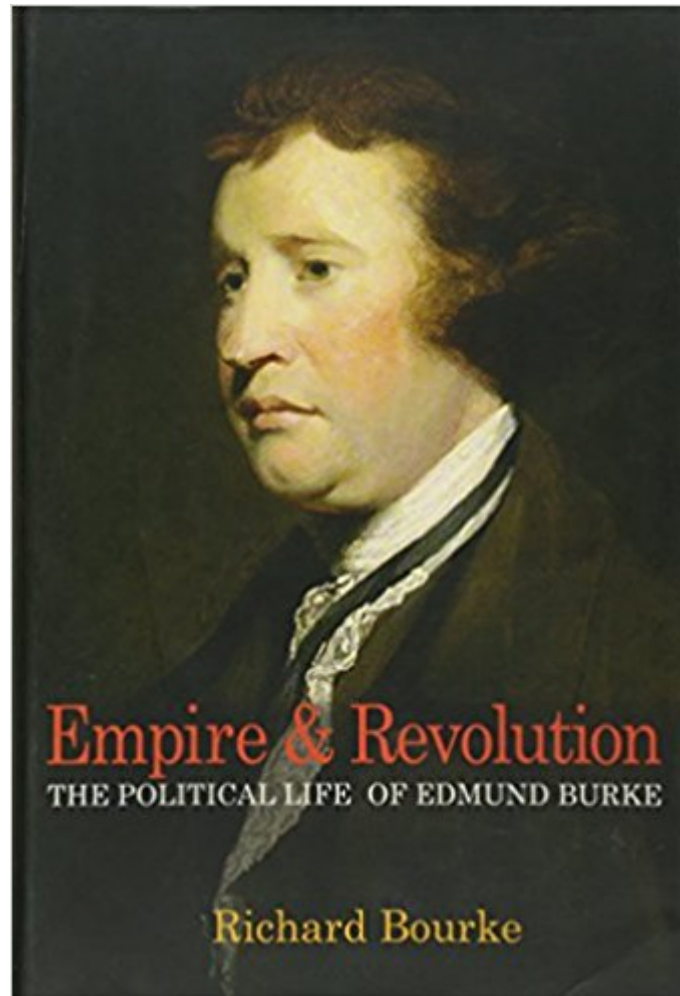




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# Empire And Revolution: The Political Life Of Edmund Burke



## Synopsis

Edmund Burke (1730–1797) 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 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 overturns the conventional picture of a partisan of tradition against progress and presents a multifaceted portrait of one of the most captivating figures in eighteenth-century life and thought. 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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Selected for the Claremont Review of Books  
CRB Christmas Reading List 2015  
One of The Guardian's Best Books of 2015  
One of The Indian Express Stand-Out Books of the Year 2015  
One of the Irish Times 2015 Readers' Books of the Year  
Selected for National Review Online's "Some Great 2015 Books"  
"One of The Spectator 2015 Books of the Year"  
[Empire

and Revolution] takes us back to the beginning again with Burke, demolishing numerous shibboleths about his politics along the way. . . . This book is both more creative and exhaustive than anything else in its single-mindedness--quite an achievement."--Duncan Kelly, Times Literary Supplement"Unsurpassable."--Colin Kidd, London Review of Books"An intensely rewarding read."--Jesse Norman MP, Times"Bourke's forensic anatomising of both the underlying consistency of Burke's commitments and also of the repeated misreadings to which his career has been subjected is a pleasure to read. Time and again Bourke skewers a misinterpretation with an acute discrimination. . . . The range and depth of Bourke's research here, and his command of both the primary and secondary archives, is truly impressive. All future historians of ideas who intend to work on Burke will need to engage with the arguments of this book."--David Womersley, Standpoint"Bourke's Empire and Revolution is the finest of intellectual portraits . . . the definitive account of a life in ideas and politics."--Gavin Jacobson, Financial Times"A truly outstanding achievement. . . . [Empire and Revolution] is the finest of all books on Edmund Burke."--Seamus Deane, Literary Review"A monument of exact scholarship and careful reflection, by a long way the best book that we have on this profound and much misunderstood politician and philosopher."--Jonathan Sumption, Spectator"A majestic study of a fascinating and gloriously ambiguous political thinker."--John Banville, Observer"Of Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke, by Richard Bourke . . . It is hard to avoid the word 'magisterial'. Burke is a fascinating thinker, at once a conservative and a radical, and this beautifully written, scholarly study will be the last word on him for a long time to come."--John Banville, The Irish Times, Books of the Year"Richard Bourke's magisterial Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke . . . authoritatively restores a key figure to his proper context."--Roy Foster, The Irish Times, Books of the Year"Richard Bourke's Empire & Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke [is] . . . The historian's Burke in a truly massive tome."--Harvey Mansfield, Claremont Review of Books"In this wonderfully rich book, Richard Bourke tells the story of Burke's political endeavors and ideas in the context of the tumultuous time in which he lived. . . . Bourke does it wonderfully. . . . He paints a bold picture of a truly outstanding figure who nonetheless has to be grasped in light of the age in which he lived. You'll understand both better thanks to this book."--Yuval Levin, National Review Online"Masterful. . . . Richard Bourke's Empire and Revolution is a magnificent intellectual biography."--Pratap Bhanu Mehta, The Indian Express"It is impossible not to admire the depth of Bourke's scholarship and the immense care and great intelligence he has displayed in examining Burke's thinking. . . . [Empire and Revolution] is a veritable treasure trove that will offer gems of wisdom. . . . [A]n absolute must read."--H. T. Dickinson, Intellectual History Review"This outstanding

intellectual biography shows that the 18th-century Irish MP Edmund Burke can be appropriated by neither Right nor Left. Thanks to Bourke's meticulous and wide-ranging scholarship, what seem to be inconsistencies, such as condemning Warren Hastings' injustice in India but supporting the notion of empire, and supporting the American Revolution and deploring the French one, are shown to be part of Burke's nuanced, if time-bound, humanitarianism."--Jane O'Grady, *Times Higher Education*"The size of this volume and the fabric of its academic structure are daunting and energizing at the same time, especially given the extraordinarily high standard of analysis sustained over nine-hundred or so pages. . . . Few intellectual historians would wish for a better illustration of their sub-discipline than Bourke's in this study, where the development of concepts and the related evolution of vocabulary are contextualized in a way that is intolerant of anachronism, yet remains both accessible and committed to the enduring relevance of Burke's thought and world."--Ian Crowe, *University Bookman*"Bourke's 1,000 page, extensively footnoted book seeks to cover every aspect of Edmund Burke's thought and career. . . . This carefully argued book deserves to be read by anyone with a serious interest in Burke."--Choice"Richard Bourke's *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* . . . is a landmark of scholarship. . . . A magnificent achievement of intellectual biography, philosophical reconstruction, and historical revision."--Paul Sagar, *Political Theory*"[*Empire and Revolution*] sets a new standard not just in Burkean scholarship but in our understanding of late 18th century political thought."--Clifford Cunningham, *Sun News Miami*"Bourke possesses a subtle understanding of the political ideas at work in Burke's eighteenth century while, yet, he still brings to his comprehensive study both the sweep of the historian's eye and the depth of a historian's technical training. . . . We can see not only the formation of Burke's ideas, but their meaning in a complex political and intellectual environment."--Steven P. Millies, *Studies in Burke and His Time*"*Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* is . . . one of several works of scholarship that have appeared in the past few years. Bourke's contribution to this corpus is a profoundly erudite study of Burke's political life; it will surely become a standard work."--Richard N. Price, *American Historical Review*"It is this combination of erudition, thoroughness and insight which makes Bourke's tome such a valuable contribution. . . . Likely long to remain a standard by which other works on Burke are judged."--Mark Klobas, *Political Studies Review*"Bourke has produced a meticulous study that blends biography with intellectual and political history. . . . An interesting reappraisal of one of modern history's most ambiguous political thinkers."--Gavin Murray-Miller, *H-Net Reviews*"Richard Bourke has contributed a monumental volume. . . . Based on extremely thorough research in primary sources and fully up to date with the most recent secondary literature, *Empire and Revolution* achieves the difficult

objective of making a distinctive addition to a deservedly crowded field."--Journal of the Historical Association

"There is no doubt that Burke studies have received a new point of departure in Richard Bourke's masterful *Empire and Revolution*. This work of surpassing scholarship enables us to place Burke fully in the context of the political history through which he lived."--David Walsh, Library of Law & Liberty

"The scope of Bourke's splendid volume is informed by a modern scholarship deeply embedded with a profound knowledge of Greek, Roman, medieval, Renaissance, and Enlightenment moral philosophy, the history of political thought and theory, historicism, and oratorical representations. In the text proper and in the abundant footnotes (thankfully placed on the relevant pages), Burke and Bourke converse with Aristotle, Augustine, Grotius, Pufendorf, Locke, Montesquieu, Hume, and Rousseau. And out of these ruminations with past philosophers and present circumstances emerges, in Bourke's words, not a diligent scholar like Kant nor a precocious genius like Hume but a man of brilliance whose gifts were realised in the cut and thrust of affairs."--James J. Sack, Journal of Modern History

"Exemplary in its detail and erudition, *Empire and Revolution* is a masterful scholarly and interpretive assessment of the complicated life and political career of Edmund Burke. . . . The book is an encyclopedic tour de force, the best book for this generation on the much studied yet misunderstood Edmund Burke."--Carla J. Mulford, Eighteenth-Century Studies

"*Empire and Revolution* is a remarkable achievement. Richard Bourke combines an astonishing mastery of detail with unfailingly good judgment and clarity of argument. He does justice to every facet of Burke's extraordinarily rich intellectual and political life, and to the global reach of Burke's attention and efforts. This is a work to savor."--Jennifer Pitts, University of Chicago

"Bridging the gap between political practice and political thought has presented a major conundrum for intellectual historians, most especially for students of Edmund Burke. With massive erudition, comprehensive scholarship, and methodological subtlety, Richard Bourke triumphantly solves this problem by scrupulously tracking the principles informing Burke's interventions across his entire political life. *Empire and Revolution* is quite simply the best book on Burke ever written: all future work on Burke must start from here."--David Armitage, Harvard University

"*Empire and Revolution* is a monumental achievement. Bourke has at once given us a sensitive reading of Edmund Burke's political commitments and a bracing portrait of the later-eighteenth-century British Empire. This elegant and powerful book not only forces us to rethink Burke's politics, it compels us to rethink his age and our relationship to it."--Steven Pincus, Yale University

"Our understanding of Burke's thought as both statesman and philosopher, engaged in the many problems of his revolutionary times, is from this

moment both deepened and broadened beyond measure."--J.G.A. Pocock, Johns Hopkins University"Empire and Revolution is the best book on Edmund Burke available. It takes a scholar of singular learning to tackle a figure like Burke, and Richard Bourke is exactly that person. His writing is clear, his scholarship impeccable, and his mastery of eighteenth-century history self-evident. This is a brilliant book and a model for intellectual historians."--Richard Whatmore, University of St Andrews"An extremely impressive piece of work."--Mark Philp, author of *Reforming Ideas in Britain: Politics and Language in the Shadow of the French Revolution, 1789-1815*

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.

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.

Assiduous and lucid elucidation of Burkes philosophy, puzzling to many, against the history from which it was developed. Great work!

Quick service, great to work with. A+.

Richard Bourke began developing this history of Edmund Burke's political thought in 1991. Published in 2015, "Empire & Revolution" uses Burke as a window into the eighteenth century articulations of British imperial power, exploring the way that Burke approached relations between Britain, Ireland, America, India, and France. It's Bourke on Burke in the best way possible. The book begins with Burke's boyhood in Ireland, which fascinated me. I hadn't realized that Burke was Irish (never having studied him in any great detail before this). Because of my longstanding interest in Irish history, this helped to put Burke's life in a familiar and interesting frame, and his various experiences of growing up in a family newly converted to Protestantism, then with his Catholic relatives, then at a Quaker school, and, finally, finishing his schooling at a Protestant

university helped me to make sense both of Burke's enduring interest in the goals and mechanisms of power, and in his attempts to remain evenhanded and resist tyrannies of all kinds throughout his life. Though the book isn't an "intimate" look at Burke's personal life, it does attend to his general situation, his actions, his professional and public relationships, and his various alliances in detail, situating the development of his thought in his daily affairs, and taking up his main publications in a chronological order to trace the trajectory of Burke's attention and the maturing of his thought over the course of his lifetime. The book closes with the challenge of grappling with Burke's ongoing legacy. Through all this, the book is beautifully written. Professor Bourke's long study, attention to detail, and gift for trenchant observation make this a lot of fun to read. After I read the book, I had the pleasure of interviewing Richard Bourke for the New Books Network. Our conversation ranged over subjects as familiar today as they were in the 1700s, including Burke's understanding of representative politics as a means of resolving conflicts present in the public at large, struggles between state and corporate power, and the warrant for popular revolution. One thing that he said really struck me, "A career doesn't have the coherence we impose upon it belatedly, but there exist preoccupations that recur and drive our action." Of course he's right, and it's just these kinds of careful, nuanced observations that make his book such a good one. He is careful to note his own judgements of Burke's life and thought, and at the same time careful to hold fast to the difference between the subjects of our study and the meaning we make from them. For all of these reasons, and many more, it's a fantastic book. Highly recommended.

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.

I have to believe that the Author and Publisher have no desire for anyone to read this book. The price for the Kindle Edition is frankly prohibitive.

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