

THE
PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE METAPHYSIC OF ARISTOTLE.

IV. Potential and Actual Reality.

SO far Aristotle has considered the real mainly from a static point of view, though he has been incidentally led to point out that all definite reality involves a dynamical process. It is this last aspect of things to which he now draws special attention, and indeed what is most distinctive of his doctrine is his conception of the world as a process. Reality, as he has contended, is neither a mere series of changes, nor is it fixed and unchanging. The former view makes reality the perpetual rise and disappearance of the particular, the latter transforms the living reality of things into the dead unchanging 'being' of the Eleatics, or the equally dead 'ideas' of the Platonists. There is change and there is permanence, but change takes place in fixed and unalterable ways, so that each thing contains within itself and is constituted by the universal nature which it realizes under particular conditions. This universal nature, however, as he now goes on to maintain, is in finite things not something which they possess, but something which they are in process of realizing, and therefore we are compelled to distinguish between what they are 'actually' (*ἐνεργεία*) and what they are 'potentially' (*δυνάμει*). The clear comprehension of the relation of the 'potential' to the 'actual' is therefore indispensable to a true knowledge of the real.