PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITY, THE HUMAN MONSTER, AND THE WORLD OF PSYCHO-PASS

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Abstract

*Psycho-Pass'*s futuristic Japanese society argues for a complex calculation and negotiation of utilitarian values through its depiction of psychiatric disability. This paper aims to demonstrate how *Psycho-Pass* is not only a productive site of conflict between the medical and socio-political models of disability, but also a narrative that interrogates the very premise of its world as much as it vexes our expectations of the trope of individual freedom and agency.

A world where humans' state of mind and the tendency of their personalities can be quantified. While all sorts of inclinations are recorded and policed, these measured numbers used to judge people's souls are commonly called 'Psycho-Pass'.

-Psycho-Pass, end credits

At first glance, the world of *Psycho-Pass* (2012) is classic dystopia. From the very first episode of its first season, dehumanizing elements directly resulting from the authoritarian rule of a surveillance state are starkly recognizable, and the philosophical narratives, allusions, and debates crucial to the anime's plot reflect what Krishan Kumar traces to the birth of dystopia in the 19th century, when the genre targeted "some of the most cherished shibboleths, what others have called the 'grand narratives', of modernity: reason and revolution, science and socialism, the idea

of progress and faith in the future".[1] Reviewers of Production I.G.'s *Psycho-Pass* have already situated its science fiction novum in the traditions of George Orwell's *1984* and Philip K. Dick's "Minority Report," worlds where criminals can be identified before the crime itself occurs; Gen Urobuchi, who authored the acclaimed first season, also confirms the Philip K. Dick influence.[2]

However, unlike these narratives that depict individual freedom as the ultimate good and therefore the ultimate loss, *Psycho-Pass*'s futuristic Japanese society argues for a complex calculation and negotiation of utilitarian values, particularly through three major characters: the apparatus which rules the whole of society, the Sybil System; the major villain whose shadow lives beyond the first season, Makishima Shogo; and the show's protagonist, the incorruptible inspector Tsunemori Akane. By dissecting the drives of these three characters—the Sybil System included—I aim to demonstrate how *Psycho-Pass* is not only a site of severe conflict between the medical and socio-political models of disability, but also a narrative that interrogates the very premise of its world as much as it vexes our expectations of the trope of individual freedom and agency in the utilitarian paradigm of the genre.

In exploring the concept of dystopia, George Claeys notes that "[w]ithin the context of the European intellectual tradition… the portrayal of hell and Satanic rebellion" and the image of the monster are dystopian staples.[3] Despite its familiar crime-show format, *Psycho-Pass*'s heavy usage of mostly Western philosophical texts tackling governance and ethics allows the narrative to be examined in this light. Unpacking all the literary and philosophical allusions alone can take up its own study, so I will focus on one of the philosophers cited in the show, Michel Foucault, whose inquiries into abnormality, criminality, and the subjects of power continue to be relevant in various academic fields, including disability studies. Foucault, too, uses the image of the monster to explain the abnormal mind, but in ways that historically contextualize, and so reveal, the nature of inhumanity and the areas of knowledge that

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1 Kumar, "Utopia's Shadow," 19.
2 Chapman, "Review: Psycho-Pass Season One."
3 Claeys, "Three Variants on the Concept of Dystopia," 16.

seek to claim it as their expertise. But first we must examine how the world of *Psycho-Pass* establishes normalcy and treats deviation.

Crime Coefficient: the social process of disabling

Editing the seminal *Disability Studies Reader* in the 1990s, Lennard J. Davis observed that discourse about disability was moving away from a highly medical perspective to an academic field that engages the socio-political realm, which encompasses the body as well as "the classroom, the workplace, the courts, the legislature, the media, and so on".[4] However, conflicts between the medical and socio-political models of disability continue to be intricate, with scholars like Thomas Courser arguing that to reject the biomedical perspective of disability, that is, to consider disability only as a condition created by society's incapacity for accommodation, is to ignore the reality of the body's illnesses and pains. In this era when research in neuroscience can interrogate the nature of fundamental assumptions about human nature, such as free will, pathologizing what falls outside of the norm under the name of science might seem like a logical and necessary act.

As fascinating as it may be to diagnose the non-normative individual using new technologies, no scholar must overlook the historical, social, and political suppositions that the disability perspective magnifies. Davis argues that "normalcy is constructed to create the 'problem' of the disabled person".[5] Tracing the development of the concept of the norm, he identifies industrialization in the 18th-19th centuries as the beginning of "the social process of disabling".[6]

Any bell curve will always have at its extremities those characteristics that deviate from the norm. So, with the concept of the norm comes the concept of deviations or extremes. When we think of bodies, in a society where the concept of the norm is operative, then people with disabilities will be thought of as deviants.[7]

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4 Davis, *The Disability Studies Reader*, 1.
5 Davis, *The Disability Studies Reader*, 10.
6 Davis, *The Disability Studies Reader* 10-11.
7 Davis, *The Disability Studies Reader*, 13.

Disability studies arose from the need to engage with the limited understanding of disability that the dominant medical model offers. Locating the problem solely in the disabled individual by emphasizing his or her "defect", the limitations and oppressive discourse of the medical model displayed their unfortunate effects through the eugenics movement of the 19th century and early 20th century. In Nazi Germany, people with disabilities were among the first who were herded and massacred, but Davis reminds us that eugenics "became the common practice of many, if not most, European and American citizens".[8] Eugenics invoked the idea of nation, resulting in a conflation of disability with criminality, where the "deviations from the norm were regarded in the long run as contributing to the disease of the nation".[9] The mentally disabled, in particular—those who fell under the category "feeble-mindedness", which referred to "low intelligence, mental illness, and even "pauperism"—were targeted for control and sterilization.[10]

The histories of people with disabilities reveal the fallibility of science and medicine, or rather, our fallibility in presuming not only that all truth is located in this field but also that arguments and assumptions made in the name of science hold absolute truth. In "Foucault and the Madness of Classifying Our Madness", Drew Ninnis points out that though the neurosciences dominate research in psychology and psychiatry, "the acceptance of this biological model and project is itself a naturalisation of the subject".[11] He contemplates subjectivity in the field of psychiatry by tracing Foucault's history of the "madman" as a moral subject under the Renaissance, an animalistic object during the Classical period, a moral object but a deficient subject in the Modern world, and finally, in our Post-modern society, "a biological object first, and an ethical subject second".[12] Foucault investigated the nature of knowledge as well as the branches of inquiry that claimed knowledge, citing as well modes of objectification by which subjects

8 Davis, *The Disability Studies Reader,* 17.
9 Davis, *The Disability Studies Reader* 18.
10 Davis, *The Disability Studies Reader*, 18-19.
11 Ninnis, "Foucault and the Madness of Classifying Our Madness," 124.
12 Ninnis, "Foucault and the Madness of Classifying Our Madness," 135.

are interpellated into power relations. Nowhere in contemporary culture is the creation of disabled individuals through these fields of knowledge, specifically science and the law, illustrated more clearly than in the world of *Psycho-Pass.*

In *Disability and Science Fiction*, Kathryn Allan writes that disability studies extricates itself from the "moral imperative" of the nondisabled to contain, cure, and rehabilitate, thus allowing us to re-examine the various constructions and discourses that dominate the lives of the disabled.[13] She adds that "the discourse surrounding disability is one that simultaneously looks backward and forward", and science fiction, with its engagement with various fields of knowledge in both the hard and soft sciences, becomes a highly conducive site for interrogating the constructions of disability as well.[14] *Psycho-Pass* actively engages with existing discourse in its world's propensity for containment and cure. Disability is often conflated inaccurately with disease; in *Psycho-Pass*, psychiatric disability is treated as a contagion, viral and potentially lethal, necessitating segregation.

Examining Japanese folklore to uncover ancient sociocultural attitudes towards people with disabilities, Okuyama Yoshiko finds that some of these attitudes survive in contemporary Japanese society. Those who are unaware of the social model of disability might understand disability literally through the characters that represent the Japanese word for it, *shougai*: the first character literally means "interfering", and the second, "damage/harm".[15] In the early days, disability was sufficient reason to commit infanticide. As recently as 2016, a man murdered 19 people in a home for the disabled, claiming, "It is better that the disabled disappear".[16] Writing about the same incident, Philip Brasor claims that the murderer considered his deed "mercy killing".[17] He laments the culture of shame which seems to have been a factor in the news reporting of the massacre, where the names of the victims were

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13 Allan, *Disability in Science Fiction*, 5.
14 Allan, *Disability in Science Fiction*, 6.
15 Okuyama, "Semiotics of Otherness in Japanese Mythology."
16 Adams, "Why Has Japan's Massacre of Disabled People Gone Unnoticed?"
17 Brasor, "Victims of Sagamihara massacre"

not publicly disclosed because, according to Mainichi Shimbun, "the families feel that they don't want the names released".[18] He also notes that public officials have historically contributed to this culture of shame:

> The belief that people with disabilities are not fully human is reinforced by people such as former Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara, who in 1999, after visiting a facility for people with developmental disabilities, wondered out loud if such people possessed "personalities"… or Finance Minister Taro Aso, who has suggested that unproductive citizens may be better off dead. "In our society," wrote [activist Karin] Amamiya, "these 'precious lives' are measured against their 'cost'" and found to be wanting in the balance. Courts, when ruling on an injury or death lawsuit, determine damages in terms of "work lost".[19]

In another article for the *Japan Times*, Brasor cites other instances of state-sanctioned segregation of the disabled, such as in 1951, when the Japanese government calculated that the mentally ill were costing the country ¥100 billion a year not just because of their supposed inability to work but also because their families had to forego work in order to care for them. The notion that the mentally disabled were burdens to their families and to society was not improved by the 1964 report of a schizophrenic man attacking a US ambassador, leading to an association of violence with mental disorder.[20] Brasor also describes how the Japanese government "encouraged isolation by rewarding hospitals for taking in mentally ill patients" through subsidies; all the hospitals had to do to profit was to confine the patients. According to Brasor's article, "Japan accounts for 20 percent of all the world's beds reserved for institutionalized mental patients".[21]

Even in education there is a strong history of segregation for the disabled in Japan going back to the Meiji Era. Anne-Lise Mithout notes the necessity to "fit into Japanese society" through

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18 Shimbun, qtd. in Brasor, "Victims of Sagamihara massacre"
19 Brasor, "Victims of Sagamihara massacre"
20 Brasor, "Japan's Media Out of Step with Mental Health Issues."
21 Brasor, "Japan's Media Out of Step with Mental Health Issues."

the ideal of "the Japanese student" whose main features are: (i) a good command of the Japanese language, (ii) a stable family environment (including a mother able and available to cooperate with the school), (iii) good health condition, (iv) sustained attention capacity, (v) full control over one's body and gestures, (vi) "average" physical ability, and (vii) "normal" social skills. Since the Meiji era, this compliance has been guaranteed by the "externalization" of children who did not match this type to other educational institutions.[22]

The integration of children with disabilities into mainstream schools truly began in the 21st century, thanks to the decades-long struggle of disability rights advocates on a global scale. It is thus interesting to see a Japanese series like *Psycho-Pass* interrogate its own treatment of deviant individuals within its allusion to the country's own historical withdrawal from the rest of the world, as the Sybil System's Japan is supposed to be the only peaceful country that still exists. The Sybil System purports to be the cure to the social diseases of human violence, such as crime and war, by directing each citizen toward a life determined by his aptitude and various inclinations. This allows the System to achieve the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people[23]

"Technology is often positioned as a solution to overcome the physical or mental limitations of the human body", Allan observes of science fiction.[24] Physical disability seems almost non-existent in *Psycho-Pass*'s hi-tech society. Two of Tsunemori Akane's colleagues, Masaoka and Ginoza, each lose an arm on separate occasions, but both return to work without apparent trouble with the replacement of a cybernetic arm. There is never any talk of pain or the foreignness of metal against flesh. There is simply the new and improved cybernetic arm. The disability is erased, cured, as it were, because this is the sort of technological utilitarian world that the *Psycho-Pass* narrative inhabits. Cure and rehabilitation are society's responses to the disabled body.

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22 Mithout, "Children with disabilities in the Japanese school system," 166.
23 Urobuchi, *Psycho-Pass*, "Crime Coefficient."
24 Allan, *Disability in Science Fiction*, 11.

Cyberization and other similar technologies seem to be widely accessible enough to serve as a solution to bodily infirmities. Hologram technology used in fashion and cosplay also lessens people's anxieties about external appearances. What is much harder to achieve, and which thus becomes the central obsession of the society, is "mental beauty".

This is where the Psycho-Pass comes in. A person's Psycho-Pass is the reading obtained about his or her state of mind and tendencies as acquired and interpreted by cymatic scans from devices and drones positioned all over the city, all joined by the network of the Sybil System. Mental beauty is readily made visible by the color of one's Hue, the Psycho-Pass' stress level component, along with the numerical component of the Psycho-Pass, known as the Crime Coefficient, or *hanzai keisuu*. The clearer and lighter one's color is, the lower one's Crime Coefficient tends to be, which means higher potential for advancement in society. On the other hand, the cloudier and darker one's Hue gets, the higher one's Crime Coefficient is, and one's status in society sinks until one becomes a Latent Criminal. Latent Criminals are identified by the scans, but the police inspectors who work under the Ministry of Welfare's Public Safety Bureau (MWPSB) are able to both scan and target them through weapons called Dominators.

The Dominators are directly linked to the Sybil System, informing a bureau inspector if the target is for enforcement action. If the Crime Coefficient falls within the norm of 99 or below, the Dominator remains locked; if the Crime Coefficient is between 100-299, the Dominator automatically unlocks to indicate that "target is for enforcement action," entering a Non-Lethal Paralyzer mode which knocks out the Latent Criminal so that he or she can be brought to a hospital or rehabilitation center to receive therapy and medication; finally, if the Crime Coefficient reaches 300 and above, the Dominator switches to Lethal Eliminator, and a wave of energy is shot at the target, who literally explodes.

The gorgeous animation of the Dominator's modes as it transitions from Non-lethal Paralyzer to Lethal Eliminator to its highest setting intended for inorganic targets, Destroy Decomposer, are

in deliberate contrast to the gross violence to which anyone who falls outside the norm is subjected. Promoting fear, the violence is punishment for anyone who intends to do harm, and fear keeps the citizens in line, keeps them obsessed with their mental beauty, keeps them away from any potentially stressful situation, like conflict with the law. The law is both beautiful and violent in its objective of protecting the greater good, and anything outside of the law must be contained.

The fact that people's emotions are contagious is also utilized in this world through the measurement of the Area Stress Level, which indicates whether the individual stress levels and crime coefficients in a given location might be elevating in response to a stimulus. The "good" citizens under the Sybil System—those who fall within the norm—have not learned to be mentally resilient, requiring drones in cute Holo-tech costumes to keep them away from crime scenes, and are consumed by anxieties about their Hues getting cloudy. Latent Criminals and the harm they might inflict on others, intentionally or otherwise, are thus removed from mainstream society, imprisoned under the pretense of rehabilitation. Interaction with other Latent Criminals is not practiced; they are always isolated in their cells, and given therapy and medication but not artistic activities, as truly creative and intellectual activities are considered risky to their Psycho-Pass. Glimpses of the confined criminals tell us that the isolation, rest cure, and standardized medical prescriptions do not sufficiently help, and can even worsen their conditions; this is confirmed in the exchange between Latent Criminal Yayoi Kunizuka, a musician who was never allowed to play her guitar during her confinement, and MWPSB Inspector Kougami Shinya, who asserts that it is actually rare for Latent Criminals to improve their Psycho-Pass enough to return to their previous lives.[25] The only way for them to do so is if the Sybil System determines that they have the aptitude to work for MWPSB inspectors as Enforcers, or Hounds.

This, then, is a world that diagnoses illness in any mind that does not fall within the norm, and in doing so, criminalizes people

25 Urobuchi, *Psycho-Pass*, "Devil's Crossroad."

instead of actions. The world's order depends on the exclusion of non-normative individuals from mainstream life. There is no such thing as innocence if the cymatic scans reveal one's Psycho-pass to be a Latent Criminal's, even if one is a five-year-old, as in the case of MWPSB Enforcer Kagari Shusei, who had to spend most of his young life in isolation because of his Psycho-Pass reading.

Through this system of diagnosis and criminalization that relies on scientific technology that claims to be infallible, psychiatric disability is, if not created, exacerbated, and definitively punished.

Is this justice? Those who ask this question are often moved to action. In the case of this futuristic society's true criminals, the motivations for destruction and murder cease to be contained in the sickness of their minds and entrench themselves instead in the oppressive social order imposed by the Sybil System.

Criminally asymptomatic: psychiatry and the human monster

The MWPSB logo has an uncanny resemblance to the Caduceus, a popular symbol in medicine. This is further proof of their society's reliance on the medical field, as all criminalization in *Psycho-Pass*'s society relies on biomedical diagnoses. However, if one traces the origin of the Caduceus to Hermes, the trickster-god in the Greek pantheon, one wonders if the production team deliberately chose this as the Public Safety Bureau's logo as a subtle critique of how humans are "tricked" by claims of absolute scientific knowledge.

This brings us to psychiatry. We take for granted now that psychiatry is a branch of medicine; to refer to the American Psychiatric Association, for example, the field is defined as "the branch of medicine focused on the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental, emotional and behavioral disorders."[26] In his lectures on the abnormal, however, Foucault clarified that psychiatry began "as a specialized branch of public hygiene",

> …institutionalized as a particular domain of social protection against all the dangers to society that may arise from the fact of illness, or from everything that could directly or indirectly

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26 American Psychiatric Association, "What is Psychiatry?"

be accorded the status of illness. [It] was institutionalized as social safety, as hygiene of the whole social body…so you can see that in order to exist as an institution of knowledge, psychiatry had to undertake two simultaneous codifications. First of all, it had to codify madness as illness…. Madness had to be codified at the same time as danger.[27]

It is a stigma that exists to this day, and which *Psycho-Pass* runs away with: that a mental disorder is an illness that is *dangerous* to others. In fact, actual research on the link between mental illness and societal violence show little evidence that supports this notion, with findings pointing towards gender, family history, substance abuse, and other psychosocial stressors as risk factors that complicate the picture of the criminal mind.[28] However, in order to legitimize itself as a body of knowledge necessary to society's wellbeing, psychiatry, according to Foucault, "has had to establish that madness belongs essentially and fundamentally to crime and crime to madness"[29] by interpreting those acts for which the law could not recognize any motivation. Psychiatry's agenda was to entrench itself as a field of knowledge that could protect society by focusing on "madness that kills", a crime that "[n]o one could predict".[30] What Foucault writes next, then, reads like the very premise of *Psycho-Pass*:

When crime suddenly irrupts, unprepared, implausibly, without motive and without reason, then psychiatry steps forward and says: Even though no one else is able to detect in advance this crime that suddenly erupts, psychiatry, as knowledge, as science of mental illness, as knowledge of madness, will be able to detect precisely this danger that is opaque and imperceptible to everyone else. . . Psychiatry can say that it can recognize [crimes] when they occur and even predict them, or enable them to be predicted, by diagnosing in time the strange illness that consists in committing them.[31]

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27 Foucault, *Abnormal*, 118.
28 Peterson, et al., "How Often and How Consistently do Symptoms Directly Precede Criminal Behavior Among Offenders with Mental Illness?," 446-447; Varshney, et al., "Violence and Mental Illness," 223-224.
29 Foucault, *Abnormal*, 120.
30 Foucault, *Abnormal*, 121.
31 Foucault, *Abnormal*, 121.

According to Foucault, 19th century practitioners of the law and of psychiatry encountered crimes consisting of "monstrous acts" and deduced that "the motiveless acts of certain criminals, were in reality not just products of a lack indicated by the absence of motive, but were produced by a certain morbid dynamic of the instincts".[32] It is this same notion of instinct—of inclinations and tendencies—that would make it possible for psychiatry to bring the problem of madness and the abnormal to everyday life, "to exercise a general jurisdiction, both within and outside the asylum," in this way becoming a "social power".[33]

And so, in the society ruled by the Sybil System, with psychiatry as the basis of the law and through the measurement of instincts, anyone can become mad, and therefore, anyone can become a Latent Criminal. Those who actively and repeatedly committed crimes—like the serial killers investigated by Tsunemori Akane's division—those who stalk, hunt, and carry out grotesque murders, are outed and judged accordingly by the Sybil System. Everyone is subject to its law.

Everyone, that is, but Makishima Shogo, charismatic leader of serial killers, whose manipulative nature and killing intent do not register on the cymatic scans. He is what is known as "criminally asymptomatic" because his inclination towards crime cannot be accurately measured by the Sybil System. His Hue is always clear, his Crime Coefficient always low. Because of this, the Dominators cannot target him, and Makishima takes advantage of this. He sets his eyes on the Sybil System itself, toying with other criminals along the way and leaving a trail of bodies in his wake.

Makishima's character design—white clothes, white hair, slanted light-colored eyes, a smile that reminds one of the *kitsune* or fox-spirit trickster—immediately encodes him as an outsider. From the very beginning of the series, he is set up as a foil to the heroic figure of the dark-haired, dark-clad Kougami Shinya. We are never given a backstory to Makishima, not a glimpse of his childhood or formative years; in the end, right before his death, we learn simply

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32 Foucault, *Abnormal*, 131.
33 Foucault, *Abnormal*, 132-134.

that he has long grown tired of the way that the utilitarian society has rendered people replaceable. He was thus unable to form bonds, except with his pursuer Kougami, who must eliminate him precisely because he represents the worst in himself. It is in fact Kougami who touches on how the Sybil System has failed Makishima, and thereby created the kind of monster that he is: "In this society, if the Sybil System doesn't acknowledge you, in a sense, isn't it the same as not being recognized as a human being?"[34]

It is at this point that we focus on Foucault's concept of the human monster. His historicization of psychiatry identifies this figure not just as the precursor of the abnormal individual, but one that locates itself within the contradictions of the 18th century French sovereignty and revolution. There are, in fact, two figures of the human monster, and they are mirror images. Foucault calls them, respectively, "the monster from below and the monster from above".[35]

The monster from below is the rebel, the violator of the social pact. Foucault locates this figure in the French revolution, specifically in the September Massacres, and attributes to him the theme of cannibalism, of consuming other humans. The monster from above, on the other hand, is the despot, whose existence predates the rebel's, and to him Foucault attributes the theme of incest, of keeping power within the family. In the *Psycho-Pass* narrative arc which belongs to the protagonist MWPSB inspector Tsunemori Akane, she confronts these two monsters, both murderers in her eyes: the rebellious Makishima Shogo, and the despotic Sybil System.

It is easy to recognize the cannibalistic, rebellious monster in Makishima who wants "to see the splendor of people's souls" beyond the fatalistic measurements of the Psycho-Pass, to ultimately render the Sybil System useless so that the citizens can truly have free will, but who mercilessly manipulates and destroys others without hesitation. Less evident is the incestuous, tyrannical monster that is the Sybil System. It is an insidious, extremely

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34 Urobuchi, *Psycho-Pass*, "Transparent Shadow."
35 Foucault, *Abnormal*, 101.

intelligent ruler whose primary drive is to produce "the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people," but its oppression of Latent Criminals fades from memory when the monstrous murders take center stage. When Makishima holds his blade up to slash the throat of Tsunemori Akane's close friend Yuki, we find ourselves praying for the Sybil System to intercede, begging for the Dominator to work.

In the face of human monsters who seek the destruction of lives and society's peace, the Sybil System appears as a lawful good. The System might not have mercy, but at least it is objective, and faithful to its citizens. Their faith in it—or fear of it—allows it to control even their choice of careers and life partners, which in turn allows the system to implement order in the society.

Then MWPSB enforcer Kagari Shuhei, he who was diagnosed as a Latent Criminal at the age of five, discovers the truth of the Sybil System. Assuming that Kagari's knowledge of its secret will result in more disorder, the System overrides a Dominator's protocol—its own law—and annihilates him. Like a despot, the System raises itself above the law.

When Tsunemori Akane eventually confirms Kagari's death in the same scene that she learns the System's secret, she is forced to weigh two monsters against each other.

The Sybil System, Tsunemori discovers, is not a supercomputer or an artificial intelligence, as everybody assumes. It is in fact a congregation of criminally asymptomatic minds—the brains of individuals who in their previous lives had done things worse than Makishima.[36] The System tells Tsunemori that Makishima's brain must be integrated into itself in order for the System to evolve. When Tsunemori resists, unable to accept that the society she loves is being governed by a collective of who were previously, essentially, criminally asymptomatic serial killers, the Sybil System argues its rationality by appealing to a morality informed by its imperative for Tsunemori's society—the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. In this light, argues the System, the

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36 Urobuchi, *Psycho-Pass*, "Where Justice Lies."

harm that the former criminally asymptomatic individuals had caused have already been balanced out by the good that they have accomplished as part of the System.

What has the Sybil System been judging people for, all along? Though it parades the use of brain scans and neuroscience as the basis of its judgments, its concern has never been the mental health of individuals, but rather the overall "health" of the society. One wonders, then, if the System is unable to detect the killing intent of the criminally asymptomatic precisely because it deems them useful to its learning process, and therefore, it believes, to the society it governs. Likening itself to an objective machine, it believes that the anomalies improve it, turning it into a better ruler. The Sybil System is not an artificial intelligence that deludes itself into thinking it is human; rather, it is a collective of humans that has deluded itself into believing it is an infallible machine.

The System's fallibility becomes the focus of Tsunemori's interest not just until the end of the first season but straight into the second season (2014) where the System is forced to purge itself of formerly asymptomatic members, and the film (2015) where the System is challenged to integrate democratic principles in its bid to impose order on the Southeast Asian Union. Tsunemori takes on the job of testing the System. This role differs from that of the typical dystopian protagonist, whose fate is usually either that of the hero who brings about the fall of the totalitarian system, or of the martyr whom the system consumes. Tsunemori feels the brunt of the System's betrayal and yet, as the System points out, she has seen what the current society can devolve into when the Sybil System is unable to implement its law.[37] Within the matrix of utilitarianism, she measures the System's "impartial beneficence" against its "instrumental harm,"[38] and in the process, weighs the casualties of the System's despotic rule against the casualties of Makishima's rebellion.

The episode "Where Justice Lies" is also where Tsunemori reaches the turning point of her own narrative as a rookie inspector faced with the truths of the world. The scene development is crucial to

37 Urobuchi, *Psycho-Pass*, "The Town Where Sulfur Falls."
38 Kahane, et al., "Beyond Sacrificial Harm."

our understanding of what informs her ultimate decision. First, she recalls her life of comfort in the city, her happiness as she hangs out with her closest friends at their regular outdoor cafe. Then this flashback cuts to a sequence of edited memories that serve to dramatize Tsunemori's internal conflict and resolution.

The first edited memory is based on her exchange with Enforcer Kagari the first time they shared a table at the MWPSB cafeteria. In this memory, Tsunemori wonders aloud if she has made the right choice to work at the MWPSB. Kagari, the youngest Enforcer in Tsunemori's team, spent most of his life in confinement and cannot understand where Tsunemori's self-doubt is coming from. "What makes you think that someone like me would know?" he asks, slamming his hand on the table. "You could've become anything."

Contrary to how the conversation actually proceeded, however, Tsunemori replies by expressing her appreciation of something that Kagari was never given: a choice. Tearfully she calls it a "heavy, tough anxiety", this ability to make choices, but also says it might be "a happy thing". As an intelligent individual with a stable Psycho-Pass, Tsunemori has received options and opportunities that Kagari and other Latent Criminals never had. Her imagined reply to Kagari reflects her contemplation of the idea of free will, which she no longer takes for granted. Thus, the segment ends with a close-up of the late Enforcer's faint smile, though the sense of peace that the image might have evoked is immediately shattered by the sharp, echoing sound of footsteps—Makishima's.

This is the second edited memory, and it is based on Tsunemori's meeting with Makishima. Interestingly, instead of transpiring underground, where Makishima holds Tsunemori's friend Yuki hostage and kills her, Tsunemori's exchange with Makishima is transposed onto the radio tower where the Enforcer Kougami Shinya, the series' male protagonist, awaits the villain at the foot of the tower's spiral staircase. In this constructed memory, Makishima is a magnificent picture of contradiction: white as a seraph, the heavens blue and bright behind him, he descends the stairs to the singing of an angelic choir, preaching the gospel of free will, making the same declarations as he did while murdering Yuki. The scene

is edited in this way to depict Tsunemori's need not only to filter the trauma of witnessing her friend's death but also to stand where her mentor Kougami must have stood. In this way, she manages to engage with Makishima's conjectures about the value of lives in the absence of free will. Where her initial meeting with him left her at a loss, in this moment she is absolutely certain that he is wrong for judging "the value of a happiness [he has] never felt".

With the blue sky beyond the radio tower as a transition device, the scene shifts to a third edited memory: that of Yuki. However, the exchange between her and Tsunemori is not based on any words they had in real life; the entire segment is imagined, as if it were the final conversation Tsunemori wishes she could have had with her friend. With the bright skies behind her, Yuki asks with a smile if her life's happiness was at all real. Tsunemori's reply is also the choice she makes: "You could've become happy. You could've searched for the answer anytime…. As long as people are alive, anyone can do it".

Between the monster Sybil's murder of Kagari and the monster Makishima's murder of Yuki, it might seem as if in the end, Tsunemori places more significance on the latter by choosing to continue as an inspector working for the Sybil System. And yet this series of reimagined conversations has been her way of lamenting both deaths, because there is no doubt in her mind that both Kagari and Yuki are victims of monsters. She literally calls the Sybil System one "*kaibutsu*". While she ultimately agrees that the citizens of the current society that the System has built cannot survive the System's failure, she is neither fully convinced nor brainwashed. In fact, she ceases to simply be a worker under the System as she learns to make demands from it in exchange for her compliance, to speak its language.

This is also because her ethics is no longer trapped by the System's cold utilitarian calculations. She is now certain about her own primary drive. She has begun operating on the philosophy of natural rights, which Michael Shermer refers to as "rights that are universal and unalienable and thus not contingent only upon

the laws and customs of a particular culture or government".[39] Specifically, *she will not kill*, not even in her duty as an inspector. She becomes able to move more quickly and more fearlessly because, as she explains to her colleague in the hunt for Makishima, "Right now, I'm someone the system wants".[40]

As she and Kougami pursue Makishima, Kougami asks her why she insists on obeying the law "when that law can neither judge a criminal nor protect people." Tsunemori replies:

> The law doesn't protect people. People protect the law.
>
> People have always detested evil and sought out a righteous way of living. Their feelings… the accumulation of those people's feelings are the law…. [W]e have to try our best to protect it to the very end. We just can't give up on it.[41]

To this, Kougami answers, "If there ever comes a time when everyone feels that way, the Sibyl System will probably disappear."

The law as articulation of society's most noble sentiments—as something to protect instead of invoke for protection—is the antithesis of the Sybil System's law, which claims to protect society by establishing order. This seems like a clue for defeating the Sybil System: true democracy, where people are active and informed participants in governance, protecting the law because the law represents what society holds dear. Unfortunately, this scenario is difficult to imagine, especially because the *Psycho-Pass* franchise appears to have no intention of doing so, given the 2015 movie, which shows that the Sybil System has begun its imperialist project and, through Tsunemori's own challenge, has utilized the democracy of the Southeast Asia Union to validate its own agenda. One wonders if Tsunemori's destiny is to grow old and die as a cog in the machine, because what she says in the episode "Blood-stained Reward" seems like it will always be true: she *is* someone the System wants. Even as she continues to make demands of it

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39 Shermer, "Moral Philosophy and its Discontents."
40 Urobuchi, *Psycho-Pass*, "Blood-stained Reward."
41 Urobuchi, *Psycho-Pass*, "Perfect World."

and deviate from what it requires of her, as she does in *Psycho-Pass 2* (2014) and the movie (2015), her Psycho-Pass remains stable.

Whether the unique stability of her Psycho-Pass makes her a true deviant or not, the System tolerates her—welcomes her resistance, even. In the final episode "Perfect World", Tsunemori angrily tells the Sybil System not to underestimate humans, that "[s]omeone will come to this room someday to turn off the power". The System, however, appears to revel in her anger. For the System, Tsunemori is the next "deviant" to "assimilate", her inner conflict the stepping stone to its evolution.

Tsunemori distinguishes between humans and the Sybil System. To her, the System is no longer a human but a monster, and yet at its core the monster can well be an "essentially psychological description of humanity's complex nature",[42] as the whole of *Psycho-Pass* has effectively demonstrated. Focused on its own power and rationality and operating within its own limited interpretation of utilitarianism, the Sybil System might be an impossible enemy. Its machinations, after all, are all too real, and all too human.

A cloudy Hue: some final suppositions

Damien Broderick defines science fiction as "that species of storytelling native to a culture undergoing the epistemic changes implicated in the rise and supersession of technical-industrial modes of production, distribution, consumption and disposal".[43] This certainly explains the birth of dystopian science fiction narratives in the 19th century, which saw enormous changes in various fields of knowledge like the sciences, industry, and economics. It also explains the continuous production of such narratives in our contemporary age of shifting technologies, as dystopic science fiction gives us numerous opportunities to confront existing structures that affect real lives.

In this vein, Production I. G.'s *Psycho-Pass* offers a strong critique of the medico-technological model of disability. The series not

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42 Claeys, "Three Variants on the Concept of Dystopia," 16.
43 Broderick, *Reading by Starlight*, 155.

only interrogates the premise that anyone whose mental health deviates from the norm is a threat to social order, but also exposes the contradictions in legal and scientific discourses in the matrix of moral philosophies. This makes the anime increasingly relevant to our present reality where the authoritative voices on disability—those who make them from the medical perspective—often place the burden of wellness on the individual and isolates him from the historical, social and political discourses that offer boundless approaches to understanding this complex and fluid human condition.

It is therefore possible to extend the discussion of disability and mental health to the ramifications of neoliberal ideology. Ruth Cain explains that neoliberalism, with its "relentless privatisation, spiralling inequality, withdrawal of basic state support and benefits, ever-increasing and pointless work demands, fake news, unemployment and precarious work", both tax and isolate the individual.[44] Makishima Shogo's dying thoughts could have been describing precisely this experience: "Everyone is alone…. Any relationship can be replaced".[45] Neoliberalism creates the sort of individuality that Foucault has critiqued as that which the state imposes on its subjects.[46] It is the kind of individuality that isolates people from one another, and therefore from communal spirit and collective action that can see through the disingenuous mechanisms of the state. In societies that revolve around the rise and fall of the market, where the elite rule over the laboring multitudes, unrest is curbed by ingrained values of politeness and good behavior, as often prioritized by our educational, familial, and religious systems. Resistance—be it in the form of vandalism, protest rallies, or armed struggle—is unpopular, because it is neither polite nor behaved.

All these are factors as to why Tsunemori Akane, whose essential traits of youthfulness, cuteness, and kindness place her character squarely in the *shoujou* or "girl's stories" trope, makes for a

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44 Cain, "How Neoliberalism Is Damaging Your Mental Health."
45 Urobuchi, *Psycho-Pass*, "Perfect World."
46 Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 785.

challenging protagonist. While her intelligence, experience, and inquisitiveness eventually reach the level of Kougami Shinya, who is the more obvious fit for the traditional dystopian hero type, Tsunemori is unable to turn her back on the status quo. Definitely the series could have more fully confronted the problem of Tsunemori's positionality and the social stratification produced by the Sybil System, which assigns to the individual the kind of life she merits based on the color of her Hue and her aptitude tests. It is a society of potentiality but also of determinism. It is also a society for the elite, like Tsunemori. When she chooses to protect the happiness of the society produced by this social order, she is protecting the life she has always known—not the rights and freedom of those designated as Latent Criminals, whose incarceration seem acceptable precisely because they are diagnosed as criminals, and not the quality of life of the homeless, who exist in the dilapidated buildings that often serve as the battlegrounds of the MWPSB, but the sanitized life of middle-class privilege brought about by the potential the Sybil System sees in her and her peers, a potential that measures her ability to accept, and uphold, the established order.

But this is how the Sybil System maintains order: by propagating and utilizing fear. First it marks individuals with mental health issues as objects for society to fear by labeling them Latent Criminals. Like the Sybil System which desires to be a machine, psychiatry, on which the System is founded, desires to be as objective as the other natural sciences. But objects in other sciences do not change because of the name or designation given to them; humans do, so therefore psychiatry cannot be like the other sciences.[47] Biological subjects first and political or ethical subjects second, if at all, individuals under the Sybil System are rendered disabled through their labels, their fates determined without their input. The System thus produces citizens who behave as they are expected to, for fear that the System will mark them as a Latent Criminals, and as such will lose everything, including their rights. If their fear actually becomes the reason that their Psycho-passes worsen, reducing

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47 Hacking, qtd. in Ninnis, "Foucault and the Madness of Classifying Our Madness," 132.

them to Latent Criminals, then the System's effectiveness is only affirmed. The Sybil System also trains its citizens to fear resistance by criminalizing those whom it perceives as threats to itself and to its order, wielding the power of a limited science to justify their isolation and punishment. Resistance is literally disorder. And so it is also fear that makes the society's kindest, most principled individuals, like Tsunemori, embrace the Sybil System, which like many totalitarian rulers presents itself as the only solution to problems of criminality and chaos.

It is precisely Tsunemori's complicity with neoliberal ideology—her inability to imagine a viable world outside the current hierarchical order—that hinders her from truly resisting the Sybil System. Perhaps this is why her Hue remains clear and her Crime Co-efficient low no matter what she does: she is not a threat to the System. She will negotiate with it and even outwit it, but she will not kill it, because she believes that her society needs it to survive. For all her indignation at its murderous and treacherous acts, she refuses the task of switching it off, assigning it to someone else, someday.[48] At best, she will reform it, as she does at the conclusion of the series' second season. At worst she will be its instrument, as it seems all of MWPSB will become after the timeline of the movie, which sees the Sybil System extending its idea of order to the Southeast Asian Union. Confronted by the question "What is the cost of revolution?" and seeing only Makishima Shougo's crimes as the answer, she decides that there is too much to lose. She has too much to lose. Unlike Kougami, perhaps. Or the rebels of the Southeast Asia Union that the Sybil System seeks to colonize.

In this light, Tsunemori's choice to stay where she is brings to mind the citizens of Ursula Le Guin's short story "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas", itself a metafiction construed around moral philosophy. Unlike Kougami, who ultimately exiles himself from the System he cannot accept, Tsunemori stays in Omelas; she doesn't agree with the System, yet she begrudgingly accepts its law: that some children need to be isolated from the rest of society in order for that society to continue to exist. Complicity

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48 Urobuchi, *Psycho-Pass*, "Perfect World."

makes Tsunemori's character both relatable and problematic; she is, after all, who much of the audience of anime and science fiction probably are—educated middle-class consumers entrenched in their own privileged lives. This contradiction is possibly why a significant factor in fans' clamoring for more seasons of *Psycho-Pass* is the suspense surrounding the contest between Tsunemori and the Sybil System, along with the hope, perhaps, that there is a way for Tsunemori to defeat the despot. Or the opposite, in fact—perhaps we are hoping that Tsunemori can change the System from the inside so that society might continue to enjoy its rule. Asked about our criteria for good and evil, we might reply as Tsunemori does in "Where Justice Lies", that "the important thing… [is] to think about it…agonize over it, and accept it". We might think that this is enough, that we can be free of the despot without losing all that we now have.

If governments and laws abide by the philosophy of "the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people", as Bentham stated, then the perspectives of the historically disenfranchised, such as people with disability, expose the problems that this principle can perpetrate. *Psycho-Pass* does not quite offer solutions, but it does illustrate the significance of dystopias. We need worlds like that of *Psycho-Pass* because they urge us to confront our fears and to interrogate our ideologies and belief systems, because through these worlds we are better able to grasp the natures of authority and resistance. To inhabit a dystopia, then, is to render society's disabling forces visible so that we may take "a necessary step towards a better world".[49]

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49 Ashworth, qtd. in Vieira, *Dystopia(n) Matters,* 2.

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