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## Preface

I first became interested in questions about truth and objectivity during an undergraduate year spent studying philosophy at the University of Glasgow. My intuitive belief then was that there could be more than one true account of some subject matter without that implying that every account is true. I still have that belief today, and I am even more convinced now that any sane human philosophy must account for this fact. This book is an attempt to sketch just such a philosophy—a view that allows for both realism about truth and pluralism about the world.

Philosophers generally have pretensions to populism, and I am no exception, but questions about truth and relativism are undoubtedly in the foreground of contemporary intellectual culture. Such questions are faced in literary criticism, history, and the sciences as much as they are in philosophy. So while this is undoubtedly a book in the area of “analytic” metaphysics and epistemology, my motivation for writing it was not simply the abstract pursuit of truth in those fields. My motivation was to clear conceptual space for a more general dialogue on how to reconcile pluralism and objectivity. Accordingly, I have tried to define technical terms and have confined more esoteric remarks to the notes. Even so, the reader less familiar with technical philosophy may find it useful to skip certain sections initially (e.g., 1.5, 4.2, and the latter half of 5.5), returning to them after having gained an overall understanding of my argument.

Many people have helped me find my way through this complex maze of ideas. First thanks go to William Alston, who deftly supervised my first fumbling attempts at understanding truth and whose own work has

deeply influenced my thinking on these and many other matters. Alston was also kind enough to provide extensive comments on a late draft of this book, which helped improve the text immeasurably. Mark Timmons, John Tienson, David Henderson, and Terence Horgan read an early version of the manuscript and met to discuss it with me over several weeks in the summer of 1997. I learned a huge amount during these sessions, and a much better book emerged as a result. Horgan, in particular, provided crucial advice and encouragement at every turn. Paul Bloomfield was kind enough to lend his services as a hardened realist and provided exhaustive commentary on the manuscript, helping me to avoid numerous mistakes. His support and friendship throughout have been invaluable. Special thanks go to my graduate and undergraduate students during the last two years, especially the participants in two seminars on truth and objectivity that I gave in the spring of 1996 and 1998. The first of these was where I initially tested many of my ideas on these subjects; the second helped to refine my presentation of them. Numerous others also provided helpful comments and conversations, including William Lawhead, John Post, Robert Neustadt, Ken Sufka, Michael Wakoff, John Hawthorne, R. M. Sainsbury, Alessandra Tanesini, Robert Westmoreland, Jennifer Case, Jose Benardete, Andrew Cortens, Hunter Hatfield, Karsten Steuber, Dave Truncellito, Howard Hewitt, and Terry Berthelot. To all the above, I express my thanks. What truth there is in what follows I share with them; the mistakes are my own.

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Finally, I thank my parents and older siblings for inspiration. Artists all, it is they who taught me to see.

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