

Presentation on Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Part 4 Chpt. 1 “Complete and Austere Institutions”

PHIL 449, Spring 2014

Started off talking about the wall in the West Bank

Separates Palestinians from Israelis but also Palestinians from Palestinians.

Pictures of Palestinians crammed into lines along the wall, to go to checkpoints, to stand in another line, to go another checkpoint, then finally to cross over.

Foucault says on p. 239: walls are terrible, but men are good; the warder is gentle and sympathetic

-- This is similar to how the Israelis talk about the wall: we don't like it, but it's a necessary evil; we really are nice people

the prison as expressing that crimes committed are injuries to the social body

p. 232: “the prison seems to express in concrete terms that idea that the offence has injured, beyond the victim, society as a whole”

With this statement, Foucault is doing four things:

1. Identifying the prison as a medium of expression—the prison as a medium through which ‘power’ can express and sustain itself.
2. Identifying the offence as an ‘injury,’ which is a theme he uses in many of his works. This makes the thing injured appear like a body, b/c bodies can be injured (inanimate objects cannot). In this case, it's the social body that is injured.
3. the “victim” is the person against whom the crime was committed
4. the “real victim”: the society in which the victim lives. Society can then exact punishment, in the form of the prison, which involves deprivation of liberty and transformation of the individual at the same time

-- so the prison is an expression of power over human bodies

-- the penalty it exacts is an “egalitarian” one—deprivation of liberty is the same for all, since our liberty is the same for all (232); it is also decided upon through a system with equal representation (231)

-- the society can now enact an injury on the body of the condemned person, one that is a deprivation of liberty

-- and this punishment seems “self-evident” because we appreciate egalitarianism and demand that it exist in the prison (232)

-- the prison also seems self-evident b/c it just reproduces the transformative, disciplinary mechanisms that exist elsewhere in society (233)

How this view of the prison fits with the Israeli/Palestinian conflict

-- the Palestinians squeezed together behind a wall—somewhat like a prison?

-- The body that is claimed to have been injured by the Palestinians is the Jewish body, even though the Palestinians have nothing to do with this injury

-- The Palestinian is to be transformed from a freedom fighter into someone more acceptable and docile

The prison and isolation, work, autonomy of the administration

Auburn model of the prison

Isolation of prisoners in the sense of no lateral communication: they can only speak to the guards, not to other inmates

-- This is supposed to be something the prisoners detest, so they won't come back after release

Philadelphia model

Isolation is for the purpose of self-reflection, developing a conscience, an inward mechanism

Both of these can be applied to the situation of Palestinians

They are isolated from other Palestinians, not just from Israelis

This isolation serves both of these functions (Christina: didn't catch how it serves the function of self-reflection, conscience)

Work as necessary in the prison, in order to make individuals better, as a means of transforming individuals

Warders in the prison autonomous: they determine the nature and length of the punishment

-- the warders have the power to be despotic, outside the rule of the law

-- this applies to Palestine too: what happens to Palestinians is ultimately in the hands of the Israeli army, which operates outside the law

Questions

1. Do you think that the quote on p. 232, noted above, sufficiently expresses all concepts in the chapter?
2. Can these ideas in the chapter be applied to all other colonial situations as I have applied them to the situation of the Palestinians?

Discussion

Question 1

Question 2

- Yes, it can be extended anywhere in the world, wherever there are ideas of the social body being injured by another group.
 - can be applied to Japanese internment camps, for example; these were talked about as if necessary b/c the Japanese were a threat to the state, and the state is portrayed as a body that can feel, that can be injured, even though it's not really a body.
- (Presenter) The body is a recurring theme in much Palestinian literature. My body belongs to a larger discourse of national liberation; it is used to communicate messages to the oppressor, to engage in action to escape the siege. The body no longer belongs just to the individual in a sense but to the wider cause; yet you're also able to attain liberation for yourself through such efforts.

Other

- The way power is talked about in this discussion is as if it's "held" by one group over another. Can we think of power as more depersonalized, as not possessed by one group or another group? Can we instead think of how identity itself develops as a result of power?
- Presenter: there is an important debate going on: did the current Palestinian identity exist before occupation, or was it developed only through and after the occupation? I believe that in its current

form, this identity is new. After the occupation, you become Palestinian because and insofar as you resist this occupation.

- Are the oppressed a body too? Could we say that acts of self-sacrifice can be inspirational for the body of the oppressed? Are Israelis trying to separate the oppressed group into individuals and thereby weaken it?
- (Presenter) Israelis call the Palestinians an “existential threat”; this could be referring to them as individuals or as a body.