



**HEYTHROP COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**



Nomination of Examiners for MPhil Degree

Candidate: Walter King
 Supervisor: Dr Patrick Riordan
 Thesis title: Accommodating Diversity: Burke’s Republican Freedom

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 Thesis description

This dissertation explores the meaning of liberty in the thought and practice of Edmund Burke. As background to Burke’s understanding of liberty the author considers the role of commerce in the eighteenth century and the perception of it as the means towards human flourishing that came through a person’s enjoyment of freedom. Government’s role is shown to facilitate this freedom and so it requires ‘sympathy’, and an intimate knowledge of a people’s ‘temper’. Specific instances are explored such as Burke’s defence of the American colonists, his proposals for the abolition of slavery, and his defence of India. These provide evidence of the importance for him of a proper recognition of the other if freedom is to be enjoyed. Republican freedom, understood as relying on the free recognition of one person by another in the context of a shared task (be it government or commerce) cannot be bestowed on people or forced on people. To be free in this way people need an identity, a history. The author contrasts Burke’s view with a different understanding of republican freedom that sees it as a freedom guaranteed by law. The rule of law is certainly *one* important constituent of civil society and can be *an* important guarantor of freedom, but - the dissertation argues following Burke - it cannot act as the ultimate determinant. In circumstances in which law had become an instrument of power rather than justice, Burke preferred to put his trust in the personal dimension of government - where sympathy between governing and governed was the foundation stone of real freedom and justice. The dissertation argues further that Burke’s views of truth and justice must be situated in a more comprehensive view of creation which included reference to the divine will for the created order and for humankind.