

Lesson 02: How We Develop Economic Principles

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Published 2014

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1. Lesson 02: How We Develop Economic Principles

4. Chapter: Lesson 02: How We Develop Economic Principles

1. Lesson 02: How We Develop Economic Principles Questions

4.1.1. If someone sneezes when pepper is thrown in his face, is that a pur...

Author: Robert Murphy

If someone sneezes when pepper is thrown in his face, is that a purposeful action?

- The answer is no, because (presumably) sneezing is a reflexive behavior. It's important for the student to realize that the distinction between purposeful action and mindless behavior is not simply the difference between human bodily movements versus items in nature. As the example of lifting a leg in the student text shows, human behavior can be classified as either purposeful action or mindless behavior, depending on the circumstances.

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4.1.2. Does "purposeful action" include mistakes?

Author: Robert Murphy

Does "purposeful action" include mistakes?

- Yes, it does. Purposeful action is intentional action; it is behavior that serves a purpose to the thing doing the behaving.
People try to achieve certain outcomes and fail, all the time.
Yet they are still acting with purpose. In this course we do not assume that people are flawless calculators, as some textbook writers do.

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4.1.3. Are brain and mind interchangeable terms?

Author: Robert Murphy

Are brain and mind interchangeable terms?

- No, they are not.

The brain is a physical organ of the body, whereas the mind is an intangible concept that obviously bears some relationship to the brain.

(Note that someone can "lose his mind" without losing his brain.)

To repeat, we are not ruling out particular theories of neuroscience that claim that certain mental states are caused by particular brain states.

We are making the very modest point that mental states or operations (such as anxiety, happiness, long-range planning, multiplication, etc.) are different from brain states (such as firing neurons and blood flow to the left hemisphere).

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4.1.4. Can we perform controlled experiments to test economic theories?

Author: Robert Murphy

Can we perform controlled experiments to test economic theories?

- No, not in the same sense that we perform controlled experiments in (some of) the natural sciences. There is an entire field called "experimental economics," in which researchers will run experiments to test various issues that are important to some economic researchers.

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4.1.5. List two examples of mindless behaviors and two examples of purpose...

Author: Robert Murphy

List two examples of mindless behaviors and two examples of purposeful actions.

- Mindless behavior:
Man sneezing because of pepper or allergies, someone flinching when a car backfires, a woman shivering because it's cold.
PARTIAL CREDIT EXAMPLES
(because too vague to determine if student understands the distinction):
Man yelling during a dream, a bee pollinating a flower, someone going to the bathroom.
Purposeful action:
Man adding pepper to his soup, a soldier running after throwing a grenade, a woman buying a coat because it's cold.
PARTIAL CREDIT EXAMPLES
(because too vague to determine if student understands the distinction):
Man yelling during a dream, a bee pollinating a flower, someone going to the bathroom.

Check the answer of this question online at QuizOver.com:

Question: [List two examples of mindless behaviors by Dr. Robert Murphy @Mises](#)

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4.1.6. Explain why the "scientific method" simply won't do well in the rea...

Author: Robert Murphy

Explain why the "scientific method" simply won't do well in the realm of social science.

- The social sciences study people, and so the very "facts" of the social sciences involve people's minds. The natural sciences study mindless particles and can use repeatable experiments, changing one variable at a time, to test which theories are better or worse. Yet there are no controlled experiments in the social sciences, because the people have minds of their own so that we can't ever replicate the same conditions for a new "test."
Sample Partial Credit Answer
Social sciences study people, and so they can't use experiments.

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4.1.7. Explain how economists derive economic principles or laws.

Author: Robert Murphy

Explain how economists derive economic principles or laws.

- The economist develops principles the same way that mathematicians prove theorems in geometry. The economist starts out with the observation or assumption that people have conscious goals, and then logically deduces implications from that fact.
Sample Partial Credit Answer
The economist knows what it's like to be living in an economy, so he can understand what motivates other people too.

Check the answer of this question online at QuizOver.com:

Question: [Explain how economists derive economic principles by Dr. Robert Murphy](#)

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