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REVIEW

C. G. Prado, *Searle and Foucault on Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). ISBN: 0521671337.

In *Searle and Foucault on Truth*, C. G. Prado continues the efforts at a rapprochement between Continental and analytic philosophy begun in his earlier works, *Starting with Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy*¹ and *A House Divided: Comparing Analytic and Continental Philosophy*.² In *Starting with Foucault*, Prado's audience is comprised of analytic philosophers who, with few exceptions, have largely dismissed Foucault, considering him not to be a philosopher at all, much less one who has anything of value to say to them about philosophical theories of truth and knowledge.³ Accordingly, that work offers an introduction to Foucault via his genealogical texts with a focus on Foucault's ideas on truth, knowledge, the subject, and rationality and, moreover, how they are products of power relations. By specifically developing Foucault's positions on truth and realism, Prado's aim is to disabuse analytic philosophers of the idea that Foucault's work is "hopelessly relativistic and unrealistic."⁴ In *Searle and Foucault on Truth*, Prado stays with the related themes of truth and realism, except that now he narrows his focus to a specific comparison between Foucault's views and those of analytic philosopher John Searle. As such, the present work is a "study in contrast," since Prado seeks to compare what he considers to be "two radically opposed conceptions of truth."⁵ His objective is to demonstrate that the contrasting views on truth are tied together by the role that realism plays in each and, moreover, that a

1 C. G. Prado, *Starting with Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995).

2 C. G. Prado, *A House Divided: Comparing Analytic and Continental Philosophy* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2003).

3 One should also look at Linda Martín Alcoff's *Real Knowing: New Versions of the Coherence Theory* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), which also engages both analytic and Continental philosophers on similar themes of truth and knowledge. See especially chapters 4 and 5 on Foucault.

4 Prado, *Starting with Foucault*, 5.

5 C. G. Prado, *Searle and Foucault on Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1.

dispute over realism is not a sufficient reason for the split between analytic and Continental philosophy, as some have taken it to be.

The book is divided into five chapters. In chapter one, Prado clearly sets out the two conceptions of truth that he compares throughout the work. The chapter also includes a useful background discussion on the problem of truth, the challenge posed by relativism to objectivist views of truth, common problems with the correspondence theory of truth, as well as a contrast of analytic and Continental philosophy in terms of canon, methodology, and each tradition's conception of the nature of philosophy. Chapters two and three respectively serve as introductions to the oeuvres of Searle and Foucault, a strategy that is quite useful given that few readers of Foucault are familiar with Searle's work and vice versa.⁶ Chapter two on Searle provides critical discussions of his work on language, mind, and social reality, while importantly showing the interconnections between these various domains and the guiding importance of realism that connects these areas. Chapter three initially presents an overview of and context for Foucault's writings as well as a section on archeology, but then focuses on Foucault's genealogical texts and what Prado discerns as five distinct uses of the concept of truth in Foucault's work.⁷ Finally, in chapters four and five, Prado further develops the contrasting positions on truth and realism. The remainder of this review focuses on the main points of Prado's comparison of the respective positions of Searle and Foucault on truth and realism.

According to Prado, the two conceptions of truth are essentially differentiated by the role that extralinguistic reality plays in each. In Searle's view, what Prado calls the *relational conception*, truth is dependent on extralinguistic states of affairs, that is, sentences are "made true by how things are in the world."⁸ According to Foucault's position, what Prado calls the *discursive-currency* or *currency conception*, truth is internal to discourse and, as such, is not dependent on some relation to extralinguistic reality.⁹ Instead of reference to "how things are in the world," this position maintains that truth is "a property attributed to expressions sanctioned by contextual and historical linguistic-practice criteria."¹⁰ The significant contribution Prado purports to make is demonstrating that the currency conception, despite what is commonly thought, does not necessarily entail a rejection of realism, that is, it is not necessarily irrealist or linguistic idealist in nature. Prado argues that Searle and Foucault, despite defending

6 Readers of this journal seeking further introduction to Searle's work are referred to his *Mind, Language and Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

7 For this discussion, see Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 81–100.

8 John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 219.

9 To avoid the baggage associated with the common names of these positions, the correspondence theory and constructivism respectively, Prado prefers to refer to them in this way.

10 Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 3.

different conceptions of truth, are both “realist in nature and commitment.”¹¹ Importantly, Prado’s goal is not a synthesis of the respective positions but, rather, is a demonstration of the differences in how each is a realist.

Though both Searle and Foucault, then, on Prado’s account, are realists, one source of confusion is that Searle explicitly avows and defends his commitment to direct or external realism, whereas Foucault only reveals his realism in passing dismissals of idealism. For example, Searle will unabashedly claim that the “world (or, alternatively, reality or the universe) exists independently of our representations of it,”¹² whereas Foucault only infrequently rejects irrealism, such as when he explains that a discursive analysis of truth “does not mean that there is nothing there and that everything comes out of somebody’s head.”¹³ The confusion, Prado claims, results from the fact that Searle’s realism and relational conception of truth are tightly connected, as I will soon discuss, whereas Foucault’s discursive-currency conception of truth is largely indifferent to realism, that is, the currency conception of truth is in theory compatible with linguistic idealism, despite Foucault not being an irrealist himself.¹⁴

Prado demonstrates that Searle’s relational conception of truth— that sentences are made true by how things are in the world—is a result of his realism.¹⁵ He explains that for Searle, “realism is a condition of intelligibility,”¹⁶ that is, each member of a “large class of utterances ... requires for its intelligibility a publicly accessible reality.”¹⁷ Realism as an “intelligibility-condition” is not an underlying assumption or philosophical position that Searle defends; rather, it is closely connected to the notion of the “Background” that he develops in his philosophy of mind. He defines the “Background” as a “set of nonrepresentational mental capacities that enable all representing to take place.”¹⁸ Prado explains that “Realism is a fundamental Background factor for Searle; [it] is an integral element of our thought and awareness ... it is a defining component of the nonintentional and nonrepresentational capacities that enable us to represent, manipulate, move about in, and talk and think about our environment and ourselves.”¹⁹ Given this view of realism as an “inescapable precondition of representation,” Searle maintains that a relational conception of truth is

11 Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 3.

12 Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, 150.

13 Michel Foucault, “The Ethics of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom,” in *The Final Foucault*, ed. James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 17.

14 Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 25–26.

15 For the main discussion of Searle’s conception of truth, see Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 55–65.

16 Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 26.

17 Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, 190.

18 John R. Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 143. Also, see Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 38–50.

19 Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 26.

“grounded in [an] intuitive understanding of truth as an accurate depiction of states of affairs.”²⁰ Thus, for Searle, there is a tight connection between his relational conception of truth and the realism from which his view of truth emerges.

Prado explains, however, that for Foucault realism is not the starting point for an analysis of truth; rather, truth, or more accurately “the production of truth,”²¹ is the starting point of Foucault’s analysis. Whereas for Searle the starting point is that “the world is as it is” and, subsequently, that “truth is getting it right,”²² Foucault’s starting point is that we are “subjected to the production of truth through power.”²³ The task of his analysis, then, is not explaining how true sentences relate to the world but determining how power²⁴ produces discourses of truth through “a complex enabling and limiting of discursive actions,” that is, by determining “what may and may not be uttered.”²⁵ What to some seems to be the “initially paradoxical view” that extralinguistic states of affairs are placed to the side in analyses of truth is made quite reasonable by Prado’s explanation that Foucault’s starting concern is not realism, but the production of truth. As such, analyses need not give an account of how true sentences relate to how things are in the world outside of language but, rather, “how some sentences come to circulate as they do, to be regularly exchanged, and others fail to become or cease to be current.”²⁶ Although Foucault’s position is seemingly a linguistic or discursive idealism, it is one of Prado’s main goals to demonstrate that “Foucault’s realism is tacit;” that is, “he does not deny extralinguistic reality explicitly or by implication.”²⁷ Prado stresses that Foucault’s position is “not [a] denial of the world,” but contra Searle and others, “it is an assertion that extralinguistic reality plays no epistemic role in the determination of what is deemed to be true or to constitute knowledge,” in other words, “it is not the determinant of currency in discourse.”²⁸ Therein lies the main similarity and difference between Searle and Foucault on Prado’s reading. Both are realists, yet, when it comes to conceptions of truth, for Searle, extralinguistic reality plays the pivotal role in determining the truth of sentences, whereas for Foucault, “truth is not about how things are beyond discourse,” but rather, “what goes on in discourse.”²⁹ That is, questions

20 Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 26.

21 Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 27.

22 Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 27.

23 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 93.

24 For Prado’s discussion of power in Foucault, see *Searle and Foucault*, 79–81.

25 Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 27, 76.

26 Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 27.

27 Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 28. For the main discussion of Foucault’s “tacit realism,” see 96–98.

28 Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 29, 98–99.

29 Prado, *Searle and Foucault*, 28.

about truth are questions about the historical developments of discursive practices, past and present.³⁰

Cogently argued throughout, Prado's book puts two important representatives of analytic and Continental philosophy in conversation on significant ontological and epistemological problems surrounding the concepts of truth and realism. In his analysis, Prado is critical of both Foucault and Searle, bringing out the strengths and weakness of both positions, while at the same time showing at what points they converge and diverge. Although Prado should be praised for avoiding the temptation of providing an unlikely synthesis of contrasting positions, some readers will inevitably feel that his project is limited by his ultimate refusal to come down on the side of one position or the other. Yet, given his aim of reconciliation between analytic and Continental philosophy, this potential weakness is also part of the book's strength in that it challenges both positions in interesting and useful ways. In any case, Prado's efforts are commendable in his continued attempts to engage Foucault with philosophers across the Continental-analytic "divide" and, as such, the book is an important contribution to Foucaultian scholarship.

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30 This is the task of genealogy. For Prado's discussion of genealogy, see *Searle and Foucault*, 76–81. Also, see *Starting with Foucault*.