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## THE HUMIST DOCTRINE OF CAUSATION.

IN metaphysics every age seems to have its pet absurdity, which subsequent ages come to regard with mingled wonder and amusement. We can laugh at the mediaeval fancy of *substantiae secundae*, or at the Leibnitzian doctrine that if two things, say two drops of water, were so like each other that you could not tell the difference between them, they were not really two at all but only one. It is certain, however, that a succeeding age will laugh just as heartily at the doctrine, widely accepted in our age, that all the things which are for us the very type of reality, on which the very conception of reality itself is modelled, are not themselves real. While natural science makes a steady progress, it seems to be a law in the history of distinctively philosophical speculation that the paradoxes of one age become the orthodoxy of the next, to be looked on in turn by the next again, not only as paradoxes, but as absurdities. The reason of the difference between the two lies in this, that nothing has as yet been generally recognized as bearing in regard to the theories of the subject sciences the same relation that the test of comparison with fact bears to the theories of physics. I have endeavored<sup>1</sup> elsewhere to shew what it is that, as it seems to me, ought to be held to bear that relation to them; that any theory which does violence to the natural use of language may as well be rejected summarily and at once. If it is not, at any rate the Time Spirit will

<sup>1</sup> "Reality and Causation," *Mind*, N.S., vol. IV, no. 13.