

**Read *Discipline and Punish*, “Docile Bodies,” and “The means of correct training” (pp. 135-194 in most editions)**

We skip sections of the book in which Foucault parses, in much more detail, his general thesis about the function of punishment and the move from sovereign to disciplinary power. At the end of the part we skipped he announces his problem: “how did the coercive, corporal, solitary, secret model of power to punish replace the representative, scenic, signifying, public, collective model? Why did the physical exercise of punishment (which is not torture) replace, with the prison that is its institutional support, the social play of the signs of punishment and the prolix [lengthy, excessive] festival that circulated them?”

**“Docile Bodies”**

1. What is “docility,” and what is a “docile body”? What is a “discipline” and how does it relate to a docile body?
2. “Discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in **space**. To achieve this end, it employs several techniques” [141]. What are they (Foucault makes it easy by numbering them 1-4)?
3. Discipline also controls **activity** in five ways. What are they?
4. “The disciplines...must also be understood as machinery for adding up and capitalizing **time**. This was done in four ways...” [157]. What are they?
5. Discipline also **aggregates forces** “to obtain an efficient machine” [164]. How?

**“The means of correct training”**

In “The means of correct training,” Foucault identifies three techniques by which discipline “makes” individuals: **hierarchical observation** [170-177], **normalizing judgment** [177-184], and **the examination** [184-192].

1. “Discipline makes possible the operation of a relational power that sustains itself by its own mechanism and which, for the spectacle of public events, substitutes the uninterrupted play of calculated gazes. Thanks to the technique of surveillance, the ‘physics’ of power, the hold over the body, operate according to the laws of optics and mechanics, according to a whole play of spaces, lines, screens, beams, degrees and without recourse, in principle at least, to excess, force or violence.” [177]

How does Foucault reach this conclusion about hierarchical observation? Note the importance of architecture and the way it structures gazes. Can you think of a contemporary example of hierarchical observation that confirms (or disconfirms) Foucault’s analysis?

2. “In short, the art of punishing, in the regime of disciplinary power, is aimed neither at expiation, nor even precisely at repression...The perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every

instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*.” [182-3]

How precisely does disciplinary punishment function, according to Foucault? In what sense is disciplinary punishment opposed to judicial penalty? What is the relationship between normalization and the individual as Foucault presents it here? Can you think of contemporary practices that normalize, in his sense?

3. “Finally, 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. It is the examination which... assures the great disciplinary functions of distribution and classification, maximum extraction of forces and time, continuous genetic accumulation, optimum combination of aptitudes and, thereby, the fabrication of cellular, organic, genetic and combinatory individuality.” [192]

What exactly counts as an “examination” for Foucault? What does being examined do to create the kind of subject he sees emerging from the practices of discipline? Are there contemporary contexts in which being made a “case” also constitutes one’s subjectivity?

### **Questions to ponder:**

What would happen if we entirely abandoned punishment, whether in the criminal justice system, in schools and prisons, or in our everyday interactions?

At the end of all this, what does the “individual” whose emergence Foucault is accounting for look like? Do you agree with Foucault that this is how individuals come into existence? What other sort of individual and what other mechanism of emergence might we posit here? In other words, what philosophical traditions is Foucault writing against? What objections or doubts do you have about the model he is developing?

It is key to disciplinary power that it functions on (and through) bodies. What is the lived experience of being a docile body? Given that schools, the army, even prisons are now organized differently than they were in the historical examples Foucault provides, do you think that we are still subject to disciplinary power in this same, embodied sense?

Foucault describes, in great detail, a host of techniques in *Discipline and Punish*. Do you have any sense of whether he thinks that disciplinary power is a bad thing? A good thing? What do you think?