

Philosophical Souls: Socratic Midwifery and Philosophical Curiosity in Plato's *Theaetetus*

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Abstract

This paper gives a reading of the midwife image in Plato's *Theaetetus*, analyzing the coherence of each part of midwifery presented by Socrates (pimping, giving birth, and the evaluation of offspring). The midwife image is introduced by Socrates to arrive at a definition of knowledge that could encompass both the Socratic method and mathematics. He introduces himself as a midwife to bring to light that which hides within the soul of Theaetetus. I put forward that the image should not be attributed to Socrates outside of the dialogue; it is not mentioned by Plato outside of the *Theaetetus* due to the essential role it plays in advancing the maieutic, or Socratic method, with Theaetetus, and it is not a cohesive image. Ultimately, the inconclusive ending of the dialogue is due to a move by Socrates to analyze the truth or falsity of ideas coming from somebodies' soul, instead of their appeal in the first place, but it does not disprove Socrates' knowledge and wisdom of soul. The midwife image is ultimately successful in showing the influences that brought Theaetetus to wonder about Sophistry and knowledge in the first place, that he is not susceptible to the Socratic maieutic, and serves as a vessel for Socrates to try to solve his own curiosity, even if the result is inconclusive.

Introduction

Plato's *Theaetetus* is a dialogue of images. From the midwife to the aviary, there are visual mathematical roots and invocations of the sport of wrestling against humiliation in every other page. The image of the midwife has become emblematic of Socratic philosophy, and for good reason. It seems to encapsulate the Socratic method of inquiry—hereby referred to as maieutic, from the Greek *maieutikos* meaning midwife—characterizing Socrates as a vessel for the enlightenment of others in his company. However, as the dialogue is full of images, so it is filled with contradictions and paradoxes. Importantly, the midwife image is original

and exclusive to the *Theaetetus*. It is impossible to ignore how the image of Socrates as a midwife paints the entire dialogue. In each refutation, he invokes his art of midwifery. Thus, I will analyze the coherence of each part of midwifery as presented by Socrates (pimping, giving birth, and evaluation of offspring) and see how well each complement the maieutic. Ultimately, I argue that the midwife image demonstrates Socrates' wisdom of soul, but it is ultimately incompatible with the soul of Theaetetus, resulting in the inconclusive ending to the dialogue, or *aporia*.

The philosophical soul of Theaetetus

Theaetetus gives 3 definitions of knowledge (knowledge as perception, knowledge as true opinion, and knowledge as true opinion with an account or *logos*), but there is a crucial preliminary account that leads Socrates to reveal the image of the midwife. When Socrates first tests the young Theaetetus through the recommendation of the mathematician Theodorus, Theaetetus says that knowledge consists in both the arts and sciences, with mathematics highlighted as the essential type (146d).¹ Theaetetus gives examples of knowledges, with no clear definition of what distinguishes one from another, or what makes them whole (146e). However, there is a hint of truth, and the curiosity of a philosopher, in this initial assertion. He also includes the arts and shoemaking in his account of knowledge, which is unexpected from a mathematician, and will surely remain relevant when he invokes Protagoras with his first official definition. Nonetheless, it becomes clear from this point that Socrates will not accept any partial answers to his questions.

Something in Theaetetus' preliminary answer pushes Socrates to elaborate the first philosophical image of the dialogue, the midwife. Theaetetus has seemingly passed the initial test of aptitude after his imagistic mathematical example, wherein he explains roots and lines in a plane through shapes like a square and oblong (147d-148e). Then, he makes it clear that he is at a loss for answers, but that he is nonetheless perplexed (148e). Is this perplexity the beginning of philosophy? Socrates begins his maieutic interpretation with an image, right after Theaetetus

attempts an image of knowledge through roots. Evidently, Socrates has seen in Theaetetus the glimmer of a philosophical soul. He thus constructs the image of the midwife to not only arrive at the truth of Theaetetus' potential, but to discern whether what brews within him can help them arrive at a definition of knowledge that could encompass both mathematics and knowledge of soul.

The midwife image is thus divided into three parts: The matchmaking of potential parents, the process of birth, and the evaluation of the offspring. As he builds the image, Socrates repeatedly asks Theaetetus to reflect upon his words, something that until this point of the dialogue, he had not asked Theaetetus to do. So, let us reflect as well on the image of the midwife, whether the description Socrates gives of the duties of the midwife constitutes a unified art, and how well the account correlates with his maieutic art.

Pimping

At the outset of the midwife image, Socrates attributes an unlikely trait to midwives: "uncanny go-betweens" (149d). In other words, midwives are exceptionally good at matching parents to produce the best offspring. This, according to Socrates, they do with great pride yet without boasting. Seemingly, through having experienced childbirth, and now aiding in the delivery of other children, they have a mysterious ability to know which man would be perfect for which woman. If children are to turn out beautiful and healthy, it is of outmost

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all citations come from Seth Benardete's *The Being of the Beautiful* (1986)

importance that both parents possess these traits, but realistically, it does not take god-aided midwifery to achieve this ability. The uncanniness, however, is a sixth sense, indeed, close to wisdom.

Although it is immediately questionable how much midwives possess this ability of matchmaking, Socrates complicates the matter further by making an analogy for midwifery through farming (149e). He prompts Theaetetus to agree with the premise that midwifery and matchmaking are one art, in the same way knowing what seed goes with what earth, and the caring and harvesting of the fruit are one art. If matchmaking is invoked in a strict biological sense, this analogy seems to work. But Socrates assumes that cultivation and harvesting can constitute a unified art. This seems strange, since harvesting does not require as much “artfulness” as cultivation itself. Similarly, the midwife may care for the child after birth, but their main concern is the wellbeing of the woman who delivers, so cultivation would be the foremost art in relation to midwifery. Moreover, the woman in this harvesting image would be the soil, and the father the seed.

We are still in the realm of art, but Socrates has yet to explain how this relates to his own midwifery. Instead, he adds that there is an “artless” layer to matchmaking (150a). Midwives are respectable, but in their action as go-betweens, it is possible that they be accused of pimping.

Therefore, they often refrain from matchmaking altogether, lest they be wrongfully accused, even though they are the only ones capable of acting as effective go-betweens. There is a question of eugenics in the account so far. Midwives have been presented by Socrates as august and uncanny,

but if they truly engaged in successful matchmaking, no matter how mysterious, then the midwife would in many ways be responsible for *production*. It should be clear at this point that Socrates is assuming many aspects of midwifery to be known. But the midwife as a producer of successful offspring adds another dimension to the dynamic of two parents creating one offspring. Before the two parents meet, the midwife acts as not only an intermediary, but then a successful and uncanny creator. The task of a prosperous and healthy society is on her shoulders. However, we are reminded that this practice is wrongfully considered unjust and artless, (unlike the artful and respectable matchmaking), thus midwives may not practice it publicly, but they possess the ability to engage in it.

We can thus correlate the image of the “farmer” with the midwife acting as a go-between. If Socrates draws a correct analogy, then by planting a seed into the right soil, and by matching a pair to bear the right children, the midwife is clearly the image of a creator. In the planting example, Socrates attributes to the farmer the ultimate responsibility for the flourishing of the crop, and one can say the fruit is theirs, even though it is up to the seed to develop and bear fruit. Even though the image is not given a name by Socrates, the art of creation is a fitting one. Just like a god can be responsible for the creation of creatures, even if they are not the ones who bear them, Socrates will in like-fashion resemble this image; let us not forget his claim that his art of midwifery is god-given.

Socrates explains that, just like a midwife has a keen sense of whether a woman is pregnant or not, he can similarly tell whether someone in his company is not pregnant with knowledge and thus does not need his maieutic art. He instead acts as a go-

between and pairs them with a different person with the help of the god or *daimonion* (151b). Socrates does not deal with men who are not pregnant and has therefore identified Theaetetus as pregnant. Let us trace back the conversation that led to this discovery in connection with matchmaking. After Socrates presents his initial perplexity about the definition of knowledge, Theodorus directs him to ask Theaetetus instead (146a-146b). Socrates is unsatisfied with Theaetetus' answer that knowledges are the sciences and the arts (146d), and we see that Socrates begins his evaluation of a potential pregnancy. His maieutic art is in display as he pushes the young mathematician: "do you believe that someone understands some name of something if he doesn't know what it is?" (147b). The question-and-answer section leads Theaetetus to link the current topic with the conversation he had with Theodorus about roots. Socrates seems to realize in this very moment, that Theaetetus has potential far beyond that of a simple mathematician. He is truly exceptional, and Socrates encourages him to apply himself to the question of knowledge in the same way he did to the question of mathematics. However, Theaetetus reveals that Socrates' reputation precedes him, and that although he has tried to answer for himself the questions he asks others, he does not feel either adequate to answer, nor capable of ridding himself of the perplexity.

Based on the discussion of matchmaking above, we can conclude that Socrates engages in pimping, both literally (by allegedly matching students who are not pregnant with other teachers), and figuratively, by assessing the potential for a young person like Theaetetus to be a philosopher, and to elevate himself to the status of godly farmer. It is easy to forget that Socrates equated matchmaking to farming,

but here he plants in Theaetetus' soul the seed of curiosity. How strange it is for a young man to be called pregnant, on account of their philosophical curiosity! And yet, this grabs Theaetetus' attention towards the confusing and incredible image of the pimping midwife. Socrates' reaps the fruit of the matchmaking aspect of midwifery in a layered way: He has created an image that successfully encapsulates the need for maieutic art, using the midwife image to engage Theaetetus in the maieutic.

With this trait of midwifery analyzed, we can prematurely conclude that Socrates does indeed possess knowledge of *something*. Whether or not this translates to wisdom of soul or of ignorance is to be seen. However, Socratic pimping and matchmaking will nicely complement the next step in the pregnancy of Theaetetus, and the one where the midwife is definitively involved: Birth.

Giving birth

Theaetetus is characterized by Socrates as "suffering labor pains" (148e). Part of the uncanniness of midwives is their ability to identify a person as pregnant better than anyone else. Of course, they can do this specifically in Socrates' characterization, but it is possible that midwives can tell if a woman is pregnant in the early stages, when their bellies are not yet showing. Nonetheless, Socrates uses this uncanniness to further characterize his maieutic art. He has identified Theaetetus as pregnant due to his perplexity with the question of knowledge, and now he will become the mediator of his delivery.

After establishing the extent of the midwife art, Socrates begins the speech in which he connects it to his maieutic art (150b-151e). Socrates explains that his

midwifery deals with men who bear wisdom, and in giving birth, he analyzes their souls. Socrates can arouse the same labor pains that a midwife could, and in doing so, he brings men to deliver either an “image and a lie” or “something fruitful and true” (150c). Importantly, the point of departure between his midwifery and that of real midwives, is this analysis of offspring as images or fruitful ideas. Of course, no woman gives birth to a phantom or a fruitful offspring; he should have instead specified true or false, as correlates for healthy or ill. The process of men giving birth is thus one initiated in the soul, so Socrates is an intermediary in the process of knowledge in the soul.

Socrates takes an important first step in his midwifery, before the birth but after the matchmaking; he can help people realize they are pregnant, and put them in a state of labor, or even help them abort their offspring (149d). This he correlates with real midwifery. The perplexity that other young men experience in his presence is thanks to his ability to give drugs and sing incantations. This ability could potentially give Socrates the role of mentor. There is an interesting claim made by Socrates, that the birth of knowledge by his students is solely their doing, and that he is only responsible for the delivery. The claim that the person does not learn anything from Socrates in their birth process will be dismantled as soon as Theaetetus gives birth to his first offspring. Due to his apparent knowledge of soul, Socrates caters his midwifery to the person giving birth, in this case, Theaetetus. It is moreover important to note that the decision to give birth or abort, would not be possible if Socrates did not intervene. The delivery of Theaetetus’ first offspring comes about immediately after the midwife image is complete. The explanation of the midwife image itself was a process of midwifery for

Theaetetus’ initial labor pains. It is impossible to say that the speech did not affect Theaetetus, especially since Socrates convinces him that there is something deeper to his perplexity, and that he will not be ridiculed for his answer to the question of knowledge, for why would a god do anything if not out of benevolence? (151c). Once again like the matchmaking stage, the midwife image serves to influence Theaetetus, and we will now see the extent of this intervention.

Now we can analyze the first official instance of midwifery by Socrates unto Theaetetus. After his speech, Socrates begs Theaetetus to start from the beginning, clearing the record from his aptitude test. “If a god’s willing” (151d), he should be able to give an answer. Socrates is ready to hold Theaetetus’ baby in his hands, after a relatively peaceful labor with some contractions. The incantations and drugs have worked because Theaetetus is unable to not answer Socrates. Thus, his first offspring seems to be that knowledge is perception (and nothing else). As stated, Socrates will not take any half-answers. Incredibly, however, he does not seem to think that Theaetetus has given birth to his *own* baby, for he does not declare the young mathematician to have given birth, but rather moves to determine whether the baby is in fact a wind-egg (151e). More interestingly, he identifies the progenitor of Theaetetus’ offspring: the Sophist Protagoras. Can we say that Theaetetus delivers a wind-egg, since his idea is implanted in him by another person, and not “original” in his soul? Socratic midwifery takes a step further. Protagoras did not champion knowledge to be perception, but instead famously, that man is the measure of all things. This is considerably different from Theaetetus’ initial answer. Was the egg a wind-egg until Socrates fertilized it? He imbues his own knowledge of Protagorean

Sophistry and relativism into the previously unfertilized egg of Theaetetus.

Moreover, when Socrates gives his interpretation of Protagorean relativism, Theaetetus says, “Indeed, he is speaking in this way” (152a), rather than agreeing to the meaning of the relativism related to his definition of knowledge. They consequently have a lengthy conversation about the workings of relativism. There is a notable interruption where Theaetetus proclaims that he does not understand the meaning of Socrates’ speech thus far, whether he is being tested, or whether Socrates only seeks to expound his own opinions (157c). Theaetetus is not as vulnerable to midwifery as we initially thought. And, although reassured in the next line that Socrates is only trying to determine a wind-egg from a fruitful one, we are reminded how far removed we are from Theaetetus’ initial answer. Socrates now speaks of relativism, of appearance and opinion, and of sickness and health. Even when he brings in Heraclitus, his art of midwifery is not as independent as initially presented.

It seems that Theaetetus has not been allowed to give birth yet after all. This is still the process of delivery, if not the erotic fertilization. In fact, Socrates has the final say in the birth of the child, finally occurring at 160d-e. Socrates refutes the thesis of relativism, because it fails to explain false opinion. After all, we do come back to Theaetetus’ offspring, but only after Socrates reminds us that his offspring has Homer, Heraclitus, Protagoras, and many others, as its forebearers. Therefore, Theaetetus gives birth, but somehow Socrates is yet unsure if the child should be brought up, for it may still be a wind-egg (161a). Socrates does take credit for delivering the child, so this is a constant in his midwifery: “Are we to say this

is yours, a newborn child as it were, and mine the delivery?” (160e), to which Theaetetus immediately agrees. In a way, the child is indeed Theaetetus, because no matter the mechanics of impregnation, the ultimate offspring is bore by him and him alone. However, it is truly difficult to ignore the heavy influence that the Protagorean connection has had on the underdeveloped initial answer of Theaetetus.

Socrates does not let this idea of knowledge as perception get lost from conversation for the entire first half of the dialogue. To recapitulate, Socrates brings into the conversation Protagorean relativism and Heraclitean flux and extends this from 152a until 160e, when Theaetetus is said to give birth, and then continues to wrestle with Protagoreanism well into 168d. I have mentioned previously that Socrates, although he claimed not to do so, does intervene in the pregnancy of Theaetetus. The reason why now becomes explicit. Socrates invents this image himself as a midwife, because he sought to have Theaetetus take ownership for the ideas he has acquired from his teacher, Theodorus, and the relationship they hold to mathematics. By making himself a passive participant, Socrates hoped to give the young mathematician the space to connect the dots on his own. In a way, he takes the offspring of Theaetetus to analyze his soul. Yes, Theaetetus passes the aptitude test, but the flame of philosophical curiosity is extinguished by the time Socrates is done with his Protagorean speech at 168d. This may be the reason why Socrates begs Theaetetus to start from the beginning at the birth of every subsequent offspring, to give him the opportunity to use the maieutic to his advantage. We see now, however, that he fails to do so, and Socrates begins to lose interest after the interlude. However, was the purpose truly to analyze the soul of

Theaetetus? He clearly has ideas that are particular to his soul, like the root image example demonstrated, but there seems to be more that Socrates hoped to get out of midwifery.

Nonetheless, it is thus in this stage of midwifery where the maieutic art takes shape. Socrates' claim that he can bring about labor pains, is one of the clearest indicators that he intervenes with his wisdom in the delivery of offspring. With the incantations and drugs, we find a clear art or *technē* that does not involve uncanniness or a sixth sense. Undoubtedly, there is a knowledge associated with his method. I put forward that this is where his knowledge of soul is most apparent. He states that at the beginning of his association with young men, they often appear ignorant, but further on they make progress (150d). We have relatedly witnessed his interventions in the aptitude test and the first definition of knowledge with Theaetetus. We are now blessed to see the godly Socrates deal with the next newborn of Theaetetus, and we can analyze where the third and final stage of midwifery puts Theaetetus in the philosophical map of his soul.

Evaluation of the offspring

The last part of Socratic midwifery, the evaluation of the value of offspring, is the most far removed from real midwifery of all the parts in the image. He acknowledges this as the departing point of what makes his art beautiful in comparison with standard midwifery. Another clear distinction is in his analysis of the souls of young men, rather than their bodies when compared to midwives. The image of Socrates as the midwife is completed in this step. According to him, he can ascertain whether a young man gives birth to an image, lie, or something

false, and something fruitful and true. Additionally, Socrates explains that if the offspring is indeed false, Theaetetus ought not to be angry in the event of it being discarded (151c). Socrates is guilty of infanticide in this case. However, a god could not possibly let falsehood run free, and thus it is his duty to kill any offspring that turn out to be phantoms or wind-eggs. Moreover, we know from the ending of the dialogue, that Socrates is incapable of explaining false opinion. Is his so-called ability to evaluate offspring simply part of his catered test to Theaetetus? This is the stage of Socratic midwifery that defines the entire dialogue.

The main complication with the evaluation of offspring by Socrates, is the roundabout way of determining whether an idea is true or false. Yes, Socrates admits that he cannot explain false opinion, and he is unsatisfied with every attempt by Theaetetus to help him come to an answer. The frustration comes not from a lack of ability to determine true from false, but rather an inability to give an *account* of the distinction. The phantom/fruitful distinction could be more believable the moment Socrates determines if a baby should be delivered in the first place. If he can sense it is false, then there is no reason to pursue birth. However, he specifies the evaluation after the baby is born, and the evaluation of the validity is still connected to the soul regardless of the viability, even though it should not be. The validity of an idea should be independent of the character of the person who produced it. The inquiry is flawed because he tries to judge why Theaetetus would be attracted to Sophistry through midwifery and then looks to dismantle the validity of Sophistry. Nonetheless, there must be a reason why he would use phantom or image to describe an opinion coming from somebody's *soul*.

Socrates is no longer a midwife at this stage, and he is no longer dealing with offspring. His knowledge of soul is at stake here. Theaetetus undoubtedly had the curiosity of a philosopher in his soul from the moment the dialogue began, but Socrates is disappointed, asking him to start from the beginning repeatedly. The last offspring of Theaetetus, knowledge as true opinion with an account (201d, 202c), seems the most fruitful. Yet, it is altogether not an offspring of Theaetetus, but hearsay he recalls and repeats: “it’s what I heard someone say it was but forgot, but now I have it in mind. He said true opinion with speech was knowledge” (201c-d). Socrates should not then move to evaluate this idea for validity as an offspring of Theaetetus’ soul; it goes against every stage in the midwifery process and the delivery. Nonetheless, Socrates again intervenes, giving Theaetetus his opinions to have him come to a more robust conclusion, “Hear then, a dream in exchange for a dream” (201e), and only then evaluating the idea.

The entirety of the Socratic legacy is in danger; if he cannot tell true from false, then the maieutic may be worth nothing. Maybe Socrates is truly barren of wisdom, for if he had wisdom of soul, he would have changed his approach with Theaetetus after the first unsatisfying response. I propose that that this dialogue is not entirely about Theaetetus or his soul, but about Socrates’ unborn child, the perplexity of what knowledge is. The idea that Socrates is barren could have been part of the strategy to rear Theaetetus’ soul, to bring him closer to enlightenment, but had no grounding in Socrates’ soul. The question changed to the possibility of discernment of false opinion after the Protagorean speech. Socrates invents an opponent for himself, to wrestle with him, in the form of a Sophist. The maieutic, and indeed the entire dialogue,

seemed to be for the purposes of proving that Socratic activity necessitated knowledge of soul. This portion of his art was what differentiated him from the more factual nature of mathematics and geometry in the teachings of Theodorus. However, at this stage we know the maieutic has failed with Theaetetus. The young mathematician has been unable to come to the realization that his love for mathematics and Sophistry is incompatible; his influences sit in his soul with no contact or relationship. All that is left is for Socrates to understand for himself whether knowledge could truly encompass both his activity and that of Theodorus. My argument is therefore that after the Protagorean interlude, the inquiry is no longer about Theaetetus’ soul; Socrates seeks to find an answer to his own perplexity through the offspring of Theaetetus.

Opinions can, of course, be acquired from outside sources, just as Theaetetus acquired the Protagorean influence from Theodorus, or from his own teaching. Theaetetus and Theodorus find ideas interesting that are not consistent with their vocation as mathematicians, because as Socrates demonstrates, relativism goes against everything mathematics and geometry try to demonstrate. Sophistry may not be considered wisdom, but certainly, being attracted to relativism is something personal and integral to the soul of the person, rather than a simple knowledge such as mathematics. Theodorus has the need for control, and he thinks speeches can save the world, while Theaetetus has a curious mind that is attracted to abstract ideas that contradict mathematics. Theaetetus being a good mathematician does not define the fabric of his soul. In so many words, the wisdom about his soul he acquires through his perplexity with the hear-say of Socrates’ questions or the appeal of Sophistry is much

more personal than the knowledge of math could be.

Socrates has knowledge of soul, but this is the very thing that stops him from defining false opinion. Socratic midwifery is about the examination of soul through the analysis of knowledge. By trying to analyze offspring of the soul for truth or falsity, Socrates fails to grasp the full picture of the soul of Theaetetus's soul. Knowledges should have been addressed in the matchmaking section as ideas which enter the soul of the young one impersonally, and which are fostered until they become wisdom or phantoms. However, Socrates analyzes "knowledges" as if they had any bearing on the fabric of the soul of Theaetetus (after all, he creates the midwife image for the purpose of this dialogue), and in doing so, he forgets the true appeal of Protagoras' Sophistry. It was never about truth and falsity, no matter how right Socrates is in analyzing that Protagoras is hypocritical in *Truth*, he does not get to the bottom of why the soul of Theaetetus could be attracted to the idea of Sophistry in the first place.

The endgame of the analysis of the offspring of Theaetetus was for Socrates to pursue a search for true opinion, or an account of false opinion. Instead, we are presented a disjointed account of what makes certain ideas false, phantoms, or images, and what makes others fruitful or true. Along the way, Socrates presents himself as having failed the task of bringing the truth to light. Indeed, Socrates has knowledge of soul, but no wisdom of the soul of Theaetetus. But his failing may be a result of choosing Theaetetus in the first place as a progenitor and fertile soul. Wisdom is as personal to Socrates as it is to Theaetetus or Theodorus, and if he had to shed his eroticism to deal with Theaetetus, then the goal of the maieutic was suspended

for the sake of dialogue, which rendered unfruitful. The ultimate failing of the dialogue stands as a testament to what false opinion looks like, so while Socrates may not have fulfilled his mission, the reader can answer what constitutes false opinion.

Conclusion

The *Theaetetus* ends with a conclusion of the midwife image. Socrates claims to refute knowledge as true opinion with *logos* or an account and includes himself in the pregnancy of Theaetetus. All the children bore by Theaetetus were ultimately wind-eggs, but this experience, Socrates claims, will make him a better person (210c). Maybe the noble pursuit of the midwife was not lost in the end. Socrates remains a god that decides whether an idea is worth rearing or not, but we may not find a satisfying definition of knowledge from this dialogue yet. Through this essay, I sought to present an account of Socratic midwifery as an original idea to the *Theaetetus*, making it an integral part of the dialogue while showing that the image itself was used as an act of midwifery on the young mathematician.

The image of Socrates as a midwife becomes complicated and expanded upon only in this dialogue, and in its many layers, it becomes clear why Plato does not attribute midwifery to Socrates in other works. Socrates sought at first to analyze the soul of Theaetetus, but through the dialogue, the influences of his lookalike made him stray from this objective. Socrates is unable to resolve his curiosity as well as pursue the maieutic with Theaetetus, and we saw that the midwife image was not an entire unified art. However, at its core, the Socratic maieutic is not a complete failure. While it does not result in wisdom of soul about Theaetetus, the goal of rearing from the

young mathematician the parents of his offspring to get him to see the philosophical curiosity that has guided his inquiry to date was successful. The ultimate failing is that the image was not meant for someone with the character of Theaetetus, which could be attributed to a lack of erotic compatibility between Socrates and him. Therefore, we can effectively leave the midwife image inside of the *Theaetetus*, where it belongs next to the paradoxes of wisdom, truth, opinion, and philosophical wonder.

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