Acknowledgments

This book is motivated by one of the possibly biggest challenges of our lifetime, the challenge to understand and recreate intelligence. It is the product of philosophical reflection in the armchair, propelled by my practical experience as a tech and software entrepreneur as well as my prior scholarly studies on questions about artificial intelligence, AI (during the postdoc after my first PhD and my work as Assistant Professor of Finance and Fintech). To some extent, it also follows from my formal training and socialization in philosophy of the analytic tradition (e.g., incarnated by the line from Rudolf Carnap to Wolfgang Stegmüller and Wolfgang Spohn – under the latter I did my Master studies in Konstanz). However, at the same time, the book at hand challenges, transcends, and breaks with some parts of that great tradition. This is neither a flaw the reader will unveil, nor an accident. I did it on purpose and for good reasons.

As a teaser, not a spoiler, the point I wish to highlight here is that some concepts, including the for our purposes central notion of intelligence, are complex systems or family concepts that cannot be reduced to necessary conditions which together are sufficient for explicating the term in question. Rather, something more than analysis is needed and harbored in systems thinking which encompasses not just analysis, but also synthesis. That the guild of analytic philosophy has a problem with questioning the value of analysis may be obvious, but why should academic philosophy refrain from becoming affected (or improved?) by new ways of thinking and working? Or rather by innovation as I, as an entrepreneur, would phrase it.

Despite being ready and willing to explore uncharted territory for investigating the concept of intelligence in a time where scientists speak of very intelligent animals like octopi or crows and where engineers claim to create intelligences artificially, my work did not come together in pure solitude. I found an ideal home and environment at the ITAS (the Institut für Technikfolgenabschätzung und Systemanalyse) at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, the “leading institute for technology assessment in Germany and worldwide”. With interdisciplinarity in its DNA, a focus on not only AI, but also on impact outside of scientific communities, and an openness to apply systems thinking, the ITAS welcomed me and provided me with the necessary support to bring my research project to a successful completion. Particularly, I am deeply grateful to my advisor Prof. Dr. Armin Grunwald, Head of the ITAS as well as of the Office of Technology Assessment at the German Bundestag (TAB), for his invaluable comments on earlier versions of this manuscript and his encouragement.

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I found an intellectual home at the ITAS. More holistically, home is where my family is and, therefore, I would like to express my utmost gratitude to my family; first and foremost, to Oana.

Another key concept (apart from “synthesis”) that systems thinking has coined is the one of a feedback loop which occurs when outputs of a system are routed back as inputs as part of a chain of cause-and-effect that forms a circuit (Hoffmann, 2017b: Figure 1; Schwaninger, 2005). By embracing this feedback view of the world, I also wish to thank my publisher Christoph Schirmer at De Gruyter for their help and the reviews I received. In this spirit, I dedicate the final word of thank you to the reader, in general, and cordially invite every single one of you to close the feedback loop. Please reach out to me with questions, comments, and stimulating thoughts. Feedback is highly appreciated.

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