



The Terror of Natural Right: Republicanism, the Cult of Nature, and the French Revolution

Dan Edelstein

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Natural right—the idea that there is a collection of laws and rights based not on custom or belief but that are “natural” in origin—is typically associated with liberal politics and freedom. In *The Terror of Natural Right*, Dan Edelstein argues that the revolutionaries used the natural right concept of the “enemy of the human race”—an individual who has transgressed the laws of nature and must be executed without judicial formalities—to authorize three-quarters of the deaths during the Terror. Edelstein further contends that the Jacobins shared a political philosophy that he calls “natural republicanism,” which assumed that the natural state of society was a republic and that natural right provided its only acceptable laws. Ultimately, he proves that what we call the Terror was in fact only one facet of the republican theory that prevailed from Louis’s trial until the fall of Robespierre.

A highly original work of historical analysis, political theory, literary criticism, and intellectual history, *The Terror of Natural Right* challenges prevailing assumptions of the Terror to offer a new perspective on the Revolutionary period.

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