



## The Politics of Friendship

*Jacques Derrida , George Collins (Translator)*

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**Influential exploration of the idea of friendship and its political consequences.**

*“O, my friends, there is no friend.”* The most influential of contemporary philosophers explores the idea of friendship and its political consequences, past and future.

Until relatively recently, Jacques Derrida was seen by many as nothing more than the high priest of Deconstruction, by turns stimulating and fascinating, yet always somewhat disengaged from the central political questions of our time. Or so it seemed. Derrida's “political turn,” marked especially by the appearance of *Specters of Marx*, has surprised some and delighted others. In *The Politics of Friendship* Derrida renews and enriches this orientation through an examination of the political history of the idea of friendship pursued down the ages.

Derrida's thoughts are haunted throughout the book by the strange and provocative address attributed to Aristotle, “my friends, there is no friend” and its inversions by later philosophers such as Montaigne, Kant, Nietzsche, Schmitt and Blanchot. The exploration allows Derrida to recall and restage the ways in which all the oppositional couples of Western philosophy and political thought—friendship and enmity, private and public life — have become madly and dangerously unstable. At the same time he dissects genealogy itself, the familiar and male-centered notion of fraternity and the virile virtue whose authority has gone unquestioned in our culture of friendship and our models of democracy

The future of the political, for Derrida, becomes the future of friends, the invention of a radically new friendship, of a deeper and more inclusive democracy. This remarkable book, his most profoundly important for many years, offers a challenging and inspiring vision of that future.

## The Politics of Friendship Details

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### Johnna Gurgel says

- See "Animal That Therefore I Am" review

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### Peter Harrison says

I know I'm supposed to find Derrida interesting and challenging and stimulating... etc.. Maybe I'm just not intelligent enough to follow his line of argument, certainly my background is not in philosophy. There is surely however an unnecessary level of obfuscation in the language Derrida uses in this book. Phrases such as:

"possibilisation of the impossible possible"

and

"the long time of a time that does not belong to time"

defy any meaning that I can uncover. This is not the language of someone trying to get complex philosophical points across to the reader, it is the language of someone showing off.

Buried underneath all this are some interesting points. The analysis of the need for an enemy in political discourse chimes well with the experience of the west since the fall of Communism. The interaction between this need for an enemy and the nature of modern warfare, and its impact on democratic politics is insightful. There are interesting points about the nature of friendship built on three separate bases: virtue, utility, and pleasure.

It's just a shame that it is so hard to get to these points you have to wade through such a cascade of meaningless literary contortions.

While there is mention of how friendship and 'fraternity' influences the democratic polity this is essentially a bourgeois vision. The focus is on how the connections between individuals are created and maintained, with some discussion of what might be thought of as 'identity' - race, gender, etc.. What is entirely missing is any sense of solidarity, of a group finding common cause, of class.

There is no doubt that this is complex work of philosophy with insights to offer. I just can't help thinking that the same points could have been made much easier to understand and in about half the space. And it doesn't have an index either, which seems odd for a non-fiction book looking to be taken seriously.

<https://marxadventure.wordpress.com/2...>

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### Bradley says

Deconstruction is the desire for thought. Derrida says here - there is no deconstruction without democracy and there is no democracy without deconstruction. For all of his attempts to avoid defining, labelling and reducing deconstruction, this book is actually quite readable and in several places it is very clear as well.

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### **Egor Sofronov says**

A study of piercing eloquence. Kant's black swan--as a figure of repudiation of essential homophilia of friendship--was especially amusing.

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### **Michel says**

An amazing read, made even more vivid in the current Mediterranean context.

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### **Alex Obrigewitsch says**

My introduction to Derrida (I know I'm late)(God help me...).

Began my love-affair with a ghost; making me accutely aware of all the ghosts haunting my life.

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### **Cain S. says**

Derrida's *The Politics of Friendship* (1994) is as fine an act of deconstructive tightrope traipse as any of his other works; combing through quotations from known philosophers, through tendentious citations severally removed from the original locutions, in unknown light, and situating in them the inscrutable intentionality embedded in language [*langue*] as such. As ever, his reading of almost trite, or Canonical, texts bringing about a moment of alterity native to them, and so surprisingly impugning the judgment of their conventional senses, is entertaining, vigorous, prolix and fecund. And, after all these qualifications one must get to the brass tacks, irreducible takeaways tacked onto all iterations hung on his every word: what of the irreducibility that cannot be recovered and yet latches onto what does get said, even beyond the speaker? In so many words, why do people say what must by nature betray them? It is perhaps necessary...

It is easy to sympathise with the death of coherence via meaning as such [a handy philosopheme], and with the entire post-modernist camp which here lights bonfires to undecidables that outlast their urgency, but being tied as we are to finite contexts that both define us and are defined in tangential, even aporetic, ways the motivation for tarrying with imponderables— or, as is the wont of Derrida, the constitutive imponderables which circumscribe the meaning of speech— must remain so long as it is tarrying with ineluctability an impossibility of determination, theory as everlasting hesitation. The impasse of all Derridology [po-faced post-modernist malingering, of which Derrida is less guilty than Derrideans], in the ethical sense of such a nonce word, is that seeking to eliminate the temerations and abuses that speech is liable to is no excuse for a longwinded avoidance of the ineliminable community of meaning which persists despite its impossibility, despite its deconstruction, as the arché-stencil from which traces must incessantly derive themselves. One may say, such spectator position theory theorises itself always-already and is either beast or sovereign, but not human.

The denial of permanence of meaning denies also that such permanence be sought out, infinity paradoxically must end— after what infinite fashion may such a token be sought [such that it is never found]? In summary, even as Derrida says, “infinite différence is finite”, and may one be loathe to rejoinder, sufficiently: finitude is the stuff of the infinite, and insofar as speech, both apt and abortive, is finite, finitude must be privileged? This deflationary movement reduces the deliberation of imponderables to mere preponderances that eliminate finite responsibility, which remains necessary for action; though it risks being misguided action, one must concede, it exceeds theory infinitely in differing from theories’ impasses. Here, one must become, again, a naïve Kantian if only to understand Derrida, Others and their communities to come, to affirm in their cacophonous and wily witnesses decidables that impinge on many a finite existence, finite well being and finite ethics. Infinite responsibility is the ruse of those who must deny finite justice, it is gentrified hubris patient with its ear to the ground, stuck there.

#### Work Cited

Derrida, Jacques. Trans. Collins, George (2005). *The Politics of Friendship*. London, UK: Verso.

<http://skepoet.wordpress.com/2013/01/...>

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#### **Erin says**

"There is little room for laughter in Heidegger."

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#### **Lauralea says**

An overview and of the classic statement thought to have been coined by Aristotle- "my friend, there is no friend." Derrida, seeming to carry on thought processes laid out by Jean Paul Sartre, traces the maxim back to other philosophers (such as Nietzsche) who have restated this in their own philosophy or argued against it. The bulk of this book argues that relationships are not only philosophically based but are increasingly political, and vice versa. In short, an at times intense but foundational read in understanding the Derrida's influence as "father" of deconstructionism, and recommend it for anyone interested in the crossroads of literary criticism and postmodern philosophy.

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#### **Katarina Ristich says**

The highest sense of humanity: an anticipation of afterlife community among the writers / poets / philosophers in earthly present & future time.

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#### **Saettare says**

The paradoxical gift of Derrida's obscurantist prose just keeps giving.

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### **Katrinka says**

Not my favorite of Derrida's, but interesting, as ever.

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### **William Durden says**

This is one of Derrida's more challenging works, I've found, and although I have technically "read" it, I have yet to follow that much of what is happening. It's one I plan to return to sometime.

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### **Teo says**

Strong two stars - meaning 'it was OK'. I don't really know what I expected. Perhaps I'm not lettered enough to understand all the references and fully appreciate them. However, I think the description here on Goodreads is overstating a bit (as usual), and this work doesn't really provide any 'challenging visions'. Although the analysis of the situation of historical political discourse - this part is, indeed, outlined, I don't think such a flash presentation-like book can do the job, and it was a less than satisfying read for me, unlike other philosophical works I've read so far. Perhaps, of course, some kind of satisfaction isn't really the point, but for me personally, when reading a new book on a topic I had not yet considered much, it is. Perhaps I'm not that much interested in this particular 'denomination' of thought. But OK.

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### **Sachin says**

Intriguing and provocative. as always.

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### **Toi Drayton-seymore says**

I read this book and I loved it. It will be a book that I will read each year. This book is a must read for the rebellious intellectual. To be different because you are. This book is a rite of passage, after you have read it. You will be open to so much more, French authors like Bataille, Foucault, Barthes or Bourdieu will entice you. Derrida quotes the canon of other writer in their original languages, to read this it does require knowledge of the language or of those quotes works. I have learned a lot from this book.

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