

James Mark Baldwin

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James Baldwin was born on January 12, 1861 in Columbia, South Carolina. He attended secondary school in New Jersey. He initially planned on a life in the ministry, but in his first year at Princeton (then the College of New Jersey), he fell under the tutelage of the Scottish Realist James McCosh, and studied empirical psychology instead, graduating as valedictorian in 1894. He spent a fellowship year in Germany and France, studying with Wundt in Leipzig, before returning to Princeton for his Ph.D. He then taught at Lake Forest University for two years, during which time he married.

Partly due to the quality of Baldwin's groundbreaking psychology textbook, *Handbook of Psychology* (1889), he was controversially selected as chair of metaphysics at University of Toronto, where he founded the first experimental psychological laboratory in the British Empire. This southern American met with considerable resistance in Victorian Toronto as he introduced Wundt's Leipzig school of psycho-physical research to the nativist Canadians. However, with an \$1100 grant and four rooms (Baldwin, 1892), the lab was established. Baldwin returned to Princeton in 1893 to set up a lab there; then, in 1903, he revamped G. Stanley Hall's former laboratory at Johns Hopkins University.

Baldwin assimilated and applied Wundt's experimental methods, Darwin's evolution theories, and Charcot's techniques of hypnotism, suggestion, and the subconscious to his hypotheses of childhood development. He was among the first to move beyond the simple observation of children into active experimentation by studying and manipulating reaction time and motor behavior. After the birth of his daughters, his interest moved towards a

psychobiological explanation of development. In *A New Factor in Evolution* (1896), *Development and Evolution* (1902), and *Darwin and the Humanities* (1909), he proposed a modification to Lamarckian evolutionary theory (later to be called the *Baldwin effect*); Baldwin argued that evolution was not merely the natural selection of inherited traits, but the use of individual learning, effort, and adaptation to filter the most useful congenital traits, allowing determination of variations by the individual.

In *Social and Ethical Interpretations in Mental Development* (1897) and *Mental Development in the Child and the Race* (1906), Baldwin correlated children's handedness, color perception, and imitation to biological theories of recapitulation, accommodation, and growth, to explain social psychological theories such as conscious imitation, learning, and social response.

The theory of *organic selection* described the selection of behaviors specifically advantageous to developmental growth from a number of imitative movements of the infant. Useful movements are repeated and become habits; the child's own propensity towards adaptation allows for the child to take on and modify these habits to continue development (accommodation). Accommodation is a function of memory, association, and voluntary attention, with the latter being the most beneficial to the child's higher development. In 1915's *Genetic Theory of Reality*, Baldwin posited the theory of childhood stages of knowledge development through instinctual/environmental interactions: the pre-logical, logical, and hyper-logical. These writings influenced the thinking of Jean Piaget, Jacques Lacan, Lev Vygotsky, and Alexander Luria.

Baldwin was a founding member of the American Psychological Association (1892) and was its 6th president in 1897. He directed the 1893 World Exposition psychology exhibit in Chicago. He co-founded the journal *Psychological Review* with Cattell in 1894. He was

publisher of the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* (1901), a collection of entries from leading contributors in the fields such as William James and John Dewey.

In 1908, Baldwin left Johns Hopkins for Paris, driven out of American academia after a morals charge was levied and then dismissed in Baltimore. He wrote *Darwin and the Humanities* in 1909 and *Individual and Society* in 1911, as well as consulting at the National University in Mexico City. He was active during World War I in lobbying for American intervention; in 1916, the ship he and his family was traveling on was torpedoed, and his daughter severely injured. He died in Paris on November 8, 1934.

Further Reading

Baldwin, J. M. (1889a). *Handbook of Psychology: Senses and Intellect*. New York: Henry Holt & Co. <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=QeUMmIX-HpgC>

Baldwin, J. M. (1892). The psychological laboratory in the University of Toronto. *Science*, 19(475), 143-144. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.ns-19.475.143>

Baldwin, J. M., Osborn, H. F., Morgan, C. L., Poulton, E. B., Headley, F. W., & Conn, H. W. (1902). *Development and evolution: Including psychophysical evolution, evolution by orthoplasia, and the theory of genetic modes*. Macmillan. <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=k3MKAAAAMAAJ&pg=GBS.PR3>

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