



## CALL FOR PAPERS

**Azimuth. Philosophical Coordinates in Modern and Contemporary Age  
Issue 1 (2022)**

### **Darwin's Tangled Legacy. Evolutionary Perspectives in Contemporary Thought**

Editors: Andrea Parravicini (Università degli Studi di Milano, Adjunct Professor)  
Andra Meneganzin (Università degli Studi di Padova, Ph.D. candidate)  
Chiara Pertile (Università degli Studi di Milano, Graduate Student)

The Darwinian theory of evolution has brought unprecedented changes in Western thought. Pragmatist philosopher John Dewey pointed out that the title of Darwin's masterpiece, *The Origin of Species* (1859), expressed an intellectual revolt against the previously dominant philosophy of nature. This considered the intrinsic superiority of what is fixed, immutable and has a final purpose over anything that changes, unfolds without purpose or has an origin in time. In this light, Darwin started off a real philosophical revolution, delivering to the scientific community a theory capable of interpreting living phenomena and the underlying processes without appealing to final causes, divine creations or intelligent designs. Evolutionary theory could account for the origin and diversity of life through law-like patterns and processes normally operating in nature. Recent research is throwing new light on Darwin's project, moving it forward and bringing about fruitful reciprocal influences between scientific evolutionism and philosophy.

The present *Azimuth's* issue will discuss the rich possibilities and uses offered by recent evolutionary research program when approaching problems and fields of contemporary philosophical thought. First, the goal of the issue is to show the importance of an ongoing dialogue between biology – evolutionary biology in particular – and philosophy. Second, it inquires what an extended (*i.e.* pluralistic and multilevel) vision of evolution can teach us about the conundrum of human nature and which interpretative paths, previously left unexplored by classic philosophical approaches, can thus arise. Never before as in contemporary philosophical debates, the Darwinian perspective has emerged as a vital tool or, in John Dewey's words, as «the greatest dissolvent in contemporary thought of old questions, the greatest precipitant of new methods, new intentions, new problems» (Dewey 1910:19).

The new emerging fields of evolutionary research offer a number of exciting theoretical challenges and represent a great opportunity for a significant renewal of philosophical research. For instance, Major Evolutionary Transition theory (Calcott & Sterelny 2011; Maynard Smith & Szathmáry, 1995; Rosslénbroich 2014) and the new concept of *holobiont* (Gilbert & Tauber, 2016) have reformulated the notion of biological individuality (in its multifaceted declinations, see Pradeu 2016) and have redefined the role of cooperation in the history of life. Classic philosophical approaches to what an individual is and how the relation between the individual and the social can be construed have thus been radically reshaped. Hierarchy Theory of Evolution, by emphasising macroevolutionary factors like climate change, puts human evolutionary history in close relation with the wider multilevel ecological scenario of the planetary "sloshing bucket" (Eldredge 2008, 2016). Similarly, Niche Construction Theory (Odling Smee, et al., 2003) provides novel insights into the recursive and reciprocal relationship between *Homo sapiens* and the environment, that can be put to use to develop an evolutionary perspective on current global crises, like anthropogenic climate change, biodiversity loss, or the ongoing planetary pandemic (see, e.g., Meneganzin, Pievani and Caserini 2020; Pievani and Meneganzin 2020). Philosophy has the chance to investigate all these crucial implications arising

from evolutionary studies and examine, from an epistemological point of view, the evolution of the evolutionary paradigm itself (Pievani 2015).

Within this vast field of knowledge, the current volume of *Azimuth* aims to explore some of the philosophically relevant issues among those outlined above. A first selection of contributions will be devoted to recent epistemological developments of evolutionary theory and debates emerging from research in philosophy of biology.

A second series of articles will discuss significant and virtuous applications of the evolutionary research program to key philosophical issues, also exploring new ways to establish a dialogue between an extended-Darwinian perspective and other disciplines (e.g. philosophical anthropology, philosophy of technology, palaeoanthropology, cognitive sciences, aesthetics, medicine).

Considering the breadth of this Issue's proposal the theme calls for the prioritization of the following subjects and research areas:

- The evolution of evolutionary theory in epistemological and historical focus (Extended Evolutionary Synthesis, Eco-evo-devo, Hierarchy theory, Multilevel Evolutionary theory and Major Transitions.);
- Human-environment interactions in the light of recent evolutionary perspectives (Niche Construction Theory, the anthropogenic impact on climate and ecosystems, “Anthropocene” and the sixth mass extinction) up to existential-ethical repercussions;
- The problem of biological individuality (host-microbiota symbiosis, the holobiont and hologenome theory of evolution, units and levels of selection, new research horizons in the philosophy of immunology and cancer), the evolution of altruism, cooperation and social entities;
- Exploring the co-evolutionary relation between biology and culture (gene-culture co-evolution, the development of technical innovation, the emergence of human cognition and language, the evolutionary origin of the aesthetic faculty and religious behaviour), including bridges between an extended evolutionary view and recent trends in human cognition and cognitive neurosciences (e.g. 4E Cognition, the so-called pragmatist turn in cognitive and affective neurosciences).
- Moving beyond the Two Cultures Debate. Investigating ways in which philosophy has a productive impact on biology and evolutionary studies and how biological and evolutionary knowledge affect philosophy.

Papers providing original contributions on these and similar topics are welcomed.

*Azimuth* invites contributions in English, German, French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. Authors, whose papers will be accepted, will be asked to edit their contributions according to the **editorial rules** of the journal (available at: <http://www.azimuthjournal.com/call-for-papers/>).

Please send your complete papers to: [editorial@azimuthjournal.com](mailto:editorial@azimuthjournal.com) by **November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021**

Contribution length: Contributions should be around 34.000 characters (spaces and footnotes included).

More info at: [www.azimuthjournal.com](http://www.azimuthjournal.com)