



Relative Justice: Cultural Diversity, Free Will, and Moral Responsibility

By Tamler Sommers



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When can we be morally responsible for our behavior? Is it fair to blame people for actions that are determined by heredity and environment? Can we be responsible for the actions of relatives or members of our community? In this provocative book, Tamler Sommers concludes that there are no objectively correct answers to these questions. Drawing on research in anthropology, psychology, and a host of other disciplines, Sommers argues that cross-cultural variation raises serious problems for theories that propose universally applicable conditions for moral responsibility. He then develops a new way of thinking about responsibility that takes cultural diversity into account.

Relative Justice is a novel and accessible contribution to the ancient debate over free will and moral responsibility. Sommers provides a thorough examination of the methodology employed by contemporary philosophers in the debate and a challenge to Western assumptions about individual autonomy and its connection to moral desert.



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Relative Justice: Cultural Diversity, Free Will, and Moral Responsibility By Tamler Sommers **Bibliography**

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Review

"This is a penetrating and far-reaching book."--**Julian Baggini, *Financial Times***

"[T]his is a keenly argued yet surprisingly accessible book that presents a provocative thesis that should not be ignored."--**Choice**

"There is much to like about *Relative Justice*. It pursues an interesting line of reasoning in a literature literally littered with rehashed arguments and stubborn dialectics."--**Matt King, *Philosopher's Magazine***

From the Back Cover

"Many philosophers and social scientists have powerful, provocative ideas, and many are captivating writers. Few have both talents. Tamler Sommers is one of the few. This book is brash, fascinating, and a delight to devour."--**Shaun Nichols, University of Arizona**

"In *Relative Justice*, Tamler Sommers develops a provocative juxtaposition of two classic philosophical conundrums: the problem of moral diversity and the problem of moral responsibility. The result is a genuinely important contribution to the discipline of moral psychology: a novel and powerful argument for skepticism about responsibility. Going forward, opponents of skepticism will be obligated to provide a credible response--and that won't be easy."--**John Doris, Washington University in St. Louis**

"This is a genuinely new contribution to philosophy, a breakthrough in the use of cross-cultural diversity as a way of thinking about the problem of free will and its implications. Tamler Sommers offers a radically new methodological paradigm for thinking about free will, as well as an original and significant discussion of the possibility of living without the belief in free will and moral responsibility. Sommers is a gifted author, and the book is a pleasure to read."--**Saul Smilansky, University of Haifa**

"This is a work of very high quality--a thoughtful, informed, and novel exploration of the contemporary literature on moral responsibility."--**Ronald Mallon, University of Utah**

About the Author

Tamler Sommers is assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Houston. He is the author of *A Very Bad Wizard: Morality Behind the Curtain*, a collection of interviews with philosophers and scientists. He has published numerous articles in scholarly journals and is a frequent contributor to the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Believer*.

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