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# NEWTON' S NEO-PLATONIC ONTOLOGY OF SPACE

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## Abstract

This paper investigates Newton' s ontology of space in order to determine its commitment, if any, to both neo-Platonism, which posits an incorporeal basis for space, and substantivalism, which regards space as a form of substance or entity. A non-substantivalist interpretation of Newton' s theory has been famously championed by Howard Stein and Robert DiSalle, among others, while both Stein and J. E. McGuire have downplayed the influence of Cambridge neo-Platonism on various aspects of Newton' s own spatial hypotheses. Both of these assertions will be shown to be problematic on various grounds, with special emphasis placed on Stein' s influential case for a non-substantivalist reading. Our analysis will strive, nonetheless, to reveal the unique or forward-looking aspects of Newton' s approach, most notably, his critical assessment of substance ontologies, that help to distinguish his theory of space from his neo-Platonic contemporaries and predecessors.

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