Philosophy of Surveillance: Foucault's Panopticon

Sabrina Reguyal
INTERFACE
13 September 2021

Structure

1. Intro to Foucault and The Panopticon
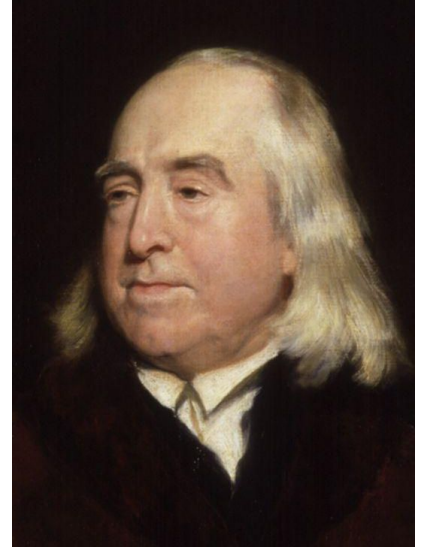2. Mediums of surveillance
3. Today

Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984)

- French philosopher, historian, political activist
  - Was interested in violence during university
  - A public figure, engaged with society
- Key issue: Relationship between power and knowledge; how they are used as a form of social control through societal institutions
- Historiographical approach
  - Against teleology (inevitability)
- Key works: *Madness and Civilization* (1961), *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), *Discipline and Punish* (1975), *The History of Sexuality* (1976)
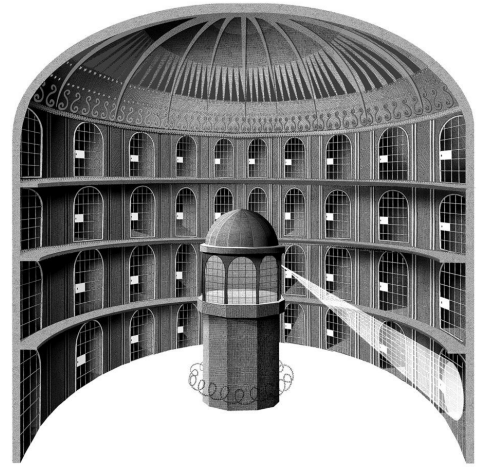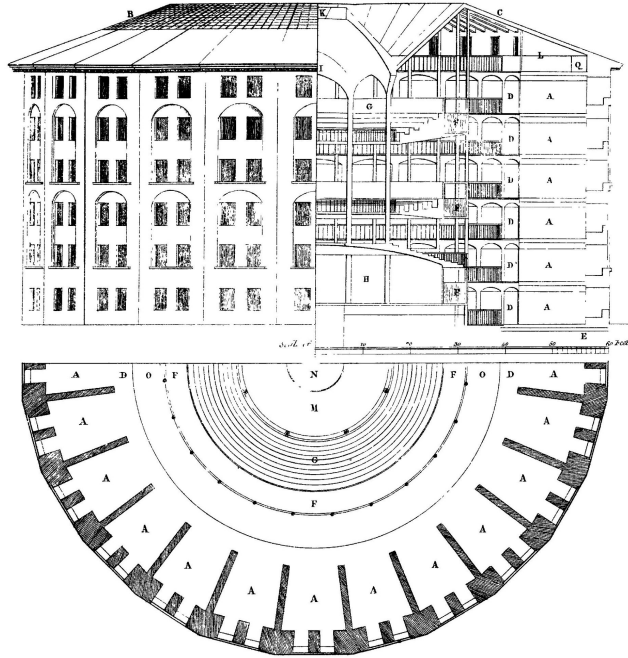
Bentham (1748-1832), Not Foucault

- Jeremy Bentham was the one who conceived of the panopticon (1785)
- English philosopher, jurist, and social reformer. Founder of modern utilitarianism
  - "It is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong."
  - Influenced the development of welfarism
  - Advocated: individual and economic freedoms, separation of church and state, equal rights for women, right to divorce, decriminalizing of homosexuality
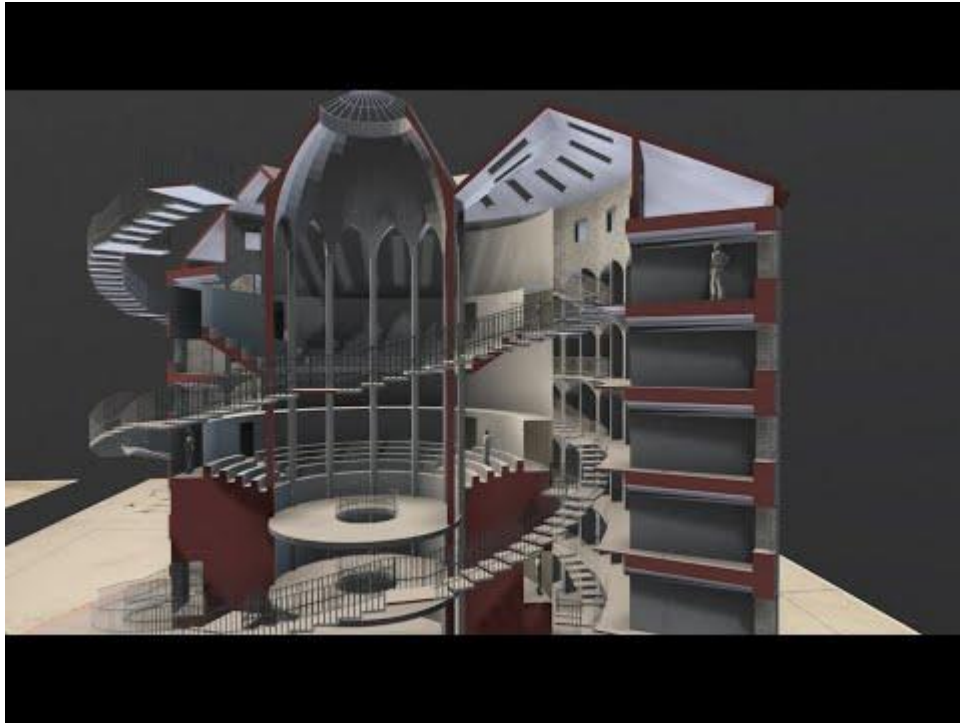
The Panopticon

- *panoptes* - "all seeing"

- a humane prison

- generalizable to factories, asylums, hospitals, and schools

Panopticon Visualization

What came before (according to Foucault)
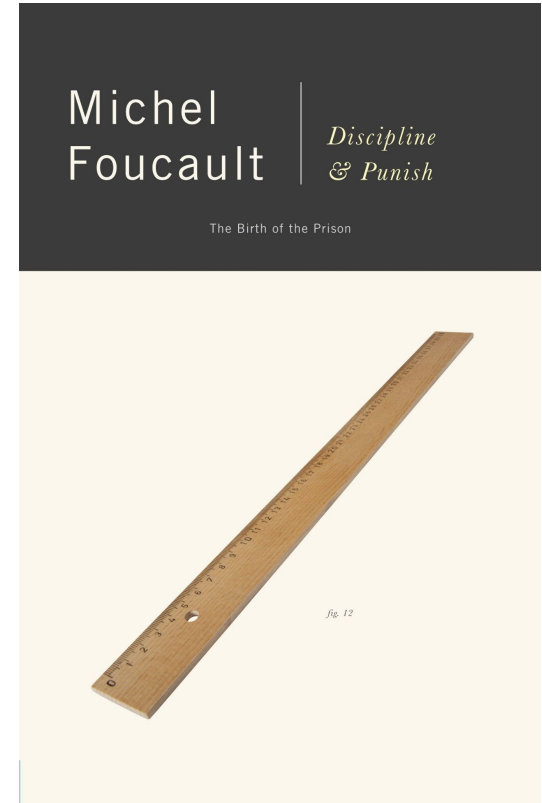

the good old days

Panopticon's Place in History

- The prison was conceived as a project for transformation of individuals
  - Failed from the start -- manufactured criminals and criminality

"At the end of the 1700s, people dreamed of a society without crime. And then the dream evaporated. Crime was too useful to dream of anything as dangerous as a society without crime."
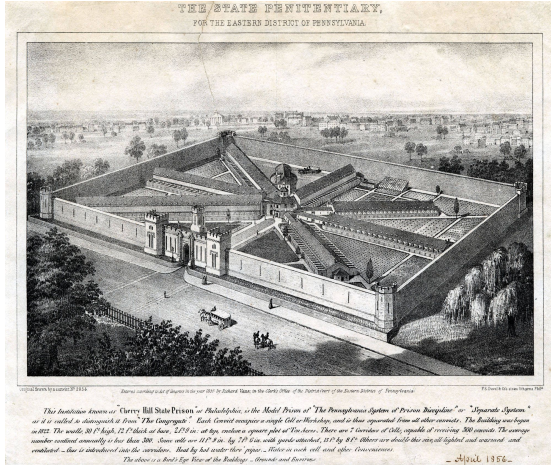
Foucault's Ideas

- Panopticon as metaphor for modern disciplinary society (emerging in the 18th century)
  - Basis of **permanent visibility**
- Discipline as technique for ordering the irrationalities of humanity
  - The plague as the framing device, the justification, the pre-image for such steps.
    - The **right to observe and accumulate knowledge** moves beyond prisons, towards hospitals, schools, and later, factories
    - The disappearance of public executions
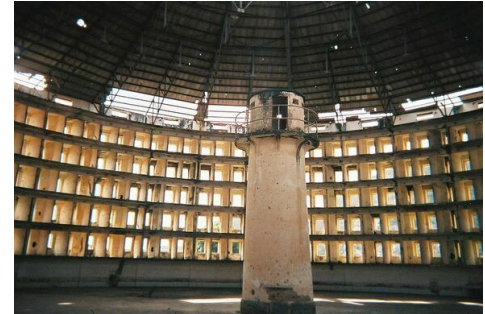 - Replacement for pre-modern society of kings

Michel Foucault | Discipline & Punish
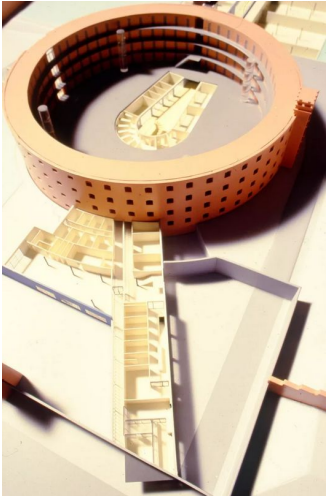
The Birth of the Prison

fig. 12

Panopticons in our world

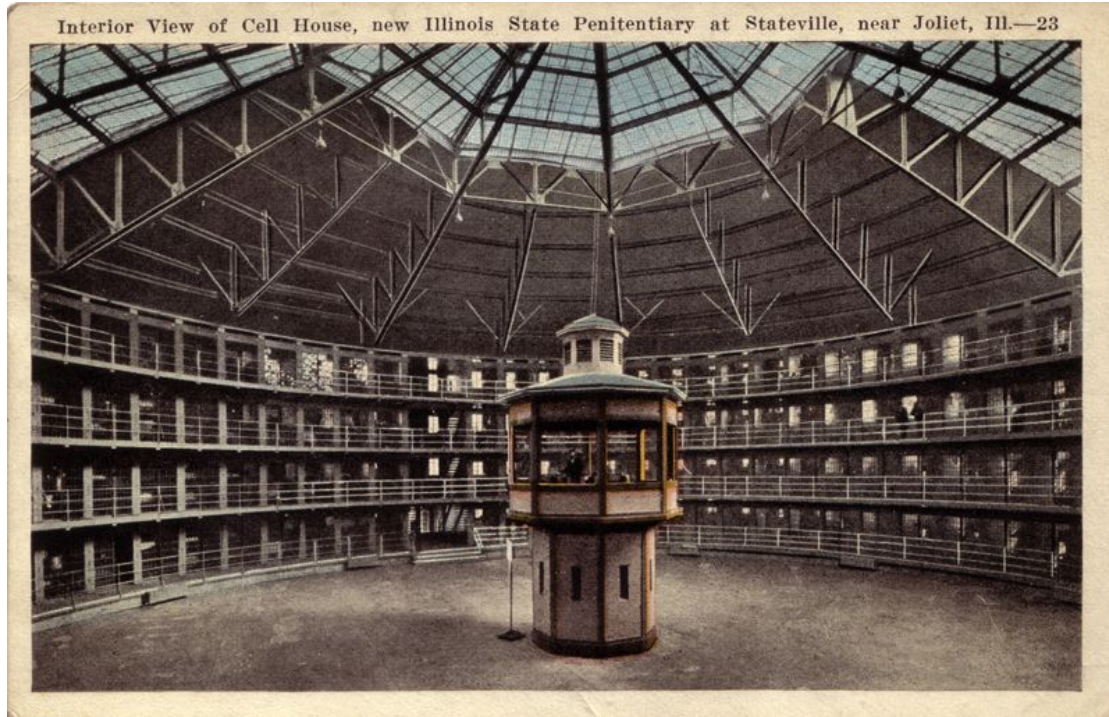- Eastern State Penitentiary (Philadelphia, PA)

Panopticons in our world

- Koepelvegangenis (Breda, Netherlands) -- consultation with Rem Koolhaus, OMA
- Presidio Modelo, Cuba

Panopticons in our world

Interior View of Cell House, new Illinois State Penitentiary at Stateville, near Joliet, Ill.—23

Discussion Questions

1. What role does the concept of "prison" or "punishment" play in our personal daily lives?
    a. How has the concept of discipline been ingrained in us since childhood, and what role did modern society play in this process?
2. In what ways are concepts of plague and purity applied to modern-day disciplinary surveillance?

Discussion Questions

3. How inevitable is the surveillance-based disciplinary society? What alternatives existed in the past, and do alternatives exist today?

       a.   Is a trust-based society possible?

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Architectures of Surveillance

- Spatiality as a social phenomenon
  - Architecture as the relationship between panopticon, people, and objects (Lefebvre)
- Spy architecture
  - Large, bland, hidden
- Architecture of Anxiety
  - Surveillance as an aesthetic
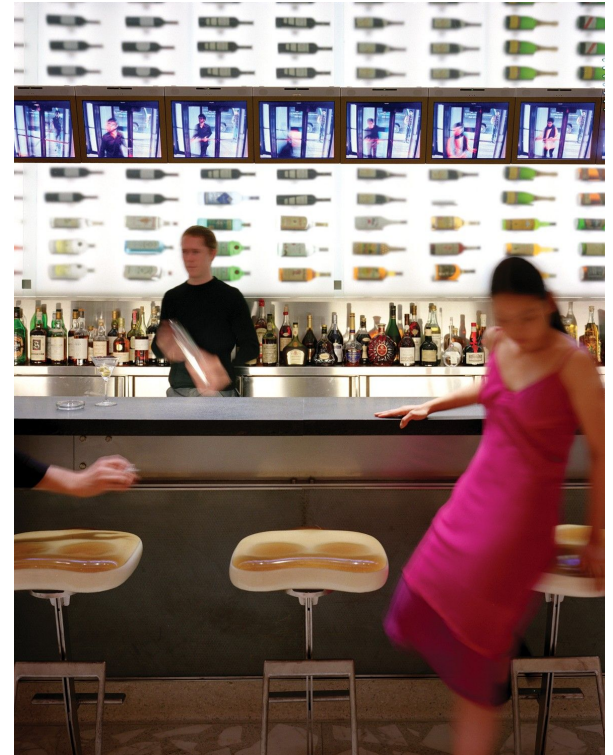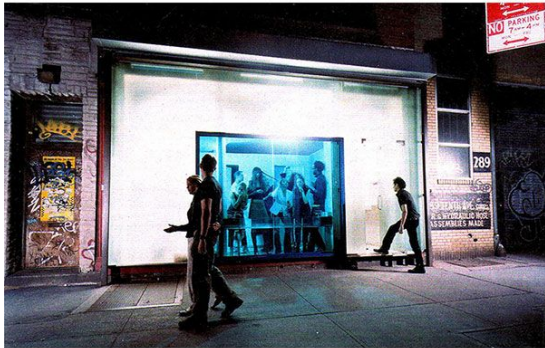 - Glass -- bureaucracy, anonymity

Spy Architecture

- NSA Headquarters
- CIA Headquarters
- FBI Headquarters
- NSA Data Center

Surveillance Aesthetic

- Glass Bar (Thomas Leeser). NYC, 2002
- Brasserie (Diller + Scofido). NYC, 2000
- Givenchy Oblique commercial

Digital Mediums of Surveillance

Human Rhetoric of Surveillance

- Fundamentals of Our National Polity (1937)

The true characteristics of filial piety in our country are its perfect conformity with our national polity by heightening still further the relationship between morality and nature. Our country is a great family nation, and the imperial household is the head family of the subjects and the nucleus of national life. . . .

When we trace the marks of the facts of the founding of our country and the progress of our history, what we always find there is the spirit of harmony. Harmony is a product of the great achievements of the founding of the nation and is the power behind our historical growth. It also is a humanitarian Way inseparable from our daily lives. The spirit of harmony is built on the concord

Human Rhetoric of Surveillance

- Mao's "Little Red Book"

We must not become complacent over any success. We should check our complacency and constantly criticize our shortcomings, just as we should wash our faces or sweep the floor every day to remove the dirt and keep them clean.

"Get Organized!" (November 29, 1943), *Selected Works*, Vol. III, p. 160.*

Psychology of Surveillance

Personal anecdotes of disciplinary surveillance systems? Thoughts on their influence?

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JON BRODKIN, ARS TECHNICA

SECURITY   09.11.2021 08:00 AM

LA Police Are Collecting Detainees' Social Media Information

According to new documents, officers ask people they stop for their Facebook and Twitter account details, and then feed the data into Palantir.

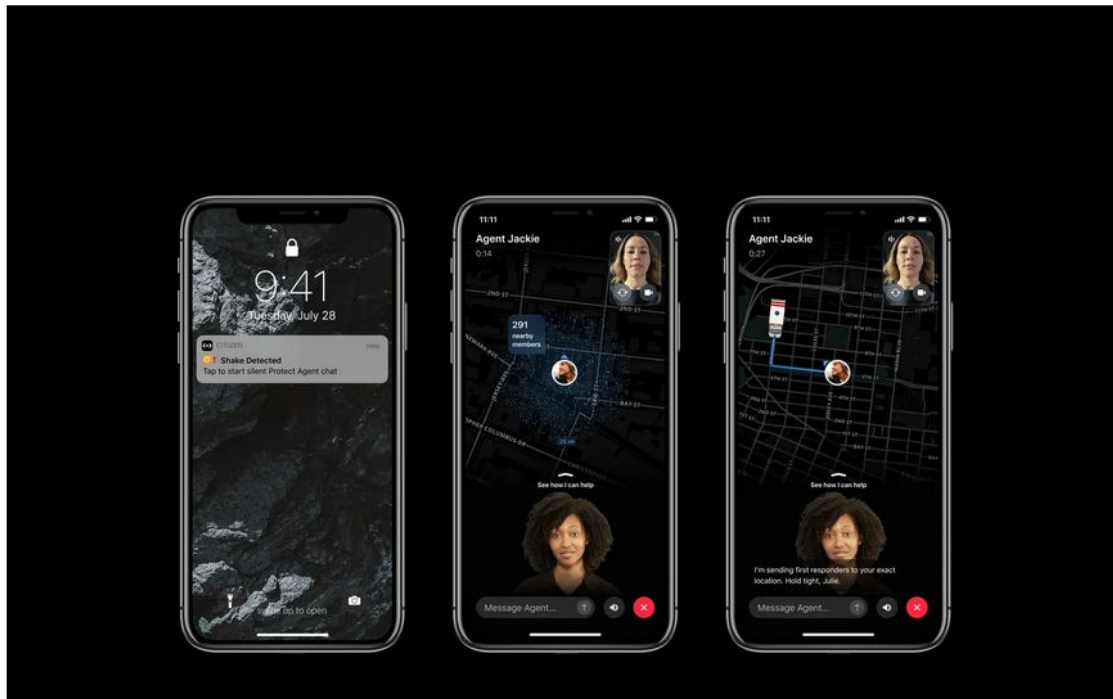JIM SALTER, ARS TECHNICA   SECURITY   09.08.2021 05:15 PM

ProtonMail Amends Its Policy After Giving Up an Activist's Data

The email service says it was unable to appeal a Swiss court's demand to log the IP address of a French climate advocate.

BOONE ASHWORTH   GEAR   08.03.2021 06:47 PM

Citizen's New Service Helps Paying Users Summon the Cops

The crime-tracking app is charging $20 per month to give subscribers access to their own virtual security service.

PRIVACY AND SECURITY

U.S. Schools Are Buying Phone-Hacking Tech That the FBI Uses to Investigate Terrorists

By Tom McKay and Dhruv Mehrotra | 12/11/20 2:15PM | Comments (109)

Drawers of cell phones stored at Israeli firm Cellebrite's research lab in Petah Tikva in 2016.   Photo: Jack Guez/AFP (Getty Images)

Coming Soon to INTERFACE!

BRIAN BARRETT   LILY HAY NEWMAN   SECURITY   09.03.2021 12:58 PM

Apple Backs Down on Its Controversial Photo-Scanning Plans

A sustained backlash against a new system to look for child sexual abuse materials on user devices has led the company to hit pause.