THE SOCIAL IDEAS OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO HIS POSITION
BETWEEN CLASSICISM AND ROMANTICISM

by

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A Thesis
submitted to the faculty of the
Department of English
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in the Graduate College
University of Arizona

1948

Flora H. Morgan, Aug 25, 1948
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

The position of Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) in English letters has long been assured. The beauties of his style and the charm of his sentiments have attracted many readers to this later eighteenth century literary figure. But Goldsmith's position in the history of ideas has received relatively little consideration. Too often his comments on social questions have been laid aside as of little significance.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study (1) to present and interpret the social ideas of Oliver Goldsmith with a view to the eighteenth century background from which they proceeded; and (2) to decide Goldsmith's position between classicism and romanticism as established by those social ideas.

Importance of the study. Goldsmith was subjected to a crosscurrent of ideas, some originating from the traditionalist, neo-classic past, others foreshadowing a future age which saw the French Revolution and the romantic upheaval. It is felt that a study of Goldsmith, a writer of the transitional period, might clarify the meanings of the terms classicism
and romanticism by revealing the contrasting tendencies at work. In Goldsmith lies the key to an age. But not only does the survey of his ideas aid in comprehending the literary forces which nourished him, but it also provides considerable insight into a difficult period, a period of transition between two great ideas.

II: THE PLAN OF THE THESIS

Prefatory material concerning Goldsmith's eighteenth century background has been included in this introductory chapter in addition to working definitions of classicism, romanticism, and sentimentalism. Two further topics, the transition from classicism to romanticism and the distinction between romanticism and sentimentalism, have been discussed briefly.

The actual matter of Goldsmith's social ideas has been apportioned among Chapters II, III, and IV, with Chapter V presenting a summary and conclusions. Chapter II presents Goldsmith's ideas on luxury and commerce. Chapters III and IV proceed from Goldsmith's denunciation of the abuses of luxury in Chapter II. Chapter III inspects the range of Goldsmith's ideas on sentimental primitivism and useful luxury, attempting to discover if justification may exist for referring to Goldsmith as a sentimentalist. Chapter IV is developed from the sympathy which Goldsmith displayed for the poor, simple folk oppressed by the tyranny of luxury. His concern with the individual as opposed to the mass of
society, with particular reference to his ideas on prison reform, is observed as growing from his personal sympathies. Cosmopolitanism has been discussed as an extension of romantic individualism, with emphasis upon Goldsmith's citizen-of-the-world concept. Chapter V, the final chapter, summarizes in the usual fashion the findings of the problem chapters, and, in conclusion, attempts to justify by reference to these findings the statements made as to the importance of the study.

III. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The edition of Goldsmith which has been used in this study is that of Peter Cunningham. This edition, first released in 1854 and reprinted in the Turk's Head Edition of 1908, was followed by a number of more modern editions which, however, were not available. The Cunningham edition includes Goldsmith's major works and large excerpts from his more important compilations. Those works by Goldsmith which are usually rated as of major importance and therefore considered at some length in this study are the two poems, The Traveller and The Deserted Village, The Citizen of the World essays, and the one great novel, The Vicar of Wakefield. The two comedies, The Good-Natured Man and She Stoops to Conquer, had no particular application to this study.

Supplementary material has been derived from his other less known works, some of which, notably New Essays edited by Ronald S. Crane in 1927, help to explain and corroborate the
positions which Goldsmith takes in the better-known works. Critical and interpretive material to supplement the readings in Goldsmith has been considered under four divisions: (1) general background works; (2) works on the theories of romanticism, classicism, and sentimentalism; (3) works containing references to Goldsmith's social ideas; and (4) works in which Goldsmith's position in the history of ideas has been estimated.

There are no extended works available on Goldsmith's social ideas. However, a fairly representative group of opinions has been derived by the collation of such articles as Robert W. Seitz's "The Irish Background of Goldsmith's Thought" and Howard J. Bell's "The Deserted Village and Goldsmith's Social Doctrines" with the brief but pertinent comments from the literary histories and critical surveys.

An interesting variance of opinion exists among those who have attempted to classify Goldsmith as classicist, romanticist, or sentimentalist. The anti-sentimentalist side is represented by Robert B. Heilman and Ernest Bernbaum; such scholars as Walter Francis Wright and James Hall Pitman stress his sentimentalism. A similar situation exists in regard to Goldsmith's position between classicism and romanticism. Thus a gallery of critics refer to the writer, according to their respective predilections, as Goldsmith, the arch-conservative, the reactionary; Goldsmith, the romantic precursor; or perhaps as Goldsmith, the man who wrote his prose with his head and his poetry with his heart.
The reasons for such a condition as centered in the dual nature of many of Goldsmith's ideas have been discussed as part of this thesis. It is felt that the best way to resolve such disturbing paradoxes is to display the author's ideas as controlled or influenced by his background and to evaluate them by suitable theoretic criteria.

IV. BACKGROUND, DEFINITIONS, AND ESSENTIAL DISTINCTIONS

Of the period in which Goldsmith lived, referring especially to the years between 1740 and 1780, G. M. Trevelyan states:

In England it was an age of aristocracy and liberty; of the rule of law and the absence of reform; of individual initiative and institutional decay; of Latitudinarianism above and Wesleyanism below; of the growth of humanitarian and philanthropic feeling and endeavour of creative vigour in all the trades and arts that serve and adorn the life of man.¹

It was, as Trevelyan implies, an age which glorified man and his faculties. Thinkers of that era felt that society had reached a certain peak of perfection. Philosophers of the street, such as Dr. Johnson, had ample leisure to moralize on the human scene, feeling happily certain that the state of society and the modes of thought to which they were accustomed were not mere passing aspects of an ever-shifting kaleidoscope, but permanent habitations, the final outcome of reason and experience.

Prosperity was theirs. The canal system and the turnpike roads had stimulated both the exchange of goods inside the island and the overseas trade. British commerce had begun to assume its modern form of supplying necessaries for all, instead of merely luxuries for the rich. For it was only in the eighteenth century that articles of general consumption were brought from overseas to clothe the bodies and quench the thirst of the King's humbler subjects. Some thinkers, however, maintained reservations as to the undivided benefits of this commerce. Goldsmith was one of these skeptics.

One aspect of the movement towards increased national production was centered around the enclosure question. During the eighteenth century great tracts of England were converted from small holdings into farms. Enclosures, regarded as a public crime during Tudor times, were now considered as a public duty. Since it was the wealthy class which framed the Enclosure Acts, the peasant was unable to state his case with effect. Some of these large estates were created by prosperous agriculturists who had so thriven as to be able to buy up other land in the neighborhood of their original holdings; others were purchased by men who had made money in the shop and the counting house. But, as A. S. Turberville remarks:

In whatever way the process took place, the small farmer and cottager lost considerably and tended to degenerate into the status of the farm-labourer on the lands of the wealthier and more prosperous owners.\(^2\)

Such was the situation lamented by Goldsmith in his picture of the 'deserted' Auburn.

The literature which rose from this background reflected the national character with its sturdy common sense, deep moral feeling, and an intellectual shortsightedness which enabled it to grasp details while rejecting general systems. The change in literary style which came in with Queen Anne was symptomatic of a corresponding change in the national temper. It was the mission of the eighteenth century to assert the universality of law and, at the same time, to assert the sufficiency of reason to discover the laws which govern in every province. Hence arose its dislike of irregularity in art and irrationality in religion. England was tired of the unchartered freedom, of the spiritual as well as literary anarchy which had been part of the seventeenth century foment. Enthusiasm of all sorts was anathema. Goldsmith, for instance, refers to enthusiasm in The Citizen of the World: He remarks that those who discard the light of reason are ever gloomy, their fears increasing in proportion to their ignorance. But, says Goldsmith, a stronger reason for the enthusiasts to be enemies of laughter is that they themselves are such proper objects of ridicule. Ridicule, he concludes, is the most powerful and successful enemy of

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enthusiasts since you cannot combat them with reason.5

The work, then, of the eighteenth century was the establishment of the rule of law, a law which, despite its faults, was a law of freedom on whose solid foundations all of England's subsequent reforms were built, and by Parliamentary modification rather than by Revolutionary violence as on the Continent.

Eighteenth century literature, growing as it did from the national character, was a part of the ordinary life and trade. The writers did not represent outbreaks of genius in protest against its surroundings but rather demonstrated the natural outcome of the ethos of the age. Speculation was not prescient of any coming revolution. Abuses were denounced, but they were regarded as removable excrescences on a satisfactory system. The English social critics of the time were content to appeal to common sense and leave ultimate results to the philosophers. They were content to keep the old machinery going. A desire to improve its efficiency in some spots did not mean a reform wave.

These observations lead to the conclusion that general conditions were favourable to a high level of taste and artistic production in Dr. Johnson's England. Wealth and leisure were on the increase. Civil peace and personal liberty were more secure than in any previous age. Wars were not yet big enough to disturb the peaceful activities

5Oliver Goldsmith, Works, V, 287.
on the island. Taste had not yet been vitiated by too much machine production. Life and art were still human and not mechanical; quality had not yet yielded to quantity.

DEFINITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS

Classicism. When attempting to distinguish the characteristics of classicism and romanticism, one must guard against a too great precision in the distinction. It is wise to agree with Walter Pater's judgment that these two theories, usually considered divisible, are actually counter-balancing qualities and tendencies which run through literatures of all times and countries. But in Walter Bate's words the sad truth is this:

Both words are loose and inadequate especially the term "romanticism." But continual use has given them such a number of connotations that they not only prove more convenient than others but even defy replacement.

In any event, the greater part of the eighteenth century can be described as dominated by the classical tradition. And an age in which the classical tradition predominates is characterized by respect for authority, love of order and decorum, a disposition to follow rules and models, and the acceptance of academic and conventional standards over-balancing any desires for strangeness and novelty.


7Walter Jackson Bate, From Classic to Romantic, p. vii.
William Lyon Phelps in *The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement* has rather carefully surveyed the characteristics of classicism.

1. He first explains their view of life as being almost wholly phenomenal. On the religious side of popular belief, mystery was hated and respectability exalted.

2. Form was exalted over matter. Clearness was exalted above force, raiment above body, brilliancy above depth. The transparent clearness of the literature was largely due to subject matter. All difficult themes were avoided.

3. There was a general belief that all true literature should follow nature. But, and this is an important distinction, nature to them meant an exact reproduction of everyday life and manners, as opposed to almost anything wild, extravagant, or imaginative. Goldsmith, in his biography of Parnell, makes a statement in line with this theory. Almost anyone can copy nature, he says. But greatness lies in the ability to select such parts as contribute to delight, delight meaning pleasurable instruction.\(^8\)

4. Phelps feels that though it lacked the Greek unconsciousness, the literature of the eighteenth century was classical in the clearness of expression and of thought, in the perfect adaptability of the language to the sense, and in the repression of emotion. Faithful adherence to critical rules was responsible for the limitation of imagination and

\(^8\)Goldsmith, VIII, 266.
the suppression of individuality. Always the respect for law and convention was uppermost.

5. City life was considered far superior to country life. The general failure to appreciate natural scenery is evidenced by the artificial pastorals. Goldsmith reflects this idea of the supposed supremacy of city life in his statement in the Critical Review that a man must be bred near the centers of learning and politeness if he is not to give vent to ridiculous vanities.\(^9\) The turn which Goldsmith evinces here contrasts with his usual sympathy with country manners.

6. For his sixth point Phelps emphasizes the neo-classic fondness for wit, satire, and travesty. People were writing satire, says Phelps, because they couldn't write anything else. Sarcasm was not directed against sin but against unconventionality.

7. There was a rather common attitude of indifference towards Old English and medieval writers. This indifference usually arose from ignorance. An example of the sort of critical judgment which rose from this general ignorance is Goldsmith's statement that Dante owes most of his reputation to the obscurity of his time.\(^10\) Goldsmith, like most of his contemporaries, considered the age of Queen Anne as the period of perfection in English literature; it was the period which provided the true standard for future imitation—taste

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\(^9\) Goldsmith, IX, 413-414.

\(^10\) Ibid., VI, 27.
united to genius.\textsuperscript{11}

8. The attitude toward anything savouring of romanticism was one of unqualified condemnation. Everything must conform to neo-classic standards.\textsuperscript{12}

Phelps has summed up the essentials of what is meant by classicism. The emphasis was upon man as a social and moral being. The English thinker and writer did not know or express any concern about the final truths of existence, but he did have a deep interest in the analysis of human passions. There he would discover the moving forces of society.

W. J. Courthope aligns both Johnson and Goldsmith under the fundamental characteristics of neo-classic society and literature.

In the view of both Johnson and Goldsmith, poetry ought to be the reflection of some active moral principle in the life of society. They thought that Pope was right, when he "stooped to truth and moralised his song." They hated anything in the shape of revivalism, because to them it savoured of affectation, which they held, and justly, to be the deadliest of artistic sins. For the same reason, they disapproved of the form of poetic diction adopted by Collins and Gray, holding with the Attic writers, Horace and Castiglione, that the true basis of metrical composition was the colloquial idiom of living society, refined by literary practice. As may be seen from Goldsmith's panegyric on Parnell, already cited, they regarded the couplet in its traditional development as the true vehicle for classical simplicity of expression, and they were displeased with the more purely literary forms of diction evolved out of the imitation of Pindar.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11}Goldsmith, VI, 304.

\textsuperscript{12}William Lyon Phelps, The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement, pp. 7-18.

The proper material for art was human nature, and especially those traits of mankind which were general and obvious.

To summarize, neo-classic literature was characterized by self-restraint, objectivity, and lack of curiosity. It was a literature not simply of this world, but of the world, the beau monde.

The transition between classicism and romanticism. The classical creed held sway over the greater part of the eighteenth century. Sir Leslie Stephen feels that romanticism was not so much a reaction as it was a development made up of many new and apparently unconnected movements, having in common only the fact that all were attempts to supply wants produced by a common cause. And that common cause was the decay of the old creed which left a variety of instincts unsatisfied.14

Bate, however, sees the development of European romanticism as somewhat more of a conscious withdrawal from the classical standard.

For European romanticism, as it emerged historically, may perhaps be most generally defined as a turning away, in whatever direction, from the classical standard of ideal nature, and from the accompanying conviction that the full exercise of ethical reason may grasp that objective ideal. In more or less degree, it substitutes for these premises the beliefs that such truth as can be known is to be found primarily in or through the particular, and that this truth is to be realized, appreciated, and declared in art by the response to

14Stephen, p. 456.
that particular of some faculty or capacity in man which is imaginative and often emotional rather than "rational," and which therefore inclines to be somewhat individualistic and subjective in its working.\(^1\)

Perhaps these two conceptions of the change can best be resolved in such a term as "unconscious reaction."

It was a movement almost contemporaneous with the conventional schools of Pope and later of Johnson, though it should be noted that Johnson also partook of certain elements characteristic of the turning away. The reaction was fostered by a few poets who, consciously or unconsciously, were not bound by the tenets of the neo-classic school. Some discarded the heroic couplet for earlier verse forms. Others clung to the couplet, doubtless imagining themselves in accord with the conventions, though their poetic sympathies were such as could never be satisfied with the ideals of Pope and his disciples. Passion, imagination, and love of nature, all formerly in disrepute, were slowly reasserting themselves.

**Romanticism.** "Romanticism is taken to indicate the dominance of imagination, in contradistinction to the dominance of reason implied in classicism."\(^2\) Reduced to simplest terms, the distinction between classicism and romanticism is usually understood in some such terms as Stauffer has here employed. One thinks of the act of the imagination as an act

\[^{1}\text{Bate, p. 4.}\]

\[^{2}\text{Donald A. Stauffer, The Art of Biography in Eighteenth Century England, p. 165.}\]
of synthesis, and the act of the reason as an act of analysis.

Phelps informs us of the three principal qualities that one ordinarily distinguishes in romantic literature: Subjectivity, the aspiration and vague longing of the writer which is manifest in his works; the Love of the Picturesque, the element of strangeness added to beauty noted by Pater; and the Reactionary Spirit, the romantic literature being always reactionary to what has immediately preceded it. These three characteristics, as thus defined, perhaps bring us close to the essential quality of romanticism. All three are elements of the romantic imagination, that somewhat mystic faculty which in its conception of the ideal world seeks what is fundamentally opposed to present realities.

But what are the means by which this powerful instrument achieves its freedom? Stauffer, in answering this question, dips into the subject matter to which romanticism turned.

The miseries of the poor, the tender stirrings of affection, the contemplation of instinctive bounty, the sight of ruined monuments of the past or of the grandeurs, asperities, and softness of natural scenery—all these provided means of freeing the imagination and the heart, transporting the sensitive soul into expansive regions of generous emotion or mysterious realms of melancholy. One further device—the appeal to memory—sheds romantic nostalgia over many lives. Here the imagination is free to rove through far-off places and through far-off days, and life becomes rather like a dream than an assurance.

17 Phelps, pp. 4-5.


19 Stauffer, p. 5.
The appeal to romantic nostalgia has been noted as a primary attribute of Goldsmith's great Poem, *The Deserted Village*.

**Sentimentalism.**

Sentimentalism rests on the belief that human nature is fundamentally good. The sentimentalist sees the world as his heart bids, not as his mind, where observation and experience of the actual are stored, presents it to him. The sentimentalist praises the spontaneous generosity and the sensitive humanity of naturally good man, and attacks form—social, liturgical, literary—as a fetter on the free outpouring of the heart.  

Further characteristics can be implied from Gallaway's definition. Man is by nature good, but as found in society he shows much that is evil. His degeneration has come about because of the artificial restraints and repressions of civilization. Therefore to find the natural man, and by hypothesis, the most nearly perfect man, one must look among untutored savages or among simple countrymen or among any other uncultured and uncorrupted group where man's natural emotions have free play.

Therefore, the term "sentimentalism" can be used in two senses important in the study of literature: (1) an over-indulgence in emotion, especially the conscious effort to induce emotion in order to analyze or enjoy it; also the failure to restrain or evaluate emotion through the exercise of the judgment; (2) an optimistic overemphasis of the goodness

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of humanity ("sensibility"), representing in part a rationalistic reaction against orthodox Calvinistic theology, which regarded human nature as depraved. It is connected with the development of primitivism, the doctrine sketched above, which states that primitive man, because he has remained closer to nature and has been less subject to the corrupt influences of society, is nobler and more nearly perfect than is civilized man.

The glorification of tearful emotion associated with sentimentalism was, as Sickels says, no new thing in the 1770's and 1780's. It had existed as a concomitant phenomenon, as a sort of safety valve, in the very midst of the neo-classic triumph.

Its rise and triumph is bound up with the increasing economic and literary importance of the bourgeoisie, with the philosophical optimism associated with the name of Shaftesbury, with the conception of the essential goodness of the human heart implied not only in Shaftesbury's system but in the ideal of the "noble savage" and in primitivism in general.

Distinction between romanticism and sentimentalism. Goldsmith has been called both a sentimentalist and a romantic precursor. Therefore, it is important to know what distinction, if any, is made between sentimentalism and romanticism.

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22 Ibid., p. 335.
24 Ibid., pp. 193-194.
The line between is difficult to draw and can at best be but a vague and tenuous one dependent largely on individual taste. Some aid is afforded by Beers' note that sentimentalism approaches its subject through the feelings, romanticism through the imagination. But this is perhaps rather arbitrary and does not clearly indicate the true nature of either theory.

Greater assistance is given in Neilson's distinction. The sentimentalist, as we have seen, is intensely interested in himself and his emotions, and is apt to choose his interests and occupations with a view to the intensifying of these emotions and the satisfaction of that self, using imagination only as a means to this end. But he is not therefore a romanticist; for imagination is his servant (his pander, I had almost said), while in romance it is his master. In all subjective verse then, if we wish to be sure whether it is romantic or sentimental, we have to discern whether the author is dealing with his inner experiences because they are the source of that light that transfigures the external world and makes Nature into art, or merely because he finds in them a thrill of self-satisfaction.

Thus one might further clarify the issue by stating that both classicism and romanticism deal with universals, classicism seeing the universal through the general, romanticism through the particular. Sentimentalism is also concerned with the particular, but, and here lies the essential difference, it cultivates the particular, meaning the subjective reaction, with an eye to nursing an emotion or cultivating a mood for the sake of egoistic enjoyment.

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25 Beers, p. 32.

Sentimentalism and romanticism are, therefore, much the same, the difference being largely a matter of the transference of one's interest from the sentiment or emotion itself to the object of it. Which characteristic most permeates an author's work can be discovered by studying the attitude of the individual towards mankind.

The emotion itself may be the important thing, in which event, as has been said, the result is sentimentalism; mankind may be the important element and when the emotion is pity the result will be an imaginative projection of the individual into the suffering of the race; or the individual himself may be the center of emphasis, and his own introspective melancholy may be intensified by drawing about itself like an aura the suffering of the race. 27

The last two types are essentially romantic.

The return to nature underlies, to some extent, both the sentimental and romantic movements. In one sense the term means to find a new expression for emotions repressed by existing conventions; or, in another, to return to some simpler social order which had not yet suffered from those conventions.

Chapter III of this thesis, a section growing out of the presentation of Goldsmith's ideas on luxury and commerce in Chapter II, concerns itself particularly with the matter of sentimentalism in Goldsmith. His reactions to the doctrine of the return to nature are to be noted carefully in relation to his ideas on luxury. Through the analytic survey of his ideas in that chapter as referred to the distinction made in

27 Sickels, p. 300.
this section, it can perhaps be determined how much Goldsmith has of the usual brand of eighteenth century sentimentalism and how deeply he bears the imprint of the restraint and moderation associated with classicism.

Sentimentalism is to be understood here as the ideological precursor of romanticism, and, in fact, as the most important step between classicism and romanticism—from the general to the particular, to the particular as universal.

This introductory chapter has included brief sections on the eighteenth century background and the literary theories pertinent to this study. Working definitions or explanations of classicism, the transition between classicism and romanticism, romanticism, sentimentalism, and the distinction between romanticism and sentimentalism have been provided. The problem chapters are to be considered against the background established here.
CHAPTER II

A PRESENTATION OF GOLDSMITH'S IDEAS ON LUXURY AND COMMERCE

Introduction

The discussion of Goldsmith's ideas on luxury and commerce contained in this chapter is divided into four main parts. His general observations on the structure of society are considered first. Second, attention is paid to the development of his ideas on luxury in the works which preceded The Traveller and The Deserted Village. Those two poems are then carefully reviewed in the third section, as being the culmination of Goldsmith's denunciation of the evils of luxury and commerce. The last section discusses both those opinions which seem diametrically opposed to his conclusions in the two major poems and those which approach the ideal of classical moderation.

I. ON THE GENERAL STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY

Goldsmith visualized society in the form of a pyramid. The royal power should be strengthened. All men had originally been equal but some had developed more strength and greater capabilities than others. The rich men, the men of commerce, would like to weaken the monarchy so as to gain power and additional wealth for themselves.
Now the state may be so circumstanced, or its laws may be so disposed, or its men of opulence so minded, as all to conspire in carrying on this business of undermining monarchy. For, in the first place, if the circumstances of our state be such as to favour the accumulation of wealth, and make the opulent still more rich, this will increase their ambition. An accumulation of wealth, however, must necessarily be the consequence, when as at present, more riches flow in from external commerce than arise from internal industry; for external commerce can only be managed to advantage by the rich, and they have also at the same time, all the emoluments arising from internal industry; so that the rich, with us, have two sources of wealth, whereas the poor have but one. For this reason, wealth, in all commercial states, is found to accumulate, and all such have hitherto in time become aristocratical.¹

Thus does the Vicar of Wakefield lay the cornerstone of Goldsmith's social philosophy. The fixed social levels as a result of which the rich married only the rich were seen to contribute to the accumulation of wealth. When the possessor of this accumulated wealth had secured all the necessaries and pleasures desired, he began to employ his superfluity by purchasing power, gathering the poorest of the people into his vortex.

But still there exists a large number of people outside of the rich man's influence, that order of men between the very rich and the very rabble.

In this middle order of mankind are generally to be found all the arts, wisdom, and virtues of society. This order alone is known to be the true preserver of freedom and may be called the People.²

However, this moderate element may be weakened if the property

¹Oliver Goldsmith, Works, III, 137-138.
²Ibid., p. 139.
qualification for suffrage is extended. Such a move would introduce the vote of the rabble, that group which follows where greatness directs. What, then, is the solution offered by Goldsmith?

In such a state, therefore, all that the middle order has left, is to preserve the prerogative and privileges of the one principal governor, with the most sacred circumspection. For he divides the power of the rich, and calls off the great from falling with tenfold weight on the middle order placed beneath them.  

Such an appeal to the sovereignty displays a reactionary tendency, but Goldsmith, good classicist that he was in many respects, admitted no extremes into his views. He wrote diatribes against the wealthy tyrants, but he certainly did not believe in the levelling of fortunes and the abolition of the class system. Always he was seeking the golden mean, here between extremes of great wealth and poverty.

He had no faith in the democratic idea. He felt that however bad the situation was redress should come only from above. Only the king could adjust the problems of society to provide equal justice. Monarchy, Goldsmith felt, was the solution to the rising problem of plutocracy.  

When he championed the middle class, he was instinctively setting his face against everything that threatened to substitute quantity for quality--against the encroachment

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3Ibid.  
of commerce and the new imperialism. Whatever intrinsic value this appraisal of the general structure of society possesses philosophically, it is indeed an excellent reference point from which to consider those particular abuses which Goldsmith condemns. The tone of these first pronouncements may be described as conservative. They seem to have been evolved through the analytic intellect. His concepts are classical in their reasoned restraint and moderation. But it is felt that when Goldsmith turned from the theoretic to the particular and the familiar, he substituted a more human and sensitive approach; and it is this aspect of his ideas which puzzles those critics who attempt to estimate his position between classicism and romanticism.

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOLDSMITH'S IDEAS ON LUXURY PRIOR TO THE TRAVELLER AND THE DESERTED VILLAGE

In this section are included notes upon and references to the general subject of luxury found in Goldsmith's earlier essays, principally New Essays, anonymous contributions from 1760 to 1762 to periodicals, which have been convincingly ascribed by Ronald S. Crane to Goldsmith, and The Citizen of the World, 1762.

In New Essays there are many comments which seem to foreshadow the ideas of The Deserted Village.

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To grow old in the same fields where we once were young; to be capable of every moment beholding objects that recall our early pleasures; to measure our own years by the trees that our hands have planted, are more truly pleasing than may at first be imagined.\(^6\)

Here is expressed that nostalgic feeling for the place of one's birth which so pervades *The Deserted Village*.

In Essay XII an even more striking echo:

When no arts are encouraged but the arts of luxury, every mind will be set upon trifles, the inhabitants must necessarily degenerate, till all at last, like the modern Italians, they seem castrated at a single blow.\(^7\)

The weakening of a nation by commerce and colonization, another phase of Goldsmith's argument against luxury, is explained in Essay XIV. Too great foreign power, he says, may lessen a country's natural strength. Dominion often becomes more feeble as it grows more extensive.\(^8\) To people new colonies requires multitudes from the mother country, and unfortunately it is the healthy and industrious who are most wanted. They are more usefully kept at home.

But perhaps an opponent will say, if we people those countries, we shall have more tobacco, more hemp, and we shall be able to procure prodigious quantities of raw silk! away then with thousands of our best and most useful inhabitants, that we may be furnished with tobacco and raw silk; send our honest tradesmen and brave soldiers to people those desolate regions, that our merchants may furnish Europe with tobacco and raw silk.\(^9\)

\(^6\) Ronald S. Crane, *New Essays by Oliver Goldsmith*, p. 15.

\(^7\) Ibid., p. 82.

\(^8\) Ibid., p. 92.

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 96.
Thus Goldsmith deplores the exchange of useful members of society for idle luxuries just as later in The Deserted Village he laments the passing of the stout yeomanry before "trade's unfeeling train."

Essay XVIII, "The Revolution in Low Life," provides a striking and significant preview of Goldsmith's later position in regard to the depopulation of rural districts by the luxurious wealthy class. As Crane asserts:

It is a first sketch of The Deserted Village—a sketch which antedates the finished poem by eight years and the short passage on rural depopulation in The Traveller by over two. No longer can we think of Goldsmith's concern with the woes of the countryside as a development merely of his later career; no longer can we fail to see how intimately the whole question was bound up in his mind with the speculations on trade and on national greatness which had preoccupied him since the early part of the Seven Years War. 10

The essay is about a happy community which a merchant from London has purchased in order that he may lay the whole out in a set of pleasure for himself. The observer says:

I was grieved to see a generous, virtuous race of men, who should be considered as the strength and the ornament of their country, torn from their little habitations, and driven out to meet poverty and hardship among strangers. 11

Crane notes the closeness of this passage to the lines in The Deserted Village:

But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied. 12

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10 Ibid., p. xl.
11 Ibid., p. 118.
12 Goldsmith, I., p. 55.
The onlooker has been informed, moreover, that this is not an isolated instance. In almost every part of the kingdom the laborious husbandmen have been reduced and their lands either occupied by some general undertaker or turned into enclosures destined for purposes of amusement or luxury.

These miserable conditions are traced to the new introduction of wealth proceeding from the increase of foreign commerce and the extension of foreign conquests. The observer finds scant pleasure in such an infusion of money because "it is calculated rather to make individuals rich, than to make the aggregate happy." 13

Turning from the New Essays to The Citizen of the World one discovers additional evidence of Goldsmith's mounting concern. In several of the anecdotes, a favorite thesis of The Traveller and The Deserted Village may be recognized: luxury softens a people, and causes national demoralization; hardships develop individual manliness, which is the strength of any government.

In Letter XXV, Goldsmith traces the rise and decline of a kingdom. After the kingdom has attained security, it begins to look for conveniences, for the elegances and refinements of life. It is found necessary to divide the state on the basis of utility into two groups, artisans and soldiers, the artisans to improve the luxuries of life, the soldiers to watch for the security of the people. At this period the

13Crane, p. 121.
state is solicitous for freedom rather than for riches. Thus the neighboring states, having nothing to apprehend from the ambition of such men, are happy to trade with them. Eventually this people become moderately rich and their opulence invites invasion. The invader is victoriously repelled. Finding victory sweet, the country turns to conquests in their own right. They thus lose the commercial support of their neighbors and are forced to turn to colonies. Through this colonial trade, the inhabitants became wealthy, but, at the same time, the colonies were gaining in strength. The mainland, while persevering in its luxuriousness, loses its maintenance and goes under.\(^{14}\)

Happy, very happy, might they have been had they known when to bound their riches and their glory; had they known that extending empire is often diminishing power; that countries are ever strongest which are internally powerful; that colonies, by draining away the brave and enterprising, leave the country in the hands of the timid and the avaricious; that walls give little protection, unless manned with resolution; that too much commerce may injure a nation as well as too little; and that there is a wide difference between a conquering and a flourishing empire.\(^{15}\)

Thus Goldsmith has exploited the second aspect of his attack on luxury, the immoderate emphasis upon foreign commerce and colonization. He also shows no little insight into the mounting colonial problem of his day, the problem that reached its bitter climax in 1776, two years after his death.

In Letter XVII he emphasizes once more the foolishness

\(^{14}\)Goldsmith, IV, 137-142.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 142.
of exchanging luxury products for our laboring, enterprising refugees sent to the colonies.

Letter CXVII, the beautiful "City Night-Piece," presents a traveler wandering through the ruins of a deserted city, commenting upon the evanescence of earthly grandeur.

They are fallen; for luxury and avarice first made them feeble. The rewards of the state were conferred on amusing, and not on useful members of society. Their riches and opulence invited the invaders, who, though at first repulsed, returned again, conquered by perseverance, and at last swept the defendants into undistinguished destruction. 16

Goldsmith has in the above passage repeated the pattern sketched in his outline of the rise and fall of a kingdom.

Two ideas stand forth thus far: (1) Wealth, when concentrated in the hands of a few, strips the land of its workers and its usefulness by inciting the rich to force the poor into their orbits and to enclose the land for their amusement and profit; and (2) this condition can be traced to the increase of foreign commerce and the extension of foreign conquests. The denunciation is not so much directed at luxury as an evil in itself as it is directed at the evils which arise from over-indulgence in its fruits. The full development of these ideas is apparent in The Traveller and The Deserted Village.

III. IDEAS ON LUXURY EXPRESSED IN THE TRAVELLER AND THE DESERTED VILLAGE

The purpose of The Traveller, styled by Krans as one of

16Ibid., V, 321.
the best eighteenth century examples of artificial verse, was to show

That there may be equal happiness in states that are differently governed from our own; that each state has a particular principle of happiness, and that this principle in each may be carried to a mischievous excess.17

The wisdom of the lonely traveler finds an equal share of blessings dealt to all mankind.

Nature, a mother kind alike to all,
Still grants her bliss at Labour's earnest call.18

Bliss is always granted by Nature to labor. Art, perhaps best understood as all outside of Nature, sends a greater variety of blessings, but, unfortunately, these blessings seem to be in conflict with one another. One should not turn to a single blessing to the exclusion of all others—even Nature alone is not enough. The avoidance of excess with regard to any one blessing—wealth, commerce, honour, liberty, content—is the wise man's way.

Where wealth and freedom reign, contentment fails,
And honour sinks where commerce long prevails.19

The poet then tries his truths upon the various climes of the world which unfold in panoramic fashion beneath his gaze.

Were Nature's bounty enough, Italy would be most surely blest. But sense alone seems to bestow little beyond sensual bliss. The external beauty remains, but with opulence

17Ibid., I, 8.
18Ibid., p. 13.
departed, the minds of the people have been contaminated.

Once had fair Italy been a scene of wealth and commerce, but that same "unsteady" commerce had betaken herself to other shores. Thus did that nation perceive the true nature of its former strength. Wealth, which was originally a product of nature's bounties, is replaced by the arts, now but "the splendid wrecks of former pride." 20

In the shadow of the old domes, "defac'd by time, and tottering in decay," a shelter-seeking peasant builds his shed.

And, wondering man could want the larger pile,
Exults, and owns his cottage with a smile. 21

And so the end of this parade of wealth and arts is the peasant cottage, where the rude churl can find a measure of happiness in simplicity.

The philosophic wanderer next turns to Switzerland.
The Swiss peasant, though his lot is hard, feels some of the charm of content because that lot is the best he knows. He sees none of that luxury which breeds dissatisfaction.

No costly lords the sumptuous banquet deal,
To make him loath his vegetable meal;
But calm, and bred in ignorance and toil,
Each wish contracting, fits him to the soil. 22

These peoples, the Italian and the Swiss, bred by nature as they are, have few wants; but correspondingly they have

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20 Ibid., p. 16.
21 Ibid., p. 17.
22 Ibid., p. 18.
few pleasures. Neither nature nor art can provide full bounty. When their sensual pleasures cloy, they cannot rely upon any finer joys to alleviate their coarse lives. Their morals, like their pleasures, are low. The refinement of civilization is necessary to the cultivation of the higher ethics.  

Turning to kinder skies, where gentler manners reign, the poet surveys first the French. In France the social temper is formed by the concept of honor. Their code, however, has become somewhat formalized.

And all are taught an avarice of praise; They please, are pleas'd; they give to get esteem. Till, seeming blest, they grow to what they seem. Too much dependence on praise may enfeeble thought, bring ostentation and vanity.

In Holland, industriousness begets too great a love of gain. Then craft and fraud appear, imparted by their much-loved wealth.

Even liberty itself is barter'd here. At gold's superior charms all freedom flies. The needy sell it, and the rich man buys. Here one sees a reflection of Goldsmith's idea that when luxury has concentrated wealth in the hands of a few, the poor are inescapably drawn into the rich man's vortex, a movement illustrated most vividly by the enclosures and

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23 Ibid., pp. 19-20.
24 Ibid., p. 21.
25 Ibid., p. 23.
Having arrived at last in Britain, the poet sees evidence of a better-rounded system.

Creation's mildest charms are there combin'd,
Extremes are only in the master's mind!
Stern o'er each bosom reason holds her state,
With daring aims irregularly great;
Pride in their port, defiance in their eye
I see the lords of human kind pass by.26

Reason, then, is the guide of their actions—the avoidance of extremes.

But their prized independence, fostered by freedom, tends too much towards the breaking of social ties. Out of the combat of mind against mind, factional disputes arise. But this is not the worst. While the ties of Nature are decaying, the bonds of wealth and law are gaining strength.

Such are the ills of freedom. But in stating them the poet would not have it thought that he is displaying monarchical sympathies. He would repress the blooms of freedom only to secure them. Government should be conducted by those most capable. An ordered, proportioned society is the ideal.

Thus far in the poem the tone has been essentially one might almost say completely, conservative and classical. Neither of the extremes of refinement or simplicity is condoned but rather Goldsmith seeks the mean between the two. But in the few remaining pages of the poem the germ of The Deserted Village may be traced. The poet decries the growth of a privileged group which, professing to protect freedom,

26Ibid., p. 24.
makes the poor dependent through its oppressive laws. Goldsmith feels that when the constitution takes a more democratic form, the freedom of the subjects is diminished. A large body of men, standing up for privilege and freedom themselves, take over power; give the show of freedom without the reality.

A blow at depopulation by advancing industry is struck as the poet pictures the many scatter'd hamlets which now repose in barren, solitary pomp.

Yes, Brother, curse with me that baleful hour,
When first ambition struck at regal power;
And thus polluting honour in its source,
Gave wealth to sway the mind with double force.
Have we not seen, round Britain's peopled shore,
Her useful sons exchanged for useless ore?
Seen all her triumphs but destruction haste,
Like flaring tapers brightening as they waste;
Seen opulence, her grandeur to maintain,
Lead stern depopulation in her train,
And over fields where scatter'd hamlets rose,
In barren solitary pomp repose?
Have we not seen at pleasure's lordly call,
The smiling long-frequented village fall?27

After picturing the pensive exile rather sentimentally as gazing from wild America towards England's fair shores, the poet turns away from his weary search to find that bliss which only centers in the mind.

Dr. Johnson wrote the concluding ten lines, except the last couplet but one, and the moral as expressed in his passage is:

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27 Ibid., pp. 27-28.
How small, of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure. 28

The purpose of the poem as stated in the Dedication was to show that the sum of human happiness is much the same in all countries and under all sorts of governments. This was Johnson's conviction. Grierson feels that Goldsmith had a clearer perception than his master of the evils of his day. 29

The short section of The Traveller which reveals his sympathy with the poor people sacrificed to the increasing wealth of the few was expanded six years later, in 1770, into the impassioned plea against "trade's unfeeling train" found in The Deserted Village.

In that later poem Goldsmith seems to have displayed his personal sympathies more truly and sincerely, and withal, with greater beauty, than in any other of his works. As Hales remarks, Goldsmith, like Gray and Burns, gazes back with sympathetic nostalgia at the merriments and sadnesses of the common country folk. Their life was a precious remembrance to him, and when he thinks of the destruction of those old, much-loved scenes, he is penetrated with genuine sorrow. 30

In the Dedication Goldsmith attempts to justify the theme of his poem.

28 Ibid., p. 29.
In regretting the depopulation of the country, I inveigh against the increase of our luxuries; and here also I expect the shout of modern politicians against me. For twenty or thirty years past, it has been the fashion to consider luxury as one of the greatest national advantages; and all the wisdom of antiquity in that particular, as erroneous. Still, however, I must remain a professed ancient on that head, and continue to think those luxuries prejudicial to states by which so many vices are introduced, and so many kingdoms have been undone. 31

By inveighing "against the increase of our luxuries," Goldsmith was attacking the pomp and splendor of the rich. By striking his blow at the aristocracy of wealth, he was actually deprecating the great increase of commerce that created it. The historical truth of his accusations need not be investigated here. However, in Chapter I, in the sketching of the eighteenth century background, it was discovered that there was considerable justification for his charge. Such a situation did exist.

Structurally, Goldsmith's poem is a series of contrasts, the then and now, the simple, innocent, healthy life of old contrasted with the later ravages of depopulation. The small farmer and cottager has been absorbed as a laborer on the lands of the wealthier and more prosperous owners.

One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a village stints thy smiling plain. 32

Where wealth accumulates, men decay. Vigorously does

31Goldsmith, I, 52.
32Ibid., p. 55.
Goldsmith protest at the destruction of the sturdy peasantry.

Once every rood of ground maintained its man, but now:

But times are alter'd; trad's unfeeling train
Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain;
Along the lawn where scattered hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose;
And every want to opulence allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride. 33

The poet had long looked forward to those last hours of his life to be spent in blest retirement among those scenes of his youth which he now recalls in beautiful elegiac. He sings of the sweet sounds at evening's close, of the venerable village preacher, of the village school-master, of the village statesmen chatting over their ale.

But all now is gone!

Vain transitory splendours! could not all Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall? 34

He contrasts these simple pleasures of the poor with the conventional and artificial diversions of the rich, upholds the simple blessings and native charms, "spontaneous joys" over the gloss of art.

Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
These simple blessings of the lowly train,
To me more dear, congenial to my heart.
One native charm, than all the gloss of art. 35

Fashion's fabrications do not bring real joy.

And now comes the charge:

This wealth is but a name,
That leaves our useful products still the same.
Not so the loss. 36

33 Ibid., p. 56.
34 Ibid., p. 63.
35 Ibid., p. 64.
36 Ibid., p. 65.
The wealthy man usurps room that once supplied many poor.
The country's needful products are sent around the world to
buy useless foreign luxuries.

Where, then, shall the dispossessed yeoman turn? To
the cities? There he confronts the evils of the manufacturing
system.

To see ten thousand baneful arts combin'd
To pamper luxury, and thin mankind. 37

What can luxury offer for that which it replaces? Com­
pare the beautiful and simple pleasures of love and family
with those pleasures which luxury attends.

O Luxury! thou curst by Heaven's decree,
How ill exchang'd are things like these for thee.
How do thy potions, with insidious joy,
Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy! 38

Under luxury's sway our pleasures are refined so thin as
eventually to destroy our ability to experience any real
delight.

A further tragedy concomitant with luxury is the im­
possibility of the continual existence of "sweet Poetry." It
is unfit in such degenerate times to "catch the heart, or
strike for honest fame." 39 Nevertheless the poet addresses
his final appeal to Poetry.

Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
Redress the vigours of the inclement clime;
Aid slighted truth with thy persuasive strain;
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;

37 Ibid., p. 66.
38 Ibid., p. 69.
39 Ibid., p. 70.
Teach him, that states of native strength possesst, 
Though very poor may still be very blest.40

Goldsmith has stated his case against luxury, identifying it with trade. Whether his attack upon trade and its train of evils was unfair, as Krans41 and Hales42 believe, it was obviously motivated by a deep sincerity. Great distress was certainly caused by the turning of small farms into great estates reserved for seclusion and pleasure. The process was perhaps inevitable.

The old order is always passing and giving place to the new. And over the death of the old there will ever be lamentation.43

IV. THE POSITIVE AND MODERATE APPROACH TO LUXURY

Letter XI of The Citizen of the World contains what seems to be an interesting reversal in Goldsmith's ideas on luxury.

Perfidy and fraud are the vices of civilised nations, credulity and violence those of the inhabitants of the desert. Does the luxury of the one produce half the evils of the inhumanity of the other? Certainly, those philosophers who disclaim against luxury have but little understood its benefits; they seem insensible that to luxury we owe not only the greatest part of our knowledge, but even of our virtues.44

What has caused this apparent turnabout? one might well ask.

40Ibid., p. 71.
41Ibid., p. lxv.
42Hales, p. 348.
43Goldsmith, I, lxv.
44Ibid., IV, p. 57.
And how far does it extend? Already in the development of Goldsmith's denunciation of luxury, passages in *The Citizen of the World* have been noted as definite contributions. In "The Revolution in Low Life" a situation was described similar to the one in *The Deserted Village*. One cannot therefore attribute this seeming reversal to as yet unformed opinions. The two views which seem opposed must be reconciled in some manner.

The essay continues:

The more various our artificial necessities, the wider is our circle of pleasure; for all pleasure consists in obviating necessities as they rise: luxury, therefore, as it increases our wants, increases our capacity for happiness.45

We are curious for knowledge, Goldsmith affirms, only when it is connected with sensual happiness. We desire to know only what we desire to possess. Luxury gives a spur to our curiosity and is thus responsible for our desire to be wise.

Not our knowledge only, however, but also our virtues are improved by luxury. The savage has few vices, but those are of the most hideous nature. He lacks the pity and tenderness which ennoble the civilized virtues.

Luxuries unite a country politically by making us dependent on others for our happiness.46

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What, then, is the conclusion reached? Goldsmith refers to Confucius.

That we should enjoy as many of the luxuries of life as are consistent with our own safety, and the prosperity of others; and that he who finds out a new pleasure is one of the most useful members of society.47

In this conclusion lies the key to Goldsmith’s total attitude. The moderate concept here announced is backed by many similar references in his other works, such as the following from New Essays:

Though sensual refinement has ever been the great object of philosophic scorn, though declamation has set its face against luxury, and speculation deprecates bodily pleasure; yet luxury ever preceded wisdom, or, in other words, every country must be luxurious before it can make any progress in human knowledge. Sensuality first finds out the pleasure, and wisdom comments on the discovery.48

The ideas in this passage resemble closely the ideas of Letter XI of The Citizen of the World and are an example of the sort of proof attested by Professor Crane in attributing New Essays to Goldsmith.

Letter LXXXII, The Citizen of the World, in a similar vein states:

The sciences are not the cause of luxury, but its consequence; and this destroyer thus brings with it an antidote which resists the virulence of its own poison.49

Three conclusions appear plausible as explanation for

47 Ibid., p. 60.
48 Crane, p. 28.
49 Goldsmith, V, 143.
these seemingly favorable sentiments concerning the values of luxury.

1. It is possible that Goldsmith's opinion was swayed by Dr. Johnson's views. Johnson held that luxury, "so far as it reaches the poor, will do good to the race of people; it will strengthen and multiply them."\(^{50}\)

2. As Forster suggests, it may be that Goldsmith never arrived at a settled conclusion in his own mind. "What he pleads for in his poetry, his prose for the most part condemns."\(^{51}\)

3. There is little or no contradiction of ideas on luxury in Letter XI of The Citizen of the World and The Deserted Village. The poem attacks the excesses of the wealthy which brought misery to the unfortunate. Letter XI is no apology for such excesses. It is not a defense of all indulgences of the appetites.\(^{52}\)

The last conclusion seems to reconcile best the facts of the problem. Supporting evidence can be readily uncovered.

As noted in the conclusion to Letter XI, the author advocated the enjoyment of such luxuries, and only such luxuries, as are consistent "with our own safety, and the

\(^{50}\text{Ibid.}, IV, 60.\)

\(^{51}\text{John Forster, The Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith, II, 139.}\)

\(^{52}\text{Howard J. Bell, Jr., "The Deserted Village and Goldsmith's Social Doctrine," Publications of the Modern Language Association, LIX (1944), 755.}\)
prosperity of others." Depopulation was caused by what Goldsmith considered an abuse. Foreign trade was bringing wealth to the few. These few were absorbing the lands and the labors of the poor and the simple. Through enclosures the land was turned to pleasure rather than profit. Thus all of these undesirable effects grew out of the immoderate abuse of the common and laudable desire of mankind for pleasure and ease. Enjoyed with reason and moderation, luxury promoted virtue and knowledge; without reason and moderation, depopulation and privation arose.

Goldsmith's attitude toward luxury can then be summed up, from one point of view, as a belief in the golden mean. True economy is the just mean between two extremes. It is to the transgression of this virtue that Goldsmith attributes most of the evils of society. He thought, to repeat, that England had now entered a stage of having too much commerce. Wealth derived from it was being concentrated in the hands of a few men. The great evils of luxury could subsequently be traced to the establishment of a great colonial empire.

An essential difference between Goldsmith's positive and negative approaches to the subject of luxury does seem to exist, however. Referring to the positive values, he argues intellectually, seeks a philosophic justification. But when he turns to consider the abuses, it is Goldsmith the seeing and feeling man, a man whose sentiments are colored by a
rich flow of personal sympathy. It is only when a few steps removed from eighteenth century rationality that Goldsmith, the precursor of social reform and romanticism, glows forth.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented Goldsmith's views on the subject of luxury. Emphasis has been upon presentation rather than interpretation, though it is hoped that the central ideas have been sufficiently explained to unify the material.

In part I Goldsmith's ideas on the general structure of society were presented. A faith in the monarchy as the correct instrument for straightening out the troubled chain of society was revealed. In a democracy there was too much opportunity for the rise of a moneyed class which would throttle the poor.

In sketching the development of Goldsmith's ideas on luxury, important data was uncovered in Crane's New Essays and The Citizen of the World, both works proceeding from Goldsmith's pen on or before 1762, eight years before The Deserted Village.

In these earlier works Goldsmith deplores the exchange of useful members of society for idle luxuries, notes the enclosures of the land caused by the introduction of a wealth proceeding from the increase of foreign commerce and the extension of foreign conquests.

The Traveller and The Deserted Village express
Goldsmith's approach to the negative aspects of luxury.

In *The Traveller* the poet contrasts countries whose bounties come from nature with those which receive them from art. In England he discovers the best balance. Reason is the guide of English actions. But even here certain ills are prevalent which have been fostered by their prized independence. Plutocracy is the natural outgrowth from democracy. Freedom, therefore, should be repressed to be made secure. Government should be conducted by the most capable. One abuse of this sage principle is noted in the brief passage on depopulation which Goldsmith inserted.

The depopulation crisis was responsible for *The Deserted Village*. In that most famous poem he decries the unreasonable advance of wealth which, concentrated in the hands of the few, has drawn the resources from the land and broken the back of the sturdy peasantry.

In part IV the seemingly positive aspects of Goldsmith's position on luxury were examined with an eye to determining the basic concept from which two apparently opposed stands could be evolved.

The conclusions to this chapter must necessarily forecast the argument of Chapter III where Goldsmith's ideological position has been more thoroughly investigated and evaluated.

What position has Goldsmith established for himself in regard to luxury and commerce? This is the important question
which must be answered at this point.

The tone of his pronouncements has been analyzed as rather thoroughly conservative. A slight change was noted when Goldsmith turned from the theoretic to the particular and familiar. His approach seemed to assume a more human and sensitive cast. His attack upon the abuses of luxury and trade grew out of sincere and sympathetic concern. He did not denounce luxury as an evil in itself. Rather was his criticism aimed at over-indulgence in its fruits. Enjoyed rationally, luxury promoted virtue and knowledge, but when reason and moderation were absent, such extreme abuses as depopulation arose. Thus his point of view can be summed up as a belief in the golden mean, enriched by a vein of personal sympathy for those oppressed by society which links him with nascent romanticism.

Chapters III and IV have been developed from the somewhat dualistic nature of Goldsmith's ideas. Chapter III emphasizes the moderate, neo-classic aspect of his thought by inspecting the range of his ideas between the poles of sentimental primitivism and the positive views of luxury. Chapter IV, working from the sympathy which Goldsmith displays for the sufferings of the poor, discusses his ideas on individualism and cosmopolitanism. Both chapters, therefore, have their basis in Goldsmith's denunciation of excessive luxury, the central point established by the present chapter.
CHAPTER III
GOLDSMITH'S IDEOLOGICAL POSITION
BETWEEN PRIMITIVISM AND SOCIAL REFINEMENT

Introduction

In Chapter II, Goldsmith's ideas on luxury and commerce have been presented. The present chapter is concerned with the evaluation of those ideas. The return to nature, a sentiment which is associated with both sentimentalism and romanticism, is to be opposed to luxury and the abuses of luxury, in an attempt to evolve Goldsmith's general position in relation to these criteria.

I. THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

As has been noted in the introduction to this thesis, sentimentalism can be considered in two ways. But of particular application to this study is the optimistic over-emphasis on the goodness of human nature connected with the theory of primitivism. Primitivism maintains that man is by nature good but as found in society shows much that is evil. His degeneration has come about through the artificial restraints and repressions of civilization. Therefore to find the most nearly perfect man one must return to that state of nature where man's natural emotions have freest play.¹

In Gallaway's definition in Chapter I it was observed that the sentimentalist sees the world as his heart bids, not as his mind, where observation and experience of the actual are stored, presents it to him. Thus the sentimentalist is able to look upon human nature as fundamentally good but corrupted by civilization. The same inward turning develops the second brand of sentimentalism which is taken to mean, roughly speaking, the indulgence of emotion for its own sake. Goldsmith's concern with the second aspect of sentimentalism is particularly important in connection with his anti-sentimental comedies. This latter aspect will not receive special consideration in this study, but it should be observed as another facet of Goldsmith's reaction against sentimentalism.

The material discussed in this chapter has been principally designed to solve a difficult problem connected with Goldsmith's social ideas. The denunciation of luxury, considered as one side of the aspiration for a return to the state of nature and simplicity of manners, has been looked upon as a characteristic mark of the sentimentalist. If one uses the two points of reference, the findings of Chapter II concerning Goldsmith's over-all position toward luxury and the additional material unearthed in this chapter, can Goldsmith be termed a sentimentalist on the basis of the above distinction?

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II. PRIMITIVISM AS OPPOSED TO LUXURY

As stated previously, the denunciation of luxury is felt to be characteristic of the sentimentalist. Goldsmith expressed a strongly sympathetic awareness of the dangers in the excesses of luxury. His ideas relative to primitivism, a theory which may be considered as the philosophical climax to the denunciation of luxury, are to be examined in this section. As in Chapter II, his opinions are organized according to a definite progression from sympathetic to reactionary.

Goldsmith made many statements which seem to ally him with those who upheld, after the fashion of Rousseau's naturalism, that the deepest springs of human affections lay in elementary nature.

Letter XXXVII, The Citizen of the World, purports to be an allegory designed to prove the futility of the pursuit of wisdom. It is prefaced thus:

> When we rise in knowledge, as the prospect widens the objects of our regard become more obscure, and the unlettered peasant, whose views are only directed to the narrow sphere around him, beholds nature with a finer relish, and tastes her blessings with a keener appetite, than the philosopher whose mind attempts to grasp an universal system.

These sentiments are illustrated in the allegory by the fate of a youth born and raised in the Valley of Ignorance where the simple inhabitants had joy in contentment, knowing nothing better, blessed with all the spontaneous productions of nature.

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3 Oliver Goldsmith, Works, IV, 211.
But this one unhappy youth, more aspiring than the rest, undertook to climb the mountain side from whence he could see what was described by an attendant genius as the Valley of Certainty. He wishes to go there and was conducted consecutively by the guides of Demonstration, Probability, and finally Error, who dropped him into the Ocean of Doubts. Such, the essayist seems to imply, is the fate of those who forsake the simplicity of spontaneous nature.4

In Letter XV this statement appears:

Man was born to live with innocence and simplicity, but he has deviated from nature; he was born to share the bounties of Heaven, but he has monopolised them; he was born to govern the brute creation, but he is become their tyrant.5

The first part of this statement is definitely Rousseau-like in tone while the second half suggests Goldsmith's great sympathy with the suffering of animals, a feeling connected with sentimentalism. It has been pointed out that Goldsmith had a tendency to humanize animals. This was part of the sentimentalist search for the primitive.6 However, Forster notes Goldsmith's intense love for all living creatures as being but another form of his worship of nature.7 Goldsmith, it might also be mentioned, had a love of nature for its own sake. As Stopford Brooke says, he describes natural scenery

5Ibid., p. 82.
6Pitman, p. 110.
7John Forster, The Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith, II, 415.
with less emotion than Collins but doesn't moralize it like Gray.\textsuperscript{8}

Related in sentiment to the idea of man in a state of simplicity and nature are Goldsmith's idealizations of rural life. The \textit{Traveller} and the \textit{Deserted Village} have been styled by Gallaway as prevailing sentimentally.\textsuperscript{9} The yearning for home, for the loveliness of "Sweet Auburn," and for the rural past being crushed by the inexorable march of economic destiny is indeed a vaguely sentimentalized feeling. Expressions of this nostalgic sentiment are to be found in many of Goldsmith's works. For example, in Letter CIII, \textit{The Citizen of the World}, Goldsmith refers to the powerful feelings we have about the place of our birth.

Whatever vicissitudes we experience in life, however we toil, or wheresoever we wander, our fatigued wishes still recur to home for tranquility: we long to die in that spot which gave us birth, and in that pleasing expectation opiate every calamity.\textsuperscript{10}

The motivation for this imaginative return apparently lies at least partially in the pleasing contrast which the author forms in his mind between the simple, homely pleasures of the humble people whom he had known and the conventional and artificial pleasures which he has found associated with society. The marked contrasts in \textit{The Deserted Village} lend substance to this point. The simple, innocent life of old is...

\textsuperscript{8}Stopford Brooke, \textit{English Literature}, p. 220.


\textsuperscript{10}Goldsmith, V, 246.
opposed to the destructive effects of luxury. The simple blessings of native charms are upheld against the gloss of art.

Luxury, as noted earlier, incites the desire for knowledge. Knowledge is an antidote for luxury. But the contented savages, as Goldsmith observes in Essay III, New Essays, do not need knowledge. Knowledge would only serve to make them miserable, only shew them the horrors of their situation, without lending them a clue to escape. They seem made for the climate they inhabit; a climate which they love, and they only can love. While we surround the globe, in order to satisfy our fictitious wants, these savages are contented with an happy indolence.

Man in a state of nature never seeks society or desires the sanction of law, if he has nothing to lose; it is property only that draws men into communities, and may be properly said to form a people.

Sentiments such as these bring Goldsmith as close to the theory of primitivism as he ever comes. But there is an important difference. The primitive naturalism often associated with the name of Rousseau was based upon the belief that man was potentially perfect and that his faults were due to the vicious effect of the type of society he had developed, one which tended progressively to restrict the freedom and hence lessen the moral goodness of man. Goldsmith has not made such an indictment of society. Rather does he imply, as

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11 Ibid., I, p. 56.
12 Ibid., p. 64.
13 Ronald S. Crane, New Essays by Oliver Goldsmith, pp. 22-23.
in *The Traveller*, that man's happiness is partially a state of mind, that when he is not incited by surrounding luxuries to dissatisfaction with his lot, he can live in comparative contentment. The situation in Essay III is similar to that of the Swiss in *The Traveller*. Goldsmith's conclusion there is, however, anything but primitivistic or sentimental in tone. Since these simple peasants have few wants they likewise can have but few pleasures. When their sensual pleasures cloy, they have nothing to alleviate their coarse lives. Their morals, like their pleasures, are low.\(^{15}\)

While Goldsmith denounces the abuses arising from luxury, he does not set up the noble savage as an enviable model. The savage may have but few vices, but those are quite hideous, since he lacks the ennobling virtues of civilization. Goldsmith felt that the luxury of civilized nations did not produce half the evils of the inhumanity of the savage.\(^{16}\) Though sensual refinement is often scorned by philosophers, yet luxury ever precedes wisdom. Therefore, the savages at the poles, since their country is incapable of affording luxuries, are without knowledge and the possibility of receiving it.\(^{17}\) Furthermore, the sciences useful in a civilized

\(^{15}\) Goldsmith, I, 18-20.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., IV, 57.

\(^{17}\) Crane, pp. 28-29.
state are prejudicial in a barbarous one. And as Goldsmith remarked in Essay II, New Essays, introducing these sciences of civilization to the barbarians serves to make them more miserable than nature designed. A life of simplicity is best fitted to a state of solitude.

Goldsmith actually seems to have extended himself somewhat to explode certain of the concepts of sentimental primitivism. For instance, the idea of educating children in the lessons of nature by confronting them early with the rigours of the outdoors was one well-known notion associated with the theory.

In The Bee, in the essay "On Education," Goldsmith states that the rigorous life of the savages shortens their life span and thus keeps their population down. And in Essay V, New Essays, one finds this statement:

The vicissitudes of season, the long fastings, the consequent repletion upon finding the precarious meal, swimming rivers, while warm with the chase, and long protracted vigils, all contribute to shorten the human span, and no habitude can reconcile them to our natures. From hence we see how very wrong those parents are, who attempt to improve the health and strength of their children by too hardy an education; and though some may survive such attempts, they seem insensible how many die under the experiment.

In his History of the Earth and Animated Nature Goldsmith exalts the rational, educated man of civilization above the

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18 Goldsmith, V, 138.
19 Ibid., p. 142.
20 Crane, p. 38.
benighted savage.

What a poor contemptible being is the naked savage, standing on the beach of the ocean, and trembling at its tumults! How little capable is he of converting its terrors into benefits; or of saying, behold an element made wholly for my enjoyment! He considers it as an angry deity, and pays it the homage of submission. But it is very different when he has exercised his mental powers; when he has learned to find his own superiority, and to make it subservient to his commands. It is then that his dignity begins to appear, and that the true Deity is justly praised for having given him the earth for his habitation, and the sea for an inheritance.21

The great neo-classic assurance that the importance of anything in the universe can be measured only by the service it renders to man glows forth in these lines.

Goldsmith upholds reason as that acquired power which should preserve the savage from the absurdities of his customs and religion.22 It does not seem, therefore, that he had much sympathy with the extreme doctrines of Rousseau. His faith lay in the moderation and restraint which are associated with classicism. In The Traveller, one idea as discussed in Chapter II was that neither Nature nor Art gave unmitigated blessings. The code of the noble savage, therefore, is not the complete rectification of the abuses arising from luxury. Moderation, the golden mean, seems to be the concept coloring his vision. The desire which he has sometimes expressed for a return to a state of simplicity is possibly a

21 Goldsmith, X, 156.
22 Ibid., IV, 55.
mildly sentimentalized longing, but it also is a counter-check to the abuses of luxury. Therefore, in those sentiments which idealize the rural past with its happy simplicity, the striving for a mean between extremes is very probably demonstrated.

While all men were originally equal, some had developed more strength and greater capabilities. An increase of refinements in living, or luxury, is inevitable as humanity progresses. Luxury in itself is not culpable, but those abuses which grow out of it should be checked. Goldsmith felt that the true point of happiness between savage wretchedness and excruciating refinement could be found in a life which incorporated society, frugality, and labor. If no arts were encouraged except the arts of luxury, every mind would be set upon trifles and degeneration must necessarily begin.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The progression of Goldsmith's ideas between the two poles of primitivism has been discussed with the conscious aim of evaluating the author's final position. Certain tendencies were discovered which lend substance to the rating of Goldsmith as sentimentalist. He has said that man was born to live with innocence and simplicity but has deviated from

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nature. He expresses sympathy for the sufferings of animals and tends to humanize them. He idealizes rural life and laments the crushing of the old scene by the onmarching cohorts of luxury. He refers to the savage as contented with his lot because he knows nothing else. Indeed, the introduction of knowledge would cause him misery.

Reviewing the findings of this portion of the study, one might very readily classify Goldsmith as a sentimentalist. Truly it must be granted that he was instinctively sensitive, and in the non-technical sense of the word, sentimental, but should he be considered as a protagonist of the doctrinaire sentimental movement?

The full consideration of the general range of his ideas does not warrant such a conclusion. He finds rational, civilized man far superior to the lowly savage frightened by the very elements. Education under nature's rigorous tutelage, while it may harden some few survivors, destroys many others.

Therefore, while the corruptions of a system should certainly be corrected, Goldsmith would not wish to see a state of nature revived. He is free from at least two obsessions of the sentimentalists, a belief in the natural goodness of human kind and in the superiority of savages.

The restraint which the use of the rational faculties implies guarded Goldsmith from such stands so alien to the eighteenth century neo-classic temper. He cannot be called a sentimentalist in the primitive-historical sense, for he
upholds the advances which society has made over the primitive state.
CHAPTER IV

GOLDSMITH'S IDEAS ON INDIVIDUALISM AND COSMOPOLITANISM

Introduction

Goldsmith's ideological position between primitivism and social refinement has been discussed in Chapter III as one development of his denunciation of the abuses of luxury. His general position was noted as characterized by his sense of classical moderation. But his criticism of the system was further reflected in the extension of his sympathy to those who must suffer from the abuses.

In this chapter Goldsmith's feelings for the poor people who fell before onrushing trade has been explored as indicating the beginnings of the romantic concern for individuals as opposed to the mass of society. The connection of Goldsmith's ideas upon the abuses of luxury with his feeling for those oppressed has been established. It is felt that Goldsmith had a warm and sincere sympathy for the poor. The humble man was an individual with a soul. The prison inmate had been cast after the same image as the wealthy aristocrat.

The first section of the chapter considers Goldsmith's sympathy for the oppressed poor and the romantic concern for the individual which evolved from that sympathy. His ideas on prison reform are to be considered in this connection.
The second half discusses Goldsmith's continual references to the cosmopolitan ideal as having sprung from his interest in the individual.

This chapter has been designed to answer a second question pertinent to the evaluation of Goldsmith's social ideas. If one refers to the distinction made in Chapter I between the sentimentalism of emotional indulgence and romanticism, how is Goldsmith to be appraised? Does he see the universal through the particular or does he cultivate the particular, or the subjective reaction, with an eye to nursing an emotion? Is his concern with depopulation and specifically the sympathy which was projected from this concern to be considered as conventional sentimentality or forward-looking humanitarianism?

I. GOLDSMITH'S SYMPATHY WITH THE POOR AS CONNECTED WITH ROMANTIC INDIVIDUALISM

Goldsmith believed that the luxury of the great had been woven from the calamities of the poor. He did not believe that the law protected the poor from the tyranny of the rich. They were merely exploited for the pleasure of the upper classes. As observed in The Deserted Village, the laws had not aided the unfortunate villagers. Rather the rich man, using the law as his tool, had been able to eject the sturdy toilers and enclose the land.

For Goldsmith then, the prime evil of his day was the
sacrifice of the poor to the increasing wealth of the few. This privileged group had, through the necessities of trade, been able to corner the wealth, and then, professing to protect freedom, had made the poor dependent upon them by their oppressive laws. \(^1\) As wealth accumulated, men decayed. \(^2\)

What redress could these oppressed people have, if any? Referring to the vile seducer, Squire Thornhill, the Vicar says that the villain can triumph in security, for he is rich and the Vicar's family is poor. \(^3\) The marriage customs which permit the rich to marry only within their class and income bracket are deplored in Letter LXXII, *The Citizen of the World*, as a powerful factor in the continued accumulation of wealth among the rich and the increased poverty among the poor. Goldsmith felt that an equal diffusion of riches through a country ever constituted its happiness.

How impolitic, therefore, are those laws which promote the accumulation of wealth among the rich; more impolitic still, in attempting to increase the depression on poverty. \(^4\)

Yet, however stringent the condition of the poorer class, Goldsmith had no faith in democracy and extended suffrage as the means by which the oppressed might slip their bonds. \(^5\)

\(^1\) Oliver Goldsmith, *Works*, I, 27.
Redress should come only from above. Only the king could straighten out the disordered network of society.

Yet Goldsmith had this sympathetic appreciation for the abused class. And he chafed at his inability to relieve them.

Why, why was I born a man, and yet see the suffering of wretches I cannot relieve! Poor houseless creatures! the world will give you reproaches but will not give you relief. The slightest misfortunes of the great, the most imaginary uneasiness of the rich, are aggravated with all the power of eloquence, and held up to engage our attention and sympathetic sorrow. The poor weep unheeded, persecuted by every subordinate species of tyranny; and every law, which gives others security, becomes an enemy to them.6

A considerable preoccupation is indicated here. There had to be an outlet. Yes, only the king could actually smooth over the troubled waters of society; yet another agency existed which might aid by exposing, by arousing the humanitarian feelings which lead to eventual reform.

Still let thy voice, prevailing over time
Redress the rigours of the inclement clime.7

The poet brings imaginative power which strips away the veneer of society. The real values are clarified by his gift of insight.

That man, though in rags, who is capable of deceiving even indolence into wisdom, and who professes amusement while he aims at reformation, is more useful in refined society than twenty cardinals, with all their scarlet, and tricked out in all the fopperies of scholastic finery.8

Goldsmith, then, had a sense of a mission to be performed.

7Ibid., I, 71
8Ibid., IV, 335.
An author may be considered as a merciful substitute to the legislature. He acts not by punishing crimes, but preventing them.9

In assigning the author such an important, monitory role in society, Goldsmith was approaching later romantic concepts of the poet as the unacknowledged legislator of the world10 or as the golden prophet who drank most deeply at the Pierian streams of truth, goodness, and beauty.

Therefore, when Goldsmith contrasts the beautiful and simple pleasures of love and family with those pleasures which attend luxury, he is perhaps doing so with a conscious knowledge of his power as a poet to move minds and influence opinion. His sympathy for the oppressed should not be evaluated as arising from a conventional sentimentality which inspires emotion for egoistic satisfaction.

The feelings aroused in him by the sufferings of the poor have been explained as due to the 'scurvy circumstances' which he himself so frequently had to endure.11 Goldsmith made frequent use of his experiences, and more than one anecdote from his personal life is memorialized in a work of literature. He had known the merriments and sadnesses of common country folk. What then more natural than that he

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9Ibid., VI, 71.


should turn for his subject matter to the everyday life of common people as did Wordsworth a few decades later.

Thus far three conclusions seem apparent:

1. Goldsmith denounced the abuses of luxury. The logical extension of his castigation was a sympathy with those who suffered from the conditions.

2. His sympathy was not merely ideal and sentimental. It had a solid basis in his own experience. His sentiments were colored by personal knowledge.

3. He had no faith in an uprising of the people. He did feel, however, that the imaginative projection of a poet's reflections might well increase the awareness of general society of the sufferings of the lowly and downtrodden.

Growing out of Goldsmith's consciousness of the position of the poor people in a state ruled by luxury was his idea of every man as an individual rather than a minute portion of the vulgar mass. In one sense this feeling is revealed by his conclusion in The Traveller that happiness depends, not upon institutions and forms of government, but upon the individual mind and temper. \(^{12}\) Reality is in large part subjective. But to go a step beyond, Letter XLIV, The Citizen of the World, emphasizes the existence of individual differences among men.

\(^{12}\) Goldsmith, I, L.
It is impossible to form a philosophic system of happiness which is adapted to every condition in life, since every person who travels in this great pursuit takes a separate road. The differing colors which suit different complexions are not more various than the different pleasures appropriated to particular minds.\(^{13}\)

Goldsmith was contentedly preoccupied with vivid and rich human detail. He creates his persons not merely as mouthpieces or as gorgeous eccentrics; strange as they are, he really likes them as people.\(^{14}\)

The Goldsmithian concern with the individual is most strikingly manifested in his comments on prison reform. His later views on this subject, centered in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, are interestingly previewed in Letter LXXX, *The Citizen of the World*.

He states in the earlier work that numerous penal laws grind every rank of people, and chiefly those least able to resist oppression, the poor. But this is not the only offensive feature of such unwise measures.

In fact, penal laws, instead of preventing crimes, are generally enacted after the commission; instead of repressing the growth of ingenious villainy, only multiply deceit, by putting it upon new shifts and expedients of practising it with impunity.\(^{15}\)

Goldsmith further strikes at the invocation of the death penalty for minor offenses such as theft.

\(^{13}\)Ibid., IV, 253.


\(^{15}\)Goldsmith, V, 128.
If, therefore, in order to secure the effects of one man, I should make a law which may take away the life of another, in such a case, to attain smaller good, I am guilty of a greater evil; to secure society in the possession of a bauble, I render a real and valuable possession precarious. \(^6\)

In this passage Goldsmith has aimed a double blow, one at the consolidation of wealth in the hands of a few, and the other at the oppression of the individual man by the artificial desires of society.

Justice, Goldsmith concludes, should know how to reward as well as to punish. \(^7\)

These ideas reached their fullest stature in *The Vicar of Wakefield*. The good Vicar indicates his faith in his fellow prison inmates.

"Excuse me," returned I, "these people, however fallen, are still men, and that is a very good title to my affections. . . . If these wretches, my children, were princes, there would be thousands ready to offer their ministry; but in my opinion, the heart that is buried in a dungeon is as precious as that seated upon a throne." \(^8\)

Thus Goldsmith's beliefs are based upon his faith in the innate worth of every individual soul, whatever the station in society of the man.

The Vicar assumed the instruction of his fellows. He provided profitable employment for their leisure and established equitable justice, instituted fines for the punishment

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\(^6\) Ibid., p. 129.
\(^7\) Ibid., pp. 128-130.
\(^8\) Ibid., III, 210.
of immorality and rewards for peculiar industry, reverting thus to the principle announced in *The Citizen of the World*.

His efforts were rewarded. In fact, his success was so gratifying as to provoke a series of criticisms of the existing system, while proposing several necessary amendments to it.

The legislative power should direct the law rather to reformation than severity. Under the present system men may be confined for trivial offenses and become thoroughly schooled in the ways of crime through the association with hardened desperates. The Vicar advocates the foundation of places for penitence and solitude, where the accused might be attended by such as could give them a desire for repentance if guilty, or new motives to virtue if innocent.

Another policy which the Vicar questions is the validity of that right which social combinations have assumed of assessing capital punishment for offences of a slight nature. To argue his point the Vicar refers to natural law. Natural law does not give a man a right to take the life of him who steals his property, nor, for that matter, does it recognize property as belonging to one man or another. Society, however, seems to have instituted a compact by which he who deprives the other of his horse shall die. But it is not thus that reason speaks, and reason finds its justification in untutored nature.
Savages that are directed by natural law alone, are very tender of the lives of each other; they seldom shed blood but to retaliate former cruelty.19

This abuse of justice which has evolved in society is traced by the Vicar to the old bugbear luxury.

It is among the citizens of a refined community that penal laws, which are in the hands of the rich, are laid upon the poor. Government, while it grows older, seems to acquire the moroseness of age; and as if our property were become dearer in proportion as it increased, as if the more enormous our wealth the more extensive our fears, all our possessions are paled up with new edicts every day, and hung round with gibbets to scare every invader.20

The levying of indiscriminate penal laws by removing distinction in the penalty has caused the people to lose all sense of distinction in the crime. This distinction is the bulwark of all morality.

Therefore, instead of converting correction into vengeance for the luxurious wealthy, it would be better to try the restrictive arts of government for awhile, and make law the protector, but not the tyrant of the people. Then it would be realized that those creatures now stuck up for long tortures, "lest luxury should feel a momentary pang," were of considerable utility to the state. One must realize, above all, that these oppressed peoples are all human beings; "that as their faces are like ours, their hearts are so too."21

19 Ibid., pp. 213-214.
20 Ibid., p. 214.
21 Ibid., pp. 210-215.
Goldsmith's faith mounting in the imperishable individuality of the human soul, his heartfelt sympathy with the poor people oppressed by the development of luxury's abuses both reach their stirring climax in these passages foreshadowing the full breadth of later humanitarian reform. Whether the idea that the English penal code was unjustly severe originated with Goldsmith, a contention which Hamilton Jewett Smith and Charles G. Osgood, Jr., deny one can ignore neither the power and sincere sympathy apparent in Goldsmith's charge nor the very full and logical development of his thesis from his ideas relative to the abuses of luxury.

II. GOLDSMITH'S IDEAS ON COSMOPOLITANISM

In his little book *Naturalism in English Poetry* Stopford Brooke refers to the cosmopolitan spirit so closely related to the idea of individualism as that great conception which empowered the French Revolution in 1789 and which enkindled the English Romantic Movement beginning back in 1730 with James Thomson.

The first, the main idea of the Revolution, an idea which had been growing up, for at least 200 years before 1789, was "That there was only one Man, if we may so style it, in all Humanity; that, therefore all divisions, classes, outside differences, such as are

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22 Hamilton Jewett Smith, *Oliver Goldsmith's Citizen of the World*, p. 121.

made by birth, by rank, by wealth, by power, or by separate nationalities, were to be wholly put aside as non-existent; that there was a universal Mankind, every member of which ought to be free, with equal opportunities, and bound each to each as brothers are bound. Hence, finally, all divisions made by caste, by colour, by climate, by aggressive patriotism, by all that we call nationality, were also dissolved. There was only one country, the country of Mankind, only one nation, the nation of Humanity.  

Brooke sees this great concept as living in Goldsmith's works, though he feels that the principle is rather worn as a fashion than felt from the heart.

It made the first great country novel in the hands of Goldsmith. In "The Traveller" Goldsmith passes from clime to clime beyond the English shores. In "Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain," he sketches the poor with faithfulness and sympathy. We feel that they are of the same blood, of the same honourable passions, as the rich and powerful. Man is man in his poetry, independent of all differences.

In extension of Brooke's remarks this section is designed to show that the theory of cosmopolitanism became almost Goldsmith's central theme. Brooke does not, for instance, mention The Citizen of the World essays, though they present nearly every element which Brooke saw working in the new concept.

It might be well, first, to note briefly the steps which have led the discussion to this point.

1. Goldsmith denounced the abuses of a system in which the love of luxury predominates.

2. His sympathy was extended to the poor people who

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24Stopford A. Brooke, Naturalism in English Poetry, pp. 79-80.

25Ibid., p. 83.
suffered because of these abuses.

3. A part of his sympathy with the oppressed ones developed into a concern for every man as an individual regardless of social rank.

4. The concern with the individual and cognizance of his sufferings led to a strong humanitarian spirit reflected principally in his ideas on prison reform.

5. Goldsmith's desire for the betterment of the lot of individuals through humanitarian reform evolved into his citizen-of-the-world concept. All nationalistic prejudices should be dissolved. When we can see this and discard narrowing national prejudices we have gained wisdom. Goldsmith's cosmopolitanism is, in a sense, but another aspect of his attack against luxury's train. Commercialism and trade expansion are responsible for the abuses of luxury. Therefore, if the individual mind can be sufficiently enlarged to grasp the wiser and solider doctrine of the corporate individual which the world should be, all men and nations can live in happiness and peace unvitiated by forced inequalities.

Goldsmith's ideas on cosmopolitanism have been considered in three aspects.

1. He cautions his readers not to be bound by national prejudices.

2. He explains why he thinks national differences do exist, emphasizing the influence of climate.
3. He counsels his readers to examine the achievements of other nations and peoples in order to improve their own condition.

In *The Citizen of the World* Goldsmith intended that his traveler should study the human heart, know the men of every country, and discover the differences which resulted from climate, religion, education, prejudice, and partiality. Smith says, "It was not his purpose to satisfy curiosity, but, by exposing the foibles of the English, to teach them wisdom." The desire to know and understand other peoples and other lands grew out of Goldsmith's personal experiences. In a letter he refers to the romantic, vagrant turn which had ever possessed his family. They had a strange love for every place and every country except the one in which they lived. Forster bears witness to the importance of Goldsmith's experiences and background in shaping the cast of his thought.

The education he thus picked up from personal experience, and by actual collision with many varieties of men, not only placed him in advance of his contemporaries on several social questions, but occasionally gave him very much the advantage over greatly more learned, and so to speak, educated men. Thus it was, in short, he became a Citizen of the World.

In Essay III, *New Essays*, Goldsmith refers to the desire which had grown up in him through his travels to elevate men's

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26 Goldsmith, IV, 42.
27 Smith, p. 42.
minds above petty national distinctions.

Nature pours her gifts round us, and we only want a proper temper to enjoy them. I should esteem it my greatest happiness, could my travels conduce to form such a temper; could they make one individual more happy in himself, or more useful to society; could I enlarge one mind, and make the man who now boasts his patriotism, a citizen of the world; could I level those distinctions which separate mankind; could I teach the English to allow strangers to have their excellencies; could I mend that country in which I reside, by improvements from those which I have left behind. 29

Be a citizen of the world rather than an Englishman, a Frenchman or an Italian bound by national prejudices. And what sort of person is this admirable citizen of the world?

Such a one, my friend, is an honour to human nature; he makes no private distinctions of party; all that are stamped with the divine image of their Creator are friends to him; he is a native of the world; and the emperor of China may be proud that he has such a countryman. 30

The Citizen of the World knows wisdom wherever he sees it without his perception ever being tarnished by either hatred of the national peculiarities of another of his own national prejudices. 31

The wise man knew what caused the differences between nations and people and judged them accordingly. Goldsmith notes the influence of climate as a principal factor in the variance among races. He extends the scope of this factor into the consideration of national dispositions.

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29 Ronald S. Crane, *New Essays by Oliver Goldsmith*, p. 17.
30 Goldsmith, IV, 129.
31 Ibid., p. 226.
I know of no country where the influence of climate and soil is more visible than in England; the same hidden cause which gives courage to their dogs and cocks gives also fierceness to their men. But chiefly this ferocity appears among the vulgar. The polite of every country pretty nearly resemble each other.\[32\]

In Essay VI, *New Essays*, the appraisal of the English national character as modified by climate is expanded to cover a wide variety of traits:

The soil is fruitful, and this prompts to luxury; but as those necessaries which are eaten are produced in greater plenty and delicacy than those which are drank, in other words, as the soil produces the most excellent meats, but no wine, the inhabitants are more apt to indulge an excess of eating than drinking; and this has a mechanical effect upon the tempers: it increases their seeming severity, so that they are grave without phlegm, and apparently ill-natured with hearts sympathizing with every distress.\[33\]

In describing the results of the transplanting of some Dutch colonists at Batavia Goldsmith notes how completely and quickly the Europeans forsook their European customs and adopted the luxurious manners of the Asiatics.

After two or three generations at farthest, the blood loses its primitive qualities, and those of the climate manifest themselves in men, animals, and plants.\[34\]

Goldsmith, Crane feels, was contented to account for the variety of the human species by attributing it to the diversity of climate alone.\[35\]. However sound or unsound his arguments as to the importance of climate may be, it is obvious that he

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\[33\] Crane, p. 53.


did not attribute racial differences to the superiority of one particular culture or national group over another. He attempted a panoramic view of society in the several regions of the globe, insisting on the potency of geographical and climatic conditions,—all dedicated to the rejection of national bias. Every man should realize what Goldsmith's Chinese philosopher found to be true,

That I falsely condemned others of absurdity, because they happened to differ from a standard originally founded in prejudice or partiality.

Rather than ridicule people because they happen to differ from himself, the wise man examines the efforts and achievements of others to see what might be learned from them.

There is scarce any country, how rude or uncultivated soever, where the inhabitants are not possessed of some peculiar secrets, either in nature or art, which might be transplanted with success.

In Letter CXXIII, the concluding essay of The Citizen of the World series, the Chinese philosopher describes the manner in which he plans to end his days.

As for myself, the world being but one city to me, I do not much care in which of the streets I happen to reside: I shall, therefore, spend the remainder of my days in examining the manners of different countries, and have prevailed upon the Man in Black to be my companion.

36 Ibid., p. xxxvii.
37 Goldsmith, IV, 20.
38 Ibid., V, 268.
39 Ibid., p. 355.
The true philosopher is not irritated by the differences between men of different nations. He realizes that one group is not intrinsically superior to another but that environmental variances supply the seeming inequalities. He does not have contempt for those who are not his countrymen. One should rather study them to improve himself.

Goldsmith was an effective spokesman in England of the cosmopolitanism which in the years before the French Revolution was breaking down the boundaries of national prejudices in Europe.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present chapter has discussed Goldsmith's ideas on individualism and cosmopolitanism, two related concepts proceeding ultimately from his sympathy with the hard lot of the poor.

Goldsmith contrasted the gradually consolidating wealth of the few with the ever-increasing poverty of the many. The abuses of a system ruled by luxury were most apparent in the oppressed condition of humble country folk forced to flee their lands and their respectability before the onrushing forces of commercialism.

While Goldsmith had no faith in a popular revolution for the redress of grievances, he did believe strongly in two powers, monarchy and poetry. Monarchy could straighten out disordered society. Poetry could point the way. In elevating the position of the poet as a reformer and
legislator Goldsmith foreshadowed the positions of important romantic poets of the next age.

Out of his awareness of the suffering grew Goldsmith's concept of the importance of the individual as against the generality of society. This respect for the individual, regardless of rank, was responsible for his humanitarian comments on prison and legal reform.

Cosmopolitanism was conceived from the belief in romantic individualism. All the world was but one individual. Therefore, distinctions of birth, wealth, power, nationality were to be regarded as non-existent. With Goldsmith this concept became part of his attack against the abuses of luxury.

Commercialism was linked with strong nationalism. By undermining national prejudices through his citizen-of-the-world idea, Goldsmith was also striking a blow at immoderate luxury.

Based upon the material presented in this chapter, certain additional conclusions as to the nature of Goldsmith's social ideas can be advanced.

1. Those concepts which evolved from Goldsmith's sympathy with the suffering poor are romantic in tone. He regrets the beauty and simplicity of a more placid age. He emphasizes the importance of every individual being. He advises reform measures which will take greater stock of those people suffering from social and economic oppression. Poetry, in his opinion, leads the way to eventual regeneration through reform.
2. Goldsmith's social ideas link him closely to the romanticists, because by observing the suffering of individuals his sympathy for all oppressed mankind is swelled. He sees universals through the particular rather than nursing a particular subjective reaction as an end in itself as did the sentimentalists.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The term "luxury" has provided the central theme and the determined the organization of this study. Goldsmith's views on the subject of luxury have been presented, discussed, and evaluated against a background of theoretical criteria provided in the introductory chapter.

In Chapter II the general range of his opinion upon this controversial subject was observed. It was discovered that even before The Traveller and The Deserted Village Goldsmith had begun to decry the exchange of useful members of society for idle luxuries. Behind the stripping of the land by enclosures he saw a rising class which, as it procured more and more wealth from the increase of foreign commerce and the extension of foreign conquests, bound ever more tightly the oppressed poor. The unreasonable consolidation of the wealth in the hands of these few had wasted the land and crushed the sturdy peasantry.

However, an important distinction must be made if one is to pierce through the confusing outer layer to the essential basis of Goldsmith's social philosophy. Goldsmith did not denounce luxury as an evil in itself. Rather was his attack directed at the abuses of luxury in a social and economic system which had got out of control. Enjoyed rationally,
luxury promoted virtue and knowledge, but with reason and moderation absent, extreme abuses such as that which caused depopulation arose. Depopulation grew out of the immoderate abuse of the common and laudable desire of mankind for pleasure and ease.

Goldsmith's attitude toward luxury, therefore, has been summed up as a belief in the golden mean. Yet this moderate point of view was enriched by a vein of personal sympathy for those unfortunates who had been oppressed by a luxurious society. The general tone of his pronouncements has been analyzed as rather thoroughly conservative, But a change was noted when Goldsmith turned from the theoretic to the particular and the familiar. When referring to conditions which he knew or had seen his approach assumed a more human and sensitive cast. Goldsmith could argue the benefits and shortcomings of luxury on an abstractly intellectual basis. But when he considered the effects of the abuses of luxury upon people with whom he was familiar and scenes which he had visited, his personal emotions were invoked and the expression of his sentiments was colored by a rich flow of romantic sympathy. Therefore, a fundamental dualism can be perceived in Goldsmith's thought. Chapters III and IV capitalized upon this dualism.

In Chapter III the range of Goldsmith's ideas between sentimental-primitivism and the moderate concepts of luxury was investigated. The object of this survey was to decide
whether Goldsmith tended towards doctrinaire sentimentalism or reverted to classical rationality. A casual appraisal of certain of his ideas seemed to indicate a degree of faith in primitivism. He said that man was born to live with innocence and simplicity but had deviated from nature. He sympathized with the suffering of animals and tended to humanize them. He idealized rural life and lamented the departure of the old era before oppressive luxury. It was decided on the basis of such evidence that Goldsmith was instinctively sensitive and in the non-technical sense, sentimental, but he was not by definition a sentimentalist. Why? Because Goldsmith by sheer weight of opinion overpowered these few slight testimonies to a sentimental yearning. His real faith, intellectually, lay in the moderation and restraint associated with classicism. He upheld reason as that acquired faculty which should preserve the savage from the absurdities of his customs and religion. He found rational, civilized man far superior to the lowly savage frightened by the elements. He jeered at the idea of education in the hard school of nature.

Therefore, while he thought the corruptions of the present system should be amended, Goldsmith did not envision sentimentally a return to the state of nature adorned by the "noble savage." He cannot be called a sentimentalist in the primitive-historical sense, because he upheld the advances
which society had made over the primitive state.

The material presented in Chapter III emphasized the moderate, neo-classic aspects of Goldsmith's thought. This was subject matter fit for the elaboration of the rational faculties. One side of Goldsmith is depicted, that side which faithfully reflects and portrays the general character of his time.

Chapter IV revealed the other side, the side which links him with those who came after, the humanitarian reformers, the poets of the full flower of romanticism.

Goldsmith's feelings for the poor people who fell before onrushing trade was explored as indicating an early romantic concern for individuals as opposed to the mass of society. From this interpretation of man as individual was traced the great ideal of cosmopolitanism, an ideal, which, as expressed by Goldsmith, was part of his attack against the abuses of luxury. Commercialism and nationalism were seen to be intertwined. The cosmopolitan ideal transcended petty national borders. Thus the intense competition implied in trade expansion could have no place with such an ideal.

Between Goldsmith's denunciation of the abuses of luxury on one end and the cosmopolitan ideal on the other a chain was established. He denounced the abuses of luxury. His sympathy was extended to those oppressed by such abuses. This sympathy was part of his concern with man as an
individual. The concern with the individual led to the humanitarianism reflected in his ideas on prison reform. From thence finally the last step was to the cosmopolitan ideal, the corporate individual.

Chapter IV considered, therefore, the forward-looking aspects of Goldsmith's social thought. It was decided that the ideas growing out of his awareness of the suffering of the poor link him closely to the romanticists. The universality of his comprehension could not admit the charge of subjective sentimentalism, although a mild sentimentality of a non-technical sort is expressed in many of his works.

Before a final estimate of Goldsmith's position in the history of ideas is attempted, a brief survey of opinions from prominent critics and literary historians is to be considered in supplement.

The critics who do not particularly press Goldsmith's sentimentalism seem to be split in opinion between evaluating him as conservative classicist and romantic precursor.

Edmund Gosse feels that Goldsmith represents a momentary phase of reaction, noting particularly his aversion for the naturalistic poets and his obedience to the verse forms established by Pope.\footnote{Edmund Gosse, A History of Eighteenth Century Literature, p. 316.} Gosse, however, is assessing Goldsmith purely on the basis of his literary views and does not
consider his social criticism. Beers, also, looks upon Goldsmith as essentially a conservative. Pitman, in his study of Goldsmith's *Animated Nature*, concludes that the eighteenth century poet showed less influence of sentimentality and more of still striving neo-classicism. Goldsmith, says Pitman, justifies his natural history by showing how everything it deals with directly affects mankind.

There can be no doubt that Goldsmith displays many of the characteristics of the conventional classical school. In this study his moderate position between primitivism and social refinement has been established. He pays tribute to the qualities of reason, moderation, and restraint associated with the neo-classic ideals. Nevertheless this does not seem to be his entire bent. Many critics see something beyond typical eighteenth conservatism in Goldsmith.

Gayley, Young, and Kurts state:

No doubt he tried to meet the requirements of the conventional school; no doubt he wrote some poems with a purpose as consciously didactic as was ever that of Pope. But the spirit of the artist was more potent than the purpose of the artificer; in spite of his heroic couplets and attempts at moralizing, in spite of Dr. Johnson and of his own adherence to conventional poetic theories, Goldsmith's truer instincts place him among the poets of the newer school.

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Wylie feels that of all the essay writers of the later eighteenth century, Goldsmith was indeed the most sensitive to the molding social forces of his time, "the most conscious of that spirit of the morrow which gives a touch a prophecy to the literature of today."\(^5\)

Cazamian notes elements in Goldsmith which link him to romanticism.

Thus one can perceive in Goldsmith the broad deep current that is leading to Romanticism. He has many of the inner feelings of which the new literature will be made up; he has even the retrospective trend of sensibility and imagination. Not only does he extol the moral purity of simple folks, but he finds pleasure in describing the archaic traits of peasant customs, exalts the touching beauty of the old popular ballads which Percy had just brought back into vogue.\(^6\)

The consensus of opinion seems to be that Goldsmith has elements of both classicism and romanticism. Some see him as classical in one faculty, romantic in another.

Aesthetically he was a traditionalist; mentally he was of the Enlightenment; he was too hard-headed to be a thorough sentimentalist, and too sympathetic to be an outright satirist.\(^7\)

Others would agree with Fairchild that Goldsmith is neither a classicist nor a romanticist— that the qualities of either theory are equally balanced in his writings and thus tend

\(^5\)Laura Johnson Wylie, *Social Studies in English Literature*, p. 41.


to cancel one another out.

The fact that Goldsmith is not powerful or original in speculation makes his mind a battlefield for the tendencies of the time. In The Deserted Village, romantic sentiment strives with pseudo-classic technic. The Vicar of Wakefield exudes a sensibility just prevented from liquefying by a touch of Johnsonian discipline. The Citizen of the World shows a mind veering between Rousseau and his opponents of the encyclopedia group but finally siding with the latter. Goldsmith is certainly not a romanticist and quite as certainly not a pseudoclassicist.

In answer to Fairchild's argument it might be said that the presence of romantic elements in Goldsmith, even though hotly menaced by classical sympathies, is sufficient justification for calling him a romantic precursor. Goldsmith was truly a man of the transition. His intellectual roots were in the neo-classic tradition. This is clearly witnessed in his stand toward primitivism and the positive aspects of luxury. But when his imagination grasped the significance of the woeful train of abuses which followed luxury, it stripped away, by sheer power of personal sympathy, the thin veneer which concealed the basic discord. Goldsmith foreshadowed romantic individualism, humanitarianism and social reform.

Yet he was a figure of the transition. The ambiguity of his personality and his writings makes him even more a figure of the transition, a transition from order and

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decorum to imagination and reform. Goldsmith, by revealing the new tendencies at work in the old atmosphere, helps to explain both the ideals of classicism and the elements which grew into romanticism. Goldsmith epitomizes his age.
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