Discipline and Punish

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Discipline and Punish
by
Michel Foucault:
a presentation
Michel Foucault talking about *Histoire de la folie* (written in 1961): “The reactions were really very odd. At first, there was no reaction on the part of psychiatrist. Then May ’68 arrived.”

*(Michel Foucault. Politics, Philosophy, Culture)*
“in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the disciplines became general formulas of domination” (DP, 137)
Disciplines: from disordered mass to ordered multiplicities through:

a) Control of time: time has not to be wasted;

b) Body –object articulation: “disciplinary power appears to have the function not so much of deduction as of synthesis, not so much of exploitation of the product as of coercive link with the apparatus of production.” (153)
The invention of the exercise: “Exercise, having become an element in the political technology of the body and of duration, does not culminate in a beyond, but tends towards a subjection that has never reached its limit.” (DP, 162)

Through exercise, one obtains that “body is constituted as a part of a multi-segmentary machine.” (DP, 164)
“[H]ierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination.” (DP, 170)

Question: isn’t ‘education’ still working this way?
Examination has transformed the economy of visibility in an exercise of power:

“Disciplinary power [...] is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility.” (DP, 187)
Examination:

- Sheds light upon individual;
- Makes each individual a ‘case’;
- Produces knowledge, information,

- **POWER.**
The plague:

“The plague is the trial in the course of which one may define ideally the exercise of disciplinary power.” (DP, 198)
The Panopticon:

- “Visibility is a trap” (DP, 200) and its major effect is “to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.” (DP 201)

- Have you ever tried the GRE TEST?
The Panoptic schema:

- The functional inversion of the disciplines;
- The swarming of disciplinary mechanisms;
- The state-control of the mechanisms of discipline (DP 210-213)
Disciplines:

- Techniques for assuring the ordering of human multiplicities; their goal is “to increase both the docility and the utility of all the elements of the system.” (DP, 218)
Disciplines

- They “should be regarded as a sort of counter-law,” (DP, 222) and they are very different from a contract.
Disciplines

They brought about a double process: “an epistemological ‘thaw’ through a refinement of power relations; a multiplication of the effects of power through the formation and accumulation of new forms of knowledge.” (DP, 224)
Disciplines and Ideal Penalty

"An indefinite discipline." (DP, 227)

That is why it is not surprising that “prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals.” (DP, 228)
Prison as a microcosm of society

“a rather disciplined barracks, a strict school, a dark workshop, but not qualitatively different” (DP, 233) whose main goal is to transform the inmates in part of the mechanism, part of the mode of production.
“Not profit; nor even the formation of useful skill; but the constitution of a power relation, an empty economic form, a schema of individual submission and of adjustment to a production apparatus.” (DP 243)
Three schemata of transformation

- “the politico-moral schema of individual isolation and hierarchy;
- “the economic model of force applied to compulsory work;
- The technico-medical model of cure and normalization.”

“The cell, the workshop, the hospital.” (DP, 248)
What do those schemata require and bring about?

Permanent observations and production of data: an excess (or a surplus value)
“the prison, and no doubt punishment in general, is not intended to eliminate offences, but rather to distinguish them, to use them; [...] it provides them with a general ‘economy’.” (DP, 272)
Illicit circuit of profit

“Police encroachment on justice and the force of inertia that the carceral institution opposes to justice are not new, nor are they the result of a sclerosis or of a gradual shift in power; it is a structural feature that characterizes punitive mechanisms in modern societies.” (DP, 282)
The ideal place: Mettray

“God sees you”, and the “technicians of the behavior” are His prophets…
Part that one could (should, perhaps, omit...)

* “Children resemble their parents.” (caption in a Biology website)
J. Caputo and M. Yount:

“Power is the thin, inescapable film that covers all human interactions [...] Institutions are the means that power [-knowledge, I would add, MV] uses, and not the other way around.”

(Foucault and the critique of institutions, 4)
Foucault about *Discipline and Punish*

“what I wanted to write was a history book that would make the present situation comprehensible and, possibly, lead to action.” (PPC, 101)
“As soon as there is a power relation, there is a possibility of resistance.” (PPC, 106)

“it happens that the machinery jams, the gears seize up. Why? Because the accused remains silent. […] Beyond admission, there must be confession, self-examination, explanation of oneself, revelation of what one is. […] he [the accused] does not play the game.” (PPC, 126-7)
Foucault @ Pitt