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ESSAY

THEORIZING THE HUMAN SCIENCES IN THE AGE OF ABSOLUTE DISRUPTION: HISTORICAL CRITICISM AND ITS REMAINDERS¹

Essay by Adam DJ Brett

Abstract: Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm's trilogy, *The Myth of Disenchantment* (2017), *Metamodernism* (2021), and *The Genealogy of Genealogy* (2026), can be read as standalone theoretical interventions or as parts of a singular project. In this essay, I argue that when read together, the books explore four questions: whether a thing exists, how it arose and why it persists, what grounds our claims about it, and whether it is desirable. I will argue that the project is strongest where its concrete analyses keep those questions distinct (the Frazer and Crowley chapters of *Myth*, the social-kinds ontology of *Metamodernism*, the Nietzsche and Jean Wahl reception history of *Genealogy*) and at its most interesting when doing a careful reading of Weber and about genealogy's institutional hegemony along with its eugenic inheritance. Its proposals do not stand or fall as a system; they work as nodes in the network of humanities theory after critique, and I follow each into its reception. Moving beyond the glib sort of relativism, of to every person their own truth, the books defend fallible inquiry after critique without treating historical situatedness as a condemnation of knowledge.

Keywords: Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, disenchantment, metamodernism, genealogy, Nietzsche, Foucault, Max Weber, social construction, process ontology, critical religion, Doctrine of Discovery, blood quantum

¹ The title plays on Walter Jaeschke, "Philosophy of Religion After the Death of God," in *Philosophy and Religion in German Idealism*, ed. William Desmond, Ernst-Otto Onnasch, and Paul Cruysberghs, *Studies in German Idealism* 3 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 1-19, https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-2325-1_1, and on the name of Jason Ānanda Josephson Storm's blog, *Absolute Disruption*, <https://absolute-disruption.com/>. The books discussed are Jason Ā. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 9780226403366 (paper); Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism: The Future of Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 9780226786650; and Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, *The Genealogy of Genealogy: Nietzsche, Foucault, and the Coils of Critical History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2026), 9780226847313 (paper).

A Usable Past: What Criticism Permits a Scholar to Conclude

Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm opens *The Myth of Disenchantment* with Marie Skłodowska Curie and Pierre Curie sitting at spiritualist séances. At the same time, they measured radiation, and the mental image this supposed paradox conjures encapsulates the project. Here the founders of a supposedly disenchanted science kept company with the enchantments their discipline's story says they abolished. Magic and meaning still haunt the sciences. A contemporary example of this paradox might be the worship of AI from inside Anthropic.² For Josephson-Storm, nuance and slow reading are skills in urgent need of recuperation in the human sciences.

Academia tends to move with a sense of ahistoricism, which leads the human sciences to discover that their objects have histories regularly. Classification remains a political act, scholarly categories like "Religion" are assembled through conflicts; modernity is a contested account of the present; and the methods that disclose such constructions carry institutional pedigrees of their own. Such discoveries can improve inquiry, and they can also substitute for it. Once an object has been pronounced constructed or implicated in power, the questions about what it does and what we can know look already answered.

Josephson-Storm examines that danger from three directions. *Myth* contests narratives that identify modernity with the disappearance of magic, especially when they organize histories of the human sciences. *Metamodernism* proposes a philosophical alternative to an academic culture in which critique allegedly makes general knowledge indefensible. *Genealogy* turns historical criticism on one of criticism's most prestigious methods. Perhaps these scholarly moves sound like a familiar story: a historian dismantles inherited categories, tires of dismantling, and builds a replacement. However, these books intentionally complicate this familiar story. The preface to *Metamodernism* reveals an earlier constructive project overlapping with *Myth*, and the newest book (conceived in 2016, delivered as a 2017 conference paper) became separate in winter 2020–21 while *Metamodernism* was in production. Reconstruction and criticism developed organically together.³

² Victor Tangermann, "Cult of Anthropic Insiders Rumored to Be Worshipping Claude as a God," *Futurism*, September 17, 2026, <https://futurism.com/future-society/cult-anthropic-insiders-worshipping-claude-god>.

³ Jason Ā. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 1–18; Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism: The Future of Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), ix–x, 15–21; Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, *The Genealogy of Genealogy: Nietzsche, Foucault, and the Coils of Critical History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2026), 257–58.

Together the three books illustrate the consequences of classificatory regimes and their desired timeless essences. A demythologizing narrative about the humanities and social sciences can shape institutions while misdescribing the practices it summarizes; a social kind of demythologizing can depend on human activity while possessing properties no participant understands; a critical method can be contingent and still produce meaningful knowledge. The propositions are related, but none entails the others, and the difference matters for evaluation. A counterexample may defeat a claim of universal disappearance without measuring decline. A reconstruction of transmission may explain a method's influence without showing its arguments sound. An account of the reality of social kinds may make inquiry possible without selecting the best explanation of a given kind. Showing that research requires not only a value system but also critical reflection on that system does not necessarily justify the values a researcher recommends; one must evaluate and assess these claims.

Josephson-Storm's analysis of intellectual intermediaries, the attention to disciplines as producers of their own objects, and the insistence that contingency permits explanation furnish a research program that is not only substantial but also cautionary. His *oeuvre's* originality lies less in discovering that constructions are real or knowledge fallible than in coordinating those insights across a capacious path of interdisciplinary intellectual history, social ontology, interpretation, epistemology, and ethics.

In this essay I will read each work in Josephson-Storm's trilogy as an argument with its own center of gravity before turning to their relationship. Objections to *Myth* must confront its qualifications about rationalization, objections to *Metamodernism* must distinguish canonical theorists from the received academic package it attacks, and objections to *Genealogy* must reckon with its repudiation of the genetic fallacy. Equally, those qualifications cannot immunize the books against their broader claims. Reception helps locate the pressure points, but it cannot adjudicate them without returning to the books.

In my reading of the trilogy, I see an emerging set of theoretical proposals: metarealism, social kinds anchored by identifiable processes, hylosemiotics, zetetic knowledge, genealogical power, and the rejection of the genetic fallacy. Each one is separable from the others, and each one has already begun to circulate in religious studies and cultural theory on its own. I treat them as nodes in the matrix of humanities theory after critique. Therefore, I am interested in tracking a node's connections to the reception by scholars like Asprem, Hanegraaff, Schilbrack, Kotsko, Elden, and others. In a recent interview with Carl Raschke, Josephson-Storm considers how the mind "spills outward into bodies, media, institutions," which led me to view his *oeuvre* as a central nervous system and/or a deterritorialized network-infrastructure map.⁴

Disenchantment and the Histories Its Story Conceals

The Myth of Disenchantment gains its force from a striking conjunction. The theorists associated with supposedly disenchanted modern knowledge inhabited worlds crowded with occult practice, psychical investigation, and speculation about unseen powers. Josephson-Storm does more than collect embarrassing exceptions: he asks how the human sciences constructed an account of modernity their own histories complicate. The gap between a field's self-description and the activities through which it developed is the book's governing problem. The argument is strongest where a description passes back into the practice it describes.⁵

⁴ Carl A. Raschke and Jason Ānanda Josephson Storm, "Genealogy, Enchantment, and the War for the Mind," *JCRT • Religious Theory* (Boulder, CO: Whitestone Publications, September 23, 2026), <https://doi.org/10.17613/hxex7-s8c52>. The interview precedes Josephson Storm's keynote at an online conference on "Religion, Politics, and Cognitive Warfare" and ranges from cybernetics and cognitive warfare to digital systems, AI, and the university.

⁵ Josephson-Storm, *Myth of Disenchantment*, 6–7, 16, 168–69.

For Josephson-Storm, myth is both a challenge to a false master narrative and an account of mobile narratives. He does not dismiss industrialization or every process of rationalization with postmodern relativism; instead, he calls for a nuanced approach. Likewise, his evidence establishes no timeless quantity of enchantment beneath the urge for change. His focus is the use of disenchantment to mark a singular rupture between modernity and an enchanted past. His introduction also puts magic, religion, and science into the analysis and in conversation with each other, as a means of resisting the stable containers that would reproduce the classificatory history he wants to examine.⁶ On his blog, *Absolute Disruption*, he records a German folktale fragment collected in 1848 explaining that there is no more magic because the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* can no longer be used. He traces the motif back to Chaucer's Wife of Bath, so that the story of magic's departure has, in his words, "a long history in folktales themselves."⁷

In *Myth*, his opening survey of contemporary supernatural and paranormal belief shows that magic has not disappeared. Still, prevalence, historical trend, and institutional authority are separate questions that present-day data cannot settle. Present-day surveys alone cannot demonstrate whether belief has declined over centuries, whether its meanings have changed, or whether a person can invoke it with equal authority in a laboratory, a court, a household, and a congregation. Josephson-Storm acknowledges historical changes of meaning, fluctuation, and privatization. Yet, he also infers that any decline since the sixteenth century appears limited, and that stronger inference needs a comparable historical baseline.⁸ In Josephson-Storm's 2019 exchange with Egil Asprem, he concedes that surveys cannot establish the practical importance of reported belief. Asprem's rejoinder makes the test symmetrical: people can deny magic while carrying charms, and they can claim magical identities while investing little in them. It is insufficient either to infer disappearance from a secular self-description or to infer unchanged enchantment from a positive survey response. The exchange highlights the types and kinds of questions one can ask with *Myth*.⁹

⁶ Josephson-Storm, *Myth of Disenchantment*, 7–18.

⁷ Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, "A Folktale of Disenchantment: A Small Research Note," *Absolute Disruption: Theory after Postmodernism* (blog), December 29, 2017, <https://absolute-disruption.com/2017/12/29/a-folktale-of-disenchantment-a-small-research-note/>. The fragment was recorded by Adalbert Kuhn and F. L. W. Schwartz in 1848.

⁸ Josephson-Storm, *Myth of Disenchantment*, 22–34.

⁹ Jason Josephson-Storm and Egil Asprem, "The Enchanted World Today," *Inference* 4, no. 3 (March 2019), <https://doi.org/10.37282/991819.19.21>. See Storm's paragraphs beginning "First, the inherent limitations of surveys," "Second, importance," and "Taken together these two issues"; Asprem's reply, especially its second point and final paragraph. Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, "Sex, Magic, & Rockets or the Implications of the Babalon Working for Theories of Belief and Rationality," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 37 (2025): 323–35, at 326–27, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700682-bja10149>.

For example, Bacon's relation to natural magic complicates any clean separation between science and an occult predecessor, and the *Encyclopédie* organizes inherited magical knowledge even while repudiating some of it. These are accounts of selective transformation, not proof that science secretly remained magical. The Romantic narratives of lost gods likewise show disenchantment serving as diagnosis, lament, and stimulus to new mythmaking: accounts of rupture were interventions in the history they described.¹⁰

The distinction between selective transformation and secret survival keeps the book from simply reversing the history it criticizes. If every famous rationalist were declared a secret magician, the old categories of magic and science would stay in place, and only the membership lists would change. Josephson-Storm usually follows a better procedure: he reconstructs which practices a given actor accepted, rejected, investigated, or redescribed. His treatment of Tylor, Max Müller, and Theosophy shows scholarship and occult speculation drawing their boundaries through interaction with each other, and he is careful that Tylor's openness to psychical forces does not become acceptance of spirits.¹¹ Esben Petersen warns that correspondence can be mistaken for allegiance, but the book's own account of Müller antagonizing the Theosophical Society shows that Josephson-Storm does not make that error.¹²

The Frazer chapters illustrate how a theory can outgrow its first formulation and become productive outside scholarship. The first edition of *The Golden Bough* does not contain the familiar sequence of magic, religion, and science in finished form. Josephson-Storm situates the developing treatment of magic within political and intellectual conflict. Frazer's association of magic and science with impersonal regularity also unsettles any summary treating them as absolute opposites, and the historical interest lies in that changing architecture.¹³

¹⁰ Josephson-Storm, *Myth of Disenchantment*, 45–57, 63–93. Compare Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum* (1620), bk. 2, aphorism 9, <https://pages.uoregon.edu/kimball/Bacon.htm>, which assigns a redefined magic a practical place within his division of inquiry.

¹¹ Josephson-Storm, *Myth of Disenchantment*, 98–123.

¹² Esben Petersen, review of *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences*, by Jason A. Josephson-Storm, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 46, no. 1 (2019): 145–47, especially 147, <https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/journal/6/article/1501/pdf/download>; compare Josephson-Storm, *Myth of Disenchantment*, 110–11.

¹³ Josephson-Storm, *Myth of Disenchantment*, 125–52. Frazer himself acknowledges his revised distinction in the preface to the second edition (1900), reproduced in James George Frazer, *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, vol. 1, part 1 of *The Golden Bough*, 3rd ed. (1911; repr., London: Macmillan, 1917), xx–xxi, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/59607/pg59607-images.html>.

The chapter on Aleister Crowley is the most compelling and helpful for me as a religious studies scholar. Crowley, the most notorious figure of the British occult revival, read *The Golden Bough* and took from it a theory of magic. Frazer defines magic as a coherent but mistaken system built on two laws of sympathy, similarity (like produces like) and contact (things once joined go on acting on one another), and he ranks it as a failed forerunner of science, superseded first by religion and then by science proper. Crowley keeps Frazer's account of how magic is supposed to work and reverses its evaluation. The laws Frazer cataloged as errors become working principles; the science that Frazer said magic had wanted to be becomes the science that Crowley claims magick is, and *Magick in Theory and Practice* cites Frazer by name, reworking his account of sacrifice and the dying god into instructions for ritual. Josephson-Storm's point is that an anthropological theory written to explain a superseded mentality returns to the world as a manual, so that the human sciences do not simply describe modern magic; they help to manufacture it. An anthropological description can furnish procedures for later practitioners, stronger evidence for the human sciences' participation in making their objects than shared vocabulary. It demands a temporal distinction: practice influenced by Frazer cannot retroactively validate his description of earlier societies, and practitioners validate no supernatural efficacy. What can be traced is a prescribed practice and its textual debt; how often it was enacted would require further evidence.¹⁴ A description of superseded magic becomes a resource for renewed magic, and the result is a history of classification, appropriation, and recursive effect rather than survival or re-enchantment.

Weber is the decisive test case of the book, since disenchantment can describe several developments. Josephson-Storm distinguishes theoretical disenchantment from formal rationalization and from capitalist constraint. His discussion of Ascona suggests a more complicated setting for Weber's thought without establishing occult membership or influence, a gap Robert Ames presses; that reservation leaves the close textual argument to be judged on its own terms.¹⁵ The chapter's most consequential qualification makes disenchantment an ongoing program compatible with persistent magic:

But what Weber has in mind is not just a process, but also a program. All he's doing is identifying that this program is in place, not that it is completed.¹⁶

¹⁴ Josephson-Storm, *Myth of Disenchantment*, 160–69; Aleister Crowley [The Master Therion], *Magick in Theory and Practice*, part 3 of Book 4 (n.p., [1929?]), chap. 14, sec. 2, 107–9, https://www.100thmonkeypress.com/biblio/acrowley/books/magick_in_theory_1_1929/magick_part_1_text.pdf.

¹⁵ Josephson-Storm, *Myth of Disenchantment*, 269–301; Robert Ames, review of *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences*, by Jason A. Josephson-Storm, *Reading Religion*, June 12, 2018, <https://readingreligion.org/9780226403366/the-myth-of-disenchantment/>.

¹⁶ Josephson-Storm, *Myth of Disenchantment*, 300–301.

The formulation preserves a qualified Weberian problem rather than eliminating it. The book's strongest result, in my estimation, is a reconstruction of what disenchantment can mean, coupled with a rejection of its inflation into a completed, universal condition. More magic would not automatically dissolve bureaucratic constraint or transform capitalism.

A later essay develops a constructive possibility: magic itself might undergo the rationalization attributed to other spheres, with professionalization and technology transforming rather than abolishing magical practice. Josephson-Storm marks the proposal as a thought experiment. The proposal extends *Myth* toward institutional investigation without making the reconstruction of Weber's doctrine or an accomplished empirical result.¹⁷ The exchange with Doug Sikkema clarifies what stays disputed: whether the conditions of belief have changed, not whether belief persists.¹⁸ Charles Taylor's buffered and porous selves make a comparable point that survey evidence does not refute, though his contrast with earlier ancestors needs historical discrimination; I can accept the distinction and still refuse it as an insulated explanation.¹⁹

¹⁷ Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, "Max Weber and the Rationalization of Magic," in *Narratives of Disenchantment and Secularization: Critiquing Max Weber's Idea of Modernity*, ed. Robert A. Yelle and Lorenz Trein (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 31–49, especially 43–48 and nn. 57–66 at 184–85. The explicit thought-experiment qualifications occur at 44 and 48.

¹⁸ Doug Sikkema, "Disenchantment, Actually," *The New Atlantis* 54 (Winter 2018): 96–103, <https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/disenchantment-actually>; Jason Ā. Josephson-Storm, John Wilson, and Doug Sikkema, "Why Do We Think We Are Disenchanted?," *The New Atlantis* 56 (Summer/Fall 2018): 3–12, <https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/why-do-we-think-we-are-disenchanted>.

¹⁹ Charles Taylor, "Buffered and Porous Selves," *The Immanent Frame*, September 2, 2008, <https://tif.ssrc.org/2008/09/02/buffered-and-porous-selves/>.

Myth unsettles a history of the human sciences built around a clean evacuation of occult interest, and documents exchanges between scholarship and its supposed opposite. It makes the disappearance narrative an object of historical explanation. Its broader challenge is strongest against universal rupture and least complete against claims about changing authority, distribution, or lived condition. Those narrower claims cannot be rescued by qualification indefinitely; they must specify what would count as evidence against them. Neither, though, can counterexamples be made to answer questions of scale they were not designed to resolve. Bradley J. Gundlach gives representativeness a concrete target: the book concentrates on cultural leaders and leaves conventionally religious nineteenth-century populations largely outside it. Intellectuals are good evidence for disciplinary self-narration and a less obvious sample of ordinary experience, so the objection limits generalization rather than invalidating the design; the recovery supports intellectual history without automatically supplying a social history of enchantment across populations.²⁰

Hugh Urban shifts the question from survival to redistribution. He asks whether enchantment has moved between churches, popular culture, and commerce, and argues that the book gives too little space to colonial power and markets. His formulation makes a transformation visible:

Enchantment is increasingly something that can be purchased like any other commodity in the marketplace.²¹

Turning to postcolonial, decolonial, and Indigenous studies theorists would help examine who controls access, which institutions authorize practice, and how economic conditions change. He also questions the movement between myth as falsehood and myth as effective narrative, two meanings worth distinguishing because the pejorative meaning of myth as falsehood tends to prevail, and one of the lasting consequences of the equivocation of myth and falsehood is often the denigration of Indigenous etiologies and the valorization of “Western” etiologies.

²⁰ Bradley J. Gundlach, review of *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences*, by Jason A. Josephson-Storm, *Church History* 89, no. 2 (2020): 475–77, especially 477, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640720001031>.

²¹ Hugh B. Urban, review of *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences*, by Jason A. Josephson-Storm, *History of Religions* 59, no. 1 (2019): 78–82, especially 80–81, quotation at 81, <https://doi.org/10.1086/703523>.

The conclusion perhaps moves too quickly from historical criticism to emancipation. Josephson-Storm denies any necessary emancipatory value to being a magician or a disenchanter, which is indispensable: exposing rationality's contested history does not make its alternatives benign. The broader suggestion that releasing us from a universal reason already leaves us free is harder to sustain. An authority can lack universal foundations and still organize lives through institutions, resources, and sanctions. Discovering that a story is contingent opens the question of changing it; it does not perform the change. His target is a universal authority, so I do not read him as denying every material constraint. The passage nevertheless moves too quickly from that authority's incompleteness to what I see as the elision of struggles conducted in its name.²²

Russell McCutcheon raises the more reflexive objection: what merits this counterhistory's claims about actors, motives, and causes once allegedly disinterested modernity has been dismantled? He also challenges Josephson-Storm's quick examination of earlier reflexive religious studies. In hindsight, McCutcheon's question may anticipate the problem that metarealism and zetetic epistemology address. Contingency does not make every historical account equally credible; the disputed issue is how historical criticism warrants its own explanations.²³ The durable lesson of *Myth*, then, is neither that modernity never happened nor that scholars should restore an enchanted worldview. It is that intellectual history improves when it follows the production and policing of distinctions rather than accepting them as the neutral shape of the past. Once again, we as scholars are called toward slow reading, careful deliberation, and a return to the archive. The book is a powerful achievement on those terms, and perhaps its unresolved questions become the central problems of *Metamodernism*: explaining persistence, generalizing responsibly, and moving from historical criticism to a defensible alternative.

²² Josephson-Storm, *Myth of Disenchantment*, 308–16, especially 314–15.

²³ Russell T. McCutcheon, "On the Myth of Disenchantment," *Harvard Theological Review* 111, no. 4 (2018): 610–17, especially 610–12, 613–17, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816018000299>.

Metamodernism: What Reconstruction Must Explain

After critique, what should theory do next? *Metamodernism* asks how scholarship proceeds after its categories lose their apparent self-evidence, and it answers by connecting an ontology of changing social kinds, material signs, fallible inference, and explicit ethical purpose. I will argue that the book's greatest achievement is making criticism answerable to reconstruction, and that its vulnerability lies in the gap between the two: exposing an opponent's weaknesses does not establish the constructive connections the book proposes. The appropriate test is comparative explanatory performance, not the deductive certainty no fallibilist project should be asked to supply.

The book's target needs careful specification. Josephson-Storm attacks a received academic package of skepticism, linguistic enclosure, and negative moral judgment. He acknowledges that the leading figures commonly grouped under postmodernism were not uniformly antirealists, ethical nihilists, or universal skeptics, and he asks that his positive proposals be assessed independently of that introductory diagnosis. Nor does his metamodernism announce a succeeding historical epoch or the aesthetic oscillation other metamodernist writers examine. Drawing on Moyo Okediji's language of extension and challenge, it names a reflexive theoretical project. The distinction matters: objections to the chronology of another metamodernism do not automatically touch this book, while the accuracy of its account of academic life remains an empirical question.²⁴

²⁴ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 5–6, 15–18, 289–90, n. 16. For the distinct aesthetic proposal, see Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, "Notes on Metamodernism," *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 2, no. 1 (2010), article 5677, <https://doi.org/10.3402/jac.v2i0.5677>. Michel Clasquin-Johnson had already adapted an oscillatory metamodernism to religious studies in "Towards a Metamodern Academic Study of Religion and a More Religiously Informed Metamodernism," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (2017), a4491, especially 4, 7–8, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4491>. This predates Storm's book and is contextual evidence, not its reception. Leonardo Ambasciano's later "Absolutely Disruptive: An Introduction to Josephson-Storm's Metamodernism Book Review Symposium," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 37 (2025): 1–12, especially 7–10, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700682-bja10134>, distinguishes the currents polemically. See also Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, "An Interview with Moyo Okediji on Metamodernism," *Religious Studies Review* 48, no. 4 (2022): 483–87, especially 485–87, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsr.16200>. Linda C. Ceriello, "The Metamodern Bend: Theorizations for Religious Studies and a Review of Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect, and Depth After Postmodernism," *Religious Studies Review* 48, no. 4 (2022): 489–96, especially 490–95, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsr.16195>, demonstrates the broader cultural and religious scope of the alternative approach; she reviews the 2017 collection, not Storm's book.

Wouter Hanegraaff asks that this American academic predicament be provincialized, since some of the proposed breakthroughs already belong to scholarly practice elsewhere. Josephson-Storm's 2022 reply concedes limited engagement with Gadamer and counters with nonlinguistic, multispecies interpretation; that counter is a substantive disagreement, but it does not answer Hanegraaff's objection about the hermeneutic circle.²⁵ Craig Martin, largely sympathetic, sharpens the source-selection problem. Hostile popular interpreters too often presume the postmodernism the book claims to supersede. On that reading, "Metamodernism might, in effect, be a clarification of 'postmodernism' rather than a movement beyond it."²⁶ Josephson-Storm's explicit corrections of caricature on pages 209–210 rebut these charges.

Metarealism distinguishes dependence on continuing attitudes, on past human causation, on classification, and on mind. Calling something real also requires specifying the contrast (a real statue need not be a real person), which replaces an inflated choice between reality and construction with questions about dependencies. Kevin Schilbrack objects that sophisticated realism already distinguishes dependence on human practices from dependence on the investigator, and Josephson-Storm's reply shifts the ground to the different historical processes gathered under religion and the category's colonial formation. Schilbrack's critique on the importance of the limits on the rhetoric of transcendence is a fruitful reminder for scholars.²⁷

²⁵ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Provincializing American Theory," *Religious Studies Review* 48, no. 4 (2022): 509–12, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsr.16193>; Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 156. Josephson-Storm, "Response to Responses," *Religious Studies Review* 48, no. 4 (2022): 517–20, especially 517–18, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsr.16192>.

²⁶ Craig Martin, review of *Metamodernism: The Future of Theory*, by Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, *History of Religions* 61, no. 4 (2022): 419–22, especially 421–22, quotation at 422, <https://doi.org/10.1086/719020>; compare Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 209–10 and chap. 6, n. 1, at 331.

²⁷ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 33–35, 41–46. Kevin Schilbrack, "Realism after Postmodernism in the Academic Study of Religion," *Religious Studies Review* 48, no. 4 (2022): 513–16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsr.16196>; Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 32–34, and "Response to Responses," 518–19. Schilbrack's article appeared online January 30, 2023, in the December 2022 issue.

The book's social ontology push scholars to more frequently consider what comes after critique is to drop the idea that a category like "religion" has an essence and to say instead that its members share a family resemblance. Josephson-Storm points out that this does not solve the problem, because deciding which resemblances count already requires decisions about who belongs and what matters. So he asks a prior question: what causes the members of a category to cluster together in the first place, such that comparison becomes possible? His answer is a process ontology, which reverses the usual order of explanation. On this view, change is the normal condition, and it is persistence that needs explaining. Historical objects hold together because of causal relations and path dependence, not because some unchanging substance is handed down through them. I count this reversal a real methodological gain, because it shows why rejecting timeless categories does not forbid historical generalization: a scholar can still generalize about a category, provided the generalization rests on the processes that keep it stable.²⁸

His central proposal makes the explanatory commitment explicit: "Social kinds are 1) socially constructed, 2) dynamic clusters of powers, 3) which are demarcated by the causal processes that anchor the relevant clusters."²⁹ He is careful to say that the formula is a description meant to guide research, not a definition that fixes necessary and sufficient conditions for membership. "Powers" here covers more than the properties a thing is displaying at a given moment; it includes dispositions, capacities, privileges, and liabilities. A framed banknote keeps its monetary capacity even while no one spends it. A social kind can also outrun what its participants know about it, because an institution can produce properties that neither its members nor an outside observer has yet noticed. It follows that calling something socially constructed does not make it whatever any individual imagines it to be.

²⁸ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 77–82, 90, 99–104.

²⁹ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 111–17.

The anchoring processes give the proposal its practical specificity. Dynamic nominalism involves classification reinforced through institutions, sanctions, incentives, and role adoption; naming alone is insufficient. Mimetic processes reproduce forms through copying, as with franchises whose similarities depend on organized replication. Ergonic processes generate convergence around functions through selection or design. These alternatives differentiate explanation from a list of resemblances: similar-looking artifacts need not share a lineage. At the same time, common descent does not warrant projecting every property from one example onto another. Josephson-Storm also warns against reading an advantageous consequence backward as an explanation of origins. Here the constructive theory establishes standards capable of disciplining its own attractive examples.³⁰

Those standards also qualify genealogy. A social kind's past matters to a present explanation when its effects on current powers or anchoring processes can be demonstrated: "Kinds do not automatically inherit essences from their origins." The argument permits historical explanation while refusing hereditary guilt and hereditary identity. Josephson-Storm calls process-kind analysis the "mirror image of a Foucauldian genealogy." If difference and discontinuity are what one expects, the puzzle becomes why any properties stabilize at all. The formulation hardly describes everything Foucault did; its force lies in setting a research question that survives successful deconstruction.³¹

³⁰ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 118–27.

³¹ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 131, 140.

His later response to a research project on esoteric practices adds a distinction between explanation and coordination: researchers may use a provisional umbrella to assemble cases without having established a single social kind. At the same time, stronger generalizations require identifying the processes responsible for the similarities.³² He acknowledges that which processes count as the relevant anchors depends on the scale and purposes of inquiry. The book's conclusion defers a fuller theory of causation and power to future work.³³ Brian Collins supplies a practical test, adapting social-kind theory to continuity among mythic figures while conceding that the practice resembles his own previous work. Josephson-Storm's replies (a 2022 proposal to investigate genre, transmission, and pantheon relations; a 2025 traffic-congestion illustration) show that the program offers more than terminology; instead, it functions perhaps analogously to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's reparative reading.³⁴

Hylosemiotics addresses the problem of meaning. If kinds are material processes, language cannot occupy a separate sphere that either mirrors or imprisons the world. Josephson-Storm, working in dialogue with Seth Josephson, brings Peircean semiotics, biological sign theory, and cognition into a material account of interpretation. His opening encounter with a monkey makes the problem concrete: meaningful interaction need not require identical concepts or a shared human language. The minimal presupposition is a navigable environment of approximate clusters and locally reliable relationships.³⁵ Producing a sign differs from interpreting it; successful communication differs from accurate representation; a natural sign need not bear an exceptionless relation to what it indicates (smoke machines and misleading symptoms make inference fallible without making it impossible). Public signs and material tools participate in cognition rather than ferrying finished thoughts between private minds.³⁶

³² Josephson-Storm, "Sex, Magic, & Rockets," 330–33.

³³ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 135–37, 283–84.

³⁴ Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, "Breaking the Postmodern Deadlock: Metamodernism's Methodological Revolution," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 37 (2025): 57–71, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700682-bja10135>. See especially 59–65, 70–71. For the earlier exchange, Brian Collins, "Lightning Bugs and Fireflies: Can Metamodernism Help Us Do Better Comparative Mythology?," *Religious Studies Review* 48, no. 4 (2022): 497–500, especially 498–99, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsr.16197>; Josephson-Storm, "Response to Responses," 518; Tommy Woodward, "Attached Critique: Paranoid and Reparative Studies of Religion," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 36, no. 3–4 (2024): 377–406, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700682-bja10106>.

³⁵ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 149–52, 162–69.

³⁶ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 169–83, 196–203.

The breadth of the synthesis brings unresolved boundaries. Extending interpretation to organisms and machines requires explaining what distinguishes sign response from ordinary causal interaction. Josephson-Storm supplies a criterion: an interpretant can choose among responses, whereas bare causal interaction is insufficient. The harder question is how that criterion discriminates among his examples, enzymes and computers included, without simply redescribing causal selectivity as choice. His treatment of translation is strongest against total impossibility: contextual expansion communicates unfamiliar meanings. It refutes an absolute linguistic prison, but which affective or poetic qualities a translation loses stays open. His later more-than-human essay sharpens the threshold by distinguishing a rock's causal response from an organism's interpretation of situationally relevant information. The clarification leaves the empirical boundary questions open rather than settling them by definition.³⁷

Zetetic knowledge supplies the epistemic practice suited to changing objects and fallible signs. Skepticism must accept scrutiny of its own claims, and rejecting certainty does not oblige scholars to treat every explanation as equally doubtful. Josephson-Storm recommends abduction: compare available explanations, examine their evidential support, test alternatives. Evidence should govern confidence, while practical stakes raise the warrant a knowledge claim requires (without making a proposition less probable). Knowledge is also a collective achievement supported by institutions of criticism. The proposal's appeal lies less in a new guarantee of truth than in refusing the oscillation between confident dogmatism and paralysis.³⁸

Josephson-Storm himself accepts that zeteticism resembles pragmatic fallibilism, an acknowledgment that places the novelty where it belongs, in coordinating an intellectual practice rather than in discovering that knowledge may be corrigible. His stronger attempt to assimilate induction to abduction is less necessary to the program's success. Calling an inference explanatory does not by itself justify the explanatory virtues employed, secure the independence of converging evidence, or establish that the available alternatives include an adequate account. The best defense is practical: disciplined comparison improves fallible research without abolishing the conditions that make it fallible. That is a persuasive ambition, provided methodological confidence does not stand in for demonstrated explanatory performance.³⁹

³⁷ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 183–96, especially 191–92; for translation and context, 183–87. See also Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, “Metamodern Theory for the Study of More-than-Human Cultures,” *Cultural Science* 15, no. 1 (nominal issue 2023): 146–55, especially 148–53, <https://doi.org/10.2478/cs-2023-0012>.

³⁸ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 211–21, 222–29.

³⁹ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 226–34.

The ethical program raises a different question of warrant. Josephson-Storm argues that professed neutrality often conceals negative moral commitments; his discussion of Weber distinguishes value-relevance from a simple demand to remove values, and he insists that political commitments do not authorize distortion of evidence.⁴⁰ An earlier exchange with Donald Wiebe locates the dispute inside religious studies rather than in a quarrel with postmodernism. Josephson-Storm challenges a manifesto prescribing non-normative scholarship and argues for fallible, plural human sciences; Wiebe replies that valuing knowledge and specifying evidential standards differ from assigning scholarship religious, moral, or political purposes. Each side still owes an argument. Methodological values do not by themselves warrant an emancipatory mission, and Wiebe's restriction of the university's purposes does not follow from empirical testing.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 243–54, 273–74.

⁴¹ Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, "Revolutionizing the Human Sciences: A Response to Wiebe," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 33 (2021): 82–88, especially 83–87, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700682-12341498>; Donald Wiebe, "A Response to My Critics," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 33 (2021): 98–105, especially 99–103, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700682-12341503>.

Establishing the involvement of values does not establish which values should govern inquiry. Josephson-Storm's preferred answer is Revolutionary Happiness: a worthwhile, flourishing life understood through critical virtue ethics, compassion, and collective transformation. Capital-H Happiness is not uninterrupted pleasure, and the political proposal is not an instruction that oppressed people become cheerful; his engagement with Sara Ahmed makes room for anger, and the refusal of oppressive expectations, and compassion toward oppressors does not require abandoning resistance. Buddhist and Confucian resources contribute to a program extending concern beyond the isolated individual and beyond the human species.⁴² Jessica Zu praises those resources while asking scholars to learn from, rather than merely about, the Global South (modern Chinese Yogācāra offers her a parallel reconstruction). Her demand that trust and suspicion apply alike to Western and non-Western traditions extends the book's reflexivity into the distribution of interpretive authority; it does not prove that the traditions assembled support identical conclusions.⁴³ Sohaib Khan asks whether process language merely redescribes economic doctrines without identifying their organizing historical projects, and he questions compassion's unequal burdens. Josephson-Storm's reply accepts that probabilistic thinking does not guarantee humility, rejects treating ethnographic self-description as infallible (interlocutors can deny racism while expressing racist views), and insists that revolutionary Happiness permits outrage; it does not settle how collective ethical authorship works under unequal conditions.⁴⁴

⁴² Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 257–59, 263–72.

⁴³ Jessica Zu, "Objective Humanities, Reflexive Humanities," *Religious Studies Review* 48, no. 4 (2022): 501–4, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsr.16198>.

⁴⁴ Sohaib Khan, "Minding the Gap: Why Epistemological Rectitude Doesn't Lead to Political Emancipation," *Religious Studies Review* 48, no. 4 (2022): 505–8, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsr.16194>; Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 279–80. Josephson-Storm, "Response to Responses," 519–20. His ethnographic example is assessed as a methodological counterexample, not an independently investigated account of those interlocutors.

The normative transition remains the least fully secured connection. His positive argument is practical and relational: one's flourishing depends on other lives, and helping others can contribute to a worthwhile life (a reason for compassion, not merely an ontological slogan). Its reach is the difficulty, since dependence can explain reciprocal concern without yet justifying expansive obligations toward every affected being, and a thick conception of Happiness does not transfer without argument into whatever psychological research measures under that name. Josephson-Storm marks his concluding ethical sections as "a promissory note, a first pass," welcomes competing goals, and retains room for research pursued for its own sake. In my estimation, he exposes a substantial ethical proposal to scrutiny while leaving important questions about justification, institutions, and conflict unresolved.⁴⁵

Metamodernism succeeds most clearly as a connected discipline of reconstruction: identify what a critique dislodges, investigate what nevertheless persists, explain how it persists, compare explanations, and acknowledge the purposes of doing so. None of those steps automatically entails the next, and the book is uneven wherever the need for a constructive alternative becomes evidence for its preferred alternative. Its distinctions produce real gains, especially the separation of construction from nonexistence and of historical origins from demonstrated present effects. Its significance is not that it settles theory's disputes. It makes a serious, revisable proposal for the work that their continuation ought to enable.

Turning the Coils Inward: Genealogy Under Its Own Examination

The Genealogy of Genealogy makes the investigator's inheritance its object, asking how historical exposure acquired authority. Its six chapters pursue genealogy's institutional ascendancy, its entanglement with the policing of ancestry, its invented pedigree, and Foucault's self-fashioning. Yet the declared self-consuming procedure is more selective than the imagery suggests, since the conclusion distinguishes genealogies that collapse when applied to themselves from historical explanations that remain useful. I therefore read the book's strongest question as not whether genealogy has an impure history, but what that history obliges its practitioners to reconsider.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 255, 261, 264–65. Jim Kanaris, review of *Metamodernism: The Future of Theory*, by Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, and *Discourse and Ideology: A Critique of the Study of Culture*, by Craig Martin, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 91, no. 3 (2023): 3, advance article published January 9, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfad084>.

⁴⁶ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 1–9, 234–48.

The opening case is exceptionally well chosen. Josephson-Storm juxtaposes the French presentation of Achille Mbembe's *Critique de la raison nègre* with its English reception as a genealogy, a methodological identity less evident in the original than Anglophone readers assume. From that discrepancy, he reconstructs an institutional history: the separation of history, philosophy, and literature; the declining prestige of intellectual history; and the recovery of historical inquiry within literary studies through discourse analysis. Edward Said and Frank Lentricchia become mediators, while Talal Asad exemplifies the circulation of genealogical models into religious studies. Here transmission becomes a historical problem rather than a ceremonial citation to Foucault.⁴⁷

The explanatory claim is that practitioners acquire genealogy by imitating exemplary works rather than by mastering an agreed procedure. Already *Metamodernism* is at work: genealogy is a social kind sustained by imperfect copying, a plausible mechanism by which scholarly authority reproduces itself. The larger allegation of hegemony is less secure, since a catalogue of genealogies establishes circulation, not dominance across heterogeneous disciplines, and prestige is not the same as intellectual exhaustion. His earlier essay credits genealogy's emancipatory contributions to queer, feminist, and postcolonial scholarship, a concession that matters beside the stronger claim that professional rewards have displaced political potential, since documenting the former does not establish the latter.⁴⁸

The second chapter takes inheritance literally: genealogical societies, eugenic investigators, and state agencies assembled ancestry into actionable records. Its force comes from concrete operations: genealogical testimony in Carrie Buck's sterilization case; the expansion of legally assigned Blackness through ancestry rules; and restrictions tied to blood-quantum classifications in particular federal and tribal settings. Such practices helped determine rights, vulnerability, and exclusion, and the contrast between expanding one subordinated category and contracting another is especially illuminating: neutral-seeming ancestral calculation acquires its meaning within distinct political projects. *Genealogical power* here names a demonstrable relationship between archives, classification, and coercion.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 13–46.

⁴⁸ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 46–51, especially 47–48. For the earlier article's explicitly qualified assessment, Jason Ananda Josephson-Storm, "The Hegemony of Genealogy," *boundary 2* 52, no. 3 (2025): 27–84, especially 61, 68–75, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01903659-11800570>.

⁴⁹ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 68–79, 90–94.

The last example also contains a factual error. On page 75 the book says that “this erosion of Indigenous self-definition deepened with the introduction of ‘blood quantum’ under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1935, which further undermined tribal sovereignty by requiring a fixed percentage of ‘Indian blood’ for full membership.” Both the date and the description are wrong. The act was approved on June 18, 1934.⁵⁰ Its section 19 does not set a membership rule for tribes; it defines who counts as “Indian” for the purposes of the act itself, and it does so through three routes: members of a recognized tribe then under federal jurisdiction, their descendants residing on a reservation in 1934, and, as a separate category, persons of one-half or more Indian blood. The half-blood clause governed eligibility for the act’s benefits, not tribal citizenship. Fixed blood-quantum thresholds did spread in this period, but they entered through the tribal constitutions adopted under the act, drafted with heavy Bureau of Indian Affairs involvement, and through the Bureau’s own enrollment practices, which is exactly what the Deward Walker passage the book quotes describes for the Nez Perce. The book’s own preceding sentence, on the Dawes Act, already locates the policing of “Indian” heritage in administrative. To be clear, the Indian Recognition Act, Blood Quantum, thresholds, quotas, and all other methods of settler colonial attempts at the erasure of Indigenous nations and peoples are genocidal acts. The correction therefore does not weaken the chapter’s claim that racial classification did coercive work.⁵¹ It shows why the contrast between an expanding category of Blackness and a contracting category of Indianness needs the particular legal and administrative mechanisms spelled out, since in the Indigenous case the mechanism was not a statute’s text but the constitutions and enrollment rules built beneath it.

⁵⁰ An Act to Conserve and Develop Indian Lands and Resources [Indian Reorganization Act], Public Law 73-383, 48 Stat. 984, June 18, 1934, Laws of the United States, 73rd Cong., 2nd sess., pt. 4, Public Laws 322-430, Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-2011, General Records of the United States Government, Record Group 11, National Archives Building, Washington, DC, National Archives Identifier 7873515, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7873515>. For further research, see National Archives, “Records Relating to the Indian Reorganization Act (Wheeler-Howard Act),” accessed September 27, 2026, <https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/indian-reorganization-act>.

⁵¹ I mention this correction because it is an important part of history more people need to know and research and to help aide in finding the information. Likewise, Josephson-Storm is one of the most careful and thoughtful readers of archives I have encountered so I know it is the type of thing he would like noted.

Moving from these institutions to philosophical, genealogical societies, eugenic investigators, and critical historians share a word and sometimes a setting. A shared vocabulary and settings justify an investigation without showing that the practices served the same political function. Josephson-Storm anticipates the objection: he is “not arguing that genealogy is intrinsically eugenicist, nor that it remains irrevocably stained by its historical entanglements with white supremacy,” and his stated goal is the more modest one of tracing “the layers of association that had to erode before *genealogy* could be taken up as a seemingly innocent term for critical scholarship.” His strongest argument is conditional and exposes a double standard: a scholar who discredits a concept by its compromised history cannot exempt genealogy from the same test. The book’s further claim reaches beyond that: genealogy “is not a dead metaphor,” because “the conceptual grammar of lineage tends to naturalize othering and to reinforce intergenerational transmission of cultural status,” so the vernacular meaning keeps working inside the scholarly one. That is a claim about transfer, and it requires evidence of how the transfer occurs in critical practice, not evidence that the two meanings coexist.⁵²

The Nietzsche chapters shift from inherited contamination to interpretive accuracy. Josephson-Storm reads *Zur Genealogie der Moral* as a polemic against moral genealogists, especially Paul Rée, rather than the announcement of a method Nietzsche claimed as his own, and reconstructing his philological training and actual interlocutors gives the argument real substance. Speculative history does not become intentionally fictional because later readers find its evidence thin, and the gap between origins and later purposes bars no inquiry into origins.⁵³

⁵² Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 67, 93–94, 236–37.

⁵³ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 100–105, 115–29.

The reading is not new, though Josephson-Storm carries it further than anyone before him. Jacqueline Stevens's 2003 essay already challenged the conversion of Nietzsche's critical references to genealogists into authorization for a superior method; Josephson-Storm's contribution is broader, combining that challenge with institutional history and the French reconstruction of Nietzsche's identity.⁵⁴ Even so, attacking the genealogists of his day does not commit Nietzsche to abandoning genealogy; it is equally consistent with his wanting to do it better than they did. Josephson-Storm's own footnote concedes the point in part. He acknowledges a passage in which Nietzsche uses *Moral-Genealogie* without the polemical edge, and he reads it as Nietzsche turning his opponents' term against them rather than adopting it. That reading is possible, but it is not the only one, and the preface itself complicates it. In section 7, Nietzsche tells the would-be genealogist of morality to exchange speculation for the "actual history of morality," the gray, documented record of what can be established. He is not rejecting genealogy there; he is prescribing a method for it. If the founding text of the tradition asks genealogists to work from documented history, then the rigid opposition Josephson-Storm sometimes draws between documented history, and genealogy is hard to sustain. The evidence supports a narrower claim: that Nietzsche criticized a particular way of writing the history of morals, not the ambition to write it.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Jacqueline Stevens, "On the Morals of Genealogy," *Political Theory* 31, no. 4 (2003): 558–88, especially 558–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591703254383>. Consulted author-hosted text: <https://jacquelinestevens.org/StevensGenealogy.pdf>.

⁵⁵ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 103–5 and chap. 3, n. 20; Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), trans. Ian Johnston (Vancouver Island University), preface, sec. 7, <https://web.viu.ca/johnstoi/nietzsche/genealogypreface.htm>. The translated passage supports the interpretive counterargument; it is not used to count German occurrences of *Genealogie*.

The treatment of *Ursprung*, *Herkunft*, and *Entstehung* is more compelling when read as a criticism of systematization than as a charge of carelessness. Josephson-Storm shows that the supposed technical vocabulary Foucault attributes to Nietzsche, in which *Ursprung* names a metaphysically suspect search for essences. In contrast, *Herkunft* and *Entstehung* name descent and emergence, which does not hold up against Nietzsche's German, where the terms are used interchangeably. Nietzsche describes his own project as a hypothesis about the *Ursprung* of morality. But Foucault did not overlook this. His essay concedes the interchangeable usage before building its distinction between "stressed" and "unstressed" uses of *Ursprung* on a handful of passages, and Josephson-Storm's verdict, that Foucault "was not so much uncovering Nietzsche's terminology as constructing it," is a verdict on that construction. Nor can Foucault be accused of lacking reflexivity, since the essay's later movement turns the historical sense back on the historian who wields it. The right question is therefore not whether Foucault was aware of the problem or capable of self-scrutiny. It is whether his reconstruction of Nietzsche actually observes the distinctions it claims to draw out of him, and on the evidence Josephson-Storm assembles it does not.⁵⁶

Nietzsche's politics cannot disappear when an emancipatory method claims him as ancestor. Racialized breeding, anti-Jewish rhetoric, and an appalling passage about Black people's supposedly reduced sensitivity to pain complicate selective appropriation. Josephson-Storm distinguishes these problems from identifying Nietzsche with Nazism, and it allows recuperative readings; Nietzsche's own attack on antisemitic agitators in the second essay, section 11, further separates hostile rhetoric about Jews from endorsement of organized antisemitism. Philosophical use does not demand an innocent predecessor. Still, it does demand honesty about what is retained, transformed, or rejected, and an argument that refuses such reconstruction to its opponents cannot quietly perform it on its own authorities.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 125–29; Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 139–64, especially 140–42, 157–64, <https://cla.csulb.edu/departments/philosophy/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Foucault-1977-Nietzsche-Genealogy-History.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 105–15, 128–29. Compare Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, second essay, secs. 7 and 11, trans. Johnston, <https://web.viu.ca/johnstoi/nietzsche/genealogy2.htm>.

If Nietzsche did not hand down genealogy as a method, the question becomes who did, and the Josephson-Storm's answer was the most rewarding stretch of reception history for me. The recovery of Jean Wahl is central: his lectures expanded genealogy beyond morality into questions about knowledge and art, while curricular changes helped consolidate the Nietzschean canon. Deleuze then made genealogy central to Nietzsche's identity, and others adapted it to distinct projects. Josephson-Storm traces multiplication rather than installing Wahl as a new founder, and Deleuze's turn toward the rhizome disrupts the image of unbroken succession.⁵⁸

Foucault's structuralism offers another recovery, centering Georges Dumézil's comparative analysis of myths, institutions, and structures through procedures rather than personal influence. A second proposition is harder to establish: that Foucault's changing methodological identity concealed an increasingly inconvenient inheritance. Explicit acknowledgment of a teacher, changes in vocabulary, and intellectual disagreement are not interchangeable evidence, and the reconstruction loses persuasiveness when it converts a complex adjustment of commitments into a presumed strategy of concealment. The warning that origins must not determine present meaning applies to intellectual biographies too.⁵⁹ Stuart Elden's response concentrates the difficulty, questioning the proposed link between Dumézil's politics and Foucault's distancing from archaeology, since continuing references complicate the alleged break.⁶⁰ Josephson-Storm records exceptions and later acknowledgment, so the disagreement challenges a causal chronology and an attribution of motive, not Dumézil's significance.⁶¹

The disputes over Foucault's pedigree matter less than what Josephson-Storm recovers from Foucault himself. He reads *The Order of Discourse* as distinguishing critical attention to exclusion from genealogical attention to the formation of discourses, perspectives that alternate and complete each other. Foucault's enthusiasm for François Jacob's history of heredity supplies an example of genealogy reconstructing scientific emergence without calling science an illusion. Such history finds a constructive resource within Foucault's inheritance rather than requiring inquiry to escape it first.⁶²

⁵⁸ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 135–53.

⁵⁹ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 161–87.

⁶⁰ Stuart Elden, "Initial Thoughts on Jason Ananda Josephson-Storm's *The Genealogy of Genealogy: Nietzsche, Foucault, and the Coils of Critical History*," *Progressive Geographies* (blog), June 21, 2026, <https://progressivegeographies.com/2026/06/21/initial-thoughts-on-jason-ananda-josephson-storms-the-genealogy-of-genealogy-nietzsche-foucault-and-the-coils-of-critical-history/>.

⁶¹ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 168–69, 175–76, 186–87, 224–25, and chap. 5, n. 49.

⁶² Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 204–11.

The same distinction sharpens *Discipline and Punish*: a soul produced through technologies of power need not be unreal, and its historical constitution becomes something to explain. In the 1976 lectures, genealogy acquires an insurgent function through the reactivation of local and subordinated knowledges. These examples interrupt the slide from constructed to fictitious, or from implicated in power to epistemically worthless, without equating production with approval.⁶³ Josephson-Storm sometimes draws the contrast between archaeology and affirmative genealogy too categorically. His more careful position is explicit: "I am not claiming that this is the sole or even dominant meaning of genealogy in Foucault."⁶⁴ The chapter's own documentation of shifting terminology (*dynasties* among them) strengthens the challenge to methodological shorthand while weakening any attempt to assign each term a single stable function.

The conclusion supplies the book's clearest standard for judging its own performance:

The genetic fallacy is an error; origins may offer clues, but they never fully determine the present.⁶⁵

Once the principle is accepted, impurity alone cannot discredit genealogy; the questions become whether its claims are justified, how earlier commitments persist, and what particular consequences its practice produces. The deliberately harsh genealogical mask makes those questions vivid, but it cannot exempt the surrounding historical allegations from evidence. In my estimation, the rhetoric about academic impotence is strongest as a criticism of routinized procedures, weakest as a verdict on a diverse practice's political effects. Acquiring a belief through institutions does not defeat its justification; trustworthy education has a causal history too. Genealogy gains force by identifying unreliable transmission, concealed assumptions, or reference shifts, which calls for differentiated consequences (correction, limitation, investigation, rejection) rather than a single verdict.⁶⁶

⁶³ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 212–20.

⁶⁴ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 227; for *dynasties* and changing formulations, 211–12, 219–20.

⁶⁵ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 235–36.

⁶⁶ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 236–43.

The constructive alternative returns to *Metamodernism*: if variation is ordinary, inquiry should investigate how categories acquire temporary durability. Mimetic anchoring identifies copying practices and controls, and the mundane example of proofreading specifies how resemblance is maintained rather than merely observed. Ergonic convergence asks whether comparable functions and constraints produce recurring forms without common descent. A useful account must also show when such mechanisms fail, and whether apparent convergence reflects independent emergence, diffusion, or an abstraction the investigator has imposed.⁶⁷

The opening account of scholarly imitation offers a revealing test. If genealogy persists because influential exemplars organize training, citation, and professional recognition, that explanation identifies more than a contingent beginning. It specifies processes that reproduce a recognizable practice even as its definitions diverge, so the constructive vocabulary clarifies the earlier history. But other methods circulate through the same institutions by similar routes. Why, then, did those circumstances favor genealogy, and which features distinguished its transmission? Answering requires comparison with rival methods, evidence of uptake, and attention to the problems practitioners believed genealogy solved. Institutional incentives and reasoned attraction need not compete; mimetic anchoring would earn its keep by integrating them rather than making imitation another name for credulity, a task the book opens more convincingly than it completes.⁶⁸

Josephson-Storm presents the program as an experiment: hylosemiotics would tie histories of meaning to embodied practices, insurgent retrieval would recover past resources for present inquiry. The evidential standard must stay equal for destructive and constructive history, and the comparison of confinement proposes a question, not a demonstration. The book succeeds less by replacing genealogy with a finished method than by exposing assumptions that keep historical inquiry from explaining, judging, and reconstructing at once; its strongest inheritance from Foucault is a capacity for revision, including revision of the uses made of Foucault himself.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 249–52, and conclusion, nn. 29–33.

⁶⁸ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 47–48, 250–51.

⁶⁹ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 246–54. Conclusion, n. 32.

Reciprocal Tests: Reconstruction under Historical Pressure

It is tempting to read the trilogy as a sequence in which the first book destroys, the second constructs, and the third synthesizes. The books read better as tests of one another, since each does some of all three and their different emphases put useful pressure on each other. *Myth* provides concrete histories against which the account of classification in *Metamodernism* can be tried. *Metamodernism* provides the standards for telling a social kind apart from its name, and an origin apart from a cause that is still operating. *Genealogy* asks whether those standards hold when the argument is turned on criticism itself.

One thread runs through all three books: a refusal of the usual inference from historical contingency. Scholars often reason that if an institution could have turned out differently, it must be somehow unreal or beyond explanation. Josephson-Storm reverses this. Contingency does not dissolve the object; it poses a question about it: what made this outcome possible, and what keeps it in place? *Metamodernism* turns that question into a general program by naming three kinds of anchoring (dynamic-nominalist, mimetic, and ergonic). However, those terms belong to the later book and should not be read back into *Myth* as its explicit theory. The Frazer and Crowley case shows what the program requires in practice. Frazer wrote a theory of magic; Crowley cited it and rewrote it as instructions. That documented borrowing and alteration, rather than the mere resemblance of two rituals, is what supports a hypothesis of mimetic transmission. But transmission is only half the story. Showing that a practice was handed on does not show what kept it alive afterward or how many people took it up. The later theory earns its place by insisting on that distinction between documented transmission and the still-unexplained durability of what was transmitted.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Josephson-Storm, *Myth of Disenchantment*, 168–69; Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 121–23.

The thread also includes a self-correction. In *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, Josephson-Storm had leaned on dynamic nominalism, Ian Hacking's idea that naming a kind of person or practice helps bring it into being. In *Metamodernism*, he pulls back from treating naming as sufficient. A name by itself cannot explain what a social kind can do. A status can be proclaimed and still fail to take hold if the institutions, sanctions, and incentives that would support it are missing, and a pattern that no one has named can still shape how people act.⁷¹ That correction cuts against one strand of Josephson-Storm's own argument in *Genealogy*, since it warns against letting a shared word carry a large historical claim, and the political inheritance of genealogy is exactly where the book asks a word to do that work. When he shows that family records were used to classify people coercively, he offers an institutional explanation grounded in documents, administrative decisions, and enforceable consequences. When he shows that a later theorist uses a term once associated with those records, he has established something different: a resemblance in vocabulary that may well have political consequences, but whose mechanism still has to be demonstrated. His own distinction in *Metamodernism* between names, concepts, and materially anchored kinds is what makes that demand unavoidable. By his standard, the word "genealogy" is a name; the coercive practice was a kind; and the two cannot be run together without showing the process that links them⁷²

The most sympathetic reading treats this limitation as part of the book's design. By subjecting critical genealogy to its own harshest procedures, Josephson-Storm shows why guilty origins can never be a general argument against a present practice, and his rejection of the genetic fallacy is the lesson the performance is meant to teach. In this reading, the book's overstated implications produce discomfort in the reader, not settled doctrine. The strongest skeptical reply accepts that the performance was intended and still asks what licenses each claim, because a harsh method can expose a weak inference in others without supplying evidence for the motives it attributes to them. Staging an argument reflexively changes how it should be read. It does not settle the facts the argument asserts.

⁷¹ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 119–28, especially 121.

⁷² Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 52–79, 90–94, 236–40, 249; Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 131, 139–40.

Four questions have to stay in contact without collapsing into one another: whether something exists or is socially real, how it came to be and why it persists, whether our claims about it are warranted, and whether its effects are good. Metarealism answers the first, the historical books the second, zeteticism the third, and the ethical program the fourth. This is the most persuasive architecture in the project: a human science that neither denies its objects because they were constructed nor accepts their self-descriptions as explanations. What the project does not do is prove that its parts require one another. Social reality can be made intelligible under more than one ontology, and a researcher can accept every one of Josephson-Storm's commitments while rejecting his ethics. I read the three books as a coordinated set of proposals rather than as a chain in which each critique forces the next conclusion. The problem, where there is one, is that an explanatory proposal has been left incomplete, not that a causal account is missing.⁷³

⁷³ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 255, 284; see also chap. 4, n. 20, at 315.

The proposal to explain stability gives my assessment its methodological center. Once a history has shown that a pattern is contingent, it can go on to investigate how the pattern reproduces itself, where the copies fail, and under what conditions the pattern lapses. In Josephson-Storm's words, "the real work begins when we stop asking *if* something is contingent and start asking to *what degree* and why." His example of proofreading and print inspection, which keep copies of a book resembling one another, shows what a mimetic anchoring process looks like in practice. His other example is weaker: he suggests that Foucault's history of confinement, which treats the asylum as a European product of the Age of Reason, may describe an ergonic convergence, since East Asian societies treated mental illness in parallel ways, but he names the comparison without doing the work that would tell convergence from diffusion.⁷⁴ A theory of anchoring also owes an account of why a stable configuration broke down at one moment and held at another; otherwise stability gets mechanisms while the ontology simply licenses change. Inheriting a critical tradition therefore means reconstructing it selectively, and both books admit as much: *Genealogy* grants that its preferred Foucauldian approach is not a traditional Foucauldian usage, and *Metamodernism* concedes that the canonical postmodernists did not uniformly hold the doctrines it critiques.⁷⁵ Latour's earlier turn from matters of fact to matters of concern shows that the call for a criticism that helps build a common world is not new; what Josephson-Storm adds is the coordination of philosophical and historical tasks on a scale Latour did not attempt.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 90, 123, 135–40; Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 250–52.

⁷⁵ Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 204–27; Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 15, 209–11.

⁷⁶ Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (2004): 225–48, especially 225–27, 245–48, <https://doi.org/10.1086/421123>, <https://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/89-CRITICAL-INQUIRY-GB.pdf>.

The global reach of Josephson-Storm's *oeuvre* and its potential application brings some exciting possibilities. Jessica Zu asks that the same interpretive standards of trust and suspicion apply to Western and non-Western sources alike.⁷⁷ Nor does a vocabulary's prominence measure how a field actually does its research, and a portable theory can harden into a routine of its own.⁷⁸ Josephson-Storm's later pedagogical essay, written in response to his reviewers and modeled on Freire, proposes dialogue, solidarity with oppressed communities, and institutional change. The program does not lack a practical side. But proposing practices is not the same as showing what they achieve.⁷⁹

I look forward to seeing how the Josephson-Storm continues to expand the critique of hegemony, especially within academia, the conjectural steps from intellectual proximity to motive, and the final integration of ethics with causal explanation. These are not incidental flaws, because the relation between criticism and construction is the project's central promise. But they do not cancel the achievement. They mark the places where the program should be used experimentally, with alternatives kept in view, rather than adopted as a finished settlement.

After the Critique: Religious Studies and Cultural Theory

Josephson-Storm gives researchers a demanding reason to keep working after critique. If a category is contingent, its reproduction becomes something to investigate. If a discipline has disavowed parts of its own history, recovering them can improve the grasp of its present objects. If a method carries inherited political materials, the task is to discriminate among those inheritances rather than accept or refuse them by reflex. What he offers is not a change of mood after a long season of criticism but an attempt to hold four things together at once: historical differentiation, explanatory mechanisms, fallible knowledge, and a research ethic in which scholars state the purposes their work serves instead of claiming a neutrality they do not have.

⁷⁷ Jessica Zu, "Objective Humanities, Reflexive Humanities," *Religious Studies Review* 48, no. 4 (2022): 501–4, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsr.16198>; Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 220–21, 263–65.

⁷⁸ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 15–18, 51, 278–80; Josephson-Storm, *Genealogy of Genealogy*, 46–51, 235–42.

⁷⁹ Josephson-Storm, *Metamodernism*, 255, 263–65; Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, "Metamodernism as the Pedagogy of Revolution," *Religion & Theology* 31, nos. 1–2 (2024): 129–36, at 3–7 of the advance PDF, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15743012-bja10066>.

For religious studies, the stakes concern both the discipline's object and its account of itself. The critique of "religion" as a universal category produces a familiar difficulty: if scholars helped build the object they study, what is left to compare and explain? Josephson-Storm accepts the historical critique and refuses the inference that construction exhausts reality. Classifications can have powers we can discover without belonging to one timeless religion-kind, and his process ontology reopens comparison on that basis. Whether a given cluster supports generalization has to be settled in the investigation itself, not guaranteed or forbidden in advance by the word "religion" and its history.⁸⁰ His intervention on esotericism shows what this means in practice. A single label might gather three different things: a kind held together by shared classification, a lineage of transmitted texts, and a set of patterns organized around secrecy. These are distinctions to investigate, not a finished taxonomy. The example shows what his answer to critical religion is meant to preserve: the ability to ask what exists and operates beyond scholarly usage while still examining how that usage changes its objects.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, "The End of Theory of 'Religion'?", *Religious Studies Review* 50, no. 1 (2024): 61–67, especially 64–66, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsr.17083>.

⁸¹ Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, "Nightmen, Troglodytes, and Other Phantoms of the Classificatory Imagination," *Aries* 24 (2024): 257–59, especially 258–59, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700593-02402014>.

His earlier trinary of religion, superstition, and the secular makes the position more precise. Adding a third term to the religious/secular opposition brings into view the practices excluded from both protected religion and state-authorized truth, since a state can guarantee religious freedom while suppressing what it calls superstition. Classification, on this account, distributes permissions and vulnerabilities rather than merely naming beliefs. That places *Myth* within critical scholarship on secularism and gives its concern with magic an institutional rationale. The trinary is a proposal open to historical revision, not a universal diagram, and his later discussion of transnational secularisms stresses exchange and creative reinterpretation rather than an Asia passively receiving European concepts.⁸² Distinctions already emerging in the field, such as Joseph Blankholm's separation of political from worldview secularism, are a reminder not to treat critical secularism scholarship as a single target. The gain is finer discrimination among histories and practices, not the discovery that everything secular is secretly religious.⁸³

The discipline's self-description undergoes a parallel revision. Writing on theosophy and religious studies, Josephson-Storm adds esoteric commitments and institutional connections to the standard Protestant genealogy of the field, and he concedes that those connections served colonialism and racism as readily as resistance. Recovering excluded interlocutors neither rehabilitates their truth claims nor gives the discipline a new innocent origin; the danger would be to replace a Protestant monopoly with an equally total theosophical counterstory.⁸⁴ His exchanges with Wiebe and others defend plural methods and explicit purposes without giving up evidential appraisal. They show that judging his thought requires separating a defense of fallible inquiry from a license for relativism. What no reply yet shows is how those commitments guide decisions when purposes conflict, and power is unequally distributed.⁸⁵

⁸² Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, "The Superstition, Secularism, and Religion Trinary: Or Re-Theorizing Secularism," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 30, no. 1 (2018): 1–20, especially 3–8, 14–18, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700682-12341409>; Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, "Epilogue: The Secular Incarnation of the God of Time: Postcolonial and Decolonial Insights from Beyond the Horizons of Euro-American Secularism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 91, no. 1 (2023): 64–68, especially 65–67, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfad042>.

⁸³ Joseph Blankholm, "Remembering Marx's Secularism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 88, no. 1 (2020): 35–57, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfz104>. See especially 35–39 and 48–51.

⁸⁴ Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm, "A Theosophical Discipline: Revisiting the History of Religious Studies," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 89, no. 4 (2021): 1153–63, especially 1154–59, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfab104>. Published online January 7, 2022; issue date December 2021.

⁸⁵ Josephson-Storm, "Revolutionizing the Human Sciences," 83–87; Wiebe, "Response to My Critics," 99–103; Josephson-Storm, "Response to Responses," 519–20, and "Metamodernism as the Pedagogy of Revolution," advance PDF, 3–7.

In cultural theory, the intervention concerns the relation between exposing a construction and explaining its effects. Josephson-Storm's proposed change is to make the reproduction of patterns as important as their contingent beginnings. The question I must ask of a genre or a method is what stabilizes it and what that stability makes possible, not only how its history can be denaturalized. *Genealogy* puts exactly that demand on an inherited critical practice. Its strongest claims extend critical reflexivity; its weakest moments let the prestige of exposing a history outrun the evidence of that history's continuing effects.

His position is a move within an ongoing contest over reconstruction, not the announcement of a successor epoch. Its relation to the other metamodernisms is one of difference with the possibility of alliance. His account is philosophical and methodological, while the cultural-historical accounts of metamodern feeling ask about art, affect, and sensibility. In a later interview, he acknowledges affinities with Vermeulen and van den Akker while describing his own aim as a less punitive scholarly culture, which signals an intended alliance rather than the arrival of a new cultural period.⁸⁶

In conclusion, *Myth* most vividly reorganizes the history of exchange between scholarship and the practices it consigned to a vanished past, and its challenge to a universal rupture is stronger than any denial that disenchantment happened in differentiated ways. *Metamodernism* provides the most sustained constructive framework, above all where it separates social construction from nonexistence, though its epistemic and ethical connections remain proposals to be tested. *Genealogy* demands scrutiny of critical conventions while its own institutional generalizations need the evidential discipline it demands of others; Kotsko's complaint that its constructive program mostly sends the reader back to *Metamodernism* is fair, and it is one reason the three books have to be read together.⁸⁷ Researchers and advanced students will find here a research agenda with usable tests, narrower than the books' panoramic syntheses but firmer.

⁸⁶ Augustas Pinkevičius, "Metamodernism and the Future of Theory: An Interview with Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm," *Darbai ir Dienos* 84 (2025): 111–41, especially 118–20, <https://doi.org/10.7220/2335-8769.84.7>.

⁸⁷ Adam Kotsko, "A Tale of Two Book Reviews: On Bernico and Dettloff's *Enough Is Enough* and Josephson Storm's *Genealogy of Genealogy*," *That Blog You Like Is Going to Come Back in Style!* (Substack), September 13, 2026, <https://adamkotsko.substack.com/p/a-tale-of-two-book-review>.

The lasting contribution is a defense of inquiry that accepts historical situatedness without treating it as a verdict against knowledge. It shows that things have histories and consequences that can be discovered. Provisional explanations can improve. Criticism must answer the same questions about its own methods that it puts to everyone else. Read this way, the three books are substantial interventions in religious studies and cultural theory, and their unfinished character is a reason for further argument, not an exemption from it.

A Note on Method and AI Assistance

I read all three books in full and checked every quotation and consequential page reference against the published editions. Grammarly was used to check for spelling, grammar, and clarity. During the drafting stage, I tested the node-and-network mapping method with Claude and Gemma4, but they weren't helpful. My friends and colleagues again helped immensely. Skynet has not replaced us all yet...

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