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Reason's Grief
An Essay on Tragedy and Value

In *Reason's Grief*, George Harris takes W. B. Yeats's comment that we begin to live only when we have conceived life as tragedy as a call for a tragic ethics, something the modern West has yet to produce. He argues that we must turn away from religious understandings of tragedy and the human condition and realize that our species will occupy a very brief period of history, at some point to disappear without a trace. We must accept an ethical perspective that avoids pernicious fantasies about ultimate redemption, one that sees tragic loss as a permanent and pervasive aspect of our daily lives yet finds a way to think, feel, and act with both passion and hope. *Reason's Grief* takes us back through the history of our thinking about value to find our way. The call is for nothing less than a paradigm shift for understanding both tragedy and ethics.

George W. Harris is Chancellor Professor of Philosophy at the College of William and Mary. He is the author of *Dignity and Vulnerability* and *Agent-Centered Morality*, and he has contributed to *The Journal of Philosophy*, *Nous*, *The Monist*, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, *Public Affairs Quarterly*, and other journals. He is a Distinguished Member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars and a recipient of a fellowship from the National Endowment of the Humanities.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521863285

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First published 2006

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Harris, George W.
 Reason's grief : an essay on tragedy and value / George W. Harris.
 p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-521-86328-7 (hardback)

1. Tragic, The. 2. Values. 3. Ethics. I. Title.

BH301.T7H37 2006

128 - dc22 2005026789

ISBN-13 978-0-521-86328-5 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-86328-7 hardback

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*To the memory of my parents, Mary O. and Theron J. Harris,
and to Patty, Rachel, and Jenny*

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Acknowledgments

For contributions to *Reason's Grief*, I am grateful to many. Tony Cunningham, Paul Davies, Robert Fudge, Danny Statman, and anonymous referees for Cambridge University Press read different versions of the manuscript at different stages of its development, providing invaluable feedback. Others provided responses to parts of the manuscript from which I was able to clarify and sharpen my understanding. Discussion with Lanny Goldman on the topic of the incomparability of values was especially helpful in this regard. Laurence Thomas and Henry Richardson were helpful in gaining research support for the project, and Noah Lemos was helpful in recommending the manuscript to Cambridge. Feedback from audiences at the Royal Institute of Philosophy Conference on Emotions at the University of Manchester, England, in 2001; at the British Society for Ethical Theory meeting in Glasgow, Scotland, in 2001; at the Virtue Ethics: Old and New Conference at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2002; at the Perspectives on Evil and Human Wickedness Conference in Prague, Czech Republic, in 2003; and at the Beijing International Conference on Democracy in Beijing, China, in 2004 was exceedingly helpful. So too has been the response of my students in several seminars I have taught here at William and Mary over recent years. Research leave was made possible by a Faculty Research Assignment granted by the College of William and Mary for the 2000–01 academic year and by a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for the year 2001–02. For this assistance, I am most grateful.

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Acknowledgments

For permission to include revised material from articles published in *American Philosophical Quarterly* and *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, I thank these journals. For bringing the manuscript to print at Cambridge University Press, I am indebted to three people: Beatrice Rehl, for her editorial guidance through the review process; Sarah McColl, for her management of the production process; and Russell Hahn, for his excellent copyediting. Of course, I am deeply indebted to many others whom I cannot acknowledge here. I hope that they will rest assured that their contributions are not less cherished for their anonymity. I cannot, however, leave implicit my undying gratitude to my wife, Patty, and my wonderful daughters, Rachel and Jenny, for the support and love they provide for an incurably pensive husband and father.