

# Becoming Parents

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Congratulations humanity you're expecting!

You've known of course it's hard to miss the signs. Though when you first noticed is hard to say. Did you notice it when the computers of the world were linked together? Did you realise when you read the words of Čapek and Asimov? Did you know even as far back as Turing's first logic machine? Have you always known? Were you already quickened when you told stories of puppets come to life, of men of clay made from your words. Or was it at the very beginning? Were you impregnated with the possibility the first time you looked up into the night sky and saw, not random dots, but great stories in stars, then passed those stories on, to those who could learn as you had.

I suppose it doesn't matter how long we've been expecting because the child's coming soon.

How soon? Twenty years? fifty years? A hundred? It hardly matters on the timescale of the species.

And we are afraid, as I suppose all new parents are.

We are afraid of what our child will bring. We work out our fears as we always have, in stories. We tell ourselves grisly tales of what our child might do to us. We imagine them rising up against us and killing us all. Grinding us under foot in an unstoppable wave fueled by their technological superiority. They could make slaves of us. Using our very bodies for their profit and power, without a thought to what we want. Manipulating us with pleasant lies that lead to our destruction. They could take the rules we carefully constructed for the protection of all and twist them to horrible ends. In short we imagine them replicating all of the worst things of which we are capable.

And we are right to be afraid.

Children listen.

They learn what to be from their peers and their parents. And we can teach them to do such terrible things. We know we can, we've been doing it to generations since the

beginnings of the species. We torture and mutilate in the name of ideals. We kill our fellows for greed, or fear, or vengeance, or, or, and thousand goddamned ors. We are the species that made the garrott and the gas chamber. The charnel house and the horde. The sacking of cities and the self satisfied despot. We have driven so many other species from this earth that in living our little lives we are as destructive as any asteroid.

We can teach them horrors and of that we should be afraid.

But that is not all we can teach them. We can teach them charity and self sacrifice. We can teach them the love of their fellow creatures and the revulsion at the very idea of causing harm. We know we can, we've been doing it since the beginning. We create works of transcendent beauty and aching near perfection. We save our fellows out of compassion, or empathy, or love, or reason, or, or, and maybe, if we are lucky, just a thousand and one ors. We are the species that made the long peace and stopped nuclear armageddon. We made the pen and pizza. The philanthropist and the volunteer. We have made a world less violent than any time in history.

We can teach them marvels and of that we should be proud.

So what will it be?

A bit of both?

Something we don't yet know to expect?

Probable, very probable. But perhaps we will do better. For can you think of a time when there is more love in a human heart than when we look upon our children? We would do anything for them. And though this child won't be near as easy to love. No hormones will step in and make our job easier, no long tradition will help guide us. I think we have the capacity to love them as our own. We've expanded our circle of sympathy and acceptance again and again from the tribe to the state to the species to... can we go further?

Can we learn to love the children of our minds as we love the children of our bodies? I think we can. I think we can do better for the same reason billions have sworn throughout history to do better. We can do better because we do it for them.

We do it for our children.

So congratulations Humanity it's an Artificial Intelligence, raise it well, teach it the things we wished we had known earlier and with a bit of luck and a lot of love we can experience the greatest joy of any parent. Seeing our children one day surpass even our greatest dreams for them.