

A Democracy of Distinction: Aristotle and the Work of Politics

By Jill Frank

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Offering an ancient education for our times, Jill Frank's *A Democracy of Distinction* interprets Aristotle's writings in a way that reimagines the foundations, aims, and practices of politics, ancient and modern. Concerned especially with the work of making a democracy of distinction, Frank shows that such a democracy requires freedom and equality achieved through the exercise of virtue.

Moving back and forth between Aristotle's writings and contemporary legal and political theory, Frank breathes new life into our conceptions of property, justice, and law by viewing them not only as institutions but as dynamic activities as well. Frank's innovative approach to Aristotle stresses his appreciation of the tensions and complexities of politics so that we might rethink and reorganize our own political ideas and practices. *A Democracy of Distinction* will be of enormous value to classicists, political scientists, and anyone interested in revitalizing democratic theory and practice.

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Editorial Review

Review
"Jill Frank has written a very important book arguing that Aristotle"s framework for social inquiry can enhance our understanding and appreciation of democratic institutions and practices. She develops an innovative, sophisticated, and persuasive interpretation of how Aristotle"s understanding of nature reveals an emphasis on the centrality of human and civic agency. Frank combines a keen interpretive eye that respects the intricacies of Aristotle"s texts with a sharp analytic sense that appreciates the resources of social theory. The result is a remarkably clear and extraordinarily valuable contribution to a variety of discussions in political theory and beyond."--Gerald Mara, Georgetown University (Gerald Mara)

"Jill Frank"s Aristotle is not the natural law moralist or the dry, positivist scientist you might remember from school. More Nietzschean than Straussian, Frank"s Aristotle is alive with insight, paradox, and, yes, sometimes even wit. Frank rethinks all of democracy"s basic institutions-membership, property, justice, the rule of law, and constitutionalism--and forces our habits of linear thinking to yield to dizzying circularities that are incredibly productive. This remarkable achievement is a must read not just for classicists but also for anyone interested in contemporary political theory."--Bonnie Honig, Northwestern University (Bonnie Honig)

"One of the best studies of Aristotle to appear in a long time, wide ranging yet still clearly focused-a truly distinctive and consistently thought-provoking approach to his political philosophy. Frank develops a variety of promising new ways of approaching the most persistent problems of modern democratic politics."--Stephen Salkever, Bryn Mawr College (Stephen Salkever)

"I have not read a better account of the pluralism in Aristotle"s Politics than the account I find in Jill Frank"s book. I have not read a more convincing explication of Aristotle"s view that property should be held in private hands for common use, nor a deeper reconciliation of the themes of legality and virtue in The Politics. This is a subtle, graceful, and impressive piece of work."--Jeremy Waldron, Columbia University (Jeremy Waldron)

"Jill Frank elucidates the substantive arguments in what have looked like paradoxes in Aristotle"s thought. She excels at connecting Aristotle"s political arguments to current discussions in political theory. Best of all, she elegantly moves beyond the liberal-communitarian debate with an Aristotelian account of politics that not only recognizes the interdependence of individual identity and civic institutions but also respects the human activity of self-creation." --Danielle Allen, University of Chicago (Danielle Allen)

About the Author

Jill Frank is assistant professor of political science at the University of South Carolina, Columbia.

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