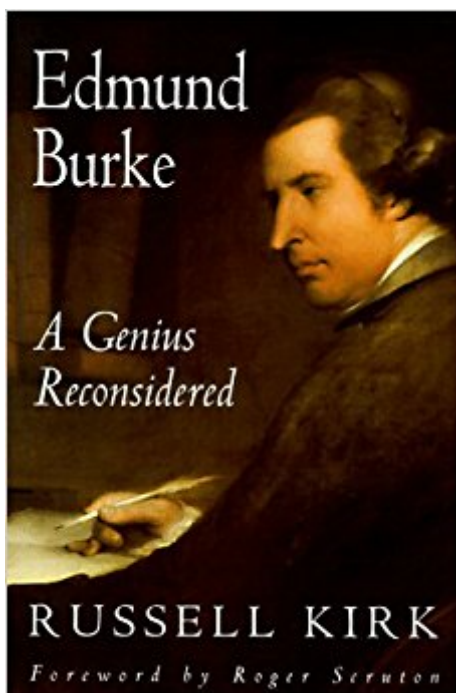


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Edmund Burke: A Genius Reconsidered



Synopsis

Russell Kirk was a leading figure in the post-World War II revival of American interest in Edmund Burke. Today, no one who takes seriously the problems of society dares remain indifferent to "the first conservative of our time of troubles." In Russell Kirk's words: "Burke's ideas interest anyone nowadays, including men bitterly dissenting from his conclusions. If conservatives would know what they defend, Burke is their touchstone; and if radicals wish to test the temper of their opposition, they should turn to Burke." Kirk unfolds Burke's philosophy, showing how it revealed itself in concrete historical situations during the eighteenth century and how Burke, through his philosophy, "speaks to our age." This volume makes vivid the four great struggles in the life of Burke: his efforts to reconcile England with the American colonies; his involvement in cutting down the domestic power of George III; his prosecution of Warren Hastings, the Governor-General of India; and his resistance to Jacobinism, the French Revolution's "armed doctrine."

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Customer Reviews

"If you are not a Burke scholar, [Edmund Burke: A Genius Reconsidered](#) must be read first." [The World & I](#) "This is the liveliest and most accessible one-volume biography of Edmund Burke." [The Bookwatch](#) "Kirk's scholarship is wide-ranging . . . and of course he brings to bear his close knowledge of the vast array of modern Burke scholarship. [His] . . . book is both elegant and eloquent, and it helps to fill a real need." [Jeffrey Hart, National Review](#) "[T]he book serves as a good short introduction to Burke's

life and thought. — Library Journal — “No one knows more about Burke or writes of him with as much authority as did Russell Kirk. — M.D. Aeschliman, *The Wanderer* — “Edmund Burke is the very book for the non-specialist and the very book that no specialist will want to be without. It is at once a general introduction to the essence of Burke’s thought and a major reassessment of Burke in the light of the vast body of scholarship now available on him. — G.B. Tennyson, *University Bookman* — “Only a man of Kirk’s provenance and ambiance would have been appropriate for the job — to reassert, by way of Burke, — the natural law tradition [against] the positivism, nominalism and scientific materialism of modern liberal thought, — as Carl Cone has put it. — C.P. Ives, *Modern Age* — This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In this, the liveliest and most accessible one-volume life of Edmund Burke, Russell Kirk ingeniously combines into a living whole the private and the public Burke. He gives us a fresh assessment of the great statesman, who enjoys even greater influence today than in his own time. Russell Kirk was a leading figure in the post-World War II revival of American interest in Edmund Burke. Today, no one who takes seriously the problems of society dares remain indifferent to “the first conservative of our time of troubles.” In Russell Kirk’s words: “Burke’s ideas interest anyone nowadays, including men bitterly dissenting from his conclusions. If conservatives would know what they defend, Burke is their touchstone; and if radicals wish to test the temper of their opposition, they should turn to Burke.” Kirk lucidly unfolds Burke’s philosophy, showing how it revealed itself in concrete historical situations during the eighteenth century and how Burke, through his philosophy, “speaks to our age.” This volume makes vivid the four great struggles in the life of Burke: his efforts to reconcile England with the American colonies; his involvements in cutting down the domestic power of George III; his prosecution of Warren Hastings, the Governor General of India; and his resistance to Jacobinism, the French Revolution’s “armed doctrine.” In each of these great phases of his public life, Burke fought with passionate eloquence and relentless logic for justice and for the proper balance of order and freedom. With sure instinct born of his sympathy and understanding, Kirk gives us the incisive quotation, the illuminating highlight, the moving, all-too-human elements that bring Burke and his age to vivid life. Thanks to Russell Kirk’s skillful evocations, Edmund Burke in these pages becomes our contemporary. “Because corruption and fanaticism assail our era as sorely as they did Burke’s time, the resonance of Burke’s voice still is heard amidst the howl of our winds of abstract doctrine.” — This text

refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Russell Kirk delivered a great and very tight biography of Edmund Burke. He is the great father of what we know as Conservatism. Conservatism in the non-political sense. Kirk brought forth, in the context of the times of Burke, a biography and also a history of the times. For it's approximate 300-page size, I consider this work a classic. Kirk's prose flows, and brings Burke to life. Although in time-context, Burke (through Kirk) reaches our hearts to this day. Has Kirk ever wrote anything that was not thought-provoking? I humbly submit, no! Although his voice was silenced in 1797, we can hear Burke scream at us through Dr. Kirk's profound work. The world owes both Burke and Kirk a great debt beyond recompense.

Edmund Burke is a philosopher & politician who needs to get more visibility, 200 years after his death I mean. His thought was key to British institutional & political thought during the time of the American and French Revolutions (often contrary to mainstream thought in Parliament and King George III, however). This book does a nice job providing an overview, one that is not too heavy-handed philosophically, and not so light-handed as popular history. A nice compromise. It is a good introduction and can lead the reader to other works about the period and about Burke. I am not quite clear on a previous reviewer's comment that the work was unbalanced in terms of covering only Burke's good qualities and not his bad ones. That individual must have read a different work than I did.

In this easy to read volume Russell Kirk provides a succinct biography of "the first conservative of our time of troubles." Burke's political philosophy is clearly explained and Kirk introduces the reader to Edmund Burke the man. The book basically deals with the four major issues of Burke's life: his resistance to Jacobinism, England's relationship with the American Colonies, the prosecution of Warren Hastings, and the stifling of George III's domestic authority. Kirk provides wonderful quotes throughout the book and thorough, balanced analysis. Those looking for a critical assessment of Burke will not find it here, as Kirk, the great conservative thinker of our time, was a proponent of Burke and felt that his voice was still applicable in today's political climate. However, this does not compromise the integrity of this volume. This book is a must read for anyone interested in political theory, politics, and/or history.

Kirk's introduction to the life and politics of Burke is essential to understanding Edmund Burke in his

time and ours. More of a Political biography than a general biography, it is still a book whose prose is very readable and understandable. A biography of a great man by a great man.

Edmund Burke deserves better than this biography. The author Russell Kirk is full of admiration for Burke, but his unqualified praise of his subject is more deserving of a 19th century hagiography than it is a modern work. At no point in the book that I can remember does Kirk ever put anything but the most positive spin on the 18th century statesman/philosopher's actions. Burke is undoubtedly everything Kirk claims -- a great man, a genius, and his influence in both England and the United States largely underestimated - but even the greatest and wisest of men have blind spots and moments of weakness. Was Burke perhaps overzealous in his sixteen-year pursuit of Warren Hastings? Did Burke hide his Irish Catholic roots out of fear for what they could do to his ambitions if brought out in the open? Was his political philosophy less than consistent? Not according to Kirk. "Edmund Burke: A Genius Reconsidered" does have its good points. It's well-written -- far more accessible than the Conor Cruise O'Brien biography "The Great Melody". (To be fair to O'Brien, his biography is not a straightforward work, but presents Burke's life thematically.) Kirk's book also makes some valid points about Burke's legacy, convincing the reader that Burke's philosophy is underappreciated by modern audiences. But a more balanced approach to Burke's life - without all the Great Man gloss -- would have made this point just as effectively.

This book is not an autobiography. it goes back and forth between papers he wrote. I was looking for a simple well laid out thoughts and how he came to form these ideas.

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