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*Justice in the Republic and King Lear*

**Abstract** – In comparing *King Lear* and the *Republic* on the basis of their common preoccupation with the problem of justice, the present study shows Shakespeare borrowing Plato’s city-soul analogy as well as the related body-politic paradigm to explore crucial convergences between ethics and politics. Yet, while both authors employ dialectical methods to clarify philosophical questions in their respective dialogues, Shakespeare goes beyond mere verbal debate, juxtaposing the characters’ pronouncements on justice with their actions as well what happens to them during the course of *King Lear* to transcend the seeming absurdity of his darkest tragedy. It is thus argued that *King Lear* not only lends support for Socrates’ critique of imitative poetry in Book III of the *Republic* due to its ethical inconsistencies and emotional effect, but inversely puts to the test such fundamental Platonic notions as the philosopher-king and the privileging of philosophy over poetry in the instruction of virtue.

**Keywords:** Justice, ethics, politics, *King Lear*, the *Republic*