

other art or sciences is. What Socrates is looking for is one thing that is common to all kinds of knowledge, in other words he is interested in the nature of knowledge, in defining the thing itself.

2. Knowledge is not perception

Theatetus, after being encouraged by Socrates to try again to explain what knowledge is, comes up with the explanation that knowledge is perception, for one who knows something actually perceives the thing he knows, and thus the explanation. Socrates appreciates the form of Theatetus' answer and proposes to examine it.

The word *aesthesis* which is translated as perception has a wide range of meaning, which includes not only awareness of external objects (sight, hearing, and smell) but also one's awareness of feelings, sensations, and emotions. Theatetus words, 'one who knows something is perceiving the things he knows', suggest that he is limiting the meaning of the word perception only to the awareness of external objects. And Socrates' examination of Theatetus' explanation further narrows down the meaning of the word to the perception of the external objects. It should also be noted that the only mode of perception analysed by Socrates is vision.

Socrates first equates Theatetus's definition with Protagoras' account that 'man is the measure of all things: of the things that are, that they are, of the things that are not, that they are not', which means that an individual is the measure of the way things appear to that individual. Which further means that what one perceives to be the case is the case for him. This implies that perception is infallible and of what *is* or of something which is real. These are the two marks of knowledge which anything claiming to be the knowledge must always possess. Socrates uses two theses to bring together the effects of the identity of knowledge and perception:

- (i) Interpreting Protagoras' hypothesis as the way things appear to someone is the way things are for that individual (for instance, if wind appears cold to someone, then it is cold for that person).
- (ii) Equating A appears B to X with X perceives A as B (for instance, wind appears cold to someone with someone perceives wind as cold).

It should be kept in mind that Socrates has not yet begun to criticize the theory that knowledge is perception, he simply is trying to show the full implication of the theory, or in other words trying to expand it to its fullest. He next uses Heraclitean thesis of Radical flux, i.e. everything is in motion and in the constant mode of changing, and that everything that we speak of having being is always in process of becoming. He attributes this thesis to Protagoras and claims it to be his secret doctrine. The thesis of radical flux makes every percept to be unique, for if everything is always changing, then no two events of perception can be same. Socrates uses the metaphor of parents giving birth to twin offspring to explain that according to the theory of Radical Flux there can never be conflict between two perceptions, and that no one can ever refute the perceptual judgment of anyone else, for every perception then would be the result of interaction between constantly changing perceiving subjects and the constantly changing objects which are to be perceived.

NOTES

It should be kept in mind that even though it is important for Plato to use the theory of perceptual relativism in order to integrate Protagorean thesis with Theatetus' definition of knowledge, Protagorean thesis of man-as-measure is not limited to mere sensory perception and is much wider in its scope.

NOTES

After bringing to light that full meaning of Theatetus' statement that 'perception is knowledge', after equating it with Protagorean theory that man is the measure of all things (if perception is knowledge and perception of same thing can be different for different individuals then without the Protagorus' dictum the statement that perception is knowledge will become invalid), and Heracleitus' theory that everything always is in flux (Plato assumes that Protagorus' theory takes Heracleitus' dictum as its basis), Socrates goes on to offer a severe criticism of the statement (perception is knowledge) using various arguments:

- Socrates argues that if every one's perception is true for him and is not inferior or superior to anyone else's perception; and if one is a judge of others perception and beliefs and if every one's perceptions and beliefs are true and right, then how can one person, say, Protagoras, be wiser than others. Thus, not all perception can be equally true and right, and if perception is not true, it cannot be knowledge.
- If knowledge is perception then anyone who perceives the utterance or written letters of a foreign language should have the knowledge of that utterance, which plainly is an impossibility.
- If perception is knowledge, then seeing or hearing is to know, for both are included in the meaning of perception. Now, when one sees something, one acquires its knowledge, and then he shuts his eyes, and still remembers it, but does not see it; and does not see it means does not know it, for seeing is knowing. Such a conclusion would be absurd and, therefore, knowledge and perception cannot be same.
- If perception and knowledge is the same thing then perceiving an object with one eye and not perceiving it by the other (by closing the other eye) would create a contradictory situation of knowing and not knowing the object.
- Socrates criticizes Protagorus' theory that all beliefs are true, and that there is no false belief in the following ways: Many believe that there is false belief, and if all beliefs are true there must be false belief. And even if all beliefs are not true, then also there must be false beliefs, thus in either case there is false belief, and therefore Protagorus' thesis that there is no false belief cannot be true.
- Socrates criticizes Protagorus' relativism by claiming that there is no possible way to apply his theory to judgements about the future.
- Socrates criticizes Heracleitean theory that everything is always in the state of becoming by claiming that if the theory is true then no stable or true statement could ever be made about these things, and therefore there could not possibly be knowledge.