

that by *criterion of truth* they meant discernible marks of truth.

4 Classical Infallibilism in Western Philosophy

The New Story's bold hypothesis is that before 1950, virtually every Western philosopher was a Classical Infallibilist. The best I can aim for here is to show that it deserves serious consideration. Let me review some salient evidence.

4.1 Medieval epistemology

It is worth tracing the posterity of the Hellenistic debate through the Middle Ages.⁴⁵ Much evidence in favour of the New Story would found along the way. Some evidence against too, which we discuss below. But it is too complex a history to be explored here.⁴⁶

derived from cognitive impressions in ways that make them discernible marks of truths as well. See Frede (1999, 318–20) and the previous footnote.

⁴⁵See Perler (2010), Pasnau (2010b), Lagerlund (2010) and Bolyard (2013) for good overviews—mainly focused on Western Europe—and the valuable collections of Pasnau (2002) and Klima (2007). Two issues are worth flagging. (1) *Conceptual divisions*. Medieval epistemology tends to draw on Aristotle and the Stoic-Academic debate. Both arguably distinguish ordinary knowledge from systematic theoretical knowledge, or, for short, knowledge from science (see fn. 21 above and sec. 4.8 below). In Western Europe, however, Cicero's *Academica* was barely known (Hunt, 1998, 26–30) and the main source on the Hellenistic debate is Augustine's (354–430 CE) *Contra Academicos*, which fails to heed the distinction. When Western philosophers discovered Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* in the twelfth century their translations (e.g. Aquinas's) did use two terms, *scientia* and *cognitio*, for Aristotle's *epistēmē* and *gignoskein*. But they may understand the distinction differently: Pasnau (2002, 5–6) suggests that *cognitio* is the most general term for mental representations or thoughts. In practice medieval authors tend instead to theorize the contrast between knowledge and science in terms of *grades of scientia* (Pasnau, 2010b). As a result, it is sometimes hard to tell whether certain views are counterexamples to the New Story. For instance, some late medieval philosophers distinguished a lower sense of “comprehension of truth” or even “knowledge” that was just true belief (see e.g. Martens, 2011). Did they think that in its most general sense knowledge includes mere true belief? Or were they merely pointing out that “grasping the truth” is ambiguous between *knowing* proper and *having a true belief*? (2) *Conceptual innovations*. *Certainty* (*al-yaqīn*, *certitudo*) became a central epistemic category with Islamic philosophy (Black, 2006). *Evidentness* (*evidentia*) is another medieval innovation. I suspect that both can be understood in Classical Infallibilist terms, but they should be discussed in more detail. It is worth noting that medieval philosophers were almost unanimous in requiring “certainty” for knowledge. Nicholas of Autrecourt may be a rare exception (sec. 4.7 below).

⁴⁶Let me highlight three episodes. (1) *Al-Fārābī's non-accidentality clause*. Al-Fārābī (c. 872–951) calls *certitudo* the endpoint of Aristotelian demonstration. He lists six conditions for “absolute certitudo” that *p*: *S* believes *p*, *p* is true, *S* knows that *p* is true, *p* is necessary, *p* is eternal, and the previous conditions hold “essentially, not accidentally” (Black, 2006, 16). The issue here is to understand the relation between *certain knowledge*—what satisfies the six conditions—and *knowledge*—what appears in the third condition. (Black (2006, 20) points out that al-Fārābī could have used a different Arabic word for the latter but he did not. That suggests that he deliberately avoided to reproduce Aristotle's distinction between *epistēmē* and *gignoskein*.) Now al-Fārābī spelled out the “necessity” and “eternity” clauses in ways that arguably makes them not modal or temporal but rather some kind of infallibility requirement (see Black, 2006 for an enlightening discussion). If so the sixth clause suggests that *one could satisfy the knowledge clause without satisfying the infallibility ones*. That would make al-Fārābī a counterexample to the New Story. Black (2006, 29–31) however suggests that the clause is in fact superfluous. (2) *Divine illumination theories*. Relying on Cicero, Augustine's *Contra Academicos* raises the core issue of the Hellenistic debate and defends on broadly Epicurean answer (Bolyard, 2006). The Epicurean view ensures the truth of all impressions