



# **Evolution's First Philosopher: John Dewey and the Continuity of Nature (SUNY series in Philosophy and Biology)**

*Jerome A. Popp*

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*Examines John Dewey's ideas in the context of evolutionary theory.*

John Dewey was the first philosopher to recognize that Darwin's thesis about natural selection not only required us to change how we think about ourselves and the life forms around us, but also required a markedly different approach to philosophy. *Evolution's First Philosopher* shows how Dewey's arguments arose from his recognition of the continuity of natural selection and mindedness, from which he developed his concept of growth. Growth, for Dewey, has no end beyond itself and forms the basis of a naturalized theory of ethics. While other philosophers gave some attention to evolutionary theory, it was Dewey alone who saw that Darwinism provides the basis for a naturalized theory of meaning. This, in turn, portends a new account of knowledge, ethics, and democracy. To clarify evolution's conception of natural selection, Jerome A. Popp looks at brain science and examines the relationship between the genome and experience in terms of the contemporary concepts of preparedness and plasticity. This research shows how comprehensive and penetrating Dewey's thought was in terms of further consequences for the philosophical method entailed by Darwin's thesis. Dewey's foresight is further legitimated when Popp places his work within the context of the current thought of Daniel Dennett.

"This carefully researched and highly readable volume opens up the kernel of one of Dewey's brightest ideas: his appropriation of Darwin for philosophy. From Dawkins to Dennett, and from genetics to the genesis of norms, Jerome Popp expertly presents a Dewey who is able to hold his own as a major player in a wide range of contemporary debates." — Larry A. Hickman, The Center for Dewey Studies, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

Jerome A. Popp is Professor Emeritus at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville and the author of *Cognitive Science and Philosophy of Education: Toward a Unified Theory of Learning and Teaching* and *Naturalizing Philosophy of Education: John Dewey in the Postanalytic Period*.

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