

fully manifests itself is the criterion of truth according to Carneades and his followers. As the criterion, it has a considerable breadth, and by admitting of degrees, it includes some impressions which are more convincing and striking in their form than others. [...] Hence the criterion will be the impression which appears true—also called ‘convincing’ by the Academics—but there are times when it actually turns out false, so that it is necessary actually to use the impression which is common on occasion to truth and falsehood. Yet the rare occurrence of this one, I mean the impression which counterfeits the truth [i.e., the second], is not a reason for distrusting the impression [i.e. the third] which tells the truth for the most part. For both judgements and actions, as it turns out, are regulated by what holds for the most part. (LS 69D)

Convincing impressions are discernible: they contrast with “confused” and “indistinct” ones, they have an “intensity of appearing true” and they “manifest themselves”. But they are not truth-entailing. They are merely reliable: they are true “for the most part”—that is, only most of them are true. Both dimensions admit of degrees. We may call *indication of truth* a property of a belief such that most beliefs who have it are true. Carneades’s suggestion is that action could be guided by a *discernible indication of truth*.

Importantly, Carneades did *not* think that indications of truth (perhaps in conjunction with truth) are enough for knowledge (e.g. LS 69F). Thus he did not challenge Classical Infallibilism. Rather, he targeted the Stoics’ assumption that one should act only on the basis of what one knows.<sup>70</sup> His successor Philo of Larissa appears to have taken a step further and targeted the widely shared Hellenistic view that one should *believe* only what one knows.<sup>71</sup> He held that convincing impressions would justify some form of assent, *opinion*.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup>See LS 69A. The Stoic assumption has been revived in the contemporary context by Unger (1975, chap. 5). Burnyeat (n.p.) argues that Carneades’s rejoinder to Stoics is not that convincing impressions *justify* actions, but rather than their fallibility *fails to justify* suspension.

<sup>71</sup>Before Philo, and even after him, few challenged Sceptics on the idea that if nothing was known, nothing should be “assented” to. Moreover, I suspect that even within the post-Philo tradition it was held that there is a kind of “assent” (typically, subjective certainty) reserved to what was known. The idea that beliefs of any type can be equally justified when one knows as when one does not is a contemporary one. In recent years the traditional view that one should believe only what one knows has been revived by Unger (1975, chap. 5), Williamson (2000, 47; 2007), Sutton (2007), Haddock (2010), Littlejohn (2014).

<sup>72</sup>“[...] the wise man will assent to what is incognitive, i.e. will opine, but in such a way that he realizes that he is opining and knows that there is nothing which can be grasped and cognized.” (LS 69K) That is the (looser) sense in which convincing impressions are said to be “criteria of truth” above. Philo (via his main pupil Antiochus, whose lectures Cicero attended) is one of our main sources and he was keen to present his own views as continuous with those of Carneades. Thus while some texts say that Carneades called convincing impressions “criteria of truths” and allowed forming opinion on their basis, a number of commentators think that Carneades restricted them to action-guidance, did not call them “criteria” and only put forward the view dialectically, as a way