From the Pleasure of Philosophy and Meaning to the Constraint of Digital Consumption Philosophical Question in the Age of Algorithmic Transformations



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Abstract:

This article addresses the phenomenon of digital pleasure, which has spread in multiple forms, examining both the numerous benefits provided by digital tools and platforms from a philosophical perspective, and the serious challenges posed by digital addiction and its negative effects on individuals and society. Analyzing this phenomenon requires considering psychological, physiological, socio-cultural, and intellectual factors, since digital pleasure is not merely entertainment but an integral part of modern life. It influences work, study, social relationships, and more.

Digital pleasure can have positive effects, such as enhancing social communication, providing entertainment, developing cognitive skills, facilitating learning, acquiring knowledge, fostering creativity, and promoting self-expression. However, it can also have negative consequences when it turns into addiction, which represents the darker side of digital pleasure, as it leads to psychological disorders, physiological illnesses, social and economic problems, and a loss of philosophical awareness. This situation necessitates the implementation of preventive measures and therapeutic approaches from a philosophical perspective.

Keywords: Philosophy, Philosophical Sensibility, Philosophical Question, Digital Pleasure, Digital Addiction, Digital Content, Online Platforms, Philosophy and Digitization.

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Introduction:

Pleasure is one of the most prominent psychological phenomena that humans strive to achieve in their lives. It represents a state of joy and satisfaction arising from the fulfillment of various desires and needs. Sources of pleasure vary, including sensory pleasures such as eating or listening to music, intellectual pleasures such as achieving success in a field of life, and social pleasures such as friendly interaction and building human relationships based on love, friendship, and respect.

Pleasure plays a fundamental role in promoting mental and physical health, as it contributes to reducing psychological stress, avoiding social and psychological crises, and increasing the sense of happiness. In this way, it stimulates learning, creativity, and work, while helping to achieve a balance between work demands and relaxation, ultimately improving quality of life. Therefore, studying pleasure and its effects on humans is an important topic that combines philosophy, sociology, and psychology.

With the emergence of digital technology, a new form of pleasure has appeared: digital pleasure, as a natural extension of the traditional concept of pleasure. It has taken various forms and become an inseparable part of daily human life. Digital media, such as social networks and electronic games, provide feelings of joy, satisfaction, and pleasure almost instantaneously. This enhances the sense of belonging and connection, similar to the feelings generated by traditional pleasure, but in a digital space that often turns into addiction and pathological use, threatening the psychological well-being of individuals. Many people have become unable to live without it; it has become a part of life to the extent that some are addicted to it just as others are addicted to alcohol, leading to behaviors that harm both mental and physical health.

First: " in understanding the philosophical context and the philosophical background of pleasure."

Several classical and modern philosophers provide valuable insights into the nature of pleasure and its potential for excess, which can help frame the discussion of digital enjoyment and addiction. Plato emphasized that pleasure must be guided by virtue and moderation, warning that uncontrolled pleasure may lead to moral deviation. Similarly, Aristotle argued that true happiness (Eudaimonia) arises from balancing intellectual and bodily pleasures highlighting the importance of moderation in all forms of enjoyment. Building on the concept of pleasure as a guiding principle, Jeremy Bentham, founder of utilitarian hedonism, regarded pleasure as the primary measure of moralitya perspective that can be linked to modern digital pleasures. John Stuart Mill refined this view by distinguishing between higher and lower pleasures, a distinction particularly relevant when

comparing superficial digital engagement to deeper, intellectual forms of enjoyment. On a more existential note, Friedrich Nietzsche explored desire, will, and the pursuit of power, concepts that resonate with the compulsive and continuous nature of digital addiction. Sociologically, Émile Durkheim highlighted how social dependency and symbolic attachments shape human behavior, offering insight into how individuals develop patterns of reliance on digital media. Finally, Jean Baudrillard analyzed the pleasure derived from signs and imitation in contemporary society, helping to explain the immersive appeal of digital environments and the allure of virtual experiences. Together, these perspectives provide a rich theoretical foundation for understanding both the benefits and risks of digital pleasure in the modern world

1- The Benefits of Digital Enjoyment

Digital enjoyment is a modern phenomenon linked to the intensive use of digital devices such as smartphones, computers, social media, digital platforms, and electronic games. All of these carry both positive aspects of enjoyment and potential negative effects. We will first focus on the positive aspects:

A- Digital Content as a Means of Enjoyable Learning

The concept of pleasure-based learning emerged alongside the rapid development of modern technological tools and the advent of the Internet, making lessons more engaging and enjoyable. The Internet has become a democratic and interactive medium for learning. The explosion of knowledge and the accessibility of information have prompted many educational institutions, particularly universities, to reconsider teaching methods and approaches. Consequently, it has become essential for every institution to teach learners computer literacy and how to handle digital technologies, linking learning more closely to the learner and ensuring greater continuity.

Advanced countries have relied heavily on technological tools and the Internet in education, which has positively impacted both teacher performance and student achievement. Learning has become enjoyable, and lessons are no longer tedious or exhausting. Contemporary educational approaches emphasize the necessity of enjoyable learning because it creates a cheerful, stimulating educational environment with enthusiasm and motivation for learning. Learners no longer perceive lessons as boring or uninspiring experiences. Every learner carries an inner child eager to play, which makes them active participants in the learning process. When learners engage with educational experiences, they enjoy them because the lesson allows flexibility, freedom, and self-realization.

Various technological tools facilitate this process, such as:

1. **Smartboards:** Modern technological tools that allow teachers to deliver lessons in an engaging and captivating way.
2. **Educational Games:** Purposeful games specifically designed to teach a particular subject, allowing learners to acquire skills through play.
3. **Role-Play and Storytelling Puppets:** Puppet theater helps learners understand and retain information by engaging multiple senses simultaneously.
4. **Educational Cards and Images:** These help learners understand concepts more easily.

All these technological and entertaining tools assist learners in the learning process, helping them overcome negative emotions and social isolation. Enjoyable lessons allow learners to express their emotions and feelings freely and flexibly **(Jamal Ali, 2016, p.5)**. However, there are conditions:
a) The technological tools used must achieve the intended educational goals.
b) The Internet must be a source of accurate scientific and philosophical knowledge, not fake news.
c) Learners should be encouraged to ask questions, explore, and learn independently. The teacher's role is simplified to guiding knowledge acquisition, helping learners discover learning materials themselves, and seeking solutions to problems using their abilities. Teachers must consider differences in learners' experiences to better invest in their skills, enriching learning and promoting enjoyment and satisfaction **(Imad Shawqi, 2011, p.73).**

In conclusion, enjoyable learning is characterized by flexibility, freedom of expression, and choice. Using digital tools helps both teachers and learners develop the skills needed to keep up with scientific and technological progress.

B- Digital Skills

Digital skills refer to the critical and effective use of information society technologies for work, entertainment, and learning. They are supported by core competencies in information and communication technology, such as using computers to access, store, produce, present, exchange information, communicate, and participate in collaborative networks online **(European Parliament, 2016, p.19).** In other words, digital skills are an individual's ability to use technological tools effectively **(Ben Sharik, 2018, p.215).**

The emergence of digital content as a learning tool represents a qualitative shift in human life, enhancing knowledge acquisition and the development of various skills and competencies. Digital content provides an interactive, personalized

learning environment leveraging advanced intelligence and modern technology. This content includes videos, educational games, smart applications, digital platforms, and e-books, making learning more attractive, effective, and enjoyable at a lower cost compared to traditional methods, which require time, effort, books, teachers, and institutional management.

This revolution has transformed learning and self-development, which is no longer limited by age, location, or formal education but extends throughout life. Top universities worldwide offer distance learning for different age groups, including:
a) **Online Learning:** Universities provide digital remote learning accessible to anyone seeking certification.
b) **Workshops and Online Courses:** Covering diverse fields like languages, business administration, cooking, sewing, and commerce.
c) **Books and Resources:** High-quality references that were previously expensive are now widely accessible.

Thus, technology cannot be ignored. Digital tools are not inherently harmful, contrary to the views of some change-resistant individuals. It is their usage that makes the difference. Digital enjoyment can be stimulating and positive, but it becomes destructive when it turns into a compulsive habit or addiction beyond the individual's control. This is where the negative side begins to appear. Nicholas Carr states:

"As we become increasingly dependent on our computers, we are tempted to delegate tasks that require wisdom to them. Once we do so, there is no turning back, and software becomes a necessity for these tasks." **(Nicholas Carr, 2022, p.292)**

2- Digital Addiction:

Digital addiction is the excessive reliance on digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, computers, digital content, social media platforms, video games, videos, and online shopping, etc. This excessive dependence on technology, which we refer to as addiction, negatively affects an individual's life, daily activities, social relationships, and mental health, and can even impact them to the point of illness.

This necessitates seeking treatment because the brain's response to likes, comments, followers, and other forms of social feedback generates a rapid and immediate feeling of pleasure. This creates a constant desire for gratification, leading the individual to become addicted. Digital addiction has serious physical, psychological, and social symptoms:

a) Urgent desire to use:
This refers to the individual's intense urge to use digital devices, interact on social media, and spend extended time online without awareness or intent.

b) Difficulty managing time:
Spending excessive time unintentionally on digital content makes it difficult for the individual to manage time between work, family, and social life, often leading to failure in fulfilling responsibilities and keeping promises.

c) Decline in work and academic performance:
Excessive and continuous engagement with digital platforms, social media, and electronic games reduces productivity at work and weakens academic achievement, as all energy and focus are exhausted on these digital networks.

d) Social isolation:
Digital addiction, which promotes virtual relationships and online interactions, can lead to social isolation and increased feelings of loneliness.

e) Sleep disorders:
Contemporary studies clearly show that staying up late at night using digital devices causes sleep disturbances, fatigue, and exhaustion.

f) Physical health problems:
Prolonged use of electronic devices leads to physical health issues, such as headaches, neck pain, eye redness, and spinal discomfort.

g) Mental health problems:
Individuals addicted to digital content show psychological symptoms such as anxiety, stress, depression, and isolation. These symptoms are crucial in diagnosing digital addiction, which comes in many different types:

1. **Video Game Addiction:**
   Excessive gaming disrupts social, professional, and educational life. The World Health Organization classifies it as a health disorder that causes symptoms such as anxiety, lack of sleep, isolation, and poor concentration—for example, American university professor Van Cleef, whose health deteriorated due to his involvement in video games **(Gregory, 28/1/2022, P9).** This can also lead to depression.
2. **Video Streaming Addiction:**
   This refers to watching various videos, including TV shows, movies, and short clips on platforms like TikTok.
3. **Online Gambling Addiction:**
   According to Ledford Hodgens, a psychology professor at the University

of Calgary, online gambling is no different from pathological gambling and is more prevalent among young people.

4. **Compulsive Communication Addiction:**
   This is the feeling of needing to communicate with others even when unnecessary, seeking social support, forming relationships, and entertainment. This can sometimes lead to conflict and guilt, known as problematic social media use or compulsive social media use. The user focuses on having a large number of virtual friends and spending most of their time on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter, documenting daily life and experiences. This can cause health issues such as depression, isolation, and irritability from dissatisfaction.
5. **Other internet addictions:**
   There are many other topics people become addicted to online, including **online shopping** and **sexual content addiction**.

As Marshall McLuhan said: *"The effects of technology occur not at the level of opinions or concepts, but alter patterns of perception steadily and without resistance"* **(McLuhan, 2003, p.3).**

3. Causes of Addiction to Low-Quality Digital Content:

The causes of digital content addiction are numerous, diverse, and often interconnected. They include biological, psychological, social, and environmental factors:

- **Effect of the brain's reward system and dopamine release (medicalnewstoday, 2019):** Addiction to various forms of digital content, such as social media, video games, and videos, stimulates the brain to release dopamine, a chemical responsible for feelings of pleasure and happiness. This encourages the user to repeat the digital behavior to receive the same reward, leading to addiction.
- **Proliferation of technological devices:** The widespread use of smartphones, tablets, and the internet has made access to digital content easy and readily available, facilitating excessive use.
- **Attractive design of apps and websites:** Companies designing apps and websites use appealing and visually engaging designs that capture attention, which can lead to addiction.
- **Feeling of social acceptance:** Social media allows individuals to reconnect with friends and family whose relationships might have weakened, providing a sense of acceptance and satisfaction.
- **Escape from reality:** Some people turn to the digital world as a means of escaping real-life pressures and social or professional challenges.

- **Lack of self-regulation:** Some individuals, especially teenagers or young children, struggle with time management and organizing their tasks due to the absence of guidance or supervision.
- **Emotional emptiness:** Feelings of loneliness and emotional void often drive individuals to seek alternatives, which they find in the digital world.
- **Educational opportunities and self-development:** While online learning has many benefits, it may also lead to a form of addiction not very different from social media or video game addiction.

4. Effects of Digital Addiction:
Digital addiction has many negative impacts on both individuals and society, including:

a) Physical health effects: Excessive use of electronic devices can lead to neck and back pain, and weakened eyesight. Studies indicate that many individuals cannot perform various tasks due to worsening vision, which has prompted ophthalmologists to warn about the dangers facing this generation's eyes.

b) Psychological effects: Digital addiction can cause anxiety, depression, irritability, and social isolation due to preoccupation with digital content and avoidance of real-life interaction with family and friends.

c) Social effects: Digital addiction can result in declining academic performance and professional productivity due to mental fatigue, lack of focus, and sleep deprivation. It also leads to neglect of family and social responsibilities and increases financial burdens due to unplanned spending on digital devices, subscriptions, and online shopping. Overall, addiction can erode social identity and harm both physical and mental health. While the internet and digital content have undeniable benefits, the problem arises from excessive use.

5. Psychological Treatment:

a) Motivational interviews: These help individuals learn new skills such as sports or music to reduce or overcome digital content addiction.

b) Reality-based therapy: This involves learning time management skills and balancing social, academic, work, and digital activities. A specific daily time (e.g., 30–45 minutes) can be allocated for digital content, with clear boundaries for activities such as video games **(Healthline, 2022).**

c) Cognitive-behavioral therapy: Identifying unhealthy patterns and avoiding them.

d) Regulating spending: Limiting money spent on electronic devices, games, and subscriptions.

6. Psychological Need for Digital Content:

The psychological need for digital content is influenced by several factors, some psychological and some social:

1. **Need for social interaction:** Digital content provides faster communication with friends and relatives, bridges distances, and fosters a sense of belonging. Engaging through comments and likes gives individuals pleasure and satisfaction.
2. **Escape from reality:** Some turn to digital content to relieve real-life stress because the virtual world reduces tension, creating a desire to engage in online interactions and gaming for enjoyment.
3. **Need for knowledge:** This is a key factor. Knowledge theories emphasize the importance of sources and learning strategies such as attention, perception, and memory. Learners must be aware of both what they learn and how they learn it, which increases motivation. Knowledge acquisition occurs through stages :

    - ✓ Selective attention to the idea or information
    - ✓ Selective interpretation of the information
    - ✓ Reformulating the information in a new way
    - ✓ Storing the information in memory
    - ✓ Retrieving and applying the information as needed **(Habib, 2017, p.2)**

From a cognitive perspective, individuals must process meanings according to digital content usage theory. Motivations can be divided into:

1. **Utilitarian motives:** Acquiring knowledge across various learning forms.
2. **Pleasure motives:** Relaxation, friendship, escaping problems, following entertainment such as series, games, or music.

For the first motive, acquiring knowledge, there are multiple dimensions:

- ✓ Gaining understanding, creativity, and skills
- ✓ Seeking emotional satisfaction from using digital devices
- ✓ Ability to organize e-learning processes
- ✓ Interaction and participation in learning communities
- ✓ Achieving pleasure and excitement while avoiding traditional learning stress

These needs drive knowledge seekers toward digital content. In a predominantly digital society, to remain engaged in the global information sphere, the following dimensions are essential:

1. **Economic dimension:** Information is a commodity and a source of added value; societies producing information can assert themselves economically and socially.
2. **Social dimension:** Societies must provide necessary information in quantity, quality, and accessibility, with digital content as the main medium.
3. **Technological dimension:** Digital technology is integral across industries, education, healthcare, and more, emphasizing the need for technological tools, online learning, and internet access.
4. **Cultural dimension:** Digital content fosters creativity, critical thinking, and cultural awareness.

Studies indicate that entertainment sites, such as gaming and political websites, are among the most visited on the internet. Youth and adolescents are the most vulnerable to addiction, as the internet offers an attractive, obligation-free virtual reality.

Conclusion:

It has become clear through this article that numerous risks threaten humans in the digital age and its repercussions. Digitalization has distanced the world from its tangible, material reality and transformed it into mere numbers, rendering humans deprived of freedom, opinion, and wisdom, tied to their computers and smartphones with no turning back.

It poses multiple and diverse dangers that threaten mental and physical health and undermine social and professional life. This is because digital technology has become an addiction that humans cannot quit for one simple yet deeply complex reason: despite its risks, it offers benefits and advantages that are indispensable, given the wealth of information, entertainment, instructions, conversations, and knowledge it provides.

Digital technology forms the foundation of scientific and technological development. Those who do not adopt it as a working tool cannot keep pace with the times. It has become an integral part of modern human life. Scholars agree that it represents the inevitable path of human progress, and those who do not keep up remain on the margins of development in all its forms and dimensions. Therefore, the solution is not to abandon it but to use it in moderation neither

excessively nor negligently because the problem of digitalization lies in its overuse, not in its use itself.

From the above, we can conclude that digital technology is necessary, provided it is used without

excess or deficiency. Moreover, humans must be aware of its potential risks.

Digital consumption can be managed through practical solutions at both the individual and social levels. Understanding digital pleasure and digital addiction relies on a deep philosophical foundation, beginning with Plato and Aristotle, who emphasized virtue, moderation, and balanced happiness, continuing with Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill in the framework of utilitarian hedonism and the distinction between higher and lower pleasures, and extending to Nietzsche, Durkheim, and Baudrillard, who focused on desire, social dependency, and symbolic pleasure in the modern era. From this background, it becomes clear that digital pleasure can be stimulating yet prone to excess and addiction Hence, practical solutions are needed, including individual and social-level changes, along with a framework for organizing technology use in daily life. These solutions include setting limits on device usage, engaging in alternative activities, increasing digital awareness, and involving families and schools in setting rules and providing educational programs, as well as creating healthy digital environments.

It is also recommended to establish a practical framework that balances digital use with real-life activities and to regularly review digital habits to ensure responsible and balanced technology use.

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