

## **Internally *Visible* (A Look at Madness, Confinement and Lack of Privacy)**

**(By Toshio U.-P.)**

*“Visibility is a trap.”*

~Michel Foucault (Discipline and Punish, 1977)

Madness and mad people are often subordinated or controlled through the use of imbalancers which interfere with their privacy and thus make them easier to watch, observe, study or monitor. This “compulsory visibility” as Foucault would describe it (1), is established through the use of use of spatial, chemical, and technological control methods.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, architect Jeremy Bentham drew up plans for his Panopticon prison, “an institution in which all the inmates, arranged like the radiating spokes of a wheel, are visible to the central authorities at the hub.” (2) This design, which Foucault described at length in terms of its symbolism (2) consisted of contrived and closed architecture where power shifts toward the jailer who has an all-seeing view on the inmates.

While closed and supervised forensic space is used to confine and restrict the personal space of inmates under the pretext of controlling their criminal behavior, clinical space in mental health institutions can be used for “observation” with conditions established in order to collect data of a covert and sometimes backward nature. In 1950s Montréal, patients at the Allan Memorial Institute (AMI) were put into seclusion, chemical sleep and had their “mental space” encroached upon when “depatterning” and “psychic driving” experiments were carried out in one of the wards. Chemical controls were a big part of the psychiatric research on the hidden away ward (referred to as the “Sleep Room”) where head psychiatrist “[Dr. Ewen] Cameron injected unwilling people with LSD. Far more horrible and damaging in its effects was his depatterning use of electro-shock.” (3) Outside the confines of an inpatient unit, patients who gain some access to the community are often tethered to an outpatient clinic with a ‘medication leash’ restricting their navigation and autonomy in an often invisible way. Here the illusion of discharged (spatial) freedom still implies constant (parole-like) conditional follow-up and frequent trips to an outpatient pharmacy or clinic nursing station throughout the calendar year. While visual and auditory hallucinations often persist as symptoms for inpatients transferred into outpatient care, the long term ‘mental un-health’ and symptomology of patients in the Allan Memorial Institute could be attributed in part to the combination of control methods from the chemical to technological spheres. In addition to injecting syringes filled with “gamma 50 LSD-25” and drugs like “desoxyn” (3), “massive electro-shock, sensory deprivation [...] tape machines playing endless loops of words under their pillows” (3) were machine-operated control methods that infringed on the basic human rights of a group of Canadian psychiatric patients.

While a 1950s ward like the one in AMI had “walls [...] full of voices, mutterings from wall speakers in private rooms [...] broadcast depth probes into other patients’ lives” (3), a more ancient cell designed by Bentham never managed to apply the principle of visual “dissymmetry” to the acoustics domain. Only crude two-way listening

(or projecting) was envisioned through the use of pipes from the jail cells to the central tower (1). Benthamite jail plans, which were advanced later on in the 1830s (1), thus lacked (mechanical) one-way eavesdropping capabilities that exist in the modern world of today.

While panopticism originally applied to the architectural framework of jails, today's panoptic surveillance is found in the many cameras and electronic technology that send visual and even auditory feedback to a control room monitored usually by law enforcement. These eyes and ears of the state deemed useful for the deterrence of crime, place great power in the hands of the police force who often favor constant supervision over event-specific investigation tactics to handle crime and deviant behaviour (4). Surveillance can even find its way into a private residence through the use of wiretaps and bugs. This invasion of private (real estate) space once again should (in theory) only be used in order to prevent crimes from occurring or to record acts of deviance (once again through event-specific investigation) in turn authorized only by a judge. However, more often these sophisticated (invisible) spying systems are used to control opposition in ways that may be deemed illegal should real evidence on the bugging and tapping make its way to court. "It has been said that bugging has a 'vastly more pernicious nature' than tapping. '[O]ne can avoid using the phone in many situations, but how does one avoid bugs in one's home or office?'" (4)

Technological control methods are too often used to imbalance power on crime scenes away from real human witnesses and toward an automated stately power trying to prolong its supremacy in an age of rapid and fleeting digital security. Other discussed imbalancers maintain state control by creating a sense of fear in its subjects, who constantly feel as though they could be watched, observed, studied or monitored. While acts of government dissidence could technically be overlooked and surveillance gaps might exist during periods of panoptic supervision by the state, the risk of "being visible" acting against powers of authority is re-enforced through a feeling or sense of eerie and intimidating paranoia not altogether different than that felt by the average prisoner in a Bentham 'Panopticon' jail cell of old.

Sources:

(1) "Discipline and Punish-The Birth of the Prison", Michel Foucault, Vintage Books, New York, 1977. p.177, p.298, 231.

(2) "Social Control and the State-Historical and Comparative Essays", edited by Stanley Cohen and Andrew Scull, Basil Blackwell, England, 1985. p.164.

(3) "In the Sleep Room-The Story of the CIA Brainwashing Experiments in Canada", Anne Collins, Lester & Orpen Dennys Publishers, Toronto, 1988. p.131,13, 2, 20.

(4) "Invasion of Privacy-Police and Electronic Surveillance in Canada", Stanley A. Cohen, Toronto, Carswell Company Ltd., 1983. p.23, 191.