Morality is one of the fundamental structures of any society, enabling complex groups to form, negotiate their internal differences and persist through time. In the first book-length study of Roman popular morality, Dr Morgan argues that we can recover much of the moral thinking of people up and down the Empire. Her study draws on proverbs, fables, exemplary stories and gnomic quotations to explore how morality worked as a system for Roman society as a whole and in individual lives. It analyses the content of sayings and stories to show which ideas and practices were central to Roman morality, which peripheral, which widely accepted or contested. It explores the wide range of authorities (natural and socially constructed, absolute and negotiable) which were invoked in support of moral ideas and actions, and shows how different ethics appealed to different authorities. It traces the relationship between popular morality, high philosophy, and the ethical vocabulary of documents and inscriptions. The Roman Empire incorporated numerous overlapping groups, whose ideas varied according to social status, geography, gender and many other factors. Nevertheless it could and did hold together as an ethical community, which was a significant factor in its socio-political success.

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POPULAR MORALITY IN THE EARLY ROMAN EMPIRE

TERESA MORGAN
In Memoriam

Madge Jones (1909–2004)
Florence Kendall (1912–1990)
Harry Kendall (1912–1986)
Kathleen Morgan (1915–1997)
Donald Watson (1910–2005)
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Preface

Early versions of some of the material in this book were delivered as papers in Cambridge, Charlottesville, Helsinki, Jerusalem, Oxford, Princeton, Salamanca and Yale, and published in volumes edited by Leofranc Holford-Strevens and Amiel Vardi, José-Antonio Fernández Delgado and Antonio Stramaglia. Warmest thanks are due to the participants in all those seminars and conferences for their lively discussion of ideas and helpful suggestions.

Various chapters were kindly read in draft by David Charles, Anna Clark, Alison Cooley, Miriam Griffin, Robert Kaster, Geoffrey Lloyd, Katerina Oikonomopoulou and Malcolm Schofield. Between them they suggested numerous improvements and saved me from many mistakes. Malcolm Schofield transformed my understanding of what it meant to be a philosopher in the early Roman Empire, for which I am especially grateful.

Many Oxford colleagues have contributed to the project in informal conversations, and it is a continuing pleasure to work among so many stimulating colleagues. Among those with whom, internationally, it is a pleasure to share an interest in ethics are Catalina Balmaceda and the economist Vivien Foster, who over the years has made me think harder and more constructively about more topics than anyone else.

Wishing the book to be accessible to those without Greek and Latin, I have translated primary sources throughout. Unfortunately, to include the many thousands of texts cited in the original as well would have made the text hopelessly bulky, so with considerable regret, they are omitted. I hope that readers will accept my apologies as they pursue the sources to their diverse original publications.

I was fortunate enough to be brought up in a family where what it means to live well – to live rightly – was a subject of constant and passionate debate. This book remembers Harry Kendall, a man of radiant loving kindness and integrity, who taught us to garden, maintain a bicycle and fill in a tax return, and used to say that ‘life is not a highway strewn with flowers’. It honours the exemplary lives of Madge Jones and Kathleen Morgan, who nursed
patients in hospital and their relatives at home, and Florence Kendall, who preserved her family through bad and good times into prosperity and taught us to cook and clean. It remembers Donald Watson, pioneering vegan (he coined the word in the 1940s) and anti-nuclear campaigner, who in old age made a collection of several hundred English proverbs which he thought people should take more seriously. Millions of ordinary Greeks and Romans like them must have used the sayings and stories that make up this study, and are forgotten.
Illustrations

1. Distribution of main topics in proverbs  
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Number and distribution of stories about or sayings of philosophers in wisdom texts (with distribution of references in Aelian’s VH)
In addition to the standard abbreviations for ancient and modern works, the following abbreviations are used:

B Babrius, *Fables*


D Ps.-Diogenianus, *Popular Proverbs*

LDAB Leuven Database of Ancient Books

P Ps.-Plutarch, *Proverbs of the Alexandrians*

Perotti *Perotti’s Appendix of Fables*

Ph Phaedrus, *Fables*

PS Publilius Syrus, *Sententiae*

VM Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Words and Deeds*

Z Zenobius, *Epitome of Zenobius’ Proverbs*