

# Introduction to RS and Philosophy 2

## How do you know you exist?

### Let's Begin...

How do you know anything is true or real? **Descartes** wanted to be sure of human knowledge and set about a journey of philosophical doubt to do so (doubting everything of which we cannot be 100% sure).. How can we know that any of our experiences were real, or whether even now we might be dreaming. He even questioned whether we could know that any of our thoughts were true - they might have been 'fed' us by an evil demon.



### Watch

Watch the film clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmxlcJFTaYU&feature=youtu.be> and have a go at answering the questions below (you might want to watch the clip once all the way through, and then again to help you answer the questions). If you come across any unfamiliar words, use a dictionary app to look them up.

# Think

<p>1. What significant question did René Descartes raise in The Meditations?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the scientific method the best way to discover truth?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the scientific method the best way to discover truth?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How do we get to know we exist or that anything is real?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What is the purpose of human life?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How do you determine the difference between right and wrong behavior?</li> </ul>
<p>2. How do most people decide what is real and true?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Philosophical inquiry</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use of senses</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth stories</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Scientific research</li> </ul>
<p>3. Why are the senses not the best route to certain knowledge and truth?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Individuals can lie</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Our senses can be deceived; when I dream I think it is real.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> We need more research to determine their validity</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Everyone has different perceptions</li> </ul>
<p>4. How did Descartes try to answer the question about existence?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> He pointed to religious faith</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> He used scientific data</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> He provided an argument based upon tradition</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> He realised that even if every thought he was having was false, he was still thinking. Therefore he existed.</li> </ul>
<p>5. What does the phrase "<i>I think, therefore I am</i>" mean?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> My ability to use rationality to raise questions proves I exist</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I exist because I can use my senses</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have beliefs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I am a thinking thing, therefore I certainly exist. Even if I don't exist as I think I do!</li> </ul>
<p>6. Descartes's argument is that the mind is the primary tool for finding truth. Do you agree?</p>	
<p>7. Descartes's argument is that the mind is the primary tool for finding truth. Do you agree?</p>	
<p>8. Descartes argued that God is a sure and certain idea, and therefore must exist. Research the ontological argument!</p>	

## Taking it further: Additional Resources for you to Explore

René Descartes believed that most of what he acquired and learned came from the senses, but that the mind interprets all these perceptions. It is possible that we interpret things wrongly. Can you give an example of when your senses have deceived you? Is there an experience that has made you doubt what you have seen or heard? Check out this [video](#) for some background on this idea or watch the TED-Ed Lesson [How Optical Illusions Trick Your Brain](#) for one example of how and why your mind can be tricked into seeing something differently than it is. Would René Descartes agree with the statement that “things are not always what they seem?” Do you?

Descartes believed that if you doubt your own existence, you must exist to doubt it! In other words, “I think therefore I am.” Check out this [video](#) to get more insight into this idea! Some people believe that this statement proves that one’s mind exists but not one’s physical body. What do you think?

René Descartes was an extremely talented man. A video link is provided [here](#) that describes his life and philosophy. He was not only a philosopher but a mathematician as well. This link will give you more insight into the life of this man <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes/>

This famous quote from Descartes may give you an idea of how he thought and what he believed: *“If you would be a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you doubt, as far as possible, all things.”*

### Discussion question: your thoughts

**Do you think the mind is the primary tool for finding knowledge and truth?**

Write your thoughts on Descartes’ ideas here: