

# Preface

The papers that appear here are new or new versions of previously published ones. I am always ready to rewrite, partly or fully, but never in order to report changes of opinion. These deserve fresh separate papers, not grafts. The new versions of older papers here are mostly abbreviations of and amplifications. Of the new papers, some are written as background information for the dispute. Two papers were rejected by the encyclopedias that had commissioned them. Two others were addresses delivered in conferences in memory of Thomas S. Kuhn and of Paul K. Feyerabend (see details on the next page).

At the background of this volume stand perennial attempts to navigate between dogmatism and relativism. Recent classical discussions of relativism, especially those of Ernest Gellner (e.g., Gellner 1986) and of Ian Jarvie (e.g., Jarvie 1984), are exhaustive. I will not repeat their arguments here. (I did so elsewhere.) My proposal here, if I have any, concerns my Popper-style attitude. I find it unnecessary to block dogmatism, as it is no temptation for the curious. Relativism is too great a constraint on criticism, but it is appealing as it dismisses the absolute truth, which admittedly is inaccessible. Yet as an ideal, as a regulative principle, it is essential for realism. Popper improved his philosophy as increasingly realist. We may further develop his philosophy in this vein.

Popper declared all attempts at criticism valuable, even ones that rest on misunderstandings. Does this hold for malicious distortions too? Yes, after they are cleansed of their malice. This volume centers on Popper's recent popular critics, whose presentations of their target look less faithful than those of his older ones, but deceptively so. His old critics ascribed to him their Wittgenstein-style philosophy (improperly but with no ill intent). His new critics are different, as they share his rejection of all justification, especially inductive (Nola and Sankey 2000, ix). Regrettably, they also belittled rationalism in the style of Michael Polanyi (Kuhn expressly so, Feyerabend against his expressed dissent from Polanyi, and Lakatos wavering). Kuhn supported the scientific leadership, Feyerabend disapproved of it, and Lakatos declared his wish to take over (Holton 1974). They use against Popper arguments that he had invented without saying so. Nevertheless, their contributions are significant and deserve less offensive and less exaggerated paraphrase.

Finally, here I overlook the criticism that W. W. Bartley, III, has launched against Popper, as well as mine. This is due to their different character: they are both within Popper's minimalist program.

Some of the chapters that comprise revised and abridged versions of invited papers are mentioned below:

4-“Rules against Excessive Defensiveness” is a revised and abridged version of “Popper’s Popular Critics”, an invited paper, read at the conference of *L’Associazione Fondazione Karl Popper* in Milan in January, 1997, published in full in *Anuar*, 7, 1999, 5-25.

5-“Against the Bouncers in the Gates of Science” is a revised and abridged version of “The Philosophy of Science Today” published in S. Shanker, ed., *Routledge History of Philosophy, IX, Philosophy of Science, Logic and Mathematics in the 20th Century*, 1996, 235-65.

6-“Duhem, Quine and Kuhn” ends with a revised and abridged version of “Comparability and Incommensurability”, published in Stefano Gattei, ed., *The Kuhn Controversy, Social Epistemology*, 17, 2-3, 2003, 93-4.

7-Karl Raimund Popper (1902-1994) is an encyclopedia article first commissioned and then rejected.

8-“Kuhn’s Way” is a revised and abridged version of the paper by the same name from *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 32, 2002, 394-430.

9- “Feyerabend’s Proposal” is a revised version of my “The Politics of Science”, *J. Applied Philosophy*, 3, 1986, 35-48.

10-Imre Lakatos is an encyclopedia article first commissioned and then rejected.

11-“A Touch of Malice” is a revised and abridged version of “A Touch of Malice” (the Feyerabend-Lakatos correspondence) published in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 32, 2002, 109-21.

12- “The Essential Popper” is a revised and abridged version of the paper by the same name that appeared in Raffaele De Mucci and Kurt R Leube, eds., *Un austriaco in Italia, Studi in onore di Dario Antiseri*. Rome, Rubbettino, 2012, 149-66.

13-*Kuhn on Pluralism and Incommensurability* was an invited paper read in Tai Pei (Taiwan), in a conference called “Incommensurability 50” on 1-3 June 2012.

14-“Paul Feyerabend and Rational Pluralism” was an invited paper read in the International Feyerabend 2012 Conference in Humboldt University, Berlin, in September 2012 and found unsuitable for its proceedings,

15- Lakatos on the Methodology of Scientific Research Programs includes a revised and abridged version of my “The Methodology of Research Projects: a Sketch”, *Zeitschrift für allgemeine Wissenschaftstheorie*, 8, 1977, 30-8.

## References

- Gellner, Ernest. 1986. *Relativism and the social sciences*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jarvie, Ian. 1984. *Rationality and relativism: In Search of a philosophy and history of anthropology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Nola, Robert, and Howard, Sankey. 2000. *After Popper, Kuhn and Feyerabend: Recent issues in theories of scientific method*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Holton, Gerald. 1974. On being caught between Dionysians and Apollonians. *Daedalus* 103: 65–81.

Popper and His Popular Critics

Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend and Imre Lakatos

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