

## THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW

### THE DISCOVERY OF THE SYLLOGISM

**E**VEN after all that modern logic has done to show that the syllogism is not the only conclusive mode of reasoning, the discovery of the syllogism and of its laws remains the greatest single discovery in the whole history of logic. It is true, as Locke observed, that "God has not been so sparing to men to make them barely two-legged creatures, and left it to Aristotle to make them rational". Aristotle in discovering the syllogism was only discovering how men always actually had reasoned, and he never claimed to be doing more than this. But in doing this he was performing a feat of analysis of which no competent judge is likely to deny the value. It is therefore a matter of interest to try to establish, so far as one can, the manner in which he reached his discovery. The attempt to do this involves us in a consideration of the order of Aristotle's writings on logic. I will leave out of account two works whose authenticity is not certain, and which in any case do not directly concern us, since they do not deal with reasoning, but with terms and judgments, the *Categories* and the *De Interpretatione*. There remain the *Topics*, the *Prior Analytics*, and the *Posterior Analytics*. Of these I will assume that the *Topics* is probably the earliest. It moves more completely than either of the other works within the circle of Platonic ways of thinking. It discusses many arguments in a way which could have been immensely improved in respect of definiteness and effectiveness if the writer had already had at his command the theory of the syllogism, as he has in the *Prior Analytics* and, as I will suggest, in the *Posterior Analytics*; and we can hardly suppose that in writing it he dissembled a knowledge which he already had.

It is true that the word *συλλογισμός* occurs occasionally in the *Topics*, but scholars are agreed in thinking that in some of them