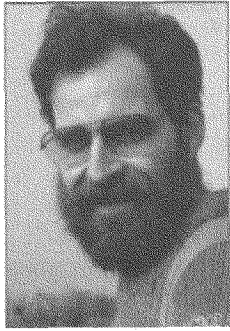


■ IN MEMORIAM



Jonathan J. King 1949-1991

Jonathan J. King died April 8, 1991 from cancer. He was 41. To the AI community, Jonathan was probably best known for his doctoral dissertation work, which was one of the first successful demonstrations of AI in the database world. Entitled "Query Optimization by Semantic Reasoning," his 1981 dissertation showed the power of understanding the domain of the objects named in a large database. It is now taken for granted that AI has something to offer the database world, but at the time database queries and knowledge-based inferences were largely disjoint.

Before attending graduate school in computer science at Stanford, Jonathan earned a bachelor's degree in engineering and a master's degree in operations research at Columbia. He then worked in the Division of Research Resources at the National Institutes of Health, where he discovered AI and where he became known to the AI-in-Medicine community. After completing his Ph.D. at Stanford, he was employed at Hewlett-Packard, Symantec, Teknowledge, and Sun Microsystems in technical and managerial work. He was an associate editor of *AI Magazine* from 1983 to 1989.

To his friends, Jonathan was many things, but above all a humanist in a technical world. He cared about people. Not humanity in the abstract, but individual, real people—without stuffy academic degrees, fancy titles, slick clothes, or what he called "highfalootin' speech". He found the good in people whose lack of pretenses sometimes made them seem odd in Silicon Valley.

Jonathan was torn between C.P. Snow's two cultures of science and the humanities. He knew that he had the technical skills and the intellectual ability to put computers to productive use. He also knew that he cared about people and about the state of the world. He was a computer scientist by profession, but he was a philosopher at heart, with a gift for insightful analysis of current affairs. He never abandoned his social conscience, but he was looking for ways to reconcile that with his responsibilities in the technical world.

I have learned a considerable amount from Jonathan, and we all could have learned so much more if he had had more time. I believe we can continue his quest for understanding the role of human values in an increasingly complex technical world, through two questions that he and I frequently talked about when we met for coffee:

What sensible public policies and programs might we lobby for that protect the dignity of every individual in a technological society?

What technical safeguards can we design into our inventions so that no individual is worse off because of them?

All of us who were fortunate enough to have known Jonathan will miss him forever. Jonathan did not let his friends get away with foolishness without some gentle barbs that brought us back to sensibility. AI needed him more than he realized.

Because of his concern for the dignity of individuals, he designed a lecture series on medical ethics and compassionate health care. Contributions for the lectureship may be sent to the Jonathan J. King Fund, c/o Darlene Vian, Stanford Medical Center, MSOB Room 215, Stanford, CA 94305-5479.

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