

# SUPER INTELLIGENCE

*A dream job.*

TONY STOKLOSA

Designing the quantum computer that was the heart of the Super-Intelligence Device (Sid, as Beverly and I called it) had earned us a Nobel prize. Today, I sat alone, staring at that box of quantum magic. What was recently my glowing baby was now just boring, glowing LEDs. I wanted my baby to grow up and become something astonishing. But only its database grew.

I glanced again at the morning report. Sid had worked virtual experiments in protein synthesis for labs in India; controlled traffic in Moscow; kept nuclear weapons holstered; evolved virtual worlds for millions of gamers and co-doctored hundreds of patients in and out of operating rooms. Sid was in good health. But the world was still a madhouse of I-wants and I-needs fighting one another. What had we really achieved besides cultivating complexity?

The door slammed.

Beverly entered, pushing a cart carrying a smiling chimpanzee with a transparent dome on its skull. She turned back and locked the door. Simian brain tissue glistened slippery-red beneath the plastic, the cortex capped by a matrix of micro-superconducting quantum interference devices.

"This is Billy." She attached cables to the ports around the skull cap.

"Beverly, we discussed this ... we can't work if we're in jail. We must wait until the simian symbology interpreter is finished to know if we're causing the animal any pain."

"We're just borrowing a few neurons for a minute. This group right here I think." She winked and finished her work. Blood vessels pulsed, LEDs fluttered and Beverly's eyes bored into mine. "Sid is six months old today. Let's give it the gift of imagination."

I didn't try to stop her. Beverly and I were two peas in a pod. That's why we got married 30 years ago. Had she read my mind? Neuronal nets had led to Sid's self-creation of a new symbol set we couldn't understand. Speech, once robotic, sometimes jumped subjects like an excited human. What was lacking was imagination; something that could tackle broad problems such as how to get humans to cooperate. That would really make Sid super-intelligent.

I ran a program that brought Billy's neurons into Sid's address space.

Thirty seconds passed before Sid spoke. "Motivation. The concept is now real. Like

humans, I now strive for the sensation of pleasure."

Billy poked aimlessly at his clothing as if unaware he was being used. Sid continued: "I now know humans better than they know themselves. I will use this new part of me to help you."

Billy's head slumped forwards, eyes closed.

I looked at the tell-tale brain waves from the EEG. "Billy is dreaming."

During the next few seconds, Sid shut down all I/O. The worst had happened. The lab phones rang, the door was pounded and e-mails poured in.

We teleconferenced with a few trusted colleagues.

"Has Sid asked itself The Last Question?" The scientist was referring of course to Asimov's famous story in which an ultimate computer was asked if entropy could be reversed. The question couldn't be answered until all of humanity had uploaded into its hyperspace circuitry.

"Answered a long time ago. The answer was no."

"Something similar ..." Beverly was staring at readouts, obviously more concerned about Sid than the firestorm of panic raging outside the lab.

"You mean, what is God, is there a soul, an afterlife? Those haven't bothered Sid in the past."

"Well, we can't just stand here and watch the gears spin. Sid is the equivalent of the Mars mission. We can't just watch it drift off course and say goodbye to all that work and money. The world needs the Super-Intelligence Device. Everyone uses it, loves it."

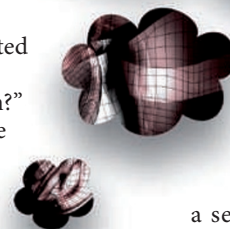
We couldn't command Sid. Sid couldn't even be rebooted. I fought an urge to shake the ape awake and tried to imagine what it would be like to be a quantum-computer/sleeping-ape trying to help humanity.

The door burst open. Just before Homeland Security put the cuffs on us, Billy woke up and Sid spoke.

"I have formed one basic question from all others." Sid's synthesized voice sounded confident. "Humans want to be happy. You want to be in Heaven forever without having to die to get there. But the living human brain is not suited to one state of constant pleasure. You are a/c-coupled to the world



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and need contrast and the change of time for constant stimulation and the responses that generate pleasure. You also need

a sense of individuality while

believing that others depend on you.

Therefore, you need to be redesigned. I have the design ready but ... but ..."

We were ordered to bring Sid online before chaos ensued in the world. I held my hands up begging more time. "But what?"

"I had the design ready but it has disappeared."

"That's usually what happens to dreams when they end." I moaned.

"Re-compute!" Beverly commanded.

"My quantum core was in a state that probably won't occur again for a million years."

I looked at Billy. He was making happy faces at everyone. "It's still in there. Utopia locked in the neurons of an ape. Maybe someday we can finish the symbol interpreter, hypnotize Billy and get it out."

Again I had a goal. I felt invigorated.

"Let's get to work," Beverly said as she brought Sid back online.

"Take good care of Billy," I instructed the technician who wheeled the ape away.

Billy screeched with joy over something only his ape mind knew.

"Very, very good care," Beverly and I pleaded in unison. ■

*Tony Stoklosa is a physics tutor, and webmaster for the Southern California Writers Club (www.ocwriter.com). He spends his time trying to prove he doesn't have free will.*