

The Baldwin Effect: An Archaeology

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Abstract: “The Baldwin effect” stands for a wide variety of ways in which learning can be conceived as guiding adaptive evolutionary change. An analysis of the history of this notion reveals that it does not reliably refer either to a theory-neutral empirical phenomenon or to a single theoretical hypothesis. On the contrary, articulations of the general idea depend on distinctive, but incommensurable, theoretical backgrounds. In reconstructing the conceptual history of the Baldwin effect I hope to support contemporary explorations of ideas by encouraging the articulation of new theoretical frameworks in which it might make sense. I am therefore more of a Baldwin booster than a Baldwin sceptic.

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