



# The City-State of the Soul: Self-Constitution in Plato's Republic

*Kevin M. Crotty*

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*The City-State of the Soul: Self-Constitution in Plato's "Republic"* explores Plato's idea that the moral life consists in the "founding" of one's own soul. This insight climaxes the long argument of the *Republic*, and, in particular, its exploration of the complex relation between the city and the human soul. This fruitful picture of the moral life, however, has not received the attention it deserves.

Plato shows that the imperative to unify one's own soul not only lies at the heart of traditional moral prescriptions (e.g., against lying or stealing), but also makes possible a better and more compelling view of the moral life as a whole, and of justice in particular. Plato's distinctive insight is that justice is above all a *creative* force. Rather than a relation amongst fully formed individuals, Plato presents justice as the quality by virtue of which a coherent entity (above all, a soul or a city) emerges from a diverse welter of different parts. Justice, then, is the virtue most closely associated with being—the source of its philosophical stature.

Plato's project in the *Republic* is to present a conception of justice such that it will strike the young, bright and ambitious as a noble pursuit, and a task worthy of their best talents.



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