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VIRTUE ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL ROLES

Professionals, it is said, have no use for simple lists of virtues and vices. The complexities and constraints of professional roles create peculiar moral demands on the people who occupy them, and traits that are vices in ordinary life are praised as virtues in the context of professional roles. Should this disturb us, or is it naive to presume that things should be otherwise? Taking medical and legal practice as key examples, Justin Oakley and Dean Cocking develop a rigorous articulation and defence of virtue ethics, contrasting it with other types of character-based ethical theories and showing that it offers a promising new approach to the ethics of professional roles. They provide insights into the central notions of professional detachment, professional integrity, and moral character in professional life, and demonstrate how a virtue-based approach can help us better understand what ethical professional–client relationships would be like.

JUSTIN OAKLEY is Director of the Monash University Centre for Human Bioethics. His publications include *Morality and Emotions* (1992) and a number of journal articles.

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To my partner, Kathryn Bailey, for her patience, support, and understanding, and our loving son, Jordan Bailey Oakley, for the life that awaits him.

Justin Oakley

To my father, Gordon, whose love, humour, sensitivity, and insight I adored and continue to miss greatly. To my beautiful mother, Yvonne, loving brother, Peter, and wonderful son, Harry.

Dean Cocking

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Preface

There are many people we wish to thank for their support in the course of writing this book. Work on the book began during 1992–3, with the help of a Large Research Grant from the Australian Research Council. We are grateful to the ARC for supporting this project from the outset. For his encouragement and enthusiasm about the project from the beginning, and for his helpful comments on the work in progress (especially in the early stages) we would like to thank Michael Smith. Michael's interest in the project helped to get it off the ground, and he has been an inspiration to us both, as he has been to many of his colleagues and students. For his detailed and incisive comments on every chapter, several times over, we are deeply indebted to John Campbell. John read our drafts very carefully, and his feedback was extremely valuable. He helped us refine our arguments at many points, and raised many useful questions about virtue ethics that would not otherwise have occurred to us. Warm thanks are also owed to Jennifer Radden for her valuable and stimulating comments on the entire typescript. Two anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press also provided very extensive comments on the penultimate draft, and their detailed suggestions resulted in many improvements to the typescript. We are also grateful to Jeanette Kennett, for discussing many of the issues in this book with us, and to Tim Dare, for his spirited rejoinder to a paper which was an earlier version of chapter 5.

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