## Acknowledgements

We are all on earth to help others. What I can't figure out is what the others are here for.

Joke by W. H. Auden.<sup>1</sup>

I'm not sure how I feel about a PhD that lasted three years; I could have done another one! I won't lie, it was painful (and often is) but always for the wrong reasons: alienation, competition, engineers, Paris (this heaven and hell), war; you name it! Yet, I can't but owe my existence to a certain set of people and institutions that helped me reside even temporarily into the imaginary. Don't be fooled: humans are flawed! However, what makes them unique is their mean and their variance [Sapolsky, 2018]. Below, I mine the mean plus the variance.

Administrative. Let's start with the people who devote their time supporting other people bring abstract ideas into papers. Cooks of our *cantine* and employees at our cafeteria, nurturing us with warm meals and (occasionally) smiles. Isabelle and Stephanie, for all their administrative support to my multiple *missions*. My jury members: Jean Ponce, Josef Sivic, Hadar Averbuch-Elor, for inspiring my research, committing their time and providing thoughtful comments to help me reinforce this (vicious) circulation of intelligence. To Karteek Alahari and Marie-Pierre Beal for being in my monitoring committee and spending time making sure that my thesis was on the right track.

**Lab.** "**Parisians**": Sonat for being caring; Syrine for art-house movies and nerdy papers; Nicolas D. for sharing publications, asking questions, and bringing water; David for being there equally for his colleagues as for his papers; Renauld for always greeting me with a smile; Loic for being egalitarian; Vincent for being exemplary of how to be successful without being toxic, in academia; Antoine for being kind and motivating; Nermin for accepting and for listening; Robin for following your

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Recited by Marvin Minsky in "How To Solve All The Problems In The World" at *ideaCity03*.

*vocation*; Romain for classy soirées; Elliot for (sometimes) being an otter; my office mates Nguyen, Shiyao for baring and eating with me; Tom for being the best travel buddy during our ten-day voyage in the new world. "**BAIRs**": To Yutong for being the spirit of a cat but "scaled the hell up!"; Yossi for sparse disentanglement; Assaf for the idempotency of research; Aleks for his friendship; Grace for her aid in data, code and insights; and to so many more!

**World: Friends.** To the friends I made along the way. Those that I don't see as often as they deserve: Diego and Alejandro for writers' obsession and witty sarcasm; Betsy for her brain; Emily for her intelligence (and care); Veronica for her worlds; Jenn for semantic radiation; Sonia for AI mysticism; Tyler F. for his moustache occluded smile; Tyler B. for hope in higher institutions; Segolene for sparks and fireworks; Ludwig for constantly turning life into a play; Georgy for god and robots; and so many more, who made my story of immigration feel like an oddyssey. To closer ones: Nikos for immeasurable support and for being human; Armin for nurture and for being the sweetest output of a razor; Marilena for making the unconsious-conscious and stability; Bessy for queer and lots of laughs; Simon for freedom and lots of laughs; to Monse for being a form of Gaia.

Athens: Friends and Mentors. My friends from Athens: Manos for the importance of intellectual loitering and micro-theories; Gregoris for the seriousness of philosophy and being my first advisor; Kosmas for net-utopia irl; Peppa for the art of pulling strings; Buzzy for good bad taste; Alexandra for love; Anastasia for care; Chrysa for honesty in coolness (and /ei/); Diana for being brave; Yorgos for the passion to exist. Elders: Marc for being cool a.f.; Christina for being competent a.f.; my cousin Themis for transforming hardship into wisdom (a smile at a time); my godfather Tasos, for the love of nature (as in science) and for the gift of education; Christos for teaching me grace; Irkos for offering me unbinded books; Ilan for a singularity of inspiration.

**PhD Collaborators and Mentors.** To Alyosha for so generously gifting me his company, and supporting me as a flâneur in a goal-oriented community; to Benjamin, and the Antikythera cohort (Michelle, Christina, Connor, Garry, Winnie, Philip, Ivar, Iulia, Cezar, Alasdair, Thomas, and ofc. Nicolai) for giving me an opportunity to be myself and introducing me to so many addictive terms and concepts. My closest collaborators: Matenia, for being the biggest supporter and motivator of my work, an oracular head reconnecting me with the classics; Nicolas G., Julien, and Hyolim for navigating my storm of ideas and being always kind; Shiry for her commitment in my thesis, making me feel as part of her extended family, and for wanting to build a Japanese garden inside a city; most importantly, to Mathieu without whom this PhD would have neither started nor ended, spending an extensive amount of time, providing practical support in very diverse instances and occasions. Among all, I thank him for teaching me how to be a sculptor.

**Most of all,** to my mother Eleni, who was always there for me as her highest priority and for teaching me unconditional love, and to my father Panagiotis who always made sure that everything works, as best as possible. To my grandparents and our extended family who nurtured as their pride and legacy: love, generosity and respect. To my godcats: Morisson, Yoko, and Hercules for being /ei/.