

Panopticon

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Irshad Ahmad Order # 736914 Academia-Reseach. Com October 25, Panopticon. The world of today is encountering the challenges of hazardous problems almost engulfing its peace, stability, charm, serenity and tranquility. This is the reason why, despite the fact that facilities are over-numbered, the luxuries superfluous, the money redundant, the satisfaction and peace of mind is out of reach. Foucault has the view that there is a cure for all these problems if the responsibilities are acknowledged and the institution of ' Power' is established on the basis strong and firm. The solution given is interesting. Plague when it breaks out at a certain territory and the authorities devise plans to counter it. A state of emergency is declared, all the state officials are assigned duties and the victims are excluded from the whole society. They are not allowed to get into connection with any other ' normal' person, they being the ' abnormal'. Measures are taken and data regarding the epidemic, the normal and abnormal is maintained. The victims are kept in separate barracks and they are given the ration after ensuring that connection with them is avoidable. The State officials who did not pay full attention to the commands of the higher authorities are made examples of. Such is the scope of Power which was felt round the corners of the town and the Plague was thus encountered successfully. Bentham's Panopticon is a machine devised on the same principles. Bentham shaped this philosophy by giving an architectural shape to it. It was an annular building with a tower at its centre. The tower was pierced with windows opening to the inner side of the ring. Round the whole of the building, it was divided into cells. The cells had two windows; on the inside and the outside so that light could travel across easily. A Supervisor

was then placed in the central tower. Then different kinds of humans were kept shut-up in the cells. These were a mad man, a school-boy, a patient, a worker etc. The machine or building was designed so technically that the backlighting allowed only the observer to see all of them and their behaviors under some circumstances while those shut-up in the cells were not able to see the observer. The building thus presented a complete laboratory for observing human nature, behavior, action and reaction under particular circumstances. The purpose of the ' Panopticon' is to inject in the inmates of the Panopticon, a sense of surety that they are always under inspection. It makes them conscious of the fact that they are ever visible with their words and deeds and all this assures the smooth functioning of the phenomenon of ' Power' (Bentham, p138). So the functioning of ' Power' can be ensured only if there is a quality check without discrimination and with sincerity and justice. ' Panopticon' thus presents the structure of a new set of political ideas incorporated in a new system. Its ' cage cells', the inmates, the observers and its powerful and high ' towers', which are knowing each and everything about the inmates and their actions, the impartial and speedy observance of justice.... These are all the requisites of that particular political system. This is the revolution Foucault foresees in the machine designed by Bentham. Foucault here turns the direction of his meditation to a social issue. He views with doubt the ways and procedures been adopted at for different institutions. Foucault is of the view that the phenomenon of ' Panopticon' is applicable to all the institutions, special of which are ' schools' who create the future of a nation, ' factories' who generate revenue for the nation, ' hospitals' which save and safeguard the life of the nation and '

prisons' which help in eradicating the crimes from inside and against a nation. He philosophically stresses that the observance of 'Power' in the institutes is assured. He answers to a query of mind that the 'Observance' in 'Panopticon' needs be brought under the limits so that the democratic checks stop any tyranny. For the purpose, he suggests that the 'observation process' is not confined to a certain faction of the people and anyone is allowed to inspect the validity of the 'Observation'. This will make the whole process reliable before the world. This is not surprising that "prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks and hospitals, which all resemble prisons" (Foucault, p201). It is because the phenomenon of 'Panopticon' is not fully applied here. There are observers, the inmates and the tower but there are probably no observers from the outside for the examination of the inside observers. For instance, the institute of 'Hospital' needs to be properly Panopticed. A system of check and balance will make the doctors feel their responsibilities. The Head person of the hospital here becomes the main observer, the doctors and other staff the inmates and hospital is the Panopticon. Space needs to be given for the outside observers to spy the affairs of the main observer as to check any unjust action under his hands and thumbs. Punishment is the most necessary tool for maintaining good governance. Same is the rule applied here in our institutions thus resembling like prisons. It is necessary because it is helpful in creating a sense of responsibility. Besides, the punishments reveal that the observation-system is fully functional and operational. The system was formulated on the current patterns because there have always been a faction of group in the society, howsoever civilized the society may be, which hinders in the development of

peace, happiness and progress and to devise institutions, it was felt necessary that they work like prisons. The methods are still the same because there should be a check and balance in the institutions. What Foucault meant of his understanding of the 'panopticon' was that the system needs modification, i. e. the institutions be Panoptimized (Foucault, pp 195-228). Works Cited. Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995. Print. Bentham, Jeremy. *Panopticon, Or, the Inspection-House: Containing the Idea of a New Principle of Construction Applicable to Any Sort of Establishment, in Which Persons of Any Description Are to Be Kept Under Inspection : and in Particular to Penitentiary-Houses, Prisons, Houses of Industry ... and Schools : with a Plan of Management Adapted to the Principle : in a Series of Letters, Written in the Year 1787*. London: Reprinted and sold by T. Payne, 1791. Internet resource.