



# The Impulse Society: America in the Age of Instant Gratification

*Paul Roberts*

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## **The Impulse Society: America in the Age of Instant Gratification** Paul Roberts

It's something most of us have sensed for years—the rise of a world defined only by "mine" and "now." A world where business shamelessly seeks the fastest reward, regardless of the long-term social consequences; where political leaders reflexively choose short-term fixes over broad, sustainable social progress; where individuals feel increasingly exploited by a marketplace obsessed with our private cravings yet oblivious to our spiritual well-being or the larger needs of our families and communities.

At the heart of *The Impulse Society* is an urgent, powerful story: how the pursuit of short-term self-gratification, once scorned as a sign of personal weakness, became the default principle not only for individuals, but for all sectors of our society. Drawing on the latest research in economics, psychology, political philosophy, and business management, Paul Roberts shows how a potent combination of rapidly advancing technologies, corrupted ideologies, and bottom-line business ethics has pushed us across a threshold to an unprecedented state: a virtual merging of the market and the self. The result is a socioeconomic system ruled by impulse, by the reflexive, id-like drive for the largest, quickest, most "efficient" reward, without regard for long-term costs to ourselves or to broader society.

More than thirty years ago, Christopher Lasch hinted at this bleak world in his landmark book, *The Culture of Narcissism*. In *The Impulse Society*, Roberts shows how that self-destructive pattern has grown so pervasive that anxiety and emptiness are becoming embedded in our national character. Yet it is in this unease that Roberts finds clear signs of change—and broad revolt as millions of Americans try step off the self-defeating treadmill of gratification and restore a sense of balance. Fresh, vital, and free of ideological, right-wing/left-wing formulations, *The Impulse Society* shows the way back to a world of real and lasting good.

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