The *Spectator*'s Moral Economy

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If the influential series of essays produced between 1709 and 1714 by Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele emerges from its present benign neglect, it may do so through the concept that periodicals create culture—that if art imitates life, life imitates art with equal significance. Such mutuality of imitation underlies the reformist proclamations of Addison and Steele; it also supports the efforts of contemporary critics to see those moralizing purposes in ideological terms. Those who find the *Spectator* now unreadable may be attending more to Mr. Spectator's self-definition as teacher of moral rectitude or advisor on social niceties than to his role as an agent of more complicated but less apparent change.[1]

Keynotes of this change, sounded some years ago in German by Jürgen Habermas, are now audible in English:

> The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. . . . The "town" was the life center of civil society not only economically; in cultural-political contrast to the court, it designated especially an early public sphere in the world of letters whose institutions were the coffee-houses, the *salons*, and the *Tischgesellschaften* (table societies). The heirs of the

1. The unreadability of the *Tatler* is alleged by Michael Stapleton in *The Cambridge Guide to English Literature* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 829–30. On further "modern" hostility, see Brian McCrea, *Addison and Steele Are Dead: The English Department, Its Canon, and the Professionalization of Literary Criticism* (Newark, Del., 1989); and Claude Rawson, "Quandaries of the Quotidian," *Times Literary Supplement* (December 2–8, 1988), pp. 1336–37.

> humanistic-aristocratic society, in their encounter with the bourgeois intellectuals (through sociable discussions that quickly developed into public criticism), built a bridge between the remains of a collapsing form of publicity (the courtly one) and the precursor of a new one: the bourgeois public sphere.[2]

Habermas sets forth a variety of contrasting pairs—aristocratic and bourgeois, public and private, economic and domestic, court and town, state and society—in order to explore the shifts from one term to its opposite. Perhaps it is irrelevant whether these shifts resulted in the actual establishment of a static public sphere at any given place and time, even in the coffeehouses of the early eighteenth century (defined as they were by distinct clienteles and functions). What is more, the idea of a gathered urban readership only addresses part of the *Spectator*'s audience, for there were other bridges built besides that between the bourgeoisie and the court. The particular contribution of the notion of *Öffentlichkeit* is its replacement of static historical periods by an active transformation of related variables. My purpose here is to examine the moral and the economic as an interactive pair that facilitated the social and ideological transformations that were both marked and effected by the periodicals of Addison and Steele, especially by the *Spectator*, the most self-consciously manipulated of the three.

Addison and Steele are usually seen as speaking for a middle-class audience of merchants whose influence on culture was beginning to match their economic importance. But this incomplete view is based on a selective reading of passages. Thus a speech by Mr. Sealand justifying the role of merchants is often quoted to show Steele's ideological position,[3] but *The Conscious Lovers*, Steele's dramatic depiction of idealized aristocratic behavior, is both structured by the aristocratic myths of the rescued maiden and the lost child and justified by Steele on the grounds of its opposition to dueling, in which merchants seldom indulged.[4]

Steele's position on dueling, however, also exemplifies the anti-aristocratic attacks of the *Spectator* on the sexual promiscuity and economic wastefulness of the Restoration. Addison and Steele proposed

2. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger, with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), pp. 27, 30.

3. John Loftis, e.g., argues that *The Conscious Lovers* depicts the social maturity of merchants ("The Social Milieu of Early Eighteenth-Century Comedy," *Modern Philology* 53 [1955]: 100–112).

4. On the mixture of aristocratic and bourgeois ideologies in *The Conscious Lovers*, see Dieter Schultz, "Richard Steele: *The Conscious Lovers*," in *Das englische Drama im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert: Interpretationen*, ed. Heinz Kosok (Berlin, 1976), pp. 74–86.

a countermodel of the gentleman based on behavior rather than birth, and they addressed an audience of country aristocrats which complemented the urban audience of the "public sphere." In stressing the commonality of these diverse audiences, they did not develop "new" economic theory or social morality but sought to recombine the familiar by finding a secular basis for moral behavior without seeming to abandon the broad religious principles from which ethical principles were traditionally derived.

The double nature of the *Spectator*'s audience parallels the social ambiguities of its authors. Neither Addison nor Steele led lives that directly served mercantile interests, however much both sought to represent them in their works. Addison was the son of a prominent clergyman, but he rejected the clerical life to prepare for a diplomatic career under the patronage of Whig aristocrats, and he discreetly but successfully combined this career with his literary interests. He was self-consciously on the rise through talent and Whig patronage rather than through commerce. Steele's politics, his domestic life, his business schemes, and his personality were less prudent than Addison's; most of all, his notorious financial ineptitude provided no personal basis for the economic morality he promoted in the *Spectator*.[5]

Nonetheless, both men had significant contacts with the commercial world represented in the *Spectator*. Several of Addison's government positions were at least tangentially related to trade: in return for writing *The Campaign* (1704), he was made Commissioner of Appeal in Excise (succeeding John Locke), and, in anticipation of his *Freeholder*, he became a Commissioner of Trade and Plantations (1715). Addison's interest in coinage was manifested in his *Dialogues upon the Usefulness of Ancient Medals*, where he found the allegorical images of coins analogous to the imagery of poetry, and the coinage of the past related to the history of the present.[6] Steele's encounters with commerce were less intellectual and more speculative. His first failed investment, during his military years, was in experiments to make gold.[7] Between 1713 and 1722 he was involved in a project to construct ships to bring live

5. "Sir, the Case, in plain Truth and Reality, stands thus: Sir *Richard*, though no man alive can write better of Oeconomy than himself, yet, perhaps, he is above the Drudgery of practicing it: Sir *Richard*, then, was often in want of Mony" (Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian* [1740], ed. John Maurice Evans [New York, 1987], p. 310).

6. See Marc Shell, *The Economy of Literature* (Baltimore, 1978), pp. 80–82. On the relation between Pope's poem and Addison's dialogues, see Howard Erskine-Hill, "The Medal against Time: A Study of Pope's Epistle 'To Mr. Addison,'" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 28 (1965): 274–98.

7. Calhoun Winton, *Captain Steele: The Early Career of Richard Steele* (Baltimore, 1964), pp. 51–53.

fish to London.[8] The contrast between these projects represents, if fortuitously, a paradigmatic shift from alchemy to commerce. The Fish Pool project was organized as a joint-stock company in 1720, during the interest in stocks preceding the collapse of the South Sea Bubble. Steele argued against the South Sea Bill, largely on ethical rather than economic grounds, in *The Crisis of Property* and *A Nation a Family*.[9] Addison and Steele remained on the periphery of trade, living in the creative gap between aristocratic culture and bourgeois status.

The mercantile culture proclaimed by Addison and Steele addressed the common interests of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie—a double audience they sought to reach by connecting morality and economics. Although they spoke of moral values in traditional religious terms, they found in the economic order a secular basis for moral behavior that restrained the free operation of the marketplace and subordinated individual gain to the common good. The economic order embodied qualities of energy, expansion, exchange, and transformation while purporting to direct commercial activity by the traditional values of "civic humanism."[10] The financial revolution of the 1690s, which gave considerable power to those who invested in public credit, required a new articulation of morality to restrain the influence of money and to moderate the individual's dreams of endless gain. Hence, by connecting commercial values to those of politeness and restraint, the *Spectator* responded to an ideological need of some urgency.[11] Religious thinkers of the Reformation, made uneasy by the perceived worldliness of capitalism, had sought to restrain the pursuit of wealth and to emphasize social utility over private gain. But in the Restoration period, support for trade among Dissenters such as Richard Baxter encountered Anglican doubts that were expressly political and social as well as moral.[12] Issues surrounding the debate, such as the Test Act, remained important in 1710, and concern lest

8. See *An Account of the Fish Pool* (November 1718), in *Tracts and Pamphlets by Richard Steele*, ed. Rae Blanchard (1944; reprint, New York, 1967), pp. 419–52. The dedication to the Lord Mayor of London praises the employments of the merchant "whose Good is the Good of all Men."

9. *The Crisis of Property* and *A Nation a Family*, in Blanchard, ed., pp. 557–89.

10. M. M. Goldsmith, "Liberty, Luxury, and the Pursuit of Happiness," in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 240–41, and *Private Vice, Public Benefits: Bernard Mandeville's Social and Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 129–35.

11. J. G. A. Pocock, "The Mobility of Property and the Rise of Eighteenth-Century Sociology," in his *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 103–23, 235–37.

12. Charles H. George and Katherine George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation, 1540–1640* (Princeton, N.J., 1961), pp. 169–73; Richard B. Schlatter, *The Social Ideas of Religious Leaders, 1660–1688* (London, 1940), pp. 158–86.

commerce replace religion is suggested, for example, by Jonathan Swift's *Argument against Abolishing Christianity* (1711).

To celebrate but moderate commercial values, Addison and Steele created a fictional editor who lived, as they themselves did, on the fringes of aristocracy. Mr. Spectator's position fits both his interest in economic matters and the connections he draws between them and social manners.[13] A man of independent means, born to a well-managed estate, Mr. Spectator has become conversant with human affairs through his perceptive sympathies, for he is not an actor in the world's business. He represents the man of virtue produced by land,[14] but we never see him managing his property. While an eager observer, his scope embraces neither the high aristocracy nor the poor; he celebrates a middle condition, perhaps a conflicted one.[15] His economic views are disinterested and gain authority from that objectivity. He seems a classless intellectual who articulates a cultural consensus, but his independence of thought and embodiment of intellectual tradition derive from an inherited independence.

Mr. Spectator compensates for his isolation by defining the members of his club in terms of their economic and social functions. And he extends his social experience by visiting coffeehouses—Will's, Child's, the Post-Man, St. James's, the Grecian, the Cocoa-Tree, and Jonathan's.[16] The life of coffeehouses was accessible and democratic, and their openness encouraged commercial enterprise.[17] The coffeehouse was important to periodical circulation, to the character of the editor, and to his conversational style.[18] Steele's dating of *Tatler* essays

13. Albert Furtwangler stresses this character's roles as social observer, moral advisor, and guide to reading ("The Making of Mr. Spectator," *Modern Language Quarterly* 38 [1977]: 21–39). See also Ralph A. Nablow, *The Addisonian Tradition in France: Passion and Objectivity in Social Observation* (Rutherford, N.J., 1990), pp. 44–74.

14. J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, N.J., 1975), pp. 446–47.

15. Jean-Christophe Agnew argues that Mr. Spectator both represents the commercialization of leisure and detaches himself from that world, thus inviting the audience to an impossible identification with him (*Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theatre in Anglo-American Thought, 1550–1750* [Cambridge, 1986], pp. 169–77).

16. *Spectator*, no. 1. All citations of the *Spectator* refer to *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1965).

17. On coffeehouses and their use in the *Spectator*, see Robert J. Allen, *The Clubs of Augustan London*, Harvard Studies in English, vol. 7 (Cambridge, Mass., 1933), esp. pp. 201–15, 239–50; Habermas (n. 2 above), pp. 32–33, 42–43; Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York, 1978), pp. 80–82; Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1986), pp. 94–100; and J. Paul Hunter, "'News, and New Things': Contemporaneity and the Early English Novel," *Critical Inquiry* 14 (1988): 501–4.

18. Charles A. Knight, "Bibliography and the Shape of the Literary Periodical in the Early Eighteenth Century," *Library*, 6th ser., 8 (1986): 242–46.

from appropriate coffeehouses implies the informal specialization there. Different clienteles appeared at various times of day, and in Steele's survey of customers (*Spectator*, no. 49), substantial members of the bourgeoisie emerge as the predominant coffee drinkers and preeminent exemplars of the moral life of society.

The economy and its transforming power first appear in the *Spectator*, no. 3, Addison's famous allegory of public credit. Following the introduction of Mr. Spectator in no. 1 and of the Club in no. 2, this is the first paper whose subject is not the periodical itself. Public Credit is "a beautiful Virgin" surrounded by documents of the British constitution—the Magna Carta, the Act of Uniformity, the Act of Toleration, and the Act of Settlement. Her health is uncertain, quickly affected by the regular news reports. Threatening phantoms pass in contrasting pairs (tyranny and anarchy, bigotry and atheism, the Commonwealth and the Pretender), causing the money around Public Credit to disappear. But at the sight of encouraging figures—liberty and monarchy, moderation and religion—she regains her physical and financial health. The allegory's symmetry, with its pairs of contrasting excesses and its complementary pairs of measured qualities, reinforces the obvious interpretation. Indeed, not even the virginal personification of Public Credit is original,[19] although her treatment as a hypochondriac with the vapors adds a witty extension to the basic idea.

As the insistent contrasts play against the changing condition of Public Credit, the controversial financial operation is shaped into a force of order, supported by the Constitution and threatened by an older absolutism.[20] On the assumption that loans will be repaid, Credit treats economic exchange as a mental construct, thus giving ideas about economic and political stability a new importance.[21] Economic growth requires international exchange and national stability, and the *Spectator* finds such stability in the constitutional principles of the Whigs.[22] The unstable image of Public Credit is subsumed in the benevolent portrait of commercial society which treats national debt

19. Bond (*The Spectator*, 1:15, n. 1) points out that *The Moderator* (August 25, 1710) had used "Lady Credit" to attack the Whigs.

20. Pocock argues that the unstable figure of Public Credit in Defoe and Addison signals "the power of opinion, passion, and fantasy in human affairs" and the replacement of imagination by rational social opinion (*The Machiavellian Moment*, pp. 452–60).

21. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (n. 11 above), pp. 98–100.

22. In addition to political concerns over the Bank of England, a significant motive for economic topics in the *Spectator* was the passage of the Landed Property Qualification Act, February 1710/11 (Calhoun Winton, "Richard Steele: The Political Writer" [Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1955], pp. 147–49).

as a patriotic obligation of moneyed individuals: "I know not whether he can be called a good Subject, who does not imbark some Part of his Fortune with the State to whose Vigilance he owes the Security of the whole" (*Spectator*, no. 346).

The transforming power of the economy and its connection with national interest are even more evident in Addison's description of the Royal Exchange (*Spectator*, no. 69). Three dominant images convey the naturalness of trade. The first is geographic: the distribution of resources "among the different Regions of the World" assures "this mutual Intercourse and Traffick among Mankind." As others before Addison had noted,[23] trade compensates for England's barrenness and makes a sophisticated civilization flourish: "Nature indeed furnishes us with the bare Necessaries of Life, but Traffick gives us a great Variety of what is Useful, and at the same time supplies us with every thing that is Convenient and Ornamental."

A second dominant (though shifting) image likens trade to politics. At the outset the international bustle of the Exchange is a "great Council, in which all considerable Nations have their Representatives." Trade thus appears cooperative and international rather than competitive and national. But the subsequent emphasis changes to trade as national self-interest: "Trade, without enlarging the *British* Territories, has given us a kind of additional Empire." The identification of the nation and its interests with the interests of families and individuals is a prime component of the *Spectator*'s Whig ideology, and its further identification of trade with geographic expansion transforms the purpose of commerce from personal gain to national glory. Prior to the development of industrial technology and the consequent creation of a national labor force, a national market economy cannot properly be said to exist.[24] Thus when Addison talks about national trade, he means trade as it benefits the nation, not as a national system of market exchange.

The third image, that of circulation, builds on those of nature and politics. The merchant contributes both to his private fortune and to the public good by "bringing into their Country what is wanted, and carrying out of it whatever is superfluous." The *Spectator* celebrates exchange, circulation, and transformation as characteristics of economic activity. The international circulation of goods requires the systolic and diastolic motions of supply and demand that give health to

23. Edward A. Bloom and Lillian Bloom, *Joseph Addison's Sociable Animal* (Providence, R.I., 1971), pp. 59–60.

24. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York, 1944), pp. 38–42; but cf. Fernand Braudel, *The Perspective of the World: Civilization and Capitalism*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York, 1984), 3:352–85.

each organ. The merchant's combination of private enrichment and public wealth is reenacted on a large scale as the enrichment of England contributes to the wealth of nations. Trade realizes both a classical order and a dynamic activity, and both derive from the business of the merchant, who becomes a central figure in the culture depicted by the *Spectator*. In manipulating exchange, he makes possible the connections that underlie the natural order of trade and the high culture based on it. His devotion to relieving oversupply and satisfying demand allows him to reconcile the conflicting goals of personal and public wealth and of national interest and international cooperation.

But trade requires capital, and in discussing how brothers of heirs might occupy themselves, Mr. Spectator proposes that a share of the wealth accumulated from land be redirected into the economy of the City. The merchant's positive functions make his profession appropriate for the younger sons of the aristocracy. In no. 21, trade is contrasted with such overcrowded professions as medicine, the law, and the church. Younger sons who are superfluous in a land-based economy are also superfluous in the traditional professions, where openings are limited by the size of a stable population. But trade generates its own expansion. Hence, "a well-regulated Commerce . . . flourishes by Multitudes, and gives Employment to all its Professors" (*Spectator*, no. 69). A further, subtler critique is traced with sympathetic cunning in the portrayal of the idleness of Will Wimble (*Spectator*, no. 108), whose resourcefulness is trivially employed.

Trade offers profitable alternatives to both idleness and the traditional professions, but commercial values apply with equal force to the profitable cultivation of land. In no. 232 (authorship unknown) we learn that Sir Andrew Freeport has a country estate near London, where Mr. Spectator visits him and hears a diatribe against alms for beggars. In no. 549 Sir Andrew expresses similar views, which in turn resemble a position earlier set forth by Defoe.[25] By employing the poor for wages, manufacturers can produce goods cheaply, particularly because a large work force makes division of labor practicable. Sir Andrew's notions echo the argument of no. 200 that national riches lie in a productive population, a point he also made in no. 174: "Sir *Roger* gives to his Men, but I place mine above the necessity or Obligation of my Bounty." For Sir Andrew, the management of employment can provide a demonstration of the merchant's "Skill in

25. Defoe argues that since there is "more Labour than Hands to perform it," charity is economically inefficient (Daniel Defoe, *Giving Alms No Charity, and Employing the Poor a Grievance to the Nation* [London, 1704], p. 9).

Numbers," and he concludes that "he deserves an Estate a great deal better who has got it by his Industry, than he who has lost it by his Negligence."

When Sir Andrew moves from the City into country retirement in an effort "to ballance Accounts with my Maker" (*Spectator*, no. 549), he brings the values of trade.[26] His investment in land relieves his estate "from the Uncertainty of Stocks, Winds, and Waves" and makes it "fixt and settled in Substantial Acres and Tenements." Distribution between land and trade, among individuals and within a family, assures a sound mixture of security and growth,[27] allowing all male members of the family, not merely inheritors, to be productive. Sir Andrew applies to landholding the entrepreneurial values of growth, transformation, and public benefit that Mr. Spectator found on the Exchange.[28]

Thus, in place of the negative morality which merely urges inheritors of estates prudently not to waste them, the morality of trade—even when applied to land—insists on the positive values of growth and improvement. Concurrently, the morality of trade subverts inheritance and primogeniture by basing merit on energy, work, and ability. In addition, the *Spectator*'s mercantilism implies, however naively, that moral values contribute to a worldly success restrained by concerns for the public good and for personal salvation. While responsible economy was not an altogether new value for the management of agriculture, the *Spectator*'s rhetoric links it specifically with contemporary City practice. In serving as a model for landowners and in demonstrating the qualities appropriate to the proper husbandry of land, Mr. Spectator's ideal trader entices landholding readers to adopt the economic virtues of a mercantile culture.

26. "Merchants are commonly ambitious of becoming country gentlemen, and when they do, they are generally the best of all improvers. A merchant is accustomed to employ his money chiefly in profitable projects; whereas a mere country gentleman is accustomed to employ it chiefly in expense" (Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Canning [New York, 1937], p. 384).

27. Sir Andrew's retirement comes at the decline of a movement from trade into land, as wealthy London merchants acquired oligarchic power and status and became capable of substantial financial diversification within the world of trade (see Nicholas Rogers, "Money, Land, and Lineage: The Big Bourgeois of Hanoverian London," *Social History* 4 [1979]: 437–54).

28. Captain Sentry, who has recently inherited the late Sir Roger's estate, virtuously promises to "manage my Affairs so, as they improve my Fortune every year, by doing Acts of Kindness" (*Spectator*, no. 544); similar virtuous appliers of commercial method to the cultivation of estates include Sir Harry Lizard in *Guardian*, no. 6, and Mr. Charwell in *Guardian*, no. 9 (*The Guardian*, ed. John Calhoun Stephens [Lexington, Ky., 1982]).

Mr. Spectator uses Eubulus, the acknowledged leader of the worthy bourgeois group described in no. 49, to exemplify the functions of trade and investment and the values by which they should be regulated. Eubulus (whose name is Greek for "good advice") is less interested in money for its own sake than as a means to social good: "In the private Exigencies of his Friends he lends, at legal Value, considerable Sums, which he might highly increase by rolling [i.e., speculating] in the Publick Stocks. He does not consider in whose Hands his Mony will improve most, but where it will do the most Good."

The *Spectator* further develops the relation of private to public good in no. 346, where, with the help of Cicero, Steele stresses the importance of benevolence and generosity in trade.[29]

> A constant Benignity in Commerce with the rest of the World, which ought to run through all a Man's Actions, has Effects more useful to those whom you oblige, and less ostentatious in your self. He [Cicero] turns his Recommendation of this Virtue in commercial Life; and according to him, a Citizen who is frank in his Kindnesses, and abhors Severity in his Demands; he who in buying, selling, lending, doing acts of good Neighbourhood, is just and easy; he who appears naturally averse to Disputes, and above the Sense of little Sufferings, bears a nobler Character, and does much more Good to Mankind than any other Man's Fortune without Commerce can possibly support.

The trader, perhaps uniquely, can practice benevolence that turns a profit. Mr. Spectator's friend Tom the Bounteous lends money at ordinary interest to poor but capable men who use these loans to profit the lender, themselves, and society at large. By mercifully protecting "the unhappy upright Man from Bankruptcy," Tom can collect his entire investment rather than a discounted part. Steele's contrasting portraits of the revealingly named Paulo and Avaro record a similar preference for public good: "When *Paulo* gains, all Men he deals with are the better: Whenever *Avaro* profits, another certainly loses."[30] The economic contract of trade carries with it, then, a moral contract that restrains self-interest: the trader must contribute to the national security on which his own security rests; he must foster the increase of wealth; he should loan his money to assist the virtuous in need. Beyond adapting the personal qualities of a gentleman, the trader should use his wealth according to principles that lead to public benefit.

29. Cicero, *De Officiis* 2.18–20.

30. *Tatler*, no. 25. Paulo and Avaro may have been drawn after specific bankers (see *The Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond [Oxford, 1987], 1:196, n. 4). All quotations from the *Tatler* cite Bond's text.

But the *Spectator* also acknowledges negative instances. The conflict between mercantile and moral values is engaged by the story of Inkle and Yarico (*Spectator*, no. 11). Inkle had been educated with "particular Care to instill into his Mind an early Love of Gain, by making him a perfect Master of Numbers, and consequently giving him a quick View of Loss and Advantage." The success of this education is grimly illustrated after Inkle's rescue by an Indian maid with whom he falls in love. He sells her and their unborn child into slavery because he begins "to weigh with himself how many Days Interest of his Mony he had lost during his Stay with *Yarico*."[31] If Inkle becomes the tragic manifestation of misplaced mercantilism, Steele, in *Spectator*, no. 450, has ironic fun at the expense of Ephraim Weed, a fictitious contributor who exclaims that, "could we look into our own Hearts, we should see Money ingraved in them in more lively and moving Characters than Self-Preservation." Weed has survived the plague, the fire of London, and the deaths of three wives with increasing profit, for his avarice defines him. His virtues accord with his character: he is sober because liquor is costly and chaste because sex is time-consuming. Weed feels that his moral obligation is not to be virtuous but to seem so.

If avarice is the vice of the bourgeois producer, luxury is that of the aristocratic consumer; the *Spectator* authors attack both with vigor. For Steele, the man of quality should be "just, beneficent, and charitable," while wealth misused as "the Support of Pomp and Luxury" is "the greatest Insolence imaginable" (*Spectator*, no. 294). Addison claims that French luxury undermines the British way of life (*Spectator*, no. 45). Although Addison, in *Spectator*, no. 69, sees the well-dressed woman as an emblem of national wealth and international resources,[32] Steele, in *Tatler*, no. 116, regards such luxury as waste. By

31. Lawrence Marsden Price reports that although Arietta, Steele's speaker, told the story in answer to the Matron of Ephesus, later generations were "interested only in the contrast between the faithless Christian and the faithful Indian," and in later versions the story provided "strictures upon Negro slavery" (*Inkle and Yarico Album* [Berkeley, 1937], pp. 9, 136). More recent explorations of the story's colonialist, racist, and sexist implications include Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797* (London, 1986), pp. 233–40; and Martin Wechselblatt, "Gender and Race in Yarico's Epistles to Inkle: Voicing the Feminine/Slave," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 19 (1989): 198–200, which argues that Steele's text, by "representing Yarico's primitive acquisitiveness and consumerism," demonstrates the naturalness of trade. To this I would respond that, while greed and self-interest may be natural in a fallen world, Inkle's "quick view of Loss and Advantage" is the unmistakable satiric target.

32. See Louis A. Landa, "Pope's Belinda, the General Emporie of the World, and the Wondrous Worm," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 70 (1971): 215–35.

castigating luxury and praising moral benevolence, Steele earned the scorn of Mandeville, who was "charm'd with his Happy Turns of Thought, and the Politeness of his Expression" and attracted by his "ingenious Sophistry" but repelled by his "fulsome Flatteries and, if you will, abominable Lies."[33]

To Mandeville or Adam Smith the activities of Thomas Inkle and Ephraim Weed would be valuable simply because individual profit contributes inevitably to the social economy.[34] But, in justifying mercantilism on the grounds of benevolence, Addison and Steele avoided a merely mechanistic theory of industrial capitalism. They lodged the social value of trade in the will of the trader rather than in the economic system. Even when the *Spectator* does not attack profit directly, as it does in the persons of Thomas Inkle and Ephraim Weed, it consistently represents profit as secondary to the public good. The moral and social bonds of trade as actuated by the moral tradesman are, in the *Spectator*'s world, stronger than the adjustments of any "invisible hand." The mercantile system justifies its workings by allowing private profit to accompany public good. For the *Spectator* the value of the system depends upon its implicit moral contract.

Since mercantile values are often transformations of self-interest, Addison and Steele confront them as potential dangers, for trade may derive from questionable motives. In *Spectator*, no. 55, Addison, meditating both historically and allegorically on the relation of avarice to luxury, declares that "most of the Trades, Professions, and Ways of Living among Mankind, take their Original either from the Love of Pleasure or the Fear of Want," the former becoming Luxury, the latter Avarice. By contrast, the virtues that arise from poverty are "Humility and Patience, Industry and Temperance," while wealth produces "Humanity and Good-nature, Magnanimity, and a Sense of Honour" (*Spectator*, no. 464). Since these qualities must combine in the moral trader, Mr. Spectator, here as elsewhere in his economic morality, echoes the traditional Protestant view that the "middle state" retains the natural feelings that moderate the rapacity of trade.[35] Those in the middle condition are motivated to uplift their station through means that are

33. Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, ed. F. B. Kaye (Oxford, 1924), 1:53. Mandeville also attacks Steele in *The Female Tatler* (see Thomas A. Horne, *The Social Thought of Bernard Mandeville: Virtue and Commerce in Early Eighteenth-Century England* [New York, 1978], pp. 9–15; and Goldsmith, *Private Vice, Public Benefits* [n. 10 above], pp. 35–46).

34. Parsimony (like Weed's) tends "to increase the exchangeable value of the annual produce of land and labour of the country" (Smith, p. 321). Compare Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, 1:249–51.

35. See, e.g., Reverend Richard Steele, *The Tradesman's Calling* (London, 1684).

modified by the good nature (but not the carelessness) associated with the wealthy.

The moral qualities necessary for success are as self-evident as the success they supposedly produce. Budgell, in *Spectator*, no. 283, specifies thrift, diligence, and "Method in Business" as virtues so infallible "that every Man of good Common Sense may, if he pleases, in his particular station of Life, most certainly be Rich." Similarly, a correspondent answering a request for papers about money (*Spectator*, no. 442) complains of "a lamentable Change from that Simplicity of Manners, which is the true Source of Wealth and Prosperity" (*Spectator*, no. 509). The quality appropriate to a man of business is "a sedate plain good Understanding," which wits and men of letters are unlikely to possess.

Although the simple qualities of thrift, diligence, method, and patience are pillars of the edifice of trade, the building also rests on reputation. Mr. Spectator (*Spectator*, no. 218) lists the rank-inflected varieties of fame: glory for heroes, reputation for gentlemen, and credit for tradesmen. Glory and reputation are both secondary and durable qualities of heroes and gentlemen. By double contrast, credit is both primary to a calling based on trust and an unstable quality in the extreme, for "an ill Word may change Plenty into Want, and by a rash Sentence a free and generous Fortune may in a few Days be reduced to Beggary." Credit is so indispensable to the system of exchange that honesty about merchants can count for as much as honesty in merchants.[36] The relationship between the real qualities of a merchant and his reputation parallels the relationship between the intrinsic value of commodities and their value in the marketplace (or, in Marxist terms, between use-value and exchange-value). R. C., a correspondent in *Spectator*, no. 443, urges Mr. Spectator to "propagate no false Notions of Trade"—that is, no deceptive practices. Will Honeycomb similarly decries young men's "Capacity of being Artful to gain their Ends, to the Merit of despising those Ends when they come in Competition with their Honesty" (*Spectator*, no. 352).

Clearly, then, one necessary danger of mercantile values is their emphasis on appearance. Buyers and investors rely on their evaluations of the product and the promises of its seller. But these can be manipulated by exaggeration or by deceit when profit is an end in itself. Surface appearances are important because some judge by these more readily than by the quality of goods or people (*Spectator*, no. 360). Even the shop signs of tradesmen fall into this category; a projector writes

36. Compare Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660–1730* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989), pp. 115–23.

offering (ironically) to regulate these according to realism, order, and propriety (*Spectator*, no. 28)—principles that should govern appearances in more serious contexts as well. Since the final purpose of trade is to promote a public good that includes buyers no less than sellers, trade should not rest on deception, even if it must rest on judgments drawn from appearances. The "Abuse of Language and hardening of Conscience" in the City, Mr. Spectator complains, make it seem "a Den of Thieves" (*Spectator*, no. 546). Even while promoting trade, the *Spectator* uses it as a vehicle for warning of the dangers of pretension.

The interrelation of mercantile and moral values in the *Spectator* can be represented by four concentric rings marking the phases of transformation from the private to the public spheres. Enclosed in the first ring are qualities of personal character: the thrift, prudence, diligence, and honesty that conjointly make for wealth, happiness, and social utility as well as the generosity, benevolence, and good judgment that give trade its public justification. When these personal qualities are put into practice, the *Spectator*'s model enlarges to encompass a second ring: the application of moral characteristics to proper investment, to buying and selling, or to the management of land. The effects of such activity compose the third circle: one's public appearances and those of one's product or service. And such appearances, finally, determine the fourth and largest circle: one's social status, one's standing in the community at large and in one's sphere of associates. The elements constituting the moral life of trade are strongly interconnected, as the concentric model suggests. Qualities of character develop through application, and such development in turn gives substance to one's own appearance and that of one's product. The consonance of success, happiness, and utility thus depends on the soundness of these rings at their core. Good character without work makes one a Will Wimble, attractive but marginal to the social order. Work without personal goodness produces an Ephraim Weed or a Thomas Inkle, for whom profit has replaced legitimate human values. Appearance without reality is a cheat, and status without achievement is ephemeral. In his proper integration of character, practice, and appearance, the trader is the moral hero of the *Spectator*.

The vividness of that integration emerges in the imagery of commercial enterprise and its organic circulation that serves to evoke London as an urban center.[37] Addison's paper on the "Cries of London" (*Spectator*, no. 251) is one of several tributes to the economic energy of the city. Although the cries keep Sir Roger awake, Will

37. See E. A. Wrigley, "A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy, 1650–1750," *Past and Present*, no. 37 (1967), pp. 44–70.

Honeycomb prefers them to "the Sounds of Larks and Nightingales." Advertisement is the city's natural sound. In no. 454, Mr. Spectator wanders among market gardeners, hackney coachmen, chimney sweeps, female shoppers, ballad singers, traders on the Exchange, shopkeepers, a chophouse, and several coffeehouses. The commercial world of the *Spectator* also extends beyond the essays into the advertisements that conclude each issue, thus merging with the business of periodical publication. The vitality of mercantile society in such exchanges and transformations energizes the London scene that the *Spectator* observes, celebrates, and embodies.

What enlivens the city economically can also change individuals. Peter Motteux, the French Huguenot author now become a British tradesman (*Spectator*, no. 552), shows the personal transformation empowered by the economic order (just as the conversion of Will Honeycomb to happy marriage shows the triumph of the domestic order). In shifting his occupation from writing to trade, Motteux at once illustrates the amenability of business and the utility of normal human qualities. His sense of order, his enterprise, his taste, and his pricing policies are elements of a success formula that any potential man of business might learn.

In addition to these personal and moral transformations, Addison and Steele connect economic success with high culture. Art, especially theatrical art, requires wealth, and here the *Spectator* seems ambivalent. Addison condemns grandiose scenic effects in terms resembling the attacks on the wasteful military policies of Louis XIV. Such ostentation betrays a distrust of the slower but more significant workings of wealth in the transformation of culture. The theatrical display of wealth signifies economic well-being on a large scale, but it does not circulate wealth productively. Ostentatious art nonetheless implies a leisure class capable of supporting expensive displays of culture, and these in turn depend on artists with high skill and training. For the *Spectator*, therefore, the achievements of art—with all of their questionable aspects—attest both national wealth and the specialized skills that make the achievement of wealth possible.

The relationship between the economic and aesthetic orders closely parallels that between economics and ideas, as represented by the projector. He is almost always a negative figure in the *Spectator* because he assumes that ideas can produce wealth without the traditional agencies of capital and labor. In his domain the projector replicates the theatrical emphasis on spectacle at the expense of sense, for he presents personal ideas as large economic schemes and pretends that a rational order replaces a traditional one. But Mr. Spectator himself can be seen as something of a projector. He mixes

public and private spheres by discoursing on domestic matters in print. Like the projector, he assumes that ideas have intrinsic social value and that trust is demonstrated not by the integrity of the proposer but by the merit of the idea. If the periodical writer can be accused of being a paid political schemer—an imputation that Mr. Spectator strongly rejects—he is also an economic schemer who seeks to transform mental constructs into wealth. Although the qualities of a wit are not themselves economic, the production of art involves the same economic factors that other products do. The figure of the bookseller stands in the gap between writing and distribution, and through his economic agency the dreams of wit are transformed into the commerce of culture.

Mr. Spectator is clearly aware of his own participation in the economy of England. In no. 367 he delineates the material benefits of his papers "as they consume a considerable quantity of our Paper Manufacture, employ our Artisans in Printing, and find Business for great Numbers of Indigent Persons." He traces the process of production from collecting rags, through the domestic manufacture of paper that now replaces imported foreign paper,[38] to the printing and distribution of the periodical. The material changes wrought by the printing process have their comic aspects in the reencounters that the process may produce: "A Lady's Shift may be metamorphosed into Billets doux, and come into her Possession a second time. A Beau may peruse his Cravat after it is worn out, with greater Pleasure and Advantage than ever he did in a Glass." But more notable by far than its comic possibilities is the national prestige of printing: "The politest Nations of *Europe* have endeavored to vie with one another for the Reputation of the finest Printing; Absolute Governments, as well as Republicks, have encouraged an Art which seems to be the noblest and most beneficial that was ever invented among the Sons of Men" (*Spectator*, no. 367). Cultural competition proceeds by way of an economic process in which labor and exchange transform waste into art—a process which the *Spectator* embodies, so that its material benefits parallel those conferred by instructing the reader. Hence Mr. Spectator asserts that the production of texts is an economic process of wide benefit, from improving the lot of the poor to enhancing the national honor.

38. The wars with France impeded the importation of French paper, and the French were somewhat successful in enticing emigré papermakers to return to France (see Allen T. Hazen, "Eustace Barnaby's Manufacture of White Paper in England," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 48 [1954]: 326–28; and Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book*, trans. David Gerard [London, 1976], p. 43).

The material benefits of producing texts are paralleled by the moral benefits of reading them, and that moral growth can in turn be measured in material terms. Addison and Steele recognize the dangers of an unrestrained profit motive, but they locate an index of moral achievement within the economic order. They set significant altruistic conditions on the attainment of success, and they see success as only an intermediate step toward happiness. But even these conditions and the moral contract that moderates economic enterprise can be judged in worldly terms as well. The ultimate reward of goodness, of course, is divine favor and immortal life; more immediately, goodness leads to success and personal happiness.

The connection of morality to economy ultimately derives from the declared relationship of personal happiness to public good and from the *Spectator*'s identification of personal happiness as a central motive of moral behavior. Addison and Steele probably would not have propounded ethical hedonism as such (for familiar religious doctrine remains articulated as a basis for moral behavior), but they could have argued its rhetorical propriety in their appeals to a broad audience on the grounds of motive rather than reason. The subjective nature of happiness allows the *Spectator* to postulate a common audience whose real interests were diverse. Ethical subjectivity, basing social behavior on personal happiness, is in fact a close correlate of Addison's aesthetic subjectivity, which sees the appreciation of art, derived from personal perception and cognition, as widely accessible to individuals and bound up with the appreciation of nature.[39] Despite its concern to see life in transcendent moral terms, the *Spectator* is a document in the history of secularization, for it delineates the workings of ethics through an economic order in which wealth, achievement, and status become public representations of moral goodness.

The position of trade as a model of morality elevates the role of the trader as moral agent (as in the idealized figure of Sir Andrew Freeport). The trader's personal morality, his conduct of trade for the public good rather than the greatest private gain, restrains Hobbesian natural conflict. The governing fiction that both justifies trade and controls it is the trader's moral agency rather than the self-regulating market. Just as the ethical centrality of personal happiness allows the

39. On Addison's aesthetic subjectivity, see John L. Mahoney, *The Whole Internal Universe: Imitation and the New Defense of Poetry in British Criticism 1660–1830* (New York, 1985), pp. 32–40; and Lee Andrew Elioseff, *The Cultural Milieu of Addison's Literary Criticism* (Austin, Tex., 1963), pp. 191–202. For connections among Addison's social and aesthetic values, see Michael Ketcham, *Transparent Designs: Reading, Performance, and Form in the "Spectator" Papers* (Athens, Ga., 1985), pp. 68–81.

Spectator to reach a broad audience, the moral trader, by transferring marketplace activities to the sphere of personal behavior, appeals to a broad social range and makes trade as attractive to country aristocrats as to London merchants.

The attractiveness of the *Spectator*'s moral economy lay both in its transformative projections and in its allegedly broad accessibility. It celebrated the energies by which the circulation of goods and money could be made to seem a natural dynamic of society. This moral economy penetrated and sustained the intimate circle of family life, where social roles resembled those of business, and children and apprentices seemed at times interchangeable.[40] It was replicated by the production of texts, whose transforming functions and distribution both celebrated and exemplified the life of trade. Such circulation and transformation of goods, finally, had their counterparts in the semiotics of language itself.[41] The making of a bourgeois public sphere which overlapped with that of the country aristocracy enacted the reformist purposes of the *Spectator*.

The reciprocal transfer of economic and moral values between land and trade is limited by a moral contract stipulating that money be used for public as well as individual good and appealing to the communal values by which the landed order was traditionally justified. The claim that the personal character of the moral tradesman will ensure his responsibility for the public good effectually exalts the economic energy of the middle class, placing it on a level with the altruism of aristocratic chivalry. This heightening allows the *Spectator* to address several audiences simultaneously. And it corrects the negative image of money and credit in early eighteenth-century culture by incorporating them into an image of the moral trader.[42] That image, though sincerely promulgated by Addison and Steele, was a convenient fiction justifying mercantile and colonial activity until the self-regulating market could afford some more plausible justification. But the image of moral economics provided by the *Spectator* extended into the nineteenth century and may, in part, explain the continued popularity of the periodical and the high regard for Addison in particular.[43]

40. Earle, pp. 100–105.

41. Compare James H. Bunn, "The Aesthetics of British Mercantilism," *New Literary History* 11 (1980): 303–21; and Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York, 1973), p. 175.

42. Goldsmith, *Public Vice, Private Benefits* (n. 10 above), p. 132.

43. Thomas Babington Macaulay articulated the heroic image of Addison among Victorian Whigs ("The Life and Writings of Addison" [1843], in *Miscellaneous Essays* [London, 1920]), but the continuing utility of the *Spectator*'s connection of trade with morality is manifested by the concurrently evil and benevolent images of trade in Charles Dickens's writings. *Sketches by Boz* and *Pickwick Papers* seem directly influenced by

The fictional connection of morality and trade explains the silences of Addison and Steele as well as the speech of Mr. Spectator. Addison and Steele spoke of mercantile activity either in personal moral terms or in the highly figurative language of the papers on public credit and on the Royal Exchange. The *Spectator* was virtually silent about the morality of slave trading or war profiteering, although both were important consequences of the War of Spanish Succession.[44] But such silence was hardly perceptible in a rhetoric that infused the image of the moral trader with such energy for its readers at so many different levels, from the location of secular morality in the principles of commercial activity to the production of the periodical itself.

Addison's and Steele's essays. Elsewhere, the plight of Nicholas Nickleby is redeemed by the mercantile benevolence of the Brothers Cheeryble, but the merchant's transformation of superfluous material into profit is represented by Boffin's Dust-heap in *Our Mutual Friend.*

44. Addison's location of gold-seeking Europeans in an Indian version of hell (*Spectator*, no. 56) seems directed at Spanish colonists rather than British slave traders; the closest the *Spectator* comes to denouncing slavery is in no. 215, where, after condemning the mistreatment of slaves (rather than the institution of slavery), Addison tells a story of "an amazing Instance of Barbarity" among slaves themselves. Bloom and Bloom (n. 23 above) admit that Addison "asked not for the redress of a moral wrong but for a palliative of civilization's confusion of economic necessity, might, and right" (p. 52). See also N. Darnell Davis, *The "Spectator's" Essays relating to the West Indies* (Demerara, British Guinea, 1885). Corruption and profiteering in the army were, of course, favorite subjects of the *Examiner.*