

Plato's Timaeus vs. On Nature, Book 14

Post by "Bryan" of January 27, 2025 at 10:13 PM

After Critias' fun story of proto-Athens defeating Atlantis' eastern advancement, Timaeus sets up the distinction between **(1) what always is**, vs. **(2) what is always becoming**. He says the craftsman looked to **(1) what always is** as a model to form our single kosmos, which is in the realm of **(2) what is always becoming**. Only the realm of **(1) what always is** has any certainty, and therefore when discussing our Earthly realm of **(2) what is always becoming**, we need to be content with probabilities.

For Epíkouros the closest we have to a realm of **(1) what always is**, is the whole natures (ὅλα φύσεις) of the atoms and the void, and the realm of **(2) always becoming** corresponds somewhat with compounds and their emergent qualities.

Epíkouros agrees with Plato in the way that he speaks with certainty about **(1) what always is**, and also agrees that we must be content with not having complete certainty about **(2) what is always becoming**, i.e., all the movements and interactions of all compounds (as it highlighted in his Letter to Pythocles).

Later on Plato includes a third aspect, the (3) Receptacle / Neutral Base. From this angle we have:

- (1) What always is, after which all is molded, ("father")
- (2) What always becomes, our realm of sensation, ("offspring")
- (3) The receptacle, or what everything comes to be in, ("mother")

Plato says the receptacle "is modified, shaped and reshaped by the things that enter it," and he compares it to a neutral base perfumers use.