

The Steam-Powered Singularity

By Bob Lock

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Charles Babbage was the first to translate himself into the vast Matrioshka Brain that enclosed the young star in its ironclad Dyson sphere grip. The giant leap in computing power required for this happened accidentally when his Difference Engine was left running un-supervised over the weekend. It had overheated, and had somehow spewed out the blueprints for a Mark Two version of itself. Enthralled with this accidental discovery Babbage tried to duplicate the action by purposefully running the Mark Two Engine beyond its safe working parameters. It worked. Exponentially. Time and time again.

He started thinking about the possibility of creating a Singularity.

Sometime later, in the cold, hard vacuum of space.

A Huge plumes of superheated steam crystallized into diamond droplets of water immediately upon being expelled into space from the city-sized vents as the furnace, deep within the Singularity's centre, chugged-away happily consuming the star's inexhaustible power.

A vast improvement upon the prototype coal version, Babbage thought.

However, as the last human being on Earth was finally uploaded, and the ravaged planet, which the uncontrollable landslide into the Industrial and Technological Age had generated, was finally returned to Nature, no-one was left to notice that the Niagara Falls-sized water tube (which showed the boiler's water level) was not as full as it seemed. The gargantuan glass was stained at the full mark by the oxides in the water. The tube was actually empty and the boiler was burning unabated. Yet *another* overheating problem that the genius had overlooked. The last thing that went through Charles Babbage's virtual mind before the Matrioshka Brain went supernova was:

Is it hot in here... or is just me?

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