

RATIONAL CHOICE OF MEANS AND ENDS : DECISION THEORY AND GAME THEORY

It is commonly admitted that the concept of rational choice can be applied to either means (given ends) or to ends themselves. It is further widely admitted that the first case poses no great problems: we are being rational if we choose the means that best attains the given end. (But of course this concept of means rationality does not touch on the moral problem, for the means might be evil.) On the other hand there is no consensus on the way of choosing among goals. True, economists often claim that preference or priority dictates the choice among goals. But ^apreference may be perfectly irrational--and immoral to boot. Clothing preferences in mathematical garb, and combining them with subjective probability, the way decision theory and game theory do, does not improve things. If anything it worsens them for giving them the appearance of scientificity.



Preference do not justify anything except in matters of taste. In matters of social conduct preferences ~~preferences~~ must be justified as rationally as possible, whence they cannot be the basis for rational, let alone moral, decisions -
pace Harsanyi (1983, 1985)