



## **Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida**

*Giovanna Borradori, Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Derrida*

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# Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida

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The idea for *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* was born hours after the attacks on 9/11 and was realized just weeks later when Giovanna Borradori sat down with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida in New York City, in separate interviews, to evaluate the significance of the most destructive terrorist act ever perpetrated. This book marks an unprecedented encounter between two of the most influential thinkers of our age as here, for the first time, Habermas and Derrida overcome their mutual antagonism and agree to appear side by side. As the two philosophers disassemble and reassemble what we think we know about terrorism, they break from the familiar social and political rhetoric increasingly polarized between good and evil. In this process, we watch two of the greatest intellects of the century at work.

**Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida Details**

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## **Phillip says**

On the most superficial levels, what happened on 911 is clear, so there is reaction, retribution, revenge. On deeper levels many more difficult questions exist: what is it like to live in such a world today? What have I taken as certainties about my existence, that now has changed? The external world, the Real, has touched me, and I am no longer immune from it. These philosophers sit down and start a discussion about all this starting at the beginning. Are we creatures who have lost our the instinctual connection to the Real, to our animality, and now have extra-natural expectations? Well, bombs, falling planes, and crashing buildings have a way of disturbing that unique human perspective. There could not be two better thinkers to observe in conversation over these issues.

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## **Meiver says**

This book is worth reading because of how incredibly insightful Habermas and Derrida's comments on 9/11 were, especially when interviewed only a few weeks after the events.

Borradori however was not as great. Her questions were leading and her viewpoint eurocentric; it was interesting that after reading the interviews, I found myself disagreeing with her interpretations of the philosopher's responses; I found her work of linking the philosopher's prior theories with these responses unnecessary and repetitive.

..so I'd only get this book to read the interviews - even if the questions are leading, the responders were brilliant to call her out on the language of her questions, and still managed to say something meaningful and important that helps one develop a broader perspective on the issues posed by global terrorism.

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## **Michael says**

Two great interviews with two of the smartest people alive. One thing I really liked about this book was how well Giovanna Borradori was able to put Derrida's and Habermas's thoughts from her interviews with them into the context of their larger bodies of work. The interviews were not as heady and difficult as the two philosophers' other writings, and Borradori's accounts of their overall theories are really accessible.

This book helped me think about the events of 9/11 a great deal, though perhaps Zizek's "Welcome to the Desert of the Real" was a more entertaining and ethically-engaging book.

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## **Salma says**

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### **???? ?????? Ahmad Abazed says**

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### **Zahreen says**

I read this book for European Political Thought, and it was the most insightful book I have read all semester (and I have taken some heavy duty classes). I have never read Habermas or Derrida, and the book is an excellent introduction to them and the practical application the two great thinkers have in our present world scene. I have been confused about a lot of things post-9/11, as a Muslim and as an American, and while this book did not clarify everything for me, it has certainly given me a framework with which to approach world and American politics and the news that I don't think I will ever leave behind.

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### **Jonfaith says**

**"To mark a date in history" presupposes, in any case, that "something" comes or happens for the first and last time. -- Jacques Derrida**

There were measures of apprehension as I approached this book. Thankfully they proved unfounded. This text is comprised of two interviews and three essays by Giovanna Borradori: an introduction followed by an response to each interview with a philosopher.

I was struck by Habermas dwelling on the nature of the Event, as it were, how he pondered the difference between his own experience viewing such (along with the rest of the world) on television and those who viewed such from the streets and rooftops around the crash site.

Derrida disagrees with the nature of it being an Event, singular and epoch evocative. I suppose the latter point is what I truly appreciated here. Richard Rorty devoted a number of essays (which I'm presently reading) attempting to establish that Derrida should be approached primarily as a comic writer. I'll avoid that

issue for the present and assert that the tone here is appropriately somber. My god, is it ever stimulating! The concepts of Tolerance and Hospitality are masticated slowly. With further deliberation Derrida delves into Kant and muses paradoxical.

I should read more Habermas. I've known that for years. Much like Sanjit Ray, this will need to wait for a better time.

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### **melanie says**

(These five stars are for Derrida, not Habermas)

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### **June says**

Read it for Derrida...

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### **Lauren says**

Overall, it was an interesting read. Coming from a novice's standpoint, I found the explanatory chapters after the actual dialogues more useful than the dialogues themselves. Of the two, I found Habermas' section the more interesting one, as it suggested ways that the philosophy could be translated into an actual policy framework. Derrida, on the other hand, had a very annoying habit of going off on tangents about things that he acknowledged himself were completely impractical. Which is a shame because his explanatory chapter was rather interesting. Over all, less winding around the topic and more ideas on practice would make this better, but compared to most philosophy books I've read, it's actually probably one of the more useful out there.

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### **Derek Brown says**

Despite his efforts, Habermas cannot make this book boring.

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### **Kate says**

What I learned from this book?

Auto-immune response, for one. Derrida does a great job of re-framing our understanding of terrorism and the war on terror.

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### **Brendan Holly says**

Rating for Derrida only...

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### **Eric Steere says**

Particularly drawn to Derrida's argument in the 90s that terrorism is a kind of "autoimmune disorder" a condition when the immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys healthy body tissue --- this biological metaphor focuses on the defense mechanisms of the organism itself, rather than a foreign invasion by Alien microbes. Turning this analogy to global processes, it would seem that counter discourses are intrinsic in the dominant discourse itself, w/ globalisation producing a radical heteronomy of internal fissures. The War on Terror is kind of a pathos related to individual self-harm.

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