Worshipping the Enterprising Self: The Oprah Empire's Brand of Spiritual Self-Governance.

Oprah Winfrey, currently one of the most popular American cultural and moral leaders, frames her empire of media products with the slogan "Live Your Best Life." Oprah uses this slogan to urge audience members to govern their choices, thoughts, and feelings in such a way that they might emulate her American Dream-like success. According to Oprah, the first step toward one's "Best Life" is to work to perfect one's spirit. The spiritual practices and products she endorses, then, become entry points into the fundamental aspects of the Oprah Empire's subjective ideal. This thesis examines Oprah's recent promotion of two explicitly spiritual books: The Secret by
Rhonda Byrne and A New Earth by Eckhart Tolle. Specifically, this thesis uses Critical Discourse Analysis to examine five episodes of The Oprah Winfrey Show from 2007 and 2008 that focus on one of these two books. Because the intended messages and ideological frameworks embedded in cultural products do not disclose what audiences make of them, the second part of this analysis studies the dominant messages of one online class used to promote A New Earth in dialogue with a sampling of related audience discussion posts on Oprah.com. Together, these two sections of analysis reveal how Oprah, as part of the contemporary historic bloc, works to align audience members' interests with an "enterprising" subjective ideal that benefits neoliberal, postfordist governance.

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