

Foucault, DP, Part 3 Chapters 1 & 2
PHIL 449, S14

Part 3, Chapter 1: “Docile Bodies”

What is “discipline” as a technology of power?

- very structured, organized—it orders disorganized masses
- surveillance and discipline are joined; discipline is an eye looking at and judging and categorizing people
- constant, infiltrates everything; permanent hold over people—can’t really escape
- a “micro-physics” of power: it structures how we think, our conceptions; discipline changes us internally; we internalize what we are made to do by disciplines and then discipline ourselves; we see ourselves as being of a certain class
- p. 137-138 description of the disciplines: this, and the rest of the chapter reminded me of universities. Allowing both utility and strict subjection.
- we are taught to think that we must be useful, work is good (Weber: protestant ethic)
- leisure is now useful as a medicine so we can go out and work more: “fun is a medicinal bath” (Adorno & Horkheimer)

Disciplines are methods that “made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility” (137).

- Docility-utility: discipline makes the body “more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely” (138)

There is a focus on details: discipline involves supervision and control of “the smallest fragment of life and of the body” (140).

Different disciplinary techniques have different origins and purposes, e.g., in the schools, military, hospitals, factories (138)

- no single origin
- gradually became more prominent in various parts of the social body

Why did the prison become so prominent as a method of punishment? It’s due to the spread of disciplinary techniques (139); he argues further for why/how later in the text

Specific aspects of disciplinary techniques

1. What they do to space

a. cellular partitioning: “Each individual has his own place; and each place its individual” (143)

- to break up muddled masses, avoid dangerous collaborations, keep track of people; avoid contagion in hospitals

- this “individualizes bodies” (144, 146)

b. ranks: the partitioned spaces are hierarchized into ranks that individuals can move into and out of

- can be physical space, such as desks in classroom assigned to particular ranks (147)
- or “‘ideal’ compartments” (147), such as being placed at a certain level without this being translated to particular physical space

c. creation of *tableaux vivants* (living tables) of individuals to transform disordered masses into “ordered multiplicities” (148)

- somewhat like classification tables for botany, zoology (taxonomy)

d. this all allows for greater “obedience of individuals” (148) as well as generating knowledge about them (148)

2. What they do to bodily movements and time (optional reading)

a. partitioning and minute control of movements

- “The act is broken down into its elements; the position of the body, limbs, articulations is defined; to each movement are assigned a direction, an aptitude, a duration; their order of succession is prescribed” (152).

- see, e.g., the descriptions of marching & handwriting on pp. 151-152

b. using each moment as much as possible—not just avoiding wasting time, but getting as much out of each moment as you can

- “it is a question of extracting, from time, ever more available moments and, from each moment, ever more useful forces” (154).

c. divide up time into “evolutive,” progressive series in training people; graduated series of steps with examinations after each

- “arranging different stages, separated from one another by graded examinations; drawing up programmes, each of which must take place during a particular stage and which involves exercises of increasing difficulty; qualifying individuals according to the way in which they progress through these series” (159).

- MF calls the activities that the individual does in such stages “exercise”: “Exercise is that technique by which one imposes on the body tasks that are both repetitive and different, but always graduated” (161).

3. Composition of forces

a. finding ways to combine individuals to get as much utility from the whole as possible

- e.g., use more advanced students to help teach less advanced ones, so that “all the time of all the pupils was occupied either with teaching or with being taught” (165)

-- e.g., use labour of children and the aged in factories rather than having them be dependent on money from others (165)

b. requires that individuals respond immediately to signals for actions; these need to be brief and clear

-- e.g., bells, clapping of hands used in schools to attract attention of students, to tell them what to do (166-167)

c. tactics: the art of combining forces well to obtain efficiency: “the art of constructing, with located bodies, coded activities and trained aptitudes, mechanisms in which the product of the various forces is increased by their calculated combination” (167)

4. Disciplinary techniques allow for order and peace, through tactics that are related to the military

-- “It may be that war as a strategy is a continuation of politics”; but politics can also be conceived “as a continuation, if not exactly and directly of war, at least of the military model as a fundamental means of preventing civil disorder” (168).

-- it was through such “military and political tactics” that “the control of bodies and individual forces was exercised in states,” to achieve peace and order.

Part 3 Chapter 2: “The Means of Correct Training”

Hierarchical observation: surveillance

1. discipline “coerces by means of observation”: “the techniques that make it possible to see induce effects of power” (170-171)

-- visibility is a means for transforming conduct, as well as gaining knowledge: the point is “to provide a hold on [others’] conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them” (172).

2. power not held by any particular person; it’s in the mechanism itself

-- “disciplinary power” is a “multiple, automatic and anonymous power” (176); it functions through the network of those involved, in the supervisors and the supervised; the supervised themselves are also supervised

3. disciplinary power operates without recourse, “in principle at least, to excess, force or violence” (177)

-- b/c people will change their behaviour just by knowing they could be seen at any time

Normalizing judgment

Discipline operates through establishing & enforcing norms

a. What is a norm, and how does it differ from a “law”? (183-184)

- law focuses on acts, and divides acc. to permitted/forbidden
- norms are developed from gathering data, establishing means and distributions around them
- norms focus on individuals, and rank them along a scale of distance from a desired point

b. norms hierarchize individuals, and promote conformity

- a rule that functions as a norm “measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the ‘nature’ of individuals. It introduces ... the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved” (183).
- ranking people according to a norm is both a punishment and a reward, exercising “a constant pressure to conform to the same model” (182)

c. need to know individual differences to move towards homogeneity; thus, need a “knowledge of individuals” (181-182)

Examination (e.g., medical examinations of patients, examinations in schools, in military, in qualifying for certifications for work, etc.)

1. Links surveillance and normalizing judgment, and also knowledge and power

a. observation allows for knowledge of individuals: e.g., in schools, “The examination enabled the teacher, while transmitting his knowledge, to transform his pupils into a whole field of knowledge” (186).

b. this knowledge documented in writing: the examination engages individuals “in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them” (189)

c. the examination makes the individual a “case”

- the case is “the individual as he may be described, judged, measured, compared with others, in his very individuality; and it is also the individual who has to be trained or corrected, classified, normalized, excluded, etc.” (191).
- the examination pins down “each individual in his own particularity” (192)
- “the examination is at the centre of the procedures that constitute the individual as effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge” (192)

d. it also allows for collection of data about groups

- “the constitution of a comparative system that made possible the measurement of overall phenomena, the description of groups, the characterization of collective facts, the calculation of the gaps between individuals, their distribution in a given ‘population’” (190)

2. In “torture,” sovereign power is highly visible; in discipline, power is least visible and subjects themselves undergo a “compulsory visibility” (187)—through examination

Groups: Where/how do you see disciplinary power, surveillance, normalizing judgment, the examination, around you today?

-- And/or, do you have any questions/concerns about the reading for today that we could discuss on Thursday?