

“Deep Responsibility”
Angela M. Smith

ABSTRACT

My aim in this paper is to offer an account of “deep responsibility” that I hope will make sense of the continuities that seem to exist between moral and non-moral exercises of responsible agency. On the account I defend, to say that a person is deeply responsible for something is to say that she is connected to it in such a way that it would be intelligible to ask her to *answer for* it – that is, to give her justificatory reasons for the thing in question. Being answerable for something in this sense makes an agent eligible, in principle, for a wide range of deep moral and non-moral agential responses, from aretaic appraisals, to moral and non-moral reactive attitudes, to aesthetic and epistemic responses of various sorts. I argue further that we should distinguish these deep agential responses from various institutional responses of reward and punishment, such as those involved in the legal system and other professional institutional contexts. Those who defend a “fair opportunity to avoid” condition on responsibility may be correct that this is necessary for these specifically institutional forms of response, but I argue that it is a mistake to think that such a condition must be met for the deep agential responses associated with answerability.