[Forthcoming in a new translation of Paul Feyerabend’s 1978 book *Science in a Free Society* into Persian, by Mohsen Khademi, due to be published by in Tehran, Iran, by Esm (اسم) publishers, 2015]

Preface to the Persian Translation of *Science in a Free Society*

Paul Feyerabend’s second book, *Science in a Free Society* (SFS), is still relatively little known and unexplored in the secondary literature. First published in English in 1978, Feyerabend himself quickly took to recommending instead the expanded German version *Erkenntnis für freie Menschen*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980). He also seems not to have wanted SFS to be reprinted during his own lifetime.

SFS is Feyerabend’s most provocative book, since it takes further the ideas of his first book, *Against Method*, (London: New Left Books, 1975), making its critique of the philosophy of science into an explicit critique of (some aspects of) science itself. SFS, as much as AM, is the source of the idea that Feyerabend was ‘an enemy of science’. Part One of the book includes some of Feyerabend’s clearest endorsements of relativism, completely in opposition to the climate in anglo-American philosophy at that time. His relativism was then developed in *Farewell to Reason*, (London & New York: Verso, 1987), before Feyerabend decided, in his final works, that relativism was flawed.

Perhaps equally significantly, Part Three of SFS does battle with critics of *Against Method* in an intemperate way. The essays here show Feyerabend at his most vitriolic, but his anger is directed exclusively towards certain academic philosophers of science, not towards science itself. Feyerabend had long considered that this academic field had deteriorated steadily from the time of Ernst Mach (see SFS Part Three, chapter four, section 3, plus Feyerabend’s 1970 essay ‘Philosophy of Science: A Subject with a Great Past’, reprinted in the third volume of his *Philosophical Papers*). Logical positivists, falsificationists and logical empiricists, he thought, had turned the field into a purely academic exercise, with no sense of history. (Whether that field really deserved to be called a ‘sink of illiterate self-expression’ is another matter). His opponents found it difficult to distinguish his attacks on philosophy of science from attacks on science itself.

Feyerabend was not really an enemy of science. Rather, his critique of existing and past science aimed at deflating its pretensions (including the pretensions that science is a monolith which speaks with one voice, and that science can answer *all* meaningful questions that human beings pose). Correlatively, he was not an enemy of rationality, *per se*, or a methodological anarchist, but rather, as material in Part One of SFS explains, he sought ‘a different view of rationality altogether’, involving what he thought of as ‘a new *relation* between rules and practices’. His real opponent was *rationalism*, not rationality.

Some of the most interesting material in this book, material which has not yet featured strongly in the secondary literature, are the sections on idealism, naturalism and interactionism (Preface and Part One), the idea of standards having cosmological presuppositions (Part One, plus Part Three, chapter 5), the long section on Aristotle (Part One section 6), and the contrast between guided and open exchanges (Parts One and Two). These themes, it seems to me, would be well worth the attention of new thinkers in West Asia, whose emergence and interest in his works Feyerabend would undoubtedly have been delighted to see.

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