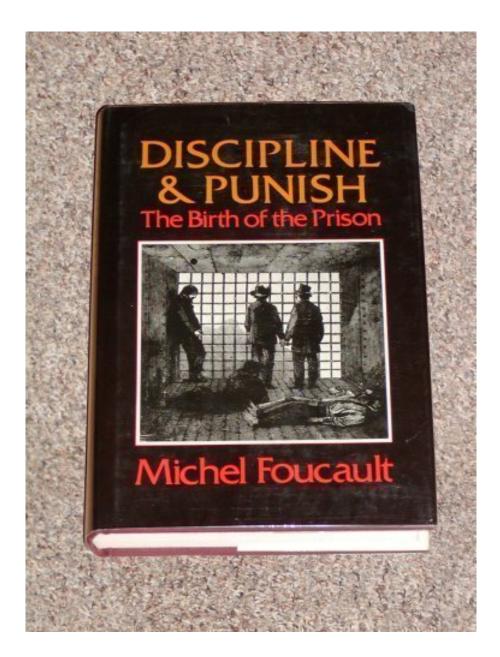


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Language Notes Text: English, French (translation)

About the Author

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) was a French philosopher, historian, social theorist, and philologist. One of the leading intellectuals of the twentieth century and the most prominent thinker in postwar France, his work influenced disciplines as diverse as history, sociology, philosophy, sociology, and literary criticism.

One of AudioFile magazine's Golden Voices, Simon Prebble has received over twenty Earphones Awards and five Listen-Up Awards, and he has been a finalist fourteen times for an Audie Award. In 2006, Publishers Weekly named him Narrator of the Year, and he was named Booklist's 2010 Voice of Choice.

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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. This groundbreaking book by Michel Foucault, the most influential philosopher since Sartre, compels us to reevaluate our assumptions about all the ensuing reforms in the penal institutions of the West. For as Foucault examines innovations that range from the abolition of torture to the institution of forced labor and the appearance of the modern penitentiary, he suggests that punishment has shifted its focus from the prisoner's body to his soul-and that our very concern with rehabilitation encourages and refines criminal activity. Lucidly reasoned and deftly marshaling a vast body of research, Discipline and Punish is a genuinely revolutionary book, whose implications extend beyond the prison to the minute power relations of our society.

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By Sheila

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.

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The Birth Of Modern Times

By N. Allen

"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.

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