

“Why wasn’t Capitalism born in China? – Deleuze and the Philosophy of Non-Events”

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Abstract

In this paper, I will address Deleuze and Guattari’s consideration of capitalism’s aborted birth in China by approaching the problematic from within their philosophy of history. To begin with, I will set out Deleuze and Guattari’s immediate answer, canvassing their machinic ontology and the significance that they place on immanence to the emergence of capitalism. In doing so, the question of history and historical interpretation will be raised. Following, I will investigate the status of such questions and inquire as to *why* Deleuze and Guattari continually pose them. From this analysis I will suggest that a critical philosophy of non-events can be found in Deleuze and Guattari’s work that is related to but distinct from their philosophy of the Event.

Introduction

Why wasn’t capitalism born in China? Why did capitalism emerge in the West, rather than China of the third or even eighth century? Deleuze and Guattari consider this question on numerous occasions throughout their writings. The answer that they provide is, in a word, the State. Through its principle of capture and control, the State apparatus restricts the intensification, propagation and abstract conjugation of decoded flows, thus inhibiting the facilitation of a field of immanence upon which capitalism depends. This response, apart from some terminological intricacies, is rather straightforward. However, what is it that lies behind this relatively simple response? And more importantly, what is it that *motivates* the question and Deleuze and Guattari’s frequent return to it? If one glances at the various instances that the question of capitalism’s emergence is invoked, it will become clear that Deleuze and Guattari are not always so interested in the answer. Instead, the question is often raised in order to illustrate the significance of a particular *kind* of question – namely, the kind of question that calls into consideration the contingency of history and the history of contingency. After discussing Deleuze and Guattari’s answer to the question of capitalism’s non-emergence in China, the second part of this paper will thus explore the manner in which this question – or more specifically, questions of this kind – might suggest to us a philosophy non-event that, although related to Deleuze’s notorious notion of the Event, is arguably irreducible to it.

The Answer: The State

Before I elaborate Deleuze and Guattari’s answer to the question of capitalism’s aborted birth in China, I must provide a disclaimer: I am not an expert on the history of China or the history of capitalism, let alone the history of capitalism in China. But nor, it must be added, were Deleuze and Guattari. Partly for this reason, my intention here, as with Deleuze and Guattari, will not be to answer this question historically, but philosophically. This is not to say that an historical question can be answered or reduced to philosophy, but simply that the question ‘why wasn’t capitalism born in China’ is for Deleuze and Guattari a philosophical question. It would thus be somewhat unfair, or at least inappropriate, to contest their response to this question purely on historical grounds.¹ There are of course important interlays between history and philosophy, and indeed the majority of my own work attempts to tease out these relations.² But I just want to stress from the outset that my treatment of this question will focus not so much on the history at play here, but the *philosophy* of history. So for those who are experts in this area of history, or were hoping to hear from such an expert, I must sincerely apologize.

So, why wasn’t capitalism born in China? As I have already indicated, Deleuze and Guattari’s answer to this is because the State put a stop to it. To briefly explain, the capitalist machine, for Deleuze and Guattari, is effectively defined by its preeminence in two respects: on the one hand decoding/deterritorialization, and on the other axiomatization. Concerning the former of these processes, unlike the primitive territorial machine which codes the earth and the barbarian despotic machine which overcodes these various codes, directing them towards a despot, the capitalist machine decodes all codes and overcodes, rendering them all exchangeable within a worldwide market.

The capitalist, as such, is not beholden to any particular code: instead, what the capitalist is interested in is the conversion of all codes and overcodes into flux.³ For example, it makes no difference to a capitalist ‘what’ is inscribed in each code, for all that matters is the translation of those codes into capital flow so that differences between them can be *capitalized* upon. In today’s world it is perhaps the futures-trader that best illustrates this activity. As codes travel across a computer screen, the trader is not so much concerned with its actual value as he/she is with its *differential* value. Given this ethic and ontology, the process of capitalization does not even make any intrinsic claims on efficiency: it matters not to capitalism whether the capital produced is done so by the most advanced means or the most antiquated; a place will be found for all, provided it contributes to the increased production of capital flow. If capitalism is thought of as a modern phenomenon, it is therefore only insofar as it is *anachronistic*; capitalism does not kill off the past, but puts it to work.

This characterization of capitalism, whereby capitalism is equated with the ongoing and amorphous decoding of flows, aptly describes what Marx might have meant by his dictum: ‘all that is solid melts into air’. As the social machine that trades in codes and proliferates vectors of deterritorialization, capitalism can be said to exert what Deleuze and Guattari call elsewhere the nomadic force of a war machine. Indeed, the capitalist and the nomad have much in common. Both, for instance, resist the regulations of the State apparatus: the nomad constructs a war machine directed towards breaking State striation, while the capitalist often measures their worth by how effectively loopholes can be found, created and exploited.⁴ In light of this, it is not surprising that the State by and large fears the deterritorializing power of capitalism, and attempts to control it as far as possible, while harnessing its awesome power.⁵ To paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari, capitalism is the dread that the State feels of a flow that would elude its overcoding.⁶ It is for this reason that Deleuze and Guattari write the following in *Anti-Oedipus*:

The despotic machine holds the following in common with the primitive machine, it confirms the latter in the following respect: the dread of decoded flows – the flows of production, but also mercantile flows of exchange and commerce that might escape the State monopoly, with its tight restrictions and its plugging of flows. When Etienne Balazs asks why capitalism wasn’t born in China in the thirteenth century, when all the necessary scientific and technical conditions nevertheless seemed to be present, the answer lies in the State, which closed the mines as soon as the reserves of metal were judged sufficient, and which retained a monopoly or a narrow control over commerce (the merchant as functionary).⁷

Deleuze and Guattari extend this analysis in *A Thousand Plateaus*. As they again note, the conditions for the birth of capitalism most certainly existed in China long before its eventual emergence in the West. However, if capitalism wasn’t born in China, it is because the State does not allow for what Deleuze and Guattari call “a general axiomatic of decoded flows” to form.⁸ This addendum is most significant for our purposes: if capitalism doesn’t appear first in China, it is not simply because the State interrupts the free flow of deterritorialization. More specifically, the State prevents an *axiomatic structure* from forming that is capable of facilitating not merely “topical conjunctions that stand as so many knots and recordings, [but] a whole generalized conjunction that overflows and overturns the preceding apparatuses.”⁹ In short, it is not capture *per se* that is the problem: what capitalism requires is a particular kind of conjunction – an axiomatic that can give rise to “*A new threshold of deterritorialization*.”¹⁰

By axiomatic, Deleuze and Guattari explicitly mean that as defined and used by modern mathematics. As they describe it: “the axiomatic deals directly with purely functional elements and relations whose nature is not specified, and which are immediately realized in highly varied domains simultaneously.”¹¹ Thus axioms do not offer their own exegeses, but rather provide the formal system and operational field in which differential relations and capitalizations occur. Because of this, the axiomatic axis of capitalism is uniquely positioned to interface with the processes of decoding and becoming that define its other side. As the pure immanence of flow continues to evade codes and overcodings unabated, the capitalist machine can appropriate any and all of these escaping lines of flight by simply adding on a new axiom or subtracting an old one. This gives capitalism an unrivalled flexibility and multiple realizability. Changes in the social field lead to the addition of new axioms, which in turn generate a new structure from which further decodings escape, only to then be reabsorbed by the addition of new axioms that ‘capitalize’ upon the newly generated difference: “How much flexibility there is in the axiomatic of capitalism, always ready to widen its own limits so as to add a new axiom to a previously saturated system.”¹² In this manner, capitalism continually displaces its own limits in the very same moment (or movement) that it realizes them. And this is indeed the “deepest law of capitalism: it continually sets and then repels its own limits, but in so doing gives rise to numerous flows in all directions that escape its axiomatic.”¹³

When Deleuze and Guattari again return to the question of capitalism’s aborted birth in China, this time in *What Is*

Philosophy?, it is precisely this ‘law’ of capitalism that they will have in mind. By way of this ‘law’, capitalism instantiates a plane of immanence that extends itself across the globe. As they now put it:

Marx accurately constructs a concept of capitalism by determining the two principal components, naked labor and pure wealth, with their zone of indiscernibility when wealth buys labor. Why capitalism in the West rather than in China in the third or even eighth century? Because the West slowly brings together and adjusts these components, whereas the East prevents them from reaching fruition. *Only the West extends and propagates its centers of immanence*. The social field no longer refers to an external limit that restricts it from above, as in the empires, but to immanent internal limits that constantly shift by extending the system, and that reconstitute themselves through displacement. External obstacles are now only technological, and only internal rivalries remain. A world market extends to the ends of the earth before passing into the galaxy: even the skies become horizontal.¹⁴

There is much that we could say about this passage, but what I would like to draw our attention to here is the *context* in which it is deployed. In this section of *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari are specifically concerned with explaining not the birth of capitalism, but in fact the birth and rebirth of Philosophy. As it happens, capitalism, according to Deleuze and Guattari, will play a vital role in the re-emergence of Philosophy in modern Europe. This is because Philosophy, like capitalism, will also require a generalized conjunction of principle elements, in this case friendship, opinion and a field of immanence, the latter of which is afforded in the modern period by capitalism. But here is my point: as this passage demonstrates, the question of the birth of capitalism is analogous, or more accurately *isomorphic*, with the question of the birth of Philosophy.¹⁵

A few pages before the one I just quoted from, Deleuze and Guattari pose the following question when investigating the birth of philosophy in Ancient Greece: “Can we speak of Chinese, Hindu, Jewish, or Islamic ‘philosophy?’.”¹⁶ Their response to this question is no, to the extent that a conjunction or *encounter* between relative and absolute deterritorialization does not occur in these other places (or at least does not occur prior to the birth of philosophy in Ancient Greece). The birth of philosophy thus depends upon a conjunction or encounter that is both synthetic and contingent: “Even in the concept”, as Deleuze and Guattari say, “the principle depends upon a connection of components that could have been different.”¹⁷ One way of looking at this comparison of capitalism and Philosophy would be to say that we have the same answer to two different questions. The question this time is about the emergence of Philosophy, not capitalism, but the answer again turns on the prevention or facilitation of a particular, generalized and contingent conjunction of principle elements or flows. It is not hard to find other examples of this kind in Deleuze and Guattari’s work. When discussing the relation between Western naval dominance and the advent of capitalism, Deleuze and Guattari ask, citing Fernand Braudel, “why not Chinese, Japanese, or even Moslem ships? Why not Sinbad the Sailor?”¹⁸ The answer is again the same: it is not technique that is lacking. Rather, the required conjunction remains “caught in the nets of the despotic State, entirely invested in the despot’s machine.”¹⁹ However, as my above reference to isomorphism suggests, another way of framing what is happening here would be to say that what we have in these different instances is the *same* question, or more exactly, the same *kind* or *form* of question, that is being deployed in different contexts – the birth of capitalism, Philosophy and naval supremacy – each time for the same purpose. What then is this kind of question, and for what purpose is it being deployed?

The Question: History, Contingency and Non-Events

It would seem to me that if this kind of question is of significance to Deleuze and Guattari, it is primarily due to its capacity to help us better appreciate the nature of contingent encounters, and in turn to aid both our understanding and alteration of reality. Perhaps surprisingly, for those familiar with Deleuze’s critical remarks about the discipline and ontology of history, it is historians who Deleuze and Guattari suggest are most sensitive to the fragility and specificity of contingent encounters. As they put it in *Anti-Oedipus*: “Let us return to this eminently contingent question that modern historians know how to ask: why Europe, why not China?”²⁰ In a way, it is this kind of question that is the quintessential historical question: why did encounter *x* occur where it did, when it did? At play in this question, I would put forward, is nothing less than the wonder of history, or the wonder that the historian experiences when peering into the depths of the past; it is the quite basic insight that all sorts of accidents and contingent events were required for a particular encounter to occur.²¹ Many historians no doubt devote their energies to minimizing or eradicating the spectre of this contingency, often by falling back on or allowing for teleological or causal-linear mechanisms to guide their work – what Henri Bergson would refer to as ‘radical finalism’ and ‘radical mechanism’. But as Deleuze and Guattari recognize, history and contingency share a bond.

What the question in the title of my paper drives at, what it calls into consideration, is therefore the contingency of history, and the history of contingency, which is to say, the problem or problematic of *historical contingency*. If one aspect of this problematic involves the realization that what happened in history *need not have*, then the supplemental realization to this would be that what *did not* happen *could* have. This is effectively what the question about the non-birth of capitalism is all about: it is a question about what *did not* happen. Historical contingency, I would thus claim, is not simply about ‘what happened’; it cannot be wholly contained by or reduced to an investigation into the past nature of an event. On the contrary, the problematic of historical contingency involves an active exploration into what did not happen, or, the nature of *non-events*.

To take seriously the non-event in this way, and to distinguish it philosophically from the Deleuzian event, is perhaps a little far-fetched; perhaps it would be more accurate and straightforward to describe such non-events as the non-actualization of a virtual event. But perhaps not. Before deciding, let us consider the most relevant Deleuzian text on the matter: chapter 8 of *A Thousand Plateaus*, “1874: Three Novellas, or, What Happened?.” As Deleuze and Guattari explain in the opening pages of this plateau, in contrast to the literary genre of the ‘tale’ which entrances and pulls the reader along by continually gesturing to ‘what is going to happen’, the ‘novella’ is organized around the converse question ‘what happened’: “In the novella, we do not wait for something to happen, we expect something to have just happened.”²² Deleuze and Guattari are careful to insist that it would be an error to reduce these different aspects to dimensions of time. While it is true that one of these movements “casts [the present] into the past *from the moment* it is present (novella), while another *simultaneously* draws it into the future (tale)”,²³ this is to a certain extent beside the point. What is key about the question of ‘what happened’ is not so much its relation to the past, but more specifically the manner in which “it places us in a relation with something unknowable and imperceptible.”²⁴ Or as Deleuze and Guattari further clarify: “it is not a question of saying that the novella relates to the past and the tale to the future; what we should say instead is that the novella relates, in the present itself, to the formal dimension of something that has happened, even if that something is nothing or remains unknowable.”²⁵

But if the novella is above all concerned with something that has happened, even in those cases where that something is nothing or remains unknowable, is this to say that the novella is equally concerned with what *did not* happen? There is good reason to think otherwise. This can be demonstrated by considering Deleuze and Guattari’s alternative formulation of the question ‘what happened’: ‘Whatever could have happened?’. While it could be suggested that this alternative formulation alludes to that which could have happened but didn’t, Deleuze and Guattari’s further expansions of this question dispel this possibility. As they say, this particular question is best put by F. Scott Fitzgerald: “*Whatever could have happened for things to have come to this?*.”²⁶ If this question is distinct from the question of ‘what did not happen, but could have’, it is most likely due to the differing relations they form between the present and the past – or equally, between what is, the known/perceptible and the unknown/imperceptible. While Fitzgerald’s question forms a relation between something *in* the past (even if that something is nothing or unknowable) to what is (or, the present condition), the question of ‘what did not occur, but could have’ concerns the relation between something *absent* in history and what is (because it did occur, or continues to).

Now, it must be admitted that there are clearly close affinities between the questions of what did not happen and what did. In a murder mystery, for example, the model detective is always simultaneously concerned with determining both what happened and what did not – the separation of fact from fiction, as it were. It is also often the case that our detective hero (or historian), like in a game of Cluedo, arrives at the truth of what happened by incrementally eliminating (progressively determining) possible alternatives of what could have happened but didn’t, and what did not happen because it couldn’t have (‘it couldn’t have been the butler, as he is left-handed!’). Nevertheless, I would claim that these two questions remain distinct, both with respect to the manner in which they are pursued and the manner in which they relate to a present reality.

This can be demonstrated if we focus on the second half of the question ‘what did not happen, but could have’. In fact, let us momentarily focus on the particular word in this phrase that invokes the realm of possibility (by which I mean, in Deleuze’s terminology, virtuality): *could*. Let us furthermore extend our literary purview beyond that of the novella and tale. Of all literary genres, it is perhaps science fiction that is most interested in exploring this realm of the ‘could’, or more specifically, the question of ‘what could happen’.²⁷ However, if science fiction is concerned with this question, it is arguably only insofar as it is able to shed light on our present condition. Science fiction, and in particular its dystopian variants, engages in not mere fantasy making, but more profoundly contemporary

diagnosis. As such, it creates a non-existent reality, so as to tell us something about our own reality, and to in turn facilitate the creation of a new reality.²⁸

When put this way, science fiction could be said to be *untimely*. As Deleuze learns from Nietzsche, the untimely is that which acts “counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come.”²⁹ But if we return to the essay this lesson is originally taken from, Nietzsche’s “On the Utility and Liability of History for Life”, we will see that history also produces this untimely affect. Indeed, as the full quote reads:

But I have to concede this much to myself as someone who by occupation is a classical philologist, for I have no idea what the significance of classical philology would be in our age, if not to have an unfashionable effect – that is, to work against the time and thereby have an effect upon it, hopefully for the benefit of a future time.³⁰

It is thus not surprising that science fiction’s concern for what could happen naturally correlates with the historical question of what could have happened: both questions are, in short, untimely. It is true that the approach route to the present is different in each case, one from the future and the other from the past, but this aspect is secondary to the untimely impetus that drives them both forward – the ‘could’ at their core, or in other words, the question of contingency.

What we have here are thus two different sets of relations, or *complexes*. On the one hand, following Deleuze and Guattari’s plateau on the Three Novellas, we have the novella, or the question of ‘what happened’, the tale, or the question of ‘what is going to happen’, and the manner in which these explain ‘this situation’, or what is. And on the other hand, following my alternative formulation, we have historical counterfactuals, or the question of ‘what did not happen/could have happened but did not’, science fiction, or the question of ‘what could happen’, and the manner in which these explorations into what is not the case or could be shed light on what is (and potentially alter it). Both complexes, one could note, are concerned with being able to tell us something about our current reality, and by extension, to proliferate new possibilities. Both, furthermore, are ultimately concerned with contingency. But there are differences. To refer back to that ‘eminently contingent question that modern historians know how to ask’, when Fitzgerald asks himself ‘how is it that things have come to this’, in a certain respect he asks the equivalent of ‘why Europe?’. However, what Fitzgerald’s question does *not* ask is ‘why not China?’. In other words, if Fitzgerald is a “novella writer of genius”, it is not because he inquires into other worlds that might have been, but rather because of his profound ability to articulate and explore his own broken reality, an eventuality that has come to be, even if he is not sure why or how he got there.³¹ What we have here, I would claim, are thus two distinct complexes, both in their temporal relations (the way they relate past, present and the future) and their relations of contingency, the known/perceptible and the unknown/imperceptible.

Ultimately, we can therefore conclude that Deleuze and Guattari’s interest in the question of ‘what happened’ is distinct in several important respects from this paper’s interest in the nature of non-events and the question of ‘what did not happen’. While the novella and the tale reflect the manner “in which the living present is divided at every instant”,³² and in so doing replicate Deleuze’s description of the aionic Event as that which is always already happened and yet to happen,³³ historical counterfactuals and science fiction concern an altogether different set of questions regarding the nature of ‘what did not happen’, ‘what could happen’ and their relations to the production of reality.³⁴ In light of this, it would be inappropriate, or at the very least inadequate, to understand non-events as merely a non-actualization of a virtual event. For not only do non-events involve a different complex of relations than that of the event, but they are also no less untimely in nature.

This claim could perhaps be best summed up by the acknowledgement that non-events are not events. It is, however, this entirely banal fact that is most perplexing for the study of non-events. For when we speak of or think about the non-birth of capitalism in China, do we not *eventalize* a non-event? Do we not inquire into *that* which happened in what did not? Or put differently again, are not non-events merely the reflections or shadows of events? To a certain extent, this is a question about possibility. In his essay “The Possible and the Real”, Bergson argues that something which is possible can only *have been* possible. Possibilities thus do not pre-exist their realization, for they are retrospectively placed into the past by the present: “The possible is therefore the mirage of the present in the past; and as we know the future will finally constitute a present and the mirage effect is continually being produced, we are convinced that the image of tomorrow is already contained in our actual present, which will be the past of tomorrow, although we did not manage to grasp it.”³⁵ While it might be tempting to think of non-events in this

manner – as possibilities retrospectively placed into the past by that which happens – this explanation is arguably a poor fit. This is because, as we have seen, science fiction does not deal in ‘images of tomorrow’ of this kind, insofar as it is untimely. Similarly, insofar as historical counterfactuals are untimely, they are again inadequately explained by this Bergsonian description of retrospectivity. As Bergsonian possibilities are retrospectively posited into the past by the present, they are in effect powerless or lifeless – a vampiric image that is a shadow of vital life. By contrast, non-events, as untimely, are productive and exude their own power (*puissance*).

It is therefore also a question about power and productivity. Non-events, I would claim, cannot be solely understood in terms of lack or the ‘thing missing’, nor can they be defined by negation or the negative. This is because, as Deleuze would say of both desire and non-being, non-events are themselves productive and positive, which is to say that there is something truly *provocative* about the question, ‘why wasn’t capitalism born in China?’ As a result, non-events are not merely the by-product of events, nor are they merely representations of lack. Rather, non-events involve the construction of real territories, and their deterritorialization. They involve the creation of other worlds – worlds that are not fake or possible, but real, insofar as they tell us something important about reality, its history and its becoming.³⁶ Non-events achieve this, furthermore, in a manner distinct from events, to the extent that the question of ‘what did not happen’ and its pursuit is different in kind from the question and pursuit of what did.

So let us consider the question one last time, but this time without any care for the answer: why wasn’t capitalism born in China? If this question (and others like it) demands our attention, it is because it *poses a problem*. Why didn’t something happen, when it could have? One possible response to such a question would be to reduce what didn’t happen to what did, to explain contingency via necessity. However, if the contingency of an encounter is to be truly appreciated, then the absence or difference intrinsic to the question of what did not happen must not be fully equalized or covered over by the presence or identity of what did. For non-events, as I have shown, are both irreducible to events and distinct from the non-actualizations of events. They are, furthermore, productive in-themselves, insofar as they are capable of addressing real problems and constructing new ones:

Those who continue to have recourse to History and protest against the indetermination of a concept such as ‘mutation’ should bear in mind the perplexity of real historians when they have to explain why capitalism arose at such a time and in such a place when so many factors could have made it equally possible at another time and place. ‘To problematize series. . .’ Whether discursive or not, formations, families and multiplicities are historical. They are not just compounds built up from their coexistence but are inseparable from ‘temporal reactors of derivation’; and when a new formation appears, with new rules and series, it never comes all at once, in a single phrase or act of creation, but emerges like a series of ‘building blocks’, with gaps, traces and reactivations of former elements that survive under the new rules. [...] One must pursue the different series, travel along the different levels, and cross all thresholds; instead of simply displaying phenomena or statements in their vertical or horizontal dimensions, one must form a transversal or mobile diagonal line along which the archaeologist-archivist must move.³⁷

In concluding, the question about why wasn’t capitalism born in China tells us much: it tells us about what is capitalism, what is the State apparatus of capture, and what is their relation to one another. But it also does much more than this. It emphasizes the relation between history and contingency; it demands that we take seriously not only what happened, but what did not, and the manner in which the two are distinct and intertwined. Finally, the question of capitalism’s non-birth in China draws our attention to not only the contingency of history, but the historical nature of contingency and creativity. It reminds us that multiplicities are in part historical, and that if we are to draw the diagonal or problematize reality, then such historical sensibilities will be indispensable.

Notes

¹ For a well-known contestation of Deleuze’s philosophy from the perspective of anthropology and history see Christopher L. Miller ‘The Postidentitarian Predicament in the Footnotes of *A Thousand Plateaus*: Nomadology, Anthropology, and Authority’, *Diacritics*, 23 (3), 1993, pp. 6-35.

² See Craig Lundy, *History and Becoming: Deleuze’s Philosophy of Creativity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012). See also Craig Lundy, ‘Deleuze and Guattari’s Historiophilosophy: Philosophical Thought and its Historical Milieu’, *Critical Horizons*, 12 (2), 2011, pp. 115-35.

³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Land (London and New York: Continuum, 1984), p. 228.

⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 352.

⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 355.

⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 140.

⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 197.

⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 453.

⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 452.

¹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 453. It should be noted that it is not just China that Deleuze and Guattari invoke as an exemplar here, but also Rome, Byzantine and Europe of the Middle Ages. Deleuze and Guattari take their lead here from Marx and Engels, who of course famously asked why capitalism was not first born in Rome, when all of the required elements appeared to be in place (see Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Correspondences*, ed. S. W. Ryaznkaya, trans. I. Lasker, Moscow, Progress, 1955, p. 294).

¹¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 454.

¹² Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 238.

¹³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 472. As this quote indicates, what defines capitalism is not simply the subordination of deterritorialization to axiomatization, since capitalism is equally defined by its ability to produce new flows. Capitalism thus cannot be reduced to either of its two tendencies, for it is more precisely defined by the conjunction of the two processes: “capitalism forms with a general axiomatic of decoded flows” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 453). The ethic and ontology of capitalism is therefore no more attributable to axiomatization than it is to deterritorialization. Rather, capitalism is constituted by the novel way in which these two processes interact, continuously feeding into one another. See also Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 171.

¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 97.

¹⁵ It should be noted that I am not claiming here that capitalism and Philosophy are isomorphic. Rather, I am claiming, more specifically, that the question of their birth is (in Deleuze and Guattari’s work).

¹⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 93.

¹⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 93.

¹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 224.

¹⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 224.

²⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 224.

²¹ “For great accidents were necessary, and amazing encounters that could have happened elsewhere, or before, or might never have happened, in order for the flows to escape coding and, escaping, to nonetheless fashion a new machine bearing the determinations of the capitalist socius” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 140).

²² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 193.

²³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 193.

²⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 193.

²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 194.

²⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 194.

²⁷ The term ‘speculative fiction’ is often used instead of science fiction. This term, however, can incorporate many

other genres aside from science fiction, such as historical fantasy. Given my interest at this point in the question ‘what could happen’, and as such in the futural aspect of speculative fiction, I have preferred to use to the term ‘science fiction’, despite its many inadequacies, as it is this particular genre of literature that is generally agreed to be most concerned with the future.

²⁸ As Ronald Bogue puts it, “[science fiction] promotes the thought of a people to come as something that actually might take any number of definite forms, and perhaps may assist us in our attempts to imagine, invent and enact alternative modes of existence, new possibilities of life”. See Ronald Bogue, “Deleuze and Guattari and the Future of Politics: Science Fiction, Protocols and the People to Come”, in *Deleuze Studies*, Vol. 5, 2011 (supplement), p. 94.

²⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the uses and disadvantages of a history for life”, in *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 60.

³⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Utility and Liability of History for Life”, in *Unfashionable Observations*, trans. Richard T. Gray. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995. As it happens, Deleuze fails to include the first half of this quote every time that he references it (see *Difference and Repetition*, p. xxi, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* p. 107, *The Logic of Sense* p. 265, and *Two Regimes of Madness* p. 346). For more on the significance of this, see Craig Lundy, “Deleuze’s Untimely: Uses and Abuses in the Appropriation of Nietzsche”, in Jeffrey A. Bell and Claire Colebrook (eds), *Deleuze and History*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 188-205.

³¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 194.

³² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 193.

³³ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (London: Continuum, 1990), pp. 1-2.

³⁴ It could be noted that the majority of Deleuze and Guattari’s plateau on the Three Novellas pursues an analysis of what they refer to as the ‘three lines’ that compose reality. While it might be possible to investigate the questions of ‘what did not happen’ and ‘what could happen’ using these three lines, I would nevertheless maintain that these questions are distinct from that of the novella and the tale, or ‘what happened’ and ‘what is going to happen’, and thus does not conflict with my attempt to distinguish non-events from events.

³⁵ Henri Bergson, *Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2007), p. 82.

³⁶ By this I do not mean to suggest that history and becoming are opposed, but rather that they together form a productive relation. For more on this see Lundy, *History and Becoming*.

³⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (London and New York: Continuum, 1999), pp. 21-22.