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This is a reader in professional ethics, intended for undergraduate, graduate, and executive courses on that subject. It consists of classic and recent articles that address the broad range of ethical issues and dilemmas that occur in professional life. Our desire is to offer a text that will genuinely help the student who is training to be a professional to be better prepared when she or he comes across the moral problems that are inevitable in the real world of working as a professional. We hope also to provide frameworks that the professional in training will use to understand her or his chosen profession—that is, how to think about oneself as a professional, how to understand professionalism as one integrates it into one’s life. The professions, perhaps more than any other kind of work, have a tendency to embrace one’s entire personality. This fact makes it particularly urgent for the student to take the time—and to have the tools—to consider the moral status, the moral virtues, and the possible moral pitfalls of her or his chosen profession.

Because of the diversity of the professions—doctors, lawyers, nurses, accountants and other businesspeople, teachers, journalists, engineers, and many more—we have organized the book around topics, rather than around specific professions. The benefit of this approach is, it turns out, that many of the professions have precisely the same moral concerns—or that their concerns are similar enough that they can helpfully learn from one another. An article on what makes an honest lawyer can be useful to a medical student who is considering what it means to be a truthful doctor. An article showing the conflicts of interest faced by nurses can be illuminating for a young accountant, in whose profession conflicts of interest are common and so important to know how to deal with. We have also tried to focus the book as much as possible on you, the reader of the book. That is, in the case of every article we have asked ourselves not, “Does this contribute to the scholarly issue at hand?” but rather “Would this help the student who was actually facing a moral dilemma?” We have tried to make this a kind of handbook for professional ethics that will, we hope, stay on your bookshelf long after you have left the university as a real aid when you are thinking about professionalism and ethics in the future.

The book could have been twice as long as it is, and we would have been that much happier: there is so much to think about when it comes to morality, the good life, and the professions. We will not review every chapter here, but there are a few chapters that bear particular mention. The first chapter introduces the idea of what it is to be a professional and discusses the importance of the professional as a leader. The first chapter, with its consideration of several different kinds of professionals and some straightforwardly philosophical pieces that are independent of any particular professions, will give the student a good idea of what is to come in the rest of the book. Some instructors may see fit to omit Chapter 2, which is a quick survey of what the great philosophers of the Western tradition have had to say about morality and the good life. There are good tools here, though, for thinking about what it means to be moral, and we provided the material in the hope that