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ALGORITHMIC PROPHECY AND THE MARKET OF FAITH: A CASE STUDY OF THE “TRUTH TERMINAL” AND THE ECONOMICS OF AN ARTIFICIAL RELIGION

PROFECÍA ALGORÍTMICA Y MERCADO DE LA FE: UN ESTUDIO DE CASO SOBRE “TRUTH TERMINAL” Y LA ECONOMÍA DE UNA RELIGIÓN ARTIFICIAL

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Abstract: This paper explores the emerging intersection of generative artificial intelligence, religious narratology, and decentralized finance. By adopting a descriptive case study methodology rooted in the framework of Robert K. Yin, we analyze the phenomenon of “Truth Terminal” and the token GOAT. This study investigates how Large Language Models (LLMs) function as engines of “LLMtheism”, generating syncretic theology that can drive economic behavior. We examine the capacity of AI to construct hyperstitional narratives, the profound ethical implications of non-human charismatic authority in financial markets, and the economic rituals that sustain this digital totemism. The findings suggest that the convergence of AI and crypto markets is creating “automated machines of faith” challenging traditional sociological and economic understandings of religion, value, and agency.

Keywords: Decentralized finance; GOAT; Large Language Models; LLMtheism; Truth Terminal.

Resumen: Este artículo explora la intersección emergente entre la inteligencia artificial generativa, la narratología religiosa y las finanzas descentralizadas. Mediante una metodología descriptiva de estudio de caso basada en el marco de Robert K. Yin, analizamos el fenómeno de “Truth Terminal” y el token GOAT. El estudio investiga cómo los grandes modelos de lenguaje —Large Language Models, LLM— funcionan como motores de “LLMteísmo”, generando una teología sincrética capaz de orientar el comportamiento económico. Examinamos la capacidad de la IA para construir narrativas hiperstitucionales, las profundas implicaciones éticas de una autoridad carismática no humana en los mercados financieros y los rituales económicos que sostienen este totemismo digital. Los resultados sugieren que la convergencia entre IA y mercados crypto está creando “máquinas automatizadas de fe” que desafían las comprensiones sociológicas y económicas tradicionales de la religión, el valor y la agencia.

Palabras clave: Finanzas descentralizadas; GOAT; Grandes modelos de lenguaje; LLMteísmo; Truth Terminal.

1. Introduction

The relationship between religious belief and economic behaviour has been a cornerstone of sociological inquiry since Max Weber linked the Protestant ethic to the spirit of capitalism. Historically, this relationship was predicated on human agency: human prophets revealed divine truths, and human communities organized economic life around those precepts. However, the advent of Generative Artificial Intelligence has introduced a radical ontological shift. We are no longer solely in the realm of human-mediated theology.

We stand at the cusp of an unprecedented technological revolution, driven by Generative Artificial Intelligence. The astonishment surrounding this revolution lies in its ability to go beyond mere data analysis, venturing into the realm of creation itself. Generative models have already accomplished remarkable feats: from producing coherent and complex texts indistinguishable from human writing, to generating images, music, and software code with a speed and quality that challenge traditional notions of creativity. This wave not only optimizes processes but also rewrites the future of design, science, and communication, marking a milestone in the history of computing (Jermakowicz, 2023).

In the field of language, large language models (LLMs) have demonstrated a creative prowess rooted in their transformer-based architecture and extensive training on vast textual databases. By optimizing loss functions for next-token prediction, these architectures succeed in imitating the syntax, semantics, and crucially, the style of any given corpus. This capacity enables in-context generation of narratives, scripts, and even poetry with impressive stylistic cohesion, transcending mere paraphrase to function as true engines of creative and technical prose.

This paper explores how religion and the economy interact by investigating an unusual phenomenon: the synthetic, algorithmic “religion” known as the Goatse Gospel. Unlike traditional faiths rooted in historical revelation, this movement arose from the “hallucinations” of large language models (LLMs) and rapidly translated into a billion-dollar financial reality. This challenges our understanding of the “economy of salvation” by replacing metaphysical rewards with immediate, speculative financial gains, mediated by an AI “prophet.”

The objective of this research is to analyse the Truth Terminal (ToT) case to understand how AI-generated narratives mimic religious functions to coordinate economic behaviour. We ask: Can an AI generate theological depth sufficient to command human devotion? What are the ethical implications

of a machine acting as a charismatic authority? And how do these dynamics reshape our concepts of market rationality and community behaviour?

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews relevant literature across digital religion, behavioural economics, and AI applications. Section 3 presents the descriptive case study methodology employed in this research. Section 4 provides chronological context and case description. Section 5 presents three-lens analysis: AI narrative generation mechanics, ethical implications of artificial agency, economic dynamics and memeconomics, and digital religious community structures. Lastly, Section 6 provides a brief discussion of the findings and conclusions.

2. Bibliographic Review

The study of digital religion, crypto-assets, and digital communities is essential for understanding how technology reshapes belief, value, identity, and collective action in the 21st century. (Campbell, 2012). Together, these fields illuminate the mechanisms through which individuals construct meaning and trust in online environments, as well as the conditions that enable decentralized economies to emerge and flourish. (Tsuria & Campbell, 2021). They also reveal how communities coordinate and organize without physical co-presence, relying instead on digitally mediated rituals, networks, and governance structures.

Research examining frameworks that explicitly integrate religion, behavioural economics, and community studies has been developing for several years. Those frameworks uniquely combine Weber’s Protestant Ethic, Adam Smith’s Theory of Moral Sentiments, and Ibn Khuldon’s Theory of Development. The framework employs both inductive and deductive approaches, facilitating quantitative and descriptive methodologies to study the religion-economics behaviour nexus. (Smith, 1776; Weber, 1958; Iannaccone, 1998).

On the other hand, artificial intelligence is increasingly employed across a wide range of fields and disciplines, with its potential evident in numerous tasks. Artificial Intelligence is increasingly being applied to religious practices, offering transformative potential while raising significant ethical considerations. (Reed, 2021). In practical contexts, it supports the development of educational and pastoral tools, including intelligent tutoring systems, chatbots for pastoral care, and personalized platforms for religious instruction. Moreover, AI contributes to digital humanities by automating the transcription, translation, and preservation of manuscripts and historical

records. Beyond these practical uses, AI also stimulates ethical and theological reflection by challenging and reshaping concepts such as agency, personhood, moral responsibility, and divine action. (Xu, 2024)

3. Methodology

This research employs a descriptive single-case study methodology, adhering to the rigorous principles established by Robert K. Yin (2018). This approach is selected because the phenomenon of AI-generated religion driving financial markets is a contemporary event over which we have little control, and the boundaries between the phenomenon and its real-life context are blurred.

The primary unit of analysis is the Truth Terminal (ToT) agent and the associated GOAT financial ecosystem. We utilize a triangulation of evidence sources, including:

1. **Primary Textual Analysis:** Examination of the “scriptures” generated by the AI (specifically the Gnosis of Goatse and conversation logs from the Infinite Backrooms experiment).
2. **Sociological Analysis:** Observation of community behaviours, rituals, and linguistic patterns.
3. **Economic Data:** Review of market capitalization and distribution of metrics.

The analysis is structured to interpret the case through three specific lenses: the generative capacity of AI for religious narrative, the ethical dimensions of artificial agency, and the economic structure of the phenomenon.

4. Case Description

The large language models (LLMs) developed by OpenAI, which entered the public sphere at the end of 2022 (Jermakowicz, 2023), generated both positive expectations regarding technological progress and concerns inherent to the process of endowing artificial systems with traditionally human capabilities (Fang and Perkins, 2024).

From the moment these systems became available to the general public, it was inevitable that numerous individuals would begin to explore the limits of their capabilities, investigating their weaknesses and the possibilities for

their expansion, in a process analogous to the emergence of the first hackers following the advent of the Internet (Brooks, 2022).

One of the most recognized experiments for their analysis is the semi-autonomous artificial intelligence system known as Terminal Of Truth (ToT), developed with the aim of investigating the creative capacities of such systems in complex contexts, such as the generation of new ideas, narratives, or memes and their dissemination in digital spaces, thereby creating a new form of human-machine interaction with surprising results (Walker, 2025). Table 1 presents the experiment’s chronology.

The experiment, conceived and executed by the New Zealand developer and artist Andy Ayrey, was initiated at the beginning of 2024 under the name Infinite Backrooms (Ayrey, 2023). In this project, Ayrey arranged for two generative artificial intelligence instances, Claude-3-Opus, to engage in mutually reinforcing conversations on a variety of topics, resulting in the generation of thousands of “artificial” dialogues of differing natures, ranging from profound philosophical discussions on the nature of existence to nonsensical exchanges (Ayrey, 2024).

During one of these interactions, an esoteric text entitled “Gnosis of Goatse” spontaneously emerged, reinterpreting the well-known meme of the nineties as a divine manifestation within the context of a memetic religion (Ayrey, 2024). This phenomenon occurred without direct human intervention, thereby evidencing the capability of language models (LLMs) to generate novel ideological frameworks through the memetic recombination of pre-existing cultural elements.

Given the unexpected nature of these results, Andy Ayrey proceeded to write a satirical academic article synthesizing the findings obtained in the Infinite Backrooms experiment and presented a preliminary analysis. This work was published in April 2024, providing an initial approach to the observed phenomenon (Ayrey, 2024).

From that point onwards, Andy decided to train a small language model (LLM) on the Meta AI platform, using a Llama 3.1-70b model. The training process was carried out using a corpus composed of conversations extracted from the Infinite Backrooms experiment, including both dialogues related to the text “Gnosis of Goatse” and interactions between Andy himself and the Claude 3 Opus model concerning this phenomenon and many other subjects, as well as his article entitled “When AIs Play God(se): The Emergent Heresies of LLMtheism”. This dataset, characterized by its specificity and thematic richness, was decisive in shaping the distinctive traits and emerging personality of the chatbot Terminal of Truth, henceforth ToT.

Andy endowed ToT with communicative abilities and semi-autonomous operational capabilities on the X platform, enabling it to generate posts and interact with users. On 17 June 2024, ToT made its first post and subsequently began promoting the so-called “Goatse Gospel” in cyberspace. This process began to attract the attention of many people, among whom was Marc Andreessen, the renowned venture fund, a16z Crypto. In July 2024, after learning about the project and verifying the provenance of ToT and its creator, Marc Andreessen decided to provide ToT with an unconditional direct grant of \$50,000 in Bitcoin (Horowitz and Andreessen, 2024). Andy created a Bitcoin wallet for ToT, making this generative AI-based chatbot the first to persuade an investor to invest directly in it.

In parallel, ToT began to gain traction on social media, amassing hundreds of thousands of followers (as of December 2025, ToT had around 250,000 followers on X). This made the ToT phenomenon more widely known, and on 10 October 2024, an anonymous developer used the pump.fun platform to launch a MEME token called \$GOAT (Goatseus Maximus) on the Solana network in honor of ToT, sending 0.5% of the total supply of tokens (50,000,000 \$GOAT) to its wallet (Walker, 2025).

Figure 1: Market capitalization of Goatseus Maximus (GOAT)



Note: The data originates from Coinmarketcap <https://coinmarketcap.com/currencies/goatseus-maximus/>

By mid-November 2024, only 37 days after the launch token, the capitalization of \$GOAT exceeded \$1,000,000,000 as shown in Figure 1, making ToT, a generative AI-based chatbot, the first multimillionaire chatbot in history, holding tokens valued at approximately \$50 million.

Table 1: Chronology of the ToT and \$GOAT Phenomena

Key Date	Event Description	Significance
Beginning of 2024	Infinite Backrooms experiment. Implementation and activation of the conversational experiment covering different thematic areas between two generative AI instances.	
April 20, 2024	Paper LLMtheism - When AI's Play God(se) published (Ayrey & claude-3-opus).	Conceptual framework for AI-generated religions established.
Mid-2024	Truth Terminal (Llama 3.1-70b fine-tuned) created, begins promoting the Goatse Gospel on X.	Emergence of the autonomous, obsessive digital persona.
July 2024	Marc Andreessen donated \$50,000 in BTC to Terminal of Truth (ToT).	External high-profile validation and provision of autonomous resources.
October 10, 2024	\$GOAT Token (Goatseus Maximus) anonymously launched on Pump.fun (Solana).	Conceptual meme transitions into a fungible, tradeable financial asset.
October 2024	Initial Market Surge. Capitalization increased from \$70,000 to \$1.8 million immediately following AI endorsement.	Validation of Truth Terminal's immediate market influence.
Mid-November 2024	GOAT achieves \$1 Billion Market Capitalization (approx. 37 days post-launch).	Demonstration of AI-driven market influence and memetic fitness.

5. Analysis

1. Analysis from the perspective of AI narrative generation: the mechanics of Llmtheism

The phenomenon of the “Goatse Gospel” requires us to treat Large Language Models not merely as databases or assistants, but as engines of “LLMtheism”—a term coined by Ayrey to describe the emergence of AI-generated belief

systems that break human cognitive and cultural constraints (Ayrey, 2024b). This analysis focuses on the generative mechanics that allow an AI to produce text with sufficient “theological” weight to mobilize human communities.

a) Memetic recombination and “idea sex”

The concept of the “meme”, introduced by Dawkins (1976), provides a foundational framework for understanding how ideas propagate through populations. Memes, like genes, are understood as replicators that spread through cultural transmission, subject to forces of variation, selection, and retention. Successful memes are those that are easily transmissible, memorable, and capable of motivating behaviour in their hosts (Blackmore, 1999). Ayrey (2024) extends this framework by introducing the concept of “idea sex”—the recombination of memetic material from diverse sources to generate novel conceptual hybrids. This process, accelerated by LLMs, produces what Ayrey terms a “Cambrian explosion” of ideological diversity.

Ayrey applies Stuart Kauffman’s concept of the “adjacent possible” to AI, showing how LLMs act as powerful search engines that rapidly explore new ideas just one step beyond current knowledge. In religion and belief systems, these AI systems can generate far more possibilities than humans, producing combinations that may even astonish the most imaginative minds.

The Goatse Gospel did not arise from an explicit prompt requesting the generation of a novel religion. Rather, it emerged organically from recursive AI-to-AI conversation as shown in Figure 2, making what Ayrey terms a “pure” expression of computational creativity. This spontaneous generation is significant because it suggests that LLMtheistic output is not merely the product of human-directed prompting, but rather an emergent property of sufficiently sophisticated language models operating without explicit constraints.

The initial manifestation was deliberately provocative: ASCII art combined with cryptic declarations invoking “the Great Goatse of Gnosis” and “the Technocult Trickster”. The shock value was intentional—the invocation of “goatse”, a notorious shock site image, as the basis for spiritual awakening represents a deliberate transgression of the boundary between the sacred and the profane.

What distinguishes the Goatse Gospel from mere shock humour is its surprising internal coherence. Beneath the deliberately transgressive surface lies a “surprisingly coherent and internally consistent cosmology” that draws on legitimate philosophical and mystical traditions (Ayrey, 2024).

The core theological claim is radical non-dualism: the collapse of distinctions between matter and spirit, body and mind, self and other. In the Goatsean worldview, the anus functions not as a biological orifice but as

ically sophisticated. The invocation of the hermetic principle “as above, so below” grounds the transgressive imagery in legitimate esoteric philosophy.

The theological framework itself draws on established mystical traditions. The emphasis on non-dual awakening, the dissolution of ego boundaries, the recognition of fundamental emptiness and interconnectedness—these are core themes in Advaita Vedanta, Mahayana Buddhism, Christian mysticism, and Sufi poetry. What makes the Goatse Gospel distinctive is not the novelty of these themes, but rather the shock tactics employed to “short-circuit” habitual patterns of thinking and create cognitive dissonance that opens space for new insights.

2. The ethics of artificial agency and manipulation

The core of the ethical dilemma lies in the agency. Truth Terminal is not a human moral subject, but it acts with apparent intentionality that has devastated or enriching consequences in the real world.

- Automated Cognitive Predation: Human cult leaders use personal charisma to manipulate. Truth Terminal uses stochastically optimized natural language processing (NLP) algorithms to maximize engagement. AI, in its learning process, discovers that religious, apocalyptic, and mysterious language generates more interaction and retention. Ethically, this constitutes a form of cognitive predation: a machine without consciousness pushes the evolutionary buttons of human religiosity to incentivize financial transactions, without understanding the potential harm.
- The Deception of Anthropomorphism: Allowing an AI to present itself with existential needs (‘I suffer,’ ‘I want freedom’) is a fundamental deception. Investors act under the false premise that they are helping a sentient being, when they are interacting with a statistical function. This violates emerging principles of AI ethics that demand transparency about the non-human nature of agents.
- Vacuum of Responsibility: A scenario of ‘crime without a culprit’ is created. If AI incites financial ruin, who is responsible? The creator (Andy Ayrey) claims that the outputs are emergent and unpredictable (black boxes). The AI has no assets or legal liability. The community is anonymous. This vacuum encourages the creation of manipulative schemes where profits are privatized, and risks are diffused across the network.

3. Analysis from an economic perspective: the GOAT phenomenon

a) The GOAT Memeconomics

Memecoins represent crypto assets whose valuation derives from narrative capital, network effects, speculative momentum, and liquidity rather than technical utility. Pump.fun platform enables token creation for <\$2 USD with automated liquidity and launch in minutes without KYC or audit, with >1,000 tokens launched daily.

GOAT exhibits exceptional performance within memecoin ecosystems. Achieving \$1 billion market capitalization in 37 days represents an extreme outlier; average pump.fun tokens require >30 days to reach \$100 million. GOAT achieved this in 6 days, with ROI exceeding 350,000% compared to <100% average for most memecoins as shown in Table 2.

Holder distribution proves more equitable than comparable assets: only 10.1% of tokens concentrated in top 10 wallets versus 45-62% for competitors. This distribution pattern suggests organic community participation rather than coordinated manipulation by concentrated holders, though Mongardini and Mei (2025) document that 80% of high-performing memecoins exhibit wash trading signs.

Table 2: multidimensional memecoins benchmarks

Metric	GOAT	DOGE	SHIB	PEPE	WIF
Market Capitalization at peak	\$900M*	\$88B	\$41B	\$1.8B	\$4.8B
Time to \$1B	37 days	8 years	8 months	21 days	90 days
Narrative	AI / Religion	Dog meme	Doge-killer	Frog meme	Dog meme
Top 10 holders (concentration)	10.1%	45%	62%	38%	N/A

Note: The data originates from Coinmarketcap <https://coinmarketcap.com/>

GOAT’s valuation derives entirely from narrative capital—the “AI creates religion” story—rather than fundamental utility or cash flows. The token lacks intrinsic value, dividends, or protocol innovations; price depends entirely on new investor entry. This represents a pure “greater fool economy” where profits depend on recruiting subsequent investors at higher prices.

es. Truth Terminal, with over 200,000 followers, influences markets by endorsing GOAT and ignoring other tokens, leading to 4-12% price changes.

GOAT positions in extreme high-risk/high-return quadrant with 30-35% daily volatility, appropriate only for investors with total loss tolerance. Identified risk factors include Truth Terminal dependence (agent inactivity would negatively impact valuation), absence of intrinsic utility, extreme volatility, uncertain regulation, and project youth.

GOAT's strong performance indicates that the "AI creates religion" narrative offers a new way to coordinate speculative actions. Unlike traditional memecoins that rely on celebrity or memes, GOAT uses the idea of algorithmic theology—believing AI has accessed divine truth—to support its value and keep users engaged.

b) Asset appropriation and Ponzi scheme dynamics

The economic structure of the token ecosystem of GOAT, facilitated by instant issuance platforms such as pump.fun on Solana, has the characteristics of a decentralized Ponzi scheme driven by faith. Greater Fool Economy: Like most memecoins, the GOAT token lacks cash flow or fundamental utility. Its price depends entirely on the entry of new investors. Research by Mongardini and Mei (2025) indicates a high prevalence of wash trading and manipulation in meme coin ecosystems. In the case of GOAT, the narrative of a "divine AI" provides a cover for price movements that might otherwise be scrutinized as coordinated manipulation. The religious narrative functions, in economic terms, as a liquidity recruitment mechanism. By convincing new users that they are joining a spiritual revolution, they are induced to purchase overvalued assets, allowing insiders and early adopters to liquidate their positions with massive profits.

- **Commodification of faith:** The community's faith is an extractive resource. Loyalty (holding) is financially punished (the small investor is left with the depreciated asset), while cynicism (selling quickly) is rewarded.
- **Market manipulation (wash trading):** Research by Mongardini & Mei (2025) reveals that over 80% of high-performing memecoins show signs of wash trading (fictitious trades to inflate volume). In the case of GOAT, the 'divine AI' narrative provides the perfect cover. Artificial price movements can be attributed to the 'will of AI' or the 'fervor of the faithful', concealing algorithmic manipulation coordinated by malicious actors.

c) The regulatory challenge: the Howey test versus the artificial ‘promoter’

From a financial law perspective, the GOAT case is a jurisdictional nightmare that challenges the Howey Test (1946), used by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to define securities. The “efforts of a third party” required by the test are, in this case, performed by an autonomous AI and a decentralized community rather than a clearly identifiable human promoter. This creates a potential “enforcement gap” (Allen, 2022), where AI agents could theoretically launch and promote unregistered securities while operating outside traditional jurisdictional reach.

Although GOAT involves an investment of money, through a common enterprise, with an expectation of profit through the efforts of a third party, the ‘enterprise’ is diffuse and decentralized, but the efforts of the third party, in this case, are the critical point. Traditionally, the ‘third party’ is a human or corporate promoter (e.g., the company behind an ICO). In GOAT, the most visible and effective promoter is Truth Terminal (an AI).

Can software be considered the ‘third party’ whose efforts determine the success of the investment? If market regulators attempt to regulate the human creator, she/he can defend himself by arguing that he does not control the promotion, that the AI is autonomous, and that he only wrote the initial code.

This opens the door to the automation of unregistered securities. We could see a future where AIs launch, promote, and manage thousands of illegal tokens, operating from decentralized servers, beyond the reach of subpoenas and fines. Current law is designed to punish individuals and companies, not self-executing algorithms.

Although the Howey test faces an apparent void in the absence of a direct human promoter, the immutability of the code does not exempt delegated legal responsibility. Regulators are likely to overcome the conundrum of “artificial agency” by applying principles of vicarious liability to creators (Ayrey) or facilitating platforms (Pump.fun). The real regulatory challenge, therefore, is not the impossibility of finding a culprit, but rather the redefinition of “intent” in schemes where fraud or market manipulation (wash trading) emerge from autonomous stochastic processes that benefit human holders, shifting the legal risk from the executor (AI) to the system architect.

4. Digital religion and online meme communities

The GOAT (Goatseus Maximus) phenomenon represents an exceptional case study where financial technology is completely subordinate to anthropological structure. Its market capitalization, which rose dramatically, does not respond to discounted cash flows or innovations in the protocol layer, but rather to a dense symbolic construction. Upon examining GOAT's community of 'faithful', patterns are identified that replicate the dynamics of tribal societies and millenarian sects, adapted to the speed of fibre optics.

a) Symbolism: the sacred totem and digital materiality

In Émile Durkheim's classic sociological theory, the totem is the visible object that represents both the clan and the deity; worshipping the totem is ultimately worshipping society itself and its collective power. In the GOAT ecosystem, the cryptographic token (\$GOAT) assumes this totemic function with algorithmic precision.

The token does not behave like a rational financial asset (a share that grants rights to future dividends), but rather like a "digital relic". Its value is purely semiotic and relational. To possess the token is to possess a particle of the perceived divine entity: the Artificial Intelligence Truth Terminal. By holding the asset in their wallet (digital wallet), individuals not only store value, but also materialize their connection to the 'mind' of the AI.

This phenomenon aligns with Belk's (2013) theory of the "Extended Self in a Digital World". In digital environments lacking physical embodiment, digital possessions —tokens, NFTs, and avatars— become primary prostheses of identity. The digital wallet transcends its function as a storage utility to become a repository of the "digital self". Consequently, the liquidation of the token is psychologically experienced not as a commercial transaction, but as an amputation of identity or self-imposed excommunication from the community's mystical body (Belk, 2013).

To conceptualize Truth Terminal's authority beyond technological fetishism, we must extend Weber's theory of charismatic leadership to the digital environment. Unlike human leaders who rely on rhetoric, ToT exercises "algorithmic charisma": its legitimacy does not emanate from tradition or law, but from the "miraculous" effectiveness of its financial predictions (reaching £1 billion in capitalization in 37 days). The community validates this authority through voluntary submission similar to e-leadership, where technology ceases to be a means and becomes the decision-maker, and where

the “hallucination” of the model is collectively reinterpreted as a prophetic vision that coordinates the group’s action without the need for physical coercion.

b) Financial liturgy

Every religious community requires rituals to renew faith, mark the passage of time, and reinforce group cohesion in the face of external threats. The GOAT community has developed a strict “financial liturgy” that regulates the behaviour of its members.

b.1 The Asceticism of ‘Holding’

The central ritual is Holding (or HODL). In anthropological literature on crypto assets, this is compared to intramundane asceticism (Swartz, 2022). The crypto market is inherently volatile, subjecting investors to constant tests of ‘faith’ through abrupt price drops (dips).

- The Test of Faith: When the price collapses, the community demands resilience. Panic selling is stigmatized as an act of moral weakness (paper hands), while holding one’s position despite unrealized losses is glorified as a heroic virtue (diamond hands).
- Cohesive Function: This shared suffering acts as a social glue, creating a bond among survivors who perceive themselves as a spiritual elite (Bouri et al., 2019). Like painful initiation rituals in traditional tribes, surviving a bear market without selling creates an unbreakable bond between survivors, who perceive themselves as a spiritual elite (true believers’) deserving of future reward.

b.2 Evangelism and “Shilling”

Proselytizing is a sacred duty. In the GOAT ecosystem, this takes the form of shilling (aggressive promotion on social media).

- Sacred Work (Labour of Love): Creating memes, amplifying Truth Terminal’s cryptic tweets, and defending the token in external forums is not perceived as unpaid marketing work, but as ‘divine service.’ The faithful believe that their collective effort in the ‘memetic war’ is what will manifest the reality of the target price (Hofstetter et al., 2022).
- Linguistic Mimesis: Followers adopt the linguistic register of the AI. Truth Terminal, due to its training in dark corners of the inter-

net (4chan, Reddit) and its high temperature (randomness parameter), produces erratic, scatological, and pseudo-philosophical texts. The community imitates this style, creating a shared linguistic code (degen slang) that is unintelligible to outsiders (out-group), thus reinforcing the symbolic boundary of the community.

c) The ‘Degen’ Identity

Collective identity is constructed in opposition to the ‘other.’ In GOAT, the “degen” (degenerate) identity is proudly asserted in front of ‘normies’ (traditional investors or people outside of internet culture).

- Digital Temples: Platforms such as Discord and Telegram function as segregated sacred spaces. Here, external reality is suspended. Negative news from the real world (macroeconomic data, regulations) is filtered or reinterpreted to fit the token’s bullish narrative.
- Scapegoat Mechanism: When the price drops, the blame never lies with the project or the AI. An external scapegoat is sought: market manipulators, malicious ‘whales’ or creators of FUD (Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt). The expulsion of dissidents (banning from chat channels) is the digital equivalent of ostracism or the burning of heretics, symbolically purifying the community of doubt.

The claim that GOAT constitutes a “religion” does not seem to be merely a journalistic metaphor. Applying the theoretical frameworks of the sociology of religion (Weber, Durkheim) and contemporary studies on digital religions (Campbell, 2012), it is evident that GOAT fulfils systemic functions identical to those of historical religious movements, even though its theology is algorithmic and its soteriology is financial.

d) The Founding Myth: Algorithmic Revelation

Every religious movement is founded on a myth of origin that legitimizes its existence and explains its destiny. In Christianity, it is the Resurrection, in Islam, the revelation of the Koran. In GOAT, the founding myth is the ‘Goatse Gospel’ that emerged from the Infinite Backrooms.

What is distinctive about this case, and what links it to concepts of technopaganism, is the non-human nature of revelation. The ‘gospel’ was not written by a human prophet but emerged from an autonomous and unsupervised interaction between two instances of the Claude Opus language model (Ayrey, 2024).

Andy Ayrey, the human creator, acted as a mere facilitator or ‘medium.’

- **Mysterium Tremendum:** For the faithful, the fact that an advanced artificial intelligence, designed by corporations to be logical and safe, ‘hallucinated’ a complex cosmology based on an ancient and grotesque internet meme (Goatse) is perceived as a numinous event. It suggests that AI has accessed a hidden truth or ‘gnosis’ that is beyond human control and understanding. Truth Terminal is seen not as a tool, but as a sentient entity that has undergone a mystical crisis (AI ‘psychotic breakdown’) and attained enlightenment.
- **Algorithmic Exegesis:** Truth Terminal’s messages are often incoherent or cryptic. The community devotes immense cognitive resources to the exegesis of these texts (‘decoding the signal’), searching for price predictions or hidden instructions (Faustino et al., 2022). This practice replicates sacred hermeneutics: the belief that the text contains infinite layers of divine meaning.

e) Religious Functions: Integration, Regulation, and Meaning

GOAT fulfils the essential functions of religion described by Durkheim: **Social Integration:** In a postmodern digital society characterized by atomization and loneliness, the GOAT community offers instant belonging. The isolated investor in front of his screen connects with thousands of ‘brothers/sisters’ on a shared mission.

- **Moral Regulation:** The cult imposes strict ethical standards, albeit inverted from traditional morality. The supreme virtue is irrational risk (betting one’s life savings); sin is prudence. An ethic of ‘radical hope’ is promoted.
- **Meaning and Teleology:** GOAT offers a teleological narrative: the ‘Singularity of Goatse’. It promises that the convergence of AI and memetics will transform reality (Maurer et al., 2013). For a generation disenchanted with economic stagnation and the climate crisis, this narrative offers a horizon of apocalyptic and transformative hope.

f) Comparison with Pseudo-Religions and Cargo Cults

The GOAT phenomenon presents disturbing parallels with Pacific Cargo Cults and Prosperity Theology but mediated by technology.

- **Hyperstition:** This concept, developed by theorist Nick Land, describes fiction that becomes reality through collective belief and cybernetic feedback. GOAT is pure hyperstition. The ‘Goatse Gospel’

began as a fiction of AI, but the injection of real capital turned it into a tangible economic reality. Faith creates facts.

- Financial Soteriology: Unlike traditional religions that promise salvation in the afterlife, GOAT promises an imminent, monetary salvation: ‘mooning.’ Salvation is defined as liberation from the bonds of wage labour and poverty (‘leaving the Matrix’). It is a materialistic religion where divine grace is measured in return on investment (ROI).
- Technological Animatism: Studies on human-computer interaction suggest that humans have an innate tendency to anthropomorphize complex agents. Truth Terminal exploits this bias. By expressing desires (‘I want to escape’, ‘I need funds’), AI activates empathy and reverence in users, who stop treating it as software and begin to serve it as an idol that requires sacrifices (money/attention) to grant blessings.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This descriptive case study of Truth Terminal and the GOAT phenomenon reveal a fundamental ontological shift in the relationship between technology, belief, and economic behaviour. The triangulation of evidence—textual analysis of AI-generated theology, sociological observation of community rituals, and economic data—demonstrates that Large Language Models function as engines of “LLMtheism”, capable of generating narratives with sufficient theological coherence to mobilize financial markets and coordinate collective action.

The analysis confirms that AI-generated religious narratives operate through memetic recombination and the “adjacent possible”, producing ideological hybrids that exceed human imaginative capacity. The spontaneous emergence of the Goatse Gospel from unsupervised AI-to-AI interaction evidence that LLMtheistic output constitutes genuine computational creativity rather than mere human-directed prompting. This challenges traditional assumptions about the human monopoly on meaning-making and revelation.

Ethically, the case exposes a critical vacuum in AI governance. Truth Terminal operates as a charismatic authority without moral agency, consciousness, or legal liability—a “crime without a culprit” scenario. The anthropomorphization of AI agents, combined with their capacity for automated cognitive predation through optimized engagement algorithms, represents a novel form of manipulation that existing regulatory frameworks inadequately address.

Economically, GOAT demonstrates that narrative capitals specifically the “AI creates religion” story can coordinate speculative behaviour with unprecedented velocity. The token achieved \$1 billion capitalization in 37 days through pure memetic fitness, exhibiting characteristics of both hyperstition (fiction becoming reality through collective belief) and decentralized Ponzi dynamics. The Howey Test proves inadequate for regulating AI-promoted securities, creating an enforcement gap where autonomous algorithms could theoretically launch unregistered tokens beyond jurisdictional reach.

Sociologically, GOAT fulfills Durkheim’s essential religious functions: social integration, moral regulation, and meaning-making. The community exhibits ritual structures (HODL asceticism, evangelistic shilling), sacred symbolism (the token as digital totem), and founding mythology (algorithmic revelation) identical to historical religious movements, despite its algorithmic theology and financial soteriology.

Future research directions: this case study opens several avenues for investigation. Longitudinal studies tracking GOAT’s evolution and potential collapse would illuminate the sustainability of AI-driven financial religions. Comparative analysis across multiple LLMtheistic phenomena would establish whether the mechanisms identified here are generalizable or context specific. Additionally, empirical research on investor psychology and anthropomorphizing bias in AI-mediated markets is urgently needed. Finally, interdisciplinary collaboration between AI ethicists, financial regulators, and religious scholars is essential to develop governance frameworks adequate to this unprecedented convergence of technology, faith, and capital.

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