



Foucault argues that prison did not become the principal form of punishment just because of the humanitarian concerns of reformists.

He traces the cultural shifts that led to the predominance of prison via the body and power. Prison used by the \\ "disciplines\\" – new technological powers that can also be found, according to Foucault, in places such as schools, hospitals, and military barracks.

The secret to right moral action, then, is more than just the relationship between knowledge and power – but also of proper surveillance. And surveillance now dominates our lives. And not just the cameras that are everywhere filming our every movement. But also in our obsession with tests in schools and performance reviews at work. To Foucault, the panopticon was not just a model for the ideal prison, but also for the ideal hospital, factory and school. He points out that this surveillance has meant turning our lives into texts. There was a time when only the heroes of our world had books written about them - today we are our high school report cards, our credit ratings, our performance review results, our medical history cards.

One of the things Foucault does that I find utterly fascinating is to look at the etymology of words and to show how earlier meanings hang around the word's usage today like ghosts. In this book he points out that the word discipline has always had the dual meaning it has today – a discipline as an area of study and discipline as in being forced to behave correctly. This seems terribly important to me.

Foucault is meticulous. He inspects each and everything from philosophical and psychological point of view; He disrobes the myth and romance of history only to show us a picture that is as real as it is shocking. For the most part of reading it, I was not entirely sure what Foucault was coming at, he dropped hints here and there but more importantly, he intends to enable us to see for ourselves. All his works are an attempt to understand the relation

between power, culture and the individual.

Modern prison is the model for control of an entire society. What happens behind the prison walls becomes so distant for the ones outside it, that they have no empathy for the man who suffers in solitary confinement or sleeps on cold prison floors. His sufferings become none of our concern. There is a 'dehumanizing' effect that the modern prison has on the criminal, an effect that expels any chance of sympathy or pity for the prisoner. He fades rather quickly in society's collective memory. Such was not the case, Foucault says, back when men were tortured in streets and executed brutally.

Power now looks kind, but isn't. In past it wasn't kind and therefore it could encourage open rebellion. So Prison system, doesn't only takes away the spectacle of torture and murder from the streets, it crushes dissent and shackles the conscience of the society.

\\\\"The ideal point of penalty today would be an indefinite discipline: an interrogation without end, an investigation that would be extended without limit to a meticulous and ever more analytical observation, a judgement that would at the same time be the constitution of a file that was never closed, the calculated leniency of a penalty that would be interlaced with the ruthless curiosity of an examination.\\\\"

All that aside, Foucault seems to do an incredibly meticulous job of tracing the history of discipline and punishment. He takes the reader from medieval tortures and public executions on up through today's modern prison-industrial complex. As Marx predicted capitalism's eventual undoing of itself, Foucault seems to suggest that the prison itself will become obsolete, thereby being replaced by a series of ever more technical disciplinary apparatuses supplied by the likes of fields better suited for controlling/shaping the individual (sociology, psychology/psychiatry, education, etc.). Other than providing physical safety by removing the dangerous individual from his fellow citizens, we still seem to have very little additional insight into the benefits or preferred goals of incarceration. We still seem just as split on whether purely punitive measures are justified or whether rehabilitation is truly possible. The prison seems to mirror the very same social constructs we use to discipline and control ourselves--regimented schedules and timetables; clearly defined responses and roles; meaning, productivity, and avoidance of temptation through labor; etc. At one point, Foucault points out the arbitrary nature of penalization almost exactly split down the class divides (those who meet out justice and bring suits belonging to one class, and those who suffer punishment and commit crimes belonging to another; the arbitrary part being to which class and circumstances one is born).

SO Foucault's take on the increasing levels of civilization that pinker toots about is that it actually ain't so civilized. Although institutions of 'social care' have expanded immensely they also increased repression of the inmates. But not physically violent repression (that's about as far as Pinker and Foucault agree). But rather rigorous psychological and moral bloodsucking of dignity, freedom, and individuality. Everywhere: military parades, schools, factories, hospitals, workhouses. Necessity of efficiency is the rationale.

But Foucault realizes that 'liberal' politics go hand in hand with this regimentation and unending labour. Work is the most efficient form of social control. Nietzsche also said that (Foucault is most certainly Nietzschean). Foucault realizes here (and apparently in his other works as well) that basic human drives are now considered taboo and he calls us out on our hypocrisy. Modern times are repressed times. Virtually everything is determined by power. Not only are most of us too well 'disciplined' and 'punished' but we are isolated in our cells of various hues and colours and so pervertedly repressed.

Further, the penal system has implications for broader society, as Foucault writes:

The practice of placing individuals under 'observation' is a natural extension of a justice imbued with disciplinary methods and examination procedures. Is it surprising that the cellular prison, with its regular chronologies, forced labour, its authorities of surveillance and registration, its experts in normality, who continue and multiply the functions of the judge, should have become the modern instrument of penalty? Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?

The principal thrust of the book is to present a view on how the punishment of felon's has evolved in western society from brutal, pain-filled tortures and executions meant to punish the victim for their effrontery to the monarch - stressing a personal offense on the part of the transgressor - to a very systematic and abstract approach meant to remove the convict from society and allow them to be kept under observation. The core concept of this evolution is presented through a very interesting treatise on Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, an early prison design in which all of the prisoner's cells were visible from a central hub - the inmates couldn't see inside this centre, so they never knew when they were being watched, and thus came to expect that at any given moment they were under observation. This

control method has been extended to society, where the populace, aware of being observed by the state in all of their everyday actions, have modified their behavior so as not to draw attention to themselves and risk being punished.

The focus of any persecution shifted from physical punishment of the body to the control, study and education of personality. The arbitrary power of the sovereign is substituted by the detailed regulation imposed by the state.

Should it come as a surprise that the prison, while being initially designed and lauded as a means to re-educate the person and having failed to achieve that aim, is still viewed as a tool for improvement of the personality of the offender? And if it failed to achieve its educational goal, why did its model become (and still is) so widely spread and replicated in so many other social institutions (schools, army, various educational facilities, factories, working houses, etc.)? By Foucault, all these institutions are there not to improve the personality (despite what their proponents officially declared) but rather to discipline those people who enter them. The whole society, particularly with the introduction of centralized police services, become an object of comprehensive control using many of the concepts that have in its core the principles of control in prisons.

You may have a feeling that Foucault is obsessed with social control, but he manages to provide an in-depth analysis of many social phenomena that are related to the discipline and control mechanisms. And even if you do not agree with many of his ideas, I found his analysis of those phenomena and the related mechanisms truly valuable.

Part I focuses on an ideological history of torture. The conclusions regarding the purpose and effect of torture by the sovereign are interspersed with anecdotal tales heightening the horror of such punishment. Well written, but not terribly enlightening. Most of the impressions regarding torture seem well established with two exceptions: Today a doctor must watch over those condemned to death, right up to the last moment- thus, juxtaposing himself as the agent of welfare, as the alleviator of pain, with the official whose task it is to end life *pg. 11*.

and

It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished...[:]...This is the historical reality of the soul, which, unlike the soul represented by Christian theology, is not born in sin and subject to punishment, but is born rather out of methods of punishment, supervision and constraint *pg. 29*.

Part II focuses on the shift of punishment from "vengeance of the sovereign to the defense of society" *pg. 90*. Foucault spends some time discussing how punishment plays into achieving societal objectives. The development of codification of laws and goals such as general deterrence by representation of the penalty, not the spectacle of corporal punishment. Judges transform their roles from punishing criminal acts to attempting to reform the criminal's soul.

Punishment evolves to achieving an articulable purpose. No longer should there be "spectacular, but useless penalties." *pg. 109*. The underlying theory behind punishment becomes: against a bad passion, a good habit;...Must one not deduce all penalties from this principle, which is so simple, so appropriate and already well known, namely, to choose them in that which is most subduing for the passion that led to the crime committed? *pg. 106 citing Lacretelle, 361*.

There is a reaction to using imprisonment to serve all punishments. The blanket use of incarceration is the same as "see[ing]: a physician who has the same remedy for all ills" *pg. 117 citing Chabroud, 618*.

It is not until Part III where Foucault begins tapping into analysis of historical development that starts to become debatable. Foucault spends considerable time addressing the use of discipline to create "docile bodies." This opens up the real focus of Foucault's work which is the interplay of power relationships. His view of discipline as a means of control in the military, classroom and factory seems straightforward. However, Foucault then adds seemingly contrived elements into his history. He attempts to impose an evolutionary timeline to show how this control morphed into a method to maximize capital production. Citing no authority except Marx. Foucault suggests at a point "[d:]iscipline is no longer simply an art of distributing bodies, of extracting time from them and accumulating it, but of composing forces in order to obtain an efficient machine." *pg. 164*. Such conclusions seem arbitrary. At no point can I think how discipline and efficiency were separate concepts.

Foucault then lays the introduction for what appears to be his most well known reference from *Discipline and*

Punish: the Panopticon. There is considerable discussion regarding the "physics of power" in relation to techniques of surveillance to maximize discipline. Surveillance takes on many forms, such as through the proliferation of evaluations. No longer limited to select individuals, the "turning of real lives into writing is no longer a procedure of heroization; it functions as a procedure of objection and subjection." *pg. 192.* We have increased our own visibility and "are entering the age of the infinite examination and of compulsory objectification." *pg. 189.*

With the proliferation of blogs, facebook accounts and online book reviews, one cannot help think that we are so well trained that we irresistibly submit ourselves to increased surveillance. The acquiescence to the sovereign's gaze may very well be a form of internal discipline the Panopticon hoped to instill.

Since the Panopticon is well covered in most of the reviews regarding *Discipline and Punish*, I won't elaborate here.

The most inspired part of the book to me was Section 1 of Part IV Complete and austere institutions. Foucault's criticism of penal reform recognizes that the very purpose of prison is to fail. As he says near the end of the book: it is not even whether we should have prison or something other than prison. At present, the problem lies rather in the steep rise of in the use of these mechanisms of normalization and the wide-ranging powers which, through the proliferation of new disciplines, they bring with them *pg. 306*

The restructuring of prison has to do with the objectives cited earlier. The focus must be on the transformation of the inmate rather than the "exchange value" of the offense. *Pg. 244.*

However, this leads to the creation of the "delinquent". The use of the 'biographical' characteristics of an inmate to determine a penalty create the idea of a "criminal as existing before the crime and even outside it." *pg. 252.* From here, Foucault deteriorates into the generic argument of the interested parties benefiting from the prison apparatus. I by no means disagree with this, but those responsible for perpetuation of the prison industry tend to be the social scientists, police and prisons themselves rather than judges, legislators and lawyers. Foucault does make recognize this to some degree when he states "[j:]udges are the scarcely resisting employees of this apparatus" *pg. 282*

The prison, that darkest region in the apparatus of justice, is the place where the power to punish, which no longer dares to manifest itself openly, silently organizes a field of objectivity in which punishment will be able to function openly as treatment and the sentence be inscribed among the discourses of knowledge. It is understandable that justice should have adopted so easily a prison that was not the offspring of its own thoughts. Justice certainly owed the prison this recognition."

During reading this book, i constantly thought about George orwell's *Eighty-four*, Kafka's *The trial* and Nietzsche's *Genealogy of morals* (And Foucault was influenced highly by Nietzsche and based most of his ideas of this book from *Genealogy of morals*). And could connect to this to our own time and realise how relevant these ideas are even now. In a final word, this book or Foucault's idea totally changed my sociopolitical view into bio-political view and its relation to human nature.

Reading Foucault, one can see the thought of Nietzsche, Freud psychoanalytical thought and Sartre in his writings. Foucault includes Sartre's "the look" in "Discipline and Punish." That one has no power when one is being observed. Foucault constantly tries to empower the individual, he attacks all oppressing ideologies and institutions. It is not a coincidence that Foucault went after the symbol of authoritarian oppression, the prison system. Conservative Christians say that Foucault's rebellion against authority came from his sexuality, namely his homosexuality. He felt oppressed as a gay man. There is truth to that criticism, that Foucault's philosophy and thought came from his life experience as a gay man.

Foucault applies his thinking about power to the corrective system. He frames power as a human game for control and the prison system as an example of societal control. The corrective system is not only a way to protect citizens from dangerous individuals, but also a way to assert control over these individuals. The modern corrective system doesn't aim to punish, but to ensure that wayward individuals are reformed into societal norms.

The use of space, the segmentation of time, and the culling of data are elaborated here -- the important follow up to Marx's analysis of the working day and the precursor to Deleuze's concept of the control society. Foucault shows that the military plays an important role in research and development of techniques for developing the category of "population" and employing that to produce, forecast, and manipulate the actual population.

Conventional institutional analysis focuses on how we strive to make institutions that will tolerate pluralism, that

will admit a diverse array of ideologies, so as to counter the possibility of the system failing through a lack of collective desire and output, or so the logic goes. It is said to be a basic precondition to happiness and freedom to have accommodating systems, that tolerate a wide array of views and forms of expression. Otherwise, we would exist in communities that would just be a wild array of differing ideologies, barely hewn together by any sense of obligation or personal commitment. Only a sense of top-down power, material or otherwise, would hold together such a system. It would lack any collective drive, common purpose, or stability. It would not be permeated by a sense of bindingness. The individuals within that system would not feel any commitment to it. They may strive to abolish it and to degrade it. And it would be a very precarious system, its source of power and ongoing existence easily identifiable, and so always at risk of violent overthrow.

However, this is unidirectional systems analysis. It is a focus on how collectives are modified to accommodate individual views. We can learn so much more however from focussing on how individual views change and adapt to systems, how those attitudinal and phenomenological changes make the ongoing existence and functioning of those systems more plausible and indeed, provides those systems with the grammar for their ongoing existence. We are told to leave behind our preconceptions when analysing human systems, to strive for objectivity and mildness. However, that ignores the assumptions that systems have embedded within them and which govern our ability to formulate thoughts, ideas and hopes. The story of a human system is a subjective -- or rather inter-subjective -- one.

We each have certain basic ways of imagining the world around us. We exist within our own thoughts and, certain capacities of empathy aside, we cannot know what it is to be externally perceived or to see and think as another does. However, we do have very special powers, and that is powers of introspection, an isolated activity. Being by ourselves is a precondition to think. We cannot read what other people have to say, we cannot write, we cannot introspect, without slow and purposeful thinking in isolation.

To think is the very first condition to be free. It is to be alone but able to be intentionally alone. To be away from others, from our lovers, friends, other workers, rulers. To be free is to realise the systems in which we live but to appreciate our role in those systems. However, the price of this supposed freedom is to realise that thought itself is destabilising. Thought always holds the conditions for our unfreedom. It is through thought that we realise we are not as free as we could be. Thinking gives us a precondition for reform, and to see the value of reform, but it is also thinking that makes us unhappy. Too much unmoderated individual thought, so it goes, it is a bad thing, as it fosters marginalisation, opposition and prejudice. We discover and give language and content to our rage through our own relentless internal thought. Sociality can be the only way we can diminish this decline towards oppression.

One of the most important reasons why individual thought is so important is that we our own first testing ground for our own thoughts, our very own sounding board. If we propose something mad in our internal monologue, and if we take the time to think slowly and deliberately about that, patiently and rationally, we will self-correct. We cannot have this internal monologue if our ability to think for ourselves is threatened. Our most ludicrous ideas are toned down through this process. Our internal thought serves as a filter, which is why privacy of thought is so important to our dignity. When we talk to others, when we then further refine and correct our views, we do so having already had the benefit of the opportunity of self-thought and critique. Only those thoughts subjected to this process then find expression on our lips.

However, our capacity to self-moderate and to think for ourselves is the limiting factor in this process. And also this model of thought is entirely unsound as it assumes thoughts to be generated free of affect, rather than being constant and varying expressions of our emotions. It privileges a certain model of cognition over others, and that model is one in which slow, rational, emotionless thought is somehow possible, let alone a good thing. It fails to recognise the emotions such a mode of thought encourages and embodies.

However, allowing of course that expressions might be spontaneous, unthinking, or otherwise devoid of slow thought altogether, we need to formulate what are the ways towards thinking in a way that does not sanction authoritarianism. We need to work out how slow, deliberate thought is productive of freedom. If someone's slow and deliberate thought leads them to endorse conditions of unfreedom, then we might be tempted to say that they are not really thinking. We should only be concerned to protect a certain category of thought. Thus we equate sincere and meaningful thought with only thoughts that are generative of our freedom. However, that I think is wrong.

The first reason I think that, is that we cannot think, act, or behave without basic material things. In the same way that lacking the preconditions of thought disables us from thinking, if we are too constantly labouring in order to satisfy those basic material needs, our ability to think will become destabilised. We need free time, material adequacy, basic psychological flourishing, in order to develop the best formulations of our sincerely held thoughts.

We need to be able to luxuriate with our own thoughts in order to self-improve and to develop our sincerely held values and viewpoints. A distributional good that influences that ability is, paradoxically, sociality. It is through exposing ourselves to others' thoughts that we develop our capacity to think in a way that has some mooring in human freedom.

However, we also must realise that there are subtle forces that find their expression in our subconscious and motivate and influence our ability to think for ourselves, to come up with what we regard as truths. We are forever limited by our time and context, we are further limited by our endless biases. We come up against the limits of language and our individual knowledge and intellect. Power, control, and coercion affect our every move, and we are mostly blind as to how these forces come to operate on us. They always have concrete expressions through actual social relations and institutions. We wield and are also affected by such displays of power. We need to think hard about the systems through which we pass each day and which each day supply us with our necessary requirements for thought.

At times, Foucault's strategic style (restrained and evasive, like a writer determined to never stand by their own claims) unnerved me: what is an operational definition of power? What does power look, taste, touch, feel like, and how can it or its relations be measured in a given context? And, is this history of prison merely a metaphor — the penal system as an image of? carceral systems as grids for? normalization of punishments as an explanation of? If a metaphor, then I understand the dalliances into education, economy, and military parallels, but those elements distracted if this were a strict history of why civilizations abandoned grotesque public tortures and embraced the prison.

Foucault's cold-minded analysis of an institution which seems perennial but is in fact the product of modern era. The sovereign right to punish metamorphized in the 18th century into something rather unique which nowadays is taken for granted: an instrument of normalisation. Why is then that schools, hospitals, factories, corporations, bureaucracies so much resemble prisons? Same idea: supervise, rank, categorize, make cogs for a systems which works. Correct anomalies when it doesn't, do away with divergence, make normal. Discipline instead of destiny. The depth of Foucault's thought matches his lack of emotional charge: observe and understand, never judge.