

In the middle of his "likely story" about the origins and nature of the universe, Plato's character Timaeus revises his initial ontology of forms and images by introducing a distinct, third kind of thing (48e2–49a4). Following some introductory remarks about the third kind, Timaeus goes on to ask: "Now, what power and nature must we suppose that it has? One such as this most of all: that it is the *hypodochê* of all coming-to-be, as it were, a wetnurse" (49a4–6). For more than one hundred years, English-speaking scholars have translated the term *hypodochê* here as 'receptacle'--hence, the standard identification of the third kind as "the Receptacle" (cf. Archer-Hind; Taylor; Cornford; Zeyl; Miller). Given this long-standing tradition, few scholars have paused to examine in detail Plato's choice of the term *hypodochê*, and in particular, whether or not the translation 'receptacle' adequately conveys his point. Instead, the assumption has been that Plato's term 'receptacle' is unfortunately imprecise and/or inconsistent, and that we should therefore use it simply as a name for the third kind, which itself, on philosophical analysis, rather turns out to be a recipient or receiver (whether matter or place), but not a receptacle (e.g., Keyt, 300; Guthrie, 263; Mohr, 91–3; Miller 12, 15). This paper aims to challenge this assumption. It argues that there is in fact a meaningful relation between Plato's *hypodochê*-image (properly understood) and the nature and function of the third kind.

The first step towards understanding Plato's meaning is to explain his comparison of the third kind to a wetnurse, especially insofar as that comparison is supposed to clarify the way in which the third kind is a *hypodochê*. In what ways, then, might a wetnurse be a *hypodochê* of all coming-to-be? How does this term make sense as a description of a wetnurse and her role? The traditional translation forces upon Plato the non-sensical comparison between a receptacle and a wetnurse. It seems fair to say that the only commonality here is that both in some way receive and hold certain objects. But why would Plato choose the image of a wetnurse to illustrate this attribute when any other subject that receives things would have sufficed as well? Would Plato not have wanted to draw the reader's attention to the feature or activity characteristic of a wetnurse in order to illustrate what he takes to be the nature and function of the third kind?

The job of a wetnurse is to take up a newborn child that is not her own in order to nourish and support that child. In contrast, what modern English speakers would call a receptacle is a containing place or vessel used to receive certain items for holding, storage, or transportation. Boxes, trashcans, and wall sockets come to mind. This paper will argue that, despite its pervasiveness, the identification of the third kind as a receptacle totally fails to capture Plato's point. It will show that when Plato calls the third kind a *hypodochê* he is not comparing it to a container or vessel, but that he rather means that the third kind is like a place of refuge, such as the area between the lap and breast of a wetnurse where a needy infant receives sustenance. The paper will also argue that Calcidius' translation of Plato's term *hypodochê* as 'receptaculum' ('refuge', 'shelter') supports this interpretation and suggests that Plato intended the third kind philosophically to serve the function of material substrate of all change.