

PAUL FEYERABEND AND THE FORGOTTEN 'THIRD VIENNA CIRCLE'*

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Abstract. The study contradicts the image of Feyerabend as a herald of postmodern “anything goes” and as destroyer of rational philosophy and anarchist, in an approach of the formative intellectual socialization of Feyerabend in Vienna, until his move to England and America. It shows a deep rootedness in the Austrian tradition of philosophy and science, which can be detected up to his return to Europe. At the same time, the text presents a consistent intellectual profile that tracks the empirically oriented complementarity of science and art and science of history and philosophy of science toward an abstract, normative philosophy of science at various levels, with a loose agenda. This is conceived in the form of a historically oriented relativism and aims rather to interpret Feyerabend’s contribution as a continuation of the productive approaches spilled into the History and Philosophy of Science since Mach than considering his work a big break or settlement with the philosophy of science, as evidenced also in Feyerabend’s notes, in his autobiography.

Keywords: Feyerabend, rationalism, empiricism, relativism, Vienna Circle, Austrian philosophy.

Paul Feyerabend (1924-1994): “The Worst Enemy of Science”?

Even though many years have passed since his death, Paul Feyerabend continues to be discussed – by philosophers and the scientific community – but he is also the subject of a broader public debate. Especially in the German-speaking world, his image as an *enfant terrible* of philosophy continues to be nourished by fragments that have appeared posthumously (Feyerabend 2005). His image remains a complex and contradictory one. As an icon of 'anti-science' or 'worst enemy of science' (cf. *Nature* 1987/ *Scientific American* 1993) his oeuvre has assumed a *life* of its own, and his name has become a popular instrument for polarizing different camps in intellectual debates.

While his work continues to be studied since the publication of his successful book *Against Method* (Feyerabend 1975), it is surprising that the period preceding it has hardly been examined with the exception of a few studies (e.g., Haller 1997, Hochkeppel 2006; and only recently after completion of my German

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