

# A Primer on Ontology

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*The BwO [Body without Organs] is not a scene, a place, or even a support upon which something comes to pass...The BwO causes intensities to pass; it produces and distributes them in a spatium that is itself intensive, lacking extension. It is not space, nor is it in space...It is nonstratified, unformed, intense matter, the matrix of intensity.*

— Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

## Cancriform

Cancer is no mere metaphor in our project—it is an active, processual concept we have expanded and amplified to include all ontological phenomena; hence, an onco-ontological project, or — as a more convenient portmanteau — *oncontology*. Since we are relying quite heavily on Deleuzian themes, there is no foreseeable reason to make a hard distinction between an oncontology and an oncoethics. However, before proceeding we must structurally define our operative terms of apoptosis and metastasis.

Cancer results from two main factors where the first is by implication the condition for the second. That is, the inability of a cell to engage in the process of apoptosis, or programmed cell death (PCD) leads to the metastasis of cellular tissue, known in two degrees of proliferation, as either *benign* or *malignant*. The aggregation or assemblage becomes an instance of threat to the integrity of the organism as a whole, rendering the organism as such an “orgiastic” conglomeration. In a healthy cell, production is controlled and abides by stringent limitations set by the genetic tablature of DNA. Cells are the composite units of all

tissue, and tissues as such are differentiated as *types*. Tissues are expansive and contractive, differing in function, variability, density, degrees of intensity, etc. Tissue is not a tracing, but a cartography. This process of differentiation of cells into tissue types is a unilateral and final quality (i.e. a bone cell cannot re-differentiate itself to become a nerve cell).

In conventional oncological terms, the process of metastasis is the wild overgrowth of cells to the detriment of the body, resulting in either growths that are benign or malignant. Apoptosis (PCD) is the process by which the cell receives a signal to stop production at a previously prescribed genetic point. The process is twofold: to retain proper cell function integral to the organism, and to remove potentially harmful or lethal elements in the cell which could endanger the organism as a whole. There are only two ways by which cells perish: either by some external agent (e.g. toxic chemicals, fire, removal) or by being induced to perish (i.e. apoptosis). Firstly, apoptosis is necessary in the organism; for instance, the uterine wall sheds during menstruation; the surplus “webbed” tissue between the fingers and toes on the fetus; the fusing of bone plates when the growth period is at an end; the resorption of the tadpole tail in the development of a frog; and so on. Secondly, apoptosis is necessary for the destruction of cells injurious to the organism such as virally infected cells, cells with corrupt DNA, or damaged or cancerous cells. Apoptosis occurs in two ways: removing or blocking all positive stimulus to the cell necessary for the cell’s continuance (one can envision that apoptosis is a kind of siege-craft, cutting all supply lines to the cellular castle), and the inducement of negative signals such as increased oxidation in the cell, aberrant absorption of proteins, the release of particular molecules that bind to the receptors of the cell’s surface which activate the apoptotic process.

Cancer possesses the unique ability to block the apoptotic signal, and the ability to transfer vicious RNA to other cells to do the same. With the apoptotic signal blocked, the cell begins to replicate its material and produce those RNA to “persuade” other contiguous cells to follow suit by way of a biological network. We can only provide a gloss of this very complex process in order to introduce these two terms in our basic arrangement for the purposes of demonstrating its analogous relation to ontology. As we will later encounter, these processes function in complementarity to the virtual-actual distinction fundamental to Deleuze’s ethics and ontology.

Metastasis and apoptosis do not exhaust one another in some sort of dialectical exchange toward finality. They are not a coupling unit, but processes by which we may name desire or ontology. To assert that they cancel one another out in equilibrium is to “gorgonify” the “cacophysical” reality of Being. In the realm of biological science, there is a moment of equilibrium in the body: a certain quantity of cells will match the creation and destruction ratio to achieve a brief period of “plateau” called homeostasis, but this is hardly measurable or significant, since it may last a matter of seconds in the life of any body, the duration of this perhaps inconsequential or even impossible. This is an abstract idealization issued from the laboratories of biological science that may be able to measure such equal ratios in the simplest of organisms and assume that more complex bodies will also follow the same rule, or to simplify the results according to approximations of equilibrium. But our notion of bodies is much more extensive and intensive--we include more than just the life of an “organism”; we include everything that can be said has being.<sup>1</sup> This includes books, plants, rocks, radios, and

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<sup>1</sup> It is possibly for this reason that Artaud lobs vitriol upon the notion of the organism. He patently rejects the static fixity of the body (as a kind of Aristotelian universal concept) as the governing instance over its organs

even cities. Metastasis and apoptosis are derelict forces, two faces of desire. It is not a measure of zombifying ontology with a series of empty concepts. Immobility is effaced by perpetual be-comings, announced by the manifest process of unlimited production and unlimited expiration, both what Spinoza would call “potentia” and Nietzsche would call “will to power” as the constant mobilization of differences. Thought crudely apopticizes bodies, whereas bodies succumb to a biological apoptosis. Thought thinks it hypostasizes being, but the true process underlying being is metastasis. These processes strafe through being and it is our thought that attempts to transcendently retrofit being through clumsy and ashen installations meant to prolong the tradition of thinking through as many ages and bodies as “humanly” possible. We know all too well the DeleuzoGuattarian de/re-territorializations, and how Pynchon’s *Pirate* could do as such to the cuisine attached to the banana. We know the real rhapsodic geometries (a rhapsoid?) that inhere within phylo- and ontogenetics. But, in the end, as it functions for Derrida in the domain of language-meaning to which we are all condemned to pursue like the ever-reticent horizon, the law of necessarily probable failure inheres in ontology as well, and what remains is to commit considerable study to the mechanics of this “failure”. Even the functions of symbiosis (not to be confused with

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(differentia) when he writes, “le corps est le corps / il est seul / et n’a pas besoin d’organe / le corps n’est jamais un organisme / les organismes sont les ennemis du corps.” [The body is the body / it is singular / It is not lacking in organs / It does not need an organization / The organs are the enemies of the body]. The body If we render this statement to the full import of Aristotle’s prescription for metaphors in *The Poetics* (esp. bk XXII), we come to identify the role of the body-concept as the sovereign principle over the use of metaphors, an allowance granted to metaphor given that they do not exceed in their difference a certain tabulation of allowable speech-rules. Derrida gives considerable treatment to this issue of the Concept-Metaphor split in “White Mythology”. But what remains is whether in Artaud’s rendering the body of full organs is opposed to the body without (need of) organs, the other way around, or if it is a mutual opposition. If it is truly an affirmative power, then the body without organs would not fall into this oppositional schema, but would be actively forgetting it. We leave this question suspended for those readers of Artaud more competent to judge the finer implications of this poetic statement.

equilibrium) where bacteria provides a benefit to the body does not endanger what we say here about metastasis since we are considering the metastasis-apoptosis phenomenon without demonstrating a prejudice *in favour of* the sustainable functions of the body, but rather isolating the principle of metastasis as descriptive of the troubling philosophical concept of becoming.

A cancer is not a space, or in space, yet it is the intensive principle that causes intensities of a metastatic kind in a body, irrespective of the hegemony of the body's functions. Although cancer co-opts the body's functions, it metastasizes them. One cannot point to some one thing and say, "here is cancer", only "here is the *effect* of cancer", such as a tumor. Cancer never "appears" as such, as something isolatable — only the effects in a radial series of productions. Cancer forms rhizomes and reticules of waves and ripples. *Cancer is a matrix of production*, even if this production can destroy a body (e.g. there are plenty of productions that destroy: the manufacture of weaponry, a painting that "destroys" a hitherto conception of art's limits, a selection of a word in a novel that radically annihilates all other word choices<sup>2</sup>), but this type of production is linked more to desire as not referenced to an external agency. Therefore this is an affirmative and generative desire rather than one patterned on or motored by dialectical negation. For example, to speak of a "referent" in a theory of referentiality (in language, desire, or cancer) is to cover the real process with an overcoding, a fantasy, a rigged narrative that denies the *potential* of this "referent". We should, instead, speak of a "deferent" such that ultimate meaning always succumbs to slippage, and that the body to which a cancer refers is little more than the zone or milieu of intense, metastatic excitation.

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<sup>2</sup> But this destruction of possibility is folded with a creation. It may produce in the mind of the reader a series of multiple associations through linguistic referentiality.

Deleuze and Guattari rather felicitously signal the issue of cancer in *A Thousand Plateaus* in their broader campaign of demonstrating how real planes of immanence can be created. This implicates the entire Western metaphysical tradition from Plato to Lacan in failing to do so on the grounds that their version of immanence was always immanent to something transcendent. The possibility of an ontological failure, or a failure in the conceptual milieu at the very least is captured here:

*Cancerous tissue*: each instant, each second, a cell becomes cancerous, mad, proliferates and loses its configuration, takes over everything; the organism must resubmit it to its rule or restratify it...How can we fabricate a BwO for ourselves without its being the cancerous BwO of a fascist inside us?"<sup>3</sup>

Deleuze is concerned about hasty and careless destratification by the cancerous. In Nietzschean terms, the 'cancerous' element can very well slide into the camp retinue of reactive forces that limit the *potentia* of bodies insofar as their capacity to act and be affected are diminished by the ravages of a reactive element. In its positive import (metastasis as productive and affirmative difference), cancer is a variable intensity, a type of multiplicity, and not a dialectical struggle between body and disease (i.e. the body, in its superficial or limited sense, is irrelevant; bodies caught up or perceived as being at odds with disease in some mock Heraclitean struggle of *polemos* make health the measure of bodily time at the expense of a more profound temporal gauge like 'becoming'). Cancer follows its distinct lines of flight among others in a tangled bundle of multiplicities, a thread in a vortex or knot-whorl. Cancer

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<sup>3</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 163. Trans. Brian Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis: 1987). We must tread carefully here where Deleuze and Guattari refer to capitalism as an expression of cancer since although late capitalism does adhere to a representative model of metastasis, the rhizome is not a representation. Capital "acts" like cancer, but is still hegemonic insofar that it is still an apparatus of capture. See my response to Slavoj Žižek's criticism of Deleuze as an enabler of capitalist-corporate logics in "McDeleuze: What Can Be More Rhizomal Than the Big Mac" in *Deleuze Studies* (forthcoming).

lines among body lines, body-part lines, etc., which can not decompose into isolated units lest they change their nature.<sup>4</sup> Cancer rearticulates the cell via complementary de- and reterritorializing. By blocking the apoptotic signal that would otherwise call the cell into the stratified order of the organism, cancer-radicals isolate the cell and allow it to continue or increase its intensity at various rates and speeds. However, this is still a *relative* rather than *absolute* deterritorialization. The “apex” of absolute deterritorialization would be the oncontological; teasing out the reasons will be our labour.

The oncomorphous zone: what is it? In the words of Deleuze and Guattari: “To be rhizomorphous is to produce stems and filaments that seem to be roots, or better yet connect with them by penetrating the trunk, but put them to strange new uses.”<sup>5</sup> So, what then is an *oncomorphology-ontomorphology*? Transitions, becomings, shiftings, cuttings, displacements and growths (both inward and outward; the “mesostrata” from which growths appear to move in and out from is merely a threshold or intensity). Why assign the rhizome a cancerous quality if not to indicate a certain quantity of reality which operates on a fold between growing and pruning, metastasis and apoptosis? This is the folding of two complementary fields: de- and reterritorialization.

Cancer has no teleology. Like the virtual, it is development without teleology. In the Platonic view, cancer is simulacral. Cancer is the principle of Being without rational guidance from either “thinking” beings or Absolute Mind. Since cancer, akin only partially to Schopenhauer’s notion of the will, is blind and unthought, ontology itself cannot but base its assumptions on the volatile uncertainties of becomings, cancerous multiplicities. This

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 32.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

cancerous property cannot (or should not) be understood negatively; that is, in the presupposition of some primary purity of a healthy organism beset by a disease. There is no primal body of Being, rather we invoke the terminology of cancer as a diagram so that we may come to understand that bodies and beings are only possible according to that fully determining instance of cancer that undergirds all formations, developments, becomings, and dissolutions. Within the virtual “egg” cancer is not only the method of division, but the principle of making multiplicities so that, as Nietzsche says of the division of protoplasm,  $\frac{1}{2}$  plus  $\frac{1}{2}$  does not equal 1, but rather 2 (or more). To divide something into halves is too negative since it presupposes a unity separated into equalizable components that mutually and negatively determine the other by recourse to a “first unity” (this is half-x and so depends on x as a whole to receive its determination, etc.). If x is cut in half, let us view this as an affirmative creation, a creation that creates two separate and unique singularities rather than by the privation of being incomplete unless rejoined. Perhaps only poor dramatists and sitcom writers believe in the myth of status quo ante, that something divided will not go “wild” in producing new growths and relations to other features in its new conceptual neighbourhood. There is nothing in the alleged unity of parts now divided that governs over these parts, except according to weak conceptuality, for even that alleged unity is a carving-off or singular articulation of some other “higher” unity. Gogol’s story, “The Nose”, illustrates that a part taken from the whole can live its own life, can establish its connections independently without recourse to the “original” body from which it grew. Even the acorn from Hegel’s mighty oak may be articulated differently; it can be carved or made into a dish, or it can be carried adrift by floodwaters. To reunite the acorn with its tree in order to reestablish the harmony of unity

comes to no avail. The acorn owes nothing to the oak, and vice versa. The problem is that the question of bodies is poorly posed, and too often the whole-part relation has its deeper prejudice in the pleasure and pain of either reunification or separation, masquerading as succession or genealogical descent (as if such a tracing will make causation more than just another interpretation). There is no separation — there is articulation. The Deleuzian articulation makes for an affirmative creation of the new, makes determination itself an affirmative instance of the virtual. Articulation is effectuation, or counter-actualization.

Actualization operates by what we call a *logic of consumption*. That is, the aim of actualization is to appropriate by thought all of existence and encase it in universal categories of thought. It is the desire to actualize, a will-to-actualize, that motors this process. This *form* of desire posits objects as idealizations and moves toward their idealizations in the depths. However, what it is truly chasing is nothing more than a projected inverted image of the real, and once the “object” of desire is achieved, this is followed by a malaise, a fatigue or exhaustion brought upon by a feeling of lack and dissatisfaction (much in accord with Bataille). By universalizing objects under categories, this falsely exhausts the content of objects and denies the many ways in which the object can be expressed. Despondency or severe disappointment results from this dissatisfaction (a mid-life crisis is an example) and there are two possible responses: resignation (passive nihilism and the desire to fade away) and insurgency (active nihilism). The metastasis of this logic of consumption is precisely the metastasis of universals in thought under which all of life is depreciated. It is also the metastasis of consumption itself as it can do nothing more than appropriate and consume. This logic of consumption eventually succumbs to its own logic, consuming and eventually

negating itself — an Ouroboros. This logic is seen in common profusion within the social, especially in terms of habit and comfort and the vain belief that particular objects will bring about the completion and validity of the Self. That is, when it becomes a moral Good to achieve a state of peaceful equilibrium, to obtain those objects that are invested by thought with the belief of their ability to provide this equilibrium, to structure a life under the grand ought of desirable things to facilitate the comfort and reinforce the habit of a “promised” life — this is when life is depreciated and reduced to the value of nil. The person who has projected this transcendental Good and follows the strictures of the ought out of a desire to attain this transcendently harmonious Good through whatever means (e.g. the attainment of property, material acquisitions, the Christian demand of being fruitful and multiplying as the ethical duty to validate oneself through the transcendental category of Family, etc.) realizes perhaps in the depths of Self a certain dissatisfaction at the point when these features of the allegedly “successful” life are acquired. It is then that the Self succumbs to a kind of existential crisis where it reflects upon the meaning of having structured life in such a way, and realizes soon thereafter that these objects-for-desire, these large and baggy moral oughts, do not access the true character of the real.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the prudence by which such a Self lives, the way in which it seeks to rig outcomes and deny chance through several means as to exclude or barricade a life from the fortuitousness of contingent events takes the form of so many insurance policies and financial investment strategies to protect the Self from losing all it has

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<sup>6</sup> Although this claim is iterated in the work of Jean-Luc Nancy, the provenance of this thought where idealization is an impossible, and this impossibility becomes a source of lack is a key cultural critique of Nietzsche's. The nuance of the Nietzschean criticism in this regard is that it subjugates the will to a will to nothingness rather than a will to power, orientating the individual toward paltry goals. Of course, in Nietzsche, the “unattainable” is what guarantees the perpetual flow of will to power, but in divesting a concrete goal beyond a mere striving, there is an emancipation of the will to welcome the feeling of resistance being overcome only for another resistance to emerge.

acquired.<sup>7</sup> And indeed, what is the underlying logic of a stereotypical suburb but a place where one can take a family away from the heterogeneity of the city to live in a utopian homogeneous setting where all homes resemble one another and there is a common majoritarian value that unites the inhabitants?<sup>8</sup> Or, consider the logic of consumption in action in social interaction wherein we most commonly congregate together in social settings to consume products and services, be it meeting over coffee or taking in a movie. The mania for consumption operates as an almost unconscious force, yet it still is linked to a transcendental moral ought: I shop therefore I am.

The apoptotic function of the logic of consumption is reactivity: to impose sameness to the different by forced or clandestine assimilation, to expel true difference through a series of determinations, and to deny chance. By excluding true difference through subsumption under universal categories (limiting what active forces can do), the process of actualization equilibrates the world according to a static, banal, and predictable image that denies or attempts to block chance. The Ouroboros is the mascot of actualization, for its principle is to assimilate its other or shadow by devouring its own tail. The Ouroboros engages in an act of killing itself and being reborn, but it is the rebirth of the same. Just as in the stage of negative nihilism, man denies life by creating a supersensible world and a God, he then murders God and takes his place, thereby performing an act of sameness (i.e. the creation of a

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<sup>7</sup> A similar claim can be found in Lyotard where he speaks of the paradoxical element of the present as a means of avoiding its relation to the Event. See Francois Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*. Trans. Geoffrey bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1991) 58-64.

<sup>8</sup> We wish to avoid any cultural chauvinism by stating that we are speaking here solely of "American" culture and the formation of the suburb phenomenon there as discussed in Lewis Mumford's *The City in History*. In addition, there is a nested homogeneous element in the dense urban centre when we consider the coagulation of ethnic neighbourhoods; and so, our point here is rather that the homogeneity and heterogeneity aspects function as appearances and far too readily become representative antinomies.

transcendental plane). The Ouroboros is the time of Chronos, and the scene of its devouring and re-creation of self is the privileged present. The circle is infinite, but an understanding of infinity that is only circuitous in its movement, like a poor rendering of Nietzsche's eternal return. Apoptosis assimilates the resemblance the past and future have with the present while denying or annihilating from itself the differences. Apoptosis in Chronos banishes differences, while metastasis is merely the genesis of sameness.

The characteristic functions of metastasis and apoptosis in counter-actualization operate on a *logic of production*. What metastasizes is the fracturing of the once tentatively unified 'I' (an idealization) into an infinite bifurcation into true differences of nature. The apoptosis function of counter-actualization takes place when it expels the last vestiges of the negative in the act of transmutation or active negation. A logic of production is a creative and generative activity, for it is the desire to produce infinite and divergent variations across a plane of immanence. It is the affirmative act that leads to joy. No longer under the tyranny of the universal, difference is free to be different in the affirmative sense, no longer assimilated as an other. This production is an excretion, but the excretion of the negative. It is the moment when the plane of transcendence succumbs to the rupture and empties its heavy bowels in an act of necessary purgation.

Counter-actualization is an apoptosis insofar as the pre-programmed death of the organi(ci)sm is the result of actualization going to its limit and expiring, going mad and negating the metastasis of transcendental images that do nothing more than cause despair. Counter-actualization becomes a counter-memory (the act of forgetting universals) and a counter-desire (that form of desire negatively defined in terms of lack). Counter-actualization

is a metastasis insofar as it engenders a logic of production where the active forces of difference freely express their difference without the apoptotic function of actualization as a becoming active of forces. It is the present that is emptied and infinitely split by the play of forces of the past and future.

One of the starting points has a classical bent. The humoral theory of cancer and its relations to force typology, and this is no mere jape in our project — rather it demonstrates another line of development between ancient conceptions of the body-as-health and Nietzsche's split between active and reactive forces. Both Hippocrates and Galen identified the humours as being the source of cancer in the body, antedating subsequent etiological theories ranging from lymph, blastema, chronic irritation, and parasitism.

Galen's text, *De tumoribus prater naturam*, devotes a single page on cancer specifically (22.5-6). Galen describes cancer as the state by which the body enters into *para physin* from *kata physin*, i.e., from a state of being in natural accord with nature to that of being at odds with nature. He describes cancer as *ek diaphthoras meizonas hypotrapheises* — a secret, destructive nurturing, and says that cancer (*karkinos*) involves the crab-like (hence the name *cancer*) spreading of veins from the site of a tumour (*onkoi*, which means mass or heap), thereby causing the perpetuation of a malignant state (*kakoethes*).<sup>9</sup> This, says Galen, is caused by the production of cool, black bile which occurs in two types of intensity: 1. *daknodes*: a strong, biting bile that attacks the body, and 2. *metriotera*: a weaker bile that does not cause ulceration. However, we should keep in mind that Galen did not distinguish between malignant and benign tumours, viewing all *onkoi* as essentially malignant given that

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<sup>9</sup> Those eager to draw a parallel here between the radial spreading of veins as destructive to the spread of urban centers would find in Galen a convenient resource.

they cause the body to go against its accord with nature, but rather he is distinguishing between two qualities of bile.

To reason from a parallel case by recourse to Nietzsche's typology of active and reactive forces would at this point appear as an attempt to shoehorn this typology by the reductive means of analogy with the humoral theory. And although Nietzsche's typology does concern the qualities of force in their particular relation and concatenation at the site of the body, Nietzsche's view is much more rarefied and inclusive on the issue of force rather than an attempt to bump credibility for homeopathy. On a metaphysical scale, Nietzsche would most likely appoint the triumph of reactive forces (the becoming-reactive of active forces) as a broad state of *kakoethes*. For Nietzsche, malignancy is a moral issue, one we may take up when we consider how oncontology functions as ethical manifestation.

### **Apoptosis and Metastasis is Double Articulation**

Apoptosis and metastasis, as functions, confirm what Deleuze and Guattari call 'double articulation'. There is, in all things and their relations, aspects of both functions which serve to loosen or rigidify codes. Metastasis multiplies formations, while apoptosis attempts to formalize or stratify them within strata-wholes. However, there is an apoptosis characterized by affirmation as there is a metastasis characterized by negation. In this sense, double articulation may be said to be quadruple.

Strata are "acts of capture...They act by coding and territorialization upon the earth."<sup>10</sup> Apoptosis in the negative sense is the agent of capture, organizing the "cellularity" of

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<sup>10</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Ibid.*, 40.

organisms by policing its formations so that nothing “malignant” endangers the organisms as a whole. Apoptosis in the affirmative sense is best articulated in Nietzsche’s eternal return: the principle by which reactive forces nullify their own participation by not willing their own return (i.e., the eternal return as deselection). Since apoptosis “orders” cells to die by creating the conditions of their suicide (blocking the signals for growth, nutritive blockage), it is an inherent feature or code of the cell, much in the same way that reactive forces do not will their return as types.

Metastasis as affirmative function is the production of multiplicities by way of a complementary re- and deterritorialization of the cell. The boundaries of the cell (be it physical or the inhering code) are “forgotten”, sloughed off, and instead the cell follows a new growth trajectory, going to the limit of its power, a new articulation, a new “aberrant” path which may cut a transversal line across the strata of the organism’s conceptuality. Metastasis in the negative sense is the overproduction of rigidifying codes, the becoming-fascist of production.

For every function of apoptosis there is a complementary function of metastasis, and this relation has a binary aspect without being resolved in a zero-sum game of equilibrating their forces. For every affirmative (active) apoptosis (which we will call A+), there is a counterforce of negative or reactive metastasis (M-). Conversely, for every reactive apoptosis (A-), there is a counterforce of active metastasis (M+).

If forms imply codes, functions imply the processes of codes without those codes being visible. A social code, for instance, is only highlighted when there is a specific problem with the product or network, an undesirable outcome. Like Ruskin’s aesthetic assertion that the scaffolding should not be present in the finished product, codes themselves are hidden from

view. If the product is believed flawless or efficient, the impetus to study its encoding is not pressing (unless by emulators who wish to copy the model, which always fails). In that instance, the idea appears to us as “pure” and undiluted, its codes hidden from us but assumed to be in good placement and proportion to produce the harmony that is required for the continued functioning of the system. However, such a relationship is markedly facile since an investigation into codes would then only be justifiable under two instances: to repair or improve. The colloquial slogan, “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” is the lethargic response to any who would take interest in reevaluating the codes. What is lacking is the more interesting posing of a problem: in forms, functions, codes and processes, one can pose the problem differently and not be blinded by apparent operational successes, for what may systemically function “well” for some may be deleterious to others. However, more importantly, to blockade investigation into codes is to send up a smokescreen of faith: that one should not tinker or engage in a genealogical inquiry into the functioning of a code, but rather take it on faith that it is working well. Moreover, inquiry into these matrices of codes allows us to sink deeper into their value, and the origin of those values, and how they attempt to determine structures in a given way.

Apoptosis can be considered a form of imposed systematics and structuration that projects limitations under which a tally of finite outcomes can occur in any given milieu (be this milieu social, geopolitical, etc). Limitation breaches, or transgressions, signal a pre-programmed cell death (PCD) response inducing the transgressing element to die. This occurs usually at the expense of the whole milieu-unit through a quick response nutritive blockage; in the case of, say, militant combatants, one alternative in dealing with such

elements is to cut all supply lines to prevent basic means of survival, access to assets and rearmament (this siege-craft element is precisely the means by which apoptosis functions in the destruction of an aberrant cell). In more localized terms, this may occur through reactive intervention policies on the part of concerned groups. A cancer is a form of crisis to which responses can vary in degrees of intensity. PCD is by far the most extreme form of response, akin to siege-craft, resource isolation, and punitive quarantine. PCD is also a preventative system insofar as it exists as an emergency response system to any contingent transgressions that may arise that cause limitation breaches in the proper ordering and regulating of any mechanism. PCD has no variability in its response, and is as totalizing in this response as an insulin dump in the body in response to any amount of higher than usual blood sugar levels.

However, there may be two forms of PCD: general and localized. General PCD will isolate a larger area for resource blockage, while a localized PCD will refine its area of isolation. There is no analogous link for localized PCD in the body as there would be in the social milieu. PCD, as a strategy, is incapable of negotiation. Its primary function is the annihilation of the milieu-unit to preserve the organism as a whole. An example of socio-historical PCD in action would be Hitler's Operation T 4 which employed the euthanasia of "useless" people as a social welfare project:

*Reichsleiter* Bouhler and Doctor of Medicine Brandt are, on their responsibility, assigned the task of extending the authority of certain doctors, who are to be personally designated for the purpose of granting deliverance through death to those persons who, within the limits of human judgment and following a thorough medical examination, are declared to be incurable.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Adolf Hitler, "Berlin Decree in support of Operation T 4" (antedated to Sept. 1, 1939; issued Oct. 27, 1940). Qtd. in Philippe Aziz's *Doctors of Death: Karl Brandt, the Third Reich's Man in White*. 73.

Underwriting this decreed operation is a classical political PCD motion; namely, the targeting of a social group without effective representation as a hindrance to the health of the broader social organism to which their fatal neutralization, rhetorically couched under the term of “deliverance”, was an expedient means of responding to the overall “health” of the Reich.<sup>12</sup> History is rife with these, and other forms of political PCD that masquerades under various narratives as “health”, “progress”, “development”, “spartanization,” “purity”, “patriotism” and the like. We also find it in agricultural commerce: the outbreak of avian flu or “mad cow disease” in various regions prompted a thorough PCD response by means of isolating and destroying any animal that may or may not have come into contact with infected animals within a given prescribed epidemic-prone region. We do not mean here to assign a roughshod equivalence between the Nazi example and other forms of PCD, but are signaling to the key similar elements that express the function of localized versus generalized PCD.

### **PCD “Patching”**

If there has been any significant variability in PCD measures, it has been through the means of upgrades to more efficient isolation-neutralization of affected zones, or “patching”. On the political level, improved methods of surveillance (in the physical sense with the aid of satellite technology or through electronic monitoring of such things as bank accounts and internet activity) has assisted PCD methods as much as it has also played into the hands of

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<sup>12</sup> During a meeting of high-ranking Nazi officials, including Dr. Brandt, Viktor Brack, Bouhler, and Dr. Conti, the definition of “unhealthy” elements was extended by Dr. Conti to include the unemployable. In this formulation, it is implied that being employed is to be healthy. We should note here that the medical view of the body has its time measured in terms of its health, and how this idea of work acts as a parallel measure of body-time.

counter-PCD entities. “Patching” consists of improving on hitherto successful methods of performing the PCD function which have now become antiquated and outmoded. Since PCD is always a pre-emptive strategy to deal with contingent crises as they arise, it is constantly assessing new risks, old failures, and anticipating future possible breaches. Counterterrorism strategies and software products fall under this domain.<sup>13</sup> The methods of PCD are always incomplete for as long as counter-PCD methods are constantly devised in light of their own knowledge base of existing PCD methods. Counter-PCD methods take aim at communicative inefficiencies and coverage gaps, exploiting these to ensure their own success. PCD patching aims at inspecting its own apparatus of surveillance and response networks to better hone its strategies. Since PCD is always pre-emptive, it must constantly grapple with anticipations of breach, attempting to run simulations of counter-PCD methods to test its efficiency. This speculative exercise, on the political scale, falls to the lot of think tanks.

In dealing with secret service personnel, it is necessary for the organization to have an effective PCD strategy in place so as to minimize the risk of uncontrolled and unplanned leaks of sensitive information. If a member of a secret service organization is discovered to be a defector, these organizations have structures in place to respond to these transgressions. One of the more effective PCD methods in successful secret service organizations has been the decentralization of information storage; that is, personnel are to gather a certain defined quantum of information without having full access to what that information entails as a whole

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<sup>13</sup> The “pre-emptive” quality of such domains as anti-virus software, and more particularly counter-terrorist action, may begin with an event that prompts reaction, but these “industries” attempt to anticipate future attacks. For example, think tanks such as the RAND corporation generated possible scenarios – no matter how outlandish – and helped to implement policies to guard against said contingencies. The Cold War overproduction of nuclear weapons according to the anticipatory idea of “mutually assured destruction” is one such example of pre-emptive action.

— each agent has a piece, but none but the highest members possess the entirety. The “jigsawing” of information collection minimizes, in PCD fashion, the risk of entrusting too much to one individual. If the agent illicitly disseminates sensitive privy information, there are structures in place to decommission that agent from further service. This method of parceling information diminishes the need for more overtly brutal tactics such as the use of intimidation, murder, or the murder of the agent's family.

We have here identified a few of the operational principles that under-grid a process of becoming patterned on the analogy of metastasis. This is far from the entire picture of what metastasis does on the ontological level, rather this is a more of an illustrative gesture to the formation of a larger project that would aim to make use of cancer as an explanatory device for helping us to rethink the problematic being-of-becoming we find recurring in philosophy from Heraclitus up through Nietzsche and Deleuze. What we hoped to have demonstrated here is that we cannot overly “-ologize” being in terms of categorical fixity, but should attempt to see being through the lens of becoming instead. Rather than trade off one phenomenology for another, a re-envisioning of ontology through becoming primarily decentralizes and de-emphasizes the rigidity of being as a stable definition. As a primer, this text multiplies questions more than tend toward stable resolutions, but it is even here – this text – that there is some degree of fidelity to the effects of metastasis that is not limited to just “things”, but also to textual production, thought, and interpretation.

### **About the Author**

*Kane X. Faucher (BA, MA, Ph.D) (1977- ) was born in Ottawa, Canada. His activities span academic and creative projects, most notably in writing, continental theory, visual art, and music. His eclectic and wide-ranging approach has resulted in academic work as diverse as pataphysics, Borges, "cancer capitalism", atomism, and experi-minimalist music.. He has a doctorate in Theory and Criticism, as well as two degrees in philosophy. He has published over 600 pieces in several journals, magazines, anthologies, and books. He currently lives and works in London, Canada with his wife, Julie Evans, and their three gifted cats.*