

Philosophical Genealogy

Subjects: **History & Philosophy Of Science**

Contributor: Brian Lightbody

Philosophical genealogy constitutes a mode of inquiry that investigates either (a) the historical emergence of contemporary ideas, institutions, religions, moral norms, and even affective dispositions by tracing them to the intersection of diverse and often heterogeneous historical practices, beliefs, customs, and technologies or (b) demonstrates how a phenomenon could have emerged by providing a pragmatic reconstruction of the object under investigation. The following entry endeavors to explore various formulations of the genealogical method.

philosophical genealogy

Nietzsche

Foucault

documentary

pragmatic

ironic

implexic

deconstruction

This entry will examine a philosophical method named “genealogy.” The purpose of this article is to communicate the main features of philosophical genealogy to readers who are unfamiliar with the term, as well as to spell out the main types of the genealogical method. These include the three most discussed in the literature (the documentary, the ironic, and the pragmatic) as well as two more recent kinds, such as the deconstructive and implexic. Although it might be difficult to ascertain what makes these methods genealogical, the author will, following Wittgenstein, demonstrate that said methods share “family resemblances” (pun intended). The author will articulate these family resemblances before proceeding to a more precise explication of each method. The investigation begins by comparing ancestral genealogy to philosophical genealogy, as this will allow the reader, who, perhaps, is unfamiliar with genealogy, to understand why quintessential philosophical and historical investigations, such as Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* or Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morals*, are considered paradigmatic genealogical texts. The entry concludes with a discussion of the genetic fallacy, an objection often raised against philosophical genealogy’s justificatory merit, and provides reasons to demonstrate how genealogy may blunt the thrust of this objection.

Retrieved from <https://encyclopedia.pub/entry/history/show/131430>