



# Feeling Our Feelings: What Philosophers Think and People Know

*Eva Brann*

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"A dazzling wealth of stimulating reflection and wise insight. To read *Feeling Our Feelings* is to relive one's own early moments of intellectual awakening, with all the advantages of age and experience. Eva Brann proves to be a most steady and enlightening guide on an inquiry into the relation between life and thought that few have pursued so thoroughly."—Susan Shell, Department of Political Science, Boston College

In *Feeling Our Feelings*, Eva Brann considers what the great philosophers on the passions and feelings have thought and written about them. She examines the relevant work of Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Aquinas, Descartes, Spinoza, Adam Smith, Hume, Kierkegaard, and Heidegger, and also includes a chapter on contemporary studies on the brain. *Feeling Our Feelings* provides a comprehensive look at this pervasive and elusive topic.

"'Feeling our feelings' comes from the words a little boy called Zeke said to me some thirty years ago when he was four. I was swinging him in a park in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and not doing it right. 'Swing me higher,' he said, 'I want to feel my feelings.' The phrase stuck with me; you might say it festered in my mind; it agitated questions: Why do we all want to feel our feelings, so generally that people 'not in touch' with them are thought to be in need of therapy? What feeling was swinging high inducing? Was it an exultation of the body or an exhilaration of the soul? When he wanted to be feeling his feelings, was there a difference between the general feeling, the mere consciousness of being affected, and his particular feelings, the distinguishable affects?—as, when you sing a song, there is a difference between the singing done and the song sung—or is there?"—Eva Brann, from her Preface

**Eva Brann** is a member of the senior faculty at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, where she has taught for fifty years. Brann holds an M.A. in Classics and a Ph.D. in Archaeology from Yale University. She is a 2005 recipient of the National Humanities Medal.

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