

The 4S of Foucault Amid the Pandemic

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Abstract

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, issues and crises arise from the quarantine and/or lockdown policy prompting the United Nations to note the Philippines' "highly militarized response". In this regard, this paper discusses Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* citing its "the segmented space", "the surveillance", "the syndic", and "the supplice" (henceforth, 4S), and at the same time, weighs the pros and cons constituted from the concrete condition of the citizens. Given the foregoing discourse, this paper sees the relevance of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, maintaining that forty-five years after its publication it can still expound on the logic and context to place communities under quarantine and/or lockdown. Wherefore, the COVID-19 pandemic gives credence to Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* vis-a-vis the philosophical, political, and social discourse that the society is facing.

Keywords: COVID-19, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, the segmented space, the surveillance, the syndic, and the supplice

Introduction

“A 38-year-old woman from Wuhan, China, who arrived in the Philippines on January 21 had reportedly traveled to Cebu and Dumaguete City, became the first confirmed case of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in the country,” Mitchelle Palaubsanon of *The Freeman* reported on 31 January 2020.¹ “DOH assures health facilities are equipped and prepared to receive and care for patients under investigation (PUIs) and confirmed 2019-nCoV cases,” the Secretary of the Department of Health (DOH) guaranteed the public against the virus.² Consequently, a mandatory quarantine of 14 days was implemented to passengers from China arriving in Cebu. On 12 March 2020, President Rodrigo Duterte announced quarantine measures cutting off all forms of domestic transportation to and from Metro Manila including mass gatherings and closure of schools for a month. But the president, wittingly or not, called this precaution a “lockdown”. “Duterte’s lockdown of Manila is ‘a mockery’, as millions of commuters to be allowed in”, *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) headlined a report on the evening of 13 March 2020.³ SCMP quoted Anthony Leachon, former president of the Philippine College of Physicians, in his comment to the many exemptions made during the quarantine and/or lockdown.

The measure would be “half-baked” and “defeat the purpose of a lockdown...to be successful it needed to be “all or nothing”. Truly, it’s a mockery of community quarantine concept... I think President Rodrigo Duterte has the intention for a total lockdown but his cabinet

¹ Mitchelle Palaubsanon, “Virus reaches Ph”, News in *The Freeman*, 2020 January 31, 1-2.

² Ibid.

³ Raissa Robles, “Coronavirus: Duterte’s lockdown of Manila is ‘a mockery’, as millions of commuters to be allowed in”, *South China Morning Post*, 2020 March 13. Available at <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3075163/coronavirus-dutertes-lockdown-manila-mockery-millions-commuters>

secretaries are not ready [and they] yielded to the complaints of the public.⁴

The precaution met complaints as it was not clear yet on its measures and policies. The public pressured the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) to release specific guidelines. Failing to present a cohesive plan, clear policies, competent leadership, and concretion of provisions are among the many things the public demanded from both the national and local governments. In a press conference with Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez and Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles, SCMP noted that “it appeared that not all restrictions were set in stone”, especially on foreigners entering the country.⁵ The two secretaries clarified the precautions as “community quarantine” and not a “lockdown” as said by the president.⁶ “Coronavirus lockdown strikes fear among Manila’s poor; unprecedented move threatens livelihoods and health of millions of Metro Manila residents living below the poverty line”, Aljazeera headlined on 14 March 2020.⁷ Aljazeera quoted Dr. Joshua San Pedro, co-convener of the Coalition for People’s Right to Health.

But authorities have not revealed provisions for financial assistance and healthcare subsidies, leaving impoverished neighborhoods like San Roque (in Quezon City), home to around 6,000 families, in a state of ‘confusion and panic’; it seemed mostly like a military and police solution rather than a health intervention. Patients must be monitored, not by oppressive measures but by encouraging their participation in their right to health.⁸

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Nick Aspinwall, “Coronavirus lockdown strike fear among Manila’s poor”, *Aljazeera News Philippines*, 2020 March 14. Available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/coronavirus-lockdown-strikes-fear-manila-poor-200313133102404.html>

⁸ Ibid.

Aljazeera reported that on 13 March 2020 "water had been cut in parts of the community" and noted that "there is a severe shortage of COVID-19 tests in the Philippines and the country's health workers are overburdened... health department's budget was cut by 10 billion Philippine pesos (\$195.8m)."⁹ Moreover, overburdened health workers are also underpaid. In Cebu City, some health workers bike tiredly from hospital to home with a distance of eight kilometers. At this point, confusion was clearer than a comprehensive and concrete plan yet trolling, branding (red-tagging), and shaming silence queries and criticisms. Hence, social media discourses arise. On the morning of 20 March 2020, the President addressed the public.

We are in a critical time... enhanced quarantine for Luzon because the magnitude of the threat that we are facing calls for it... severely restricts the freedom of movement of our countrymen and thus deprives many people of their ability of earning living for the coming weeks... I don't think it is just a quarantine. I think that we are already in the stage of a lockdown simply because the contagion continues to take its toll in the countryside... Better still, just keep your distance from stranger or friends. Just so na maputol 'yung contamination from A to B, B to C. Kay D putulin natin doon. 'Yun ang maganda (It is better to cease the contagion...)... So it's actually the socially intercourse that is bad at this time. I hope you can understand us at maintindihan rin ninyo kung ano ang ginagawa namin (and understand what we are doing).¹⁰

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Genalyn Kabling, "Duterte admits Luzon already in 'lockdown', stresses 'it will effectively kill COVID-19', *Manila Bulletin*, 2020 March 20. Available at <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/03/20/duterte-admits-luzon-already-in-lockdown-stresses-it-will-effectively-kill-covid-19/>

However, the President's appeal did not stop the public from panicking and clamoring yet some personalities tried to refute the public's outcry. "To those who are complaining about the quarantine period and curfews, just remember that your grandparents were called to war; you are being called to sit on the couch and watch Netflix...," media personality James Deakin posted online.ⁱ Upon seeing the workers stuck on the streets, Instagram influencer Cat Arambulo Antonio added, "God, why don't you motherf*ckers just stay at home? Stay at home! Don't you guys get it? Tigas ng ulo (So hardheaded). This is exactly why they need the military because you f*ckers won't stay at home. Guys, come on."ⁱⁱ Such insensitive and anti-poor comments are devoid of Charles Wright Mill's Sociological Imagination and the Church's Preferential Option for the Poor. A lot of minimum wage earners in the Philippines, including university lecturers, cannot receive a salary unless they show up at the workplace. The country's miserable public health care system fuels the paranoia of the poor for survival amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. It is in this context that when the mobilization of the military is more visible than the health workers, the hashtag "solusyong medikal, hindi militar (medical solution, not militarist)" went trending on social media. Lorielle Ann Aquino, a medical student, explained it in Rappler's Opinion on 18 March 2020.

We need information, not force; we need medical and financial support, not guns... And yet, we are met with thousands of policemen and soldiers armed with rifles – many of whom have no PPEs and thermal scanners, are lenient on the enforcement of social distancing, are unaware of what their protocol is if ever they encounter an individual suspected of being infected, and are unaccompanied by barangay healthcare workers... call

for adequate economic aid; in any crisis, it is always the poor that are most severely affected.¹¹

As the public criticizes the government in handling the problem, the administration's supporters warn critics not to politicize the COVID-19 pandemic. But David Runciman, in *The Guardian*, wrote on 27 March 2020 that "coronavirus has not suspended politics – it has revealed the nature of power... the stripping away of one layer of political life to reveal something more raw underneath."¹² Runciman radicalizes the COVID-19 pandemic: "how will governments exercise the extraordinary powers we give them? and how will we respond when they do?"¹³ The COVID-19 pandemic compels citizens to contemplate on these socio-political questions. To what extent that the individuals subordinate their individuality to the "collective"? "The Philippines' coronavirus lockdown is becoming a crackdown; curfew violators, poor and displaced residents, activists, and alleged 'fake news' disseminators are facing arrest and persecution as they accuse authorities of failing to provide relief", Nick Aspinwall wrote in *The Diplomat* on April 03 2020.¹⁴ The mobility of the masses, i.e., spatial, virtual (social media), political, economic, is vital between the boundary of living and dying which in the time of health crisis turns as socio-politico-economic problems the sovereign has to secure. This paper, henceforth, uses Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* in dealing with crises citing "the segmented

¹¹ Lorielle Ann Aquino, "Solusyong medikal, hindi aksyong militar", *Rappler*, 2020 March 18. Available at <https://www.rappler.com/move-ph/ispeak/255014-opinion-medical-solutions-not-military-actions-coronavirus>

¹² David Runciman, "Coronavirus has not suspended politics – it has revealed the nature of power", Opinion in *The Guardian*, 2020 March 27. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/mar/27/coronavirus-politics-lockdown-hobbes>

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Nick Aspinwall, "The Philippines' Coronavirus Lockdown Is Becoming a Crackdown", Features in *The Diplomat*, 03 April 2020. Available at <https://thediplomat.com/2020/04/the-philippines-coronavirus-lockdown-is-becoming-a-crackdown/>

space”, “the surveillance”, “the syndic”, and “the supplice” vis-à-vis the COVID-19 pandemic in Philippine context.

Why Foucault and his Discipline and Punish?

Discipline and Punish explains the penal system and the social context of punitive procedure and measure; hence, the subtitle *The Birth of the Prison*. “At once a work of history and sociology, philosophy and penology, legal analysis and cultural criticism”, David Garlandⁱⁱⁱ describes it.¹⁵ Felix Driver, of the University of Cambridge, says that it “is about a fundamentally historical transformation in the exercise of power and... the use of space”.¹⁶ The French friends of Foucault at the *Nouveaux Philosophes*^{iv} (New Philosophers) trumpeted *Discipline and Punish* as a “winning blow against both bourgeois and Marxist conceptions of power and discourse”.¹⁷ Nonetheless, *Discipline and Punish* surveys historical, philosophical, and judicial procedure handling power relations and its exercise vis-à-vis people put under penalty and/or, what we call today amid the COVID-19 pandemic, quarantine where contentions arising from the “lockdown” reminisce Foucault’s knowledge of individuals vis-à-vis the juridical subject and the obedient object. Foucault furnishes knowledge of individuals for the government to supervise (Foucault uses the term control) and transform behavior.¹⁸ Though Foucault features this idea concerning the incarcerated criminals, in this paper, it is appropriated in general to the citizenry placed under community quarantine, i.e., the juridical subject as a possessor of rights¹⁹ observing “physical and/or social distancing” yet cognizant of “social

¹⁵ David Garland, “Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*: An Exposition and Critique”, *Am. B. Found. Res. J.* (1986): 847.

¹⁶ Felix Driver, “Power, space, and the body: a critical assessment of Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*”, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 1985, volume 3, pages 425-446.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 426

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 125.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

solidarity” whom Foucault worded as “caught up in the fundamental interests of the social pact”²⁰ unlike the obedient subject, i.e. “the individual subjected to habits, rules, orders, an authority that is exercised continually around him and upon him, and which he must allow to function automatically in him”.²¹

In the third part of the book, Foucault, in his concept of Panopticism, lays the foundation of measures needed in observing, judging, and correcting illegalities and/or delinquency allowing control of community from austerity to normalization. It draws up rules which serve (somehow) inspiration (directly or indirectly) to the contemporary state security forces (and of course, to penology) and to the individuals who recognize the logic of quarantine and/or lockdown to solace the boredom and/or the paranoia amid the pandemic. His *Discipline and Punish* provides paragons of descriptions and measures — an exemplar of Foucault’s governmentality and biopolitics useful in comparing with policies on pandemic between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The former combines the terms government and rationality rendering the art of governing a large population at a distance yet closely monitoring, controlling, and governing. The latter, though coined by Rudolf Kjellén, poststructuralists positing socio-political power over life use the meaning and method Foucault features forty-five years ago but relevant to today’s COVID-19 pandemic, especially in placing communities under quarantine and/or lockdown

The Segmented Space²²

In Part Three, i.e. *Discipline*, Foucault discusses the Panopticism in which he describes the spatial regnum reduced into George Orwell’s 1984 where the term and/or concept of “Big Brother” describes the phenomenon Foucault calls

²⁰ Ibid., 128.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 195.

Panopticism under a restrictive rule closely monitoring citizens. Foucault defines the segmented space.

It is a segmented, immobile, frozen space. Each individual is fixed in his place. And, if he moves, he does so at the risk of his life, contagion or punishment...²³ This enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the center and periphery, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead - all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism...²⁴

Foucault describes the segmented space in what he calls as “spatial partitioning” which includes the following:

The Closing of the Town and Its Outlying Districts

“On the appointed day, everyone is ordered to stay indoors,” Foucault says.²⁵ This word “indoors” is dubitable since Foucault continues the statement in saying, “it is forbidden to leave on pain of death.”²⁶ Leaving the house or leaving the town? Since in the preceding statement he cites “a prohibition to leave the town on pain of death”, one may presuppose that the term “indoors” implies within the designated segmented space, i.e., the town, and not within the house. But he continues in narrating that a syndic is in charge of locking doors of houses

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 197.

²⁵ Ibid., 195.

²⁶ Ibid.

from the outside and an intendant keeps the key until the quarantine ends.

In the Philippines' jam-packed communities, staying inside the house with the family is sweet but sweating. It's the hot season in the tropical country when the government implements quarantine. Even in 4th class municipalities, there are jam-packed communities. With feverish temperature, citizens feel heaven under a single shade of a tree but such an attempt to cool down one's body runs the risk of arrest and incarceration. While the billionaires of the world are chartering superyachts and millionaires recreating in their gated community, the poorest of the poor, whose house bears no distinction between the living room, dining, and bedroom, are told to stay indoors.

Though many Filipinos recognize the need to implement quarantine and/or lockdown, that does not mean they're not bothered and/or afraid. Just a week after the implementation of community quarantine, big grocery stores in Cebu, the richest province outside Metro Manila, started draining food stocks. And the supplies continue to slow down despite the increasing demand from the home-quarantined citizens. Even middle-class citizens are anxious about food shortages which may cause food riot. Though there is no ban for the delivery of goods, food stocks are continuously draining after three weeks of General Community Quarantine (GCQ) which allows public transportation but with strict physical and/or social distancing — a week after the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) was implemented in Metro Manila which bans public transportation. Nevertheless, food delivery continues to supply the market though not in the manner before the coronavirus breaks out.

Despite the discomfort, stress, vulnerability, and paranoia the COVID-19 brought along with the implementation of community quarantine and/or lockdown, “isolation, quarantine, social distancing, and community containment” are significant

strategies interrupting the transmission of coronavirus.²⁷ Isolation separates the infected from the non-infected. Unlike today's fourteen-day quarantine, fourteenth-century Italy implemented it for forty days. Merriam dictionary cites the Italian word *quaranta*, i.e., forty, as the historical and etymological background of the word quarantine.²⁸ While some adopt the term social distancing referring to the proximity of people from each other, others prefer the word physical distancing. Community containment varies according to the extent of the infection — from the barangay level, municipal, city, and/or regional.

A Prohibition to Leave the Town on Pain of Death

Prohibition to leave the house and/or the town has different dimensions between the classes. From the context of previous centuries to today's quarantine and/or lockdown, there's a huge difference between a jam-packed house and/or community and a gated subdivision with walled houses where people can have recreation inside and/or at their garden. Washing hands is sometimes a luxury in a jam-packed community where there is a scarcity of supply. In this regard, prisoners do have the luxury the quarantined do not have, i.e., recreation. Also, there is an increasing intensity of having domestic violence which is painful – the "killing me softly" feeling of the victim, and at times of community quarantine and/or lockdown, difficult to account in public. As such is a psycho-penal paranoia of the victim — a physio-psycho-emotional^v torture sprouting from a power play of (micro)biopolitics. The heightening need to survive one's household drowns the care to protect the oppressed in another. The COVID-19 pandemic is not as meticulous as the angel of

²⁷ Annelies Wilder-Smith, and David O. Freedman, "Isolation, quarantine, social distancing and community containment: pivotal role for old-style public health measures in the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak," *Journal of travel medicine* 27, no. 2 (2020): taaa020.

²⁸ Ibid.

death in Exodus. For the poor, the weak and the vulnerable, prohibition to leave the house and/or the town is a gradual painful death. For the haves, staying indoor is heaven but for the have-nots, it's hell. The prohibition invites the lovers of Sophia to analyze the material condition amidst the pandemic. Meanwhile, Sophia lovers may not recognize until such a time they are in the situation of the have-nots. The prohibition paves the way for the people to reflect on the burgeoning social inequality. As to how this happens, why, and how to transform, are questions for survival the people should continue wrestling with.

While there's a clash between individual human rights and public health protocol, law enforcement like checkpoints helps to contain the coronavirus. Otherwise, the contagious coronavirus transmits in a jiffy. Cordoning infected households and/or communities reduces the risk and delays the contamination of communities. Though the situation still calls for a potent health protocol, the Prohibition to Leave the Town prevents the spread of COVID-19. If this weren't implemented, there could have been more difficulty in contact tracing the coronavirus.

The Killing of All Stray Animals

Punishment is, Foucault says, "the most hidden part of the penal process."²⁹ Like Foucault, President Duterte deems it inevitable. The president reminds the citizens to stay home following quarantine and curfew policy; otherwise, those who defy will be shot.^{vi} Telling so, as in the words of Foucault, the president must have believed that punishment discourages the citizens from doing "crime" resulting in public opinion that the State is no longer accountable for the punishment and/or death of the one who does "crime". Defying the State makes one an "enemy of the State". Hence, the killing of the "enemies of the State" by the State is justified. In this regard, Foucault must have

²⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 9.

been naïve in a context where the powerful stands against the powerless, the haves against the have-nots, the State against the individual. Punishment is both a “spectacle” and a message sowing fear to the subjects that they have to subordinate themselves to the authority; otherwise, they’ll be punished. The State, however, feels being ill-treated by protesting citizens, e.g., Sitio San Roque in Quezon City, who amplify their material condition amidst quarantine and/or lockdown.^{vii} Cracking down of critiques protects the State from exposing the ills of society. A citizen silenced through fear,^{viii} disciplined or docile? Whoever has criticisms and/or dissenting ideas is seen going astray prompting the administration’s apologists to subordinate the rationality to the ruler’s authority. Foucault captures it in his words, “neutralize the effects of counter-power that spring from them and which form a resistance to the power that wishes to dominate it.”³⁰

In the Philippines, people may go astray because of “infodemic”. The government is not only curbing the coronavirus but also misinformation and/or fake news. Section 6 (f) of the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act (Republic Act No. 11469) particularizes a provision on those “going astray” infected with the “infodemic”.

Individuals or groups creating, perpetuating, or spreading false information regarding the COVID-19 crisis on social media and other platforms, such information having no valid or beneficial effect on the population, and are clearly geared to promote chaos, panic, anarchy, fear, or confusion; and those participating in cyber incidents that make use or take advantage of the current crisis situation to prey on the public through scams, phishing, fraudulent emails, or other similar acts.³¹

³⁰ Ibid., 219.

³¹ Congress of the Philippines, “Bayanihan to Heal As One Act,” The Official Gazette of the Philippines. Available at <https://www.senate.gov.ph/Bayanihan-to-Heal-as-One-Act-RA-11469.pdf>

Critics, however, argued that this Act may become an instrument to weaponize the law against dissent. Consequently, people become anxious and cautious. “The panopticon is a marvelous machine which, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogenous effects of power”, Foucault thinks.³² Punishment extorts truth³³ as lies may seemingly become true if they remain unchallenged. Governmentality and biopolitics say that there should be an efficient way of obtaining information especially those that can inflict harm to the health of the government.³⁴ Nevertheless, cooperation is needed in as much as criticism necessitates newer and better ideas; hence, “bayanihan (civic unity) to heal as one.”

The Division of the Town Into Distinct Quarters

“At each of the town gates there will be an observation post; at the end of each street sentinels,” Foucault wrote on Discipline in parallel with Panopticism.³⁵ The mechanism of containment compels quarantine and/or lockdown partitioning towns favorable to self-sustaining communities. For the minimum wage-earners, provisions do not suffice. Many of the minimum wage-earners are contractual employees and are compelled by the inhumane labor condition to show up at the workplace; otherwise, they do not earn a living. In a metropolis like Manila and Cebu, millions of workers are living in the adjacent cities or that which we call in the west as suburban. With ECQ, there is no public transportation, and employees are left to the employers’ mercy if they’ll be provided free lodging to continue working. With lesser clients and/or customers many business establishments are forced to lay off employees and go home to the suburban. Without their lands to till, they’re

³² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 202.

³³ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁴ Michael V. DelNero, “Invasion, Surveillance, Biopolitics, and Governmentality: Representations from Tactical Media to Screen,” PhD diss., Bowling Green State University, 2016, 3, 37-44.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 196.

helpless and pray the pandemic ends before supplies last. Since experts project draining of finance³⁶ and food³⁷, in a longer containment, only fishing villages and farming communities may survive. And in the case of a viral breakout, district and/or provincial hospitals may not be able to accommodate and contain the virus. Home inspections, if there is, and road checkpoints may render futile without sufficient health workers and health equipment and health funds. The prompt obedience of the citizens should be paired with the health sector's prompt response. The "segmented space" becomes scary without comprehensive security involving health and economic measure. The State devises the division for health measure but there is more than that. If not for social media, the division diminishes the political participation of the people; in a way, it's detrimental to democracy. "This enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised...", Foucault claims that "this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism."³⁸

The policy of containment putting provinces and/or cities under the quarantine period operates effectively in stopping the spread of the infection from the metropolis to the countryside. Over two months under community quarantine, municipalities and component cities maintain a safer zone compared to the highly urbanized cities which have the highest number of infections. Prohibiting cross border mobility is a security measure confining the coronavirus. Such segmentation intercepts, especially if an infected escapes the confinement centers. Putting communities under quarantine allows the State

³⁶ CNN Philippines Staff, "Duterte eyes selling govt. properties if funds vs. COVID-19 not enough", *CNN Philippines*, 2020 April 09. Available at <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/4/9/duterte-government-properties-for-sale.html>

³⁷ Ratziel San Juan, "Paralyzing trade over COVID-19 could endanger global security-UN experts", *Philstar Global*, 2020 April 01. Available at <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/04/01/2004799/paralyzing-trade-over-covid-19-could-endanger-global-food-security-un-experts>

³⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 197.

to supervise the population. In so doing, the segmentation neutralizes the tendency to trigger an outbreak; it is preventive to the penetration of the pandemic to the populace. Loosening the procedure of segmenting the confines of the communities increases the rate of infections. Implementing space segmentation, the State secures the rest of the country from suffering the malady the metropolises experience. Foucault sees “spatial organization as an important part of social, economic, and political strategies... emphasizes that disciplinary ‘technology’ allocates a special role to spatial organization... control and division of space (and time) become a vital means for the discipline and surveillance of individuals.”³⁹

The Surveillance

According to Alan Sheridan, the translator of *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* in Vintage version, the French word *surveiller* is a closer derivative of discipline though it does not suffice. Foucault translates Jeremy Bentham’s ‘inspect’ as ‘surveiller’ which carries contradiction and connotations not corresponding accordingly. ‘Supervise’ is the closest but associated with many concepts making ‘observe’ as fitting.⁴⁰ Though the enemy is the virus, the State conducts surveillance to the citizens since there is insufficient capacity to detect the virus but there is enough police and/or military personnel to oversee the spatial mobility of the citizens. If only there is enough capacity and measure to monitor the mobility of the virus, the citizens may move as swift as the virus. In this regard, the jam-packed communities are severely hit by the panoptic policing of the people by the State.

“Crimes”, criticisms and the confusion of citizens breed insecurity to the State trying to cover-up the imminent threat of a food shortage which may cause food riot as the poor are

³⁹ Felix Driver, “Power, space, and the body: a critical assessment of Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*”, 426.

⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Translator’s Note.

anxious about dying in hunger than in contracting with the virus. The ruling class, in what Louis Althusser calls the Ideological State Apparatuses, mechanizes its machinery in tracing more the dissent than the virus. Foucault explains.

... a higher juridical and moral value placed on property relations, stricter methods of surveillance, a tighter partitioning of the population, more efficient techniques of locating and obtaining information: the shift in illegal practices is correlative with an extension and a refinement of punitive practices...⁴¹ Hence the idea that the machinery of justice must be duplicated by an organ of surveillance that would work side by side with it, and which would make it possible either to prevent crimes or, if committed, to arrest their authors; police and justice must work together as two complementary actions of the same process - the police assuring 'the action of society on each individual', justice 'the rights of individuals against society'.⁴²

State power, in times of pandemic COVID-19, places the citizens under Big Brother's watch. The State claims surveillance curtails the spread of the virus and/or crimes but the citizens feel it constraints criticisms from constituting contending power. Fearing the eyes and ears of Big Brother, critical discourses on the COVID-19 crisis cease.

...an effort to adjust the mechanisms of power that frame the everyday lives of individuals; an adaptation and a refinement of the machinery that assumes responsibility for and places under surveillance their everyday behaviour, their identity, their activity, their apparently unimportant gestures; another policy for that

⁴¹ Ibid., 77.

⁴² Ibid., 96.

multiplicity of bodies and forces that constitutes a population.⁴³

The State acting ala Big Brother tunes in critics to “contented citizens”. Criticisms, unlike crimes, are like lights in the time of perpetual darkness which should lighten up the way since they are rooted in the citizens’ concrete condition. Surveillance, in keeping citizens indoor, is not done in gated communities with walled houses. Not necessary either. As to how and why, one needs not to surveillance jam-packed communities but finds a material solution to their material problem. The State, however, needs to trace where dissent comes from.

However, Foucault finds logic to the surveillance by the State as it prevents crimes and allows avenue arresting criminals.⁴⁴ Also, it provides certitude for getting the criminals punished.⁴⁵ Since the health crisis leads to socio-politico-economic issues, crimes may concur with the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides, the persons under investigation (PUIs) and persons under monitoring (PUMs) have to be visible to the eyes of the State securing the society from the contagion.

The Syndic

In his discussion of the Discipline vis-à-vis Panopticism, Foucault describes who and/or what the syndic does.

Each street is placed under the authority of a syndic, who keeps it under surveillance; if he leaves the street, he will be condemned to death. On the appointed day, everyone is ordered to stay indoors: it is forbidden to leave on pain of death. The syndic himself comes to lock the door of each house from the outside; he takes the key with him and hands it over to the intendant of the

⁴³ Ibid., 77-78.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

quarter; the intendant keeps it until the end of the quarantine... Only the intendants, syndics and guards will move about the streets and also, between the infected houses, from one corpse to another, the 'crows', who can be left to die: these are 'people of little substance who carry the sick, bury the dead, clean and do many vile and abject offices'...⁴⁶ Every day, too, the syndic goes into the street for which he is responsible; stops before each house: gets all the inhabitants to appear at the windows (those who live overlooking the courtyard will be allocated a window looking onto the street at which no one but they may show themselves); he calls each of them by name; informs himself as to the state of each and every one of them - 'in which respect the inhabitants will be compelled to speak the truth under pain of death'; if someone does not appear at the window, the syndic must ask why: 'In this way, he will find out easily enough whether dead or sick are being concealed.'⁴⁷

In conducting a constant inspection, what Foucault describes is not far from what is happening in the Philippines in the time of COVID-19, i.e. policing unpaired with qualified and/or competent health workers. As to how the intendant monitors the syndic in fulfilling the task of the latter, it bears resemblance with today's pressures felt by officials of Local Government Units (LGUs) from the directives of the national government which provided special funds to the LGU on the third week of the quarantine and/or lockdown. The syndic reports to the intendant and the latter to the magistrate who appoints a physician in charge. Physicians, not military men; health measure, not militarist. Foucault notes what the government today is doing, i.e., constant centralization of the registration of population and pathology.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid., 195.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 196.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Foucault uses the term “purification” in referring to today’s “disinfection” which he suggests five or six days after the start of the quarantine but up to the writing of this paper, i.e., the third week of quarantine, few streets, and other public places are disinfected, or as Foucault says, purified. But Foucault says, not only the streets and public places but also “purifying the houses one by one”.⁴⁹ Doing so may drain the DOH logistics or the government’s coffers. Otherwise, it was done. Or, when will it be done?

The syndic, the disciplinarian, becomes the power player who, as Foucault finds, has a “political dream of the plague” where only a few can feast lessening the power player.⁵⁰ The syndic, as it monitors the plague, becomes the plague. “The plague as a form, at once real and imaginary, of disorder had as its medical and political correlative discipline”, Foucault flaunts.⁵¹

In taking measures against the pandemic, it is understandable the government mobilizes that which is capable of doing what Foucault asks in Panopticism, i.e., “a strict spatial partitioning.”⁵² The presence of the military and/or the police, Foucault says, is “to ensure the prompt obedience of the people...”⁵³ Foucault describes this power, over the lives of people amid a pandemic, “omnipresent and omniscient... behind the disciplinary mechanisms” for the separation of the infected and the segmentation of the entire population.⁵⁴

The Supplice

Foucault and Alan Sheridan, the translator, describe ‘supplice’. The former in his discourse of *The Spectacle of the Scaffold in Torture* and the latter in his note to the *Vintage*

⁴⁹ Ibid., 197.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 198.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 195.

⁵³ Ibid., 196.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 197-198.

version of Discipline and Punish. The first part of the following description is Sheridan's.

Here 'supplice' refers specifically to the public torture and execution of criminals that provided one of the most popular spectacles of eighteenth-century France. By extension, the word can also refer to any prolonged torture, mental as well as physical. Depending on the context, I have translated the word by 'torture', 'public execution' or 'scaffold'. The author also refers to another form of torture, 'la question', the extraction of confessions by interrogation, and the systematic application of pain. Here I have followed the accepted translation, 'judicial torture'.⁵⁵

What is a supplice? 'Corporal punishment, painful to a more or less horrible degree,' said Jaucourt in his Encyclopedie article and added: 'It is an inexplicable phenomenon that the extension of man's imagination creates out of the barbarous and the cruel.' Inexplicable, perhaps, but certainly neither irregular nor primitive. Torture is a technique; it is not an extreme expression of lawless rage.⁵⁶

Foucault cites the mounting crime needing penalty that intimidates the citizens as if the Greek goddess Nemesis haunts them in their lifetime,⁵⁷ and he offers three principal criteria for the punishment considered torture: (1) "must produce a certain degree of pain", (2) the "production of pain is regulated", and (3) "forms part of a ritual".

The first criterion posits that pain is measurable, calculable, comparable, and hierarchical.⁵⁸ It considers death torture except for suicide. Death is, Foucault says, "the

⁵⁵ Ibid. Translator's Note.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 33.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 77.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 33.

culmination of a calculated gradation of pain.”⁵⁹ Inflicting pain through torture can be infinite so long as the victim lives. In this regard, death is the pinnacle of pain. Foucault calculably encapsulates the definition of torture as the “quantitative art of pain.”⁶⁰

With the second criterion, Foucault maintains that torture corresponds to the “quality, intensity, and duration of pain” vis-à-vis the “gravity of the crime” and the social status of the criminal and its victim.⁶¹ While there is torture in Foucault’s description and the contemporary period, the difference is that torture in the former is governed by rules which Foucault calls the “legal code of pain” implying that torture is “calculated according to detailed rules” whereas there’s none in the latter that is known to the public but it’s an open secret that torture still exists. In the description of Foucault, it was the court who decides as to how torture is carried out but in recent times it’s the law enforcer, the security forces, the junior officer, the gentleman from the academy, the repressive Ideological State Apparatus, as Louis Althusser posits.

The third criterion maintains rituals and ceremonies as instruments of holding back society from disintegration reminiscent of the Roman empire crucifying the “enemies of the State”. Foucault calls this as an “element in the liturgy of punishment” which must have two marks: a scar on the body of the tortured, and the “spectacle to brand the victim with infamy” by the public whom the State wants to remind that it may happen to anyone of them once they defy the authority. “Torture does not reconcile, but to ‘purge’ the crime”, Foucault clarifies.⁶² It reminds the critics-citizens to “behave”.

Foucault clarifies the intention, i.e., to prosecute offenses.⁶³ “Torture is a technique; it is not an expression of lawless rage”, he claims.⁶⁴ Legislated power expresses in punishment.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 34.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 33.

Conclusion

The 4S of Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* foresee the so-called “social distancing”, quarantine, and/or lockdown amidst the COVID-19 pandemic but these should not be devoid of social solidarity since panic sprouts from State (in)security. While it seems “tactical” to do “spatial partitioning”, the “segmented space” may not survive without sufficient health measure paired with socio-politico-economic relief comparable to the mounting militarism. Though people experience displeasure feeling uncomfortable with community quarantine, such policies relative to the 4S of Foucault generate a positive effect on the delay, reduction, and containment of the coronavirus lessening the risk of infecting the outlying districts of the metropolises like Cebu and Manila. While there is effectivity of Foucault’s 4S vis-à-vis testing, tracing, isolating, and treating patients, the crisis constitutes as well the crackdown of critics, activists, and suspected “communists”. Hence, the governmentality and biopolitics of Foucault are relevant through the 4S vis-à-vis the panoptic principle he discusses in the third part of Part Three in his *Discipline and Punish*. As part of the Global South experiencing deficit funds for basic social services, especially on healthcare, the 4S of Foucault stand relevant to the Philippines, forty-five years after the original publication of *Discipline and Punish*, securing the State and the society from the malady brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 34.

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Notes

ⁱ See <https://www.rappler.com/technology/features/254864-james-deakin-coronavirus-viral-netflix-post>

ⁱⁱ See <https://www.rappler.com/entertainment/news/254913-netizens-blast-cat-arambulo-rant-instagram-vs-stranded-workers-coronavirus>

ⁱⁱⁱ When David Garland published his exposition and critique of *Discipline and Punish*, he lectured in the Center for Criminology, Faculty of Law, University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

^{iv} *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French* describes the Nouveaux Philosophes as "an eclectic group of young French philosophers" who in the 1970s broke up from dominant philosophies like Marxism.

^v See <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1253820/dlsu-offers-free-mental-health-counseling-amid-covid-19-pandemic>

^{vi} See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/philippines-president-duterte-shoot-to-kill-order-pandemic/>

^{vii} See <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/4/1/quezon-city-protesters-arrested-.html>

^{viii} See <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/4/5/UE-Dawn-editor-forced-public-apology-Duterte-admin.html>