ABSTRACT
ESSENCE AND NECESSITY, AND THE ARISTOTELIAN MODAL SYLLOGISTIC:
A HISTORICAL AND ANALYTICAL STUDY

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The following is a critical and historical account of Aristotelian Essentialism informed by recent work on Aristotle’s modal syllogistic. The semantics of the modal syllogistic are interpreted in a way that is motivated by Aristotle, and also make his validity claims in the Prior Analytics consistent to a higher degree than previously developed interpretative models. In Chapter One, ancient and contemporary objections to the Aristotelian modal syllogistic are discussed. A resolution to apparent inconsistencies in Aristotle’s modal syllogistic is proposed and developed out of recent work by Patterson, Rini, and Malink. In particular, I argue that the semantics of negation is distinct in modal context from those of assertoric negative claims. Given my interpretive model of Aristotle’s semantics, in Chapter Two, I provide proofs for each of the mixed apodictic syllogisms, and propose a method of using Venn Diagrams to visualize the validity claims Aristotle makes in the Prior Analytics. Chapter Three explores how Aristotle’s syllogistic fits within Aristotle’s philosophy of science and demonstration, particularly within the context of the Posterior Analytics. Consideration is given to the Aristotelian understanding of the relationship among necessity, explanation, definition, and essence. Chapter Four applies Aristotelian modal logic in contemporary contexts. I contrast Aristotelian modality and essentialism with contemporary modalism based upon the semantics of possible worlds, e.g. Kripke and Putnam. I also develop an account of how Aristotelian modal logic can ground a sortal dependent theory of identity, as discussed by Wiggins.