Thoughts on the 'Society of Virtue'

an Anarchist Reclamation of the 'Republic of Virtue'

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LIBERTE, ÉGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ OU LA MORT

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"The man of revolution is merciless to the bad, but he is sensitive, he pursues the guilty...and defends innocence, he speaks the truth so that it will instruct, and not so that it offends...His probity is not a delicacy of spirit but a quality of the heart. Honour the mind but base yourselves on the heart."

— Louis Antoine de Saint-Just, "Rapport, présenté par Saint-Just au nom du comité de salut public, sur la police générale, lors de la séance, 26 germinal an II" (15 April 1794)

or a more inclusive version that this author prefers,

'*The revolutionary is merciless to the bad, but sensitive, pursuing the guilty and defending innocence, speaking the truth so that it will instruct, not offend. Their integrity is not a delicacy of spirit but a quality of the heart. Honor the mind but base yourselves on the heart.*'

TL;DR

the concept of the 'Republic of Virtue' envisioned by radical French lawyer and politician Maximilien Robespierre and championed by fellow National Convention delegate and Committee of Public Safety member Louis Antoine de Saint-Just of revolutionary France in 1794—a society based on the promotion of virtuous behaviors aimed at achieving the greatest possible public welfare—can and should be reworked and adopted to foster an egalitarian, classless, stateless society organized around mutual aid and community defense to maximize liberty, happiness, and true security

Introduction

> "*But there do exist, I can assure you, souls that are feeling and pure; it exists, that tender, imperious, and irresistible passion, the torment and delight of magnanimous hearts; that deep horror of tyranny, that compassionate zeal for the oppressed, that sacred love for the homeland, that even more sublime and holy love for humanity, without which a great revolution is just a noisy crime that destroys another crime...*"
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> — Maximilien Robespierre, "Speech of 8 Thermidor Year II" (26 July 1794)[1]

Thoughts on the 'Society of Virtue' is a vision for the fundamental moral character of both an anarchist revolutionary project and the social and societal development endemic to said project. This document is both heavily inspired by and earnestly critical of the central idea from a speech written by revolutionary French lawyer and politician Maximilien Robespierre (1758–1794) and delivered to the French National Convention on 17 Pluviôse Year II (5 February 1794) titled "Report upon the Principles of Political Morality Which Are to Form the Basis of the Administration of the Interior Concerns of the Republic" (shortened here and in the cited publication to "Report on the Principles of Political Morality"). In this address, Robespierre proposes a distinct conception for the internal moral framework of budding republican France which he calls the 'Republic of Virtue'. As I will explain, my goal is not by any means to promote Robespierre's ideation to the letter, but to capture the essence of his belief in the potential and wisdom of the people and focus it through a liberatory lens. You can read the full speech here: "Report on the Principles of Political Morality"

In this work, I will attempt to adapt and reimagine the Republic of Virtue through the aligned means and ends of anarchism (society without rulers); you will not find suggestions on specific methods of production or organization or confederation between communities as they might function within an anarchist system as this is simply offering thoughts on the kind of personal and public morality and mindset that seem to me to be necessary for a voluntary society based on mutual aid and solidarity to function most effectively. There are great works out there composed by rightfully-celebrated authors and activists that describe in great detail what an anarchist world could look

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[1] Maximilien Robespierre, Speech of 8 Thermidor Year II: https://rbzpr.tumblr.com/post/ 126841746789/robespierres-speech-of-8-thermidor; translation from: Robespierre, Maximilien. "*Extracts From* Speech of 8 Thermidor Year II". *Robespierre: Virtue and Terror*, edited by Jean Ducange, translation by John Howe, Verso, 2017, pp. 126–141

like—some of which I quote and reference in this document—so I defer to them in that endeavor.

I am choosing to call this framework the 'Society of Virtue', which, to be fair, is essentially a rebrand of anarchy. The name 'Society of Virtue' immediately exposes my primary critiques of Robespierre's utopian republican ideal: that republican government is an invalid method of achieving anarchy, and that scaling a single organizational system based on virtue to the size of a nation-state from a central point—especially one as large and populous as France, even in 1794—was an effort doomed from the outset, and clearly recommended the use of authoritarian measures to achieve this end (republican government being inherently hierarchical and authoritarian), another non-starter. Those two issues can be avoided, and have not precluded me from seeing the value in much of what "Report on the Principles of Political Morality" has to offer.

One of the reasons I've grown attached to this idea is that, on the whole, I interpret Robespierre's overall tone, attitude, and many of his priorities to be remarkably in line with what an anarchist's vision could look like. His belief that a healthy society free from corruption required the preeminence of virtue and the need for virtue's enemies to experience true terror in order to suppress and combat their despotic urges sounds very much like how anarchists describe mutual aid and solidarity coupled with militant antifascism and community defense to protect inclusivity, liberty, and equality from the forces that would dominate and destroy them. Just like the royalists and aristocrats determined to reimpose absolute monarchy, fascists *should* be afraid to be fascists.

Robespierre also subscribed to philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's maxim that humans are naturally good and only corrupted and degraded by their environment. There are many issues with Rousseau's work (some of which David Graeber and David Wengrow address in their exceptional book *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*), but the belief that most people are inherently decent, capable of organizing themselves and cooperating for mutual benefit in a benevolent arrangement, seems to be central to any anarchist project succeeding. Yes, it's also about decentralizing power to the individual level as to prevent the indecent from ruling over others, but if everyone at their core wanted nothing more than to either rule or be ruled (the cynical sonic masterpiece by 80s pop band Tears for Fears cannot be correct), anarchy could not be achieved.

A cursory knowledge of the most influential participants and extraordinary events of the French revolutionary project of the late 18th-century may be helpful when reading this work, but I will do my best to make that undertaking as unnecessary as possible. To say that much occurred in France between 1789 and 1794 would be a massive understatement; the French Revolution is arguably the most important political event to occur in the last 1600 years due to its both immediate and lasting effects on European conflict and government (leftist, liberal, and conservative), its inspiration of the Haitian and Russian Revolutions, and even the development of anarchism and socialism.

Let me stop here and recognize that posterity has not afforded Robespierre the greatest reputation. Yes, he was a hardcore statist. And I understand that he's generally regarded as some sort of bloodthirsty dictator intent on exploiting the gains of the revolution like Lenin who followed and looked up to him; this fabrication is not borne out by the facts but is a consequence of counter-revolutionary propaganda manufactured by conservatives—and some to the left of him—attempting to escape justice (drowning nuns and priests on the way to committing some light genocide is bad) and rehabilitate their own images through scapegoating Robespierre and his allies. In my opinion, holding people in the government to account for their actions is a nice change of pace, actually. Funny enough, in his final speech to the National Convention less than 48 hours before his condemnation and execution in an event called the Thermidorian Reaction, the astoundingly prescient Robespierre saw it all coming, directly addressing the imminent conservative coup against him and their aim to pin the revolution's issues on him and paint him as a tyrant. Rehabilitating Robespierre's character is beyond the scope of this work; suffice it to say his moral rectitude and many of his words and deeds as I understand them have earned the respect of this author and anarchist.

The Jacobin Club (a revolutionary French political club which, at the height of its influence, essentially commanded the National Convention from June 1793 through July 1794 (their political affiliation within the Convention was called the Mountain), and of which Robespierre was a founding member) was not an anarchist organization by any measure. On their best day, the most radical among them were something akin to proto-socialists, but the majority were liberals as demonstrated by their belief in private property and capitalist market dynamics for the distribution of goods and resources. Membership came almost exclusively from the bourgeoisie, though the truly virulent and revolutionary members could easily be branded as class traitors (the good kind) for their support of the most oppressed and their desire to completely reform society in a more egalitarian fashion. The Jacobins were something of a vanguard who aimed to remake the French state in their own image, a source of inspiration for the later Bolsheviki; for this reason, I will not defend this means of revolutionary action used by the club at-large as capturing and reforming the State will never directly create the conditions for anarchy to manifest. For a bit of proto-anarchist history, I suggest looking into the Enragés, a very loosely-affiliated group of Parisians that used direct action to try and pull the Jacobins and the National Convention as far left as they could and secure a much more horizontal administration of things.

This work is in no way an absolute prescription for a societal backbone, just a series of suggestions for how we may direct our behavior as we envision and achieve a better world free from the type of domination we've been conditioned to accept. The other purpose of this work is to offer an alternative, perhaps more mainstream-friendly name for anarchy. I recognize that the word 'anarchy' makes total sense in its construction and has clear and consistent meaning among anarchists and other leftists who have taken the time to understand it. Among non-anarchists—especially those who identify

as liberal or moderate and have much more of a traditional, American education on and understanding of political economy—I immediately run into a problem when I use the word anarchy (or socialism or communism for that matter). I want an easier way to describe a world without exploitation without having to spend the window of time I typically have to explain why anarchy does not mean abject chaos and why socialism doesn't mean Stalinism. Maybe this isn't it, but I feel that elucidating the Society of Virtue is a worthy experiment in that way.

Before getting into the specifics of the Society of Virtue, I would be remiss not to point out that the revolution isn't just a future event for which we must plan and wait. It lives in the hearts of people across the world at this very moment, people determined to reject the vices put on us by capitalist domination of our minds and bodies and be better than we're monetarily incentivized to be. The virtues described in this work can be immediately adopted and expressed in all of our actions and interactions as we organize ourselves in ways that align the ends of a world where exploitation has been eradicated with means that reject exploitation now. We know where we want to go; virtue is the vehicle to take us there.

But what does it mean to have virtue, to live virtuously, to build a society upon the principles associated with virtue?

1. Virtue

"What is the goal toward which we are heading? The peaceful enjoyment of liberty and equality; the reign of that eternal justice whose laws have been inscribed, not in marble and stone, but in the hearts of all men, even in that of the slave who forgets them and in that of the tyrant who denies them."

— Maximilien Robespierre, "Report on the Principles of Political Morality", 17 Pluviôse Year II (5 February 1794)[1]

"It cannot be sufficiently emphasized that revolution is in vain unless inspired by its ultimate ideal. Revolutionary methods must be in tune with revolutionary aims. The means used to further the revolution must harmonize with its purposes. In short, the ethical values which the revolution is to establish in the new society must be initiated with the revolutionary activities of the so-called transitional period. The latter can serve as a real and dependable bridge to the better life only if built of the same material as the life to be achieved."

— Emma Goldman, *My Further Disillusionment in Russia*[2]

What is virtue? Which behaviors or principles are virtuous? What is or isn't considered a virtue is undoubtedly a subjective determination based on established culture and ideology, varying between communities.

Virtue has been defined as "moral excellence; goodness; righteousness" or "conformity of one's life and conduct to moral and ethical principles; uprightness; rectitude"[3]. When I use the term 'virtue', I'm ascribing these definitions within the context of cooperation and societal relations and organization. To be virtuous is to recognize, internalize, and act in accordance with the humanity and earnest desire for liberty and security in each

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[1] Maximilien Robespierre, "Report upon the Principles of Political Morality Which Are to Form the Basis of the Administration of the Interior Concerns of the Republic": https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4887836/mod_folder/content/0/Robespierre_Report%20on%20the%20principles%20of%20political%20morality.pdf; translation from: Robespierre, Maximilien. "On the Principles of Political Morality That Should Guide the National Convention in the Domestic Administration of the Republic". *Robespierre: Virtue and Terror*, edited by Jean Ducange, translation by John Howe, Verso, 2017, pp. 108–125

[2] Emma Goldman, *My Further Disillusionment in Russia*: https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/emma-goldman-my-further-disillusionment-in-russia

[3] "Virtue Definition and Meaning | Dictionary.com." Dictionary.com, 4 Sept. 2020, www.dictionary.com/browse/virtue.

person, and to act and live in such a way as to maximize that liberty and security for all; individual freedom is maximized through collective security. For a voluntary society to function with effective and honest communication and mutual aid, moral excellence seems to me to essentially be a prerequisite.

In "Report on the Principles of Political Morality", Robespierre listed a number of virtues he believed exemplified a society administered for the good of all, contrasting them with vices to eliminate. These included: "integrity for formal codes of honor, principles for customs, a sense of duty for one of mere propriety...self-respect for insolence...the charm of happiness for sensuous boredom, the greatness of man for the pettiness of the great..."[4] to name a few.

In this and the succeeding section on vice, I will provide some brief context along with the virtues and vices I identify. The following are virtues that I believe people and their communities ought to aim for when attempting to maximize liberty, security, and self-actualization in a cooperative arrangement such as a Society of Virtue:

- mutual aid – The voluntary exchange of resources and services for mutual benefit without profit motive is the most truly revolutionary act, and absolutely integral to the achievement of anarchy and the greatest possible happiness and security for humanity. Without mutual aid as the basis of social relations, all other virtues are simply strategies for harm reduction, as capitalism would still reign supreme; if there were only one virtue to live by, it would be mutual aid. As anarchist and scientist Pyotr Kropotkin explains in his 1902 work *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, cooperation through mutual aid is an evolutionary strength that allows a species to thrive instead of being dominated by the desire to destroy each other through constant competition for the profit of a few.

- solidarity – You won't find empathy on this list of virtues because solidarity is more inclusive, requiring both empathy and action taken beyond it; simply acknowledging another's struggle is insufficient in the mitigation of said struggle. Strength in numbers is real; solidarity is strength in numbers, and in character.

- justice – 'No justice, no peace' is a tried and true activist slogan for a reason. Without justice, hunger for power and domination will pervade society, promoting violent interrelations instead of peaceful ones. Justice means upholding moral rightness and equitability—upholding virtue—something made possible through cooperation and solidarity to recognize the 'rightness' that must be restored in

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[4] Maximilien Robespierre, "Report upon the Principles of Political Morality Which Are to Form the Basis of the Administration of the Interior Concerns of the Republic": https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4887836/mod_folder/content/0/Robespierre_Report%20on%20the%20principles%20of%20political%20morality.pdf; translation from: Robespierre, Maximilien. "On the Principles of Political Morality That Should Guide the National Convention in the Domestic Administration of the Republic". *Robespierre: Virtue and Terror*, edited by Jean Ducange, translation by John Howe, Verso, 2017, pp. 108–125

any given situation where it has been violated. Justice and accountability are somewhat intertwined, but not quite the same concept, at least in the consideration of foundational virtues.

- accountability – Each person should claim responsibility for their actions. When people hold themselves accountable, they demonstrate an appreciation for justice, solidarity, and the integrity necessary for trust to take hold in society.

- equality – No person is inherently superior to any other, and should not be treated as such. Of course individuals have differing strengths and degrees of strength therein, but the capacity to contribute more or less to the general welfare, richness, and complexity of society should have no bearing on one's ability to have the resources required to secure comfort and safety.

- integrity – An honest assessment of a person or situation at hand untainted by prejudice or avarice with an earnest desire for the best possible solution for as many people as possible seems necessary to maximize the security and success of a society. Adhering to one's reasoned beliefs in the face of adversity—but not in light of superior information, as that leads into vanity, insolence, and ignorance—takes courage and accountability, and should be an ideal to aim for.

- uniqueness – Complexity and diversity are strengths, not weaknesses, and indicative of a society that promotes liberty. The encouragement of self-expression in all its forms without fear of state or corporate (I say 'or', but states are corporations) reprisal unlocks untold richness and happiness. Judging the worthiness of products based primarily on their commercial viability as we do in capitalism does not encourage innovation, but stifles it, rewarding conformity and limiting the bounds of art and science. Be yourself and create what moves you, as those are things that no one else can do quite like you can.

- courage – The struggle against capitalism and the State's monopoly on violence—and the challenge that the pressure of societal norms and demands presents—requires tremendous courage from those who believe that a better world is not only possible but attainable. Sustainable solidarity, especially in 2023, is only possible through strength of character and the willingness to support one another when facing adversity.

- reason – The ability to perceive and process a set of facts or data without prejudice is key in sound decision making. Seeking the truth allows one to avoid errors that another with the same information but without the drive to think through possibilities and pitfalls will make. Yes, sometimes we have incomplete information, and some errors are inevitable; making a mistake during an earnest endeavor or insolently erring after choosing ignorance are categorically different.

- wisdom – Wisdom is the result of the repeated application of reason and the collection of the knowledge acquired therein. I have categorized wisdom as distinct from reason because I see reason as a process and wisdom as a product of that process, which then feeds back into reason which becomes greater wisdom and so on ad infinitum. Wisdom should be shared among everyone as this results in maximizing the betterment of the people and their ability to reason through their own problems; it should not be gate kept for the purpose of profit and exploitation. Knowledge is power, and mutual aid promotes the empowerment of all over the tyranny of the few.

Let me reiterate that my vision for the Society of Virtue is just that: my vision. I believe that the virtues listed above make sense and apply directly to the achievement of anarchy, but happily welcome those who are interested in this concept to help both expand and hone this list (and the list of vices in the next section) so as to propagate many virtuous communities as effectively as possible.

2. Vice

"[T]o the continual miracles wrought by the virtue of a great people, intrigue always adds the baseness of its criminal schemes, a baseness ordered by tyrants, later using it as material for their ridiculous manifestos, to hold ignorant peoples in the filth of opprobrium and the chains of servitude. But, ha! What can the crimes of its enemies really do to liberty? When the sun is veiled by a passing cloud, does it stop being the star that animates nature?"

— Maximilien Robespierre, "Report on the Principles of Political Morality", 17 Pluviôse Year II (5 February 1794)[1]

"Capitalism will continue as long as such an economic system is considered adequate and just. The weakening of the ideas which support the evil and oppressive present-day conditions means the ultimate breakdown of government and capitalism. Progress consists in abolishing what man has outlived and substituting in its place a more suitable environment."

— Alexander Berkman, *What Is Communist Anarchism?*[2]

If we do not currently live within a Society of Virtue—which we do not—then we're surely subjects of a society of vice, the antithesis of virtue. Indeed, capitalism incentivizes vice as vice is a prerequisite for profit maximization. Only through exploitation and callousness can one construct a fiefdom on the backs of workers from whom capitalists steal the value of labor to finance their comfort and vain machinations. Only through prejudice and insolence can states alienate the people from the civil functions of society and poison the well from which the sweet taste of solidarity could quench the thirst of the masses for agency. Only through tyranny and avarice can the basic necessities for personal security such as housing and food be held out of the reach of human beings desperate for relief from the contrived competition of capitalism.

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[1] Maximilien Robespierre, "Report upon the Principles of Political Morality Which Are to Form the Basis of the Administration of the Interior Concerns of the Republic": https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4887836/mod_folder/content/0/Robespierre_Report%20on%20the%20principles%20of%20political%20morality.pdf; translation from: Robespierre, Maximilien. "On the Principles of Political Morality That Should Guide the National Convention in the Domestic Administration of the Republic". *Robespierre: Virtue and Terror*, edited by Jean Ducange, translation by John Howe, Verso, 2017, pp. 108–125

[2] Alexander Berkman, *What Is Communist Anarchism?*: https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/alexander-berkman-what-is-communist-anarchism

While sweets, alcohol, and cigarettes are surely vices in their own way, these are not existential threats to the voluntary organization of humans in comparison to the true social vices enumerated below. The way that modern society focuses on the excessive vilification of what are essentially victimless behaviors is a distraction at best, and usually some kind of power play. Let us do away with the authoritarian, puritanical concept that things like sexual and gender expression and rest are moral weaknesses or failings and pin the blame for the difficulty of everyday life squarely on the forces of domination that wish to box us in and suck us dry for their own benefit. The vices below are not all perfect antonyms of the virtues detailed in the previous section, but concepts that appear to me to be in direct opposition to how a Society of Virtue—a community built for the benefit of all—would foster and maintain solidarity:

- exploitation – Exploitation is the opposite of mutual aid. The parasitic interpersonal and ecological relations championed by capitalist society's overlords are antithetical to true freedom, and have no place in a Society of Virtue. Of course we must make use of some resources, but do so in a sustainable way with the least possible disturbance of our ecology. Being a mirror of mutual aid, exploitation seems to me to be the primary vice that must be eliminated from social relations for virtue to be victorious; most of the following vices are variants of exploitation, or will quickly become exploitative if they don't begin that way.

- prejudice – The demonization and oppression of a person or people based solely on an unreasoned perception of their inherent identity including but not limited to their physical appearance, origin, gender, sexuality, and/or race can only ever be a tool to dissolve the bonds of solidarity and promote exploitation. That prejudice has—and therefore always can be—graduated from personal and cultural to fully systemic is all the more justification to combat its ability to divide and conquer us. The application of reason and wisdom, the celebration of equality and uniqueness, and steadfast justice are the most capable tools to erode prejudice and encourage people to see every person as an individual, where they can be accepted or rejected as such. As I see it, the rejection of 'prejudice against' does not apply in the same way to domineering ideological groups or choices in that wisdom and reason both inform us of their acute threat to free association and are available for anyone to understand the immanent tyranny and prejudice of hateful ideologies and organizations and the destruction they mean to cause, so their decision to align themselves with said ideologies and organizations is a conscious one. An example of this in modern American society is the slogan "blue lives matter", a twisted riff on "Black lives matter" meant to equate one group's chosen identity with the other's inherent identity. Police officer is a selected profession; there are no "blue lives", excepting of course people with cyanosis (blue skin from lack of oxygenation), but that's obviously not what is meant.

- corruption – Where integrity demonstrates courage when facing adversity and temptation to abuse or exploit, corruption succumbs. Corruption prohibits proper cooperation, solidarity, and openness to reason and wisdom, hollowing one out to become a vessel for further vice.

- vanity – Vanity is not the expression of personal beauty or achievement—uniqueness is a virtue—but the idolization of it that motivates someone to hold themselves as inherently above others. This rejection of equality and solidarity can cause one to consider exploitative measures to further elevate themselves, cutting against cooperation and claiming an entitlement to more than a mutual aid society can or should sustain.

- usury – The practice of charging exorbitant interest—any interest at all, really—on the use of resources that were otherwise sitting idle is pure exploitation. This particular vice seems to me to be more applicable to the transition away from capitalist society towards a Society of Virtue than something that would be an ongoing concern in an established mutual aid society, but as the revolution is ongoing and always, usury should be discouraged in all cases, now and forever.

- tyranny – The embrace of power to abuse and exploit others is an affront to human dignity and solidarity, and therefore cannot be tolerated. Direct action against those who seek to impose their tyranny is not tyranny itself, but self-defense.

- cruelty – Intentionally causing pain beyond acting in self-defense demonstrates callousness and tyranny. A cruel person cannot be trusted to be in solidarity with their peers or participate in mutual aid. Public safety and justice are dependent on an absence of cruelty.

- avarice – Hoarding resources is a crime against the people, and should be considered so in any decent society. Seeing as how capitalist society is not decent but despotic, it makes sense that an insatiable desire for wealth is not only rewarded, but idolized. Avarice undermines cooperation and solidarity, and should not be tolerated.

- ignorance – The ignorance I speak of here is the intentional ignorance of dismissing or refusing to recognize information because it doesn't fit one's worldview or wounds their vanity or challenges their tyranny or any number of things. Educating oneself in matters necessary for the best possible execution of a project or mission is the reasonable and wise thing to do. There's also the practice of encouraging and perpetuating ignorance—at the very least not offering proper, unbiased education on things like history and basic finance that put people at an intentional economic and political disadvantage—by the State that should be

eliminated in favor of the open exchange and distribution of accumulated wisdom for the benefit of all.

- callousness – Coldness and a lack of caring for others or even oneself cuts against mutual aid, the very heart of a Society of Virtue. No one can or should be compelled to care about others, but refusing to do so excludes oneself from the community, and necessarily prevents proper participation in programs that guarantee the best possible personal and societal security and opportunity for individual liberty.

As the supremacy of vice would spell doom for a Society of Virtue, what must be done by virtuous people to protect themselves and their communities from those who have fully committed themselves against virtue? The answer is community defense, known to revolutionary France as 'terror'.

3. Terror

"If the mainspring of popular government in peacetime is virtue, amid revolution it is at the same time [both] virtue and terror: virtue, without which terror is fatal; terror, without which virtue is impotent. Terror is nothing but prompt, severe, inflexible justice; it is therefore an emanation of virtue."

— Maximilien Robespierre, "Report on the Principles of Political Morality", 17 Pluviôse Year II (5 February 1794)[1]

"There were two 'Reigns of Terror,' if we would but remember it and consider it; the one wrought murder in hot passion, the other in heartless cold blood; the one lasted mere months, the other had lasted a thousand years; the one inflicted death upon ten thousand persons, the other upon a hundred millions; but our shudders are all for the 'horrors' of the minor Terror, the momentary Terror, so to speak; whereas, what is the horror of swift death by the axe, compared with lifelong death from hunger, cold, insult, cruelty, and heart-break?

"What is swift death by lightning compared with death by slow fire at the stake? A city cemetery could contain the coffins filled by that brief Terror which we have all been so diligently taught to shiver at and mourn over; but all France could hardly contain the coffins filled by that older and real Terror—that unspeakably bitter and awful Terror which none of us has been taught to see in its vastness or pity as it deserves."

— Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*[2]

Terror was integral to the formation, consolidation, and protection of Robespierre's ideal Republic of Virtue, and therefore must be explained in this re-imagination of

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[1] Maximilien Robespierre, "Report upon the Principles of Political Morality Which Are to Form the Basis of the Administration of the Interior Concerns of the Republic": https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4887836/mod_folder/content/0/Robespierre_Report%20on%20the%20principles%20of%20political%20morality.pdf; translation from: Robespierre, Maximilien. "On the Principles of Political Morality That Should Guide the National Convention in the Domestic Administration of the Republic". *Robespierre: Virtue and Terror*, edited by Jean Ducange, translation by John Howe, Verso, 2017, pp. 108–125

[2] Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* quote: https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/989759-there-were-two-reigns-of-terror-if-we-would-but

it into a Society of Virtue. Beyond its mere incorporation and analysis in this work, self-defense against tyranny (as this type of terror was and is intended to be) by both individuals and the community at-large is vital in maintaining a free and voluntary society.

I'm not going to lie: 'terror' doesn't sound very good. I can feel readers recoiling at the thought of even tolerating 'terror', let alone endorsing the idea. But I believe that the mainstream understanding of 'terror' has been distorted by capitalist propaganda. The 'terror' of legitimate self-defense is not equivalent to terrorism[3]; the vast majority of people on Earth are ruled by terrorist governments, including citizens of the United States right now in 2023. For this millennial who grew up in the so-called United States, the word terrorism evokes images of white supremacist demonstrations and attacks, bombings in urban centers, police brutality, the prison-industrial complex, inhuman treatment of migrants at our contrived borders, price inflation whipped up by hoarders and profiteers, and mass shootings on a daily basis, as just a few examples, as well as a justification used by nation-states to inflict terror on peoples other than just their own. If there has ever been a 'Reign of Terror', it is surely ongoing, a policy of the State through both concerted action and assent and protection of known terrorist cells called police departments, corporations, and investment banks. Clearly, these are not what I refer to when I argue that 'terror' be a feature of a revolutionary movement. The problem with most statist manifestations of terror is that the wrong people are terrified; the 'terror' I propose the people exercise—as was the terror demanded by the people of revolutionary France—is synonymous with 'community defense'.

Through an anarchist lens, antifascism and community defense are core features of a society that fosters liberty, equity, and inclusion and prevents reactionary forces from dominating and subjugating the people. This has been the aim of Antifascist Action (originally Antifaschistische Aktion, now better known by the abbreviation 'antifa'), a political and social movement—not a distinct organization or group—predicated on the promotion and practice of mutual aid and a necessary defense against the violent displacement of mutual aid efforts perpetrated by both fascists and liberal states. A select few grabbing the reigns and harnessing society to violently align its elements in accordance with a specific racial, sexual, religious, and/or other systemic supremacy is fundamentally incompatible with the goal of freedom to express uniqueness and develop complexity. The high-level concept of terror as the protection of liberty through the eradication of authoritarian rule and action is fully in alignment with maintaining an open and compassionate environment in which people of any gender, sexuality, race, spirituality, and disability can thrive. A truly rich society is one in which people collaborate for the benefit of all, because when everyone has a place to live, enough food to eat, and time to discover and create reflections of their imaginations, we're all better off.

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[3] Wahnich, Sophie, et al. *In Defence of the Terror: Liberty or Death in the French Revolution.* Verso, 2012, pp. 102–103

The institutional terror implemented by the French National Convention in the 1790s was a response to the citizens of France demanding the government do something or face a popular terror carried out by the people directly. There was a legitimate and visceral fear of royalist elements conspiring to steal sovereignty back from the people—to whom it rightly belongs—and restore the monarchy; the people wanted protection from their elected officials and demonstrated that they were prepared to act on their own if they did not receive it. Nearly the whole of Europe was threatening to invade France and put Louis Capet (King Louis XVI) back on the throne in his role as absolute ruler. The Convention believed that they could and should attempt to control the terror as the people had already proven through popular insurrections that it was going to happen one way or another. The targets of this 'terror' were members of the nobility and their enablers, supporters of the recently deposed Ancien regime—a criminal enterprise that declared a king as the sovereign ruler of France and conferred special privileges upon the wealthy, exempting them from taxation and placing the financial burden on working people—as well as others who sought to undermine the success of the revolutionary project. One of the places where I believe the Convention went wrong was siphoning the power of community defense from its natural mainspring, the people themselves; the State choosing to carry out 'terror' with the express goal of preventing the people from commanding their own justice through direct action was patriarchy rearing its ugly head.

A recent example of the natural tendency people have toward community defense and the State's desire to maintain their monopoly on that defense is the mass murder that took place at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas in 2022. A shooter—who will not be named here as to not dignify in the slightest his horrific acts as human—killed 19 students and two teachers while police waited outside of the classroom for over an hour, deciding instead to establish a perimeter around the school to keep community defenders out. Desperate parents pleaded with officers to let them inside to stop this monster and save their children, but instead of allowing the community to protect itself and end the killing, police tackled and tasered terrified parents. Law enforcement officials were exposed as cowards who would rather let children be hunted than give up an ounce of their authority over the situation. This intentional inaction by police demonstrates one of many reasons that necessitate their abolition; if the police had not been in the way, many of those children and teachers would likely be alive today.

Intimidating, doxxing, and directly confronting and fighting fascists are tactics that have been employed to great effect by a network called Anti-Racist Action (ARA) that formed in the late 1980s in response to a growing and violent neo-Nazi presence in the hardcore punk music scene[4]. ARA spread from its initial organization in Minneapolis, Minnesota, reaching Canada and the western United States including

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[4] Flores, Celina, Mic Crenshaw, and Erin Yanke, hosts. *It Did Happen Here*, It Did Happen Here production team, 13 November 2020, https://www.itdidhappenherepodcast.com/

Portland, Oregon—the focus of a podcast called *It Did Happen Here* and an accompanying book, *It Did Happen Here: An Anti-Fascist People's History*. Interest in formal resistance to white supremacist violence in Portland grew rapidly following the murder of Ethiopian student Mulugeta Seraw in 1988 by three members of a group called East Side White Pride, which was affiliated with a larger neo-Nazi organization, White Aryan Resistance (WAR). Portland ARA members teamed up with the Coalition for Human Dignity (CHD) to gather intelligence and organize community defense against the proliferating intolerance as well as publish information on the activities of white supremacist groups and individual actors that was circulated among antifascist networks across the United States. Though they were challenged by police, anti-racist activists successfully exposed white nationalists and severely weakened their terror campaign by making them afraid to espouse their abhorrent beliefs for fear of personal and professional consequences. Community defense works.

Punching up and punching down are very different. If we condemn all punching as equally unacceptable, we will find ourselves being punched by fascists without recourse. I am in no way advocating for the use of violence and intimidation against the innocent and virtuous to keep them in line as is the policy of the current statist capitalist regime, or against the contrite misguided who have succumbed to the capitalist system, rightly believing that acquiring comfort requires participation in—and some amount of intentional ignorance to—the workings and exploitation that capitalism demands. Indeed, the purpose of popular terror (aka community defense) is to petrify and, when necessary, eliminate the truly tyrannical elements of society that are or seek to be above us in the hierarchy before they destroy us all.

I am, however, advocating for community defense against the defiantly guilty, the enemies of the people, the usurpers of self-determination, the fascist fanatics and capitalist criminals who mean to exploit and enslave the entire planet for their own vanity, supremacy, and indulgence. These traitors to humanity have a fundamental aversion to the virtues of mutual aid and solidarity. They're dominators. They're tyrants. And their actions have proven them to be incompatible with a society founded on the well-being of all. They should be abjectly terrified to avow their belief that a select few should own everything and be able to destroy the habitability of our planet for profit. They should fear the righteous vengeance of virtuous people committed to protecting themselves, their communities, and the ecosystems that belong to all of us and none of us. They should expect accountability for their actions—something bourgeois capitalist society has taught them is reserved for others and not them—and expropriation of their stolen resources. And when that fear is not enough to curtail their lust for power, they deserve prompt, severe, inflexible justice, for that is the only remedy to the illness they bring upon society. What that justice looks like is and will be determined by the people engaging in defense of their communities.

The tension in differentiating between the contrite misguided and the defiantly guilty is captured brilliantly by French historian and author Sophie Wahnich in her book *In Defence of the Terror: Liberty or Death in the French Revolution*, where

Wahnich describes a "plurality of politics of terror"[5] in which Robespierre and his long-time friend, journalist and National Convention deputy Camille Desmoulins disagreed on the political sensibilities of the terror:

> "What Camille Desmoulins proposed was not to renounce terror towards the Girondins [*note: the Girondins were a faction within the National Convention who were removed by a popular insurrection in June 1793 with assent from the Mountain*] ('I have never spoken for a clemency of moderation, clemency for the leaders'), but rather to conceive of it differently. For him, terror was indeed a response to the risk of an overflow of punitive emotions, and in this respect it was actually conceived as a procedure of pacification towards the intolerable. But this procedure can go into reverse if the boundary between bad men and men of goodwill – those with a just reputation for having a heart – is impossible to draw. What clemency proposes is a particular line for this boundary, a boundary that claims to properly restore civil trust. By admitting that man is always a fallible and divided being ('Since when is man infallible and exempt from error?'), Desmoulins claimed that political action should not aim to distinguish between good and bad but rather between those who had gone astray and those who were irredeemable. The *Comité de clémence* [*note: Committee of Clemency, which was never established*] should therefore recognize the irredeemable, and help those who vacillated not to collapse into counter-revolution. This impossible boundary had to be worked on within each individual. Whereas terror sought to produce a system of external constrains, Desmoulins proposed a policy aiming to lead the subject to freedom. His conception of truth was radically opposed to that of Robespierre. If both agreed in basing truth on the *forum interior*, for Robespierre that truth was either whole or nil: any fault destroyed the subject totally. For Desmoulins, on the contrary, truth remained relative or polemical. Referring to Galileo and his '*eppur si muove*', he argued that truth and error were not absolutes but figures of convention...Robespierre rather hoped for a radical change in political sensibility on the part of his contemporaries. This did not come about, and republicans could only grow melancholy in tracking down their ever more numerous enemies."[6]

As I understand and mostly agree with Desmoulins' sentiment—I clearly subscribe to the framing of virtue and vice as inherently good and bad respectively as I see the dichotomy as helpful in encouraging a culture that promotes cooperation over

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[5] Wahnich, Sophie, et al. *In Defence of the Terror: Liberty or Death in the French Revolution.* Verso, 2012, pp. 54–55

[6] Wahnich, Sophie, et al. *In Defence of the Terror: Liberty or Death in the French Revolution.* Verso, 2012, pp. 54–55

domination—I believe that community defense is necessarily based on the need to protect the people specifically from those who have an insatiable hunger for domination and their enablers as demonstrated by their ideas and actions and not become a hysterical free-for-all that undermines the entire basis of a Society of Virtue. Recognizing and internalizing the difference through reason, collaboration, and wisdom will be key in the propagation and security of these communities.

4. Security

> "*[T]he people, that multitude of men whose cause I am defending, have rights that come from the same origin as your own. Who gave you the power to take them away?*
>
> "*General practicality, you say! But is there nothing practical in what is just and honest? And does not that eternal maxim apply above all to social organization? And if the purpose of society is the happiness of all, the conservation of the rights of man, what should we think of those who want to base it on the power of a few individuals and the degradation and hopelessness of the rest of the human race!*"
>
> — Maximilien Robespierre, "On the Silver Mark", April 1791[1]
>
> "*But the evil of pinning faith to indirect action is far greater than any such minor results. The main evil is that it destroys initiative, quenches the individual rebellious spirit, teaches people to rely on someone else to do for them what they should do for themselves...*"
>
> — Voltairine de Cleyre, "Direct Action"[2]

Individual freedom is maximized through collective security. The Society of Virtue is a society of individuals who recognize that mutual aid yields the greatest security. Security is the goal of community defense. As Robespierre claimed, terror (community defense) is fatal without virtue[3]. Mutual aid, solidarity, and justice are all virtues that bolster and secure a free people. But—again to Robespierre—virtue is impotent without terror[4]; people may be naturally predisposed to virtue, but they must make the conscious choice to defend those virtues or succumb to the creeping specter of vice.

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[1] Robespierre, Maximilien. "On the Silver Mark". *Robespierre: Virtue and Terror*, edited by Jean Ducange, translation by John Howe, Verso, 2017, p. 8

[2] Voltairine de Cleyre, "Direct Action": https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/voltairine-de-cleyre-direct-action

[3] Maximilien Robespierre, "Report upon the Principles of Political Morality Which Are to Form the Basis of the Administration of the Interior Concerns of the Republic": https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4887836/mod_folder/content/0/Robespierre_Report%20on%20the%20principles%20of%20political%20morality.pdf; translation from: Robespierre, Maximilien. "On the Principles of Political Morality That Should Guide the National Convention in the Domestic Administration of the Republic". *Robespierre: Virtue and Terror*, edited by Jean Ducange, translation by John Howe, Verso, 2017, pp. 108–125

[4] Maximilien Robespierre, "Report upon the Principles of Political Morality Which Are to Form the Basis of the Administration of the Interior Concerns of the Re-

A point of clarification: 'crime' in the context of "Report on the Principles of Political Morality" is referring to monarchical and aristocratic rule and the vices that enabled and emboldened it, something I also consider to be a crime against the people.

What is meant by 'security'? The security of a Society of Virtue is not the primacy of property and power over human life enforced by deputized gangs called police departments as it is in capitalist society, but assurance of the materials required to nurture a meaningful and peaceful existence. Quality food, housing, and healthcare and the tools and resources associated with the production and maintenance of these things must be available to all (e.g., simply procuring raw vegetables without having a knife, cutting board, stove, oven, plates, utensils, seasonings, etc. isn't enough). One cannot be truly secure if one must spend the majority of their waking hours toiling for the profit of another just to have to then purchase the resources necessary to not freeze or starve or languish from a preventable ailment while prices rise at the whims of the few in control. The working class in 2023 in the United States typically must choose one or two of those things while the others remain out of reach, only to be enjoyed by those more fortunate. This is completely unacceptable, and antithetical to a society based on mutual aid.

The police are a weapon of the State, and therefore must be abolished. Application of force by agents of the State does not yield public safety; on the contrary – their presence alone undermines it. There cannot be an "anarcho-police force" that "enforces law and order" in a Society of Virtue. This would require a hierarchy in which rules or agreed-upon conventions would apply differently to different people, thus undermining virtue. It is the responsibility of each and every person to look out for one another and protect themselves and their community. That's community defense. That's mutual aid. That's solidarity. That's courage and accountability.

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public": https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4887836/mod_folder/content/0/Robespierre_Report%20on%20the%20principles%20of%20political%20morality.pdf; translation from: Robespierre, Maximilien. "On the Principles of Political Morality That Should Guide the National Convention in the Domestic Administration of the Republic". *Robespierre: Virtue and Terror*, edited by Jean Ducange, translation by John Howe, Verso, 2017, pp. 108–125

5. Scale vs Propagation

"When human politics attaches a chain to the feet of a free man, making him a slave in contempt of nature and citizenship, eternal justice fastens the other end about the tyrant's neck..."

— Louis Antoine de Saint-Just, "Fragments on the Republican Institutions"[1]

"Change opinion, convince the public that government is not only unnecessary, but extremely harmful, and then the word anarchy, just because it means absence of government, will come to mean for everybody: natural order, unity of human needs and the interests of all, complete freedom within complete solidarity."

— Errico Malatesta, "Anarchy"[2]

The biggest problem with instituting a Republic of Virtue as opposed to fostering a Society of Virtue is that it assumes a hierarchical nature where the State is ultimately in charge of enforcing virtue among the people and their representatives. Though Robespierre believed that virtue would serve to "repress the [governmental] body itself,"[3] the incentive structure adopted over and over by republican governments has disproven this hope. A top-down strategy is completely unacceptable in a Society of Virtue, where people are instead encouraged to organize freely for the well-being of all. This is why we should seek to demonstrate the power of our ideals through both individual and community action in order to inspire others to reproduce this framework in their own lives and groups to which we have no direct connection; the scale and scope of the modern administration of many US cities is already much too large for every community member to have the chance to weigh in on important issues.

Scaling a single decision-making apparatus to require the input of 8 billion (or even 8 million) humans is untenable, unwieldy, and wholly undesirable, as localized oversight with confederated systems of solidarity seem to me to be the only way to preserve

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[1] Louis Antoine de Saint-Just, "Fragments on the Republican Institutions": https://www.academia.edu/21887125/Saint_Just_Fragments_on_the_Republican_Institutions_

[2] Errico Malatesta, "Anarchy": https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/errico-malatesta-anarchy

[3] Maximilien Robespierre, "Report upon the Principles of Political Morality Which Are to Form the Basis of the Administration of the Interior Concerns of the Republic": https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4887836/mod_folder/content/0/Robespierre_Report%20on%20the%20principles%20of%20political%20morality.pdf; translation from: Robespierre, Maximilien. "On the Principles of Political Morality That Should Guide the National Convention in the Domestic Administration of the Republic". *Robespierre: Virtue and Terror*, edited by Jean Ducange, translation by John Howe, Verso, 2017, pp. 108–125

autonomy and prevent a return to nation-states. New York City, for example—a city home to over 8 million residents in 2023 who are subject to the authoritarian rule of their mayor and an occupying army known as the New York City Police Department, which boasts a budget exceeding that of several US states—would likely better serve its people if the current centralized system of domination were abolished and administration subdivided even beyond its five boroughs, down to the neighborhood level. This is because the specific desires, interests, and concerns—and the understanding of how those concerns affect daily quality of life and the continuation or improvement of that quality of life—of the Bedford-Stuyvesant community will vary enough from those of residents of Harlem or Lower Manhattan that autonomous administration of each neighborhood coupled with coordination between neighborhoods would maintain a local focus bolstered by collective security. The key difference between this confederated model and the current system in place in New York City is that no authority would exist above each neighborhood, whereas the mayor and city council outrank each neighborhood today.

Our aim should be the propagation of our ideals so that mutual aid and collective security become the desire and program of all. A world populated by people who have cast off the yoke of the State and cooperate to prevent its return would be a beautiful world, but only possible if its inhabitants have direct say in their community's processes of production, organization, and resource management. Just as individuals organize together in mutual aid and collective security, so should communities. The Society of Virtue is the sum of all autonomous mutual aid-based communities in solidarity with one another.

Conclusion

> *"We want an order of things in which all base and cruel passions would be fettered, and all beneficent and generous passions awakened by the laws; in which ambition would be a desire to merit glory and serve the homeland; in which distinctions are born only of equality itself...in which the homeland would ensure the well-being of every individual, and every individual would share with pride the prosperity and glory of the homeland; in which all souls would grow larger through the continued communication of republican sentiments, and the need to deserve the esteem of a great people; in which the arts would be decorations of the liberty that ennobled them, commerce the source of public wealth and not just the monstrous opulence of a few houses."*

> — Maximilien Robespierre, "Report on the Principles of Political Morality", 17 Pluviôse Year II (5 February 1794)[1]

> *"...therefore the terms abolition of the State, Society without the State, etc., describe exactly the concept which anarchists seek to express, of the destruction of all political order based on authority, and the creation of a society of free and equal members based on a harmony of interests and the voluntary participation of everybody in carrying out social responsibilities."*

> — Errico Malatesta, "Anarchy"[2]

Robespierre's words above encapsulate both the promise and problems I see in the concept of a Republic of Virtue, and why I believe a Society of Virtue is a worthwhile endeavor in both theory and practice. Simply removing "by the laws" and replacing "republican sentiments" with 'anarchist sentiments' yields what appears to me to essentially be a social anarchist ideological statement. Mutual aid is inherent to virtue; capitalism is inextricable from vice. Therefore, a society of free people with liberty, equality, and solidarity in their hearts should embrace virtue and eradicate vice.

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[1] Maximilien Robespierre, "Report upon the Principles of Political Morality Which Are to Form the Basis of the Administration of the Interior Concerns of the Republic": https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4887836/mod_folder/content/0/Robespierre_Report%20on%20the%20principles%20of%20political%20morality.pdf; translation from: Robespierre, Maximilien. "On the Principles of Political Morality That Should Guide the National Convention in the Domestic Administration of the Republic". *Robespierre: Virtue and Terror*, edited by Jean Ducange, translation by John Howe, Verso, 2017, pp. 108–125

[2] Errico Malatesta, "Anarchy": https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/errico-malatesta-anarchy

One of Robespierre's biggest failings was that he couldn't separate himself enough from Rousseau, going so far as to spin up the Cult of the Supreme Being—a state religion predicated on everyone basically being directed to believe in "the existence of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul"[3]—to codify Rousseau to the greatest extent possible in French law. While I intimately understand the immense difficulty in overcoming the gravity of a special interest (autism for the win), the aim of elucidating the Society of Virtue in this work has been just that; encouraging people toward virtue, demonstrating it in one's actions, and organizing with those who want to build a world where liberty, mutual aid, and prosperity triumph over tyranny, exploitation, and coerced belief allows us to proverbially kill and move beyond our heroes while employing their wisdom for our benefit.

The idea most central to a society that has successfully rejected capitalism and statism is mutual aid. Without it, the fundamental shift in mindset needed to keep exploitation at bay will lack the instrument to do so. What is required for mutual aid to become and remain the program of the revolution is nothing short of an embrace of all of the aforementioned virtues: solidarity, as confederation requires a commitment to aiding each other for mutual benefit; justice, as corruption degrades the social bonds that empower reciprocity and collective security; accountability, as one should hold themselves responsible above the lure of vanity; equality, as claiming oneself above others undermines mutuality; integrity, as true mutual aid requires earnestness and honesty; uniqueness, as a greater number of novel contributions from the spirit to society itself feeds the fire of the 'freedom to be' that makes such contributions possible; courage, as we must face the unrelenting forces of capitalism which incentivize enclosure and exploitation; reason, as listening to and understanding others and their particularities allows for more intimate connection; wisdom, as knowing the power of mutual aid in maintaining and promoting the necessities of life and liberty for all reinforces the desire to see it thrive.

Just like the concept of revolution, we need not wait for perfect—or even favorable—conditions to start building a Society of Virtue. It is born within each of us as we decide that virtue must triumph over vice and act accordingly with the courage to challenge and prevent those who would dominate and subjugate us from doing so.

I'll leave you with one more passage from Robespierre's "Report on the Principles of Political Morality", the speech that inspired this undertaking:

> "But when, through prodigious efforts of courage and reason, a people breaks the fetters of despotism to make them the trophies of liberty; when, through the strength of its moral temperament, it returns, so to speak, from death's embrace to resume all the vigour of youth; when, by turns sensitive and proud, intrepid and docile, it can be stopped neither by the indestructible ramparts nor the numberless armies of the tyrants armed

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[3] Maximilien Robespierre, "Decree Establishing the Cult of the Supreme Being": https://alphahistory.com/frenchrevolution/decree-cult-supreme-being-1794/

against it, and stops of its own accord before the image of the law; then if such a people does not soar rapidly to the height of its destiny, it can only be through the fault of those who govern it.

Besides, one might say that in a sense, the people has no need of great virtue to love justice and equality; it is enough that it love itself."[4]

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[4] Maximilien Robespierre, "Report upon the Principles of Political Morality Which Are to Form the Basis of the Administration of the Interior Concerns of the Republic": https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4887836/mod_folder/content/0/Robespierre_Report%20on%20the%20principles%20of%20political%20morality.pdf; translation from: Robespierre, Maximilien. "On the Principles of Political Morality That Should Guide the National Convention in the Domestic Administration of the Republic". *Robespierre: Virtue and Terror*, edited by Jean Ducange, translation by John Howe, Verso, 2017, pp. 108–125

Recommended Reading

Robespierre: Virtue and Terror: https://www.versobooks.com/products/1994-virtue-and-terror

What Is Communist Anarchism? by Alexander Berkman: https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/alexander-berkman-what-is-communist-anarchism

Means and Ends: The Revolutionary Practice of Anarchism in Europe and the United States by Zoe Baker, PhD: https://www.akpress.org/means-and-ends.html

In Defence of the Terror: Liberty or Death in the French Revolution by Sophie Wahnich: https://www.versobooks.com/products/2254-in-defence-of-the-terror

Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution by Pyotr Kropotkin: https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/petr-kropotkin-mutual-aid-a-factor-of-evolution

The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity by David Graeber and David Wengrow: https://firestorm.coop/products/18524-the-dawn-of-everything.html

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Tom Maxwell
Thoughts on the 'Society of Virtue'
an Anarchist Reclamation of the 'Republic of Virtue'
20 August 2023

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