**Summary of Myles Burnyeats article ‘Knowledge is Perception: Theaetetus 151d-184d**

**Background:** Intelligent, young student by the name of Theaetetus has been chosen by his teacher, Theodorus, to discuss with Socrates to both learn and prove his intelligence.

**Introduction:** Socrates and Theaetetus begin by discussing the nature of knowledge and how it can be defined.

1. **Defining Knowledge:**

* Knowledge is perception.
* Starts off by Theaetetus claiming that what we know is based on what we perceive through our senses.
  + Socrates demonstrates how this view coincides with a similar view from another Philosopher of the time, Protagoras.
    - Protagoras doctrine states: “Man is the measure of all things: of things which are, that they are, and of the things which are not, that they are not” - Protagoras(152a3).
* Wind may be cold for one person but not for the other (152b3).
  + Perception is relative.
  + In this case, perceiving that the wind is cold is the same as appearing the wind is cold.
  + Then Socrates establishes that the perception of things is the appearance, but nothing appears how it is because how a thing is perceived/appears is relative. Which leads us to Heraclitus’s theory of flux.
* Heraclitus’s theory of Flux, knowledge is always in flux because perception is always in flux.
  + The world is forever in flux and so are we, constantly changing.
  + “No man has ever stepped in the same rive twice, for it is not the same river and he is not the same man” – Heraclitus.
  + Further demonstrating how perception is relative, by showing how one person’s unique individuality and the unique state of the world will result in a unique perception. Leading us into the discussion about motion.
* Motion has two forms: active and passive.
  + Active motion= what is perceived.
  + Passive motion= perception of it.
  + Socrates uses an example of vision.
    - A white stone (an active motion piece of the environment that is being perceived) fills the eye (a passive motion that is perceiving) with sight, working as a team to produce a sight of whiteness in the stone. Creating a private perception relative to the eye and this stone during this moment.
  + At this point, Socrates has Theaetetus agree that the exposition of the argument as has been currently laid out, seems reasonable. But Socrates says it is still incomplete for they have not addressed cases of false perceptions.
* False Perceptions.
  + Perception can deceptive.
  + Cases involving dreams, insanity, mishearing, and mis seeing.
  + None of the things that appear to during these cases are true, therefore perception is not knowledge because perception is not true, and knowledge must be true.
  + However, according to Protagoras, “you are the judge,” meaning that your perception is true for you. This is excellently summed up in a quote from Socrates, “How can I fail to be a knower of things of which I am a perceiver?”
* Now Socrates and Theaetetus have a short celebration for Theaetetus had his first intellectual “baby” guided out by the hands of the midwife, Socrates.
  + “All that I know, such as it is, is how to take an argument from someone else-someone who is wise and give it a fair reception” (161b3).
* Socrates objection to this theory based on memory.
  + In order to know something, you must perceive it. And if you have perceived something then you have a memory of it and therefore still know it. But let’s say you close your eyes and no longing seeing the thing you were perceiving but still have the memory of it. You would then be simultaneously knowing something and not knowing something since not seeing it is the same as not knowing it.
  + Therefore, knowledge and perception result in an impossibility.
* Knowledge and perception are two separate things.

1. **Knowledge is True Judgement:**

* Theaetetus suggest that knowledge is true belief, but Socrates challenges this and asks for more clarification.
  + Theaetetus further clarifies that if we believe something is true, and it is true, then we possess knowledge.
* Socrates points out that a true belief can be arrived at by chance or through unreliable methods.
* Socrates argues that knowledge requires not only true belief, but also justification, or an account of why the belief is true.
* Judgement is true in some cases and other times it isn’t.
* Knowledge is when my judgement corresponds to reality. In which case I’ll have knowledge. Or the opposite.
* Socrates points out that this isn’t completely accurate.
* For Socrates, knowledge must be grounded in an objective foundation that is independent of individual perspectives, rather than simply being a matter of personal judgement. Therefore, Socrates does not believe knowledge is simply true judgement but rather believes that its something much more complicated.
* The dialogue ends without a clear answer to the question of what knowledge is but come to close to a reasonable but not a completely accepted result.