

"The Panopticon", a podcast by Andrew Gabelic

***Each color represents a different voice of the mind.**

None of us are one person. We've seen it, lived it, been prisoners to it, every single moment of our lives.

None of us are one person. There's three of us, five of us, a million of us inside.

None of us are all us, there's different voices that control our moods and our minds

The victim

The wise sage

And the panopticon.

One loves to feel powerless, defeated, mistreated, confused.

The other has hope in the future, faith in the innerworkings of life. He dreams, he hopes, he plans and he fights.

And the third? The third? What did you call him?

The Panopticon.

Panopti-what?

The Panopticon.

Panopticon.

The Panopticon.

What does he do? Who does he favor? Where is he now?

HYPER SENSITIVE is your number one enemy, there is something about that hypersensitivity that not everybody has, everything means something, everything is insulting, and every little thing that happens to you affects your mood. It's like every time someone displays what they think about you...

Is he a rationalizer?

Is he a dumb part of my brain that pretends to be smart?

I'm right! I love it when I'm right. And I get to love a lot because I'm always right.

Oh he's the ego, the part that feels superior and all knowing.

The part that thinks I'm god's gift to humanity.

Is that the best you can come up with? "EGO"? How many hours have you spent reading wise quotes on instagram? Answer this question! And please...weave your response into something resembling a

rational, coherent, and sensible train of thought for once in the history of your cracked out excuse for a mind.

Answer simply, and do not adorn your language with adjectives, hyperboles, or complex sentences. Just answer simply and clearly.

WHATTT?

Do you really think Jeremy Bentham designed an entire prison and Michelle Foucault used it for years as a metaphor for the mind, if all he was talking about, was THE EGO? EGO? EGO??

Why don't you tell me who and what you are?

I control everyone, from President Obama to Snooki, from Mother Theresa to Kanye West. I'm a part of the human experience, a section of our primate brains. I drive our behaviors, sometimes hidden, sometimes right to your FACE.

What is my biggest weakness? I know I have a lot of talents, but I'm also deficient in many ways. Think about the most damning of all of your deficiencies. Verbalize it now. What is it?

Mindless hope. I have dreams and aspirations, but every day, I block myself from going after them.

Something inside me stops me, like a force that doesn't want me to have the things I want. A force that wants me to suffer more, forcing me to continue sinking deeper and deeper into discontent.

So I visit the same website 300 times a day. I scroll through my Facebook feed 1000 times. I watch another episode of the TV series I've already seen. I do anything to keep my mind away from the solution.

It's unrecognized anxiety.

Unrecognized anxiety.

Unrecognized, anxiety.

And where is the light switch I can flick to make it all go away?

The brain hack, life hack, that thing I can do to be the person I always wanted to be?

I have a question for you both. If you were born again in a different body, and had to choose between one of the following, which would you choose?

Would you rather be a virtuous, honest, generous, and caring person who everyone believes to be a degenerate idiot, or a corrupt, evil, and selfish person who everyone believes to be a hero and a saint? '

Good person believed to be bad, any day of the week.

Really? Is that what I truly think or what I think I should respond to a question like that? What deep in my mind, I know others want to hear me say? What I think is a normal response representative of normal behavior?

What good is it to be good if everyone thinks you're the worst? Why would that make any sense?

Wait, Panopticon is that you?

Wait, Panopticon, is that you?

I'm pretty sure that is him. Me being smart and analyzing my own question pragmatically like the best of contrarian leaders, deep thinkers, transformational individuals.

This is me speaking through you.

You can control what I say?

Our brain, our ego, our subconscious, our moods, and our desires are not arbitrary, unchangeable or permanent.

They are our own, and we could have unlimited power over them, reprogram them, build them into better structures, design an objective for our best self and work to achieve it.

We just refuse to try. Wait. Who said that? I thought that was my voice. Why do I know these things?

You're not fooling me.

I am not, I am fooling he who controls you.

The structure of modern society is designed to impose a very strict network of belief systems that remain unquestioned.

The mother of all belief systems – that we have no control over our thoughts, our desires, and our behavior – is at the center of this structure.

This was Michele Foucault's central argument.

We walk through life believing those different sides of ourselves, those three voices diametrically opposed to each other, which have conflicting dreams and belief systems and objectives and strengths and weaknesses, to be a permanent unchangeable deficiency in our minds.

We think these whims can take us anywhere, make us do anything, and we are their slaves. We think something inside us pulls us away from living good lives, working hard to achieve our dreams, finding success in our drive to change the world, and enjoying what we have.

In "Discipline and Punish", Foucault argued that morality was one of the most important mechanisms we have imposed on ourselves in order to facilitate this structure. By defining appropriate and inappropriate behavior (whatever that may be, and however it may change throughout history), the idea that we could be one of two things:

NORMAL, OR ABNORMAL

Is implanted into the lowest depths of our minds.

Those who are abnormal, are stigmatized, pitied, pushed to the outskirts, not allowed to belong to the special club of successful individuals.

They are punished, and punishment can take many forms.

Science, religion, history, psychology, economics, political science, sociology, anthropology and art are bound by the structure of ideas that constantly remind us of the normal and the abnormal, the common and the rare, the right and the wrong.

And although we perceive those systems to be actual definitions of the world that surrounds us, they're just stories created by humans for humans. Yes, they're systems made to describe truth, and in many ways they achieve this objective.

But in many ways they do not. In many ways they blind us from the truth

Forget about how many individual pieces of knowledge in each system are true, and think about how many could very well be wrong.

How many times, after the passage of several decades, have we discovered all our proven, perfectly agreed upon scientific knowledge to be wrong? And why do we believe this is not going to happen again?

What if the world we live in changes? What if our vision of life is transformed in powerful ways like it was so many centuries before?

This is not about denying science, or any of our systems of belief. This isn't about claiming they're all mistaken. In many ways we have discovered the truth.

But in many ways we have not.

This is about learning to accept, at any point and at all times, that our beliefs about ourselves and our world construct our reality, and that they are just that: BELIEFS.

But we always, every day in every way, accept them as TRUTHS. AS DESCRIPTIONS OF THE WORLD WE LIVE IN.

The universe is far more complex, and a portion of our beliefs will always be wrong.

We all believe certain things about ourselves that we can't prove, and refuse to question.

A perpetual questioning is necessary – and if you're sitting on your couch devouring cookies, scrolling through your phone which will give you nothing, and watching another season of a show you know by heart instead of doing the things that will actually make you happy, believing to be incapable of changing the side of yourself that is starving for these useless distractions, the best gift you could give yourself is question why you think your state of mind is static, unquestionable, impossible to improve the way you want it improved.

What anxiety is weighing you down? Perhaps it's the anxiety that you're not normal like the rest...

Travelling as much as the rest. Earning as much money as the rest. Finding love like the rest. Enjoying life as much as the rest.

We drill this anxiety into the deepest corners of our minds. And it is that depth that gives birth to our uncontrollable whims.

The voices that can't be stopped. The self-sabotage that derails our path.

The side of ourselves that gives birth to the chaos in our lives.

These whims can take us anywhere, make us do anything, and we are their slaves. We think we're abnormal, so we think something inside us pulls us away from living good lives.

But what about the panopticon? **What about the panopticon?** What is the panopticon?

It was the late 18th century, and Jeremy Bentham, a renowned philosopher, set out to design a prison that could function with no prison guards. The challenge was to achieve this marvelous feat through architecture alone.

How to design a prison where prisoners behave? How to leave them on their own and create an environment where they self-police? Where they become well behaved versions of themselves?

His groundbreaking design became known as a "PANOPTICON". A panopticon prison is a tall building that looks like a hollow cylinder, where all the prison cells are located on the inner walls. This meant that a prisoner in his cell would be able to see all of the other prisoners in their cells at all times. In the center of the cylinder courtyard stood a guard tower, which would be significantly higher than the cells.

This meant that one guard could watch all prisoners from his vantage point at any time, but, since the tower was so tall, prisoners would never be able to tell who the guard was looking at or what he was doing.

They had to behave at all times, because they never knew when they were being watched.

The guard could be looking at the other side of the prison, but they would never know.

The guard could be dead, and they would never know.

There could be no guard there at all – and yet they would never know.

The threat of punishment was always there, so they always had to behave.

They made themselves follow the rules at all times.

People always behave when they think they are being watched, whether or not they are actually being watched.

The more you think about panopticon systems, the more you'll realize that they are a common occurrence in the modern world.

Yesterday our HR manager stopped by my desk, wanting me to sign our new employee guideline handbook. 45 pages. It said I had no privacy in my work computer and all internet browsing was being monitored.

Speed enforced by aircraft.

I stopped going to non-work related sites.

Fascinating, isn't it?

That I don't want to lose my job?

That you think they actually have the time, interest, and technical skill to monitor your browsing so meticulously.

They don't?

You could say that the 21st century is the ultimate panopticon.

Everything we do being so public and impossible to hide. Everyone being conditioned to share their lives, experiences, thoughts and whims through multiple social media channels. And being forced to meticulously monitor the lives of others.

We are finally able to be monitored, finally able to present every day of our lives edited into some form of reality show, one that is viewed and evaluated by everyone who knows us.

And we feel that monitoring every second of the day.

We quietly transform our own behavior into some performance, some idealistic version of ourselves – some dream and hope and perfect statue.

Some weird reflection of our true selves. Censored. Polished. Beautifully crafted.

Rather than the person we really are.

Who is monitoring you? Who is judging if your next career move is right or wrong? Who reads the title on your LinkedIn profile, and is impressed with where you are?

Who sees the car you drive, the clothes you wear, the couch sitting in your living room and delicious breakfast you prepared?

Who says it is wrong to reach certain life milestones after the agreed upon timeline?

Why is it a problem that you met prince charming at 35, 45, 55?

Why can't you stand the humiliation of being fired, or quitting your job without anything else aligned?

Who are you choosing as your life partner, and why?

Beware, for every life blessing is getting packaged for public consumption, every good moment is getting designed with public relations in mind.

You present your life to everyone, except your own emotions, and your own personal needs.

But what does that have to do with power exactly?

This is not about the power the government has over our lives, this is about the power we have over our own minds. Our power to change ourselves into identities diametrically opposed to who we truly are.

Our power to become individuals that conflict with our inner nature. Our power to insert ourselves into unhealthy, unhappy, and unfulfilling situations because we think we need them. Our power to live lives that are not even close to what we really need, or want.

That's the scariest power another entity can have over you. And yes, that manipulative, dangerous, and misguided entity is right inside you.

Right where every passing thought in your mind originates.

There is three of me inside me. There is three of me, inside me. ***There is three of me....inside me.***

There is no guard in the tower. And every single prisoner, through the design of the prison, has a perfect immaculate view of every other cell.

It is not just the guard that we fear. It's our cell mates, everyone else who suffers our fate and seems to be handling it better than us.

The fear of public condemnation looms large, perhaps much larger, than punishment by authority.

Every prisoner internalizes the voices of the guards. Every prisoner internalizes the voices of his cellmates. And every prisoner makes those voices his own.

Convinced, that it is who he is, and what he wants.

It's a good point. But I've never been obsessed with money or getting rich. I've never cared what others think of me. I don't think much would change after all this.

Convinced, that it is who he is, and what he wants.

Mark Leary is a leading researcher on self-consciousness. Mark LEARY asked himself this very question.

MARK LEARY theorized, that the panopticon, or what is known as the "sociometer", is a feature we gained through evolution.

Think about how vulnerable we are in the natural world. We can't even walk any terrains without shoes on. We can't sleep outside. Branches, rocks, and spines cut our skin. A million plants can kill us and most of the food available can only be obtained through the combined effort of several individuals. Without groups, we die. Without being liked, we die.

Without following the rules in order to belong, we DIE.

We would never have survived if we didn't develop some sort of ability to get small groups of people to accept us into their circles.

Right, but then you grow up and learn it's a stupid way to live and if you're smart you'll start living for yourself and not for others.

Convinced, that it is who he is, and what he wants.

First you say this is the thing that is keeping me from being truly happy. Then you say we all have it and can't escape it. What was the point of your entire speech?

Caring what others think, thinking yourself superior in many ways, believing in your ability to achieve and go after what you want, and doing it all from the most innate drive to impress them all, the drive to be liked, the drive to be respected and loved, is a feature of your brain.

It will not go away. It is ingrained.

And it is neither good nor bad.

It is the source of humanity's accomplishments. And the core of our greatest regrets.

It is the trains and the wars. The dynamites and the vaccines. Our nukes and our footprints on the moon.

DO NOT ESCAPE THE PANOPTICON. That would mean you would steal, kill, rape – because you would not care. You have to care. You have to have a moral compass. A sociometer can be good.

Caring is good and has many positive effects.

BUT – remember there are no blacks and whites in this universe. There is no philosophy, behavior, or worldview that makes everything perfect.

There is no one right that explains all wrongs. No wrong that cancels out every right.

Every yin has its yang.

Everything that we do for our own good triggers unrelated problems that can destroy us.

So the fact that we need it, does not mean it is not harming us in many ways.

You would not want to escape the panopticon. But you have to be conscious of it at all times.

It can make you care deeply about things that don't really matter.

It can get you depressed about things you don't really care about.

It can get you obsessed with your quest to satisfy external signposts of validation you don't even know you're yearning for.

You could sacrifice your own happiness, live in despair and look for all the wrong things, forget who you really are.

Because societies have a horrible record of getting every single thing in their moral code correctly.

Societies have a LOOOONG history of valuing the wrong things.

Our moral codes have sanctioned persecution, slavery, and genocide, and they have shamelessly rationalized them as virtues.

They've married off girls at 12 to 40 year old men. They've told rape victims they deserve it. They've told 30 year old women it is too late to find love and happiness.

They've told the poor that they're inferior. And the rich that they're the best.

Societies don't know what the TRUTH is, but they're very good at pretending that they do.

And write it into books. And push huge masses of people to adhere to them. And use the panopticon

The voices in your head – they come from everyone you've ever met, and every day you believe they are your own.

There is a you there – but you don't necessarily hear it every day.

**A part of yourself is always analyzing your thoughts, actions and words from the outside looking in.
When you become a prisoner to that voice, you let go of yourself, giving everyone around you the power to direct your own life.**

Actually – it's worse. You're giving your perception of what everyone around you thinks of you the power to direct your own life. It's what you think that they think, not what they actually think.

Isn't that screwed up? That's the panopticon.