Labiod Benali
University of Oran 1 (Algeria)
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3761-2281
benali.labioudh@isci.u-zitouna.tn

The Structure of the Family in a Consumerist Sphere: Between the 'Value of Freedom' in Digital Space and the Guarantees of Religion

Abstract

This study seeks to address the structural features of the 'value of freedom' within a complex value network established by late capitalism. Within this context, freedom has been subjected to cultural and ideological tensions, giving rise to transmuted and reductive connotations often described as 'libertarian freedom'. The research focuses on the impact of these representations on the family-the most vital existential and human structure-which currently undergoes profound sociological transformations within a digital consumerist space driven by digital space. In this 'liquid space', religion emerges as a challenging factor and a foundational reference capable of confronting the value liquidity inherently linked to the modern notion of freedom.

Consequently, this study aims to demonstrate how religion-through its philosophical foundational perspective-interacts with the value of freedom and employs it to regulate the family structure, safeguarding it against the ethical and value-based challenges created by the contemporary consumerist and digital landscape.

Keywords: *value of freedom, family structure, consumerist sphere, digital space, religion*

Labiod Benali
Oran 1 Universiteti (Əlcəzair)
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3761-2281
benali.labioudh@isci.u-zitouna.tn

İstehlak məkanında ailə strukturu: Rəqəmsal məkandakı "Azadlıq dəyəri" və dinin təminatları arasında

Xülasə

Bu tədqiqat, son kapitalizmin yaratdığı mürəkkəb dəyərlər şəbəkəsi daxilində "azadlıq dəyərinin" struktur xüsusiyyətlərini təhlil etməyə çalışır. Bu kontekstdə azadlıq anlayışı mədəni və ideoloji gərginliklərə məruz qalmış, nəticədə tez-tez "libertar azadlıq" kimi xarakterizə olunan, daxili strukturu dəyişmiş və reduksiya edilmiş mənalar qazanmışdır. Tədqiqat bu təmsillərin ən mühüm ekzistensial və insani struktur olan ailəyə təsirinə fokuslanır; hansı ki, hazırda rəqəmsal məkanın idarə etdiyi rəqəmsal istehlak məkanında dərin sosioloji transformasiyalara uğrayır. Bu "axıcı məkanda" din, müasir azadlıq anlayışı ilə ayrılmaz şəkildə bağlı olan dəyər axıcılığına qarşı dura bilən bir çağırış faktoru və təməl istinad nöqtəsi kimi çıxış edir.

Beləliklə, bu araşdırma dinin-öz fəlsəfi-təməl perspektivi vasitəsilə-azadlıq dəyəri ilə necə qarşılıqlı əlaqədə olduğunu və ailə strukturunu tənzimləmək, onu müasir istehlakçı və rəqəmsal mühitin yaratdığı etik və dəyər əsaslı təhdidlərdən qorumaq üçün bu dəyərdən necə istifadə etdiyini nümayiş etdirməyi hədəfləyir.

Açar sözlər: *azadlıq dəyəri, ailə strukturu, istehlak məkanı, rəqəmsal məkan, din*

Introduction

The value of freedom in the media discursive space is defined as the human exercise of their full will in reality without coercion or duress, and this meaning is usually checked by the freedom of others. This meaning is a natural-logical manifestation of pragmatic philosophy. Following the spreading of liberal thought into regimes and peoples, the concept of libertarian freedom crystallized-as expressed by Michel Clouscard for exemple- which mandates the deconstruction of any value confronting individual freedom or desire.

In this context, the concept of the family is subjected to a philosophical, cognitive, and social deconstruction that led to its trivialization and superficiality, making it merely a traditional custom standing against freedom in the post-modern era. This is evident in the face of social media challenges, which impose systematically Epicurean material values on all people, and instill in them an individualistic sense, subject to instinct, that disregards any religious standards or social or spiritual dimensions. Indeed—after the initial deconstruction of the idea of religion—feminist ideas, for example, practice their activity and influence on social media with great power and emotional strings, disregarding the philosophical, existential, and ethical dimensions, as they are a movement confronting the transcendent value of the family.

In the same context, we find the LGBT Community which spread strongly in the West, making it a normal phenomenon, and spreads its ideas under the pretext of sexual, emotional, and psychological freedom, leading to social, ethical, and cognitive distortion and disintegration in the concept of the family in particular and contemporary man in general. This led us to address the problem investigated by our research regarding the dialectic of the value of freedom, being the most important value addressed by ideologies and contemporary societies, through social media, and the dimensions of its effects on the structure of the most important human component, which is the contemporary family.

Two sub-problems branch from this issue:
- What is the value of freedom that social media markets regarding the concept of the family?
- What guarantees does religion offer to regulate the space of freedom, guide it, and thereby preserve the concept of the family?

Method

Examining the concept of freedom in multiple contexts, most notably its manifestations on social media, and demonstrating how this has impacted the concept of family and its values, leads the discussion to focus on two elements: first, the influence of the value of freedom through social media on the concept of family; and second, religion as an ontological guarantor of the family and a regulator of human freedom. This detailed examination necessitates a tripartite methodology: it is analytical in its deconstruction of concepts, comparative in its evaluation of divergent frameworks, and critical in its assessment of contemporary socio-cultural shifts.

It seems that the concept of the family faces challenges on several levels in social media: cognitively, practically -in reality-, and ethically. This necessitated addressing the value of freedom, as it is an important factor played upon particularly by late capitalism, which has been strongly reinforced in social media.This led us to examine the concept of freedom in detail, and to bring into focus its epistemological background and its ideological load.

The most important results clarifying the above can be summarized in the following points:

• Social media is a reality no less valuable or influential than real life, according to statistics. Rather, it surpasses it in influencing human life, especially in social relations and the family, which have become subject to the influence of the values produced by social media.

• The concept of human freedom has been subjected to philosophical ideological adaptations, exploiting the general definition—as the right to act, speak, or think as the individual wishes. This was invested in the internet and social media to enhance its psychological and social apparatus.

• Late capitalism attempted to naturalize the value of freedom within its cultural system in a reductive way that takes in care the psychological and social characteristics of man, by exploiting temptation (or seduction) from the object's perspective and pleasure from the self's perspective. This

led to the disintegration of the concept of the family within this system, following the deconstruction of surrounding values and the critique of classical concepts.

• The voracious consumption imposed by social media, which addresses human instincts, caused concepts of sex to change and become distorted by a single standard, which is desire. This constitutes an existential threat to children specifically, in a world where pornography is legalized in the name of freedom, and also by opening up the field for people in extra-marital relationships and making it easily accessible. This makes the concept of the family a costly concept in this system, and thus subject to human desire.

• Freedom in the religious, particularly the Islamic, paradigm takes into account both the spiritual and material dimensions,. On this basis, religious values and principles harmonize at their various levels with the concept of freedom regulated by religion, contrasting with the single dimension upon which the libertarian freedom marketed by social media is based.

• The concept of the family is fundamentally a metaphysical concept. It has been proven that no civilization throughout history has abandoned the concept of the family. This is actually related to the ontological nature of man who realized his nihilism- or nothingness- without a family, as he is a moral and religious being. The value of freedom that he seeks and desires realistically is cognitively clear and practically truthful only within this framework-the religious/metaphysical framework-. This is what makes religion the protector of family values and the guarantor of its conceptual firmness and existential stability.

Research

The influence of the value of freedom through social media on the concept of the family:

The value of freedom is a provocative and multifaceted human concept, much like the transcendental values of truth and goodness within moral philosophy on one hand, and social and political reality on the other. This epistemological and practical disquiet arises from the inherent dimensions of the concept itself, which expand or contract according to ideological agendas, philosophical orientations, and political interests, to say nothing of socio-psychological tendencies. Consequently, we are confronted with a persistent debate and an epistemological tension surrounding a concept that is fundamentally a universal human principle and an existential value.

In the contemporary discursive field, freedom is defined as the condition or right of being able or allowed to do, say, think (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.), without being controlled or limited. The various significations of the term "freedom" revolve around three primary axes: First: The possibility of an individual acting at will to satisfy their inclinations and aspirations (freedom of action versus constraint and servitude, encompassing both civil and political liberties). Second: The authority of self-determination and autonomy without external or internal compulsion (freedom of the will versus determinism). Third: The realization of the "logical self" through the internal primacy of reason and the dominance of higher motivations over baser impulses and emotions (rational freedom) (Finance, 2018).

Freedom, in its general and linguistic sense, refers to the ability to act according to one's own will, without any external coercion (İbrahim, n.d.). This definition highlights the core of the problem addressed in this study. This conceptual framework of freedom has found powerful expression in social media, where it has served as both a theoretical and practical framework for justifying the transgression of the concept's values. Even a cursory glance reveals that social media use has become a pervasive lifestyle. However, in recent years, this use has shifted from a primarily utilitarian and functional practice to a form of excessive daily consumption-what might be described as "overconsumption"-on a global scale, including in developing countries, as evidenced by numerous recent statistical reports. According to the Global Digital State report, the number of social media users increased by 10% in the past year, at the same time, social media users have witnessed faster growth than internet users over the past decade, so the total number of social media users today has reached 4.62 billion, which is 3.1 times higher than the 1.48 billion reported in 2012. This indicates that the number of social media users has grown at a compound annual rate of 12% over the last ten years (Kemp, 2022).

We see negative repercussions for this on all users and the family institution, especially since the latter is a vital human component not isolated from the complex influences of reality and the digital space. For instance, social media have become a pulpit and a platform for manufacturing and furnishing reality. They have transformed from a means of enjoyment for the majority into an essential means of influence, exploiting instinctive psycho-social factors, such as exploiting what we may call the "ethos". This is a philosophical, ethical-psychological concept referring to the customs and mentalities of the individual or society, or, depending on the context : the meaning of the desired self-image to be displayed, which is a natural feature present in everyone, " how the person wants to appear" . This concept was exploited by late capitalism—according to the French sociologist Michel Clouscard—to deeply form the psychological structure of the "consumer man" (Clouscard, La bête sauvage, 1983), the market man driven by pleasure and desire..., or a non-normative, relative ethical concept such as "care of self" as conceptualized by the French philosopher Michel Foucault (Fuko, 2015).

Capitalism has largely succeeded due to its investment in the value of freedom as its primary driving force, and secondly, in the ethos of the masses. Consequently, capitalism has transformed into a philosophy of life that forcefully imposes itself across all domains—particularly within social media—positioning itself as the sole and exclusive available option. In this context, Michel Clouscard describes this value as "libertarian freedom" (Clouscard, Critique du libéralisme libertaire, 2006) (Clouscard, Le capitalisme de la séduction, 1982). According to Clouscard, this is merely the "right to consume" and the gratification of desires (hedonism), which capitalism promotes to dismantle traditional familial and social bonds, ultimately transforming the individual into an "isolated consumer."

Accordingly, we observe rising waves of social liberation on social media platforms in the name of freedom of expression, alongside the escalation of leftist thought in its gendered, sexual, and familial dimensions, including the feminist movement and the LGBT community. This latter community has proliferated significantly among the youth, overturning the standards of social and psychological truth by framing psychological or sexual deviance as a core component of freedom of expression. Such trends fall within the framework of "liberal freedom" and a growing climate of permissiveness inherent in the aforementioned capitalist system. Therefore, within this new ideological framework, it becomes logical to find pedophilia movements active on social media, attempting to legitimize such behavior based on the principle of "consent." This was exemplified by recent serious parliamentary debates in France regarding the adjustment of the age of sexual consent (Witt, 2021). These double standards continually challenge contemporary humanity and the concept of the family, which has become subject to violation and cognitive and axiological deconstruction by an arsenal of ideological concepts imported via social media.

From this perspective, it is evident that any discussion regarding the concept of the family and its surrounding tensions is inextricably linked to the media landscape, especially social media. These platforms represent an influential factor in evaluating, rectifying, manufacturing, and producing the conceptual and ethical frameworks related to the family by generating values and sculpting standards through programs, podcasts, images, and videos, these platforms analyze the inclinations of target social groups, leveraging their priorities and tendencies as a strategic 'key' for effective content dissemination, that facilitate the atomization of society As individuals come to prefer digital communication over real-life interaction, they develop a psychological leaning toward individualism and withdrawal under the guise of privacy. Although the internet has reduced physical distances, it has increased emotional distance; individuals remain preoccupied with their virtual worlds, spending their days therein while neglecting their real-world ties with family and friends, ultimately becoming a mere formal presence.

Regarding children, their prolonged immersion in virtual environments fosters the adoption of distorted cognitive frameworks. In this same context, cybercrimes are escalating, while extramarital relations have become increasingly accessible, normalized (Bosamia, 2018), and legitimized-deliberately severed from their religious, ethical, and familial moorings. Such relations are now

actively pursued, fueled by the intensive visual stimulation of social media and a "culture of seduction." This culture has disoriented public aesthetic taste and destabilized the standards of beauty and human connection, rendering relationships contingent upon provocation, psychological excitement, and transient pleasure. Consequently, the values of the "natural family"- as an essential human construct- collapse under the guise of "liberal openness." The family is thus reduced to a mere aggregate of individuals -atomization-, indifferent to concepts and their existential, ethical, social, psychological, and spiritual dimensions.

Furthermore, this shift is reinforced by the epistemological and cultural conceptions of postmodernity, specifically the obsession with the "hic et nunc" or "here and now" and immediate gratification (Kerbs, 2002). Social media facilitates ephemeral relationships and a sense of moral permissiveness, cultivating a hedonistic lifestyle centered on pleasure, devoid of any normative standards or principles. Simply put, this represents a radical rupture with the "normative" human, family, and society.

This allows us to comprehend the profound impact of social media on the family structure. It operates by exporting psychological values tied to a specific "mood" of freedom- one inextricably linked to the culture of seduction and embedded within the ethos of the masses. This "mood" eventually crystallizes into a deep-seated emotional and intellectual conviction. Since social media- in its consumerist and influential nature- is a quintessential capitalist product, it ultimately functions as a socio-cultural and media logic for the manufacturing and standardization of values.

In this regard, Michel Clouscard distinguishes between "human freedom" and "liberal freedom". He argues that capitalism has co-opted the concept of freedom into its own paradigm, rendering people blind to any alternative system or meaning. Clouscard posits that if philosophers were to focus on this distinction between human liberty and liberal liberty, they could restore and preserve "common sense" within human nature (Clouscard, Le capitalisme de la séduction, 1982). Generally, that meaning has gradually taken root, forging a new culture across all societal levels, most notably within the concept of family and its system : parents and children.

Religion as an Ontological Guarantor of the Family and a Regulator of Human Freedom:
Throughout history, religions have served as the sociological cradle for the concept of the family, providing a framework for its continuity across diverse civilizational contexts. Religion has remained inextricably linked to the human experience; indeed, no civilization has ever existed devoid of a religious dimension. This historical axiom renders religion an existential factor that cannot be overlooked in any rigorous anthropological or sociological analysis, let alone in psychological and cultural discourses. Consequently, the concept of the family has historically carried a sacred significance, or more precisely, a transcendent meaning that surpasses the horizontal, temporal, and positivist levels of analysis.

To delineate the concept of religion, we define it as: "the faith in the transcendent absolute, which surpasses or transcends the material world, conceived as a principle in which the individual believes in omnipotence, providence, and judgement (Ləbiod, 2025)."

From a practical and sociological perspective, all religions encompass frameworks of restraint that distinguish them from libertarian or liberal freedom. the later lacks any ontological safeguard or regulatory mechanism, save for the subjective desires of the self within a culture of seduction. Thus, the value of freedom, particularly within the divinely revealed religions, is governed by divine injunctions. These take the form of the commands, prohibitions, and guidance found in sacred texts and teachings. Religion confronts the individual with their own reality: first, by acknowledging that reality itself imposes inherent constraints regardless of their nature; and second, by guaranteeing a realistic space for freedom, directed by religion's principles.

In this regard, Islam represents perhaps the most comprehensive system of obligation (Taklif): legislation, faith, and ethics, structured around the triad of Creed (Aqidah), Worship (Ibadah), and Transactions (Mu'amalat). Within this framework, freedom is a guaranteed value, yet it is conceptualized in harmony with a human nature that possesses both material and spiritual dimensions.

Herein lies the fundamental distinction between "human freedom" and "liberal freedom". While the former addresses the 'bipolar' nature of man 'spiritual and material' -as characterized by Ali Izet begović (Beqoviç, 1994), the latter is concerned with a unidimensional existence. This liberal conception is sustained solely by internal animalistic instincts and external allure or seduction, thereby reducing the human experience to a single, sensory pole.

Indeed, concepts such as behavioral refinement, individual reform, social transformation, the cultivation of generations, and self-determination are found exclusively within the human domain. Ultimately, these are all fundamentally ethical constructs.

To simplify this perspective, we may posit that the intellect, in its capacity to engage with objects, is shared by animals. In this sense, animals interact with the material world, albeit with a lower level of consciousness, or through an unconscious perception devoid of the intentionality-which is the prerequisite of freedom-. Thus, the human being is characterized by superior intelligence, a greater abundance of purpose, and deeper contemplation in their pursuit of and interaction with objects. To be clearer: the human mind possesses priori intellectual principles-the substantiation of which is not the present occasion -yet this distinction is one of degree rather than essence regarding the "animal intellect." Since the primary function of this intellect is the pursuit of objects, the difference remains a variation within a single, shared cognitive genus between humans and animals.

In stark contrast lies Value, or the intellect in its capacity to seek the "optimal" and interact with it. This requires the agent to be capable of invoking ideal values in pursuit of the notion of perfection, in whatever form it may take. Such a notion is entirely absent and unobserved in the actions and lives of animals; they are utterly devoid of it. Consequently, the intellect, when viewed solely as a seeker of objects, is stripped of value; it lacks the capacity to render any judgment on whether an action is "good" or "evil". By "action", we refer to the totality of human engagement, not merely behavioral acts, but also the acts of thought and contemplation, even the simple contemplation of an idea that is harmful or contrary to principle is judged as immoral thought, and the inverse is equally true. Without this ethical dimension, all human actions would resemble automated processes rather than human ones, rendering the individual indistinguishable from a robot. It is ethics that opens up these existential dimensions and enables confrontation, placing the human being face-to-face with the self, the other, and existence itself.

Hence, we contend that the human being is the sole ethical agent, defined by the freedom to choose between good and evil. Moral philosophers, in their discourse on responsibility, emphasize that ethics cannot subsist without "freedom." It is an established philosophical axiom that the virtuous individual is not one who is incapable of sin, but one who possesses the capacity to err yet chooses not to. This implies that the possessor of moral liberty can exercise it even in defiance of religious tenets or divine commands. Furthermore, it is evident that any action proven to be "immoral" is necessarily categorized as inhumane, whereas an action lacking rationality is not inherently stripped of its humanity. Consequently, the ethical principle is more specialized and sublime than the rational principle (in the instrumental sense defined earlier: as the mere perception and pursuit of objects).

Once human freedom is understood as a fundamentally ethical value in its practical context, the concept of the family-like all human social relations-becomes subject to moral values that guarantee its ontological stability and epistemological robustness. (Here, one may refer to Zygmunt Bauman's third chapter on the concept of freedom and its structural formations within the context of Liquid Modernity, governed by the logic of late capitalism as a cultural ideology…) (Bauman, 2009). The family, therefore, is governed by a specific conception of freedom, predetermined by a metaphysical idea that transcends unidimensional, positivist definitions.

Behaviors and values inherent to the family-such as commitment, procreation, child-rearing, and sacrificial love-are not merely animalistic instincts. In fact, they find no logical justification within a unidimensional framework; they cannot exist without a conception of freedom that accounts for the bipolar existential dimensions of man. This explains the stance of nihilistic thinkers who view procreation as illogical or even-in a tone of literary indignation-a criminal act. As Emil Cioran provocatively stated: "To have committed every crime but that of being a father" (Huston, 2005).This

line of thought is consistent: if one is convinced that the human race ought to perish, then procreation, commitment, and parenthood become mere socio-linguistic expressions devoid of any essential, referential, or ethical meaning.

In this broader context, even Friedrich Nietzsche acknowledged that the idea of morality is quintessentially metaphysical; hence, he was strategically consistent in his critique of it and all its derivatives. Similarly, when Existentialism sought to strip man of inherent values, it could not dispense with the concept of freedom, which is itself a metaphysical construct, much like the notion of consciousness. This is because we perceive the ethical principle as transcendent, independent of mere utility or self-interest. For what "utility" or hedonistic pleasure is found in the sacrifice for one's children? Utility and pleasure are subjective concepts contradicted by sacrifice as an altruistic construct. Ethics may align with or oppose self-interest; therefore, morality only truly becomes morality through the existence of an absolute, transcendent reference. Only then can the human being exist as a free, religious being, and by necessity, a truly ethical one.

Religion, as a transcendental framework-at once existential, epistemological, and axiological-safeguards the concept of the family from ideological distortions by legitimizing and framing familial values. Concepts and values such ontological security, tranquility, mutual respect, fidelity, devotion, responsibility, and the ontological complementarity of male and female find no existential or epistemological guarantee outside the religious paradigm. Without this framework, these values are reduced to mere non-binding linguistic terms, or dismissed as relative, traditional, or obsolete constructs.

Conclusion

Consequently, invoking a transcendent reference is imperative to regulate human freedom and familial values. Should we bypass religious referentiality and defy the moral law, existence itself is stripped of any meaningful framework, rendering the concept of freedom absurd. This absence leads to the theoretical and practical destabilization of the family as witnessed in contemporary reality beginning with current gender theories, and extending to the values organically linked to the family, without which human existence would inevitably wither. This raises a fundamental deconstructive question: To what extent has the original, natural cognitive and ethical linguistic load of universal human values—such as coexistence, justice, respect, and human rights—been violated and Monopolized within one-dimensional, closed, reductive, and relativistic ideological and epistemological systems?

References

1. Bauman, Z. (2009). *Does ethics have a chance in a world of consumers?* Harvard University Press.
2. Beqoviç, Ə. Ə. (1994). *Əl-İslam bəynəl-Şərqi vəl-Qərb* (M. Y. Ədəs, Trans.). Məcllət əl-Nur əl-Kuveytiyyə.
3. Bosamia, M. P. (2018). *Positive and negative impacts of information and communication technology in our everyday life*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325570282
4. Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.). Freedom. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/freedom
5. Clouscard, M. (1982). *Le capitalisme de la séduction: Critique de la social-démocratie libertaire*. Éditions Sociales.
6. Clouscard, M. (1983). *La bête sauvage: Métamorphose de la société capitaliste et stratégie révolutionnaire*. Éditions Sociales.
7. Clouscard, M. (2006). *Critique du libéralisme libertaire*. Humanisme.
8. Finance, J. de. (2018). Freedom. *Encyclopedia.com*. https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/political-science-and-government/political-science-terms-and-concepts/freedom

9. Fuko, M. (2015). *Əl-İnhimam bil-zət: Cəmalıyyət əl-vücud və cürət qovl əl-həqiqə* (M. Azvitə, Trans.). İfriqiya əl-Şərq.
10. Huston, N. (2005). *Professeurs de désespoir*. Lemeac; Actes Sud.
11. İbrahim, Z. (n.d.). *Müşkilət əl-hurriyyə* (2nd ed.). Dar əl-Tıbaə əl-Hədisə.
12. Kemp, S. (2022, January 26). *Digital 2022: Global overview report*. DataReportal. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-global-overview-report
13. Kerbs, R. (2002). L'éthique à l'époque postmoderne. *Dialogue*, *14*(2), 15–17, 33.
14. Ləbiod, B. Ə. (2025). *Sual əl-din fil-hivar əl-əhlaqi əl-rahin bəynə işkalliyyət əl-təsis və təhəddiyat əl-məyar*. Camiət əl-Zeytunə.
15. Witt, J. (2021, April 15). Violences sexuelles sur mineurs: Le Parlement adopte jeudi le texte de protection des mineurs. *20 Minutes*. https://www.20minutes.fr/societe/3021611-20210415-violences-sexuelles-mineurs-parlement-adopte-jeudi-texte-protection-mineurs

İÇİNDƏKİLƏR

CONTENTS