

§ 2. Complex Assent

{188} I HAVE been considering assent as the mental assertion of an intelligible proposition, as an act of the intellect direct, absolute, complete in itself, unconditional, arbitrary, yet not incompatible with an appeal to argument, and at least in many cases exercised unconsciously. On this last characteristic of assent I have not insisted, as it has not come in my way; nor is it more than an accident of acts of assent, though an ordinary accident. That it is of ordinary occurrence cannot be doubted. A great many of our assents are merely expressions of our personal likings, tastes, principles, motives, and opinions, as dictated by nature, or resulting from habit; in other words, they are acts and manifestations of self: now what is more rare than self-knowledge? In proportion then to our ignorance of self, is our unconsciousness of those innumerable acts of assent, which we are incessantly making. And so again in what may be almost called the mechanical operation of our minds, in our continual acts of apprehension and inference, speculation, and resolve, propositions pass before us and receive our assent without our consciousness. Hence it is that we are so apt to confuse together acts of assent and acts of {189} inference. Indeed, I may fairly say, that those assents which we give with a direct knowledge of what we are doing, are few compared with the multitude of like acts which pass through our minds in long succession without our observing them.

That mode of Assent which is exercised thus unconsciously, I may call simple assent, and of it I have treated in the foregoing Section; but now I am going to speak of such assents as must be made consciously and deliberately, and which I shall call complex or reflex assents. And I begin by recalling what I have already stated about the relation in which Assent and Inference stand to each other,—Inference, which holds propositions conditionally, and Assent, which unconditionally accepts them; the relation is this:—

Acts of Inference are both the antecedents of assent before assenting, and its usual concomitants after assenting. For instance, I hold absolutely that the country which we call India exists, upon trustworthy testimony; and next, I may continue to believe it on the same testimony. In like manner, I have ever believed that Great Britain is an island, for certain sufficient reasons; and on the same reasons I may persist in the belief. But it may happen that I forget my reasons for what I believe to be so absolutely true; or I may never have asked myself about them, or formally marshalled them in order, and have been accustomed to assent without a recognition of my assent or of its grounds, and then perhaps something occurs which leads to my reviewing and completing those grounds, analyzing and arranging them, yet without {190} on that account implying of necessity any suspense, ever so slight, of assent, to the proposition that India is in a certain part of the earth, and that Great Britain is an island. With no suspense of assent at all; any more than the boy in my former illustration had any doubt about the answer set down in his arithmetic-book, when he began working out the question; any more than he would be doubting his eyes and his common sense, that the two sides of a triangle are together greater than the third, because he drew out the geometrical proof of it. He does but repeat, after his formal demonstration, that assent which he made

44 before it, and assents to his previous assenting. This is what I call a reflex or complex
45 assent.

46 I say, there is no necessary incompatibility between thus assenting and yet proving,—
47 for the conclusiveness of a proposition is not synonymous with its truth. A proposition
48 may be true, yet not admit of being concluded;—it may be a conclusion and yet not a
49 truth. To contemplate it under one aspect, is not to contemplate it under another; and
50 the two aspects may be consistent, from the very fact that they are two *aspects*.
51 Therefore to set about concluding a proposition is not *ipso facto* to doubt its truth; we
52 may aim at inferring a proposition, while all the time we assent to it. We have to do this
53 as a common occurrence, when we take on ourselves to convince another on any point
54 in which he differs from us. We do not deny our own faith, because we become
55 controversialists; and in like manner we may employ ourselves in proving what we
56 already believe to be true, simply in order to ascertain {191} the producible evidence in
57 its favour, and in order to fulfil what is due to ourselves and to the claims and
58 responsibilities of our education and social position.

59 I have been speaking of investigation, not of inquiry; it is quite true that inquiry is
60 inconsistent with assent, but inquiry is something more than the mere exercise of
61 inference. He who inquires has not found; he is in doubt where the truth lies, and wishes
62 his present profession either proved or disproved. We cannot without absurdity call
63 ourselves at once believers and inquirers also. Thus it is sometimes spoken of as a
64 hardship that a Catholic is not allowed to inquire into the truth of his Creed;—of course
65 he cannot, if he would retain the name of believer. He cannot be both inside and outside
66 of the Church at once. It is merely common sense to tell him that, if he is seeking, he
67 has not found. If seeking includes doubting, and doubting excludes believing, then the
68 Catholic who sets about inquiring, thereby declares that he is not a Catholic. He has
69 already lost faith. And this is his best defence to himself for inquiring, viz. that he is no
70 longer a Catholic, and wishes to become one. They who would forbid him to inquire,
71 would in that case be shutting the stable-door after the steed is stolen. What can he do
72 better than inquire, if he is in doubt? how else can he become a Catholic again? Not to
73 inquire is in his case to be satisfied with disbelief.

74 However, in thus speaking, I am viewing the matter in the abstract, and without allowing
75 for the manifold inconsistencies of individuals, as they are found in the world, who
76 attempt to unite incompatibilities; who do {192} not doubt, but who act as if they did;
77 who, though they believe, are weak in faith, and put themselves in the way of losing it
78 by unnecessarily listening to objections. Moreover, there are minds, undoubtedly, with
79 whom at all times to question a truth is to make it questionable, and to investigate is
80 equivalent to inquiring; and again, there may be beliefs so sacred or so delicate, that, if I
81 may use the metaphor, they will not wash without shrinking and losing colour. I grant all
82 this; but here I am discussing broad principles, not individual cases; and these
83 principles are, that inquiry implies doubt, and that investigation does not imply it, and
84 that those who assent to a doctrine or fact may without inconsistency investigate its
85 credibility, though they cannot literally inquire about its truth.

86 Next, I consider that, in the case of educated minds, investigations into the
87 argumentative proof of the things to which they have given their assent, is an obligation,
88 or rather a necessity. Such a trial of their intellects is a law of their nature, like the
89 growth of childhood into manhood, and analogous to the moral ordeal which is the
90 instrument of their spiritual life. The lessons of right and wrong, which are taught them
91 at school, are to be carried out into action amid the good and evil of the world; and so
92 again the intellectual assents, in which they have in like manner been instructed from
93 the first, have to be tested, realized, and developed by the exercise of their mature
94 judgment.

95 Certainly, such processes of investigation, whether in religious subjects or secular, often
96 issue in the reversal of the assents which they were originally intended to {193} confirm;
97 as the boy who works out an arithmetical problem from his book may end in detecting,
98 or thinking he detects, a false print in the answer. But the question before us is whether
99 acts of assent and of inference are compatible; and my vague consciousness of the
100 possibility of a reversal of my belief in the course of my researches, as little interferes
101 with the honesty and firmness of that belief while those researches proceed, as the
102 recognition of the possibility of my train's upsetting is an evidence of an intention on
103 my part of undergoing so great a calamity. My mind is not moved by a scientific
104 computation of chances, nor can any law of averages affect my particular case. To incur
105 a risk is not to expect reverse; and if my opinions are true, I have a right to think that
106 they will bear examining. Nor, on the other hand, does belief, viewed in its idea, imply a
107 positive resolution in the party believing never to abandon that belief. What belief, as
108 such, does imply is, not an intention never to change, but the utter absence of all
109 thought, or expectation, or fear of changing. A spontaneous resolution never to change
110 is inconsistent with the idea of belief; for the very force and absoluteness of the act of
111 assent precludes any such resolution. We do not commonly determine not to do what
112 we cannot fancy ourselves ever doing. We should readily indeed make such a formal
113 promise if we were called upon to do so; for, since we have the truth, and truth cannot
114 change, how can we possibly change in our belief, except indeed through our own
115 weakness or fickleness? We have no intention whatever of being weak or fickle; so our
116 promise is but the natural {194} guarantee of our sincerity. It is possible then, without
117 disloyalty to our convictions, to examine their grounds, even though in the event they
118 are to fail under the examination, for we have no suspicion of this failure.

119 And such examination, as I have said, does but fulfil a law of our nature. Our first
120 assents, right or wrong, are often little more than prejudices. The reasonings, which
121 precede and accompany them, though sufficient for their purpose, do not rise up to the
122 importance and energy of the assents themselves. As time goes on, by degrees and
123 without set purpose, by reflection and experience, we begin to confirm or to correct the
124 notions and the images to which those assents are given. At times it is a necessity
125 formally to undertake a survey and revision of this or that class of them, of those which
126 relate to religion, or to social duty, or to politics, or to the conduct of life. Sometimes this
127 review begins in doubt as to the matters which we propose to consider, that is, in a
128 suspension of the assents hitherto familiar to us; sometimes those assents are too
129 strong to allow of being lost on the first stirring of the inquisitive intellect, and if, as time

130 goes on, they give way, our change of mind, be it for good or for evil, is owing to the
131 accumulating force of the arguments, sound or unsound, which bear down upon the
132 propositions which we have hitherto received. Objections, indeed, as such, have no
133 direct force to weaken assent; but, when they multiply, they tell against the implicit
134 reasonings or the formal inferences which are its warrant, and suspend its acts and
135 gradually undermine its habit. Then the assent goes; but whether slowly or suddenly,
136 noticeably or imperceptibly, {195} is a matter of circumstance or accident. However,
137 whether the original assent is continued on or not, the new assent differs from the old in
138 this, that it has the strength of explicitness and deliberation, that it is not a mere
139 prejudice, and its strength the strength of prejudice. It is an assent, not only to a given
140 proposition, but to the claim of that proposition on our assent as true; it is an assent to
141 an assent, or what is commonly called a conviction.

142 Of course these reflex acts may be repeated in a series. As I pronounce that "Great
143 Britain is an island," and then pronounce "That 'Great Britain is an island' has a claim on
144 my assent," or is to "be assented-to," or to be "accepted as true," or to be "believed," or
145 simply "is true" (these predicates being equivalent), so I may proceed, "The proposition
146 'that *Great-Britain-is-an-island* is to be believed' is to be believed," &c., &c., and so on to
147 ad infinitum. But this would be trifling. The mind is like a double mirror, in which
148 reflexions of self within self multiply themselves till they are undistinguishable, and the
149 first reflexion contains all the rest. At the same time, it is worth while to notice two other
150 reflex propositions:—"That 'Great Britain is an island' is probable" is true:—and "That
151 'Great Britain is an island' is uncertain" is true;—for the former of these is the expression
152 of Opinion, and the latter of formal or theological doubt, as I have already determined.

153 I have one step farther to make—let the proposition to which the assent is given be as
154 absolutely true as the reflex act pronounces it to be, that is, objectively {196} true as
155 well as subjectively:—then the assent may be called a *perception*, the conviction
156 a *certitude*, the proposition or truth a *certainty*, or thing known, or a matter
157 of *knowledge*, and to assent to it is to *know*.

158 Of course, in thus speaking, I open the all-important question, what is truth, and what
159 apparent truth? what is genuine knowledge, and what is its counterfeit? what are the
160 tests for discriminating certitude from mere persuasion or delusion? Whatever a man
161 holds to be true, he will say he holds for certain; and for the present I must allow him in
162 his assumption, hoping in one way or another, as I proceed, to lessen the difficulties
163 which lie in the way of calling him to account for so doing. And I have the less scruple in
164 taking this course, as believing that, among fairly prudent and circumspect men, there
165 are far fewer instances of false certitude than at first sight might be supposed. Men are
166 often doubtful about propositions which are really true; they are not commonly certain of
167 such as are simply false. What they judge to be a certainty is in matter of fact for the
168 most part a truth. Not that there is not a great deal of rash talking even among the
169 educated portion of the community, and many a man makes professions of certitude, for
170 which he has no warrant; but that such off-hand, confident language is no token how
171 these persons will express themselves when brought to book. No one will with justice
172 consider himself certain of any matter, unless he has sufficient reasons for so

173 considering; and it is rare that what is not true should be so free from every
174 circumstance and token of falsity as to create no suspicion in {197} his mind to its
175 disadvantage, no reason for suspense of judgment. However, I shall have to remark on
176 this difficulty by and by; here I will mention two conditions of certitude, in close
177 connexion with that necessary preliminary of investigation and proof of which I have
178 been speaking, which will throw some light upon it. The one, which is *à priori*, or from
179 the nature of the case, will tell us what is not certitude; the other, which is *à posteriori*, or
180 from experience, will tell us in a measure what certitude is.

181 Certitude, as I have said, is the perception of a truth with the perception that it is a truth,
182 or the consciousness of knowing, as expressed in the phrase, "I know that I know," or "I
183 know that I know that I know,"—or simply "I know;" for one reflex assertion of the mind
184 about self sums up the series of self-consciousnesses without the need of any actual
185 evolution of them.

186 1. But if so, if by certitude about a thing is to be understood the knowledge of its truth,
187 let it be considered that what is once true is always true, and cannot fail, whereas what
188 is once known need not always be known, and is capable of failing. It follows, that if I
189 am certain of a thing, I believe it will remain what I now hold it to be, even though my
190 mind should have the bad fortune to let it drop. Since mere argument is not the measure
191 of assent, no one can be called certain of a proposition, whose mind does not
192 spontaneously and promptly reject, on their first suggestion, as idle, as impertinent, as
193 sophistical, any objections which are directed against its truth. No man is certain of a
194 truth, who can endure the thought {198} of the fact of its contradictory existing or
195 occurring; and that not from any set purpose or effort to reject that thought, but, as I
196 have said, by the spontaneous action of the intellect. What is contradictory to the truth,
197 with its apparatus of argument, fades out of the mind as fast as it enters it; and though it
198 be brought back to the mind ever so often by the pertinacity of an opponent, or by a
199 voluntary or involuntary act of imagination, still that contradictory proposition and its
200 arguments are mere phantoms and dreams, in the light of our certitude, and their very
201 entering into the mind is the first step of their going out of it. Such is the position of our
202 minds towards the heathen fancy that Enceladus lies under Etna; or, not to take so
203 extreme a case, that Joanna Southcote was a messenger from heaven, or the Emperor
204 Napoleon really had a star. Equal to this peremptory assertion of negative propositions
205 is the revolt of the mind from suppositions incompatible with positive statements of
206 which we are certain, whether abstract truths or facts; as that a straight line is the
207 longest possible distance between its two extreme points, that Great Britain is in shape
208 an exact square or circle, that I shall escape dying, or that my intimate friend is false to
209 me.

210 We may indeed say, if we please, that a man ought not to have so supreme a conviction
211 in a given case, or in any case whatever; and that he is therefore wrong in treating
212 opinions which he does not himself hold, with this even involuntary contempt;—
213 certainly, we have a right to say so, if we will; but if, in matter of fact, a man has such a
214 conviction, if he is sure that {199} Ireland is to the West of England, or that the Pope is
215 the Vicar of Christ, nothing is left to him, if he would be consistent, but to carry his

conviction out into this magisterial intolerance of any contrary assertion; and if he were in his own mind tolerant, I do not say patient (for patience and gentleness are moral duties, but I mean intellectually tolerant), of objections as objections, he would virtually be giving countenance to the views which those objections represented. I say I certainly should be very intolerant of such a notion as that I shall one day be Emperor of the French; I should think it too absurd even to be ridiculous, and that I must be mad before I could entertain it. And did a man try to persuade me that treachery, cruelty, or ingratitude was as praiseworthy as honesty and temperance, and that a man who lived the life of a knave and died the death of a brute had nothing to fear from future retribution, I should think there was no call on me to listen to his arguments, except with the hope of converting him, though he called me a bigot and a coward for refusing to inquire into his speculations. And if, in a matter in which my temporal interests were concerned, he attempted to reconcile me to fraudulent acts by what he called philosophical views, I should say to him, "Retro Satana," and that, not from any suspicion of his ability to reverse immutable principles, but from a consciousness of my own moral changeableness, and a fear, on that account, that I might not be intellectually true to the truth. This, then, from the nature of the case, is a main characteristic of certitude in any matter, to be confident indeed that that certitude {200} will last, but to be confident of this also, that, if it did fail, nevertheless, the thing itself, whatever it is, of which we are certain, will remain just as it is, true and irreversible. If this be so, it is easy to instance cases of an adherence to propositions, which does not fulfil the conditions of certitude; for instance:—

(1.) How positive and circumstantial disputants may be on two sides of a question of fact, on which they give their evidence, till they are called to swear to it, and then how guarded and conditional their testimony becomes! Again, how confident are they in their rival accounts of a transaction at which they were present, till a third person makes his appearance, whose word will be decisive about it! Then they suddenly drop their tone, and trim their statements, and by provisos and explanations leave themselves loopholes for escape, in case his testimony should turn out to their disadvantage. At first no language could be too bold or absolute to express the distinctness of their knowledge on this side or that; but second thoughts are best, and their giving way shows that their belief does not come up to the mark of certitude.

(2.) Again, can we doubt that many a confident expounder of Scripture, who is so sure that St. Paul meant this, and that St. John and St. James did not mean that, would be seriously disconcerted at the presence of those Apostles, if their presence were possible, and that they have now an especial "boldness of speech" in treating their subject, because there is no one authoritatively to set them right, if they are wrong?

(3.) Take another instance, in which the absence of {201} certitude is professed from the first. Though it is a matter of faith with Catholics that miracles never cease in the Church, still that this or that professed miracle really took place, is for the most part only a matter of opinion, and when it is believed, whether on testimony or tradition, it is not believed to the exclusion of all doubt, whether about the fact or its miraculousness. Thus I may believe in the liquefaction of St. Pantaleon's blood, and believe it to the best

of my judgment to be a miracle, yet, supposing a chemist offered to produce exactly the same phenomena under exactly similar circumstances by the materials put at his command by his science, so as to reduce what seemed beyond nature within natural laws, I should watch with some suspense of mind and misgiving the course of his experiment, as having no Divine Word to fall back upon as a ground of certainty that the liquefaction was miraculous.

(4.) Take another virtual exhibition of fear; I mean irritation and impatience of contradiction, vehemence of assertion, determination to silence others,—these are the tokens of a mind which has not yet attained the tranquil enjoyment of certitude. No one, I suppose, would say that he was certain of the plurality of worlds: that uncertainty on the subject is just the explanation, and the only explanation satisfactory to my mind, of the strange violence of language which has before now dishonoured the philosophical controversy upon it. Those who are certain of a fact are indolent disputants; it is enough for them that they have the truth; and they have little disposition, except at the call of duty, to criticize the hallucinations of others, and much less are they angry at their positiveness or ingenuity in argument; but to call names, to impute motives, to accuse of sophistry, to be impetuous and overbearing, is the part of men who are alarmed for their own position, and fear to have it approached too nearly. And in like manner the intemperance of language and of thought, which is sometimes found in converts to a religious creed, is often attributed, not without plausibility (even though erroneously in the particular case), to some flaw in the completeness of their certitude, which interferes with the harmony and repose of their convictions.

(5.) Again, this intellectual anxiety, which is incompatible with certitude, shows itself in our running back in our minds to the arguments on which we came to believe, in not letting our conclusions alone, in going over and strengthening the evidence, and, as it were, getting it by heart, as if our highest assent were only an inference. And such too is our unnecessarily declaring that we are certain, as if to reassure ourselves, and our appealing to others for their suffrage in behalf of the truths of which we are so sure; which is like our asking another whether we are weary and hungry, or have eaten and drunk to our satisfaction.

All laws are general; none are invariable; I am not writing as a moralist or casuist. It must ever be recollected that these various phenomena of mind, though signs, are not infallible signs of uncertainty; they may proceed, in the particular case, from other circumstances. Such anxieties and alarms may be merely emotional and from the imagination, not intellectual; {203} parallel to that beating of the heart, nay, as I have been told, that trembling of the limbs, of even the bravest men, before a battle, when standing still to receive the first attack of the enemy. Such too is that palpitating self-interrogation, that trouble of the mind lest it should not believe strongly enough, which, and not doubt, underlies the sensitiveness described in the well-known lines,—

"With eyes too tremblingly awake,
To bear with dimness for His sake."

300 And so again, a man's over-earnestness in argument may arise from zeal or charity; his
301 impatience from loyalty to the truth; his extravagance from want of taste, from
302 enthusiasm, or from youthful ardour; and his restless recurrence to argument, not from
303 personal disquiet, but from a vivid appreciation of the controversial talent of an
304 opponent, or of his own, or of the mere philosophical difficulties of the subject in dispute.
305 These are points for the consideration of those who are concerned in registering and
306 explaining what may be called the meteorological phenomena of the human mind, and
307 do not interfere with the broad principle which I would lay down, that to fear argument is
308 to doubt the conclusion, and to be certain of a truth is to be careless of objections to
309 it;—nor with the practical rule, that mere assent is not certitude, and must not be
310 confused with it.

311 2. Now to consider what Certitude is, not simply as it must be, but in our actual
312 experience of it.

313 It is accompanied, as a state of mind, by a specific feeling, proper to it, and
314 discriminating it from other {204} states, intellectual and moral, I do not say, as its
315 practical test or as its *differentia*, but as its token, and in a certain sense its form. When
316 a man says he is certain, he means he is conscious to himself of having this specific
317 feeling. It is a feeling of satisfaction and self-gratulation, of intellectual security, arising
318 out of a sense of success, attainment, possession, finality, as regards the matter which
319 has been in question. As a conscientious deed is attended by a self-approval which
320 nothing but itself can create, so certitude is united to a sentiment *sui generis* in which it
321 lives and is manifested. These two parallel sentiments indeed have no relationship with
322 each other, the enjoyable self-repose of certitude being as foreign to a good deed, as
323 the self-approving glow of conscience is to the perception of a truth; yet knowledge, as
324 well as virtue, is an end, and both knowledge and virtue, when reflected on, carry with
325 them respectively their own reward in the characteristic sentiment, which, as I have
326 said, is proper to each. And, as the performance of what is right is distinguished by this
327 religious peace, so the attainment of what is true is attested by this intellectual security.

328 And, as the feeling of self-approbation, which is proper to good conduct, does not
329 belong to the sense or to the possession of the beautiful or of the becoming, of the
330 pleasant or of the useful, so neither is the special relaxation and repose of mind, which
331 is the token of Certitude, ever found to attend upon simple Assent, on processes of
332 Inference, or on Doubt; nor on Investigation, conjecture, opinion, as such, or on any
333 other state {205} or action of mind, besides Certitude. On the contrary, those acts and
334 states of mind have gratifications proper to themselves, and unlike that of Certitude, as
335 will sufficiently appear on considering them separately.

336 (1.) Philosophers are fond of enlarging on the pleasures of Knowledge, (that is,
337 Knowledge as such,) nor need I here prove that such pleasures exist; but the repose in
338 self and in its object, as connected with self, which I attribute to Certitude, does not
339 attach to mere knowing, that is, to the perception of things, but to the consciousness of
340 having that knowledge. The simple and direct perception of things has its own great
341 satisfaction; but it must recognize them as realities, and recognize them as known,

before it becomes the perception and has the satisfaction which belong to certitude. Indeed, as far as I see, the pleasure of perceiving truth without reflecting on it as truth, is not very different, except in intensity and in dignity, from the pleasure, as such, of assent or belief given to what is not true, nay, from the pleasure of the mere passive reception of recitals or narratives, which neither profess to be true nor claim to be believed. Representations of any kind are in their own nature pleasurable, whether they be true or not, whether they come to us, or do not come, as true. We read a history, or a biographical notice, with pleasure; and we read a romance with pleasure; and a pleasure which is quite apart from the question of fact or fiction. Indeed, when we would persuade young people to read history, we tell them that it is as interesting as a romance or a novel. The mere {206} acquisition of new images, and those images striking, great, various, unexpected, beautiful, with mutual relations and bearings, as being parts of a whole, with continuity, succession, evolution, with recurring complications and corresponding solutions, with a crisis and a catastrophe, is highly pleasurable, quite independently of the question whether there is any truth in them. I am not denying that we should be baulked and disappointed to be told they were all untrue, but this seems to arise from the reflection that we have been taken in; not as if the fact of their truth were a distinct element of pleasure, though it would increase the pleasure, as investing them with a character of marvellousness, and as associating them with known or ascertained places. But even if the pleasure of knowledge is not thus founded on the imagination, at least it does not consist in that triumphant repose of the mind after a struggle, which is the characteristic of Certitude.

And so too as to such statements as gain from us a half-assent, as superstitious tales, stories of magic, of romantic crime, of ghosts, or such as we follow for the moment with a faint and languid assent,—contemporary history, political occurrences, the news of the day,—the pleasure resulting from these is that of novelty or curiosity, and is like the pleasure arising from the excitement of chance and from variety; it has in it no sense of possession: it is simply external to us, and has nothing akin to the thought of a battle and a victory.

(2.) Again, the Pursuit of knowledge has its own pleasure,—as distinct from the pleasures of knowledge, {207} as it is distinct from that of consciously possessing it. This will be evident at once, if we consider what a vacuity and depression of mind sometimes comes upon us on the termination of an inquiry, however successfully terminated, compared with the interest and spirit with which we carried it on. The pleasure of a search, like that of a hunt, lies in the searching, and ends at the point at which the pleasure of Certitude begins. Its elements are altogether foreign to those which go to compose the serene satisfaction of Certitude. First, the successive steps of discovery, which attend on an investigation, are continual and ever-extending informations, and pleasurable, not only as such, but also as the evidence of past efforts, and the earnest of success at the last. Next, there is the interest which attaches to a mystery, not yet removed, but tending to removal,—the complex pleasure of wonder, expectation, sudden surprises, suspense, and hope, of advances fitful yet sure, to the unknown. And there is the pleasure which attaches to the toil and conflict of the strong,

385 the consciousness and successive evidences of power, moral and intellectual, the pride
386 of ingenuity and skill, of industry, patience, vigilance, and perseverance.

387 Such are the pleasures of investigation and discovery; and to these we must add, what I
388 have suggested in the last sentence, the logical satisfaction, as it may be called, which
389 accompanies these efforts of mind. There is great pleasure, as is plain, at least to
390 certain minds, in proceeding from particular facts to principles, in generalizing,
391 discriminating, reducing into order and meaning the maze of phenomena which nature
392 presents to us. {208} This is the kind of pleasure attendant on the treatment of
393 probabilities which point at conclusions without reaching them, or of objections which
394 must be weighed and measured, and adjusted for what they are worth, over and against
395 propositions which are antecedently evident. It is the special pleasure belonging to
396 Inference as contrasted with Assent, a pleasure almost poetical, as twilight has more
397 poetry in it than noon-day. Such is the joy of the pleader, with a good case in hand, and
398 expecting the separate attacks of half a dozen acute intellects, each advancing from a
399 point of his own. I suppose this was the pleasure which the Academics had in mind,
400 when they propounded that happiness lay, not in finding the truth, but in seeking it. To
401 seek, indeed, with the certainty of not finding what we seek, cannot in any serious
402 matter, be pleasurable, any more than the labour of Sisyphus or the Danaides; but
403 when the result does not concern us very much, clever arguments and rival ones have
404 the attraction of a game of chance or skill, whether or not they lead to any definite
405 conclusion.

406 (3.) Are there pleasures of Doubt, as well as of Inference and of Assent? In one sense,
407 there are. Not indeed, if doubt simply means ignorance, uncertainty, or hopeless
408 suspense; but there is a certain grave acquiescence in ignorance, a recognition of our
409 impotence to solve momentous and urgent questions, which has a satisfaction of its
410 own. After high aspirations, after renewed endeavours, after bootless toil, after long
411 wanderings, after hope, effort, weariness, failure, painfully alternating and recurring, it is
412 an immense relief to the exhausted mind {209} to be able to say, "At length I know that I
413 can know nothing about any thing"—that is, while it can maintain itself in a posture of
414 thought which has no promise of permanence, because it is unnatural. But here the
415 satisfaction does not lie in not knowing, but in knowing there is nothing to know. It is a
416 positive act of assent or conviction, given to what in the particular case is an untruth. It
417 is the assent and the false certitude which are the cause of the tranquility of mind.
418 Ignorance remains the evil which it ever was, but something of the peace of Certitude is
419 gained in knowing the worst, and in having reconciled the mind to the endurance of it.

420 I may seem to have been needlessly diffuse in thus dwelling on the pleasurable
421 affections severally attending on these various conditions of the intellect, but I have had
422 a purpose in doing so. That Certitude is a natural and normal state of mind, and not (as
423 is sometimes objected) one of its extravagances or infirmities, is proved indeed by the
424 remarks which I have made above on the same objection, as directed against Assent;
425 for Certitude is only one of its forms. But I have thought it well in addition to suggest,
426 even at the expense of a digression, that as no one would refuse to Inquiry, Doubt, and
427 Knowledge a legitimate place among our mental constituents, so no one can reasonably

428 ignore a state of mind which not only is shown to be substantive by possessing a
429 sentiment *sui generis* and characteristic, but is analogical to Inquiry, Doubt, and
430 Knowledge, in the fact of its thus having a sentiment of its own.