

Reed (2002b, 160) doubts that Stoics held the view that “false impressions could not result in the very same behaviour that cognitive impressions produce” because it is “obviously incorrect”.³⁶ Now if Stoics are Classical Infallibilists, they need not deny that some cognitive impression and some false impression have the same actual effects. But they need to deny that they would have the same effects *even if the subject was attentive enough*. Many contemporary epistemologists find that claim obviously incorrect too. But it is no more obviously incorrect than the view that it is in principle possible to avoid false belief entirely, which Stoics clearly held. In fact, as surprising as it may be, we find philosophers holding the view up until the twentieth century. Thus G.E. Moore tentatively held that some wakeful experiences are discernible:

But what I am in doubt of is whether it is logically possible that I should *both* be having all the sensory experiences and the memories I have and *yet* be dreaming. The conjunction of the proposition that I have these sense experiences and memories with the proposition that I am dreaming does seem to me to be very likely self-contradictory. (Moore, 1993, 194)³⁷

Malcolm argued that the presence of an ink-bottle in front of him was discernible:

Now could it turn out to be false that there is an ink-bottle directly in front of me on this desk ? [...] It could happen that when I next reach for this ink-bottle my hand should seem to pass through it and I should not feel the contact of any object. [...] Having admitted that these things could happen, am I compelled to admit that if they did happen then it would be proved that there is no ink-bottle here *now*? Not at all! (Malcolm, 1952, 185)

And the Oxford Realist H.A. Prichard took knowing to be discernible:³⁸

that does support it is the “ungrounded, and quite implausible, insistence that false impressions simply cannot be as rich and vivid as some true impressions” (Reed, 2002b, 153). That is the Classical Infallibilism I claim they held.

³⁶Reed (2002b, 160) approvingly quotes Carneades for that claim (LS 40H, which says that false impressions are “equally self-evident and striking”). But it seems clear to me that it was commonly granted that if Stoics conceded that claim to Carneades they were defeated. If so it would be natural to think that Stoics did hold the view.

³⁷What allowed Moore to hope that the conjunction was *logically* contradictory was his Idealist view that ordinary objects were to be analysed in terms of sense-data. See section 4 on how Classical Infallibilism motivates Idealism.

³⁸See also Marion (2000a, 313) on Cook Wilson’s infallibilism. Marion (2000a, 314) claims that on Cook Wilson’s view, knowing *p* and “being under the impression” that *p* are indistinguishable. But the passage he quotes suggests that Cook Wilson took them to be distinguishable *on reflection*: “if we really thought we knew, we must have reflected and must have thought the evidence conclusive, whereas, ex hypothesi, *any reflection shows it could not be conclusive*” (my emphasis).