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Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon

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In his hugely influential book Discipline and Punish, Foucault used the example of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison as a means of representing the transition from the early modern monarchy to the late modern capitalist state. In the former, power is visibly exerted, for instance by the destruction of the body of the criminal, while in the latter power becomes invisible and focuses on the mind of the subject, in order to identify, marginalize, and 'treat' those who are regarded as incapable of participating in, or unwilling to submit to, the disciplines of production. The Panopticon links the worlds of Bentham and Foucault scholars yet they are often at cross-purposes; with Bentham scholars lamenting the ways in which Foucault is perceived to have misunderstood panopticon, and Foucauldians apparently unaware of the complexities of Bentham's thought. This book combines an appreciation of Bentham's broader project with an engagement of Foucault's insights on economic government to go beyond the received reading of panopticism as a dark disciplinary technology of power. Scholars here offer new ways of understanding the Panopticon projects through a wide variety of topics including Bentham's plural Panopticons and their elaboration of schemes of 'panoptic Utopia', the 'inverted Panopticon', 'panoptic governance', 'political panopticism' and 'legal panopticism'. French studies on the Panopticon are groundbreaking and this book brings this research to an English-speaking audience for the first time. It is essential reading, not only for those studying Bentham and Foucault, but also those with an interest in intellectual history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and those studying contemporary surveillance and society.

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