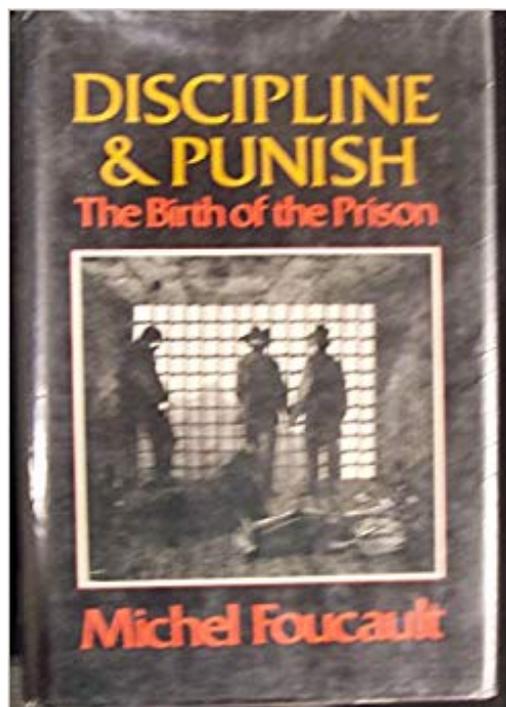


# Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison *by* Michel Foucault



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In the Middle Ages there were gaols and dungeons, but punishment was for the most part a spectacle. The economic changes and growing popular dissent of the 18th century made necessary a more systematic control over the individual members of society, and this in effect meant a change from punishment, which chastised the body, to reform, which touched the soul. Foucault shows the development of the Western system of prisons, police organizations, administrative and legal hierarchies for social control - and the growth of disciplinary society as a whole. He also reveals that between school, factories, barracks and hospitals all share a common organization, in which it is possible to control the use of an individual's time and space hour by hour.



## Reviews of the **Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison** *by* Michel Foucault

Dogrel

Having previously delved into other 20th century French "philosophes" such as Lacan and Derrida, and finding them pretentious and unreadable, I was for a long time reluctant to make the acquaintance of Foucault. While I continue to harbor doubts about the historical accuracy of this work, it is nonetheless a remarkable tour-de-force of the evolving role of punishment in society since the times of the French ancien régime. Its analysis of the relationship between schools, factories, and prisons remains remarkably relevant to an understanding of the manner in which human beings are surveilled, disciplined, and punished in modern western societies. It brings a necessary dose of realism to the misleading discourse on "freedom" and "values" that dominates public debate. While it is at times hard to take Foucault "literally", his good humor and energy make this work not only enlightening but entertaining.

Morlunn

The author describes in great detail the many steps that have been taken over many centuries by those in power to manipulate, control, terrify, quantify, observe, categorize and cajole humanity into manageable pigeonhole dwelling "units". It makes you want to immediately read Thoreau.

Tane

This translation isn't the best, the original English translation that was published alongside the original French version (from the late 70's) is much better, but quite rare and expensive.

Lahorns Gods

Foucault is a classic, must-read for any CJ/penology/criminology major. It is a little tedious, but nevertheless an important piece of literature that will help you gain insight into 1) the various forms and processes of punishment; and 2) how punishment has taken shape and evolved throughout history.

Bladebringer

"Barely two hundred and fifty years ago a man condemned of attempting to assassinate the King of France was drawn and quartered in a grisly spectacle that suggested an unmediated duel between the violence of the criminal and the violence of the state" (Book Jacket). When compared to the modern tactics of contemporary prison, we can begin to see that we have not merely experienced an evolution, but a fundamental restructuring of our system. What Foucault is able to accomplish in the space of 300 pages is remarkable. We journey from the Medieval power struggles to the knowledge of modern times; a knowledge that has compelled us to abandon this confrontation between offender and offended.

What used to generate latent feelings of power and resoluteness in the mass has undergone a definite process of banalization. In other words, the violent forces meeting in an ultimate showdown of wills has been removed in favor of a shameful and boring "isolationism" for convicts. We follow the different streams of thought and custom, traversing the classical age until we find that "power" ultimately culminated into a new principle of societal order: surveillance. Or as utilitarian reformer Bentham terms it, the "panopticon" (That which sees all). With no words wasted, the style can be rough going, especially as terminology is introduced in the early chapters. However, the last 70 or so pages roar with ferocity through modern ideas and rationalizations of discipline and imprisonment.

It is easy to understand how Foucault was hated by conservative rationalists and system apologists. The approach taken is essentially anarchistic, in the sense that Foucault offers no alternative system and that he does not criticize certain trajectories in favor of others. He is fundamentally opposed to the current civilization (and this extends even beyond his beginnings in the pre-classical systems) Despite this, strong willed readers will appreciate the complete absence of dogma or moralizing rhetoric. In this way, the work is beyond criticism, except perhaps that this kind of knowledge tends to paralyze readers from action.

Ultimately, a close read will provide an unimaginable amount of value. We are shown the themes of modernity as they existed in their nascent stages, without wading through the endless legal and

political details. Foucault is explicit that there are of course many other institutions that were ultimately governed by the same power/knowledge including hospitals and schools. I would encourage any active citizen to read this book as they make their way through their journey.

Ustamya

Nothing wrong with the seller, but this Edition is terrible. Wrongly done and very poor quality  
Cala

Got this book for an English class here at UC Berkeley, incarceration of the mind body and spirit and it was a great foundational work for exploring incarceration and the effects on the human soul class covered slavery, chinese and japanese internment and much more so this was invaluable for the course.

I am using this one as a reference book for a big writing project. Foucault is, of course, a powerful thinker and this translation truly does him justice in that regard. The narrative structure is also excellent, in the sense that it leads a reader through the history of incarceration and punishment (they are not the same; punishment is routinely added to the incarceration, which some experts consider adequate punishment because of the loss of freedom).

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