



Written by [Isabel Lyman](#) on April 12, 2011

Is It Really the Economy, Stupid?

The term “economite” was coined by John Attarian in his book, [Economism and the National Prospect](#). In a brisk 72 pages, Attarian, who earned a doctorate in economics from the University of Michigan, provides plausible answers to the troubling questions that currently preoccupy many thoughtful Americans: “What has happened to this great nation? Where are we headed as a people? Who’s taking us down this road to destruction? Why do so many seem to be oblivious to the danger?”



Attarian places the blame squarely on the worldview he calls “economism” and its adherents, the “economites.”

Economism incorporates the belief that men and women are primarily economic beings, focused mainly on “production, exchange, and consumption. Indeed, economism tries to explain virtually all human motivation and action by economics. ”

Those promoting this philosophy — and they include everybody from Rush Limbaugh to the Federal Reserve to the Cato Institute to Oprah Winfrey to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to the Wisconsin public union protestors to Joel Osteen — claim that money and material gain will solve humankind’s problems; that prosperity will lead to world peace and harmony; and that universal affluence will enable unfettered gratification. Attarian’s approach is to 1) explain economism and its impact on American daily life; 2) show its lethal errors and blindness; 3) demonstrate its unworkability; and 4) warn of its potential to create moral havoc.

Central to his arguments are discussions of the flawed policies of federal and state governments (managed trade, high taxes, disastrous immigration policies, and a costly public education system). The author laments the results: lower wages, the demise of family farms and businesses, unwieldy statist bureaucracies, gluttonous lifestyles, low birth rates for American women, and the reduction of human beings to “interchangeable parts ... whose noneconomic characteristics do not matter.”

Attarian is especially preoccupied with the number of families who serve both Mammon (material greed) and Molech (the ancient god whose worship involved child sacrifice). Economic systems in which men can provide for their families, so that women can bypass the workplace and day care centers to tend to the “soulcraft” of the children, make for a superior society and the true achievement of the American Dream.

Sure it sounds old-fashioned, cliché, unrealistic, and possibly even boring in our fast-paced, knowledge-based economy. But Attarian’s point is that man’s “noneconomic parts” are what make him human and matter most. His soul, his spirit, his emotions, his will — these are the parts that connect him to the world, other people (especially like-minded kin), nature, and his Creator. These lead to personal (and community) fulfillment. An economite’s point of view, after all, isn’t a spiritually friendly one. Attarian



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reminds, quoting Matthew 16:26, “And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?”

John Attarian, whose ancestors were Armenian genocide survivors, passed away in 2004 of a heart attack. He was only 48. The publisher of his book remembers him — and his work — fondly. “Mr. Attarian was a man of uncommon intelligence and insight,” states John Vinson, president of the AIC Foundation. “America, he affirmed in his book *Economism and the National Prospect*, is not just an economy, but a nation and a society. If we reduce everything to economics, he warned, we will lose not only our souls, but — with no small irony — our prosperity as well. The current direction of America is bearing out his prophecy.”

Isabel Lyman blogs at <http://thecastillochronicles.blogspot.com/>



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