

Summary of The Inward Conversation, an essay on Plato's *Theaetetus*
by Christopher Turney

Plato's *Theaetetus* is at first glance a dialogue on the nature of knowledge. What does it mean to know something? Socrates, together with his friends Theaetetus and Theodorus, seeks to answer this question. Despite his efforts, the Philosopher never settles on a final definition of Knowledge. His friends are disappointed as we the readers ask, "well, what was the point?" Upon further inspection, however, it seems this dialogue works its magic on a deeper level. Plato is interested in the soul and how it works. We see this interest in his other dialogues *Meno*, *Gorgias*, and the *Republic*. He uses the conversation in *Theaetetus* to illustrate the soul at work within itself, continually holding its own inward conversation. Theaetetus and Theodorus are really illustrations of Socrates' past and future self as the soul seeks to unite all parts of his person together in conversation. Knowledge, which Plato suggests is different from Truth, seems to begin and end in the soul. With this conclusion in mind, readers are compelled to look inwards and see how their soul holds its own conversation. Plato wants his readers to live the 'examined life', and this life begins apparently with an exploration of this inward conversation. Scary? Yes. Necessary? Plato says so. Where should we start? Begin by asking yourself how you've reacted to this very suggestion. Is there Truth to Plato's view of the soul as a conversational being? I leave you to decide.

Note: I strongly recommend Myles Burnyeat's translation of *Theaetetus* for further reading.