

# Can we be certain of anything?

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# Cartesian Skepticism

# The Argument from Past Error

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- In the past, my senses have deceived me, therefore I should not trust them now.
  - Sticks partly in water have appeared bent
  - Things far away have looked small
  - Things very small have seemed not to exist

# The Dream Argument

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- I might be dreaming.
- Hence, I cannot be certain that I am really perceiving anything in the external world.

# Which beliefs are untouched by the Dream Argument?

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## 1. Mathematical beliefs

- $2 + 2 = 4$

## 2. Conceptual beliefs

- All bachelors are unmarried

## 3. Logical beliefs

- Either I'm dreaming or I'm not

## 4. Appearance/seeming beliefs

- It appears to me that I'm talking

# The Deceptive God Argument

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- God might be implanting false beliefs in my mind.
- Hence, I cannot be certain of anything.

# The Evil Demon Argument

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- ❑ An evil demon might be implanting false beliefs in my mind.
- ❑ Hence, I cannot be certain of anything.

# Are any beliefs untouched by the Evil Demon Argument?

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1. Empirical beliefs?
  - I have two hands
2. Mathematical beliefs?
  - $2 + 2 = 4$
3. Conceptual beliefs?
  - All bachelors are unmarried
4. Logical beliefs?
  - Either I'm dreaming or I'm not
5. Appearance/seeming beliefs?
  - It appears to me that I'm talking