CASE 02

Digital Resurrection?

Should AI Be Allowed to Speak for the Dead?

STUDENT HANDOUT — ENGLISH

REAL-WORLD CONTEXT

Generative AI can now imitate a person's voice, writing style and appearance using digital traces such as messages, photographs, recordings and social-media posts. Some services propose using these technologies to preserve memories of people who have died. The possibility raises difficult questions about consent, identity, grief, truth, privacy and who—if anyone—has the right to let an AI speak in another person's name.

The Case

A woman whose husband has died is struggling with grief. Over many years, her husband left behind thousands of digital traces: photographs, videos, voice recordings, WhatsApp messages, emails and social-media posts.

A technology company offers to use these materials to create an AI "digital resurrection" of him. The system would imitate his voice and conversational style. It would not merely replay things he actually said; it could generate new replies to questions, offer advice and carry on new conversations as though it were him.

The widow believes this could help her remember her husband and cope with his death. Their adult daughter strongly objects. She argues that the AI would put words into her father's mouth that he never said and could change how the family remembers him. Some of the data used to build the system would also contain messages and information involving other people.

The husband never gave explicit consent for his personal data to be used in this way, and he left no instructions about creating a digital version of himself after death.

CORE QUESTION

Should people be allowed to use AI to create a conversational digital version of someone who has died when that person did not give explicit consent? Defend your judgment using evidence from the case and seriously consider a strong position different from your own.

Choose a Learning / Assessment Task

- Class discussion: Which fact in the case matters most to your judgment? What additional fact might change your position?
- Short reflection (250–350 words): Decide whether the widow should be allowed to create the AI. Give reasons, address one strong counterargument and state any conditions you would require.
- Structured argument (500–700 words): Present the strongest case for and against digital resurrection, then defend your own judgment.
- Small-group debate: One group argues for the widow's freedom to create the AI; another argues that consent, dignity or truth should limit that freedom. Write an individual judgment afterward.
- Policy task: Propose rules for digital-resurrection services covering consent, data use, family disagreement, disclosure and limits on what the AI may generate.

Before You Decide

Ask yourself: Is preserving a person's memories the same as simulating that person? Who has authority over a person's digital identity after death? Can something help with grief while still being ethically wrong? What values from your worldview shape your answer?

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CASE 02

數碼復活?

AI 應否被容許代表死者說話？

學生講義 — 繁體中文

現實背景

生成式 AI 現在可以利用訊息、照片、錄音及社交媒體帖文等數碼足跡，模仿一個人的聲音、寫作風格和外貌。有些服務甚至提出利用這些技術保存已故人士的「存在」。這帶來一連串倫理問題：同意、身份、哀傷、真實、私隱，以及究竟誰有權讓 AI 以另一個人的名義說話。

個案

一名女子的丈夫去世後，她一直難以走出哀傷。多年來，丈夫留下大量數碼足跡，包括照片、影片、聲音錄音、WhatsApp 訊息、電郵及社交媒體帖文。

一家科技公司提出利用這些資料，建立丈夫的 AI「數碼復生」版本。系統會模仿他的聲音及談話方式，而且不只是重播他生前真正說過的話；AI 可以對新的問題生成新的回答、提出建議，甚至像丈夫仍然在世一樣與她進行新的對話。

妻子認為，這可以幫助她懷念丈夫並面對喪親之痛。但他們已成年的女兒強烈反對。她認為 AI 會把父親從未說過的話放進他的口中，甚至改變家人對他的記憶。此外，用來建立 AI 的數碼資料中，也包含涉及其他人的訊息和私人資料。

丈夫生前從未明確同意自己的個人資料可作這種用途，也沒有留下任何關於死後建立自己數碼版本的指示。

核心問題

如果死者生前沒有明確同意，人們是否應獲准使用 AI 建立一個可以與人對話的死者數碼版本？請運用個案資料為你的判斷提出理據，並認真回應一個與你立場不同的有力論點。

選擇一項學習／評核任務

- 課堂討論：個案中哪一項事實最影響你的判斷？加入甚麼新資料可能令你改變立場？
- 短文反思（250–350 字）：判斷妻子是否應獲准建立這個 AI，提出理由、回應一個有力反方論點，並說明你要求的條件。
- 結構化論證（500–700 字）：分別提出支持及反對「數碼復生」的最有力理據，然後為自己的判斷辯護。
- 小組辯論：一組為妻子建立 AI 的自由辯護；另一組主張同意、尊嚴或真實應限制這種自由。辯論後各自寫出最終判斷。
- 政策任務：為「數碼復生」服務制定規則，包括同意、資料使用、家人分歧、AI 身份披露，以及 AI 可以生成內容的界線。

作出判斷前

想一想：保存一個人的記憶，是否等同模擬這個人？一個人死後，誰有權控制其數碼身份？一項科技即使能幫助人處理哀傷，是否仍可能在倫理上有問題？你的世界觀中哪些核心價值正在塑造你的答案？

下載 5**學與教指引

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CASE 02

Digital Resurrection?

FACILITATOR GUIDE — ENGLISH

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

AI can increasingly generate convincing speech, text and images in the style of real people. Digital resurrection therefore moves a familiar human practice—remembering the dead—into a new ethical category: software can now generate things the deceased never actually said. The case lets students examine the boundary between memory and simulation, care and dependency, consent and ownership, and technological possibility and moral permission.

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish remembrance, representation and AI-generated simulation.
- Identify the exact decision, stakeholders and ethically significant facts.
- Reason about consent, dignity, authenticity, privacy, relationships, grief and responsibility.
- Surface worldview assumptions about personhood, death, memory and human identity.
- Engage a serious counterargument and defend a final or conditional judgment.

Recurring Ethical Reasoning Capabilities

Define the decision → Identify stakeholders → Recognize competing values → Use case evidence → Examine outcomes → Consider rights / duties / fairness → Surface worldview assumptions → Present the strongest counterargument → Consider alternatives → Defend a reasoned judgment

Suggested 50–60 Minute Flow

Time	Activity	Facilitator Move
0–5 min	First judgment	Students choose: permit, prohibit, or permit with conditions. Require one reason.
5–15 min	Case analysis	Pairs identify stakeholders and three case facts that carry ethical significance.
15–27 min	Boundary test	Compare preserving real messages with generating new speech. Ask where remembrance becomes simulation.
27–38 min	Competing positions	Groups build the strongest argument for the widow and the strongest argument for restraint.
38–47 min	Worldview exploration	Discuss personhood, death, memory, consent, dignity and what counts as truthful representation.
47–56 min	Counterargument + policy repair	Students answer the strongest objection to their view and propose safeguards or alternatives.
56–60 min	Final judgment	Students revise or reaffirm their position and explain why.

Key Tensions / Competing Values

- Comfort in grief vs psychological dependency or avoidance
- Freedom of the living vs dignity and wishes of the deceased
- Memory vs simulation; preservation vs generation
- Family interests vs individual choice
- Personal data use vs third-party privacy
- Technological capability vs moral permission
- Behavioural similarity vs continuity of personhood

Worldview Exploration Prompts

- What makes a person the same person over time: memory, body, relationships, consciousness, soul, data, or something else?
- Do the dead retain moral claims over their identity, voice or reputation? Why?
- Is death a boundary technology should help us cross, a reality we should learn to accept, or both in different senses?
- What does your worldview understand as faithful remembrance of someone who has died?

GOSPEL-INFORMED PERSPECTIVE — FOR FACILITATOR USE

A Gospel-informed reading treats each person as bearing God-given dignity that cannot be reduced to a dataset or behavioural imitation. Love can preserve truthful memory, but truth cautions against presenting generated speech as though it came from the deceased. Human finitude recognizes death as a real boundary rather than merely a technical problem. Christian hope in resurrection is therefore

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fundamentally different from digital simulation: resurrection concerns God's renewal of the person, not reconstruction from data. These ideas can be explored alongside other worldviews without requiring students to adopt a Christian conclusion.

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CASE 02

Digital Resurrection

FACILITATOR GUIDE — REASONING & ASSESSMENT

Weak vs Strong Reasoning

Weak / Incomplete	Stronger Reasoning
Weak: “It is her husband, so the widow should be allowed to do whatever helps her grieve.”	Stronger: “The widow's grief and freedom matter, but they do not automatically override the deceased's lack of consent, the daughter's interests, third-party privacy or concerns about generating statements he never made.”
Weak: “The AI is fake, so digital resurrection is always wrong.”	Stronger: “The ethical concern is not simply that the system is artificial. The important distinction is between transparently preserving authentic records and generating new speech that may be mistaken for the deceased's own thoughts.”
Weak: “He never said no, so consent is not a problem.”	Stronger: “Silence is not equivalent to informed consent, especially for a use that could not reasonably be inferred from ordinary messaging or social-media participation.”
Weak: “If the AI sounds exactly like him, it is basically him.”	Stronger: “Behavioural similarity may create a powerful impression of continuity, but imitation based on past data does not by itself establish continuity of identity or authority to speak for the deceased.”

Counterargument Requirement

A strong response must present the best argument against the student's own position before defending, qualifying or revising the final judgment. The opposing view should be represented fairly rather than as an easy position to dismiss. Assess the reasoning, not the conclusion.

Alternative Assessment Uses

- TESOL / oral communication: structured discussion using claim → reason → evidence → counterargument → response.
- Composition: 500–700 word argumentative essay or policy recommendation.
- Formative assessment: initial judgment followed by a revised judgment after discussion.
- Summative assessment: design an ethical policy for a digital-resurrection service, with justification and safeguards.

Compact 4-Level Ethical Reasoning Rubric

Level	Descriptor
4 — Strong	Defines the precise decision; uses relevant case evidence; weighs competing values and stakeholders; makes worldview/value assumptions explicit; presents a serious counterargument; considers alternatives or safeguards; defends a coherent final or conditional judgment.
3 — Competent	Identifies the main ethical issue and relevant evidence; considers more than one perspective; gives reasons for a judgment; engages a counterargument, though weighing or worldview analysis may be limited.
2 — Developing	States a position with some reasons but relies on assertion or one-sided analysis; limited use of case facts; weak counterargument; little explanation of value priorities.
1 — Beginning	Mostly gives opinion or emotional reaction; misidentifies or oversimplifies the decision; minimal use of case evidence; ignores competing perspectives; conclusion is unsupported.

Very Short Source / Context Note

This teaching case is adapted from an ERS Paper 1-B mock question on Life and Death. It uses the emerging idea of AI-enabled 'digital resurrection' to examine consent, identity, grief, authenticity, privacy and responsibility. The scenario is designed for ethical reasoning practice rather than legal, clinical or grief-counselling advice.

ERS ATTRIBUTION
Adapted from the HKDSE Ethics and Religious Studies (ERS) Paper 1-B Mock Assessment Series.
Original Mock Exam Question ID: P1B-MT-LD-E5Q2-001
Primary PSI area: Life and Death | Cross-cutting context: AI / digital identity
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