# Digital Necrolatry:
## Thanabots and the Prohibition of Post-Mortem AI Simulations

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## Abstract

*The emergence of **Thanabots**—artificial intelligence systems designed to simulate deceased individuals—presents unprecedented challenges at the intersection of artificial intelligence, legal rights, and societal configuration. This short policy recommendations report examines the legal, social and psychological implications of these posthumous simulations and argues for their prohibition on ethical, sociological, and legal grounds.*

## Introduction

Recent technological advances have enabled the development of sophisticated AI models capable of simulating deceased individuals through the aggregation of their digital footprints, personal communications, and social media presence. These systems,

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commonly referred to as Thanabots[3] (or deathbots[4]), purport to offer continuing connections with the deceased.

The evaluation of thanabots must be situated within the broader philosophical discourse surrounding death, personhood, and digital immortality. Drawing from Heideggerian concepts of being-toward-death and contemporary digital ethics, it becomes apparent that the simulation of deceased individuals represents a profound distortion of both human mortality and authentic interpersonal relationships.

## Discussion

**I.** While natural language processing and behavioural modelling have achieved remarkable sophistication, the fundamental nature of consciousness and personal identity cannot be reduced to computational models. The simulation of a deceased individual, regardless of its apparent verisimilitude, represents merely a probabilistic approximation of past behaviours rather than a genuine continuation of personhood. The availability of thanabots risks disrupting society itself. Natural grieving processes are substituted by an illusive alternative to acceptance and emotional resolution.

- Legal problems: We can foresee that users of very evolved thanabots may eventually demand 'human rights' for their models and perceive switching them off as analogous to homicide.

- False Continuity: The illusion of continued interaction may create maladaptive attachments to digital entities that can neither evolve nor authentically respond to changing circumstances. The users of thanabots may end up 'exiting' from society.

- Emotional Dependency: The accessibility of seemingly infinite interactions with the deceased may foster unhealthy emotional dependencies on artificial systems. Prolonged engagement with thanabots may prevent the necessary psychological work of processing loss and accepting our mortality.

**II.** The introduction of thanabots raises profound questions regarding posthumous violation of human rights:

- Consent cannot be meaningfully obtained from the deceased for the ways in which their simulated personality might evolve or be employed.

[3] From Greek θάνατος ('thánatos' = death) + robot.

[4] The appellation 'deathbot', hitherto used by some authors, is infelicitous, needlessly invokes sci-fi tropes à la Terminator, and is also quite inapposite, since the majority understand it as 'robot that *causes* death' instead of 'AI simulated dead human'. Hence, *thanabot* is a terminologically superior choice and will be the one used here.

- Manipulation and misrepresentation of the deceased's personality, beliefs, and relationships will not be adequately controlled.

- The commercialisation of digital resurrection threatens to commodify personal identity and human relationships.

- The simulation of the deceased fundamentally violates human dignity by reducing personal identity to a collection of data points and behavioural patterns..

**III.** The normalisation of thanabots presents significant sociological concerns:

- Cultural Attitudes towards Death: The availability of posthumous simulations risks undermining societal capabilities for processing mortality and loss.

- Intergenerational Relationships: Future generations may develop distorted relationships with simulated ancestors, compromising authentic familial and cultural transmission.

- Social Cohesion: The persistence of artificial versions of the deceased may complicate social and familial dynamics, particularly regarding inheritance, relationships, and emotional closure.

- **A societal 'dead-end' (literally!):** The prohibition of thanabots is essential for preserving healthy processes whereby future individuals respond to concerns of existing humans rather than rely on multiple idealised 'relationships' with the simulacra of the departed.



## Recommendations

The following measures are proposed:

1. Implementation of immediate international moratorium on the development and deployment of post-mortem simulation technologies.

2. Development of comprehensive legislative frameworks protecting posthumous digital rights.

3. Establishment of ethical guidelines governing the use of personal data after death.

4. Investment in research examining the psychological impacts of digital immortality technologies and their impact on a functioning society.

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