

failed altogether to find the cause by experiment, still its necessity would be as firmly fixed in the mind reflecting thereon, as if it were questionless disclosed. The necessity, therefore, of the relation does not, for us, result from any clear view we may have into any example of cause and effect, but it results from considerations of the relation in its uttermost generality. This will be at once seen, if we consider that knowledge on which the relation rests. Man knows by an intuitive certainty, that bare nothing cannot produce any action—that, therefore, there must be a sufficient cause for every action which takes place between things. Or the case may be stated thus: either a quality or action springs from something or from nothing: if it be granted, that reason has sure ground to deny the last as impossible, then it is thrown on the other as necessary.

From such principles as these we may derive infallible conclusions, where all experience utterly fails us; as, for instance, the necessary existence of a first cause, incomprehensible to us in every other respect save the necessity of its existence—the existence of God. For we possess the highest possible certainty (1), of our own existence, and (2), of our dependent existence; we cannot doubt these things, and our knowledge of them is at the basis of all truth. For, as to the first, the thinking on any proposition whatsoever, of necessity involves the reality of consciousness; there cannot be certainty or knowledge, which are but