Was the justification of the death penalty during the french revolution was right or wrong? Through the eye’s of Maximilien Robespierre, at first he thought that the death penalty was a barbaric and monstrous action. He says, “The horror of crime is diminished when it is punished by another crime.” Later after the overthrowing of the French government Robespierre goes back on his opinion of the death penalty. In his article “Justification of the Use of Terror” Robespierre states that “..terror is the principle of despotic government.” then confirms that “The government of the revolution Is liberty’s despotism against tyranny.” Showing that the government Robespierre had diligently created has been tainted by his own purity of belief is now leaning towards the death penalty to show absolute power.

Maximilien Robespierre was a leader of the Committee of Public Safety during the French revolution. At first he was very against the death penalty after becoming the leader of the committee. He was said to be a “fairly straightforward liberal thinking – reputedly he slept with a copy of Rousseau’s Social Contract at his side.” But not long after joining the Committee, Robespierre became “frustrated with the progress of the revolution.” and soon tried to kill himself after disrespecting the council. He firmly believed that the death penalty was not the “model of justice and reason.” Robespierre thought it was a “cruel punishment.” So in the beginning, his view on the death penalty was one of “human sensibility.”

Robespierre’s role in the revolution was one of a tyrant. He played roles in stabilizing the French economy, and the creation of the French army. Said French army fought against counter-revolutionary uprisings. Uprisings and the speed at which the revolution was going had made Robespierre impatient and unhappy. This changed Robespierre’s view on the death penalty and he began his “reign of terror.” He begins to try to justify the use of terror by saying how important government power is. He says “the characteristic of popular government is confidence in the people and severity towards itself.” This is just showing that if they were to incite terror into the people using the death penalty that people would be confident with their governments power. Especially if the people are followers of the revolution, the death penalty is a showing of absolute power of the people.

“..virtue which is nothing other than the love of country and its laws.” When Robespierre says this I find it completely unjust. Especially because the “country” and “laws” that you’re supposed to love, Robespierre overturns and overthrows the countries government and revolutionizes. It is also unjust because he later turned to using terror to control and assert power over people and make them acquire the feeling of virtue.

In summary, Robespierre was clearly a power hungry hypocrite. Robespierre used a humble modest and human sensible persona to assume power within the Committee of Public Safety. Which he later became an enraged power hungry tyrant that he once wanted to overthrow. Him switching opinions on the death penalty to incite fear and dominance was his will to show absolute power and take control.