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## Preface

This book deals with the semantics of the natural language expressions that have been taken to refer to individuals: pronouns, definite descriptions, and proper names. It claims, contrary to previous theorizing, that they have a common syntax and semantics, roughly that which is currently associated by philosophers and linguists with definite descriptions as construed in the tradition of Frege.

Besides advancing this proposal, I hope to achieve at least one other aim, that of urging linguists and philosophers dealing with pronoun interpretation, in particular donkey anaphora, to consider a wider range of theories at all times than is sometimes done at present. I am thinking particularly of the gulf that seems to have emerged between those who practice some version of dynamic semantics (including DRT) and those who eschew this approach and claim that the semantics of donkey pronouns crucially involves definite descriptions (if they consider donkey anaphora at all). In my opinion there is too little work directly comparing the claims of these two schools (for that is what they amount to) and testing them against the data in the way that any two rival theories might be tested. (Irene Heim's 1990 article in *Linguistics and Philosophy* does this, and largely inspired my own project, but I know of no other attempts.) I have tried to remedy that in this book. I ultimately come down on the side of definite descriptions and against dynamic semantics, but that preference is really of secondary importance beside the attempt at a systematic comparative project.

I owe a great intellectual debt to Irene Heim, whose writings and comments have inspired and improved this work at all stages of its production. This book is a revised version of my 2002 MIT PhD dissertation by the same title, for which Heim served as committee chair. I also owe a great deal to the other members of that committee, Kai von Fintel, Danny Fox, and Michael Glanzberg, for the many hours they have spent

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With gratitude for everything, this book is dedicated to my father, David Elbourne, and to the memory of my mother, Jacqueline Elbourne.