

# THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

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## SOME STAGES OF LOGICAL THOUGHT.

THE man in the street, when asked what he thinks about a certain matter, often replies that he does not think at all; he knows. The suggestion is that thinking is a case of active uncertainty set over against conviction or unquestioning assurance. When he adds that he does not have to think, but knows, the further implication is that thinking, when needed, leads to knowledge; that its purpose or object is to secure stable equilibrium. It is the purpose of this paper to show some of the main stages through which thinking, understood in this way, actually passes in its attempt to reach its most effective working; that is, the maximum of certainty.

I wish to show how a variety of modes of thinking, easily recognizable in the progress of both the race and the individual, may be identified and arranged as successive species of the relationship which doubting bears to assurance; as various ratios, so to speak, which the vigor of doubting bears to mere acquiescence. The presumption is that the function of questioning is one which has continually grown in intensity and range, that doubt is continually chased back, and, being cornered, fights more desperately, and thus clears the ground more thoroughly. Its successive stations or arrests constitute stages of thinking. Or to change the metaphor, just in the degree that what has been accepted as fact—the object of assurance—loses stable equilibrium, the tension involved in the questioning atti-