

Love and Duty in Burke

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This is the first article to investigate the role of parental affection in Edmund Burke's political thought. It challenges the widely held view that Burke defended patriarchal authority in reaction to egalitarian ideas of the family advanced by the French Revolution. Burke, himself a devoted father, believed that civil liberty depended upon parental rights and responsibilities. Long before the revolution began, he warned against a contemporary fascination with Spartan ideas of parental indifference in the *Annual Register* – ideas that the National Assembly in France appeared, in his view, to be implementing in their reforms to family law. From Burke's perspective, the revolutionaries in France were interfering in the relationships between parents and their children in order to make way for an all-encompassing devotion to the state. Burke warned that by undermining parental love and duty, the revolutionaries in France were not only instituting a new tyrannical regime but also destroying the very foundation of humanity.