An Unnoticed Analogy between the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*

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Abstract

The question of the relationship between the *Timaeus* and the so-called “unwritten doctrines” (*agrapha dogmata*) gave rise to many discussions since Antiquity until more recent times. The present paper focuses on what seems to constitute their central point, namely the intermediate position of the *mathēmata*. Aristotle expressly attributes this doctrine to Plato but we don’t find it in the dialogues. The paper first recalls the interpretation of the *Timaeus* 55c7–d6 according to which this important passage alludes to the distinction between Forms, *mathēmata* and sensible things. It then proposes a new interpretation of the *Laws* v, 739a1–e7 which shows that a close analogy between the *Timaeus* and the three “constitutions” (*politeiai*) mentioned in the *Laws* is conceivable. This new interpretation has an impact on the overall interpretation of the *Laws*.

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