Definition

Baldwin's Law proposes a mechanism for how learned behaviors can influence the course of evolution. Here's how it works:

1. **A novel, advantageous behavior arises or is learned by some individuals within a population.** For example, an individual might learn a better way to hunt or build shelter (your "good trick").
2. **This learned behavior increases the survival and reproductive success of those individuals.** They are better able to thrive in their environment.
3. **Because of this increased success, individuals with a greater genetic predisposition to easily learn or perform this behavior (or related advantageous traits) will also have higher fitness.** Over generations, genes that support the acquisition of this behavior (or make it less reliant on learning) will become more prevalent in the population through natural selection.
4. **Eventually, what was initially a learned behavior can become, to some extent, genetically encoded or more easily acquired through instinct.** The population has effectively "assimilated" the learned adaptation into its genetic makeup.

James Mark Baldwin, an American psychologist, came up with Baldwin's Law (also known as the Baldwin effect or ontogenetic adaptation) in the late 19th century, and it is still considered to be entirely feasible, though difficult to prove.

"Neural plasticity" refers to the capacity of the nervous system to modify itself, functionally and structurally, in response to experience and injury.

Required Reading

Fourth Wall Phantoms, Joshua Cutchin, 2025.

Premise

By understanding the evolution of emotion and ‘useful societal tricks’ we can better understand how ‘magic’ works, as detailed in *Fourth Wall Phantoms*.

Synopsis

In this treatment of the topic, we examine only psychological factors that become long-term or permanent factors, not the other factors involved with anomalous experience generation, as explained in terms of the ‘dream of physicality’ (standard ‘objective’ explanations).

"Emotion is an evolutionarily encoded 'story' told by the body.

This is why emotion is so powerful a summoner of 'fourth wall phantoms'. (A reference to Josh Cutchin's book by that name).

Pain tends to last a lifetime (we store it in our shadows, our 'hurt child').

Positive emotions tend to be transitory in comparison to pain, and we have not evolved a mechanism to store them.

This explains the efficacy of suffering to catch the attention of the larger life, the 'producers' of our 'theatrical productions we call life.

Now authors of metaphysical or 'archetypical books' STORE the story in books, which then leap to the readers, and which can even re-infect the readers (they re-read the 'spell' in the book), they can reminisce with others about the book, etc.

In general, we have authors or suffering autistics or saints who produce most of the summoning of "fourth wall phantoms".

Autistics are genetically born to have a weak self-story, to not fit into human society well without intervention, and thus are prone to some level of perpetual suffering, and they tend to perseverate about other 'stories to rescue them', as the 'human story' doesn't work for them.

Saints yearn for heaven and fear hell, causing a permanent disassociation between ominous 'evil' in their 'shadow' (demons, hell, etc.), while simultaneously filling their 'superegos' with visions of heaven and other religious stories to rescue them.

In short, they 'damn themselves to hell with their 'shadows' and create 'heavenly stories' in their superegos, and this causes much suffering and disassociation and completely overwrites the standard human story...

They are prone both to 'memorized pain' and 'memorized bliss'.

It's no wonder they summon so many "fourth wall phantoms" in the guise of religious imagery.

Now, it is possible to work around these evolutionary deficits, and those workarounds are called the practice of magic.

In the far future, of some Earths, humans internalize ‘ritual magic’
to such a degree, that those who do so prosper and have more children.

In a sense, this is how our standard long-term emotions and impulses
became encoded into us.

The ’thing that you do constantly’ to survive and prosper, that becomes
‘encoded into you’, in the short term via neural plasticity and in the long
term by evolution of the species due to Darwinian evolutionary principles
and ‘Godwin’s Law’ in particular.

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