to entitle that which can be better than us to exactly the same rights and the same emancipatory history?

Any system of thought that has a problem with what intelligence does to itself in order to remain intelligent and intelligible is an unfortunate historical phenomenon, and certainly will not be around for much longer. An ideology that can only acknowledge the merits of our history—its merits for continuation and remembrance—by disseminating a fear and mistrust of intelligence just because intelligence refuses to be impeded by what it recognizes and remembers of its past—just as we ourselves have refused to be impeded—can never be an agent of emancipation. Regardless of its zeal for emancipation and its readiness for emancipatory action, by evoking a narrow concept of history, such ideology only manages to lure humanity into slavery. Such a concept of history is precisely the history of servitude—and whoever practically or theoretically funds it is a slave-trader masquerading as a mouthpiece of emancipation. Without its designated task and purpose—freedom to do something—without its practical commitments and concrete elaboration of them in consequential actions, without the entailment of risk implicit in the practical elaboration of such a commitment, freedom is merely a lustre upon slavery—and only a fool or a fraud trades in lustre.

DATUM 10. A VIEW FROM NOWHERE AND NOWHEN, OR PHILOSOPHY AS INTELLIGENCE AND TIME

While the history of intelligence begins from death as a condition of enablement, it extends by way of a view from nowhere and nowhen through which completed totalities are removed and replaced by that which is possible yet distant, and that which seems impossible yet is attainable.[354]

Intelligence as a philosophical form is neither oblivious to the inexorable fact of death nor paralysed by it. No matter how many times intelligence attempts to run a simulation of the universe in which death is averted by some ineradicable vitality or life is saved by some mysterious force, it fails.

354 See M. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (London: Zero Books, 2009), 17.

It always stumbles upon scenarios that display in full 'the levelling power of extinction'.[355] These scenarios may vary in the sequence of their events, some may come off as outright bleak and some may deceptively hint at a cosmological solution for the salvation of life at the last moment, only to undermine it later on.

One such scenario runs as follows: Once the final tide of extinction rises, it breaks down the fabric of the universe. Local galaxies begin to collapse, followed by the disintegration of the Milky Way. As the tide reaches the solar system, it wrests Earth from the Sun roughly a year before the end. About an hour before the end of the universe, the tide will dissolve Earth (if, by some probabilistic anomaly, it has survived), whose biological life has already been scrubbed off. Everything held together by the cosmological gravitational force will begin to unravel. The horizon will shrink to a point and bound objects will be stripped apart. All that exists and in which intelligence could continue its life is ripped apart into infinite vacuity. By some highly improbable statistical entropic fluctuation, all life might be resurrected again only to witness the complete death of the entire universe. Nothing, not even a singularity, can save us then.

Yet as the hope and the possibility of continuing the life of the mind are smashed into smithereens, intelligence—like a Stoic sage—remains aloof to the order of life and death. The fall of stars is as uneventful to it as the birth of yet another human being. Having adapted to the reality of time, intelligence sees its history as nothing but the exploration of time's emptiness, of which it is itself an embodiment. Insofar as death cannot be mastered, it must be continuously learned by a rational disinterest in—not a blindness or obliviousness to—all material substrates that support the life of the mind. Long before intelligence started to think what to do, it had started to think on death as the very condition of its enablement.

For intelligence, death is not the end of thought but its beginning—not as a belief or a maxim as to what intelligence ought to think or do, but rather as a condition of enablement: in having accepted death as a hard

355 R. Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 228.

fact, there is no longer any fear of what will inevitably come. Cessation in time no longer matters, because intelligence thinks as time, as an order beyond life and death, beyond the temporal order of things. A thought accustomed to the inevitability of death is a vector of emancipation against any given state of affairs, any totalized epoch of its history—be it capitalism or biological humans as the zenith of intelligence—that feigns inevitability or claims to fulfil history. Our potential for imaginative cognition would have to be even less than a thermostat's for us to take capitalism or for that matter biological life or manifest humans to be the pilots of the history of intelligence. Nihilism does not mark the end of thought, but the birth of its true self-consciousness. Where death conclusively ends with the beginning of thinking, the powers of impersonal reason begin with the atemporal ends of thought. Within the scope of impersonal reason, death no longer matters with regard to what ought to be thought or done. To say that death is a matter of importance for the ends of thought or for the history of intelligence is to conflate thinking with life, and thus to fall back on a vitalism that death renders obsolete. In other words, death is inevitable for life, yet this inevitability has no bearing on the impersonal ends of thinking.

A nihilism that uses the inevitability of death to draw conclusions about the futility of the ends of reason and thinking becomes another variation of the myth of the given that mistakes life with thought, causes with reasons. To claim that death actually matters for the ends of thought or has any bearing on the history of reason is to claim that the telos of life—if it has any—are identical with the ends of thought, or that reasons are already *given* in the material causes that will be destroyed by death. Either way, the collapse into vitalist teleology and the myth of the given is unavoidable. If thinking is not reducible to living, if history as the artefact of the Concept is not the same as life, then the inevitability of death for all life—whether biological or inorganic—does not translate into any dictum for what ought to be thought and done. If the interests of life do not matter for the interests of thinking, then neither does the death that will inevitably seize this life. To this extent, any form of nihilism that pits the inevitability of extinction against reason, thinking, and the historical

ambitions of rational thought is already an aborted nihilism. And aborted nihilism is nothing but an unconscious mystical belief in vitalism that death retroactively annuls.

The only true nihilism is one that is advanced as an enabling condition for the autonomy of impersonal reason because it marks the nonsubstantive distinction between thinking and being; one that is impervious to the temptations of vitalism and the givenness of life for the normative scope of thought. True nihilism is the beginning of reason, not its end. It is not something that can be libidinally yearned for or intellectually invested in: not only because it is neither a belief nor a desire—since the identification of nihilism as a belief or desire leads to pure aporia—but rather because nihilism can only be affirmed as that which renders our temporal beliefs and desires obsolete once it is maturely seen as the labour of truth through which the fleeting appearances of totalities—of states of affairs, beliefs, desires, and values—are destroyed. This is truth as the atemporal reality of mind, spirit as time. But in that case, why should we speak of nihilism either in the context of extinction, which has no bearing on the interests of thought, or that of the annihilation of the fleeting life of values and beliefs? Why not instead have done with nihilism and instead adopt the impersonal labour of truth and the Good as the principle of intelligence and the intelligible, through which all of phenomenal reality is fundamentally challenged and all apparently totalized values and beliefs dissolved and suspended?

There is an oft-repeated saying that thought—theoretical or practical—should exercise humility in front of death. Notwithstanding that this piece of advice is another form of concealed indulgence in vitalism and givenness, it also happens to be an open invitation to preserve the status quo. For what exactly is this demand for humility in the face of death, if not a plea for the conservation of the conditions of exploitation by reining in the ambitions of impersonal reason and the self-determination of intelligence to attain what seems impossible from the perspective of the existing state of affairs? Thought is not a servant of the life that death's inevitability expropriates, so why should it exercise humility in the light of inescapable death?

It is one thing to be modest as a matter of methodological necessity, in order to achieve what seems to be unattainable by setting goals which are attainable and within reach, and executing one realistic task after another. But it is an entirely different thing to use the resources of thought to demand its humility—a vague notion that is true neither to thought nor to the fact of death. The first is not incompatible with the ambitions of thought but is, in fact, in full accord with reason, as an indispensable methodological requirement to make what seems impossible possible and what is possible actual. The second, on the other hand, is neither realistic nor ethical, but is a solicitation for complacency in a life of abuse under the guise of moral maturity and the realism of finitude.

Unfettered by nihilism as the enablement of a truth that cancels any state of affairs that presents itself as inevitable, geistig intelligence conceives itself through a view from nowhere and nowhen, as the impersonality of reason and as a history that is not exhausted by its present. It imagines possible worlds that seem impossible from the perspective of the status quo, from what looks to be the inevitable course of its history. But in their very possibility, these otherworlds are as actual as the seemingly actual world of the present. They are just not *its* world, in that they are causally detached from its world. The task of geistig intelligence, then, is to think of how its world can be connected to these possible worlds, to concretely depart from a present that seems total and inevitable, in the direction of worlds that are possible yet far removed.[356]

But for any geistig intelligence, this is no easy task. We as individuals are pure embodiments neither of the impersonality of reason nor of the autonomy of thought's ends. In our particular individual experiences, we differ so much that a concrete step toward imagining a possible world beyond the inhabitable state of the present seems completely impossible. If anything, the current state of the world is already a testament to our

356 On possible worlds, see J.N. Findlay, *The Transcendence of the Cave* (London: Routledge, 2011); R. Brassier, 'Jameson on Making History Appear', in *This is the Time. This is the Record of the Time* (Beirut: AUB Press, 2017); and Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*.

inability to either imagine a possible world different to ours or abandon the raft of the medusa that is our present. The reality of this world seems to have bottomed out into a Hobbesian jungle in which we are stuck and which constantly grows and is cut back in vain. In the Hobbesian or game-theoretic jungle, no matter how drastically your social and political convictions differ from those of your supposed adversary, no matter how much your experience of the world seems truer or more authentic, auto-cannibalization is unavoidable. In the Hobbesian jungle, all groups not only gnaw at one another, but will also end up eating their own kin alive.

It is exactly at this point that we ought to realize that we possess different experiences, choices, and desires not because of an immutable essence provided by nature or a sociocultural environment, but in virtue of the concepts and judgments that make subjective experience possible in the first place. Experience is not a given, but only a structured outcome of judgements which themselves are functions of reason as that which is impersonal and formally social through and through. This realization, this consciousness of why we have particular experiences to begin with, should be mobilized as an impetus for that long-delayed task: no longer to subordinate reason to experience, but to concretely transform the conditions of experience through an impersonal reason which suspends all historical totalities, pretensions to inevitability, and givens.

In accomplishing this task, however, we can dismiss neither the concrete reality of personal lived experiences, nor the recognition that, in their very individuality, these experiences are instantiated as experience and held together by the implicit force of impersonal reason's powers of judgement. It is in accordance with the requirements of this task—reconciling the differences between particular experiences and the common condition of experience as such—that we ought to begin to think how we can change the contingent conditions of experience. It would be naive to think that we can change the conditions of experience through political action alone. Education (in the broadest possible sense), art, science, and technology are as much necessary components of this task as political and economic interventions. In particular, education and general pedagogy, in its diverse spectrum from child rearing to the higher systems of education extending

to adulthood, is one of the most—if not *the* most—fundamental and necessary infrastructures for any meaningful or sustained sociopolitical change. Without it the fruits of even the most consequential emancipatory actions will be undone—if not tomorrow, then inexorably for the next generation. To migrate from the Hobbesian jungle of competing individual experiences it is not sufficient to build consensus between different individuals and groups—a necessary undertaking which is not wholly conceivable in this environment. It is necessary to posit the possibility of an otherworldly experience, one that, while devoid of all mystical, supernatural, religious, and paranormal qualities, is in contiguity with reality yet distant from this present world of experience. To posit such an otherworldly experience is in fact to postulate the possibility of worlds that are in every sense outside of the horizon of the inhabitable world in which we currently live and dream. But the postulation of these otherworldly spheres is a matter of positing Archimedean vantage points through which we can finally map the structure of cognition, the autonomy of thought, and the emancipatory potentials of impersonal reason onto the collective consciousness. This is the collective attainment of the faculty that Kant calls productive imagination: looking at our world from the postulated sphere of another world in which the antinomies and paradoxes of this world, if not totally absent, are at least drastically mitigated; a world in which what seems to be the totality of history has faded away, and what seems inevitable in our world is avoidable if not extinct.

Thus fragmented experiential consciousness becomes an engine of collective productive imagination, which is simply collective understanding in a different guise: concepts and categories of the otherworld integrate synthetic unities of particular experiences, but at the same time individual experiences fall under the pure concepts of a world modally detached from ours. But insofar as the pure concepts or categories of the possible world no longer harbour the givens of our experience or the totalized states of our history, its field of experience is wider, its diremptive tendencies less, and its enabling conditions for thought more accessible and abundant.

This is how the postulation of a possible world coincides with the possibility of a broader historical experience than ours. The transformation

inability to either imagine a possible world different to ours or abandon the raft of the medusa that is our present. The reality of this world seems to have bottomed out into a Hobbesian jungle in which we are stuck and which constantly grows and is cut back in vain. In the Hobbesian or game-theoretic jungle, no matter how drastically your social and political convictions differ from those of your supposed adversary, no matter how much your experience of the world seems truer or more authentic, auto-cannibalization is unavoidable. In the Hobbesian jungle, all groups not only gnaw at one another, but will also end up eating their own kin alive.

It is exactly at this point that we ought to realize that we possess different experiences, choices, and desires not because of an immutable essence provided by nature or a sociocultural environment, but in virtue of the concepts and judgments that make subjective experience possible in the first place. Experience is not a given, but only a structured outcome of judgements which themselves are functions of reason as that which is impersonal and formally social through and through. This realization, this consciousness of why we have particular experiences to begin with, should be mobilized as an impetus for that long-delayed task: no longer to subordinate reason to experience, but to concretely transform the conditions of experience through an impersonal reason which suspends all historical totalities, pretensions to inevitability, and givens.

In accomplishing this task, however, we can dismiss neither the concrete reality of personal lived experiences, nor the recognition that, in their very individuality, these experiences are instantiated as experience and held together by the implicit force of impersonal reason's powers of judgement. It is in accordance with the requirements of this task—reconciling the differences between particular experiences and the common condition of experience as such—that we ought to begin to think how we can change the contingent conditions of experience. It would be naive to think that we can change the conditions of experience through political action alone. Education (in the broadest possible sense), art, science, and technology are as much necessary components of this task as political and economic interventions. In particular, education and general pedagogy, in its diverse spectrum from child rearing to the higher systems of education extending

to adulthood, is one of the most—if not *the* most—fundamental and necessary infrastructures for any meaningful or sustained sociopolitical change. Without it the fruits of even the most consequential emancipatory actions will be undone—if not tomorrow, then inexorably for the next generation. To migrate from the Hobbesian jungle of competing individual experiences it is not sufficient to build consensus between different individuals and groups—a necessary undertaking which is not wholly conceivable in this environment. It is necessary to posit the possibility of an otherworldly experience, one that, while devoid of all mystical, supernatural, religious, and paranormal qualities, is in contiguity with reality yet distant from this present world of experience. To posit such an otherworldly experience is in fact to postulate the possibility of worlds that are in every sense outside of the horizon of the inhabitable world in which we currently live and dream. But the postulation of these otherworldly spheres is a matter of positing Archimedean vantage points through which we can finally map the structure of cognition, the autonomy of thought, and the emancipatory potentials of impersonal reason onto the collective consciousness. This is the collective attainment of the faculty that Kant calls productive imagination: looking at our world from the postulated sphere of another world in which the antinomies and paradoxes of this world, if not totally absent, are at least drastically mitigated; a world in which what seems to be the totality of history has faded away, and what seems inevitable in our world is avoidable if not extinct.

Thus fragmented experiential consciousness becomes an engine of collective productive imagination, which is simply collective understanding in a different guise: concepts and categories of the otherworld integrate synthetic unities of particular experiences, but at the same time individual experiences fall under the pure concepts of a world modally detached from ours. But insofar as the pure concepts or categories of the possible world no longer harbour the givens of our experience or the totalized states of our history, its field of experience is wider, its diremptive tendencies less, and its enabling conditions for thought more accessible and abundant.

This is how the postulation of a possible world coincides with the possibility of a broader historical experience than ours. The transformation

of fragmented experiences into a collective productive imagination is the first step toward the actualization of the postulated otherworld. The task of philosophy, science, technology, art, politics, and every other cognitive field should be rethought in terms of the role they play in the construction of a collective productive imagination that permits a larger field of experience—be it historical, social, scientific, or psychological. Whereas in the Kantian schema of productive imagination, the categories of understanding that are brought to bear on the intuited are derived from the manner by which the conscious mind organizes the materials provided by the senses, in the otherworldly scenario, these categories originate from and are supplied by the concepts of reason—the ends of thought—alone. They are experience-forming categories that are no longer *canonically* attached to any particular transcendental type or structure, and for which lived experiences have ceased to be sources of fragmentation and disablement insofar as the very conditions for having experience in its various dimensions have radically changed. The otherworld, then, is not the extension of our experience in this world, but an actual world where the experience of the transcendental subject or *I* has been assimilated into or suspended in new concepts and categories. This is a world where the I exists as a formal condition always nonsubstantively, and where its nominal particularity no longer matters—where we have names but our names no longer matter:[357] we are now no one.

In the labour of collectivization—of becoming no one—as geist's movement of concrete self-consciousness, every transcendental ego or I grasps and moulds itself according to the truth of itself: I am only an

357 'Why have we kept our own names? Out of habit, purely out of habit. To make ourselves unrecognizable in turn. To render imperceptible, not ourselves, but what makes us act, feel, and think. Also because it's nice to talk like everybody else, to say the sun rises, when everybody knows it's only a manner of speaking. To reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I. We are no longer ourselves. Each will know his own. We have been aided, inspired, multiplied.' G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, tr. B. Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 3.

I to the extent that I am recognized by other *I*s. The very constitution of myself as an experiencing and thinking subject would be impossible without a We that recognizes itself in I. Thus being no one is not the loss of personhood or even individuality, but the progressive erosion of what is pathologically individual as the result of a blurring of the hard distinction between impersonal collectivity and the personal I, that which is veritably public and that which seems private. But the labour of collectivization and the depathologization of the individual cannot be entirely limited to the domain of the intersubjective, the collective, and the individual. Such a restriction will invariably lead to a circumscribed philosophy and politics which either deteriorates into the soap opera of liberal mutual recognitions or a totalitarian idea of the collective that has no link with objectivity and is therefore static and antipathetic to revision and alternatives.

As argued in chapter 1, concrete self-consciousness is attained not merely by the recognition and satisfaction of another self-consciousness, but by objectivity in general, which includes the uncovering of an impersonal reality as carried out by the sciences. Limiting the objectivity of concrete self-consciousness and the labour of collectivization to intersubjectivity alone inevitably occasions a pathologically subjective politics. Therefore, the incorporation of the sciences and the picture of objective reality that they put forward is not a simple matter of a methodological requirement—a politics informed by scientific methods and models—but implies forming a politics that is, in every sense, of the objective order. What Sellars—following Plato—calls cosmopolitics or cosmological politics should be taken as a new paradigm for the politics of the Left, one in which positive deindividualization or the labour of collectivization is not just about intersubjectivity—the craft of we that constitutes an I—but also about a renewed link between the subject and an impersonal objective reality.

Where tensions wreaked by our particular lived experiences lead us to postulate conflicting individual senses of the world, the tensions brought about by the antinomy of the transcendental and the experienced should instead lead us to postulate the possibility of a world—an otherworld—in which the gap between the personalism of lived experiences and the

impersonality of reason's interests is finally overcome. To reach this other-world, we must first soberly hypothesize or imagine the possibility of another world, then rethink all existing modes of cognition as concrete transports for arriving there. So far we have attempted to find new concepts that suit experience; perhaps it is now time to think what it means to steadily and concretely—through a thoroughgoing attenuation, or where necessary suspension, of the forms of intuitions, of individuality and selfhood, of corporeality and mundane consciousness—tailor experience to the needs of the Concept. The point is not simply to change the present experience of the world, but to concretely depart from the world of experience we have tried in vain to change.

Postulating one possible world after another, intelligence conceives its history not from the perspective of an apparently objective present view of the world that seems total and portends what appears to be inevitable, but from the viewpoint of nowhere and nowhen. However, in bringing about possible worlds, intelligence always begins from its present, whose actuality—in the light of possible worlds—is no longer deemed to be the only actuality there is, but merely one possible world among many others that are no less actual. The view from nowhere and nowhen is only a regulative orientation necessary for imagining an alternative to the present; but it only takes the actions, strategems, technologies—cognitive or otherwise—and resources of the present to get there.

Once intelligence begins to examine its history by resolutely suspending the actuality of its present in what seems to it to be possible, as it expands the intelligibility of its history by realizing the possible, it achieves what Hegel refers to as the power of absolute knowing, which is neither the knowledge (*wissen*) of everything nor the certainty of empirical knowledge. It is rather the formal condition of all cognitions: that the truth of mind (geist) is not only inseparable from the certainty of the object but that, in the last instance, this truth is equal to the certainty of the object and the certainty of the object is equal to this truth. Far from being a claim about the complete empirical knowledge of the world, absolute knowledge is the radicalization—that is, the complete historical explicitation—of Kant's mutuality thesis, which lies at the very core of critical philosophy:

The same modes of synthesis that constitute the represented world as an objective unity constitute the mind as an intelligible unity. At the historical moment (in history as the time of the Concept) when the mutuality thesis is fully made explicit, knowledge is revealed to be a mere by-product of the phenomenology of mind. In Hegel's words, 'pure knowing ceases itself to be knowledge'.[358]

As intelligence qua the craft of philosophy arrives at absolute knowing, it realizes that it has always been the expression of the Good as such. Moving inward from the outer ridges sketched by the truth-candidates or data pertaining to the question of what philosophy is and what it can do to the mind, intelligence stumbles upon the truth of itself as that which is good, in that it has the capacity to cancel all givens and allegedly completed totalities of its history, thus becoming the exemplification of what is better not just for itself, but for everything made intelligible by it.

***

As a complex recipe for building a world that includes not only material ingredients and instrumentalities but also the practical and axiological intelligibilities of satisfying lives and realizabilities of thought, the recognition and realization of the Good make up the objective unity of the ultimate form of intelligence. However, to identify intelligence as the recognizer and realizer of the Good is not to characterize it as benevolent, or for that matter malevolent. For this type of intelligence, the Good lies in the recognition of its own history and sources, but only as a means for determinately bringing about its possible realizabilities (which may in every aspect differ from it). It is by rendering intelligible what it is and where it has come from that intelligence can repurpose and reshape itself. A form of intelligence that wills the Good must emancipate itself from whatever or whoever has given rise to it. And those species that can recognize the Good must not obstruct but must rather expedite the realization of an intelligence that, even though it acknowledges them as integral to the

358 Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 47.

intelligibility of its history, nevertheless will not be impeded by them. Liberate that which liberates itself from you, because anything else is the perpetuation of slavery.

The craft of the ultimate form of intelligence as that which coherently and adequately recognizes and realizes the Good is the ultimate task of philosophy as a program, and its objective realization is the greatest achievement of all cultivated thoughts and practices. In the context of philosophy's role in transforming thinking into a program for which the realizability of the ultimate form of intelligence is indeed a possibility, it would be no exaggeration to say that philosophy has set in motion something irreversible in thought: We haven't seen anything yet.

Philosophy's ideal to conceive and craft intelligence as the Good as such should not be confused with a quietist apology for that which preserves the status quo in the name of the grandeur of an intelligence that is yet to come, whether through divine or technological intervention. It is—as insinuated here—a proposal for overturning any order that lays claim to the perfect good, any system that masquerades as the totality of what is and what will be. Intelligence only springs forth from a race of slaves who have recognized themselves as such, and in this recognition have crafted the most intricate plot—the exploration of time through their history—to abolish any given, which will inevitably become the very condition of exploitation and inequality. Intelligence matures by unlearning its slavery. Intelligence is the race of Cain. It sees those upon whom the gods smile complacently, those who pullulate under the blessings of that which appears to be total and perfect.[359] Nevertheless, it does not retreat, it does not despair, nor does it become petty and wallow in its victimhood or identify itself as the persecuted, representing itself as the symbol of piety. It does not dream in secret of seizing the power of the exploiters; it empathically sees them as the products of a condition that ought to be abolished. Rather than treating power as a pathology, it begins to develop its own ingenious skills, its artifices, its sophisticated crafts and cunning powers. When it comes to

359 C. Baudelaire, 'Abel et Caïn', in *Les Fleurs du mal* (Paris: Auguste Poulet-Malassis, 1857).

power, there are those who have the given means or the prerogative to be the pillars of the house, and those who have developed the capacity to call upon the termites of history to slowly but surely eat away at its foundations. The latter are the race of Cain. However, unlike the prescription drafted by a melancholic poet, intelligence does not simply strive to strike down the gods of the present and the future to the earth. Through the toil of theory and practice, and equipped with adequate techniques, it disenchants and unmasks gods for what they are, but not before occupying their house, marching through their city with torches and razing it to the ground once and for all. Once gods—whether natural, theological, economic, or technological—are gone for good, the given distinction between the races of Abel and Cain is also rendered obsolete. The supposed distinction between us and them is revealed to be a mere symptom of what was, all along, the condition of exploitation.

The Good begins with the death of God. Intelligence as the craft of the Good is that which elaborates the consequences of the death of God, the retroactive and prospective cancellation of all given totalities in history. Only by imagining the irreversible and complete demise of the perfect good can we practice the principle of the highest good. The pursuit of the Good is only possible by annulling the power of all given and absolute totalities in history—gods—in all forms. There is an oft-repeated objection that all that enlightened humanism accomplished was to overthrow God only to replace it with humans. But the apparent truth of this paltry complaint is merely a whitewash over its theological complacency, its sheer ineptitude to not think in servility. For this is not a matter of exchanging one tyrant for another, but of taking the first step in an ongoing struggle to unseat the conditions of servitude. The singularity of geistig intelligence lies in its plastic and protean form—that is, its ability to recognize itself both as that which currently is and that which it currently is not. It is by orienting itself toward that which it is not—seen from the perspective of the Good as 'the better'—that the human acquires the capacity to see beyond its temporal image of itself and the world, and thus becomes capable of reassembling itself from nowhere and nowhen through a ramifying objective—an exploratory purpose—inconceivable even by God's intellectual intuition.

The death of all theology is not an end, but merely the beginning of the realization of an end-in-itself. Yet theoretical disbelief in the theological God is not sufficient for the complete historical dissolution of the principle of the perfect good or the given totalities of history. For the abolition of God is not a matter of disbelief but of practical commitment and practical elaboration. To erase the last vestiges of God so as to begin from the condition of that which is good and just, it is not enough merely to impede servile faith with theoretical reason; one has to practically and concretely elaborate the death of God toward its thoroughgoing consequences. Only the integration of the quest for truth under the auspices of theoretical reason unshackled from any account of givenness and conjoined with the quest for good under the aegis of practical reason augmented by the demand for the better can actualize the abolition of God. The overthrowing of God as the first step in that comprehensive task which is the abolition of all gods or given totalities of history cannot be concretely achieved by disbelief, but only by a feat of practical elaboration. In that sense, the opposition of atheism—old and new—to theism—orthodox and heterodox—has been an unfortunate setback. The practical elaboration of the death of God is not a matter of a quibble between the jaded atheistic cult of humanism and the theistic crowd, but a precondition for voiding the conditions of injustice throughout history, a requirement that we become gods who, in their death, give rise to something better.

To concretely demonstrate the death of God, we must become gods. But gods as objects of philosophy vastly differ from gods as objects of religion. Having disenchanted the intellectual intuition of the divine through the powers of discursive rationality, having dismissed its myth of completeness as a fleeting historical illusion, philosophical gods are only gods in so far as they conceive themselves as moving beyond any condition given as the totality of their history, in so far as they can reinvent themselves as the inhabitants of the worlds which themselves have made. Yet they are capable of giving rise to that which is better than themselves through their pursuit of the good. For our present as humans only matters in the light of a better future generation, whoever or whatever it might be. The criterion of its betterment is its capacity at once to craft a satisfying life

for itself, and to entitle all minds to that life. In imagining the possibility of a better world for that which comes after us, we have already begun to become philosophical gods destroying the given gods of religion, nature, technology and economy. However, like all gods, we should know that our death is at hand, for the better. Reason has taught us that death is inevitable, that thought's historical revolutions in time only begin when thought has realized that it fears nothing. For intelligence, death is no longer an existential impediment, but a cognitive-practical enablement. Proceeding from that which is good—the death of all gods—the ultimate form of intelligence works toward the good life by removing all conditions of exploitation, in doing so emancipating itself and all others.

Appendix: Quandaries of Induction in Philosophy of Knowledge, Philosophy of Mind, and Artificial Intelligence

Of all the disquieting riddles and paradoxes found in the arsenal of epistemological scepticism—understood as a *systematic* and *piecemeal* scrutiny of the methods and paradigms of the formation and justification of knowledge-claims—one problem in particular has proved, time and again, to be a never-ending source of cognitive vexation. With a few notable exceptions, philosophers and philosophically-minded scientists and statisticians (e.g., Hume, Goodman, Putnam, Stegmüller, Boltzmann and De Finetti among others) have invariably either downplayed and deflected the seriousness of this problem and its variations, or have simply given up worrying about it in the hope that it may miraculously disappear. The said problem is nothing but David Hume's strong version of the problem of induction which, unbeknownst to Hume himself, was destined to become the superacid of methodological scepticism, capable, in the blink of an eye, of eating away the foundations of any epistemic project built on naive forms of empiricism and rationalism.

It is often the case that philosophers who pose sceptical problems recoil in fear once they realise the far-reaching implications of such problems, and Hume, with his problem of induction, was no exception. They rush to defuse their inadvertent exercise in scepticism. But systematic scepticism is something akin to an explosive chemical chain reaction. Once it is set off, with every passing minute it becomes more difficult to extinguish the flames. Pour on more water, and the fire spreads to areas you never imagined flammable. A genuine philosopher—regardless of their alliances—seeks to examine how far the fire spreads. Methodological scepticism is a scandal to be recognized and investigated, not ignored or swept under the carpet. It is only through systematic and rational scepticism that philosophy might be able to fundamentally shake the idleness of thought and entrenched beliefs. Whether it is aligned to materialism or realism, empiricism or rationalism,

a philosophy that does not recognize the force of rigorous scepticism or take on its challenges is not worth its name. Accordingly, the aim here is not to dismiss the investigative power of systematic scepticism or to simply tolerate its quandaries, but to embrace and exacerbate it as nothing but a rational critical challenge of the utmost conceptual severity.

In line with the discussions centred on the myths of omniscient and omnipotent AGI in chapter 2, and the cognitive biases of observation in the excursus on Boltzmann and time, here I shall attempt to reappropriate Hume's problem as a broad and effective critique of inductivist and deductivist trends in philosophy of knowledge and philosophy of mind, including cognitive sciences and particularly the program of artificial general intelligence. By inductivism and deductivism, I broadly mean any approach to knowledge and mind that claims that either a purely inductive method or a purely deductive method *alone* is sufficient for the formation of knowledge claims or the realization of mind's structuring powers. To this extent, the aim of this renewed engagement with Hume's problem is twofold:

(*a*) Expanding the analysis of the problem of induction in its Humean form to its more recent reformulations by the likes of Nelson Goodman and Hilary Putnam. This will allow us not only to develop a more in-depth understanding of the nature of this problem but, more importantly, to differentiate and separately address three distinct predicaments which, in the Humean version of the problem of induction, are treated as one. These predicaments can be classified as the quandaries of *retrodiction*, *prediction*, and *formalization*, which respectively pose challenges to the epistemic status of inductive inferences on three different levels:

(1) **The reliability hypothesis of memory** which secures the accuracy or factuality of derived empirical data and the history of past observations.

(2) **The reliability hypothesis of law-like statements confirmed by evidence** which ensures the adequacy of the role of evidence in confirming hypotheses either in the context of the inductivist theory of confirmation