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AUTHOR'S NOTE

1   Recent years have seen a growing interest in the relationship between pragmatism and genealogy, a "narrative describing how a certain belief, concept, value, or practice came about or might be imagined to have come about" (Lorenzini 2020), manifested in a variety of works. Some authors have proposed combining contributions from pragmatism with the ideas of authors adopting genealogical approaches, in particular those inspired by Michel Foucault (Stuhr 1997; Koopman 2013; Medina 2013).[1] Other authors have instead sought to identify original contributions to genealogy within the work of pragmatist authors themselves (see Viola 2020 on Peirce), or to integrate pragmatist insights with approaches not directly indebted to Foucault's work, such as German historicism (Joas 2013) and analytic philosophy (Queloz 2021). Although these various pragmatist-inspired approaches have been developed independently, rarely making extensive reference to one another, they share a concern towards several important issues and theoretical problems, such as the normative status of genealogy, the relation between contingency and universality, and the connection between genealogy and critique.

2   In this paper I would like to reframe the dialogue between these pragmatist approaches to genealogy. As a starting point for this discussion, I will take the most comprehensive extant contribution discussing the relationship between genealogy and pragmatism, namely Colin Koopman's book *Genealogy as Critique.* In section 1, I will briefly reconstruct Koopman's proposal of a division of labor between genealogy and pragmatism.[2] In the following discussion, I will embrace various points of his theory – for example, the centrality of problematization in genealogical inquiry and the opportunity to integrate pragmatism with other approaches that reconstruct power dynamics in more detail. At the same time, I will attempt to challenge two of Koopman's theses: the idea that Dewey's social philosophy takes for granted the existence of problematic situations and problems, being therefore incapable of accounting for problematizing practices; and the incompatibility between genealogies that problematize, and genealogies that vindicate.

3   In section 2.1, I will expand on the idea of the coexistence of problematization and vindication by discussing Hans Joas's concept of affirmative genealogy. By uniting attention to contingency and a focus on dynamics of universalization, Joas illustrates the possibility of a genealogical inquiry that affirms or re-affirms the importance of a specific value without thereby losing its problematizing force. This suggests that problematization does not necessarily require a genealogy which is normatively quasi-neutral. In section 2.2 I will develop this insight by discussing Mathieu Queloz's idea of pragmatic genealogy. Pragmatic genealogies allow us to justify the intermingling of values, interests and practices without debunking the higher *explanandum* by reducing it to the lower *explanans.* On the contrary, it is exactly their relationship with practical concerns that allows values or concepts to be vindicated through genealogical inquiry. Finally, in section 2.3 I will use the preceding discussions to sketch a hypothesis concerning the normative status of genealogies. In doing so, I will use Dewey's concept of evaluation and hypothesize that the normative status of genealogies can be captured by focusing on their evaluative function. Using evaluation according to Dewey's pragmatic understanding of this term allows us to account for the fact that genealogies cannot be reduced to allegedly value-free descriptive projects, nor can they be instrumentalized to use history as a tool for defending and backing ready-made moral and political positions.

4   The article aims thus at three main goals. First, I will provide an overview of existing studies in pragmatism and genealogy, thereby encouraging a debate between the different approaches. Second, I will sketch a contribution to a longstanding issue in studies in genealogy, i.e., the question of the normative status of genealogical inquiries. Third, I will suggest a novel application of one of the hallmark concepts of pragmatist ethics: the concept of evaluation.

1.1. Koopman on Genealogy and Problematization

5   In a series of volumes (Koopman 2009; 2013) and articles (Koopman 2017; 2019), Colin Koopman presented an articulated discussion of the relationship between genealogy and pragmatism. The theoretical core of Koopman's proposal hinges on a productive division of labor between these two approaches. Instead of treating genealogy and pragmatism as two self-sufficient, competing and mutually exclusive paradigms, his strategy consists in taking the best these two approaches can provide to critical inquiry

while discarding their respective shortcomings, blind spots and incompleteness. This division of labor between the two approaches can be summed up in the motto: genealogists problematize, pragmatists reconstruct.

6   According to Koopman, genealogy teaches us how to *problematize* situations, values and ideas which are usually taken for granted and understood as given, unproblematic and "natural." Koopman's main reference in this sense is Michel Foucault. Foucault's contributions are best understood according to Koopman as critical histories of the present which show how present institutions and subjectivities are the outcome of various threads which have been woven together into a new singularity. In this sense, Foucauldian genealogy does not aim at formulating political and moral judgments about the past or the present. Rather, genealogy problematizes what often appears to us as immediate and natural by showing that this is the outcome of practices, discourses and institutionalizations which "coagulated around what we take as a certain truth" (Koopman 2013: 211). For instance, Foucault's genealogical inquiry is not interested in discovering what sex really is, nor in judging if the way we live our sexuality today is better or worse than before. Rather, its main goal is problematizing what appears to us as self-evident and necessary, by showing how this is instead a contingent outcome of historical processes.

7   We must not be tempted however to reduce critical inquiry to the mere role of problematization. Problematization opens new potentialities of action by showing the contingent and open texture of reality. But how are we to reconstruct and redirect the spaces and possibilities of agency opened by genealogy? This is precisely where pragmatism enters the scene. Pragmatists provided a theory of inquiry which focuses on the best ways in which we can address and *reconstruct* social problems by taking into account the interests and concerns of individuals and social groups. If Foucauldian genealogy shows us that things could have gone and could still go in some other way, the melioristic approach endorsed by authors like William James, John Dewey and Richard Rorty helps us in understanding how we can attempt to make things go better. The two projects seem to interact in a quite complementary way. Pragmatist reconstruction would be fanciful and unrealistic without the spaces for agency opened by genealogical problematization, while genealogy in turn risks being reduced to a mere exercise in historical erudition if it is not complemented by reconstruction.

8   Koopman's proposal of a division of labor between genealogy and pragmatism thus relies on two specific judgments of incompleteness. Foucauldian genealogy is incomplete, since its focus on problematization does not fully account for the ways in which social actors can reconstruct what genealogy has problematized. Pragmatism is incomplete, insofar as it does not propose a convincing and effective activity of problematization. Koopman does not suggest that Foucault was insensitive to the need for a transformative and reconstructive phase, nor that pragmatists were totally unaware of the importance of practices of problematization. Still, for the sake of developing the best version of critical inquiry, it is better to single out and integrate the most promising contributions that these traditions can provide us, rather than denying their shortcomings. Foucault is better than pragmatists at problematizing, and pragmatists are better than Foucault at reconstructing.

9   Koopman's discussion of the relation between genealogy and pragmatism is insightful and productive for at least two reasons. First, Koopman deftly avoids the idea that pragmatist social philosophy is perfectly complete and adequate in itself, without at

the same stroke writing off pragmatists as totally incapable of contributing to a critical inquiry. Compared to such extreme and superficial positions, a strategy that unites the most compelling contributions of pragmatism and the more detailed analyses proposed by other theoretical approaches is certainly attractive.

10 The strategy of combining pragmatism with Foucauldian genealogy has been further explored by José Medina (2013). According to Medina, James and Foucault share the idea that truths are made, not given, and that we are prone to genetic amnesia regarding the genesis of such truths (Medina 2013: 34). However, pragmatist melioristic pluralism is unable to account for situations in which social conditions render equitable and fair amelioration impossible. Therefore, Medina suggests a combination of a guerrilla pluralism inspired by Foucault and a pragmatist melioristic pluralism. In his vision, the former fulfills deconstructive tasks while the latter engages in reconstructive tasks "whenever the social conditions make these tasks possible" (*ibid.*: 289). Once again, pragmatists are invited to reconstruct what someone else has already deconstructed. However, while Medina's understanding of genealogical problematization is definitely closer to a subversive activity, Koopman is careful to distinguish problematizing from subverting.

11 This divergence with Medina's perspective offers us the opportunity to introduce the second main contribution from Koopman's discussion of genealogy, i.e., a new understanding of *problematization.* While Medina's proposal aptly captures an important role that *some genealogies* can play – i.e., "challenges, subversions, and resistances of all sorts" (*ibid.*: 288) – the concept of problematization which Koopman extracted from Foucault's work is particularly well-suited to exemplify what *genealogies can do in more general terms.* Koopman maintains that genealogies put forth a kind of critique that should not be reduced to one-sided and ready-made moral and normative judgments (Koopman 2019). In this sense, his ideas echo Raymond Geuss' reflections on genealogy and critique. Genealogy is not a critique in the sense that it involves a mere moral rejection of the object of genealogical analysis. Rather, genealogy is a critique in the sense that it problematizes the apparently self-evident assumptions of a given form of life and the (supposedly) natural or inevitable and unchangeable character of given identities (Geuss 2005: 157). This is the reason why genealogies can politicize a given concept, value, or situation by showing its open and contestable nature (Jenkins 2011), and they do so most effectively when it is not subjugated to the need of affirming hasty and fully determined political judgments.

12 However, two passages of Koopman's discussion deserve a further critical discussion. The first critical remark concerns his reading of Dewey on the relationship between problems and problematization. The second remark deals with the way in which Koopman understands the relation between problematization, subversion and vindication.

1.2. Dewey on Problematization

13 A detailed reading of Koopman's works on pragmatism and genealogy show that he doesn't see pragmatism in general as lacking an adequate understanding of problematization. Rather, the focus of his criticism is basically restricted to Dewey's social philosophy. While authors like William James and especially William Du Bois (Koopman 2019) were quite aware of the role that individuals and social groups play in

challenging and shattering our customary beliefs, situations and concepts, Dewey's almost exclusive focus on melioristic reconstruction causes him to miss this aspect of social practice entirely.

14 Koopman presents his criticism of Dewey in two forms. According to the *first criticism*, Dewey takes problems as given. Instead of acknowledging and recognizing the contingent way in which a problem is socially constructed through a contingent set of conflictual practices, Dewey takes the existence of problems at face value, using them as the starting point of social inquiry and problem-solving. Consequently, he fails to explain how something is recognized as problematic, thus leaving a crucial question unanswered: "what enables us to transform a situation that is generally regarded as acceptable or legitimate into one that comes to be recognized as unacceptable or illegitimate?" (Koopman 2013: 247).

15 According to the *second criticism*, Dewey did not provide a sufficiently detailed analysis of the different practices of problematization and of the ways in which these practices are intermingled with relations of power. The role played by social asymmetries, practices of domination and resistance is thus limited to a disturbingly vague acknowledgment of the role that power plays in our lives. This lack of detail, paired with the great emphasis on reconstructive practices, is the main reason why Dewey's social philosophy has often been depicted as irenic, optimistic, and finally *naïf*.

16 I think that there are good reasons to reject the first criticism. Dewey was in fact quite aware that problems are at once given and made (Jaeggi 2018: 140). According to Dewey, problems are *given* only in the sense that they presuppose the existence of problematic situations (Dewey 1988 [1938]). These situations being at least partially incomplete, they can be transformed into problems only by means of a process of articulation, i.e., a process through which the indeterminacy and potentialities of a situation are developed and determined. However, this does not entail that he naively took problems as things which sprout spontaneously from partially indetermined problematic situations. This is exactly the sense in which problems are *made*. Problems are the outcome of process of conflicts and negotiations between social groups trying to articulate problematic situations in ways that fit with their concerns and interests (Frega 2009).

17 Moreover, Dewey acknowledged that the problematic nature of a situation can itself be a subject of contestation and disagreement. In his 1919-1920 *Lectures in China*, Dewey explains how dominant groups try to de-problematize the claims of subordinated groups by portraying these claims as individualistic and egoistical, and therefore devoid of any social relevance. In this scenario, neither problems nor the problematic status of a situation are naively given. On the contrary, one of the ways in which dominant groups exert their power is by actively de-problematizing customs, values and institutions. More specifically, they use their authority to portray the customary and instituted order as the manifestation of the "authority and majesty of *society*." When a subordinated group revolts and tries to express repressed social interests, dominant groups represent them as "making claims on their own *individualistic account* because they do not have the sanction of any social aim which has become acknowledged authoritatively." In this way, "activities which in reality express a wider and more just *social* arrangement are held to be lawless, manifesting the selfish desires of a number of *individuals* to disturb *society* on behalf of their own *egoistic* indulgences and ambitions" (Dewey 2015 [1919-1920]: §43). Patriarchal groups tried to de-

problematize the concerns of women and their fight for emancipation by representing them as "an *antisocial willful attack upon the very foundation of social relationships* on the part of a few aggressive, more or less ill-natured and disappointed women" (*ibid.*: §48).

18   Therefore, Koopman's first criticism is not convincing. Dewey knew well that social groups are actively engaged in practices of problematization and de-problematization. At the same time, there are still good reasons to retain Koopman's second criticism. It is undeniable that Dewey's discussion of problematization never achieves the level of detail reached by the genealogical analyses put forth by Foucault. We can and we should agree with Koopman about the need of integrating pragmatism and Foucauldian genealogy, without necessarily conceding that Dewey's social philosophy merely reduces problematization to the unavoidable effect of pre-existing and given problems.

1.3. Problematization vs. Vindication?

19   The second critical remark concerns the relation between problematization, vindication and subversion, and more generally speaking, the relation between genealogy and normativity. According to Koopman, both subversive uses (in the guise of Nietzsche's genealogy of moral) and vindicatory uses (e.g., Williams's affirmative genealogy of truth) overburden genealogical inquiry with an excessive normative load. They both reconstruct the historical – or counterfactual – genesis of practices and values of the present "in order to establish a normative evaluation of these practices" (Koopman 2013: 87). In doing so, Nietzsche's debunking project and Williams's vindicatory approach incur in the genetic fallacy, insofar as they risk deriving validity from genesis. Conversely, Foucault's model introduces an alternative genealogical strategy based on problematization. In contrast with debunking and vindicatory approaches, problematization aims at challenging and destabilizing what appears to us as immediate and natural, rather than at providing normative judgments. In this sense, problematization steers clear of the genetic fallacy by achieving a mode of neutrality, i.e., a mode of doubt, indeterminacy, and vagueness (Koopman 2013: 60). Problematizing genealogies provide resources for normative critique, but they are not alone sufficient instruments for normative conclusions (*ibid.*: 218).

20   The concept of problematization provides a convincing and effective criterion, capable of demonstrating that genealogies cannot be reduced to purely descriptive histories of ideas, nor to normatively charged instrumentalization of historical events. But are problematization and vindication (or subversion) incompatible? This incompatibility appears unconvincing – or at least unnecessary – if we consider genealogy as a kind of inquiry. As long as genealogy is a specific kind of inquiry, its outcomes will be partially open and unpredictable by definition. Indeed, it is thanks to its problematizing function that genealogical inquiry can provide us unexpected facts, scenarios, and connections. Thus, we cannot exclude that a genealogy can play a vindicatory (or subversive) function *exactly* because of its outcomes. If we shift our attention from the intentions of the genealogist to the outcomes of their inquiries, it is perfectly conceivable that a problematizing genealogy ends up playing a vindicatory role by strengthening our belief that the object of genealogy plays a valuable role in our social life. Thinking of problematization and vindication as alternative projects pushes us to think that a problematizing genealogy cannot be affirmative, and that an affirmative genealogy must necessarily renounce its problematizing force. The alternative

hypothesis that I want to propose tells us that you can have both, exactly because genealogy is a kind of inquiry whose outcomes are by definition partially open. And in accordance to the pragmatic maxim, these outcomes play momentous a role in defining the nature and the meaning of a specific genealogy.

21   Koopman suggests that we should "not use genealogy to try to prove anything about the present" (Koopman 2013: 71). I believe that we can ignore this latter recommendation while at the same time keeping Koopman's emphasis on the importance of problematization for genealogies. Some genealogies fall short not because they try to prove anything, but because they do so without a sufficient degree of problematization – i.e., without strict adherence to the rules of genealogy as a specific kind of inquiry. In this sense, considering vindication and problematization together can help us sort out the queer normative status of genealogy – what Marchetti aptly called its quasi-normative pretensions (Marchetti 2015: 217). In this way, we may find an alternative path which avoids both the presumption of neutrality and the tendency to instrumentalize history for the sake of producing one-sided normative judgments.

22   To sum up, we have examined two insights which emerged from the discussion of Koopman's theories – first, the compatibility of vindication and problematization; second, the idea that genealogies have a specific normative status. In the second part of this article, I will develop these insights, first by discussing Hans Joas's pragmatist inspired affirmative genealogy of human rights, and later by examining Mathieu Queloz's pragmatic genealogy.

2.1. Joas's Affirmative Genealogy

23   Hans Joas's genealogy of human rights in his book *The Sacredness of Person* (2013) has been significantly inspired by pragmatism. Even though the book itself does not discuss pragmatist authors at length, the ideas put forth in it are clearly connected with some previous books in which Joas dealt extensively with pragmatism. Specifically, *The Sacredness of the Person* can be seen as a further development of the ideas presented in his book *The Genesis of Values* (Joas 2000). In this latter book Joas discusses the different theories which try to account for the emergence of values. Through a detailed discussion which includes pragmatists like William James, John Dewey, and Richard Rorty, Joas develops the thesis according to which values are the outcome of the articulation of experience of self-formation and self-transcendence, i.e., individual and collective experiences that push us beyond the limits of our customary identity. This means that values are neither discovered – rather, they are the outcome of a process of articulation and interpretation – nor posited – as they involve a passive dimension of captivation. Values are not just something that we affirm in a voluntaristic way, but they are something that captures us, something that binds us through an affective attachment. This idea that values are neither discovered nor posited opens the path to genealogical inquiry. From this perspective, genealogy reconstructs the contingent historical processes and practices through which individual or collective experiences are articulated and interpreted, and they coalesce into a specific value. This is exactly what Joas will do in his genealogy of human rights.

24   Joas's genealogical project has several significant points of contact with Koopman's approach, sharing historical sensibility, pragmatist inspiration, and the idea that

genealogies are not necessarily debunking. The most significant among these convergences is the compatibility between contingency and universality. According to Koopman, we do not necessarily have to choose between universality and contingency. On the contrary, genealogical inquiry helps in understanding and reconstructing the contingent conflicts, negotiations, and compromises through which processes of universalization have been achieved. Practices and dynamics of universalization have "a history in which are buried complex sequencings of contingent selections" (Koopman 2013: 237). Indeed, one of the examples mentioned by Koopman is the precise topic of Joas's book, i.e., human rights. The history of the universalization of human rights can be told by means of a genealogical inquiry, provided that we acknowledge that this history will not necessarily require sacrificing the contingency and complexity of historical processes. This means that, from a genealogical perspective, processes of universalization are instantiated through contingent practices and conflicts. They are embodied in particular contexts and struggles, and they are the potential objects of contestation and of particularistic backlashes.

25   Although the compatibility of contingency and universality aligns Joas's perspective with Koopman's approach, a momentous difference separates them. While Koopman believes that genealogies do work better when they problematize without vindicating, Joas's genealogy is explicitly affirmative. According to Joas, genealogies shed light on the contingent genesis of a specific value, the ways in which a value emerges from people processing their experiences of self-transcendence and self-formation. But the acknowledgment of contingency does not necessarily weaken our value commitments. On the contrary, genealogies can reactivate and reaffirm our attachment to a value. Here the distance between Koopman and Joas is significant. On the one hand, Koopman maintains that we should carefully avoid the genetic fallacy, and that we should do so by weaking the normative force of genealogies. This is the reason why genealogies should problematize, while at the same time refraining from vindicating or subverting. On the other hand, Joas believes that genealogies can be problematizing *and* affirmative at the same time. This implies a more relaxed attitude towards the genetic fallacy. If the validity of a value cannot be derived immediately from its historical origin, at the same time genealogical inquiries can do justice to the interleaving of genesis and validity (Joas 2013: 3).

26   The affirmative genealogy that Joas has in mind thus aims to reconcile aspects that are often seen as incompatible. It aims to overcome the incompatibility of contingency and universalization. This means that the acknowledgment of contingency is a necessary step both in the vindication of radically contextual and particular values, and in the affirmation of values which have undergone a process of universalization. It dissuades from the instrumental use of history to affirm our values, while acknowledging the intertwining of validity and genesis. And finally, while values cannot be derived from rational arguments and justifications, genealogical reconstructions and narratives can provide arguments for vindicating the importance of a present value. According to Joas, affirmative genealogies can do all this work only by engaging in a "specific context-transcendent interleaving of narration and argument" (*ibid.*: 137). Genealogies can be affirmative in the sense that, by reconstructing the historical processes of ideal formation, they can open new paths through which "historically embodied meanings call upon us" (*ibid.*: 127). In this sense, an affirmative genealogy can problematize by opening the path to an unexpected new (or renewed) attachment to universal and particular values. Narration and argument potentially cooperate in advocating the

worth and the importance of either values that we already deem as important, or of values that are apparently losing their attractive force.

27 But even in the case in which genealogy revitalizes and refines our existing value commitments and orientations, this does not necessarily happen at the expense of a problematizing attitude. Influenced by Ernst Troeltsch, Joas maintains that the revitalizing and refining function of affirmative genealogy in no way requires an uncritical acceptance of extant mythical and conventional historical accounts. On the contrary, when genealogies play a revitalizing function, they do so precisely because they tell a different story, examining in detail the contingent historical processes which define the emergence of a value. The encounter with the vicissitudes through which some experiences have been articulated can re-enact the vitality of this value. This encounter, however, does not preclude the acknowledgment of the role played by power and asymmetries in the genesis and in the articulation of values. On the contrary, only by starting from the fact of ideal formation can we acknowledge the proper role played by "interests, power, and ideological delusion" (*ibid.*: 133). All these decisive factors in human and social life influence the processes of articulation and diffusion of values. The multifaceted narratives of these influences are a constitutive part of genealogical reconstruction. An affirmative genealogy that does not recognize the spurious history of values, instead portraying them as pure entities, will necessarily boil down either to a wishful thinking, or to a weapon in cultural wars.

28 Joas's understanding of affirmative genealogy shows that we can preserve Koopman's core intuition – i.e., the idea that genealogies work best when they are problematizing – without accepting the postulate of the incompatibility between problematization and affirmation. A genealogy can be a good affirmative genealogy insofar as it does not stop problematizing the past, the present and their contingent historical connections, and thus, problematizing genealogies do not need necessarily to be normatively neutral. In the next section, I will try to capture the ambiguous normative nature of genealogy by means of one of the hallmark concepts of pragmatist ethics, i.e., evaluation. In order to do that, I will compare the pragmatist contributions to genealogy here analyzed with Mathieu Queloz's reflection on pragmatic genealogy.

2.2. New Strategies of Vindication: Queloz's Pragmatic Genealogy

29 In the last few years, the importance of conceptual history (Plunkett 2016) and genealogy (Haslanger 2005) for philosophical reflection has been increasingly acknowledged in discussions on conceptual engineering, i.e., a philosophical approach in analytic philosophy that aims at assessing, revising, and improving our concepts and representational devices (Cappelen 2018; Plunkett & Cappelen 2020). The most detailed and fine-grained discussion of genealogy from the standpoint of conceptual engineering has been provided by Mathieu Queloz (2021; 2022). Queloz moves from a general understanding of genealogy as a developmental narrative describing how a cultural phenomenon – say, a value – could have come about. In his view, there are at least three ways in which genealogists can inquire into the emergence of a cultural phenomenon. The first approach focuses on actual history, and it involves a historical reconstruction of the emergence of concepts, values, and other cultural phenomenon from the interplay of practices, institutions, and conflicts. The second approach focuses

on conjectural history, and it elaborates speculations about a very distant past. The third approach engages with what Queloz calls counterfactual developments. Differently from the first two approaches, such an approach does not concern itself principally with historical realities. Rather, it aims at constructing a fictional and idealized model which accounts for the generic and basic dynamics behind the genesis of cultural phenomena. State of nature hypothesis belongs to this latter category.

30   From this general background, Queloz develops three theses which are particularly relevant for the present discussion. He begins by proposing that counterfactual genealogy is a legitimate kind of genealogical inquiry, although it does not focus primarily on actual historical events. More specifically, counterfactual reconstructions can effectively contribute to conceptual engineering. If conceptual engineering's first goal is addressing the question: "what do we need a specific concept for?," then the reconstruction of an idealized model explaining what basic concerns have been addressed by the introduction of a concept could be of great help. This conceptual reverse engineering can thus fruitfully contribute to what Queloz calls pragmatic genealogy, i.e., a genealogy that "answers the question of why we came to think as we do by reverse-engineering the points of ideas, tracing them to their practical origins, and revealing what they do for us when they function well" (Queloz 2021: 3). When it comes to the genealogy of a concept of great importance to a specific group or community, pragmatic genealogy seeks to explain its emergence by showing which practical concerns (e.g., interests, needs, and desires) have been satisfied by this "higher" phenomenon.

31   Second, according to Queloz, pragmatic genealogy is not necessarily debunking. Rather, it can also function in a vindicatory sense. Even in the specific case in which it explains the genesis of an *explanandum* (e.g., a value) which is normatively conceived as "higher" in terms of the role it plays for the satisfaction of a *explanans* (e.g., a practical concern) which is normatively conceived as "lower," practical genealogy is neither reducing the higher to the lower, nor denying the importance of the higher. For instance, the reconnection of the higher to the lower can strengthen our commitment to a value, by showing that its emergence played a momentous role in addressing an important and valuable concern in our social lives. In this sense, the genealogical connection to the lower contribute to an evaluation of the higher (Queloz 2022). When this evaluation is positive, pragmatic genealogy plays a vindicatory function. As examples of vindicatory genealogies in this sense, Queloz enlists Bernard Williams' *Truth and Truthfulness* and Miranda Fricker's work on epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007). In both cases, pragmatic genealogy vindicates respectively, the role of the value of truth and the virtue of testimonial justice by showing how these "higher" phenomena address some basic and important social concerns.

32   Third, Queloz represents pragmatic genealogies as a triadic process. This process involves an explanandum, an explanans, and an addressee. The addressee plays a decisive role in defining the nature and the function of a genealogy. As Queloz aptly points out, "a genealogy is not *intrinsically* vindicatory or subversive, but vindicatory or subversive *for someone*," i.e., for an addressee "who has certain values and normative expectations, including about what kinds of origins the higher element *ought to have* if it is to merit confidence and respect" (Queloz 2022: 22). In this way, pragmatic genealogies potentially inform the addressee's evaluations of the object of genealogy. At the same time, the responses of the addressee contribute to the definition of the

nature and function of a genealogy. In a nod to pragmatism, the introduction of the necessary role of the addressee suggests that the meaning of a genealogy is less in the genealogist' head than in the potential responses produced by genealogy. We cannot define a genealogy as subversive or as vindicatory without including the perspective of the addressee.

33   Queloz's pragmatic genealogy is clearly different from the pragmatist approaches previously discussed in at least two respects. First, his reconstruction focuses more explicitly on Cambridge pragmatism (Misak 2016; Price 2011) rather than on classical American pragmatists, whose work heavily inspired both Koopman and Joas. Second, while Queloz focuses on the key role played by counterfactual reconstruction and its usefulness for conceptual reverse-engineering, both Koopman and Joas insist on the unavoidable historical grounding of genealogies.[3]

34   However, in this context I think it is more productive to focus on similarities between pragmatic genealogy and pragmatist genealogy, rather than dwelling on the differences. The discussion of Queloz's proposal helps us to further develop the second main insight gained from the preceding discussion of Koopman's and Joas's theories, i.e., the idea that the concept of evaluation can help us grasp the normative status of genealogies. By developing a narration which tries to combine values and concerns, contingency and universalization, we provide relevant facts for the evaluation of the object of genealogy (Queloz 2022). This could hardly be further from simply expressing a one-sided and harsh moral judgment, something that Koopman rightly warns genealogists not to do. But what exactly does *evaluating* mean in this context? In the next and final section of this paper, I will try to address this question by using one of the key concepts of pragmatist ethics, i.e., Dewey's concept of evaluation.

2.3. The Evaluative Function of Genealogy. Some Deweyan Insights

35   According to Koopman, using history to "evaluate the present" (Koopman 2013: 87) either negatively or positively means incurring into the genetic fallacy, i.e., deriving the validity of something from its genesis. But genealogical inquiry offers us a number of ways to evaluate both the past and the present. If evaluating means expressing totally fixed and predetermined moral judgments and using history as a pretext to affirm our own position, as often happens in cultural wars, then Koopman would be correct in saying that evaluation undermines problematization. But what if evaluation means achieving a better understanding of what appears today as an end-in-itself, by reconstructing the situation out of which it emerged and the entanglement of this end with a various and multifaceted set of means? This is exactly what Dewey meant by evaluation, and is a far cry from the expression of apodictic and one-sided moral judgments.

36   The concept of evaluation has been introduced and discussed by Dewey in one of his most significant contributions to ethics, his 1939 *Theory of Valuation*. The theoretical core of this essays is represented by the distinction between valuations and evaluations. Evaluation does not consist in labelling something as good or bad. Rather, differently from valuations – e.g., interests, needs, concerns, desires – evaluations include a reflexive dimension. This gap between valuation and evaluation, calls into

question the means/ends relationship. If what we value were an absolute, transcendent, untouchable end, its reflexive evaluation would be logically and practically impossible. On the contrary, if we understand values as necessarily enmeshed with contingency, experiences and practical concerns, evaluations will have to include both means and ends. This means that a specific value is evaluated not merely in the sense that we immediately judge it good or bad. Rather, evaluations include the interleaving of means and ends as their objects. We evaluate values by taking into account the contextual means through which these values have been implemented. More specifically, the evaluation of a specific value includes the assessment of the way in which it responded to the needs, concerns and experiences of the specific situation that produced it, and of the ways in which its realization concerns and influences other values and interests.

37   Evaluation tries thus to do justice to the entanglement of means and ends without at the same time debunking and delegitimizing these ends. If we take ends to be representatives of a "higher" level and means to be representatives of a "lower" level, then evaluation can nicely account for Queloz's idea that genealogies can reconnect the higher to the lower without necessarily debunking. The contingent means which are both interconnected with ends and involved in their realization combine in defining the nature of the ends, their value to us, and what we are to do with them. In this sense, Dewey's definition of evaluation shows us that the reconstruction of the relations between (higher) ends and (lower) means cannot be purely descriptive, because it is precisely these different ways in which ends and means intermingle which is the object of evaluation. Genealogies often work as evaluation in Dewey's sense: they function neither as the explicit and unquestioned endorsement of a value and a sheer moral judgment about that value, nor as a neutral and pure explicative analysis. Rather, genealogies loosen and rearticulate the ties between ends and means, values and concerns.

38   To further elaborate on this connection between evaluation and genealogy, another key concept of pragmatist ethics and epistemology could be of great help. In fact, the idea that genealogies can evaluate by reconnecting a higher explanandum – e.g., a value – and a lower explanans – e.g., a practical concern – risks being misconstrued, leading us to assume that values, concerns, and interests exist as independent entities. On the contrary, values and concerns, means and ends always exist in the framework of a *specific situation* (Dewey 1988 [1938]). This suggests the following hypothesis: genealogies do not simply reconnect a single explanandum to a single explanans – say, a value to a practical concern. More precisely, genealogies reconstruct the way in which its object emerged from a specific situation.

39   Putting situations at the center of the relation between genealogy and evaluation leads to at least three important consequences. First, situations are by definition internally complex and composed. This means that a situation is not characterized by the existence of a single practical concern. Rather, a situation normally includes a set of different concerns, interests, and ideals. Of course, it makes perfect sense within a given situation to single out the relevant aspect – e.g., a specific concern – that played a major role in the emergence of the object of genealogy. And yet, we should never forget that our analysis will be based on these legitimate interests we have selected. Such a selection will never fully encompass the whole situation, whose internal complexity oversteps the aspects we have selected.

40   Second, if genealogies reconstruct internally complex situations, then we should be wary of the idea that genealogies trace by definition a higher explanandum – e.g., a value – back to a lower explanans – e.g., a concern.[4] Since the original situation is internally composited, we cannot assume from the outset that this situation will be devoid of values and ideal orientations. Nor would it be wise to methodologically exclude these "higher" elements from genealogical reconstruction. In fact, some genealogies are problematizing and unsettling *exactly because* they show that the origins and the function of the object of genealogical inquiry are higher than expected. An insightful example in this sense can be found in Jane Addams' genealogy of the memories of migrant women at the Hull House. In *The Long Road of Women's Memory* (1916) Addams deals extensively with biographical stories told by women living and coming from disadvantaged social milieus. Some of these stories – i.e., the legend of a baby devil born in the Hull House – present clear mythological features, and they are therefore often labeled as the expression of ignorance and superstition. However, in her careful analyses Addams reconstructs the situation from which this legend emerged, showing how this narrative helped women to process their memories and their suffering, thereby generating a first germ of social criticism (Viola 2021). Addams' genealogy makes clear how these legends emerged from practical situations which were not devoid of ideal contents – the value of preserving dignity and reacting to injustices and humiliations. In doing so, Addams is clearly re-evaluating what Medina calls "knowledge without social currency" (Medina 2013: 291). This knowledge is re-evaluated and not simply snatched back out of oblivion. At the same time, Addams' evaluative reconstruction is problematizing exactly insofar as it attempts to shed light on the dignity of these cultural phenomena and their critical function.

41   Third, the evaluative function of genealogies is not restricted to the evaluation or re-evaluation of an original situation. Rather, evaluations in Dewey's sense are capable of tracking the different roles that the object of genealogy plays in different situations. The fact that a value or concept performed an emancipatory function for a specific group in a specific original situation does not automatically imply a positive evaluation of the role it can play in our contemporary context.

42   A good example in this sense is Dewey's genealogy of liberal values in *Liberalism and Social Action* (1985 [1935]). In its universalistic breadth, the idea that each individual is free to pursue his or her own interests without interference from intrusive institutions, such as the state or the church, has certainly served an emancipatory function in the past. However, from the middle of the nineteenth century the socio-economic situation changed radically. The exaltation of free initiative and the free pursuit of self-interest and the economic and social changes come to full fruition: the industrial and commercial economic groups that had supported these changes become dominant in society. As a result, liberalism, individualism, and the doctrine of self-interest change sign in a radical way: they are no longer instruments of criticism of the society, but instruments of justification of power. In this sense, Dewey's genealogy fulfills a problematizing function. It shows how liberal values are not simply good or bad as pure ends-in-themselves, but how on the contrary their evaluation depends on the analysis of the situation in which they operate. A thorough evaluation of these values and the role they can play in contemporary society involves an analysis and comparison of the various historical situations in which they have acted. If in situation A the value of free enterprise has played an emancipatory role and in situation B it has played a

conservative role, for the purposes of the evaluation of this value it will be necessary to analyze whether the contemporary situation resembles A or B more. Dewey's revisionary and melioristic proposal of keeping liberal values, but only after a deep reconstruction of their meaning, is deeply influenced by his genealogical reconstruction of the concerns, the interests and the needs that these values addressed in different historical situations, and by the comparison between these situations.

Conclusions

43   In this article, I connected different threads of discussion about the relationship between pragmatism and genealogy. As an outcome of the discussion of Koopman's, Joas's and Queloz's approaches, I proposed that genealogies can work as evaluations without losing their problematizing force. More specifically, this hypothesis maintains that genealogies often work as evaluations in Dewey's sense: neither the explicit and unquestioned endorsement of a value, nor a neutral and pure explicative analysis. Rather, genealogies loosen and rearticulate the ties between means and ends, values and concerns, past situations and present situations. The idea that genealogies are often evaluative in Dewey's sense takes seriously into account Koopman's admonishment against an excessively normative understanding of genealogies while rejecting his proposal of understanding genealogical problematization as normatively neutral. In this sense, I have tried to show how pragmatist ethics and philosophy do not simply externally complement genealogical approaches by supplementing their missing normative pieces. Rather, the concept of evaluation, central to pragmatist ethics, can help us shed light on a specific aspect of genealogies, i.e., their normative status.[5]

44   Of course, the hypothesis here introduced does not entail that every genealogy *must* necessarily produce a clear evaluation of the object of genealogical inquiry. More modestly, the idea is that a problematizing affirmative genealogy is possible, to the extent that this vindication is the outcome of an evaluation in Dewey's terms, and not the expression of a fixed, given and pre-shaped moral judgment. Paradoxically, denying this possibility risks dampening the problematizing force of genealogies, by excluding affirmation/vindication as a possible outcome of genealogical inquiry. Problematization and evaluation are not incompatible from a Deweyan standpoint, precisely because evaluations are a form of experimental inquiry, rather than the mere top-bottom application of unalterable moral and ethical standards.

45   Moreover, thinking of genealogies as evaluative in Dewey's sense involves putting situations at the center of genealogical inquiries. This key role of situations can be fruitfully employed and developed in two directions. First, it can help us reframe the way in which paradigmatic genealogies have been generally understood. For instance, Nietzsche's (1887) reconstruction of the emergence of moral values is often summed up in the thesis "moral values emerge from resentment." And yet, Nietzsche's genealogy can be interpreted as the reconstruction of an internally composed situation in which three different social groups confront one another: a superior class upholding aristocratic values; an inferior class, which is not strong enough to challenge the superior class, and which develops resentment against the ruling elite; and finally, a priestly class, which is cultured and powerful enough to articulate this resentment into the de-valuation of the vital aristocratic life and the idealization of the weaknesses of

the inferior class. From this perspective, the affirmation of "weak" defeatist moral values at the expense of vitality, nobility and joyful affirmation of the individual cannot be reduced to the sole motivating force of resentment. What Nietzsche's genealogy of morality reconstructs is in fact an original internally composed situation in which different groups adopt different strategies motivated by different interests in a context of deep power asymmetries.

46   Second, the idea of the centrality of situations can help us address explicit or implicit uses of genealogical argumentations in contemporary political and cultural debates. An example can help clarify this final point. In the last few years, anti-fascism as a value has become the object of discussions and debates. Some critical evaluations in this regard take at least a proto-genealogical form. One such argument holds that anti-fascism was a founding and inspirational value at a time in history when the threat of fascism was real and chronologically close. Today, however, fascism no longer exists. Therefore, anti-fascism as a value has lost meaning. Moreover, it serves a dangerous distracting function, as it diverts our attention from the real problems of contemporary society. Reconstruction and comparison of different situations play a key role both in this – albeit rudimentary – genealogical assessment, and in the way in which this critical stance can itself be evaluated. For instance, one might say that the aforementioned argument is weak because it oversimplifies the role that this value played in the original situation in which it emerged – in this case, it had an inspirational function expressing the desire for democracy, and cannot be reduced to the simple contestation of an oppressive fascist regime – and it provides a superficial reconstruction of contemporary societies – i.e., by underrating the risk of fascist backlashes. As long as they include a complex intermingling of narration and argumentation, genealogical evaluations can thus be in turn assessed. The way in which these evaluations reconstruct and connect past and present situations is a relevant object of this assessment.

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NOTES

1. For a skeptical reading of the integration between pragmatism and Foucauldian genealogy see West 1989.

2. For a far more detailed and thorough reconstruction, see Marchetti 2015.

3. However, an interesting use of counterfactual reconstruction can be found in James' account of the genesis of value orders and hierarchies. What may appear as an abstract and eternal order of moral obligations in fact emerges from the practical need to address competing claims. But this competition of claims in turn is possible only in a world in which there are at least two thinkers who are not indifferent to each other's thoughts and acts (James 1979 [1891]: 146). I have discussed this point at length in Santarelli 2021.

4. Queloz (2022) focuses more at length on the genealogies that trace an explanandum which is normatively conceived as higher back to a "lower" explanans. However, in general terms Queloz's perspective is perfectly compatible with the idea that genealogies do not *by definition* trace the higher back to the lower – unless we understand the terms "higher" and "lower" in a functional rather than in a normative sense.

5. This does not entail that the normative status of genealogy can be reduced to the evaluative dimension. In this sense, the proposal put forth by this article can be nicely integrated with other contributions who shed light on other normative aspects of genealogy. See for instance Lorenzini's recent contribution on possibilising genealogies (Lorenzini 2020). Lorenzini's criticisms of Koopman resonates in many aspects with the criticisms presented in this article.

ABSTRACTS

In this article I want to reconstruct some threads of the recent discussions on pragmatism and genealogy. As a starting point for this discussion, I will discuss Koopman's proposal of a division of labor between genealogy and pragmatism. While preserving his emphasis on the centrality of problematization in genealogical inquiry, I will try to challenge his ideas about the incompatibility between genealogies that problematize, and genealogies that vindicate. In the subsequent parts of the paper, I aim at developing the hypothesis about the compatibility between problematization and vindication by discussing two different pragmatist approaches to genealogy: Hans Joas's genealogy of human rights, and Mathieu Queloz's pragmatic genealogy. In the final part of the article, I will sketch a possible contribution to the understanding of the normative status of genealogies, by focusing on Dewey's concept of evaluation. More specifically, I hope to show that evaluative genealogy inquiries can preserve their *sui generis* normative force, without being reduced to a tool for defending and backing ready-made moral and political positions.

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