Language, apart from its cultural and social dimension, has a scientific side that is connected not only to the study of “grammar” in a more or less traditional sense, but also to disciplines like mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology. This book explores developments in linguistic theory, looking in particular at the theory of generative grammar from the perspective of the natural sciences. It highlights the complex and dynamic nature of language, suggesting that a comprehensive and full understanding of such a species-specific property will only be achieved through interdisciplinary work.

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Language, Syntax, and the Natural Sciences

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To Juan Uriagereka for the significant contributions he has made, and continues to make, to the scientific study of language and mind, and for inspiring us to seek understanding by looking beyond the traditional domains of theoretical linguistics while at the same time resting firmly on those foundations.
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This book was originally conceived as a tribute to Juan Uriagereka. Juan has made tremendous efforts to develop highly interdisciplinary initiatives, creating bridges and stimulating interactions between linguistics and other sciences in order to reach a deeper and fuller understanding of human language and cognition as a natural object. Some of Juan’s notable works in this regard are: *Rhyme and Reason: An Introduction to Minimalist Syntax* (1998), *Derivations: Exploring the Dynamics of Syntax* (2002), *Syntactic Anchors* (2008), and *Spell-Out and the Minimalist Program* (2012). Also significant is the long list of students he has supervised and whose own research strategies have been crucially influenced by his thinking, a list to which we humbly include our own names. Thus, first and foremost, we would like to acknowledge our tremendous intellectual and personal debt to Juan.

The inception of this volume goes back to 2012, when we started soliciting papers mostly from scholars who have worked closely with Juan over the years, or who share his vision of approaching the study of language from the perspective of the natural sciences. However, Juan, we would argue, is at the pinnacle of his career and thus may not yet be “ready” for a typical Festschrift. Furthermore, it was our strong intention from the outset that this volume should go beyond any special dedicatory function and serve as a highly focused survey of the current state of generative grammar, in particular the theory of syntax, with an emphasis on integrated scientific approaches to language. Although it has taken much longer than originally planned, because of several challenges faced along the way, this book never could have been realized if not for the tremendous support we received at every stage from Cambridge University Press, especially Andrew Winnard, Stephanie Taylor, Bethany Johnson, and Jacqueline French. Of course, we also express heartfelt thanks to the authors of the chapters for their cooperation, not to mention their endless patience and understanding of numerous delays.

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