



Sven Ove HANSSON: *The Ethics of Risk.  
Ethical Analysis in an Uncertain World.*  
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 172 pp.

The author of the book *The Ethics of Risk, Ethical Analysis in an Uncertain World* is a Swedish philosopher Sven Ove Hansson. He is a professor of philosophy at Department of Philosophy and History of Technology and at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. He published many articles and books. His major scientific interest is in the field of ethics, especially in the decision theory. His book *The Ethics of Risk* is dedicated to exactly this area of interest.

The main argument made by the author is that every human being does their decision-making in some condition of certainty, risk, or uncertainty. It is indeed a problem worth considering by moral philosophers, ethicists, and theologians. Partially, the issue is undertaken in the field of management, particularly risk management. It is a big accomplishment on the part of Sven Ove Hansson to have considered the issue from the viewpoint of ethics. .

Part One of Hansson's book is devoted to fundamental question "Why Risk Is a Problem of Ethics". The second part entitled "Making Prudent Risk Decisions" emphasizes the problem of decision-making from the standpoint of ethics . The third part focused on solving conflicts, again from the viewpoint of ethics.

According to the author, certainty is not an obvious condition when human beings do their decision-making. There are two conditions under which decision-making is made: risk and uncertainty. Decision-making under the condition of risk is realized in a very measurable level of knowledge which we call probability. It means that the level of risk is determined

by the number of probabilities. As the author wrote, risk is an objective number of probabilities, and he called it fact-laden. “As we already noted, risk always refers to the possibility that something undesirable will happen. Due to this component of undesirability, the notion of risk is value-laden” (pp. 10 f.). What follows is Hansson’s definition of risk: “Risk if each action leads to one of a set of possible specific outcomes, each outcome occurring with a known probability. The probabilities are assumed to be known to the decision-maker. For example, an action might lead to this risky outcome: a reward of \$10 if a fair coin comes up heads and a loss of \$5 if it comes up tails. Of course, certainty is a degenerate case of risk where the probabilities are 0 and 1” (p. 8). Risk determined by facts, and the most important knowledge is, that it is possible to express by the number of probability. The ethics’ consequences are following. In a case when the objective value of each decision has been known, then it is very simply predicting the measure of ethical responsibility for that decision. Hansson call that value-laden. But what is the problem of uncertainty in the relation to ethics? The author defines uncertainty in the following way: “Uncertainty if either action or both has as its consequence a set of possible specific outcomes, but where the probabilities of these outcomes are completely unknown or are not even meaningful” (p. 12). In a case of uncertainty, it is not possible to set the objective level of outcomes. The consequence for decision-making is different. The biggest difference is in area of ethics, because there is not possibility to estimate the impact of that decision. He speaks truly that every decision has got two consequences. First consequence takes on fact-laden objective field of facts. Secondly it takes on value laden field of ethics.

Reading of the book is very fruitful also for theologians. The author explains to us how decisions we every day do, influence our lives, the world around us as well as axiology. The author proposes very new view on the of decision-making from the point of ethics. The book gives us a better understanding how decision-making process influence economical values as well as ethical values of everyday life. Reading of the book gives readers a special benefit: a better understanding process of decision-making, no matter which field of study we are interested in.

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