

October [__], 2025

Hi [name],

Hope you're enjoying a pleasant autumn on the West Coast! Thanks for your patience while I went through your manuscript. I read through the copy you sent a few times, and to dive right into it, I think there's one major issue that is at the root of most of the others: you're trying to speak to everyone, leading you to convince effectively no one.

In our call, you had mentioned that you've gotten feedback from others that the call to action felt unclear, and you posited that the call to action *is* for everyone to get involved in the dialogue. But with a threat as existential as you've described, you risk just evoking fear and defeatism rather than inspiring involvement *if you don't show a path forward*. One of the most common feelings in the modern era is that of impotence against the enormous tides of the world. Climate change, fascism, microplastics, the list is endless. Research shows that problem-focused coping – acting, no matter how small the act – is a good antidote to this feeling of helplessness.

But if people cannot find the path towards action (and many of them don't know how to even look for it), then they either marinate in their despair or, worse, disengage entirely from the collective effort of living in this world in concert with everyone else here. You don't have to sound like you're taking sides, but if you're going to present a problem, people are going to be much more interested in listening if you also propose a way forward. Right now, it feels like you're holding back because of the concern that maybe some people won't like it if you seem like you're prescribing a specific medication.

Given that your primary exhortation is for people to engage in the great debate of it all, the sense that I get from this draft is that you want anyone and everyone to be willing to read it and accept the challenge. The problem is, this is not only actually limiting rather than freeing, but trying to be agnostic is the *opposite* of persuasive. Rather than being driven by what the text claims is most important (essentially, "save democracy before AGI gets here"), the argument reads as lacking conviction outside of the sense of urgency. It's unclear whether you're wary of proposing regulations or are simply trying to avoid narrowing readers' focus with your own ideas first. But either way, your message would be better served by some kind of guidance on what readers can or even should do. Is that to get involved with certain organizations? Call their reps? Form or join lobbying groups centered on some of the policy proposals you described?

It goes without saying that the severity of polarization today is on everyone's minds, and I'm not saying that you need to take some kind of hardline political stance because that's not what this is about at all. If the threat is truly as existential as you're describing, then this is no longer a game of something like "Republicans hate regulations, Democrats love them" – the argument would be to stop that existential threat in whatever manner possible, and the probability of the

existential threat should be compelling enough to sway someone who may normally not be for whatever type of approach you have in mind.

You even have an entire subsection trying to push this neutral stance, saying that Republicans, Democrats, and independents all need to rise above the past to face this threat. Yet at the same time, the broader text of the book assumes American exceptionalism and hegemony, emphasizing the AI arms race and repeatedly pointing to China as an enemy. But if the threat is so existential, shouldn't all humans work together to anticipate and prevent it? This selective hawkishness undercuts your domestic neutrality; you can't convincingly tell readers to "rise above politics" while framing the AI arms race as a US imperative with active enemies that you seem to presume will not understand the greater existential threat.

With how new AI is in the public consciousness, I don't think fear of alienating any particular audience needs to be a major concern, especially when it degrades your larger argument. We are still in a nebulous phase where there are fairly mixed feelings in the pot. Certainly, some Republicans' response might be to never regulate a damn thing, but others are eyeing the tension between legacy media and AI companies because of the IP concerns that AI has raised. Some Democrats are rallying against the environmental impact, but even Aaron Cooper characterized the Biden administration and the Trump campaign as having quite similar stances last year.

You don't necessarily have to pick a single constituency, but by prioritizing trying to address everyone, you lose the ability to make a more concrete call to action out of fear of losing some readers. The irony is that by avoiding taking positions to preserve universal appeal, you dilute your persuasive power and risk appearing calculated rather than principled. If you truly believe in your argument about the existential threat of AGI – and I do think you believe it – you have to follow through on that conviction by making it clear how your readers can engage in the fight to prevent that threat from coming to fruition.

I've also attached a point-by-point memo for some of the different facets of this issue. I refrained from doing a manuscript markup at this stage to keep the scope from getting too large and because I had promised to focus on the "call to action" issue. If you're interested in chatting about my notes further, let me know!

Joni