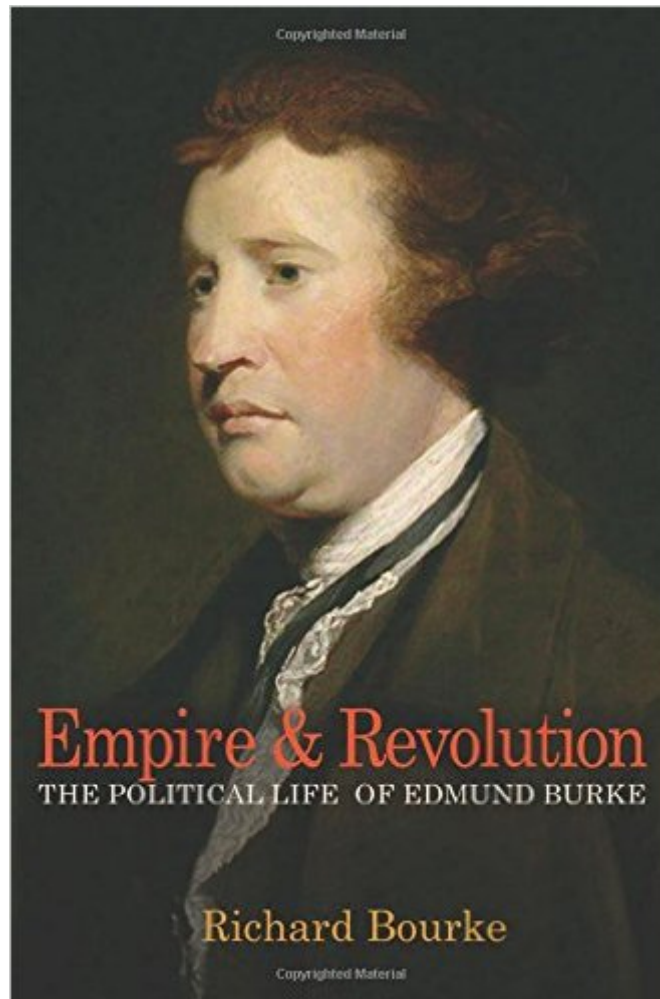


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Empire And Revolution: The Political Life Of Edmund Burke



Synopsis

Edmund Burke (1730-97) lived during one of the most extraordinary periods of world history. He grappled with the significance of the British Empire in India, fought for reconciliation with the American colonies, and was a vocal critic of national policy during three European wars. He also advocated reform in Britain, pressed for constitutional change in Ireland, and became a central protagonist in the great debate on the French Revolution. Drawing on the complete range of printed and manuscript sources, *Empire and Revolution* offers a vivid reconstruction of the major concerns of this outstanding statesman, orator, and philosopher. In restoring Burke to his original political and intellectual context, this book strips away the accumulated distortions that have marked the reception of his ideas. In the process, it overturns the conventional picture of a partisan of tradition against progress. In place of the image of a backward-looking opponent of popular rights, it presents a multifaceted portrait of one of the most captivating figures in eighteenth-century life and thought. While Burke was a passionately energetic statesman, he was also a deeply original thinker. *Empire and Revolution* depicts him as a philosopher-in-action who evaluated the political realities of the day through the lens of Enlightenment thought, variously drawing on the ideas of such figures as Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Hume. A boldly ambitious work of scholarship, this book challenges us to rethink the legacy of Burke and the turbulent era in which he played so pivotal a role.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A brilliant review and analysis of the works of one of history's great political minds. This is a book for

those interested in such diverse political situations in the 18th century as revolutionary France, India under the East India Company, America's independence, and Ireland under the thumb of protestant England. These all have clear echos to the present day. Professor Richard Bourke, the author, is a scholar of the highest level. The detailed knowledge mined in order to write "Empire & Revolution" is impressive to this reader. It will win prizes. Caution: This is not a comprehensive biography: it does not explore Edmund Burke's personal life.

In view of the two-star rating given by a previous reviewer, a few things need saying. Bourke's Empire and Revolution is an outstanding POLITICAL biography of Edmund Burke. Written with exceptional command of scholarship in several disciplines about a major political thinker who was also an MP deeply engaged with issues arising in Ireland, the American colonies, India, and France, it is necessarily a long book (1,001 pages including the index). Of the two other excellent biographies of Burke, both having different emphases, F. P. Lock's exceeds 1,100 pages and David Bromwich's first volume runs to an even 500. Some potential readers, of course, won't want to make the investment of time it requires, but it will reward those who do. Princeton University Press has somehow managed to offer the book at an remarkably inexpensive price. Had it been published by, say, Oxford University Press, it would have cost over \$100. The exceptionally high advance praise quoted above from the book's back cover comes from eminent scholars whose judgment is worth knowing and can be trusted. It has been echoed in early reviews from the UK.

Be patient; reread; underline; review and toil; an amazing portrait of a man of genius: Edmund Burke, the writer who every undergraduate has read especially as the writer of the French Revolution.

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