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Serendipity and Scientific Discovery: a new way to see Science and Knowledge?

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Abstract

At the heart of my paper there is the concept of serendipity: it has recently been defined as a «discovery at the intersection of chance and wisdom», but it has been described in many other ways since Horace Walpole coined the term to indicate «that discoveries of things the observers were not in quest of, which happen by both accidents and sagacity». Finding an unambiguous definition is therefore complex. However, defining the concept of serendipity is not the only way to shed light on its occurrence: by analyzing and understanding its theoretical-conceptual characteristics, in fact, I believe we can clarify how it acts within the process of scientific discovery. In this way, chance, theory ladenness, scientific method, and situated cognition acquire a new light and significance. In particular, what we learn through serendipity is not only new facts about the world, but also other ways of seeing science and knowledge.

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