PREFACE

The present work has its origin in a long-cherished plan to do some evaluation of Feyerabend’s iconoclasm about reason and science. Particularly because of its popularity among the postmodernist and feminist critiques of modern science and the universalist concept of rationality. I realized that we should not underestimate the liberalism of Mill and the critical rationalist account of Popper’s somewhat conservative view to which our tradition/generation owes its basic attitude to reason and freedom. As apparent from the title of this work, I have tried here to examine different aspects of the concept of freedom—metaphysical, social and moral—to show that the underlying theme of the different facets is homogeneous. The undercurrent of the theme is individual freedom and open universe. The final output however is a defence of reason and the concept of freedom, which is an essential ingredient of any liberal world-view and democratic political order. In this task the general critical rationalist position is endorsed and amended where this position is not very explicit since it is basically an epistemological theory. The extension of the concept of freedom beyond the human boundary is such an attempt to expand the notion of reason and freedom from a critical rationalist position into a rational ecology.

I have sometimes cited from Indian/Eastern authors and schools of thought to stress some point or given examples from non-western traditions. Though I tried to make it clear, I regret if there is any problem for anyone not familiar with eastern thought or writer. I take this opportunity to acknowledge my debt and express my gratitude to various people and institutions that are instrumental in making this work possible. The first and foremost is the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, and its director at that time, Professor Mrinal Miri. The Institute provided me with a fellowship for one year during 1996-97 which relieved me from the regular university job of teaching and grading, and concentrate on research and writing. The serene ambience of the Institute, away from the humdrum of the city life, helped me attain the goal which I could not have achieved in several years in Calcutta. I also thank the excellent staff of the library at the Institute who cooperated with me in every possible way. I am also particularly grateful to Mr A. Jabbar and his staff at the Institute for helping me out with the typing of the first draft of the book. I am also grateful to the University of Calcutta and particularly the Department of Philosophy for granting me extraordinary leave to avail of the fellowship at the Institute. My intellectual debt goes back to Karl Popper and ‘fiery’ Feyerabend whose tumultuous seminars in the late sixties at the London School of Economics initiated me into the thoughts that led to the present work. In this connection I must mention that I owe a lot to professor J. W. N. Watkins of the London School of Economics (who unfortunately died suddenly in 1999) and Professor D. P. Chattopadhyay of Centre for
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