

Onopticon: Sovereignty as Environmental Structuring

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Introduction: No Longer Surveillance, but Pre-Processed Life

We still speak of surveillance, the disciplinary society, algorithmic governance, and data extraction. Each of these once explained a historical period. They no longer suffice. Because the problem is no longer that the human being is watched, that behavior is predicted, or that preference is nudged. The problem is that access to the vital thresholds of life is pre-processed in advance. The problem is that the conditions of subjectivity are technically prepared before action. The problem is that the world is closed off to the individual before it is ever opened.

The regime through which we are living is not, in the classical sense, a regime of surveillance. It is a regime of sovereignty in which the subject's relation to the world is pre-structured by technical infrastructures. The name of this regime is Onopticon.

Onopticon does not treat the individual merely as a watched being or as a producer of data. It constitutes the individual as a being whose recognizability, mobility, access, priority order, risk profile, and vital legitimacy have already been processed in advance. Power here is no longer simply the force that legislates, prohibits, or disciplines. Power now organizes not merely the field of visibility, but the field of possibility. Whatever the person does, the path available to them has already been narrowed.

For this reason, the transformation underway is not a simple continuation of previous forms of power. Discipline, security, biopolitics, control society, surveillance capitalism, algorithmic governance: all of these described the roads leading to this threshold. But we have now reached the end of those roads. Today, the individual has ceased to be a subject who can still be described in moral and political terms, and has instead been reduced to a processable form of life bound to vital, biological, and technical thresholds.

The name of this new form of being is Homovictimus.

I. The Old Genealogy Is Over

Foucault saw discipline. Deleuze saw modulation. Agamben saw bare life. Zuboff saw behavioral extraction. Rouvroy and Berns diagnosed algorithmic governmentality. Amoore exposed the logic of data-driven security. This genealogy was not wrong. It was incomplete. Because all of these theoretical frameworks, to varying degrees, still thought through historical phases in which the subject remained a subject in some meaningful sense: governed, disciplined, placed under exception, modulated, behaviorally inferred.

Today, that threshold has been crossed. What is governed now is no longer the behavior of the subject, but the conditions of its existence. Before what a person thinks or wants, what is processed is which institutional gates they may pass through, which services they may access and in what order, which risk cluster they will be assigned to, which regime of recognition will admit them. The human being is no longer the historical center; it is a living entity moving through technical gateways, its existence operationally segmented.

Thus, the issue is not to append a few digital supplements to older theories. The issue is to admit that the process they described has now arrived at a new anthropological threshold. The individual has not

disappeared; something worse has happened. The individual has been reduced to a form of processability whose biological continuity is bound to technical conditions of access. The contemporary name of this reduction is Homovictimus.

II. What Is Onopticon?

Onopticon is not the digital continuation of the Panopticon. Panopticon establishes visibility, produces discipline, and creates internalized control. Onopticon goes further: it determines in advance how the subject will be connected to the world, through which infrastructural gateways it will pass, within which systems it will be recognized, and at which thresholds it will be stopped.

The question of Onopticon is not “who is doing what?” Its question is: “Who, under what conditions, may access which domains, and to what extent?” Surveillance here is no longer merely a tool of information gathering; it becomes a mechanism of pre-processing transformed into a vital threshold.

For this reason, Onopticon is not simply data accumulation. It is not simply the algorithm. It is not simply platform capitalism. It is a form of sovereignty that binds finance, health, identity, movement, energy, communication, security, and public recognition under a common technical logic. Its violence lies not in excluding the person, but in pre-formatting them while including them. Onopticon is less a regime of exclusion than a regime of conditional inclusion. It does not need to cast you outside the system; it incorporates you into the system only in the form that it can process.

It is precisely here that the subject is processed technically not before law, but together with law. The process does not begin when the decision is made. Long before any decision is made, the world has already been laid out before the decision-maker in a particular order. Sovereignty today operates most nakedly here: not in the decision itself, but in the horizon of the decision.

III. Homovictimus: The New Human Type

Homovictimus is not simply the injured or victimized human. It is not the name of victim psychology. It is the anthropological form of the new era. It is neither the classical citizen nor merely a data object. It is the being that lives biologically, is processed technically, prioritized institutionally, and conditioned vitally.

To understand this being, the classical language of freedom is no longer enough. Because the classical subject was not erased all at once, but stroke by stroke. Will, representation, citizenship, public agency, collective action, normative objection: each of these was not shattered in one blow, but worn down by the spread of infrastructural dependencies, by the technical mediation of access to services, by the tethering of life itself to gateways.

Today, the reactions societies give to major events are the naked indicator of this transformation. In most cases, people no longer respond to injustice as moral agents, but as biological subjects under conditions of vital disruption. Reaction emerges when energy falters, when logistics fail, when healthcare narrows, when mobility is interrupted, when payment systems collapse, when networks tremble. Reaction is no longer, in most cases, the defense of truth; it is the alarm signal of metabolism.

For this reason, the question “is there still resistance?” is often wrongly posed. Of course there are protests, movements, campaigns, unions, privacy networks. But these are no longer, in the old sense, the confident counter-actions of a sovereign public subject. In most cases, they are frictions within a life already bound to technical gateways. Resistance did not disappear in an instant; it was pushed into the cracks of vital, logistical, and data infrastructures. As the classical subject receded, counter-action also

shifted away from the center of conscious political will and became compressed around infrastructural breakdowns and access crises.

Homovictimus is therefore not the passive human, but the human produced by a completed process of pacification. This is not a failed citizenship project; it is a successful reduction operation.

IV. Palantir: Not a Company, but the Interface of Contemporary Sovereignty

To read Palantir merely as a technology company is one of the most foolish mistakes of our time. Palantir cannot be understood on the same plane as Amazon Web Services, Azure, or ordinary cloud and data storage providers. These firms move data, store it, scale it. Palantir transforms data into operational ontology, ontology into priority order, and priority order into a horizon of intervention.

For this reason, Palantir's importance does not lie merely in producing advanced software. Its importance lies in allowing state institutions to render heterogeneous data sets readable, classifiable, relatable, and actionable through its systems. Palantir does not merely store data; it gives data a logic of intervention. That is why the issue is not simply "what data exists?" The issue is how that data is rendered meaningful, and for whom. This is where sovereignty shifts.

Palantir's real privilege is not that it formally makes decisions on behalf of the state. The formal decision remains with the state. But the layer of pre-processing, the architecture of attention, the threat horizon, the map of relations, and the operational sense of reality are prepared within a private infrastructure. Sovereignty today is reconstituted precisely in this distinction: the decision remains with the state, but the horizon of decision is prepared inside the private platform.

For this reason, Palantir is not a vendor. It is the constitutive interface of the regime of cognitive pre-processing.

V. ICE: The Pre-Legal Attention Architecture of Enforcement

The field of migration is one of the clearest sites in which the punitive form of Onopticon becomes visible. The problem here is not simply the collection of data. The problem is which bodies are made visible first, which persons are rendered "priority," which clusters are converted into objects of risk and intervention.

In the case of ICE, the technical tool does not directly replace the court. But it determines what will appear before the court, in what order, and with what intensity. Thus enforcement is constructed within a technical economy of attention before any legal decision has occurred. Questions such as whose file will be opened, whose address will be flagged, which relational network will be treated as suspicious, which person will be inserted into the horizon of capture, are shaped by a pre-processing logic that operates outside law yet at the very center of enforcement.

Here the machine does not "decide." Something more dangerous happens: it narrows the field of reality that makes the decision possible. Bureaucracy is protected precisely through this arrangement. "The machine said so" does not replace the legal ruling; it functions as a shield that disperses responsibility and converts violence into technical procedure. This is the most sophisticated violence of Onopticon: it manufactures legitimacy before judgment.

VI. NHS and Civil Administration: The Regime of Mandatory Inclusion

Onopticon does not operate only in the domains of security and war. Its deeper success lies in its operation within the basic institutional circulation of everyday life. Health is one of its clearest examples,

because technicalization in the health sector usually arrives not in the language of violence, but in the language of efficiency, coordination, and modernization.

Yet what is happening here is not merely the digitization of old systems. What is happening is the reorganization of health data, patient flow, decision coordination, and service prioritization according to the logic of private infrastructure. The individual is not punished; they are included. But the conditions of that inclusion are determined by the platform. For this reason, Onopticon is not only a regime of exclusion, but a regime of mandatory inclusion. One must be inside it in order to live; yet once inside, one is constituted according to its processing logic.

Vendor lock-in is therefore not merely a technical problem; it is a political condition. The state does not simply buy software; it binds its own institutional intuition to an external cognitive order. What appears in the field of civil services as modernization is, in reality, the transfer of vital gateways to technical-private interfaces.

VII. Maven, AIP, and the Pre-Processed Reality of War

The battlefield is the nakedest form of Onopticon, because here the connection between pre-processing and death is difficult to conceal. With Maven, AIP, and similar architectures, what is really transformed is not simply the possibility that lethal decision-making becomes fully autonomous. What is transformed is the machinic shaping of threat, priority, reasonableness, and operational attention.

“Human-in-the-loop” is not, here, a genuine safeguard; in most cases it functions as an ideological slogan. Because even if the human remains in the loop, the world presented to that human has already been narrowed. Which image matters, which target is meaningful, which movement counts as anomaly, which cluster requires intervention: all of these have already been shaped in the layer of pre-processing. The human decides, but the reality within which they decide has already been designed.

For this reason, Onopticon is more current and more insidious than the fantasy of the autonomous killer robot. The problem is not that the machine pulls the trigger. The problem is that the human can think only within a war reality already narrowed in advance by the machine.

VIII. The Technological Republic: The Enemy Confesses Itself

Palantir’s importance lies not only in the contracts it signs with states. Its deeper significance lies in the fact that it has begun to defend its own historical role in openly political language. The Technological Republic and the manifesto that accompanies it declare that technical infrastructure is not neutral; on the contrary, it carries an explicit ontological and political claim.

Anti-pluralism here is not accidental. The hierarchical ranking of cultures is not accidental. The contempt for “hollow pluralism” is not accidental. The rhetoric of the hard state, elite technical reason, cultural hierarchy, and strategic force is not accidental. These are not merely the ideological whims of a few executives; they are the self-confident language of a new regime of sovereignty, its speech of victory.

For this reason, Palantir’s manifesto is more than a text to be criticized from the outside. It is the document in which the contemporary form of sovereignty speaks in its own voice. Infrastructure no longer merely functions; it defends itself. It no longer merely produces utility; it interprets history. It no longer merely provides services; it claims to chart the direction of humanity. It is at this point that the company ceases to be merely a company. It becomes doctrine.

The political-theological dimension of Onopticon is revealed precisely here: the technical instrument begins to present itself as destiny.

IX. Conclusion: A New Name for a New Regime

What we confront today is not simply an upgraded version of the surveillance society. It is not merely an expanded form of data capitalism. It is certainly not just the digitization of the security state. Each of these is a component of the regime we inhabit. None of them is its proper name.

The name of the regime is Onopticon.

Onopticon is the form of sovereignty that technically pre-processes the fundamental thresholds of life. It binds recognition, circulation, access, priority, and sanction under a single cognitive infrastructural logic. It does not always seize decision-making directly; it does something more effective. It processes the world placed before the decision.

The human being of this regime is Homovictimus. It is no longer the classical political subject. It is not a center that speaks in its own name, makes history, and stands in public as a constituent agent. It is the human whose biological continuity is bound to technical thresholds, whose life is organized through institutional gateways, whose horizon of action is narrowed before it even begins.

Palantir is not merely one company among others in this age. It is the clearest emblem of the regime: the interface that converts data into ontology, ontology into priority, priority into intervention, and intervention into sovereign practice. More importantly, it is one of the first great technical-political structures that no longer hides this function, but declares it through its own manifesto.

For this reason, the issue is not merely Palantir. The issue is to name correctly the historical threshold that crystallizes within Palantir.

The old language no longer suffices. The old image of the human has collapsed. The old political vocabulary has disintegrated.

A new regime demands a new name.

To name it is no longer a theoretical option, but a historical necessity.

We are in the age of Onopticon.

And its human being has already become Homovictimus.