

Taking responsibility for our racist emotions

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The topic of this paper is what I will call “biased emotion”. An example of such an emotion is the following: Ruth believes that racism is a very bad thing and that it would be racist to think that every black man is dangerous. Nevertheless, when she encounters a black man at night, she is afraid. Some have argued that one is not responsible for one's biased emotions as the psychological mechanism that gives rise to such emotions is unconscious, automatic and reflex-like. I will, however, argue that biased emotions are not merely reflexes but full-blown representational states which reflect a person's goals. For this reason, biased emotions are attributable to agents.