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Plato's Hypothesis and the Upward Path

Richard Robinson, in his stimulating and searching book on Plato's Earlier Dialectic, has a section entitled "Hypothesizing a Higher Hypothesis." Like other recent scholars, he takes it for granted that in Plato's scheme of hypothetical reasoning as developed in the Phaedo and the Republic, the more general hypothesis, the hypothesis bordering more closely upon the ἀνωθετον, is the higher hypothesis. That is to say, in a deductive system, as the Latin base of the term indicates, the premises are thought of as located higher than the conclusions. In this, Robinson follows not only what he conceives to be Plato's own hints, but also the usage of Aristotle: "By 'upward' I mean the ascent to the more universal, by 'downward' the descent to the more particular." In this footnote on terminology, Aristotle is talking about κατηγορία, predicates in syllogistic reasoning. It might at first be supposed that ἀνω and κάτω are references to the purely formal structure of the syllogism itself rather than to the structure of the reality signified by the terms of the syllogism. But other passages make sufficiently clear that the reference is indeed to higher and lower Being. For Aristotle, the movement of the syllogism is downward because we demonstrate certain conclusions from certain assumptions — often, paradoxically, called κέιμενα — of a more universal character. τὰ ἀνωθετα are a regular term for the superordinate genus. In his discussion of Plato, also, τὰ ἀνω and τὰ κάτω always refer to genus and species. It is not surprising, therefore, that Aristotle's logical terminology is generally thought to be based on Plato's. The facts, however, do not entirely bear out this view. In this paper I shall attempt to show that Aristotle's logical terminology, ontologically conditioned or determined as it obviously is, contrasts with that of Plato, who, on the whole, with perhaps one exception, was very careful not to introduce unwarranted ontological perspectives into matters of logic.

To begin with, it will be convenient to note the implications of Platonic diaeresis. It is true that this operation of Platonic dialectic is not the same as the logical progress from premise to inference. Genus and species are ontological rather than logical terms. And yet it may be assumed that if Plato's logic anticipated the Aristotelian distinction between the higher and the lower, the same topographical perspective should also be apparent in the area studied by diaeresis. It will be all the more striking, then, if we can show that diaeresis does not make provision for a vertical hierarchy of Being, or, at least, that Plato's discussion does not suggest that such a hierarchy is reflected in the diaeretic procedure so as to shape it in its image.

Modern discussions of Plato's analysis via division and collection often refer to higher or superordinate and lower or subordinate γένη, μέγιστα γένη is sometimes rendered as "highest forms." And elegant stemmata are devised,
spreading from the top of the page to the bottom, to reproduce the up- or downward movement of the dialectical process. But if we look closely at the relevant passages, both at those where Plato practices the technique of division and collection, and at those in which he states his method, we find that the directional implications of the process are either indifferent or horizontal. That is to say, to the extent that Plato conceives the diaeretic procedure as moving, it moves on one plane or level.

Here is a listing of the principal passages in question, with the key words, the topographical orientation implied, and occasional further comment.

**Phaedrus 265D - 266C:** diaeresis operates by dividing the entity to be analyzed into a left (ἐπ' ἀριστερά τεμνόμενος) and a right part (εἰς τὰ ἐν δεξιᾷ). Orientation: not vertical. Hence such terms as "sub-form" and "infima species" should be eliminated from the discussion of diaeresis passages.

**Sophist 253:** analysis consists of showing which γένη associate with one another and which do not (... ποία ... συμφωνεῖ ... ποία ... οὐ δέχεται) and which γένη have another "stretched through" them (διατεταμένην) so as to contain them (περιεχομένας). Orientation: indifferent.

**Politicus 262A - 263B:** analysis should operate by cutting through the middle (διὰ μέσον ... ἔσται τέμνοντας). Orientation: inconclusive.

**Politicus 268C:** analysis involves disengaging the item to be isolated from connected and related γένη "poured around" it (περικεχυμένους αὕτη). Orientation: indifferent.

**Politicus 275E:** the choice of the proper inclusive concept will allow us to "wrap up" (περικαλόπτειν) one species along with the others with which it constitutes a genus. Orientation: indifferent.

**Politicus 285A-C:** analysis requires orderly procedure, especially the grouping of separate elements into the one comprehensive genus to which they belong (τὰ οίκεῖα ... ἔρξαις ... περιβάλλων). Orientation: indifferent.

**Philebus 16D - 18D:** the analogy of grammatical and musical analysis shows that philosophical analysis must interpose various stages between the conception of the one and the conception of the infinite number containing the one (μίαν Ἰδέαν περί πάντως ... ἐνοῦσαν). Orientation: indifferent.

**Sophist 265E - 266A:** In a progressive division of a γένος into 2, 4, 8, etc., parts, the division is made alternately by drawing a vertical line (κατὰ πλάτος) and a horizontal line (κατὰ μήκος). Orientation: indifferent.

Other references could be added, but the result would be the same, namely, that logical implication is regarded by Plato not as subsumption but either as containment — that is to say, the genus envelops the species — or as division — that is, the species constitutes the right or left half of the genus. The movement experienced in the transition from genus to species or, in the case of collection, from species to genus is not in a single instance characterized as a descent from or an ascent to the genus.
One possible answer to this would be that the εἶδη may not be organized in a vertical hierarchy, but that the Ideas of Plato's middle dialogues are, and that such terms as ὑπόθεσις, ἀρχή and ἐπαγωγή, with their well-known connotations, speak palpably for a vertical perspective. ἐπαγωγή may be dispensed with out of hand. Even Robinson, who insists that Plato practices ἐπαγωγή, admits that he is not aware of it as a logical procedure, and has in fact no term for it. Does Plato use induction? The boundary line separating induction from analogy is of course tenuous. But "all that business about cobbler's and cleaners and cooks and doctors," as Callicles calls it, suggests that when Plato refers to practical reality, he appeals to some sort of intuition rather than the powers of reasoning. However that may be, Plato does not use the term ἐπαγωγή, and that relieves us of the need to discuss it.

As for ὑπόθεσις and its near-equivalent ἀρχή, the situation is very complex. Robinson himself has done much to shed light on the obscure standing of hypothesis in Plato. According to him, the case is the reverse of that obtaining in the matter of induction: "Plato discussed but rarely used the hypothetical method." Since, therefore, we have Plato's methodology but little of his application, obscurities and even inconsistencies in the former leave matters somewhat doubtful. This much, however, is clear. A hypothesis is something posited — cf. Aristotle's κείμενον — as a preliminary assumption, as a basis for further logical operations which may either analyze the assumption itself or depend on it for the analysis of other assumptions. Normally the latter is the case, i.e., the hypothesis is a premise rather than a demonstrand. Broadly speaking, then, "hypothesizing is positing with a view to future action." Often the assumption which forms the point of departure for further investigation is a κοινῆ διὸκειόμενον, a statement tacitly assumed to be true by all.

The important question which now arises is this: does the ὑπόθεσις part of the word διάθεσις signify that this basic assumption is conceived of as lying under and thus supporting the logical edifice constructed from it? Let us call this the U- (= under) perspective, to contrast with the A- (= above) perspective whereby the assumption is conceived of as lying above the conclusion. Now on the face of it, it would seem likely that the ὑπόθεσις points to a U-perspective. But according to Robinson and most Platonists that cannot be, for a hypothesis to be useful must refer to a higher reality than the propositions deduced from it. Hence Plato's hypothesis, like Aristotle's premise, and equally paradoxically so, must be pictured as vaulting above the conclusions and deductions which are suspended below it.

To render this unlikely notion palatable, Robinson undertakes, in the wake of Burnet, to demonstrate that the first sense of hypothesis was intellectual, not architectural or physical in any way. His reasoning is that if the word had ever "borne some such sense as 'physical foundation', Plato would hardly have written the phrase ἀλλὰν αὐτῷ ὑπόθεσιν ὑποθέμενος ἡτὶς τῶν ἁπλῶν βελτίστη φαύνετο (Phd. 101D); for it would have carried the absurd suggestion of 'placing as base whatever base seemed best of those above!'" As we shall see later, Robinson's interpretation of the Phaedo passage, though commonly accepted, is not the only possible one. At Republic 511B, where Plato does understand hypothesis in the sense of a
physical stepping stone — ἀλλὰ τῷ ἄντι δύσθεσις, οἷον ἐπιθέσεις τε καὶ ὄρμας ... — Burnet and Robinson suspect a pun. But even granted that Plato is speaking humorously here, the passage proves that he felt the δύσ- part of the term strongly enough to allow his conception of logical procedure, at this point, to be guided by it or at least to make allowance for it.

Though there is no uncontested case of Plato using δύσθεσις in the sense of "foundation," other writers supply us with the required supplementary information. Closest to that of Plato is, perhaps, the usage of the Hippocratic writers. For instance, the writer On Ancient Medicine (chs. 1; 13; 15) uses δύσθεσις to refer to one of the opposites — τὸ ἰομην and τὸ ψυχρόν, etc. — alleged to determine health, as well as to the assumption of the operation of such an opposite. The spatial perspective is not entirely clear, but it cannot be doubted that these opposites should be ranged closely with the Ἐμπεδοκλεῖον δύσαμα, and as δύσαμα they would of course realize their δύσ- function to the fullest.

Other writers who capitalize on the δύσ-force of the word δύσθεσις are Aeschines (3.76) and Polybius (15.35.2). But our clearest evidence for the dynamic implications of δύσθεσις occurs in a popular text, and a simile, to boot. Demosthenes 2.10.5: "Just as a house and a ship and other such structures require the strongest foundations, so the ἄρχαί and δύσθεσις of actions must be true and just." Here there can be no doubt; a hypothesis is analogous to the foundation of a house, not to its roof. And this, I suggest, was the natural significance of the word δύσθεσις, before its meaning was obscured in a manner to be described directly: a foundation upon which to erect a superstructure of some sort, a broad basis on which things of lesser extent but greater concreteness are supported.

Logical progression, therefore, naturally leads from the hypothesis below to the inferences above. But there is another way of looking at logical progression. It may be pictured as leading forward horizontally from the start to the finish of a sentence or argument. This perspective is well illustrated by the usage of Xenophon Memor. 4.6.13: ἐπὶ τὴν δύσθεσιν ἐπανήγειν τὸν λόγον ὡς ... The understanding is that the hypothesis, the subject or foundation of the discussion, had been voiced, or should have been voiced, at the beginning of the conversation. A "getting down to fundamentals" is, therefore, a "going back" to the beginning. Here the horizontal advance of the discussion has imposed its stamp on the topography of δύσθεσις. In most cases it is a relatively simple matter to distinguish between this perspective and the perspective which mirrors the structural concept outlined above.

After these few preliminary remarks, we must now turn to some of the passages in which Plato exemplifies his understanding of δύσθεσις. Again our list is representative rather than exhaustive. As before, I shall state the references, cite crucial words, and indicate the contribution of the passage to the subject under discussion. The actual word δύσθεσις does not occur in all of the passages cited. Sometimes ἄρχη takes its place; sometimes there is no technical term to be found. Not all of the passages describe what we would term a logical procedure. But the process envisaged is always the same: the movement from general assumption to specific conclusion. It is this movement which according to the usual interpretation should be a movement ἀνωθεν κάτω.
Gorgias 454C2 ff.: ... ίνα ... οὗ τὰ σαυτὸν κατὰ τὴν ὑπόθεσιν ... περαίνῃς. The perspective is undetermined.

Charm. 171D2-3: ... δ' ἐς ἀρχὴς οποιειθήμεθα ... Perspective undetermined.

Protag. 339D2-4: ... πρῶτον ... ὑπέθετο ..., δλίγον δὲ ... εἰς τὸ πρόσθεν προελθὼν ... Perspective horizontal.

Crito 48E5 and 49D6: ἀρχὴ and ἀρχωμαι are used of the hypothesis (here not so called) from which further statements are deduced. ἀρχὴ is seen as the beginning of a δδδς. Perspective undetermined.

Cratylus 428D5-8: δεὶ ... θαμὰ μεταστρέφεσθαι ἐκ τὰ προερημένα, καὶ πειράσθαι ... βλέπειν ἡμά τρόσῳ καὶ ὑπόσῳ. "Looking backward" refers to revising prior agreements, "looking forward" to inferring or deducing results. Perspective horizontal.

Cratylus 436D4-7: δεν ... δὲν μὴ μενεὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς ... τὸν πολὺν λόγον εἶναι καὶ τὴν πολλήν σκέψιν εἶτε δρῶς εἶτε μὴ ὑποκεῖται· ἐκείνης δὲ ἐξετασθέσεις ἰκανῶς, τὰ λοιπὰ φαίνεσθαι ἐκείνη ἐπέμενα. Perspective undetermined.

Meno 86B3ff.: ... ἐς ὑπόθεσισ αὐτὸ σκοπεῖσθαι, εἴτε διδακτὸν ἐστιν εἴτε ὑποκεῖσθαι ἐπί τὰ ὑποκεῖται. In this interesting passage which features a number of hypotheses in action, with the result that all of them are either demonstrated or refuted or both, the perspective is undetermined throughout.

Parm. 128D5-6: ... ἐτι γελοιότερα πάσχοι ἀν αὐτῶν ἢ ὑπόθεσις, εἴτε πολλά ἐστιν, ἢ τοῦ ἐν εἶναι, εἴτε ἰκανῶς ἐπεξίοι. Perspective undetermined.

Parm. 135E9 - 136A2: ... μή μένον εἴ ἐστιν ἡ ὑπόθεσις καὶ συμβαίνοντα ἐκ τῆς ὑπόθεσις, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἴ μὴ ἐστι τὸ αὐτὸ τοῦτο ὑποτίθεσθαι ... Perspective undetermined. 15

Timaeus 61D3-4: ὑποθέτεστον δὲ πρῶτον άλλως, τὰ δ' ὑποτέθεντα ἐπάνωμεν αὖθις. Perspective probably horizontal.

Timaeus 53D4-7: τοῦτην δὲ πυρὸς ἀρχὴν ... ὑποτίθεμεα κατὰ τὸν μετ' ἀνάγις εἰκάτω λόγον πορευμένοι. ... This last sentence poses a problem on which neither Taylor nor Cornford comments. The question is whether ἀνωθεν goes with the preceding words, and is to be construed with ἔτι, or whether τὰς δ' ἐτὶ τὸτων ἀρχὰς ἔρχεται θεὸς oίδεν ... If the latter interpretation is adopted, as I suspect it should, ἀνωθεν ... oίδε would be parallel to such an expression as Theaet., 175D3 βλέπων ... ἀνωθεν. Translators who have favored the former interpretation have usually ended up blunting the force of ἀνωθεν and substituting innocuous terms like "remote" or "principal." — Hence, probably, perspective undetermined.

Laws 812A4-5: κατὰ μὲν τὴν ὑπόθεσιν, ἧ ἐνε, ἐμοιγενοὶ τοίς πορευεσθαί τῶν ὑποτεθετων λόγων ... Perspective undetermined.
Phaedo 100A3 - 101E3: άλλον δὴ ταύτη γε άμμα, καὶ οποθέτενος ... ἔνεν δὲν μοι δοκὴ ταύτη συμφωνεῖν τίθεμι δὲ ἀληθὲς ἦντα .... 101D3: εἰ δὲ τῆς αὐτῆς τῆς οποθέτεως ἔχοιτο, καθέρευν ἐφες ἔν .... ἐως ἄν τὰ ἀπ᾽ εὐεργής ὅρμησεν σκέπασίο .... ἐπεὶ δὲ ἑκεῖνης αὐτῆς δέοι σε διδὸνα λόγον, διαφυγεῖς ἄν διδοῦτι, ἐλλην αὖ ὑπὸθεσίν ὕποθέμενος ἐτις τῶν ἀνάλογων ἑλπίστω φαίνοιτο, ἐως ἐπὶ τὶ ἵκανον ἐλευθέρος .... We should note that this last passage, as so many others dealing with hypothesis, employs a verb of motion or progression, in this case ὅρμω and ὅρμωμαι. The usual sense of the word is "to move forward," in a horizontal direction. The direction may occasionally be vertical; but in that case it is likely to be upward rather than downward, for the simple reason that the word denotes willed rather than automatic motion. And yet in this passage ὅρμωμαι has been interpreted as downward motion, the reason being that hypothesis in the Phaedo is clearly associated with the Ideas, and the Ideas are highest. However, the argument is not from Ideas to sensibles and back but, according to Socrates, from Ideas to Ideas; and there is no evidence to indicate, at least in this passage, that one Idea is higher than another. Thus the more comprehensive or basic hypothesis should not be pictured as lying above a hypothesis entailed by it or generated by it. Never does Plato use such a phrase as ἐν δόο οποθέτεων ἤρτητα or a similar verb of suspension in connexion with the hypothesis method. But we can go further than that, and suggest that in the Phaedo Plato seems to conceive of the premise as lying below the conclusion, that is to say, that Plato adopts the U-perspective. This emerges from the words: ἐλλην αὖ ὑπόθεσιν ὕποθέμενος ἐτις τῶν ἀνάλογων ἑλπίστω φαίνοιτο .... Plato's language here points to the notion of an inverted pyramid, with the more comprehensive hypothesis lying at the bottom, and the ὅρμησεν radiating upward from each hypothesis. ὅρμησεν is merely another way of saying ὅρμησεν. We translate as follows: "placing below hypothesis X another hypothesis Y which would seem to be the best (hypothesis) of the (propositions) above it," that is, which would account best for X and other statements on the same level. Usually the genitive τῶν ἀνάλογων is explained as a partitive genitive. It is, however, equally possible to take it as an objective genitive, referring to the conclusions generated by the premise. Cf. the Aristotelian parallel given above, note 17. The word ἑλπίστη in the sense of "most effective" may seem unusual, but the functional connotation of ἵκανος is well known. The phrase as it stands is awkward, but the stylistic difficulties seem to me less decisive than the difficulties of interpretation which result from the traditional assumption of a "higher hypothesis." To imply, as one would have to on the old assumption, that there are many hypotheses of a more universal character, any of which might be relevant to the argument, is to render the method itself almost unworkable. The plural τῶν makes better sense if it can be supposed to refer to the several conclusions inferrable from a particular premise chosen with the assistance of common sense and synoptic experience.18

If we now draw the balance of the passages we have discussed, it appears that most of them do not tell us anything about the direction of the activity prompted by hypothesis. Two, perhaps three instances favor the horizontal perspective; here the eye focuses on the progress of the operation rather than on the mutual relations between the terms of the operation. One passage speaks for the U-perspective; here the etymological meaning of ὑπόθεσις seems to rise more fully to the consciousness. And finally, there is no evidence of the A-perspective.
It now remains to investigate some passages from the Republic, particularly from the section containing the allegory of the Cave and the diagram of the Divided Line. These passages have been reserved for the final part of our discussion because they appear, at first glance, to occasion the greatest difficulty. It is only natural, given the perspectival connotations of Cave and Line, that the Platonic distinction between "up" and "down" should here find its most marked expression. We should, however, remember that this perspective refers to the distinction between levels of reality, or rather between reality and the various kinds of non-real, and to the distinction between the correlate mental activities, such as knowledge and belief. The method of hypothetical reasoning, on the other hand, functions on only one level of mental activity, and is concerned with only one level of reality, viz., the Ideas (511Cl-2), whether these Ideas be visualized in their pure state, as in dialectic, or less purely, as in mathematics and other sciences (510B4 ff.).

First, a preliminary passage. Rep. 437A6-9: ήποθέσεις οικεῖοι ... είς τὸ πρόσθεν προτομεῖ συμβαίνοντα, ἡμῖν ποτὲ άλλη φανή τούτα ή ταύτη, πάντα ήμῖν ἅτο τοῦτο συμβαίνοντα λελυμένα έσεσθαι. In this concise description of argument on the basis of postulates, the perspective is horizontal, or at best undetermined. What makes the passage important is the fact that the quotations to be studied directly refer by and large to just such reasoning as is contemplated here, in language very similar to the terms used here.

Rep. 533C7 - D3: ... ἡ διαλεκτικὴ μέθοδος μὲνὶ τάστη πορεύεται, τάς ὑποθέσεις ἀναφέρει, ἐπ' αὐτὴν τὴν ἀρχὴν ἵνα βεβαιώσηται, καὶ τῷ ἄντι τῇ βορβυρῷ βαρβαρικῇ τινί τῇ τῆς φυκῆς ἡμᾶς κατωφρυμένου ἱέμα ἐλκεῖ καὶ ἀνάγει ἄνω .... The perspective of the operation itself is undetermined. The effect of the operation is to turn the mind upward from the swamp of Becoming to the exalted status of Reality. Analogously, the activity of dialectic is seen to lie at the top of the hierarchy of sciences, 534E2-4: ... δοκεῖ ... ὑποτεθήμικος τοῖς μαθηματικοῖς ἡ διαλεκτικὴ ἦμῖν ἐπάνω κείσαι, καὶ οὐκέτ' ἄλλο τοῦτο μάθημα ἄνωτέρω ὅρως ἐπιτίθεσθαι ....

Rep. 510B5-9: ... φυσικῆς ἐπείγον ἀναγκαζεῖται εἰς ὑποθέσεως, οὐκ ἡ ἀρχὴ πορευομένη ἄλλα ἐπὶ τὴν τελευτὴν, τὸ δ' ἐπὶ ἄλλον — τὸ ἡ ἀρχὴν ἀνυπόθετον — εἰς ὑποθέσεως οὕσα τὴν μέθοδον ποιομένην. Perspective undetermined. Ἀρχὴ and τελευτὴν, πορευόμενα and μέθοδον ποιούμενον are relative opposites but not absolutely fixed topographically. Cf. 510D1-3: ἐκ τούτων ἀρχὴμενοι τὰ λοιπά ἡ συνειδής τελευτᾶσθαι εἰς τούτο οὖν ἡ συμφηνοῦν μεθομοῦν. For this analysis of non-dialectic hypothetical argument, cf. above, 510B5-9. There is, however, one difference between this statement and other statements we have discussed: ἀρχὴ is now distinguished from ὑποθέσεις; it is equated with the ἀνυπόθετον. Mathematical demonstration is contrasted with the genuine dialectical method which leads to the ἀνυπόθετον and which is outlined in 511B3 ff. Mathematical reasoning functions on the second highest level of mental activity. Compared with pure dialectic, it is a swamp which does not permit a man to get his head free. That is to say, in the hierarchy of the sciences
mathematics is so far below dialectic that it might as well be thought to be
located in the quagmire of belief. There is no transfer or transition
possible between mathematical and dialectical reasoning. "To get above the
(mathematical) hypotheses" is tantamount to entering an entirely different
arena of logical endeavor.

Rep. 511B5-8: ... τὰς ὑποθέσεις πολούμενος οἷς ἀρχής ἀλλὰ τῷ ὑπτη
ὑποθέσεις, οἷς ἐνεργοῦς τε καὶ ἰσομέτρεις ἔπλεξα καὶ ἄνωθεν ἔπει τῆν τοῦ
παντός ἀρχήν ἴδων ... πάλιν αὖ ... ἐπὶ τελευτῆς καταβαίνη ... The key ex-
pressions are: ... ἐπὶ τὴν ... ἀρχήν ἴδων ... ἐπὶ τελευτῆς καταβαίνη. Cf.
511C8-9: ... διὰ δὲ τὸ μὴ ἐπὶ ἀρχήν ἀνελθεὶν οὐκεῖν. The mental activity
described is that of dialectic, as contrasted with that of mathematics and
the inferior sciences. It is difficult to decide whether the words, and ex-
pecially the prepositions employed in the compound verbs, refer to a vertical
or a horizontal perspective. The horizontal or "progress of argument" sig-
nificance of ἀνα- and κατά-compounds is well known and has already been in-
stanced,20 τελευτῆ, I suspect, refers to the end of the supreme deductive
argument, just as ἀρχή refers to its beginning, or to the end of the ensuing
synthesis. What complicates the situation is the image, probably humorous,
of the stepping stones, which seem to indicate an "up" and "down" orientation.
And yet, if that were Plato's conscious intention, he might well have spoken
of higher and lower hypotheses, or he might have detailed the location of the
ἀρχή vis-a-vis the other "steps" in the logical process. This he does not do.
For the rest, the language does not differ significantly from the language of
other passages we have discussed. The best we can say, therefore, is that
for one moment there is promise of a vertical perspective coming out into the
open, only to be silenced immediately by what is probably a vague assumption
of horizontal procedure. Whether the vertical perspective lurking under the
surface would have been a U-perspective, as is suggested by the image of the
stepping stones, or an A-perspective, as the alternative meaning of the prepo-
sitions may indicate, is impossible say. But this very uncertainty should
help to drive home the point that Plato is not in this context interested in
establishing an unambiguous vertical perspective.

To repeat, when Plato, in his analysis of the Divided Line and Cave,
talks about hypothesis, ἀρχή, τελευτή, etc., his language is usually non-
commital on the score of perspective. Where he does speak of "up" and
"down" he is ranking scientific hypotheses in the second highest division,
below those of dialectic. Once, 511B5 ff., the ontological and epistemological
context does, on one interpretation, seem to color the logical perspective, and
he appears to believe that those hypotheses which bring a man closer to the
ἄνυπαθεῖν are seen as higher than more mediate hypotheses. But we have shown
that the language need not carry this meaning, and that the similar phrasing
of other passages speaks against the adoption of this interpretation.

We conclude, therefore, that the evidence for Plato regarding the argu-
ment by hypothesis as leading downward from premise to inference is nil. It
may be wondered why Plato was misunderstood so soon, notably by Aristotle.
One explanation may be that Plato provides few examples of the technique in
action. Another may be that Plato's followers regarded him as a metaphysician
first and last, and could not separate his logic from his ontology. The prob-
lem calls for a close investigation.

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NOTES


3) See especially Anal. Prior. 65b23: τούτο γὰρ ἐγχωρεῖ γενεσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ ἄνω καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ κάτω λαμβάνοντι τὸ συνεχές....

4) Cf. the passage just preceding the footnote on terminology, Anal. Post. 81b38: ἄρα ἐνδέχεται ἀρξαμένῳ ἀπὸ τοιοῦτον δ' αὐτῷ ὑπάρχει ἄλλῳ ἄλλο ἐκείνῳ, ἐπὶ τὸ ἄνω εἰς ἀπειρόν ἔναι, ἀτέρου δὲ ἀρξαμένον....

5) Anal. Post. 97a33.

6) Met. 992a18.

7) I wish to thank Professors J. B. Skemp and D. J. Allan for reading an earlier draft of the ms, and suggesting many valuable changes. My gratitude does not not, however, imply that they approve the thesis of this paper.


9) That "subsumption" is regularly visualized by Plato as containment, appears also from such passages as Gorgias 464A ff., and Theaet. 205D4: "... εἰς ταύταν ἐμπέπτωκεν ἡ συλλαβὴ ἐδός ἐκείνῳ [sc. τῷ στοιχεῖῳ] εἴπερ...."

10) The word is Robinson's, p. 95.

11) Robinson, p. 112.


13) Robinson, pp. 68 and 98.

14) It may be asked how the notion of "dependence" is naturally expressed in Greek. The word "dependence" itself, of course, betrays an A-perspective; here the more solid or more substantial matter is pictured at the top. In Greek also this perspective is utilized for the notion of dependence and vital connexion, chiefly through the verb ἄρταω and its compound ἀναρτάω. Herodotus, for example, uses them frequently in this sense. But more or less the same conception may be expressed via the verb κοτι μα in combination with the preposition ἐν; and there the perspective is the opposite. Thus the linguistic data bearing on the notion of "dependence" are inconclusive on the score of perspective.
15) In this passage, διδάσκεις has come to mean little more than πράγματα; this becomes clear from the fact that in the sequel the various hypotheses are ἐλ- clauses. — Robinson, pp. 278-280, indicates the ways in which hypothesis in the Parmenides differs from the hypothetical method in the Republic. One difference on which he comments, with apparent surprise: "There is almost no trace in the Parm. of the upward path of the Rep." Incorrect; there is no trace whatever. Furthermore, as we shall see later, there probably is no upward path in the Republic either.

16) Olympiod, in Phaed. 188 line 3 Norvin.

17) The combination of διδάσκεις or ἀρχή with the genitive, so familiar in ontological contexts (example: Timaeus 53D4, as above), recurs in Aristotle's terminology; Met. 1013a16: τῶν ἀποδείξεων ἀλ. ὑποθέσεις. Compare also 1013b20 and Phys. 195a18: αἱ ὑποθέσεις τοῦ συμπεράσματος, where however αἴτια is understood.

18) R. S. Bluck, in Phronesis 2 (1957) 26 asks what Plato could have meant by the "higher" hypothesis that is to be substituted for the hypothesis that turned out to be unsatisfactory. He believes that Plato is here thinking of the Form of the Good, i.e., the teleological cause. He shrugs off the stubborn fact that Socrates had announced he was going to undertake a δεύτερος πλοῦς. On rejecting the translation "higher hypothesis" the difficulty resolves itself.

19) F. M. Cornford's translation of Rep. 510B4 ff. and 533C7 ff. freely interpolates "up" and "down," instead of reproducing the inconclusive perspective of the text. H. D. P. Lee has managed to do this admirably.

20) Cf. ἐπανήγειν, Xenophon Memor. 4.6.13, cited above, page 4; also the use of ἐπανέρχομαι and ἐπάνειμι, Plato Parm. 142B1-2, and the parallel use of ἀνω and κάτω to refer to the limits of the race course, Plato Rep. 613B11-12. Cf. further O. Becker, Das Bild des Weges, Hermes Einzelschriften 4 (1937) index, s.v. καταβάτω, and LSJ s.v. ἀνέρχομαι, II.2.