Theaetetus

EUCLIDES: Are you just back from the country, Terpsion – or have you been back some time? 142a

TERPSION: A fair while. Actually I was looking for you, in the market-place, and I was surprised that I couldn't find you there.

EUCLIDES: That's because I wasn't in town.

TERPSION: So where were you? a5

EUCLIDES: I was going down to the harbour, when I met Theaetetus being carried back to Athens from the army camp at Corinth.

TERPSION: Alive or dead?

EUCLIDES: Alive, but only just; he's in a bad way, from some wounds too, but what is really bringing him down is the sickness that has broken out in the army. b1

TERPSION: Not dysentery, I suppose?

EUCLIDES: Yes, dysentery. b5

TERPSION: That's quite a man we'd be losing!

EUCLIDES: A fine example to us all, Terpsion; only just now I was listening to people showering praises on his conduct in the fighting.

TERPSION: There's nothing strange about that; it would be much more of a surprise if he hadn't shown that sort of quality. But why didn't he think of stopping off here in Megara? c1

EUCLIDES: He was hurrying to get home – I kept begging him to stay here, and telling him it was for his own good, but he didn't want to. So then I saw him on his way, and as I left him I recalled once again how wonderfully prophetic Socrates had proved to be about him, as about so much else. I think it was just before his death that he encountered Theaetetus, then a young lad. They got together, and by the end of c5

their conversation[1] Socrates was totally in awe of the boy's natural qual-
d1 ities. When I went to Athens he relayed to me the exchange he'd had with him – and well worth the hearing it was; he said the boy would certainly become someone to reckon with if he made it to the right age.

TERPSION: That's turned out true enough, it seems. But what was
d5 their discussion like? Could you give a report of it?

EUCLIDES: Zeus, no! Or at any rate not just like that, off the cuff. But
143a I did make notes at the time, as soon as I got home. Later on I would go back over it all in a leisurely fashion and write it up, and then every time I arrived in Athens I would ask Socrates again about anything I'd not remembered, making the corrections when I got back to Megara.
a5 The result is that I have pretty much the whole discussion written up.

TERPSION: Yes, I've heard you say that before. I've always been meaning to ask you to show it to me, and putting it off – till this moment. What's to stop us going through it now? I'm myself quite ready for a rest, anyway, after my journey from the country.

b1 EUCLIDES: In fact I saw Theaetetus all the way to Erineum,[2] so I'd not be against a rest myself. Come with me, and the slave will read to us while we put our feet up.

TERPSION: A good idea.

b5 EUCLIDES: Well, Terpsion, here's the book. I didn't write it out with Socrates reporting the discussion as he reported it to me, but instead had him in direct conversation with the people he said were there. These,
c1 he said, were the geometer, Theodorus, and Theaetetus. To avoid the trouble of writing out the narrative bits between the speeches – like 'And *I* said' or 'And *I* told *him*', whenever Socrates was talking about himself, or 'He assented', or 'He wouldn't agree' when he was talking
c5 about the respondents – well, I took out all that, and simply had him conversing directly with them.

TERPSION: And quite reasonably so, Euclides.

EUCLIDES: So, boy, take the book and start.

d1 SOCRATES: If it had been Cyrene I cared about more, Theodorus, I would be asking you how things were there – whether there were any young people in Cyrene interested in geometry or philosophy of some

[1] Or 'dialogue' (*dialegesthai*/*dialogos*). See Introduction, Section 5.
[2] I.e., most of the way to Athens, and a considerable distance by foot.

sort; as it is, I'm less fond of the people there than I am of people here, d5
and I'm keener to know which of *our* young people are expected to turn
out respectably. That's just what I try to find out for myself, so far as
I can, and I also ask any others I see the young wanting to spend their
time with. You yourself have no mean following, and justly so; you e1
deserve it, especially for your geometry. So if you've encountered
anyone worth talking about, I'd be delighted to know.

THEODORUS: Well, Socrates, there is one lad I've met, among your e5
fellow-citizens, whose quality absolutely demands that I talk and you
hear about him. If he were beautiful, I'd be afraid to be enthusiastic about
him in case anyone should think I was lusting after him. But as it is, and
don't be cross at my saying so, he's not a beauty, but with his snub nose
and bulging eyes he rather resembles you, though both features are less
pronounced in his case than in yours. So I can be straight with you: 144a
among all the people I've ever yet come across – and I've got together
with a good many in my time – I've never known anyone with such
wonderful natural gifts. So incomparably quick at learning, yet excep-
tionally quiet-tempered, and with a courage, too, that's second to none. a5
I would not have thought such a combination possible, nor do I see it
occurring in anyone else. Those who are as sharp, quick, and retentive as
he is are generally unstable and short-tempered, rushing around and
shifting about like vessels with no ballast, and more manic than
courageous; the weightier ones are somewhat sluggish in approaching b1
their studies, and brimming with forgetfulness. This lad approaches
study and inquiry so smoothly, so unerringly, and so effectively – and
with great calm, like the noiseless flow of olive oil from the jar – that one b5
wonders how someone so young can carry all this off so well.

SOCRATES: That's good news. Which of our citizens is his father?

THEODORUS: I've heard the name, but I can't remember it. No
matter – he's the middle one in this group that's approaching us now. c1
He and his friends there with him were rubbing themselves down with
oil just now on the track outside; I think they've finished and are coming
over here.[3] See if you recognize him.

SOCRATES: I do. He's the son of Euphronius of Sunium, who was, c5
yes indeed, very much the sort of man you described the lad as being.

[3] We are evidently to picture the conversation taking place in a gymnasium; the boys have been training on a running track.

He was well respected in many ways, and to cap it all he left very substantial wealth when he died. But I don't know the lad's name.

d1 THEODORUS: His name, Socrates, is Theaetetus; as for his inheritance, I think some of the trustees have ruined it. Despite that he's also amazingly generous with his money, Socrates.

d5 SOCRATES: He sounds like a paragon, this one. Tell him to come and sit here by me.

THEODORUS: I shall. Theaetetus, come over here by Socrates!

SOCRATES: Yes, please do, Theaetetus, so that I can check for myself

e1 what sort of face I have. Theodorus says I have one like yours. But now if each of us had a lyre and Theodorus said both instruments were tuned in a similar way, would we immediately take his word for it, or would we have tried to find out first whether he was speaking as a musical expert?

THEAETETUS: We would have asked that first.

e5 SOCRATES: And we would believe him if we found he was an expert, but if we found he was no musician, we wouldn't trust him?

THEAETETUS: True.

SOCRATES: And in the present case, I imagine, if we've any interest in

145a whether our faces are similar or not, we should ask whether or not he's speaking as an expert in painting.

THEAETETUS: I think we should.

SOCRATES: So is Theodorus an expert painter?

a5 THEAETETUS: Not so far as I know.

SOCRATES: And he's not an expert in geometry either?

THEAETETUS: Oh, he's certainly that, Socrates!

SOCRATES: Is he also expert in astronomy, arithmetic, music, and everything else that goes to make an educated person?

a10 THEAETETUS: I certainly think he is.

SOCRATES: So if he claims that we're similar in some physical respect, whether by way of praising or of criticizing us, it's not worth paying him the slightest attention.

THEAETETUS: Perhaps not.

b1 SOCRATES: But what if he were to praise one of us for the state of our soul – for our goodness and wisdom? Wouldn't the one who heard him praising the other be justifiably keen to check on the object of the praise, and the other to show what he was made of?

b5 THEAETETUS: Certainly, Socrates.

SOCRATES: So see here, my dear Theaetetus: in this case the showing is for you to do, the inquiring for me, because the fact is that however many foreigners or citizens Theodorus may have praised to me, he has never praised anyone as he did you just now.

THEAETETUS: That would be a fine thing, Socrates. But just watch out b10
that he wasn't joking. c1

SOCRATES: That's not Theodorus' style. Don't try ducking out of what we agreed, pretending that our friend here was only joking, because otherwise he'll actually be forced to give evidence against you; and no one's going to charge *him* with perjury. Be a man and stick by our agreement. c5

THEAETETUS: I'll have to, if that's your decision.

SOCRATES: So tell me – I suppose you're learning a bit of geometry from Theodorus?

THEAETETUS: I am.

SOCRATES: And a bit about astronomy, and music, and arithmetic? d1

THEAETETUS: I'm keen to, anyway.

SOCRATES: I am too, my boy, whether from Theodorus or from anyone else I think has some understanding of such things. All the same, d5
while I get on well enough with these subjects in most respects, there's one thing about them that puzzles me, and I'd like to explore it with you and the others here. Tell me: to learn is to become wiser[4] about the subject one's learning about, isn't it?

THEAETETUS: Obviously. d10

SOCRATES: And I imagine wise people are wise through wisdom.

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And this isn't different at all from knowledge? e1

THEAETETUS: What isn't?

SOCRATES: Wisdom. Aren't people wise about the things they know about?

THEAETETUS: Of course. e5

SOCRATES: So knowledge and wisdom are the same thing?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, this is the very thing that I'm puzzled about, and can't get a proper hold on for myself – what knowledge actually is. So can we give 146a
an answer? What do all of you say? Which of us will be the first to speak? The one who tries and misses will sit down and be donkey, as children say

[4] 'Wiser': i.e., more expert.

when they play ball, and so will the next one who misses, and so on; anyone
a5 who gets through without missing will be king over us and make us answer any question he wants. – Why the silence? I don't suppose, Theodorus, that my love of discussion is making me a boor, so keen am I to have us engage in conversation together, and become friends who talk to one another?

b1 THEODORUS: Boorish is the last thing that would be, Socrates! But please get one of the lads to answer your question. I'm unused to this sort of discussion myself, and I'm too old to get used to it either, whereas
b5 it will suit them, and do much more for them than it would for me; youth truly gives room for improvement in everything. Go on as you started, and don't let Theaetetus off: question him!

c1 SOCRATES: You hear what Theodorus says, Theaetetus. I don't think it'll be your wish to disobey him, and it wouldn't be right in any case, when a wise person gives instructions in such matters, for the younger not to listen. So take your courage in your hands and tell me: what do you think knowledge is?

THEAETETUS: I'll have to do it, Socrates, seeing that the two of you
c5 are telling me to. In any case, if I do somehow miss the target, you'll both set me right.

SOCRATES: Definitely we will – at any rate if we can.

THEAETETUS: Well, I think the things one can learn from Theodorus
d1 are knowledges,[5] that is, geometry and the subjects you just mentioned; cobbling too, and the skills that belong to other craftsmen – each and every one of these is nothing other than knowledge.

SOCRATES: That's certainly a brave answer, and a generous one, my
d5 friend: you're handing over a whole collection of things when you were only asked for one, and a mixed bag instead of something simple.

THEAETETUS: Can I ask why you say that, Socrates?

SOCRATES: It's probably nothing, but I'll tell you what I'm thinking. When you mention cobbling, you're not talking, are you, about anything other than knowledge of the making of shoes?

[5] Theaetetus here uses the plural of *epistêmê*, 'knowledge'; this is perfectly natural in Greek, because *epistêmê* does duty both for knowledge in general and for any form or branch of it. 'Knowledges' is scarcely English, but to introduce 'forms' or 'branches', or even 'examples', of knowledge here – or to substitute the singular for the plural – would be unhelpful; Socrates' response to Theaetetus' proposal, at any rate, in the following lines, will be to take him as identifying knowledge with what are in fact forms/branches/examples of it, while not recognizing that this is what they are. Knowledge for Theaetetus, according to his present account, is just geometry, cobbling, carpentry . . .

THEAETETUS: I'm not. d10

SOCRATES: And what about when you talk about carpentering? Are you treating that as anything other than knowledge of the making of wooden objects? e1

THEAETETUS: Here too, no.

SOCRATES: So in both cases you're marking out what each is knowledge *of*. e5

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: But what was asked for, Theaetetus, wasn't what things knowledge is of, or how many knowledges there are; we didn't ask the question what knowledge is because we wanted to count examples of knowledge, but because we wanted to know what the thing, knowledge, might be in itself. Or is there nothing in what I'm saying? e10

THEAETETUS: No, you are absolutely right.

SOCRATES: Now think about the following. Suppose someone put the same question to us about some everyday thing that's ready to hand: clay, for example – what is it, actually? Wouldn't we be a laughing stock if we replied to him 'potter's clay and ovenmaker's clay and brickmaker's clay'? 147a a5

THEAETETUS: Possibly.

SOCRATES: Because I suppose first of all we'd be expecting the questioner to understand whenever we said 'clay' in our answer, whether we add 'figurine-maker's' or refer to any other craftsman who uses clay. Or do you think anyone will understand the name of a thing at all if he doesn't know what the thing is? b1

THEAETETUS: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: Then anyone who doesn't know what knowledge is won't understand what knowledge of shoes is either. b5

THEAETETUS: No, he won't.

SOCRATES: Then anyone who's ignorant of what knowledge is won't understand what cobbling is, or indeed what any other expertise is.

THEAETETUS: That's so. b10

SOCRATES: Then if someone is asked what knowledge is and he answers with the name of some expertise or other, the answer is absurd. He's offering knowledge of something when that wasn't what he was asked for. c1

THEAETETUS: It seems so.

SOCRATES: And I think we can also say he's taking an awfully long way round when he could be giving a short and everyday answer. In the case
c5 of clay, for example, I suppose he could have answered the question in an easy and simple way by just saying 'Clay will be earth thoroughly mixed with liquid', and leaving out whose clay it is.

THEAETETUS: Now that you put it like that, Socrates, it seems so easy! And actually you may be asking the very sort of question that occurred
d1 to us – me and your namesake Socrates here – just now when we were talking amongst ourselves.

SOCRATES: What sort of question was that, Theaetetus?

THEAETETUS: Theodorus was using diagrams to illustrate a point for
d5 us about powers,[6] in relation to a figure of three square feet and one of five square feet, namely that they are not commensurable in length with a figure of one square foot; and he proceeded in this way case by case until he reached a figure of seventeen square feet, where somehow or other he came to a halt. Well, this sort of thing occurred to us – given that the powers were apparently unlimited in number, we should try to combine
e1 them into one, so that we'd have something to call all these powers.

SOCRATES: And did you find something like that?

THEAETETUS: I think we did. But see what you think.

SOCRATES: Go on.

e5 THEAETETUS: We divided the whole of number into two. Any number that can be produced by multiplying two equal numbers we compared to a square figure, and called it 'square' or 'equal-sided'.

SOCRATES: Good; well done.

THEAETETUS: So then any number between these, namely three, and
148a five, and any other that can't be produced by multiplying equal numbers, but only by multiplying a greater by a less or a less by a greater, and is always contained by a side that's greater and a side that's less – this we
a5 compared to an oblong figure, and called it an 'oblong' number.

SOCRATES: Very fine! And what was your next step?

THEAETETUS: Lines that as sides of a square produce the 'equal-sided'
b1 plane numbers we marked off as 'lengths', and those that produce the

[6] Which Theaetetus will shortly attempt to define as 'oblong numbers'. To understand this, we need to recognize at least the following: (a) that the mathematics of the time does without 'irrational' numbers; (b) that it therefore has to deal with what we call the roots of non-square numbers in a special way; (c) that this special way is geometrical in form; but (d) that the whole exercise is not just about numbers, but geometry too.

'oblong' ones as 'powers' – on the grounds that while these are not commensurable in length with the other sort of lines, they *are* commensurable in the plane figures they have the power to produce. And we made another, similar distinction in relation to solids.

SOCRATES: Boys, no one on earth could give a better example! It seems to me there's no danger of perjury on Theodorus' part. b5

THEAETETUS: And yet, Socrates, I wouldn't be able to answer your question about knowledge in the way I answered about lengths and powers, and I think it's something of that sort that you're looking for. So once again Theodorus does appear to be perjuring himself. c1

SOCRATES: How so? If it had been your running he was praising, and he said he'd never come across another young runner as good as you, do you think his praise of you would be any less truthful if you happened to finish behind the fastest runner at his best? c5

THEAETETUS: No, I don't.

SOCRATES: And do you suppose, as I was saying just now, that finding out about knowledge is a small matter? Don't you think it's something for those at the top of their game in every way?

THEAETETUS: Zeus! Yes, I do – it certainly is for people at the very top.

SOCRATES: So be confident about yourself, believe what Theodorus c10
said about you, and commit yourself completely to getting an account of d1
knowledge: what, exactly, is it?

THEAETETUS: If commitment is what counts, Socrates, the answer will appear.

SOCRATES: Come on then. You've just given us a good start. Try mimicking your answer about powers: just as there were many of them, d5
and yet you covered them all with a single form, try now to apply a single account to the many knowledges there are.

THEAETETUS: You can be sure, Socrates, that I've made numerous e1
attempts to figure it out, on hearing the questions they said you were asking. But the fact is that I can't persuade myself that I've anything adequate to say myself, or that I'm hearing anyone else give the sort of e5
account that you're insisting on. On the other hand, I can't stop worrying about it either.

SOCRATES: Those are birth-pains, my dear Theaetetus. You're having them because you're not empty-headed, you're pregnant.

THEAETETUS: I don't know, Socrates. I'm just telling you how I feel. e10

149a SOCRATES: Then – how ridiculous of you! – you've not heard that I'm the son of a midwife? A very fine and muscular one, too: Phaenarete?[7]

THEAETETUS: That much I have heard.

SOCRATES: Haven't you also heard that I practise the same art as she does?

a5 THEAETETUS: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: I can assure you I do. But don't tell on me to everybody else. They don't recognize this skill of mine, my friend, and it's not one of the things they say I do, because they don't know about it; instead they say I'm a10 very strange, and reduce people to puzzlement. You've heard *that* said of me?

b1 THEAETETUS: I have.

SOCRATES: So shall I tell you the cause?

THEAETETUS: Yes, certainly.

SOCRATES: It'll help you understand what I'm getting at if you think b5 about the whole situation with midwives. I imagine you know that none of them acts as midwife to others while she is still conceiving and bearing children herself, only when she's no longer capable of doing so.

THEAETETUS: Yes, I do.

b10 SOCRATES: Well, they say Artemis was the cause of this, having been allotted childbirth as her province when she was herself childless. Not c1 that she actually assigned midwifery to the barren, because human nature lacks the strength to acquire skill in things where it has no experience; rather she gave the function to women now too old to give birth, as recognition of their similarity to herself.

THEAETETUS: That's likely enough.

c5 SOCRATES: And isn't it also likely, indeed inevitable, that it should also be midwives more than anyone who can tell whether a woman is pregnant or not?

THEAETETUS: It certainly is.

SOCRATES: And what's more, it's the midwife who by applying homely d1 drugs and singing incantations is able to bring on birth-pains, and to make them gentler if she wishes; she will even bring about the birth when women are in difficulties, or else she will cause a miscarriage in the early stages,[8] if it seems right.

[7] The name can be read as/sounds like 'revealer of excellence/virtue/goodness' (*phainein* + *aretê*).

[8] Two words in the text here (*neon on*) are marked as irredeemably corrupt by the editors of the OCT.*

THEAETETUS: That's right.

SOCRATES: And have you noticed yet another characteristic of mid- d5
wives? They're the most skilful of matchmakers, because of their versatility at telling which woman should marry which man in order to produce the best children possible.

THEAETETUS: That's complete news to me.

SOCRATES: Well, I can tell you that they pride themselves more on this d10
than on their skill at cutting the umbilical cord. Ask yourself: telling e1
what sort of soil is suitable for sowing each particular plant – does that seem to you to be a part of the same expertise as tending and harvesting the crops, or of a different one?

THEAETETUS: No, part of the same one. e5

SOCRATES: But when it comes to sowing in a woman, you think, my friend, do you, that the sowing and the harvesting belong to different arts?

THEAETETUS: No, that's not at all likely.

SOCRATES: No, it isn't. But because there's also that other way of 150a
bringing men and women together, the inappropriate, skill-free one we call procuring, midwives avoid matchmaking too, to protect their august status, because they're afraid that if they practise matchmaking they'll be charged with procuring; though in fact it's pretty well only those who are a5
true midwives who can actually make the right matches.

THEAETETUS: Apparently.

SOCRATES: Well, that's how much midwives do; but it's still not as much as *I* have to do. Women don't sometimes give birth to phantoms, b1
sometimes to true children, with no easy way of telling them apart. If they did that too, it would be the greatest and finest task of the midwife to judge which was true and which not, don't you think?

THEAETETUS: I do. b5

SOCRATES: Now my own art of midwifery has all the same features as theirs, but with the difference that I act as midwife to men, not women, and it's their souls I oversee giving birth and not their bodies. And the greatest aspect of my skill is that it enables me to test this way and that c1
whether the mind of a young person is giving birth to a phantom and a falsehood or something fruitful and true. Yet I do have this much in common with midwives, that I am unproductive myself – unproductive, that is, of wisdom. Many people have complained about me that c5
I put questions to everybody else without declaring my own view on anything, because I've nothing wise to contribute; and that is true

enough. The cause of it is this, namely that the god[9] compels me to act as midwife while forbidding me to procreate anything myself. I am, then, d1 not at all wise myself, nor has any discovery that could be called wise been born as offspring of *my* soul.

But those who associate with me are a different matter. Some at first appear quite hopelessly ignorant, but as we continue being together, d5 there they are, all of them – all, that is, whom the god permits – making the most amazing progress, in their own eyes and everybody else's; and this, quite plainly, without their ever having learned a single thing from me, just by their having discovered and brought to birth lots of fine things from within themselves. The actual delivery of their off- e1 spring, though, *is* the god's responsibility and mine. This is clear from the fact that many people who were ignorant of the situation and looked down on my role, giving all the credit to themselves, went off earlier than they should have done, either of their own accord or on the advice of others; then, having gone off, they not only caused the miscarriage of e5 what was left, by getting into bad company, but even neglected and lost the offspring of theirs that I'd already delivered, because they preferred falsehoods and phantoms to the truth of things, and ended 151a up looking stupid both to themselves and to everybody else. One of these has turned out to be Aristides, son of Lysimachus,[10] but there are lots and lots of others. When they come back, begging for my company again and prepared to do anything to get it, in some cases the divine sign that comes to me stops me being with them, in others it allows it, and a5 then they resume their progress. Those who get together with me have something else in common with women in childbirth: they suffer birth- pains, and a sense of helplessness fills them, night and day – much more, b1 indeed, than a woman, and my expertise is able both to awaken and put a stop to the pain. That's how it is with these people. But for some, Theaetetus, who don't seem to me pregnant in one way or other, I act as a perfectly well-meaning matchmaker, recognizing that they have no b5 need of me; and I'm quite good enough at guessing whose company they

[9] Plato's Socrates frequently refers to 'the god', as here, without specification; he may have one particular god in mind (Apollo, as in the *Phaedo*), but in Plato generally 'god' can serve as a collective noun, used interchangeably with 'gods'.

[10] A young man whose education Plato's Socrates discusses in the *Laches*; perhaps this is an authorial cross-reference.

might benefit from – many of them I've passed on to Prodicus,[11] many to other founts of oracular wisdom.

If you're wondering, dearest boy, why I've described all this for you at such length, it's because I suspect that you're suffering birth-pains from something you're carrying inside you; you think so yourself.[12] So treat me as the son of a midwife who has some midwife's skills of his c1
own, and be ready to answer as you can any questions I ask of you. If at any point I think, on examination, that something you've said really is a phantom, not a true child of yours, and I take it from you and dispose of it, don't go wild like a mother over her first baby. You'd be amazed, my c5
friend, how many people get cross with me – cross enough even to sink their teeth into me, when I take some bit of nonsense away from them. They don't imagine that I'm doing it out of good will, so far are they from understanding that no god is ever guilty of ill will towards human d1
beings, and no more do I do anything of this sort out of ill will either: for me it is simply not permissible to accept what is false and hide away the true.

So then, Theaetetus, go back to the beginning and try again to tell me: just what is knowledge? Whatever you do, don't say it's beyond you; god d5
willing, and if you have the courage, it won't be.

THEAETETUS: Well, Socrates, with you cheering on like that it would be a disgrace for anyone not to make every effort he can to say what he e1
has to say. So here's what I think: if a person knows something, he is perceiving the thing he knows; the way it appears now, knowledge is nothing other than perception.

SOCRATES: That's a good, straight answer, my boy; just the sort of way one should express oneself. But now come on, let's jointly examine what e5
you've said, and see whether in fact it's fruitful or a bag of wind. Perception, you say, is knowledge?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, that's very probably no bad account to give of 152a
knowledge; it's the one Protagoras[13] too used to give. In a somewhat different way, he said this very same thing. His claim, I think, is that the 'measure of all things' is a human being, 'of the things that are, that they

[11] A 'sophist' who is portrayed in Plato's *Protagoras* as specializing in nice verbal distinctions.
[12] See 148e: Theaetetus put it differently, but Socrates' diagnosis was the same.
[13] See Introduction, Section 1.

are, and of the things that are not, that they are not.' I imagine you've read it?

a5 THEAETETUS: Indeed I have, many times.

SOCRATES: Well, isn't he saying something like this, that as each and every thing appears to me, so it is for me, and again, as they appear to you, so they are for you – you and I both being human beings?

THEAETETUS: Yes, that is what he's saying.

b1 SOCRATES: And it's a reasonable assumption that a wise man won't be talking rubbish. So let's follow out what he's saying. Isn't it the case sometimes that when there's a wind blowing, even though it's the same wind, one of us will be cold and another won't? And one will be slightly cold, another very cold?

THEAETETUS: Yes, very much so.

b5 SOCRATES: So in such cases are we going to say that the wind, taken itself by itself, is cold, or that it's not cold? Or shall we accept Protagoras' line that it's cold for the person who is shivering, and not for the person who isn't?

THEAETETUS: It seems we will.

b10 SOCRATES: And this is also how it appears to each of them?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: But now 'appearing' here is a matter of someone's perceiving?

THEAETETUS: Yes, it is.

c1 SOCRATES: A thing's appearing to someone, then, is the same as his perceiving it, in the case of hot things and of everything like that. For[14] how each of us perceives a thing is likely also to be how it is for each of us.

THEAETETUS: It seems so.

c5 SOCRATES: As befits knowledge, then, perception is always of what is, and never plays us false.

THEAETETUS: It appears so.

SOCRATES: By the three Graces! So has Protagoras turned out to be even wiser than we thought? Has he given us this as a riddle for the

c10 common riff-raff, while revealing the truth[15] to his disciples in secret?

d1 THEAETETUS: Why on earth do you say that, Socrates?

[14] Reading *gar*, which the OCT reads, but reluctantly.*

[15] There is probably punning here: *Truth* will have been the title of the book of Protagoras' that Theaetetus says he has read and re-read (152a); see 161c.

SOCRATES: I'll tell you a theory that certainly ought not to be written off. It's to the effect that actually nothing is just one thing, itself by itself, and that you cannot refer to a thing correctly by any description whatever. If you call something big, it will appear as small as well, and d5
if you call it heavy, it will appear as light too; and similarly with everything, just because – so the theory says – nothing is one, whether a one something or a one any sort of thing. If we say, of anything, that it is, we're wrong, because in fact all things are in a process of coming to be through motion, and change in general, and mixture with each other; nothing ever is, it's always *coming* to be. On this account of things we e1
may take it that all the wise in succession, apart from Parmenides, are agreed: not just Protagoras, but Heraclitus[16] and Empedocles, and among the poets, the top representatives of both genres, Epicharmus e5
for comedy and, for tragedy, Homer, who in composing the line 'Ocean, begetter of the gods, and Tethys their mother'[17] made everything the offspring of flux and change. Or don't you think that's what he's saying?

THEAETETUS: I do. e10

SOCRATES: Who then could still dispute the theory and not make 153a
himself a laughing stock, up against so powerful an army, with Homer himself as its general?

THEAETETUS: It wouldn't be easy, Socrates.

SOCRATES: No, Theaetetus, it wouldn't, since in fact there is evidence a5
enough for saying that being, or what seems to be such, and coming to be are produced by change, while rest produces not-being and passing away. Heat or fire, after all, the very thing that generates and controls everything else,[18] is itself generated from motion and friction, and both of these are changes. These are what generate fire, are they not? a10

THEAETETUS: Indeed they are. b1

SOCRATES: And what's more, every kind of living creature[19] springs from these same things.

[16] Heraclitus, notorious for the slogan 'everything flows', is actually the only one of those named who can be said for certain to be much interested in the theory Socrates is outlining; but precision is not his priority in the present context; see next note.

[17] The same line appears twice in the *Iliad* (14.201 and 302). It has only a superficial connection with what Socrates proposes to get from it, as he will virtually admit later on (see 180c–d).

[18] Especially (or even only) in Heraclitus' account of things (see n.16 above).

[19] This is the first occurrence of the term 'kind' in the *Theaetetus* (see Introduction, Section 2). The Greek has 'the kind of/belonging to living creatures' (*to . . . tôn zôiôn genos*), which is presumably the sum of its sub-kinds.

THEAETETUS: Of course.

b5 SOCRATES: And what about the condition of our bodies? Isn't that destroyed by rest and idleness, and generally preserved by exercises, that is, by change?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And the condition in our soul – isn't it by study and b10 practice, themselves changes, that it acquires learning of different sorts, and is preserved and improved, whereas lack of activity, when there is c1 no practice or study, means that it not only fails to learn anything but forgets anything it has learned before?

THEAETETUS: Very much so.

SOCRATES: One of the two, then, namely change, is good for both soul c5 and body, whereas the other is the opposite?

THEAETETUS: It seems so.

SOCRATES: So then let me go on and draw your attention to what happens when there is an absence of wind, calm, and things like that – how in each case the absence of change rots and destroys things, whereas the other sorts of conditions preserve them. And for my finishing touch, c10 I'll bring on that golden cord of Homer's. It's the sun he's talking about, d1 nothing else; what he's pointing out is that so long as the circumference and the sun are moving and changing, everything is, and is preserved, in both the divine and the human sphere, whereas if they came to a standstill, as if tethered,[20] all things would be destroyed, and we'd have d5 that famous situation where everything up is down and everything down is up.[21]

THEAETETUS: Yes, Socrates, this does seem to me to demonstrate what you're saying.

SOCRATES: The best way to think of it, my friend, is this. In the case of the eyes, first of all, you shouldn't think of what you call white colour as d10 some other thing outside your eyes, or within the eyes, and neither e1 should you assign it some particular location; if you do, it will surely then be fixed and resting, and come to be no longer in the process of coming to be.

[20] As Zeus says he could use a golden cord to bind up and tether everything to Mount Olympus, leaving it hanging in mid-air (Homer, *Iliad* 8.19–27).

[21] Probably another reference to Heraclitus, who was famous for claiming that opposites were somehow identical – as the road up is the same as the road down.

THEAETETUS: How should I think of it, then?

SOCRATES: Let's follow out what we were saying just now, and posit nothing that is just one thing, itself by itself. That way we'll find e5
that black or white or any colour you like must have been generated from the eyes' meeting the relevant motion, and what we actually call 154a
colour in each case won't be either what is doing the striking or what is being struck, but rather something that has come to be in between the two, peculiar to each. Or would you prefer to insist that as each colour appears to you, so it appears to a dog or whatever other living creature too?

THEAETETUS: Zeus! No, I would not. a5

SOCRATES: What about another human being? Does the way anything appears to someone else match the way it appears to you? Are you sure about that? Aren't you much surer that it won't even appear the same to you, because you yourself won't ever be the same as yourself?

THEAETETUS: That does seem the more likely to me.

SOCRATES: Well, if the things we measure ourselves against or touch b1
were large or white or hot, they wouldn't ever have become something different simply through meeting something else, without undergoing any change in themselves; and similarly if it was what was doing the measuring against or touching that was large or whatever it might be, b5
that couldn't have become different without anything having happened to it, just as a result of something else's having approached it or had something happen to *it*. Though as matters stand, my friend, we're all too readily forced into saying amazingly ridiculous things, as we'd be told by Protagoras and anyone who sets out to say the same things as he does.

THEAETETUS: What are you saying? What sorts of ridiculous things? b10

SOCRATES: One small example and you'll know exactly what I have in c1
mind. Take six dice. If you put four next to them, we say the six are more than the four, in fact half as many again; if you put twelve next to them, we say the six are fewer, in fact half as many, and I imagine we c5
won't put up with anyone saying otherwise in either case. Or perhaps you will?

THEAETETUS: I certainly won't.

SOCRATES: So what if Protagoras or anyone else asks you 'Theaetetus, is it possible for a thing to become bigger or more in number in any way other than by being increased?' How will you answer?

d1 THEAETETUS: Well, Socrates, if I say what I think in relation to the present question, I'll reply that it isn't possible; but if I answer in relation to the previous question, in order to guard against contradicting myself I'll say I think it is possible.

SOCRATES: A brilliant answer, by Hera! Well done, my friend! But evidently, if you reply 'Yes, it is possible', we'll have a situation like the d5 one in Euripides: we'll find that you've a tongue that's safe from being challenged, but a mind that is not.[22]

THEAETETUS: True.

SOCRATES: Now if the two of us were wise and clever people who had already examined all the contents of our minds, we'd have more e1 than enough time available to try each other out; we'd have been rushing like sophists into the sorts of battles sophists have, using arguments as weapons to beat each other's arguments down. But as it is, we're not experts like them, and what we'll want to do first is to look at the things we're thinking and see how they relate to each other – e5 whether they chime together, or whether there is complete disharmony between them.

THEAETETUS: That's quite certainly what I'd want to do.

SOCRATES: And the same goes for me. In that case, since we're in 155a no hurry, should we not go back and ask again – without getting cross about it, just doing a proper job of examining ourselves – what we're to make of these things that seem apparent to us?[23] The first of these, I think we'll say, as we go through them, is that nothing will ever become a5 greater or smaller, whether in size or in number, so long as it is equal to itself. Right?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And second, that if a thing had nothing either added to it or taken away from it, it never grows or shrinks but is always equal.

a10 THEAETETUS: Yes, surely.

b1 SOCRATES: Isn't there a third thing that seems apparent, too: that it's impossible for a thing to be, later on, what it was not before, and for it to be this without having become it or becoming it?[24]

[22] Cf. Euripides, *Hippolytus* 612: 'It was my tongue that swore; my mind remains unsworn.'

[23] I.e., these things that appear to us (to be true); 'the things we're thinking', as Socrates just called them.

[24] Omitting *alla* in this much debated sentence, apparently with Proclus.*

THEAETETUS: This certainly seems something we need to look at again.

SOCRATES: These three things we've agreed on really are, I think, b5
battling with themselves in our souls when we talk about what happens with the dice, or when we claim that I, being the age I am, without having grown or the opposite, will be within the same year now bigger, now smaller than your adolescent self, not because my size has been c1
reduced at all but because yours has increased. In this case I actually am, later on, what I was not before, without having become so; for it's impossible for anything to *have* become something without its coming to be that thing, and I could never become smaller without my losing any size. And there are myriads upon myriads of other examples where the c5
same is true, that is, if we're going to admit the cases mentioned. You follow me, I think, Theaetetus; at any rate you seem to me familiar enough with the sort of thing I'm referring to.

THEAETETUS: Yes, Socrates, and I perpetually wonder – by the gods I do! – how to make sense of it all; sometimes just looking at it makes me c10
literally quite dizzy.

SOCRATES: My friend, it appears Theodorus' guess about your nature d1
wasn't far wrong. This wondering of yours is very much the mark of a philosopher – philosophy starts nowhere else but with wondering, and the man who made Iris the offspring of Thaumas wasn't far off with his d5
genealogy.[25] But let me ask: do you now understand why the things in question are as they are, from what we're claiming our friend Protagoras says – or are you not yet grasping it?

THEAETETUS: I don't think I am, yet.

SOCRATES: So I'll be doing you a favour if I help you sniff out the d10
hidden truth in the mind of a famous man, or rather, of a number of e1
famous men?[26]

THEAETETUS: You certainly will – a very big favour.

SOCRATES: Then take a look round and make sure none of the uninitiated is listening in on us. The people I have in mind[27] are those that think there is nothing in the world except what they can grasp firmly e5
in their hands, and refuse to accept an action or a coming into being, or anything that can't be seen, as part of what is.

[25] See Hesiod, *Theogony* 265. *Thaumas* is the personification of wonder or amazement; Iris is messenger of the gods as well as the rainbow.
[26] See n.28. [27] The atomists, perhaps?

THEAETETUS: What an obstinate and thick-skinned sort of person
156a you're describing, Socrates!

SOCRATES: Yes, my boy, because they're quite entirely without cultivation. But others are much more subtle, and it's their mysteries I'm going to tell you about.[28] Their starting point, on which hangs every-
a5 thing we were talking about just now, was that everything was change and that there was nothing besides change; and of change there were two forms, each unlimited in plurality but with different powers, one to act, the other to be acted upon. From the coming together of these two motions, and the friction of one against the other, offspring come into
b1 being – unlimited numbers of them, but twins in every case, one twin being what is perceived, the other a perception, emerging simultaneously with what is perceived and being generated along with it. Well, for the perceptions we possess names such as seeing, hearing, smelling, cooling
b5 down, or burning up, ones we call pleasures and pains, too, desires and fears, and others besides – an unlimited number that lack names as well as a huge range that are named. As for the kind of thing that is perceived,
c1 it shares its birth with the perception, so that colours of all different varieties come to be with different seeings, sounds similarly with hearings, and the other sorts of things perceived with the other sorts of perceptions, kindred births in every case. So, Theaetetus, what is this
c5 story telling us, in relation to what we were saying before? Do you see?

THEAETETUS: Not entirely, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Well, see if we can somehow round the story off. What it's trying to tell us is that all these things are changing, as we're saying, but that there is a quickness and a slowness in their changing. All of it that is
c10 slow changes in the same place and in relation to neighbouring things,
d1 and that's how it gives birth, but the change relating to its offspring is

[28] These 'mysteries' seem to be the same as 'hidden truth' just mentioned, at 155d–e, as being 'in the mind of a famous man', i.e., Protagoras. They will amount to a development of the theory of flux, which was attributed at 152e to 'all the wise in succession' apart from Parmenides, including Empedocles, Epicharmus, and Homer, as well as Heraclitus (actually the main 'fluxer'); logic then suggests that these are the other famous men referred to in 155d. In this case, the 'hidden truth' (another pun on the title of Protagoras' book?), and the 'mysteries', will be hidden and secret not least because their supposed authors had never heard of them; after all, most of them were not even fluxers in the first place. Nor, strictly speaking, was Protagoras: Socrates brings in the theory of flux, and the theory he is now going to introduce, in order to give the Protagorean idea of the individual as 'measure' (152a), as interpreted in terms of the equation knowledge = perception, the sort of underpinning he thinks will give it the best chance of working (cf. 157c–d, 160d–e, 183a).

of the other sort, and that's why they are quicker[29] – for they move from place to place, and that is what their change consists in, namely locomotion. So when something commensurate with an eye has come into the neighbourhood of an eye, together the eye and it generate both whiteness and a perception twinned with whiteness – two things that would never d5
have come to be if either the eye or the other thing had approached anything else. Sight then moves between them from the eyes, whiteness e1
from the co-producer of the colour, and now – hey presto! – the eye is full of sight; now it *sees*, having become, certainly not sight, rather a seeing eye, and what has co-generated the colour has been filled full of e5
whiteness, having become for its part not whiteness but white, whether a white piece of wood or a white stone or whatever thing happened to have become coloured with this sort of colour. And so with everything – hard, hot, or anything else, we're to understand it in the same way: nothing is, itself by itself, as we were saying before; rather, it is in coming 157a
together with each other that all things and all sorts of things come to be, from their changing. In fact it's not possible, they say, to get a stable fix, in the one case, even on which of them is doing the acting and which is being acted upon, for neither is there anything acting before it comes a5
together with what is acted on, nor anything being acted on before it comes together with what is acting; and what does the acting when together with one thing turns out to be what is acted on when together with something else. The consequence of all this, according to the theory, is that nothing – as we were saying at the beginning – is just one thing, itself by itself, but instead is always coming to be in relation to b1
something. The verb 'is' must be removed from every context, even though we ourselves have been forced to use it many times over even just now, out of habit and lack of knowledge. In fact, according to these wise people's theory, we shouldn't consent to using 'something', or 'somebody's', or 'mine', or 'this', or 'that', or any other name that brings b5
things to a standstill. Instead our utterances should conform to nature and have things 'coming to be', 'being made', 'passing away' and 'altering', since if anyone ever uses language that brings something to a stop, he lays himself wide open to challenge. The rule applies to talk both about the individual case and about many collected together – the

[29] The translation here attempts to convey the sense of a supplement suggested by an editor to fill an evident lacuna in the transmitted text (immediately before 'and that's why they are quicker').*

c1 sort of collection for which people posit entities like human being, and rock, and so on with each living creature and form. – So, Theaetetus, do you like the look of all this? Is it appetizing enough for you to try it out?

THEAETETUS: For myself, I'm not sure, Socrates, and actually I can't
c5 make out where you stand on it, either – whether you're saying it because you agree with it, or in order to test me.

SOCRATES: You're forgetting, my friend, that I myself neither know anything of such things nor claim to know anything of them; none of them is my offspring. I'm acting as midwife to you, and that's why I sing
d1 my incantations, setting out dishes from this and that wise person for you to taste until I can help bring what *you* think out into the light. Once I've done that, then I'll look and see whether it will prove a bag of wind or something fruitful. Keep your spirits up, and bear with me, telling me
d5 in a good, forthright way whatever appears to you in relation to the things I ask you about.

THEAETETUS: Ask away, then.

SOCRATES: So tell me again whether you're attracted by the proposal that neither good, nor beautiful, nor any of the things that were on our list just now *is* at all, but is rather always in a process of *coming to be*.

d10 THEAETETUS: When I hear you setting out the theory like this, to me it appears so wonderfully reasonable that we should take things to be just as you've set them out.

e1 SOCRATES: Then let us not leave out any aspect of it that still remains to be filled in. What is missing is anything about dreams and diseases, especially madness, and all the things that one is said to mis-hear or mis-see, or mis-perceive in some other way. In all these cases, as I'm sure you
e5 know, the theory we've just been describing is generally thought[30] to be
158a found lacking, on the basis that quite plainly we find false perceptions turning up in them: far from things being as they appear to each person, it's rather the reverse, and nothing is as it appears to be.

THEAETETUS: That's very true, Socrates.

a5 SOCRATES: So then, my boy, what argument is left for someone who posits that perception is knowledge, and that what appears to each person also *is*, for the person to whom it appears?[31]

[30] Evidence, perhaps, that the theory in question is not just an invention of Plato's (see Introduction, Section 6)?

[31] See 151d–152a.

THEAETETUS: I really am hesitant, Socrates, about admitting that I don't know what to say, because you've only just told me off for saying it. Though I'd truly be unable to dispute that a madman believes what is b1
false when he thinks he's a god, or that a dreamer believes falsely when he thinks he's got wings, and in his sleep imagines that he's flying.

SOCRATES: So you have no notion, either, of the sort of dispute there b5
is about these cases, and especially about sleeping and being awake?

THEAETETUS: What sort of dispute is that?

SOCRATES: One that I think you've often heard, when people ask what evidence one could show if asked now, offhand, at this very moment, b10
whether we're asleep and dreaming everything we're thinking, or whether c1
we're awake and really talking to each other, not dreaming it.

THEAETETUS: Yes, Socrates, it certainly is hard to see what evidence one should point to. Each and every feature of either state is mirrored, as it were, in the other. There's nothing to stop us believing in our sleep, too, that we're having the same conversation with each other that we've c5
been having here and now; and indeed when we're dreaming and thinking we're describing dreams, the resemblance between this experience and the other is uncanny.

SOCRATES: So you can see that getting a dispute started here isn't difficult, given that it's disputed even whether we're awake or asleep. d1
Indeed, since the time we are asleep is equal to the time we are awake, and in either case our soul contends that whatever we currently believe is absolutely and completely true, it follows that we spend an equal amount of time claiming that one set of things is so and an equal amount claiming d5
that the other is, advancing both claims with similar confidence.

THEAETETUS: Yes, you're quite right.

SOCRATES: So won't the same argument apply in cases of illness and madness, except in relation to time, since in them it is not equal?

THEAETETUS: Right. d10

SOCRATES: So is what is true really going to be determined by the length or shortness of time?

THEAETETUS: That would be quite absurd, in all sorts of ways. e1

SOCRATES: Can you offer any other evidence to show clearly which of these beliefs are true?

THEAETETUS: I don't think I can.

SOCRATES: Then I shall tell you the sorts of things that would be said e5
on the subject by those who lay it down that what seems to someone at

any moment is true for the person to whom it seems so. I think their exposition would begin with this question: 'Theaetetus, if something is entirely different from something else, it can't, can it, somehow have the same power as the other thing? You're not to suppose, by the way, that
e10 the thing in question is in one way the same, in another different; it's wholly different.'

159a THEAETETUS: Well, it's impossible for it to have any feature in common with the other thing, whether by way of a power or in any respect whatever, when it's completely different.

SOCRATES: So mustn't one concede that such a thing is also unlike the other?

a5 THEAETETUS: I think so.

SOCRATES: Suppose, in that case, that a thing is coming to be like or unlike something, whether that something is itself or another thing: will we say that when it's becoming like, it's coming to be the same, and when it's becoming unlike, it's coming to be different?

THEAETETUS: Necessarily so.

a10 SOCRATES: Weren't we saying earlier that there were large, in fact unlimited, numbers of things that act upon other things, and similarly with things acted upon?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And also, that when one thing is mixed with another, and then another, it won't generate the same things, but different things?

b1 THEAETETUS: Yes, certainly.

SOCRATES: So now let's apply the same rationale to me and you and everything else. Take Socrates healthy and then Socrates sick: shall we
b5 say the one item is like or unlike the other?

THEAETETUS: The sick Socrates – you're taking this as a whole, and similarly the other thing, the healthy Socrates?

SOCRATES: You've taken the point beautifully; that's exactly what I'm doing.

THEAETETUS: Then the answer is: unlike.

b10 SOCRATES: And different too, insofar as it's unlike.

THEAETETUS: It must be.

c1 SOCRATES: And similarly, you'll claim, with Socrates sleeping or in any of the situations we were talking about just now?

THEAETETUS: I shall.

SOCRATES: Then won't it surely be the case that when any of the things whose nature it is to act on other things comes across Socrates healthy, it will interact with me as one thing, and when it comes across Socrates sick, with me as a different thing? c5

THEAETETUS: It certainly must.

SOCRATES: And in either case both I, the one acted on, and the thing that's doing the acting will generate different things?

THEAETETUS: Of course. c10

SOCRATES: Now when I drink wine and I'm healthy, it appears to me pleasantly sweet?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And that, from what we agreed before, is because what is c15 acting and what is being acted on, both being simultaneously in locomo- d1 tion, have generated both sweetness and a perception: the perception, being from what is acted on, has rendered the tongue perceiving, while from the wine, the sweetness moving around it has made it both be and appear sweet to the healthy tongue. d5

THEAETETUS: Yes, that's certainly in line with what was agreed between us before.

SOCRATES: And when it[32] comes across Socrates sick, first of all it must truly not be the same person it's confronting – right? After all, it's d10 encountering something we've agreed is unlike.

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: So to spell it out again, Socrates in this condition plus the e1 drinking of the wine have generated different things: perception of bitterness around the tongue, and bitterness coming to be and moving around the wine, so that it, the wine, comes to be not bitterness, but bitter, while I come to be perceiving, not perception. e5

THEAETETUS: Quite so.

SOCRATES: And I shall never come to be perceiving in this way in relation to anything else, since a perception of something else is another perception, and makes the person perceiving of another sort, in fact 160a another person; nor will what is acting on me ever at any time generate the same thing and come to be as it is now by coming together with something else, since having generated something else from something else it will itself come to be different.

[32] I.e., whatever it is that is doing the acting in this case.

a5 THEAETETUS: That's right.

SOCRATES: And neither will I come to be like this for myself, nor it like that for itself.

THEAETETUS: No.

SOCRATES: But I must inevitably come to be perceiving something,
a10 when I come to be perceiving, because it's impossible for me to come to
b1 be perceiving but perceiving nothing; and in turn it must come to be for someone, when it becomes sweet or bitter or anything of that sort, because it's impossible for something to have come to be sweet and yet have come to be sweet for nobody.

THEAETETUS: That's certainly so.

b5 SOCRATES: So all that is left, I think, is that I and it, whether we are or whether we come to be, are or come to be for each other, since necessity binds what each of us is[33] with what the other is and not with anything else, or even with ourselves. That we are bound to each other really is the only possibility left. So whether someone uses the word 'is' about something or talks about it as coming into being, he'll need to say that it is
b10 or is coming into being *for*, or *of*, or *relatively to* someone or something. He
c1 mustn't allow himself or anyone else to talk of a thing as being or coming to be itself by itself – or so the theory we've been describing indicates.

THEAETETUS: That's certainly so, Socrates.

SOCRATES: So given that what is acting on me is for me and nobody
c5 else, it's also I who perceive it, and nobody else?

THEAETETUS: It must be.

SOCRATES: In that case my perceptions are true for me, because they are of what is for me, personally, in every case; and I am judge, in Protagorean mode, both of the things that are for me, that they are, and of the things that are not for me, that they are not.[34]

c10 THEAETETUS: It seems so.

d1 SOCRATES: So if there is no falsehood in me, no stumbling in my thought about the things that are or come to be, how can I not *know* the very things of which I am perceiver?

THEAETETUS: There's no way you can fail to know them.

d5 SOCRATES: In that case it was quite right for you to say that knowledge was nothing else but perception. Everything has come together – the

[33] Or our 'being' (*ousia*).

[34] This is basically Protagoras' dictum as quoted at 152a, but with the addition of 'for me'.

view of Homer and Heraclitus and the whole of that sort of tribe, that all things change like rivers;[35] that idea of Protagoras, too, wisest of all, that the measure of all things is a human being; and now Theaetetus' proposal, e1
to the effect that if these things are so, perception turns out to be knowledge. How about it, Theaetetus? Shall we claim this as your newborn baby, as it were, delivered by me as midwife? Or what do you want to say?

THEAETETUS: It's as you say, Socrates; I can't deny it. e5

SOCRATES: This, then, it seems, is what we've finally brought to birth after so much trouble, whatever it may actually be worth. Now that the birth's over, instead of running around the hearth with the baby we must do things properly, and run our argument around the baby in a circle, to make sure what's taking shape isn't fooling us and pretending to be worth bringing up, when it's actually a bag of wind and falsehood. Or 161a
what do you think? Do you think your offspring should be brought up anyway, and not disposed of? Or will you put up with seeing it put to the test, and not be too angry if someone robs you of your first-born?

THEODORUS: Theaetetus will put up with it, Socrates – he's not at all a5
the ill-tempered sort. But by the gods, come on! Say why things *aren't* like this!

SOCRATES: You're simply a glutton for debate, Theodorus! It's good of you to suppose that I'm some sort of sack of arguments, and can easily pull one out to say that on the other hand, no, these things aren't so. b1
You don't notice what's happening. The arguments never emerge from my side; they always come from my partner in discussion, and I have no more knowledge than the little required to get an argument from someone else who *is* wise and to receive it in a measured way – as I'll be b5
trying to get one from Theaetetus now, and not trying to say something on my own account.

THEODORUS: The way you put it is better, Socrates. Go on and do as you say.

SOCRATES: So do you know, Theodorus, what I wonder at in your friend Protagoras? b10

THEODORUS: What's that? c1

SOCRATES: I'm happy enough with other aspects of his claim, that things are what they seem to be to each individual. But I do wonder at

[35] Or so, again, *Heraclitus* said ('all things flow/are in flux', as he is frequently reported as saying).

c5 the way he begins. Why didn't he open his *Truth* by saying 'The measure of all things is a pig', or 'a baboon', or choosing some still stranger sort of thing that possesses the capacity to perceive? That way he could have begun addressing us with magnificent and total contempt, by demonstrating that while we were busy revering him like a god for d1 his wisdom, when it came to knowing things he was actually no better than a tadpole, let alone any other human being. What else are we to say, Theodorus? If whatever belief each person comes to through perception is going to be true for him, and no one is going to be a better judge of what has happened to someone else than that someone himself, nor d5 will anyone be better placed to judge whether what another person believes is correct or false – if, that is to say, as has been repeated many times, each and every person is going to believe what he believes, by himself, on his own, and all of his beliefs are going to be correct and true, then how on earth, my friend, can it be that Protagoras is wise? e1 How can anyone be justified in supposing him qualified to teach others, for large fees, and the rest of us more ignorant than him, so that we need to go to him to be taught? How so, when we are each the measure of our own wisdom for ourselves? How can we avoid concluding that *that* idea was mere demagoguery on Protagoras' part? I say e5 nothing about my side of things, and how ridiculous it makes *me*, if his theory is correct – me and my art of midwifery, presumably along with all this business of philosophical conversation. Examining the things that appear to and are believed by one another, and trying to refute 162a them, when each person's appearances and beliefs are correct – isn't this just an inordinately drawn-out piece of tomfoolery, if Protagoras' 'truth' is true, and isn't simply making fun of us from the oracular recesses of his book?

THEODORUS: The man was a friend, Socrates, as you said yourself a5 just now. So I wouldn't want Protagoras to be refuted because of concessions I'd made on his behalf; nor again would I resist you by going against my own beliefs. So take it up with Theaetetus again; the way he was following your lead just now appeared altogether very appropriate.

b1 SOCRATES: If you went to Sparta, Theodorus, and visited the wrestling schools, would you think to watch other people naked, some of them inferior specimens, and not take your turn to strip off and show them what shape you were in?

THEODORUS: Well, what do you think – if I could persuade them to let me choose? Just as now I imagine I'll persuade you people to let me watch, not drag my stiff joints off to the gymnasium. The bout should be with the younger and more supple among us. b5

SOCRATES: Well, Theodorus, I'm happy if you are, as people say who like their proverbs. Back it is to the wise Theaetetus, then. So start by telling me, Theaetetus, about the things we were saying just now: does it not make you wonder, that you're suddenly going to find yourself every bit as good, when it comes to wisdom, as any human – or even any god? Or do you think the Protagorean measure applies any less to gods than it does to human beings? b10 c1 c5

THEAETETUS: Zeus! I certainly don't. And to answer your question, it really does make me wonder. When we were discussing the manner of their claim, that what seems to each individual also is for the individual thinking it, it appeared completely fine to me; but now all of a sudden it's quite the opposite. d1

SOCRATES: That's your youth, my dear boy, making you quick to listen to crowd-pleasing talk and to allow it to take you in. The response to this objection from Protagoras, or from anyone who speaks for him, will be 'You people, young and old, you sit there merely playing to the crowd! Not only do you try to bring gods into it, when I specifically omit to say, whether in person or in writing, either that they are or that they are not,[36] but when you say how strange, if no human being is going to be any wiser than the next sheep or goat, then you're just saying what ordinary people would accept if you told it to them. You mention nothing whatever by way of compelling proof; instead you rely on what merely looks likely. If Theodorus or some other geometer tried doing geometry like that, they wouldn't be worth a single moment's attention.' So you and Theodorus had better look and see whether you're going to be content to accept statements, on questions of such great importance, that rely on mere plausibility and likelihoods. d5 e1 e5 163a

THEAETETUS: It wouldn't be right, Socrates; neither you nor we would say it was.

[36] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* IX.51, reports Protagoras as saying 'About the gods, I am incapable of knowing either that they are or that they are not; for many are the things that prevent my knowing, both obscurity and the shortness of the life of a human being.'

SOCRATES: Then it seems we must take a different line in our inquiry.
a5 That's what you and Theodorus are saying.

THEAETETUS: Yes, definitely a different line.

SOCRATES: So here's a way we might consider whether knowledge and perception are after all the same thing, or different – I suppose that was the point of our discussion all along, wasn't it? That's how we came to
a10 stir up all these weird subjects?

THEAETETUS: It certainly was.

b1 SOCRATES: Well now, are we going to accept that when we perceive anything by seeing or hearing, we also know it at the same time? For example, are we going to say that before we've learned their language, we don't hear non-Greeks speak, or that we both hear and know what
b5 they're saying? Again, if we don't know our letters, will we claim that we're not seeing them when we look at them, or insist that we do know them, if indeed we're seeing them?

THEAETETUS: What we'll say we know, Socrates, is exactly what
b10 we see and hear of them: the shape and the colour, we'll say, we both
c1 see and know in the case of the letters, while in the other case we both hear, and at the same time know, the high or low pitch of the voices. But as for what schoolmasters or interpreters teach about them, we'll say we don't perceive that by seeing or hearing it and we don't know it either.

c5 SOCRATES: Very well done, Theaetetus, and it's not worth disputing the point with you, if you're to progress. But watch out for this new objection that's looming, and think how we're to fend it off.

THEAETETUS: What sort of objection?

d1 SOCRATES: The sort where someone asks 'Suppose someone has come to know something, and suppose he still has a memory of this same thing, which he's preserving: at the time he remembers it, is it possible for him not to know the very thing he remembers?' It seems I'm using
d5 too many words, when all I want to ask is whether someone who has learned something doesn't know it when he remembers it.

THEAETETUS: How could he not know it, Socrates? What you're saying would be monstrous!

SOCRATES: So perhaps I'm being crazy? But look here. Aren't you saying that seeing is perceiving, and that sight is perception?

d10 THEAETETUS: I am.

SOCRATES: So, according to what you were saying just now, the person who has seen something has come to know the thing he has seen? e1

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And what about memory? You do say there is such a thing?

THEAETETUS: Yes. e5

SOCRATES: And is memory of nothing, or of something?

THEAETETUS: Of something, I imagine.

SOCRATES: Of things that a person has learned and things that he has perceived – those sorts of things?

THEAETETUS: Obviously.

SOCRATES: And I suppose a person sometimes remembers what he has seen? e10

THEAETETUS: He does.

SOCRATES: Even when he's shut his eyes? Or has he forgotten once he's done that?

THEAETETUS: That would be a strange thing to say, Socrates!

SOCRATES: And yet it's something we'll have to say if we're going to save our proposal; if we don't, it's dead and buried. 164a

THEAETETUS: Zeus! That's what I'm suspecting too, but I'm not entirely clear why. Explain it to me.

SOCRATES: The point is that according to what we're saying, the person seeing has come to know the thing he's come to be seeing, given our agreement that sight – that is, perception – and knowledge are the same thing. a5

THEAETETUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: But if the person who has come to be seeing, and thus to know the thing he was seeing, now shuts his eyes, he remembers the thing but isn't seeing it. Right? a10

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: But 'isn't seeing' is 'doesn't know', if seeing is also knowing. b1

THEAETETUS: True.

SOCRATES: It follows, in that case, given that he's not seeing it, that a person doesn't know, even while he still remembers, what he came to know. Which is just the result we said would be monstrous. b5

THEAETETUS: Very true.

SOCRATES: Something impossible, then, appears to follow if one claims knowledge and perception to be the same thing.

b10 THEAETETUS: It looks like it.

SOCRATES: In that case we need to say that the two things are different from each other.

THEAETETUS: Very likely.

c1 SOCRATES: What, then, *will* knowledge be? It seems we'll have to begin our account again from the beginning. – But hold on, Theaetetus! What on earth are we thinking of?

THEAETETUS: In what respect?

c5 SOCRATES: We appear to me to be behaving like a badly bred fighting cock, leaping away from the thesis we're opposing and crowing before we've won.

THEAETETUS: How so?

SOCRATES: It looks as though we've reached agreement between us in the way antilogicians do,[37] content if we defeat the thesis somehow by c10 basing ourselves on issues of mere verbal consistency. We're not in it for d1 the sake of winning, we say, in the way those clever fellows are, we're *philosophers* – not noticing that we're actually doing the same as they do.

THEAETETUS: I don't yet understand your point.

d5 SOCRATES: I'll try to show what my thinking is about it all. Our question was whether someone who has learned something and remembers it won't know it. By showing that the person seeing and then shutting his eyes was remembering and not seeing, we showed that he didn't know even while he was actually remembering; and this we said was impossible. And so the Protagorean story met its end, and your d10 story, about knowledge and perception being the same thing, went with it.

e1 THEAETETUS: It appears so.

SOCRATES: I don't think, my friend, that it would have met its end at all, if only the father of the first of the two stories were alive – he would find plenty to say in its defence. But as things are, it's an orphan, and we're trampling over it. Not even the guardians Protagoras left e5 behind him are willing to come to its aid, one of whom is Theodorus here. But come on, for the sake of justice we'll risk helping it out ourselves.

[37] An expert in 'antilogic' would typically claim to be able in one way or another to lead a respondent who starts with one position, on anything whatever, into asserting the opposite of that position.

THEODORUS: You see, Socrates, I'm not the one looking after Protagoras' legacy; that's more Callias, son of Hipponicus.[38] We on 165a
our side somehow headed rather quickly away from abstract arguments, to geometry. All the same we'll be grateful if you will come to the orphan's aid.

SOCRATES: You're right, Theodorus. So see what you think of my attempt to help out, for what it's worth. The fact is that we might find a5
ourselves making even stranger concessions than we did just now, if we don't pay attention to the words we use, and the way we're mostly used to asserting and denying things. Shall I tell you how it might happen – or should I be telling Theaetetus?

THEAETETUS: You should tell us both, but let the younger of us answer the questions, because he'll make less of a spectacle of himself b1
when he trips up.

SOCRATES: Well, here is the strangest question. I think it goes something like this: is it possible for the same person to know something and yet not know this thing he knows?

THEODORUS: So what shall we answer, Theaetetus? b5

THEAETETUS: That it's pretty much impossible, I think.

SOCRATES: Not so, or at least not if you're going to assume that seeing is knowing. If you are, how will you deal with a question you can't escape – one that will leave you 'trapped in a well', as people say: what if some forthright individual claps his hand over one of your eyes and asks c1
if you see his cloak with the covered eye?

THEAETETUS: I imagine I'll say that I don't see it with this one, but I do with the other.

SOCRATES: So you're seeing and not seeing the same thing at the same time?

THEAETETUS: I am, yes, in a way. c5

SOCRATES: 'That', he'll say, 'isn't at all what I'm after; my question wasn't about how, just *whether* what you know you also don't know. And as things stand, you're plainly seeing what you're not seeing; since you've actually admitted that seeing is knowing, and that not seeing is not knowing, you can work out for yourself where this leaves you.' c10

[38] A wealthy patron of intellectuals; the main conversation in Plato's *Protagoras*, with Protagoras and Socrates as protagonists, takes place in his house.

d1 THEAETETUS: Yes, I can – saying the opposite of what I proposed before.

SOCRATES: Indeed, my wonderful friend, and probably more of the same would have happened to you, if someone went on to ask you if it's possible to know things now sharply, now dimly, or know them from d5 close up but not from a distance, or know a lot or just a little bit about the same thing. There are tens of thousands of such questions you would be ambushed with in discussion by some fee-earning expert in skirmishing, as soon as you proposed that knowledge and perception were the same thing. Sallying into hearing and smelling and all sorts of perceptions like e1 that, he would keep challenging you and not let up until he'd bound you hand and foot with wonder at his much-envied wisdom; at which point, having made you his prisoner and tied you up once and for all, he would ransom you for whatever sum you decided on between you. – So, you e5 may ask, what answers will Protagoras give in support of his offspring? Should we try to say?

THEAETETUS: We certainly should.

166a SOCRATES: He'll say all the things we are saying in his defence, and then I imagine he'll come to close quarters with us and say contemptuously. 'Good for Socrates! Didn't he do well, bullying some little boy by asking him if it was possible for the same person both to remember and not to know the same thing at the same time – and then, when the boy a5 said no because he was frightened and couldn't see what was coming, using the discussion to make *me* a laughing stock! That's just lazy of you, Socrates. This is the way it is: when you use your method of questioning to examine something I have said, I am the one that is refuted if the b1 person questioned slips up by giving the very sorts of answers I would give; but if his answers are not the sort I would give, the refutation is of him, not of me.

'To begin with, do you think anyone is going to concede to you that when we have a present memory of things that have happened to us, this is the same sort of experience as the one we had originally, if we're no longer experiencing the things in question? Far from it.[39] Or, con- b5 versely, that anyone will hesitate to concede that it's possible for the same person to know and not know the same thing? Or, if he's too

[39] In other words, why do you suppose that I (Protagoras) cannot construct an account of a present memory consistent with the one I've given of perception?

frightened to make that concession, do you think he'll ever grant you that someone who is becoming unlike is the same person he was before becoming unlike, or indeed even that he's some*one*, and not a plurality of individuals coming into being – an unlimited plurality at that, if things c1
are going on becoming unlike? Certainly not, if we're going to have to watch out for people pouncing on our use of words. Be more adventurous, my good man,' Protagoras will say, 'and direct your attack at what I'm actually saying. Refute me, if you can, by showing that the perceptions that come to be for each one of us are not peculiar to that c5
individual, or that, if they are peculiar to him, it does not follow at all that what appears to him comes to be – or is, if we have to call it that – for that person alone, that is, the one to whom it appears. By talking about pigs, or baboons, you not only behave like a pig yourself, you persuade the audience to do the same towards my writings, and that's not right.

'I say the truth is as I have written it: each one of us is the measure d1
both of the things that are and of the things that are not, but people differ ten thousand times over from each other, for the very reason that different things are for, and appear to, different people. I am far from denying that there is such a thing as wisdom, or that an individual can be d5
wise; but the only individual I do call wise is the one who effects change in the person to whom bad things appear, and for whom they are, and brings it about that good things both appear to him and are for him.

'I ask you again – don't attack what I'm saying merely for the way I say e1
it. But let me explain yet more clearly what I *am* saying. Recall the sort of example we used before: how what the sick person eats both appears and is bitter to him, whereas the opposite is and appears to the healthy person. What is required in this case is not to make one or the other of e5
them wiser, which is ruled out in any case; nor is it to call the ill one 167a
ignorant for having the beliefs he has, the healthy one wise for having different ones. What is needed is to change the one to the other state, because one of them is better. In education, similarly, the aim must be to effect change from the worse of two states to the better; the difference is a5
that the medical doctor brings about the change with drugs, whereas the sophist[40] does so with words. Nobody ever made anyone with false

[40] I.e., a professional purveyor of wisdom (*sophia*); as 'Protagoras' himself has now set things up, only he or someone like him will qualify.

beliefs about anything go on to have true ones; for it's impossible for anyone to believe either things that are not, or things that go against what
b1 he is currently experiencing, which is in every case true. What I think *can* be done is to make someone who has a soul in unsound condition, and believes things akin to that condition, come to believe different and sound things with a soul in correspondingly sound condition – things, that is, appearances, that some people, out of inexperience, call true, whereas I myself don't call them in any way truer than the others, but
b5 simply better. And, my dear Socrates, so far from reducing wise people to frogs, I call them doctors if they deal with human bodies, farmers if they deal with plants; for I claim that farmers too produce sound and
c1 healthy perceptions and truths[41] in plants, when some aspect of them is sickly, in place of unsound perceptions, and that wise and good public speakers are those that make sound things seem to cities to be just in
c5 place of unsound ones. Because whatever sorts of things seem to each city to be just and fine, these I claim are so for that city, for so long as it thinks them so; but the wise person in each case makes sound things be for and seem to the citizens instead of things that are unsound. The same argument applies to the sophist too: it is his ability to educate his pupils
d1 in this way that makes him both wise and worth a great deal of money to those he has educated.

'That is how it can be *both* that some people are wiser than others *and* that no one has false beliefs about anything, so that whether you like it or not, you too have to put up with being the measure; the conjunction of
d5 the two things preserves that thesis of mine. If you are able to dispute this, starting at the beginning, then do so by setting out the opposing case – or if you prefer to use questioning, do it that way; one shouldn't run away from questioning either, and indeed any sensible person
e1 should encourage it more than anything. But I ask one thing of you: make sure that you don't treat me unjustly in your questions. It is quite unreasonable for someone who claims to care about goodness to persist in behaving unjustly in discussion. The sort of injustice I have in mind is when one fails to separate two different things, namely having one's say
e5 in a spirit of competition, and doing so as part of a conversation.[42]

[41] Reading *alêtheias* (accusative plural) in place of the manuscripts' *alêtheis.**

[42] I.e., presumably, a thoughtful or philosophical one; a proper dialogue (the term Protagoras uses is *dialegesthai*).

Competing is a matter of playing about and trying to trip the other person up as much as possible, whereas in conversation one is in earnest, and helps put the respondent back on his feet, pointing out to him only those slip-ups that he is responsible for himself or has been misled into 168a
by the company he's been with previously. If you do keep the two things apart, people who spend time with you will blame themselves for their own confusion and puzzlement, not you. You they'll follow and love, while reserving their hatred for themselves, fleeing from their own a5
company into philosophy, in order to become different people and be rid of the people they were before. But if you do the opposite of this, as most do, then you'll get the opposite result, and instead of making your companions into philosophers you'll make them hate the whole idea b1
when they become older. So as I said before, if you take my advice you'll approach what we're saying with kindly intent and not in a hostile or aggressive manner; you'll settle down with us and genuinely examine what it is that we're saying when we assert that everything is changing, b5
and that things are for each, individual and city, what they seem to each to be. And you'll use *that* as the basis for considering whether knowledge and perception are the same thing or different; not, as you were doing just now, the conventional use of words and names, which people c1
generally drag in somehow or other and create all sorts of puzzles for one another in doing so.'

I present this, Theodorus, as my contribution towards helping your friend out. Small it may be, but so are my resources; it's the best I can do. If only he were alive, he'd have mounted a more magnificent defence c5
for his own offspring.

THEODORUS: You're joking, Socrates. You've defended the man with a quite youthful vigour!

SOCRATES: Good of you to say so, my friend. Tell me – did you perhaps notice how when he was speaking just now Protagoras criticized us for addressing our arguments to a little boy,[43] and competing against d1
his case by using the boy's fears? And how he wrote off what we said as an amusing trifle, while extolling this 'measure of all things' of his, and telling us to take his position seriously?

THEODORUS: I could hardly fail to notice it, Socrates. d5

[43] 166a.

SOCRATES: So do you think we should do as he says?

THEODORUS: Very much so.

SOCRATES: Well, you can see that all here are 'little boys' except you. So if we are going to do what the man says, it's the two of us that will
e1 have to 'take his position seriously' by doing the questioning and answering between ourselves. Then at least he won't be able to complain that we treated examining his position like a game with adolescents.

THEODORUS: What are you saying? Won't Theaetetus be better at
e5 following the investigation of a thesis than any number of us who have big beards?

SOCRATES: Certainly no better than *you*, Theodorus. There's no reason why I should be making every effort to support your dead
169a friend while you make none at all. Be a good man and follow for a little while – up until the point when we know whether it's you after all that should be the measure when it comes to geometrical figures, or whether everyone is just as much an authority as you are on astronomy and the
a5 other subjects in which you are said to excel.

THEODORUS: It isn't easy, Socrates, for anyone sitting beside you to avoid giving an account of himself. It was crazy of me to pretend just now that you would allow me not to strip off, and wouldn't use compul-
b1 sion as the Spartans do; in fact I think you're more like Sciron.[44] The Spartans give an option, either to leave or strip, but you seem to me rather to be playing the scene Antaeus-style[45] – if anyone comes near you, you don't let him go until you've forced him to strip and wrestle with you in discussion.

b5 SOCRATES: Yes, that's a first-rate analogy for my affliction, Theodorus. But I'm harder to shake off than Sciron or Antaeus. I've come across tens of thousands of powerful speakers in my time, veritable Heracleses and Theseuses, and they've given me a thoroughly good
c1 thrashing, but even so I'm still no more likely to stand back, so extraordinarily deep is the passion in me for working out on these subjects. So no, don't you begrudge me a bout with you, either; it'll do you good as well as me.

c5 THEODORUS: I won't resist any more. Lead on as you will. I shall have to put up with it anyway, whatever fate you spin for me with your

[44] A legendary brigand, proverbial for his combination of viciousness and cunning.
[45] Another legendary figure, who wrestled any passer-by to death.

questioning. But I'll not be able to offer myself to you beyond what you've proposed.

SOCRATES: Even that far will suffice. And please do watch out that we don't use some childish sort of strategy in the discussion and not notice it. We don't want anyone reproaching us for that again. d1

THEODORUS: I'll certainly try, so far as I can.

SOCRATES: So let's first attack the same point we were attacking before, and see whether we were right or not to be upset at Protagoras' theory for making each individual self-sufficient in wisdom, and whether he was right or not in agreeing with us that some individuals were in fact superior to others, that is, in relation to what is better or worse, so that these individuals *were* wise. Right? d5

THEODORUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, if he were here to make the concession for himself, instead of our making it for him, to help him out, there wouldn't be any need for us to take up the point again and confirm it; but as things are, someone might declare us to be lacking the authority to make the concession for him. So it's better for us to reach a clearer agreement on this particular point, because it makes no small difference whether it is so or not. d10 e1 e5

THEODORUS: That is true.

SOCRATES: Then let's not get the concession through others but from what he himself says, in the shortest possible way. 170a

THEODORUS: How?

SOCRATES: Like this. I think he says that what seems to each individual also is for that person?

THEODORUS: Indeed he does. a5

SOCRATES: Well then, Protagoras, we too are saying what seems to a human being,[46] or rather what seems to all human beings, and we claim that there is no one who doesn't think that in some respects he is wiser than others and in other respects others are wiser than him. That certainly holds at times of greatest danger: whether we're on military campaigns, we're ill, or we're in a storm at sea, we treat whoever is in charge like a god, looking to him to save us through his superiority in a10 b1

[46] Or 'what a human being believes' (Socrates is using the term *doxa*); but what Socrates says here appears designed to pick up 'what seems', *to dokoun*, in what he last said – a person's 'beliefs' being, *inter alia*, the things that seem (true) to him or her.

precisely this respect, that he *knows*. And practically every area of human life is full of people looking for those who will teach them or otherwise take charge, whether of themselves, of other animals, or of productive
b5 activities; full too of others who think they're up to teaching and to taking charge. Is it possible to avoid the conclusion that in all these cases human beings themselves think there is wisdom and ignorance among them?

THEODORUS: No.

b10 SOCRATES: And they think wisdom is true thought, ignorance false belief?

c1 THEODORUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: So how, Protagoras, shall we deal with this outcome? Are we to say that what human beings believe is in every case true, or that it
c5 is in some cases true, in others false? It looks as if it follows either way that their beliefs are not always true, but sometimes true, sometimes false. For think, Theodorus: would Protagoras and his supporters, or would you, really be prepared to maintain that no one ever thinks that someone else is ignorant and has false beliefs?

THEODORUS: It's hard to credit, Socrates.

d1 SOCRATES: And yet that's the predicament this thesis, that a human being is the measure of all things, necessarily finds itself in.

THEODORUS: How so?

SOCRATES: Suppose you have made a judgement about something
d5 privately to yourself, and you then declare your belief to me: granted that on Protagoras' thesis it will be true for you, will it not be possible for the rest of us to be our own judges of your judgement? Or do we always judge your beliefs to be true? Don't tens of thousands of people resist you every time with their own opposite beliefs, and suppose your judgements and thoughts to be false?

e1 THEODORUS: Zeus! Yes, Socrates, 'countless tens of thousands', to quote Homer,[47] who give me the sort of trouble human beings do.

SOCRATES: What then? Do you want us to say that you find yourself
e5 on such occasions believing things that are true for you yourself, but false for tens of thousands of others?

THEODORUS: It seems that must be so, at least from what we've said.

[47] *Odyssey* 16.121, of the numbers of enemies Odysseus faces on his return home.

SOCRATES: And how about for Protagoras himself?[48] Mustn't it be the case that if not even he thought human beings were the measure, and neither did most people (as in fact they don't), this *Truth* he's written isn't the truth for anybody at all? And if he did think it himself, and the 171a generality of people do not, you'll recognise that, first, it's more the case that it's not the truth than that it is, by the same proportion as those to whom it doesn't seem to be so outnumber those to whom it does.

THEODORUS: Inevitably, given that it is going to be so or not so according to individuals' particular beliefs. a5

SOCRATES: Yes, and there is this second, quite exquisite consequence: on the one hand, in relation to his own thinking, I suppose Protagoras agrees that the thinking of those holding opposite beliefs, by virtue of which they consider *his* thinking false, is in fact true, since he concedes that everyone believes things that are.[49]

THEODORUS: Certainly. a10

SOCRATES: Will he then concede that his own thinking is false, if he b1 admits that the thinking of those who consider his to be false is true?

THEODORUS: He can't avoid it.

SOCRATES: But they, on the other hand, do not concede that *their* view is false? b5

THEODORUS: They do not.

SOCRATES: And he for his part concedes that this belief too is true, to judge by what he has written.

THEODORUS: Apparently.

SOCRATES: It follows, then, that Protagoras' view will be disputed b10 from all sides, starting from Protagoras – or rather *he* will be agreeing with it, as soon as he concedes to someone taking the opposite view to his own that this person in this moment believes what is true. And[50] c1 Protagoras himself will concede on his own behalf that neither a dog nor any random human being is the measure in relation to anything whatever if he hasn't learned it. Isn't that so?

[48] This seems to pick up the question at 170c. Socrates has just established that Theodorus is not 'prepared to maintain that no one ever thinks someone else is ignorant and has false beliefs'; now he asks whether Protagoras would be.

[49] 'Believes things that are' (*ta onta doxazein*): another way of putting the by now standard formula 'what seems to each person (to be) also is for that person'; it picks up Protagoras' claim at 167a that 'it's impossible for anyone to believe either things that are not, or things that go against what he is currently experiencing, which is in every case true.'

[50] Deleting the comma before *tote* and inserting a full stop after it (after Sedley).

THEODORUS: It is.

c5 SOCRATES: So, since it's disputed by everybody, Protagoras' *Truth* will be true for nobody; not for anybody else, and not even for him.

THEODORUS: We're pushing my friend too hard, Socrates.

c10 SOCRATES: But I have to say, my friend, it isn't clear that what we're saying is breaking any rules.[51] In any case the likelihood is that being d1 older than us, the man really is wiser than we are. If he could suddenly poke his head up from the ground just there in front of us, as far as the neck, I've no doubt he'd find me out many times over for talking nonsense, and you for agreeing to my nonsense; then he'd sink back down again and be gone before we knew it. But we must just make the d5 best of ourselves as we are, I suppose, and simply say what seems to us in each case. And in fact, in the present case, surely we'll say that anybody and everybody would agree at least to this much, that one person can be wiser or more ignorant than another?

THEODORUS: It certainly seems so to me.

SOCRATES: And do you also think the position we're discussing holds e1 up best in the way we ourselves sketched it when we were coming to Protagoras' aid, namely that most things are for each individual as they seem to him – hot, dry, sweet, everything of that type; but that if it was going to concede at all that there were things in which one person is e5 superior to another in certain things, it would want to say that not every female or child, or indeed animal, is competent to recognize what is conducive to its own health, and to heal itself, and that if there is indeed any context in which one person is superior to another, it's here?

THEODORUS: That's how it seems to me.

172a SOCRATES: And similarly in the political sphere, in relation to what is fine or shameful, just or unjust, or pious or not: whatever a city thinks about these, and lays down as the norm for herself, that, according to the thesis, will also in truth *be* fine, shameful, and so on for each city, and in a5 such matters no individual will be any wiser than another, nor any city wiser than another; but when it comes to laying down what is advantageous or not for herself, that is where, if anywhere, one adviser will again be superior to another, and one city's decisions superior to another's, in b1 relation to their truth. It would be simply too much for the thesis to

[51] An admission that the last objection to Protagoras might be somewhat *ad hominem*?

claim that anything a city thought was advantageous to herself and laid down as such would with absolute certainty turn out to be so. But with the things I'm talking about, the just and the unjust, the pious and the impious, it is different – people are happy to maintain that none of them is a thing in nature with its own being;[52] what seems just, pious, or b5
whatever to people collectively comes to be true at the moment it seems so to them and for as long a time as it seems so. Even those who don't go all the way with Protagoras' view hold something like this sort of view of wisdom. – Just look, Theodorus, we discuss one thesis, and then another c1
one comes along, bigger than the last!

THEODORUS: We have the time for it, don't we, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Evidently. I've frequently thought to myself on other occasions, my friend, and I'm thinking it now, how unsurprising it is that those who have spent a lot of time on things like philosophy appear c5
such buffoons when they go and speak in a court of law.

THEODORUS: Why exactly do you say that?

SOCRATES: Take people who have knocked around since their youth in the courts and other such places, and compare them with those brought up on philosophy and activities like that: it's pretty much like comparing d1
the upbringing of slaves to that of free men.

THEODORUS: How so?

SOCRATES: Because the latter sort always have the thing you mentioned – time. They say what they want to say at their leisure, with d5
nothing to disturb them: they can swap the thesis before them for another one if they like the look of it, just as we are now already happily taking on our third in succession; and it doesn't matter to them whether they use many words or only a few, so long as they hit the target – what *is*.[53]
The other sort, by contrast, never have time when they speak, because e1
the flow of the water in the clock always hurries them on; nor can they ever talk about whatever they want, because the opposing speaker is always there standing over them, forcing them to stay within the limits of the affidavit he keeps reading out. Their speeches are always about e5
a fellow-slave, addressed to a slave-master sitting there with some penalty or other in his hand. The contests are never without a clear purpose, always about the matter before them, and frequently the race is

[52] I.e., (at least) a thing in its own right. [53] 'What is' (*to on*): see Note on text and translation.

173a even a matter of life and death. As a result of all this they become intense and driven, knowing how both to flatter the slave-master and to creep into his good graces, and they are stunted and warped in their souls. Slavery since youth has prevented them from growing straight and true
a5 like free men, forcing them into crooked dealings by heaping great dangers and fears upon souls still tender. Unable to bear the weight of these in the company of justice and truth, they turn at once to falsehood and paying each other back, injustice for injustice; constantly bent and
b1 broken as they are, they end up passing from adolescence to maturity with nothing sound in their heads, and grown clever and wise – as they suppose. So much for them, Theodorus; do you want us to describe the
b5 members of our own chorus before we go back to our discussion, or shall we leave them to one side? As we said just now, we're free to change the subject of discussion, but we shouldn't overdo it.

THEODORUS: Certainly not, Socrates; we should describe our sort of
c1 people first. You got it absolutely right when you said that, as members of our sort of chorus, we are not slaves of our discussions; it's our discussions that are our slaves, as it were, each one of them waiting around to be completed when *we* decide. There are no jurymen to stand
c5 over us, no spectators to find fault with us and order us about as they do poets in the theatre.

SOCRATES: So we're to do it, it seems, since you think we should. And let's talk about the leaders of our chorus; why would anyone want to discuss people who do philosophy badly? The leaders, I imagine, first of
d1 all haven't known since they were children how to get to the market-place, or where to find a law court, a council chamber, or any other of the city's public meeting places. Laws and decrees, spoken or written down, our chorus leaders neither see nor hear. Political clubs scrambling after
d5 office; parties; dinners; revelling with pipe girls: not even in their dreams does it occur to them to join in. If someone in the city is born well or badly, or something bad has come down to someone from his ancestors, male or female, our chorus leader knows less about it than about the proverbial number of pitchers-full there are in the sea. And he doesn't
e1 even know that he doesn't know any of this. It isn't even that he's standing back from it for the sake of a good reputation; rather it's that it is only his body that is truly located in the city and resides in it, because his mind, having concluded that all these things are worth little
e5 or nothing, rejects them and flies off in all directions, both 'to the deeps

of the earth', as Pindar says, and measuring its surfaces, tracking the stars 'in the heights of heaven' too, and using every sinew to search out every nature among the things that are, taking each thing as a whole, not lowering itself to any of the things close by.[54] 174a

THEODORUS: How so, Socrates?

SOCRATES: It's like when Thales fell into a well while doing astronomy, Theodorus, and looking up at the stars; they say a witty and charming Thracian slave girl joked that he was so eager to know about the things in the heavens that he omitted to notice what was in front of him, right by his feet. The same joke can be used against anyone who spends his time in philosophy, because such a person really does fail to notice not just what his neighbour is doing, right next to him, but practically even whether he's a human being or some other sort of creature; what he looks for, and takes pains to track down, is what a human being is, and what it is a part of a nature of that sort, as distinct from others, to do and have done to it. I think you see what I'm getting at, Theodorus, don't you? a5 b1 b5

THEODORUS: Yes, I do, and what you say is true.

SOCRATES: That, my friend, is why, as I was saying at the beginning, someone like this makes a laughing stock of himself, whether he's dealing with someone in private or in public, as soon as he is forced, in a law court or somewhere else, to hold a conversation about things by his feet or before his very eyes. It isn't just Thracian girls that laugh at him; it's the mass of people in general, as he falls into wells and all sorts of puzzlement because of his inexperience. The unseemliness of it all is extraordinary, and makes him seem a fool. When it comes to insults, he has none of his own to offer against anyone – not being practised in finding fault, he recognizes none in anybody; so, having nothing to say, he appears ridiculous. If others are boasting and expecting praise, he openly laughs at them, and it's genuine, not fake laughter, which they take as a sign of craziness. When he hears an encomium for a tyrant or a king, it sounds to him like a herdsman of some sort, a swineherd, a shepherd, or perhaps a cowherd being called happy for the quantity of milk he gets from his cows; only in his eyes they have a more ill-tempered and treacherous animal to herd and milk – one that it takes all c1 c5 d1 d5

[54] On this passage, see the final paragraph of Section 2 of the Introduction to this volume.

e1 their time to handle, so that inevitably somebody like that becomes no less boorish and uneducated than ordinary herdsmen, only with a city wall surrounding them instead of a mountain sheep pen. Again, when he hears ten thousand *plethra*[55] or even more being spoken of as an aston-
e5 ishing amount of land to own, it seems to him a quite tiny amount to speak of, accustomed as he is to gazing upon the whole earth. When people hymn family connections, counting someone as noble if he has seven generations of wealthy ancestors to boast of, it seems to him to be
175a what only thoroughly dim and short-sighted people would praise; he puts it down to a lack of education and an inability on their part to keep their gaze fixed always on the whole, or to work it out that each and every person has had countless tens of thousands of ancestors and forebears, among which there will have been rich and poor and kings and slaves,
a5 non-Greek and Greek – many times ten thousand of each for anybody you care to name. When people pride themselves on a list of forebears going back twenty-five generations, and trace their line back to Heracles, son of Amphitryon, it appears to him a strangely petty sort of counting,
b1 and he laughs to think that they can't rise far enough above the vanity of their mindless souls to work out that it will have been a matter of pure chance what sort of person Amphitryon's own twenty-fifth ancestor was, and the twenty-fifth before that. It's in all these cases, I'm saying, that
b5 the generality of people ridicule him for his behaviour, sometimes for his supposed arrogance, sometimes for not knowing what is just in front of him and being puzzled by everything.

THEODORUS: That's exactly what happens, Socrates.

SOCRATES: But what, my friend, if he himself manages to drag
c1 someone upwards, and finds him willing to move away from perpetually having to ask 'How have I wronged you?' or 'How have you wronged me?' to inquiring into justice itself, and injustice – what each of the two things is, and how they differ from everything else or from one another; or from a question like 'Whether happiness is being king', or again
c5 'Whether happiness is having a little gold',[56] to an inquiry about kingship, and about human happiness and misery in general, asking what sorts of thing they are and in what way it befits human nature to acquire

[55] A *plethron*, as a measure of area, is roughly 10,000 square feet/1,000 square metres/a tenth of a hectare.

[56] Perhaps a quotation, from an unknown source.*

the one and avoid the other? When that stunted, driven soul, so good in d1
court, has to give an account of all *these* subjects, the tables are turned;
dizzily suspended on high, and looking down from the skies, the
unfamiliarity of his situation bewilders and puzzles him, and his stam-
mering responses make him a laughing stock, not to Thracian slave girls, d5
or to anyone similarly uneducated, because they don't notice such
things, but to anyone who has been brought up in the opposite way to
a slave.

These are the modes of our two types, Theodorus. One is that of
someone who has been truly brought up in freedom, without constraints e1
on his time – you call him a philosopher; someone who counts it no
reproach to seem a simple-minded good-for-nothing when he finds
himself asked to perform slave-like tasks, like tying up the bedclothes
when he knows nothing about bed-tying, or flavouring a sauce, or
making flattering speeches. The other mode is that of someone who is e5
keen and sharp at doing everything of that sort, but doesn't know how to
strike up an elegant tune like a free man, let alone how to tune his words
correctly in celebrating a life fit for the gods, and for human beings if 176a
they are to be happy.

THEODORUS: If only you could persuade everyone of what you're
saying, Socrates, as you persuade me, peace would be more widespread
among men, and bad things less so.

SOCRATES: But it's not possible, Theodorus, for bad things to be a5
abolished – because there is necessarily always something opposite to
good – nor can they ever find a place among the gods; but around mortal
nature, and this region of ours, they always circle, of necessity. That is
why one must try to escape from here to there as quickly as possible.
Escape is becoming as like god as one can, and becoming like god is b1
acquiring justice and piety along with wisdom. But I tell you, my good
friend, it is not at all easy to persuade someone that the reasons most
people give as to why one should avoid badness and pursue goodness,
namely so as not to be thought bad but be thought good, are actually the b5
wrong reasons. This is just the rubbish that the proverbial old wives talk,
or so it appears to me. The truth, let's say, is like this: god is in no case
and in no way unjust, but as just as it is possible to be, and nothing is c1
more like him than whichever one of us succeeds in becoming as just as
can possibly be. It is here that we see whether a man is truly clever or an
unmanly good-for-nothing; understanding this is what constitutes true

c5 wisdom and goodness, while not understanding it is patent ignorance and badness, and all other sorts of seeming cleverness and wisdom are either vulgar, as among those wielding political power, or in the case of
d1 craftsmen merely mechanical. Thus if someone behaves unjustly and says and does impious things, it is best by far not to attribute to him a cleverness driven by lack of scruple, since people revel in such a reproach; they hear it as telling them that they are not examples of futility, useless burdens on the earth, but men with the qualities neces-
d5 sary for surviving in the city. So we must tell them the truth, which is that they are all the more the sort of people they do not think they are for the fact that they do not think it; for they do not know the penalty for injustice, and that is the last thing one should be ignorant about. It is not what they think it is – flogging, execution and the like, which they
e1 sometimes escape altogether even when they do behave unjustly; it's a penalty that it's impossible to escape.

THEODORUS: What is *that*?

SOCRATES: In the nature of things there are two models available to us, my friend, one divine and most happy, one godless and most miserable;
e5 but these people fail to see that this is so, and through foolishness and an
177a utter lack of intelligence they fail to notice how through their unjust actions they make themselves like the second model and unlike the first. And for that they pay the penalty of living the life that resembles the model they follow. But if we tell them that unless they rid themselves of
a5 their cleverness, that other region, pure of all that is bad, will not receive them even when they are dead, and meanwhile here they will always have an existence that reproduces their own selves, bad people keeping the company of things that are bad – if we tell them that, they will respond exactly like the clever, unscrupulous characters they are, and hear it as coming from imbeciles of some sort.

THEODORUS: They certainly will, Socrates.

b1 SOCRATES: I can tell you, my friend, I know. Not that they are totally unaffected, though: when in private conversation they have to give and receive an account[57] of the things they are so critical of others for discussing, then so long as they're prepared to be like men and put up with it for long enough, not run away like cowards, it's strange, I tell you,

[57] A standard Socratic-Platonic expression for dialectical discussion.

how they end up not being happy with what they're saying, and how that b5
rhetorical know-how of theirs somehow dries up and leaves them looking
no better than children. – Well, now we should stop talking about this
subject, since it is really a digression; if we don't, more and more will c1
flood in and drown out our original argument. If you agree, we'll go back
to what we were saying before.

THEODORUS: To me, Socrates, these sorts of things aren't at all
unpleasant to listen to; for someone of my age it's easier to follow. Still,
let's go back, if that's your decision. c5

SOCRATES: Well, the following is roughly where we were in our
argument, isn't it? We were discussing those who talk about being as
motion, and who claim that what seems to anyone at any time also is for
the one to whom it seems. We were saying that they will happily
maintain their position in other cases, and not least on questions of
justice – so that by their account whatever a city decides on and lays d1
down as just *is*, incontrovertibly, just for the city that has laid it down as
such, and for as long as she continues to do so; but no one, we said, will
be brave enough to go on to make the same claim in relation to what is
good, and brazenly insist that whatever a city lays down as beneficial for
herself, because it thinks it so, is actually beneficial for as long as she so d5
lays it down. Someone might of course talk as if it were like that, and use
the name 'beneficial', but that, I imagine, would be just to make fun of
what we're saying. Am I right?

THEODORUS: Yes, certainly.

SOCRATES: So let him not use the name, but rather look at the thing e1
being named.

THEODORUS: Indeed.

SOCRATES: In fact whatever a city calls it, it is surely what *is* beneficial
that she is aiming at when she makes her laws, and she makes every one e5
as beneficial for herself as she can, within the limits of her thinking and
of what that allows her to achieve. Or will she have some other goal in
view when making her laws?

THEODORUS: Certainly not. 178a

SOCRATES: So do cities always succeed in hitting the mark, or does
every city often make mistakes too?

THEODORUS: I think myself they also make mistakes.

SOCRATES: Well now, everyone would be still readier to accept all of a5
this if one tried asking about the whole form to which the beneficial

actually belongs; and among other things, I imagine, it relates to time that is going to be. Whenever we make laws for ourselves, we frame our
a10 laws on the basis that they will be beneficial in future time; and the right thing to call this will be what is 'going to be'.

b1 THEODORUS: Yes, certainly.

SOCRATES: So come on, let's put this question to Protagoras, and to anyone else who says the same things as he does. '"A human being is the measure of all things", as you people say, Protagoras – of white things,
b5 heavy things, light things, of everything whatever like that: having the means for judging them within himself, when he thinks them to be as he experiences them he is thinking things that are true for him, and that are. Isn't that what you say?'

THEODORUS: It is.

SOCRATES: 'Well, Protagoras,' we'll say, 'does he also have in himself
c1 the means for judging things that are *going* to be? If someone thinks things are going to be like this or that, do they actually turn out that way for the person who thought it? Take hot things. When one person thinks, as a layman, that he's going to get a fever, and that there will
c5 be this hotness in him, while a second person, who is a doctor, thinks the opposite, are we to say that the future will turn out to accord with what the first believes, or the second? Or will it turn out in accordance with what both of them believe, so that for the doctor the patient won't become hot, or fevered, whereas for himself he will become both?'

THEODORUS: That would be quite ridiculous.

SOCRATES: 'And when the question is whether wine is going to be
d1 sweet or dry, I suppose it is what the farmer believes, not the cithara player, that will be decisive?'

THEODORUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: 'Nor again, when it comes to whether something is going
d5 to be out of tune or well-tuned, would a gymnastic trainer have better beliefs than a musical expert as to what will in the event seem well-tuned to the gymnastic trainer himself.'

THEODORUS: Quite so.

SOCRATES: 'Or suppose someone is going to attend a feast, and lacks culinary skills: if the banquet is still being prepared, his judgement about
d10 the pleasure to come will have less authority than the cook's. Let's not
e1 fight it out between us, at this stage, about what is now pleasant to each individual, or has been in the past; our question is about what is *going* to

seem and be for each individual, and whether each is the best judge of that for himself – or whether you, Protagoras, will be better than any layman whatever at predicting at any rate what sorts of speech each of us e5
is going to find persuasive in a law-court.'

THEODORUS: Yes indeed, Socrates, he used to claim vehemently to be superior to anyone else in that!

SOCRATES: Zeus! He certainly did, my friend. Or else no one would ever give large sums of money to talk to him; that is, if he actually tried to 179a
persuade the people who came to him that in relation to how things are *going to* be, too, and *going to* seem, neither a seer nor anyone else will be a better judge than a person is for himself.[58]

THEODORUS: Very true.

SOCRATES: Surely, then, legislation anywhere, and the beneficial, both a5
have to do with what is going to be, and everyone would agree that a city that is legislating for herself will necessarily often fail to achieve what is most beneficial.

THEODORUS: Very much so.

SOCRATES: Then our measured response[59] to your teacher will be to a10
say that he cannot avoid conceding both that one person is wiser than b1
another, and that it is that sort of person that is the measure; whereas there is no compulsion, from any point of view whatever, on the know-nothing that I am to become the measure, as just now the argument on his behalf was compelling me to be whether I wanted it or not. b5

THEODORUS: That, Socrates, seems to me where his argument is most vulnerable, though it is also caught out by the way in which it gives authority to other people's beliefs, when these turned out to treat the things he says as not true at all.

SOCRATES: There are plenty of other ways too, Theodorus, of catching c1
out this sort of claim, that any belief anyone has is true. But if one sticks to what each individual experiences in the immediate present, from which his perceptions and the corresponding beliefs derive, it is harder to convict these of not being true. But perhaps I'm talking nonsense. c5
Maybe they are simply unassailable, and those who claim that they're evident, and so cases of knowledge, are perhaps saying things that are – and Theaetetus here was not off the the mark when he proposed that d1

[58] Retaining *hautôi* at the end of the sentence, and reading *dê* for *mê* after *ei* near the beginning.*
[59] I.e., *this* won't be 'pushing him too hard' (Theodorus' complaint at 171c)?

perception and knowledge were the same thing. So we must get closer up, as we were urged to do by the argument on Protagoras' behalf, and test this idea of being as motion to see whether it rings true or is flawed.
d5 In any event there's no minor battle over it, and there are more than a few combatants.

THEODORUS: It's certainly far from minor, and in fact in Ionia it's growing very considerably. Heraclitus' friends are chorus-leading for this theory for all they are worth.

e1 SOCRATES: All the more reason to examine it, then, my dear Theodorus, and right from the very beginning, just as they themselves lay it out.

THEODORUS: I quite agree. The truth, Socrates, about these Heracli-
e5 tean notions – or Homeric, as you say they are, or even earlier – is that with the people around Ephesus[60] themselves, those of them who profess to be experts, there's no more possibility of a conversation than there is with the raving mad. They're simply as it says in his writings – perpetually in motion, and as for the capacity to stay with a discussion, or a question, and stay still enough to reply and then ask their questions in
180a turn, they have less than none; or rather, even to say 'less than none' is an exaggeration, given the lack even of a vestige of stillness in these people. If someone asks them a question, they pull out a set of riddling
a5 little phrases from their quiver, as it were, and shoot them off; if you try to get hold of an explanation of what they've said, you'll only get hit with another, freshly invented for the occasion. You'll never get to make any progress with any of them – indeed they don't make any progress even with each other, so careful are they to avoid allowing anything to stay
b1 constant either in what they say or in their own souls. They think, it seems to me, that if something stays constant it will be standing still, and this is something that they're totally at war with, and try so far as they can to expel from everywhere.

b5 SOCRATES: Perhaps, Theodorus, you've only seen these people in combat, and not had experience of them when they're at peace; they're not exactly people you spend your time with. But I imagine they do divulge such things at leisure to whichever of their students they want to make resemble themselves.

[60] Heraclitus' home city.

THEODORUS: Their *students*? What a wonderful notion! With people like that there is no such thing as one becoming another's student; they just spring up spontaneously from wherever each of them got their inspiration, and each thinks of the next as knowing nothing. So, as I was going to say, you'll never get the account you want from them, whether with their consent or without it. We have to take it all into our own hands and look into it as if it were a geometrical problem.

SOCRATES: Yes, fair enough. Am I right, then, in saying that whereas the ancients who have handed this problem of ours down to us tried to conceal it from ordinary people by using poetry, and saying that the origin of everything else was actually the streams of Oceanus and Tethys (and nothing is at rest), their successors, because they were wiser, have put it on open display – the purpose being that even shoemakers should be able to understand their wisdom when they hear it, so that they would stop thinking, like simpletons, that of the things that are some are at rest while others are changing, and once having realized that everything is in fact changing, would duly honour their teachers? I almost forgot, though, Theodorus, that there are others who have announced the opposite view, as in 'And unchanged shall be the name of the all',[61] and the rest of the things our Melissuses and Parmenideses insist on in opposition to all these people we've been talking about, to the effect that all things are one – a one that is at rest, itself within itself, because it has no place in which to change. So what are we going to do with all this? As we've gone on bit by bit, without noticing it we've been drawn into the middle between the two sides, and if we don't somehow defend ourselves and escape, we'll pay for it, like people in that game in the wrestling schools who find themselves grabbed by both sides and dragged in opposite ways across the line. Well, it seems to me we ought to look at the other group first, the one we started going after: the fluxers, and if they turn out to have something to say, we'll join in with them in dragging ourselves over to their side, and try to get away from the others; but if a better account comes from those who make a stand for the whole, we'll take ourselves off to them, this time away from those who try to make the unchanging change. And if both sides turn out not

[61] Reading *hoion akinêton te thelei tôi panti onom'einai*, and treating the (mis)quotation as beginning with *akinêton*. Socrates appears to be thinking of, and misremembering, a pair of lines from Parmenides (fragment 8.37–8).*

to be saying anything that measures up, it will be ridiculous for us to think humble individuals like us have anything to say when we have scrutinized and rejected people as ancient and wise as can be. So
b5 consider, Theodorus, whether we gain by advancing into such danger.

THEODORUS: It's surely quite unacceptable, Socrates, for us not to examine what each of the two groups is saying.

c1 SOCRATES: Examine them we must, then, if you're so eager. So now the starting point for our examination seems to me to be about change, and what sort of thing they can possibly be saying when they claim that everything is changing. The sort of question I have in mind is this: are they talking just about one particular form of change, or rather – as it
c5 appears to me – about two forms? But don't let this just be about how it seems to me; you need to join in too, so that we can share the suffering, if it should come to that. Tell me this: do you call it change when a thing exchanges one place for another or turns on itself in the same place?

THEODORUS: I do.

SOCRATES: So let this be one form of change. What about the change
d1 that occurs when something occupies the same place but grows old, turns black from white, or hard from soft, or undergoes some other alteration: isn't it right to treat this as a second form of change?

THEODORUS: Yes, it must be.

d5 SOCRATES: I'm saying, then, that there are these two forms of change, one of which is alteration, the other motion.

THEODORUS: And you're right.

SOCRATES: So with this distinction made, let's now have a talk with
e1 those who claim that everything is changing, and ask them 'Are you claiming that all things are changing in both ways, that is, both moving and undergoing alteration, or that some perhaps are changing in both, others in one way but not the other?'

THEODORUS: Zeus! For myself I don't know what to say; but I think I'd say all in both ways.

e5 SOCRATES: Yes, my friend, or otherwise they'll find things turning out to be both changing and at rest, and it will be no more correct to say that all things are changing than to say they are at rest.

THEODORUS: Very true.

SOCRATES: So given that they must be changing, and that there must
182a be no trace of not changing in any of them, then all of them are always changing with every sort of change.

THEODORUS: Necessarily.

SOCRATES: Now think of the following aspect of their position. We were saying, weren't we, that they talk about hotness or whiteness or whatever it may be as coming about in this sort of way: namely that each of these things is in movement simultaneously with a perception, in between something that is acting and something that is being acted upon, and what is being acted on comes to be, not perception, but something perceiving, while what is doing the acting comes to be, not quality, but something qualified? Well, perhaps 'quality' strikes you as a strange word,[62] and it isn't helping your understanding, either, to have the point put collectively, so here are some individual examples: what is acting comes to be, not hotness or whiteness, but hot and white, and so with everything else – because I imagine you remember that that's how we were putting it before, to the effect that nothing is just one thing, itself by itself, not even what is acting, or what is being acted upon; rather, it's from their both getting together with each other that they generate the perceptions and the things perceived, and some come to be of a certain quality while others come to be perceiving.

THEODORUS: I remember; of course I do.

SOCRATES: Well, let's leave to one side whether we've got these people right or not on other aspects of what they're saying, and keep to the point of our present discussion. Let's ask them 'Everything is changing, and in flux, you're claiming? Right?'

THEODORUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Is that with both the sorts of change we distinguished? They're both moving and undergoing alteration?

THEODORUS: Of course – if they're going to be completely and utterly changing.

SOCRATES: So if they were only moving, and not altering, I suppose we'd be able to identify the sorts of qualities the things in motion were fluxing with – or how do we put it?

THEODORUS: Like that.

SOCRATES: But this does not stay as it is, either, the fluxing thing fluxing white; it changes too, so that this very thing, whiteness, will be

[62] The Greek term Socrates uses here, *poiotês*, is evidently a new coinage ('quality' is its exact etymological counterpart in English, deriving as it does from the Latin *qualitas*, from *qualis* = *poios*).

itself in flux, and changing into another colour, or else it will be caught staying as it is. Given that, will it ever be possible to refer to a particular
d5 colour and get its name right?'

THEODORUS: How could it be, Socrates? Or indeed to anything else like that, if even as one is speaking of anything it is always quietly slinking off, as it must if it's in flux?

SOCRATES: And what shall we say about perception, of whatever sort –
e1 the sort constituted by seeing, for example, or hearing? Shall we say that it stays as it is, that is, as seeing or hearing?

THEODORUS: It certainly shouldn't, if everything is to be changing.

SOCRATES: In that case we shouldn't call anything seeing more than
e5 we call it not seeing, or any other sort of perception more that sort of perception than not that sort, given that everything is changing in every respect.

THEODORUS: No, we shouldn't.

SOCRATES: And yet perception is knowledge, Theaetetus and I said.

e10 THEODORUS: You did.

SOCRATES: In that case, when asked what knowledge was, we gave as our answer what was no more knowledge than not knowledge.

183a THEODORUS: You do seem to have done that.

SOCRATES: A fine way this will turn out to be of getting that answer right, when we were so eager to show that everything is changing just so
a5 it would come out right! What has actually emerged, it seems, is that if everything is changing, any answer to any question whatever will be equally correct. It won't matter whether one says 'This is so', or 'This is not so' – or if you prefer we can substitute 'coming to be' for 'is', so as not to say things that bring our friends the fluxers to a standstill.

THEODORUS: Correct.

a10 SOCRATES: Yes, Theodorus, except that I said 'so' and 'not so'. We
b1 mustn't use this 'so', even, because the 'so' wouldn't itself be changing, nor again can we say 'not so', because this isn't a change either; instead those who support this theory need to establish some other way of talking, since as things are they have no terms that fit their own
b5 hypothesis – unless perhaps 'not like that either' would suit them best, applied without limit.

THEODORUS: That way of talking would certainly be most appropriate for them.

SOCRATES: So we're finished with your friend, Theodorus, and we're not yet conceding to him that every individual is the measure of all things, unless he has some sort of wisdom; nor shall we be going along with saying c1
that knowledge is perception, at any rate on the basis that everything is changing – unless Theaetetus here has something different to say.

THEODORUS: This is a wonderful thing to hear from you, Socrates, because now that all this is finished, I too have to be released from the c5
role of respondent, according to our agreement, which was that I should continue until the matter of Protagoras' thesis was settled.

THEAETETUS: No, Theodorus; not until Socrates and you have done d1
what you proposed just now, and deal in turn with those who claim that everything is at rest.

THEODORUS: At your young age, Theaetetus, are you trying to teach your elders to be unjust and break agreements? Prepare to give Socrates d5
an account of yourself for the rest of the discussion.

THEAETETUS: If that's his wish. But I would dearly have liked to hear about the things I mentioned.

THEODORUS: Inviting Socrates to discuss something is like inviting cavalry onto an open plain. So ask away and you'll hear what you want to hear.

SOCRATES: Still, Theodorus, on the subject Theaetetus says he wants d10
discussed, I don't think I'm going to oblige him. e1

THEODORUS: Why on earth not?

SOCRATES: Ashamed as I am that I might subject Melissus, and the others who say everything is one and at rest, to vulgar investigation, the shame is less than I feel before one being, Parmenides[63] himself. But e5
Parmenides does appear to me, to use Homer's words,[64] to be someone 'revered in my eyes . . . and dreaded too'. I actually met him, when I was very young and he was a very old man, and he appeared to possess a 184a
certain depth that was altogether noble.[65] So my fear is not just that we'll fail to understand what he is saying, and be left much further behind when it comes to grasping what he had in mind in saying it; my greatest fear is that we'll be prevented from examining the question about the

[63] 'One being, Parmenides': a phrase designed to recall Parmenides' support for the idea that a One (Being) is all there is.
[64] At *Iliad* 3.172.
[65] This is very likely a cross-reference to the meeting between Socrates and Parmenides in Plato's *Parmenides*.

a5 nature of knowledge that has motivated our whole discussion, because of all these theories that keep rushing in on us like disorderly revellers if one lets them – especially the one we're stirring up now, which is of such unimaginable size that to look at it in passing would be to do it less than justice, while an adequate treatment of it will go on and on and drown out the issue about knowledge. Neither of which must happen. Rather
b1 I must use my midwife's art to try to help Theaetetus give birth to what he's conceived on the subject of knowledge.

THEODORUS: Then that's what we must do, if you think so.

SOCRATES: So, Theaetetus, here's a further point I'd like you to think about in relation to what has been said. Your answer was that knowledge
b5 is perception – right?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now suppose someone were to ask you this: 'With what does a person see white and black things, and with what does he hear high and low sounds?' I imagine you'd reply 'With eyes and ears'.

b10 THEAETETUS: I would.

c1 SOCRATES: Going easy on the use of names and expressions, and not pressing people to be precise, is usually no sign of ill-breeding; it's rather the opposite that's lacking in class. But sometimes it is necessary, and
c5 one such moment is now, because I must latch on to one aspect in which your reply is incorrect. Think about it – which is the more correct reply: that what we see with is eyes, or that eyes are things *through which* we see? And ears – are they what we hear with, or are they rather what we hear *through*?

THEAETETUS: Eyes and ears are what we perceive things through, I think, Socrates, rather than what we perceive them with.

d1 SOCRATES: Yes, my boy, because I imagine it would be astonishing to find that there were lots of individual perceptions sitting inside us, as if in wooden horses, and that all these things did not converge in some single form[66] – soul, or whatever we should call it – with which we
d5 perceive everything perceivable through eyes and ears, which would be our instruments,[67] as it were.

[66] 'Lots of individual perceptions': as, perhaps, on the Protagorean theory (as reconstructed by Socrates). 'Wooden horses': i.e., what we call 'Trojan' ones. 'Form' (here *idea*): or 'sort of thing', as in colloquial English ('that sort of thing'); a perfectly ordinary, non-technical use of *eidos*/*idea*.

[67] Or 'organs' (the Greek term used is *organa*).

THEAETETUS: This seems to me more the way it is than what I first said.

SOCRATES: The reason I'm being so precise about this with you is that I want to discover whether there is some one aspect of ourselves, the same in all cases, with which we reach out through the eyes to white and e1
black things, to different sorts of things through the ears, and so on, and whether, if asked, you'll be able to assign all of this sort of thing to the body. But perhaps it's better if you give your own answers rather than have me doing it for you like some busybody. So tell me: do you take e5
each of the things *through* which you perceive hot or hard or light or sweet things to belong to the body? Or perhaps to something else?

THEAETETUS: No, to the body.

SOCRATES: And will you also accept that what you perceive through one capacity it's impossible for you to perceive through another? For 185a
example, what you perceive through hearing you can't perceive through sight, and what you perceive through sight you can't perceive through hearing?

THEAETETUS: Of course I will.

SOCRATES: In that case, if you have a thought about both, things seen and things heard, you certainly won't be having a *perception* about both, a5
either through one of the relevant instruments or through the other.

THEAETETUS: No indeed.

SOCRATES: Now when it comes to a sound, or a colour, first of all don't you have this very thought about both of them, that both of them are?

THEAETETUS: I do. a10

SOCRATES: And that each of them is different from the other, and the same as itself?

THEAETETUS: Of course. b1

SOCRATES: And that both together are two, and each is one?

THEAETETUS: That too.

SOCRATES: Are you also able to consider whether they are unlike or b5
like one another?

THEAETETUS: Probably.

SOCRATES: Through what, then, do you think all these things about them – given that it's not possible to grasp what is common to them either through hearing or through sight? Here's another bit of evidence relating to what we're saying: if it were possible to examine whether both b10
of them were salty or not, obviously you'll be able to say what you'll c1

examine them with, and this clearly won't be either sight or hearing but something else.

THEAETETUS: Obviously – the capacity that operates through the tongue.

SOCRATES: Beautifully put. And through what does this other capacity
c5 operate, the one that indicates to you what is common, both in every context and in this particular one, namely what you label with 'is' and 'is not', and the other aspects of things we were asking about just now in relation to our examples? What will you assign for all these aspects, as the instruments through which what does the perceiving in us perceives each of them?

c10 THEAETETUS: You're talking about being and not-being, likeness and
d1 unlikeness, same and different, also things being one or having some number; you're clearly asking about even and odd too, and everything that goes along with these. You want to know through which of the parts of the body we could possibly perceive all these things with the soul.

SOCRATES: You're following extraordinarily well, Theaetetus. That's
d5 exactly what my question is.

THEAETETUS: Zeus! I certainly couldn't answer the question, Socrates, except by saying that I don't think there's any such thing in the first place – there's no special instrument in these cases as there is in the
e1 others. Rather, the soul appears to me to investigate the common aspects in relation to everything by and through itself.

SOCRATES: That shows what a beauty you are, Theaetetus, not ugly as
e5 Theodorus said; beautiful words make a speaker beautiful and good.[68] And besides your beauty, you've done me a favour by having saved me a great long discussion, if it already appears to you that the soul investigates some things by and through itself, others through the capacities the body has. This was what I was thinking myself, and I wanted you to be thinking it too.

186a THEAETETUS: It is indeed already apparent to me.

SOCRATES: So to which of the two sets of things do you assign *being*?[69] This is what is most constantly present in all cases.

[68] There is something of a pun here: 'beautiful/fine-and-good', *kaloskagathos*, is a standard term of approval in Athenian society, for people we might say were 'of quality' (whatever we – or indeed the Athenians – might have in mind by 'quality').

[69] One of the 'greatest kinds' of the *Sophist* (two more are sameness and difference, introduced in Socrates' next contribution).

THEAETETUS: I myself count it among the things that the soul reaches out to, itself by itself. a5

SOCRATES: The like, too, and the unlike, the same and the different?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: What about beautiful and ugly, good and bad?

THEAETETUS: These too, it seems to me, are more than anything a10 things whose being the soul examines in relation to one another, reckoning up in itself past and present in comparison with future. b1

SOCRATES: Hold it there. It's through touch that it will perceive the hardness of the hard, and similarly the softness of the soft – right?

THEAETETUS: Yes. b5

SOCRATES: Whereas what our soul tries to judge by itself, going close up to them[70] and comparing them with each other, is their being, namely that they are, their oppositeness to one another, and again the being of their oppositeness?[71]

THEAETETUS: Certainly, yes. b10

SOCRATES: There will be some things, then, that human beings and animals alike are naturally able to perceive as soon as they are c1 born, namely those things the experience of which extends through the body to the soul; whereas calculations about these, in relation to their being or the benefit they bring, come, to the people to whom they do come, only with difficulty, late on, and after much trouble and c5 education?

THEAETETUS: Yes, quite certainly.

SOCRATES: Now can a person reach truth, if he can't reach even as far as being?

THEAETETUS: Impossible.

SOCRATES: And if he fails to reach the truth of a thing, will he ever have knowledge of that thing? c10

THEAETETUS: I don't see how he could, Socrates. d1

SOCRATES: In that case knowledge does not reside in what we directly experience, but rather in our reasoning about those experiences; because in the latter, it seems, it is possible to get a hold on being and truth, whereas in the former it is impossible. d5

[70] I.e., to hardness and softness.

[71] I.e., glossing this as Socrates glosses 'being' in the first case, 'that there is this oppositeness between them'.

THEAETETUS: Evidently.

SOCRATES: So are you going to call the two things the same, when there are such great differences between them?

THEAETETUS: There would certainly be no justification for it.

d10 SOCRATES: What name, then, are you assigning to the first – seeing, hearing, smelling, being cold, being hot?

e1 THEAETETUS: I call it perceiving; what else should I call it?

SOCRATES: The whole of it, then, you're calling perception?

THEAETETUS: Necessarily.

SOCRATES: And that's something we're saying has no claim to a hold e5 on truth, because it can't even grasp being.

THEAETETUS: No indeed.

SOCRATES: So it has no claim to knowledge either.

THEAETETUS: No.

SOCRATES: In that case, Theaetetus, perception and knowledge e10 couldn't ever be the same thing.

THEAETETUS: Evidently not, Socrates. It has become as clear as it could be, especially now, that knowledge is something other than perception.

187a SOCRATES: But our aim in starting this conversation wasn't at all to find out what knowledge was not; it was to find out what it is. Still, at least we have advanced far enough to know not to look for it in a5 perception at all, but rather under whatever name we're to use to describe the soul when it's occupied with the things that are, itself by itself.

THEAETETUS: Yes, and the name we give it, I think, Socrates, is forming and having beliefs.[72]

SOCRATES: Yes, my friend, you think correctly. So now go back to the b1 beginning, wiping from the slate everything you said before, and see if you can see things a bit better, now that you've progressed this far. Say again what knowledge is.

[72] 'Forming and having beliefs' translates the single word *doxazein*: the verb has been used before simply of believing something, having a belief (*doxa*), or having something seem (*dokein*) to one, all of which will presumably be included here, along with plain thinking (which will be even more explicitly brought under the umbrella of *doxazein* at 189e–190a). The whole family of terms is sometimes contrasted with those for knowledge and knowing, but clearly not in the present context. If there is such a contrast in the *Theaetetus* at all, it is between knowledge and *true* belief (so, e.g., at 201b–c, or 209a). See Introduction, Section 4.

THEAETETUS: To say that it's any and every belief, Socrates, is impossible, given that there is false belief too; but possibly true belief b5
could be knowledge. So let this be my answer, since if as we go on it appears not to be the right answer, as it presently appears it is,[73] we can try saying something else.

SOCRATES: That's the commitment we need, Theaetetus, not those b10
hesitant answers you were giving at the beginning! If we go on in this c1
way, then one of two things will happen: either we'll find what we've set out to find, or we'll be less inclined to think we know what we don't know at all, and actually that sort of pay-off would be nothing to complain about. So then, what is it that you're now claiming? There being two forms[74] of belief, the one true and the other false, you mark off c5
the true one as knowledge?

THEAETETUS: I do; that is how it appears to me now.

SOCRATES: Well now, is it even now worth picking up that point about belief again –

THEAETETUS: Which point are you talking about?

SOCRATES: It strangely disturbs me, as it has on many other occasions; d1
so much so that I've been completely puzzled, whether thinking about it by myself or with someone else. I just can't say what this thing is that happens with us, and how it comes to happen at all.

THEAETETUS: What sort of thing?

SOCRATES: Someone's believing what is false. I'm presently still in two minds as to whether we should leave the subject to one side, or look into it using a different approach from the one we were using a little earlier.[75]

THEAETETUS: Of course we should look at it, Socrates, if there appears the slightest reason for thinking we should. You and Theodorus were d10
quite rightly saying only just now that when it comes to questions like this we have all the time in the world.

SOCRATES: You're right to remind me. It probably won't be a bad e1
moment to go back over our tracks, as it were. Better, I imagine, to accomplish a little and do it well than to get through a lot and do it badly.

[73] After all, belief/believing, *doxa*/*doxazein*, has been agreed to meet the conditions that perception failed to meet, if it was to be the same as knowledge; namely, that it can grasp 'being' and truth. And if it is *true* belief that's in question, it will, surely, have grasped truth, so why should it not be knowledge?

[74] 'Form': *idea* again, but now used in a more obviously technical way.

[75] See 167b, 170a–172b.

THEAETETUS: It certainly is.

e5 SOCRATES: So how to proceed? What is it we actually say? Do we claim all the time that there is such a thing as false belief, and that one of us has false beliefs while another has true ones, as if things were naturally like this?

THEAETETUS: Yes, we do.

188a SOCRATES: Well, there is this much we can certainly do, isn't there, in relation to everything and to each individual thing, namely either know it or not know it? I recognize that there's learning, and forgetting, in between these, but I'm passing over them at the moment, because now they're not to my point.

a5 THEAETETUS: There's certainly no remaining alternative, Socrates, in relation to each thing, besides knowing it and not knowing it.

SOCRATES: If so, mustn't the person who believes be believing either one of the things he knows or one of the things he doesn't know?

THEAETETUS: He must.

a10 SOCRATES: And yet if he knows something, it's impossible for him not
b1 to know that same thing, or to know it if he doesn't know it.

THEAETETUS: Obviously.

SOCRATES: So is the person who believes what is false thinking the things he knows are not these but some other things he knows, so that
b5 while he knows both sets of things he is also ignorant of both?

THEAETETUS: That's impossible, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Or is he supposing, of things he doesn't know, that they are some other set of things he doesn't know? Is it a matter of someone's taking it into his head, when he doesn't know either
b10 Theaetetus or Socrates, that Socrates is Theaetetus or Theaetetus Socrates?

c1 THEAETETUS: How could that be?

SOCRATES: But I imagine it can't be the case that a person thinks things he knows are things he doesn't know, nor, again, that things he doesn't know are things he knows.

THEAETETUS: It'll be a wonder if he does.

c5 SOCRATES: In that case how can anyone believe what is false? We've presumably gone through all the possible ways of believing, if we actually

do always either know a thing or we don't know it; and nowhere among these does it appear possible to believe what is false.[76]

THEAETETUS: Very true.

SOCRATES: So perhaps this isn't how we should be looking into what we're after. Instead of proceeding by reference to knowing and not knowing, should we do it by reference to being and not being? c10 d1

THEAETETUS: How would we do that?

SOCRATES: Perhaps the simple fact is that anyone who believes things that are not, about anything whatever, must believe things that are false, whatever other aspects there may be to his thinking. d5

THEAETETUS: That too is likely enough, Socrates.

SOCRATES: So how can it be? What are we going to say, Theaetetus, if someone asks us 'Is what is being said actually possible for anyone? Will anyone on earth believe what is not, no matter whether he believes it about one of the things that are, or just believes what is not itself by itself?' We, it seems, will respond by saying 'Yes, whenever he thinks and the things he thinks are not true.' Or will we? d10 e1

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: So does this sort of thing perhaps happen in other contexts?

THEAETETUS: What sort of thing? e5

SOCRATES: I'm asking, for example, if someone can see something yet see nothing.

THEAETETUS: How could he?

SOCRATES: Yet if he is seeing some *one* thing, he is seeing something belonging to the things that are. Or do you suppose that oneness is ever to be found among the things that are not?

THEAETETUS: I certainly don't. e10

SOCRATES: So if he is seeing some one thing, he is seeing something that is.

THEAETETUS: Apparently.

SOCRATES: So the person who is hearing something, too, is hearing some one thing and something that is. 189a

THEAETETUS: Yes.

[76] One plausible way of treating the immediately preceding stretch of argument is as an illustration of the reasons for the 'puzzlement' Socrates admitted to, just before, over the problem of false belief (187d). It fits with this interpretation that a few pages on Socrates will in fact bring in the two items explicitly 'passed over' here as 'not to my point' (188a), namely learning (191c) and memory (191d), as part of a new approach to the problem.

SOCRATES: And again, the person who touches something is touching some one thing, and something that is, if it is one?

a5 THEAETETUS: Yes to that too.

SOCRATES: But isn't the person who believes believing some one thing?

THEAETETUS: He must do so.

SOCRATES: And isn't the person who believes some one thing believing something that is?

THEAETETUS: I grant that.

a10 SOCRATES: So the person who believes what is not is believing nothing?

THEAETETUS: Apparently so.

SOCRATES: But the person who is believing nothing is not even believing at all.

THEAETETUS: That's clear, it seems.

b1 SOCRATES: In that case it's not possible to believe what is not, whether about the things that are, or what is not itself by itself.

THEAETETUS: Apparently not.

SOCRATES: So believing what is false must be something other than

b5 believing things that are not.

THEAETETUS: It seems so.

SOCRATES: So there isn't false belief in us if we look at it like this, any more than there was when we looked at it as we were doing a little earlier.[77]

THEAETETUS: You are quite right, there isn't.

b10 SOCRATES: Or do we call it false belief if it happens like this—

THEAETETUS: Like what?

SOCRATES: We claim belief is false as a sort of 'other-believing',[78]

c1 namely when someone claims that one of the things that are is another of the things that are because he's swapped them over in his mind.[79] This way what his belief is about is still something that is, only one such thing in place of another, and because he fails to hit on what he was aiming at he'll justly be said to be believing what is false.

[77] Here, too, Socrates may be explaining the sorts of reasons why he has difficulties with the very notion of false belief. It is worth noting in this context that the way the main speaker in the *Sophist* proposes finally to explain false belief involves a discussion of Parmenidean ideas, which Socrates has deliberately avoided here in the *Theaetetus* (183e–184b).

[78] The point is not that we (i.e., ordinary people?) say false belief *is* this, rather that its being this might be an alternative explanation of our happily continuing to say that there is such a thing.

[79] See Further notes on the text.

THEAETETUS: The way you have put it now seems to me quite correct. c5
When a person believes a shameful thing instead of a fine one or a fine instead of a shameful one, that's when he believes things that are truly false.

SOCRATES: Obviously, Theaetetus, rather than standing in awe of me you're looking down on me.

THEAETETUS: Why, exactly? c10

SOCRATES: I suppose you think I'll not pick you up on your 'truly false', and ask whether it's possible for anything to be slowly quick, or d1
heavily light, or for anything else to turn out in accordance not with its own nature but with that of its opposite, oppositely to itself. As reward for your boldness, I let that go. You're happy, you say, with the proposal d5
that believing what is false is 'other-believing'?

THEAETETUS: I am.

SOCRATES: So according to what *you* believe, it's possible in one's mind to put down one thing not as what it is but as another thing.

THEAETETUS: Indeed it is.

SOCRATES: So when someone's mind is doing this, must it not be e1
thinking either of both or of one of the two things?

THEAETETUS: It certainly must; either both at once, or one after the other.

SOCRATES: Very fine. Do you call thinking what I call it?

THEAETETUS: What do you call it? e5

SOCRATES: Talk that the soul conducts with itself about whatever it is investigating. That's what I'm claiming, at any rate, as someone ignorant about the subject. The image I have of the soul as it is in thought is exactly
of it as in conversation with itself, asking itself and answering questions 190a
and saying yes to this and no to that. When it fixes on something, whether having arrived at it quite slowly or in a quick leap, and it is now saying the same thing consistently, without wavering, that is what we set down as
something it believes. So I for my part call forming and having a belief[80] a5
talking, and belief a talk that has been conducted, not with someone else, or out loud, but in silence with oneself. What about you?

THEAETETUS: I agree with you.

[80] 'Forming and having a belief': the same makeshift translation of *doxazein* as in 187a. It is in any case clear, from the context, that Socrates is using *doxazein* here to cover both thinking about things and reaching conclusions about them.

SOCRATES: Then when someone believes one of two things to be the
a10 other, it seems he is also saying to himself that the one is the other.
b1 THEAETETUS: Of course.
SOCRATES: Well, try to recall if you have ever yet said to yourself that what is actually fine is absolutely and completely shameful, or that what is actually just is absolutely unjust. Or, to sum up the point,
b5 see if you've ever tried to persuade yourself that one thing is absolutely and completely something else, or whether it's quite the opposite, and you've never yet had the gall even in your sleep to say to yourself that there's no doubt about it, odd things are really even, or anything like that.
THEAETETUS: What you say is true.
c1 SOCRATES: And do you think anyone else, either, whether healthy or mad, has had the gall seriously to say to himself, and hoped to persuade himself, that the ox must be a horse or the two one?
THEAETETUS: Zeus! No, I don't.
c5 SOCRATES: Well, then, if saying something to oneself is the same as believing it, no one who is talking and thinking about[81] *both* of two things, and grasping both with his soul, will say and believe that the one is the other. You must let pass the form of words here, as I did for you.[82]
d1 What I'm saying is just this, that no one thinks that what is shameful is fine, or anything else of the sort.
THEAETETUS: I will let it pass, Socrates, and what you're saying seems right to me.
d5 SOCRATES: It's impossible, in that case, for someone who is thinking about both of two things to think one of them to be the other.
THEAETETUS: It seems so.
SOCRATES: And yet if he is only thinking about one of the two, and not at all about the other, he'll never think the one is the other.
d10 THEAETETUS: True; he would have to have a hold on the one he is not thinking about too.

[81] The verb is again *doxazein*, the correlate of *doxa* (see preceding note), as it is for all of the next seven occurrences of 'thinking'/'thinking about'; keeping in these cases to 'belief' or some cognate of it would be not only awkward but positively unhelpful. (In any case, in this whole context *doxazein* is clearly treated as interchangeable with other verbs for 'thinking'.)

[82] Cf. 189c–d. What Socrates is asking Theaetetus to let pass cannot easily be reproduced in English: the Greek for 'the one is the other' is 'the *heteron* is *heteron*', which might suggest, superficially, and to the ear, precisely that the one *must* be the other.

SOCRATES: In that case there is no possibility of 'other-believing', whether a person is thinking about both things or about only one of e1
them. So if a person tries to define false belief as believing one thing to be another, he would be talking nonsense. False belief isn't showing up in us with this approach any more than it did with the previous ones.

THEAETETUS: It seems not.

SOCRATES: And yet, Theaetetus, if this isn't going to show up as e5
something that is, we shall be forced to make many strange concessions.

THEAETETUS: What sorts of concessions?

SOCRATES: I'm not going to tell you until I try every available way of investigating the matter. I would be ashamed for us if we were forced, even while finding ourselves puzzled, into the sorts of concessions I'm 191a
referring to. If we can free ourselves by finding what we're after, that will be the time to talk about them – as things that happen to other people, while we ourselves stand safely outside the absurd spectacle. And if our puzzlement turns out to be terminal, I suppose we'll have to accept the humiliation of surrendering ourselves to the argument, like seasick a5
passengers on a ship, to trample over us and do to us whatever it likes. – So let me tell you where I'm still finding a way forward for our investigation.

THEAETETUS: Please do!

SOCRATES: I'm going to say that it was wrong of us to concede that it was impossible for someone to believe that things he knows are things he doesn't know, and for false belief to occur in that way. In a way it is b1
possible.

THEAETETUS: Are you saying what I myself suspected, when we said it was like that – that sometimes, though I know Socrates, in the distance I see someone else I don't know and think[83] it is Socrates whom I do b5
know? In a case like this the sort of thing you're talking about does occur.

SOCRATES: Didn't we distance ourselves from that, on the grounds that it made us not know what we know, when we do?

THEAETETUS: We certainly did.

SOCRATES: Because let's rather set things up in the following way – b10
perhaps it will help us, somehow, or perhaps it will work against us, but c1
the fact is that we are caught in such a bind that it requires us to twist

[83] Here *oiesthai*.

and test every line of argument till it squeaks. So see if this takes us forward. Is it possible for someone who didn't know something before to go on later to learn it?

c5 THEAETETUS: It surely is.

SOCRATES: And then another thing, and another?

THEAETETUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: I want you to suppose, for the sake of argument, that our souls contain a waxen block. It is larger in one person, smaller in another,

d1 of purer wax in one, filthier in another; in some it is too hard, in others too soft, while in still others it is as it should be.

THEAETETUS: Done.

d5 SOCRATES: Let's say, then, that it is a gift from Memory, mother of the Muses, and that we imprint on it whatever we wish to remember from among the things we see or hear or the thoughts[84] we ourselves have, holding it under our perceptions and thoughts as if we were making impressions from signet rings; whatever is imprinted on the block, we

d10 remember and know for as long as its image is in the wax, while whatever

e1 is wiped off or proves incapable of being imprinted we have forgotten and do not know.

THEAETETUS: Let's say that.

SOCRATES: Now take someone who knows the things in question, and is thinking about[85] one of the things he's seeing or hearing. Consider

e5 whether he might perhaps come to a false belief in the following way.

THEAETETUS: What sort of way?

SOCRATES: By thinking, at one moment, that things he knows are things he knows, at another moment that they are things he doesn't know – because it was not a good move on our part, earlier on, to agree that such cases were impossible.

e10 THEAETETUS: What do you want to say about them now?

192a SOCRATES: We need to say the following. From the start we shall lay it down that if a person knows something, having acquired a record of it in his soul, but is not currently perceiving it, it is impossible for him to think it is another of the things he knows – because he has an impression

a5 of it, too – but is not currently perceiving. Also that it is impossible for anyone to think, either, that something he knows is something he doesn't

[84] Here *ennoein*. [85] Here *skopein*.

know and doesn't have the seal of in his wax; or that something he doesn't know is another thing he doesn't know; or that something he doesn't know is something else he does know. It is impossible too for a person to think that something he is actually perceiving is another of the things he is actually perceiving; or that something he is perceiving is one of the things he is not perceiving; or that something he is not perceiving b1
is another of the things he is not perceiving; or that something he is not perceiving is one of the things he is perceiving. Again, it is impossible for a person to think that something he knows, is perceiving, and has the imprint of, corresponding to the perception, is another of the things he knows, is perceiving, and similarly has the imprint of, corresponding to b5
the perception – this, in fact, would be an even greater impossibility, if there could be such a thing, than the previous cases. Also impossible: to think that something one knows and is perceiving, and keeping a correct record of, is something else one knows; that something one knows and is perceiving, along with a similarly correct record of it, is something else c1
one is perceiving; or again that something one doesn't know, and isn't perceiving, is some other thing one doesn't know and isn't perceiving either; or that something one doesn't know, and isn't perceiving, is something else one doesn't know; or that what one doesn't know, and isn't perceiving, is something else one isn't perceiving. The impossibility of all these cases is more than enough to rule out finding false belief in c5
them. It remains that such a thing will come about, if anywhere, in the following sorts of case.

THEAETETUS: Which are they? If you tell me what they are, maybe I'll actually understand a bit more, because as things are I'm not following you.

SOCRATES: With things one knows – thinking that they are other things one knows and is perceiving, or things one doesn't know but is c10
perceiving; or that things one knows and is perceiving are other things d1
one knows and is perceiving.

THEAETETUS: Now I'm much further behind than I was before.

SOCRATES: Here's the same point put in a different way. I know Theodorus and have a memory in myself of what he is like, and similarly with Theaetetus. Now isn't it the case that I am sometimes seeing them, d5
sometimes not, at one moment touching them, at another not, hearing them or having some other perception of them at one moment, at another having no perception relating to you and Theodorus at all, but

for all that still having a memory of you and knowing you, myself in myself?

e1 THEAETETUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Well, take this as the first of the points I want to illustrate for you: that it is possible either not to be perceiving things we know, or to be perceiving them.

THEAETETUS: That's true.

e5 SOCRATES: And with things we don't know too, it's possible for us often not to be perceiving them either, often to be only perceiving them.

THEAETETUS: That's also true.

193a SOCRATES: So see if you can follow a bit more now. If Socrates knows Theodorus and Theaetetus, but isn't seeing either of them, and no other perception relating to them is currently present to him either, he will never form the belief in himself that Theaetetus is Theodorus. Am I making sense or not?

a5 THEAETETUS: Yes, what you say is true.

SOCRATES: Well, this was the first of the cases I was talking about.[86]

THEAETETUS: It was.

SOCRATES: And the second was this: if I'm acquainted with one of you a10 and not the other, and I'm not perceiving either of you, again I'd never think the one I do know to be the one I don't.

THEAETETUS: Correct.

b1 SOCRATES: And the third case was where I'm not acquainted with either, nor am I currently perceiving either; I wouldn't think a person I don't know to be another person I don't know. And assume I've gone through again the whole of my original list of cases in which b5 I shall never have a false belief about you and Theodorus, whether I'm acquainted or unacquainted with both of you, or acquainted with one of you and not with the other; similarly with perceiving, if you follow me.

THEAETETUS: I do.

SOCRATES: So there remains the possibility of having a false belief in b10 the following case. I know you and Theodorus, and I have the imprints c1 of you both, as if from signet rings, in that wax block of mine. But suppose then that I see you both at a distance, and not sufficiently well:

[86] I.e., in 192a.

in my eagerness to refer the imprint belonging to each of you to the corresponding visual perception, and to make the latter fit its own traces, so that recognition can take place, I fail in this, switching things like c5
someone putting his shoes on the wrong feet, and applying my perception of each of you to the imprint belonging to the other. Or it's like what happens with sight in the context of mirrors, changing its flow from right to left – the same thing happens to me in this case, and I go d1
wrong; that's when this 'other-believing'[87] occurs, that is, believing what is false.

THEAETETUS: That seems right, Socrates. You describe marvellously well what happens to belief.

SOCRATES: And again, when I'm acquainted with both of you, but one d5
of you I'm perceiving as well, the other not, and the knowledge I have of the former isn't corresponding with my perception; that was the sort of way I was putting it before, and you weren't following me.

THEAETETUS: Right, I wasn't.

SOCRATES: Well, what I was saying was this: that if a person is d10
acquainted with someone and is currently perceiving him, and the e1
knowledge he has of that person corresponds with his perception of him, he will never think he is someone else he knows and is currently perceiving, if the knowledge he has of this second person also corresponds with the perception. That was it, was it not?

THEAETETUS: Yes. e5

SOCRATES: And what remained, I think, was the sort of case we were referring to just now, in which we definitely claim false belief occurs: namely when someone is acquainted with both of two people and is 194a
currently seeing them both, or having some other sort of perception of them both, but the imprints he has of each of them do not correspond with the perceptions he has of each, the result being that he looses off like an inferior archer, deviates from the target and misses; and this is what is in fact called a falsehood.

THEAETETUS: Yes, that sounds plausible. a5

SOCRATES: Also when for one of the imprints there is a perception present but not for the other, and you fit the imprint belonging to the missing perception to the present perception, your thought is in this

[87] See n.78 above.

case certainly false. In short, in relation to things one doesn't know,
b1 and hasn't ever yet perceived, it seems that neither falsity nor false belief is possible, if what we are presently saying is at all sound. But it is different with things that we both know and are perceiving – in these very cases belief twists and turns between false and true: true when it
b5 brings together the appropriate imprints and impressions directly and without deviation, false when it does the fitting in a skewed and sideways fashion.

THEAETETUS: So, Socrates, isn't that a fine account of the matter?

c1 SOCRATES: Well, you'll say that even more when you've heard the next bit too. Believing what is true is a fine thing, believing what is false is a cause for shame.

THEAETETUS: Yes, certainly.

c5 SOCRATES: The explanation for this divergence of outcomes, they say, is the following. The wax in some people's souls can be deep and abundant, and have the smoothness that comes from proper kneading; and when the things that come through the senses are imprinted on this 'heart' of the soul, as Homer calls it, playing in riddling fashion on the
d1 word for wax,[88] then, in these cases, the imprints they make in the wax are pure, and have sufficient depth to be lasting. People of this sort are not only quick to learn but have good memories, and instead of mis-
d5 aligning imprints with perceptions they believe what is true. Because their imprints are clear and are not crammed together, they quickly assign everything to its counterpart in the wax, 'everything' here being what are called things that are; these are the people who are called wise. Or don't you agree?

THEAETETUS: I do, most emphatically.

e1 SOCRATES: Well, it's different when a person's 'heart' is 'shaggy', a thing our all-wise poet actually praises, or when it's filthy and composed of wax that is impure, or too fluid or too hard. People whose 'heart' is fluid turn out as quick to learn but forgetful; if it is hard, they turn out
e5 the opposite. Those in whom it is 'shaggy' and rough, with a stony element, or with lots of earth or filth mixed up in it, have imprints that are unclear. So too do those with the hard wax, because it lacks depth,
195a and those with the soft wax too, because the imprints run together and

[88] Cf. Homer, *Iliad* 2.851, 16.554; *kear*, 'heart', in the Homeric lines is close enough for Socrates' purposes to *kêros*, 'wax'.

quickly become indistinct. If on top of all this they are all in a jumble because of lack of space, as in the case of someone with a tiny little soul, they are still more unclear. So all these people turn out to be liable to a5
form false beliefs, since when they see or hear or think of anything they cannot quickly assign each thing to each impression; slow and liable to misalignment, they mis-see, mis-hear and mis-think the most, and they in their turn are said to be mistaken about the things that are, and ignorant.

THEAETETUS: It wouldn't be humanly possible to put it better, b1
Socrates.

SOCRATES: Shall we say, then, that there are false beliefs in us?

THEAETETUS: Yes, very much so.

SOCRATES: And true ones too?

THEAETETUS: And true ones. b5

SOCRATES: So do we think we now have a satisfactory agreement that there are quite certainly both these sorts of belief?

THEAETETUS: Yes, most emphatically.

SOCRATES: Truly, Theaetetus, what a terrible and unpleasant thing a b10
man really is when he babbles!

THEAETETUS: Why? What makes you say that?

SOCRATES: It's because I'm annoyed at my own stupidity, and what c1
truly is babbling on my part. What else but a babbler would you call someone who keeps dragging the arguments this way and that because he's too dim-witted to be convinced, and won't be separated from any one of them?

THEAETETUS: But what exactly is annoying you? c5

SOCRATES: It's not just that I'm annoyed. I'm also afraid about what I'll be saying, as things stand, when someone asks me 'Socrates, so you've discovered that false belief doesn't occur either in perceptions in relation to perceptions or in our thoughts, but in the combination of d1
perception with thought?' I think I'll actually agree, and be preening myself on our having made a fine discovery.

THEAETETUS: To me, Socrates, what has just been shown seems nothing to be ashamed of. d5

SOCRATES: 'Are you saying', he now asks, 'that we'd never suppose that the human being we're only thinking of and not seeing was a horse that we're similarly not seeing or touching, only thinking of, not perceiving at all?' I imagine I'll agree that I am saying that. d10

THEAETETUS: Yes, and rightly so.

e1 SOCRATES: 'What then,' he goes on, 'will it not follow on this account that no one will ever suppose that the eleven he's only thinking about are a twelve he's also only thinking about?' Come on, you answer the question.

e5 THEAETETUS: My answer will be that someone could suppose that the eleven were twelve if he was seeing or touching them, but that he could never believe that about an eleven that was only in his mind.

SOCRATES: Well then, what if someone has proposed to think about 196a five and seven to himself – and I'm not talking about seven and five human beings, just five and seven by themselves, which we're saying are memories stored in that block of wax he has there in his mind, and among which we're saying it is not possible to believe what is false. The a5 question is whether any human being in the world ever set about discussing these in conversation with himself and asked what they came to, and if indeed anyone has, whether one person has expressed the thought to himself that they made eleven, another that they made twelve; or whether everyone says and thinks to themselves that they come to twelve?

b1 THEAETETUS: Zeus, no! There are plenty of people who make them eleven; and in fact the larger the number involved the more they go wrong; I think you're talking about numbers as a whole.

SOCRATES: You're right to think that – and see whether what we have b5 in the case we're talking about isn't actually someone's thinking that the twelve themselves there in the waxen block are eleven.

THEAETETUS: Yes, it seems so.

SOCRATES: Doesn't this take us back to what we were saying at the beginning?[89] The person to whom this happens will be thinking that b10 something he knows is something else he knows, which we said was impossible; and on that very basis we were forcing through the conclu- c1 sion that there was no such thing as false belief, because otherwise the same person would be forced into knowing and not knowing the same things at the same time.

THEAETETUS: Very true.

[89] See 188a–c.

SOCRATES: Then we must declare believing what is false to be anything but the misalignment of thought with perception; because if it were that, there would never be falsehood in our thoughts by themselves. As things stand, either false belief is not possible,[90] or else it is possible not to know what one knows. Which do you choose? c5

THEAETETUS: The choice you're offering is impossible, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Yet the argument is not likely to allow both. Still, since we must try anything, how about if we were prepared to be quite shameless? d1

THEAETETUS: How?

SOCRATES: By allowing ourselves to say what sort of thing knowing is. d5

THEAETETUS: And why is that shameless?

SOCRATES: You appear not to realize that our whole discussion from the beginning has been an investigation into knowledge, on the basis that we didn't know what it was.

THEAETETUS: I am aware of that. d10

SOCRATES: So doesn't it look brazen, when we don't know what knowledge is, to state what sort of thing knowing is? In fact, Theaetetus, for some time now our discussion has been full of impurities, since over and over again we've said 'we're acquainted with' and 'we're not acquainted with', 'we know' and 'we don't know', as if we were somehow understanding one another even while we are still ignorant of knowledge. Or if you will, think of what we're doing now, using 'ignorant of' and 'understanding' as if that was perfectly appropriate even when knowledge is the very thing we're lacking. e1 e5

THEAETETUS: But how are you going to carry on the discussion, Socrates, if you hold off from using them?

SOCRATES: I can't, if I'm to stay who I am, though maybe I could if I were an antilogician;[91] and if that sort of person were here now, he would have said *he* was holding off from using them and be criticizing us severely for not doing so. Well, given that we're not up to his standards, do you want me to try my hand at saying what sort of thing knowing is? It seems to me it would be of some help to us. 197a

[90] Except, presumably, in the (less important?) case of the 'misalignment of thought with perception', which Socrates and Theaetetus have done nothing to discredit as an explanation of at least one sort of false belief (and thinking).

[91] See n.37 above.

a5 THEAETETUS: Then – Zeus! – please do try your hand. I'll completely forgive you if you don't hold off.

SOCRATES: Well, have you heard what people currently say knowing is?

THEAETETUS: I may have, but I don't at the moment recall.

b1 SOCRATES: I think they say it's having knowledge.

THEAETETUS: True.

SOCRATES: Well, for our part let's make a slight change and say it's *being in possession* of knowledge.

b5 THEAETETUS: So how are you going to say this differs from the other?

SOCRATES: Perhaps it doesn't at all. But anyway hear what the difference seems to me to be, and then help me assess it.

THEAETETUS: I will if I can.

SOCRATES: Well, having doesn't seem to me to be the same thing as b10 possessing. For example, if someone bought a cloak and had control of it but was not wearing it, we wouldn't say he had it, rather that he possessed it.

THEAETETUS: That's correct.

c1 SOCRATES: So see if it's possible similarly to be in possession of knowledge and not have it. Imagine someone catching wild birds, pigeons or whatever, and looking after them at home in an aviary he'd c5 prepared for them: in a certain way, I suppose, we would say that he has them all the time, just because they're in his possession. Right?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: But in another way we wouldn't say he had any of them; rather that he has acquired power over them, by making them subject to d1 him in his private cage, to catch and to have whenever he wishes, after he's hunted down whichever he wants at any time, and then to let them go again; and he can do this just as often as he decides.

THEAETETUS: Right.

d5 SOCRATES: So, just as in the preceding discussion we installed some sort of contraption in souls that we'd moulded out of wax, now let's make a sort of aviary in every soul, containing birds of all different varieties, some of them in flocks separate from others, some in small groups, d10 others flying about wherever it might be on their own in among them all.

e1 THEAETETUS: Done. What's next?

SOCRATES: We're to say that when we are little children this container is empty, and think of pieces of knowledge[92] instead of the birds. If someone comes to possess a piece of knowledge and confines it in the cage, we're to say he has learned or discovered the thing this knowledge e5
was originally of, and that is what knowing is.

THEAETETUS: Let's do it.

SOCRATES: So now when he comes back to hunt for whichever piece 198a
of knowledge he wants, and catches and has it, then lets it go again, see what names for things you think are needed here – the same ones as when he was coming to possess the knowledge in the first place, or different ones? The following example will help you understand more clearly what I'm asking. You recognize a science of arithmetic? a5

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, think of it as a hunt for pieces of knowledge of every even and odd number.

THEAETETUS: Done.

SOCRATES: It's through this science, I suppose, that a person both has a10
the pieces of knowledge of the numbers as subjects under his control, b1
and also passes them on to another, if he does.

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And when someone does pass them on we say he is teaching, while taking them over is learning, and as for having them, by virtue of b5
having come to possess them in that aviary of ours, that we call knowing.

THEAETETUS: Right.

SOCRATES: So now pay attention to the next step. If someone is a perfect arithmetician, won't he know all numbers? After all, there are b10
pieces of knowledge of all numbers in his soul.

THEAETETUS: Obviously.

SOCRATES: So would this sort of person ever do any counting, by c1
himself to himself, whether numbers by themselves,[93] or something else, outside himself, that has number?

THEAETETUS: Of course he would.

[92] 'Pieces of knowledge' renders the single word *epistêmai* in the Greek, which was translated just as 'knowledges' at 146c. The 'knowledges' of 146c will presumably be some of the parts into which the form or kind, knowledge, is in fact divided, or 'cut' (*Sophist* 257c); it will be an open question whether the 'knowledges' in question here in 197e are the result of a similar cutting of the form/kind 'at the natural joints', or of simply 'breaking [it] apart in the manner of an inexpert butcher' (*Phaedrus* 265e).

[93] Cf. 196a ('not . . . seven and five human beings, just five and seven by themselves').

SOCRATES: And as for counting, we won't take that as anything but
c5 looking to see how large some number actually is.

THEAETETUS: Just so.

SOCRATES: In that case, he is plainly looking for something he knows as if he didn't know it, given that we have agreed that he knows all number. I imagine you hear disputes going on along such lines.

c10 THEAETETUS: Indeed I have.

d1 SOCRATES: Well, we on our side will surely compare the situation to the possession and hunting down of our pigeons, and say, no, there were two sorts of hunting: the hunting that took place before he came to possess a pigeon, and for the sake of coming to possess it, and the hunting that occurred after he'd come to possess it, for the sake of catching and having in his hands what had previously come into his
d5 possession. Just so, even if he already knew the things in question, because there were pieces of knowledge of them in him that he learned long ago, he can still be learning the very same things again, by virtue of his recovering, and so having, the knowledge of each of them that he had once come to possess but did not presently have to hand in his thought.

THEAETETUS: True.

e1 SOCRATES: This is what I was asking just now, about what names we should use when talking about these things, that is, when the expert arithmetician sets about counting, or someone expert in reading and writing sets to reading something. Should we say in that sort of situation that someone already knowledgeable is actually going back to learn again
e5 from himself the things he knows?

THEAETETUS: That would be strange, Socrates.

199a SOCRATES: Or are we to say that he will be reading or counting things he doesn't know, when we've granted that he knows every letter and every number?

THEAETETUS: There would be no reason to say that either.

a5 SOCRATES: So do you want us to say that it is of no concern to us what names are used? Let people drag 'knowing' and 'learning' around however it pleases them. Having established that it is one thing to possess knowledge, another to have it, we declare it impossible not to possess what one possesses, so that it never happens that someone does not know
b1 what he knows, but yet we declare that it is still possible for him to acquire a false belief about it. For, we say, he can fail to have the knowledge of this, and have another piece of knowledge in place of this

one; when he is hunting for some piece or other, as they all fly around, he mistakenly gets hold of one instead of another – and it's then, in fact, that he thinks the eleven to be twelve, namely when he gets hold of b5
the piece of knowledge of the eleven that is there in himself instead of the piece of knowledge of the twelve, just as he might get hold of a ring-dove instead of a pigeon.

THEAETETUS: Now that does sound reasonable.

SOCRATES: But when he gets hold of the one he's trying to get hold of, then we'll say, shall we, that in this case he is free of falsity and believes the things that are; so that this is how belief can be true or false, and none c1
of the things that were annoying us before[94] is standing in our way any longer? Well, perhaps you'll agree; or what will you do?

THEAETETUS: I'll agree.

SOCRATES: Yes, we are done with this not knowing what we know; c5
we're never going to turn out in any way not to possess what we possess, whether we're misled about something or not. But we seem to me to be faced with another and more frightening situation.

THEAETETUS: What is that?

SOCRATES: If the interchange of pieces of *knowledge* is going to turn c10
out to be false belief.

THEAETETUS: How is that frightening?

SOCRATES: First of all, that someone who has knowledge of something d1
should be ignorant of that very thing, not by reason of ignorance but by his own knowledge! Then again, as for his thinking it to be something else, and the other thing to be it, is it not utterly against reason that, when knowledge is present, the soul should recognize nothing and be d5
ignorant about everything involved? If this is going to be our account of the matter, there is nothing to prevent the presence of ignorance also causing us to know something, or blindness from causing us to see; why not, if knowledge actually sometimes makes a person *not* know?

THEAETETUS: Yes, Socrates, and perhaps it wasn't a good move to e1
make the birds exclusively pieces of knowledge. Maybe we should have had pieces of ignorance in the soul too, flying about with them, so that the person hunting sometimes gets hold of a piece of knowledge, sometimes a piece of ignorance about the very same thing. Then he e5

[94] See 195c.

would believe what is false by virtue of ignorance, what is true by knowledge.

SOCRATES: It's hard, Theaetetus, not to applaud your effort, but do think again about what you just said. Suppose it is as you say. The
200a person who has got hold of the piece of ignorance, you say, is going to believe things that are false; right?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: He presumably won't *think* he is believing what is false.

THEAETETUS: Certainly not.

a5 SOCRATES: No, he'll think he is believing what is true, and he'll behave like someone who knows about the things he's actually misled about.

THEAETETUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: He will suppose, in that case, that he has hunted down, and has, a piece of knowledge, not a piece of ignorance.

a10 THEAETETUS: Clearly.

SOCRATES: Surely, then, we've gone a long way round only to arrive
b1 back at the puzzle we started with. That expert critic of ours[95] will laugh at us and say 'Wonderful! Friends, are you saying that someone who knows both of them, a piece of knowledge and a piece of ignorance, can suppose one of them, which he knows, actually to be another of the things he knows? Or does he know neither of them, and believe that one of them, which he doesn't know, is another of the things he doesn't
b5 know? Or does he know one of them, not the other, and believe the one he knows is the one he doesn't know; or else think the one he doesn't know is the one he does? Or will you now tell me that actually there are also pieces of knowledge *of* the pieces of knowledge and ignorance, which the person who has come to possess them keeps
c1 confined in other ridiculous aviaries or wax concoctions of some sort, and which he knows so long as he possesses them, even if he does not have them to hand in his soul? Are you going to let yourselves be forced to circle round to the same point ten thousand times over without making any progress at all?' What are we going to reply to this, Theaetetus?

c5 THEAETETUS: Zeus, Socrates! I have no idea what we should say.

[95] I.e., in 195c–e.

SOCRATES: Well, my boy, perhaps the argument is quite properly rebuking us, and showing that it's wrong for us to be leaving our search for knowledge to one side and looking for false belief first, when in fact d1
it's impossible to recognize false belief until one has got a sufficient hold on what knowledge is.

THEAETETUS: At the present moment one can only think, Socrates, that you are right.

SOCRATES: So, starting all over again, what is one to say knowledge is? d5
I imagine we're not going to give up yet?

THEAETETUS: Certainly not, unless you're proposing to.

SOCRATES: Tell me, then, what would be the best thing to say it was, to give us the least chance of contradicting ourselves?

THEAETETUS: What we were trying to say before, Socrates; because e1
I've nothing else to propose.

SOCRATES: And what was that?

THEAETETUS: That true belief was knowledge. True belief is surely e5
free from mistakes, and everything that comes about under its guidance turns out fine and good.

SOCRATES: As the man said when he led the way across the river, Theaetetus, it will show for itself: if we go on and try our river, maybe the very thing we're looking for will show because we'll bump into it. If 201a
we stay on the bank, nothing will come clear.

THEAETETUS: You're right. Let's go on and look at it.

SOCRATES: This one surely won't need a long look; there's a whole branch of expertise indicating to you that knowledge is not what you're a5
saying it is.

THEAETETUS: How so? What expertise is this?

SOCRATES: The one possessed by the greatest in respect of wisdom, the people they call orators and advocates. I take it these people don't use their expertise to persuade an audience by teaching it, but rather by making it believe whatever they want it to believe. Or do you suppose a10
any of them to be such clever teachers that, in the short time allowed by b1
the water-clock, they can successfully teach judges who were not there when people were being robbed, or subjected to violence of some other sort, the truth of what actually happened?[96]

[96] The sense is clear here, but the text is uncertain.

b5 THEAETETUS: I don't think it's possible; but they could certainly persuade them.

SOCRATES: And you say, do you not, that persuading is making people believe something?

THEAETETUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: So when judges are justly persuaded of things that could only be known through someone's having seen them, and not c1 otherwise, and they make the judgement they do from hearsay, having acquired a true belief, they will be making their judgement without knowledge, merely having been correctly persuaded – that is, if they have judged well.

THEAETETUS: Yes, that's certainly right.

SOCRATES: My friend, if true belief and knowledge really were the c5 same thing, a top judge would never have correct beliefs without knowledge; but as things stand, it seems that each must be something different.

THEAETETUS: Oh yes, Socrates, there's something I heard someone saying, but had forgotten; I remember it now. What he said was that true d1 belief was knowledge when accompanied by an account, whereas true belief that lacked an account fell outside knowledge; the sorts of things of which no account can be given he said were not knowable – that is the name he gave them, 'not knowable'[97] – while those of which an account can be given were knowable.

SOCRATES: Very good. So tell me how he wanted to distinguish these d5 knowables from the not knowables. I'd like to see whether what you have heard is the same as I have.

THEAETETUS: I don't know if I can work it out. But if someone else spelled it out, I could probably follow.

SOCRATES: Then let me swap with you, a dream for a dream.[98] For my e1 part, I thought I was hearing certain people saying that the primary elements, as it were, out of which we and everything else are composed, were things one couldn't give an account of. Each of them, taken itself by itself, could only be named, and nothing else could be said of it by way of e5 addition, either that it is or that it is not; that would be already to add

[97] Possibly an acknowledgement that the word used for 'knowable' is unfamiliar, or a new coinage (*epistêton*, rather than *gnôston*, which will be used in what follows, *epistêton* being preferred here simply because it is cognate with *epistêmê*, the noun used in the question 'what is knowledge?').

[98] See Introduction, Section 6.

being or not-being to it, when nothing ought to be brought in if one is going to talk about that thing itself alone. In fact, one ought not to bring in even this 'itself', or 'that', or 'each', or 'alone', or 'this', or a whole range of things of that sort; for these run about and get themselves attached to everything, when they are different from the things they are applied to, whereas what should happen, if it was actually possible for it to be talked about by itself, and it had an account belonging exclusively to itself, is that it should be talked about in isolation from all those other things. But as it is, it is impossible for any of the primary things to be expressed in an account; the only possibility for it is to be named, since this is all it has – a name. With things that are composed from these, however, it is a different matter: just as the primary things themselves are woven together to form the compounds, so their names become woven together too, and form an account, since what it is to be an account is a weaving together of names.[99] So it is that the elements are unaccountable and unknowable, though they can be perceived, whereas the compounds are knowable, because an account can be given of them, and one can also have true beliefs about them. So when someone gets hold of the true belief belonging to something but without an account, his soul has the truth about the thing in question, but not knowledge, since a person who is unable to give and receive an account of a thing is ignorant about it; but if he has got hold of an account of it too, then that makes him capable of all these things and perfectly equipped in relation to knowledge. Did the dream you heard go like that, or was it different?

THEAETETUS: Like that in every respect.

SOCRATES: So are you happy to go this way, and put down true belief with an account as knowledge?

THEAETETUS: I certainly am.

SOCRATES: Theaetetus, have we really now grasped, just like that, on this very day, what so many wise people have sought for so long and gone grey before they found it?

THEAETETUS: To me, at any rate, Socrates, what was said just now seems a fine account of the matter.

SOCRATES: And very likely it *is* like that. What knowledge could there possibly be apart from the account and a correct belief about something?

[99] All of this, in the Greek, is in indirect speech, as are the next two sentences; it is all part of what Socrates claims to have dreamed that he heard.

There is, though, one aspect of what was just said that I am not happy with.

THEAETETUS: Which was what?

d10 SOCRATES: What actually seems the most subtle part of it, namely that
e1 the elements were unknowable, while the kind belonging to compounds was knowable.

THEAETETUS: Is that not correct?

SOCRATES: This is what we need to establish. We have as it were our hostages for the theory in the examples it used in laying it all out.

e5 THEAETETUS: Which were they?

SOCRATES: The elements and compounds we use in writing. Or do you think the person who said the things we're talking about had something else in mind when he was saying them?

THEAETETUS: No, this was what he had in mind.

203a SOCRATES: So let's put them to the test – or rather, let's test ourselves, to see whether we learned our letters like this or not. Here's the first question: do syllables have an account that can be given of them, whereas letters do not?

a5 THEAETETUS: Probably.

SOCRATES: It appears that way to me too, certainly. At any rate, if someone asked you about the first syllable of 'Socrates', and said 'Theaetetus, tell me: what is SO?' What will you answer?

THEAETETUS: That it's S and O.

a10 SOCRATES: And this is the account you have of the syllable?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

b1 SOCRATES: So come on, give me an account of the S along the same lines.

THEAETETUS: And how exactly is one going to give the elements of an element? Actually, Socrates, S is one of the voiceless letters, just a
b5 particular noise, as of the tongue hissing; B in its turn has neither voice nor noise, and neither do most of the letters. So it is quite correct for them to be said to be unaccountable, given that the seven most distinct among them, the seven vowels, only have voice, and it is impossible to give any sort of account even of them.[100]

[100] Vowels are 'voiced' insofar as they involve movement of the larynx; a consonant like S, while being unvoiced, has a sound of its own; consonants like B are unvoiced and cannot be pronounced on their own, i.e. without a vowel, at all. The vowels are 'most distinct' perhaps

SOCRATES: Here's something, then, my friend, that we've got right about knowledge. b10

THEAETETUS: It appears so.

SOCRATES: What about the point that the syllable is knowable but the letter isn't – have we shown that to be right? c1

THEAETETUS: Yes, it looks like it.

SOCRATES: So come on, do we say that the syllable is both its letters, or all of its letters if there are more than two? Or do we rather say that it's some unitary form that has come about from their being put together? c5

THEAETETUS: I think we say that it is all the letters.

SOCRATES: So think of a case where there are two, S and O. Both together are the first syllable of my name. Mustn't someone who knows the syllable know both of them? c10

THEAETETUS: Obviously. d1

SOCRATES: In that case he knows the S and the O.

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: What then – does he actually not know either of them individually, and know both while knowing neither? d5

THEAETETUS: That would be strange and unaccountable, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And yet if it is necessary to know each if one is going to know both, then it is absolutely necessary, if a person is going to know a syllable, that he should know the letters first; in which case our beautiful account of knowledge will make its getaway and vanish from the scene. d10

THEAETETUS: Yes, and pretty sharply too. e1

SOCRATES: That's because we're not watching over it closely enough. Maybe we should have supposed the syllable not to be the letters, but rather some unitary form that has come to be from them, one that has a single identity[101] of its own and is different from the letters. e5

THEAETETUS: You're quite right, and perhaps that's the way it is, not the other.

SOCRATES: We must look and see; we should not give up on an important and respectable account in so feeble a fashion.

THEAETETUS: No, we certainly should not. e10

because they are, as it were, the most substantial, the easiest to make out on their own (but even they are 'unaccountable').

[101] Or 'form' (*idea*); earlier in the sentence 'form' is *eidos*.

204a SOCRATES: Then let it be as we are now saying: let the compound be a unitary form that comes to be from the elements as they fit together in each case, whether in the context of writing or in any other context.

THEAETETUS: Certainly.

a5 SOCRATES: Then surely it must not have parts.

THEAETETUS: Why so?

SOCRATES: Because whenever a thing has parts, the whole of it must necessarily be all the parts. Or do you also claim that the whole has come to be out of the parts as some unitary form that is different from all the parts?

a10 THEAETETUS: I do.

b1 SOCRATES: Well, do you call all of it the same as the whole, or are these two different things?

THEAETETUS: I have no clear view of the matter, but since you tell me to be ready and willing with my answers, I shall take my chances and say they are different.

SOCRATES: Your willingness, Theaetetus, is thoroughly in order; let's

b5 see if your answer is likewise.

THEAETETUS: Yes, let's.

SOCRATES: We're presently saying the whole will be different from all of it?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

b10 SOCRATES: So, what if I ask you whether there is any difference between all of them and all of it?[102] For example, when we say 'one,

c1 two, three, four, five, six', or if we say 'two times three' or 'three times two' or 'four plus two' or 'three plus two plus one', are we talking of the same thing in all these cases, or something different?

THEAETETUS: The same thing.

SOCRATES: Six, or something else?

c5 THEAETETUS: Six.

SOCRATES: So whichever expression we use, we will have talked of all six?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: But again, when we talk of all of it, are we talking of nothing?

[102] The renderings 'all of it' and 'all of them', representing respectively the singular, *to pan*, and plural, *ta panta*, of the same noun-phrase, are borrowed from Nicholas Denyer.

THEAETETUS: We must be talking of something.
SOCRATES: Six, or something else? c10
THEAETETUS: Six.
SOCRATES: At least in everything composed out of a number of things, d1
then, it's the same thing we're talking of when we say 'all of it' and when we say 'all of them'?
THEAETETUS: Apparently.
SOCRATES: So let's say the following about such cases. The number of a *plethron*[103] and the *plethron* are the same thing; right? d5
THEAETETUS: Yes.
SOCRATES: And similarly with a stade?
THEAETETUS: Yes.
SOCRATES: And the number of an army is the same as the army, and so d10
on with everything like that; all of the number, in each case, is all of what each of them is.
THEAETETUS: Yes.
SOCRATES: But the number of each surely isn't anything other than e1
its parts?
THEAETETUS: No.
SOCRATES: So anything that has parts will be composed out of parts?
THEAETETUS: Apparently.
SOCRATES: And yet it is agreed that all the parts are all of it, given that e5
all of the number is all of it.
THEAETETUS: That is so.
SOCRATES: The whole, in that case, is not composed out of parts;[104]
since if it were, it would be all the parts, and so all of it.
THEAETETUS: It seems you're right. e10
SOCRATES: But is there anything a part is of, as a part, other than the whole?
THEAETETUS: Yes – of all of it.
SOCRATES: You're certainly fighting your corner manfully, Theaete- 205a
tus. But isn't all of it what it is, namely all, when nothing is absent from it?
THEAETETUS: It must be.

[103] See 174e, with n.55 (but a *plethron* can refer to a distance as well as an area: one-sixth of a stade).
[104] That is, if it is going to be different from 'all of it'.

SOCRATES: And won't a whole be this same thing, namely something from which nothing is missing in any way? Whereas what does have
a5 something missing from it is neither a whole nor all of it, the same thing having come about from the same cause at the same time?

THEAETETUS: It seems to me now that there is no difference between all of it and a whole.

SOCRATES: So were we not saying that whenever a thing has parts, the whole and all of it will be all the parts?[105]

a10 THEAETETUS: We certainly were.

SOCRATES: Now let us go back to what I was attempting to say just
b1 now.[106] If the compound is really not the elements that compose it, is it not necessary that it not have the elements as parts of itself – since otherwise it would be the same thing as them and so knowable in a similar way?

THEAETETUS: Just so.

b5 SOCRATES: And surely it was to avoid this consequence that we set it down as something different from them?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, if the elements are not parts of a compound, can you suggest any other things that *are* parts of a compound but at the same
b10 time not elements of that compound?

THEAETETUS: I certainly can't. If I were to concede that it had parts of some sort, Socrates, I imagine it would be ridiculous to leave aside its elements and go looking for other candidates.

c1 SOCRATES: Without any question, then, Theaetetus, according to our present argument, a compound will be a unitary, partless form of some sort.

THEAETETUS: It seems so.

c5 SOCRATES: So, my friend, do you remember that a little earlier we were inclined to think it right to say that there was no account to be given of the primary elements from which other things are composed, on the grounds that each of them was, taken in and by itself, incomposite, and that it would be incorrect even to apply 'being' to them when we talk about them, or even 'this', on the grounds that it would be to refer to

[105] See 204a; Socrates now quietly adds 'and all of it' to what was actually said there.
[106] See 203e.

different things not belonging to them; and that this very reason made them unaccountable and unknowable? c10

THEAETETUS: I remember.

SOCRATES: And is there any other reason than this[107] for their being d1
unitary in form and indivisible into parts? I don't see any.

THEAETETUS: There certainly doesn't appear to be.

SOCRATES: So does the compound not now find itself belonging to the same form as the primary element, if it really is a partless, unitary form?[108] d5

THEAETETUS: Most certainly it does.

SOCRATES: So then if, on the one hand, the compound is many elements, and some sort of whole, and these are its parts, both compounds and elements are knowable and accountable in a similar fashion, given that all the parts turned out to be the same thing as the whole. d10

THEAETETUS: Quite so. e1

SOCRATES: But if, on the other hand, the compound is something unitary and partless, it is not just an element that will be unaccountable and unknowable, but a compound will be too, in exactly the same way; the same reason will make them such.

THEAETETUS: I can't disagree. e5

SOCRATES: In that case, let us not accept it if someone says a compound is something knowable and accountable, an element the opposite.

THEAETETUS: No, not if we listen to the argument.

SOCRATES: And what if I said you'd actually be more inclined to accept 206a
someone's putting it the other way round, from your own personal experience of learning to read and write?

THEAETETUS: The other way round?

SOCRATES: That when you were learning you were continually trying a5
precisely to distinguish each letter in and by itself, whether by sight or by ear, in order that their arrangement wouldn't confuse you when they were spoken or written.

THEAETETUS: Very true.

SOCRATES: And at the cithara teacher's, wasn't the learning process a10
complete precisely when you were able to follow each note and say which b1
string it belonged to – notes being what can be called the elements of music, as everybody would agree.

[107] I.e., being incomposite. [108] 'Form' in this sentence is first *eidos*, then *idea*.

THEAETETUS: Exactly right.

b5 SOCRATES: So if we're to go by the elements and compounds we ourselves are familiar with, and use them as evidence for others, we'll say that the kind belonging to the elements is much more clearly knowable than the compound, and of much greater importance when it comes to the completion of learning in each context, and if someone b10 claims that a compound is by nature knowable, an element by nature unknowable, we'll suppose him to be merely playing around, whether deliberately or despite himself.

THEAETETUS: Quite right!

c1 SOCRATES: Anyway, I think there would turn out to be other ways of proving this point; and none of it should allow us to forget the business in hand, which is to look and see what exactly was intended by the claim that when accompanied by true belief the addition of an *account* makes c5 for the most perfect knowledge.[109]

THEAETETUS: Yes, we need to see that.

SOCRATES: So come on, what precisely does the author of the claim intend 'account' to signify for us? He seems to me to be saying one of three things.

THEAETETUS: What are they?

d1 SOCRATES: The first will be 'account' as making one's thought evident through speech with verbal expressions and names, imprinting the belief on the stream issuing through the mouth like a reflection in a d5 mirror or in water. Does that sort of thing not seem to you to be an account?

THEAETETUS: Yes, given what we say of someone doing it.[110]

SOCRATES: Doesn't that surely make it something anyone can do, either off the cuff or in a more leisurely fashion? Anyone can indicate what seems to him about whatever it may be, provided that he is not dumb or deaf from the beginning, so that if we take 'account' in this way e1 anyone who has a correct belief about anything will turn out to have it

[109] See 201c–d, where Theaetetus reported hearing from someone that 'true belief was knowledge when accompanied by a reasoned account'. The slightly garbled Greek perhaps results from the adaptation of the original claim to its new context.

[110] I.e., that he *legei* ('is talking', 'is speaking'); *logos*, which is 'account' in the account of knowledge currently being considered, is a noun cognate with *legein*, so that any and every occurrence of *legein* (or of 'making one's thought evident', etc.) can be understood as offering a *logos* or account – of some sort.

'with an account', and there will no longer be any correct belief anywhere that's separable from knowledge.

THEAETETUS: True.

SOCRATES: Well, we shouldn't too easily convict this person of having talked nonsense when he declared knowledge to be what we're currently considering. Maybe the speaker wasn't saying that, but rather that an 'account' was a matter of being able when asked what anything is to give the questioner the answer by listing its elements.

THEAETETUS: What would be an example, Socrates?

SOCRATES: One example would be from Hesiod, when he says 'And one hundred are the timbers of a wagon.'[111] I would not myself be capable of describing these, nor, I imagine, would you; we'd be content, if someone asked us what a wagon is, if we were able to reply 'Wheels, axle, frame, rails, yoke.'

THEAETETUS: We certainly would.

SOCRATES: But he'd probably think such a reply made us just as ridiculous as if we were asked for your name and gave its syllables – because then, though we'd be correct in our belief and our expression of it, we'd be fancying that we were experts in reading and writing, and had an expert's control of the account of Theaetetus' name and his ability to express it; when in fact, the questioner would say, it is not possible to talk knowledgeably about anything until as well as having true belief one has finished going through it by way of its elements – something that was surely said earlier on in our discussion.

THEAETETUS: Yes, it was.

SOCRATES: Well, in the case of the wagon too he would say that we have correct belief about it, but that it is only by getting a hold on those 'hundred timbers', and being able to express through these what it is, that one will have added an account to one's true belief and so instead of having a mere belief, become expert and knowledgeable about what a wagon is by having gone through the whole by way of the elements.

THEAETETUS: And doesn't that seem right to you, Socrates?

SOCRATES: If it does to you, my friend, and if you accept that describing each thing element by element is an account of it, whereas

[111] *Works and Days* 456.

describing it according to 'syllables', or some larger unit still, is no
d1 account of it at all, do tell me, so that we can look into it.

THEAETETUS: I certainly do accept it.

SOCRATES: Is that because you think anyone is knowledgeable about anything, no matter what, when the same thing seems to him now to
d5 belong to one thing, now to another? Or when he believes that what belongs to the same thing is now one thing, now something else?

THEAETETUS: Zeus, no! I don't think that.

SOCRATES: Then are you forgetting that when you and the others were learning to read and write, to start with you did just that?

d10 THEAETETUS: Are you talking about the way we would now think one
e1 letter belonged to the same syllable, now another, and would put the same letter now into the proper syllable, now into a different one?

SOCRATES: I am.

e5 THEAETETUS: Zeus knows I don't forget it, and neither do I think people in a condition to do that have yet acquired knowledge.

SOCRATES: So now suppose that someone at just such a stage is writing
208a 'Theaetetus': he thinks he should write T, H, E, and does; then he tries to write 'Theodorus', but thinks he should write T, E, and writes that. Are we going to say that he knows the first syllable of your names?

THEAETETUS: Hardly, when we just agreed that someone in that
a5 condition does not yet have knowledge.

SOCRATES: Well, is there anything to prevent the same individual being in that condition in relation to the second syllable too, and the third, and the fourth?

THEAETETUS: No, nothing.

SOCRATES: So when he writes 'Theaetetus' with the letters one after
a10 another, as he does so he'll have that description by element we were talking about, along with correct belief?

THEAETETUS: Clearly so.

b1 SOCRATES: While still lacking knowledge, we're saying, even though he has correct belief?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Despite, that is, possessing an account together with correct belief. After all, he had the way through by element as he wrote, which we agreed constituted an account.

THEAETETUS: True.

SOCRATES: In that case, my friend, there is correct belief with an account that ought not yet to be called knowledge.

THEAETETUS: That's probably so. b10

SOCRATES: It was only a dream of gold, then, when we thought we had in our hands the truest account of knowledge. Or shall we not draw a line under it just yet? Perhaps instead of defining 'account' this way, some- c1
one will choose the remaining way of taking it among the three we said would be available to anyone defining knowledge as correct belief with an account.

THEAETETUS: That is a timely reminder; there is still one of the three left. One option was to take it as an image, as it were, of thought in c5
speech, and the one we've just considered was the route to the whole by element. What are you saying was the third?

SOCRATES: What most people would say: that it's a matter of being able to identify some distinguishing mark by which the thing one has been asked about differs from everything else.

THEAETETUS: Can you give me an example of this sort of 'account' of something?

SOCRATES: Take the sun, if you like: I imagine you would be content, d1
if you asked what the sun was, to be told that it was the brightest of the things that travel through the heavens around the earth.

THEAETETUS: Certainly I would.

SOCRATES: See now what this illustrates. It's what we were just saying, d5
that when you get hold of the difference that marks off a thing from all other things, it's then – or so some people say – that you'll be getting hold of an account of that thing; whereas so long as your grasp is only on some common aspect it shares with other things, you'll find your account relates to all the things that share that aspect.

THEAETETUS: I see; and it seems to me a fine idea to call this sort of e1
thing an account.

SOCRATES: And if someone has correct belief about any one of the things that are, and then adds to that a grasp of its difference from all the rest, he will have become knowledgeable about a thing about which he e5
previously had belief.

THEAETETUS: That is just what we're saying.

SOCRATES: Well, Theaetetus, now that I've got close up to the option we're talking about, I feel exactly as if I were up close to a

shadow-painting[112] – I can't make it out in the slightest, even though
e10 while I was standing back from it there appeared to me to be something in it.

THEAETETUS: How has this happened?

209a SOCRATES: I'll tell you, if I can. I have a correct belief about you: if I have an account of you as well, then I know you; if I do not, then I only have belief about you.

THEAETETUS: Yes.

a5 SOCRATES: But we said an account would be a report of what makes you different.

THEAETETUS: We did.

SOCRATES: So when I only had belief about you, isn't it the case that so far as concerns any aspect that differentiates you from other people, I had no grasp in my mind on a single one of such aspects?

THEAETETUS: It seems not.

a10 SOCRATES: In that case I had in mind one of the common aspects, none of which belongs to you any more than it does to anyone else.

b1 THEAETETUS: That must be so.

SOCRATES: Then come on, in the name of Zeus! How on earth, in such a case, was my belief ever about you rather than anyone else whatever? Suppose that I'm thinking 'Theaetetus is the one who is a human being,
b5 and has a nose, eyes, a mouth', and I go on to include each one of the limbs. Well, is there any way that this thought will make it Theaetetus I'm thinking of rather than of Theodorus, or of the most distant of the proverbial Mysians?[113]

THEAETETUS: How could it?

c1 SOCRATES: But then if I think not merely 'the one with a nose and eyes', but 'the one with a snub nose and protruding eyes', again my belief surely won't be about you any more than about me or anyone else like that?

THEAETETUS: Not at all.

c5 SOCRATES: And it will not, I think, be *Theaetetus* that will be the subject of my belief until such time as this particular snub-nosedness

[112] 'Shadow-painting' is a technique, especially used for scenery in the theatre, which creates an illusion of depth.

[113] It appears that it was proverbially difficult to tell where the Mysians ended and the Phrygians began: see Strabo, *Geography* 12.4.4.

has left some imprint on my memory that differentiates it from the other cases of snub-nosedness I have seen; similarly with everything else that constitutes you. This is what will awaken my memory, even if I meet you tomorrow,[114] and will make me have correct beliefs about you. c10

THEAETETUS: Very true.

SOCRATES: In which case correct belief too, in relation to anything, d1 will have to do with what makes that thing different.

THEAETETUS: Yes, it appears so.

SOCRATES: So this getting hold of an account in addition to correct belief – what will it now amount to? If on the one hand we're being told d5 to add another belief, about how something differs from everything else, that's a quite ridiculous thing to tell us to do.

THEAETETUS: Why?

SOCRATES: Because it would be instructing us to add a correct belief about how a thing differs from everything else to a correct belief we already have about how it differs from everything else. That would make d10 the turning of a code-staff or a pestle[115] – or whatever example one e1 uses – nothing compared with the circularity of this injunction, which would be more justly called advice from the blind; telling us to 'get hold of in addition' what we already have, in order to get to know what we already believe, looks as if it could only be done by someone quite exceptionally in the dark. e5

THEAETETUS: But if, on the other hand . . .? What was the other thing you were going to say when you asked your question just now?

SOCRATES: This, my boy: if telling us to get hold of an account in addition is a matter of telling us to get to know the relevant difference, not form a belief about it, what a delightful thing the finest of our accounts in relation to knowledge would turn out to be! Getting to know something, I imagine, is to get hold of knowledge; right? 210a

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, if this account of ours is asked what knowledge is, it seems its answer will be that it is correct belief accompanied by

[114] 'Even if': because without these extra conditions, as soon as he and Theaetetus parted today he would cease to have true belief about Theaetetus (let alone knowledge).

[115] 'A code-staff': a reference to a Spartan military coding system, in which the message cannot be read until one knows the dimensions of the staff around which the strip on which it was written was originally wrapped (slantwise). The turning of a pestle was apparently proverbial for endless labour that achieves nothing.

a5 knowledge of difference. That, after all, according to it, would be what it is to add an account.

THEAETETUS: It seems so.

SOCRATES: And it is surely quite simple-minded, when we're trying to find out what knowledge is, to claim that it is correct belief accompanied by knowledge, whether of difference or of anything else. – Neither can b1 perception, then, Theaetetus, be knowledge, nor true belief, nor the addition of an account along with true belief.

THEAETETUS: It seems not.

SOCRATES: Well then, are we still pregnant with something on the b5 subject of knowledge, and still in labour, or have we now given birth to everything we had in us?

THEAETETUS: Yes, and – Zeus knows! – I've already said more things than I had in me, thanks to you.

SOCRATES: And do our midwifery skills tell us that they were all a bag of wind, and not worthy of being fed and watered?

b10 THEAETETUS: Yes, undoubtedly.

c1 SOCRATES: Well, if you try to become pregnant with other things after these, Theaetetus, and you succeed, they'll be better things you're filled with thanks to our present inquiry; and if you are barren, you will be less overbearing to those who keep company with you, and gentler, because you'll have the sense not to think you know what you don't c5 know. This is all that my expertise is capable of, nothing more. I know none of the things others know, all those important and wonderful men there are and have been; this midwifery of mine and my mother's is what d1 has been allotted to us by god – hers for women, mine for the young and noble and for any who have beauty. – Well, now I must go to the Porch of the King Archon, to meet Meletus' indictment, the one he has brought against me; but in the morning, Theodorus, let's meet here again, you and I.