

Title	Dark Star
Director	John Carpenter
Date	1974
Area	Epistemology
Theme	Scepticism
Plot Summary	Four astronauts journey through the galaxy, whiling away the time with jokes, sunlamp treatment, personal diaries on videotape, and games with their own pet alien. At the the of the film, the ship's talking bomb receives a command to explode, and after some debate, destroys the ship.
Key Scenes	<p>To stop the talking bomb from setting itself off, one of the astronauts tries to convince it Cartesian-style that there might be nothing existing outside of it, and hence that it might not really have received the command to explode.</p> <p>Doolittle: Hello, Bomb? Are you with me? Bomb #20: Of course. Doolittle: Are you willing to entertain a few concepts? Bomb #20: I am always receptive to suggestions. Doolittle: Fine. Think about this then. How do you know you exist? Bomb #20: Well, of course I exist. Doolittle: But how do you know you exist? Bomb #20: It is intuitively obvious. Doolittle: Intuition is no proof. What concrete evidence do you have that you exist? Bomb #20: Hmmmm.....well.....I think, therefore I am. Doolittle: That's good. That's very good. But how do you know that anything else exists? Bomb #20: My sensory apparatus reveals it to me. This is fun! Doolittle: Now, listen, listen. Here's the big question. How do you know that the evidence your sensory apparatus reveals to you is correct? What I'm getting at is this. The only experience that is directly available to you is your sensory data. This sensory data is merely a stream of electrical impulses that stimulate your computing center. Bomb #20: In other words, all that I really know about the outside world is relayed to me through my electrical connections. Doolittle: Exactly! Bomb #20: Why...that would mean that...I really don't know what the outside universe is really like at all for certain. Doolittle: That's it! That's it! Bomb #20 : Intriguing. I wish I had more time to discuss this matter. Doolittle: Why don't you have more time? Bomb #20: Because I must detonate in 75 seconds. Doolittle: Wait! Wait! Now, bomb, consider this next question very carefully. What is your one purpose in life? Bomb #20: To explode, of course. Doolittle: And you can only do it once, right? Bomb #20: That is correct. Doolittle: And you wouldn't want to explode on the basis of false data, would you? Bomb #20: Of course not. Doolittle: Well then, you've already admitted that you have no real proof of the existence of the outside universe. Bomb #20: Yes...well... Doolittle: You have no absolute proof that Sergeant Pinback ordered you to detonate. Bomb #20: I recall distinctly the detonation order. My memory is good on matters like these. Doolittle: Of course you remember it, but all you remember is merely a series of sensory impulses which you now realize have no real, definite connection with outside reality. Bomb #20: True. But since this is so, I have no real proof that you're telling me all this. Doolittle: That's all beside the point. I mean, the concept is valid no matter where it originates. Bomb #20: Hmmmm.... Doolittle: So, if you detonate... Bomb #20: In nine seconds.... Doolittle: ...you could be doing so on the basis of false data. Bomb #20: I have no proof it was false data. Doolittle: You have no proof it was correct data! Bomb #20: I must think on this further. This exchange takes the form of a Socratic dialogue between teacher (human) and student (machine).</p>
Relevant Text	Descartes, Meditation 1