

Jonathan Beere (Berlin): What does the "third form" explain in Plato's *Timaeus* – and how?

Abstract

This paper develops a new approach to the "third form" (the receptacle, *chora*) in Plato's *Timaeus*. Plato's arguments for the third form anticipate in crucial ways the concept of matter. In particular, the third form is a subject of change. However, it would be wrong to think of the third form as matter, since the properties that are in it do not stand to it as form to matter. This requires some clarification of the in relation. It follows that perceptible things are not composites of matter and form. I raise a question about whether the third form has all or only some properties of perceptible bodies, and, if it has only some, which ones. In light of these general reflections on the third form and perceptible bodies, we can see how the third form explains some of the fundamental and general features of the cosmos: its three-dimensional, bodily character; the relationship between body and place; and the fact that there is motion (but not the fact that there are the particular motions that there are). I claim that we can then see why interpreters have been understandably tempted to see the third form as matter and as space, as well as how both interpretations are partly correct and partly incorrect.