since there is no objective reality independent of experience, the structure of social reality lies in the objectifications of meaning that cannot be reduced only to observation. Hence explanation and description hold a subordinate position in methodology of hermeneutics.

Both methodologically and substantively, social and human sciences are separate and distinct from natural science. In this sense, hermeneutic is anti scientific. The importance of language as the basic structure of society characterized most hermeneutical approaches. Linguistic constructivism is a fundamental departure from positivism and its methodological individualism.
The whole range of positivists may be said to represent a realist view of social reality. That is, their theories and methods deal with the assumption of an externally objectified real world. In contrast the hermeneutic generally present a constructivist view of social reality in which the world is socially constructed.

Marxist social science questioned both positivism and hermeneutics and stood for transformation of society by deepening its consciousness of itself through the process of dialectics. Dialectics is a process by which the contradictions in society are resolved through the raising of consciousness. Marxist social science regards society or social reality as characterized contradictions, conflict, change and transformation.

When compared with the hermeneutic method, the Marxist approach is more explanatory than interpretative and does not reduce change to cultural change. In contrast to positivism and Hermeneutics, nature is neither to be dominated by the science, nor is it true that nature and society are separate. For Marxist social science, ‘Nature and Society are part of a dialectical movement that unfolds through praxis. Labour, as the transformative power of agency, is the link between nature and society.

The critical theory of Frankfurt school came as a critique of orthodox Marxist social science that crystallized after Marx, and of positivism of both the Comtean and Marxist variety. It provided a critique of ideology as false consciousness, starting that it should be regarded as a form of reality. Ideology had to be understood not so much in terms of false messages, as its capacity to remove the desire for change in society.

The critical hermeneutics of Jurgen Habermas attempted to produce a unified vision of post-empiricist positivism, hermeneutics and neo-Marxian critical theory through a hermeneutical communication theory. To him social science differs from natural science not only in subject matter but also in methodology. According to him social science moves from theoretical problems to observation. Methodology of social science involves both explanation and understanding. In this he is agreement with Weber. He departs from Weber in assigning social science a critical self-reflective role with an emancipator interest as a critical science of society. In line with the Marxist notion of dialectics, he holds that social science is in a dialectical relationship to its object. The notion of consciousness has to be replaced by that of communication. Thus Heberma’s approach is radical constructivist.

The post-modernist alternative goes by various names: post structuralism, deconstructionism and postmodernism. Its stance is anti-modernist, anti-Marxist and anti-positivist. Deconstruction is a methodology used by post-structuralism and postmodernism. It is initiated by Jacques Derrida, the leading architect of post-structuralism, with his reading of Martin Heidegger in the late 1960s. He argues that the meaning of language is to be found only in relation to language itself and not with reference to any reality or truth. For example, the word ‘masculinity’ has meaning only in relation to words like ‘feminine’, ‘androgyneous’ and so forth. By themselves, none of these words convey any truth or reality that may be studied through observation. Taken in association with words in different texts they revealed the hierarchy in gender relations. This intellectual process by meaning is uncovered through the relationship between words is the method of deconstruction.

Deconstructionism which pervades post-structuralism is represented by names such as Derrida and Foucault, whilst post modernist deconstructionism is associated with Lyotard, Barthes and Escober. However, in the discourse of post-modernism such distinctions are diffused. In postmodernism we can see an explicit rejection of all forms of meta-language, meta-narrative or meta-theory. Modern knowledge based on reason is regarded as ‘oppressive, disciplining, normalizing, totalizing, essentialist, truth claiming, knowledge thought up in the pursuit of power’ (Peet, 1998). Theories of Marx, Weber, Freud and the rest are meta-theories, hence un acceptable. To them society can be interpreted as a text. The very act of deconstruction, that is the methodology of post structuralism and post modernism, is itself politics and a challenge to power because deconstruction means the deconstruction of pre conceived fixed ideas. For every fixed idea there is an ‘absent’ idea, for example ‘identity’ needs a ‘non identity’, ‘self’ needs the ‘other’, and so on.

From the post modernist debate, social science has moved over to a discussion and debate between constructivism and realism, opening up the question of the social context of knowledge. It was Karl Mannheim who established constructivism as one of the key methodological issues in social science as founder of the sociology of knowledge. According to his formulation, knowledge produced in society was a function and product of the location of the producer in the class and culture of her/his society. Truth, then, is ultimately a product of its social location. Ideology, political beliefs were thus socially constructed, the later, by the dominant groups. Mannheim’s
formulation implied that there could be no objective basis for truth.

The feminist constructivist challenge to social science is at a fundamental normative level. It raises the issue that, there is a gender subtext in research formulation and analyses, which are male-implicit. Feminist response have varied from those that insist on operating from within the existing frame works, to those that put forward a new epistemology based on separate feminist ontology and methodology. Feminist discourse in the radical constructivist framework has developed over time to emphasis the following:

- Social science is partial in presenting an androcentric view of social reality.
- The belief in feminist social science is based on the recognition that the personal, direct experience underlies all behavior and actions. The construction of a woman’s social science will need to begin with women’s experience of women’s social reality. It rejects the androcentric sexist language of social science.
- Women are social beings living in interaction with other social beings. The whole gamut of social actions and reactions defines the scope of feminist social science.

Critical realism holding to the view that the sciences should be distinguished both in terms of their subject matter and methodology, critical realism is anti-positivist. Its foremost exponent is Roy Bhaskar. The following are some of the main points of the critical realism:

- According to Bhaskar, social reality is composed of ‘generative mechanisms’. These generate events.
- Social science knowledge, like natural science, is ultimately explanatory. Unlike positivism it holds that causal laws are not universally deterministic, but are contingent and context shaped, and always falsifiable.
- It accepts the hermeneutic notion of social reality as being communicatively constructed, but goes beyond social constructions by social actors by introducing causal mechanisms and contingent causal laws.

In conclusion the major paradigmatic and theoretical discourses is basically intended to provide a very broad familiarity with the field of social science as it has evolved. Needless to say they have grown out of numerous serious researches that have attempted to comprehend, explain and understand the social world in all complexity of change and order. Thus the above three major discourses have characterised the progress of social science. The first has taken off from orthodox positivism and its critique by Popper; the second, from the hermeneutical tradition; and the third, from a Marxist critique (neo-Marxism). These three traditions are now being debated within the new paradigmatic parameters of constructivism and realism.

The reasonable approach to a problem in social science is identified through the process of Observations, identifying the problem, defining the problem, reviewing literature, developing theoretical frame work, Choosing a research design, Collecting the necessary data, Analyzing the result and Drawing conclusion. When we select a topic for discussion in social science it is necessary to go through the above mentioned process. The topic should generate through scientific investigation that requires curiosity, which makes people to ask two questions like why? and how?, skepticism- which helps people to re examine the past explanation and last one that is objectivity- which enables to seek impartiality for the truth. When these three attitudes come together scientific inquiry will flourish and the topic passes through four phases scientific thinking that is enquiry, analysis, inference and argument and the final stage argument Strengthening the meta-level components of scientific thinking (Kuhn & Pearsall, 1998).

Thus we can conclude that to generate a topic in the midst of social scientific thinking is both a simple and complex one. It is simple because social science deals with a system of knowledge so it is easy to select a topic but on other hand it is complex because topic is related not on the basis of the knowledge of common sense but on the basis of educated common sense, that has a future social value.

References
