A power without an exterior

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In *Surveiller et punir* Michel Foucault described an initial stage in the grouping of norms in the modern sense of the term as *disciplines*. He demonstrated how they extended progressively in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and how they spread across the whole ensemble of the social body, 'the formation of what one might in general terms call the disciplinary society'.[1]

This diffusion came about by means of three principal modalities. The first, and probably the most important, is to be found in what Foucault calls the functional inversion of disciplines:

> Originally they were required to neutralise dangers, to keep useless or agitated populations in their place and to avoid the problems caused by assemblies of too great a number; from then on, though, since they became capable of so doing, they were required to play a positive role, increasing the potential utility of individuals.[2]

We see, then, a movement from discipline as a blockade given completely to negative functions like stopping evil, breaking communications, suspending time, to discipline as mechanism.

The second modality:

> The emigration of disciplinary mechanisms. Whilst disciplinary establishments multiply, their mechanisms have a certain tendency to become de-institutionalised, to step outside closed fortresses and to circulate in a 'free' state; massive and compact disciplines decompose into supple processes of control, which can be transferred and adapted.[3]

Disciplines are no longer the prerogative of certain institutions which are 'closed, established within boundaries', and every institution becomes capable of using the disciplinary schema. Disciplines become ubiquitous and liberated, no longer addressing only someone who is to be punished or a particular evil

which one wishes to contain; they are placed at the service of the good, the good of all, of all socially useful production. Disciplines are addressed to all people, without distinction. 'Finally, the mechanisms of discipline are established as means of state control'[4] by means of the organisation of a centralised police force whose task is to exercise a 'permanent, exhaustive and omnipresent surveillance capable of making everything visible'.[5] Hence the conclusion which constitutes one of the major themes in *Surveiller et punir*: not only did the generalisation of the schema and the technologies of discipline make prison possible, but in itself it presented to modern society its true picture of itself: 'Why should we be surprised if prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, and hospitals, all of which resemble prisons?'[6]

Foucault did not mean by this that 'disciplinary society' was a society of generalised confinement. Probably he meant the opposite. In fact the diffusion of disciplines demonstrates that their techniques are alien to the principle of confinement or, more exactly, that with disciplines confinement is no longer of a segregational nature. What makes society, as it were, disciplinary is precisely the fact that disciplines do not create partitions. On the contrary, their diffusion, far from dividing or compartmentalising, homogenises social space. The important element in the disciplinary society is the idea of society: the disciplines create the society; they create a sort of common language between all sorts of institutions, making it possible for one to be translated into another.

Prison does not escape from this: the disciplinary element is what makes prison the exclusive instrument of the administration of punishment, and it does so without alienating the social element. This is how prison can claim to re-educate the criminal and see as its end product the socialisation of the offender. Because the juridical apportionment in the deprivation of liberty no longer designates a share in the real. It is a 'false' apportionment, an artificial apportionment which no longer involves anything either on the side of the mechanisms of power, or on the side of the objectivation of the criminal. What characterises prison is the fact that the juridical aspect is of a purely surface nature and has no function in the substance of what goes on. It should not be allowed to mask the fact which, for Foucault, characterises the modern age: the fact of the redundancy of the disciplinary, of the great disciplinary continuum. Disciplinary society is a society of absolute communication: the diffusion of disciplines makes it possible for everything to communicate with everything else according to an interplay of redundant elements and infinite homologies.

The norm, or the normative, is at the same time that which makes possible the transformation from discipline as blockade into discipline as mechanism, the matrix which transforms the negative into the positive, and is to make possible the generalisation of the disciplinary as that which is instituted as a result of this transformation. The norm is precisely that by means of which and

through which society, when it becomes a disciplinary society, communicates with itself. The norm links disciplinary institutions of production, of knowledge [*savoir*], wealth and finance and makes them *interdisciplinary*, homogenising social space even if it does not unify it.

Foucault describes three major disciplinary instruments: hierarchic surveillance, normalising sanctions, and examination.[7] It is perhaps less a question of three instruments than of three uses of the same technology which lies at the basis of the norm. In a certain way one is not dealing with instruments aiming to resolve the traditional problems of power: ordering multiple elements, linking the whole with its parts, placing them in relationship one with another. The normative puts forward a particular solution to this old problem: we have already seen that this composition operates according to a principle of production (and not of repression) – producing, raising value, intensifying rather than constraining, forbidding, stopping; but also this ordering occurs according to the logic of *individualisation*. Foucault continally returns to this point: discipline 'manufactures' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power which takes individuals at one and the same time as objects and as the instruments by means of which it is exercised.[8] But this axis of individualisation is not and cannot be the only one: the norm is at the same time the link, the principle of unity – of communication – between these individualities. The norm is the reference which is instituted when the group finds itself objectivised in the form of the individual. The norm is at the centre of a form of communication without origin and without subject.

The normative schema rests on the whole economy of *visibility*.

> The exercise of discipline supposes an apparatus which constrains by means of the interplay of perception [*regard*]; an apparatus where the techniques which make it possible to see produce the effects of power, and where in return the means of coercion make clearly visible those to whom they are applied.[9]

Normative disciplines principally mobilise space and architecture. We need to try to find out why it should be that the norm implies such a use of *architecture*, stones and walls. The importance of architecture comes from the fact that it takes the place of the king. In normative space architecture is no longer – or is no longer exclusively – the expression of power. It takes its place. It moves to the centre. It *is* the power itself. Architecture is the instrument, the technique, the apparatus by means of which, in the absence of a sovereign, and correlative to the individualisation of the subjects, there exists the possibility of an *objectivity* in the self's judgement of the self; by means of which this objectivity – the principle of communication, the value of values, meaning of meaning – could be constituted by means of a mechanism of self-reference. Architecture makes it possible for the objectivity of a judgement of the self on the self to be without external reference, just a judgement of self by self.

In fact, 'examination – disciplines – inverts economy and visibility into the exercise of power'.[10] This inversion designates practically a double process. First the institution of a one-dimensional space of visibility, where the axis of verticality – up and down – disappears, leaving purely horizontal vision; next, and as a result of this, comes the institution of lateral and relative visibility. That is to say, in disciplinary or normative space there is nothing to take the place of the sovereign. Perception [*regard*] itself becomes invisible: 'Disciplinary power is exercised by making things invisible; on the other hand, it imposes on those whom it subjugates a principle of obligatory visibility.'[11] Visibility is no longer the visible origin which can be situated; for it has no source other than those whom it makes visible, thus visible to themselves.

In the pre-disciplinary (pre-normative) order, the sovereign organises – for example, in the ceremony of torture and capital punishment – the sumptuous spectacle of his own presence. 'Until then the role of political ceremony had been to provide for the presentation, at the same time excessive and ordered, of power; it was a sumptuary expression of power, an expenditure which was at the same time exaggerated and codified and from which power drew its vigour,' Foucault[12] says; and by way of synthesis:

> Traditionally power is that which is seen, that which shows itself, that which makes its presence felt, and, paradoxically, that which reveals the principle of its strength in the movement by means of which it deploys that strength. Those on whom it is exercised can remain in the shade; they receive light only from that part of power which is conceded to them, or from the reflection of it which, for a moment, they might bear.[13]

We should be clear about the function of this presentation: it reminds people of their place, and gives everyone their identity. The individuality of power is maximal, to the extent that it is on the basis of its unity, its identity, that each individual is able to perceive his own identity.

With disciplines, according to the logic of the norm – 'the reversal of the political axis of individualisation'[14] – the shade becomes the light. 'In discipline, it is the subjects who are there to be seen. This light ensures the control of the power exercised over them.'[15] Each individual is to be objectivised according to an infinite principle of individualisation. Each individual becomes *a case*. Therefore each is always different, different from the other (and from himself). How can this individualisation operate, this individualisation of the normative?

The answer is that it occurs according to a purely lateral and relative logic. Normative individualisation comes about without any reference to any nature or essence in subjects. It does not have the form of a specification: it does not aim to reveal qualities that the individual might himself possess and which could thus be seen as characteristics of his type or of his nature. Disciplinary individualisation occurs without the supposition of any knowledge [*savoir*]. It

is an individualisation which is positive and without metaphysics, an individualisation which is substanceless, rather like the way, in the system of language, in which the opposition between signifiers can never be traced back only to differences, unless one can fall back on the notion of the signified having a substance. It is a pure relationship. It is a relationship without support. Normative individualisation is itself also diacritical, lateral and relative.[16] It is purely comparative. Meaning is created only by spaces within it (rather than *exploits*).[17] Disciplines individualise and never cease from so doing; yet this individualisation does not occur by means of categories, only on the interior of categories. Always present and always starting afresh, it makes appeal to no knowledge exterior to that which it makes visible. Hidden worlds, the internal and secrets are finished with. The age is one of purely positive forms of knowledge [*savoirs*]. Normative knowledge [*savoir*] appeals to nothing exterior to that which it works on, that which it makes visible. What precisely is the norm? It is the measure which simultaneously individualises, makes ceaseless individualisation possible and creates comparability. The norm makes it possible to locate spaces, indefinitely, which become more and more discrete, minute, and at the same time makes sure that these spaces never enclose anyone in such a way as to create a nature for them, since these individualising spaces are never anything more than the expression of a relationship, of a relationship which has to been seen indefinitely in the context of others. What is a norm? A principle of comparison, of comparability, a common measure, which is instituted in the pure reference of one group to itself, when the group has no relationship other than to itself, without external reference and without verticality.

From the analysis which Foucault carries out in *Surveiller et punir*, two other characteristics of the norm, or the normative, can be deduced. First of all, normative individualisation is not exterior. The abnormal does not have a nature which is different from that of the normal. The norm, or normative space, knows no outside. The norm integrates anything which might attempt to go beyond it – nothing, nobody, whatever difference it might display, can ever claim to be exterior, or claim to possess an otherness which would actually make it other. Georges Canguilhem demonstrated this in the context of his analysis of monsters; when one thinks in terms of norms, the anomaly is not abnormal. It does not bear witness to a difference which would be seen as so strong that partitions would have to be seen in nature; the difference manifests a possibility. Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire said: 'There is no exception to the laws of nature, there are exceptions to the laws of naturalists.' It is not the exception that proves the rule. Rather, the exception is within the rule.

Therefore the line from the abnormal to the normal is not a definite one. It cannot be traced back to anything in nature. The abnormal is the norm: both the giant and the dwarf, the idiot and the genius. But this does not mean to say

that, in normative space, there is no possible division, that there is no place for a process of valuing. The practices of the norm are not relativistic. The normal is opposed to the abnormal. But this division is of a special kind: it is formulated in terms of thresholds and boundaries. It is precisely a problem of knowing how to effect the division between the normal and the abnormal. It must be understood, though, that it can never express a law in nature; it can only formulate a pure relationship between the self and the group.

Hence the implication concerning the treatment of the *abnormal*. As Foucault writes: 'To punish is to exercise'.[18] Disciplines do not act by means of segregation but through intensification. In a disciplinary society – and this is its principle– the treatment of those who have been declared to be criminals is no different from that which applied to the good citizen. 'Disciplinary punishment is, for a large part at least, an isomorph of obligation itself; it is less the vengeance of the contravened law than its repetition, its redoubled insistence.'[19] Also, if prison constitutes a disciplinary space, this is not because it is founded on the *juridical* deprivation of liberty but because within its confines the means by which normal individuals are manufactured are repeated and insisted upon. When the disciplines become normative, the disciplinary institutions become isomorphs of one another. When the whole society becomes normative, each institution – armed forces, school, workshop, prison – becomes redundant in its relationship to the others.

'Norm' should not be confused with 'discipline'. Disciplines target bodies, with a function of training them; the norm is a measure, a means by which the common measure is produced. It is at the same time that which makes things comparable and that which individualises them: a principle of visibility, resulting from the pure mechanism of the group's reflection on itself. Disciplines are not necessarily normative. What characterised modernity, according to Foucault, was the advent of a normative age: the normalisation of disciplines, the movement from discipline as blockade to discipline as mechanism, and correlatively the formation of a disciplinary society, which is characterised not by confinement, even if one continues to use the procedure, but rather by the constitution of a *space*: supple, interchangeable, without segregation, indefinitely redundant and without exterior.

NOTES

1. *Surveiller et punir*, Paris: Gallimard, 1975, p. 211.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
7. *Ibid.*, Part III, Chapter II, 'Les moyens du bon dressement', pp. 172 ff.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 192, 195.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
19. *Ibid.*