When I first began my studies for my PhD I intended to produce a new, positive account of scientific rationality. My supervisor, C. B. Christensen, advised me that to produce a positive account of scientific rationality I must first ‘deal with’ the critique of scientific rationality found in the writings of Paul Feyerabend. Consequently, I embarked upon a study of Feyerabend, intending to devote a chapter to ‘refuting’ Feyerabend’s critique of scientific rationality. However, once I began to read Feyerabend I was struck by the huge disparity in my reading of Feyerabend and the interpretations found in the literature. In attempting to explain my interpretation of Feyerabend, the planned introductory chapter blossomed into a full-fledged thesis.

One week after I submitted my thesis (Feyerabend’s Epistemological Anarchism and Values-Based Rationality, ANU, 1998) I had an intellectual epiphany as to how I should have written my thesis. Subsequently, even though my thesis was passed, I embarked on the process of rewriting my thesis, the results of which are contained herein.

Even though I was distracted from my initial project, the original goal was achieved: I believe that the idea of a values-based rationality is of great importance and constitutes a valid alternative account of rationality. I sincerely hope that the readers of this book concur with my assessment.

My thanks go to C. B. Christensen, for supervision, disagreements and hospitality. F. Jackson stopped me from making some grievous mistakes and offered invaluable editorial advice. G. Munevar, A. Musgrave, and H. Sankey provided me with many comments and criticisms of my thesis. Special thanks to G. Munevar for consistent encouragement of my efforts to get this book into print. I would also like to thank J. Wright, L. Tambolo and S. Gattei for comments and discussion of previously published parts of this book. Thank you also to the people who attended two departmental seminars at the University of Newcastle where chapter’s 7 and 8 were first presented. Special thanks to C. Erkelens and J. Voogd for their editorial assistance.


My deepest thanks go to Lucinda, for love and support, and to my children – Breanna, Kellis, and Isabella – who all arrived during the various phases of the writing of this book.

Newcastle, Australia, February 2003

R. P. Farrell
Feyerabend and Scientific Values
Tightrope-Walking Rationality
Farrell, R.P.
2003, X, 259 p., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-1-4020-1350-8