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5. SECURITY, EMANCIPATION AND DOMINATION IN *PSYCHO-PASS*

5.1. Introduction

This chapter analyzes the animated TV series *Psycho-Pass* (2012-2013), and explores the ways in which this anime illustrates interrelated aspects of security, emancipation and domination in an advanced surveillance society. Together with Chapter 4, this chapter is concerned with the ability of anime to reflect and illustrate philosophy. I use *emancipation as security* as an entry-point into this critical investigation. The term ‘security’ refers to a condition or a feeling of being free from danger or threat at the level of individuals, societies, states, and the international community. In political theory, there are two conflicting views on security and power: the first is security as emancipation; and the second is security as domination. According to International Relations theorist Ken Booth, the theory and practice of security should focus on the emancipation of human individuals because “emancipation, not power or order, produce true security” (Booth 1991, 319). Certain presuppositions about the nature of security rest on this understanding of individual and collective emancipation, that is, *security* is defined in opposition to power or domination. In contrast to this, Michel Foucault (2007) expresses a different view of what is at stake in practice of security, and its relation to broader questions of power and order. According to Foucault, the mechanisms of power are closely intertwined with technologies of security. The analysis of this chapter shows how *Psycho-Pass* illustrates Foucault’s notion of security as governmentality in digital surveillance and provides a counterexample to Booth’s argument of security as emancipation.

Psycho-Pass is directed by Shiotani Naoyoshi and produced by Production I.G. Film director Motohiro Katsuyuki is also involved in the production as executive director. The story is set in a Japan of the future, where new technologies are available to measure and monitor people’s mental conditions, personalities and inclinations to antisocial behaviors. The criteria of the so-called *Psycho-Pass* are widely used in society to measure people’s mental health, just like various other criteria such as blood pressure or cholesterol levels to check people’s physical health in our present. The government has established a powerful mental healthcare system, the *Sibyl System*, to record and monitor all citizens’ Psycho-Pass. The system also calculates the *Crime Coefficient*, which gives the probability that a citizen is likely to commit crimes. If one’s Crime Coefficient is above a

normal level, one becomes a potential criminal and will be arrested by the police or sent to correction facilities as if he or she had actually committed a crime. Thanks to the system, society has become safer because the government can prevent crimes by detecting what will happen in the future, enabling police to stop the criminal before they commit a crime. In this society, citizens are subject to the Sibyl System but, at the same time, they enjoy security and stability through the system.

The story is about a group of police officers investigating a series of crimes. The protagonist Tsunemori Akane is a new police officer called Inspector at the Public Safety Bureau. Her job is to arrest criminals and would-be criminals with her team including Enforcers and other experts. Both Inspectors and Enforcers use a special weapon called the *Dominator*. The Dominator is a type of weapon carried by the police for shooting criminals and potential criminals. The Dominator is directly connected to the Sibyl System and the system judges whether a person is a (potential) criminal or not, and whether they should be eliminated or not. Inspectors and Enforcers follow the system's judgment during their duties. In short, *Psycho-Pass* explores the belief that crime can be prevented before it happens, a scenario similar to Philip K. Dick's ([1956] 2000) short story (and the subsequent film directed by Steven Spielberg) *Minority Report* (2002). Script writer Urabuchi Gen notes that he wants to create Philip K. Dick's world in anime (Sudo 2012b; Psycho-Pass Production Committee 2013, 144). The anime demonstrates the ways in which surveillance becomes a biopolitical security and power technology, and it showcases the regulatory measures that transform it into a technology of certainty.

Psycho-Pass exposes us to the world of digital surveillance, allowing us to critically see the problematic and better feel the consequences of security. As Peter Marks (2005, 222) rightly argues, works of fiction such as novels and films "have long provided vivid, provocative and critically informed accounts of surveillance practices and trends," providing "stimulating points of reference for surveillance scholars." Indeed, surveillance has frequently been explored in popular culture especially in the science fiction genre. On the one hand, "the surveillant imaginary finds its way into novels, films, song lyrics and other media but, on the other hand, surveillance is itself influenced by popular culture, as the media can shape our attitudes and actions towards surveillance" (Kammerer 2012, 99).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ The recent NHK documentary *The Next World* (2015) provides excellent examples of how the technologies, practices and popular imaginary of surveillance are integrated into constructing aspects of social reality in Japan. Interestingly, some of the content and visual images of the program are very similar to the anime *Psycho-Pass* (Oricon Style 2015). The documentary has five episodes in total, with each episode divided into two sections: the first part being an ordinary documentary on cutting edge technologies available in 2015 (artificial intelligence, human enhancement technologies, virtual reality etc.), while the second part is science

This chapter draws attention to a range of security mechanisms manifested in *Psycho-Pass*, and examines the politics and implications of their use in a fictional context. The *Psycho-Pass* illustrates how practices of security are actually an instrument of power, discipline, government, and above all, domination as discussed by Foucault, rather than being emancipatory. Moreover, the anime deals with the question of how people live against the background of digital surveillance and how they negotiate it.

This chapter also argues that the notion of emancipation as security needs to be critically reconsidered and reexamined. In what follows, I begin by considering Booth's critical approach which seeks to equate the notion of emancipation with security. I then explore the ways in which Foucault conceptualizes security as being parallel to governmentality. Afterwards, I examine how various modes of power within the notion of governmentality are manifested in *Psycho-Pass*. I conclude that emancipation tends inevitably to produce new forms of domination.

5.2. Emancipation as Security and its Problematics

Locating the agenda of security studies within a broader tradition of Critical Theory, Ken Booth and Richard Wyn Jones criticize the traditional approach to security that focuses entirely on war and military threats to the state. They make the link between security and an Enlightenment-influenced notion of emancipation, proposing an alternative critical approach, in which security is studied in relation to human emancipation. Challenging the dominant definition of security as 'the threat, use and control of military force' in security studies, they propose that the security of human individuals is the most important object of study. In one of his most influential essays, entitled "Security and Emancipation" (1991), Booth redefines the concept of security and equates it with the emancipation of human individuals.

fiction drama set in 2045 which envisions how our life could change dramatically in thirty years. Episode 1 "To Singularity and Beyond" first features the evolution of AI and available technologies, which can predict many things including crime, consumer trends such as forecasting future hit songs or the best partners on a dating site. Then in the drama, a future society in which the protagonist Kiyoto lives is very similar to a rationalized world of *Psycho-Pass*: AI is everywhere around him; he has an AI personal assistant like Akane in *Psycho-Pass*; various technologies (e.g. toothbrush, bicycle, and other wearable devices) keep him updated about his health, risks and probabilities of future events, and guide him accordingly. There is no way to pretend that he knows nothing or cheat someone. In addition, the image design of AI is blue-green, which is almost identical to the color motif of *Psycho-Pass*.

Security means the absence of threats. Emancipation is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do. War and the threat of war is one of those constraints, together with poverty, poor education, political oppression and so on. Security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security. Emancipation, theoretically, is security. (Booth 1991, 319)

For Booth, emancipation is the key to *true security*. He acknowledges that war and military threats to the state are certainly two of those constraints on individual security but they are not the only ones.⁵¹ In his view, security studies should not restrict its scope of study to the level of state security, but should extend its focus to the various other insecurities preventing human individuals from pursuing the projects they have freely chosen. Thus threats to human individuals such as political freedom, food supply, and environmental degradation are important security matters on top of violence and conflict within and beyond the state.⁵² Booth and Wyn Jones identify five security sectors: military, environmental, economic, political and societal (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010, 23). Wyn Jones (1999) further develops Booth's point of view and stresses the importance of a critical approach and immanent critique for transforming society in a more secure and emancipated direction.

Moreover, Booth and Wyn Jones do not conceive of emancipation as a static condition, a fixed goal for true security practice; they see emancipation instead as "a process rather than an end point, a direction rather than a destination" (Wyn Jones 1999, 77). For Wyn Jones, emancipation takes the form of "concrete utopias" – the pursuit of which is a ceaseless process that involves identifying particular insecurities experienced by human individuals and groups in a given context, rather than setting out fixed blueprints for an ideal society. "Even if a more emancipated order is brought into

⁵¹ Concerns about security may exist at an individual or collective level but the distinction between individual and collective (i.e. societal and national) security is in fact not as complete as it may seem. For instance, security checks at the airport, the introduction of biometric identity documents, and the proliferation of CCTV may all be proposed in the name of national security. Yet, these practices are also invoked in relation to security and insecurity at the personal level. Moreover, the theoretical differentiation of internal and external threats is no longer viable. For instance, crime and criminality have traditionally been categorized as domestic security but now they cannot be separated from international security.

⁵² Moreover, as Booth (1991) notes, the state-centric approach is problematic and unhelpful because it cannot explain people's insecurity when the state itself becomes major security threats to its own people, rather than the other state.

existence, the process of emancipation remains incomplete. There is always room for improvement, there is always unfinished business in the task of emancipation” (ibid., 78). In short, for Booth and his followers, emancipation is a precondition of security; emancipation and security are two of a kind.

The critical approach to security taken by Booth and Wyn Jones has extended and deepened debates among the security studies scholars over what security is, and in the meantime attracted much criticism of their distinctive understanding of security as emancipation. At base, Booth’s definition of emancipation refers to the universal liberation of individual human beings, which is deeply rooted in the particular European philosophical traditions such as the Enlightenment and Marxism. Some critics including Hayward Alker (2005, 189) remind us of the danger of a positive and progressive connotation within the idea of emancipation that can become hegemonic. Imperialism is an example of a practice once regarded as emancipatory and justified accordingly.⁵³ Moreover, while Booth’s argument aims at the way in which true security can only exist when emancipation has been achieved (and the equivalence of emancipation and security), in practice security has become the dominant justification for the growth in modern surveillance, which increases constraints on the free choices of individuals.

Surveillance is ostensibly a key mechanism for contending with threats of any kind, either imminently or in the future. For instance, it has been central to the construction of global warming, environmental degradation, nuclear accidents, terrorism, (im)migration, natural disasters, and resource scarcity as threats in recent years. A system of mass surveillance – identification, monitoring, tracking, and control – is said to be vital in achieving security, that is, the freedom to live free from constraints or fear, either with reference to traditional conceptions of security (i.e. societal or state security) or to non-traditional ones (e.g. human or environmental security). In other words, safety – the state of being secure or at least feeling secure – is a key to the good life. Accordingly, a wide range of knowledge and technologies has been developed and applied to achieve people’s wellbeing. The task allocated to security apparatuses is to predict the probable risks and prevent or mitigate them. Yet the apparatuses of security, and in particular those monitoring human subjects, are at the same time inevitably involved in practices of micropolicing, spying, or interrogating individuals perceived as threatening, dangerous, or abnormal. These

⁵³ Other critics point out the linkage between security and emancipation in Booth’s conception is problematic since it becomes impossible to consider the struggles for emancipation outside of the logic of security. Claudia Aradau (2004) argues that security and emancipation should be separated from rather than equated with one another. Aradau suggests that if emancipation is conceived as the struggle for the political equality of human individuals, it is more helpful to understand this in terms of democratic politics, equality and fairness rather than security (ibid., 401).

subjects include enemies, criminals, beggars, floating populations, and so forth. In addition to human subjects, other nonhuman subjects (e.g. ongoing changes in environment, disease, veterinary, foodchain surveillance and so forth) are also part of the apparatuses of security.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the qualities of threat, danger, and abnormality are all socially constituted in accordance with one's self-identity.⁵⁴ David Campbell (1992, 2), for instance, contends that nothing is a threat in itself; rather, it depends on how one identifies things "through an interpretation of their various dimensions of dangerousness." According to Campbell, it is not danger itself that directly constitutes a threat towards an agent (e.g. an individual or an state), given that there are numerous risks that might cause physical harm and death in the world in our everyday life (e.g. driving a car in the street). Yet, not all risks are equally perceived. The degree of actual threat depends on how the actors identify themselves. As Campbell notes, "Danger is not an objective condition. It is not a thing that exists independently of those to whom it may become a threat" (ibid., 1). This is why Campbell regards danger as an "effect of interpretation" (ibid., 2). It "bears no essential, necessary, or unproblematic relation to the action or even from which it is said to derive" (ibid.). In this sense, security or threats to security are the product of one's self-identity, and if identity is so crucial to what constitutes danger for an agent, we need to look further into the construction of that identity in order to understand the actions of agents when it comes to their security.

Identity, from a poststructuralist point of view, is "an inescapable dimension of being" (ibid., 9), yet this understanding does not suggest that identity is naturally given or fixed. Rather, identity is neither naturally given nor fixed but exists in the way people perform. Judith Butler (1988) therefore perceives identities as being performative. A simplified example is how gender identity has been constructed over time. Gender is not something that is inherent to a certain sex, but rather something that society has constructed over time in discourse, and in power relations. Hence, gender is not fixed but subject to change. In other words, gender identity is "a regulated process of repetition" (Campbell 1992, 10).

Moreover, identity is constituted through difference, where difference is present by looking at identities. The sense of difference and the existence of others with different identities create a strong conception of threat in a group with a defined identity. This can range from small-scale local threat perception to the perception of threat on a global level. With different scales come different stakes, prompting specific measures to counter the threats and re-establish a sense of safety in performing one's identity.

⁵⁴ Arnold Wolfers (1962, 150) points to two faces of the security: one in an objective and the other in a subjective sense. Security in an objective sense refers to "the absence of threats to acquired values," and in a subjective sense, to "the absence of fear that such values will be attacked" (ibid.).

Furthermore, if identities are performative, they require actions of an agent to maintain and reproduce its superficially stable identity. Facing danger provides a perfect opportunity for this. Security issues are intimately related to the politics of identity and difference. The discourse of danger and threat is fundamental to an agent's identity. This discourse helps agents to constantly define who they are and what values they should preserve in comparison to others. "It is the objectification of the self through the representation of danger that Foreign Policy helps to achieve" (Campbell 1992, 79). These perspectives on states' foreign policies make it possible to see that states are not as stable as they might seem, but rather they are "unavoidably paradoxical entities," and do not possess any kind of "prediscursive" identity (ibid., 11). As they do not have a fixed identity, the dangers they face are also not fixed, but dependent on how their identity is constructed at that point. Security in this respect is a dynamic, rather than a solid, stable concept. As there are varieties of identities, there are as many threats to be identified. Each identity thus struggles with other identities to define its own existence. The struggle for identity and security does not only involve with the use of physical violence, but also the production of knowledge, practices of dividing, and government of the self.⁵⁵ Moreover, since the idea of security is not as stable as it might be, it is important to examine the process of meaning making and to ask what kind of practices and discourses construct a particular aspect of security and insecurity. The meanings of security and insecurity depend on who is identified as the others, and what is recognized as danger at both individual and collective levels.

This way of understanding is profoundly contrary to Booth's original proposal (2007, 112) – emancipation as "a philosophical anchorage for knowledge, a theory of progress for society, and a practice of resistance against oppression." Indeed, emancipation in Booth's understanding is committed to a belief that a *progressive* transformation of social reality can be made through the *theory* and *practice* of security. He conceives security "as *the means* and emancipation *and as the end*." (Booth 2007, 115 emphasis in the original). Thus, security is "a process of emancipation" (Booth 1991, 322). From the critics' view however, the idea of security is highly problematic.

⁵⁵ Foucault (1983) argues that there are three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects. The first mode is to give them the status of science. The second mode is called "dividing practices" (mad versus sane, sick versus healthy, criminals versus the good boys). The third is the way that a human being turns him/herself into a subject (208–209).

5.3. Security as Governmentality

As shown in the previous section, the desire for security has become a crucial part of modern everyday life. The next key question is how individual and collective security can be achieved. Scholars have paid great attention to the development and standardisation of techniques, policies, and organizations that provide security for people within and outside borders. Among others, the scholarly literature on security studies and surveillance studies⁵⁶ has provided the basis of understanding the apparatus of security. The literature identifies a wide range of strategies and technologies which are adopted to avoid, prevent, or manage the dangers posed by multifold threats, or the feeling of threats, so as to achieve individual, societal, state, or trans-states security. Biometric technologies at airports, video surveillance in train stations, tracking devices including GPS (Global Positioning System), RFID (Radio Frequency Identification), drone system and so forth are some of those examples of modern surveillance technologies.

Surveillance, as David Lyon (2001, 2) defines it, is “any collection and processing of personal data, whether identifiable or not, for the purposes of influencing or managing those whose data have been garnered.” Surveillance from this perspective has two faces: *care* and *control* (Lyon 2001). In Toni Weller’s (2012, 61) words: it is “practices of warfare and welfare.” Surveillance is both for people’s wellbeing and the control of populations as human resources. Indeed, modern surveillance technologies (e.g. CCTVs, RFID chips, credit cards, biometric passports, and identity cards) have played an ever more indispensable role in security practices. Governments also extend the scope of surveillance through assorted ‘e-government’ initiatives, involving scrutiny of individuals, groups and environments through the new technologies. Gathering and processing the data, police and governmental officers incorporate various ways to visualize, track and target *the enemy* whatever they are defined. The same is true in international security. States, either democratic or autocratic, all collect data on their own citizens and foreigners for the sake of *security*.

Moreover, police forces have increasingly been sharing information and exchanging ideas on best practice across the world in order to counter ‘new threats’ such as terrorism, fundamentalism and organized crimes. There are cross-border flows of data and persons. These security practices are globalized in cooperative schemes, wherein extensive and intensive databases are collected, analyzed and shared globally. Consequently, we are gradually moving toward a uniform world surveillance society with surveillance technologies integrated into all aspects of our everyday lives.

⁵⁶ Surveillance studies intersect with many fields such as philosophy, sociology, criminology, social psychology, political science, law, architecture/planning, history, and so forth. For an overview and recent developments of the studies, see Lyon (2007); Ball, Haggerty, and Lyon (2012).

Nevertheless, surveillance also raises a series of questions about security and governance on the one hand, and civil liberties and privacy on the other. For instance, what are the implications of the spread of databases and their interconnection? Is our privacy at risk?

These questions have drawn increased public and academic attention recently. As Lyon (2001, 7) notes, “the applications of technology to risk management in the social sphere may themselves be read as a risk,” leading to violations of privacy and liberty. Likewise, Foucault also identifies the problematic of *caring*, in which life (e.g. body, health, sexuality, etc) is the focal subject for governing individuals and the population in modern society.

Foucault’s concept of *governmentality* is useful for understanding the rationalities of surveillance presented in *Psycho-Pass* and the way that the social control functions. Governmentality, in the broadest sense, is defined as the “political technology of population management” (Ceyhan 2012, 38). In one of his interviews, Foucault states that

We must distinguish the relationships of power as strategic games between liberties ... and the states of domination ... And between the two ... you have governmental technologies ... (Foucault in Hindess 1996, 99)

Foucault in his later work identifies three types of power relations, namely: between *liberties*, *domination* and *government*. The first type is power relations between *liberties*, and it is “the total structure of actions bearing on the actions of individuals who are free; that is, whose own behaviour is not wholly determined by physical constraints” (Hindess 1996, 99–100). Power in this sense is manifested in the instruments, techniques and procedures taken by the people who have their choices. The aim of power is to influence what their choices might be.

The second type, *domination*, concerns “those asymmetrical relationships of power in which subordinated persons have little room to manoeuvre because their margin of liberty is extremely limited by the effects of power” (ibid., 102). According to Hindess, Foucault recognizes that power relations often have a different structure, and domination is one type of power relations. Thus, even those who dominate would have a better chance to impose their will to the others, their power is never one-sided (ibid.).

Regarding *government*, Foucault gives the term a very broad meaning and defines it as “the conduct of conduct,”⁵⁷ that is, “a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons” (Gordon 1991, 2). To *conduct* is at the same time to *lead* others, and a way of behaving within a more and less open field of possibilities (Foucault 1983, 220–221). To govern is therefore to regulate the conduct of the self and of others, structuring the possible field of their

⁵⁷ Foucault (1983, 220) argues that the term conduct is one of the best aids to specify power relations.

actions. It refers to the ways in which one governs oneself, one's wife, husband, children, as well as the government of an institution. Foucault (1983, 221) states that

Government did not refer only to political structures or to management of states; rather it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed: the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick.

Furthermore, there is continuity between government of oneself, of the family, and of the state. The task of the government is to establish continuity,⁵⁸ in both an upward and downward direction. Upward: a person who wishes to govern the state well must first learn how to govern him/herself. Downward: when a state is well run, the head of the family will know how to look after his family, his goods, which means that individuals will, in turn, behave as they should.

Consequently, the term government refers not only to the government of institutions but also the government of *individuals* and its associated *things*. The object over which government exercised is therefore a "complex composed of men [*sic*] and things" (Foucault 1991, 93). This complex can be best illustrated in his example of governing a ship.

What does it mean to govern a ship? It means clearly to take charge of the sailors, but also of the boat and its cargo; to take care of a ship means also to reckon with winds, rocks and storms; and it consists in that activity of establishing a relation between the sailors ... and the ship ... and the cargo ... and all those eventualities like winds, rocks, storms and so on. (ibid., 93-94)

It is in this respect that Foucault's notion of government departs from the Machiavellian notion of power, or juridical sovereignty, wherein the prince's sovereignty is merely exercised over his or her own territories, and the subjects who inhabit those territories. Governmentality, in contrast, is exercised over individuals and in their relations with numerous other things (e.g. wealth, resources, territories, customs, ways of thinking and acting, life and death etc.) (ibid., 93). In other words,

⁵⁸ At the heart of this continuity is the government of the family, termed economy. And the key issue in the establishment of government is to introduce economy into the practice of politics. Consequently, as Foucault (1991, 92) notes, "to govern a state will therefore mean to apply economy, to set up an economy at the level of the entire state, which means exercising towards its inhabitants, and the wealth and behaviour of each and all, a form of surveillance and control as attentive as that of the head of a family over his household and his good."

government is concerned with managing the population of the state and the institutions, organizations and processes that the population encompasses.

In addition, and contrary to a Machiavellian notion of sovereignty as external and singular, Foucault thinks that practices of government are multiple and internal to society. According to Foucault, the Machiavellian prince acquires his principality by inheritance or conquest, but in any case the prince remains external (Foucault 1991, 89–90). Yet the practices of government, Foucault argues, are multiple and concern many kinds of people including the head of a family, the teacher of a child, etc. More importantly, they are internal to the state and society. Foucault notes that “We find ... a plurality of forms government and their immanence to the state: the multiplicity and immanence of these activities distinguishes them radically from the transcendent singularity of Machiavelli’s prince” (ibid., 91)

Foucault accordingly sees governmentality as a modern form of power explicitly in opposition to the Machiavellian idea of sovereignty, as we have also seen in Chapter 1. Machiavellianism is concerned with maintaining security through the figure of sovereignty, and the object of government is to maintain the sovereign’s rule over its territory and subjects of the state. Yet, according to Foucault, this type of rule is too fragile because it is too external to society. The practices of government should instead be immanent to society itself, and exercised over individuals and things, promoting the wealth and wellbeing of the population, and regulating the milieu (the term Foucault uses to depict the space of security) within the field of population. The *conduct of conduct* is undertaken by various institutions and practices across different social fields. Government through state institutions or apparatus is just one aspect of the strategies of governmentality.

The term *security*, or rather apparatuses of security in Foucault’s understanding, is “exercised on an entire population of individuals for managing their life, health, psychology and behaviors. It refers to different meanings according to whether it is exercised in terms of series of mobile elements and events, or in terms of a milieu as the space in which circulation occurs” (Ceyhan 2012, 39–40). Governmentality in this context refers to a regulation that can only be carried out through, and is indeed dependent on the freedom of each individual. A good form of governance requires certain sorts of individual freedom. Security allows certain ‘things’ to happen, ensuring that every individual is able to participate productively in the market. In this sense, security retains freedom as an imperative means for the operation of power.

Hence, from the Foucaudian point of view, emancipation from danger, threat and fear in modern society paradoxically leads to governmentality – to the regulation and control of populations. For instance, the authorities, either democratic or autocratic, argue that they provide their citizens with security while invoking it to lead their populations to become useful human resources. Governmentality “has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge,

and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument” (Foucault 2007, 108). In other words, while Booth sets up emancipation in opposition to power, Foucault sees emancipation as a tool and effect of the operations of power. There exists an irony that in trying to liberate a *subject* from domination, one is actually subjecting the *subject* to power relations, converting the *subject* into one who is *subjected*, and who should free themselves in certain ways.

5.4. Power and the Apparatus of Security in *Psycho-Pass*

This conception of governmentality provides a very useful tool to think of various forms of security (e.g. disciplinary and normalising power) and techniques (e.g. panopticism and confession). In this section I identify and analyze various surveillance and security regimes shown in *Psycho-Pass* to contemplate the question of what effects surveillance and security systems have on power and freedom.

5.4.1. Govern through Security

Foucault’s notion of governmentality is manifested vividly in the visual narrative of *Psycho-Pass*. In *Psycho-Pass*, people believe that the mass surveillance society built on the system is just, and a good society should maximize people’s security and wellbeing. Any risk or uncertainty should be minimized hence potential criminals are seen as dangers before they actually commit a crime. They are detected, relocated or sometimes removed entirely for the sake of maintaining public security. Paralleling Foucault’s idea of governmentality, security in the anime is exercised on an entire population in order to manage their life, mental and physical health, and behavior. Advanced technologies and knowledge of people’s behavior become constitutive of a security apparatus. In particular, risk management and pre-emption are very important for the maintenance of security and social order. The precautionary approach to security is enforced by technologies of the *Sibyl System* and the *Dominator*.

The *Sibyl System* is a mass surveillance and welfare system that monitors people’s mental conditions by collecting, analyzing and processing personal data in everyday life. The system evaluates immediate and future risks to social order and takes a precautionary approach to remove potential threats from society in advance. Sibyl identifies who is normal or abnormal, who is a potential criminal or not, and who is an immediate or future threat to society. The street scanners monitor people’s *Psycho-Pass*. The *Psycho-Pass* is an instant visual representation of mental

conditions of individuals by colors that indicates a person's stress levels. The more a person is stressed or mentally ill, the more their Psycho-Pass color will be opaque.

The *Crime Coefficient* is another set of standards processed through the Sibyl System's huge psychological database to measure the probability that a person will commit crimes. An individual's Psycho-Pass color and Crime Coefficient is examined during routine check-up and counselling. If the figure is higher than a normal level of 100, the person is judged as a latent criminal (*senzai-han*), and the police will arrest the person, relocate him/her to the isolation facilities or eliminate him/her. At the individual level, people carry an instant tester to check their Psycho-Pass and have counselling sessions or medication to maintain their mental condition within the normal levels. Individuals are also subject to regular health checks in institutions such as schools, work places, and hospitals. All data are recorded and processed by the Sibyl System. As a welfare system, Sibyl also judges the most appropriate career and life plan for every citizen so that one does not have to agonize over these issues anymore.



Figure 10 Visualized Psycho-Pass. Screen capture from Episode 13, *Psycho-Pass* television animation series.

The *Dominator* is a type of special weapon carried by enlisted police authorities to shoot criminals, including potential criminals, and threats to the other members of society based on the Criminal Coefficient of the target. Potential criminals are detected, captured and sent to isolation facilities before they actually commit a crime, and serious crimes and violence have decreased dramatically as a result. Citizens are asked to trust the whole advanced system of knowledge as perfect but citizens can know little about the system. The Dominator instructs the user on how to handle the suspect and latent criminal. If the Crime Coefficient value exceeds a normal level, The Dominator, not the user, decides the operation mode: paralyze the target, or kill them.⁵⁹ The Dominator

⁵⁹ The Dominator has three operation modes: Non-Lethal Paralyzer, Lethal Eliminator and Destroy Decomposer. Non-Lethal Paralyzer is used to capture latent criminals to bring them into custody, while with Lethal Eliminator and Destroy Decomposer the police can kill latent criminals as immediate danger even before they actually commit violence. Although the last two modes both indicate the immediate removal of the target, there are different degrees of violence between the two and the differences are visually presented.

functions as an iconic symbol of knowledge and security in the narrative and is visually very powerful too. Once the user holds it, it always emanates a strong blue light. It also gives precise instructions to the user, calculating danger and prescribing appropriate response modes such as paralysis or destruction of the target.

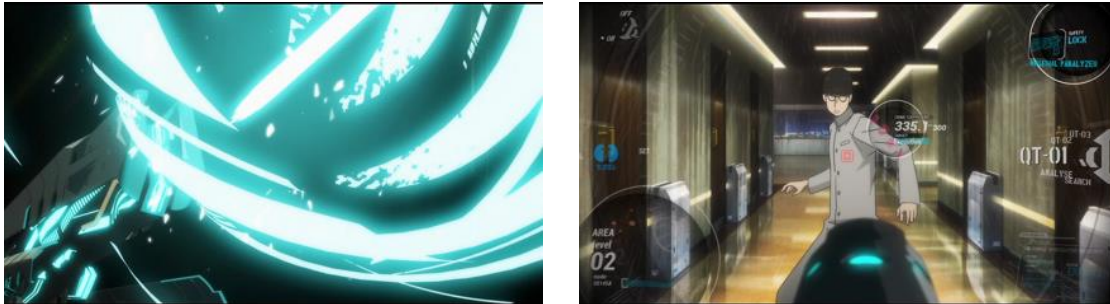


Figure 11 The Dominator. Screen capture from Episode 1 (left) and Episode 5 (right), *Psycho-Pass* television animation series.

Using the Dominator – with its accumulation of scientific knowledge on human psychology and criminology – the police can capture or eliminate people in the name of security. The Dominator could justify police violence as a preemptive measure as the future becomes predictable and inevitable. In other words, it is Sibyl and the Dominator that evaluates the risk and authorizes the user to exercise power. The police authorities, however, are not fully in charge of it. It is the Dominator itself and the Sibyl System behind the weapon that judges whether a person is normal or abnormal, potentially criminal or not, or to be eliminated or not. When the user aims the Dominator at a target, it instantly reads the target’s Psycho-Pass and sends the data to the Sibyl system. The system judges how to deal with the target and Dominator gives instructions to the user.

Although there is little detailed depiction of how the Sibyl System and Dominator actually function, the majority of the population relies on the system and naturalizes various surveillance technologies operating in *Psycho-Pass*. People strongly believe that the system can improve security and social order as well as their future prospects by removing any uncertainty, fear and threats from their life. They believe that “the world has realized a stable prosperity and achieved the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people” (00:03:34-00:03:39, Episode 13). The system and technologies are normalized throughout society and it is hard for people to imagine life without the system. Such a life is unthinkable and seen as dystopian: it is characterized as uncertain, unstable, and disordered. For example, in the last episode, when the protagonist Akane finds that Sybil functions as an apparatus of authoritarian control rather than a just welfare system, she still decides to remain in the system, admitting that “it’s true that the current society cannot hold without Sibyl” (00:14:58-00:15:01, Episode 22).

Both Executive Director Motohiro and Scriptwriter Urobuchi clearly note that there is an ambivalent relationship between utopian and dystopian visions in *Psycho-Pass*, and they do not

want to depict the world of *Psycho-Pass* as a simple dystopia. As Urabuchi notes “*Psycho-Pass* is not about the critique of controlled society, but rather about the world where people are saved by the control and become happy. Such a world, however, does create distortions and that’s why the traditional detectives come in” (Sudo 2012b, my translation). Similarly, Motohiro explains that *Psycho-Pass* is “the world where people are totally subject to/controlled by numbers and yet the control is not stressful but rather utopian. It is a detective story set in such a society” (Sudo 2012a, my translation). According to Motohiro, the world of *Psycho-Pass* is “a highly-advanced future Japanese society combining features resembling Google with Disneyland” (Psycho-Pass Production Committee 2013, 141, my translation). As the Sibyl System manages the population thoroughly, this future Japan is a perfectly clean and secure space where people neither have to worry about their life nor bother to make their own choices anymore because the system sorts out for them. Importantly, uncertainty and insecurity are considered as a risk in this world; the majority of people believe that mass surveillance brings security and care, while any corner without a surveillance system is depicted as a dangerous space in which care is absent, rather than as a space free from control.

The visual style of *Psycho-Pass* reflects a close relationship between security and visibility, a link that is highlighted by stunning backgrounds throughout the series. The night-time scenes and the neon-lit cityscape appear very often throughout the series, creating a sense of insecurity and anxiety. In an interview in the anime convention Sakura-Con held in Seattle in 2013, Director Shiotani openly admits the visual style of *Psycho-Pass* is influenced by popular science fictional films in the 1980s and 1990s including *Blade Runner* (1982), *Minority Report* (2002), *Gattaca* (1997) and *Brazil* (1985) (Lamb 2013).⁶⁰ These films are inspired by film noir, a type of American thriller film in the 1940s and 1950s, and are sometimes called *neo-noir* or just *noir*.⁶¹ Cinematography of film noir often “emphasizes the impression of night-time photography with high-contrast lighting, occasional low-key lighting, deep shadows and oblique angles to create a sense of dread and anxiety” (Hayward 2013, 149–150). Films inspired by earlier noir works do not always use classic visual techniques but they “contain the same alienation, pessimism, moral ambivalence, and disorientation” (Conard 2009, 2).

⁶⁰ The interview recording is available in the bonus track in *Psycho-Pass Complete Series Collection* (2014).

⁶¹ For instance, *Film Noir Reader* (Silver and Ursini 1996) covers a number of essays that range over noir from mid-1950s to the TV series *Miami Vice* (Yerkovich 1984) in the 1980s. While, Naremore analyzes the classic films in the 1940s to *L.A. Confidential* (Hanson 1997) as film noir (Naremore 1998). *The Philosophy of Neo-Noir* covers “any films coming after the classic noir period that contains noir themes and the noir sensibility” including more recent films such as *Memento* (Nolan 2000) and *The Man Who Wasn’t There* (Coen and Coen 2001) (Conard 2009).

Psycho-Pass uses the cinematography of noir extensively. For example, the opening shot is very reminiscent of *Blade Runner* and the *Ghost in the Shell* series.⁶² A helicopter approaches a glittering city and the camera zooms in (Figure 12 left). Gigantic media screens of geisha girls are shot at a low angle, making the screen even larger (Figure 12 right). Highways and skyscrapers are shot at a high angle. Swift camera movements such as zooming in and panning present the city as glamorous.



Figure 12 Cityscape in noir style. Screen capture from Episode 1, *Psycho-Pass* television animation series.

A noir visual style efficiently creates a sense of darkness and anxiety and also depicts the relationship between insecurity and invisibility in crime scenes in *Psycho-Pass*. A number of crime scenes take place in space outside the Sibyl network and the Psycho-Pass scanners, in locations that include ruined districts, an off-line drone factory, a ruined subway line, and an abandoned boiler room on campus. These crime scenes depict insecurity in the absence of mass surveillance.

For example in Episode 1, when a group of police chases a latent criminal, most of the scenes are shot in the dark. The incident happened in a ruined urban area on a rainy night. Classic low-key lighting is used as characters' faces are often obscured by darkness. Lights are flickering in the ruined building. The bright neon signs are occasionally inserted between the shots and contrast with the darkness. The visual effects of darkness create a sense of insecurity and anxiety in the crime scene.

⁶² Napier (2005) suggests that Oshii Mamoru's 1995 film *Ghost in the Shell* owes to *Blade Runner* or William Gibson's cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer* (1984) in terms of noir style cinematography, as well as the central theme exploring the relations between soul, body and technology. This influence is found in *Ghost in the Shell* animation series produced by Production I.G including *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* (Kamiyama 2002) and *Ghost in the Shell: Arise* series (Kise and Murata 2013).

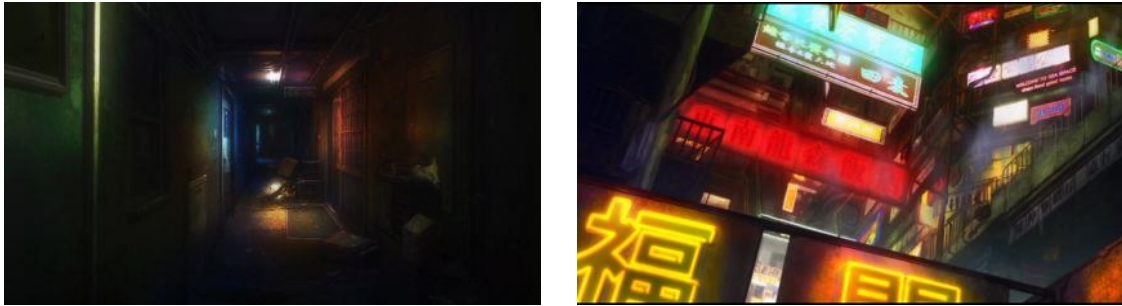


Figure 13 Crime scene in the dark. Screen capture from Episode 1, *Psycho-Pass* television animation series.

Apart from the aforementioned noir-inspired cinematography, *Psycho-Pass* builds a sense of darkness through various visual choices from the color of the sky to the design of the characters. Indeed, Executive Director Motohiro chooses monotone as a motif for the entire series and Director Shiotani visualizes the motif accordingly (Psycho-Pass Committee 2013, 101). For example, clear blue skies and daytime scenes hardly appear in the *Psycho-Pass* world. According to Shiotani, a majority of scenes are intentionally set at night, in the evening or before dawn. When the sky appears in the scene, it is often cloudy or has a darker tone (Psycho-Pass Committee 2013, 100).

Manga artist Amano Akira provides character design concepts along with the monotone motif. All main characters in the police except Karanomori Shion wear black suits and have dark hair (i.e. black or brown and not red, blue, green etc.). This is relatively rare in anime character designs because anime and manga tends to individualize characters with immediate visual elements including distinctive clothing and hair.⁶³ Director Shiotani explains these specific visual choices: “for *Psycho-Pass*, we want the world first. The characters are almost being played by the world. We don’t use colors that stand out too much. Everything was a part of the world we tried to create” (Lamb 2013).

⁶³ For example, Poitras (2001, 60–62) notes that “a character’s hair is one way of making him or her instantly recognizable” and the variety of hair in anime and manga ranging from hair color, style to movement or “hair action.” We can also see the importance of distinctive visual elements of costume and hair in anime and manga characters through the fan cultural practice of cosplay referring to dressing and performing of favorite anime, manga or videogame characters.



Figure 14 Characters in black (left to right: Karanomori Shion, Kagari Shūsei, Kunizuka Yayoi, Kōgami Shinya, Tsunemori Akane, Ginoza Nobuchika, Masaoka Tomomi). Screen capture from the ending title sequence of *Psycho-Pass* television animation series.

The example of highly advanced hologram technology also indicates the close relationship between the visual representation of space, security, and order. Hologram technology is prevalent in people's everyday lives in *Psycho-pass*: the cityscape is projected by hologram in order to improve or maintain preferred scenery; people can choose and change the interior of their living space instantly; they also have access to an unlimited wardrobe using a wearable hologram; the police officers question people in a cute-looking hologram on the street in order not to scare people. Hologram technology is used to protect and control citizens in both public and private space. The omnipresence of hologram technology in public space also indicates the presence of order and security everywhere. In other words, if holograms are absent or disordered in any part of the city, this indicates insecurity and a lack of control. Some of the aforementioned crime scenes (e.g. ruined districts and a ruined subway line) are areas holograms do not reach, and they are accordingly depicted as dark, rusty and insecure places.

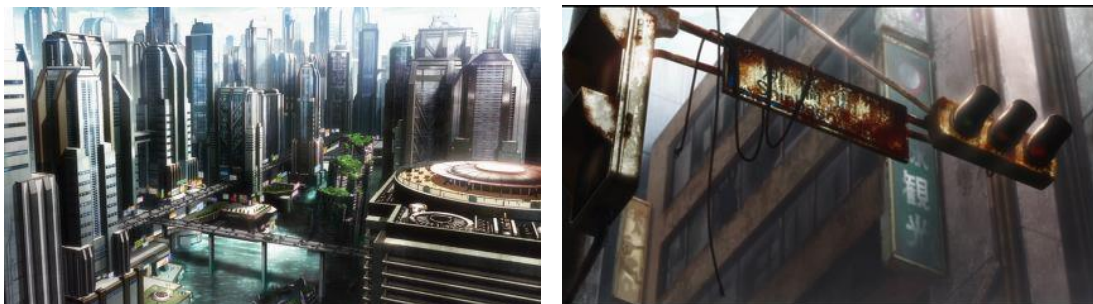


Figure 15 Cityscape with and without hologram (left: orderly city; right: ruined district). Screen capture from Episode 2 (left) and Episode 10 (right) *Psycho-Pass* television animation series.

Psycho-pass depicts distorted space and a sense of insecurity effectively. In Episode 5, when Inspector Akane and her colleagues Enforcer Kōgami and Masaoka close in on the murderer Midō, Midō cracks the interior hologram of a hotel room where he hides to escape from the police. The entire space is distorted: the wall, furniture, floors are all twisted; color changes and the image, together with uneasy music, makes the police and the audience feel dizzy. Uncanny visual effects and uneasy music create a sense of insecurity and uncertainty.

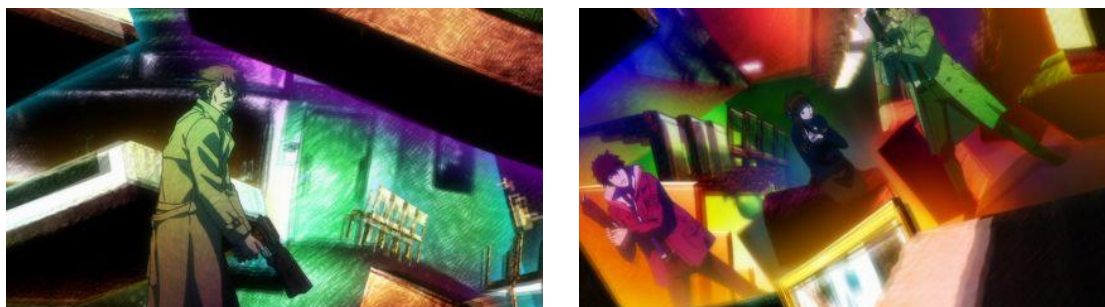


Figure 16 Hologram hacking and distorted space. Screen capture from Episode 5, *Psycho-Pass* television animation series.

In summary, security is achieved through various measures in *Psycho-Pass*: the maintenance and treatment of individual mental health, both at the individual and collective levels (the Psycho-Pass standard is widely used for self-monitoring, as well as constant monitoring in public space); the elimination of would-be criminals from public space; the ordered cityscape using hologram technology. Violence is hardly seen on the street. Streets are safer and crime is reduced. The legal system becomes simpler, and police and armed forces are reduced. Security based on advanced mass surveillance technologies is, at the same time, a modern form of domination enhanced by knowledge/power.

5.4.2. Disciplinary Power

The Psycho-Pass is one of the major standards for measuring an individual's state of mind and people's Psycho-Passes are checked everywhere. In public space, advanced Psycho-Pass scanners, similar to CCTV cameras, are installed in every corner of the city, observing not only people's behavior but also monitoring their mental conditions with an automated face recognition system. This mass surveillance system is similar to Foucault's account of disciplinary power and the example of Bentham's panopticon as we have seen in Chapter 1.

In *Psycho-Pass*, disciplinary power is significant in the life of latent criminals in the isolation facility. A good example is Enforcer Kunizuka Yayoi. Yayoi used to be a Sibyl-authorized musician.

When she becomes deeply involved in music, her Psycho-Pass becomes worse and she is sent to an isolation facility to recover her Psycho-Pass. In the isolation facility, latent criminals are locked up in a padded-cell, monitored all the time, and take medication to recover their Psycho-Pass. The screens are everywhere and they show latest Psycho-Pass. When their Psycho-Pass gets worse, sedating gas is automatically activated and they have to take further psychiatric medication. However, the facility allows latent criminals the freedom to freely remain in their private room under surveillance. As long as they make an effort to keep their Psycho-Pass stable, they are free from further overtly coercive forms of violence such as sedating gas. Discipline is normalized for latent criminals, who become docile subjects of disciplinary power through these practices.



Figure 17 The latent criminal Yayoi in the padded cell. Screen capture from Episode 12, *Psycho-Pass* television animation series.

Control is therefore achieved not through direct oppression but through more invisible and routinized forms of subjection. The effect of power is to normalize and eliminate all social abnormalities and to produce useful individuals through altering their bodies and minds. In this way, power functions to discipline the individual prisoner to be more ordered, obedient, useful, and efficient. It normalizes and modifies them as “good” citizens.

5.4.3. Knowledge and Security

In *Psycho-Pass*, power produces a large quantity of advanced knowledge about people’s psychology, biology and criminal tendencies, as well as the techniques to manage and regulate people’s behavior. Knowledge is accumulated and applied to control the population through various technologies, including the Sibyl System and the Dominator. *Psycho-Pass* thus illustrates the Foucauldian themes of intrinsic links between knowledge and power and the repetitive application of knowledge as an instrument of power.

In *Psycho-Pass* knowledge and security are closely interrelated. Knowledge about the human body, health, psychology and behavior has been highly developed and applied to manage

populations and their health. In *Psycho-Pass* knowledge is built up to improve people's health and wellbeing, as well as to achieve security by sorting populations. Various standards are set to measure people's mental conditions and those that prevail throughout society. A whole series of knowledge systems has been developed, focusing on the identification, the tracking and the surveillance of individuals considered dangerous for the population's health and wellbeing. In other words, knowledge produces disciplined bodies and minds through the social practices of wellbeing and security, and it reinforces exercises of power. It is important to see how citizens as well as individual police officers believe in this knowledge, and as a consequence willingly take part in social practices of power.

For example, the head of the Public Safety Bureau Kasei tells Inspector Ginoza how the system should work when Ginoza reports the flaws of the Sybil System and the Dominator. "For a system, rather than functioning perfectly, it's more important that people continue to trust that it is perfect. Thanks to that belief in the system and sense of security, Sibyl brings blessings to people even now" (00:05:04-00:05:17, Episode 13). Kasei continues

You guys are at the lowest level of the system. And people recognize and understand the system only through the lowest level. Hence, the system's credibility is judged by seeing how properly and strictly the lowest level end is functioning. If you guys doubt the Dominator, it could eventually cause all the citizens to doubt this society's order. Do you understand? (00:07:39-00:08:06, Episode 13)

Kasei's voiceover narration accompanies the images of cityscape from various angles and the noise of the city, before the noise suddenly stops and the viewpoint switches to a close-up shot of Kasei. The images and sounds indicate what the consequences would be if the citizens found the system could malfunction. Ginoza agreed with resubmission of the report afterwards.

In summary, knowledge, security and power are closely interrelated in *Psycho-Pass*. Various forms of knowledge and various techniques (e.g. the Sibyl, Dominator and psychological measures) have been developed to improve people's wellbeing and security, and applied to an entire population through various social practices. The government makes the security and wellbeing of individuals their priority, and the Sybil System and the Dominator become a symbol of progress and prosperity. This progress, however, cannot be separated from exercises of power and control. Based on scientific knowledge, total surveillance over the population is depicted as a necessary step to improve the wellbeing and security of the individuals. The government justifies violence against potential criminals as pre-emptive measures to combat emerging threats to the health and security of individuals. Although the system is not perfect, it is important for both the authorities and people to believe that the system could identify future threats and improve security.

5.4.4. Biopower

The operation of biopower – power over life – is significant in *Psycho-Pass*. Technologies to manage populations are highly advanced and personalized. People regard the Sibyl System as a comprehensive public welfare system that provides completely for people’s physical and mental health care, and manages their career based on detailed analysis of their personal data. The majority of people accept the judgments and assessments of the Sibyl System since they believe it offers what is best for them. People are encouraged to maintain a healthy body and mind – in other words, to maintain a good Psycho-Pass for their wellbeing – and this becomes their priority. For example, so-called “mental beauty” indicates a person with a clear Psycho-Pass like Akane and it becomes a new standard of beauty in the fictional world. Her friends call her a natural-born mental beauty and envy her because she does not need much “stress care,” just like someone who has a beautiful body shape without much effort to exercises or control their diet. People check their Psycho-Pass regularly and take supplements to maintain their mental health. If their stress increases, they get psychological care, medication and therapies to improve their mental state. People also constantly receive information about themselves and their environment via various devices including a holographic personal assistant.



Figure 18 Akane’s personal assistant Candy. Screen capture from Episode 2, *Psycho-Pass* television animation series.

Akane, for instance, starts her day with her holographic personal assistant who checks her health and gives her advice on maintaining a good mental condition. It says “Good morning! ... Ms. Akane Tsunemori’s Psycho-Pass colour this morning is powder blue! Have a wonderful day with that healthy mind of yours” (00:00:22-00:00:33, Episode 2). The assistant tells Akane today’s weather and schedule, and asks her what her room preference is. People decorate space with their hologram to maintain good mental health. The assistant tells Akane how many calories she ate yesterday, and the recommended amount for today’s breakfast. It also gives a forecast on the anticipated group stress in the city, just like a weather forecast, and recommends taking a supplement to prevent mental contamination.

Routine mental checks and care are normalized to modify individuals to be more ordered, efficient and productive. Routine practices shape individuals into subjects as well. People believe that the advanced system and technologies provide them with the best choice for maintaining wellbeing and realizing their potential. The choice is already made for them and it is hard to imagine better ways of maintaining their life than the choice made by the existing system. Indeed, people believe that the system can emancipate them from various uncertainties, fears and risks. Interestingly, free will takes on negative connotations in this world, as it refers to uncertainty and risk for the majority of people. It is, moreover, worth noting that how cute appearance of the assistant Candy could function to disguise exercises of bio-power in everyday life.⁶⁴ Candy is designed as an adorable creature both visually and acoustically. It looks like a pink fluffy jellyfish, speaking in a cheerful, friendly and childish manner. However, the power relation between Akane and her assistant Candy is more complex. What Candy actually does is not only to act as Akane's personal companion, but also to control Akane's physical and mental condition to make her healthier. Interactions between Akane and Candy, however, look like a form of care rather than exercises of power and control. Customized checks and care look fine-tuned without a generating a sense of repressive control.

In summary, we can find various exercises of biopower in *Psycho-Pass*. Advanced knowledge, technologies and techniques shape new ideas of health and beauty, and encourage people to meet new standards to become more healthy and beautiful, in other words shaping particular kinds of individual bodies and minds. Moreover, the various exercises of power even add a personal touch in the fictional world, as cute personal assistants are caring, not controlling.

5.5. Conclusion: Security is Governmentality

Analyzing the anime *Psycho-Pass*, this chapter examined how the concepts of security, emancipation and domination are interrelated. For Booth, the emancipation of human individuals is a way to true security, while Foucault argues that security as developed in modern society is a form of domination called governmentality – a new way to manage populations through knowledge and

⁶⁴ In her insightful essay “Cuties in Japan” (1995) Sharon Kinsella analyzes cute or *kawaii* consumer culture in contemporary Japan. In the analysis of fancy goods industry of *kawaii* cartoon characters, Kinsella points out how cuteness (e.g. small, soft, round, loveable style) is performative: it functions to mask the dirty image of the goods or services such as gambling and sex industry in some cases. “Cute style gives goods a warm, cheer-me-up atmosphere. What capitalist production processes de-personalise, the good cute design re-personalise” (Kinsella 1995, 228).

techniques applied to people's behavior to secure their health and productivity. My analysis demonstrates how *Psycho-Pass* illustrates the Foucauldian notion of governmentality, and performs a thought experiment that challenges Booth's argument and confirms Foucault's notion of security as governmentality by showing the ways in which different exercises of power (i.e. disciplinary power, knowledge and biopower) operate to secure people's wellbeing. The Sibyl System and scientific knowledge about people's psychology (i.e. Psycho-Pass, and Crime Coefficient) are applied to human individuals through everyday practices, and people internalize these standards to maintain a healthy body and mind. Security – a form of emancipation in Booth's view – is achieved through the control of populations and mass surveillance in *Psycho-Pass*. In other words, *Psycho-Pass* confirms Foucault's idea of power in digital surveillance society through the visual narrative. Modern forms of knowledge, rationality, and subjectivity seem to be given and natural for human wellbeing, but are in fact constructed in relations of power and domination. *Psycho-Pass* could be seen as a metaphor that exaggerates the effects of power as a tool of convenience in order to caution that everything is dangerous. Whenever we think we obtain freedom and security, we have in fact entered into another form of control. The political struggle for power, domination and repression, therefore, is continued indefinitely.