Article

Reconstructing Philosophical Genealogy from the Ground Up: What Truly Is Philosophical Genealogy and What Purpose Does It Serve?

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Abstract: What is philosophical genealogy? What is its purpose? How does genealogy achieve this purpose? These are the three essential questions to ask when thinking about philosophical genealogy. Although there has been an upswell of articles in the secondary literature exploring these questions in the last decade or two, the answers provided are unsatisfactory. Why do replies to these questions leave scholars wanting? Why is the question, "What is philosophical genealogy?" still being asked? There are two broad reasons, I think. First, on the substantive side, the problem is that genealogical models will get certain features of the method right but ignore others. The models proffered to answer the first question are too restrictive. The second reason is that the three essential questions to ask regarding the nature of genealogy are run together when they should be treated separately. In the following paper, I address these problems by attempting to reconstruct genealogy from the ground up. I provide what I hope is an ecumenical position on genealogy that will accommodate a wide variety of genealogical thinkers, from Hobbes to Nietzsche, rather than a select few. Therefore, I examine two of the three questions above: What is philosophical genealogy and its purpose? I argue there are seven main features of genealogy and that these features may be used as a yardstick to compare how one genealogist stacks up to another along the seven aspects I outline in the paper.

Keywords: philosophical genealogy; method; limit-attitude; pudenda origo; Nietzsche; Foucault

1. Introduction

In order to understand philosophical genealogy as a method of inquiry, we need to think about it with three questions in mind: (1) What is it? (2) What purpose does it serve? and (3) How does it achieve this purpose? Although these three questions are closely related, I do not have space in this paper to address all of them. In this essay, therefore, I will focus on the first two questions: (1) What is philosophical genealogy, and (2) What is the purpose of genealogy? In Section 2, I briefly examine three different answers in the secondary literature to explore the intimate imbrication of these questions. After explaining and critiquing each interpretation, I start from scratch and reconstruct genealogy from the ground up.

In the subsequent sections of the paper, I flesh out the article's primary purpose: to reconstruct genealogy by advancing a series of basic suppositions common to all genealogists and to work out the implications of these assumptions. All told, I argue there are seven components that are standard to all genealogical investigations. First, genealogy provides a functional interpretation of how a phenomenon might have come about from earlier social practices and technologies. Second, the "givens" of a genealogical inquiry will underpin those practices and technologies. Third, genealogy, in the main, uses historical evidence to provide a compelling narrative of how this new thing could have come about to serve a critical function in society. The evidence supporting this functional narrative will be perspectival because of the interests of the genealogist and the "givens" selected. Fourth, the genealogical account of the phenomenon is contingent because it is not a necessary outcome of these earlier conditions. Genealogy is an anti-metaphysical critique.[1] Fifth, the

object of investigation is novel and original; it is irreducible to the conditions of its origin because a genealogy does not provide a causal account of the phenomenon in question.

The remaining two aspects of genealogy answer the second question: What is the purpose of genealogy? Thus, we have aspect six: genealogy aims to offer alternative perspectives through which to view the object under investigation. In hopes of providing alternative frameworks, one may free oneself, in the words of David Owen, from restricted self-consciousness. In other words, the statements making up a genealogical narrative have perlocutionary effects on its readers. Seventh, genealogies are practices of critique: they attempt to render transparent the limiting conditions that led to our current formatting of subjectivity in an effort to go beyond these limits.

With these seven elements of genealogy in mind, I begin by briefly looking at three traditional interpretations of genealogy before constructing a new model.

2. Three Answers to the Question: What Is Genealogy? (Lightbody 2019)

As the name implies, genealogy is a distinct method of practicing philosophy that examines the historical origins of present-day concepts, ideas, practices, and discourses. A genealogical investigation aims to take ideas long thought to be innate, immutable, and absolute and instead demonstrates that such ideas are constructs of sorts: elaborate assemblages erected from previous concepts, behaviors, and even feelings.

With this brief but as I will show crude explanation in mind, genealogy in the secondary literature has been characterized along three lines. The first model is the substantive or documentary interpretation. This template provides, at least ideally, a close, rigorous documentation of the events and circumstances surrounding the historical emergence of some idea, moral code, observance, or tradition and how and why such things changed over time. This approach is naturalistic, broadly construed, in that it sticks closely, as Nietzsche put it, "...to what is documented what can actually be confirmed and has actually existed in short the entire long hieroglyphic record so hard to decipher of the moral past of mankind!" (Nietzsche 2000, preface sct. 7). Foucault reaffirms and amplifies this maxim. Genealogy, he evinces, "...consequently requires patience and a knowledge of details, and it depends on a vast accumulation of source material... In short, genealogy requires relentless erudition" (Foucault 1977a, sct. 140).

The second I call the ironic or post-modern model. This model is similar to the above paradigm, the documentary model, but with a twist: it argues that since all claims are shot through with perspectives, including the genealogist's own, tracing the history of some idea to discover the true purpose of its value or origin is incoherent. To expand on this point, because all truth claims cannot be decoupled from evaluative suppositions, including the genealogist's own, it is senseless to think that genealogical accounts of the origin of some value or idea are meant to be truthful.[2] If that is right, then, according to some interpretations, the point of genealogy is to demonstrate that the belief in a purely objective, historical investigation of, for example, the origin of emotions, rational thinking, morality, etc., devoid of prejudice and bereft of sentiment, is inane. Thus, the reader should approach *The Genealogy of Morality* or *Discipline and Punish* as performative works, the true philosophical import of which does not lie in the accuracy of the so-called "claims' made in each book but in the ability of these texts, in particular, to erode the reader's quest for objective knowledge (Granier 1966; Koffman 1972; Rajchman 1994). The results demonstrate that embracing a post-modern celebration of perspectives on illocutionary grounds is the best we can hope for in understanding our history (Prado 2006, p. 135).

Following Mathieu Queloz, I shall call the third method the pragmatic approach.[3] Pragmatic styles of genealogy are a kind of conceptual reverse engineering; they seek to demonstrate how a complex idea like truth emerged from a social need. Queloz sums up this view succinctly when he writes: "My concern, by contrast, is with the practical origins of ideas: with the ways in which the ideas we live by can be shown to be rooted in practical needs and concerns generated by facts about us and our situation" (Queloz 2020, p. 2).

In this vein, two paradigmatic and relatively recent genealogies are Edward Craig's work, *Knowledge and The State of Nature,* and Bernard William's book, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Craig 1990; Williams 2002; Hobbes 1966; Hume 1975). Other, much older pragmatic genealogies include Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (Smith 1976; Hobbes 1966).

The three very different interpretations of genealogy noted above motivate scholars working in the area of philosophical genealogy to take a fresh approach to the field. In this regard, my process is to begin by unpacking a few basic suppositions of genealogy and then drawing out the full implications of these assumptions. By doing so, I believe I have produced a novel and fecund answer to the fundamental questions of philosophical genealogy, namely, what it is and what purpose it serves.

3. What Truly Is Philosophical Genealogy?

Philosophical genealogy is a discourse that traces the origin of a contemporary idea, institution, religion, moral code, and very often a feeling to the intersection of various older practices and technologies. Just as with family genealogy, philosophical genealogy purports to show that a present-day object is the offspring of a multitude of archaic and disparate lineages of social, bodily, material, and political origin. These once separate lines of force, to borrow a term from Deleuze, become entwined, forming a discernible and very real knot as it were in our present social fabric, much like an individual is the product of many different family lineages (Deleuze 1988, p. 101).

Although a genealogy relies on historical events and facts, it is unlike traditional historical accounts. To be sure, the distinction between historical and genealogical explanations is not firm. Still, Bruce Knauft offers a helpful explanation that will put us on the right path in tracking the difference between these two. Knauft writes, "At one level, genealogy, as opposed to history, is simply an alternative way of considering the relationship between entities over time—not in a relationship of assumed causation, but in an alternative or bare factual sequence of what preceded and succeeded what" (Knauft 2017). Putting Knauft's remark another way, unlike some historical accounts of a phenomenon, a genealogy, as an alternative narrative to those traditionally proffered, highlights contingency. To clarify, Knauft suggests that most kinds of historical investigation provide a causal account for the origin of a historically significant event. Moreover, the causal account presented supposes that specific historical conditions will always give rise to the same event kind (revolution, war, etc.).

Genealogies, in contrast, suggest that events are overdetermined; there is no guarantee that they would repeat even if history were somehow replayed with the same conditions. Colin Koopman amplifies this point by focusing on the contingency of a genealogical narrative in this way: "Genealogy is concerned with the conditions of possibility insofar as these conditions are contingent rather than necessary. In this, genealogy requires that philosophy involves itself in history, which is to say that genealogy affirms an internal connection between philosophy and history" (Koopman 2019, pp. 23–24).

Genealogy appears doubly contingent when gleaning the main ideas from Knauft and Koopman. The first contingency can be extracted from Koopman's quote. Although he does not clarify precisely what he intends to articulate when he states that "...genealogy affirms an internal connection between philosophy and history," I take Koopman to mean that philosophical assumptions irrevocably frame any reading of past events. For example, many 19th-century historians read the tape of history in Whiggish fashion: history has a definite *telos*. History is nothing more and nothing less than the slow, *necessary* march of humanity towards moral progress. However, where "the Whig historian stands on the summit of the 20th century and organizes his scheme of history from the point of view from his own day," genealogists, in contrast, are under no illusion that their perspective gives them a God's eye view into the past: they acknowledge that their peculiar outlook is conditioned by a contingent context that makes some interpretations possible and not others (Butterfield 1963, p. 13).

Turning to the second contingency, Knauft's point is more straightforward (but also one still worth remembering): history is not a reductive, causal discipline such that historical facts are mere epiphenomena entirely dissoluble to their material conditions, as some pure Marxists might still believe. The phenomenon under genealogical investigation is new and is irreducible to its origin, no matter how carefully its lineage is traced. And yet, paradoxically, per Koopman, the genealogical narrative demonstrates that philosophical concepts such as "truth" and "liberty" are nonetheless the product of older practices. They would not exist if not for specific shared traditions and conditions.[4]

In thinking about what I call this double-contingency, it is Bernard Williams who provides further clarification and, in doing so, advances our preliminary investigation: "The genealogy gives no way of translating language that mentions the resultant item into terms that mention only the original items, nor does it claim that "justice" or "property" or "knowledge" introduces nothing over and above the original items—on the contrary, it shows what new thing is introduced, and why it is new" (Williams 2002, p. 36). To put the matter more forcefully, we have a license to say that genealogy is antithetical to physicalist reductionism. In combining the above insights from Williams, Knauft, and Koopman, I believe we can make sense of a strikingly profound (if initially cryptic) statement by Foucault: "Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things; its duty not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, having imposed a predetermined form to all vicissitudes"(Foucault 1977a, p. 146). In other words, genealogy is not a reductive discourse that attempts to translate a historical event into an identity statement (e.g., the rise of the prison system is identical to the following descriptive statements about social and political life in the 18th century) but is nonetheless an explanatory narrative for the advent of some new thing in history. The question, then, is: How does genealogy explain the emergence of the recent phenomenon? Can we gain a better purchase of genealogy's unique explanatory power?

To fully answer the above questions, it might be helpful to review: we can now claim that genealogy explains how some new thing in history arose by looking at how the item emerged from a multitude of very different conditions and practices. As Williams puts genealogy, "In this way, it is a kind of naturalistic inquiry but one where questions (are) not about reduction but about explanation" (Williams 2002, p. 23). But what kind of explanation does genealogy offer? The answer is a functional one. A genealogy explains why the object emerged, given the social practices/technologies that pre-empted it, by providing how the new thing served a critical function that surfaced from prior discourses and non-discursive practices.

Williams' functional explanation of genealogy resolves the paradox introduced by Koopman. The paradox is if a genealogical description respects the novelty of the phenomenon under investigation, how does it explain said phenomenon's emergence from earlier material conditions and social practices? Functional definitions of phenomena resolve this problem. Consider that functional explanations explain the purpose of something within a more complex system. If a component within a multifaceted organization plays an integral role in the structure's overall functioning, then it is not entirely reducible to its material makeup. The material elements of a thing do not, by themselves, explain the role the entity has in the more extensive configuration of which it is a part. For example, although the human heart is nothing more than the cardiac cells that comprise it, the cells cannot explain the role the heart plays vis-à-vis circulating blood throughout the body. Moreover, functional explanations are perspectival: the same object under one framework may function differently when viewed under another. To return to the above example, hearts also have a thumping sound. The purpose of the thumping sound, under some other functional framework of the heart, might be to alert a doctor to an arrhythmia.[5] Thus, although there are different ways to understand how a particular new technology or practice functioned in the society in which it emerged, this is how it should be, or so I argue, because functional accounts are dependent on the interests of the genealogical

researchers engaged in explaining the item under investigation. Genealogists support a pluralistic position concerning functional explanations ([Godfrey-Smith 1993](#)).

Genealogy's functionalism may be interpreted in two ways. The first sort of functionalism pertains to the purposeful role the thing under investigation had in the society in which it emerged. In other words, the functionalism referred to under this umbrella relates to the practical explanation regarding why a particular value or idea came to have the resonance it did for a specific society. To clarify further and to follow a standard distinction in the philosophy of language and communication theory, the sentences that make up the genealogy are propositions: representatives of a state of affairs. They are taken as assertions for how a particular phenomenon may have emerged from the practical needs of a society. However, as statements that are part of a more extensive explanation, they may be more or less warranted by their respective falsification conditions. Therefore, the warrantability of each statement will have justificatory implications on the functional explanation as a whole and the overall credibility of the genealogy itself.

The next function of genealogy bleeds into the second philosophical question I asked at the commencement of this paper: What purpose does genealogy serve? In other words, the second function of a genealogy pertains to the impact a genealogical description has on its readers. The functional aspect of genealogy under this interpretation pertains to the normative implications of a narrative. Once again, I follow the communications model above: the statements that make up a genealogical narrative have perlocutionary effects on its readers. To wit, they provoke readers to question their respective existing belief systems by demonstrating how the standard explanation for the emergence of phenomena is doubtful. I now examine the first kind of functionalism, which purports to show how the subject matter of investigation played a significant if unacknowledged role by the inhabitants of some society before being articulated and then subsequently consecrated before turning to how the genealogical narrative functions to disabuse readers of their traditional belief system.

The first sort of functionality gets to the heart of the question: How does genealogy explain the emergence of this new phenomenon? In this first sense, a genealogy's functionalism concerns the epistemic and normative chains of implication that link the statements of a genealogy together. By normative, here, I follow Robert Brandom in that comprehension in general and understanding of a genealogical narrative in particular "...can be understood, not as the turning on of a Cartesian light, but as practical mastery of a certain kind of inferentially articulated doing, responding differentially according to the circumstances of proper application of a concept, and distinguishing the proper inferential consequences of such application" ([Brandom 1994](#), p. 120). To simplify Brandom's remark, one comprehends a genealogical analysis when one can articulate the epistemic consequences that may be drawn from it: to grasp and appreciate the new insights the genealogy provides. These inferences will, undoubtedly, vindicate or condemn one's belief system and at least minimally provide one with reasons to rethink the warrantability of one's core values. Suppose we can agree that the narrational explanation given to mainly historical evidence (but of course, there are other kinds of evidence a genealogist may use, too) is the broth of a genealogical account. What components are being brought into the mixture? What demarcates genealogy from history other than the former's emphasis on functionality, its capacity to offer an account of a historical phenomenon that is both warranted and yet non-causal, and contingent?

Here, I will examine the components that make up the proverbial "soup' of genealogy rather than thinking merely about the ingredients of its broth, namely the narrative that encapsulates the meatier chunks or "chowder." To begin with, minimally, all genealogists can agree that the statements that make up the genealogical narrative are connected because they explain how the subject matter of the genealogy began to serve a critical function in the social and political practices of the time. For example, Mathieu Queloz argues that Nietzsche's *On Truth and Lies, in a Non-Moral Sense* exhibits an early kind of genealogy that traces our collective need to establish absolute non-falsifiable claims (i.e., truth) to

earlier social practices. He writes: "Nietzsche's early genealogy of truthfulness answers this question by showing that truthfulness has practical origins in the exigencies of social life" (Queloz 2020, p. 116). These practical origins are ones that already existed prior to the arrival of the concept of truth but were not articulated. In a word, they are "givens."

But what exactly are these givens? Returning to Williams, once more, a helpful and constructive explanation can be gleaned about these givens, which I now italicize to illuminate: "... because it (a genealogy) represents as functional a concept, reason, motivation, or other aspect of *human thought and behavior*, where that item was perhaps not previously seen as functional; the explanation of the function is unmysterious, because in particular it does not appeal to intentions or deliberations or (in this respect) already purposive thought; and the motivations that are invoked in the explanation are ones that are agreed to exist anyway" (Williams 2002, p. 24). In keeping with what has been noted before, a genealogy, it is crucial to remember, does not provide a causal explanation for the emergence of some event but rather a *defeasible* yet warranted explanation as to why and how a society or era crystallized prior practices into a seemingly necessary concept or institution (e.g., Foucault's explanation for the rise of the "carceral regime") which becomes impossible to do away with—a limit-attitude.[6] Such an explanation neither relies on the intentions and plans of larger-than-life and, also, larger-than-history figures in the Carlylean sense of that term(e.g., his "Great Man" theory of history where figures such as Napoleon and Alexander the Great are the actual engines of history) nor overly simplistic historical causal trigger events (e.g., the crossing of the Rubicon by Julius Caesar marked the end of the Roman Republic) (Carlyle 1841). To be sure, the actions of singular individuals and the occurrence of particular events may play significant roles in supporting the credibility of a genealogical narrative, but the explanation is not reducible to these factors alone. Nevertheless, there remains something relatively stable, a platform that allows the genealogy to get off the ground: the given.

It is this notion of the given that has led to some severe misinterpretations of the genealogical method in the secondary literature, so it is vital that we work through the idea carefully. I will begin by examining a misconception of the given and a mistaken view of genealogy that arises from it before reconstructing what I think the actual purpose is.

Many scholars have been led astray in thinking that genealogy will try to reduce a contemporary phenomenon and, very often, a moral duty to an earlier somatic practice of a lowly origin. This common misreading is attributed to specific genealogical works such as Nietzsche's *Genealogy* and Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (and, to a lesser extent, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*). The evidence for this position can be found in "Nietzsche Genealogy History," where Foucault affirms Nietzsche's conception of genealogy: "In what for instance do we find the original basis (*Ursprung*) of morality, a foundation sought after since Plato? "In a detestable narrowminded conclusion. *Pudenda origo*. (shameful origin)" (Foucault 1977a, pp. 140–41; Nietzsche 1982, sct. 102). This way of thinking about genealogy, namely that genealogy is just about providing a casual account of how a contemporary, sacred concept is reducible to much earlier shameful practices, is pervasive in the secondary literature.[7] I take a brief but necessary excursus to demonstrate how this passage has been misinterpreted.

Unlike other philosophers who are critical of genealogy because it seemingly conflates perspective with truth, Brandom argues that genealogies are incoherent, even if taken as works of fiction.[8] Brandom's critique of genealogy rests on a fundamental mistake that now we can see through.

4. Why Genealogy Does Not Reduce to the *pudenda origo*[9]

Robert Brandom begins his attack on genealogy by rehearsing Kant's criticism of Humean practical rationality. Where, for Hume, practical rationality may be construed in instrumental terms in that the purpose of reason, writ large, is to satisfy one's subjective preferences, in contrast, Kant argues that the capacity to exercise rational judgment is universal. In undertaking an action or commitment, I provide myself with reasons for the

action and the upholding of a commitment to enact my intention in those situations that call for it. Without giving such reasons, the action would be unintelligible.[10] Now, as noted above, understanding for Brandom is not a Cartesian light but a mastery of a linguistic practice; the intelligibility of my actions is therefore not simply dependent upon my subjective interpretation of said actions but upon my grasping of the conceptual and material implications of my reasoning to justify them. When we combine Brandom's position on cognition with the upshot of Kant's point about practical rationality, the reasons and inferences I draw from an action entail practical commitments. Such commitments are socially embedded and serve to inform, guide, and justify the subsequent actions undertaken by the agent who holds them because they are responsive to the beliefs, attitudes, commitments, and actions of other individuals in a community (Brandom 2013). To paraphrase Brandom's mentor, Wilfrid Sellars, beliefs are not just attitudes of the mind but exist within a "logical space of reasons" (Sellars 1963, p. 169). They are connected to networks of justification that are external to my beliefs and are informed and comprised by the practices of the community in which I find myself. According to Brandom, Kant revolutionized past theories of mind from Descartes to Hume by demonstrating that epistemic claims are both cognitively and normatively laden (Brandom 2013, sct. 3, 8).

However, Brandom argues that as genealogists, Nietzsche (and Foucault) have forgotten Kant's crucial insight. The genealogist affirms that the content of what a subject believes is reducible to the cause of what produced the belief. The genealogist blurs the distinction Kant formulated between quid juris, or matter of right, and quid facti, a matter of fact (Brandom 2013, sct. 3, 8).

A quid juris examination of a judgment involves analyzing it in terms of its propositional content. For example, a normative speech act, such as promise-making, is uttered by a speaker because the speaker understands the idea of promising, content-wise, from the inside as it were: he acknowledges a commitment to the promise made because the conditions of a particular social context entail the obligation. Promising, as a social practice for Brandom, is a Hegelian dialectical enterprise where the concept of promise-making is confirmed and refined by particular promise-making speech acts and where particulars are understood qua particulars insofar that they fall under the universal of promise-making per se. An individual with a mastery of the concepts and implications of promise-marking then fully understands that a lie or insincere promise is self-undermining in that (1) it cannot be universalized because it depends on the opposite practice of telling the truth and (2) lying enervates trust in a community, weakening the practice of promising itself. Someone sapient can apply his understanding of the concept of promise-making to both known and novel examples and draw out their normative implications.

In contrast to the quid juris model is the quid facti or causal approach to explain moral concepts. In looking at the facts that led to promising, as Nietzsche does in Essay 2 of *The Genealogy of Morality*, he *seemingly* reduces the social practice to its causal etiology. He, therefore, fails to consider its inferential and material entailments, at least according to Brandom's literal pudenda origo reading of the genealogical method. Consider, for example, Nietzsche's account of how the first "five or six thou shalt not's" came into existence:

> With the aid of such images and procedures [of torture], one finally remembers five or six 'I will not's' . . .—and it was indeed with the aid of this kind of memory that one, at last, came 'to reason'! Ah, reason, seriousness, mastery over the affects, the whole somber thing called reflection, all these prerogatives and showpieces of man: how dearly they have been bought! How much blood and cruelty lie at the bottom of all 'good things'! (GM II 3)

In taking this reductive tactic, the genealogist goes awry, at least according to Brandom's reading of *The Genealogy of Morality*, where he assumes that Nietzsche is simply providing a reductive history of promising per se. According to this interpretation, promising is a practice that stems from a more ancient, punitive genealogical history. "The act of promising, in all forms, is yoked to the feeling of guilt through a series of breeding, tortuous bodily and mental practices, education, and social reinforcement" (Lightbody

[2020](), p. 640). To recapitulate, a token of some speech act of promise-making does not stem from the speaker's inherent realization that the situation before her falls under a universal promise-making type but is a causal process, a response to an ancient behavior-induced stimulus of shameful origin.

If this is all there is to Nietzsche's account of guilt, then Brandom is correct that the reasons to which I point to explain my action are not genuinely reasonable. Or as Brandom stridently puts it, "For one can take it that what the genealogists dug down to is not just causes distorting our reasons, but causes masquerading as reasons. When what we fondly believe to be reasons are unmasked, all that remains is blind causal processes. Those processes have taken on the guise of reasons, but in fact, yield nothing more than rationalizations. Genealogy, in its most radical form, seeks to dispel the illusion of reason" ([Brandom 2013](), sct. 1, 3). In other words, Nietzsche argues that the conception of promising manifests *before* one understands its inferential import. It is an evolved capacity that was initially nothing more than a dimly perceived, rudimentary understanding of indebtedness, and it is this practice that Brandom labels the first stage of promise-making.[11] So, although Nietzsche's hypotheses are ingenious, they cannot explain normativity as such, as Brandom declares: "A normative significance is imposed on a non-normative world, like a *cloak* thrown over its nakedness, by agents forming preferences, issuing orders, praising and blaming, esteeming and assessing" ([Brandom 1994](), p. 48). Presumably, once cast over the world, the cloak cannot be thrown off: one can only understand the meaning of concepts, norms, values, and the like if one also understands their inferential entanglements. For Nietzsche, however, Brandom's cloak of normativity would appear as a quilt—a motley collection of patches stitched together over time, and therefore, according to Brandom, Nietzsche's account is meaningless ([Brandom 2013](), sct. 6, 18).

The real difficulty, then, is unraveling how a contemporary, much-used, and, therefore, seemingly necessary concept, like the speech act of promise-making, emerged from purely contingent and underdetermined sources. This is the challenge Brandom presents. As Dennett claimed some years ago, his way out is to appeal to one's Community (with a capital C) ([Dennett 2006]()). And suppose one was offering an account that indeed was reductive, as he believes the genealogist is doing, that it genuinely did reach the pudenda origo of promise-making itself. In that case, Brandom might very well be correct. But as I have shown, this is not what genealogy attempts to do. Indeed, as discovered, part of the explanation that will blunt the acuity of Brandom's reductive critique of genealogy is already supplied by claiming that a genealogy provides a functional description of the item under investigation. In so far as functional explanations clarify the purpose of some object in relation to a more significant, more complex whole, such descriptions are anathema to crude, reductive approaches to understanding phenomena. Still, this answer is only partial in that it also acknowledges that genealogy is contingent in that it relies on history that could have been otherwise and that it is perspectival in that there are different lenses through which to view said historical facts and, therefore, different ways to construe the new object's functionality. Brandom's retort to this so-called defense, I think, would be to state that all this solution entails is that the genealogy is a *defeasible, functional* reduction of some norm, such as promise-making, but a reduction all the same.

To fully respond to Brandom, it is crucial in answering to turn to Williams again. For this purpose, genealogy, Williams writes, ". . .tries to explain a cultural phenomenon by describing a way in which it came about, or could have come about, or might have come about. Some of the narrative will consist of real history, which to some extent must aim to be, as Foucault puts it, "gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary" ([Williams 2002](), p. 20). Distilling the essence of William's quotation, we can say that genealogy attempts to explain the emergence of vital, seemingly necessary social concepts by presenting a coherent narrative elucidating how the idea *might* have arisen if certain givens identified by the genealogist are assumed beforehand. The given does not exist outside the genealogical perspective that the investigator chooses to frame her project but is an indexical depending on how far back the genealogist goes. Nietzsche is not simply staking out the etiology of a

chain of events that gave rise to promise-making and the like but weaving a tale containing historical and anthropological facts, assumptions about our early ancestors that preceded civilization where civilization is functionally understood as communities with walls and taxes, and most importantly hypothesizing about how some social practice *could* have come about from these conditions.

Brandom's critique is simply a category mistake if I am on the right path. But what then about Foucault's line above? I cannot thoroughly entertain an answer to that perplexity here, but I would argue it pertains to another question regarding genealogy: How precisely does a genealogy execute its purpose? Unfortunately, I will need to examine that question in another paper.

In any case, in looking at the two quotations from Williams, we can combine them to form a relatively robust understanding of genealogy. The first component of genealogy is its functionality. If we recall, Williams wrote that a genealogy explains how a "...functional concept, reason, motivation or other aspect of *human thought and behavior*...", emerged from earlier social practices. The italicized portion is that which I will call the "given" of a genealogical investigation. The second quotation (which I again italicize to highlight), concerns the "possible": a genealogy provides an explanation concerning how a phenomenon "...*could have come about, or might have come about.*" We now have three meaty components, namely the given, the possible, and the factual, that we may add to our genealogical soup's narrational, functional broth. Since the factual element is relatively straightforward, I will focus on the given and the possible.

5. The True Given

We have seen what the given is not by looking at Brandom's take on genealogy. The given does not refer to a lowly origin understood as some primal source that causally produces the subject matter of the genealogical investigation. In this section, I will endeavor to explain what the given is. In a genealogical account, givens are assumed and warranted pre-conditions of the genealogical context that allow the functional narrative to get started. Givens might even be those inherent qua being human. Still, even here, the human, too, is an indexical term: it is the current endpoint of a contingent yet biological process, namely natural selection. A statement I used to highlight the features of pragmatic genealogy from Mattieu Queloz's recent book, *The Practical Origin of Ideas: Genealogy as Conceptual Reverse-Engineering*, is consistent with the position I am taking here. If we recall, Queloz claims that genealogy is the study of how: "The ideas we live by can be shown to be rooted in practical needs and concerns generated by facts about us and our situation" (Queloz 2020, p. 2).

The framework I am using holds that the "us" in Queloz's statement refers to our biological endowments, and the "our situation" part is open-ended to include our current ecosystem or, indeed, the ecosystem of the early Paleolithic period of sub-Saharan Africa. Here, too, the idea of humans is not sui generis; it is a development from our simian ancestors. Thus, even though truth may have emerged as a social need to establish the practice of argumentation itself, which will lead to new insights and, therefore, new truths, and for someone like Foucault, "regimes of truth", this development is platformed on a whole host of biological and cognitive architecture that preceded it.[12]

It might be helpful to enlarge the above point, namely that any so-called sure footing is really loose gravel from another perspective. According to Michael Tomasello, one such cognitive capacity that must have emerged before the very notion of truth was even glimpsed is that of joint intentionality. Joint intentionality is harnessed when a planning activity involves two or more agents. It likely evolved as a means for early hominids to coordinate their hunting roles. The capacity allows agents engaged in a necessary part to complete a mutually beneficial, shared activity to take up the perspective of the other. For example, two hominids involved in a hunt can trade places (e.g., one can beat a bush to scare the game out where the other hominid is waiting to kill it or vice versa). Each can understand the role the other is playing to accomplish their shared goal and, therefore,

can take the place of the other. According to Tomasello, the capacity to see the world from another person's perspective must have been possible before its articulation.[13] Indeed, this capacity is necessary before the more refined idea of objective truth could get off the ground.

Where Queloz puts pride of place on social practices as the mechanisms of historical transformation, which are underpinned by naturalistic hypotheses about human beings, other genealogists emphasize somatic technologies. Such technologies are the engines for social, emotional, and political change in these genealogical narratives. For example, Nietzsche emphasizes torture (see esp. GM II 3 and GM II 16) to press into service the formation of new social norms like guilt. At the same time, Foucault stresses the impact of discipline (see the section on the means of correct training in *Discipline and Punish*) to explain the emergence of what he refers to as the "carceral regime." It is the same "given" that allows both genealogists to embark on their functional narratives: the pliability of the human body.

Though the idea I am advancing here of "the given" may seem like some foundational approach to genealogy, it may be rendered consistent with post-modern methods that celebrate the perspectival nature of facts and the throwing off of all "master narratives." The notion of a given is the *mise en scene* that allows new discourses, events, values, practices, and eras to appear on the historical stage. The given allows the emergent to erupt, marking, as Foucault forcefully put it some years ago, "the entry of (competing) forces" (Foucault 1977a, p. 149).

We see this dance between contingency and necessity most clearly in Foucault's *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*. Foucault often stresses that the new historian, the genealogist, reveals that facts are groundless; where history has established immobile foundations, the genealogist exposes the "faults and fissures" of history (Foucault 1977a, p. 146). Yet, to achieve this end, the French philosopher accepts at least one given: "The body is the inscribed surface of events" (Foucault 1977a, p. 148). The body, seemingly, has an innate capacity to be molded by "the rhythms of work, rest and holidays" (Foucault 1977a, p. 153).

In a related but slightly different vein, the body is a "thicker" entity for Nietzsche as it hosts animal instincts capable of being transformed into life-affirming or life-denying drives. In contrast, for other genealogists like Hobbes, the body is stripped down to, seemingly, its bare essence, namely the fact that it wounds and can be wounded in turn. This is a bare given insofar as it cannot be thrown off because our "humanity", at least currently constructed, is embodied. The capacity to be physically harmed and harm others becomes the platform for our sense of justice, so Hobbes argues.[14]

Notice that in each case, what is taken as given is only about what is vital for the investigation and how far back into history the genealogist is willing to go. The answer to Brandom's worry about promise-making seeming like a reduction, through a genealogical lens, is just a highlighting of an obvious if uncomfortable truth: we are promise-making animals, and although we may not be able to trace how we became so, our best evidence suggests that somehow, we did.

So, what do genealogists really have in common if their goal is not to return to the shameful origin of our beliefs? The chief commonality is a mutual commitment to the idea that philosophical concepts are without a metaphysical foundation—broadly construed. Paraphrasing David Couzens Hoy, in *Nietzsche, Hume and the Genealogical Method*, Genealogy becomes a way to do non-metaphysical philosophy (Hoy 1994, p. 251). Put another way by Eric Blondel, "...genealogy is a heterology (i.e., a discourse on the other) because "it uncovers the hidden in the same" (Blondel 1994, p. 309). For Foucault, genealogy exposes the non-space, a void, the pure distance where two discordant forces face off against each other. Thus, the French philosopher writes: "Consequently no one is responsible for an emergence; no one glorifies in it, since it always occurs in the interstice" (Foucault 1977a, p. 150). Genealogy provides a functional account of how a new idea emerged from the intersection of well-established discursive and non-discursive technologies and practices. These discourses and technologies, in turn, arose as functional responses to the social and

political practices that preceded them. Thus, in combining the thoughts of Hoy, Blondel, and Foucault, we can confidently claim (1): there is no singular author/event/cause for the emergence of some new idea or feeling à la Foucault; (2) there is no metaphysical underpinning for any practice per Hoy, and (3) yet the novelty of the item under investigation, following Blondel, is already lurking in the shadows of the junction of prior traditions, waiting to reveal itself.

To concretize the non-metaphysical nature of genealogy that combines the elements discussed so far, namely functionality, possibility, and the given, consider two paradigmatic genealogical accounts: Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* and Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morality*.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault provides four hypothetical principles his genealogy of the prison will follow. Although all four are pertinent to the point Williams makes regarding how a genealogy offers a functional, possible explanation of the phenomenon in question, the functionality of genealogy is brought into sharper relief by looking at the first of these: "Do not concentrate the study of punitive mechanisms on their 'repressive' effects alone, on their 'punishment' aspects alone, but situate them in a whole series of their possible positive effects, even if these seem marginal at first sight. As a consequence, regard punishment as a complex social function" (Foucault 1977b, p. 23). The prison system is valued as a form of punishment because it marks moral progress over the kinds of punishment initiated before its inception, or so a traditional rendering for the emergence of the penitentiary holds. Foucault demonstrates, in contrast, that the prison is a very practical and incredibly efficient system whose purpose is to observe and discipline bodies. These twin aspects of modern societies, namely surveillance and discipline, go hand in hand. What must be disciplined must be tracked, and it is easier to observe what is being disciplined. One of the principal products of these political technologies is the docile body. This new emergent can be trained to perform a variety of critical roles in the new nation-states of Europe (e.g., soldier, worker, student, progenitor, consumer, etc.) The new way of punishing, which entails prison sentences of varying lengths, becomes highly valued because it plays a pivotal role in producing a new system of power/knowledge (e.g., criminology, psychology), which reinforces the justification of the prison.

In contradistinction, older corporeal procedures of punishment (flaying, drawing, quartering, public executions, etc.) are now characterized as barbaric, uncivilized, unmerciful, and revolting. What was once a public affair is now viewed as too shocking and too dangerous for public consumption: too shocking because they provoke strong visceral reactions (fainting, vomiting) and too dangerous because they foment rebellion (Foucault 1977b, p. 73). Having such gruesome public displays becomes unthinkable in a relatively short period, and punishment, in turn, is hidden behind prison walls. What is presupposed in Foucault's functional account is the passivity of the body, which makes its subsequent encoding possible. Without the capacity for the body to "read-modify-write," as a computer scientist might describe it, Foucault's project cannot get off the ground. Indeed, Foucault admits as such in the infamous methods passage of *Discipline and Punish*, where he crystalizes his project in a single sentence: "In short, try to study the metamorphosis of punitive methods as the basis of a political technology of the body in which it *might be read* a common history of power relations and object relations" (Foucault 1977b, p. 24).

Turning to Nietzsche, and GM II in particular, the German philosopher is at pains to solve a profoundly perplexing problem when viewed through a naturalistic lens: How did the promise-making animal come about? In answering this question, we are able, Nietzsche thinks, to arrive at a more general inquiry: How did civilization arise? The answer to this investigation is somewhat complicated, with many components, but the first step is to create the "bad conscience." The bad conscience is the seedbed of civilization itself. In Sections 16–18 of GM: II, Nietzsche presents a functional interpretation of "civilization." The creators of domesticated society were "blond beasts of prey" who laid their "terrible claws upon a populace" (Nietzsche GM: II 17). As Nietzsche calls them, these warrior–artists laid the tracks for the formation of the modern human (Nietzsche, GM: II 17). They

created civilization by erecting walls, writing laws (the first "Thou Shalt Nots"), and inflicting punishment (torture) on those who dared to break free from their newfound enclosures (GM II 3–5). Nietzsche's provocative suggestion is that the natural, animal-like instincts of the body turned inward due to the "hammer blows" and artistic violence of this "terrible artist's egoism" (Nietzsche, GM: II 17). These fearful tyrants of the first state "...went on working until this raw material of people and semi-animals was at last not only thoroughly kneaded and pliant but also formed." (Nietzsche's italics) (Nietzsche, GM: II 17).[15] The bad conscience arises, according to Nietzsche's genealogy, because it performs a necessary function vis-à-vis the materialization of civilization: without an ever-present fearful memory that forces one to repay their debts, the entire currency of civilization, (which, for Nietzsche, is the practice of extending credit and calculating debt) is undermined, leading to the words of Hobbes "a war of all against all" (Hobbes 1966, p. 100).

Once again, the given in Nietzsche's genealogical account are these aggressive animal instincts that direct the animal body to track and pursue various targets (e.g., there is a hunting instinct, an adventure instinct, a violence instinct, a sex instinct, etc. GM II 16).[16] Yet another given is the capacity for these same instincts to turn inward when blocked from flowing in their appropriate channels. These instincts, when obstructed, transform into drives that take on different external targets but, more importantly, serve to carve out the soul.[17] The soul, Nietzsche reminds us, before the advent of civilization, was as thin as "...if stretched between two membranes."[18]

There is a crucial reason why it is difficult to provide a functional account for how ideas like truth or guilt arose, even though the seedbed for their origins seems to be in plain sight (Blondel's remark about "the hidden in the same"). I would submit that the reason is because the phenomenon becomes invested with tremendous value, and valuing obscures the object's original functionality. The vaunted, almost consecrated status of the phenomenon to be investigated serves to thwart if not an enlightened attitude of the item–namely, that the phenomenon does not mark some inherent step towards moral progression but is simply a means to solve a practical problem—at the very least, a different perspective through which to view it. My hypothesis on this score seems factually true in thinking about Foucault's functional approach to the rise of the prison system, where sentencing an individual to a prison term, regardless of the crime committed, turns out to be so "obvious" that it becomes uniformly employed such that criminologists can no longer conceive of an alternative means of punishment (Foucault 1977b, Discipline and Punish Generalized Punishment section). With this idea in mind, it is important to remember, then, the purpose of the genealogy's functional explanation for the emergence of some new value or technology which is to question the deified worth of the object under investigation. If that is right, we can examine the second notion of functionality: genealogies' impact on their readers.

6. Functionality II: Aspectival Captivity

There is a second function of genealogy. Genealogy, as remarked, is an alternative to historical accounts. Thus, we might ask: alternatives for whom? Whose purpose do genealogies serve? The other function of genealogy is to provide an alternative narrative of some historical event or idea than the one traditionally proffered. Readers can look at the possible origin of some phenomenon in at least two different ways and critically reflect and assess the methods that scholars have used to develop the two diverging accounts of the same occurrence. Returning to the meatier components of the genealogy, namely that of possibility, the account, if successful, provokes possibilities hitherto unexplored and even unimagined. If we are on the right track so far, then a genealogical narrative is necessarily connected in some way to traditional accounts of the same phenomenon. The possibilities a genealogical narrative reveals are dependent on conventional versions of that same object, though what such dependency entails is an open question and one I will attempt to answer in this section.

To begin the investigation regarding precisely what sort of dependency genealogy has on standard explanations of some phenomenon, I will start with Daniel Conway. In his *Genealogy and the Critical Method*, Conway evinces, "Genealogical interpretations are always abnormal and reactive, preying upon the normal, authoritative interpretations they challenge" (Conway 1994, pp. 318–34, 325). Conway is undoubtedly correct in so far as a genealogical inquiry serves to function as a means of disabusing readers of their traditional beliefs. A genealogy cannot be taken up ab initio—it is a response to the dominant account of the phenomenon under investigation. Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morality* responds to Paul Rees's *The Origin of Moral Sentiments*, and also, I might add, Christian apologists. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* is a response, at least in part, to thinkers like Durkheim who believed mistakenly, in Foucault's opinion, that new punitive methods are simply consequences of legislation and the new humanistic sentiments that inform them (Foucault 1977b, p. 53).

But what Conway gets wrong, in my view, is when he connects the above quotation with the following statement: "Whatever degree of validity a genealogy acquires is therefore entirely relative to the interpretation it discredits" (Conway 1994, p. 325). Contained within this line are two thoughts: (1) that a genealogy's narrational functionality is parasitic on traditional discourses, and (2) that it has a normative functionality: the function of genealogy is directed to disillusioning a reader from viewing some object under a particular framework. The normativity in question here is epistemic, with at least two interpretations. The first ascribes a reasonably robust sense of rationality to the reader. Conway implies that once the reader compares the genealogical account with the traditional one, she will be compelled to discard the old interpretation in favor of the new one. The causal factor in rejecting the old narrative is normative in that the reader considers the genealogical account more warranted and cohesive than the story she initially believed to be accurate. In comparing one narrative to the other, the reader believes that the genealogical story is more compelling, epistemically speaking. Both accounts appear incompatible; therefore, the reader thinks she should adopt the new narrative (on pain of inconsistency) to explain the emergence of the event or object. The weight of what it means to be rational provokes the reader to disassemble her previous belief system. It is for this reason that the curative aspects of genealogy are normative.

A second interpretation that is less metaphysically committed but still epistemic holds that Nietzsche's genealogies are a kind of modern *ephexis* (*epexetai*) (suspension); they are tactics aimed at correcting the reader of a belief once held to be accurate by demonstrating that the traditional stance regarding the origin of some subject matter is rife with problems. Jessica Berry more fully works out this position in her work, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition*. Rather than forcing a reader to pick one account over the other, Berry argues that Nietzsche adopts a weaker position: a genealogy provokes readers not to rush to judgment; readers should hold both narratives (e.g., the Christian account of guilt and Nietzsche's) in a state of equipollence or suspension of judgment (Berry 2011, p. 173). Thus, in looking at the diagnostic purpose and efficacy of Nietzsche's argumentation given this model, his *Genealogy* serves to combat dogmatic beliefs not dissimilar to ancient skeptical philosophies, especially those employed by Democritus, the laughing philosopher, or so some defenders of this interpretation hold. The curative value resides in refusing to take moral ideals seriously ". . .to regard them as if from above and from a great distance and cast ultimate suspicion upon them" (Berry 2011, p. 173). By not taking such beliefs sincerely (e.g., guilt as a punishment from God), we are not subject to deleterious and unnecessary mental suffering.

An interpretation that brings both Conway's and Berry's respective views together to form a more ecumenical sense of genealogy is that of David Owen. Owen connects the dependency claim of Conway and the skepsis of Berry—the latter of which merely taps the epistemic vein of genealogy—and exposes the vein itself. Owen's thinking about genealogy is preferable for my argument because it underscores the importance of possibility. Per Conway, his definition of genealogy relies on ideology critique (Owen 2002, p. 217).

Ideology critique tries to show that a falsehood (e.g., propaganda) is promoted to hide a more profound truth that, if revealed, would jeopardize the current structure of power in a society.

In contrast, genealogy discloses to its readers that they do not suffer from a false belief (though their belief system may well be chock-full of unwarranted assumptions) because that would presuppose that there is an accurate picture of the world to be had. Instead, genealogy demonstrates that a reader's belief set is limited; there are other beliefs to consider (Owen 2002, p. 217). Owen makes the distinction more concrete by thinking about a false belief set in Marxian terms. If holding a faulty belief system is akin to Marxian false consciousness, then a limiting belief set is equivalent to what Owen calls restricted self-consciousness. Restricted self-consciousness occurs when a subject is captured by a vision of reality that is neither true nor false but is taken to be the only frame of reference in which questions regarding the truth and falsity of various issues may be legitimately asked. It is also essential to notice the word "self" in "self-consciousness" compared to the more straightforward notion of "false consciousness." For subjects to suffer from restricted self-consciousness, it is implied that these individuals, to some degree, are complicit in what Owen calls their very "aspectival captivity" (Owen 2007, p. 149). In other words, they have hitherto failed to examine their beliefs critically: being held captive by a picture is more of an active form of self-imposed constraint to self-government than merely suffering from false consciousness because it is a result of the subject accepting (and failing to interrogate) the ways of construing the world that are put to her (Owen 2002, p. 217). The purpose of genealogy, in general, Owen claims, is to free its readers from restricted self-consciousness. In summary, genealogies are necessarily polemical because they strategically go to war with some component of a reader's well-entrenched belief system.[19] By demolishing a cornerstone of a fortified belief structure, a corridor is opened, allowing other ideas, attitudes, and even feelings to infiltrate.[20]

But how exactly do genealogies achieve a viable alternative account of some event in such a way that it allows its readers to see a phenomenon in a new light? It cannot just simply be through providing a different perspective to view the object in question. This is too simplistic. Genealogies expose a possible way to think about how our very subjectivities have been forged. It is important to recall that the entire second essay of Nietzsche's *Genealogy* provides a narrative of a *possible* way the promise-making animal came to be. Turning to Foucault, it is imperative to recall that the French philosopher is at pains to draw his readers' attention to the fact that "...the soul is the prison of the body" (Foucault 1977b, p. 30). He then proceeds to show us—assuming, of course, that the givens for this statement are true—precisely how the carceral formatting of our bodies has restricted our collective capacity for new forms of self-expression. In sum, these genealogies demonstrate that there could very well be limits to how we can reimagine ourselves, yet presumably, for Owen, merely to view a genealogical object in another light is also to see how we could have been different.[21] But what capacity allows us to see our very limits?

Unfortunately, I cannot undertake an answer here as exploring this question would lead to the third question of genealogy: How does a genealogy achieve its purpose? Instead, I want to focus on the final feature of genealogy: What limits does a genealogy reveal to its readers?

Before looking at the final aspect of genealogy, I think it is vital to understand what we have learned so far. First, genealogy provides a functional interpretation of how a phenomenon might have come about from earlier social practices and technologies. Second, the givens of a genealogical inquiry will underpin said practices and technologies. Third, genealogy, in the main, uses historical evidence to provide a compelling narrative of how this new thing could have come about to serve a critical function in society. The evidence supporting this narrative will be perspectival because of the givens selected by the genealogist. Fourth, because the account is only one possibility among many, the phenomenon is contingent because it is not a necessary outcome of these earlier conditions. Genealogy is an anti-metaphysical critique. Fifth, the object of investigation is novel and

original; it is irreducible to the conditions of its origin because a genealogy does not provide a causal account of the phenomenon in question. Sixth, the second function of genealogy is to offer alternative perspectives through which to view the object. It is in hopes of providing said alternatives that one may free oneself from aspectival captivity. With this summary in mind, I turn to the last component to a fulsome answer to the initial question driving this investigation: What is philosophical genealogy, and what is its purpose? This last facet is aspect seven: genealogies attempt to surpass our current limit-attitude.

7. Genealogy as Critique: The Limit-Attitude

In order to think about and address this idea of the "limit-attitude," we need to return to Foucault. In one of his last interviews, the French philosopher claimed that genealogies investigate three aspects of our subjectivity:

First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth, through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents (Foucault 1984).

Each of these three areas of research constitutes avenues of potential genealogical exploration. And each, I argue, follows the six-fold methodology (and soon to be seven) I outlined above. However, these same paths of investigation are then used reflexively to think about the constitution (or possible constitution) of our very subjectivity. To amplify this point, I turn to Foucault's essay, "What is Enlightenment?".

In this work, Foucault suggests that our respective subjectivities, at least operationally speaking, may be thought of as the locus of our current ways of thinking, feeling, doing, saying, and behaving (Foucault 1984, pp. 47–48). These ways of relating to ourselves, or what Foucault calls the *rapport à soi,* are contingent and, therefore, are best explained by providing a genealogical analysis of the conditions that gave rise to them. If that is correct, then the purpose of genealogy is to expose the historical conditions that generated the present ways we have of relating to ourselves to demonstrate that they are not necessary but contingent, historical, and arbitrary through and through. Mark Bevir articulates the personal, transformative possibilities of genealogy that come into focus for subjects just from individuals reflecting on the contingent nature of their beliefs and norms. He observes: "Finally, genealogy opens novel spaces for personal and social transformation precisely because it loosens the hold on us of entrenched ideas and institutions; it frees us to imagine other possibilities" (Bevir 2008, pp. 263–75, 272).

A genealogical analysis exposes the possible, capricious ways in which our subjectivity came to be, and in so doing, the very idea of subjectivity is transformed. Instead of thinking that some feelings, actions, discourses, thoughts, etc., are metaphysically necessary and define what it means to be "human", we now think of them (and the category of humanity itself) as conditional and, therefore, a "limit" preventing further analysis, experimentation, and other possibilities of self-relation. The "limits" to our thinking or feeling are no longer considered immutable parameters reigning in possible ways to be human—they are now known to be subject to alteration if and only if we are courageous enough to challenge them. As a result, they become "limit attitudes", and in turn, the genealogist must "experiment" with them by actively endeavoring to "go beyond them" (Foucault 1984, p. 50).

To clarify the above points, a genealogy provides a compelling picture of how a phenomenon *possibly* emerged from constructing a narrative from givens that the reader accepts as warranted. However, in providing an alternative image, for example, as to how we, as subjects, came to think of our very subjectivity, as Foucault, Nietzsche, and Hobbes do, we already transgress what was traditionally considered essential and even sacred to the very concept of subjectivity itself. If that summary is correct, then even the undertaking of a genealogical investigation is necessarily an ethical project, for it is an attempt to rethink the ways in which we have come to be. With this gloss in mind, Foucault's description of genealogical practice as an *ethos* comes into sharper focus: "This philosophical *ethos* (of

genealogy) may be characterized as limit-attitude. . .Criticism indeed consists of analyzing and reflecting upon limits" ([Foucault 1984](), p. 47). In this way, genealogy is therapeutic as ". . .it is capable of subverting the assurances of transcendence or meaning which history appears to offer to knowledge" ([May 1993](), p.77).

This curative side of genealogy is well-established in Foucault's mentor, Friedrich Nietzsche. In the preface to *The Genealogy of Morality,* Nietzsche reminds his readers that the sort of new investigations of morality he calls for must be taken up with the utmost seriousness precisely because it is only through these kinds of naturalistic examinations that we may flush out the "poison" from our current belief systems[22]:

> But to me on the contrary, there seems to be nothing more worth taking seriously among the rewards for it being that some day one will perhaps be allowed to take them cheerfully. For cheerfulness or in my language *gay science* is a reward: the reward of a long, brave industrious and subterranean seriousness of which to be sure not everyone is capable ([Nietzsche 2000](), preface, sct. 7).

For Nietzsche, questioning our beliefs and values is undoubtedly significant, but being critical of our feelings is more vital because "it is feelings and not thoughts" that are inherited ([Nietzsche 1982](), sct. 30). If we combine these points and the general thrust of Nietzsche's message about "feelings" is correct, which I take to mean that current systems of non-physical constraint work on both a subject's doxastic and non-doxastic parts (e.g., the affects), then the subterranean serious work Nietzsche mentions in the above passage before one is rewarded, is genealogy. So, what, then, is the reward? It is nothing less than the capacity to reconfigure the current constitution of oneself. It is for these reasons that a genealogy will always be personal. Christopher Janaway elucidates the personal aspect of genealogy well when he writes, in this regard, "How did I come to feel and think in these ways of mine?" That is one sense in which the inquiry must be personal for Nietzsche" ([Janaway 2006](), p. 347).

Grouping these ideas, we have a tripartite picture reflecting the limit-attitude aspect of genealogy: (1) Per Foucault, genealogy provides a new way to examine the possible constituents of our subjectivity. These constituents are not just cognitive but dispositional and affective. As a result, genealogical inquiry must be "personal" per Janaway; (2) Genealogy exposes the limits of said subjectivity as constituted by the above components; and (3) It offers a curative solution to how we can rethink such boundaries. Colin Koopman, once more, provides a helpful elucidation and summary of these three elements in the following statement:

> "First, genealogy is a practice of critique. This does not mean that it stands in judgment of that which it surveys or tells us what is wrong with the world rather genealogy is critical in that it explores the limits of what we can do in the present. These limits may be judged to be good or bad but genealogy is concerned with the conditions of possibility that define the present in such a way that certain actions simply are not possible for us". ([Koopman 2019](), p. 23)

How do we come to recognize and even go beyond these limits, one might reasonably ask? Koopman's response implies that recognizing our "limits" concerning "what we can do in the present" is epistemic: we need genealogy to provide a new framing of phenomena. The role of the epistemic but, more specifically, the justificatory was emphasized in Owen, Conway, and Berry, as already noted, but we see it in other places. Krestemas, for example, writes: "In this manner, genealogies can operate as a method for tracing pathways that unravel the definitions we impose on things and for exposing the limitations of familiar narratives; producing explanations that are non-teleological" ([Krestemas 2017](), p. 1).

As I have demonstrated, however, by returning to Nietzsche and Foucault, the exposing of limits does not simply denote the fact that genealogy reveals, cognitively speaking, how what we take to be necessary may have resulted in a contingent fashion and thus makes us skeptical of how a crucial concept or institution in our society came about. My argument is that a successful genealogy, more crucially, operates directly on our emotional sentiments. Thus, I agree with Owen when he states that there is an essential difference

between genealogy and ideology critique in that the latter has to do with being held captive by an ideology. In contrast, the former involves being held captive by a perspective. The main problem with Owen's (et al.) understanding of genealogy is that they believe that ideology critique and genealogical inquiry are not different in kind (see the above section). Owen construes aspectival captivity as a cerebral, although affectively attenuated, reflective mode of non-physical constraint. Yet, even to claim that ideology and aspectival captivity are two species within the genus of non-physical forms of constraint to self-government is to misunderstand how particular values, questions, and truths came to be recognized as the only values, questions, and truths considered valid in contemporary society. If Nietzsche's genealogy is even somewhat accurate, then "herd valuation," along with its debilitating and attending emotive affects like ressentiment, invades the body and the head.

Having a mistaken picture (aspectival captivity) is not just a form of non-physical constraint that impedes our abilities for self-government à la Marx, but is, in fact, a manifestation of a very real physical production which manufactures—at the very least—parts of the self. Thus, because Owen mischaracterizes the diagnostic essence of genealogy, he also misidentifies its curative value: genealogy does not just expose a form of non-physical constraint but, more importantly, reveals a kind of constitutive enslavement: our very subjectivity in some sense is not our own: it is an internalization of both discursive and non-discursive modes of power.

More to the point, Owen fails to acknowledge how exactly the body is affected by power and how once affected, it causes one to become closed off from potentially life-affirming viewpoints. Foucault, one of Nietzsche's most insightful commentators, emphasized the importance of the body concerning genealogical inquiry when he wrote: "Descent (Enstehung or the markings of power) attaches itself to the body. It inscribes itself in the nervous system, in temperament, in the digestive apparatus. . ." (Foucault 1977a, p. 147). While Owen seems to realize this objection in only an implicit fashion in his commentary on Nietzsche's *Genealogy* when he acknowledges the following, "Nietzsche's genealogy, in particular, is designed to mobilize our existing affective dispositions against morality," it is difficult to see how this may be accomplished on a purely, reflective level even if one's affects provide a measure of tonality and charge to said reflection (Owen 2007, p. 131).

Part of the problem concerns Owen's construal of perspectivism and aspectival captivity. We may wonder: How does the process of unmooring ourselves from such mistaken pictures occur given Nietzsche's gripping portrayal of the genealogy of the ascetic ideal? Our tremendous capacity to torture ourselves is not something we can "will away" no matter how well we reflect on, and engage with, our emotional propensity to feel shame and guilt (especially when we realize that we are "unproductive" or "wasting time") and that such notions are somatically, but not conceptually tethered to older emotions. While Owen is correct in asserting that a successful genealogy does mobilize the affects by using various tools such as rhetoric, vivid portrayals of torture, and shifting points of view, he has failed to pinpoint how, precisely, this "mobilization of affects" occurs.[23] In sum, Owen seems to assume that a careful, historical, and warranted investigation, albeit emotionally informed, regarding the origins of a Western, Christian moral outlook is sufficient to account for the agent's future enlightenment and emancipation. However, as I will argue in a follow-up article, mere critical reflection is not enough; a genealogy is successful only insofar as it engages the body's very affective system and physical movements.[24] Similar issues are found in the works of Janaway and Leiter. Both thinkers underscore the importance of altering one's affects vis-à-vis finding a curative antidote to aspectival captivity, but hereto, affects are still subsumed under the category of the epistemic.[25]

It is here that I must leave this investigation to one side; however, a fulsome response to this question would entail looking at question (3): How does a genealogy achieve its purpose? I leave that question for a future article that uses the present one as its scaffolding.

In conclusion, I argue that a genealogical account comprises seven elements. First, genealogy provides a functional interpretation of how a phenomenon might have come about from earlier social practices and technologies. Second, a genealogist establishes

"givens" that will serve as a platform for said functional explanation. Third, genealogy is anti-metaphysical: the givens of a genealogical account are indexicals. Fourth, because a genealogist acknowledges that their account is only a possible one for the emergence of a phenomenon, the phenomenon is contingent in the sense that it is not a necessary outcome of earlier social, political, material, or even biological conditions. Fifth, the object of investigation is novel and original. It is irreducible to its conditions of origin because a genealogy does not provide a causal account of the phenomenon in question. Sixth, a genealogy is always polemical in the sense that it attempts to make readers question their well-entrenched beliefs. The genealogy aims to demonstrate that readers suffer from restricted self-consciousness. Seventh, genealogies are practices of critique and personal engagements with history. A genealogy transcends our current limit-attitude by engaging with the conditions of the formation of subjectivity itself. In another paper, I will use this essay as a foundation to explore the third question of philosophical genealogy: How does it achieve its purpose?

Notes

1   A reviewer suggested that I develop an explicit critique of metaphysics by coupling the genealogical sketch I provide here with a Heideggerian analysis. I certainly think such a project is warranted, but it is too large an undertaking for a journal article.

2   See Taylor (1986, p. 70): "The idea of liberating truth is a profound illusion. There is no truth that can be espoused, defended, rescued against systems of power. On the contrary, each system defines its own variant of truth".

3   For a brief introduction to pragmatic genealogy, see Queloz (2021).

4   In thinking about the genealogy of Liberty I have Foucault's in mind, see Foucault (1977a, p. 150). Foucault is referencing Nietzsche's account of the origin of Liberty in *Wanderer and his Shadow* sec. 9 (Foucault 1913, p. 179).

5   This is an example used by Millikan, see Millikan (1989).

6   I explain this last component of a genealogy, which is about a genealogy's purpose, in the final section.

7   See, for example, Alastair MacIntyre's interpretation of genealogy in "Genealogy as Subversions": "The ruptures in that history (of science), as identified by Bachelard and Kuhn, moments in which a transition is made from one standardized understanding of what is to be rational to some other, sometimes incommensurable standardized understanding of rationality, are also secondary phenomena. For they, like the standardized orders which they divide and join, are the outcome of assemblages and confluences in the making of which distributions of power have been at work, in such a way that what appear at the surface level as forms of rationality both are, and result from, the implementation of a variety of aggressive and defensive strategies, albeit strategies without subjects. Truth and power are thus inseparable—what appear as projects aimed at the possession of truth are always willful in their exercise of power" (MacIntyre 1994, p. 301). Thomas McCarthy has the same reductive view of genealogy as Brandom and MacIntyre: "Having become more or less co-extensive with restraint, power becomes all too like the night in which all cows are black." McCarthy concludes that Foucault has a one-dimensional ontology in which truth, knowledge, and subjectivity are reduced in the end to the effects of power, see McCarthy (1994, p. 254). Mark Bevir, in "What is Genealogy?" also argues that Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morality* practices an unmasking where the true source behind our feelings is revealed. He writes: "Of course, genealogists may buttress their critique by other forms of argument—such as the phenomenological or psychological unmasking associated with, for example, Nietzsche's account of ressentiment—but the distinctly genealogical form of critique derives from the denaturalizing effect of radical historicism." How one may square this claim with genealogy's purported nominalism–one of genealogy's fundamental attributes, according to Bevir—is unclear (Bevir 2008, p. 271). See also Migotti (2006).

8   For the criticism that genealogies conflate perspective with truth, see Habermas (1985, p. 281) and Taylor (1984).

9   This section discusses themes found in an earlier article I wrote on Brandom's diagnosis of genealogy. See Lightbody (2020).

10 See Lightbody (2020, p. 639) for a more detailed analysis.

11 See Lightbody (2020) and in particular the section De Re, De Dicto, De Intellectu Readings and Nietzsche's Genealogy, pp. 643–47.

12 For the pragmatic origins of truth see Price (2011).

13   Tomasello (2019, p. 81). See my article for more on this connection.

14   (Hobbes 1966, p. 81). This fact sets up Hobbes's later grim view of human nature: "Even the strongest must sleep; even the weakest might persuade others to help him kill another." p. 98.

15   The above is a much-condensed summary of a fuller treatment I provide of Nietzsche's explanation of the bad conscience from an earlier article. See Lightbody (2021a, p. 9).

16   For a clear and informative introduction to Nietzsche's philosophical psychology and drive theory, see Riccardi (2021).

17   This process of "soul carving" that Nietzsche discusses in section GM: II, 16 is often referred to as the Internalization Hypothesis. For two different readings of this Hypothesis, see Lightbody (2021b). This article attempts to justify a literal reading of internalization. The second interpretation is an implexic reading of internalization. See Lightbody (2023, pp. 113–55), particularly chapter 4: The Internalization Hypothesis: A New Reading.

18   Nietzsche, GM: II 16: "The entire inner world, originally as thin as if it were stretched between two membranes, expanded and extended itself, acquired depth, breadth, and height in the same measure as outward discharge was inhibited."

19   The full title of Nietzsche's *Genealogy* is *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic* (*Latin Polemos and Greek Polemikos* "to be at war").

20   I treat Owen's construal of aspectival captivity in an earlier work. See Lightbody (2010).

21   I return to Owen's position in the final section.

22   For more on the poisonous aspects of our beliefs see Higgins (2020, pp. 49–63).

23   (Owen 2007, p. 143). See my earlier book, *Philosophical Genealogy* for more on this connection.

24   A similar issue appears in the work of Janaway and Leiter where each acknowledges that a successful genealogy must engage the reader's affects in order to effectuate change, but such engagement is subordinate to the realm of the epistemic. We see this in at least two places in Janaway's *oeuvre*. The first is found in Nietzsche (2003). According to Janaway, Nietzsche's true goal in the *Genealogy* is to set off, within the confines of his readers' psyches, "a set of affective detonations in which a new truth becomes visible every time through thick clouds". The second is found in Janaway (2007), Janaway writes: "So Nietzsche's practice in the Genealogy suggests the belief that our feeling shocked, embarrassed, disgusted, or attracted by some phenomenon tells us something about that phenomenon—that is that feelings themselves have cognitive potency.", 210. See Leiter (2002).

25   As I will argue in a forthcoming article, Nietzsche provides genealogists with important tools that help to disentangle the cognitive elements from the affective in relation to our emotions. For an early treatment of this method, see Lightbody (2021a).

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