

johnsons and goldsmiths political views were nearest those of a

Johnson's and Goldsmith's political views were nearest those of a particular ideological framework that emphasized a blend of classical liberalism and pragmatic governance. Understanding their political philosophies necessitates an exploration of their backgrounds, the historical context in which they operated, and the specific tenets they advocated for. Both figures prominently influenced the political landscape of their time, engaging in debates that resonate within contemporary political discourse.

Background of Samuel Johnson and Goldsmith

Samuel Johnson

Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) was an English writer, lexicographer, and literary critic. He is best known for his dictionary, "A Dictionary of the English Language," published in 1755, which marked a significant advancement in English lexicography. Johnson's political and social views were heavily influenced by his experiences, including his struggles with poverty and his observations of the social hierarchies of 18th-century England. He was known for his moralistic stance and often engaged in discussions about morality, ethics, and the role of government in society.

Oliver Goldsmith

Oliver Goldsmith (1730–1774) was an Irish novelist, playwright, and poet whose works often reflected his critique of society and human nature. Goldsmith's most famous works include "The Vicar of Wakefield" and "She Stoops to Conquer." His writing often contained elements of social commentary that critiqued the upper classes and highlighted the virtues of simplicity and the common man. Goldsmith's political views tended to lean towards the compassionate and humane treatment of all people, emphasizing the importance of social justice.

Common Political Ideologies

Both Johnson and Goldsmith operated within a political milieu characterized by various competing ideologies. However, their views aligned closely with the following principles:

Classical Liberalism

- Individual Rights: Both writers championed the notion that individuals should have the freedom to pursue their interests, provided they do not infringe upon others' rights. Johnson's essays often reflected a belief in

the moral responsibilities of individuals, while Goldsmith emphasized the dignity and worth of the common person.

- **Limited Government:** They argued for a government that serves the interests of the people rather than one that oppresses or controls them. Johnson believed in the importance of a moral government that promoted virtue and ethical behavior.

- **Social Contract:** Both thinkers endorsed the idea that governments derive their authority from the consent of the governed. They were critical of arbitrary power and the divine right of kings, advocating instead for a system that reflected the will of the people.

Humanism and Compassion

- **Empathy for the Underprivileged:** Goldsmith's works, particularly "The Vicar of Wakefield," highlighted the struggles of the poor and advocated for a more compassionate society. Johnson, too, expressed concern for the plight of the disadvantaged, often emphasizing moral duty towards one's fellow citizens.

- **Moral Responsibility:** Johnson's writings frequently grappled with moral dilemmas and the ethical responsibilities of both individuals and the state. He believed that literature and philosophy should serve a higher moral purpose, guiding society towards virtue.

Critique of Social Norms

- **Satire and Criticism:** Both Johnson and Goldsmith utilized satire to critique societal norms and the hypocrisy of the upper classes. Their works often served as social commentaries that challenged the status quo and called for reform.

- **Value of the Common Man:** Goldsmith's portrayal of relatable characters in his plays and novels underscored the notion that wisdom and virtue are not exclusive to the wealthy. Johnson, through his essays, similarly emphasized the importance of the common man's experience and perspective.

Influence of Enlightenment Thought

The Enlightenment played a crucial role in shaping the political views of both Johnson and Goldsmith. This intellectual movement emphasized reason, individualism, and a scientific approach to understanding human society. Key influences included:

- **Rationalism:** The belief in reason as the primary source of authority and legitimacy. Johnson's work often reflected this, as he sought to apply rational thought to moral and social issues.

- **Empiricism:** Understanding through experience and observation, which both Johnson and Goldsmith employed in their critiques of society. They often drew from their own life experiences to inform their political views.

- **Progressivism:** The idea that society can improve through education and

reform was central to their thought. They believed in the possibility of progress and the role of literature and intellectual discourse in advancing society.

Contrasts and Divergences

While Johnson and Goldsmith shared several political views, they also diverged in certain aspects:

Views on Authority and Power

- Johnson's Conservatism: Johnson tended to exhibit a more conservative approach to authority. He believed in the necessity of social order and the importance of tradition, often valuing stability over radical change.
- Goldsmith's Radicalism: In contrast, Goldsmith exhibited a more progressive stance, often advocating for social reforms that challenged existing power structures. His works frequently highlighted the need for change and the importance of addressing social injustices.

Approaches to Literature and Politics

- Johnson's Didacticism: Johnson believed that literature should serve a moral purpose, guiding readers towards ethical behavior and social responsibility. His essays often had a didactic tone, aiming to teach as much as to entertain.
- Goldsmith's Humanism: Goldsmith, on the other hand, focused on the human experience, emphasizing empathy and understanding. His narratives often sought to evoke compassion and challenge the reader's perceptions of morality and justice.

Conclusion

In summary, Johnson's and Goldsmith's political views were nearest those of a classical liberal and humanist framework that underscored the importance of individual rights, social responsibility, and empathy for the underprivileged. Their works resonated with the ideals of the Enlightenment, reflecting a commitment to reason, progress, and critique of societal norms. While they shared common ground, their differing approaches to authority, power, and the role of literature in politics highlight the dynamic nature of their political philosophies.

As we consider their contributions today, it is essential to recognize how their insights into human nature and governance continue to inform contemporary discussions on social justice, individual rights, and the role of literature in shaping political consciousness. Johnson and Goldsmith stand as enduring figures in the discourse on politics and ethics, reminding us of the vital intersection between literature and the socio-political landscape.

Frequently Asked Questions

What political ideology did Johnson and Goldsmith align with during their careers?

Johnson and Goldsmith's political views were nearest those of a conservative orientation, often emphasizing traditional values and free market principles.

How did Johnson and Goldsmith's views impact their political actions?

Their conservative views led them to support policies that favored economic growth, limited government intervention, and a strong national defense.

In which political movements or parties did Johnson and Goldsmith find their closest affiliations?

They found their closest affiliations within the Conservative Party, aligning with its core principles and policies during their political careers.

What social issues did Johnson and Goldsmith prioritize in their political agendas?

They prioritized issues such as immigration control, law and order, and economic reform, reflecting their conservative stance on social matters.

How did Johnson and Goldsmith's views compare to those of their political contemporaries?

Compared to their contemporaries, Johnson and Goldsmith were more aligned with traditional conservative views, often contrasting with more progressive or liberal approaches within the political spectrum.

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