Ariana Soderberg  
they/them  
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**Neoliberalism and Religion: The Internalization of Policing Practices**

I wish to be considered for this scholarship because my financial situation has changed drastically over the last year and my financial aid package does not reflect this. My single mother is now the full time caretaker for my great-grandfather who has advanced dementia. This has put significant financial strain on my mother, who has not been able to contribute at all to me financially. Additionally, I will be moving off-campus for the first time next semester and as a disabled student this is an incredibly daunting task. This scholarship would allow me to pay for my tuition and/or groceries with less worry in this transitional time. I hope you enjoy this essay about policing, as I believe it is incredibly relevant to our current times. Thank you.
Neoliberalism and Religion: The Internalization of Policing Practices
Following a period of social change in the 1960s, conservatives desired to restore the previous social and political hierarchy and to do this, they turned to market fundamentalism and a resurgence in religion. (Dreher 2020, 26) These changing beliefs worked to advance individualism and shift blame away from the collective and ultimately the government (Weber/Dreher). This shifting of responsibility creates a greater responsibility on the individual members of society, forcing those in lower positions in society to bear the burden of the consequences of their actions as the state takes a hands-off approach. Because individuals must face these consequences, they have turned to policing their actions and the actions of others to receive the intended outcome and avoid conflict with the state or religious figures. *Neoliberalism and religion have changed technologies of power and technologies of self, shifting hierarchical policing to parallel and internal policing.*

The neoliberalist state legitimizes its power by creating and enforcing disciplinary methods. These methods are often unattainable by regular members of the state, further showing how the state is more dominant, capable, and powerful than its members, aiding in the creation of docile subjects. In Wacquant’s article “Crafting the Neoliberal State: Workfare, Prisonfare, and Social Insecurity” he discusses “prison not as a technical implement for law enforcement, but as a core organ of the state whose selective and aggressive deployment in the lower regions of social space is constitutively injurious to the ideals of democratic citizenship” (2010, 200). Prison is one example of the disciplinary methods that states use to enforce laws, but Wacquant is arguing that that prison is not merely a disciplinary method; Instead, he is arguing that prisons work to keep lower members of the state under control. Hamann writes of this, as well as prison’s connection to the state’s need for surveillance: “Many of the contemporary practices that can be defined in terms of neoliberalism have historical precedents that we can locate in
Foucault’s archaeological/genealogical analyses. It is hard to argue with those who would point to today’s exploding prison populations, the use of prison labor and the training of both students and prisoners in “entrepreneurialism”, the replacement of welfare with workfare, the pervasive use of surveillance, training, and testing, etc. as instances of the contemporary manifestation of something that appears to be disciplinary power.” (Hamann 2009, 49-50) The pervasive and nearly constant use of surveillance mentioned here is just one way that the state and neoliberalism creates docile subjects. When individuals believe that they are constantly being watched, they behave differently; Foucault described this in his famous essay “Discipline and Punish” (1975) as panopticism---“He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection” (Foucault 1975, 202-203). Foucault’s writing took place in a time before widespread surveillance cameras, but Hamann’s text was published on the cusp of the technological boom of the twenty first century when cell phones began to have high quality cameras. We are now on the other side of that technological boom and recorded surveillance is at an all time high; most, if not all, shops, offices, and even schools have cameras inside and out to keep them ‘secure’. There are very few places where people can exist without being recorded in some form or another, even if the footage is never reviewed. This creates a pseudo-panopticon where subjects become both the police and the policed. Hamann suggests that the modern workplace is another example of a modern panopticon, as it is a site that reproduces capitalist ideals and subjects whose “freedom is shaped, conditioned, and constrained within a form of subjectification characterized by increasing competition and social insecurity.” (Hamman 2009, 51). The hierarchical structure of many corporate workplaces encourages surveillance both
through management and literal video and camera surveillance. Prisons, workplaces, and the surveillance associated with them aim to produce a certain kind of subject---a docile subject---making them technologies of domination.

Christianity’s hierarchical structure and policing strategy is similar to that of workplaces and prisons. In “The Peasant War In Germany” (1850), Engels discusses Muenzer’s ideas about the church’s structure and the way that the structure inflicts violence upon the lower class by creating unquestionable control from above. The church pushes the idea that God is always watching you and that you must repent for any mistakes you make in hopes to make it into heaven. Those in powerful positions within the Church use this to police lower members, causing the hierarchy of power and domination to become more defined. The church also reinforces obedience to authority, and specifically themselves as the authority, as Engels describes through his analysis of revolutionaries against the Catholic church. This value can be applied to other forms of authority, such as politicians, police, and employers, again aiding in the creation of docile subjects. Creating docile subjects under neoliberalism was a stepping stone towards implementing parallel and internal policing.

Once the state has successfully implemented their policies and regulations, the individualism necessitated by neoliberalism compelled individuals “to fashion themselves (their practices, understanding, and manner of speaking) according to its rules, often out of practical necessity.” (Hamann 2009, 50) We understand this as the creation of a technology of self. Rather than being directly controlled by the dominant class or force, individuals in the subaltern group self-regulate and govern themselves with the rules prescribed by the dominant class. The state enforces this through threat of violence, be it physical or otherwise. Police forces were created to
enforce formal rules and regulations but they often turn to citizens for help. Think about tip lines, wanted posters, or door-to-door questioning; the police cannot do their job properly without citizens policing other citizens. Since the police have been given power by the state to harm people, citizens are coerced into working with them in this way. There are almost always more people in the general population than there are police, making it very difficult to tend to each and every one of them efficiently. Thus, it is a “practical necessity” (Hamann 2009, 50) to enlist other citizens' help. Additionally, because police possess this ability to inflict harm, many individuals would prefer to police themselves and those close to them instead of turning to the law.

Additionally, according to Foucault the surveillance put in place by the state discussed previously suggests that anyone can operate the modern panopticon: “There is a machinery that assures dissymmetry, disequilibrium, difference. Consequently, it doesn't matter who exercises power. Any individual, taken almost at random, can operate the machine” (Foucault 1975, 202). Because anyone can operate the panopticon, individuals begin to operate the panopticon within themselves and survey and judge themselves both consciously and subconsciously. This means that the surveillance, judgment, and administration that can be done by a superior and considered a technology of domination can also be considered a technology of self. A technology of the self is experienced when a technology of domination, or an attempt to make an individual or group behave a certain way, becomes internalized and performed by the individual.

One example of this internalization of a dominating belief can be seen in the way that religious groups, particularly Christians, influence individuals into policing themselves in the name of God and avoiding eternal damnation. The hierarchical structure within the church those who hold positions within it try to disseminate the word of God and of the Bible but these structures have been tainted by neoliberalism as well. As previously mentioned, the Church
policies its members by reminding them that God is all seeing and knowing. Shame within the Church is another example of a technology of domination; Superiors within the Church shame members for making decisions that they believe do not fit within what is allowed by the scripture. Then, after experiencing that shame from others for so long, individuals internalize that shame and it becomes a technology of the self. Additionally, because Hell is believed to be such an unholy place full of suffering, individuals and groups will police others' behaviors in an attempt to save them from going to Hell. Policing others behaviors—who have the same amount of power within the system as you—is an example of parallel policing. This kind of policing could be another example of a technology of the self, as it seeks to regulate one’s one community without the involvement of authority figures or the law.

Another example of this internalization of policing can be seen in the ways that impoverished people police themselves due to external pressure from the state and those more privileged than them. Neoliberalism can be “seen in the myth of meritocracy, which determines an individual’s success or failure based upon his or her merit in relation to work, savings, investment, and risk” (Day 2012, 7). This myth creates a stigma surrounding welfare and its recipients, as more privileged individuals believe that poor people should be working harder to pull themselves out of poverty instead of relying on the state; “When reflecting on how the economic resources of a black underclass are systematically exploited, one must acknowledge that the logic of free-market ideology and meritocracy obscures the real experiences of poor Black women” (Day 2012, 67). However, this myth causes many impoverished individuals to heavily police their own behavior in an attempt to avoid looking like a lazy or ungrateful poor person; “These stigmatizing images are often internalized by Black women, becoming images that inhibit their sense of self-actualization” (Day 2012, 76). For example, many individuals
qualify for welfare benefits but do not apply to receive them. This could be due to the
decentralization of the state that occurred with the introduction of neoliberalism and they simply
do not know that they qualify. It could also be due to the stigma that Day explores in *Unfinished
Business* which is a result of the individualism that occurred with the introduction of
neoliberalism, which leaves them feeling that they will be harshly judged for receiving money
from the government. Day calls this an “ideological constraint of unworthiness” (2012, 87).
Because of the overwhelming stigma attached to living in poverty, applying for or receiving
welfare benefits would mean that the individual has failed; They were not able to use the free
market that neoliberalism boasts to their advantage and this must be a failure of their character.
While writers like Day acknowledge that this is untrue and poverty is caused by systemic failure
to meet people’s needs, the individualistic, neoliberalist mindset is reinforced daily by the hoops
that impoverished people must jump through to even receive welfare. When applying for benefits
many people are not looked in the eye by employees, their information is not kept confidential,
they must prove their income and relationship status through humiliating means, etc. This is
another example of the modern panopticon. These barriers are another reason why people may
avoid welfare altogether and instead attempt to police themselves better and work harder towards
making it out of poverty. This stigma and these barriers were things that I had heard of before,
but I had never truly thought of how they affect who felt safe enough to access welfare and/or
who benefitted from the barriers being upheld by those of us who are less privileged, rather than
by those in power. In summary, the systemic barriers and social stigmas that poor people face
put them under constraints that create feelings of unworthiness and cause individuals to police
their own actions in a bid to feel less ostracized.
The synthesis of neoliberalism and religion that occurred in the early 1970s lead the state to encourage individualism in the workplace and in religion. This individualism allowed the state to resist taking responsibility for social, political, and economic inequalities and instead use their stance over those without status in society to discipline and dominate; However, this technology of domination became a technology of the self when individuals began internalizing the disciplinary methods, such as surveillance, that the state used to legitimize their power.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


