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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 Cambridge neo-Platonism, which posits an incorporeal basis for space, and substantialism, which regards space as a form of substance or entity. A non-substantialist interpretation of Newton's theory has been famously championed by Howard Stein and Robert DiSalle, among others, while both Stein and the early work of 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-substantialist 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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