In the *Theaetetus*, Plato argues against the thesis that knowledge is perception. At various points in the discussion, one glimpses a background theory of perception which, if fully articulated, would make the course of the argument more intelligible. This is particularly true of the final argument against this thesis at 184-186, for in making this argument Plato seems to speak in his own voice and to make claims about perception that stand in need of further elucidation. Certain features of the argument at 184-186 that bear on the question of what Plato thinks perception is have been discussed by Cooper and Burnyeat with considerable insight. A full-scale reconstruction of the theory of perception which Plato subscribes to in the *Theaetetus* remains to be undertaken. Since the *Theaetetus* is an important source of information about Plato's views on perception in the later period, an attempt at such a reconstruction appears in order.

The object of this paper is to carry out this project, i.e., to elucidate the theory of perception found in the *Theaetetus*. In the first section, a general characterization of perception will be given that meets the requirement that the claims made about perception in the course of the argument at 184-6 are entailed by it. This requirement, it will be argued, would be met by a modified version of the secret doctrine account of perception. The objective of the second section will be to decide whether, on the theory of perception at work in the *Theaetetus*, human percipients are able to make simple judgments through perception. The third section seeks to give an account of the mind's inability to grasp *ousia* (being) through perception which is compatible with the position that some simple judgments are made through perception.

I

A number of claims about the nature of perception are made in the course of the final argument against the thesis that knowledge is perception. Unlike the account of perception given earlier in the *Theaetetus* (156-157), these claims are not made on behalf of any other theorist, so they provide a likely starting point for the reconstruction of the theory of perception which Plato accepts in the *Theaetetus*. This is especially true of the restric-
tion of each sense to its proper object(s), the identification of perceiving with the mind's apprehension of an object through a sense, and the identification of the instrumental use of a sense with the instrumental use of a sense organ. Moreover, the explication of the argument at 184-186 requires the articulation of the background theory of perception to provide a justification for the crucial premiss that an object which is perceived through one sense cannot be perceived through any other sense.

At 184e-185a7, Plato lays the groundwork for the argument to show that perception is not knowledge:

Socrates: Now will you also agree that the objects you perceive through one faculty cannot be perceived through another — for instance, objects of hearing through sight or objects of sight through hearing?
Theaetetus: Of course.
Socrates: So if there's something which you think about both of them, it cannot be something which you are perceiving about both, either by means of one of the two instruments or by means of the other (trans. McDowell).

Having established that a feature which is common to objects perceived through two different senses cannot be perceived through either sense, Socrates is able to press Theaetetus to name the organ through which such common features as sameness, difference and being are perceived. He then endorses Theaetetus's suggestion that there is no such organ and that the mind apprehends these objects in itself. They agree that knowledge involves the apprehension of common features and hence perception is not knowledge. The cogency of the argument as a whole thus depends in large measure on the soundness of the reasoning at 184e-185a7.

The argument at 184e-185a employs the strong premiss that an object perceived through one sense cannot be perceived through any other sense. It is arguable that Plato could have used a weaker premiss to the effect that the proper object(s) of a sense cannot be perceived through any other sense. He might have meant only that sight does not perceive sounds, or hearing, colors. Stated in this way, the premiss is quite innocuous and presumably true, but since the existence of some objects that are not perceived by more than one sense is compatible with the existence of other objects which are perceived by more than one sense, this weak premiss would not warrant the conclusion that the common objects are not perceived. To meet this objection, the weak version of the premiss might be reformulated to assert that neither the proper object nor features of the proper object of one sense can be apprehended through another sense. But the reformulated premiss loses much of the intuitive appeal of its predecessor, for what the premiss asserts is no longer clear. What sorts of