

Editorial

***Genealogy*: Inaugural Editorial**

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A genealogy is a narrative that tries to explain a cultural phenomenon by describing a way in which it came about, or could have come about, or might be imagined to have come about.

(—Bernard Williams ([1], p. 20).)

Genealogy is an open-access, quarterly journal that publishes original research and theory online immediately after it has completed the review process. The journal will serve as a venue for cutting edge contributions to the field of genealogy studies; making this scholarly work available to the broadest possible reading audience in a timely manner.

But what exactly is genealogy studies? The journal invites a multiplicity of answers to this question, seeking to foster a dialogue about the relevance of genealogical perspectives for an interdisciplinary array of theories and research questions. The journal's inaugural issue initiates this discussion by inviting essays that explore the question "What is Genealogy?" The journal also invites proposals for guest-edited special issues which can include (but are not limited to) family lineage and family studies more broadly defined, migration studies, histories of law and state policy, medical and health studies, literary studies and philology, the narration of all types of social identities (including but not limited to racial-ethnic, gendered, religious and political identities), and the implications that recent developments in genetic/genographic research and services hold for the narration of these identities.

The introductory quote by Bernard Williams encompasses all of these directions. His definition of genealogy is both succinct and suitably vague; suggesting an analytic tendency that characterizes all genealogies, while allowing for a diversity of research interests and disciplinary perspectives which are amply illustrated by the scholarship of the journal's editorial board. But perhaps the most compelling feature of Williams' definition is the implication that genealogical narratives must be understood as methods of explanation and not simply aggregations of historical data. Put another way, the thing that is most genealogical about a genealogy is the method by which its contents have been strung together.

Following Williams, if all genealogies are explanations, then they can also be understood as expressions of a philosophy of knowledge; whether these are essentialist epistemologies that have informed popular ideas about blood lineage or Nietzschean genealogical distinctions that are used to decenter universalist truth claims. Although these examples describe very different perspectives on genealogy, they both shed light on the uneasy tension between genealogical narratives and the dominant epistemologies of modernity. In the former case, genealogy recalls a premodern knowledge—neofeudal lineage trees that are at odds with the egalitarian subjectivities of the modern, liberal-democratic state. While in the latter case, genealogy gravitates toward the postmodern—taking the form of an explicit assault on modernist categories of thought. In both cases, genealogy lies on the margins of the modern. It embeds things in history, mapping irreducible singularities; generating a kind of knowledge radically counterpoised to the modernist paradigm described by Anthony Giddens [2], which dis-embeds things from localized contexts and reinserts them within generalizable categories that are articulated across progressively wider tracts of time and space.

When viewed in this light, the journal's scope broadens considerably. *Genealogy* is also a venue for rethinking the contours of modern science. This aim is not well described by the idea of critique,

much less opposition to the modernist paradigm. Instead, it suggests a more creative mode of inquiry that seeks to reassess the distinctions through which modernity has defined its limits in order to chart new horizons for research and theory. This potential for genealogy studies resonates with the aims of transdisciplinary theory [3]. It is also conducive to Hans Joas' [4] effort to elucidate an affirmative genealogy that is neither Kantian nor Nietzschean; highlighting a dimension of genealogical theory that is inherently open-ended.

Colin Koopman [5], for example, has elaborated a Foucauldian genealogical method that claims a Nietzschean lineage but which can also be understood as a departure from this lineage. Koopman describes genealogy as a method for explicating differentiation within historical processes, and he emphasizes that this process is transformative. Genealogies can be used to clarify previously unforeseen distinctions that radically re-frame our pre-existing conceptual schemas, and which open up new perspectives for acting in (and on) the present. Hence, the analysis of history is used to re-conceptualize the dilemmas of the present, describing the varied pathways that are entangled within the present moment, and offering a prescription for the path that should be taken.

Although this process is highly conceptual, it is also very concrete. Genealogical distinctions are typically defined by practical problems that force us to pay closer attention to the immanent. It also bears noting that some of the most widely cited concepts in the social sciences are implicitly genealogical. Some examples include the distinctions that migration scholars make between different pathways to integration (segmented, straight-line, pluralist), distinctions that have been used to describe paradigms of social movement activity (between "old" and "new" social movements, or between first, second and third wave feminism), or distinctions that have been used to describe shifting themes in the political evolution of race and racism, or distinctions between Keynesian and neoliberal paradigms of social welfare policy. These research interests clearly extend beyond that of family lineage, but as some scholars have shown [6,7], discourses on family lineage (along with religious and ethno-national narratives that drape themselves in metaphors of family lineage), can provide fresh insights into the broader social and political contexts described by these concepts.

Hence, another aim of the journal is to promote a more rigorous genealogical theory that can better inform the implicitly genealogical distinctions that are already widely used across the disciplines. For example, Timothy Dallen and Jean Kay Guelke [8] have made important contributions to the spatial analysis of genealogical data. Koopman, in contrast, places more emphasis on how genealogies are used to trace processes that unfold in time. The articulation of these two analytic perspectives, the temporal and the spatial, points toward another frontier for genealogical scholarship that resonates with ideas advanced by the growing field of Bergsonian scholarship [9,10]. Genealogical narratives are always spatial insofar as they delimit an entity (describing how it takes up space; its territorial configuration), but they are also inextricably bound up with the process of duration. Genealogies mobilize fragments of the past to conceptualize the present (which always presents itself as a problem), and this process is part and parcel of the way that a thing manages to endure—which can be understood, ultimately, as the problem of life itself: how will a thing continue to go about the precarious act of living?

This question indicates how genealogical studies could contribute to an evolutionary theory that can enter into conversation with Darwinism without necessarily being assimilated to it. There is, of course, a Darwinian perspective on genealogy [11,12], but genealogical methods also have the potential to foster evolutionary explanations that are not tied to the concept of species or natural selection, and are not primarily concerned with replication (*i.e.*, the reproduction of the same). These conceptual horizons have already been explored in some depth by philosophers of science [13–15]. *Genealogy* offers a venue for exploring them in a way that highlights the singular contributions of a genealogical perspective, and which attempts to draw the diverse strands of genealogical scholarship into closer conversation with each other. We hope you will join the conversation!

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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