

## **KNTV PHILOSOPHY**

### **RENE DESCARTES**

#### **Programme-related questions (and answers)**

1. Where did René Descartes come from, and when was he alive?  
*(He was French, and lived from 1596 to 1650.)*
2. Where did Descartes have his best ideas?  
*(In bed. He often stayed in bed until midday, a habit he'd had since, as a sickly child, his teacher had told him to take more rest.)*
3. What simple saying sums up Descartes' greatest philosophical theory?  
*('I think, therefore I am.')*
4. What did Descartes do with any so-called truth that he doubted?  
*(He discarded it. Descartes wanted to dig down to a universal truth, and he thought that even one single element of doubt would ruin his theory.)*
5. How could people be certain that they really existed, according to Descartes?  
*(By understanding that the very fact that they were thinking about whether or not they were real, proved that they were. It is the act of thinking that proves a person's existence – hence the saying, 'I think, therefore I am.')*
6. How did Descartes use a piece of wax to demonstrate his theory?  
*(He showed that when heat was applied to wax, everything about it changed. Therefore, it was no good relying on the senses such as sight, smell and touch to understand the true nature of wax. The only way to do that is to use the mind, to think about wax.)*
7. Why was Descartes' concept of analytical geometry so important?  
*(It bridged the gap between algebra and geometry.)*
8. What kind of man was Descartes?  
*(He loved dressing up in fine clothes, was a skilled swordsman, and travelled constantly because he loved seeing new places and people.)*
9. How did Descartes die?  
*(He caught pneumonia at the Swedish court, possibly because he was forced to rise very early and work with the windows open.)*
10. What did people believe about blood circulation in the 17<sup>th</sup> century?  
*(They thought that the stomach pumped the blood, and if a person lay down the blood would gather in their buttocks and form muscle.)*
11. What was life like for poor people in Descartes' time?  
*(They were desperately poor, and seldom had enough to eat. Even bread was too expensive for them to buy. They had to roam the countryside, begging or stealing food.)*
12. Name two modern-day pieces of technology that have been shaped by Descartes' original ideas.  
*(The computer and the MP3 player.)*