

An Interdisciplinary Evaluation of the Relationship Between the Authority Figure of The Father in the Family and the Authority Figure of God in Religion

Ailedeki Otorite Figürü Baba ile Dindeki Otorite Figürü Tanrı Arasındaki İlişkinin Disiplinler Arası Yaklaşımla Değerlendirilmesi

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Makale Bilgisi / Article Information

Atıf / Citation: Yüce, Fatma. "An Interdisciplinary Evaluation of the Relationship Between the Authority Figure of the Father in the Family and the Authority Figure of God in Religion". *Şırnak Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 37 (Ekim 2025), 135-148.

ABSTRACT

*Date of
Submission*
22.05.2025

Date of Acceptance
18.08.2025

*Date of
Publication*
15.10.2025

Keywords:

Philosophy of
Religion, Sociology,
Psychology, Family,
Religion, Authority,
Father-God
Relationship

The family is a formal, methodical, and systematic institution consisting of a mother, father, and children, in which authority relationships are defined. Religion, on the other hand, is an institution that generates values and proposes a way of life, encompassing philosophical, psychological, and sociological dimensions, all systematized around an absolute authority. In the modern era, the shift from agricultural to industrial society, from rural to urban living, and from the extended to the nuclear family has transformed the understanding of authority in both the family and religion. This article aims to evaluate the relationship between the father, as the authority figure within the family, and the concept of divine authority in religion from an interdisciplinary perspective. The perspective and main arguments of this article are rooted in the philosophy of religion, while the concepts are drawn from the disciplines of sociology and psychology. This article aims to explore the possibility of explaining God's authority in religion through the authority of the father in the family, and to examine how the modern world's changes impact the authority within the Father-God relationship. Although numerous studies have investigated the family, none have explored the family-religion relationship through the lens of authority within the field of the philosophy of religion. The method of this article is literature analysis. Furthermore, analogy, as a method of reasoning, was utilized. This article concludes that the transformation of the father's authority within the family in the modern world has played a significant role in the transformation of God's authority in religion. Furthermore, the study found that while the authority of God can be interpreted analogically through the authority of the father, this analogy does not justify a conclusion regarding God's existence.

ÖZET

Geliş Tarihi
22.05.2025

Kabul Tarihi
18.08.2025

Yayın Tarihi
15.10.2025

Aile anne, baba ve çocuklardan oluşan içerisinde otorite ilişkilerinin belirlediği formel, düzenli ve sistemli bir kurumdur. Din ise felsefi, psikolojik ve sosyolojik yönleri bulunan mutlak bir otorite etrafında sistemleşmiş, değer üreten ve yaşam tarzı sunan bir kurumdur. Modern dönemde tarımdan sanayiye, kırdan kente ve geniş aileden çekirdek aileye geçişle birlikte aile ve din kurumlarındaki otorite anlayışı dönüşüme uğramıştır. Bu çalışmanın konusu ailedeki otorite figürü baba ile dindeki otorite figürü Tanrı arasındaki ilişkinin disiplinler arası yaklaşımla değerlendirilmesidir. Bu makalenin bakış açısı ve ana argümanları din felsefesine aittir, bununla birlikte kavramlar sosyoloji ve psikoloji disiplinlerinden alınmıştır. Çalışmanın amacı ailedeki baba otoritesinden hareketle dindeki Tanrı otoritesinin açıklanmasının mümkün olup olmadığını ortaya koymak, ayrıca modern dönemdeki değişimin baba-Tanrı ilişkisi kapsamında otoriteye yansımaları tespit etmektir. Aileyle ilgili çalışmalar oldukça fazla olmakla birlikte, din felsefesi alanında aile-din ilişkisinin otorite kavramı üzerinden değerlendirildiği herhangi bir çalışma bulunmamaktadır. Otorite üzerinden aile ve din ilişkilerinin tespit edilme girişimi makalenin orijinal tarafını ve önemini ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışmanın yöntemini literatür analizi oluşturmaktadır. Ayrıca

INTRODUCTION

The family is a formal, methodical, and systematic institution comprising a mother, a father, and their children. In modern times, the transition from agriculture to industry, from rural to urban life, and from extended to nuclear family structures has brought about significant changes and transformations in both family and religion, affecting individuals with their relationships with one another. These changes and transformations have also influenced authority figures and tendencies toward authority in both the family and religion. In this context, examining how the modern era has impacted the family and religion is essential for understanding the evolving dynamics and new codes that shape the family–religion relationship. This article aims to examine this relationship through the concept of authority and authority figures in both institutions, namely the father-God relationship.

Authority is the legitimate power of one person over others to direct them, determine the basic dynamics of the relationship between them, and be effective in the decision-making process. Max Weber (1864-1920), who classified the concept of authority, used the term 'herrschaft' to mean both sovereignty and authority.¹ Therefore, when authority is mentioned, sovereignty and power relations come to mind. According to Weber, "domination shall be identical with authoritarian power of command."² Those who hold power want to base their sovereignty on a legitimate basis. Weber explained three pure types of authority. Legal authority, free from personal, emotional, and irrational influences, is founded on rational principles and established laws, as well as on the belief in the legitimacy of existing rules and the right of those empowered by them to issue commands. Traditional authority, which represents the family as a small group and the state as a large group, is based on accustomed traditions and belief in the sanctity of ancient traditions and the legitimacy of those authorized by them. Charismatic authority is based on sacred powers, the God-given exemplary character of an individual, and the adherence to that individual's orders and rules.³ In this context, the father figure within the family can be associated with traditional authority, while

¹ Jonathan H. Turner vd., *Sosyolojik Teorinin Oluşumu*, çev. Ümit Tatlıcan (Bursa: Sentez Yayınları, 2018), 225.

² Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, çev. Guenther Roth - Claus Wittich (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1978), 946.

³ Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 215.

the God figure in religion may be regarded as the supreme embodiment of charismatic authority. In the modern world, it can be said that the power of traditional and charismatic authority has been broken and replaced by legal-rational authority. This transformation in authority can even be regarded as one of the defining features of modernity, alongside industrialization and urbanization.

The subject of this article is to examine the relationship between the father as the authority figure in the family and God as the authority figure in religion from the perspective of the philosophy of religion. This article aims to explore whether the authority of God in religion can be explained by analogy with the authority of the father in the family, and to examine how modern transformations have influenced authority within the context of the father–God relationship. Although numerous studies have been conducted on the family, and to a lesser extent within the philosophy of religion⁴, no study has specifically examined the intersection of family and faith through the lens of authority. This scope and approach reveal the originality and importance of the article. This article employs a literature-based analysis and utilizes analogy as a method of reasoning. The findings obtained in the article were analyzed with an interdisciplinary approach. Although the primary discipline of the article is philosophy of religion, philosophical, psychological, and sociological data are discussed together in this article. The perspective and main arguments of this article are rooted in the philosophy of religion, while the concepts are drawn from the disciplines of sociology and psychology.

1. An Authority-Centered Approach to the Family

The family is generally defined as the smallest unit in society, based on blood ties and marriage, and formed by the relationships between parents, children, and siblings. The family is a social institution characterized by sincere, warm, and trusting relationships between parents and children (and other relatives, depending on the family type). It serves as the primary context in which individuals are prepared for society and plays a vital role in the continuation of the human species.⁵ The family can also be defined as an institution with biological, psychological, and sociological functions, typically established by two adults of opposite sex who assume the roles of mother and father, bound by legal and ethical ties.⁶ From an authority perspective, the family can

⁴ Cafer Sadık Yaran, “İslam Düşüncesinde Ailenin Felsefi ve Etik Temelleri”, Küreselleşen Dünyada Aile 2009 Yılı Kutlu Doğum Sempozyumu Tebliğ ve Müzakereleri (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2010), 104-115; Fatma Yüce, “Modern Zamanlarda Sürdürülebilir Aile İçin Ben Merkezlikten Öteki Merkezliğe Geçiş”, Uluslararası Aile Sempozyumu: Aile Kurumunun Bekasına Yönelik Çağdaş Fırsatlar/Tehditler (Sinop: Sinop Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2020), 641-658.

⁵ Özer Ozankaya, *Toplumbilim* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1999), 357.

⁶ İbrahim Ethem Özgüven, *Evlilik ve Aile Terapisi*, ed. Naim Dilek (Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2014), 24.

be understood as a formal, methodical, and systematic institution composed of a mother, father, and children, within which authority relations are established.

The family serves as a bridge between the individual and society, functioning as a large living unit for the individual and a small living unit within the broader society. The 'family', which is the first and important stage in the process of human socialization, is seen as a microcosm (small universe) and 'society' as a macrocosm (large universe). In this understanding, which is shaped as the expression of the same phenomenon at different scales, society is considered a big family. These explanations make it understandable why the terms "society" and "family" are sometimes used interchangeably or with similar meanings in specific languages.⁷ Based on this conceptualization, it is possible to refer to the father a micro-authority within the institution of family, which is viewed as a microcosm, and the state-father (*parens patriae*) as a macro-authority within society, which is seen as a macrocosm. Similarly, God can be considered a macro-authority within the institution of religion, where authority extends and influences society as a whole. In this analogy, it is appropriate to regard God as the highest authority.

The family is classified according to household and authority relations. Generally, classification is commonly based on the household structure. In this context, the family is divided into two basic groups, such as the extended family and the nuclear family. The nuclear family, considered limited in terms of household size, consists of a mother, a father, and their children, and is also referred to as the small family, urban family, modern/contemporary family, modern democratic family, or narrow family. In contrast, the extended family includes more than two generations and two nuclear families, expanding the household with the children, parents, and siblings of the spouses' children; it is commonly known as the big family, traditional family, old family, or village (rural) family. In addition to these, a third type known as the transitional family has emerged, characterized by a unique identity that retains the traditional elements of the extended family while resembling the nuclear family in form and structure; this type is also referred to as the shanty or town family.⁸

In classifications based on authority, two primary types of families are identified: the matriarchal (matriarchy) and the patriarchal (patriarchy) family. In a matriarchal family, where the mother holds superiority and authority, matrilineal kinship is predominant. However, the head of the

⁷ Kadir Canatan, "Aile Kavramının Tanımı", *Aile Sosyolojisi*, ed. Kadir Canatan - Ergün Yıldırım (İstanbul: Açılım Kitap, 2011), 53.

⁸ Birsen Gökçe, "Aile ve Aile Tipleri Üzerinde Bir İnceleme", *Hacettepe Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi* 8/1-2 (1976), 60-63; Özgüven, *Evlilik ve Aile Terapisi*, 28-29; Gülbahar Gül, "Aile ve Evlilik Kurumu", *Evlilik Okulu: Evlilikte Kişilerarası İlişkiler ve İletişim Becerileri*, ed. Haluk Yavuzer (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2009), 25-27.

household—the authority figure—is often the mother’s brother, the uncle. In contrast, the patriarchal family is characterized by the father’s superiority and authority. Patriarchal families, in which paternal authority prevails, are common in almost all societies.⁹ Although family structures vary among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all three share patriarchal characteristics.¹⁰

The patriarchal family is characterized by absolute paternal authority, with the father deriving his authority from religious sources. Family members are devoted to the religion of the father’s ancestors and bear the responsibility of preserving this faith. Sons are valued as future fathers and representatives of God, while daughters are often marginalized. Upon marriage, women typically reside in their husband’s household (patrilocal residence), and kinship is traced through the father’s lineage. The father owns the family’s property and holds authority over its members. Thus, the patriarchal family is characterized by the father’s complete dominance in family relations. In societies where state authority is weak, paternal authority tends to prevail more strongly.¹¹

The modern world, characterized by urbanization and industrialization, has brought about significant changes to family structure. The nuclear family—commonly found in urban settings and engaged in trade or service sectors, with weaker kinship ties—has become more prevalent. Conversely, the extended family—typically located in rural areas, engaged in agriculture, and maintaining strong kinship bonds—has declined in importance. In nuclear families, paternal authority is more distributed among family members, whereas in extended families, the father’s authority (and that of his ancestors) remains unquestioned. In modern societies transitioning from land-based production to industrialized economies, paternal authority continues to hold sway in transitional family forms, which resemble nuclear families but still retain elements of the extended family.¹²

With the rise of the nuclear family in the modern era, the influence of paternal authority and its associated traditional values has diminished. However, paternal authority persists in extended families—though less common—and in transitional family types that emerged during this period of societal change. Based on the data presented by all these typologies, it can be concluded that the father’s authority in the family has decreased and sometimes lost its influence in the modern

⁹ Gökçe, “Aile ve Aile Tipleri Üzerinde Bir İnceleme”, 57-60; Enver Özkalp, *Sosyolojiye Giriş* (Eskişehir: Eğitim, Sağlık ve Bilimsel Araştırma Çalışmaları Vakfı Yayınları, 2003), 135-137.

¹⁰ Mehmet Akif Aydın, “Aile”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1989), 2/196-200.

¹¹ Gökçe, “Aile ve Aile Tipleri Üzerinde Bir İnceleme”, 60.

¹² Gökçe, “Aile ve Aile Tipleri Üzerinde Bir İnceleme”, 57-63; Özgüven, *Evlilik ve Aile Terapisi*, 28-29; Gül, “Aile ve Evlilik Kurumu”, 25-27.

world. It is similarly observed that families of the contemporary period cannot preserve their traditional beliefs, and a break in these beliefs is evident.

2. An Authority-Centered Approach to Religion

Religion is broadly understood as an institution embedded in culture that produces values. In a narrower sense, religion is often defined theistically, referring primarily to the Book Religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Within this context, religion is generally defined as a belief system that recognizes a personal God, as follows:

“It is an institution that has individual and social aspects, is systematized in terms of ideas and practices, offers a way of life to believers, and gathers them around a certain worldview. It is a way of valuing, appraising, and living... It is a voluntary attachment to a transcendent and holy Creator, surrender and submission to His will.”¹³

This definition highlights the philosophical, psychological, and sociological dimensions of religion. It addresses the institutional structure of religion while emphasizing belief in a Creator with absolute authority and the necessity of submission to His will. According to Rudolf Otto (1869–1937), religion is “the manifestation of the holy.”¹⁴ In this light, religion can also be understood as the manifestation of absolute authority. Theistic religions, in particular, can be interpreted within the framework of the father–son relationship. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) famously described Judaism as a “Father religion” and Christianity as a “Son religion,” where the old God, the Father, yields to Jesus, the Son—much like sons in ancient times aspired to succeed their fathers.¹⁵

The concept of God as Father is strongly emphasized in the Old Testament (e.g., 1 Chronicles 17:13; 22:10; 28:6; Isaiah 63:16; Psalms 2:7), and similar emphasis appears in the New Testament (e.g., Matthew 23:9; 6:9). In Christian doctrine, the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—clearly reflects the use of Father and Son imagery to describe God. Both Judaism and Christianity frame God within the scope of the father figure. In contrast, Islam rejects this notion. The Qur’an explicitly criticizes the idea of God as father or son, associating it with Jewish and Christian beliefs (Tawbah 9:30). As stated in Surah Al-Ikhlās (112:3), Allah “begetteth not, nor is He begotten.” Therefore, in Islamic theology, God is neither father nor son.

Atheists have defined religion in negative terms. The most well-known religious discourse of Karl Marx (1818-1883), the representative of sociological atheism, is that ‘Religion is the opium of the

¹³ Mehmet Aydın, *Din Felsefesi* (İzmir: İzmir İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 1999), 6.

¹⁴ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, çev. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 176.

¹⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion: Drei Abhandlungen* (Amsterdam: Verlag Allert de Lange, 1939), 157-158.

people'.¹⁶ Marx's remarkable definitions of religion are as follows: religion is 'the sigh of the oppressed creature'¹⁷, 'the heart of a heartless world'¹⁸, and 'the spirit of a spiritless situation'.¹⁹ Freud, the founder of psychoanalytic atheism, also had a view of religion parallel to Marx. Freud labelled religion, which Marx called opium, as a sleeping drug with a narcotic effect. While Marx viewed religion as a form of opium that anaesthetizes people, Freud regarded it as a kind of sleeping pill that lulls them into unconsciousness. Freud defines religion primarily as a universal neurosis of obsession (eine universelle Zwangsneurose).²⁰ Freud's other remarkable definition of religion is that religion is an 'illusion (Illusionen)'.²¹ Towards the end of his life, Freud attributed a cultural value to religion and described it as an archaic heritage (eine archaische Erbschaft).²² The theistic definition emphasizes institutional religion, while the atheistic definition outright rejects it. Deism, often described as belief in God without adherence to organized religion, similarly rejects institutional religion but, unlike atheism, affirms the existence of God, much like theism. While theism asserts God's authority and atheism denies it, deism accepts God's authority but interprets it within a rational framework. However, deism replaces worship with morality and rejects the notion of an institutional structure in which God actively intervenes in human affairs. Although deists acknowledge God, their conception of His authority is weakened and rests on fragile grounds. The institution of religion is generally supportive of the family institution. It is well recognized that the family plays a crucial role in sustaining and perpetuating religion.²³ In this context, by analogy, one might expect that a person who accepts the authority of the father in the family would also take the authority of God in religion, or vice versa. However, the acceptance or rejection of authority in one domain does not constitute substantial evidence for accepting or rejecting authority in the other. To date, no theistic argument has convincingly demonstrated that accepting paternal authority logically leads to acceptance of God's authority. In contrast, atheistic arguments that proceed in the opposite direction are numerous. One such argument is psychoanalytic atheism, which explains and denies God by interpreting Him as a projection of an exalted father figure. In analyzing the Father-God relationship through the lens of

¹⁶ Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", On Religion, ed. Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 42.

¹⁷ Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", 42.

¹⁸ Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", 42.

¹⁹ Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", 42.

²⁰ Sigmund Freud, "Zwangshandlungen und Religionsübungen", *Gesammelte Schriften* (Leipzig, Wien, Zürich: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1924), X/219-220.

²¹ Sigmund Freud, *Die Zukunft einer Illusion* (Leipzig, Wien, Zürich: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1928), 47.

²² Freud, *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion: Drei Abhandlungen*, 175-176, 177.

²³ Topses, *Kurumlar Sosyolojisi*, 122, 144-146.

Freud's psychoanalytic atheism, the concept emerges that the figure of God is an idealized reflection of the father—a refuge sought in childhood. Freud explains the origin of religion as rooted in the psychological needs of the individual, arguing that God is a construct formed to fulfill these needs. According to Freud, the need for religion arises from a childhood longing for a father, accompanied by feelings of helplessness during that period.²⁴

As a result, Freud does not ascribe authenticity to belief in God. Instead, he defines religion as an illusion grounded in the image of an exalted father.²⁵ For Freud, God is a projection of the human mind, created out of the desire for protection and security. The ambivalent feelings of fear and admiration a child holds toward the father are transferred to God in adulthood. To cope with helplessness, the individual creates an image of a powerful and protective God resembling the father figure. Thus, God emerges as an exalted father figure developed to defend against this vulnerability, and religion arises as a psychological defense mechanism.²⁶

In Freud's theory, the image of God parallels that of one's own father. He locates the exalted father figure in the unconscious and associates it with the Superego within his triadic model of personality—id, ego, and superego. The Superego develops through identification with the father, the authority figure in childhood, and over time becomes an internalized protector of the father's character.²⁷ Acting as the successor and representative of the parental figure who controlled the individual's behavior in childhood, the Superego exerts pressure on the ego, maintaining its dependence. This indicates that paternal authority underpins the differentiation of the Superego from the ego.²⁸ In essence, the Superego functions as a substitute father, embodying authority within the psyche.²⁹

Freud further connects the exalted father image to the Oedipus complex, a central theory in his work. His view of religion as a form of neurosis is based on this connection. The Oedipus complex highlights the child's simultaneous fear of and desire for the father. The father's authority restricts the child from satisfying these unconscious wishes, which are then relegated to the realm of dreams and fantasies. Unable to fulfill these desires due to the overwhelming paternal authority,

²⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1930), 18.

²⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Totem und Tabu: Einige Übereinstimmungen im Seelenleben der Wilden und der Neurotiker* (Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1925), 177.

²⁶ Freud, *Die Zukunft einer Illusion*, 34-37.

²⁷ Sigmund Freud, "Das Ich und das Es", *Gesammelte Schriften* (Leipzig, Wien, Zürich: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1924), VI/378-379.

²⁸ Freud, *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion: Drei Abhandlungen*, 206-207.

²⁹ Freud, *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion: Drei Abhandlungen*, 208.

the child ultimately seeks refuge in the father, just as people, fearing God as the ultimate authority in religion, simultaneously fear Him and seek shelter in Him.³⁰

Freud identifies this displacement in neuroses as occurring between the father and God. He affirms the father–God relationship through the concept of authority, viewing both as identical and subject to rejection through psychoanalysis. According to Freud, psychoanalysis reveals that one’s relationship with the father shapes one’s relationship with God. He emphasizes that one of the most significant reasons psychoanalysis deserves attention is that the concept of God inherently contains a paternal element.³¹

Freud’s idea of God as an exalted father has its intellectual roots in Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach (1804–1872). Feuerbach arrived at godlessness through anthropological atheism, grounding his conclusions in human nature. In his view, God is a projection of man³² —a reflection³³, a mirror³⁴, and the highest abstraction of human subjectivity.³⁵ According to Feuerbach’s theory of projection, God represents the personified nature of man, the manifest interiority of man, and the specific notion of humanity.³⁶ God’s character is, in essence, the projected personality of man³⁷, or man’s alienated self.³⁸ Feuerbach transformed the biblical teaching that “God created man in his image” into the idea that “man created God in his image.” In this reversal, man becomes the projector, and God the projection.³⁹ The man–God relationship of Feuerbach’s anthropological atheism was later transformed into the father–God relationship in Freud’s psychoanalytic atheism.

Similarly, Karl Marx (1818–1883) offers a sociological atheism that can be understood through the lens of God as an exalted state–father figure. Marx rejected the concept of God by providing a sociological explanation of religion. He interpreted society primarily in terms of class conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. In the capitalist system, the bourgeoisie—the class that owns the means of production—exploits workers to maximize profits. The state supports the bourgeoisie in their exploitation of the working class. It deceives workers through elements of the superstructure, such as religion and morality. However, Marx argues that material relations in the economic base are fundamental, as this infrastructure determines the nature of the superstructure. According to Marx, religion was created to sustain the capitalist system effectively. Therefore, both

³⁰ Freud, *Die Zukunft einer Illusion*, 21-26.

³¹ Freud, *Totem und Tabu: Einige Übereinstimmungen im Seelenleben der Wilden und der Neurotiker*, 177-178.

³² Hans Küng, *Does God Exist?: An Answer for Today* (London: SCM Press, 1991), 191-216.

³³ Küng, *Does God Exist?: An Answer for Today*, 199-202.

³⁴ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, çev. George Elliot (New York: Prometheus Books, 1989), 63.

³⁵ Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 31.

³⁶ Küng, *Does God Exist?: An Answer for Today*, 201.

³⁷ Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 226.

³⁸ Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 31.

³⁹ Küng, *Does God Exist?: An Answer for Today*, 201.

the state and religion must be dismantled. In the most concise terms, there is no God; rather, God is a projection of the exalted state-father.

Freud, after defining God as the “exalted father,” explained religious belief as a psychological projection. In contrast, Paul C. Vitz applied Freud’s psychoanalytic method to the psychology of atheism, proposing what he called “The Defective Father Hypothesis.” Vitz argued that atheists reject God because of negative or dysfunctional relationships with their fathers. Such relationships, he claims, provide psychological evidence explaining atheism. Thus, he considers atheism itself to be an illusion. According to Vitz, the psychological concepts atheists use to reject God reflect their own personal experiences and attitudes toward their fathers.⁴⁰

Although Freud’s “exalted father” theory (explaining the psychological foundations of theism) and Vitz’s “defective father” theory (explaining the psychological foundations of atheism) reach opposite conclusions, their methodological approaches are strikingly similar. Both theories suffer from logical fallacies, including overgeneralization —the application of findings from a limited number of cases to all individuals —and cherry-picking evidence that supports their views, as well as jumping to conclusions without sufficient analysis. While these theories may help explain individual cases, they lack scientific rigor and generalizability. Psychological explanations for theism or atheism do not lead to definitive conclusions about their truth or falsity. Understanding the motivations behind a person’s belief or disbelief in God does not provide evidence for or against the existence of God. It is certainly possible for a person to attribute qualities of their father to God. However, moving from Freud’s psychological explanations of theism to the conclusion that God does not exist is a logical leap. In doing so, Freud transcends psychology and enters philosophical territory—a move that Vitz similarly makes. Neither theory conclusively proves or disproves God’s existence. The question of God’s existence must be grounded in objective evidence that goes beyond subjective psychological explanations.⁴¹ While these psychological theories can illuminate how individual beliefs or social structure develop, they cannot resolve universal metaphysical questions. Therefore, it is logically unsound for atheists to deny God’s existence solely on the basis of rejecting paternal authority. Likewise, accepting authority does not necessarily entail accepting God’s existence.

Conclusion

In the modern world, with the transition from agriculture to industry, from rural to urban living, and from extended families to nuclear families, both the family and religion have undergone

⁴⁰ Paul C. Vitz, *Faith of The Fatherless; The Psychology of Atheism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2013), 3-4, 17-69.

⁴¹ Fatma Yüce, *Freud’un Din Yanılsaması* (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2023), 157-170.

significant change and transformation. This shift has also impacted the understanding of authority within these institutions. While everyone holds an image of family and religion, these perceptions vary widely because the concepts themselves cannot be precisely defined. In this article, family and religion are examined through the lens of authority relations, and new definitions are proposed based on this concept. The authority figure within the family is the father, while in religion, it is God. Thus, the Father–God relationship can be seen as a reflection of the family–religion relationship. Within this framework, the father, as the authority figure in the family, can be considered a form of micro-authority. In contrast, the state-father, as the authority figure in society, represents macro-authority. By analogy, God is regarded as the highest form of macro-authority.

In the modern world, traditional and charismatic forms of authority have weakened and been largely replaced by legal-rational authority. This article suggests that the transformation of authority should be recognized alongside other defining features of modernity, such as industrialization and urbanization. The emergence and rapid growth of the nuclear family structure in modern society can be seen as reflecting the fragility of paternal authority within the family. Given that the continuity of religion is often maintained through the authority of the father in the family, it follows that the authority of God may also be fragile. The new authority emerging in the modern era is reason. From an atheistic perspective, the authority of reason supplants the authority of God; deism, however, posits that the authority of God and reason are fundamentally identical. Theism offers the most varied explanations, affirming both institutional religions and their associated authorities, thus upholding both traditional and rational forms of authority. These findings allow us to interpret the tendencies toward deism and atheism observed among today's youth not as a deviation in belief, but rather as a revision in their understanding of authority. Interpreting the transformation in religious attitudes during adolescence through the lens of shifting perceptions of authority yields more meaningful and plausible results. Within this framework, for institutional religions and theism that affirms them to maintain a sustainable position against deism and atheism, a revision in their conception of authority is required. Instead of insisting on absolute authority, they must adopt a more rational and democratic approach to religious authority.

Atheism often equates the authority of a father in a family with the authority of God in religion. Freud interpreted the perception of God as an exalted father through a psychological lens and concluded that God is an illusion reflecting human needs. In contrast, Vitz proposed the “defective father” theory to explain the psychology of atheism. Similar to Freud's psychoanalytic approach,

anthropological atheism denies God's existence by interpreting God as a projection of exalted human qualities. In contrast, sociological atheism views God as a projection of the exalted state-father figure. Conversely, theories proposing God as a "defective" human or state father can challenge these claims. While anthropological, psychological, and sociological perspectives on atheism abound in the literature, the same thematic frameworks could be adapted to explain theism through these new lenses. More explicitly, the explanations that trace a path from the rejection of authority to the denial of God can be supplemented by alternative explanations that move from the acceptance of authority to the recognition of divine authority, and thus to the acceptance of God. It is also evident that the latter offers a more reasonable and coherent framework compared to the former.

It is possible to understand the authority of God by analogy with the authority of the father, but this analogy alone is insufficient to establish an ontological claim about God's existence. This analogy does not, in itself, support a conclusive argument for or against the existence of God. Furthermore, to conceive of God in terms of an exalted father/human/father-state image requires the prior presence of such a conceptual framework in the individual's mind. Indeed, the idea of God as a father in an ontological sense is prominent in Judaism and Christianity; however, in Islam, this notion is strongly rejected. In Islamic theology, God is not considered a father in an ontological sense, though metaphorically He is acknowledged as possessing paternal authority or as a father figure in terms of His supreme authority—similar to how Freud is metaphorically referred to as the "father of psychoanalysis" to emphasize his foundational authority in the field. Without asserting existence, inference can be made by analogy from the similarity of the tendency to authority between two things that already exist. One can infer by analogy that if a person is inclined to accept authority, they will likely receive the authority of God in religion and the authority of the state in society, just as they accept paternal authority within the family—or vice versa. This consistency in the acceptance of authority is expected. When formulating such propositions, it must be kept in mind that analogical reasoning in logic yields probabilistic rather than definitive conclusions. Therefore, the propositions should be constructed in a manner that allows for exceptions and acknowledges their contingent nature. These theoretical findings await empirical support through field research and lay the groundwork for future studies.

Article Type / Makale Türü	Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi
Peer-Review / Değerlendirme	Double anonymized – At Least Two External / Çift Taraflı Körleme - En Az İki Dış Hakem Bu çalışma, etik kurul izni gerektirmeyen nitelikte olup, kullanılan veriler literatür taraması ve yayımlanmış kaynaklar üzerinden elde edilmiştir. Çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere riayet edildiği ve yararlanılan tüm kaynakların eksiksiz biçimde kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur. / This study does not require ethical committee approval, as the data were obtained through literature review and published sources. It is hereby declared that scientific and ethical principles were adhered to throughout the preparation of the study, and all referenced works have been duly cited in the bibliography.
Ethical Statement / Etik Beyan	
Plagiarism Checks / Benzerlik Taraması	Yes / Evet – Turnitin.
Conflicts of Interest / Çıkar Çatışması	The author(s) has no conflict of interest to declare. / Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.
Complaints / Etik Beyan Adresi	suifdergi@gmail.com
Grant Support / Finansman	The author(s) acknowledge that they received no external funding in support of this research./ Bu araştırmayı desteklemek için dış fon kullanılmamıştır.
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