A Map of Theaetetus

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3. A rough outline of the contents.

I. INTRODUCTION

142a–143c  3–5  Conversation that frames the main dialogue: Eucleides and Terpsion. Historic date: shortly before Theaetetus’s death probably in 369 BCE.

143d–145c  5–8  The characters introduced: Theodorus, Theaetetus, Socrates. Dramatic date: 399 BCE, when Theaetetus was a teenager.

145c–146c  8–9  The central question posed: what is knowledge (τί σοι δοκεῖ εἶναι ἐπιστήμη; to soi dokei einai epistēmē)?

146c–148e  9–13  Theaetetus initial answer (D0); the central question clarified: what is knowledge ‘as such’, or ‘itself’ (γνῶναι ἐπιστήμην αὐτὸ, gnonai epistēmē auto).

149a–151d  13–7  Socrates’s midwifery (ἡ μαιευτικὴ τέχνη, he maieutikē technē).

II. FIRST DEFINITION (D1)

151d–e  17  D1: knowledge is perception (οὐκ ἄλλο τί ἔστων ἐπιστήμη ἢ αἰσθήσις, ouk allo tī estōn epistēmē hē aisthēsis).

152a–c  17–8  Thesis P (Protagoras): man is the measure of all things.

152c–157d  18–26  Thesis H (Heraclitus): flux, things are always coming to be.

157e–160c  26–32  An initial objection: dream and sleep; confirmation that D1, P and H coincide.

161a–163a  32–5  First critical attempt, and brief reply by ‘Protagoras’.

163a–164c  35–7  Second criticism: hear language one does not know; remembering and not knowing.

164c–165c  37–40  Socrates doubts the plausibility of his criticism (ἀντιλογικός, antilogikos = ‘in a logic-chopping way’).

165e–168c  40–3  Socrates defends the theses on behalf of Protagoras: impossible to judge what it not (i.e. what is false), impossible to judge beyond what one perceives.

168d–171d  44–8  Theodoros enters the dialogue; third criticism: generalised, if others judge that P is false, yet Protagoras
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presumes all judgements are true, then he concedes that ‘P is false’ is true, and hence that P is false. Self-refutation?

Beginning a fourth objection.

Digression on the philosopher.

Completing the fourth objection: better judgements, expertise, more ‘doxastic’ authority; not everyone is a ‘measure’ (some are more ‘measure’ than others). Yet: concession that D1 is perhaps accurate for present things.

Criticism of H: generalised, extreme flux.

Completing the fourth objection: better judgements, expertise, more ‘doxastic’ authority; not everyone is a ‘measure’ (some are more ‘measure’ than others).

Yet: concession that D1 is perhaps accurate for present things.

Final refutation of D1: being is not perceived, but can be known, and thus knowledge is not perception.

III. SECOND DEFINITION (D2)

D2: knowledge is true judgement (ἡ ἀληθὴς δόξα ἐπιστήμης εἶναι, hē alēthēs doxa epistēmē einai).

Introducing problems with false judgements: how possible?

(a) Thinking a thing that is another thing.

(b) Thinking a thing that is not.

(c) ‘Other-judging’ (ἄλλοδοξεῖν, allodoxein)

(d) The mind as a wax tablet: error concerns judging, not perceiving.

(e) The mind as an aviary: having/possession knowledge; solving puzzles about false judgement seems to presuppose the definition of knowledge.

Refutation of D2: persuasion and testimony; true judgement and knowledge may come apart, and are thus not the same.

IV. THIRD DEFINITION (D3)

D3: knowledge is true judgement with an ‘account’ or logos (τὴν μὲν μετὰ λόγον ἀληθῆ ἐπιστήμην εἶναι, tēn mēn metà logou alēthē doxan epistēmēn einai).

Socrates’s dream about elements and complexes introduced and then refuted.

What is an ‘account’? (a) Logos as making a statement.

(b) Logos as enumerating elements or parts.

(c) Logos as providing a distinctive or differentiating feature.

D3 refuted. Aporia: all attempts to define knowledge fail. At the end, Socrates refers to his trial (cf. Apology), and hints at both Euthyphro (which is set at the King’s Porch) and the Sophist, whose dramatic date is the next day.