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EPISTEMOLOGICAL ANARCHISM IN THE THOUGHT OF PAUL FEYERABEND

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Abstract:
This article aims to shed light on the topic of epistemological anarchism in Paul Feyerabend's philosophy of science and its role in the advancement of scientific knowledge, based on principles such as the relativity of knowledge and its opposition to methodological monism. Feyerabend rejects all prevailing epistemological orientations and methodologies, standing against empiricism and rationalism alike. In doing so, he revolts against every attempt to rationalize scientific practice, instead establishing new conceptions such as epistemological anarchism and methodological pluralism. This approach opened a new direction in contemporary philosophy of science.

Keywords: anarchism, epistemology, methodology, methodological pluralism, rationalism.

1.INTRODUCTION:

Human thought has, throughout the course of its historical development, witnessed many different scientific approaches that vary in form and rules. Some are rational and deductive, while others are empirical and grounded in reality. In light of the developments that the field of philosophy of science has undergone in the modern era, what came to be known as the inductive method emerged. It is the result of the epistemic movement that the question of method has known. This method was behind the success of the natural sciences, such as physics and biology, as well as the human sciences, such as history, psychology, and sociology. The empirical method was transferred and applied to these fields, while preserving the specificity of each discipline, which led to the establishment of a distinction between scientific and non-scientific studies, as well as the strengthening of studies aimed at achieving development and progress. Through this method, we seek to achieve our goals of understanding the world and developing knowledge.

However, this scientific method was not free from harsh criticism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by philosophers of science. These philosophers neglected the principles and foundations upon which the scientific method is based, and instead focused their attention on the problem of induction. This led to a new revolution in thinking about the idea of an appropriate scientific method, and thus various approaches emerged that differed in perspectives, rules, and criteria. This led the twentieth century to become an age of methodological anarchism.

Undoubtedly, science today has become a developing project that depends on breaking with the prevailing rationality that believes in stability. This has led to the emergence of a variety of multiple and relativistic scientific approaches, where there is no single method that can be considered the fixed foundation of science. Science today reflects the complexities and diversities that exist in reality and develops according to surrounding conditions and contexts. Through this philosophical shift, new horizons for thinking and scientific exploration are opened, where multiple and relative truths are accepted. It becomes clear that scientific knowledge is not absolute or fixed; rather, science works to modify and improve existing theories and concepts and provides new experiments and conclusions in order to achieve a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the world around us.

Therefore, the twentieth century can be considered a period marked by a shift from a fixed and absolute scientific approach to a pluralistic and diverse one. By adopting a relative and multiple scientific method, we realize that science is not merely a set of fixed facts, but rather an ongoing journey through which we seek to discover new truths and expand the horizons of human knowledge. This transformation was largely driven by Paul Feyerabend (1924–1994), the contemporary Austrian philosopher of science, who emerged as one of the most important philosophers of science in the twentieth century due to his intellectual boldness. He was a critic of Western rationalism and its way of thinking, especially with regard to science and method, and he founded a philosophical project centered on the concept of methodological anarchism. This granted him a prominent position in contemporary philosophy of science. Hence, we may ask: What is the epistemological approach presented by Paul Feyerabend? Does his call for "anti-method" mean that he rejects method altogether and establishes an epistemology based on anarchism and methodological pluralism? And to what extent can methodological rigidity be overcome in favor of methodological anarchism?

2. The concept of epistemological anarchism in Paul Feyerabend:

Anarchisme (Anarchism) corresponds to the term Anarchy, which is composed of two parts: the prefix "AN," meaning negation, and the second part "archie," meaning authority. Thus, the meaning of the term is "no authority." The Arabic term "fawda" (chaos) also carries the same meaning (Boudbous, 1989, p. 8). It can be said that anarchism is a political term that means opposition to order and organization, and rejects all types of authority.

Lalande notes that the concepts of anarchy and anarchism were first used by Proudhon. In Lalande's dictionary, anarchism is defined in two senses:

- "A disruption of order due to the absence of organized authority."
- "A political doctrine or theory, with notable variations, whose common feature lies in the rejection of any state system that imposes itself on the individual" (Lalande, 2001, p. 67).

Thus, anarchism is a political philosophy that calls for abolishing state control and all forms of authority, aiming to build human relations on the basis of individual freedom. It is therefore a doctrine advocating the elimination of political control within society. The state and its institutions are considered the greatest enemies of the individual, and abolishing them and their systems would eliminate all human ills and evils.

Paul Feyerabend was influenced by the concept of anarchism; hence he was called an anarchist philosopher, and his philosophy was also labeled anarchist philosophy because it calls for freedom and rejects all forms of intellectual authority. He borrowed this term from politics and applied it to the field of science, integrating it into philosophical terminology, especially within philosophy of science, giving it a scientific character. This term, in Feyerabend's view, was widely rejected in the political domain, as he says: "If anarchism is undesirable in politics, it is the best remedy for epistemology, and even for philosophy of science itself" (Feyerabend, Three Dialogues on Knowledge, p. 11). Thus, from the concept of anarchism in political thought, we may ask whether anarchism carries the same meaning in the epistemological scientific domain.

Since political anarchism means rejecting all systems and state authority, and calls for freedom because it sees the state and its laws as the greatest obstacle to the individual, the same applies, in Feyerabend's view, to scientific knowledge. Science should not be bound to a single method, because it is an "anarchist" project, and all methods are acceptable and available within it, according to his slogan "anything goes." This is evident in his book *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*, where he states that he is engaged in an anarchist project that discusses the absence of a distinctive method for scientific research (Feyerabend, *Science in a Free Society*, 2000, p. 6). This stems from his belief that there are numerous diverse and unlimited methods, and

that each attempt has value and usefulness. Thus, he denies the existence of a single scientific and objective method that distinguishes science. He also believes that any progress in science, if it is to be understood, will necessarily result from the destruction of every conceivable rule of rationality.

Feyerabend presented a comparison unprecedented in epistemology, especially when he freed science from the constraints of method and called for epistemological anarchism, based on the idea that science itself is an anarchic activity. He says: "Science is essentially an anarchic activity, and anarchism is more humane than science; it is more likely to encourage progress than methodological alternatives represented by law and order" (Feyerabend, Three Dialogues on Knowledge, p. 11). That is, he affirms that anarchism is a form of scientific knowledge, based on the idea that science itself is, in his view, an anarchic activity that is not governed by methodological rules or intellectual authority, but is rather a free project based on methodological pluralism and the diversity of theories and viewpoints.

Feyerabend explains the reasons for choosing the term anarchism as a foundation for a new philosophy of science. He states that it refers to an attempt to increase liberation from all constraints—whether scientific, social, or political—in order to achieve a full and meaningful life. This, however, can only be achieved by rejecting all universal standards, rigid orientations, and the laws of scientific method, including the laws of reason itself, in favor of anarchism. He says: "Professional anarchists oppose any kind of restriction and demand that individuals be given the opportunity to develop freely, without being hindered by any laws, duties, or commitments. In doing so, they incorporate all the standards imposed by scientists without being bound by them" (Qutb, 2008, p. 34).

3. The concept of relativism in Feyerabend:

"Relative" stands in contrast to "absolute," and "relativism" is a doctrine that holds that all knowledge is relative. What is meant by the relativity of knowledge is that the human mind cannot encompass everything, and the absolute cannot be grasped (Qutb, 2008, p. 34).

The concept of relativism refers to one of the philosophical perspectives that sees the value and meaning of human beliefs and human behavior as lacking an absolute reference point that determines them. Philosophers use the term relativism to indicate the philosophical tendency that denies the existence of an absolute truth.

Relativism is an intellectual current known since the ancient Greeks, for example in the sophist Protagoras, who held that "man is the measure of all things," and that truth changes with individuals depending on situation and circumstance. In this sense, truth does not remain absolute; rather, it is not more than subjective truths. Instead, truth multiplies with the multiplicity of individuals, and from here the beginnings of relativism emerge.

Relativism is considered one of the most important contemporary trends in the philosophy of science, which has launched an attack against all conceptions and notions claiming the objectivity of science. It seeks to undermine everything absolute in science. Feyerabend is considered one of those influenced by the relativist tendency, as he sees science as chaotic, not governed by order, and not based on absolutes or objectivity, because knowledge differs and varies from one person to another. It seems that Feyerabend drew the idea of relativism from Protagoras; he praises his relativism because it emphasizes the idea of the plurality of values and traditions without rejecting individual subjective perspectives or claiming that one's habits are the only true ones. This constitutes the axis of his philosophy. The relativist tendency appears in him through both his attacks and his defense of the same principle. This relativist aspect is clear in his statement: "Complete knowledge is neither necessary nor attainable, and all that is available are different viewpoints, which are only true in

certain respects, and there are no views that are not tied to a specific tradition" (Feyerabend, *Three Dialogues on Knowledge*, p. 26).

This means that knowledge cannot be objective and absolute, because in most cases it is not fully accessible. Not everything that science presents is available; rather, what is available is a set of different opinions that may be true in some of their aspects. Our total views are inseparable from our beliefs and human knowledge, as science is a human activity. Feyerabend's relativism denies all universal and objective standards in science. Judging a scientific theory as true or false is a judgment that changes from one scientific community to another. In contrast, he calls for diversity of values and plurality of knowledge. There is no science better than another; all forms of knowledge are useful as long as they contribute something new to science. This is what he expressed in his philosophy when he denied the superiority of science over other forms of knowledge, considering it merely one tradition among many others.

It can be said that Feyerabend's epistemological anarchism is merely a new form of relativism, which is evident in his works. He describes himself as an enthusiastic relativist, although his relativism differs from other forms of relativism. He says: "The relativism I present here is not about concepts, but about human relations; it deals with problems arising from the clash of different cultures or individuals with different customs and tastes" (Qutb, 2008, p. 51).

With this statement, Feyerabend criticizes rationalists who have moved away from life into a mechanical world of knowledge. They do not take into account this or that culture; their main concern is ideas such as truth and correctness, without ever asking how these ideas are connected to human existence. They only attempt to make scientific practice more rational.

Perhaps the scientific research conducted by Feyerabend in the field of philosophy of science confirms his relativist tendency. At the same time, he rejects all methodological rules and rationalist conceptions that restrict human freedom in inquiry. The concepts that philosophers of science seek to establish and defend, such as objectivity, rationality, and method, are all relative concepts because they change from one paradigm to another and from one philosopher to another. Their meanings differ according to the contextual framework in which they appear. All theories are useful; there is no theory better than another. All are available to serve science.

4. Against Method Unity:

The concept of "method" in the contemporary period of the history of philosophy has generated extensive debate in epistemological circles concerned with the problems of science and the requirements of scientific thought in general. The philosopher Paul Feyerabend was one of the most important philosophers of science who subjected method to criticism. He worked to undermine everything absolute in human knowledge, including scientific knowledge, rejecting strict method with great force and considering it an obstacle to scientific progress. Perhaps among the most violent attacks launched against attempts in scientific research to formulate logical principles and fixed universal rules for rationalizing scientific practice is what he presented in his book *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*, in which he clearly states that science has never been bound by a single specific method, but is rather an anarchic, non-authoritarian project that recognizes no authority. All methods can be useful in it, as long as they suit the nature of the problem at hand and lead to its solution and to the addition of something new to science. In contrast, restricting science to a single method hinders thought, limits creativity, and suppresses the essential spirit required for achievement.

Feyerabend questions whether there is a specific scientific method defined by methodological frameworks and rules in science that cannot be deviated from. The answer he reaches denies the

existence of any single method at all, because the world we seek to explore is obscure and unknown, and many truths remain hidden from us. Therefore, we must remain open to all possible choices without predefining them. For this reason, scientists should have greater freedom in their choices and free themselves from the prison of illusion they have built under the claim of methodological strictness, in order to understand science and reach truth.

Feyerabend did not reject existing methodologies, but rather called for the availability of all of them in scientific research. He opposed the idea of methodological unity and, in contrast, opened the field to all methods to express themselves. This is confirmed by his phrase "anything goes," meaning that everything is acceptable and all methods are available as long as they benefit scientific research. He says: "If we reflect on past history, we will find that for every rule we wish to defend, there are circumstances in which progress is achieved by breaking that rule. Research methodologies at best provide us with a confused list of approximate rules, and the only principle we can trust under all circumstances is 'anything goes'" (Feyerabend, *Three Dialogues on Knowledge*, p. 21). This means that the rules claimed by scientists to be strict and necessary in science are false and unfounded, because they do not contribute anything new to scientific research. Rather, these principles and standards weaken science and its objective results. The history of science shows that these rules must be overcome and not adhered to in order to reach scientific truth, as he says: "However necessary and fundamental the rules of method that philosophers of science insist upon may seem, there are always circumstances that require not only ignoring these rules, but adopting their opposite" (Feyerabend, *Three Dialogues on Knowledge*, p. 12). Thus, he opens science to all types of human knowledge, whether scientific or non-scientific, with the aim of expanding the range of alternatives in scientific theories and providing new explanations that may solve scientific problems. Therefore, Feyerabend rejects the epistemic authority of a single method, since science is an open and diverse project in which all methods may contribute. This methodological plurality is necessary for creative innovation in science, whereas rigidity and strictness limit its capacity for invention. Restricting scientific practice to a single methodological framework hinders scientific progress, because science has never been the product of fixed methodological rules, but rather the result of an extensive research process enriched by other forms of knowledge.

From his perspective, the only principle that can be defended under any circumstance is the principle of "anything goes," because it does not restrict scientific progress. It expresses methodological pluralism, which brings forth different viewpoints and alternative forms of knowledge. He says: "The rationality I seek… is rather the expansion of the range of alternatives and the use of all theories, even those that have long been abandoned and forgotten, because they may contain an element useful to our knowledge" (Qutb, 2008, p. 44).

That is, he emphasizes the necessity of liberation from the constraints of method. Scientific knowledge must be integrated with other forms of human knowledge such as myth, art, and religion. The diversity of opinions is necessary for objective knowledge, as it opens research to new and different modes of thinking that contribute to the construction of knowledge. Therefore, the scientist must adopt multiple theories and expand the scope of research to include everything, without being confined to a single type of knowledge. Rigidity, stability, and uniformity weaken critical power. He says: "One can be a philosopher of science only if one is prepared to deal with multiple theories rather than a single point of view… theoretical pluralism is a feature of all knowledge that claims objectivity" (Feyerabend, *Science in a Free Society*, 2000, p. 7).

That is, he calls on scientists, in their studies of scientific theories, to free themselves from the constraints imposed by philosophers of science, and instead adopt epistemological pluralism. He also points out that none of the existing methodological approaches in philosophy of science has succeeded in explaining scientific progress, and he emphasizes that it is a mistake to reduce science

to simple methodological rules due to the complexity of its history. Throughout its historical development, method has been subjected to critique, modification, and change by philosophers; thus, it is futile to subject science to rigid rules. He says: "The idea that science can and should be organized according to fixed and universal rules is at once idealistic and false… it is harmful to science because it ignores the complex physical and historical conditions that truly influence scientific change, making our science less adaptable and more dogmatic" (Qutb, 2008, p. 45).

Feyerabend's call against methodological monism was the result of a distinctive critical rational reflection. It is a clear call aimed at freeing science from the authority of concepts and frameworks that dominate it, because he believed that the course of science does not advance according to strict logical order or methodological rigidity. On the contrary, when science is subjected to methodological pluralism, it becomes more scientific and objective. Plurality is a feature of science. His argument is that the history of science shows that the most flourishing periods were those that witnessed diversity and variation in perspectives and methods. Therefore, diversity of approaches and methods makes scientific research more objective. This is evident in his statement: "The method that encourages diversity is the only approach consistent with the human vision" (Feyerabend, *Against Science Tyranny*, 2017, p. 21).

He sought to make science open to all methods, because its nature requires the application of multiple approaches. He therefore advocated what is called an open methodology, which faithfully expresses the nature of science and its anarchic reality. It does not exclude human knowledge but places it within the scientific domain, from which it draws whatever it wishes insofar as it suits the problems raised in scientific theories.

5. Conclusion:

From the foregoing, we can infer that the epistemological foundations of Feyerabend's philosophy of science emerged to clarify the relationship between science and other forms of human knowledge, and to show the importance of studying scientific theories in light of human history and culture. This is what gave rise to what is known as anarchist epistemology, which sought to abolish methodological unity, thereby opposing all the concepts and assumptions underlying contemporary philosophy of science. It calls for a new epistemology unparalleled in the field of scientific practice, one that embraces epistemic criticism and relativism and advocates for intellectual freedom.

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