

THE
PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE METAPHYSIC OF ARISTOTLE.

II. THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF KNOWLEDGE.

IN a former article an account was given of the line of reasoning by which Aristotle is led to the conclusion that the universal desire of knowledge can only receive ultimate satisfaction in a science which determines what are the first principles of reality; that these principles are those of 'matter,' 'form,' 'change,' and 'end,' all of which are implied in the substantial unity of actual things; and that it is also the task of this science to discuss the fundamental antithesis of unity and plurality, in connection with the subordinate conceptions which fall under it. We have still to ask, however, whether metaphysics deals with the first principles of knowledge as well as of reality.

Now, the first principles of knowledge must be those which (1) cannot possibly be denied, (2) are the necessary condition of all other knowledge, (3) do not presuppose any principles higher than themselves. Of these none is more fundamental than the principle, that 'the same thing cannot at once belong, and not belong, to the same object in the same relation.' This principle does not require or admit of proof, just because it is a first principle, and, therefore, possesses the marks mentioned above. It cannot be proved, because there can be no proof unless it is presupposed. But, though in the attempt to prove this principle we have to assume it, we can indirectly show that it is ultimate and indubitable by pointing out that those who set up a theory of