

NAME:

David Hernández de la Fuente, PhD.

TITLE:

Oracles as Sources of Law and Plato's Reinterpretation in the *Laws*

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Oracles, Delphi, Classical Political Thought, Plato, Plato's *Laws*

ABSTRACT:

Greek divination had a political and legislative dimension. From archaic times, the lawgiver of a city and other relevant political figures were deeply involved in mantic practices. In the *Laws*, Plato focuses on the main tasks of a legislator within a political community stemming from a deep religious feeling and dwelling heavily in oracular procedures. Divine wisdom inspires the legal system of his ideal city in all aspects and his lawmaker recalls the first legendary *nomothetai*, such as Minos (624b). Plato's lawgiver is the heir of a long tradition: his reinterpretation of the role of oracles as sources of law can lead us to a further appreciation not only of the traditional relation between Greek religion and law, but also of his aims when he wrote this controversial treaty on political utopia.

CONTACT ADDRESS:

fuentes@uni-potsdam.de