

doubt that we think. It must be admitted that we have here reduced the matter to a fundamental paradox which means that a contradiction of the validity of the statement is a contradiction of the law of thought that nothing can both be and not be; but the truth of the law of thought rests upon our perception or intuition of its validity, and as the reliability of even our immediate perceptions may be doubted the validity of the argument fails. We must admit that the doubt of the validity of our immediate perceptions involves the most palpable self-contradiction; but the *possibility* of doubt remains and this excludes absolute knowledge. Some persons will imagine that they are introducing a new argument by urging that though our perceptions are admitted to be false it still cannot be doubted that we have them; but it is easily seen that the refutation of this seeming argument is the same as we have just gone through. From the time of Descartes' until the present day we find no speculative principle of certainty expounded that can rival his famous *cogito ergo sum* and it is unnecessary to go into wearisome and fruitless details.

And now what say those persons who have deemed our enquiry vain and absurd? If they still hold to their opinion we would have them carefully ponder what we have said, show us wherein we have erred, and cite us that standard of certainty from which they attain such a degree of assurance. But withal we must not forget that scepticism is paralytic in its tendencies and so we are led to believe that there must be some ground for a strong belief in external reality. This we admit and can abundantly prove. Though we cannot prove the actual existence of the material world the same limitations prevent our proving it to be non-existent. Accordingly, admitting the strength of the sceptic's ground, we may if we choose, and I think we must whether we will or no, believe firmly in the existence of the external, material world.

And here we cite a rule of certainty that is enunciated in modern philosophy, viz.; since the external world by an appeal to our senses so forcibly compels our belief in its reality, it appears that we may be justified in assuming it to be actual. To this we must say that we are certainly warranted in making this *assumption* so long as we do not confound it with absolute knowledge. And here we get a hint that will help us to decide what our attitude is to be in the case. We must make and act upon the foregoing assumption or else undergo those experiences that make up our conception of death. For unless we practically assume that what forcibly appears to sense is true, we must fail to fulfil the conditions of life. If one fails to make the proper inference on the occasion of certain troublesome organic sensations and seeks not that which will satisfy them, excusing himself on the ground that his senses deceive him this will be found to be but a poor way of freeing himself from the pangs of hunger, and utterly unavailing to assert the sure consequences of such neglect. And so in the total sum of our experiences our com-