AI in Redefining death, memory and immortality

Why in News?

Recently, an AI technology company called StoryFile used prerecorded answers combined with artificial intelligence to create a realistic, interactive experience.

How is AI used to create a digital life?

- **Virtual life or Digital** – Creating a virtual digital version of a person with by using their information, data, feeds, responses in digital environments like social media, internet usage, email.
- It uses artificial intelligence to create a realistic, interactive experience.

A persons digital usage includes Social Media Profiles, Online Communities, Virtual Reality (VR), Digital Workspaces, Content Creation, E-commerce, Digital Identity.

- **Conversational video AI** – Live interaction with the digital AI version of a living or deceased person.
- **Chatbot based system** - Microsoft has patented a system that can take someone's digital data – such as texts, emails and social media posts – and use it to create a chatbot.
- This chatbot can respond in ways that sound like the original person.
- **Virtual reality** – Virtual recreation of a person and interacting with them in the virtual world.

What are the advantages of digital life?

- **Managing post life** - Helping people manage their digital lives after they're gone.
- **Managing digital assets** - Apple, Google and Meta offer tools to allow someone you trust to access your online accounts when you die.

Digital assets include everything from social media profiles and email accounts to digital photos, online bank accounts and even cryptocurrencies.

- **Coping with grief** - Using advanced digital imaging and voice technology, virtual version of a person can be used to overcome loss of a person.
- It gives people a new way to feel connected to a loved one after they're gone.
- **Personality development** – Interacting with one's own digital life improves many of the dimensions of their work, play and home lives.

What are the challenges in managing digital life ?

- **Ownership of digital life** - This issue is already being discussed in courts and by governments around the world.
- In the United States, nearly all states have passed laws allowing people to include digital accounts in their wills.
- **Inheritability of digital property** - In Germany, courts ruled that Facebook had to give a deceased person's family access to their account.
- It held that digital accounts should be treated as inheritable property, like a bank account or house.
- **Responsibility**– In cases of, When digital clone of a person says or does something online that the person would never have said or done in real life.
- **Exploitation** – Use of deep fakes of persons like singer, actor for commercial purpose without their permission.
- **High cost** - Basic tools for managing digital accounts after death are more advanced services with highly expensive.
- This cost barrier raises important questions about whether digital immortality could create new forms of inequality.
- **Grief challenge** - Research shows that a significant proportion of people maintain their social media connections with deceased loved ones.
- Staying connected to someone's digital presence could make it harder for people to move on.

What are the Cultural and religious views on digital afterlife?

- Different cultures and religions have their own unique perspectives on digital immortality.
- **Catholic** - The Vatican, the center of the Catholic Church, has said that digital legacies should always respect human dignity.
- **Islam** - In Islamic traditions, scholars are discussing how digital remains fit into religious laws.
- **Japan** - Some Buddhist temples in Japan are offering digital graveyards where families can preserve and interact with digital traces of their loved ones.

How can the digital life be managed?

- **Decision on digital legacy** - Reflecting on whether creating a digital self aligns with the personal, cultural or spiritual beliefs.
- **Managing digital assets** – Making a list of all digital accounts, content and tools representing digital self and Deciding on how these should be managed, preserved or deleted.
- **Digital executor** - Appointing a trustworthy, tech-savvy person to oversee digital assets and carry out wishes.
- **Digital assets in will** – Covering digital identity and assets in life will and specify how they should be handled, including storage, usage and ethical considerations.
- **Ethical and emotional impacts** - Considering how digital legacy might affect loved ones while planning to avoid misuse, ensure funding for long-term needs, and align your decisions with your values.

What lies ahead?

- Thousands of years ago, the Egyptian pharaohs had pyramids built to preserve their legacy.
- Today, our “digital pyramids” are much more advanced and broadly available.
- They don’t just preserve memories; they can continue to influence the world, long after we’re gone.

References

[The Hindu | AI is redefining death, memory and immortality]

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