



Descartes

*Meditations on
First Philosophy*

Methodological Rules

- The first was never to accept anything as true if I did not have evident knowledge of its truth; that is, carefully to avoid precipitate conclusions and preconceptions, and to include nothing more in my judgments than what presented itself to my mind so clearly and distinctly that I had no occasion to doubt it.
- The second, to divide each of the difficulties I examined into as many parts as possible and as may be required in order to resolve them better.
- The third, to direct my thoughts in an orderly manner, by beginning with the simplest and most easily known objects in order to ascend little by little, step by step, to knowledge of the most complex, and by supposing some order even among objects that have no natural order of precedence.
- And the last, throughout to make enumerations so complete, and reviews so comprehensive, that I could be sure of leaving nothing out.

Clear, Certain, & Distinct Knowledge

Clear Knowledge:

the presence of an idea or object for attentive inspection by the mind, so that all its qualities can be observed.

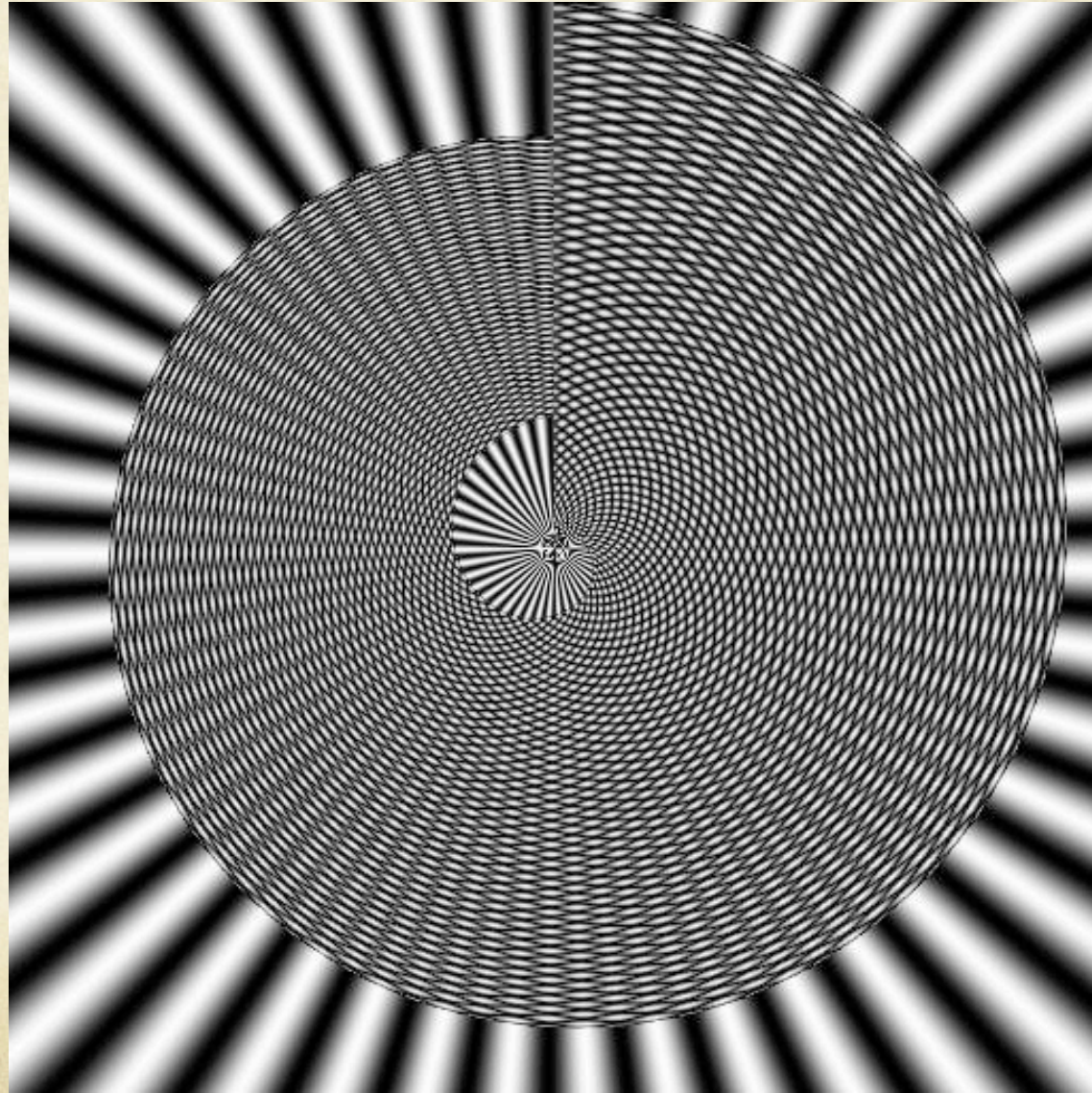
Distinct Knowledge:

the relationships between the idea or object and anything else are themselves clear, such that what truly belongs to the idea or object can be distinguished from its relationships.

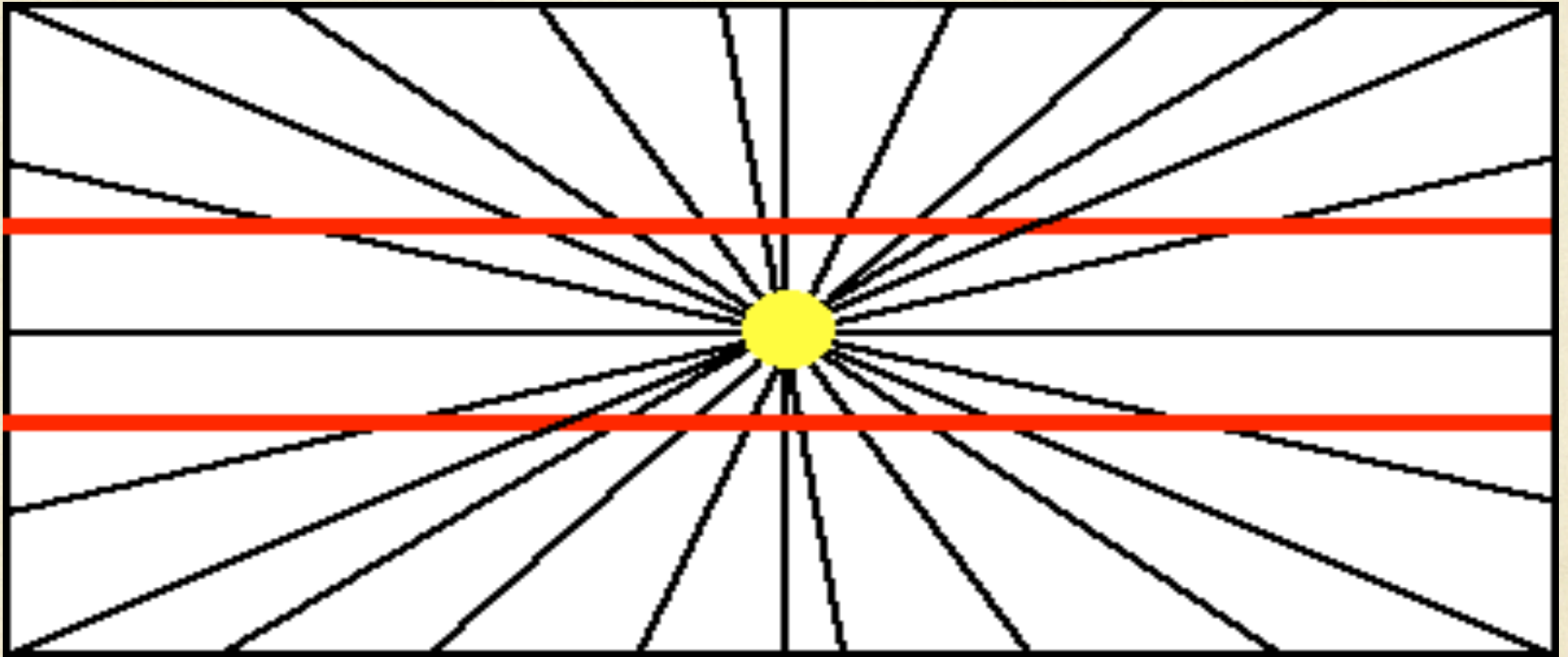
Descartes' criteria for claiming "to know":

- Knowledge is infallible
- Knowledge is immutable

Stage 1: Sensory Experience



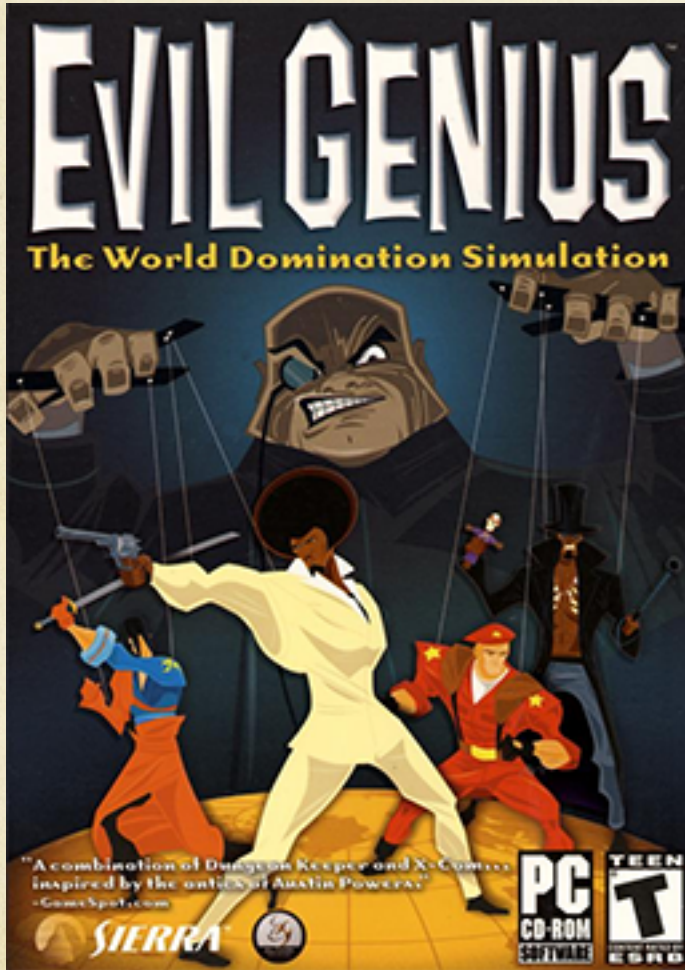
Do the red lines appear parallel?



Stage 2: Lucid Dreaming

- Sometimes dreams seem just as real as our waking states.
(Lucid dreaming, night terrors)
- Sometimes our waking states do not seem real.
- By what criteria can we clearly, distinctly and with certainty differentiate waking states from dreaming states?

Stage 3: *Evil Genius*



“It is possible, unless some contradiction be found, for there to be an evil genius as malign in thought as in power, who has employed his whole energies in deceiving me in all things.”

Cogito Ergo Sum

- Not even the Evil Genius can deceive me about the fact that I exist as a thinking thing whenever I engage in the act of thinking that I exist as a thinking thing.
- A thinking thing, the “I”, is a thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, imagines, and has sensory perceptions.

Of God, that he exists

- The effect of something cannot be greater than its cause.
- I have an idea of deity that is greater than me (all “omni” predicates associated with the Christian god).
- The idea of deity, being greater than me, cannot be caused by me.
- Therefore, the idea if deity is caused by God.

How Mind and Body are Distinct

- All things clearly and distinctly perceived can be created by God as I apprehend them.
- A (the mind) and B (the body) can be conceived as logically distinct unless there persists a contradiction.
- Cannot be deceived by the Evil Genius that I exist when I engage in the act of thinking that I exist.
- Only thinking things that exist can be deceived.
- Deception presupposes thought.
- Therefore, my essence consists solely in the fact that I am a substance whose nature is to think.
- Therefore, while I *may* possess a body I know without a contradiction that I *perceive myself* as a thinking and unextended thing and of “my” body to be that of an extended and unthinking thing.

The Wax

- Does *the same wax* remain after being held over the fire?¹
 - What were its properties prior to be held over the fire?
 - What were its properties after being held over the fire?

1. Descartes says “he judges it to be the same wax” which is very different from claiming it to be the same piece of wax which is the conclusion he draws. This distinction Hume will examine in great detail.

Primary and Secondary Properties

- The mind and the body have unique primary and secondary properties:
 - The Mind:
 - Primary:
 - Willing, doubting, understanding, affirming, having of sensory perceptions
 - Secondary:
 - Particular sensory perceptions, doubting X, willing action A
 - The Body:
 - Primary:
 - Extension, shape, color
 - Secondary:
 - 11 x 3 x 3 inches, rectangular, yellow

Another Argument for How Mind and Body are Distinct

- The body, as an object of pure mathematics, is infinitely divisible.
- Mind, by definition, is indivisible.
- If two things do not share any one property (divisibility and indivisibility), then the two are said to have entirely different properties. (Principle of Mutual Exclusivity)
- Two things with entirely different properties have a mutually exclusive existence (are independent of one another).
- Therefore, mind and body have entirely different properties.
- Therefore, mind and body are mutually exclusive in existence.

How the Body Must Exist

- I have an idea of sensory perception; i.e., I have an idea of the body.
- The body is an object of pure mathematics.
- The idea of the body is not in me because it does not presuppose thought. (The body is not subject to my will and all that is in me must presuppose thought. If in me, then Idealism is true.)
- Therefore, the nature of sensory perception must exist in something other than me.
- This other something is either (A) God or (B) the body or (C) some third thing.
- Not (C).
- Not (A) or God is a deceiver.
- Therefore, the other substance must be corporeal reality.

Problem of Interaction

- If the Mind is independent (mutually exclusive from) the Body, then how can the two interact?
- Descartes' answer:
 - ?
- How the two interact:
 - Parallelism
 - Bi-directional interaction