

## A Whatever-Whenever-Wherever Economy

Written by Ginny Grimsley  
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By: John Horvat II

When people ask me what is wrong with our modern day economy, I respond that it is frenzied and out of balance.

In my book, Return to Order, I coined the term “frenetic intemperance” to describe a restless and reckless spirit inside modern economy that foments a drive to throw off legitimate restraints and gratify disordered passions. This frenetic intemperance, I explain, is where we went wrong.

But frenetic intemperance is an abstract concept. It is not immediately apparent as to what I mean. I am always on the lookout for examples or expressions that help to clarify the concept and make it more understandable to the man in the street.

I recently found such an example that goes a long way in explaining frenetic intemperance. It involved an article that described television viewing habits. It said that the average American adult spends 4 hours, 31 minutes watching television each day. That might seem like a lot of viewing but it only tells half the story.

The television screen represents yesterday’s entertainment. People today also look at other screens and monitors. And so, the article notes, in addition to the television viewing time, the average American adult spends yet another 5 hours, 16 minutes looking at other computer and phone screens each day.

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The total of 9 hours, 47 minutes is an impressive amount of time before any screen. It indicates a certain lack of restraint that is characteristic of frenetic intemperance. There are missing priorities in these habits where the person gives in to the temptation to be constantly checking his devices. An economy that supports this kind of obsessive behavior is a clarifying example of what is meant by frenetic intemperance.

However, the article ended with an even more dramatic example of frenetic intemperance. It told the story of a man with three very young children who were fully hooked up to their screens. Two of the three could not even read yet they all had wi-fi-enabled mobile devices and could stream videos to them.

The father gloried in the fact that, "They expect to be able to see whatever they want, whenever they want, wherever they want."

This is a perfect expression to describe frenetic intemperance. It is an economy that throws off restraint and encourages a regime in which you seek out whatever you want, whenever you want and wherever you want.

This whatever-whensoever-wherever economy is what is throwing everything out of balance. People must have everything now, regardless of the consequence. If it cannot be had immediately, there are always credit options to make it happen. If that does not work, there is always big government to turn things once considered privileges or luxuries into entitlements.

When society is not virtuous, a whatever-whensoever-wherever economy leads to an economy that is run by the disordered whims and passions. Reason is no longer in control and consequently markets frequently crash. Self-interest alone comes to rule in accordance with personal preferences. Such a conception of life calls to mind the ideas of Scottish philosopher Dave Hume who famously wrote, "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."

The problem is that the passions can be true tyrants that do not respect reality. Real economy should be run by reason and temperance. It should lead men to virtue. This requires restraint,

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foresight and effort. It does not exclude the orderly passions and preferences that are part of the lives of men. However, these very human and necessary elements are secondary and cannot dominate.

Our problem today is our whatever-whenever-wherever economy is taking us to our ruin. It is filling us with frenetic intemperance. What we need is a return to order.

About John Horvat II: John Horvat II is a scholar, researcher, educator, international speaker and author "Return to Order: From a Frenzied Economy to an Organic Christian Society – Where We've Been, How We Got Here and Where We Need to Go," ([www.returntoorder.org](http://www.returntoorder.org)). For more than two decades he has been researching and writing about the socio-economic crisis in the United States.