

Nietzsche's Genealogy

Is it a proper philosophical method?

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Abstract

The goal of this thesis is to analyze Nietzsche's genealogy and in doing so try to answer whether or not it can be seen as a proper philosophical method. I've done this by extensive study of Nietzsche's works and secondary literature found on Nietzsche's work, as well as literature about the criteria for a philosophical method.

A schematic four step plan for genealogy is given in the first chapter: (1) What is the form of the belief or value you want to investigate? (2) Does this form occur in historical sources? (3) Why do people now and did people then hold on to this belief or value? (4) How can you explain the difference, if there is any, between the two reasons why these values were held?

In line with Collingwood and Williamson I've set up a list of constraints in the second chapter regarding the goodness of a philosophical method. Constraints such as semantics, logic, common sense, findings of other disciplines etc. Not all these constraints have to be met by a philosophical method for it to be a good philosophical method.

In the third and final chapter I've tested genealogy against the list of constraints and found that it was disciplined by some of the constrained, but crucially missed the constraint of simplicity and precision. This meant that I came to the conclusion that genealogy cannot be used as a method to produce conclusive answers, but rather as a method to produce insights into the origins and history of our beliefs and values.

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Introduction

In recent years a large amount of text has been dedicated to the *On the Genealogy of Morals*¹ written by Nietzsche. Authors such as Leiter², Janaway³, Schacht⁴ etc. have written extensively about that particular book. Within these writings there have been some explications of genealogy as a method. I wish to continue that analysis. Is Nietzsche's genealogy a proper philosophical method? The vast amount of works dedicated to his writings should indicate that his method is at the very least interesting to philosophers. Foucault⁵ and others have used genealogy as a method after Nietzsche. But I haven't come across an extensive and schematic analysis of genealogy as a method. There have been questions whether or not Nietzsche ought to be regarded as a philosopher, but I haven't seen the question raised whether or not genealogy ought to be regarded as proper philosophy. I hope to answer that question in this thesis.

I will be trying to answer this question by first explicating Nietzsche's genealogy. What is Nietzsche's genealogical method? I'll be doing this by mostly referring to the *Genealogy*, but I will also be using some of his earlier works, such as *Human, All Too Human*⁶, *Dawn*⁷, and *The Gay Science*⁸. I will give a schematic overview of genealogy as a method.

Secondly, I'll give a brief overview of some of the literature on philosophical methods. On what basis can we judge a philosophical method? I'll give a comprehensive list of criteria and characteristics of a good philosophical method in this chapter. In the last chapter I'll compare the schematic overview of genealogy given in the first chapter to the list of criteria and characteristics given in the second chapter. Some criteria or characteristics that genealogy possesses may be missing from this list and if that is the case I will add those to the list at the end of this chapter. I will try to explain, with the use of the list of criteria, why I believe genealogy is or isn't a proper philosophical method.

At the end of my thesis I hope to have given the reader an analysis which they will be able to interpret themselves, as I do not believe there is an objective way of telling the goodness of a philosophical method. My goal is therefore not to convince the reader whether or not the genealogical method is a proper form of philosophy or not, but to give the reader the tools to judge for themselves. Nonetheless, I will give my own conclusion at the end of my thesis as well.

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals", trans. Walter Kaufmann and Reginald J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), original in German from 1887.

² B. Leiter, "Nietzsche on Morality", 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2015).

³ C. Janaway, "Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche's Genealogy" (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁴ R. Schacht, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality" (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994).

⁵ Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D. F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 139-164.

⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits", trans. Brittain Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), original in German from 1878.

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Dawn: Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality", trans. Reginald J. Hollingdale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), original in German from 1881.

⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Gay Science" trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), original in German from 1882.

1. Nietzsche's Genealogy Explained

Genealogy is more commonly known as the study of families, the tracing back of lineages throughout history. The allure of this type of genealogy differs for various cultures. In contemporary western society some like to know their ancestry to discover where they've come from. Multiple TV shows have been broadcasted on this premise, such as *Finding Your Roots*, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, *History Detectives* etc. But this is just one of the motivations for genealogy. There was a need for having a complete family tree (although not necessarily correct) in medieval times. Family played a key role in society at that time, power and status often relied upon being a relative of someone with a high status.

Nietzsche's genealogy doesn't trace back the ancestral lineage of humans, but the lineage of our beliefs and values. For Nietzsche, the world and everything in it, including humans, is constantly changing.⁹ What philosophers fail to grasp is the idea that the beliefs and values of the contemporary human do not represent an *aeterna veritas* (eternal truth). "They do not want to learn that humanity has come to be, that even the faculty of cognition has also come to be, while some of them even allow themselves to spin the whole world out of this cognitive faculty."¹⁰ Philosophers tend to see the human of today as having characteristics of an eternal or absolute idea of humanity. But, according to Nietzsche, there is no such thing as eternal facts, nor absolute truths. Everything has come to be by being ever changing. Therefore, we are in need of historical philosophizing, to discover how our beliefs and values have come to be.

Genealogy as a Method

Genealogy, historical philosophizing and rigorous science are all names that Nietzsche has attributed to this method. The main proposition is that we cannot find the true origin of our beliefs and values if we are chained by our current framework of beliefs and values. We must free ourselves from these chains of customs and make use of the proper historical context when we are uncovering the origins of a belief or value. When Nietzsche talks about the origins of 'Good', he states that the "English psychologists" (and philosophers) determine the descent of good with its current values and justifications in mind, as if those values were always and will always be valued by humans, while Nietzsche believes that the value and justification of good has changed over time and will change again.¹¹ For genealogy to work, we have to look at the origins from a blank slate and therefore try to get rid of our current beliefs and values. He refers to this as a "real *history of morality*", in which "the values of the values must itself first be questioned".¹² If done correctly, we will end up with a complete picture of how our beliefs have shaped over the course of history and may end up *debunking* those beliefs and values. By explaining the original appearance of our beliefs and values we may open the eyes of philosophers to the possibility that there are no intrinsic values in those beliefs and values and that we shouldn't justify our conviction of those beliefs and values on their essential characteristics.

⁹ Nietzsche, "Human, All Too Human", §2.

¹⁰ Nietzsche, "Human, All Too Human", §2.

¹¹ Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals", I, §1-2.

¹² Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals", Preface §6.

We cannot trace the justification of our contemporary beliefs and values back to their origin, as the beliefs and values have changed and become. The justification of the beliefs and values may have been different in the past. So what can we trace back as a relatively stable thing? According to Leiter, Nietzsche splits a belief or value into two questions when he is using the genealogical method.¹³ First, *what* thing are we trying to investigate? Second, *why* do we hold onto that value or belief or thing? The former should be answered by observation and empirical evidence, the latter is a question of value, a question of justification. As the value, meaning or purpose of a thing is ever changing and *fluid*, the relatively stable object that we have to trace back through history is the *what*, the practice, the act, a certain strict sequence of procedures.¹⁴ If we are able to find the *what* in historic sources, we might be able to extract the *why*. At the last stage this difference in *why*, if there is any, is investigated and will possibly result in an answer in what caused that difference to happen.

I've divided the genealogical method into four steps:

- 1) Choose a belief or value and answer the *what* question.
- 2) Look for the *what* in historical sources.
- 3) Answer the *why* question for both the present and the historic instance of the *what*.
- 4) If there is a discrepancy between the two *why*'s, investigate further to find the cause of this discrepancy.

Some might argue that the 4th step isn't necessary for genealogy as a method, as genealogy should be complete once we have found the origins of a belief or value. It is my belief that the 4th step is essential for genealogy to be philosophical, and moreover it answers the most interesting question. Looking back to genealogy as tracing back the lineage of families, when someone seems out of place, it is most interesting to find out how and why that person has come into the family. If, for example, a man who has lived in England his entire life, and so did his parents, grandparents etc., finds out that 4 generations back he has an ancestor whom is of Afghani origin, the most interesting question to ask is how someone from Afghanistan joined the family. So, the question of how something has changed, is very much in place in philosophical genealogy.

Nietzsche's substance of genealogy

Nietzsche describes the *what* in the first step as: "... the custom, the act, the "drama," a certain strict sequence of procedures ..."¹⁵ If we are to answer the *what* question, we have to determine the physical and observable things that constitute a value or belief. In doing so, we are able to have a certain set of signs that will help us in the search of the relatively stable *what* in historical sources.

The second step can be seen by the references to old historical sources in Nietzsche's work. Although these references aren't as clear and refined as current academic guidelines prescribe, they are present. In the case of punishment he refers to a variety of old practices of punishment, such as stoning (which was already found in the sagas), breaking on the wheel (which he calls the most characteristic invention of the Germans), piercing of stakes, quartering, the boiling of a criminal in oil or wine (which was according to Nietzsche still

¹³ Leiter, "Nietzsche on Morality", p. 168.

¹⁴ Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals", II, §12-13.

¹⁵ Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals", II, §12-13.

employed in the 14th and 15th century) etc.¹⁶ When writing about the origins of bad, he refers to the German word *schlecht* [bad] which he found to be quite similar to *schlicht* [plain, simple].¹⁷ Furthermore, his texts are full of references to Greek texts, the Bible etc. Nietzsche did on the face of it investigate a lot of historical sources to gather these observations.

Before we dive deeper into the third and fourth step, we ought to give some broader context to the philosophy of Nietzsche. The most important aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy with respect to genealogy is the fact that every aspect of humans have become to be. Our appearance, characteristics, intelligence etc. have all gradually arisen, depending on the changing circumstances of life.¹⁸ We are indeed still in this process of becoming, which has no end goal. This is often equated to a Darwinist approach.¹⁹ But Nietzsche adds another form of selection, *social selection*. The fact that we are born into a society that has a set of beliefs and values, which we then tend to copy as if they are our own, as we do not know any better. In doing so, we lose the knowledge of why certain customs and values are considered good or bad. We tend to believe that we are adhering to them for the *sake* of us considering them a good thing to do, while in reality we cannot know what exactly *drives* us. "Actions are *never* what they appear to us to be! It took so much effort for us to learn that external things are not what they appear to us – now then! It is just the same with the inner world!"²⁰ Furthermore, even when we probe deeper into our true motives and drives, we are unable to complete the total image of our drives and motivations.²¹ We can merely scratch the surface of some of our motivations and drives.

Because we have lost the knowledge of our true motivation, we need to look back in history for the origins of our beliefs and values and why they came into existence. It's important to emphasize that Nietzsche does not believe in a miraculous origin of our current beliefs and values.²² "Metaphysical philosophy has up to now helped itself get past this difficulty by denying that one emerged from the other and assuming that more highly valued things had a miraculous origin, immediately out of the core and essence of the "thing in itself"."²³ Instead, Nietzsche advocates for the theory that our beliefs and values have become to be, that our concept have gradually arisen and that we therefore have to carefully trace them back to their origins and give an account of every change and adjustment that happened in their lifespan. Nietzsche also commits himself to a naturalistic history.²⁴ "Fortunately I learned early on to differentiate between theological and moral prejudice and I no longer looked for the origin of evil *behind* the world."²⁵ Nietzsche places the cause of evil and other beliefs and values in the natural world, that world which we are able to grasp by way of the scientific method.

So, the third step becomes a bit more controversial in its completion by Nietzsche. For the step is largely based on interpretations of historical sources as well as Nietzsche's own view of the justification of contemporary beliefs and values. Nietzsche would argue that we do not know *why* we adhere to the present *what's*, while common sense beliefs we justify the *what* because of their intrinsic

¹⁶ Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals", II, §3.

¹⁷ Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals", I, §4.

¹⁸ Nietzsche, "Human, All Too Human", §16.

¹⁹ Richardson, "Nietzsche's New Darwinism", 2004.

²⁰ Nietzsche, "Dawn", §116.

²¹ Nietzsche, "Dawn", §119.

²² Nietzsche, "Human, All Too Human", §1 and Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History".

²³ Nietzsche, "Human, All Too Human", §1.

²⁴ Leiter, "Nietzsche on Morality", p. 172.

²⁵ Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals", Preface §2.

value. We *think* that we do so because of those *what*'s having an intrinsic value, but there is no such thing as an intrinsic value. We have just lost the justification for the belief or value over time, because we merely adopted the customs of the society we were born in. Nietzsche argues that we may be able to find the origin of the *what* and in doing so tracing the *why* back through time till we arrive at the present day.

The fourth step by Nietzsche is mostly explained by the fact that the *why* can change due to a shift in power. "... That something already existing, something that has somehow come into being is always interpreted for new views, newly appropriated, transformed and reorganized for a new purpose by a superior power..."²⁶ We can see this in Nietzsche's idea of the shift from master to slave morality. The slave appropriates the concept of good and bad, or good and evil, to his own utility. The concept of good as the powerful and strong was transformed to a concept of good as the powerless and weak.²⁷

²⁶ Nietzsche, 'On the Genealogy of Morality', II, §12.

²⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future", trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, Inc., 1966), original in German from 1886.

2. What is a philosophical method?

Before I will give an overview of what a philosophical method entails, I have to mention and emphasize that there isn't an agreement on what philosophy itself is, nor what a philosophical method is. There is no set list of criteria to judge a philosophical method for on its usefulness and goodness. What follows is a list of criteria and characteristics which aren't conclusive. They are mere examples of good characteristics to have within a philosophical method. As Collingwood wrote: "Consequently, when we set out to give an account of philosophical method, what we are trying to describe is not so much a method actually followed by ourselves or any one else, as a method which in our philosophical work we are trying to follow, even if we never entirely succeed."²⁸

What is Philosophy?

There is no singular way in which we can define philosophy. In the Greek period, it encompassed the pursuit for knowledge, but this is no longer a viable definition. For scientific and empirical studies do not fall under the discipline of Philosophy. Personally, I would define Philosophy as all speculative thought that cannot or hasn't been proven by observation and experience. Which includes those subjects that are not of an objective or observable nature, such as Ethics (although some would argue that they are), and those that are as of yet unobtainable or will never be obtainable by our observations, such as metaphysics. This does not entail that philosophy should ignore observations and experiences, but if those observations and experiences cannot be satisfactorily explained by other disciplines, philosophy should try to explain it. This is not even close to an infallible definition of philosophy, but it give us a certain direction of thought.

Philosophy is often defined not just by her questions, but by her answers. "Nearly all philosophers seek answers to such questions as the nature of substance, mind, intelligence, consciousness, sensation, perception, knowledge, wisdom, truth, identity, infinity, divinity, time, explanation, causation, freedom, purpose, goodness, duty, the virtues, love, life, happiness, and so forth."²⁹ Bealar adds to this that these questions have three features that stand out; universality, generality and necessity.³⁰ Universal because they aren't bound to biological, historical etc. context. General because the answers and questions aren't bound to an individual instance or event. Necessary because they call for answers that consist of explanation of why things are or *must* be the way there are. But again, just as I have done so above, Bealar recognizes that philosophical inquiries often lack one or more of these features, which doesn't necessarily make them less philosophical.

What is a Philosophical Method?

"The question "What is philosophical methodology?" admits of a "lower-order" reading, on which admissible answers are *the use of thought experiments to test*

²⁸ R. G. Collingwood, "Essay on Philosophical Method", ed. James Connelly and Giuseppina D'Oro (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 4.

²⁹ George Bealar, "On the Possibility of Philosophical Knowledge", *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 10, *Metaphysics* (Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1996), pp. 2-3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

conceptual analyses, or understanding us and our environments in a way conducive to human flourishing. But the same question admits of a "higher-order" reading, on which admissible answers are *the epistemological methods that distinguish philosophy from the natural sciences (on one side) and the humanities (on the other side), or the pursuit of a description of reality at the most fundamental level.*"³¹

Dever makes a distinction between two characteristics of a philosophical methodology here; On the one hand we have the practical implementation of the method, while on the other hand we have the theoretical characteristics of what the method is. He himself continues the latter part. Through a data-pool consisting of all occurrences of the word "methodological" in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP)*, he gathered a robust data pool of the uses of methodology in philosophy. He states that philosophical methodology is apparently the source of axioms, principles, precepts, and questions.³² After countless tries of different fittings, he comes to the conclusion that there isn't much to say about how to do philosophy well. There are some guiding aphorisms, but those are handled very loosely. "There's only skillful receptiveness to possible fruitful interactions."³³ There are no rules of good philosophical practice, so philosophical methodology has an eliminated topic. While this may be the case for the "higher-order" manner of reading the question, I do believe that in the "lower-order" we should be able to distinguish some characteristics that are beneficial to a philosophical method.

Practical characteristics of a philosophical method

Collingwood already named one philosophical temptation that has dreading the philosophical discipline for ages, the temptation to expand the subject matter of his essay. He says that there are two main reasons why we shouldn't; "First, as a matter of principle: if the discussion of a special problem is allowed to expand until it becomes a discussion of the most general problems, no special problem will ever receive adequate attention ...".³⁴ The second reason being expedience, there was enough on the market about the general problems of philosophy. Williamson expands on this by saying that we should be open about the constraints we put on ourselves when we use a philosophical method, which is not the case for most of contemporary philosophy.³⁵ He names some of these constraints; semantics, syntax, logic, common sense, imaginary examples, the findings of other disciplines or the aesthetic evaluation of theories (elegance, simplicity). Several, but not all, of these constraints are, according to Williamson, necessary to do proper philosophy. I will use this list, with some constraints added from other works of Williamson and others, as a point of comparison for genealogy.

Semantics: There are two forms of theories of meaning. Firstly a *semantic* theory, which asks what the meaning of a symbol is. Secondly, a *foundational* theory, which asks in virtue of what facts about a person or group a symbol has a

³¹ Josh Dever, "What is Philosophical Methodology?", *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Methodology*, ed. Cappelen, Gendler, Hawthorne, 2016, p. 3.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³⁴ R. G. Collingwood, "Essay on Philosophical Method", p. 8.

³⁵ Timothy Williamson, "Must Do Better", in *Truth and Realism* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 182.

certain meaning.³⁶ This constraint is often used by methods that investigate language or thought.³⁷

Syntax: "Syntax is the study of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in particular languages. Syntactic investigation of a given language has as its goal the construction of a grammar that can be viewed as a device of some sort for producing the sentences of the language under analysis."³⁸ This constraint is most obviously used for questions about linguistics.

Logic: Best described as *correct reasoning*.³⁹ Quine argues for two prominent components; truth and grammar.⁴⁰ If both of these are true and proper, one can obtain a logical truth.

Common Sense: This constraint can be seen as the common thoughts of humanity about certain subjects. For example; if you are going to deny the existence of free will, you ought to explain why the common sense is that we have a free will.

Imaginary examples: Imagining examples is a common practice in philosophy. These examples need not be a phenomenon or thing that have actually occurred. Thought experiments such as the trolley problem tell us something about our intuitions, while in logic many counterexamples are made by imagination.

Findings of other disciplines: Philosophy can be influenced by other disciplines. Psychology tells us about the behavior of humans and those findings ought to be addressed in a philosophical theory about the mind. Findings in Quantum-theory may influence philosophies that propose deterministic views of the world.

Simplicity: All things equal, the simpler theory should be chosen. A theory or argument is simple when it is concise, with the least amount of assumptions and principles. Mostly associated with *Occam's razor*. *Elegance* is usually seen as a facet of ontological Simplicity, which means that a theory is elegant when the number and complexity of things postulated are of a low amount.⁴¹

Model-Building: Models are hypothetical examples. Williamson argues that many of the questions asked by philosophers are too complex and large.⁴² If a method constrains itself to model-building, it is able to give an explanation for a hypothetical example and in doing so gather more knowledge about the real phenomenon. This is a common occurrence in scientific disciplines, such as biology, where models are made for predator-prey population shifts which have easily adjustable variables to work with, instead of a complex model which includes all variables of a certain type of predator-prey population.

Precision: Williamson also mentions precision, as vague statements are often the hardest to prove wrong. "Obscurity is the oracle's self-defence."⁴³ According to Williamson, precise errors do more for progress than vague truths.

Relevancy: Insight and theories produced by a philosophical method should be relevant to current or former philosophical debates, which does not exclude the possibility of opening a new philosophical debate.

³⁶ Jeff Speaks, "Theories of Meaning", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2017 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta.

³⁷ Timothy Williamson, "Must Do Better", p. 181.

³⁸ Noam Chomsky, "Syntactic Structures" (De Gruyter, Inc., 2009), p. 11.

³⁹ Stewart Shapiro and Teresa Kouri Kissel, "Classical Logic", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2018 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta.

⁴⁰ W. V. Quine, "Philosophy of Logic" (Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 7.

⁴¹ Alan Baker, "Simplicity", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2016 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta.

⁴² Timothy Williamson, "Model-Building in Philosophy", in *Philosophy's Future: The Problem of Philosophical Progress*, ed. Russell Blackford and Damien Broderick (New York; John Wiley & Sons, 2017), pp. 159-171.

⁴³ Timothy Williamson, "Must Do Better", p. 185.

Fruitfulness: Does a method produce a significant amount of insights and theories for it to be called fruitful? If this does not seem to be the case, we'd have a hard time justifying the use of a method, for it lacks the production of insights and theories.

Abduction: Often equated with the *inference to the best explanation*, which means that if a method cannot provide conclusive, necessary answers, it may still be able to propose a better explanation than that we had before.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Timothy Williamson, "Abductive Philosophy", *The Philosophical Forum*, vol. 47, no. 3-4, 2016, pp. 263-280.

3. Genealogy as a Philosophical Method

Before testing genealogy on the constraints listed in the last chapter, we ought to look at whether or not genealogy can be categorized as philosophical. It certainly fits the narrative of seeking knowledge. But, furthermore, I also believe that it can be used in a speculative form. Nietzsche himself, in *Human, all too Human* is eluding to possible origins or causes that changed our beliefs, without the proper historical sources to back him up. Speculation is a big part of genealogy even with proper historical sources, because you either need to interpret the sources or there is a lack of sources which result in a knowledge-gap that needs to be filled. If we think about the content of the questions asked by genealogy, we often find that we can find them in the list of Bealar. There is indeed a significant part of genealogy that is better categorized as historical. But with the interpretation needed and the fact that to properly do the full method you need to theorize about the meaning and purpose of the belief or value, I believe we can better categorize it as philosophy.

Constraints of genealogy

Semantics: Genealogy seems to be constrained by both a semantic and a foundational theory of meaning. In most of the genealogical method, but primarily in the third step, we see that we need to investigate the meaning of a word (as most historical sources are written sources). When we are investigating the historical *why*, we are in need of the meaning of the written texts. If we are going to state that we shouldn't interpret the texts with our contemporary values, we shouldn't just use our current idea of semantics when interpreting the written sources. For the 4th step of the genealogical method, we need to know how those meanings were formed, what *caused* them. For that we need a foundational theory of meaning. What fact of either the human mind or sociological or historical fields caused the meaning that a certain word or belief had at that moment in time.

Syntax: Besides the obvious constraint that historical sources are often written in different languages, genealogy doesn't need an abstract theory of language. This constraint is in my belief reserved for methods and philosophy that investigate a language and its structure, not necessarily the meaning of words.

Logic: Besides the obvious need for a certain logic in arguments, there doesn't seem to be a need for logical acrobatics in the genealogical method. No arguments are based on logical truths. This doesn't mean that they cannot be given in a method, but the method itself isn't constrained by it.

Common Sense: Common sense does play a large role in genealogy. To discover the current content of the *why* you need to take into account the common sense idea of the *why*. This doesn't necessarily mean that the current common sense idea about the *why* is correct, but that you need to take it into strong consideration. The same goes for the historical answer to the *why* question, as you often only have access to the common sense idea of the reason people are doing the *what*. For Nietzsche this means that he has to explain, extensively, why he doesn't use the common sense idea of the present *why*. He does so by explaining that we have lost the original justification of most of our beliefs and are basing our justification on the fact that the belief is good in itself. The same issue can be seen in other ethical theories or theories of hard determinism where the free will is said to be an illusion. All these theories need to justify why they go against the common sense.

Imaginary examples: The use of imaginary examples is necessary in genealogy. The fact of the matter is that we don't always have enough sources of a particular period in history to base our information on. Sometimes a speculative image is needed to fill up the gap. This ought to be based on other findings of the relevant historical period. Also, we often only find written sources and there may be a need to visualize these sources into a practical environment. Nietzsche does this quite often, although that should mostly be attributed to his style of writing. An image speaks a thousand words, as they say, and so it can in genealogy.

Findings of other disciplines: Genealogy is obviously constrained by the findings of other disciplines. History plays a major part in genealogy. Finding and dating sources is not the forte of the philosopher, but that of the historian. Those sources are necessary to be able to find the *what* and the *why* in the historical context. One should not forget that the dating of the sources may be just as crucial. If we base our genealogy on 5 sources which are believed to originate in the period of 0 – 10 A.D. but two of those sources are from 50 years later, our theory may fall apart. The 4th step may also be heavily influenced by other disciplines, such as psychology or biology. If you are going to explain the discrepancy between the two *why*'s within a humanizing and naturalistic context, as Nietzsche tends to do, you need to be up to date with current findings of psychology or biology on the nature of the human mind, social interaction or theories of evolution.

Simplicity: Genealogy certainly doesn't seem constrained by simplicity. Although the answer to some questions may be fairly simple, the vast amount of assumptions and interpretation needed in order to get the answer makes it very complex. For the first step you already need an idea of how you are going to define the *what* and how you justify that idea. For the 2nd step you need to justify the date of the sources, the authenticity and the context from which the source originates. You need to know the language of the written. The first two steps are relatively simple compared to the 3rd and 4th step. The *why* question is based on a multitude of assumptions, both for the current and historical question. What ethical theory do you adhere to in order to find the justification for our actions. Why do you or why don't you adhere to common sense morality? Why do fill in the meaning of a phenomenon in history the way you do? And for the 4th step, why do you believe that is the cause of the change? We cannot argue that genealogy is constrained by simplicity, because it necessarily is based on a lot of assumptions and considerations.

Model-Building: Genealogy isn't a method that is based in model-building. Even though you try to limit yourself to one thing, one *what*, and there may sometimes be hypothetical examples, those examples do not use any variables that are easily changed or manipulated for more information. Some assumptions can be based on model-building theories, such as evolution, but genealogy itself does not make use of it.

Precision: Genealogical answers may be very vague, which isn't necessarily a result of the method itself. Due to the lack of sources in some instances, we get a vaguer answer since we do not have sufficient information to give a more precise answer. This does mean that genealogy cannot be constrained by precision, but there simply isn't a way to consistently constrain it for every subject.

Relevancy: Genealogy is a method that can be used to call into question our current beliefs and values on the basis of their origins. I would deem that relevant enough to say that genealogy is constrained by relevancy, as beliefs and values are prominent in philosophical debate. There is however a problem with the method, namely the genetic fallacy. For explaining the origin of a belief or value doesn't necessarily devalue them. We justify these values and beliefs not on their origins, but for example on their intrinsic value or truth. Although Nietzsche sometimes makes it out to be a conclusive counterexample, genealogy doesn't provide negation of these values. It merely calls them into question, an objection that has to be considered by other theories about the justification of beliefs and

values. It gives us insights in the growth and adaptation of our beliefs and values, which ought to be explained how and why this happened over the course of history. Someone that argues that things have intrinsic value doesn't have to throw his theory in the bin because of the results of a genealogical method, but he should be responding to it, by either proving the argument wrong or incorporating the argument into his theory. Simply put, someone that believes in the intrinsic value of things can state that over the course of history we have learned more and more about the intrinsic value of these things. That the beliefs and values of humans were different in history just means that they didn't completely understand the intrinsic value of a thing yet.

Fruitfulness: There seem to be little investigations into the origin of beliefs and values that do not involve idealization of our contemporary beliefs and values. Genealogy tries to be as objective as possible when looking at the values and beliefs in historical context. Therefore I do believe that genealogy can produce quite a bit of insight and answers. We have a vast number of beliefs and values that could be investigated.

Abduction: Genealogy is largely constrained by the best explanation. The answers and theories that are produced by the method are only valid if they give a better explanation of why we hold a belief or value than our current explanation. If it fails in doing so, genealogy has no reason to be used. There is no foundational justification associated with genealogy that would make the answers a necessary truth. Genealogy is in the business of providing the best explanation possible of the origination of our current beliefs.

Special characteristics of genealogy

One of the constraints that are missing in genealogy is that genealogy is constrained to *negative truths*. Genealogy doesn't provide a positive justification for a certain value or belief. It merely explains why beliefs or values are held and how they originated. It cannot, although Nietzsche can be interpreted as doing so, provide us with any values or beliefs themselves. The reason it seems like Nietzsche does so is because he isn't exclusively using genealogy. He also has a vast number of beliefs and values himself on which he bases his theories. His ideas about human psychology and the physical world drives most of his writing and by doing so also his answers and theories that are produced by his genealogical method. But if we take the genealogical method in his ideal state, there wouldn't be any positive truths given. There should only be explanations pertaining to how our beliefs and values changed over time. The how may be influenced by other theories and methods and therefore give the illusion that genealogy gives positive truths.

One other constraint is *causality*. The 4th step of genealogy already implies that there is a cause for the change between the two *why's* if there is a difference between the two *why's*. This constraint simply means that there is a cause for the change, not that this cause is deterministically or naturally driven.

Is genealogy a proper philosophical method?

Genealogy is constrained by semantics, common sense, imaginary examples, findings of other disciplines, relevancy, fruitfulness, abduction, negative truth and causality. On the face of it, it does seem like there are enough constraints to warrant genealogy as a proper philosophical method. But two major constraints are missing, simplicity and precision. Due to the fact that almost all conclusions

by a genealogical method are based on a vast amount of assumptions and interpretations, there cannot be answers that aren't somehow vague. If we would give precise answers, a counterexample or the lack of subscription to one of the assumptions may already be conclusive. Due to this, genealogy is an unreliable source of philosophical answers.

That it is almost impossible to give a conclusive answer to the question doesn't mean that genealogy cannot be a proper philosophical method. It can also generate insights into certain philosophical phenomenon. I think that the generation of those insights is the strong point of genealogy. Even though the answers may not be as conclusive as some other philosophical theories, they do at the very least cast doubt about other theories. The answers can be used to give us better insight into the history of our beliefs and values even if the answers aren't conclusive. They help us in our investigation. This is why I think we shouldn't use genealogy as a method to help us gain conclusive evidence for the history of our beliefs and values, but to help us gain insight into the history of our beliefs and values and can in the regard be seen as a proper philosophical method.

Conclusion

Genealogy is a method that tries to find insights into the origin and history of our beliefs and values. This is done in 4 steps: What belief or value are we investigating? Where does the form of this belief or value occur in historical sources? Why did people hold these beliefs or values? How can we explain the difference, if there is any, between the reason we now hold these beliefs and value and the reason why those beliefs and values were held in the past?

In line with Collingwood and Williamson I've set up a list of; semantics, syntax, logic, common sense, imaginary examples, findings of other disciplines, simplicity, model-building, precision, relevancy, fruitfulness and abduction. If we are to judge a philosophical method on how well it performs, the method should be disciplined by some of these constraints. We found that genealogy was constrained by semantics, common sense, imaginary examples, findings of other disciplines, relevancy, fruitfulness and abduction. Furthermore, genealogy has the constraints of negative truth and causality.

Due to vast amount of assumptions and interpretations needed to make genealogy work, I've concluded that genealogy as a method for conclusive answers is a bad philosophical method. Due to these assumptions and interpretations the method cannot provide us with simple and precise answers. What it can provide us is insights into the history of our beliefs and values. It is therefore a proper philosophical method to generate insights, which should not be simply ignored because they aren't conclusive. Insights about the history of our beliefs and values can be beneficial to the understanding of the human mind and are therefore relevant to current philosophical debates.

I hope that genealogy may be used by other philosophers to generate more of these insights, with the help of my 4 step plan. The 3rd and 4th step of the genealogical method are dependent on other theoretical assumptions in philosophy, such as a foundational theory of meaning and a theory of the mind. Therefore, Nietzsche's genealogy seems to provide us with conclusive answers about the origins of our beliefs and values, but this is largely dependent on the philosophical theories Nietzsche himself adheres to. The genealogical method and his other philosophical theories work together to provide those conclusive answers that are often ascribed to Nietzsche's *Genealogy*, but genealogy alone should provide us with insights rather than conclusive answers.

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