Panopticon: The Ideal Social Order Essay, Research Paper

Panopticon: The Ideal Social Order

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English 1-53

“The Panopticon is a marvelous machine which, whatever use one may wish

to put it to, produces homogenous effects of power.” Panopticism is a style of

controlling the individual and making him conform to the system. That system

could refer to the police or the world as a whole. There is never a definite

top position, therefore, everyone feels as if they are being monitored by

someone else. It is for this reason that this disciplinary mechanism is so

effective.

The Panopticon serves as a tool for discipline and a laboratory of power.

The capabilities of a Panopticon are endless. It is the basis for the

government while it could also aid in the criminal activities for the mafia. In

the government there is a system of checks and balances where nothing can get

accomplished without the authorization of a higher ranked official. Once these

ideas are passed they are then imposed on the individuals of society by other

organizations . Whether it be the police, the IRA, or a neighborhood watch

group. The Panopticon can serve the public in many ways. It can defend a

country, reform prisoners, treat the ill, and educate the public. It does

this by creating channels of power and distributing them to the individuals. In

the Panopticon, no one individual shall be granted too much power so as to

place his or her own values upon the masses. The concept behind panopticism is

the distribution of power in order to better society as a whole. The historical

problems with power have proven, when it is unevenly distributed, those with

the power take advantage and impose their values on the public. For instance,

Hitler was given too much power and he massacred millions of innocent people.

The Panopticon, on the other hand, serves to increase the wealth, welfare,

education, and spirituality of society. The Panopticon does punish but it does

so in a means of reform. It attempts to restore the individual to a being that

can be a productive and positive influence. The system has two main purposes,

the distribution of power and the means of establishing discipline.

Every aspect of the world has the ideas and principles of panopticism

behind them. The world is full of intricate and complicated people. These

people group together to create tribes, governments, countries, and or

civilizations. What are the rules? How are we, the most complicated form of

life that we know of, suppose to act towards one another. The panoptic system

has implemented itself upon the world. It has created a system where no one

force can overcome the next without any serious implications. If our country

had one person in complete control we would be in grave danger. What if this

individual decided he didn’t like people with blonde hair. If one was granted

enough power he could round up all of those with blonde hair and execute them.

The panopticon prevents this. It forms a intricate network of the distribution

of power so that one never feels that he can act without repercussions. This

form of control goes so far as to question, how do we know that we are not being

watched by other forms of life? Right now, as I write this paper there might be

some other form of life monitoring my every action. Not to mention that our own

government can follow us with the invention of satellites. This is why the

system is ingrained so deeply within its’ society. No matter what level of

society one is on he doesn’t know if he is being watched.

The police force in our government is a prime example of panopticism in

our society. The police enforce discipline and they are given enough power to

protect us from the ills of society. Yet they are not given too much so that

they can control us. If an officer decides that he does not like an individual

he has just arrested, the officer does not have the right to impose his own

values upon the offender. He must act in accordance to a higher authority. If

he disobeys this authority he is subject to disciplinary actions. The beauty of

the system is that this officer never knows when he could get caught breaking

the rules. Even though this officer upholds justice, he himself is subject to

the laws he maintains. This is what makes the panopticon so strong. The

citizens of our society looks the police as the bad guys. Where would we be

without a police force? They are here to protect those that are benefiting

society. Just the fact that there is a police force acts as a deterrent to

those who might be considering an illegal activity. This network of who is

watching who is one of the concepts behind panopticism and it is what makes the

police force so successful.

The Panopticon is a multi-functional form of organization. It serves as

a distribution of power that provides, produces, and protects the individuals

contained within its’ limits. It includes institutions such as a hospital,

schoolhouse, government, or even a prison. One might feel that each of these

organizations have different objectives. Panopticism shows that all of these

forms of order have a unified purpose, to benefit any individual in society and

help society by bettering that individual.