

RESEARCH ARTICLE		<h1>The harms of consumerist slavery on the mind and soul — and how can one find a cure for this psychological illness</h1>	
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<h3>Abstract</h3> <p>This research paper aims to highlight the psychological harms of consumerist enslavement on the modern individual and to explore the question of the self. One of the consequences of neglecting this question is that modern humans have forgotten their essential needs and duties. Major issues have been marginalized and erased from their minds due to an addiction to shopping and consumption. As a result, this study reached several conclusions, including the need to direct our culture toward understanding the ways to build the human being and channel their potential through learning crafts. It is essential for today’s individual to acquire a skill or master the art of doing any work with excellence. Moreover, the act of reading must be revived, as it leads us to understand and transform our worldviews — it is the birth of civilization and productivity.</p>			
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## Introduction

One of the main tasks of philosophy is to uncover the ailments of civilization and the diseases of the soul. Philosophy was not created merely to weave words into texts and articles and remain silent and static in the world of books, nor to simply circulate its ideas and sayings in universities and conferences. Rather, philosophy heals the mind, refines the soul, and corrects behavior. This has always been – and con-

tinues to be – the essence of philosophy: through its living ideas, methodologies, and open dialogues, it transforms our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. Since ancient times, it has addressed psychological, cultural, and social illnesses. However, it seems that today we have allowed philosophy to hover high above in the realm of abstract and repetitive definitions and concepts – concepts that have not been examined, renewed, or questioned. As

a result, we have come to define philosophy in a narrow, reductive way, failing to align it with the understanding of reality and contemporary conditions. Therefore, this study seeks to uncover the question of the self and examine its condition within most contemporary philosophical problems, as well as within various branches of philosophical and psychological sciences. Socrates is well known for his famous saying, "Know thyself," which he adopted as a central motto of his philosophy. This marked a philosophical revolution in the history of Greek thought, as it aimed to seek the inner truth of the human being and discipline the soul's desires through doing good and avoiding evil and pretense. His aim was to teach people how to know themselves, for self-knowledge enables a person to understand... (*sentence continues*)

...his needs and to grasp the reality of his daily life, making it easier for him to achieve his goals. Plato then followed in his footsteps, uncovering the nature, conditions, and components of the soul. He identified three parts: the rational faculty, the spirited faculty, and the appetitive faculty. This laid the foundation for a structured approach to developing the power of philosophical thought, knowledge, and politics. For the question of the self is, in essence, a question about the human condition, and about the path of society and the nation. Therefore, we adopted the analytical method to examine the causes and manifestations of consumption, and we also used an integrative approach in an attempt to bridge thought and practice—so that the mind does not remain confined to abstraction and theory, but is instead completed through practical reasoning. From this standpoint, we may pose the following problem: **How has the consumerist model been spread in a way that standardizes and subdues the masses unconsciously? And what are the possible therapeutic methods to treat the disease of consumption and the enslavement to the market?**

### 1. Shopping Addiction or the Temples of Consumption

The human soul often tends to gravitate toward marketplaces, especially when the inner self is transformed into an ever-expanding market. In this process, the external replaces the internal, making it easier to control. It can be said that the new world order represents a globalization of this psychological imperialism and a generalization of the concept of the economic/physical human being—a one-dimensional human who cares neither for homeland nor dignity,

concerned only with buying, selling, utility, and pleasure. From the perspective of psychological imperialism, the purpose of production becomes consumption, and a person's life gains meaning only when they consume. Within this framework, the commodity becomes both the beginning and the end, the center of existence. It is the commodity that gives meaning to the life of the consumer, who is drawn into the infernal machine of consumption after being led to believe that goods not only fulfill his needs but also bring him happiness—that is, pleasure. And to complete this happiness and realize his identity, he must buy a new car every year, a shirt of a certain brand, and shoes of another. Thus, many luxuries are transformed into necessities without which happiness in this life is considered incomplete. The pleasure industry promises man an earthly paradise that will completely free him from the burden of history, moral responsibility, and concern for others (Al-Messiri, 2013, p. 283). As a result, man forgets his essential needs, duties, and rights, because major causes have been marginalized and erased from his thinking, all due to his addiction to the act of shopping. The soul has become a vast marketplace, shaped by a consumerist vision that has taken root in thought and manifested in behavior.

Contemporary human culture has become one of living in intensity—intensity in everything. People are no longer satisfied with essentials; they constantly crave more, seeking to increase their consumption. It is a life of excess. This culture of intensity has become deeply rooted in modern education and family life, without individuals pausing to consider the psychological effects of such inflation and intensification, or how this intensity has taken over the feelings and senses of the consumer addicted to shopping and consumption. "The slightest suggestion of pleasure in our contemporary world is essentially a promise of intensity: advertising is nothing more than an expression of emotions generated by stimulation. What is sold to us is not merely the satisfaction of needs, but a point of view shaped by a growing perception and a value-laden awareness of what we call sensual pleasure. Take chocolate (with an intensity of 86%), alcohol (note the strength of vodka, for instance), ice cream (like the intense Magnum), flavors and fragrances, perfumes that share this same intensity—this is how we now describe our experiences, our moments, and our very existence, using an ever-expanding borrowed English vocabulary. We even describe remarkable individuals using this term, and

we apply it to everything we consume that is strong, surprising, and authentic" (García, 2021, p. 16). Thus, the consumer no longer cares about substance, value, or wisdom. What matters to him is intensity—the intensity of presence, of physical development, of lights and spectacle.

In its initial state, the human soul follows the path of sound natural disposition—it leans toward purity and goodness and looks up to the heavens with metaphysical and spiritual contemplation. Its condition mirrors that of the early stages of civilization, when it is at the height of spiritual strength. Its downfall, however, begins when the instincts are unleashed. "The first stage begins with the emergence of a religious idea, and its decline begins when the gravitational pull of the earth overcomes it, once the soul, and then reason, are lost. This is the course of decline, driven by psychological factors that are lower than the level of the soul and the intellect. As long as a person is in a state where he accepts the guidance of soul and intellect—which lead to the growth of civilization—these psychological forces remain stored in the subconscious. But when the influence of the soul and intellect wanes, the base instincts are unleashed, dragging the human being back to the level of primitive life" (Ben Nabi, 2012, p. 59). For this reason, the psyche of the consumer-driven human tends toward consumption for the sake of consumption—not for the sake of goodness, purity, or enjoining what is right. Desires and instincts are thus liberated without being subjected to any form of conditioning or moral restraint. One might ask: is the root of the rise in modern psychological disorders the absence of the religious idea? We can respond that the underlying cause of all these moral crises and social illnesses is the dominance of materialist ideas—or materialist philosophy—over the mind and psyche of the modern human being. This philosophy aims to cement the secular, materialist model, one that separates life from spiritual and religious perspectives. In other words, the religious idea is absent from the content of intellectual and educational curricula, and separated from the concepts and visions used to solve problems. As a result, the religious idea is missing from the project of building the self and forming the family.

### 1.1 Manifestations of Shopping Addiction

When we observe everyone rushing to shopping centers to acquire luxuries, leftover or damaged items, and things that add neither value nor dignity to a person, we find ourselves caught in a perpetual race. "We remain in the race as long as we are shopping

here and there. Our shopping is not limited to stores, supermarkets, or commercial outlets—or what George Ritzer calls *temples of consumption*. If shopping means quickly scanning through a range of possibilities, examining and touching the displayed goods, holding them, comparing their prices with what we have in our wallets or what's left within the limits of a credit card, putting some items in the cart and returning others to the shelves—then this means we are shopping in the street, at home, at work, during our leisure time, in our wakefulness, and in our sleep. Whatever activity we are engaged in, whatever label we attach to what we do, it is a form of shopping. The code that defines the policy of our lives is dictated by the pragmatics of consumption" (Bauman, 2016, p. 127).

Shopping is not limited to the act of purchasing—buying goods, products, food, or clothing—but also includes the search for beauty treatments and fitness regimens. "We shop for the skills required to earn a living, and we shop for the means to convince employers that we possess those skills. We shop for the image that looks good when we wear it—or for ways to convince others that we are what we wear. We shop for methods to make friends with new people we desire and for ways to get rid of old friends we no longer want. We shop... we shop for the best tools to save for a rainy day and for the best ways to spend money before we even earn it. We shop for the resources to help us accomplish necessary tasks more quickly, and for things to fill the time that has become empty. We shop for the most mouthwatering foods, and for the best diet plans to undo their consequences. We shop for the loudest speakers and the most effective headache pills" (Al-Ibrahimi, 2015, p. 128). All forms of shopping, extravagant buying habits, and excessive consumption have negative impacts on the psyche and intellect. This can be openly acknowledged and illustrated by referring to the ethical and moral teachings of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, especially in his discussion of the overpowering nature of the self and the darkness of desires—particularly the desire for food.

He states: "The soul is an idol; whoever worships the soul is worshipping an idol, and whoever worships God with sincerity is the one who has conquered his soul... Yahya ibn Mu'adh al-Razi said: Strive against your soul through obedience and discipline. Discipline involves: forsaking sleep, speaking little, bearing harm from others, and eating little. From little sleep comes clarity of will; from little speech, safety from

calamities; from bearing harm, attainment of lofty goals; and from little food, the death of desires. For excessive eating hardens the heart and extinguishes its light. The light of wisdom is hunger, and satiety distances one from God. One of the righteous once compared the stomach to a pot under the heart—it boils, and its steam rises to the heart. Excessive steam clouds and darkens the heart. Overeating diminishes understanding and knowledge, for a full belly dulls the mind” (Al-Ghazali, 2021, pp. 19–21). This is because overpowering desire narrows the mind’s capacity for reflective thought and creative work. Desire turns kings into slaves. Adam and Eve were expelled from the abode of peace to the realm of humiliation and need after being forbidden from the tree—but their desires overpowered them, and they ate from it. Thus, their nakedness became apparent to them.

### 1.2 The Harms of Consumer Slavery

One of the harms of consumer slavery is the act of hoarding. This behavior often begins with accumulating small and simple items (furniture, clothes, household tools, appliances, etc.). The world of things carries heavy harms and illusions that weigh on the human psyche. Before chaos is created around the self, there will be chaos within one’s thoughts and emotions, causing tension and disturbance in one’s thinking and actions. Hoarding things is the beginning of hoarding negative feelings, thoughts, and values, because the energy linking the chain of things, thoughts, and emotions is latent. Things carry meanings, values, memories, joys, and pains.

Psychiatry also explains that having too many choices before a person can lead to psychological disorders. When one faces such a situation, they must alone precisely determine what they want and choose (for example) between goods that differ only slightly. All this creates real pressure on a person that many people cannot handle, causing them much misery” (Al-Misiri, 2013, p. 55).

## 2. The Impact of Consumption and Shopping Slavery on the Value System: How Have Values Like Friendship, Love, and Kinship Become Among the Most Consumed and Corrupted Values in Our Time?

The philosopher and sociologist Zygmunt Bauman answers this question in his book *Liquid Love* regarding the impact of this consumer culture on the psyche of the contemporary human being, and how human relationships have become fragile and quickly deteriorate due to liquid modernity and its manifestations in awareness and behavior. Moral values have become commodities and products that are consumed,

replaced, and whose validity expires. At any moment, these values (friendship, loyalty, love, patience, ...) are discarded because everything is thrown into the trash bin of expired values in this era on the pretext that they are no longer suitable for our time or compatible with our psyche, and that something better exists. Therefore, no more time should be wasted, and one must look for an alternative.

Thus, contemporary humans race forward, imbibing a culture of diversity, pleasure, and the decline of duty. “They enter the world of transient relationships, thinking they are lightening their responsibilities and not depriving themselves of opportunities or horizons that may arise, but in the end, they find themselves unhappy and in need of a psychological counselor to lead their life or experts who advise them at a high cost on how to maintain a normal relationship in a time when nothing remains naturally or artificially as it was... The world of waste, as Bauman calls it, where all connections can be discarded like a consumed product — the eye always reaches beyond the moment and looks toward what is decorated as better... dissatisfied with what is available... It is the era of spare parts and product replacement before the warranty expires, not the era of the art of fixing things. It is the era of the next opportunity, which makes what you hold in your hand disposable, so you don’t get too attached, as your partner may not want or be willing to commit to a long relationship, thus also depriving them of better opportunities” (Bauman, 2016, p. 18). Today, the consumer human lives in a psychological struggle with the multiplicity of choices, decisions, and values because the self has reached a stage of luxury where everything is ready and everything can be discarded. We consume manufactured values that are empty of meaning: equality, progress, freedom, justice... and other secular values that have been stripped of their sanctity and transformed into ideological covers. Each time, their content and meanings change. Paul Valéry observed that “our concept of moral and aesthetic values tends toward convergence in a world dominated by speculation, similar to the value of goods in the stock market. There is no fixed standard for goods, nor a stable and permanent measure; rather, these goods fluctuate in a broad market, and their value rises and falls according to moods, market panic, or bets based on subjective estimates. Valéry liked to say that thought as a value differs little from the value of wheat or gold and is in continuous decline... Thus, the phenomenon of fashion, which until now only appeared in certain

areas dominated by arbitrariness or customs, such as clothing, today invades our concept of ethics. We live in the fleeting moment, in the rapidly passing, in self-indulgent whims, as if the most sacred values, which have become baseless, can be displayed in this large market of tradable goods and have their own fluctuating price” (Benedi, 2004, p. 17).

Talking about problems of friendship and kinship relations has become one of the most troubling topics discussed today, especially on social media or heard in daily conversations in all public places. The common outcome of all this is that the prevailing statements in these discussions and dialogues are advice, warnings, and alerts about the hypocrisy and lies of these relationships, as well as reminders to the mind and heart of the harsh situations and psychological pains caused by these false friendships or utilitarian relationships. The concept and content of friendship, as well as the meanings and values of kinship relations, have changed and been distorted in the age of consumption and the dominance of materialistic views. It is as if today’s human lives between hope and fear, because they have lost trust in their fellow human beings due to the many disappointments and psychological wounds caused by these utilitarian and narcissistic relationships. Kinship networks “lack stable bridges for the flowing burden, thus becoming weak and frail. Their boundaries are vague and contentious, causing them to disintegrate in a land without clear property deeds or definitive inherited holdings — a borderline land, sometimes a battlefield, and sometimes the subject of bitter legal battles. Kinship networks cannot be certain of their survival possibilities nor calculate their expected lifespan. This fragility increases their precious value. As long as these networks remain fragile and flimsy, they evoke pity... They long for caring nurture” (Bauman, 2016, p. 66). Thus, kinship relations have fallen apart, hearts have grown cold, and the threads of communication between kinship networks have become fragile like spider webs.

As for the value of love between spouses, siblings, and friends—in an age dominated by the call of consumption and the pursuit of benefit—this value has become easily replaced and sold. “The relationship of love, like other consumer goods, demands immediate consumption (it requires no additional training or long preparation) and is for single use ‘without regret.’ It is, ultimately, non-reusable. When the consumer realizes that the goods purchased are defective or unsatisfactory, they can replace them and

obtain other goods that are more pleasing, even if after-sales service or money-back guarantees are not available. But even if these goods fulfill their promises, it is not expected that they remain in use for a long time. We have as a prime example elegant cars, computers, and good mobile phones, which are discarded without regret into piles of garbage as soon as ‘new and modified versions’ appear in stores and become the talk of the town. So, is there any reason to exempt love relationships from this rule?” (Bauman, 2016, p. 48).

Thus, love has become a commodity offered in the market of consumer values, changing colors according to fluctuating feelings, sensations, interests, and whims, quickly thrown away into the trash of dead emotions whose expiration date has passed after the flaws of the beloved appeared along with their urgent self-interests and excessive narcissism. “We should not be surprised; the era of romantic love based on the saying ‘till death do us part’ has passed. The expiration date of this romantic definition ended due to the radical disintegration of kinship structures that supported it, from which it drew its strength, vitality, and special significance. But the death of that idea necessarily made easier the tests that experience must pass to be called love. Instead of people achieving high levels of love, they lowered those levels, greatly expanding the range of experiences referred to as love” (Bauman, 2016, p. 39). After all this value crisis and ethical blindness, it should be noted that the purpose of identifying and diagnosing the psychological illnesses and social problems suffered by the consumer individual is not to paint life in a pessimistic light. Rather, we also want to show that despite all these moral crises, we still see a light shining in the darkness because there are those who continue to cling to the origins and sanctity of values, respect the individuality of the person, and strive to refine themselves and correct their behavior. These are the group of sufferers and sincere in their words and deeds. They represent the model of the spiritually purified human who struggles and strives to preserve their religion and values despite the ugliness of the globalized reality.

From the idea of consumption to the idea of construction, and the necessity of integration between the creation of thought and the creation of handiwork (producing creative ideas, learning crafts, and acquiring knowledge). Here, we can offer a remedy for the disease of addiction to shopping and excessive consumption by directing souls and minds towards the



necessity of learning and practicing how to produce and exert intellectual and practical effort in the fields of science and knowledge, by generating creative and productive ideas to solve problems, crises, and hardships, acquiring knowledge, learning crafts, and the arts of civilization. Ibn Khaldun says:

*"Good qualities in education, crafts, and all ordinary conditions increase a person's intelligence in his mind and illumination in his thought through the abundance of qualities acquired by the soul. We have mentioned that the soul is formed through perceptions and the qualities that return to it; thus, these qualities increase the cleverness of what returns to the soul from scientific effects. The common people may think this difference is a disparity in human nature, but this is not true. Look at the city dwellers compared to the Bedouins—you will find the urbanite endowed with intelligence and full of cleverness, to the point that the Bedouin might think he has fallen behind in his humanity and intellect, but this is not the case. Rather, it is because of his mastery of qualities of crafts and etiquette related to urban customs and conditions, which the Bedouin does not know."* (Ibn Khaldun, 2004, p. 454)

The key to learning sciences, crafts, and arts is reading, because reading brings a person out of the circle of stagnation, inertia, and accumulation into the act of movement, alertness, and production. Reading is the tourism of minds between the worlds of thought, arts, and crafts to gain experiences and wisdom, as well as to learn methods of production and achievement. The goal of all this is for the market of knowledge and crafts to replace the market of things and accumulated products. For this reason:

*"The wealth of society is not measured by the quantity of things it owns, but by the extent of ideas it contains. It may happen that a society faces painful circumstances, such as floods or wars, which erase the 'world of things' completely or temporarily deprive it of control over it. If at the same time the society loses control over the 'world of ideas,' destruction is inevitable. But if it manages to save its ideas, then it has saved everything, because it can rebuild the 'world of things.' Germany and Russia experienced similar conditions during the last world war. The war destroyed the 'world of things' in both countries, almost wiping out everything, but both quickly rebuilt everything thanks to their stock of ideas."* (Ben Nabi, 2006, p. 37)

Because true wealth is the wealth of ideas and knowledge, and whoever possesses creative ideas or

masters a craft is the strongest, longest-lasting, and more influential in mind and action than one who controls the world of things and properties. The living, valid, and effective idea changes the method of thinking, refines souls, and reforms nations. Therefore, our culture must be directed to know the ways of building the human and guiding his powers to learn and read (integrated reading: which combines knowledge and action, knowledge and ethics, thought and craft). A person today must acquire a craft or profession rather than become addicted to all types of consumption or addicted to using social media, because the idea of production does not arise from spiritual or psychological emptiness but through learning and training.

*"It is known that, for example, the Arabian Peninsula did not have the revelation of the Quran except among a Bedouin people living in a barren desert, spending their time in vain without benefit. Therefore, the three factors—human, land, and time—were stagnant, dormant, or, more precisely, accumulated without playing any role in history. Until the spirit manifested itself in the Cave of Hira—as it had before in the Sacred Valley or the waters of the Jordan—a new civilization arose from among these three accumulated elements. It was as if it was born by the word 'Read,' which astonished the illiterate Prophet and stirred with and upon him the world. From that moment, the Arab tribes were established on the stage of history, carrying for centuries a new civilization that led the world to urbanization and progress."* (Nabi, 2012, p. 57) Reading leads us to understanding and changing worldviews as well as enlightening and developing thought because it is a driving force that springs from the spark of spirit and mind. Reading is the birth of civilization, production, and construction. Perhaps the question that should be asked here in our discussion about reading and learning sciences is: What is the relationship between the soul and knowledge? To answer, Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali said: *"Indeed, if all sciences are contemplated, you will find them all derived from the souls, for the first teacher was not taught by a teacher but rose to knowledge from knowing himself."* (Al-Ghazali, 2014, p. 352) Therefore, to roam and explore the fields of knowledge and savor their nectar, the soul must be pure, and for its purity, it must be integrated with divine wisdom by connecting to the higher world and freeing itself from the obscurities of sins. Among the eternal fundamental crafts that Ibn Khaldun spoke about, which maintain their character and remain

constant in civilization, are essential crafts such as farming, construction, tailoring, carpentry, and weaving. As for the honorable crafts related to the topic, such as midwifery, writing, scribery, and medicine, he says:

*"Indeed, crafts and sciences are for humans insofar as their thought, which distinguishes them from animals... and the quality of crafts for refinement depends on the degree of civilization of the country."* (Ibn Khaldun, 2004, p. 418)

Here, we must discuss the importance of the craft of writing after pointing out the fruits of reading, because we want to promote the market of reading and culture and the marketing of good ideas over the market of trivial things and spoiled products. Therefore,

*"Writing and what follows from scribery preserve a person's needs and protect them from forgetfulness, convey the conscience of the self to the distant and absent, immortalize the results of ideas and sciences in manuscripts, and elevate the ranks of existence for meanings."* (Ibn Khaldun, 2004, p. 423)

Its transition from potentiality to actuality occurs through teaching and reading. The importance of religious and philosophical texts lies in their richness in eloquence, wisdom, the politics of thought, and methods of analysis and synthesis, which contribute to building and expanding human understanding and refining the self. For example, the soul must get used to buying books and spending money on knowledge and learning rather than becoming accustomed to buying useless things that accumulate in homes.

*"Generosity of the soul in spending on books was evidence of the glorification of knowledge; glorifying knowledge was evidence of the nobility of the soul and protection from the intoxication of ailments."* (Al-Jahiz, 1965, p. 55) Reading and learning crafts are a cure for the soul from diseases and afflictions. The value of reading and writing must be deeply rooted in the psyche of the contemporary person, and the goal of this should be to raise awareness of the importance of education, reading, and knowledge.

We must also emphasize the importance of educating the reader while guiding them to learn a craft or any type of handiwork so that the learner, intellectual, or scholar becomes both knowledgeable and skilled in their craft (developing skills and acquiring the craft). This is the secret to the integration between knowledge and work, between idea and reality, and the combination of the power of thought with the power of the hand. This is what distinguished scholars and thinkers in Islamic civilization, which was a

civilization that produced ideas and crafts, not one that consumed. For example, the philosopher Al-Kindi mastered many fields of knowledge including philosophy, medicine, engineering, astronomy, optics, and mechanics. *"In addition to these established fields of knowledge, Al-Kindi also learned and wrote about how to produce perfumes, make swords, glass, dyes, vessels, how to remove stains, and how to distinguish between real and fake gemstones. Other areas of knowledge he studied included birds, bees, pigeon breeding, earthquakes, tides, causes of rain, snow, lightning, and thunder. These latter topics show links with Aristotelian natural philosophy, while studies related to perfumes, swords, and similar matters reflect Al-Kindi's close relationship with the Abbasid court and the practical interests of his patrons from the house of the Caliphate."* (Prentice, 2022, p. 55)

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we can summarize some of the fruits of ideas on this subject by saying that the plague of *consumption* and addiction to shopping centers has taken deep root in souls and minds, to the point that the contemporary human no longer exercises their right to think—especially about the world of ideas and the states of the soul. Instead, their vision has been reduced to the world of things and acts of accumulation. Thus, from the core of this materialistic and one-dimensional mindset emerged the consumer human and the utilitarian human who rebelled against their nature and stripped themselves of their moral attire. In this research paper, we presented visions and solutions to treat this plague through the idea of craftsmanship and learning sciences (the craft of the hand and thought), by way of reading and investing in craftsmanship. The idea of production does not arise from an intellectual and spiritual void but necessarily requires learning and training in the arts of crafts, both theoretical and practical. This is what we have drawn from Ibn Khaldun's thought as well as from Malik Bennabi's philosophy, especially in the method of building the human being. Building the integrated human being is one who combines the reform of thought and the soul, uniting words and actions, thus imprinting upon themselves meaning and value.

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