

some are “cognitive”. They are characterized thus:<sup>31</sup>

A cognitive impression is one which arises from what is and is stamped and impressed exactly in accordance with what is, of such a kind that could not arise from what is not. (LS 40E, see also LS 40C, 40D)

Since cognitive impressions are “impressed exactly in accordance with what is”, beliefs based on them are true (Frede, 1987, 164). So they are marks of truth. Are they discernible? Arguably, that is what the third clause was meant to secure. First, Stoics took cognitive impressions to differ from others:

‘Of such a kind as could not arise from what is not’ was added by the Stoics, since the Academics did not share their view of the impossibility of finding a totally indiscernible [but false] impression. For the Stoics say that one who has the cognitive impression fastens on the objective difference of things in a craftsman-like way, since this kind of impression has a peculiarity which differentiates it from other impressions, just as horned snakes are different from others. (LS 40E)

The difference was sometimes said to be that cognitive impressions are “clear and distinct” (LS 40C). Second, Stoics thought that it is possible to assent only to impressions that are cognitive (LS 40D, 41G). Presumably, that is because a sufficiently attentive subject can tell cognitive impressions apart (Frede 1999, 314–6; as Frede points out, that may involve some training). Thus cognitive impressions are discernible.<sup>32</sup>

Knowledge requires nothing more. It is not required that one knows, believes or is otherwise aware that one’s assent is to a cognitive impression. The unwise assent to cognitive and non-cognitive impressions alike, and yet they have knowledge (LS 40C). Nor it is required that one antecedently knows that cognitive impressions are true (Frede, 1999, 299, Barnes, 1990, 132–6).

While details remain blurry, the overall Stoic picture is clear enough. When one’s eyes are open, one is close enough and in a well-lit area, one can get an impression of an object of a kind that one could not get otherwise. When the conditions are right, one can get an impression of Socrates of a kind that one could not get from a twin. When one is wide awake, one gets impressions such that one could not get while dreaming. More generally, it is always possible to discern that one’s impression is of the cognitive kind. This does not mean that

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have content; Reed oscillates between the two). The loose reading is enough for present purposes.

<sup>31</sup>All Hellenistic texts are cited in Long and Sedley’s (1987) translations.

<sup>32</sup>Some texts indicate that they are also *convincing*, that is, they force assent (LS 40H, 40O). This may be what their “clarity and distinction” consists in (Frede, 1987, 168).