



“Thanabots” & Our Digital Afterlives:

The Business Of Chatting With The Deceased, Coping With Grief Through Technology & The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Macro Investments

Emerging Technology

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Well before most took Artificial Intelligence, or AI, seriously, in 2017, American science-fiction Film Director, [Michael Almerayda](#) released the film “[Marjorie Prime](#)”, starring [Jon Hamm](#), [Tim Robbins](#), [Geena Davis](#) & [Lois Smith](#), basing the story on [Jordan Harrison’s](#) play of the same name.

The film prophetically told the tale of a service that provided holographic recreations of deceased loved ones, allowing a woman to come tête-à-tête with the younger version of her late husband and unpacked the complexities imposed on her, her family and her community at-large.

In 2017, this tale seemed more fairytale than true to life, however, since its public launch last year, the artificially intelligent chatbot, ChatGPT, has changed both AI’s public perception and our digital realities moving forward.

Cite:- [The Investment Theme We Like, For A Technology We Hate: Facial Recognition Technology \(FRT\) and Dual-Use Applications](#), 13 July 2020

Simultaneously wowing and frightening the world with its deep knowledge, its surprising empathy and its undeniable potential to change the world in yet unforeseen ways, [Large Language Models, or LLM’s](#) like ChatGPT have stoked a genesis in newer applications, including what we now refer to as “[Thanabots](#)” – chatbots trained on data of deceased loved ones’ digital communications, allowing us to ‘talk’ with the departed.

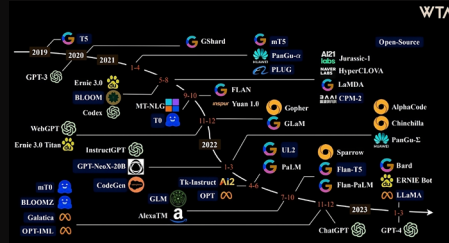
The term thanabot derives from [Thanatology](#), the scientific study of death.

With OpenAI’s ChatGPT rapidly propelling the non-profit towards an impressive milestone of [achieving US\\$1 billion in annual revenue within its second year](#), the commercial application of Thanabots is speedily being explored (and clandestinely developed) by the likes of [Baidu \[BIDU:US\]](#), [Microsoft \[MSFT:US\]](#), [Alphabet \[GOOGL:US\]](#), [Amazon \[AMZN:US\]](#), [Meta Platforms \[META:US\]](#), [Salesforce \[CRM:US\]](#), [Adobe \[ADBE:US\]](#), [ServiceNow \[NOW:US\]](#), and [Intuit \[INTU:US\]](#).

The well publicised trailblazer is “[Project December](#)”, which allows paying customers to input all sorts of data and make their own personalised chatbots (for US\$10 a month); even ones based upon deceased friends and family.

It is rumoured others are being developed synthesising posthumous public figures, such as [Abraham Lincoln](#), [Jesus Christ](#) and [Julius Caesar](#) (and sadly, probably [Adolf Hitler](#) and other demons) where, in real time, a user will be able to chat with the likeness of these figures, having ‘live’ (no latency) conversations, back-ended by all known data (speeches, writings, commentaries, etc.) utilised in the holographic chatbot.

Thanabots will become more prevalent in the coming decade as more people with extensive digital records of texts, emails and



social media posts pass away and these systems may be created without prior consent from the deceased, or may constitute part of [digital estate planning wherein someone plans or consents to the creation of their own Thanabot](#), for personal, legal or altruistic reasons.

As [Meta, Google, Apple and Microsoft all store a lot of our digital communications](#), it’s likely that they all will create and sell Thanabots in the coming years and considering that communing with the dead has been a consistent fixation across human cultures, it’s likely there will be plenty of demand.

The obvious potential downsides that need to be addressed are that people’s online lives can be very different from their offline one’s, so the Thanabot may not accurately represent the person it was made to mimic and moreover, Thanabots may not provide the catharsis that users might hope for and instead intensify feelings of grief, despair and disconnect.

Seeing, “AI” now, everywhere, makes one wonder if companies are just puffing that word in front of everything (and many are), nonetheless, the explosion of interest in AI that has dominated equity markets in recent months reflects the potential for new avenues of growth and at the same time, the power of a stockmarket narrative to drive expectations.

Cite:- [Quantum Supremacy, Complicated Technologies Define Realpolitik, Hegemony & Wealth](#), 22 October 2020

While AI as a technology is not new, the interest around its potential has gathered momentum since the launch of ChatGPT; this exuberance has [fuelled a re-rating in the technology sector overall, however particularly in the easier to identify early winners; companies innovating and investing heavily in the technology and those that are enabling its commercialisation](#).

The outperformance of the technology sector (the NASDAQ, for example, is up 42% this year and the MSCI World up 15%) has occurred despite the impact of higher interest rates and this is very different from the experience of 2022 when higher interest rates, driven by the rise in inflation, prompted a de-rating of the technology sector owing to its ‘long duration’, or sensitivity to rising discount rates.

The implication is that investors are assuming much higher future growth rates to offset higher discount rates.

The small group of early winners have driven valuations in US technology stocks (seen as the epicentre of the new technologies) to an unusual premium relative to technology companies elsewhere with US technology sector valuations increasing relative to those in Europe this year, suggesting that the AI

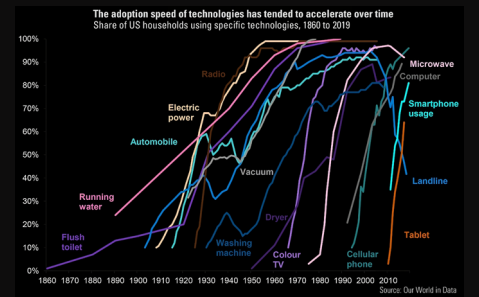
narrative has been a key factor given that most of the leading companies investing in this space currently are hubbed in the US.

With the [rapid pace of LLM launches and ongoing capital influx in China](#) – where 90+ LLMs have been announced in China alone [year-to-date](#), amongst which only seven were by internet platform companies, others were from the tech/start-up/academia camps – [Sino internet giant BBAI](#) is well positioned for [Model-as-a-Service \(MaaS\)](#) opportunities for Thanabots and related technologies, with unique [C2C traffic advantages](#) with deployment of LLMs into their key ecosystems, led by [WeChat \[Tencent 700:HK\]](#), [Taobao](#), [Douyin](#) and [Baidu Search](#).

Cite:- [Chinese Internet Megatrend Going Global](#), 4 December 2018

Cite:- [Sino Spycraft & Sophisticated Cybersecurity: Cuba, Vanuatu, UAE – Financial Risk Management Concernment Confronting The D10](#), 5 July 2023

[Sino AI comes inherently with its own unique risk factors](#), coupled with [accessibility of GPU’s and Sino-US geopolitical tensions](#).



AI and machine learning are accelerating innovation across healthcare beyond thanatology, with [BioTech](#) aiding pan-Atlantic investments by enhancing the ability to efficiently collect, [manage and generate valuable insights from massive, complex healthcare datasets offers a myriad of competitive advantages in personalisation, effectiveness, time and cost vis-à-vis traditional approaches](#).

Cite:- [Biotech & Life Sciences](#), 25 July 2018

Cite:- [Oncology In The Age Of COVID: Cancer Treatments Get Highly Specialised & Drive Innovative Investment Solutions](#), 10 March 2021

A [medical ethics framework for conversational AI](#) came in the first few months of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), where increases in health care needs globally combined with [social distancing measures made virtual medicine more relevant than ever](#).

Voice assistants such as Siri, and Google Assistant also are beginning to experiment and improve with the help of LLMs and it was recently unearthed that [Amazon is even creating their own LLM](#) to help run Alexa.

Death is an undisputed reality of the human condition and this emotionally laden topic has been researched and written about across many different disciplines but found in the innovations of the Internet, a relatively [new and important area of research for thanatologists](#) and society has begun. ■

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