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## VALUE AND VIRTUE IN A GODLESS UNIVERSE

Suppose there is no God. Would the implication be that human life is meaningless, that the notions of right and wrong, virtue and vice, good and evil have no place, and that there are no moral obligations – hence people can do whatever they want? Erik J. Wielenberg believes this view to be utterly mistaken and in this book he explains why. He argues that even if God does not exist, human life can have meaning, we do have moral obligations, and virtue is possible. Naturally, the author sees virtue in a Godless universe as significantly different from virtue in a Christian universe, and he develops naturalistic accounts of humility, charity, and hope. The moral landscape in a Godless universe is different from the moral landscape in a Christian universe, but it does indeed exist. *Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe* is a tour of some of the central landmarks of this underexplored territory.

Erik J. Wielenberg is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at DePauw University. He has written articles in such journals as *Religious Studies*, *Faith and Philosophy*, *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, *Synthese*, and *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*.

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ERIK J. WIELENBERG

*DePauw University*



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*For Margaret,  
a group number one person*

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“Many a man has borne himself proudly on the scaffold; surely the same pride should teach us to think truly about man’s place in the world.”

– Bertrand Russell, *What I Believe* (1925)

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John Pardee, my high school English teacher, once told the immature and erratic student I was in high school that "you can only



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get by on potential for so long.” Though a few years passed before these words began to take effect, John Pardee was the first of several persons who crucially influenced my academic career. John Dreher, Ned Markosian, and Tim Spurgin introduced me to philosophy at Lawrence University, and Tom Ryckman saw that the immature and still fairly erratic student I was in college might have the potential to study philosophy at the graduate level. I did my graduate work at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst, where I was lucky to fall under the influence of several excellent teachers, none more so than my dissertation director, Fred Feldman, under whose guidance and penetrating criticism I finally managed to produce work in philosophy that I would not be embarrassed by today. While finishing my dissertation, I spent a year as a graduate student Fellow at the Center for Philosophy of Religion at the University of Notre Dame, where I benefited tremendously from my interaction with the other members of the Center, particularly Alvin Plantinga and Tom Flint.

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I am confident that the majority of the people I have listed here would disagree with much of what I have to say in the book. Some of them, moreover, would find parts of the book to be at odds with deeply held beliefs. I hope that they will take the book in the spirit of inquiry in which it was intended. Of course the responsibility for the errors that the book undoubtedly contains is mine alone.

Plainfield, Indiana  
 March 2004