

SAMPLE PHILOSOPHY PAPER FROM KRISTIN SHRADER-FRECHETTE (BioScience format, 1"m, 12 pt.)

Thesis: Harsanyi's argument (it is irrational for Rawls to make one's behavior depend alone on some unfavorable contingencies) is doubtful because his New York-Chicago example (1) relies on some counterfactual assumptions about plane-crash probabilities; (2) focuses on individual, rather than societal, risk; and (3) addresses a case of Bayesian risk, rather than uncertainty.

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Argument 1: Harsanyi's argument is doubtful because his New York-Chicago example relies on counterfactual assumptions about plane-crash probabilities (Starr and Whipple 1980, p. 1118).

Objection 1: A1 is questionable because (1) one's highest probability of dying could be from a single plane crash, and (2) thought experiments need not be real-world experiments (see Sorensen 1992).

Response 1: O1 is questionable because (1) normal ethical intuitions are not accurate in counterintuitive thought experiments (see Sorensen 1992, pp. 261-269), and (2) auto accidents or cancer, not single commercial airline trips, are higher risks for the average person (Starr and Whipple 1980, p. 1118).

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A2: Harsanyi's counterexample fails because it focuses on individual, not societal, risk (see Rawls 1974, p. 142).

O2: A2 is questionable because (1) societal-risk cases are merely aggregates of, and applications of, individual cases, and (2) scale is not a fundamental variable in ethics (Harsanyi 1975, p. 605).

R2: O2 is questionable because the societal case is not merely an aggregate of individual cases, given that individual (but not societal) risks tend to be voluntary and to involve no threat to others' rights, to democratic process, or to fairness (Shrader-Frechette 1991, pp. 105-107).

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A3: Harsanyi's counterexample likewise fails because it is of Bayesian risk, whereas cases of Bayesian uncertainty are at issue (see Resnik 1987, pp. 26-37 for distinction).

O3: A3 is questionable because the counterexample gave no probabilities but merely stipulated that the crash had a "small, positive probability" (Harsanyi 1975, p. 595).

R3: O3 is questionable because (1) under uncertainty, one never knows a probability is small (Resnik 1987, pp. 26-37); (2) commercial air crashes have very small probabilities (Starr and Whipple 1980, p. 1118); and (3) in stipulating a "small" probability, Harsanyi begs the question of uncertainty (Shrader-Frechette 1991, p. 107).

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#### References cited

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- Starr, Chauncey and Christopher Whipple. 1980. Risks of risk decisions. *Science* 208:1114-1119.