In the *Passions of the Soul*, Descartes writes:

There is nothing in which the defective nature of the sciences which we have received from the ancients appears more clearly than in what they have written on the passions. . . . I am unable to entertain any hope of approximating the truth except by shunning the paths which they have followed. This is why I shall be here obliged to write just as though I were treating of a matter which no one had ever touched on before me.

(Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, Article I)

As it happens, the ancient error Descartes has in mind concerns not the emotions themselves, but the Greek view that death is caused by the soul’s absence, rather than, as he will insist, by corporeal decay and pathology. But whether or not Descartes himself shunned the paths the ancients followed on the emotions, ¹ under the shadow of the Cartesian mind/body split (cast long until the early part of this century) emotions often seem to be either inner feelings, outward behaviors, or biological drives. The break with the ancients, and in particular, Aristotle, is unmistakeable. For the path we find clearly articulated in a work, such as Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, is an intentional theory of the

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¹. See Part II, Article 52 of *The Passions* for some suggestion that Descartes is himself treading the path taken by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*. I am grateful to Dan Robinson for guidance on this point, and in general, for insightful, critical comments on an earlier draft of this essay.
emotions in which emotions are object directed and constituted by cognition. Emotions are not feelings or drives, but cognitively rich mental states. In this essay I want to explore Aristotle's account, relating it to his conception of virtue as developed in the ethical writings. In particular, I want to consider the implications of an intentional theory of the emotions for training the emotions. I shall be guided by Aristotle's idea that an agent's character is assessed in terms of emotions as well as actions—that the "mean" or nominal criteria of what is praiseworthy and fine, applies to both (EN 1109a23; b16; 1115b16ff.). We are praised for both what we do and how we feel. Emotional comportment becomes a moral achievement.

The paper divides as follows: I begin in Section I with some familiar objections to taking the emotions seriously within an account of virtue, and respond in a broadly Aristotelian way. In Section II, I discuss Aristotle's treatment of the emotions in Rhetoric II, turning in section III to issues of responsibility and control as they are raised in the ethical writings. In the concluding section I raise some lingering concerns.

I.

From an intuitive point of view, emotions are both central to morality, and yet problematic. They are central because as moral beings we care not only about how we act but also about how we feel—what our emotional reactions are, in the sense of our motivations, attitudes, and affects. The point is not that emotion is internal and action external, for both action and emotion have exterior moments that point to deeper interior states, linked with character. It is that emotions tend to grab hold of dimensions of life and to express them in ways that are distinctive. They are modes of registering value (e.g., what is danger-

2. For contemporary cognitive views of the emotions in experimental psychology literature, see Averill 1974, 1976; Frijda 1986; Lazarus 1966; Parrott and Sabini 1989. For philosophical accounts, see Davis 1987, 1988; de Sousa 1987; Gordon 1987; Greenspan 1988; Lyons 1980; Roberts 1988; Solomon 1973. A significant contribution to the discussion comes from psychoanalytic object relations theorists. For an excellent review of the field, see Greenberg and Mitchell 1983.