

America as Living Laboratory of the Neoliberal Future

Present-day society, which breeds hostility between the individual man and everyone else, thus produces a social war of all against all which inevitably, in individual cases, notably among uneducated people, assumes a brutal, barbarous, violent form—that of crime. In order to protect itself against crime, against direct acts of violence, society requires an extensive, complicated system of administrative and judicial bodies which requires an immense labor force.—FRIEDRICH ENGELS, Speech at Elberfeld, 8 February 1845

To punish is to reprove, it is to blame. Thus, at all times, the main form of punishment has been to blacklist the guilty party, to hold him at a distance, to isolate him, to create a vacuum around him, to separate him from law-abiding folks. . . . But punishment is only a material sign through which an interior state is conveyed: it is a notation, a language through which the public conscience of society . . . expresses the sentiment that the reproved act inspires among its members.—ÉMILE DURKHEIM, “Academic Penalty,” 12th lecture, 1902

The public agitation over criminal “security” (*insécurité*, *Sicherheit*, *seguridad*) that has rippled across the political scene of the member countries of the European Union at century’s close, twenty years after flooding the civic sphere in the United States, presents several characteristics that liken it closely to the pornographic genre, as described by its feminist analysts.¹ A rough sketch of its main figures and springs can help us discern the evolving contours of the transformation of the state in the age of economic deregulation and social insecurity that is the empirical topic of this book and set out the parameters of the analytic agenda the latter pursues.

Figures and Springs of Penal Pornography

First, the rampant gesticulation over law and order is conceived and carried out not so much for its own sake as *for the express purpose of being exhibited and seen*, scrutinized, ogled: the absolute priority is to

put on a spectacle, in the literal sense of the term. For this, words and deeds proclaiming to fight crime and assorted urban disorders must be methodically orchestrated, exaggerated, dramatized, even *ritualized*. This explains why, much like the staged carnal entanglements that fill pornographic movies, they are extraordinarily repetitive, mechanical, uniform, and therefore eminently *predictable*.

Thus the authorities responsible for law enforcement in the different governments succeeding one another in a given country, or within different countries at a given time, all combine, in the same staccato rhythm and with only a few minor variations, the same mandatory figures with the same partners: they go down to patrol and extol anti-crime measures in the subway or on an inner-city train; they visit in procession the police station of an ill-reputed neighborhood; they slip into the team victory picture after an unusually large seizure of drugs; they hurl a few virile warnings to the outlaws who had better “keep a low profile” now or else; and they train the headlights of public attention on teenage scofflaws, repeat offenders, aggressive panhandlers, drifting refugees, immigrants waiting to be expelled, street prostitutes, and the assorted social detritus that litter the streets of the dualizing metropolis to the indignation of “law-abiding” citizens. Everywhere resound the same praise for the devotion and the competence of the forces of order, the same lament over the scandalous leniency of judges, the same avid affirmation of the sacrosanct “rights of crime victims,” the same thundering announcements promising, here to “push the crime rate down by 10 percent every year” (a promise that no politician dares make about the ranks of the unemployed), there to restore the hold of the state in “no-go-areas,” elsewhere to increase the capacity of the prison system at the cost of billions of euros.*

As a result, the law-and-order merry-go-round is to criminality what pornography is to amorous relations: a mirror deforming reality to the point of the grotesque that artificially extracts delinquent behaviors from the fabric of social relations in which they take root and make sense, deliberately ignores their causes and their meanings, and reduces their treatment to a series of conspicuous position-takings, often

*Brought into office by surfing on the surging law-and-order wave of the presidential campaign of winter 2002, prime minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin pushed anti-crime pornography to the point of nominating to his first cabinet a junior “minister in charge of justice real estate investments,” in other words, entrusted with building prisons. This world première (which made France the triste laughingstock of penologists around the planet) was rather inconclusive, since the junior minister in question was later forced to resign after having been indicted for “passive corruption” and speedily replaced by a junior “minister for crime victims.”

acrobatic, sometimes properly unreal, pertaining to the cult of ideal performance rather than to the pragmatic attention to the real. All in all, the new law-and-order *geste* transmutes the fight against crime into a *titillating bureaucratic-journalistic theater* that simultaneously appeases and feeds the fantasies of order of the electorate, reasserts the authority of the state through its virile language and mimics, and erects the prison as the ultimate rampart against the disorders which, erupting out of its underworld, are alleged to threaten the very foundations of society.

Whence comes this curious manner of thinking and acting about “security,” that, among the “basic functions of the state” identified by Max Weber—the elaboration of legislation, the enforcement of public order, the armed defense against external aggression, and the administration of the “hygienic, educational, social and cultural needs” of its members²—grants unprecedented priority to its missions of police and justice, and exultantly heralds the capacity of the authorities to bend indocile categories and territories to the common norm? And why has this punitive approach, targeting street delinquency and declining urban districts, which purports to make criminal offenses recede inch by inch through the full-blown activation of the penal apparatus, recently been embraced not only by right-wing parties but also, and with surprising zeal, by politicians of the governmental Left from one end of the European continent to the other? This book seeks to answer these questions by mapping out one of the major political transformations of the past half-century—and yet one that has gone virtually unnoticed by political scientists and by sociologists specializing in what is conventionally called, due to intellectual hysteresis, the “crisis of the welfare state”: namely, the *irruption of the penal state* in America, and its practical and ideological repercussions upon the other societies subjected to the “reforms” fostered by neoliberalism.

Over the past decade, the grand American experiment of the “War on crime” has indeed imposed itself as the inevitable reference for all the governments of the First world, the theoretical source and practical inspiration for the general hardening of penalty that has translated in all advanced countries into a spectacular swelling of the population behind bars.* It is in the United States, this country “where imagination is

*I retraced in *Les Prisons de la misère* (Paris: Raisons d’agir Editions, 1999; expanded English trans. *Prisons of Poverty*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009) the three stages of the planetary diffusion of the notions, technologies, and policies of public safety “made in USA”: gestation and implementation (as well as exhibition) in New York City under the tutelage of the neoconservative think tanks that led the campaign against the welfare state; import-export through the agency of the media

at work,” according to an official report by a French government expert in urban safety, that penal innovation has proven that “it is possible to make real delinquency and the feeling of subjective insecurity recede” by the deployment of zealous police, judicial, and correctional policies aimed at the marginal categories caught in the cracks and ditches of the new economic landscape.³ It is in the United States that, forsaking all “sociological complacency,” criminology is said to have demonstrated that the cause of crime is the personal irresponsibility and immorality of the criminal, and that the merciless sanctioning of “incivilities” and assorted low-level disorders is the surest means of damming up violent offenses. It is in the American metropolis that the police are said to have proven capable of “reversing the crime epidemic” (the title of the best-seller autobiography of New York City’s chief of police is *Turn-around*), here by applying “zero tolerance” and there by the “coproduction” of safety with the residents of dispossessed neighborhoods. It is in America that the prison has turned out, in the end, to be a judicious tool for taming the “violent predators” and other “habitual offenders” who roam the streets in search of innocent prey. Better yet, according to a leading journalist at *Le Monde*, “to focus on the repressive policies of the United States,” in relation to the urban policies implemented in that country, would enable us to “open our eyes to what is being invented there, day after day, and without connection with the sole punitive obsession: schemes to promote autonomy, buttressed by the instituting capacity of civil society.”*

This book discloses and dismantles the springs of the international legend of an *American law-and-order El Dorado* by showing how the

and of the kindred policy centers that have mushroomed throughout Europe, and particularly in Great Britain, acclimation chamber of neoliberal penalty with a view toward its dissemination on the continent; scholarly “dressing up” by local *passeurs* (smugglers) who bring the warrant of their academic authority to the adaptation to their countries of theories and techniques of order maintenance that come from the United States.

*Jean Birnbaum, “Insécurité: la tentation américaine,” *Le Monde*, April 4, 2003 (an article that reviews and extols the books by Didier Peyrat, *Éloge de la sécurité*; Jacques Donzelot, Catherine Mével, and Anne Wyvekens, *Faire société*; and Hugues Lagrange, *Demandes de sécurité*, and whose introductory caption confirms: “The United States is becoming an ever-more important source of inspiration for French researchers interested in urban insecurity”). Birnbaum writes with the superb assurance that comes from the smug ignorance of US realities combined with the doxic belief in the new neoliberal security-think: “Here we find what is perhaps one of the strong constants of the present time: whatever their political sensibilities, from now on the renewal of a democratic doctrine of public safety seems to have to pass through this double resort to civil society and to the US reference.”

penal categories, practices, and policies of the United States find their root and reason in the neoliberal revolution of which this country is the historical crucible and the planetary spearhead. Explosive growth of the incarcerated populations, which increased fivefold in twenty-five years to exceed two million and are stacked in conditions of overpopulation that defy understanding; continual extension of criminal justice supervision, which now covers some seven million Americans, corresponding to one adult man in twenty and one young black man in three, thanks to the development of computer and genetic technologies and to the frenzied proliferation of criminal databases freely accessible on the internet; runaway growth of the budgets and personnel of correctional administrations, promoted to the rank of third-largest employer in the country even as social expenditures undergo deep cuts and the right to public aid is transformed into the obligation to work at underpaid, unskilled jobs; frenetic development of a private incarceration industry, darling of Wall Street during the roaring 1990s, which has taken on a national and even international scope in order to satisfy the state's demand for expanded punishment; targeting of police surveillance and judicial repression onto the residents of the collapsing black ghetto and onto sex offenders, now aggressively repulsed to the infamous margins of society; finally, diffusion of a racialized culture of public vituperation of criminals endorsed by the highest authorities in the land and relayed by a cultural industry feeding (off) the fear of felons: the irresistible ascent of the penal state in the United States over the past three decades responds not to the rise in crime—which remained roughly constant overall before sagging at the end of the period—but to the dislocations provoked by the social and urban retrenchment of the state and by the imposition of precarious wage labor as a new norm of citizenship for those trapped at the bottom of the polarizing class structure.⁴

The Material and Symbolic Charges of Incarceration

To understand why and how the law-and-order upsurge that has swept most postindustrial countries around the close of the century constitutes a *reaction to, a diversion from, and a denegation of, the generalization of the social and mental insecurity* produced by the diffusion of desocialized wage labor against the backdrop of increased inequality, it is both necessary and sufficient to break with the ritual opposition of intellectual schools and to wed the virtues of a *materialist* analysis, inspired by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and the strengths of a *symbolic* approach, initiated by Émile Durkheim and amplified by Pierre

Bourdieu. The materialist perspective, elaborated by various strands of radical criminology, is attuned to the changing relations that obtain in each epoch (and particularly during phases of socioeconomic upheaval) between the penal system and the system of production, while the symbolic outlook is attentive to the capacity that the state has to trace salient social demarcations and produce social reality through its work of inculcation of efficient categories and classifications.⁵ The traditionally hostile separation of these two approaches, the one stressing the instrumental role of penalty as a vector of power and the other its expressive mission and integrative capacity, is but an accident of academic history artificially sustained by stale intellectual politics. This separation must imperatively be overcome (as suggested by the epigrammatic joining of Engels and Durkheim), for in historical reality penal institutions and policies can and do shoulder both tasks at once: they simultaneously act to enforce hierarchy and control contentious categories, at one level, and to communicate norms and shape collective representations and subjectivities, at another. The prison symbolizes material divisions and materializes relations of symbolic power; its operation ties together inequality and identity, fuses domination and signification, and welds the passions and the interests that traverse and roil society.*

By paying attention to both the social-economic and discursive dynamics at work in the growing linkage between revamped welfare and penal policies, “workfare” and “prisonfare,” one gains the means to discover that the explosive growth of the scope and intensity of punishment—in the United States over the past thirty years and in Western Europe on a smaller scale over the past dozen—fulfills three interrelated functions, each corresponding broadly to a “level” in the new class structure polarized by economic deregulation. At the lowest rung of the social ladder, incarceration serves to physically neutralize and warehouse the supernumerary fractions of the working class and in particular the dispossessed members of stigmatized groups who persist in entering into “open rebellion against their social environment”—to recall the provocative definition of crime proposed a century ago by W. E. B. Du Bois in *The Philadelphia Negro*.⁶ One step higher, the rolling out of the police, judicial, and correctional net of the state fulfills the function, inseparably economic and moral, of imposing the disci-

*A forceful argument for recognizing the full “complexity of structure and density of meaning” of punishment as a multilayered social institution, that skillfully draws on Marx, Durkheim, Elias, and Foucault, is deployed by David Garland, *Punishment and Society: A Study in Social Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), esp. 280–92.

pline of desocialized wage work among the established fractions of the proletariat and the declining and insecure strata of the middle class, in particular by raising the cost of strategies of escape or resistance that drive young men from the lower class into the illegal sectors of the street economy.* Lastly and above all, for the upper class as well as the society as a whole, the endless and boundless activism of the penal institution serves the symbolic mission of reaffirming the authority of the state and the newfound will of political elites to emphasize and enforce the sacred border between commendable citizens and deviant categories, the “deserving” and the “undeserving” poor, those who merit being salvaged and “inserted” (through a mix of sanctions and incentives on both the welfare and crime fronts) into the circuit of unstable wage labor and those who must henceforth be durably blacklisted and banished.

So much to say that this book does not belong to the genre, which is coming back into fashion these days, of the “political economy of imprisonment,” inaugurated by the classic work of Georg Rusche and Otto Kirschheimer, *Punishment and Social Structure*,⁷ since my ambition is to hold together the material and symbolic dimensions of the contemporary restructuring of the economy of punishment that this tradition of research has precisely been unable to wed, owing to its congenital incapacity to recognize the specific efficacy and the materiality of symbolic power. Deploying Pierre Bourdieu’s little-known but potent concept of *bureaucratic field* enables us at once to construe the perimeter and missions of the state as sites and stakes of sociopolitical struggles, to (re)link developments on the welfare provision and crime control fronts, and to fully attend to the constitutive capacity of the symbolic structures embedded in the public organization, implementation, and representation of punishment.** Just as Bourdieu broke with the Marxist conception of class to expound his multidimen-

*To get a raw experiential sense of the steep escalation of police intrusion and penal sanction at ground level, compare the autobiographical narratives of criminal life on the streets of the Big City given by Piri Thomas in *Down These Mean Streets* (New York: Vintage, 1967) for the 1950s, and by Reymundo Sanchez (a.k.a. “Lil Loco”) in *My Bloody Life: The Making of a Latin King* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2000) for the 1990s.

**“When it comes to the social world, the neo-Kantian theory that confers upon language, and upon representations more generally, a properly symbolic efficacy in the construction of reality is perfectly justified.” This is why “social science must encompass a theory of the theory effect which, by contributing to impose a more or less authorized manner of seeing the world, contributes to making the reality of that world.” Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990 [1982]), 105–6. My translation.

sional theory of social space and group-making through classification struggles,⁸ we must escape from the narrowly materialist vision of the political economy of punishment to capture the reverberating roles of the criminal justice system as cultural engine and fount of social demarcations, public norms, and moral emotions (as dramatized by the feverish campaign to banish sex offenders analyzed in chapter 7, which would appear irrelevant and inexplicable from the standpoint of an economic paradigm).

Punishing the Poor is intended as a contribution to the *historical anthropology of the state* and of the *transnational transformations of the field of power in the age of ascending neoliberalism*, in that it purports to link the modifications of social policies to those of penal policies so as to decipher the *double regulation* to which the postindustrial proletariat is now subjected through the joint agency of the assistential and penitential sectors of the state. And because the police, the courts, and the prison are, upon close examination, the somber and stern face that the Leviathan turns everywhere toward the dispossessed and dishonored categories trapped in the hollows of the inferior regions of social and urban space by economic deregulation and the retrenchment of schemes of social protection. In sum, the present volume is a study, not of crime and punishment, but of the remaking of the state in the era of hegemonic market ideology: penal expansion in the United States, and in the Western European and Latin American countries that have more or less slavishly followed its lead, is at bottom a *political project*, a core component of the retooling of public authority suited to fostering the advance of neoliberalism. Tracking the Malthusian retraction of the social wing and gargantuan enlargement of the penal clutch of the state in America after the peaking of the Civil Rights movement thus paves the way for moving from a narrowly economic conception to the fully sociological characterization of neoliberalism essayed in the conclusion to this book. This characterization proposes, first, that we construe the prison as a core political institution, instead of a mere technical implement for enforcing the law and handling criminals, and, second, that we recognize that “workfare” and “prisonfare” are two integral components of the neoliberal Leviathan, and not passing contradictions or accidental sideshows to the grand narrative of the alleged advent of “small government.” And it puts in the spotlight the distinctive *paradox of neoliberal penalty*: the state stridently reasserts its responsibility, potency, and efficiency in the narrow register of crime management at the very moment when it proclaims and organizes its own impotence on the economic front, thereby revitalizing the twin historical-cum-scholarly myths of the efficient police and the free market.

The provisional account offered here of the rise of the penal state in the United States as an integral component of neoliberal restructuring is admittedly one-sided and overly monolithic. It does not probe policy misfirings, ambiguities, and contradictions, which abound in the penal field as in every realm of public action, and the manifold metamorphoses and devolutions that state activity undergoes as it percolates down from central conception to local implementation at ground level.⁹ It does not survey efforts to resist, divest, or divert the imprint of the penal state from below, which have been variegated if remarkably ineffectual in the United States. Nor does it elucidate the contests that have raged at the top, inside policy-making circles, to steer public programs in divergent directions on both the welfare and the punishment tracks.* This choice of focus is deliberate and justified on three grounds.

First, this book is not an inquiry into penal policies (or their social-support cousins) in their full scope and complexity but, rather, a *selective excavation* of those changing activities of the police, courts, and especially the prison that are specifically *turned toward managing the "problem" categories* residing in the lower regions of social and urban space, and so it overlooks other forms of offending (such as white-collar, corporate, and regulatory crimes, for instance) and other missions of the law-enforcement machinery. Second, it seeks to highlight the discursive and practical arrangements that work to join penal sanction and welfare supervision into a single apparatus for the cultural capture and behavioral control of marginal populations. Accordingly, it stresses a selfsame logic cutting across policy domains at the expense of multiple logics competing within a single domain.¹⁰ And, thirdly, the analysis offered here is necessarily provisional and schematic insofar as it tackles policy developments that are ongoing, unfinished, and diversified along regional as well as local lines. To paint patterns that are not fully congealed, whose elements crystallize at varying paces, and whose effects have yet to ramify fully across the social structure and play out over the long run (in the case of workfare), requires that one exaggerate the meshing of trends tying punishment and marginality, at the risk of giving the impression that penalization is an irresistible totalizing principle that crushes everything in its path. This (over)simplification is an unavoidable *moment* in the analysis of the surge of the penal state

*This book also concentrates on the nexus between penalty and emerging forms of urban marginality at the expense of a full treatment of the powerful prismatic effects of ethnoracial division, as the latter are tackled frontally in another study. See Loïc Wacquant, *Deadly Symbiosis: Race and the Rise of the Penal State* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

in the neoliberal age and a *cost* well worth paying if it gets students and activists of criminal justice to pay attention to germane developments in poverty policies and, conversely, if it alerts scholars and militants of welfare—as traditionally defined—to the urgent need to bring the operations of the overgrown penal arm of the Leviathan into their purview.

It should be clear, then, that the high degree of internal coherence and external congruence displayed by the radiography of the nascent government of social insecurity after the collapse of the Fordist-Keynesian order drawn here is partly a function of the analytic lens deployed. It should not mislead the reader to think that the penalization of poverty is a deliberate “plan” pursued by malevolent and omnipotent rulers—as in the conspiratorial vision framing the activist myth of the “prison-industrial complex.”¹¹ Nor does it imply that some systemic need (of capitalism, racism, or panopticism) mysteriously mandates the runaway activation and glorification of the penal sector of the bureaucratic field. The latter are not preordained necessities but the results of struggles involving myriad agents and institutions seeking to reshape this or that wing and prerogative of the state in accordance with their material and symbolic interests. Other historical paths were open, and remain open, however narrow and improbable they may appear to be. It goes without saying—but it is better said nonetheless—that, with Pierre Bourdieu, I forcefully reject the “functionalism of the worst case” which casts all historical developments as the work of an omniscient strategist or as automatically beneficial to some abstract machinery of domination and exploitation that would “reproduce” itself no matter what.* At the same time, it is the empirical claim of this book that neoliberal penalty does coalesce around the shrill reassertion of penal fortitude, the pornographic exhibition of the taming of moral and criminal deviancy, and the punitive containment and disciplinary supervision of the problem populations dwelling at the margins of the class and cultural order. Bringing developments on the social welfare and crime control fronts into a single analytic frame reveals that, for the precarious fractions of the urban proletariat that are their privileged clientele, the programmatic convergence and practical interlock of restrictive “workfare” and expansive “prisonfare” gives the neoliberal state a dis-

*“One of the principles of sociology consists in recusing this negative functionalism: social mechanisms are not the product of some Machiavellian intention. They are much more intelligent than the most intelligent of the dominant.” Pierre Bourdieu, *Questions de sociologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), 111, translated as *Sociology in Question* (London: Sage, 1990), 71. My translation.

tinctively paternalistic visage and translates into intensified intrusion and castigatory oversight.*

The undivided hegemony of neoliberal “security-think” on both sides of the Atlantic hides the fact that contemporary societies have at their disposal at least three main strategies to treat the conditions and conducts that they deem undesirable, offensive, or threatening.¹² The first consists in *socializing* them, that is, acting at the level of the collective structures and mechanisms that produce and reproduce them—for instance, as concerns the continual increase in the number of the visible homeless who “stain” the urban landscape, by building or subsidizing housing, or by guaranteeing them a job or an income that would enable them to acquire shelter on the rental market. This path entails (re)asserting the responsibility and (re)building the capacities of the social state to deal with continuing or emerging urban dislocations. The second strategy is *medicalization*: it is to consider that a person is living out on the street because she suffers from alcohol dependency, drug addiction, or mental deficiencies, and thus to search for a medical remedy to a problem that is defined from the outset as an individual pathology liable to be treated by health professionals.

The third state strategy is *penalization*: under this scenario, it is not a matter of either understanding a situation of individual distress or a question of thwarting social cogs; the urban nomad is labeled a delinquent (through a municipal ordinance outlawing panhandling or lying down on the sidewalk, for instance) and finds himself treated as such; and he ceases to pertain to homelessness as soon as he is put behind bars. The “legal construction of the homeless as bare life” abridges his

*This diagnosis contrasts with the influential views of Nikolas Rose, for whom advanced countries have witnessed “a bewildering variety of developments in regimes of control” displaying “little strategic coherence”; David Garland, who sees penal change over the past three decades as stamped by schizophrenic “bifurcation” betraying the limits of the sovereign state; Pat O’Malley, who also stresses dispersal, inconsistency, and volatility; Jonathan Simon and Malcolm Feeley, for whom postmodern disintegration deepens the disconnect between the actuarial logic of the “new penology” and popular understandings of crime and punishment; and Michael Tonry, who highlights the cyclical nature and absurdist tenor of recent trends in criminal policies. See respectively, Nikolas Rose, “Government and Control,” *British Journal of Criminology* 40, no. 3 (Spring 2000): 321–39; David Garland, *The Culture of Control* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Pat O’Malley, “Volatile and Contradictory Punishment,” *Theoretical Criminology* 40, no. 1 (January 1999): 175–96; Jonathan Simon and Malcolm Feeley, “The Forms and Limits of the New Penology,” in *Punishment and Social Control*, eds. Stanley Cohen and Thomas Blomberg, 75–116 (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2003); and Michael Tonry, *Thinking about Crime: Sense and Sensibility in American Penal Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

or her rights, effectively reduces him to a noncitizen, and facilitates criminal processing.¹³ Here penalization serves as a *technique for the invisibilization of the social “problems”* that the state, as the bureaucratic lever of collective will, no longer can or cares to treat at its roots, and the prison operates as a judicial garbage disposal into which the human refuse of the market society are thrown.

Inasmuch as they have developed the necessary organizational and ideological capacity, advanced countries can implement these three strategies in diverse combinations and for diverse conditions. There is, moreover, a dynamic interrelationship between these three modalities of state treatment of deplorable states of affairs, with medicalization often serving as a conduit to criminalization at the bottom of the class structure as it introduces a logic of individual treatment.* What matters here is that the weighing and targeting of these manners of governing indocile populations and territories is *doubly political*. First, they are political in that they result from ongoing power struggles between the agents and institutions which contend, in and around the bureaucratic field, to shape and eventually direct the management of “troubled persons” and troubling collective states. Second, the shifting dosage and aim of socialization, medicalization, and penalization are political in that they result from choices that engage the conception that we have of life in common.

It is crucial that these choices be made with full knowledge of the causes and consequences, in the middle and long run, of the options offered. The most portentous scientific and civic mistake here consists in believing and making people believe, as the hypersecuritist discourse that saturates the political and journalistic fields today asserts, that police and carceral management is the optimal remedy, the royal road to the restoration of sociomoral order in the city, if not the only means of ensuring public “safety,” and that we have no alternative to

*In American history, the adoption of the medical model to deal with a variety of disquieting activities (opiate use and addiction, homosexuality, abortion, child abuse and madness) has repeatedly led to their penalization. Peter Conrad and Joseph W. Schneider, *Deviance and Medicalization: From Badness to Sickness* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992). An instructive case study of how medicalization worked to divert attention from the socioeconomic roots of the rising presence of homeless people on the streets of New York City in the 1980s (namely, the steep decline in stable jobs and severe penalty of affordable housing) and to justify a policy of physical removal of social discards from public space is Arline Mathieu, “The Medicalization of Homelessness and the Theater of Repression,” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, n.s. 7, no. 2. (June 1993): 170–84. For a germane analysis in the French case, see Patrick Gaboriau and Daniel Terrolle, eds., *Ethnologie des sans-logis. Etude d’une forme de domination sociale* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998).

contain the social and mental turbulence induced by the fragmentation of wage work and the polarization of urban space. The sociological analysis of the stupendous ascent of the penal state in the United States after the peaking of the Civil Rights movement demonstrates that such is not the case. Entering into the living laboratory of the neoliberal revolution also has the virtue of revealing in quasi-experimental fashion the colossal social cost and the irreversible debasement of the ideals of freedom and equality implied by the criminalization of social insecurity.

New York, May 2004—Berkeley, December 2006