

Discipline & Punish - Panopticism

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<https://foucault.info/documents/foucault.disciplineAndPunish.panOpticism/>

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But there was also a **political dream of the plague**, which was exactly its reverse: not the collective festival, but **strict divisions**; not laws transgressed, but the **penetration** of regulation into even the smallest details of everyday life through the mediation of the complete hierarchy that assured the capillary functioning of power; not masks that were put on and taken off, but the assignment to each individual of his **"true"** name, his **"true"** place, his **"true"** body, his **"true"** disease. The plague as a form, at once **real and imaginary**, of disorder had as its medical and political correlative discipline. Behind the disciplinary mechanisms can be read the haunting memory of "contagions", of the plague, of rebellions, crimes, vagabondage, desertions, people who appear and disappear, live and die in disorder.

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The leper was caught up in a practice of rejection, of exile-enclosure; he was left to his doom in a mass among which it was useless to differentiate; those sick of the plague were caught up in a meticulous tactical partitioning in which individual differentiations were the **constricting effects of a power** that multiplied, articulated and subdivided itself; the great confinement on the one hand; the correct training on the other. **The leper and his separation; the plague and its segmentations.** The first is marked; the second analysed and distributed. The exile of the leper and the arrest of the plague do not bring with them the same political dream. The first is that of a pure community, the second that of a **disciplined society**. Two ways of exercising power over men, of **controlling their relations**, of separating out their dangerous mixtures.

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In view of this, Bentham laid down the principle that power should **be visible** and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which **he is spied upon**. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so. In order to make the presence or absence of the inspector unverifiable, so that the prisoners, in their cells, cannot even see a shadow, Bentham envisaged not only venetian blinds on the windows of the central observation hall, but, on the inside, partitions that intersected the hall at right angles and, in order to pass from one quarter to the other, not doors but zig-zag openings; for the slightest noise, a gleam of light, a brightness in a half-opened door would betray the presence of the guardian. The Panopticon is a machine for **dissociating the see/being seen dyad**: in the peripheric ring, one is **totally seen, without ever seeing**; in the central tower, **one sees everything without ever being seen**.

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