At the beginning of the history of logic stands the theory set out in the Prior Analytics. Studies of this theory 'from the point of view of modern formal logic' have made it possible to appreciate as never before Aristotle's achievement as a logician. But the theory of the Prior Analytics is itself the outcome of a development in Aristotle's thinking whose starting points do not lend themselves to study from the same perspective. My object in this paper is to sketch an account of these starting points. In this way I hope also to throw some light on Aristotle's eventual invention or discovery of logic.

I.

Investigations approaching the Topics from a variety of angles and applying different criteria have converged on the conclusion that it is among the earliest of Aristotle's surviving works, completed, or begun and substantially advanced, while he was still a member of the Academy. The evidence is of various kinds, but by far the most compelling ground is the absence in it of the categorical syllogistic. It is not merely that the technical terms of the Prior Analytics are missing, or when used, employed in a way that betrays no familiarity with the senses fixed in the Prior Analytics. Rather, it is the absence of the substantive content of that theory that is most significant. As has often been noted, one searches in vain for middle terms, figures and the like,

1 The locus classicus for arguments that the Topics is earlier than the Analytics is Brandis 1833; his case was summarized and augmented by Maier 1896-1900, II, 2, 78 n. 3, and again by Brunschwig 1967, LXXXV ff.
The treatment of argument in terms of the *topoi*, which occupies the bulk of the work and gives it its name, is not conceived in terms of the categorical syllogistic and, in the main, cannot be reconciled with it. To cite only the most obvious difference, in a categorical syllogism the conclusion is deduced from two premises in which three terms appear, the subject and predicate of the conclusion and the middle term, which appears only in the premises, whereas—though this depends on what Aristotle counts as a premise, which is not always clear—it seems that, often enough, the syllogism of the *Topics* will deduce its conclusion from one premise with two new terms not occurring in that conclusion. And such evidence as we have suggests that, after the elaboration of the categorical syllogism, Aristotle and his successors chose to treat arguments formed in accordance with the *topoi* as syllogisms on the basis of a hypothesis not reducible to syllogisms in the moods of the three figures. But the issue of how topical arguments are related to the categorical syllogism does not arise in the *Topics*, for the good reason, as it seems, that there was at that time no theory of the categorical syllogism against which to measure them. In sum, Aristotle would not have written the *Topics* as he did if he had the categorical syllogistic in hand and regarded it, as he does in the *Prior Analytics*, as capturing arguments of every stripe, whether in the demonstrative sciences, rhetoric or dialectic (I 23, 40b20-23, 41b21; II 23, 68b9-13).

Yet the *Topics* begins with a promise to treat of the dialectical syllogism, which it explains with the aid of a definition almost precisely the same as that with which the *Prior Analytics* begins: ‘a logos in which, certain things being laid down, something different from them follows of necessity by their being so’. What is more, in a celebrated passage at the end of the *Sophistical Refutations*, Aristotle presents himself as the first theorist of the syllogism and, as the pioneer of the field, asks his auditors’ pardon for his oversights and their thanks for his discoveries (34, 184b1-8). This claim to originality concludes a comparison between the subject as he found it and the far more advanced condition of rhetorical studies, and his recapitulation of the inquiries that were necessary to bring it up to the level of other pursuits, which could build on a tradition of previous work, corresponds to the program of the *Topics*, with the addition of the treatment of fallacious argument in the

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2 Cf. Brunschwig 1967, XXX; Barnes 1981, 47; Braun 1959, 34.
3 Cf. Brunschwig 1967, LII-LIII.