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Theological Observer

AI Nannies?

On August 11, 2023, the Wall Street Journal featured an article titled “The AI Nanny in Your Baby’s Future.”¹ Shortly thereafter, I submitted the following letter to the editor that was unfortunately not printed.

It was with great interest that I read your recent article on the potential use of artificial intelligence to raise our children. I was particularly intrigued with this statement: “Human infants arrive in the world a bit underdone. A likely evolutionary reason is that if a typical fetus spent any longer developing in utero, its head would simply be too large to deliver safely. So nature had to compromise.” No one will dispute that development of the human brain does occur “at a breathtaking pace during the first two years of life” and certainly is part of the reason why humans “are the most intelligent, creative and productive of all species.”

But what if this reality isn’t the result of evolution but of a higher design? In most religious traditions—certainly the case in the Judeo-Christian—there is no higher calling than the care and nurture of children, a calling that requires sacrifice. Unlike a bird, which is soon pushed out of the nest, or any number of four-legged creatures that quickly learn to fend for themselves, children require sacrifice of self from their caregivers. Is that sometimes a burden? Certainly. But rather than seeing it that way, should parents perhaps instead learn to recognize it as part of God’s design by which they learn selfless love?

Maybe we should be worried about AI nannies. But let’s not forget the harm they could bring to parents’ own development.

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Sasse, Evolution, Mayes

One of the fascinating and most prominent twentieth-century theologians for confessional Lutherans especially in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

¹ Dana Suskind, “The AI Nanny in Your Baby’s Future,” *The Wall Street Journal*, August 11, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-ai-nanny-in-your-babys-future-999d0e50>.