Working glossary so far…

Method = way of doing something
Methodology = reasoning about the ways of doing something

Note **(i)** some people – many people – use the terms 'method' and 'methodology' interchangeably

Research Method = way of doing research
Research Methodology = reasoning about the way of doing research
Epistemology = theory of knowledge / knowing; what is knowledge? what is worth knowing?

"method-discourse-guarantee-ism" = (my new term) for a way of talking about research method that explicitly or implicitly proposes that the "method" guarantees the security/robustness/ reliability of the knowledge claims elaborated through this way of working. I am not advocating or dismissing this way of speaking: I am simply identifying that it is not an inevitable outcome of discussing how research is done. It is possible to discuss ways of working and enquiring, without "method-discourse-guarantee-ism."

Note **(ii)** some people see this neat separation of layers Method / Methodology/Epistemology as a fiction or as just one of many possible constructions,

We can talk about research method in three distinct layers:

(a) A pedagogic strategy that proposes that asking questions about how something is being done, as it is in process, can help to refine and enhance the activity, but also develop broader insights and skills
(b) A doctoral qualification layer, which is that the award PhD is made on the basis of demonstrating competency in relation to questions of method and methodology specific to the discipline, practice or domain of the research
(c) A wider epistemological layer where there is a question about the relationship between ways of doing and organising a research project and the potential of the insight, understanding and knowledge that might be generated from the project. This is where "method-discourse-guarantee-ism" can be activated OR it can be avoided and a different approach adopted.

Etymologies / metaphors of path following
Meta-hodos (Anc. Greek)

method (n.)
early 15c., "regular, systematic treatment of disease," from Latin methodus "way of teaching or going," from Greek methodos "scientific inquiry, method of inquiry, investigation," originally "pursuit, a following after," from meta "in pursuit or quest of" (see meta-) + hodos "a method, system; a way or manner" (of doing, saying, etc.), also "a traveling, journey," literally "a path, track, road," a word of uncertain origin (see Exodus).
Meaning "any way of doing anything, orderly regulation of conduct with a view to the attainment of an end" is from 1580s; that of "orderliness, regularity" is from 1610s. Meaning "a system or complete sent of rules for attaining an end" is from 1680s. In reference to a theory of acting associated with Russian director Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938), it is attested from 1923.

The root metaphor of "path following" is a widespread metaphorical figure in many traditions.

But how do we gloss the term "research?"

It was suggested that "research tasks" may have different possible formats:

- Asking a question
- Describing a situation
- Trying to understand something
- Testing the possibility of doing something
- Seeing what happens if something like this, is put in relationship with something like that…
- Playing with something to see what might emerge

Suggesting that we can frame a research task in one or more of these different ways does not in itself really specify what "research" is as such, in contrast to something like "production" or "expression" etc.

WE SAW ONE INDICATION OF RESEARCH IN "THE DUBLIN DESCRIPTORS"

"The word 'research' is used to cover a wide variety of activities, with the context often related to a field of study; the term is used he re to represent a careful study or investigation based on a systematic understandi ng and critical awareness of knowledge. The word is used in an inclusive way to accommodate the range of activities that support original and innovative work in the whole range of academic, professional and technological fields, including the humanities, and traditional, performing, and other creative arts. It is not used in any limited or restricted sense, or relating solely to a traditional 'scientific method'." (*The Dublin descriptors are the background outlines that specify the common core of the bachelor, Matserds and Doctoral levels of award in the European common education area*.)

HERE IS ONE EXAMPLE OF PROBLEMATISING RESEARCH AS EUROCENTRIC KNOWLEDGE PRACTICE

"Research is a dirty word for many of those who have been affected by colonialism and its legacies. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2003) suggests that 'the term "research" is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism' (p. 1) . In many ways qualitative research methods of participant observation, interviewing and ethnography historically served as the 'scientific' basis for objectifying 'natives' and justifying colonisation and are therefore implicated in the project of racism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). How then, was I going to conduct 'research' with a group of women who have suffered the consequences of colonialism from a postcolonial standpoint if research was a dirty word?

Swanson (2007) argues that in order to disrupt and decolonise the dominant meanings and 'deficit discourse'(Bernstein, 2003a, 2003b)inherent in much research which produces meanings from particular privileged perspectives it is essential to find 'less objectifying ways of being in research' (p. 62). She further acknowledges that in her South African–based research:

> Ubuntu provided a vision and framework for me for respectful engagement in research of this nature; one that permitted reflexivity, reciprocity, community connectedness, and cross-cultural understanding, through a sense of 'humble togetherness'. (p. 62)

This research was underscored by friendship."

From Melanie Baak (2016) CHAPTER 2 "FRIENDSHIP AND NEGOTIATING BELONGINGS THROUGH RESEARCH" in In: *Negotiating Belongings. Studies in Inclusive Education*. SensePublishers, Rotterdam. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-588-3_2

Some discussion points that came up in the morning left open for further discussion:

(i) Not shopping for "ways of doing an enquiry" as if it is just a "choice"
Arriving at a way of doing research and choosing a way of doing research… and being already embedded in a way of research in… Some different scenarios… are these equivalent?

(ii) This conversation about "ways of working" as part of a Western or Eurocentric tradition

(iii) an earlier question was not about challenging authority/institution
but thinking/inquiring about other methods/modes/traditions of knowledge production
where the "how" and "why" are shown embedded into a performative text
as opposed to describing it
(or perhaps the criteria for assessing them
especially in the context of a practice based phd as opposed to other phds)

Types of approach to the PhD examples

In looking at PhD examples and evaluating and studying these, I proposed a provisional (not an absolute) contrast between approaches.

Immanent – approaching the evaluation based on the terms that the PhD OR object OR situation seems to suggest from within itself: e.g., the PhD states that practice is central, so we can evaluate how this central role is actually manifest or not in the project.
Extrinsic – approaching with reference to considerations drawn from elsewhere, not just from within the PhD OR object OR situation: e.g., it should follow this rule that comes from something outside the situation and that is not activated already in the situation

This is a rough and approximate description of a contrast in approaches to critique. It is not a fully developed theory of criticism as it is formulated here.

Among the questions that we came up with in our discussions of the examples: (i) "What is being enabled?" and (ii) "What is being enabled for the practice as such?"

A classic example of "anti-method" discourse : Feyerabend's book *Against Method*

In 1970, Feyerabend published a long article entitled "Against Method" in which he attacked several prominent accounts of scientific methodology. In their correspondence, he and Lakatos subsequently planned the construction of a debate volume, to be entitled *For and Against Method*, in which Lakatos would put forward the "rationalist" case that there was an identifiable set of rules of scientific method which make all good science science, and Feyerabend would attack it. Lakatos' unexpected death in February 1974, which seems to have shocked Feyerabend deeply, meant that the rationalist part of the joint work was never completed.
[…]

Instead of the volume written jointly with Lakatos, Feyerabend put together his tour de force, the book version of *Against Method* (London: New Left Books, 1975), which he sometimes conceived of as a letter to Lakatos (to whom the book is dedicated). A more accurate description, however, is the one given in his autobiography:

> *AM* is not a book, it is a collage. It contains descriptions, analyses, arguments that I had published, in almost the same words, ten, fifteen, even twenty years earlier… I arranged them in a suitable order, added transitions, replaced moderate passages with more outrageous ones, and called the result "anarchism". I loved to shock people… (pp. 139, 142).

The book contained many of the themes mentioned so far in this essay, sprinkled into a case study of the transition from geocentric to heliocentric astronomy. But whereas he had previously been arguing in favour of methodology (a "pluralistic" methodology, that is), he had now become dissatisfied with *any* methodology. He emphasised that older scientific theories, like Aristotle's theory of motion, had powerful empirical and argumentative support, and stressed, correlatively, that the heroes of the scientific revolution, such as Galileo, were not as scrupulous as they were sometimes represented to be. He portrayed Galileo as making full use of rhetoric, propaganda, and various epistemological tricks in order to support the heliocentric position. The Galileo case is crucial for Feyerabend, since the "scientific revolution" is his paradigm of scientific progress and of radical conceptual change, and Galileo is his hero of the scientific revolution. He also sought further to downgrade the importance of empirical arguments by suggesting that aesthetic criteria, personal whims and social factors have a far more decisive role in the history of science than rationalist or empiricist historiography would indicate.

Against Method explicitly drew the "epistemological anarchist" conclusion that there are no useful and exceptionless methodological rules governing the progress of science or the growth of knowledge. The history of science is so complex that if

we insist on a general methodology which will not inhibit progress the only "rule" it will contain will be the useless suggestion: "anything goes". In particular, logical empiricist methodologies and Popper's Critical Rationalism would inhibit scientific progress by enforcing restrictive conditions on new theories. The more sophisticated "methodology of scientific research programmes" developed by Lakatos either contains ungrounded value-judgements about what constitutes good science, or is reasonable only because it is epistemological anarchism in disguise. The phenomenon of incommensurability renders the standards which these "rationalists" use for comparing theories inapplicable. The book thus (understandably) had Feyerabend branded an "irrationalist". At a time when Kuhn was downplaying the "irrationalist" implications of his own book, Feyerabend was perceived to be casting himself in the role others already saw as his for the taking. (He did not, however, commit himself to *political* anarchism. His political philosophy was a mixture of liberalism and social democracy).

He later said:

> One of my motives for writing *Against Method* was to free people from the tyranny of philosophical obfuscators and abstract concepts such as "truth", "reality", or "objectivity", which narrow people's vision and ways of being in the world. Formulating what I thought were my own attitude and convictions, I unfortunately ended up by introducing concepts of similar rigidity, such as "democracy", "tradition", or "relative truth". Now that I am aware of it, I wonder how it happened. The urge to explain one's own ideas, not simply, not in a story, but by means of a "systematic account", is powerful indeed. (pp. 179–80).

SOURCE: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feyerabend/#AgaiMeth1970

NOTE: Feyerabend proposed that 'Western rationalism', superlatively manifested in science, has enabled and encouraged policies of intellectual and cultural imperialism. In a set of charges now very familiar from post-colonial and decolonial critiques (but already widespread in anti-colonial resistances for centuries) Feyerabend declares that "non-Western" peoples are "physically suppressed," that they "lose their intellectual independence", while in the West the hegemony of science is "restricting the lives … thoughts [and] education' of developed world societies".[1] A related set of ideas here is within the spectrum from "epistemic violence" and "epistemicide" as used by Gayatri Spivak and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, and many others.

I would suggest that Feyerabend's critique, however, is not addressed to the question of whether or not it is useful to talk about how things are done or how research is done. Rather, his critique is addressing the idea of a standardized "scientific" methodology. His arguments are situated within the wider debates Popper, Kuhn, Lakatos and others on the nature of science. He is also engaged in talking about method himself in a special way. He proposes that some method talk is useful. Also, note that he was planning a contrastive approach – for and against – to the treatment of the debated issue, with his friend and colleague Lakatos with whom he mostly disagreed. This "against method" is not against the discursive exchanges of reasoning and other genres of speech, as such, but rather against a totalising and absolutist idea of "rationality" and an authoritarian regime of discourse that claims exclusivity and primacy – "the one and only way to go."

[1] Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*, 1st edition (London: New Left), 299.