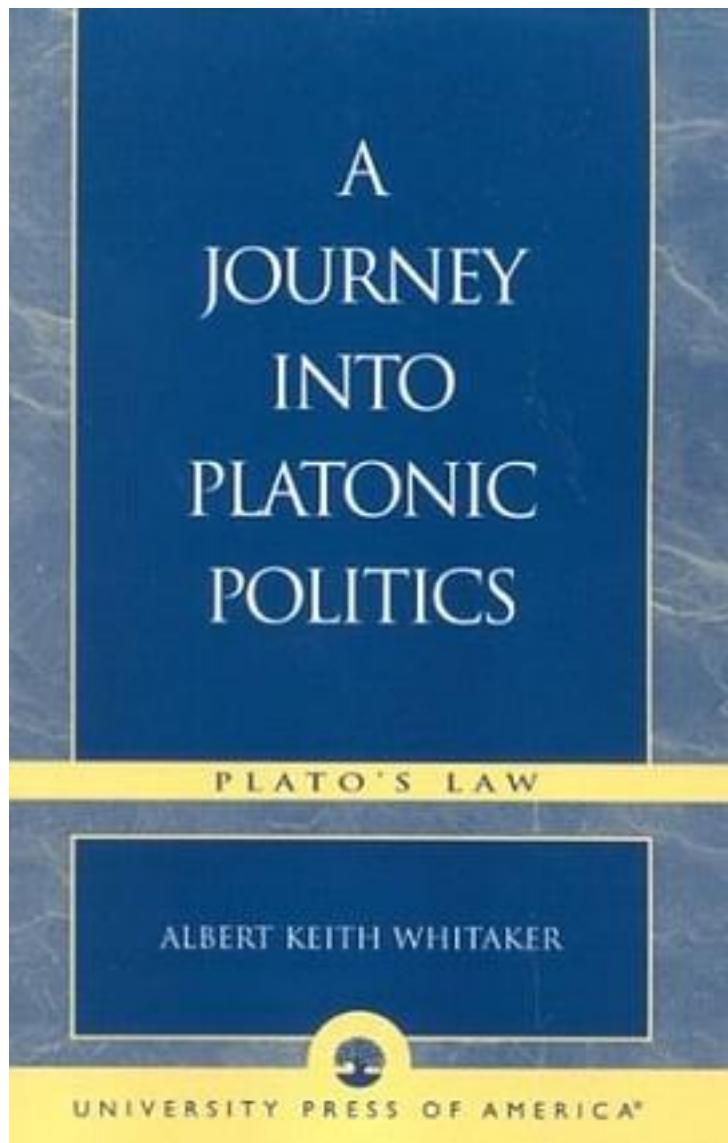


A Journey Into Platonic Politics



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"One should not take up the Laws as a plan for a new society nor as a means to critique one's own nation and its customs. Indeed, the Laws benefits most those readers who are comfortable in their lover for and allegiance to the standards and institutions of their time and place. Perhaps this claim sounds surprising. But it should surprise only those who believe that love and loyalty are deep set obstacles to thought and reflections. In contrast, such attachments, and not their facile critique, are precisely what lead us to take a healthy interest in and reflect fruitfully upon other people's ways. The characters of the Laws recognize this truth as well. They recommend that the highest body of the new city, a council of thinkers and legislators, young and old, should regularly send spies to other nations, to search out the "beauties" in their foreign habits, beauties that might-or might not-be able to be transplanted back to the council's city. The following study of the Laws attempts to do something of the same thing, to read Plato's dialogue as, in effect, a foreign country, through which readers are led as if they were on a mission for our own Nocturnal Council." -Albert Keith Whitaker, from the Introduction

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