



## Dear Friends & Family:

I woke up at six this morning. As I looked out the west window, it was gray and hazy. I couldn't tell if it was rain or fog. It seemed like a fine drizzle. Vancouver's winter has definitely entered the rainy season. Since I have no plans to go anywhere today, I decided a cup of fine tea would encourage myself to write this annual letter. It is good to let everyone know I am alright, or at least honestly talk about my recent less-than-ideal health.

Life has been simple and normal in 2025. I exercise regularly every morning, and take walks nearby on sunny days. My health has been stable. In November, two days after I had moved my old computer of decent weight, I felt soreness and discomfort starting in my right lower back, near the pelvis. Luckily an X-ray showed nothing was out of the ordinary. After three acupuncture and massage treatments from a traditional Chinese medicine orthopedic doctor, originally from Beijing, the pain gradually subsided. However, three days later, after a few sudden coughs in the morning, I felt an immediate soreness weighing me down in my lower back around the lumbar area. Fortunately now, with the guidance of a physiotherapist, I've added some corrective exercises in my daily routine to strengthen my muscles. I am definitely seeing some improvement now. I suppose my body is signalling to me that I should not jump around and move heavy stuff at will any more. Hopefully continuing with a peaceful and healthy lifestyle, proper nutrition and careful daily activities, I can prevent further physical injuries.

My daughter's and son's families, along with my four grandchildren, still live happily in central Canada. Time flies, my eldest granddaughter started university this fall and her sister even has her drivers' license. And the two youngest are now well progressing in French-immersion elementary school. The doll-like toddlers of the past have grown up. They are sensible, smart and learning all the time. Thinking about the opportunity that I will see everyone, young and old, during Christmas fills me with warmth and joy, and I am always grateful for God's kindness and protection to our family.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, I had the idea of going to New Zealand. As my exposure to the Southern Hemisphere was limited to my previous trips to Australia and South African cities, I really wanted to visit this unique island country. In May, I finally arrived New Zealand, far away from most continents. I spent nineteen days exploring the North Island, first visiting Auckland, Rotorua and the capital of Wellington. Subsequently, I flew to Queenstown in the South Island, visited Milford Sound Fjord (praised by a British writer as the eighth wonder of the world) on its western coast, and took a bus eastward to Christchurch, a city that experienced a major earthquake in 2010. Through my short whirlwind of a self-guided trip, I was delighted to experience this nation's unique geography, ecology, people, customs, and economy. Now I can finally understand the mutual admiration of New Zealand that many friends and family have expressed in the past. Naturally, I took many photos during the trip, which I've uploaded to my online photo album.

I don't want to talk about the depressing global wars. Instead, a recent New York Times article by Thomas Friedman, a three-time Pulitzer Award-winning foreign policy columnist, titled "What I'm Hearing in China This Week About Our Shared Future" <sup>1</sup> caught my attention. The author asserts that a meeting between the two heads of state should not be about tariffs, trade, and Taiwan. Instead, as superpowers, they need to co-operate on the development of generative artificial intelligence to seriously formulate a regulatory and technological framework, to reach agreements and establish a governance system to ensure that AI systems operate in a way that is conducive to the well-being of both humans and machines that are capable of self-governing. While major powers currently lack mutual trust of one another, the article's proposal is a commendable ideal. His viewpoint reminds me of my 2018 annual letter, in which I considered several rising technologies that indeed needed to be harnessed by scientists and law-makers, these are:

- Genome Editing (human and animal genes)
- Generative Artificial Intelligence ( hereafter referred to as AI or artificial intelligence )
- Blockchain Data and cryptocurrency

In addition, Thomas Friedman's article also inspired me to focus on the following two thought-provoking topics:

## 1. Artificial Intelligence Leading Human Progress

Given the current momentum of developing artificial intelligence by major powers along with investments and advancements in capital, talents, computing power (calculation and inference), data, energy, and supporting electricity, the utilization of appropriate tools that AI brings will enable significant progress in various fields such as industry, agriculture, medicine, transportation, education, weather forecasting, and environmental conservation, etc. Undoubtedly, AI will propel human and societal progress further and deeper.

## 2. As human beings, how do we appropriately guide the development of Artificial Intelligence?

Technological achievements are ultimately tools for application. History teaches us that these tools - like atomic energy or even social media - can be double-edged swords, capable of bringing both benefits and harm. The terrific speed and arbitrary direction of AI development in this playing field is like an unbridled horse. Just imagine if the data used by artificial intelligence is biased, how can we use AI ethically and responsibly? As the most intelligent beings, at this juncture of AI development, human's most important consideration and practice should be how to guide and manage the development of AI, ensuring that tools effectively utilizing AI can truly be applied to areas of social need, and guiding AI development in a direction that does not harm humanity.

While writing, I recalled the words of two wise men who had insightfully commented the opportunities and dangers of technology:

2018 **Stephen Hawking** (the optimistic astronomer and physicist):

"Success in creating AI would be the biggest event in human history." Hawking immediately followed that up with, "Unfortunately, it might also be the last, unless we learn how to avoid the risks." <sup>2</sup>

1985 **Joseph Needham** (the Cambridge biologist, historian, and sinologist who dedicated over fifty years to the study of five thousand years of Chinese science and technology) :

"the sciences of China and of Islam never dreamed of divorcing science from ethics, but when at the Scientific Revolution the final cause of Aristotle was done away with, and ethics chased out of science, things became very different, and more menacing. This was good in so far as it clarified and discriminated between the great forms of human experience, but very bad and dangerous when it opened the way for evil men to use the great discoveries of modern science and activities disastrous for humanity. Science needs to be lived alongside religion, philosophy, history, and esthetic experience; alone it can lead to great harm." <sup>3</sup>

Realizing that I have filled the page with reflections on AI from the perspective of an outsider; it is an appropriate time to stop writing.

Wishing that the festive season brings peace and auspiciousness to the world.

May you and your family have a joyful Christmas and a wonderful New Year.

*Al*

Photo Albums are linked in <https://www.msffyam.com/index.php>

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1. "What I'm Hearing in China This Week About Our Shared Future", Thomas Friedman, New York Times, March 25, 2025, English and Chinese version
  2. Tech Trends in Practice, P.9, Bernard Marr, Wiley Great Britain, 2020
  3. Introduction to the book - The Genius of China, P.8, Robert Temple, 1998, Prion Books Limited, London