

Editorial

What Is Genealogy? Introduction to the Inaugural Issue of Genealogy

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Academic Editor: Amy M. Smith

Received: 31 May 2017; Accepted: 1 June 2017; Published: 5 June 2017

The inaugural issue of *Genealogy* offers an ambitious selection of essays which provide several answers to the question “What is Genealogy?” Each essay could easily have appeared in a different journal, specializing in philosophy, family studies and communication, race and ethnicity studies, political sociology or the cultural study of science and technology. As Bruno Latour (Latour 1993) has explained, this way of describing the contents is classically modern, sorting scholarly knowledge into separate and clearly demarcated fields of inquiry. Directions in inter, multi and transdisciplinary research (Max-Neef 2005) have attempted to overcome the blindsights of this order of knowledge, by fostering collaborations across disciplinary lines. But genealogy proceeds a different way.

Instead of promoting an intersectionality between things presumptively defined as categorically different, genealogies map the trans-categorical (or hybrid) relations in which all things are already embedded. The tracing of these relations may reveal how species (or, qualities that become recognizable to us through the language of “species”) wither away and branch off into other species, or how family names transform over time or disappear entirely in the winds of history (or are re-membered from the vantage point of a very different cultural sensibility) and so on. 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.

Another feature of the genealogical method is its disruptive tendencies which, as Foucauldian scholars have explained, allow it to operate as a diagnostic and prescription for social change (Koopman 2012; Gutting 1990). The genealogical distinction describes a crossroads, which is always situated in view of a “past” of some sort, but marks a rupture nonetheless—the point at which one line ends and another begins. The great trick of the genealogical method is to render visible these emergent differences, that might otherwise remain buried in discourses that emphasize their continuity with what came before. Viewed in this light, genealogies are not just maps of the past, but templates for future action. This is why it may be besides the point to ask whether a genealogy is accurate. Or at least, our interest in understanding the meaning of a genealogy should not be *limited* to an analysis of its empirical veracity. It’s also important to understand what a genealogy is being used to do. What new forms of cultural agency and filiation does it make possible? (And just as important, what possibilities and historical memories does it rule out?)

These qualities are precisely the sorts of things that put genealogical explanations at odds with the Cartesian moorings of modern science. They muddy the subject/object distinction that makes it possible to imagine the scientist as a non-interfering observer of an objective datum. The genealogical method even appears to contradict itself, by complicating the critique of teleology that is typically attributed to the Nietzschean and Foucauldian genealogical method. For example, when Frederick Neuhauser (2012) examines the genealogy that Rousseau uses to organize his discourse on inequality, he concludes that Rousseau is not using genealogy as an historical method, but as a telos for organizing the narration of history—so as to distinguish paradigmatically different forms of inequality, including their effects, causes and defining qualities. This is not a teleology with a capital “T” that tries to explain

how all of history (including other, competing value systems) derives from the same, transcendent standard of truth. Instead, the genealogical treatment of teleology is used to make distinctions between divergent principles that, if left to their own devices, would create entirely different kinds of social realities.

This may come off as a strangely Nietzschean reading of Rousseau; and one that Rousseau might not have approved. Nietzsche can still be counted as the first scholar to seriously mine the philosophical implications of the genealogical method—which he uses to undermine the moral foundations of the very same political project that Rousseau set out to create (Nietzsche [1881] 1997).¹ But as Neuhouser (2012) insists, Rousseau’s genealogy can also be regarded as an ancestor of Nietzsche’s method (and the same argument can be made about Darwin, as we will see shortly). This is all in the way of genealogies. Even the most sharply opposed philosophies and social identities can be located in the same line of descent. Genealogies expose these embarrassing connections between things that would rather be kept separate—underscoring the point that, even if they share similar qualities, ancestors don’t determine the actions of their descendants.

Nevertheless, Rousseau’s discourse on inequality provides a revealing insight into the way that genealogies are used to cultivate truths; which is all the more compelling because Rousseau is not intending to make a relativist argument.² Even when advocating for their preferred truth, the genealogist does not shroud it in discourses that testify to its inevitability and universality. Instead, they quite often depict it as embattled and in need of protection (consider Nietzsche’s writing on noble types (Nietzsche [1882] 1974) or Rousseau’s affirmation of *amour-propre*³). This is why the preferred truths of the genealogist can be described as teleologies with a small “t”. They inhabit a pluralistic universe of the sort described by William James (1909), in which the genealogist cultivates standards of truth to clear new paths in a vast jungle teeming with other entities, who are manufacturing truths propelled by different principles and aims.

As a result, the genealogical method can be used to dissolve standards of truth that have been posited as timeless and universal (this is its non-teleological moment). And after it has established the fluid and contingent nature of truth it can go on to fashion narratives that are told from a specific cultural-historical locus (the point at which it re-engages teleology, with a small “t”). But again, this is where genealogies get into trouble with the modern paradigm of knowledge; because they draw attention to another disturbing truth. It’s not possible to cleanly separate the analysis of historical processes from the creative work that is used to steer history in new directions. The genealogist is always, at some level, participating in making the histories on which they are reporting.

This scandalous situation leaves genealogy studies open to all sort of criticisms. It can be faulted for a naïve empiricism; not appearing to understand that the cultural artefacts it takes for real are things of its own making (echoing the modern-European polemic against African fetishism, recounted by Latour (1993)). Or if the genealogist embraces their powers of creation, they can be damned for the opposite reason—because they now appear to believe that reality can be whatever you choose to make of it (they have descended into “postmodernism”⁴). This situation becomes all the more scandalous when the genealogist demonstrates that this profane relationship between truth and fabrication is not

¹ Nietzsche’s description of Rousseau as a “moral tarantula” (in the course of one of his many criticisms of Kant) sums up these intentions well enough (Nietzsche [1881] 1997).

² The implication here is that the relativism of truth is a postulate that is genetic to the genealogical method rather than a value held by the user of the method. Unlike Nietzsche, Rousseau did not celebrate value pluralism, but in order to use the method effectively (or at all) the existence of divergent values—and the capacity for humans to create divergent values—must be acknowledged, as an “is” irrespective of what “should be”.

³ Rousseau distinguishes *amour-propre* (a desire for social esteem that requires public affirmation) from self-love (Neuhouser 2012). Notably, the self-love Rousseau dismisses is closer to Nietzsche’s aesthetics (which is, among other things, very suspicious of the values underlying the desire for public acclaim) as well as the ancient philosophy of self-care discussed approvingly by Foucault (see Alexandre Lefebvre (2017) contribution to this volume).

⁴ I’m using the scare quotes to reference the pejorative meanings that “postmodernism” has acquired in many intellectual circles; which has, at times, taken on a life of its own, over and above the serious criticism of postmodern scholarship.

unique to their vocation. Or rather, because the genealogical method can be applied to all evolving things, its profanities have the potential to infect every branch of the sciences.

This introductory discussion illustrates how the questions raised by genealogy studies poach on longstanding issues of concern for the philosophy of science. This is why it's fitting that the inaugural issue starts off with an essay by an anthropologist with expertise in the philosophy of science (who has also produced a genealogy of the paradigms of knowledge that have shaped the discipline over the past two centuries (Knauf 1996)). Bruce Knauf's essay (Knauf 2017) is framed in such a way that it speaks to the cultural construction of kinship while engaging the genealogical method on a scale envisaged by Nietzsche and Foucault.

Instead of just explaining how Nietzsche and Foucault's genealogical method applies to anthropology, Knauf (2017) evaluates them, with the aim of making them more relevant to participatory and social justice themed research. As a result, Knauf produces a genealogy of the genealogical method itself, calling for a genealogy that is not burdened by the elitist and overly scholastic tendencies of its forbearers. Knauf's discussion is, in other ways, "typically genealogical" in the way it traces connections between seemingly contrary things. For example, the meta-theoretical scale of his discussion may come across as abstract, but it is being used to re-tool the genealogical method so that it can more directly engage the practical and political circumstances of life as it is lived. Moreover, Knauf's interest in fostering a genealogy that is conducive to participant-action research signals his interest in using the genealogical method to affirm local agencies rather than, merely, trace histories. His proposal for an inter-genealogical approach to genealogy studies follows naturally from these commitments.

Knauf uses the concept of the inter-genealogical to discuss how we can go about creating meaningful, nonhierarchical relationships between qualitatively different ways of doing genealogy. This is not a matter of locating different versions of the genealogical method within the same lineage tree. Knauf criticizes these kinds of tracings for privileging vertical relationships of descent—which tend to obsess over what came first. The inter-genealogical is more concerned with the new horizons and possible futures that genealogies are being used to create, and how to negotiate their co-existence.

Marco Solinas' essay (Solinas 2017) offers an interesting contrast and complement to the issues raised by Knauf. Whereas Knauf is concerned with updating the genealogical method for the challenges of the present, Solinas focuses on its beginnings. In a nutshell, Solinas argues that Nietzsche and Foucault's genealogical method must be situated in light of Darwin's natural genealogies, which precede and inform them. Solinas' essay contributes to a relatively new body of theory on the convergences of "poststructuralism"⁵ and evolutionism, which has elicited growing interest within the international scholarly community. This interest has also, likely, been primed by neoDarwinian theorists like Richard Dawkins (1976) and especially Daniel Dennett (1996), who have explained Darwinism in a way that resonates with themes that are often associated with poststructuralism—underscoring the contingency, complexity and nonlinear quality of evolutionary processes. In a similar vein, the connecting thread that Solinas uses to link Darwin and Foucault's genealogies is their propensity for non-teleological explanations.

Given Darwin's stature, as a standard bearer of the scientific enterprise, Solinas' argument further complicates the relationship between modern science and the genealogical method that was discussed earlier. For example, could it be that Nietzsche's genealogical method describes a possible future for modern science, rather than a rebellion against it, because Darwinism can claim Nietzsche's method (and Foucault, by way of Nietzsche) as one of its many offspring? Solinas does not offer a tidy answer to these sorts of questions, ironically, due to the argument he uses to make his case.

Solinas' argument focuses on the significance that Foucault attributes to the distinction between *Ursprung* (origin) and *Entstehung* (beginnings) as a way of understanding evolutionary theory.

⁵ Poststructuralism is in quotes to put some critical distance between the label and the work of the theorists whom it purportedly describes. Foucault, who is the focus of Solinas' essay, didn't embrace the label (Raulet 1983).

According to Foucault it is the latter type of evolutionary theory that is most consistent with his genealogical method. Instead of predicting the qualities of descendants in light of *Ursprung* (a shared origin) a theory of *Entstehung* explores the “innumerable beginnings” of a thing—which underscores that the abilities of descendants cannot be predicted from the qualities of a single, original ancestor (which is why Darwin should not be regarded as a seminal “father figure” for Foucault’s genealogical method).

If we read Darwin’s influence on Foucault in light of Foucault’s reading of *Entstehung*, it follows that Darwin’s theory is just one of the innumerable beginnings of Foucault’s genealogical method. Solinas also shows that it’s not just that Darwin is one of these beginnings, but that there are “many Darwins”—or rather, many tendencies within Darwin’s theory, and that not all of these tendencies are conducive to the nonteleological orientation of Foucault’s and Nietzsche’s method. In the same vein, there are also “many Foucaults”: only some of whom are amenable to mapping the nonteleological sympathies of evolutionism and the genealogical method (as Foucault became more critical of evolutionary theory in his later writings). Viewed in this light, Solinas’ essay can be viewed as an attempt to identify the point at which these “many Darwins” and “many Foucaults” intersect.

Catherine Nash’s essay (Nash 2017) takes the discussion of genealogy and poststructuralism in a different direction. Whereas Solinas explores their sympathies, Nash exposes their tensions. Her essay is also the first in the series to focus exclusively on the practice of family genealogy. Nash introduces readers to a critique of genealogy that is informed by poststructuralist and postmodern perspectives on science and technology studies. Nash positions herself thoughtfully within the emergent field of genealogy studies—as a scholar who has, at times, been optimistic about the radical democratic potential of family genealogy studies and is also concerned about essentialist ideas about family and kin relations that can be reified by genealogical research.

For this essay, Nash focuses on the latter set of concerns and discusses them with an eye for the growing influence of genetic and genographic research on family genealogy studies. Nash begins by describing two set of troubles posed by contemporary genealogy. The first trouble complements Knauff’s proposal for an inter-genealogical project—though Nash emphasizes that, in addition to affirming multiple approaches to genealogy, more attention should be paid to evaluating the “historical and geographic contingencies” that shape people’s understanding of genealogy. The second trouble could be regarded as a more immanent translation of the first, focusing on what’s specifically problematic with the “model of relatedness” that is affirmed by family genealogy studies. On this point, Nash raises questions about the way that family genealogy studies, for all its complexity, normalizes ideas about blood kinship and national belonging which are further reinforced by the commercialization of genetic data. Nash explains how the idea of a lineage based on “blood kin” excludes many other, equally plausible, frameworks for thinking about family and community; and also how genealogical trees—though superficially inclusive—lend themselves to hierarchical and racialized distinctions between their varied branches.

Nash’s argument resonates with the critique of teleology that informs Solinas’ essay, but turns this critique against the practice of genealogy itself. Her argument speaks to an important tension at play in genealogy studies. Is genealogy best understood as a nonteleological explanatory framework, emphasizing hybridity and mutability, that is at odds with the modern paradigm of knowledge? Or is genealogy better understood as a research practice informed by a modern orientation toward place, community and family that is premised on a strict distinction between nature and human culture (and following that, between “higher” and “lower” types). Without conclusively answering this question, Nash shows that—as we get more practical about what we mean by genealogy—the troubles posed by contrasting views on “what genealogy is” cut more deeply and are less easily smoothed over by appeals to multiplicity and complexity. At some point, we have to answer the question of whether the ideas about family and kinship that are being mobilized by family genealogists are sufficiently inclusive of the real diversity of family-kinship relations. Will genealogy studies be the medium that helps all of these perspectives negotiate a shared—even if uneasy—coexistence (recalling the agonistic

pluralism proposed by William Connolly (1995)), or are some of these perspectives on family and kinship wholly antithetical, forcing genealogy studies to “pick a side?” The inter-genealogical project proposed by Knauff will surely be tested by these kinds of questions.

The next two essays in the series continue with the theme of family genealogy studies. Bruce Durie’s essay (Durie 2017), which follows Nash, offers what is, in many ways, a counterpoising perspective; but it shares a similar concern for getting practical about what it means to do family genealogy research. Durie writes from the perspective of a professional genealogist who is concerned with enhancing the academic rigor of a field with a large preponderance of amateur researchers.

Similar to Nash, Durie’s essay illustrates how the question “What is Genealogy?” can be turned inside out, depending on how the argument is pitched. Durie’s argument, for example, makes several references to the difference between popular, and often romanticized, ideas about family lineage that are shattered by the rigors of professional genealogical research. All of this research takes “blood kin” relations as the starting point for its investigations into family genealogy. This would be a defining theme of its small “t” teleology; that one’s family genealogy is a history of relations of biological descent, guided by a quest for the earliest known “blood ancestor.” However, the distinction that Durie makes between the amateur and professional genealogist allows some room for the latter to establish a critical distance from these ideas.

Durie’s description of genealogy studies as a citizen science makes it possible for research on family history to be understood as an inalienable right. The professional genealogist can respect this right, by helping amateur researchers to more rigorously trace their family histories without endorsing or passing judgement on their starting assumptions about what family means. As a result, the working relationship between the amateur and professional genealogist is not necessarily rooted in a shared ideology of national community and blood kinship, but in an affirmation of the right of all people to research and interpret their family lineage in a way they find meaningful.

Durie emphasizes, however, that what the professional genealogist contributes to the doing of genealogy, above all, is methodological rigor. Durie also shows how the concern for method and accuracy can result in the de-centering of popular narratives on family and kinship. But this process doesn’t involve problematizing meta-conceptual ideas about family, nation and place. Instead, it proceeds by grappling with personal narratives on family history, as understood by the amateur researcher, and reconciling these narratives to the actual historical record of births, marriages and migrations that describe the “blood lineage.” Nash would likely point out that the factual evidence of this “blood lineage” is ultimately rooted in socially constructed ideas about family and kinship. Hence, we are not really comparing an imagined family history to a “real” history, but contrasting different socially constructed ideas about what a family can be. Nevertheless, the professional genealogist can come to a similar conclusion as Nash, that the way people ordinarily think about their families is, quite often, not the same as the official record of lineages that defines a line of biological descent. The postmodern critic and professional genealogist may disagree about which of these vantage points should be granted the most significance, as a starting point for defining kinship. But even on this matter, Durie does not signal a clear preference, noting that genealogy, “... is not some struggle towards an ultimate ‘truth’; but a process of diminishing deception.”

With these kinds of statements, Durie communicates a sensibility that dovetails with the critique of *Ursprung* discussed by Solinas. The rigorous tracing of ancestries will not result in the discovery of an origin that offers some sort of narrative closure about the truth of the family line (i.e., a “final cause”). So although there are people who look to family genealogy for further confirmation of what they think they already are, Durie’s essay cautions that professional genealogy cannot provide such guarantees. This cautionary advice also underscores that there is much to learn about what people expect and get from the process of doing family genealogy.

It could be that academicians have underestimated the sophistication of the amateur interest in genealogy studies, and that many people find the experience meaningful even if—or precisely because—it exposes the limitations of their received knowledge about family and kin relations.

Moreover, the willingness to make one's personal identity open and vulnerable to the contingencies of history may not have a direct bearing on whether the genealogist adopts a radical, conservative, postmodern or liberal view of modern family life. There is much more to be learned about what people get out of family genealogy research: why do they *do* it, and what do they do *with* it?

These questions are especially pertinent to Amy Smith's essay (Smith 2017) on the intersections of family genealogy and family communication. Her essay offers yet another way of reorganizing the themes and tensions that have been discussed so far. All of the prior essays advanced arguments that were informed by the critique of teleology (which was used, in turns, to re-evaluate, explain or critique the genealogical method). Smith's essay, in contrast, pays more attention to the art of creating the small "t" teleologies that were described earlier.

For Smith, family genealogies are valuable, primarily, for understanding how people create and synthesize meaning. Like both Nash and Durie, she makes a distinction between the official record of lineage relations that describe a person's family tree, and the narratives and emotional truths that are used to make sense of these relations. Unlike Durie, however, Smith locates the truth of the genealogy in the narrative itself and not the line of descent. What matters most, from her perspective, is the way that family is narrated and what this tells the researcher about the way that gender, ethnicity, race, class and other social distinctions get defined in the process. In this way, Smith tries to better understand "family" and "genealogy" as its understood by amateur genealogists. But this sympathetic engagement is also informed by a critical ethnography that exposes the constructed nature of family narratives even as it seeks to understand the means by which these narratives cohere and replicate meaning.

This approach differs (but only in degrees) from Nash's in that the critical impetus operates through the established language of family genealogy studies. The goal is to understand how amateur genealogists use ideas about kinship to narrate family histories rather than to examine the limits of kinship as a narrative framework for imagining family. But putting this difference aside, Smith and Nash both illustrate how a feminist epistemology can be applied to family genealogy studies—whether this takes the form of a meta-theoretical critique or an ethnographic research method. It's also worth noting that Smith's approach to family genealogy offers one possible synthesis of all the perspectives discussed thus far. Her essay suggests how the work of professional genealogists can be informed by a social constructionist analysis of family genealogy, in a way that is consistent with Knauff's inter-genealogical project (encouraging a horizontal dialogue between divergent epistemologies) and which is wary of the "search for origins" (criticized by Solinas).

The last two essays in this volume engage the question "What is Genealogy?" by doing genealogy. Alex Lefebvre provides an enlightening discussion of Foucault's writing on the care of the self (Lefebvre 2017). In the process, he illustrates how the genealogical method can be extended—beyond concerns about family lineage—to engage defining themes in the study of human culture.

In his re-telling of Foucault's genealogy, Lefebvre explains how care of the self has been devalued by the emergence of a legal-judicial mode of governance. Under this mode of governance, political incorporation (administered via rights) is conferred on the citizen-subject by the state, rather than being a quality that arises from the agency of persons who claim the title of "citizen" by virtue of their civic engagement. Care of the self, describes a morality and an ethics that is consonant with this latter type of politics (though, as Lefebvre explains, it is not oriented toward the political sphere). Care of the self, can be described as an ascetics—an art of self-government—that is entirely voluntarily and oriented entirely toward the self. Lefebvre explains that this self-centered morality comes under a cloud of suspicion in the modern age, in which restraint and self-discipline are valued, primarily, for the role they play in securing a benignly hierarchical social order; epitomized by Hobbes' Leviathan. In this new age, any morality that is not clearly articulated with some discourse on the greater good—that transcends the self—is not legible as a morality at all.

Keeping this context in mind, it's important to note that Lefebvre is interested in rehabilitating a human rights discourse that is informed by an ethics of self-care, rather than engaging in a polemic against rights discourse (Lefebvre 2013, 2018). This larger project can also be understood as an attempt

to produce a new genealogy of human rights; making distinctions between a rights discourse that emerges from a civic activism guided by a personal ethics, as opposed to being defined by the administrative priorities of state and corporate actors.

Lefebvre's analysis also, inadvertently, sheds light on why the practice of family genealogy tends to be treated in a dismissive way by the scientific community. Family genealogy can be understood as a variant of self-care, which is often written off as a "vain" or "navel-gazing" obsession with one's lineage that serves no credible public good, and may even be injurious to the public good (by fostering divisive social distinctions). This inability to see any point in the practice of family genealogy is indicative of the modern morality described by Lefebvre, which can only make sense of things by subjecting them to a master signifier of some sort. What gets lost is an appreciation for how the capacity for individual and collective agency is nurtured by seemingly pointless activities that allow people to hone their values and ethical sensibilities in a self-directed and open-ended way. Family genealogy is one of many terrains of leisure activity that allow people to do this; which is why Smith is very prescient when she insists that the most important thing to learn from family genealogies is the creative work that goes into narrating them.

William Wei concludes the inaugural issue with a research essay that takes up Smith's call for a critical family genealogy studies (Wei 2017). Wei compares the historical memories that have crystallized around two important figures in the 19th century Chinese American community of Denver Colorado. He explains how the reputations of both men were effected, in divergent ways, by their degree of conformity to a conventional paradigm of family formation. The man who married and had children has been remembered as a pillar of the Chinese American community, whereas the man who died a childless, bachelor has been remembered as a shadowy figure, associated with the most ominous stereotypes of 19th century Chinese immigrants.

Wei's analysis problematizes the relationship between family lineage and historical memory in at least two ways. First he observes that family genealogies tend to be self-perpetuating. Men who sire children, and in a way that replicates middle class family norms, benefit from the efforts of these offspring to preserve the memory of their family line. As a result, family genealogies are hard pressed to tell the stories of people who do not conform to the model of kinship relations that they take as normal. Second, Wei draws attention to the micro-politics and the race/class/gender hierarchies of the broader social context that shape the dynamics of family formation. He uses these observations to recount the reasons why the traditional, Chinese family ideal was not achievable for a great many Chinese immigrant men in the 19th century American West. These obstacles to family formation tell us as much about the social history of Chinese American family life in the 19th century US as the stories of men who married and had children. But as Wei points out, "failed attempts" at family formation (not to mention deliberate divergences from family-kinship norms) are not the typical subject of family genealogies.

These challenges set up the puzzle that Wei tackles in his essay. Can the same data sources and research methods that are used to trace family genealogies also be used to tell the stories of people who are often left out of these genealogies? Effectively, Wei produces an empirical mapping of the meta-conceptual questions that were introduced by Nash. He shows that it is possible to salvage these stories, with some success, but that these efforts expose the limitations of the procreational family tree as a framework for conceptualizing family history. As a result, Wei's research findings also operate as a reflexive critique of the epistemological framework of family genealogy research.

Although genealogies are well suited for tracing relations between divergent things, Wei draws attention to the limitations of the tracings themselves. Are some relations wholly untraceable? This could be understood as a challenge posed by terminal lines in a family tree (evoking Darwin's observations on the significance of extinctions; as discussed by Solinas). But what standard is being used to determine the terminus? If it's possible to salvage the family histories of people who did not conform to the procreational norm of "blood kinship" (childless and single heterosexuals, gay and lesbian families—with or without children—and various types of blended and intentional families)

they become available for the narration of family history, irrespective of whether the people who compose these families are all “blood kin”. And if this happens, these people no longer describe a point of termination in the genealogical narrative. This is another frontier for the inter-genealogical project described by Knauff. Can family genealogies, informed by ideas of “blood kinship” be led into a dialogue with other non-biological/non-procreational standards of family membership? And how can family genealogists better account for the interplay between these divergent perspectives on family, in the narration of family histories?

It is in keeping with the genealogical appreciation for the immanent, that a discussion that began by exploring the “family relationship” between Nietzsche’s and Rousseau’s genealogical method, ends with a discussion of actual family relationships. But I also hope this discussion has illustrated how philosophical treatments of the genealogical method and the practice of family genealogy can raise questions that are relevant for each other—because these two kinds of genealogies are “distant relatives,” in their own way. One of the goals of this opening discussion has been to demonstrate how these very different perspectives on genealogy can be put in conversation with each other and, along with that, to give the reader some indication of the potential scope of genealogy studies.

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

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