

Collins' Burke: Introduction
to the Symposium on
*Commerce and Manners
in Edmund Burke's
Political Philosophy*

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Gregory Collins believes that dedicating oneself to getting great figures right is a good way to do political philosophy. He has immersed himself in Edmund Burke, dedicated to getting him right. The result is the 578-page book *Commerce and Manners in Edmund Burke's Political Philosophy*, plus numerous articles, including Burke on slavery (Collins 2019, 2020b).

Collins is a postdoctoral associate and lecturer at Yale University political science department. The book grew out of his dissertation at Catholic University of America. Does he get Burke right? In this symposium we find that opinions differ.

In "Tocqueville's Burke, or Story as History," Ralph Lerner writes: "Burke and Tocqueville each engaged all his art in retelling his nation's history with a view to reshaping prevailing perceptions." Writing in the 1850s, Alexis de Tocqueville, in *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*, used Burke in a way that served his prospective message.

There is something of the same with Collins's Burke. Maybe that is as it should be. And maybe the same can be said about each of the eight contributors to this symposium. The eight contributors are Richard Bourke, Stephen Davies, Samuel Gregg, Lauren Hall, Iain Hampsher-Monk, Emily Jones, Anna Plassart, and Richard Whatmore.

The matter is nicely put by Bourke: "The central question raised by Collins concerns the relationship between markets and morals. On the one hand Burke celebrates the role of commerce and on the other extols virtue. But how does he reconcile these two positions?"

Burke lived, spoke, and wrote economics, morals, and politics. Did Burke propound a pro-market, pro-virtue politics? If so, was it coherent? How might it be interpreted today, in words that 2021 readers find meaningful?

People who speak three languages are called *trilingual*, and people who speak two languages are called *bilingual*. Those who speak one language are called American. I do not know how good Collins's French is, but he's definitely American.

It's somewhat similar with another country's history, institutions, and culture, even if language is shared. It is noteworthy that most of the eight commentators are British and leading Burke scholars. It is exciting to see Collins's book engaged by scholars with a native understanding of Britain and its past. Of the eight commentators, Lauren Hall hails from the United States, Samuel Gregg hails from Australia and now lives in the United States, and Anna Plassart hails from France and now lives in the United Kingdom. The others hail from the United Kingdom or Ireland (Bourke).

Burke as natural-rights exponent is highlighted by one of our commentators. The symposium finishes with Collins's reply to all of the commentators.

Thanks are due to all contributors, to Gregory Collins, and to Leslie Marsh and *Cosmos + Taxis*, for affording us a searching symposium. Dedicating oneself to getting great figures right is a good way to do political philosophy. Burke's relevance does not fade. In fact, it seems to grow during the present discontents.

NOTES

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