



Philosophy

Year 11 to Year 12 Bridging

What is Philosophy?

https://youtu.be/1A_CAkYt3GY

What is Philosophy for?

<https://youtu.be/mIYdx6lDDhg>

How can you start?

- The best way to prepare yourself for studying philosophy is to start reading. The first unit that you will be taught is 'Epistemology'. An accessible text recommended by AQA for this part of the A level is: Audi, R (2010) *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge, 3rd edition*, Routledge ISBN-10: 041587923X/ISBN-13: 978-0415879231
- There are some other accessible ways into some of the ideas we will be studying. Take a look at '**Crash Course Philosophy**' on YouTube @:
<https://www.youtube.com/user/crashcourse/search?query=Philosophy>
- Use the AQA Philosophy A Level Specification available below to help you pick out topics to search for:
<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/philosophy/specifications/AQA-7172-SP-2017.PDF>

What is philosophy?

- The nature of this subject is not immediately clear when it is compared to other subjects like maths, business studies, history etc..
- This is because the word ‘philosophy’ is used in many different ways.



- If you go into a library and look in the philosophy section or look in a book shop you will find books near philosophy which cover areas such as UFOs, tarot cards and personal therapy.



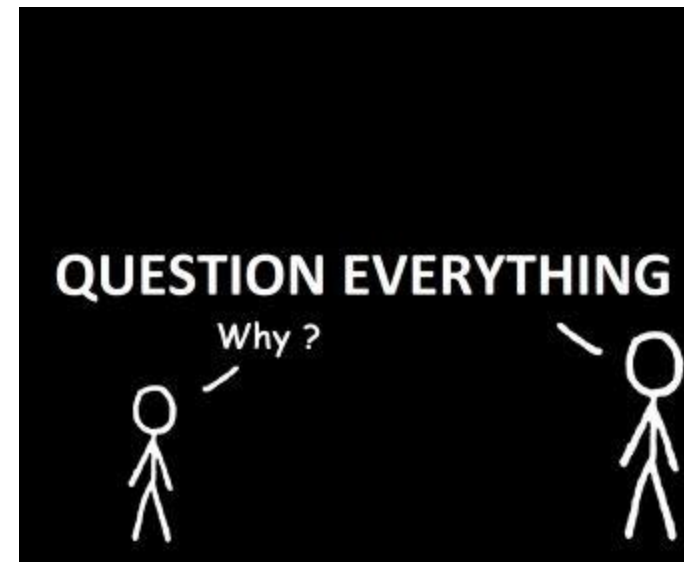
Even philosophers cannot agree.

In John Campbell's book *'Philosophers'*, he asked over 50 philosophers to describe the subject and he got over 50 different answers including,

'Philosophy is thinking in slow motion. It breaks down, describes and assesses moves we make ordinarily at great speed-to do with our natural motivations and beliefs. It then becomes evident that alternatives are possible'.

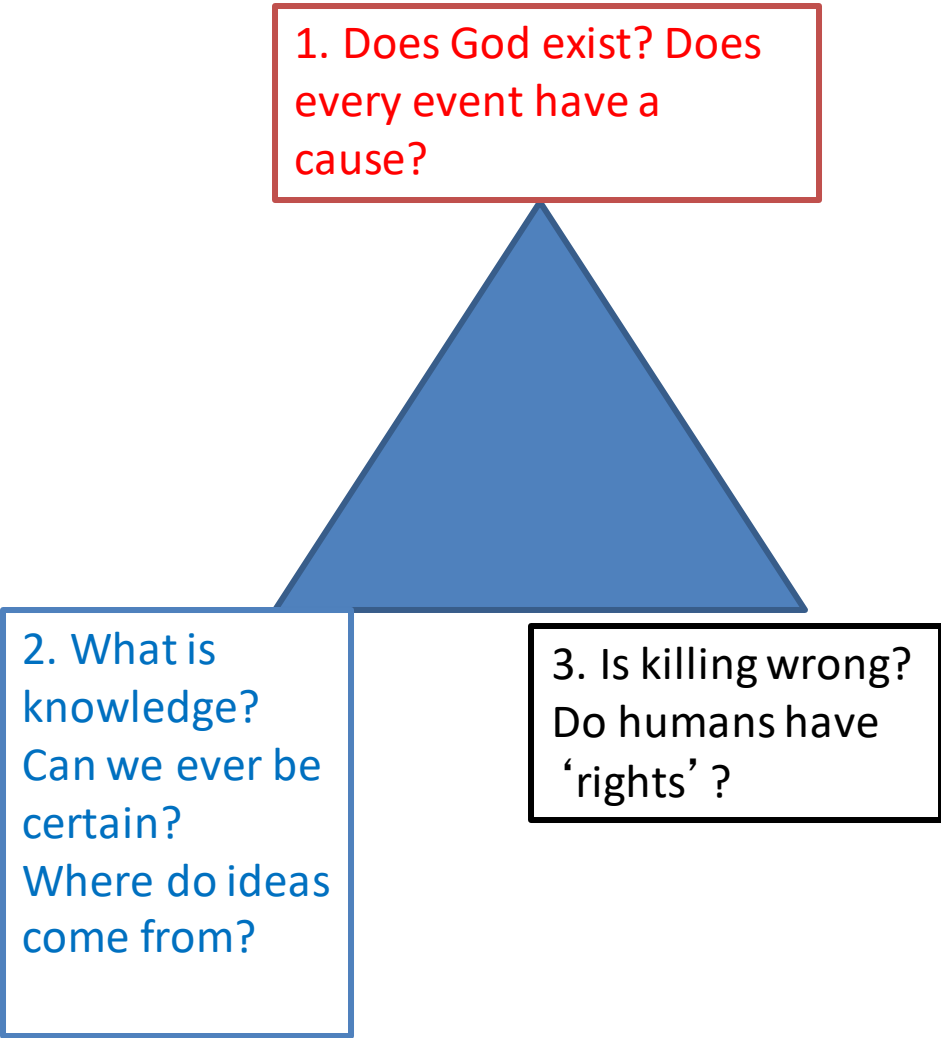


- The noun philosophy means the study of proper behavior, and the search for wisdom.
- The original meaning of the word *philosophy* comes from the Greek roots *philo-* meaning "love" and *-sophos*, or "wisdom." When someone studies *philosophy* they want to understand how and why people do certain things and how to live a good life. In other words, they want to know the meaning of life.



- The subject can be divided into separate sections each with its own methods, interests and even language.

1. **Metaphysics- the study of the ultimate nature of reality.**
2. **Epistemology- the study of what we can know.**
3. **Ethics- the study of how we should live and act.**



1. Does God exist? Does every event have a cause?

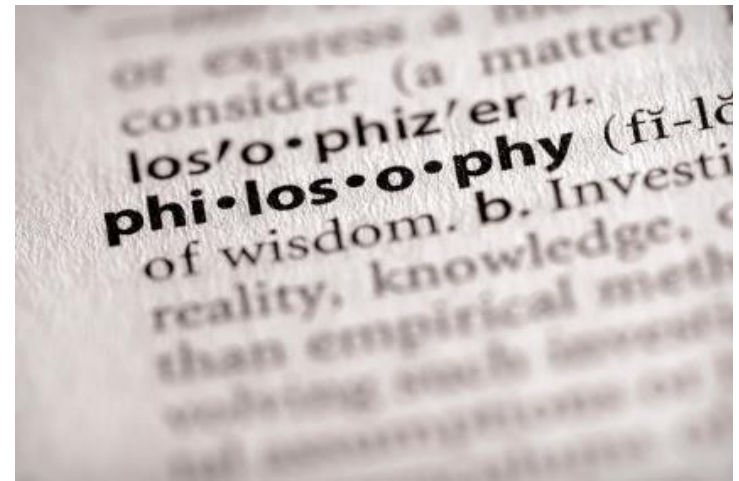
2. What is knowledge?
Can we ever be certain?
Where do ideas come from?

3. Is killing wrong?
Do humans have 'rights' ?

- It is important to realise that philosophy is all around us. We often look at the world around around us and accept or make common sense assumptions about it.
- Accepting that the grass is green in front of me is a philosophical viewpoint, but it is important to realise that philosophy allows us to challenge that view.

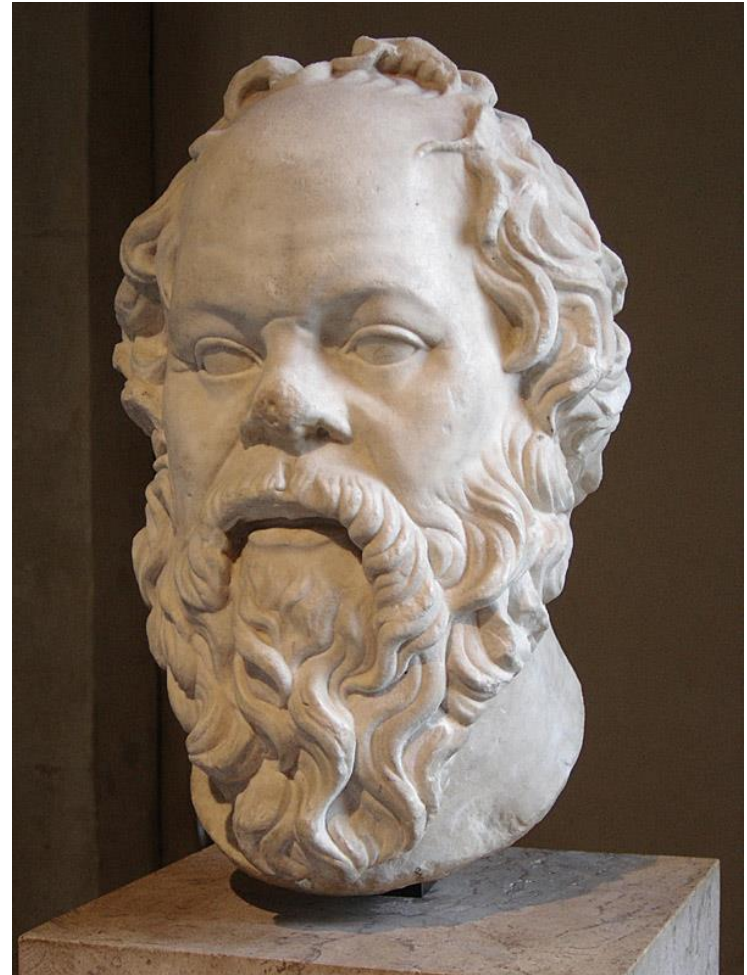


- Many people just live life and want to get on with things. Get a job, house, car and so on. But why do we do this? Is it because we think it will make us happy? Is it a goal worth pursuing? Indeed, is it a GOOD LIFE?



Socrates

- The great philosopher Socrates said no.
- *‘The unexamined life is not worth living’.*





Rene Descartes

An example of a philosopher.

Some background...

Birth

- He was born on March 31 1596 in La Haye En Touraine, France.



- He studied at a Jesuit college, and was allowed the unusual privilege of being able to stay in bed until 11am due to ill health.



- He spent some time in the army but did not fight, but it was during this time he had a series of visions (locked away in a pretty hot room).
- He believed that he had been given a divine mission to seek truth through the use of REASON.



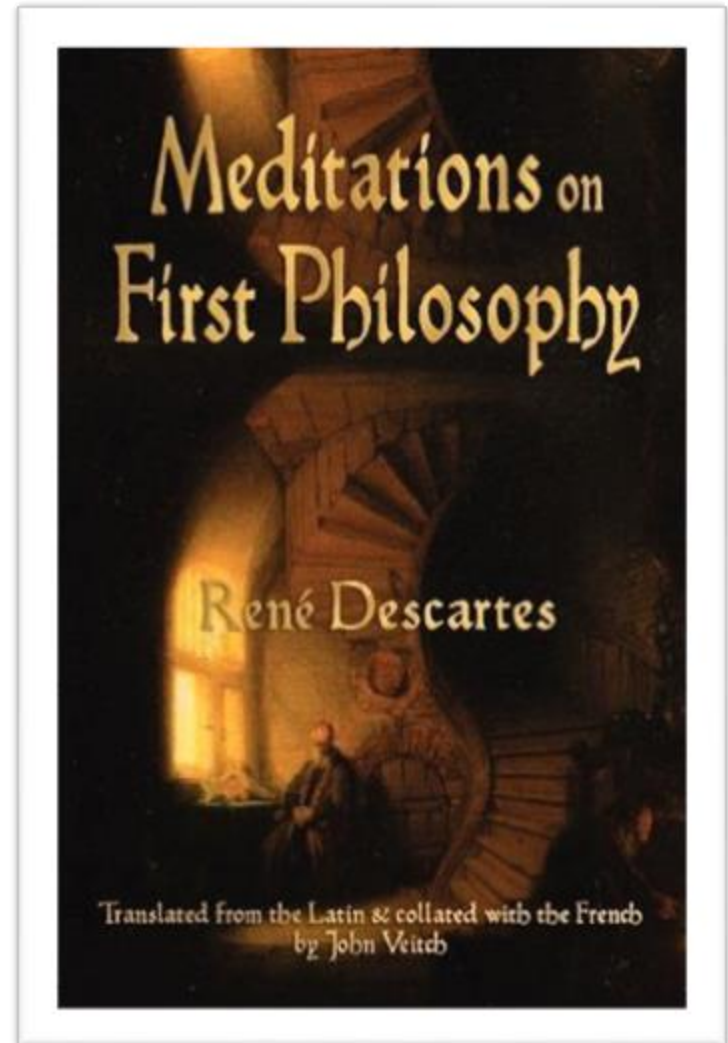
Death

- Descartes died on February 11 1650 age 53 in Stockholm, Sweden while he was invited as a philosophy teacher for the Queen Christina of Sweden (he had to get up at 5am!)



- Descartes set out a new approach for seeking the truth.....
- *1. Accept only beliefs that can be recognised clearly and distinctly as true.*
- *2. Break down every problem into smaller parts.*
- *3. Build up the arguments systematically in the right order.*
- *4. Carefully check through to ensure no steps are left out.*

- This method is used in perhaps his most famous work, '*Meditations*' in that he decides to destroy the building of his former opinions through his scepticism and then rebuild a new knowledge.
- There is only one way to do this- through the foundations up (it is not an easy book to dip in and out of for that reason!).





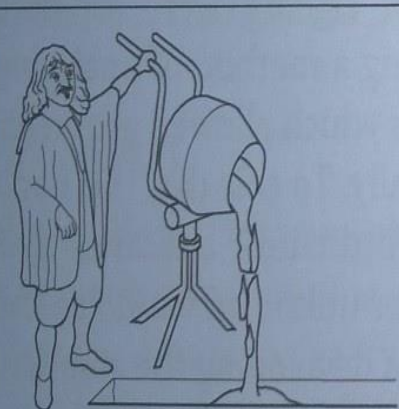
Descartes is dismayed that his belief system is so shaky



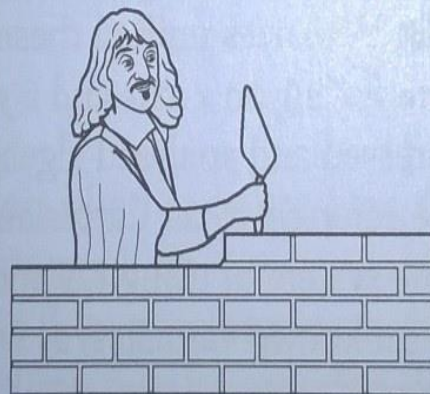
Descartes, using the bulldozer of doubt, demolishes his old house of beliefs



Descartes reduces all his beliefs to rubble



Descartes begins to lay secure foundations



Descartes carefully begins to rebuild a new house of beliefs – one that will last forever

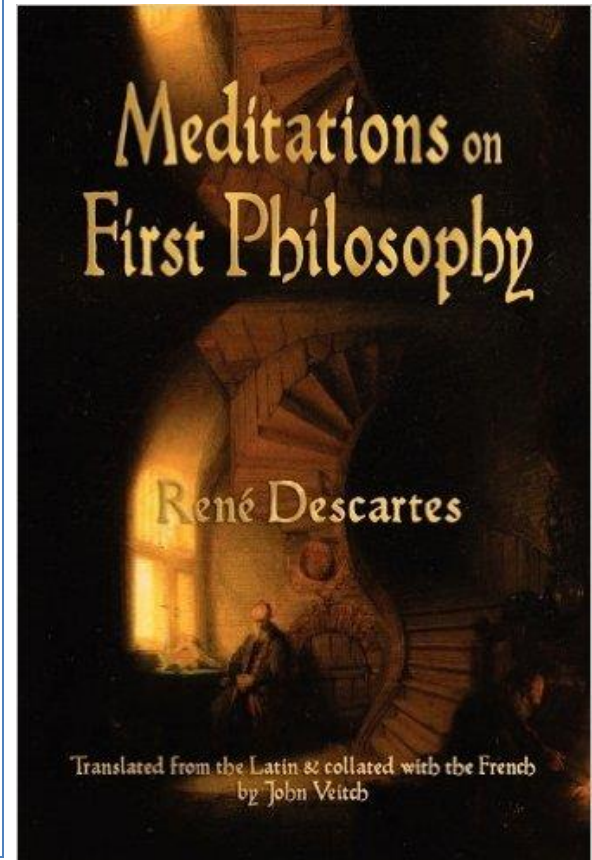
Figure 0.2 Descartes' METHOD OF DOUBT.

Descartes thinks of his present belief system as like a badly constructed building. It has been built haphazardly on shaky foundations and so is full of errors. To remedy the situation he will demolish the building, find secure foundations, and carefully rebuild so that the new building will be free from error.

The Meditations text.

1. *Doubting his senses.*

Descartes starts by noting that his senses have deceived him. He knows that from time to time he has been the victim of illusions. He therefore sets out not to trust his senses anymore.



2. **Dreaming**-Even Descartes recognises that this is an extreme reaction to doubting his senses. Surely only a mad person would not trust their senses? However, Descartes writes that when we dream we are as deluded as the madman and yet we still think dreams can be a reality whilst they are happening.

He even asked whether it was possible for him to be dreaming now, whilst he felt wide awake.

2. Dreaming.



- Descartes then thought that if he **WAS DREAMING**, the things that he must be dreaming must have some basis in reality.
- He considers what parts of his dream could be real and speculates that shapes and colours might be.
- He then introduces the idea that only a sceptic could, and that is the concept of an evil demon, who could make anything seem real.

3. The evil demon.



The cogito.

- Having taken himself to the idea of the deceiving demon, Descartes considers whether we can know anything for sure?
- However, he does not end there...



- He thought that his own existence could not be doubted, because when he attempts to doubt, he realises that there must be someone doing the doubting. **In other words, his own thoughts were proof that he existed.**
- So he cannot be nothing and therefore wrote, ***‘I think, therefore I am’***.



"I THINK,
THEREFORE
I AM"
RENE DESCARTES

- Descartes has reached a point of certainty. His belief is '*clear and distinct*' and so he can accept it as true.
- So just like maths has self-evident truths, once they have been worked out ($2 \times 2 = 4$), so clear and distinct ideas can be established using reason alone.

Clear and
distinct.



"I THINK,
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Recommended
films that deal
with
philosophical
issues.

Epistemology.

The Matrix-This film deals with the nature of reality.

Inception- Raises the question of, '*How do we know we are not dreaming?*'

The Truman show- Is the whole of Truman's life an illusory?

Ethical dilemmas.

Million Dollar Baby-Looks the moral issue of when it is acceptable to help someone to die?

Saving Private Ryan- Would you risk the lives of many men, to save the life of a single man?

Indecent proposal- Asks difficult questions about faithfulness within relationships.

And remember...'*The unexamined life is not worth living*' (Socrates)

Your challenge...

Answer the following questions from this year's A Level paper:

- Define a) acquaintance knowledge b) ability knowledge and c) propositional knowledge
- Briefly explain the difference between 'Direct realism' and 'Indirect Realism'.
- About a paragraph for each answer will stand you in good stead for starting your study of the first unit of the A Level specification. Use the resources you have been given above to help you.