

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION	VII
REPUBLIC	1
LIFE OF PLATO	393
FURTHER READING	396

Plato's *Republic* has exercised enormous influence over long millennia in the Western tradition. This is the work in which it is proclaimed that injustice and corruption can only cease if rulers are philosopher kings, or queens. Here, too, one of the most famous Platonic allegories—the *allegory of the cave*—is presented. Admittedly, the *Republic* is a complex work, but it repays the attentive reader. Plato captures the essential philosophic activity of analyzing concepts, posing penetrating questions, unpacking propounded theories, and puzzling over how problems are to be solved. The objective is not simply to express opinions about the elusive meaning of life and other lofty subjects, but to engage with problems and seek solutions in the most rigorous way affordable to the human mind. The provocative claim made in the *Republic* is that philosophy, and only philosophy, can save the human species not only from the poor choices made by most people but also from the savage evils inflicted by the powerful upon the powerless. Philosophy is not to be understood here as a spiritual activity, some guru-centered building of a faithful community, or a subjectively inspired search for meaning in life. Instead, the activity of philosophy is defined as rational inquiry