

## The New Form of Being-With: Islam, Family, and the Transformation of Privacy

"İle Olma"nın Yeni Hali: Mahremiyetin Dönüşümü, İslam ve Aile

Mustafa MACİT<sup>1</sup>, Semanur GÜRBÜZ TEPELER<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Dr., Atatürk Üniversitesi, İlahiyat Fakültesi, Erzurum, Türkiye.  
Prof. Dr., Atatürk University, Faculty of Theology, Erzurum, Türkiye.

<sup>2</sup> Arş. Gör. Dr., Atatürk Üniversitesi, İlahiyat Fakültesi, Erzurum, Türkiye.  
Res. Asst. Dr., Atatürk University, Faculty of Theology, Erzurum, Türkiye.

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### ABSTRACT

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The transformation of privacy has emerged as a fundamental socio-cultural rupture in contemporary societies, wherein the boundaries, roles, and symbolic meanings between the institutions of religion and family are being renegotiated, leading to a broader dissolution of normative structures. This study aims to analyze the transformation of privacy within the context of social change, focusing on three interrelated axes: the structure of the family, the religious-normative framework, and the privacy-based relationship between religion and the family. A general review of the literature reveals that most studies on the transformation of privacy tend to examine religion and the family as separate domains. However, in-depth analyses exploring how these two institutions interact, influence each other, and renegotiate their respective boundaries through the lens of privacy remain limited. Addressing this gap, the present study is designed within a research framework grounded in Alfred Schütz's phenomenological approach and his methodological proposals on typification within interpretive sociology. The central phenomenon of the research is defined as the "transformation of privacy" in its modern and Western sense. The analysis begins by examining the intersection of this transformation with the institutions of marriage and family. It examines its implications for religion and the interrelationship between religion and the family. The findings of the study indicate that the transformation of privacy, as a discursive formation, challenges the given structure of the family and the associated religious-normative framework. In a social context where the boundaries of privacy are increasingly blurred, the relationship between religion and the family has become a contested domain subject to ongoing negotiation. In this regard, the study offers a unique and integrative sociological perspective on contemporary social transformations through the intersecting lenses of religion, family, and privacy.

### ÖZET

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Mahremiyetin dönüşümü, çağdaş toplumda din ve aile kurumları arasındaki sınırların, rollerin ve anlam dünyalarının yeniden müzakereye açıldığı, normatif düzenin çözülmesine neden olan temel bir sosyokültürel kırılma alanı olarak belirginleşmektedir. Bu çalışma, toplumsal değişim süreçleri bağlamında mahremiyetin dönüşümünü, aile yapısı, dini-normatif çerçeve ve din-aile arasındaki mahremiyet temelli ilişki ekseninde analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Literatüre genel olarak bakıldığında, mahremiyetin dönüşümüne ilişkin çalışmaların çoğunlukla din ve aile kurumlarını birbirinden bağımsız biçimde ele aldığı, ancak bu iki kurumun mahremiyet ekseninde nasıl karşılıklı etkileşim içinde olduğu, birbirlerini nasıl dönüştürdüğü ya da sınırlarını nasıl yeniden tanımladığı konusunda derinlemesine analizlerin sınırlı kaldığı görülmektedir. Literatürdeki bu boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlayan bu çalışma, Schütz'ün fenomenolojik yaklaşımı ile yorumlayıcı sosyoloji kapsamında tipleştirme kavramına ilişkin metodolojik önerilerine dayanan bir araştırma deseniyle yapılandırılmıştır. Araştırmanın odak fenomeni, modern ve Batılı anlamda "mahremiyetin dönüşümü" olarak belirlenmiştir. Mahremiyetin dönüşümünün öncelikle evlilik ve aile kurumlarıyla, ardından ise din ve din-aile

**Anahtar Kelimeler:**  
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ilişkisiyle kesişen boyutları analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçları, mahremiyetin dönüşümünün bir söylemsel düzenek olarak aile kurumunun verili yapısını ve ilgili dini-normatif çerçeveyi zorladığını ortaya koymaktadır. Mahremiyetin sınırlarının bulanıklaştığı bir toplumsal zeminde, din ve aile ilişkisi bu çerçevede yeniden müzakereye açılan bir sorunsal haline gelmiştir. Bu yönüyle çalışma, çağdaş toplumsal dönüşümleri din, aile ve mahremiyet ekseninde ele alan özgün ve bütüncül bir sosyolojik yaklaşım sunması bakımından önem taşımaktadır.

## INTRODUCTION

Despite many definitions, Aristotle's claim that 'man is a social animal' remains widely accepted. However, a closer examination reveals that this definition defines human beings not only by their similarity to animals, but especially by their difference from them. Sociability, in this context, appears as a uniquely human characteristic. While there are various interpretations of the "social", at its most fundamental level, the term "social" signifies a form of togetherness grounded in "being-with" others.<sup>1</sup> While some animals share this 'being-with' state, reducing sociality to it overlooks what makes human sociality unique.

If this definition is based on human difference, sociality must go beyond animals' mere 'being-with' others. In this context, revealing the core elements and ontic codes of the 'social' unique to humans is essential. Human sociality rests on two basics: the "individual" and "collective personalities." Individuals with a 'being-with' ontology form collectives through communication and interaction. These acts become social reality and, through a dialectical process, gain autonomy from their creators. By shaping individuals and societies, they help produce and reproduce the social, becoming its core elements. Naturally, all of this production and reproduction unfold over time, making it inherently historical.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the 'social' refers to an existence that shapes both history and societies.

The family embodies the human trait of 'being-with' as a collective identity. Though contested today, it remains the dominant form of 'being-with,' rooted in the male-female binary. Through its biological foundation, the family mediates "the regulation of sexual relations and the reproduction of the human species through legitimate mating and procreation processes".<sup>3</sup> The family also includes sociocultural ties shaped by practices like marriage. The family expresses the complex interplay of nature and culture.<sup>4</sup> With its dynamic and networked structure, the family is more

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (California: Stanford University Press, 2000), 38; Martin Heidegger, *The Question of Being*, trans. William Klubak - Jean T. Wilde (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1958), 26.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Fichter, *Sosyoloji Nedir*, trans. Nilgün Çelebi (Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık, 2016); Nilgün Çelebi, *Sosyoloji Notları* (Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Bryan S. Turner, *Klasik Sosyoloji*, trans. İdil Çetin (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Turner, *Klasik Sosyoloji*, 364.

connected to the layers of society than any other collective, serving as its core. Social structures are produced and reproduced through the natural and cultural processes embodied in marriage and family.

From a structural-functional perspective, the family is not just a subsystem, but it encompasses economic, cultural, and social functions such as production, inheritance, socialization, and control.<sup>5</sup> In this regard, the family maintains a particularly close dialectical relationship with religion. In most major religions, the biological and sociocultural aspects of human 'being-with' are normatively regulated, starting-with marriage and family and extending throughout societies.

20th-century sociologists, from Parsons to Luckmann, argue within major theories that the ties between family and religion endured under modernity and secularization, albeit in transformed forms.<sup>6</sup> From this perspective, religion primarily persists in the family and private sphere. As Luckmann notes, secularization reduced its public role but shifted it to the private domain.<sup>7</sup> Although the relationship between family and religion remains a subject of debate, modern social change has reshaped it. Throughout the 20th century, discussions about their future echoed broader debates on industrial and secular urbanization.

In 21st-century postmodern societies, debates on family and religion largely follow similar patterns. In contemporary societies, family is not only described as “dissolved,” “fragmented,” or “incomplete,” but it now also involves issues like reproductive technologies, gender and sexuality shifts, feminist and LGBTQ+ movements, and digitalization. Trends like rising divorce, single parenthood, delayed or rejected marriage, cohabitation, and same-sex unions are seen as risks transforming the family in many societies, including Türkiye.<sup>8</sup> These transformations are central to sociological debates on religion and societies. Notably, the changing nature of privacy is a key issue for both institutions and their relationship. In line with this observation, the primary research problem of this study is the relationship between religion and family in the context of privacy transformation.

This study examines the transformation of privacy in relation to the current structure of the family, the religious-normative understanding of privacy, and the privacy-based connection between religion and family. It aims to explore how privacy is being redefined as a layered reality shaped by religious norms, family roles, and social structures, and how this shift is reshaping both

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5 Turner, *Klasik Sosyoloji*.

6 Turner, *Klasik Sosyoloji*.

7 Thomas Luckmann, *Görünmeyen Din: Modern Toplumda Din Problemi*, trans. Ali Coşkun - Fuat Aydın (İstanbul: Rağbet, 2016).

8 F. Beylü Dikeçligil, “Aileye Dair Kabullerin Ezber Bozumu,” *Muhafazakar Düşünce Dergisi* 8/31 (2018), 20; Önal Sayın, *Aile Sosyolojisi: Ailenin Toplumdaki Yeri* (İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1990), 20–21.

institutions and their interaction. Focusing on the transformation of privacy offers a valuable lens for understanding the future of religion, family, and broader social structures.

Numerous studies within the sociology of religion literature have explored the relationship between the transformation of privacy, family, and religion. Kaplan examined the transformation of privacy and changes in intra-family religious norms through Diyanet's Alo Fetva hotline. Yılmaz and Çelik analyzed how the Turkish family structure transformed alongside religion during the modernization process, while Kılıç and Terzioğlu examined the concept of privacy in the Quran within the context of the family.<sup>9</sup> However, these studies generally overlook the interaction between the transformation of privacy, religion, and family. In particular, few offer a comprehensive view of how privacy is transforming-within and between these institutions. This study examines how the transformation of privacy—an issue often overlooked in earlier studies—reshapes the relationship between religious and familial institutions. Unlike previous studies, this paper conceptualizes privacy as a dynamic and discursive phenomenon shaped at the intersection of religious norms, family practices, and institutional expectations, offering a new perspective on the evolving relationship between religion and family. This study addresses that gap by presenting an original and up-to-date framework for understanding social change at the intersection of religion, family, and privacy. By doing so, it contributes to the literature with a nuanced perspective that repositions privacy as a key analytical tool in understanding institutional change and the evolving relationship between religion and family.

## 1. Methodology

This study was carried out in three main stages, following a documentation-based research design in which data collection and phenomenological content analysis were interwoven. A review of the relevant literature revealed that there is no universally accepted or standardized definition of the concepts of "privacy" and the "transformation of privacy." Therefore, in the first stage, we adopted Alfred Schutz's phenomenological approach, along with his methodological proposals inspired by Max Weber, particularly the typification method.<sup>10</sup> This framework, which helps understand both

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<sup>9</sup> Cemile Kaplan, *Türkiye'de Mahremiyetin Dönüşümünün Aileye Etkileri* (Istanbul: Marmara University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2019); Sinan Yılmaz, *Türk Ailesinin Dönüşümü ve Din* (Istanbul: Marmara University, Institute of Social Sciences, Doctoral Dissertation, 2008); Celaleddin Çelik, "Değişim Sürecinde Türk Aile Yapısı ve Din: Paradigmatik Anlam ve İşlev Farklılaşması", *Karadeniz Uluslararası Bilimsel Dergi* 08 (2010), 25–35; Enes Kılıç, "Aile ve Din Bağlamında Kur'an'da Mahremiyet Tasavvuru," *Journal of Analytic Divinity* 2/1 (2018), 54–81; Hülya Terzioğlu, "Mahremiyetten Mahrumiyet Mi Mahremiyetle İstikamet Mi? Aile Nereye? –Kuran'dan Referanslarla Çözümler," *Uluslararası Mevlid-i Nebi Sempozyumu: Peygamberimiz ve Aile*, ed. Huriye Martı (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2021).

<sup>10</sup> Alfred Schutz, *Fenomenoloji ve Toplumsal İlişkiler*. trans. Adnan Akan-Seyda Kesikoğlu (İstanbul: HeretikYayınları, 2018); Weber Max, *Protestan Ahlakı ve Kapitalizmin Ruhu*. trans. Zeynep Gürata (Ankara: Ayraç Yayınları, 1999).

the multiple dimensions of a phenomenon and the interactions among various phenomena, provides a functional basis for examining privacy and its transformation, particularly in the context of family life.

In this first stage, data were collected through purposive sampling of literature addressing the transformation of privacy, examined across three central analytical units: “privacy,” “transformation of privacy,” and “family.” During the subsequent re-reading and coding of the collected data, prominent themes including sexuality, love, gender, parenthood, and kinship emerged. These codes guided a supplementary literature review, through which additional relevant data were incorporated into the dataset. With attention to the scope and content validity of the coding process, the analysis focused on the interrelations among these codes. This process resulted in an analytical framework grounded in thematic categories that reflect key dimensions of the transformation of privacy in relation to family life—namely, sexual emancipation and individual autonomy, the rise of romantic love, shifts in the perception and definition of gender, and the transformation of parental and kinship relations.

In the second stage, descriptive content analysis was applied to two bodies of data: first, to the relationship between the transformation of privacy and family dynamics based on the previously developed analytical framework; and second, to the normative and descriptive regulations of Islam concerning these themes, derived from a focused literature review. The findings revealed that the transformation of privacy is not shaped solely by explicit narratives but is also constructed through implicit and latent discourses. This discursive construction carries significant implications for the relationship between Islam and family. Therefore, in the third and final stage, an in-depth analysis was conducted to uncover and interpret the implicit and interconnected discourses contributing to this construction.

This study is limited to the transformation of privacy within the family context, drawing on literature that addresses themes such as love, sexuality, gender, parenthood, kinship, and the normative framework of Islam.

## **2. Privacy and Transformation of Privacy**

Privacy – defined in Muslim societies as “that which is forbidden from the gaze of strangers, belonging to the sphere of secrecy, family life, and women” and “a man's family” – is a fundamental concept for understanding areas such as secrecy, gender discrimination, and public morality.<sup>11</sup> In Western societies, however, privacy is associated with themes such as intimacy,

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<sup>11</sup> Nilüfer Göle, *Modern Mahrem* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2016), 20.

closeness, and sexuality.<sup>12</sup> The term, derived from the Arabic word “mahrem”, carries both its lexical meaning and religious normative connotations, thus encompassing both religious and familial dimensions.<sup>13</sup> The family and kinship system are the relational spaces where privacy is produced.<sup>14</sup> Privacy functions as a social mechanism that defines boundaries within and outside the family, and is conceptualized mainly through the family. In this sense, there is a constitutive and ontological link between privacy and the family: The family both represents privacy and organizes its internal structure through this mechanism.<sup>15</sup>

Privacy is a multi-layered, subjective, and objective life policy that defines the boundaries of “being-with”. In its Western sense, the transformation of privacy refers to a shift toward individual autonomy, emotional intimacy, and personal boundaries—marked by the decline of traditional religious and moral norms, the rise of romantic love in self-construction, the move from hierarchical to negotiated parenthood, and the redefinition of kinship as flexible personal ties.

Based on the existing literature, the key dimensions of transformation privacy within the family context include sexual emancipation and individual autonomy, the rise of romantic love, shifts in the perception and definition of gender, and the transformation of parenthood and kinship relations. These dimensions also reflect the broader implications of the transformation of privacy for Islam and family relations.

### **3. The Transformation of Privacy and the Family: New Familial Forms of Being-With**

#### **3.1. The Invention of Sexuality, Sexual Liberation, and Autonomy**

In traditional societies, sexuality was tied to privacy, chastity, and social duty. Female virtue, in particular, was shaped by sexual control through limited premarital contact, arranged marriages, and institutional oversight.<sup>16</sup> In modern times, sexuality has been reshaped around freedom and individual autonomy. According to Foucault, sexuality emerged as a modern “invention” in the 18th century, replacing Christian doctrine's notion of confession as repentance with confession.<sup>17</sup> Defining eroticism as pleasure-based—separate from love and reproduction—along with birth control and reproductive tech, has made sexuality autonomous, enabling sexual freedom and

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<sup>12</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Mahremiyetin Dönüşümü*, trans. İdris Şahin (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Salim Ögüt, “Mahrem,” *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: T.D.V. Yayınları, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Özlem Altunsu Sönmez, “Bireyin Siyasal Sosyalizasyonunda Ailenin Rolü,” *Aile Sosyolojisi Yazıları*, ed. Mustafa Aydın (İstanbul: Açılım Kitap, 2014), 121.

<sup>15</sup> Mahmut Hakkı Akın, “Ailede Mahremiyet,” *Tüm Yönleriyle Mahremiyet*, ed. Şule Albayrak (Ankara: T.C. Aile ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanlığı, 2022), 390–395.

<sup>16</sup> Giddens, *Mahremiyetin Dönüşümü*.

<sup>17</sup> Michel Foucault, *Cinselliğin Tarihi*, trans. Hülya Uğur Tanrıöver (İstanbul: Ayrıntı, 2003).

diversity. Sexuality is now seen as part of self-expression and identity, not just biology. Love and sexuality, once tied to marriage, are now redefined through individual relationships.<sup>18</sup>

As sex detaches from procreation and gains autonomy, marriage loses its role in defining privacy and legitimate sexuality, bringing significant sociodemographic changes. This shift has increased extramarital relationships, delayed marriage, and reduced childbirth within marriage. Falling fertility, especially among the middle class, raises concerns about shrinking social networks and social sustainability.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.2. The Rise of Romantic Love and the Shift from Marriage to Relationships

Historically, love has been viewed as a divine and transcendent force.<sup>20</sup> In traditional societies, marriage was shaped by socioeconomic status, cultural rituals, and religious norms. Romantic love was neither essential nor widely accepted—and in some cultures, seen as incompatible with marriage.<sup>21</sup> Still, in both traditional times and early modernity, marriage was loosely linked to romantic love, seen as a possible outcome of erotic affection. Furthermore, eroticism was viewed not just as desire, but as the key to a deep, lasting relationship.<sup>22</sup>

However, with the advance of modernization, love lost its divine meaning and became synonymous with desire.<sup>23</sup> This shift sped up after the 1968 movements and the invention of the birth control pill. Sexuality became freer and more autonomous, and love came to focus more on pleasure and sex than romance.<sup>24</sup>

The romantic ideal of “love until death” lost its meaning as the kinship structures that supported it dissolved.<sup>25</sup> As Giddens notes, romantic love has reshaped marriage by highlighting individuality and turning love into a brief, personal experience detached from social ties. This has also transformed the concept of privacy—relationships are now based on sexuality, negotiation, and mutual satisfaction. The “pure relationship” model values voluntary commitment and shared pleasure over traditional duties. The growing focus on “relationships” instead of marriage clearly reflects this shift.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Giddens, *Mahremiyetin Dönüşümü*.

<sup>19</sup> According to the 2018 Türkiye Population and Health Survey, fertility among women with at least a high school education fell from 2.65 to 1.53, with the sharpest drop among urban middle-class women. Haşim Akça - Mehmet Ela, “Türkiye’de Eğitim, Doğurganlık ve İşsizlik İlişkisinin Analizi,” *Maliye Dergisi* 163 (2012), 223–242.

<sup>20</sup> Alain Touraine, *Modernliğin Eleştirisi*, trans. Hülya Tufan (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> Giddens, *Mahremiyetin Dönüşümü*.

<sup>22</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Akışkan Aşk: İnsan İlişkilerinin Kırılabilirliğine Dair*, trans. Işık Ergüden (İstanbul: Versus Kitap, 2012), 285–286.

<sup>23</sup> Touraine, *Modernliğin Eleştirisi*, 360.

<sup>24</sup> Hasan Bülent Kahraman, *Kitle Kültürü Kitlelerin Afyonudur* (İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> Bauman, *Akışkan Aşk. İnsan İlişkilerinin Kırılabilirliğine Dair*, 20.

<sup>26</sup> Giddens, *Mahremiyetin Dönüşümü*.

The rise of romantic love and privacy-based relationships is reshaping traditional marriage, once tied to reproduction, inheritance, and kinship. However, fulfilling these roles within lifelong monogamy is becoming increasingly challenging.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, more flexible and individualized relationship models have emerged, facilitated by digital platforms, ranging from “love until death” to “until a second chance.”<sup>28</sup> The expansion of relationship status options on social media—from traditional categories like “married” or “single” to nuanced ones like “open to a relationship,” “it’s complicated,” or “married but available”—reflects a shift toward more fluid, temporary, and personalized understandings of privacy and emotional connection.

### 3.3. “Gender Trouble”

In traditional societies, gender roles were shaped by both biological essentialism and cultural norms. Femininity and masculinity were regarded as natural extensions of one’s biological sex, and these roles were reinforced through religious teachings, customary practices, and social expectations. Femininity was linked to fertility, care, and obedience, with women’s lives following a set path from childhood to motherhood and then grandmotherhood. Masculinity was traditionally tied to notions of protection, authority, and financial responsibility. In contrast, modern theories see gender as a construct shaped by cultural, historical, and discursive processes. As Judith Butler argues in her work “Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity”, the performative nature of gender allows for questioning traditional hierarchies based on femininity and masculinity.<sup>29</sup>

While gender debates have historically centered on women—particularly in relation to inequality, domestic violence, and representation—recent years have witnessed a growing scholarly focus on masculinity. This growing attention has prompted a deeper reevaluation of both masculinity and fatherhood, considering them not only from a biological perspective but also within broader social and cultural frameworks. However, one prevailing discourse that associates masculinity with violence—often framed under the general label of “male violence”—tends to overlook complex individual psychological factors such as emotional dependency, trauma, or personality disorders. Such framing risks reinforcing essentialist assumptions that equate masculinity with aggression, contributing to the dehumanization of men, and portraying fatherhood as inherently flawed or even threatening.

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<sup>27</sup> Giddens, *Mahremiyetin Dönüşümü*.

<sup>28</sup> Anthony Elliott, *Çağdaş Sosyal Teoriye Giriş*, trans. İbrahim Yıldız- Aylin Görgün Baran (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2016), 181.

<sup>29</sup> Judith Butler, *Cinsiyet Belası Feminizm ve Kimliğin Altüst Edilmesi*, trans. Başak Ertür (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2014).

At the same time, second-wave feminism's claim that "biology isn't required to be a father" has significantly broadened the concept of fatherhood. This reconceptualization has created space for non-biological and symbolic paternal figures, defined by both legal and cultural frameworks. While this development has helped legitimize diverse family structures, it has also contributed to the normalization of the "fatherless family" model. In this context, Silverstein and Auerbach argue that fatherhood is not essential for child development.<sup>30</sup> They propose a redefinition of the father figure, suggesting that responsible fathering can occur not only within heterosexual marriages but also across various alternative family forms.

### 3.4. Negotiated Parenthood and the Contraction of Kinship

According to Tönnies, with the development of modern institutions, social structure has evolved from *Gemeinschaft* (community) to *Gesellschaft* (society). This shift reflects a move from emotional and kin-based bonds to more individualistic and short-term relationships.<sup>31</sup> The rise of the nuclear family has weakened extended family and kin ties. Relationships once taken for granted are now negotiated, profoundly changing how people relate to one another.<sup>32</sup>

Kinship, parenthood, and caregiving relationships were once considered natural and immutable social arrangements, grounded in biological ties and marriage-based structures.<sup>33</sup> Today, such relationships are shaped more by personal choice, economic factors, and social services than by moral or social duty. Macit's<sup>34</sup> analysis of the story *Tahta Çanaklar* highlights the value loss in the shift from extended to nuclear family, the decline of elders' authority and meaning, and the redefinition of care through individualism.<sup>35</sup> This shift impacts not only caregiving but also privacy, trust, and intergenerational solidarity.

The rise in single-parent families and falling birth rates is shrinking extended kin networks—such as uncles and aunts—making kinship and parenting more negotiable and reconstructing these ties in more isolated forms. In Turkish society, replacing specific kin terms like *emmoğlu* (paternal cousin) and *teyzeoğlu* (maternal cousin) with the more general term *kuzen* reflects this transformation at the linguistic level. According to Saussure's structuralist approach, signs (such as kinship terms)

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<sup>30</sup> Louise B. Silverstein - Carl F. Auerbach, "Deconstructing the Essential Father," *American Psychologist* 54/6 (1999), 397–407.

<sup>31</sup> Martin Slattery, *Sosyolojide Temel Fikirler*, trans. Ümit Tatlıcan- Gülhan Demiriz (Bursa: Sentez Yayınları, 2017), 58.

<sup>32</sup> Giddens, *Mahremiyetin Dönüşümü*, 98.

<sup>33</sup> Giddens, *Mahremiyetin Dönüşümü*, 98.

<sup>34</sup> Mustafa Macit, "Türkiye'de Toplumsal Değişim ve Aile 'Tahta Çanaklar' Öyküsü Üzerinden Bir Değerlendirme," *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 18/1 (May 21, 2014), 13–24.

<sup>35</sup> Mustafa Macit, "Türkiye'de Toplumsal Değişim ve Aile 'Tahta Çanaklar' Öyküsü Üzerinden Bir Değerlendirme," *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 18/1 (May 21, 2014), 13–24.

derive their meaning through the oppositions they establish with other signs.<sup>36</sup> In this context, *teyzeođlu* and *emmođlu* reflect not just personal distinctions but also unique meanings tied to social roles and cultural expectations. Replacing specific kin terms with a universal word, such as 'cousin,' is not just a change in vocabulary; it reflects the breakdown of family structures and social solidarity networks. As Malinowski<sup>37</sup> argues, kinship terms are more than genealogical labels; they form a social system that structures roles, authority, and solidarity.<sup>38</sup> Simplifying this language signals a more profound shift in the meaning and social structure of family life.

#### 4. The Transformation of Privacy and Islam: New Religious, Islamic Forms of Being-With

##### 4.1. The Islamization of sexuality: Exploring the Notion of Sexuality in Islam

In Islamic thought, sexuality is legitimized solely through the bond of marriage; any sexual activity outside this framework is categorized as *zina* (illicit sexual intercourse) and is strictly prohibited. The Qur'anic injunction against *zina* (al-Isrā', 17:32) not only targets the act itself but also includes behaviors that may lead to it. In this context, the preservation of chastity is framed not merely as an individual moral obligation but as a foundational principle underpinning social order (al-Mu'minūn, 23; al-Nūr, 24). Accordingly, sexuality in Islam is not understood solely as a physical act, but as a comprehensive domain of privacy that entails divine, moral, and social responsibility. This conception contrasts markedly with the Western religious traditions. Indeed, Foucault's analysis of the invention of sexuality and sexual freedom shows that, in the Western Christian world, sexuality developed under a regime of repression shaped by Christianity.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, Islam legitimizes sexuality through marriage (*nikāh*) without attaching a negative meaning to it. Some interpretations even see Islamic views on sexuality as part of a unique moral discourse that affirms desire and connects it to a warrior ethos, distinguishing it from Western views.<sup>40</sup>

With modernity, sexuality, as pointed out by Foucault and Giddens, has been invented sexuality.<sup>41</sup> In contexts like Türkiye, it has taken new forms shaped by negotiation with religious and traditional values within specific historical and social settings. In this context, while religious and traditional norms are challenged in the name of sexual freedom, Islam's relatively more flexible stance—especially compared to Christianity—allows these norms to be reinterpreted. As part of

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<sup>36</sup> Elliott, *Çağdaş Sosyal Teoriye Giriş*, 99.

<sup>37</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, *Bilimsel Bir Kültür Teorisi*, trans. İsmail Türkmen (İstanbul: Kabalıcı Yayınevi, 1992), 61.

<sup>38</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, *Bilimsel Bir Kültür Teorisi*, trans. İsmail Türkmen (İstanbul: Kabalıcı Yayınevi, 1992), 61.

<sup>39</sup> Foucault, *Cinselliğin Tarihi*.

<sup>40</sup> Bryan S. Turner, *Max Weber ve İslam*, trans. Yasin Aktay (İstanbul: Vadi Yayınları, 1997).

<sup>41</sup> Foucault, *Cinselliğin Tarihi*; Giddens, *Mahremiyetin Dönüşümü*.

this shift, the idea of “Islamic sexuality” has gained attention. Erotic themes once rejected are now represented both visually and rhetorically in certain books and on social media.<sup>42</sup> Posts by individuals with a pious identity often blur the lines of privacy and sometimes reflect a pornographic aesthetic, creating a new form of media representation.<sup>43</sup> Such content responds to the visibility demands of digital surveillance culture and creates a new media aesthetic where Islamic imagery becomes more open to erotic interpretation.

#### 4.2. The Islamization of Romantic Love

Unlike certain traditions in which passionate love is perceived as incompatible with marriage, Islam defines marriage not merely through emotional intimacy or sexual attraction but within a framework grounded in tranquility (*sakinah*), deep affection (*mawaddah*), compassion (*rahmah*), and divine responsibility, without negating the notion of love.<sup>44</sup> In the Qur’an, marriage is presented as a bond based on enduring love and mercy. Surah al-Rum describes spouses as a source of peace for one another, emphasizing that love and compassion are placed between them (al-Rum 30:21). At the same time, Surah al-Nisa characterizes marriage as an integral part of human creation (al-Nisa 4:1). In Surah al-Baqarah, the verse stating that spouses are a “garment” for one another (al-Baqarah 2:187) illustrates that this union is not only emotional, but also entails physical, moral, and social complementarity. Within this framework, marriage in Islam signifies a conscious partnership in life, rooted in love, responsibility, and fidelity, rather than in transient desires.<sup>45</sup>

Nevertheless, the Qur’anic conception of marriage has been reinterpreted through an Islamic lens in conjunction with the discourses and behavioral patterns associated with romantic love, which have challenged traditional perceptions of marriage. In Türkiye, this reinterpretation has emerged particularly since the second half of the 20th century, through the medium of *hidayet* (guidance) novels, and more recently, through social media platforms. Macit’s study on the Turkish context offers a concrete example of the Islamization of romantic love.<sup>46</sup> According to him, Islamist popular culture in Türkiye has gradually shifted from a notion of “romantic Islam,” which sought to Islamize modernity through the metaphor of love as portrayed in novels, to a form of “Islamic romanticism” that focuses on individual pleasure and is marketed under the label of “halal love.” Thus, the traditional conception of marriage is being increasingly replaced by a modern

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<sup>42</sup> See, for instance Arif Tekin, *İslamda Cinsellik* (İstanbul: Berfin, 2014).

<sup>43</sup> see, for instance, Nurullah Yaşar, (Youtube) “İslam’da Ön Sevişmesiz Cinsellik Yasaktır- Cinselliği Bir de Kadınlardan Dinleyin-İslam’da Evlilik,” (December 14, 2024).

<sup>44</sup> Giddens, *Mahremiyetin Dönüşümü*, 43–45.

<sup>45</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2009)

<sup>46</sup> Mustafa Macit, “‘Romantik İslam’dan İslami Romantiz’ me: İslamcı Popüler Kültürün Değişen Panoraması,” *İlahiyat Tetkikleri Dergisi* 51 (2019), 457–478.

relationship model shaped by a culture of romantic love, which emphasizes individual satisfaction and emotional gratification.

### 4.3. Islam Falling Silent Amid Changing Gender Norms

In Islamic thought, differences between the sexes are considered to be divinely ordained and rooted in biological reality. Surah al-Ḥujurāt (49:13) emphasizes that human beings were created from one male and one female, thereby affirming gender as a fixed, creation-based identity. Here, it is worth noting that Islamic thought does not differentiate between sex and gender as distinct categories. Instead, both are understood to reflect a divinely ordained, biologically grounded reality. Similarly, Surah al-Nisā' (4:1) highlights that humanity was created from a single soul, from which its mate was formed, and from this union both men and women were brought forth, highlighting the ontological bond between the sexes. Within this framework, the Qur'an presents marriage as a heterosexual institution based on mutual complementarity and the continuation of lineage. Traditional religious narratives, grounded in this normative framework, assign specific social roles to men and women within the family and legitimize the hierarchical structure by framing these roles as "natural."

However, the diversification of postmodern family forms, the increasing fluidity of gender roles, and the detachment of parenthood from its biological foundations have led to a growing critique of traditional religious discourses grounded in fixed role distributions. These debates, particularly within the framework of Islamic feminism, involve critical engagement with gender roles based on traditional religious narratives.<sup>47</sup> Although such critiques are at times accompanied by hermeneutical efforts to reconcile these roles with the religious framework, without creating contradiction. Nonetheless, as Judith Butler argues, the notion that gender is socially and plurally constructed renders the impact of such hermeneutical frameworks limited.<sup>48</sup> Religion, in turn, retreats into a defensive and increasingly silent discursive space, losing its normative authority. Consequently, in the face of rising individual freedoms, new forms of parenthood, and alternative family structures, religion finds itself positioned as the "loser" within the evolving gender regime.

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<sup>47</sup> Ayşe Güç, "İslamcı Feminizm: Müslüman Kadınların Birey Olma Çabaları," *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 17/2 (June 1, 2008), 649–673.; Hidayet Tuksal Şefkatli, *Kadın Karşıtı Söylemlerin İslam Geleneğindeki İzdüşümleri* (Ankara: Otto Yayınları, 2012).

<sup>48</sup> Butler, *Cinsiyet Belası Feminizm ve Kimliğin Altüst Edilmesi*.

#### 4.4. Islam Under Negotiation Alongside Parenthood and Kinship

Islam approaches the state of “being-with,” from marriage to family, through both descriptive and normative frameworks encompassing parenthood, kinship, caregiving, and inheritance/property relations. The Qur’an outlines legitimate forms of union (An-Nisā’ 4:23), kinship and inheritance regulations (An-Nisā’ 4:12), as well as responsibilities toward parents and children (Al-Baqarah 2:83; 2:233) within this expanding relational scope. Accordingly, Islam structures social relations based on moral obligation and communal solidarity, framing caregiving and kinship ties as integral components of privacy and responsibility.

As parenthood and kinship structures have undergone transformation and become subject to negotiation, the religious framework has, inevitably, also been drawn into this discursive space. New approaches to caregiving and parenting have prompted reinterpretations of religious norms. For instance, in response to the rising influence of feminist discourse in the 1990s, some Islamic scholars emphasized that, in Islam, a mother is not religiously obligated to breastfeed her child—a reflective stance that challenged traditional assumptions that a mother should breastfeed her child. Moreover, the decline in birth rates and the weakening of kinship ties have rendered many traditional religious norms surrounding kinship increasingly obsolete, often without even requiring direct theological contestation.

#### 5. Islam and Family in the Context of the Transformation of Privacy as a Discursive Formation

Evaluations based on Giddens’ framework regarding the transformation of privacy in Western societies demonstrate that, with the rise of modernity, privacy has become embedded within a discursive formation. This formation particularly reflects the “invention” of sexuality and the influence of Freudian thought. As noted in the introduction, the foundation of privacy lies in the condition of “being-with,” which stems from the human being’s inherently social nature. It is defined through culturally and socially constructed boundaries.

At the core of Freud’s psychiatric analysis lies the assumption that the human being is, above all, an animal. According to this perspective, three fundamental events—birth, sexual intercourse, and death—hold decisive importance for every animal. In line with this assumption, non-social and non-historical elements are abstracted and positioned as the ultimate criteria for understanding all that is social and historical.<sup>49</sup> In Freudian theory, the sexual drive -presumed to be repressed by the conscious mind- is central to the interpretation of both individual and social life. It is the

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<sup>49</sup> Valentin Nikolayevič Vološinov, *Freudculuk Eleştirel Bir Taslak*, trans. Cem Soydemir (Ankara: Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2016), 16.

fluctuations in sexual instincts that determine a person's destiny and shape the entire content of their life and creative activity. An individual's consciousness is thus shaped not by historical existence, but by the essential dimensions of sexuality.<sup>50</sup> All mental and human behavior is understood as the product of the conflict between the conscious and the unconscious. Within this framework, the proposed treatment for psychological—and, by extension, mental and behavioral—problems involves bringing repressed elements of the unconscious into consciousness so that they may be integrated and normalized.<sup>51</sup>

With the "invention" and subsequent liberation of sexuality, a conception of love based on desire and sexual satisfaction has emerged. This transformation has altered the private sphere, encompassing everything from family structure to parenting and kinship. In this context, privacy as a condition of "being-with" can be seen as a new attempt to bring the unconscious into consciousness. Western modern privacy thus unfolds within a discourse that dismisses historically grounded understandings of privacy as illusions, while normalising the dominance of the unconscious.

This situation implies that a non-social and non-historical biological phenomenon is abstracted and transformed into the ultimate criterion for interpreting all that is social and historical. Yet this shift is not linear; it is accompanied by discursive concealment. In the case of binary gender patterns, biological determinism is sidelined in favor of social and historical narratives. The dominant discourse now frames gender as a social construct, continuing to shape reality through this claim.

Within such a discursive formation, religion shares the fate of consciousness in its social and historical dimensions as well. Religious discourse—particularly its descriptive and normative stance on privacy—is drawn into the now-conscious realm of consciousness and compelled to engage in hermeneutic negotiation. In this context, Islam's normative framework on privacy becomes part of the Islamization process, rearticulated through meanings shaped by the transformation of Western notions of privacy.

Whether the family—once regarded by Luckmann as a refuge for religion amid modernization and secularization—continues to serve this role remains uncertain.<sup>52</sup> As privacy evolves, religion struggles to sustain stability within this "refuge," and the once-convergent relationship between religion and the family has grown more fragile. In today's context, maintaining a connection between religion, family, and privacy seems possible only through a hermeneutic

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<sup>50</sup> Vološinov, *Freudculuk Eleştirel Bir Taslak*, 14–15.

<sup>51</sup> Vološinov, *Freudculuk Eleştirel Bir Taslak*, 37.

<sup>52</sup> Luckmann, *Görünmeyen Din*.

posture that allows religion to survive by adopting a postmodern identity, expressed through neither-nor or both-and logics.

## **Conclusion**

The transformation of privacy in the modern social context marks a critical rupture that not only redefines the boundaries of the private sphere but also reshapes the normative regulatory role of religion and the institutional form of the family. This transformation unfolds within a discursive apparatus that disciplines the representational domains of love, marriage, parenthood, kinship, and ultimately religion. The transformation of privacy claims to emancipate the individual's identity, desires, and relationships from the confines of social structures. Yet, it is precisely through this claim that privacy undergoes a process of detachment from its historical, cultural, and religious references. However, this process goes beyond a narrative of liberation; it suppresses the historical and social consciousness of privacy and instead centers the biological, structured around sexuality. At the same time, it constitutes a rewriting effort in which the natural is desacralized and substituted for the social and the historical. Initiated by the universalization of the Freudian unconscious, this process ultimately reduces privacy to the constructed naturalness of desire, while simultaneously transforming religious norms into objects of negotiation, either silenced or reconciled with modern normative frameworks.

In this context, Islam is positioned not only as a historical reference to be invoked when necessary in the discursive universe of the modern privacy regime, but also as a flexible "framework of meaning" that needs to be reshaped. The new mythology of modern love, stripped of its sacredness, is transforming marriage and family structures from permanent, institutional forms into temporary and individual relationships. Love and sexuality are reduced to an aesthetic of privacy centered on personal satisfaction, visibility, and pleasure. This transformation not only removes privacy from its ontological status as a fundamental right and shifts it to a performative, permeable, and marketable terrain but also leads to the evaporation of religion's normative framework and the dissolution of the family's functional, structural, and value-producing capacities, transforming it into a fluid, unstable social form. Therefore, discussing the transformation of privacy requires not only a rethinking of the boundaries of the individual or the private sphere, but also a reevaluation of the historical, cultural, and normative meanings of religion and family.

The transformation of privacy intersects with shared understandings of religion, family, and the human being. Therefore, when addressing the associated risks and problems, attention should first

be given to how human is defined. Instead of the modern concept of the human, rooted in Cartesian dualism and shaped through Freudian thought, which reduces the human to nature and obscures historical and spiritual reality, we must redefine the human as a historical and spiritual being. To do this, we can move away from the self-centered notion of the modern "individual" and turn toward the concept of the "person" — a being of spiritual and ethical maturity — whose essence, in the root meaning of the word in some languages, implies "being-with." Indeed, Islamic teachings on privacy and family also emphasize this idea of "being-with." They understand the concepts of humanity, privacy, and family not through a reference to nature, but within a historical and spiritual framework. From this perspective, such a redefinition provides a strong foundation for building immunity against the challenges and risks in question.

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[suifdergi@gmail.com](mailto:suifdergi@gmail.com)

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