

# HS 312 – Introduction to Science and Technology Studies

Lecture 11  
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# Against Method

- Paul Feyerabend – Austrian Philosopher @ University of Bristol, UC Berkeley; Book *Against Method* (1975)
- He questions and rejects on the grounds of history and logic, the belief @ existence of scientific method that distinguishes science from other cognitive activities
- Against ‘law and order’ Philosophy of Science – certain unchanging norms which determine scientific practice
- Give me any norm, I will show it is violated, not by oversight but consciously
- History of science goes against the idea of scientific method, since every possible norm has been violated

# Against Method

- Two conditions that ought to be met by any theory – consistency condition, correspondence condition
- The new proposed theory must be consistent with the already well established theories
- The new proposed theory must correspond to the well established facts
- Feyerabend – both conditions are illegitimate as they hinder progress of science
- Overlooks the fact that the established theories may be faulty
- Since all observations are theory-laden, correspondence condition too cannot be sustained, as new theory might fail to correspond to facts
- Correspondence condition is primary as consistency condition can be reduced to it

Empiricism: A philosophy that emphasizes knowledge gained through experience and observation rather than theory or logic.

Example: Scientists rely on experiments and data to confirm hypotheses.

Inception: The beginning or initiation of an idea, process, or institution.

Example: The inception of the internet revolutionized global communication

# Against Method

- Feyerabend – we must attempt to develop new theories that go **counter to so-called known facts**
- **Scientific pluralism** rejects fundamental doctrine that “all facts must belong to one grand scheme”
- Not call for abandoning empiricism but proposal that we must not insist that theories must produce data at the inception
- Galileo, Copernican theory and Ptolemaic theory – telescope
- Feyerabend maintains that **relationship between successive theories is incommensurable**

# Against Method

Repudiates means to reject, deny, or refuse to accept something, often formally or strongly.

- Methodological monism – Only one method for science irrespective of its subject matter
- Feyerabend – repudiates the idea of method in natural sciences, and roots for methodological pluralism
- Post-paradigmatic stage marked by plurality
- A line of demarcation between science and non-science – not absolute and logical but relative and historical
- Social science also works with some conception of method

Conception refers to the formation of an idea, belief, or plan in the mind.

# Group Presentation

3	210010007	Akash Banger	Chapter 1		13	22B0919 Nitesh Singh
	22B1852	Akepogu Bhagya Raju	Edible knowledge: the chemical transfer of memory	5-Feb		22B0974 Nitin Singh Patel
	22B0684	Ankit				22B2155 Nitya Tiwari
	22B1026	Anumandla Vasavi Priya				22B1008 Nuthakki Rithik

# Sources

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- NPTEL. Views of Paul Feyerabend.
- Harry Collins and Trevor Pinch (1998). Edible Knowledge: the chemical transfer of memory. Chapter 1, in *The Golem: what you should know about science*; second edition: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK.

Thank you