

Hans-Joachim Niemann

## Karl Popper and the Two New Secrets of Life

Including Karl Popper's Medawar Lecture 1986 and Three Related Texts

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The story of how humans and all living things came into existence is told in two widely believed versions: the *Book of Genesis* and Darwin's *Origin of Species*. It was the philosopher Karl Popper who presented us with a third story, no less important. His *New Interpretation of Darwinism* denies the creative power of blind chance and natural selection and establishes knowledge and activity of all living beings as the real driving forces of evolution. Thus, spiritual elements are back in the theory of evolution, and in Popper's view "the entire evolution is an adventure of the mind."

In this book, Hans-Joachim Niemann establishes Karl Popper as an eminent philosopher of biology. In the first chapter, biographical details are unearthed concerning how Popper's biological interests were inspired by a biological meeting in the old windmill at Hunstanton in 1936. The second chapter focusses on the year 1986 when Popper, in several lectures, summarized the results of his life-long biological thinking. The most important of these, the Medawar Lecture given at the Royal Society London, was lost for a long time and is now printed in the Appendix. A new world view begins to emerge that is completely different from Creationism or Darwinism.

Twenty years after Popper's death, the last chapter looks back on his biological thoughts in the light of new results of molecular biology. His then attacks on long-lasting dogmas of evolutionary theory turned out to be largely justified. The new biology seems even well suited to support Popper's endeavour to overcome the gloomy aspects of Darwinism that have made organisms passive parts of a machinery of deadly competition. Neither blind chance nor natural selection are the creative forces of all life but knowledge and activity. How they came into existence is still a secret and a worthwhile research programme.

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[Postscript 23 December 1989]

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**The publisher's 'Mohr Kurier' writes:**

Karl Popper's lecture *A New Interpretation of Darwinism* given at the Royal Society London in 1986 is printed here for the first time in the original. In it, Popper denies the creative power of blind chance and natural selection. Instead of these two Darwinian dogmas he establishes knowledge and activity of all organisms as the creative driving forces of evolution. Hans-Joachim Niemann unearths biographical details about the year 1936 when Popper's biological thoughts were inspired by a meeting with some scientists of the avant-garde of molecular biology. He then focusses on the year 1986 when Popper, in several lectures, summarized the results of his life-long biological thinking. After that Niemann discusses Popper's philosophy of biology in the light of new results of molecular biology that apparently supports his endeavor to overcome some gloomy aspects of Darwinism. How the new creative forces knowledge and activity came into existence is still a secret and a worthwhile research programme.

**Hans-Joachim Niemann:**

Born 1941; 1970 degree in chemistry; 1972 doctorate in physical chemistry at the University of Tübingen; 1973 research with KWU (Siemens AG); 1984 freelance writer; 1993-99 lecturer for critical rationalism at the University of Bamberg; 1994 guest lecturer at the University of Passau.

**At the back of the book:**

After the *Book of Genesis* and Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, Karl Popper established a third theory of evolution based on evolutionary and molecular biology. Hans-Joachim Niemann discusses the history and significance of this contribution to the philosophy of biology.