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The good society and the good soul: *Plato's Republic* on leadership

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Abstract

This article assesses the relevance of Plato's *Republic* for discussions of leadership in contemporary democratic societies. Specifically, Plato's theory of the good life challenges contemporary consumer culture and the definition of the good life as desire satisfaction; his critique of democracy raises difficult questions about the ways democracies train and choose leaders; and his account of the ideal regime illustrates the importance and difficulty of taming endemic conflicts between private interests and the public good. At the same time, Plato offers an account of leadership as benefiting the entire community that remains morally attractive. Plato thus cannot be easily dismissed by advocates of democratic modes of organizing leadership; on the contrary, a close reading of *The Republic* reveals some of the enduring challenges facing democratic societies.



Keywords

Ethical leadership; Good life; Good society; Consumerism; Democracy

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Plato: Republic, like the concession of a claim, the art is not tough.
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