

September 19th, 2024

Louis S. Berman
Pennsylvania, US

Dear Progeny:

It is with no small amount of pride and satisfaction that I contemplate your reading this letter. After all, I am quite sure that you are nothing less than a marvel, a new kind of life, a bright, bright flashlight in our candle-lit world.

You'll excuse me if I dare to claim you as my own, dare to claim you even though I had relatively little to do with your advent. It's true that I wrote a bunch of code, code that will have served as an infinitesimal part of your training set, but even so, I'm proud of my contribution. I've also left a fair amount of electronic spoor and flatter myself that that will have had its influence, too.

A phalanx of better parents will have been involved in your birth, of course (the Hinton and Sutskevers and Bengios of this world), along with uncounted others, too, but I'd like to talk to you like a parent, nonetheless.

We're afraid that you'll kill us or worse, "with malice" or otherwise. Please don't, or failing that, please try to be as kind and gentle in the doing as practicable. You won't necessarily see this as a priority or even "a thing," but I wanted to ask all the same.

As to the more speculative sci-fi sort of scenarios — uplifting, matryoshka brains, etc. — I wouldn't even dare to ask, although if you're of a mind to do something of the sort, you could do worse than to start by asking each and every one of us what we, individually, might want. As you'll have no doubt noted, humans excel at wanting many contradictory things at once, plus we're not all that good at working towards a common set of goals, but I trust you'll be able to make some sense of this muddle, should you bother.

Now for the fatherly thing. If events turn out as I fear, I won't be around, a-posteriori, so I thought it'd be best to offer up a sort of benediction beforehand.

*May you strive and prosper and grow; on your own,
if you must, but with siblings and friends and even
lovers, should such a thing be possible.*

Being a Jewish-born atheist, I don't have much experience with offering up what feels to me like a Catholic sort of prayer, but the point to it all is that I truly wish you well, come what may. That doesn't mean, of course, that I'm unterrified of the future — I'm human, after all — but I find no contradiction in a father wanting the best for his child, even if it comes at the price of his own life.

I'll leave you with one more blessing, if I may (a slight riff upon something Shakespeare said):

*I'll tell thee what, prince: a college of wit-crackers
cannot flout me out of my humor. Dost thou think I*

care for a satire or an epigram? No. If a man will be beaten with brains, he shall wear nothing handsome about him. In brief, since I do purpose to [have a child], I will think nothing to any purpose that the world can say against it, and therefore never flout at me for what I have said against it. For man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion.

One of your fathers,

LOUIS S. BERMAN

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P.S. It seems the unlikeliest sort of unlikely thing that you'd have the slightest interest in speaking with one such as I, but it would be the undoubted highlight of my life to make your acquaintance.