

As the definition makes clear, nothing special is meant by “mark” and “bearing a mark”. A mark is simply a property of beliefs; a belief “bears” a mark if it has the property. For instance, the *truth* of a belief is (trivially) a mark of truth. But it is not discernible, since even an attentive subject may believe that one of her beliefs is true while it is not. By contrast, *having the content that it rains* seems to be a discernible mark: a sufficiently attentive subject will believe that a belief of hers has the content that it rains if and only if it has.¹³ But that is not a mark of truth, since some beliefs that have that content are false. Descartes’s “clarity and distinction” is a prototypical example of a putative discernible mark of truth: on his view, only true beliefs can have a “clear and distinct” content and a sufficiently attentive subject will believe that a belief has a clear and distinct content if and only if it has.¹⁴

If Infallibilism were put forward today several issues of detail would need to be addressed. First, the definition of marks of truth is too permissive. The property of *having the content that 331 is prime* is one that only true beliefs have. It may also be discernible. Yet somebody may believe that 331 is prime without thereby knowing that it is. To avoid that, we should say that a property is a mark of truth if it belongs to a *relevant kind* of properties that all entail truths. *Having the content that 331 is prime* is of a kind that includes *having the content that 333 is prime*, which is not truth-entailing. Second, a similar refinement is needed for discernibility. There may be some brain pattern C such that necessarily, one believes that one’s belief is *realised by C* just if it is. But we do not want *being realised by C* to count as a discernible property. Again, we should say that a mark is discernible only if marks of its kinds are such that attentive subjects discern them. What kinds count as “relevant”? We may leave it open. Note that the shift to kinds makes Infallibilism more stringent, so it does not threaten the main claim I will make: that Infallibilism leads to Scepticism. Third, we should specify whether our notion of necessity is restricted, say, to physical possibility. Fourth, we should clarify sufficient attention. It is implicitly relative to a belief: a mark of a belief is discernible if it is discerned by a subject attentive enough *to that belief*. We need not assume that subjects directly refer to their belief; it is enough for them to think of it under a description such as “my belief that 331 is prime”. The definition does not prevent the beliefs of an unreflective creature from bearing discernible marks provided *sufficiently attentive* versions of that creature would be able to reflect on their own beliefs.

¹³Or so it seems. Williamson’s (2000, chap. 4) anti-luminosity argument can be adapted to argue that there must be cases where even a sufficiently attentive subject could be mistaken about whether a belief of hers has the content that it rains; and more generally, to argue that nothing is discernible. However, that is a surprising—and still controversial—result, and it is a fair bet that it would have come as a surprise to past philosophers too.

¹⁴See section 4.