



Beautiful City: The Dialectical Character of Plato's "Republic"

David Roochnik

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To the vast literature on Plato's *Republic* comes a new interpretation. In *Beautiful City*, David Roochnik argues convincingly that Plato's masterpiece is misunderstood by modern readers. The work must, he explains, be read dialectically, its parts understood as forming a unified whole. Approached in this way, the text no longer appears to defend an authoritarian and monolithic political system, but rather supplies a qualified defense of democracy and the values of diversity.

Writing in clear and straightforward prose, Roochnik demonstrates how Plato's treatment of the city and the soul evolves throughout the dialogue and can be appreciated only by considering the *Republic* in its entirety. He shows that the views expressed in the early parts of the text do not represent Plato's final judgment on these subjects but are in fact dialectical "moments" intended to be both partial and provisional. Books 5-7 of the *Republic* are, he maintains, meant to revise and improve upon books 2-4. Similarly, he sees the usually neglected books 8-10 as advancing beyond the thoughts presented in the previous books. Paying particular attention to these later books, Roochnik details, for instance, how the stories of the "mistaken" regimes, which are often seen as unimportant, are actually crucial in Plato's account of the soul.

Beautiful City is certain to be controversial, as the author's insights and opinions will engage and challenge philosophers, classicists, and political theorists.

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