

"Biopolitics and Its Problems: A Genealogical Pragmatist Approach"

Contemporary humanities and social sciences research are abuzz with discourse surrounding the intersections of the biological, the political, and the ethical, typically framed in terms of biopolitics and bioethics. There is no single best way to approach the tangled morass of biopolitical and bioethical challenges we face in the actual present. Some (such as Giorgio Agamben) have sought ahistorical analyses. Others (such as Ian Hacking) have concentrated on historically specific inquiries. I here motivate the latter approach by developing a theoretical option for the study of biopolitics rooted in what I call 'genealogical pragmatism'. This option makes use of both pragmatism (as featured in John Dewey's work) and genealogy (as featured in Michel Foucault's work) by establishing a shared insight that resonates remarkably well across all the distances (spatial and temporal) that divided them. This insight concerns their attempt to orient inquiry around problems (Dewey's 'problematic situation' and Foucault's 'problematization') and our responses to these problems (Dewey's 'reconstruction' and Foucault's 'thought'). The logic of inquiry featured in genealogical pragmatism is thus described as one of problem-and-resolution in contrast to traditional logics of truth-and-falsity or assertion-and-negation.

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