

Infopolitics, Biopolitics, Anatomopolitics

Toward a Genealogy of the Power of Data

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1. Information as a Political Problematization

The classified intelligence documents exposed by Edward Snowden in 2013 revealed not only the technological tactics of contemporary mass surveillance but also some of the core strategic ideas underwriting its operation. One brief, anonymously authored sentence drawn from the leaked cache concisely expressed a key conditioning assumption of contemporary intelligence agencies: “in the future, superpowers will be made or broken based on the strength of their cryptanalytic programs.”¹

Enigmatic sentences like this are significant because of both what they assert and what they fail to state. What this prediction clearly asserts is that state power now hinges in part on information sciences, data analytics, and cryptographic technology. A recent social media campaign waged against suspected terrorist groups by the United States Department of State under the leadership of Richard Stengel, former Managing Editor of *Time*, indicates that information wars are already entrenched in the realm of official state conduct.² In a speech on the multi-faceted campaign of which Stengel’s project was a part, then-President Barack Obama noted that the strategy was one of “contesting the space that terrorists occupy—including the Internet and social media.”³ Such international informational espionage is not the province of the United States alone. Over the past few years, a Russian organization called the Internet Research Agency has allegedly sought to conduct, in its words, “information warfare against the United States of America,” including using stolen identity data to mount social media campaigns designed to tilt the outcome of the 2016 United States presidential election in favor of the candidate who in fact ended up winning the election.⁴

A similar situation characterizes the landscape of contemporary corporate enterprise. From the multi-billion-dollar market capitalization of

social media juggernauts to the flush field of cryptocurrency speculation, there can be little doubt that contemporary market economies are driven by a deep interest in, and even at times a clear dependence upon, implementations of information science ranging from cryptographic security to high-performance computing. Explosive interest around the promises of “big data” over the past few years has been driving massive market gains, increasing corporate affluence, and producing accompanying dislocations and relocations of labor.⁵ This enthusiasm has also led to a raft of emergent projects by governments working in coordination with corporations. While most of the work of these hybrids are predictable, many involve unexpected uses of data—such as, for instance, the leveraging of grey market data in Facebook profiles and psychometric evaluations by the firm Cambridge Analytica as part of the 2016 Republican presidential campaign.⁶

Our deepening dependence on data is, it seems, obvious enough. Yet it is hardly obvious how to make sense of what exactly is at stake. How, for instance, are we to understand the politics of information in a milieu in which big data is simultaneously operative at the heart of organizations as otherwise disparate as the Pentagon and Pinterest?

The widening deployment of data across so much of our lives suggests that it may no longer be as contentious as it once was to claim that there is a politics of information. Indeed, it seems almost undeniable today that there is a politics at stake in such ubiquitous features of our society as social media interaction, electioneering (and election hacking) through those interactions, cell phone addiction, personal information monetization, the lack of security in personal data markets, and massively-scaled state surveillance. Yet, even if the fact of the politics of these domains is now in view, what is insufficiently understood is how such a politics functions. What characterizes the politics of all of this data that is driving so much of our lives?

To put the question in the terms afforded us by the political philosophy of Michel Foucault: what is the modality of power expressed in our contemporary politics of information? This is the question left unanswered—because unasked—by cryptic predictions about the future as well as official statements by shrewd politicians and corporate titans.

2. Toward a Genealogy of the Power of Data

The critical methodology of genealogy—the philosophical “history of the present” as Foucault once called it⁷—offers a valuable perspective for getting a grip on the politics of contemporary data dynamics. But to mobilize genealogy as a critical method in the context of contemporary configurations of power, we must first be prepared to recognize the ways in which the present today is different from Foucault’s present of

the 1970s. Recognizing these differences enables a crucial distinction in how we take up Foucault's insights. In my view, we can draw methodological advantage from Foucault's critical genealogy without assuming at the outset the applicability of his particular concepts of power to every aspect of our present situation.⁸ In short, my view is that genealogical inquiry can offer crucial insights into the unique political specificities of emergent assemblages.

One of the most important insights yielded by a genealogy of contemporary data configurations, I shall argue, is that our present is in the midst of a distinctive dynamics that has a longer history and a deeper reach than is commonly suspected. There are three claims packed into this argument. I will highlight each at the outset and then further develop them below.

First, the present dynamics of this situation has a *longer history* than we might have thought. The power of information is often glossed as a recent, or even a futural, phenomenon. One example of this is the common confusion of the social dynamics of information technologies with digital technologies, as if processes of datafication are sufficiently reducible to processes of digitization. A genealogical interrogation of information as a technology of power reveals, I argue, a weighty politics of information that stretches back at least one hundred years. The history of the power of data stretches back to an explosive political moment in which data began to explicitly define our subjectivity in such now-quotidian forms as birth certificates, national registration numbers, psychometric inventories like intelligence tests and personality profiles, genetic information thought to determine our fates, and a vast array of financial reporting that can be seen as culminating in contemporary credit scores. This was a moment, at least in the context of the United States that I here take as my focus, that ran across the first half of the twentieth century and was at its most intensive from the mid-1910s to the mid-1930s. This moment resulted in the explosion of information theory after World War II that many historians of data have taken to be the originating moment of the "information society" in which we still find ourselves cocooned.⁹

Second, the present dynamics have a *deeper reach* than many have suspected. Being older than is commonly supposed, the power of data also runs more deeply than is commonly thought. Information influences our political condition across a vast panorama of everyday ephemera that form a scaffolding upon which so much of our lives hangs. Perhaps the most perspicuous examples of this are the quotidian forms that format the informational condition of much what we do. You need only consider how many forms you have already filled out this week to glimpse the ubiquitous presence of such formats in

your life (consider the pen-and-paper intake sheets at the clinic, the pre-filled forms popping up in your web browser, the grading rubrics that you have used to assess your students or that have been used to assess you, etc.). The extent to which our action is immersed in such forms speaks to the deep grasp that information has on us today. It is the grasp of an informational power.

Third, our informational present has a *distinctive dynamics*. To bring attention to its specificity, I refer to this power as *infopower* and its accompanying political orders as *infopolitics*. Infopower brings to bear a distinctive operation of power that I will call *fastening*. I employ this term in a double sense. Fastening connotes both buttoning down and speeding up, both canalizing and accelerating. My claim is that information fastens us in that it both ties us to a data point and thereby augments the velocity with which we can be handled as a data point. Think of the way your email address both pins you into a network of communicative obligations but at the same time significantly quickens the pace of discharging those duties. My claim is that you are simultaneously canalized and accelerated by your data. You are fastened by your data.

Before I turn to unpacking these three ideas, I want to first situate the stakes of any such project. Why does it even matter to excavate the functional specificity of a power of information? Why not just assume that power always functions the same wherever it is brandished and, with this in mind, move on to descriptions of how power is at work in networks today? To answer these questions, it will be helpful to contrast infopolitics to other ways in which we familiarly take power to operate, such as the models of biopolitics and anatomopolitics (i.e., disciplinary politics) developed in Foucault's work. I flesh out these contrasts below by way of, first, a sketch of Foucault's contributions to political theory (§3), and second, a discussion of the largely neglected role of information technologies within those contributions (§4). This outline of Foucault's work motivates the idea of a general analytical schema through which various modalities of power can be compared (§5). With this contrast and schema in view, I can then go on to specify how information has consolidated into a distinctive operation of power, that is, a modality of power in its own right, irreducible to biopower, disciplinary power, or classical sovereign power (§6).

3. Biopolitics and Anatomopolitics: Powers of the Norm

The infopolitical operation of *fastening* can be—and I shall argue should be—contrasted with the political operations performed by biopolitics and anatomopolitics. On Foucault's account, biopolitics is an operation of *regulation* while disciplinary anatomopolitics is an operation of *normalization*.

My argument is not that infopolitical fastening is opposed to, contradicts, or negates the operations of disciplinary power and biopower.¹⁰ Rather, my claim is just that the core focus of infopolitics is elsewhere, such that it may very well overlap in some respects with biopolitics and discipline but is nevertheless not wholly reducible to them. This irreducibility can be brought into view by a functionalist interrogation of how modalities of power actually work. From such a functionalist perspective, infopower is a functionally distinct assembly of power that should not be construed as a sub-assembly of discipline or biopower (nor of sovereign power).¹¹

Foucault presented his concepts of the disciplinary power of normalization and the biopolitical power of regulation in lush detail in *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (i.e., *La volonté de savoir*, a book whose limply-translated title loses the connotations of the original French with its proposed focus on “the will to know”). The particularities offered in these two books are further enriched in Foucault’s Collège de France course lectures from the 1970s, in which he presented his ongoing research. For the sake of a summary overview, I here follow the chronology of Foucault’s work. I consider first his analyses of disciplinary power in *Discipline and Punish* and the works leading up to that book, moving from there to his presentation of biopolitical regulation in *The History of Sexuality* and the researches surrounding this project.¹²

3.1 Anatomopolitics

One of Foucault’s first attempts to explicitly isolate discipline as a unique mode of power can be found in his 1973 course lectures, later published as *The Punitive Society*. Foucault there distinguished the “sequestration” of disciplinary “normalization” from the work of “confinement” that in the classical age had effected “marginalization”: “it is not a matter of marginalizing at all, but of fixing within a certain system of the transmission of knowledge, of normalization.”¹³ The next year, in his 1973–1974 lectures, *Psychiatric Power*, he further elaborated the disciplinary operation. Discipline is “normalizing,” asserted Foucault, in its work of “always reestablishing the rule.”¹⁴ This rule is neither functionally identical to sovereignty nor objectively targeted at the same material. Foucault explained that “the subject-function in the power of sovereignty is never fastened to a somatic singularity,” whereas “in disciplinary power . . . the subject-function is fitted exactly on the somatic singularity” (PP 55).

Foucault’s 1975 lecture series, titled *Abnormal*, was delivered concurrently with the publication of *Discipline and Punish*. In these lectures, Foucault introduced his topic by telling his audience that what he would like to study “is the emergence of the power of normalization, the way in which it has been formed, the way in which it has established

itself without ever resting on a single institution but by establishing interactions between different institutions.”¹⁵

Taking up an example also elaborated in *Discipline and Punish* (DP 199), Foucault distinguished between the exclusion of lepers at the end of the Middle Ages (a technique of “casting out”) and the “inclusion of plague victims” at the outset of disciplinary modernization (A 43–4). The latter, for Foucault, involves meticulous rituals of observation, partitioning, and analytics. This “is not exclusion but quarantine” (A 46). What Foucault sought to make visible was a differentiation in the very mechanics of how power can be operated: “It is not a question of driving out individuals but rather of establishing and fixing them, of giving them their own place, of assigning places and of defining presences and subdivided presences” (ibid.). Normalization does not reject, exclude, and drive away; it incorporates by way of a binding set of norms that establishes placement, relation, and distribution.

Foucault’s suggestive lectures culminated in his 1975 book, *Discipline and Punish*, the centerpiece of which is a series of accounts of technologies of examination, observation, and normalization. In this book, Foucault wrote of discipline as a five-fold operation of comparing, differentiating, measuring hierarchically, homogenizing, and defining the limits of an abnormality (DP 183). “In short,” he claimed, discipline “normalizes” (ibid.). Foucault referred to discipline as enacting a “penalty of the norm” that is “irreducible in its principles and functioning” to the sovereign operation of law (ibid.). Thus do we become bound to the norm in the sense of the normal; thus do we become rigorous and vigilant in guarding ourselves against falling into abnormality.

This admittedly brief survey can be condensed into a summary overview of disciplinary anatomopolitics. Discipline *operates* as a power of normalization by coaxing bodies (not physically coercing them) to conform to the norm (see DP 177–83). Its *techniques* for putting power into operation include panoptic observation, regular examination, and a meticulous training, or “dressage” (see DP 170–229).¹⁶ Such an anatomopolitics, as the term itself implies, is an operation that targets its *subjects* at the level of corporeal individuality (SMBD 243). Its eventual aim is a docile body—the obedient pupil, the submissive prisoner, the compliant employee.

3.2 Biopolitics

Following the publication of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault completed the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* in August 1976, which was soon published in December 1976.¹⁷ Between the two books, he delivered his next series of Collège de France lectures under the title “*Society Must Be Defended*.” Foucault’s 1975–1976 lecture series explicitly distinguished

biopolitics from disciplinary anatomopolitics. Discipline, he wrote, is “a technology of drilling” that is “distinct from” what he calls “a technology of security” (SMBD 249). The former, as we have seen, “centers on the body,” whereas the latter “is centered not upon the body but upon life” (ibid.). Foucault then described biopolitical security as “a technology which brings together the mass effects characteristic of a population, which tries to control the series of random events that can occur in a living mass, a technology which tries to predict the probability of those events” (ibid.).

The suggestive language of these lectures coalesced in *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault there succinctly summarized the operations and targets of biopolitics: “supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls: a bio-politics of the population*” (HS1 139). Foucault’s analysis apprehended sexuality in terms of the specific modality of power appropriate to the formation of sexuality as a site of regulation. What is the operation of regulation to which Foucault frequently refers? Regulations do their work by rules. These rules are, of course, not always formalized and explicit like legal codes. The power of regulation is not an obligatory power of the law. Nor is it the normalizing power of discipline. Regulatory power is made to operate on “the biological existence of a population” (HS1 137) by a decisive ensemble of distinctive techniques, including “demography” (HS1 140), “statistical assessments” (HS1 146), and a whole “continuum of apparatuses [*appareils*] (medical, administrative, and so on) whose functions are for the most part regulatory” (HS1 144; see also SMBD 243–4, 249).

In the years following the publication of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault continued to pursue an analysis of biopolitical regulation. In his 1978 Collège de France lectures, he presented this analysis under the new heading of “security.” As described in one lecture, “we are in a world of indefinite regulation, of permanent, continually renewed, and increasingly detailed regulation, but always regulation, always in that kind of form that, if not judicial, is nevertheless juridical.”¹⁸ At the conclusion of the lecture series, Foucault summarized biopolitics: “the course focused on the genesis of a political knowledge that put the notion of population and the mechanisms for ensuring its regulation at the center of its concerns” (STP 363). In the next year’s Collège de France lectures, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault delivered some of his last lectures on the topic of regulation as a historical feature of the trajectory of modernity. The focus here was on the development of a liberal problematic of “an internal regulation of governmental rationality.”¹⁹

Foucault’s analyses of biopolitics can be summarized along lines similar to those that I used to characterize anatomopolitics above. Biopolitics, as the term implies, is a politics of the living. As such, its *subjects* are not the individual bodies grasped by disciplinary power but rather living beings

taken as populations. Biopower *operates*, then, not so much by a power of normalization as by a power of regulation. It is a power that is put into play by a range of *techniques*, including public health policies, demographic management, national and social security, statisticalization, and medicalization. The eventual aim of biopolitics is a healthy and robust population: a people simultaneously productive and reproductive.

3.3 Powers of the Norm

With this survey of Foucault's presentations of anatomopolitics and biopolitics in view, it is crucial to make explicit that despite their functional severability, there is the possibility of intimacy between these two deployments of power. Both regulation and normalization, as Foucault analyzes them, are, to borrow a fecund phrase from *Discipline and Punish*, expressive of a "power of the Norm" (DP 184).

This phrase was given greater currency in the final lecture of "*Society Must Be Defended*," where Foucault discussed the relationship between "the regulatory technology of life and the disciplinary technology of the body" (SMBD 249). As he explained the connections running between these two different technologies of power, Foucault was explicit about their terms:

there is one element that will circulate between the disciplinary and the regulatory, which will also be applied to body and population alike . . . The element that circulates between the two is the norm. The norm is something that can be applied to both a body one wishes to discipline and a population one wishes to regularize. (SMBD 252–3)

Foucault retrieved the same idea yet again in his *Security, Territory, Population* lectures delivered in 1978. There he wrote of techniques of discipline and of biopolitics in terms of a material of normality. Discipline "started from a norm" so that "the normal could be distinguished from the abnormal" (STP 63). By contrast, securitarian biopolitics enacts "a plotting of the normal and the abnormal, of different curves of normality" in order to establish "an interplay between these different distributions of normality" (ibid.). Both are technologies of the norm in that, for the former, "the normal comes first and the norm is deduced from it," and in the latter, "the norm is fixed and plays its operational role on the basis of this study of normalities" (ibid.).²⁰ What was at stake for Foucault in both anatomopolitics and biopolitics was "the norm."

4. Informatics, Biopolitics, Anatomopolitics

Foucault's genealogies of powers of the norm are brilliant exemplars of what critical political philosophy can do. But they are not therefore all that

critical theory need do. For we are today in the midst of political configurations that may require us to leave these specific genealogies behind, at least if we hope to grasp, resist, and reconfigure our contemporary political orders. We must not hesitate to take distance from an analytics of powers of the norm if we want to render visible a different mechanics of power that has been slowly accreting for over one hundred years now.

My argument is that if anatomopolitics and biopolitics enacted a power of the norm, then we are today in a moment where we must attend additionally to the politics of the format. We are indeed bound to and ruled by norms. But today we are also subjects who are formatted—informed as we are by the forms that define who we might allow ourselves and one another to be.

Insofar as forms and formats are functionally reminiscent of technological standards, my argument can be seen as parallel to the analysis of media archaeologist Friedrich Kittler, who radicalized Foucault's differentiation of powers of the norm from the classical sovereign power of law by further distinguishing "an empire of standards" from both norms and laws.²¹ Kittler's discourse on standards anticipates my analysis of formats. But I prefer the latter term if only because it bears less officiality and more flexibility, which is what we so frequently find when we are fastened today by the prefabricated formats of corporate social media and surreptitious state surveillance.

In developing an argument that distances the infopolitics of formats from anatomopolitical and biopolitical powers of the norm, however, I would not want to give the impression that information plays no role in Foucault's analyses of anatomopolitics and biopolitics. Decidedly it does. Information technologies, some of them crude and others quite sophisticated, were among the multiplicity of vectors through which the politics of bodies and of life emerged across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But while information played some role within these regimes, its role could only be a supporting one. What distinguishes infopolitics as a political configuration in its own right is the point where information begins to function as a generalizable and even universalizable technology for exercising power and knowledge. The thresholds of generalization and universalization mark those transitional spaces where infopolitics began to achieve its own gravity, solidity, and singularity.

Before turning to my core focus here—information as an independent political apparatus—I want to first briefly survey the function of information in its earlier dependence upon biopolitical and anatomopolitical machinery. I do so by way of a brief (and certainly not exhaustive) consideration of the appearance of information in Foucault's political analyses. This is necessary insofar as the role of information technology in Foucault's work has been neglected by most commentators. At the same time, those

few who have attended to it have also tended to overemphasize its importance to his argument. For my purposes here, then, it is clear that any attempt to specify the difference between infopolitics on the one hand and biopolitics and anatomopolitics on the other cannot afford to neglect the informatics functioning within biopolitics and anatomopolitics.

Consider first the role of information in biopolitics. Probably the most prominent informatics apparatus that contributes to the formation and deployment of biopolitics is that of statistics. As noted above, Foucault explicitly wrote in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* of the role of “statistical assessments” in biopolitics (HS1 146). Statistics is, of course, quite plausibly construed as an information technology. As such, it appears that Foucault’s own analysis of biopolitics already anticipates in significant ways the politics of information. That much might be true. Yet it must be observed that Foucault only mentions statistics a few times in the book (HS1 25, 144, and 146), and whenever it does appear it is indeed only a mention, such that we must conclude that Foucault declined to develop in any detail his potential analyses of statistics. Moreover, we can further observe that he neglected to ever develop a detailed analysis of statistics in any of the work he himself prepared for publication.²² If there is an infopolitics in Foucault’s biopolitics, it must be conceded that it is massively underdeveloped—in a way that is rather inconsistent with the precision and detail with which Foucault elsewhere elaborated his political analyses.

In considering anatomopolitics, we find a much fuller conscription of information in Foucault’s work. In describing the “slender technique” (DP 185) of disciplinary examination, *Discipline and Punish* explicitly registered “a whole mass of documents that capture and fix” (DP 189). Also notable, though too little noted, is that Foucault described the book’s infamous figure of the delinquent as a product of “a system of individualizing and permanent documentation” (DP 250; see also DP 190, 196, 200, and 214). Foucault went even further in some of the lectures leading up to *Discipline and Punish*. In these less-restrained, but also less-polished talks, he would refer to a “pangraphic panopticism” as central to disciplinary power (PP 55).²³ In the same lecture, Foucault referred to small-scale techniques of disciplinary writing in which individual action is “graded and recorded” in ways that enable discipline to “transmit this information from below up through the hierarchical levels” in order to “make this information accessible” (PP 48; see also PP 49–51). In an earlier lecture series, Foucault touched on early-nineteenth-century savings books and work record books as controlling “irregularity” and enacting “infra-judicial penalties” (PS 193; see also PS 91, 131). There is, then, clearly an informatics apparatus at play in anatomopolitics.²⁴ But again it must be observed that Foucault merely mentions these

information devices without developing them in anywhere near the detail with which he addresses technologies of surveillance or technical paradigms like that of the panopticon.

Moments of documentary force and statistical influence abound in Foucault's works from the 1970s, but nowhere are these scattered references drawn together into an explicit recognition of a power of information as such. Foucault did not once bring together these disparate references into a unified theme of his work. They remain, therefore, no more than occasional provocations in his writing. I propose that we are today finally in a position to take them as such. What they provoke is not a reduction of the unseen politics of data to the well-known operations of normalization and regulation. What they provoke, rather, is the possibility of a distinctive operation of the power of information itself. Nascent biopolitical statisticalization and disciplinary documentation neither wholly anticipate nor exhaustively comprehend the politics of datafication in which we now find ourselves.

5. An Analytic of Power

The limited but real role played by informational technique in biopolitics and anatomopolitics suggests a general philosophical issue that I take to be crucial for the critical deployment of genealogy in the context of changing political configurations. Techniques that appear identical can in fact function in dramatically different ways if deployed via different modalities of power. Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson develops this idea in her forthcoming Foucauldian genealogy of terrorism by proposing a political philosophy that attends “not only to the techniques themselves, but [also] to their contextually specific function.”²⁵ This point is anticipated in Foucault's own work—for instance, in his distinction between technical “procedures” and their functional “tactics.”²⁶ Where we note the appearance of similar techniques, we nonetheless still need to ask how these techniques are operationalized.

Any combination of surface similarity and functional difference presents the critical theorist with an interesting analytical challenge. One way to meet this challenge is to decompose different concepts of power into multiplicities of distinct elements, all of which are involved in the exercise of that form of power. By distinguishing separable elements of power, we can recognize that modes of power may differ from one another across some, but not necessarily all, of their constituent elements. The above summary of Foucault's accounts of biopolitics and anatomopolitics already suggests the possibility of one such model of decomposition taking the form of a tripartite analytics of power.

Pursuing this possibility, I want to suggest that we can analytically distinguish between *techniques*, *operations*, and *subjects* of power. On this model, *technique* refers to *the specificities through which a mode of power operates*. What are the particular techniques, technologies, devices, and apparatuses through which power is brought to bear? *Operation* refers to *what a mode of power does*. What does power do when it is implemented? How does it conduct the actions of those on whom it is employed? Lastly, power is always focused on specific targets or *subjects*. On whom is power implemented? The targets of power are most commonly, but need not necessarily be, people. Power can, moreover, target people in multiple ways: it can address itself to them as a unity or a multiplicity, as an individual person or as an associated group, as a legal entity or as a biological being.

These three dimensions of power are only analytically distinct. Although a mode of power can be decomposed into these differentiable dimensions, it would be misleading to think of any of these dimensions as existing independently of the others. Consider how operations and techniques are mutually constitutive: every technique of power exercises specific operations of power (i.e., there are no empty techniques that do nothing), and every operation of power is exercised by techniques of power (i.e., there is no power operative in the abstract without instantiation in particular apparatuses). Such technical operations, and the subjects they target, are also reciprocally coproductive insofar as technical operations shape their subjects into forms that can then serve as guidance (be it intentional or not) for future technical operations.²⁷

With such an analytical schema in view, I now can precisely differentiate my proposed conception of infopolitical fastening from biopolitical regulation and anatomopolitical normalization. These differences can be summarily stated in schematic form, as in TABLE 1. Such a tabular presentation already indicates that the comparative exercise I am undertaking here can only be an effort in typification. As such, it will retain some level of abstraction. It should not be denied that abstractions have their use in political theory. But nor should it be asserted that they are all that political theory needs.

In part because of Foucault's own genealogical practice of critique, I am convinced that the abstract concepts of political theory must be manufactured on the basis of patient and meticulous empirical inquiry into political actualities, be these historical or contemporary. Though I am committed to such a practice of philosophy, I cannot here provide anything near a sufficient genealogy of infopower to make good on my own desideratum for descriptive detail. My more modest hope is only to present the outlines of an argument about how infopower can be differen-

tiated from other modalities of power. In order to gain some specificity, I shall focus on just one paradigmatic technology of first-generation infopolitics, namely the birth certificate. A fuller treatment of the requisite specificities, however, could only be the subject of a book-length project (such as one on which I am presently at work, tentatively titled *How We Became Our Data: A Genealogy of the Informational Person*).

Mode of Power	Techniques	Operations	Subjects (Targets)
Infopower	Formats and Forms	Fastening	Informational Persons
Biopower	Demographics, Statistics, Security, etc.	Regulating	Living Populations
Disciplinary Power	Surveillance, Examination, Drilling, etc.	Normalizing (Norming)	Individual Bodies
Sovereign Power	Violence, Law, Command, etc.	Forbidding and Permitting	Legal Citizens and Enslaved Subjects

TABLE 1

6. Infopolitical Fastening: Powers of the Format

It was for good reason that Foucault did not give inchoate information technologies a bigger role in his account of emergent modalities of power in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In that period, these nascent informatics did not yet have a solidity and gravity of their own that would warrant conceptualizing them as an infopolitical assemblage. The mechanics of infopower ballooned out of more miniscule biopolitical and anatomopolitical employments in such small locales as statistical manuals, worker record books, and endless collections of biographical documentation. But it was not until this eventual ballooning that they became generalizable apparatuses of power in their own right. At this threshold of generalization, and a later threshold of universalization, they were no longer restricted to functioning in the service of a broader disciplinary or biopolitical apparatus whose ends they would serve. They became an entire apparatus in their own right, composed of a multiplicity of vectors. This involved a shift from information as an element

within biopower and anatomopower to the possibility of information as constituting its own modality of power composed of a diversity of elements.

The political operationalization of data took place in the early decades of the twentieth century, specifically—at least in the context of the United States (out of which were later born such parochial universals²⁸ as the internet and social media)—between the years of 1913 and 1938. Across these decades we witness, in domain after domain, the emergence of information technologies in the service of the general strategy of fastening. This strategy was to receive its definitive articulation in 1948—the year that saw the birth of three grandiose (and still compelling) visions of informational universalism: Claude Shannon’s information theory,²⁹ Norbert Wiener’s cybernetics,³⁰ and George Orwell’s infodystopia.³¹ What matters for a genealogy of contemporary infopolitics, however, are not these grandiose theoretical visions of information that had congealed by 1948 so as to form the historical *a priori* for the postwar period. These major statements are of some interest, but what really matters for a genealogical account are the humble techniques and minor procedures through which infopolitics was quietly elaborated in the decades leading up to those more celebrated proclamations.

To interrogate these earlier technologies, we can start with the present whose history they form. What does infopolitical fastening look like as it operates for us today? How does infopower gain its grips on the subjects it targets, namely the informational persons that you and I have become?³²

First, consider the convenient example of that ultra-contemporary emblem of the informational persons we have all become: the social media profile. These profiles appear in a variety of forms today—from all-purpose social media brands like Facebook, to narrow-segment markets like Academia.edu. Across their many instantiations, social media profiles fasten us in two senses. First, they pin us down to prefabricated formats, categories, and conceptions to which we readily tie ourselves. For instance, we proudly assert our interests in particular books, movies, and music by pulling them from suggestion databases populated by the interests of others (prompting a question about which obscure texts and albums have not found their way into that database). We can proclaim our friendship only with those who are also pinned down to the same profiles (prompting a question about which of our friends cannot be publicly displayed as our friends for the fact that they have not profiled themselves). Second, in addition to these pinning operations, social media profiles accelerate social recognition (e.g., ‘friending’) and interaction (e.g., sharing, messaging, and otherwise keeping in touch with the most distant family and the closest friends). That they do so is amply evidenced by the near-constant buzzing in our pockets

produced by the stream of notifications social media send to our phones as an invitation for ever more engagement. The particular technical formats of social media simultaneously pin us down and speed us up as subjects of datafication—that is, as informational persons.

The formats through which data fasten us depend upon the coalescence of numerous pieces of technological infrastructure. In the case of social media’s particular technique of fastening, a quick starter list of such technologies would include network telecommunications hardware (e.g., fiber optic hardware) and software (e.g., distributed network protocols and packet-switching transmission software), relational databases, social graph algorithms, image-recognition software, and ad-serving marketing analytics. Yet another information technology upon which social media depend is that of standardized identification: be it in the form of account numbers, network IP addresses, or even standardized names. Technologies of identification are of particular interest in that they offer a rich site of inquiry through which we can come to terms with the long history and deep grasp of the kind of informational accoutrements at stake in those glittery social media that we are invited to believe are so remarkably new.

Information technologies are of most interest when they function as universalizable—that is, as technologies in which everyone can be expected to participate.³³ In the case of standardized identification, dreams of universal identifiability stretch back at least as far as the late eighteenth century. A poignant caption for these early dreams can be found in the work of Jeremy Bentham. Famed visionary of the panopticon, an architectural diagram for disciplinary obedience, Bentham also envisioned an intoxicating infopolitical machine.³⁴

For Bentham, the fundamental problem of identification can be put in interrogative form: “Who are you, with whom I have to deal?” (PPL 557). Such a seemingly simple query poses innumerable problems given the deceptions with which it might be met in reply. “It is to be regretted,” observed Bentham, “that the proper names of individuals are upon so irregular a footing” (ibid.). Facing such common problems as two persons sharing one and the same name, Bentham advocated “a new nomenclature . . . so arranged, that, in a whole nation, every individual should have a proper name, which should belong to him alone” (ibid.). Of course, even someone in possession of a unique name could change (or at least attempt to change) that name. Hence, a more serious problem for Bentham was that of tethering people to their names. Bentham proposed for this problem repurposing “a common custom among English sailors, of printing their family and christian [*sic*] names upon their wrists, in well-formed and indelible characters” (ibid.). To be clear, this is a proposal of identifying tattoos, and Bentham argued that

they “should become universal” (PPL 557). Bentham’s disciplinary panopticon was meant primarily for prisoners, and perhaps also for some classes of workers, but the identifying tattoo was intended for us all, and indeed could only possibly work if applied in universal fashion. With this Bentham would be satisfied: “Who are you, with whom I have to deal? The answer to this important question would no longer be liable to evasion” (ibid.).³⁵

Bentham’s dream was just that: a fantasy that was, of course, never enacted. Specific technologies of universal identity would not be implemented until more than a century later. When they finally were, they were installed not on the flesh, but by way of paperwork that soon became part of the basic informational furniture upon which so much of life would come to rest.

An early, though surprisingly recent, vector for informational identification was the now-ubiquitous technology of the singular and stable name. According to historian Jane Caplan, the technology of the name as a universal descriptive designation did not become usable for the purposes of identification in much of Europe until as late as the nineteenth century.³⁶ If that is right, then their proximity to the explosion in identification paperwork seems to serve as evidence for political theorist James C. Scott’s argument that “the invention of permanent, inherited patronyms was . . . the last step in establishing the necessary preconditions of modern statecraft.”³⁷ In the context of the United States (which is, again, my preferred historiographical site insofar as it is the locale out of which many later information technologies of social media emerged), there emerged soon after stable names a number of now-ubiquitous technologies of identification: foundational identification documents such as birth certificates, papers of certifiable representation as instantiated in the modern passport system, and individualizing identifiers like Social Security Numbers.³⁸ I shall here consider just one of these technologies, that which is simultaneously the least studied and most important technology of documentary identification: the birth certificate.

The standardization of birth registration practice occurred in the United States in a period from 1903 to 1933.³⁹ At first, the United States’ version of this technology lagged behind its European counterparts, but over the course of these three decades, recordkeeping and vital statistics in the United States caught up with, and then surpassed, those of most other countries. In 1903, the United States Census Bureau initiated a campaign for birth registration standardization across all states, and soon settled on a goal of at least 90 percent registration in every state. That goal was not met until 1933 after much effort by public agencies including the Census Bureau and the Children’s Bureau in concert with a raft of private and professional groups like the American Child Health Association, the American Public Health Association, the American

Medical Association, and the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Central to meeting this goal was the production, dissemination, and stabilization of a wealth of technologies: most notable were standard birth certificate forms, administrative protocols for the storage and processing of standard birth certificates, and an information audit whereby completeness of registration could be checked (the latter presented an interesting and not inconsiderable problem in view of the absence at the time of any existing reliable count of births).

What, then, was the birth certificate doing by 1933? Exactly what it still does today: fastening people to data such that their personal information becomes part and parcel of their personal identity. Through birth certificates we become precisely "who" our birth certificates say we are. We thereby become fastened to a standardized (two-or-three part, stable, difficult-to-alter) name, parentage, place of birth, and the other standard data points included on our birth certificates.⁴⁰ Birth certificates represent a convention whereby we can produce a reliably truthful answer to Bentham's question: "Who are you?"

Consider a 1919 publication by the Children's Bureau titled *An Outline for a Birth-Registration Test*. Its first words were these: "Who are you? What is your name?"⁴¹ In that historical moment, questions like these were the kind of colloquy one could increasingly expect in the conduct of everyday life. The pamphlet's readers (who would have mostly been government administrators or birth-registration boosters at other kinds of organizations) would immediately recognize not only their own ability to easily answer these questions, but also their need to be able to do so with evidence satisfactory for a governmental or corporate bureaucracy: "anyone can answer these questions, but some persons may find it rather difficult to prove the truth of their answers."⁴² With a need for such proof in view, the Children's Bureau argued that one particular piece of information technology could serve as the provenance for such answers: "only the person whose birth has been registered can easily establish his age and identity."⁴³

With birth certificates in hand, an answer to a wide range of questions of identity can now be proposed and taken as truthful. Precisely for that reason, these questions and answers can also be political. For they can now be used to produce inequalities, unfreedoms, and other such burdens. One need only mention the fact that birth certificates have functioned for over a century to convert gender into formatted data to see the point. Only some gender identities are allowable, and though there may be some flexibility or choice in the formats provided, it is obligatory that one choose (or rather have chosen for one at birth) some one specific gender among those allowable on the form.⁴⁴

What is this transformative operation whereby information can establish an identity such as a gender identity? It is that operation of canalization and acceleration that I have been calling *fastening*. A small sheet of paper peppered with sequences of blank boxes subsequently filled in with individual letters can establish who one is. Nothing could seem more mundane than this today. Yet there is also at work here an extraordinary transubstantiation whereby we become the paperwork that makes us—or, to use updated language that is appropriate for today's digital workflows, whereby we become the data in the clouds that store us.⁴⁵

The formatting work of a standardized form such as a birth registration form can be, and as a matter of fact was, implemented in concert with biopolitical regulation and disciplinary normalization. Among the initial interests in birth certificates cited by the Census Bureau were biopolitical matters of vital statistics and demography.⁴⁶ But infopolitical fastening, including in the case of the installation of standardized technologies of birth registration, is irreducible to regulation and normalization. Biopolitics and anatomopolitics are insufficient to account for the politics at play in a requirement for a standardized and formatted name (and gender, race, parentage, date of birth, place of birth, and so on). The politics of the informatics apparatus of the birth certificate is, at least in part, outside of the orbit of biopolitics and anatomopolitics.

Similarly, the power by which a regulatory apparatus manages the life of a population, or by which a disciplinary machine drills a body into obedience, cannot fully comprehend the power operative in the way a social media profile restricts a user's presentation of themselves (e.g., their gender, their name, or even their 'interests' and their 'likes'), or the power expressed in the way an information channel limits a politician's messaging to a glib 140 characters, or the power implicated in the way in which foreign agents and entrepreneurial teenagers can exploit the marketing engines of social media platforms to influence voters. If there is a politics in any of these latter informational functions, then it is not a politics of biopolitical regulation, nor is it one of disciplinary normalization, but rather a politics distinctive to the deployment of data itself: an infopolitics.

If that is right, then a critique of this influential political deployment is needed in the present. A genealogy of infopolitics offers one route toward such a critical confrontation. For what such a genealogy can reveal is the depth at which information holds us today. The grip that information's formats have on us is profound. For these formats direct so much of what we do and are capable of doing. This is not to say that these formats command us to do anything in particular. It is rather to observe that they shape us before we have even begun to contemplate

any action whatsoever. Before I take any action in my name, I take my name, and one that has already been formatted before it was ever contemplated in any specificity. There is a politics in this insofar as the formats into which we have been inscribed have become sites for the distribution of political burdens and benefits; specific technologies have facilitated the reproduction of particular inequalities and unfreedoms. These politics are not always sinister. But they are often dangerous. For there is so much at stake in them, including who we are and what we can be.

How do we mount resistance to the political actualities of data where it proves most dangerous? Such a question is precisely what we must learn to bring into focus as one of the crucial political problematics of our present. For if we do not, then the limits placed upon us by our data will be played out upon us by those who are indeed asking, and perhaps even answering, such questions.

NOTES

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1. National Security Agency, cited in Nicole Perloth, Jeff Larson, and Scott Shane, “N.S.A. Able to Foil Basic Safeguards of Privacy on Web,” *The New York Times*, September 5, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/06/us/nsa-foils-much-internet-encryption.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed February 12, 2018).
2. For discussion of this social media campaign, see Brian Knowlton, “Digital War Takes Shape on Websites Over ISIS,” *The New York Times*, September 26, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/27/world/middleeast/us-vividly-rebuts-isis-propaganda-on-arab-social-media.html?_r=0 (accessed February 12, 2018).
3. Barack Obama, “Address to the United Nations General Assembly,” New York City, September 24, 2014, *The White House*, obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/24/remarks-president-obama-address-united-nations-general-assembly (accessed April 8, 2018).
4. This is according to an indictment by the United States Department of Justice Special Counsel Robert Mueller filed on February 16, 2018 (*U.S.A. v. Internet Research Agency, LLC, et. al.* [18 U.S.C. §§2371,1349,1028A]; see in particular §10[c] for the quotation, §41 on identity theft, and §§42–7 on the use of social media to favor specific candidates).

5. Informative discussions of the issues raised in these two paragraphs can be found in Louise Amoore, *The Politics of Possibility: Risk and Security Beyond Probability* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), and Rob Kitchin, *The Data Revolution: Big Data, Open Data, Data Infrastructures, and Their Consequences* (London: Sage, 2014).
6. For a discussion of the role of Cambridge Analytica in the United States presidential election, see Matthew Rosenberg, Nicholas Confessore, and Carole Cadwalladr, "How Trump Consultants Exploited the Facebook Data of Millions," *The New York Times*, March 17, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/17/us/politics/cambridge-analytica-trump-campaign.html> (accessed March 17, 2018).
7. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Press, 1995), p. 31; henceforth DP, followed by page number.
8. For a defense of a distinction in Foucault between methodological deployments and conceptualizations of historical configurations, see Colin Koopman and Tomas Matza, "Putting Foucault to Work: Analytic and Concept in Foucaultian Inquiry," *Critical Inquiry* 39:4 (2013), pp. 817–40.
9. The historicization I am suggesting in this paragraph will be recognized by some readers as consonant with, but importantly divergent from, an exceedingly common refrain in the literature on the history of the politics of information. The most striking example of this refrain is developed in the media archaeologies of Friedrich Kittler. Kittler's work is typical of the literature on the history of the politics of information in two ways. First, it is historicist in its rejection of the glittery avant-gardism through which information technology is often presented (and marketed). Second, it is typical in its historiographical conceit (pervasive across the historicizing literature) that we must trace the politics of data back to an originating moment in World War II and the post-war birth of information theory (see Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999], p. 259; see also his *Optical Media: Berlin Lectures 1999*, trans. Anthony Enns [Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012], p. 41). By contrast, the genealogical project I am here outlining looks to an earlier and more multiplicitous history of the politics of data in the decades that preceded the war. This is a history that is variegated and differentiated across a range of practices that began to consolidate in the 1910s and 1920s. To give a summary of the historiographical differences at stake here, my argument employs a historiography of emergence, whereas Kittler's representative refrain (and, of course, the work of those following him) relies on a historiography of origins. That one of these categories is more properly genealogical in Foucault's sense than the other should not go unnoticed (see Foucault's contrasting of "emergence" and "origins" in Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, vol. 2 of *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow [New York: The New Press, 1998], pp. 369–91, esp. 376–9).

10. The careful reader will note that I am here aligning biopower with biopolitics as cognate terms, and that I am doing so despite Foucault having suggested on at least one occasion that “bio-power” is actually cognate with both “bio-politics” and “anatomy-politics” as its two poles (Michel Foucault, *An Introduction*, vol. 1 of *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, [New York: Pantheon Books, 1976], p. 139; henceforth HS1, followed by page number; for the original French edition, see *La volonté de savoir*, vol. 1 of *Histoire de la sexualité* [Paris: Gallimard, 1976]). Foucault’s nomenclature here is regrettable, for his distinction could have been made by simply substituting an alternative term for those exercises of power that combined biopolitics and anatomopolitics. My nomenclature, by contrast, uses the “-power” and “-politics” suffixes as cognate, the former describing a mode of the exercise of power, the latter describing the form of political organization that is produced by this exercise.
11. In the course of developing these contrasts in this essay, it will also become clear why the classical conception of power—that of sovereign force or violence—is also not at all adequate to explain the politics of information, which is so often much less visible and nearly always less bloody than the violence of sovereignty.
12. For more on the limitations of Foucault’s historical analyses of biopower in contrast to the sufficiency of his critical inquiry into disciplinary power, see Paul Patton, “Life, Legitimation and Government,” *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* 18:1 (2011), pp. 35–45.
13. Michel Foucault, *The Punitive Society: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1972–1973*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 208; henceforth PS, followed by page number.
14. Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973–1974*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York: Picador, 2006), p. 54; henceforth PP, followed by page number.
15. Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–1975*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 26; henceforth A, followed by page number.
16. See also Michel Foucault, “Society Must Be Defended”: *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*, trans. David Macey, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 246; henceforth SMBD, followed by page number.
17. See Daniel Defert, “Chronology,” trans. Timothy O’Leary, in *A Companion to Foucault*, ed. Christopher Falzon, Timothy O’Leary, and Jana Sawicki (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2013), p. 61.
18. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–78*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 340; henceforth STP, followed by page number.
19. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–79*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 10.

20. In the next sentence, Foucault claims that security is about “normalization” proper, while discipline is not so much about normalization as “normation” (STP 63; see also STP 57). I avoid Foucault’s shift of terminology for the sake of clarity of exposition.
21. Kittler, *Optical Media*, p. 37. For more on the politics of technological standards, see Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999). For more on formats as standards (a view from which I decidedly depart here), see Jonathan Sterne, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).
22. For further references to statistics in Foucault, see SMBD 243; Michel Foucault, “The Birth of Social Medicine,” trans. Robert Hurley, in *Power*, trans. Robert Hurley et al., ed. James D. Faubion, vol. 3 of *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, trans. James D. Faubion et al., ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 2001), pp. 134–56 (which is the second lecture from a three-part lecture series Foucault first delivered in Rio de Janeiro, in 1974); and STP 29–86 and 103–6. *Security, Territory, Population* provides certainly the fullest analysis of statistics in Foucault, and yet it must be recalled that Foucault did not want these unfinished lectures published. For a more detailed analysis of statistical politics in a manner that appears consistent with (but that does not necessarily provide a development of) Foucault’s analytics of biopolitics, see Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). For examples of claims that over-identify biopolitics with statistical technique (thereby neglecting such quintessential biopolitical functions as an enthusiasm for the mere mention of sex), see Alexander R. Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), p. 87; Gordon Hull, “Biopolitics Is Not (Primarily) About Life: On Biopolitics, Neoliberalism and Families,” *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 27:3 (2013), pp. 322–35; Orit Halpern, *Beautiful Data: A History of Vision and Reason since 1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 25; and John Cheney-Lippold, *We Are Data: Algorithms and the Making of Our Digital Selves* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), p. 135. Far more common, as noted above, is the opposite error of overstating in the other direction and failing to acknowledge any role of statistics in biopolitics at all, as exemplified by Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). For further discussion of these themes, see my earlier analysis in Colin Koopman, “Michel Foucault’s Critical Empiricism Today: Concepts and Analytics in the Critique of Biopower and Infopower,” in *Foucault Now: Current Perspectives in Foucault Studies*, ed. James D. Faubion (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), pp. 98–101.
23. On this page, Foucault claims that discipline “fastens” the subject, the translation suggesting a potential resonance with my analysis. But the translation is problematic. Foucault’s original term is *s’ajuster* (Michel Foucault, *Le pouvoir psychiatrique: cours au collège de France, 1973–1974*, ed. François Ewald, Alessandro Fontana, and Jacques Lagrange [Paris: Gallimard, 2003], p. 57). A better translation here would be “adjusts.” The translator also renders the quite different term *accrochait* on the same

- page into the English “fastened” (ibid.), and translates *s’ajuster* once as “to fasten” and once as “to fit” (p. 55). Translation concerns aside, the double resonance of my technical term clearly differs from Foucault’s more colloquial expressions here.
24. See Michel Foucault, “The Incorporation of the Hospital into Modern Technology,” trans. Edgar Knowlton, Jr., William J. King, and Stuart Elden, in *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*, ed. Jeremy W. Crampton and Stuart Elden (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), pp. 140–51. This was the third lecture in Foucault’s three-part lecture series in Rio de Janeiro, in 1974.
 25. Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson, *Genealogies of Terrorism: Revolution, State Violence, Empire* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming 2018).
 26. Foucault develops this distinction in *The Punitive Society* in a memorable discussion of how similar procedures can differently function across separate “[economies] of power” (PS 8), “systems” (PS 9), or “regimes” (PS 10) where their “tactical role is entirely different” (ibid.). Foucault’s examples here are the “penalties” of the fine (PS 9–10) and the death penalty (PS 10–1), and he offers analyses showing how in each case a similar penalty can be levied in quite different contexts such that a technique that appears the same can function quite differently (e.g., capital punishment as repayment of a debt versus as a symbolic marking of a body). See also Foucault’s *Security, Territory, Population*, where he distinguishes “a history of the actual techniques themselves” from “the history of technologies, that is to say the much more general, but of course much more fuzzy history of the correlations and systems of the dominant feature which determine that, in a given society and for a given sector . . . a technology . . . will be set up” (STP 8).
 27. Consider the following rather simplified example. Automobiles were designed as a technique for the operative transportation of people, and over time helped turn users of these machines into agents who conceive of themselves as needing automobile transportation such that eventually it became possible to think of oneself as a driver, and in a way that helped further refine the purpose for which automobiles were designed.
 28. I intend the term “parochial universal” here as a kind of provocation that points to the way in which some highly-localized projects are envisioned, produced, disseminated, and even installed as universal (though, of course, always only near-universal) requirements. See my discussion of “contingent universals” in Colin Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), pp. 231–41.
 29. See Claude E. Shannon, “A Mathematical Theory of Communication,” *Bell System Technical Journal* 27:4 (1948), pp. 623–56.
 30. See Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1948).
 31. See George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1949), which was written in the main in 1948.

32. Exercises of power are often best illuminated at their end points. For this reason, the dimension of the subject is often privileged in analyses of power, as it will be here. By focusing on the consequential ways in which power is productive of particular kinds of persons, we can effectively bring into view the specific techniques that produce persons and the operations of power of which those techniques are expressive. Thus was the notion of the subject, or modes of subjectivation, an orienting category for Foucault, such that he even once described his work as “a history of the different modes by which . . . human beings are made subjects” (Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in *Power*, p. 326). For further discussion of this topic, see Daniele Lorenzini, “Foucault, Regimes of Truth and the Making of the Subject,” in *Foucault and the Making of Subjects*, ed. Laura Cremonesi, Orazio Irrera, Daniele Lorenzini, and Martina Tazzioli (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), pp. 63–76. Following my prior analytical discussion in Colin Koopman, “Conceptual Analysis for Genealogical Philosophy: How to Study the History of Practices after Foucault and Wittgenstein,” in *Critical Histories of the Present*, ed. Verena Erlenbusch, special issue of *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 55:S1 (2017), pp. 103–21, I here follow Foucault’s methodological lead, especially as it has been developed into the idea of “kinds of people” by Ian Hacking, “Making up People,” in *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, ed. Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and David E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), pp. 222–36, and Arnold I. Davidson, “Closing up the Corpses,” in *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 1–29. I also follow the idea of “figures” developed by Ladelle McWhorter, *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), and Andrew Dilts, *Punishment and Inclusion: Race, Membership, and the Limits of American Liberalism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014). Thus my own focus here is on how the subject of infopolitics, which I call the *informational person*, helps make visible the functions of infopower.
33. This point is consonant with a historiographical point noted above: genealogy does not focus on singular points of origin (e.g., the first ever technology of identification) but rather on multiplicitous moments of emergence whereby technologies can be taken to be obligatory for nearly everyone (e.g., the moment at which standardized identity became an expectation for us all).
34. The source of the ensuing discussion is Jeremy Bentham, *Principles of Penal Law*, in pt. 2 of vol. 1 of *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. John Bowring (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1838); henceforth PPL, followed by page number. This work was probably composed in the late 1770s, but it was first published in French in 1802 as *Principes du code pénal*, in vol. 2 of *Traité de législation*, trans. and ed. Étienne Dumont (Paris: Bossange, Masson and Besson, 1802). It was not published in English until 1838.
35. For further discussion of Bentham’s proposal, see Jane Caplan, “‘This or That Particular Person’: Protocols of Identification in Nineteenth-Century Europe,” in *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World*, ed. Jane Caplan and John Torpey (Princeton:

- Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 65. The essay also discusses (pp. 49–50) a related proposal for universal identity cards by Fichte in 1796 (see Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Science of Rights*, trans. A.E. Kroeger [Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Company, 1869], pp. 378–83).
36. Caplan, “This or That Particular Person,” p. 50. While our current two-name system had stabilized across most of Europe by the twelfth century, the very idea of a fixed and unique name was by no means customary or widespread. First, names tended not to be unique—in London, as late as the mid-seventeenth century just ten first names accounted for almost two-thirds of all names (Stephen Wilson, *The Means of Naming: A Social and Cultural History of Personal Naming in Western Europe* [London: University College London Press, 1998], p. 187). Second, everyday usage did not always follow names entered on church and other registers (p. 234), and indeed many persons assumed different names for different contexts (one name among their own family, another among their in-laws, and a third with members of their age group) (p. 235). Third, spelling and orthography were by no means customary. In fact, our contemporary tendency to insist on the correct spelling of our names is a recent phenomenon—populations were largely illiterate prior to the rapid expansion of literacy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (p. 241).
 37. James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 65; see also pp. 64–71. For further discussion, see James C. Scott, John Tehranian, and Jeremy Mathias, “The Production of Legal Identities Proper to States: The Case of the Permanent Family Surname,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44:1 (2002), pp. 4–44.
 38. In addition to the following brief discussion of United States birth certificates, see on the topic of United States passports the exemplary work of Craig Robertson, *The Passport in America: The History of a Document* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and on the topic of United States Social Security Numbers, see the institutional overview in Carolyn Puckett, “The Story of the Social Security Number,” *Social Security Bulletin* 69:2 (2009), pp. 55–74.
 39. This paragraph, and the ensuing analysis of the emergence of the birth certificate, is based on original research for the first chapter of my forthcoming book, *How We Became Our Data* (University of Chicago Press), as well as original Census Bureau, Children’s Bureau, and other documents cited in endnotes 41 and 46.
 40. The current standard birth certificate (Revision 12, implemented in 2003) can be accessed online at Center for Disease Control and Prevention, “U.S. Standard Certificate of Live Birth,” <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/dvs/birth11-03final-acc.pdf> (accessed February 8, 2018).
 41. United States Department of Labor Children’s Bureau, *An Outline for a Birth-Registration Test* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919), p. 3.
 42. *Ibid.*
 43. *Ibid.*

44. See Paisley Currah and Lisa Jean Moore, “We Won’t Know Who You Are’: Contesting Sex Designations in New York City Birth Certificates,” *Hypatia* 24:3 (2009), pp. 113–35.
45. The techniques that turn us into data are extraordinary, but not for that reason unique; equally remarkable, as Foucault’s work showed, is the deployment of other technologies that turn us into members of living populations or obedient bodies.
46. See United States Census Office, *Legislative Requirements for Registration of Vital Statistics: The Necessity for Uniform Laws, Methods and Forms: Resolutions for Congress and the American Public Health Association: With a Special Form of Law for Registration of Deaths* (Washington: United States Census Office, 1903). Recent discussions by historians suggest the same point. See, for example, Dominique Marshall, “Birth Registration and the Promotion of Children’s Rights in the Interwar Years: The Save the Children International Union’s Conference on the African Child, and Herbert Hoover’s American Child Health Association,” in *Registration and Recognition: Documenting the Person in World History*, ed. Keith Breckenridge and Simon Szreter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 449–73, and Susan J. Pearson, “Age Ought to Be a Fact’: The Campaign against Child Labor and the Rise of the Birth Certificate,” *Journal of American History* 101:4 (2015), pp. 1144–65; see also my co-authored paper with Sarah Hamid, Patrick Jones, Claire Pickard, Bonnie Sheehy, and Laura Smithers: Critical Genealogies Collaboratory, “Standard Forms of Power: Biopower and Sovereign Power in the Technology of the U.S. Birth Certificate, 1903–1935,” *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* (forthcoming).

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