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Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. by Michel Foucault ; Alan Sheridan

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tics, related over time through time-series analyses to school expenditures, unemployment, gross national product, police-force size, and police and social security expenditures. Still another analysis tests social-psychological predictions on some small-scale surveys of various Canadian populations. These complex analyses are tedious and overwhelming, and although the author is able to extract meaning from the overall picture I have doubts. According to McDonald, "The results [of the international analyses] altogether were strongly supportive of twentieth-century conflict explanations. Social problem explanations of all kinds were almost routinely disconfirmed, which means disconfirmation of consensus theory very generally . . ." (p. 154). However, although the table of correlations relating to 20th-century conflict tests (table 5.7) presents 21 significant findings favoring the hypotheses out of 135 correlations, the table relating to the "disconfirmed" consensus theory (table 5.8) finds 16 significant favorable findings out of 60 correlations.

It is bootless to expand this type of criticism. The author has made a valiant effort, but the task is probably impossible. Not only must violence be done to the history of social thought in order to simplify to the extent necessary for these analyses, but more detail and validity must be demanded of official statistics than reasonable men can credit. The indexes used in the analyses suffer in various degrees from indirectness, incompleteness, and bias, and the very ingenious efforts of McDonald to overcome these problems are inadequate to their magnitude.

A further defect in this enterprise is that it seems firmly walled in by grand theory on the one side and by the computer on the other and rarely makes reference to the proliferation of middle-range theory and studies grounded in field research which to my eyes typify the best thinking in contemporary criminology. Work that dwells on writers on the order of, for example, Bonger, Pound, and Sorokin, to take only "moderns," and ignores the work of Zimring, Andenaes, and Gibbs must ultimately be regarded as intellectually narrow and provincial.

Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. By Michel Foucault. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978. Pp. 333. \$10.95.

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Prisons, according to Michel Foucault, cannot be separated from the societies they serve: they are symbols of the present order of society and as such assume a greater significance than has previously been acknowledged by most participants in the current prison debate.

Discipline and Punish maintains that the prison has changed the nature and form of punishment. Punishment is no longer characterized by the physical tortures of corporal punishment; instead, the incarcerated offender

is handled in a less brutal though equally debilitating manner. The penalties currently imposed on prisoners control not just their bodies, as was true of the tortures of earlier centuries, but the totality of their lives. This total regimentation of the daily activities of the offender, characteristic of contemporary prison life, epitomizes the form of social control exercised by today's disciplinary society.

Foucault states that the modern disciplinary society emerged at the close of the 18th century with the introduction of the first modern prison—the Walnut Street jail in Philadelphia. Paradoxically, he claims that the prison set the pattern for other social institutions. The form of institutional dominance imposed by the prison has been copied by schools, hospitals, and factories, and the type of routinized control it maintains has thus become symbolic of the entire disciplinary society. With the prison serving as prototype, modern society has acquired symbolic and actual control over the totality of the lives of its members through supervision of their daily activities in all major societal institutions. The pervasive surveillance of the details of everyday life has superseded raw physical brutality as the principal means of social control.

Despite the logical consistency of Foucault's arguments, he overstates the disciplinary role of the prison in modern society when he writes, "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?" (p. 228) Prisons control only a small uninfluential sector of the population; therefore, it is hard to accept a central thesis of *Discipline and Punish* that the prison provides the model for all other institutions of the disciplinary society. A more tenable thesis than the one presented by Foucault is that all social institutions stem from the same concept of discipline or dominance that characterizes modern society.

Discipline and Punish states that penal institutions, apart from their symbolic importance, have the expressed goal of reducing crime through the imposition of defined sentences. But prisons neither administer finite penalties nor curtail criminality: according to Foucault, their failure on both accounts is intentional. Because prisons produce crime, surveillance of the offender in the community after completion of the prison sentence becomes necessary, thereby making sentences indefinite. The disciplinary society, however, does not restrict its community surveillance to the former prisoner but encompasses all members of society. As a result, the prison, negating its intended purpose, serves the larger aims of the disciplinary society by legitimating the control and repression of all individuals both within and outside the prison structure.

Foucault argues that the prison demonstrates the utility of total institutional domination over the individual. He views the penal institution as static, exercising an ever-constant level of control over its prison population. This argument can be made legitimately on a symbolic level, but it loses some of its validity when the actual contemporary prison is examined. Penal institutions no longer regiment the offender to the extent that the author suggests, and absolute control is no longer exercised over every waking hour.

Gresham Sykes, in *Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security*

Prison (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), analyzes the attempts made by the prison staff to achieve total power over the inmate population, a struggle that frequently fails. Although society views the maximum-security prison as the ultimate means of controlling criminal deviance, the prison fails to consolidate its control because the population is unwilling and the rulers are defective. The inherent instability of the prison population, never fully controlled by the staff, results in a norm of controlled deviance within the institutional setting.

Gresham Sykes's *Society of Captives* weakens Foucault's argument by demonstrating the inability of the administration in a maximum-security prison to maintain total control over the inmate population. By dealing with the prison on both the symbolic and literal levels, Foucault dilutes his argument for the preeminence of prison as the crucial control mechanism of disciplinary society.

Regrettably, the frequent criticism of ethnocentrism made against American scholars also applies to this illuminating work on the origin of the prison. Foucault uses French literature in his analysis, and the foreign material cited consists almost entirely of the penological and legal arguments of Thorsten Sellin and Sir Leon Radzinowicz. While much of Foucault's substantive analysis focuses on the prison as a total institution, he ignores the sociological and historical studies of David Rothman and Erving Goffman.

Rothman, in *The Discovery of the Asylum* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), analyzes the emergence of the prison in the context of industrial society and the relationship between the prison and earlier forms of punishment. For Rothman, as for Foucault, the prison emerged as a result of societal evolution and changing attitudes toward the criminal population. Goffman's *Asylums* (Chicago: Aldine, 1961) examines the similarities of contemporary total institutions. Even though the prison is not the particular total institution chosen by Goffman for analysis, his observations on the effects of institutional domination on the individual are also applicable to prisons.

The analyses of Rothman and Goffman are central to Foucault's arguments on the role of prison in society, but *Discipline and Punish* neither incorporates nor transcends their arguments. When examined in the context of these earlier studies, *Discipline and Punish* loses some of its novelty and applicability. Foucault could have placed his analysis of the prison in a broader social perspective if he had incorporated the ideas of Rothman and Goffman on the relationship between man and modern institutions.

Foucault's work, though not equally convincing on all analytical levels, transcends traditional academic boundaries to provide a provocative examination of the relationship between prison and the mechanisms of social control in contemporary society. *Discipline and Punish* broadens the understanding of all scholars interested in both the nature of prison and the philosophy of punishment.