

The influence of modern epistemological streams. The case of epistemological anarchism

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Abstract. *The rationale of this research goes into the origins of the history of economic science but is willing to underpin new coordinates in methodology of science. An unusual account about this aspect shows the fear of some economists that overrating the role of methodology of science could bring scientific chauvinism out. Nor were these problems of recent origin; they were rooted in deep epistemological debates over time. Considering the theoretical evidence analyzed in this paper work, this approach of modern epistemological streams puts forward new highlights of economic methodology.*

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Introduction

Most appropriate way to introduce a controversial epistemological topic is through the one of the most controversial epistemologist's outlook credo, Paul Feyerabend, by the appearance of a logo where are to be found underpinning keywords of the mainstream: "Science is overall an anarchic quest: theoretical anarchism is more human and more entitled to encourage progress rather than law-and-order alternatives". This work represents a methodological approach of economic thinking through one epistemological stream which is not depleted of all the answers to economic science challenges.

Short epistemological outlook on evolution of science

History of science does not contain only facts and conclusions derived from facts, but ideas too, interpretation of facts, conflict problems from misunderstandings and the like. Scientific facts and outcomes are not only Godless, apolitical, feeling and moral less, but idealized. They are obtained acting from different perspectives. Therefore, history of science will be as complex, as chaotic, as full of mistakes or as entertaining as the ideas contained, which will have at their own the same properties as the ones of the minds of their thinkers. That is precisely why "objectivity" of science implies uniformity, abstracted approach and simplification, when people intend to narrow reality they study in theoretical frameworks. Scientific education of present days is engineered on this very coordinates, trying to simplify science by simplifying science participants profiles (Feyerabend, 2010, p. 3). Simplification tends to develop itself after the following steps:

- At the beginnings is defined a research field, being designed a methodological definition area;
- The field is after that isolated from the other disciplines, giving the field a logic approach and purpose by its own;
- Crystallization of the research program;
- Embedding the coordinates of school of thought;
- Gaining theoretical background for the field scientist, essential stage within the uniformity process. One might try to eliminate the personal influences of religion, humor, emotional intelligence, personal preferences, cultures, habits. A hard core consequence of this stage is the narrowing of the imagination background. Imagination will be injured, and the language along with it. Language will cease to be genuine, natural and will be slowly removed by the scientific one.

It has to be out there an anarchic methodology, to match an anarchic science. Conversely to social state of anarchy, whose synonym is the lack of authority,⁽¹⁾ decreasing the power of law and order in scientific field will not lead to chaos at all, but to the existence of some primordial conditions of new ideas, just as the chemical and physical primordial conditions have maintained life on Earth.

1. Anything goes

“The only principle which does not inhibit progress is: anything goes” is the Paul Feyerabend’s (2010, p. 7) phrase which has shocked the community of scientific knowledge. His *Anything goes* is the symbol of methodological anarchism. Anything goes, anything is possible, are nothing else but soft encouragements to act, to discover, to innovate. *Anything goes* makes the shift from *idea* to *action*. Between *idea* and *action* scientific progress follow a wrong path under the rigor of laws: birth of an idea, or a problem, then action, discussion, critics, giving up. A better alternative would be the following of children intellectual evolution. First of all they assume their parents’ vocabulary or other adults’ from their proximity. Even they would not completely understand the meaning of those words they use, they keep playing with them until they tend to discover meanings beyond their understanding until then. The main idea is that a joyful entertainment activity might be an essential stage in understanding process. More than this, there are no prior issues to underpin the cease of this mechanism for adult intellectual development (Feyerabend, 2010, p. 10). On the same methodological trend could be analyzed as well the scientific theories:

- First of all an opposite body of ideas challenges the mainstream and the contemporary experience of society;
- This new faith is spreading, winning supporters and followers, and, along with them, is about to win support from other rebel and controversial or contested theories;
- The research is already rejected out from the common channels already used by *mainstream*, but this is helpful for the new faith, because it is redirected to insufficient known and developed areas, hence the opportunity to make use of new ideas, methodology, instruments and experiments. Eventually, having all these, a new ideology might occur. Its initial strong points are mobility and adaptability;
- As the ideology proves able to self sustaining through arguments independent of *mainstream*, so grows the chances to embedding a new opposite doctrine to *mainstream*. Theories get clearness only after disparate and incoherent parts of it have been used for about some time. Apparently worthless and meaningless at the beginning, theories are like toys whose use is out of methodology, but

very useful as essential pre requirement for the later empiric success. Paul Feyerabend (2010, p. 11) has synthesized this by saying that „without frequently misused of language, there won't be achieved any discovery through progress”. Paul Feyerabend takes *anything goes* as a milestone for his thesis according to which „anarchism is helpful in gaining progress in any meaning some might choose”.

2. Scientific chauvinism

The *anything goes* principle can be explained analyzing the consequences of “counter-rules” which oppose the laws, with official records in scientific research. An opposite rule is opposite action to current outcomes. The rule is the control key used by an institution in order to systemized its data, nothing else than empirics precondition of research. As empiricism is underpinned by induction, Paul Feyerabend (2010, pp. 13-28) put up for explanation for its *anything goes* principle, *the counterinduction*. This will lead to the following questions:

- Does counterinduction use better arguments than induction?
- Is there any circumstances to recommend and favor its utilization?
- Which are the advantages of using it?
- Which are its limits and weak points?
- Is counterinduction always preferable to induction?

The question list could go on, but the general outlook is that scientist should nither contest any rule, nor use them as anchors, because scientific methodologies, however strong they are through their outcomes, should be used under the restriction of their limit in time, whenever this might happen. Without this attitude, scientist will force the fall of theories under the power of *scientific chauvinism*. A good example is the traditional Communist Chinese medicine resurrection. A great country underpinned by great traditions has imported Western scientific principles, due to intellectual superiority. The science became to be imported as well, taught and spread by force shifting the traditional knowledge. Scientific chauvinism wins if anything considered having poor match to modern science is considered expandable as well, therefore suitable to be removed. The most well known victims were herbal medicine and acupuncture. But once Communist gained power, bourgeois elements were considered to underpin Western modern medicine, hence the u-turn to ancient values. Paul Feyerabend (2010, p. 31) has indeed admitted, it was a force majeure case, but tyranny of scientific chauvinism within Chinese modern medicine was to bring anything but hard countermeasures of the Communist party. The main idea is that scientific chauvinism is to be countered by forces outside scientific world, hence the origins of political intervention.

Science is one of the multiple instruments invented and perfected by men in order to smooth their interaction with roundabout reality. Therefore it is neither unique, nor ineffable. Meanwhile it has been awarded with enough authority to become powerful and dangerous left out of sight. It is not only about threat of nuclear technology control by hostile forces to peace and liberty, but intellectual pollution as well, able to counteract to further evolution of civilization to some extent. This could happen through educational system. Using marks and grades inducing the fear of school failure – and virtually social failure – teachers can undermine their pupils imagination, willing to accept imposed frameworks in order to pass the exams. Paul Feyerabend (2010, pp. 164-165) has proposed education to be left out of the teachers' jurisdiction. Marks constraints, competition, periodically exams should be removed by a learning process for specialized objectives. A thing must be avoided by all cost: special standards for special persons who will control special professions. This should not be allowed to breach into the educational system. Universal education should be able to train people to choose between standards, or to find their place in a society shaped by different groups, able to adhere to different standards, but without abiding standards of a special group.

Scientists are a special group. They are able to make precise and correct analysis. This is not equivalent with the powerless of ordinary people to do analysis as well. Scientist get better in their ability to see aspects, whereas ordinary people are able to register mainly things instead of aspects. This ability to see the truth from different perspectives was given by education and supported by courage to break the limits of the patterns. As example, Egyptologists decoding hieroglyphs on the Nile Valley, even they had clues about the messages from those drawings, they have not entirely understood the meanings until they have changed the perspective of plane geometry reading to space geometry approach. This example is a checkpoint for a brand new scientist, one who search progress and avoid pitfalls of scientific chauvinism.

Countering back scientific chauvinism might be the anthropologist research method. Two aborigine tribes from different continents seem closely related on the first sight, but it is more. Research on them is to be made after the following algorithm: first contact, exploring communication channels and language. Then anthropologists observe art and common every day habits. One might suppose that almost "savages" mainly fish or hunt for food, but what they effectively eat and the way the hunt is conducted could be very different. After fishing and hunting, anthropologists inquire on spiritual issues, social, economic matters. Researching over the one tribe's habits through the previous other tribes' habits brings the research under the shadow of scientific chauvinism and inductivity errors. Science is to be approached just as the anthropologist approach the field of healers as the medical department of the tribe. Most of charms of the tribe's healers are

matching on modern medicine, at least as outcomes. Therefore scientists should be prepared to analyze apparently meaningless and irrational things (for current status of modern science), and to ac with lack of logic in order to understand the meanings.

3. Fighting back to the tyranny of science

Perception on science should be open and friendly. In *The Tyranny of Science* Paul Feyerabend (2011, p. 9) made a very interesting approach on science from the market perspective. Market not only provides goods for consumers, but also is signaling over hidden needs which consumers are not aware of. Therefore science, religion, art could be taken as *spiritual markets*, with different departments linked one to another. Market offer new items too, not only tested item through previous experiences, hence the supposition that science was not based necessary on experience. Yet, a specific boundary is to be set between empirics and experience. The last is the sum of all people's five senses, when new worlds comme into the light. Empiricism is an experience based philosophy, as a very useful tool to get clear perspectives over the world when properly used (Feyerabend, 2011, p. 40).

The tyranny of scientific chauvinism is underpinned by several limitations of unity of science, resumed in the following sentences:

P1: Scientific progress (from its champions' perspective) depends on the people's openness to new doctrines, which inflicts with other people's totalitarian and rigid doctrines.

P2: Ideas and doctrines are hard to be taken for granted, requiring sometimes long time until fully recognition.

P3: Principles underpinning scientific knowledge within society are not universal, keeping the probability (and normality) for every society to define its own standards of normality.

P4: New perspectives on doctrines could inflict with *mainstream*, yet they won't ever contest the methodology of science, rationalism.

Sometimes people have a hard time understanding the future and the progress to come along with it. Superior utility of current consumption underpins Paul Feyerabend's faith in empiricism of economics. A good example is Bill Clinton's choice on his economic board. Professors and Ph.D. great economists were waiting for the president's call, but, as hardly most people expected, none of them was summoned. The president chose average economists with the touch in every day current economic issues, whose experience was more valued than abstract scientific papers.

In time science shifted to laboratory science. Science was to study reality, whereas laboratory science has the purpose to mainly smooth disturbances, volatility through its experiments. Apparently nature abides to simple principles, because nature hides many side effects. Therefore nature is to be adjusted, along with its side effects stages, yet the simple principles have to be amplified up to a clear understanding peak. This is the very reason scientist try hard to change what they study through abstracted knowledge and artificial outcomes. This approach is sustained by a specific attitude of contemporary scientific community. First of all, is to be assumed that nature does not reveal willingly all it secrets, hence the reason to force it to do it. Main laws are hidden by false presumptions and material obstacles entitled to be removed in order to gain objectivity and scientific righteousness. Second, a scientist who knows universal laws can analyze a particular case from his desk within a laboratory, without being necessary to work on the open air. After all, universal laws are the same everywhere. Some few more questions are required for additional data to fill the blanks in tables, patterns and IT programs to have their precious outcome, scientific predictions. This is the reason of shifts within educational system, which made polytechnic learning to remove competencies on engineering skills by engineering, which made medicine to remove interest for handy medical intervention by molecular biology. Assessing on the labor market, scholarships, medical procedures and marriages became to depend more on some test paper statistics instead on debate and discussion between participants (Feyerabend, 2010, pp. 43-46). Written test are good for objectivity of assessment, and for a brand new definition for it: *that assessment some has not to check personally*. Data filled in patterns and tables allow assessor to stay cozy at home. The patterns are underpinned by math and best empirical data gained. This data are to be processed under laboratory design principles, not on field designed principles. At this stance, Paul Feyerabend (2011, p. 47) used to say that “we are miles away from problem, while it lies there, in the nature, along with its plants, its clouds, insects, men, rodents, worms, etc. We are almost on another planet.”

Conclusions

In this new status-quo solutions found will be efficient only from the perspective of laboratory efficiency definition. Improvement of economic indicators will not necessary lead to improvement on quality of life, supported by feelings, traditions, engagements and patience in forming the generations.

The current problems of society are far to important to be left to scientists. Final calls are under the governments' control, just as previously the Church had the final approve in science discoveries. When Fayerabend (2011, p. 55) invited four

colleagues to make dissertations on the influence of science over religion, the Catholic and the Protestant said “We have already been burned. We do not want to happen again.”, whereas the Muslim and the Jew expressed their interest in any form of knowledge. This is only a new embedding of the fact that through scientific knowledge there is no absolute path to be followed, but only a particular case of knowledge.

Note

⁽¹⁾ From Greek *an* + *arkhe*, without authority.

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