

*Discipline and Punish: The translation of the absent or  
the comment to be translated*

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This comment text brings, at the end, a part of *Surveiller et Punir* (Discipline and Punish), which has not been translated into Portuguese and does not appear in more than 40 editions of the Brazilian translation. It is on the back cover of the original in French, as if it were an afterword, signed by the author himself, Michel Foucault, which more than 40 years ago published by Editions Gallimard, his first copies in February 1975. Two years later, the Brazilian version was published, but without this part which contains the reflection that Foucault invites us to think about at the end of his work: “Can the genealogy of modern morality be drawn from a political history of bodies?” (Foucault, 1975, p. 318, my translation). In addition to this absence, in the text in Portuguese, we have to think about why Foucault chose to put it in the final part of the book?

This is a question that may help us to better understand this work, as we seek to update it, in our present, in a genealogical gesture that ventures into its microphysics of power, whose writing is continually made in a historical discontinuity. This can be seen in the speeches about the work. They have in their order, like any other speech, the procedure of commentary, whose “unlevel between text first and text second plays two roles that are solitary” (Foucault, 1996, p. 24), allowing “saying for the first time what, however, had already been said and tirelessly repeating what, however, had never been said.” (Foucault, 1996, p. 25). In this case, “the indefinite repetition of comments is worked from the inside by the dream of a disguised repetition: in its horizon there is perhaps nothing more than what was already in its starting point, the simple recitation.” (Foucault, 1996, p. 25).

Since then, since the publication of the first edition in Portuguese, in Brazil, we have noticed how much these last words by Foucault are missing for Brazilians, readers of *Discipline and Punish* by the restless professor at the Collège de France who considered himself an anti-

fice (pyrotechnician). What would be the reasons for this absence resulting from a translation choice, more indebted than any other? Forgetfulness? Censorship or self-censorship? Effects of the power of the Military Dictatorship of Brazil that controlled what could be known?

There is, in this silence, a sea of voices silenced by this lack, perhaps unnoticed by those who preferred to read directly in Foucault's language, but harmful for those who do not master it. And how this number has increased in recent years because of the absence of French as a school subject in Brazil, especially in official teaching establishments, and even in the Rio Branco Institute, which still forms the diplomatic corps of Brazil.

But perhaps this harmful lack was alleviated with the publication of *A Verdade e As Formas Jurídicas*,<sup>1</sup> a work composed of five lectures given by Foucault and a roundtable at the PUC in Rio de Janeiro in 1973. Some people say that it emerged from these discussions. In Brazil, much of what Foucault wrote in *Discipline and Punish*. However, his motivation for carrying out this undertaking would perhaps have arisen “on the occasion of a press conference of the lawyers of the Maoist militants, who were on hunger strike to obtain the status of political prisoners, Foucault announces the creation of the Information Group on Prisons (GIP), to which he gives his domicile as headquarters” (Defert, 1999, p. 33). It is interesting to note that, in the American editions, the first being from 1978, this part is also missing. In the Spanish version, published in 1976, by the publisher *Siglo XXI*, it appears on the back cover, but not in its entirety, as in the text in French. The last paragraph of text is missing. There is in this absence something that “puts power and desire into play” (Foucault, 1996, p.21) that we need to disarm, or perhaps even threaten to better know it.

## The absent in translation

Perhaps we are ashamed of our arrests today. The 19th century prided itself on the fortresses it built along the borders and sometimes in the heart of cities. He was enchanted by this sweet novelty that replaced the scaffolds. He marveled at not punishing bodies anymore, and now knowing how to correct souls. Its walls, its locks, its cells represent a whole social orthopedic enterprise. Those who steal are imprisoned, those who rape are imprisoned; those who kill, alike. Where does this strange practice come from and the curious project of imprisoning to correct, which include, with them, the Penal Codes of the modern age? An old heritage from the Middle Ages dungeons? Rather, a new technology: perfected, from the 16th to the 19th century, of a whole set of procedures for framing, controlling, measuring, training individuals; making them, at times, “docile and useful”. Surveillance, exercises, maneuvers,

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<sup>1</sup>In French : *La vérité et les formes juridiques*. Lectures by Michel Foucault at PUC-Rio from 21 to 25 May 1973).

notions, ranks and places, classification, examinations, records, a whole way of subjecting bodies, of mastering human multiplicities and of manipulating their forces, developed over the classical centuries, in hospitals, in the army, in schools, colleges or workshops: discipline. The eighteenth century, no doubt, invented liberties; but it gave it a deep and solid subsoil, the disciplinary society from which we belong. Prison is in the formation of this surveillance society.

The modern penalty no longer dares to say that it punished crimes; she intends to rehabilitate offenders. That's why, quickly, in two centuries, it became a neighbor and cousin of the "human sciences". It's your haughtiness, your way, in any case you don't to be ashamed of herself: "maybe I'm still not quite right; be patient, see how I am becoming wise". But how could psychology, psychiatry, criminology justify today's justice, since their history shows the same political technology, at the point where they form with each other? Under the knowledge of men and under the humanization of punishments there is a certain disciplinary investment of bodies, a mixed form of subjection and objectification, the same "power-knowing". Can the genealogy of modern morality be drawn from a political history of bodies? M.F.

#### *Portuguese version*

Talvez tenhamos vergonha de nossas prisões hoje. O século XIX orgulha-se das fortalezas que construiu nos limites e, por vezes, no coração das cidades. Encantava-se com essa doce novidade que substituiu os cadafalsos. Maravilhava-se por não punir mais corpos e agora saber como corrigir almas. Suas paredes, suas fechaduras, suas células representam todo um empreendimento social ortopédico. Aqueles que roubam são presos, aqueles que estupram são aprisionados; aqueles que matam, igualmente. De onde vem essa estranha prática e o curioso projeto de aprisionar para corrigir, que inclui, com eles, os Códigos Penais da época moderna? Uma velha herança das masmorras da Idade Média? Antes, uma nova tecnologia: aperfeiçoada, do século XVI ao XIX, de todo um conjunto de procedimentos para enquadrar, controlar, medir, adestrar os indivíduos; tornando-os, às vezes, "dóceis e úteis". Vigilância, exercícios, manobras, noções, patentes e lugares, classificações, exames, registros, toda uma forma de assujeitar os corpos, de dominar as multiplicidades humanas e de manipular suas forças, desenvolvida ao longo dos séculos clássicos, nos hospitais, no exército, nas escolas, faculdades ou oficinas: disciplina. O século XVIII, sem dúvida, inventou as liberdades; mas deu-lhe um subsolo profundo e sólido, a sociedade disciplinar da qual pertencemos. A prisão está na formação dessa sociedade de vigilância.

A penalidade moderna não ousa mais dizer que puniu crimes; ela pretende reabilitar delinquentes. Por isso, rapidamente, em dois séculos, ela tornou-se vizinha e prima das "ciências humanas". É a sua altivez, a sua maneira, em todo caso de não se envergonhar de si mesma: "talvez eu ainda não esteja completamente certo; tenha paciente, veja como estou me tornando

sábio”. Mas como a psicologia, a psiquiatria, a criminologia poderiam justificar a justiça de hoje, já a história delas mostra a mesma tecnologia política, no ponto em que se afirmam umas com as outras? Sob o conhecimento dos homens e sob a humanização dos castigos há um certo investimento disciplinar dos corpos, uma forma mista de assujeitamento e objetivação, o mesmo “saber-poder”. Pode-se fazer a genealogia da moral moderna a partir de uma história política dos corpos? M.F.

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