

Gerard Rothfus, "Rationality and Ratifiability"

Abstract: The long running debate between causal and evidential versions of decision theory has uncovered serious obstacles to considering either formulation an adequate explication of rational choice. Historically, it has been popular to suggest that one or the other of these approaches is defective because of its propensity to license unratifiable actions, i.e. actions that are foreseeably suboptimal conditional upon being chosen. Recently, a number of sophisticated alternative theories have been proposed that generalize the intuitive binary choice rule of maximizing *graded ratifiability* and appear to avoid some of the problems that confront the classic approaches. Alas, I argue, the generalizations of the graded ratifiability rule still fall prey to some of the most disturbing objections brought against causal and evidential decision theories. However, an older and unduly overlooked approach to incorporating ratifiability considerations into the theory of rational choice (Gustafsson's rule of *general ratifiability*) evades these difficulties and may constitute the adequate explication of rational choice philosophical decision theorists have been searching for in this context.