

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

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Dear Phil:

Your interesting letter has created quite a bit of discussion among our faculty and very little agreement about their dreams. The following is a short list of my own dreams.

1. The Dream of the Perfect Language.

Surely there must be a computer language in which all algorithms can be expressed in a precise, elegant and transparent form.

2. The Dream of Natural Continuation.

Surely some of our constructs will possess the property that all extensions and continuations build upon them so perfectly that one need never backtrack to produce better foundations.

3. The Dream of Understanding.

Surely we can create programs that contain the same mixture of logical insight, world knowledge, and fuzzy reasoning as the human mind.

4. The Dream of Simplicity.

Through the performance of computers and their programs we will remove all doubts that there is only a chemical distinction between the living and the nonliving world.

Actually I do not believe that some of these dreams can materialize. Nevertheless they define goals that trigger introspection.

Sincerely yours,



Alan J. Perlis  
Eugene Higgins Professor and  
Chairman

AJP:plb