

Becoming, Not Merely Producing: Moral Agency and the Family in the Age of New Media and Artificial Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

Set against the United Arab Emirates' designation of 2026 as the Year of the Family, this address reframes the central question of the digital age from the technical to the moral: not what new media and artificial intelligence can do, but whether their use helps human beings become better people and strengthens the families and communities to which they belong. It proposes two evaluative questions for assessing any technology, whether it makes us better and more cohesive, and whether the time devoted to it enlarges or constricts our capacity to live, love, and serve others meaningfully. Positioning the family as the indispensable formative environment, likened to a mirror in which individuals confront imperfections they might not otherwise acknowledge, it argues that the home is the primary setting in which children acquire both values and the disciplined, exemplary use of emerging tools. Central to the argument is the principle of individual moral agency, the capacity to choose and act in accordance with what is good, honest, and just, which must be guarded against the addictive and manipulative tendencies of new media and against an uncritical trust in artificial intelligence. The address insists that the purpose of engaging technology is not the production of impressive content or analysis but human becoming: the formation of a resilient generation, secure in its identity. It concludes that technology should support, never supplant, the collective effort to help young people discover who they truly are and develop the moral agency that will strengthen their lives.