The idea of this book was conceived in September 2001 in Massa-Carrara, Italy, where the Board of Directors of the International Association of Bioethics (IAB) met, enjoying the hospitality of Professor Maurizio Mori. During the Board’s visit to the marble quarries of Carrara, and the nearby town of Colonnata, Professor Søren Holm suggested that we should organize an academic meeting in which bioethicists working in the North West of England could exchange views on the conceptual and empirical aspects of the subject. We agreed that Søren and Matti would plan the meeting, and that Tuija would then join Matti in editing a volume of the best contributions for the Special Series Values in Bioethics (ViB) of the Value Inquiry Book Series (VIBS). It was also decided that the venue of the meeting would be the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) in Preston, England. The birth of the book became, in this way, linked with two co-sponsors of ViB, namely the IAB and the Centre for Professional Ethics (CPE) at UCLAN’s Faculty of Health.

The meeting, the First North West Bioethics Roundtable (NorthWeb 1), was held in Preston on 23 January 2002, secured by the kind financial support of Eileen Martin, Dean of the Faculty of Health at UCLAN. The participants, who made the encounter an academic success, were philosophers and social scientists from the universities of Keele, Lancaster, Liverpool, Manchester, and Central Lancashire in Preston.

The sponsors of NorthWeb 1 included

- Empirical Methods in Bioethics, a project co-ordinated by Professor Søren Holm and funded by the European Union Quality of Life and Management of Living Resources research program;
- Genes, Information, and Business, a project co-ordinated by Professor Matti Häyry and funded by the Academy of Finland;
- What Is Bioethics All About? a project co-ordinated by Dr Tuija Takala and funded by Emil Aaltonen Foundation and Helsingin Sanomain 100 Years Foundation;
- Values in Bioethics, a Special Series in Rodopi’s Value Inquiry Book Series;
- Centre for Social Ethics and Policy, University of Manchester;
- Institute of Medicine, Law, and Bioethics, University of Manchester;
- Centre for Professional Ethics, University of Central Lancashire; and
- Faculty of Health, University of Central Lancashire.

The organizers, and the editors of this book, acknowledge this support with gratitude.
The editors' thanks are due to the authors, and to Peter Herissone-Kelly (CPE/UCLAN), the Assistant Editor of ViB, who prepared with great skill, speed, and dedication the Index, the "About the Editors and Contributors" section, and the camera-ready version of the book from the authors' contributions.

The finishing touches were added to the book on our way home from yet another IAB event, the Sixth World Congress of Bioethics in Brasília, Brazil, during and after which we were once again confronted with the question: "What is bioethics all about?"

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