

phil henshaw

From: amerikalistan-owner@mg.skola.mark.se on behalf of phil henshaw [pfh@synapse9.com]
Sent: Sunday, November 02, 2008 12:34 AM
To: 'Stanley Salthe'
Cc: amerikalistan@mg.skola.mark.se
Subject: RE: COAL IN QUESTION

Stan

Phil --

Stan,

Don't you find it odd for you make an exception to MEP as your universal rule for organisms choosing not to destroy themselves, when it's OUR MEP that is destroying US, and choosing not to follow it would be what would allow us to survive?

I agree that it is our blind following of MEP that is leading to our doom. BUT, it needs to be noted that MEP is 'demanded' by a LAW OF NATURE -- the Second Law of thermodynamics. To get a feel for the difficulty of transcending it, try to sit still without fidgeting for 20 minutes. It will destroy us because it is too great to fight against, and it pervades everything, from thunderstorms to baby's crying.

[ph] I think your statement of it and the 2nd law may be significantly different. It sounds like you say everything takes the shortest route between two points and the 2nd law may only say there's nothing shorter than a straight line between two points. Those are very different statements aren't they?

fyi My paper also discussed the reason why stability, as you say, "has not been the major outlook in biology or ecology for a while (and is dying in economics too)". The reason is that the theorists assume that individuals follow statistical principles, and the cause of both stability and instability needs to be explained in terms of individual learning processes for those systems composed of parts who follow individual learning processes rather than global equations. The "ologies" are fat and happy as the world falls apart! That's not new! How do we change that???

It appears to me that the move away from equilibrium models to developmental models -- and they are BOTH JUST models -- was the failure of equilibrium models to predict. Development was taken up rather than evolution because developments are in principle predictable. What you talk about is reasons why developments really can't predict some things we would like to predict. My version of why is historicity.

[ph] the failures caused by representing the future as a continuation of the past do not seem possible to correct with models, since all models do that. However many ways you try making the same mistake it won't fix the problem it causes. It's like trying on pants as a shirt, over and over, any way you like. It just never results in your finding a comfortable place for your head.

Development is inherently unpredictable because a) you can not know all the ways any system is developing b) never have a complete description of its environment and c) and can only make educated guesses about what it is learning or will find in its environment before it does. For that natural circumstance your best bet seems to be to watch closely to see how the system behaves 'differently' from your expectations, and use that to help you learn what it's learning sooner than you would if you were to trust a model and ignore the active behavior of the system. Right?

Phil

STAN

Phil

Subject: RE: COAL IN QUESTION

Phil --

Stan,

[ph] I think it's more specifically the choice making strategy of taking the first thing that comes along that will do what you need. You don't look for the 'best' fruit in the bin, but the first one that's not too bruised, etc.

Same thing in my view. Act, and act NOW!

I think it seems to be the opposite of the idea that people (or other learning systems maybe too) don't have their own internal thresholds. MEP would imply self constraints don't exist. Doesn't choosing what works for your present need, not eating till your sides burst, and avoiding risky situations, etc. , display the opposite principle.

Because of their structural needs, all systems have limits. But they will maximize their energy throughput as often and as much as they can without (usually) destroying themselves.

Do you recall that that was the main theme of my paper in Cosmos, why that kind of learning by the parts is necessary for distributed system stability?

But stability has not been the major outlook in biology or ecology for a while (and is dying in economics too). Systems are destroyed and new ones subsequently develop to fill their niche.

STAN

Phil -- As I understand satisficing, it has to do with the strategy of fixing things as they come up, as opposed to planning in advance what to do when. It does not contradict the principle of striving as much as possible most of the time.

STAN

