

The Platonic Doctrine of Untruth: Heidegger's Interpretation of Plato's Theaetetus and the Natural Possibility of Opinion

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Abstract

This article examines Heidegger's interpretation of Plato's *Theaetetus*, focusing on the problematic nature of opinion (*doxa*). Some commentators maintain that Plato's philosophy seeks an absolute conception of truth simply opposed to the arbitrary character of opinion, emphasizing an epistemological framework of the Platonic metaphysics. But a close reading of Heidegger's thoughts on the *Theaetetus* shows that Plato's original thinking does not attempt to simply posit a theoretical doctrine of pure knowledge contrary to opinion. For Plato, the possibility of knowing necessarily contains the ambiguous movements of opining (*doxazein*). Illuminating the lively disclosure of being inherent in the varying modes of opining, Heidegger's interpretive thinking suggests an open possibility of Plato's doctrine of untruth. In this light, I argue that a proper understanding of the *Theaetetus* must be based on the Platonic insight into the ambiguous power (*dunamis*) of opinion, which reveals the intermediate state of being between knowledge and ignorance.

Keywords: Opinion, Knowledge, Untruth, Being, *Theaetetus*, Heidegger

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Introduction: The Questionable Relationship of Knowledge and Opinion

This article examines the problematic relationship of knowledge (*epistêmê*) and opinion (*doxa*) revealed in Heidegger's interpretation of Plato's *Theaetetus* (Heidegger, 2002).¹ Some contemporary scholars insist that Plato defines opinion merely as an illusory belief opposed to the pure knowledge of being itself. In their view, this metaphysical antagonism between truth and opinion is generated from Plato's denunciation of the political life tainted by popular opinions (Arendt, 1990, pp. 73–74); facing the political persecution of the Socratic way of life, Plato's philosophy tries to establish a transcendental doctrine of idea as the absolute form of knowledge (Delueze, 1990, pp. 254, 258; Popper, 2003, pp. 19, 26). However, Heidegger's lecture on the *Theaetetus* shows that, for Plato, the varying possibilities of knowledge cannot be separated from the natural ground of opinion. Focusing on Plato's careful approach to the problematic power (*dunamis*) of knowing, Heidegger discloses open possibilities of thinking about untruth. In his view, Plato's *Theaetetus* does not simply try to posit the absolute or pure conception of truth; rather, this dialogue demonstrates that human effort of knowing naturally contains the ambiguous disclosure of beings, which leads to the multiple possibilities of opining (*doxazein*).

Thus, I argue that Heidegger's thoughts on the *Theaetetus* reveal the natural possibility of opining as the intermediary state of being between knowledge and ignorance. For Heidegger, Plato's thoughts on opinion hardly indicate an oppositional conception of true knowledge; rather, they seek a necessary ground of being with others which enables the human capacity of knowing as such. Particularly, Heidegger's grasp of the lively nature of being helps us understand the Platonic view of opining as a persistent basis of human learning. But some studies about Heidegger's view of the *Theaetetus* simply try to explicate the metaphysical issues unfolded from his "phenomenological" approach to the Platonic idea (Wood, 1999; Wrathall, 2004). Other scholarly works criticize his fixed conception of the Platonic truth, focusing on Heidegger's methodological framework of "hermeneutics" (Rosen, 1991; Rockmore, 1990). In a similar vein, a recent study argues that Heidegger's interpretive thinking fails to grasp the dynamic possibility of Platonic dialectics underlying varied definitions of knowledge (Gonzalez, 2009, pp. 173–224). A closer reading of the text, however, shows that Heidegger's thoughts on the *Theaetetus* try to uncover the active connection of knowing and opining, rather than metaphysical doctrines of knowledge. In this light, I maintain that for Heidegger, Plato's thinking recurrently confronts the possibility and limit of untruth based on the multiple forces of opining.

1. The Platonic Untruth and the Recurrent Question of Being

Heidegger's approach to the problem of being confronts, above all, the natural limit of human knowing (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 87, 260–262). For him, the ancient thinking of

¹ Hereafter *ET*. The text is based on a lecture course delivered at the University of Freiburg in the winter semester 1931–1932. It was first published as volume 34 of Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe* (collected works): *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit: zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1988). When citing the text, I will put the abbreviated title along with a page number in parenthesis.

being struggled with the problem of speaking (*legein*) and opining (*doxazein*), seeing that human possibilities of knowing are “both in the truth and in untruth” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 264; 1998b, pp. 1–16). The everyday modes of speech (*logos*) often distort and overlook the authentic possibility of true knowledge; nonetheless, the ordinary process of knowing is based upon the human capacity of opining. Thus, Greek philosophy approaches the power of opining as a problematic mode of human confrontation with the varying aspects of beings. In this light, a proper interpretation of the ancient philosophy must examine the natural connection between truth (*alētheia*) and opinion (*doxa*) (Heidegger, 1962, p. 494, n. 39; Rockmore, 1990, p. 116). For Heidegger, the ancient meaning of nature (*phusis*) implies the perplexing movements of being that can both reveal and hide itself (Heidegger, 2000, p. 106). The Greek meaning of the truth as disclosedness (*alētheia*) of being signifies this lively problem of nature, which constantly demands human beings to uncover the higher possibility of their own being.

The Greek conception of opinion (*doxa*) reflects the ambiguous “appearing [*dokein*]” of being through varying motions of beings (Heidegger, 2000, p. 110). The differing possibilities of opinion signify the perplexing disclosure of being through everyday speeches. The ancient power of philosophizing emerges from this natural experience of opinion, wavering between the revelation of being and its seeming appearances. The Platonic view of opinion, therefore, is not to simply posit the opposite conception of truth but to grasp our questionable experience of being based on the conflicting possibilities of untruth. In contrast to some commentators’ criticism against Plato, the Platonic doctrine of untruth seeks an open possibility of thinking about the being of non-being, which implies a necessary possibility of being with others (Heidegger, 1995, p. 22; cf. Popper, 2003, p. 23). In this sense, the genuine power of Plato’s philosophizing lies not in its metaphysical doctrine of pure knowledge but in its persistent questioning about the natural existence of varied opinions. However, Heidegger sees that traditional conceptions of Platonism hardly grasp the original meaning of Plato’s confrontation with the differing perspectives of being (Heidegger, 1991, p. 209; 1998b, p. 94). Plato’s philosophy attempts not to impose the fixed oneness of being on the plural beings in motion, but to disclose the shared ground of the varying beings (Lee, 2016, p. 396).

Heidegger’s thoughts on the *Theaetetus* illuminate Plato’s view of opining as an inevitable mode of the soul’s striving for being (knowing) and its diverging possibilities. Thus, Heidegger’s lecture on the *Theaetetus* begins with emphasis on the leading question of the dialogue: what knowledge *is* (*ET*, 110). His interpretation primarily approaches the meaning of knowledge as a persistent problem of being. Thus, he criticizes the presumptive reading of the dialogue based upon the modern scientific theory of knowledge. This metaphysical perspective tends to see Plato’s *Theaetetus* simply as an “epistemological” dialogue, reducing its lively questions into a dogmatic doctrine of knowledge (*ET*, 111; cf. Arendt, 1990, pp. 74, 97; Rockmore, 1990, p. 117.). For Heidegger, the right way of the interpretation must grasp Plato’s recurrent efforts to question the possibility and limit of knowledge, which can reveal the problematic nature of opinion. In other words, the ruling question of the *Theaetetus* is not to establish a philosophical theory of knowledge but to disclose the necessary relationship of knowing and opining (Blitz, 2010, pp. 215–226; Mara, 1988, pp. 476–483).

Plato's *Theaetetus* approaches the problem of being through the multiple opinions about knowledge. Heidegger sees that the Greek sense of knowledge is based on the possible disclosure of beings as a whole. For Plato, the human power of opening (*doxazein*) is an inevitable mode of disclosing the clearer aspects of beings (*Theaetetus*, 158d f.; cf. Arendt, 1990, pp. 79–80).² In the *Theaetetus*, the possibility of knowing signifies the soul's determinate modes to gather diverse beings in a certain unity (198d). In an immediate sense, to know something means to grasp the present beings with bodily powers of sense perception (*aisthēsis*); at the same time, the human power of knowing further reveals its extensive possibility to retain beings through the intellectual power of memory and imagination, namely "making-present" (*ET*, 116; 191d; cf. Heidegger, 1962, pp. 95–102.). Even when something is physically absent, a human soul can keep the presence of something in order to maintain one's own stance amid the changeable beings.

2. The Fragmented Beings of Sense Perception (*Aisthēsis*) and the Ruling Power of the Soul

The immediate problem of being emerges from Theaetetus' first definition of knowledge as sense perception (*aisthēsis*) (184b). As an introduction to this issue, Heidegger refers to Socrates' earlier statement: "appearance and perception are the same [*phantasia ara kai aisthēsis tauton*]" (152c1; cf. Deleuze, 1990, p. 262.).³ For Heidegger, Plato does not simply denigrate the importance of bodily perception (*aisthēsis*) which captures the instant appearance of beings: the sense perception implies a human capacity of having something directly before oneself (*aisthanesthai*), i.e. a prompt grasp of the self-showing beings (*phantasia*) (*ET*, 119). There arises a question of whether the sense perception can contain the genuine nature of beings, and this questionability of sense perception initiates a more serious inquiry into the basis of human sensibility. Thus, Socrates' question about the varied modes of sense organs concerns what makes the power of perception as such possible (185b–c). Heidegger emphasizes that, for Plato, a human being can recognize something only if it passes through the sense organs; on the other hand, the sense organs are dispersed at multiple places of the body in order to perform their own particular functions (*ET*, 123; cf. Mara, 1988, p. 477). This fragmented aspect of bodily beings seems to be uncanny (*deinon*) for the human being trying to ascertain and maintain one's own self (184d). The bodily capacities can exist only if the human being has a higher power to bring the divided perceptions together. Then, the natural powers and limits of sense perception allow us to seek a deeper ground of the human existence.

In Heidegger's view, Plato sees the being of the soul (*psyche*) as the governing power of the diverse senses. The soul signifies a natural possibility of the human being to unify the differing forces of corporeal beings. However, the conventional interpretation of Platonism could not grasp Plato's original view of the soul and its necessary relation to bodily perceptions. The metaphysical theories of the Platonic ideas have reduced the natural power of the soul into merely a spiritual conception of being; for Heidegger, this weakened notion of the idea was "probably the most disastrous thing that could have

² When citing the *Theaetetus*, I will follow the Stephanus pagination

³ Without special notice, the following citations of the *Theaetetus* (except the last section) are based upon Heidegger's own translation in the *ET*.

happened to the Platonic philosophy” (*ET*, 125; cf. Popper, 2003, p. 23). In its original sense, the Platonic idea of the soul is not to simply denounce and escape the bodily confusion of a human being (152c). Rather, the soul signifies the superior power of being that enables and sustains the immediate appearances of the physical beings.

Thus, Plato’s thoughts of the idea and soul cannot be simply understood as otherworldly and dogmatic conceptions of being, which despises the worldly coexistence of human beings (cf. Arendt, 1990, p. 93; Popper, 2003, p. 77). The governing power of the soul contains an open possibility of “the relational [*das Verhältnishaft*]” (*ET*, 128). For Heidegger, this view of the soul reveals the lively character of the Platonic ideas, which constantly connects and determines the multiple possibilities of beings (*ET*, 129; Lee, 2016, p. 394). The Platonic form (*eidos*) implies a disclosed outlook (idea) of being based on the soul’s persistent disclosing of the natural connectedness of beings. The possibility of knowledge reveals itself from the soul’s openness to other beings; the human soul approaches the genuine knowledge of being through the differing ideas and manifold forms of beings based on sense perception. Perceiving physical matters like color and sound, human beings can discern a greater idea of being that rules the apparent beings. For Plato, it means that the human being has the natural power of “*dianoein* [intellection]” to see a being of beings through their interactions (*ET*, 131; 150c; Plato, *Republic*, 511d).

For Heidegger, the natural power of human striving (*eporegesthai*) reveals a deeper meaning of the Platonic *erōs* (love; desire). The authentic possibility of *erōs* contains the measuring ground for varying desires, seeking a beautiful and fitting way of being with others (*ET*, 155; 169a f.). However, Plato’s original reflection of *erōs* has been distorted and forgotten, particularly through the contemporary conception of *erōs* as a groundless desire of sensuality. In this light, it is important for us to see the unruly desire as an inauthentic *erōs*, the lawless pursuit of instant beings (cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a30). On the other hand, for Socrates, philosophizing is a truly erotic mode of the soul in that the love of wisdom strives for the more lawful and suitable way of being including the erotic power itself (169c; Plato, *Republic*, 403a). Therefore, Heidegger sees that the possibility of knowing implies our natural “attunedness (*Gestimmtheit*)” toward other beings (*ET*, 158; Heidegger, 1962, p. 172). The human desire for knowledge is based not on groundless impulses of an isolated subject, but on determinate connections of one’s own being to the other (*Zueinander-sein*) (*ET*, 160; 160b).

In this regard, the power of speech (*logos*) signifies the most important mode of the soul’s striving for being with others. Heidegger sees that the original meaning of *logos* is to gather and display beings in a certain relationship (*ET*, 160; 206d ff.). To speak in an orderly way (*logizesthai*) implies the natural power of being to associate dispersed beings into a certain unity; on the other hand, the fixed categories of logic cannot fully disclose the soul’s constant movement of knowing (205b). Thus, Heidegger tries to clarify the temporal implication of the Platonic soul, which deliberates in itself “the past and the present things relative to the future” (186b). The soul must have an active power to relate different beings in motion while the dynamic faculty of the *logos* constantly determines the temporal connections of changeable beings (*ET*, 165). Therefore, the true power of a

human being can be understood by unveiling the deeper ground of the soul's movement for knowledge underlying the *logos*.

But the genuine possibility of being with others hardly discloses itself in an easy way. The open power of the Platonic soul still makes us see the uncanny possibilities of something higher, which permanently empowers the human efforts of knowing (*ET*, 171; cf. 186c7). At the same time, the human being belongs to a varying nature of bodily forces. The dispersed and changing sense perceptions cannot fully disclose the true basis of their own functions, while they offer a necessary pathway to the higher possibility of knowing (187a f.; Wood, 1999, p. 814). Then, the problem of the sense perception reveals more serious questions about the necessity of untruth, i.e. the natural ground of opinion (*doxa*).

3. True Opinion (*Alēthes Doxa*) and the Ambiguous Power of Opining (*Doxazein*)

The concrete problems of opinion come up in the context of Theaetetus' second definition of knowledge, namely, as true opinion (187a). For Heidegger, what we need to learn from this passage is not an analytical definition of knowledge but Plato's careful approach to the being of untruth. In other words, Heidegger's basic intention is not to simply analyze an essence of the Platonic methodology but to uncover Plato's confrontation with the difficulty of knowing (cf. Popper, 2003, p. 29). Theaetetus' second answer necessarily emerges from the challenging context of the first answer: the finite possibility of sense perception still maintains its own "*positive* meaning" for Plato's ongoing investigation of knowledge (*ET*, 178; cf. Delueze, 1990, p. 258). The power of the soul can unite the fragmented bodily perceptions only after grasping their relatedness to beings as a whole. It means that the idea of the soul is not to simply oppose the changing forces of bodily perceptions but to reveal the questionable association of truth and opinion. Thus, Heidegger sees that Socrates is cautious "not to tie down this compartment of the soul by any kind of rigid definition, and instead gives substantive guidelines for the question" (*ET*, 179). In this light, Theaetetus' second definition of knowledge as true opinion leads to a newly opened discussion about the soul's power of opining as such.

In Heidegger's view, Plato's view of opinion (*doxa*) is grounded in the possibility of the constant "self-showing [*phainesthai*]" of beings themselves, which varied powers of sense-perception cannot wholly capture. The determinate process of opining is necessary for the soul to approach and disclose the clearer aspects of beings beyond the immediate sensations. The human soul must have a determined view (*doxa*) of beings based on the gathering power of speech (*logos*); at the same time, the root meaning of *doxa* from the verb "*dokein* [appear]" signifies a countering possibility to "*lanthanō* [concealing; forgetting]" (*ET*, 181; Arendt, 1990, p. 80). The original meaning of *doxa* contains the natural possibility of grasping a self-showing of beings in different ways (191b). The definite perspectives of various opinions can conceal the genuine aspect of being because they also contain derivative looks of being, i.e. the possibility of non-being. Therefore, the human power of opining implies the two confused ways of disclosing: the self-showing of being itself and its variable appearances. This ambiguous nature of opinion

indicates that its untrue character never implies a purely oppositional concept of truth. Rather, the possibility of opinion signifies the multiple modes of revealing the truth of being.

Illuminating the Platonic problem of the *doxa*, Heidegger explicates the meaning of Theaetetus' perplexity (*aporia*) before Socrates' questioning (*ET*, 185). Socrates' art of speech continually allows Theaetetus to experience the uncanny thinking about the *being* of untruth (187c f.). The distorted possibilities of opinion inevitably emerge through the soul's recurrent struggle for knowledge. Thus, the discussion about the possible existence of true opinion leads to a contrary question of what makes the false opinion (*pseudēs doxa*) possible. In this light, Heidegger carefully examines Plato's preliminary discussions about the possibility of *pseudēs doxa* (187d–191). Only in light of Plato's cautious efforts to confront the inevitable problems of opinion, we can understand the Socratic art of guiding Theaetetus to overcome his own perplexity.

Heidegger's interpretation primarily focuses on Socrates' thoughts on the intermediary state of being between knowing and not-knowing (188a–d). The possibility of knowledge is based on the persistent experience of learning, i.e. the soul's movement from ignorance to knowledge. However, the transitional situation of “coming-to-know” cannot exist if everything is simply “known or unknown” (*ET*, 190; 188c). Knowing must be an ongoing attempt to grasp clearer aspects of something, although it cannot wholly disclose the truth of being. The possibility of knowledge signifies the necessary being of the in-between (*metaxu*) (Kirkland 2007, 100). In knowing, therefore, human beings must encounter the being of “otherness [*heteron*],” which underlies the diverse movements of *doxa* (*ET*, 193). In other words, the human power of knowing must reveal through the varying views of opining while striving for a true knowledge of something.

Here, Socrates approaches the core problem of *doxa* by questioning how “the one and the other” can be enjoined together through human speech. In speaking of something *through* something *else*, “the one is posited *instead of* the other” (*ET*, 201). For Heidegger, the significant point here is not simply a confusing nature of opining. The impossibility of the *alldoxia* indicates that a certain *being* of something must show itself even in the vague process of opining through something else (190d). The misleading mode of opinion cannot eradicate the natural ground of being that makes itself possible, although the original appearance of a being is often concealed and distorted through opining (*ET*, 202; Kirkland, 2007, p. 108). Therefore, the varying possibilities of opinion do not merely signify a groundlessness or nothingness of untrue speeches. Rather, the untruth of human opining ironically implies the irremovable possibility of being and truth, i.e. the soul's natural power of disclosing a more genuine relationship of beings as a whole.

4. The Natural Possibility of False Opinion (*Pseudēs Doxa*)

The two analogies of Socrates demonstrate the original ground of false opinion (*pseudēs doxa*) in a more vivid way (192–200d). Here, Heidegger uncovers Plato's subtle view about the possibility of untruth inherent in the human power of thinking and opining (*ET*, 204; cf. Heidegger, 2003b, pp. 14–15, 19). Plato's thoughts on falsehood (*pseudos*)

reveals that the being of untruth cannot be simply reduced into a logical error of speech; rather, they demonstrate a more dynamic aspect of being in deed (Lee 2016, 392). Plato's deeper way of thinking is indicated by the dramatic situation. Like Socrates, Theaetetus finally "takes heart" to confront what has perplexed him (191a). Theaetetus is now able to seriously deal with the baffling state of being between knowledge and ignorance. Thereby, he begins to understand the nature of "*mathēsis* [learning]" (ET, 206; 191c): without pursuing a simple answer about knowledge, Theaetetus tries to reflect upon his own perplexity before the being of differing opinions. He now comes to learn Socrates' careful approach to the nature of the in-between (*metaxu*), which is neither simply true nor absolutely false. Thus, Heidegger argues that we need to see how the new possibilities of thinking about untruth is "opened up" here (ET, 207; Kirkland, 2007, pp. 96–97; cf. Nietzsche, 1989, pp. 117; 134–137).

Socrates firstly presents a "simile of the wax" in order to make visible the problematic possibility of "remembrance [*mnēmosynē*]" (191c ff.). This analogy of the wax depicts the imprinting (sealing) power of the soul. The human soul has a power to hold beings within itself as the wax keeps the shape of something; even when beings are physically absent, the soul can have the ideas of them through its memory. Heidegger argues that this simile of the wax illuminates the human power to "make-present [*vergegenwärtigen*]" distinct from the immediate "having-present [*Gegenwärtig-haben*]" of sense perception (ET, 211–212; Heidegger, 1962, pp. 373–374; 421). Human beings can keep an encountered being based on its natural outlook (*eidos*) presented to their souls. However, the making-present of a being cannot reflect its whole presence because a memory of something contains the imitative look (*eidōlon*) of its varying appearances (194a f.).

Socrates then suggests the "simile of the aviary" in order to make clear the retaining power of the soul from a more dynamic perspective of being (197b ff.). The soul's aviary is an imaginary container filled with various sorts of birds: throughout everyday life, human beings encounter many changing beings and try to keep some of them in their souls. The birds that simply enter the container represent the soul's mere collection (possessing) of beings. But the human soul has a higher capacity to dispose and rearrange the encountered beings, namely when the man within the aviary is able to free the birds and catch them again. According to Heidegger, this recurrent mode of the soul's grasp (having) of beings is what Plato calls "*hexis* [disposition]" (ET, 216). For Plato, the varying capacities of knowing and opining are related to the human dispositions, i.e. the individual souls' distinctive manners of dealing with beings in various circumstances (197d).

Heidegger sees that these two similes demonstrate the soul's ambiguous capacity of making-present, in which the natural possibility of being remains throughout the temporal change of beings. For Plato, the possibility of knowledge cannot be separated from the varying possibilities of opinion. The power of opining can determine the changeable nature of beings in a fitting or unfitting way. However, the various retaining powers of the soul show the higher possibility of opinion beyond the immediate sense perceptions, pursuing a more broad relationship to being as a whole (cf. Delueze, 1990, p. 263; Popper,

2003, p. 26). On the other hand, the actual capacities of the human souls are not the same: we need to carefully consider the diverse conditions of the individual souls (*ET*, 218; 194d f.). There is a natural dissimilarity in the human powers to retain, recollect and dispose beings, causing their differing manners of thinking, speaking and opining in everyday life. But Heidegger also emphasizes that the conflicting possibilities of the human souls can be seen only in light of “one and the same” ground of being (*ET*, 219). The multiple opinions of human beings are possible only by their souls’ striving for the higher power of being as such.

The implication of being in the two analogies helps us understand the lively ground of the Platonic untruth. According to Heidegger, the ambiguous nature of opinion is grounded in the two diverging powers of the soul (having-present and making-present). The differing movements of opining reveals that the soul is not to simply make a universal representation of beings within our consciousness; rather, the natural power of the soul persistently strives for a shared ground of being, based on its recurrent grasp of apparent beings. In this light, the striving power of the soul contains several modes of action: sense-perception (*aisthêsis*: having-present), remembrance (*mnêmê*: making-present), and deliberation (*dianoia*: thinking through *logos*) (*ET*, 220; 195d). The actual process of opinion associates these different ways of the soul’s striving for being. In other words, the possibility of opining implies an intentional combination of bodily perceptions and mental recollection.

Thus, Heidegger tries to uncover from Plato’s thoughts on opinion a forgotten path of approaching the genuine problem of being with others. In Heidegger’s view, the logical category of correctness and incorrectness cannot allow us to question the natural occurrence of untruth and its relationship to knowing. Plato’s philosophizing does not simply determine opinion as an oppositional conception of pure knowledge. The distorted viewpoint of false opinion implies not merely a logical error but the concealing and forgetfulness of being with others. For Plato, the truly opposed concept of knowledge is ignorance (*agnoia*), which completely forgets and loses one’s own power of opining (199d; Plato, *Republic*, 478c, 511d). In this light, we cannot simply reject the untrue character of opinion as something without any connection to truth: a whole nature of being, however much it is distorted and forgotten, cannot be entirely concealed, “for it *shows itself*, offers a look, [and] we have a view of it” (*ET*, 227). For Heidegger, the natural perspectives of Plato’s thinking illumine that there must be an origin, direction and end of becoming, i.e. the determining power of being as such; however, the truth of being can be neither easily known by true opinions (with *logos*) nor simply rejected by the untrue ones (210a–b). In this light, Plato’s dialectical approach to the problem of opinion shows that the irremovable possibility of being must reveal itself through the dissimilar modes of knowing (Wood, 1999, p. 826; cf. Nietzsche, 1968, p. 9).

Conclusion: The Differing Ways of Being in the *Polis*

For Heidegger, Plato’s *Theaetetus* reflects not simply on a logical problem of untruth, but on the lively nature of human existence. To coexist with others in a proper way, human beings must confront recurrent struggles of differing opinions. For Plato, the conflicting

forces of opining (*doxazein*) reveal the possibility and limit of *being* underlying human quest for knowledge. In this light, Heidegger's interpretation of the *Theaetetus* illuminates a positive meaning of opinion (*doxa*): in so far as being shows itself through the everyday opinions of beings, we can strive for the higher possibility of being with others (*ET*, 229; 169d). The questioning of being is necessarily difficult because the changeable nature of beings can often be twisted and buried under the determinate views of opinions. In other words, human pursuit of knowledge must confront the vague (false) revelations of everyday being with others. Thus, Plato's thinking about knowledge and opinion indicates the natural limit and power of philosophizing itself: philosophy cannot give us a definite answer about true knowledge of being, but it can guide our thinking and opining to constantly seek the better possibilities of living with others (157d; 173d f.). Thereby, the Socratic questions of knowledge naturally lead to the political problem of being in the *polis* (167c; 170b).

The dramatic contexts of the dialogue indicate that the natural ground of knowledge implies the inevitable problems of being in the *polis* (Mara, 1988, p. 483; Wood, 1999, p. 812; Blitz, 2010, p. 226). Heidegger's interpretation of the *Theaetetus* illuminates the recurring question of being inherent in the Platonic discussion of knowledge and opinion. The intermediate state of knowing implies the human way of being in the varying modes of opining. However, Heidegger fails to notice that in light of the whole context of the dialogue, this questionable nature of being ultimately signifies a political problem of everyday living with others (167c; 177d; 179a). Theaetetus eventually actualized a courageous way of being in the *polis* after the perplexing dialogue with Socrates disclosing the problematic basis of knowledge and opinion. While their discussions cannot determine the pure concept of knowledge, the political implications of the Socratic thinking might let Theaetetus see the actual ground of his own being.

The *Theaetetus* reveals that the human quest for knowledge must pass through the inevitable possibility of untruth. As a determined state of the soul's striving for being, the power of opining cannot be separated from the ongoing practice of learning from error (190a). Thus, as Heidegger rightly points out, Plato's philosophizing is not to simply establish an absolute doctrine of knowledge against the everyday opinions. For Plato, the ambiguous nature of opining further reveals a necessary conflict between the differing perspectives of being, which constantly requires the human striving for the best-possible modes of unity. The power and limit of opinion signifies the dynamic character of the Platonic untruth wavering between awareness and deceptiveness; the natural possibility of false opinion does not imply nothingness or groundlessness of existence but the conflicting movements of being with others. Thus, the possibility and limit of Heidegger's interpretive thinking allows us to read the *Theaetetus* as a whole more carefully, considering the interactive relationship of truth and opinion as a persistent problem of being in the *polis*.

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