Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison

III. Discipline
3. Panopticism

Michel Foucault

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French Philosopher, Sociologist & Historian

Chairperson at College de France with the title “History of Systems of Thought”

Taught at University of Buffalo and the University of California, Berkeley

Best known for his critical studies of social intentions, most notably psychiatry, medicine, the human sciences and the prison system - as well as for his work on the history of human sexuality.
Discipline and Punish was translated into English in 1977 from the French *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*, published in 1975.

*Discipline and Punish* is an examination of the social and political mechanisms behind the considerable changes occurring throughout the western penal systems during the modern age.

*Discipline and Punish* is grouped according to its four parts: Torture, Punishment, Discipline and Prison.
Tartur

Begins by contrasting two forms of penalty: the violent and chaotic public torture of Robert-François Damiens who was convicted of regicide in late 18th century, and the highly regimented daily schedule for inmates from an early 19th century prison.

Foucault wants the reader to consider what led to these changes. How did western culture’s approach to corrections shift so radically?
Part 2: Punishment

The progression of punishment came slowly, we look to the past to consider the social forces that guided these decisions.

Public humiliation were often used by local communities as imprisonment was long unusual as a punishment, rather a method of coercion.

Prisons were preceded by a different form of public spectacle. The theatre of public torture gave way to stocks, public chain gangs, etc.

This "gentle" punishment represented the first step away from excessive force and towards more generalized and controlled means of punishment.
Part 3: Discipline

The emergence of prison as the form of punishment for every crime grew out of the development of “discipline” in the 18th and 19th centuries.

This discipline developed a new economy and politics for individuals. Modern institutions required people be individuated according to their tasks, as well as for training, observation, and control.

The individual discipline constructs for individuals it controls have four main characteristics:

- cellular
- organic
- genetic
- combinatory
Foucault's argument is that discipline creates "docile bodies," ideal for the new economics, politics and warfare of the modern industrial age - bodies which function in factories, ordered military regiments, and school classrooms.

To construct docile bodies the disciplinary institutions must be able to:

- constantly observe & record who they control
- ensure the discipline of the people being controlled. Discipline must come about w/o excessive force through careful observation and molding of the people into the preferred form through this observation.
Part 4: Prison

The prison, as the central means of criminal punishment, becomes a small part of a larger "carceral system" which has become an all-encompassing institution in modern society.

Prisons are one part of a vast network, including schools, military institutions, hospitals, and factories, which build a panoptic society.

This system creates "disciplinary careers" for those locked within its corridors. It is operated under the scientific authority of medicine, psychology, and criminology.
History of Exclusion: The Plague

The Black Death - 3rd deadliest pandemic in history (Smallpox and Spanish Flu)

Plague Control as the end of the 17th century prescribed the creation of the inspectors and the transformation of the home into an “enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point.”

The sickness and disorder of the illness was met by those in power with “order” and analytic power – those outside of this discipline being “contagions.”

The disciplinary mechanism was perfected using segmentation, discipline showing its medical and political cleansing power.
History of Exclusion: The Leper

The Leper Confinement added a new type of absolute exclusion, including an intensification of power, resulting in exile.

The disciplinary mechanism was perfected using separation, discipline showing the power of a centrally controlled society.

Both Plague Control and Leper Confinement were made possible as a result of the double mode / binary divisions that include:

• Mad / Sane
• Dangerous / Harmless
• Normal / Abnormal
The Dualistic Division: Who’s Right? Who’s Wrong?

“…the existence of a whole new set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal brings into play the disciplinary mechanism…”

This acknowledgement mirrors the simple dualism of life and death.

Power when reduced to such a simple form, results in a hierarchical, architectural response that relies on a passive, functioning optical system, where perfecting and exercising seniority is important.
The Architectural Response: Bentham’s Idea

As a Late-Enlightenment, early-Industrial-Revolution thinker he was able to solidify what we now regard as a granted norm. That one might be under observation is a much more important tool than actively being watched.

This type of surveillance first emerged as a form of disciplinary power with the creation of the Panopticon, which consists of an observation post towering at the focal point of radially aligned cells. The panopticon creates the opportunity for an observer to become omniscient not in the eyes of the convict, since the convict cannot see the observer in the tower, but in the mind of the convict. Never knowing when the observer leaves her or his watch, the inmate finds no true privacy.
Bentham’s Panopticon

Bentham described the Panopticon as "a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example."

Although the design was not realized during his lifetime, Foucault proposes that not only prisons but all hierarchical structures like the army, schools, hospitals and factories were influenced by the design – others suggest it stems more from Foucault’s analysis of it.
Disciplinary Society

The Panopticon served multiple purposes during its exercise of power. It also serves as a place of:

- Safe custody
- Confinement
- Solitude
- Forced labor
- Instruction
- Social Laboratory

By doing so many things so efficiently, its mixed mechanism as able to handle both types of discipline, exceptional and generalized.
The Spread of Disciplinary Institutions


Whereas the roles of institutions were once defined in negative terms, “disciplines function increasingly as techniques for making useful individuals.”

This utility led to their being associated with the “most important, most central and most productive sectors of society (education, training, rehabilitation).
The Spread of Disciplinary Institutions

2. “The swarming of disciplinary mechanisms.”

The methodologies of schools, hospitals, and other institutions came to be applied by these institutions on the communities and individuals around them.

These institutions also became “centers of observations” for the societies around them, subverting the traditional power of the church.
3. “The state control of the disciplinary mechanisms.”

The secularization of power and its shift from monarchic control is not a complete shift of disciplinary functions to the “state apparatus.”

The shift from the spectacle to the surveilled that is made concrete in the Panopticon where we are reminded that this has been a shift from persons being “repressed” to individuals “fabricated” into a “social order.”
The Formulation of Disciplinary Institutions

1. Economics

Tactics of power fulfill three criteria: lowest cost, maximum power, and increased output. This in turn increases both the docility and the utility of all the elements of the system.
The Formulation of Disciplinary Institutions

2. Politics

Discipline acts as a “counter-law” and, through the “minute disciplines, the panoptics of every day” works it subtle magic against the more obvious mechanisms of the juridico-political.

The prison’s power to punish has become the power to observe, selectively prosecute, and train, not through the “universal consciousness of the law in each juridical subject” but through “the infinitely minute web of panoptic techniques.”
The Formulation of Disciplinary Institutions

3. Scientific Process

The formation of knowledge and the increase of power regularly reinforce one another in a circular process. Within institutions, the growth of power could give rise to new knowledge or methodologies for control.

Disciplinary examination and judicial inquisition or investigation – considering the relationship between inquisition and the rise of empirical methods - Penal justice today is both inquisitorial and disciplinary.
Smile,
You’re on CCTV

Between 1960 and 1996, the proliferation of the closed circuit system resulted in UK government spending more than three-quarters of the total crime prevention budget on cameras surveillance in Brighton (May 1997).

Over the next few years, face and license plate recognition was installed in key positions in London. With the 7/7 bombings, the effectiveness of the CCTV system has come under scrutiny, with emerging reports showing little or no deterrence of overall crime in London.
Surveillance Nation

England, the most surveiled nation on Earth (although the Canada and US are catching up), and their web of surveillance cameras makes inhabitants feel like they are being watched, or more importantly it gives them the perception of being watched.

Photographic surveillance began in 1913 with the surreptitious taking of pictures from inmates in Holloway Prison. The first use on record of camera surveillance in public space was that of the Metropolitan Police at Trafalgar Square in 1960.

Britain’s Sunday Times found that people were caught on a network of 4.2 million (1 for every 14 people) CCTV cameras an average 300 times a day.
Omnipresent Surveillance

Public space is increasingly policed by hidden surveillance systems in the US from the sides of buildings, ATM machines, traffic lights, capturing our every move for observation by police officers and private security companies.

As video surveillance systems evolve and become more sophisticated, the opportunities for abuse are compounded. Sophisticated video systems can identify the faces of individuals, the objects they carry and their activities.
Self - Surveillance Nation

Video Analytics in the Home

Home Security Systems

“Nanny” Cam

Cell Phones

In-Car Cameras (Interior/Exterior)

Bio-metric Access
Modern Panopticon

Anti-terrorism, the new plague?

Panoptic Gaze

New York City has ambitions to create a 'ring of steel', similar to that surrounding London. It would surround 1.7 square miles of Lower Manhattan and cost $90 million. As of August 2007, the city had raised about $25 million.

City planners call the system to defend against future bombings, “fortress urbanism.”

Airport Security
Visibility is a Trap

Surveillance has been used to assure, or attempt to create, a sense of safety in urban environments. Together, surveillance and architecture explore the act of being constantly viewed by an invisible and unknown power makes one try to conform to the social norms expected.

You might say that we now live in a "Superpanopticon," a system of surveillance without walls, windows, towers, or guards." People with camera phones respond to events by photographing and texting live information across communication networks. The development of technology has changed into a whole new form of surveillance architecture.
Home of the Free?

Prison Populations per 100,000 (2007)

USA 762  
Cuba 531  
Russia 611  
Singapore 267  
New Zealand 185  
Australia 157  
UK 153  
Netherlands 128  
China 119  
Canada, Italy, South Korea, Turkey, France, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, Iceland, Syria, Afghanistan and India <108
Modern Incarceration in the US

Over 2 Million People Detained

$40 Billion Industry

$27k – 100k / person / year

Largely privatized towards Correction Corporations – effectively changed public facilities into private, contracted businesses shifting the purpose from maintaining for the public good (help, educate, rehabilitate) to largely profit / politically driven

2 / 3 reoffend within 3 years (recidivism) provide a steady stream of returning “clients”
“Jess goes to Jail”

South Side Regional Jail
Emporia, Virginia

100 Inmates

A Nation Under Guard
– Current TV Award Winning Documentary

Community Model in Corrections

Self Policing and positive reinforcement decreases recidivism by 45%

Reinforces the benefits of the Democratic process
Global & Domestic Surveillance

Satellite Technology

Google Earth – Free and Fee Based Services

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) - surveillance drones developed by the US Military – use low light and ultraviolet cameras to surveil from 60,000 feet

Some UAVs are categorized as “Hunter / Killers” complete with catchy names like the “Grim-Reaper” with not just surveillance technology but also armed with 4 Hellfire Missiles, 2 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, and 2 GBU 12 Paveway Laser-guided bombs (approx. 3,000 pounds of munitions)
Questions?

- Is it surprising that factories, schools, barracks, hospitals resemble, in plan, prisons? Why is architecture shifting away from this?

- If cameras are necessary on every corner, is there something fundamentally wrong in our society? Would getting rid of these cameras a good thing? Since 2005, San Francisco has spent $900k on 68 cameras… is this money well spent?

- Is surveillance of public / private / virtual space an invasion of personal privacy? Is having this information stored a small price to pay for the security benefits such surveillance offers?