



# The Birth of Politics: Eight Greek and Roman Political Ideas and Why They Matter

*Melissa Lane*

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In *The Birth of Politics*, Melissa Lane introduces the reader to the foundations of Western political thought, from the Greeks, who invented democracy, to the Romans, who created a republic and then transformed it into an empire. Tracing the origins of our political concepts from Socrates to Plutarch to Cicero, Lane reminds us that the birth of politics was a story as much of individuals as ideas. Scouring the speeches of lawyers alongside the speculations of philosophers, and the reflections of ex-slaves next to the popular comedies and tragedies of the Greek and Roman stages, this book brings ancient ideas to life in unexpected ways.

Lane shows how the Greeks and Romans defined politics with distinctive concepts, vocabulary, and practices--all of which continue to influence politics and political aspirations around the world today. She focuses on eight political ideas from the Greco-Roman world that are especially influential today: justice, virtue, constitution, democracy, citizenship, cosmopolitanism, republic, and sovereignty. Lane also describes how the ancient formulations of these ideas often challenge widely held modern assumptions--for example, that it is possible to have political equality despite great economic inequality, or that political regimes can be indifferent to the moral character of their citizens.

A stimulating introduction to the origins of our political ideas and ideals, *The Birth of Politics* demonstrates how much we still have to learn from the political genius of the Greeks and Romans.

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