

Neo-Cartesian Rules for Guiding One's Orientation in Thinking

By Vera Bühlmann and Andrea Collinari, June 2026

A pantomime Text on René Descartes' *Regulae ad directionem ingenii* (Rules for the Direction of the Mind). Written in "translated positioning" in alignment with the *Elements of a Respiratory Geometry* (by Vera Bühlmann and Andrea Collinari, 2026).

Rule I

The end of study should be to direct the mind not toward isolated truths, but toward the relations by which truths, forms, and practices become capable of entering into communication. For the greatest error is to suppose that things are first given separately and only afterward connected.

Rule II

We should attend only to those objects whose transformations can be followed. For what cannot be transformed cannot be compared. And what cannot be compared cannot yet be understood.

Rule III

Concerning objects proposed for investigation, we ought to seek not merely what others have said about them, nor what we ourselves conjecture, but what passages may be established between them. For a bridge often reveals more than either shore.

Rule IV

Method is necessary not because the world is obscure, but because relations are numerous. Without order we become

lost among crossings. With too much order we cease to discover new ones.

Rule V

The whole method consists in arranging things according to the ease with which one may travel between them. Not from simple to complex. But from familiar passages to unfamiliar ones.

Rule VI

To distinguish things rightly, one should seek the invariants that persist through their transformations. For what remains recognizable through change belongs to the form itself.

Rule VII

Enumeration should not merely count things, but trace their circulations. A concept is known only when one has followed its routes.

Rule VIII

Whenever investigation reaches an impasse, one should search for a neighboring domain through which the question may continue its movement. For stagnation often indicates that one remains too long within a single territory.

Rule IX

The mind must exercise itself on crossings. For difficult transitions sharpen understanding more than familiar identities.

Rule X

In order to discover, one should learn to translate. Geometry into architecture. Architecture into cosmology. Cosmology into infrastructure. For translation reveals structures hidden within a single language.

Rule XI

No object should be regarded as self-sufficient. Every object is a crossroads of relations.

Rule XII

The powers of the mind are not exhausted by deduction.
There exists also orientation. That faculty by which one senses
a relation before one can yet demonstrate it.

Rule XIII

If a question appears insoluble, reformulate it in terms of
movement rather than substance. Ask not: "What is it?" but:
"How does it travel?"

Rule XIV

Figures are not merely representations. They are instruments
of passage. A diagram is a bridge upon paper.

Rule XV

The most fruitful investigations occur at boundaries. Where
mathematics touches perception. Where myth touches
architecture. Where language touches matter.

Rule XVI

One should proceed by repeated return. For a thing seen from
many directions gradually reveals its landscape.

Rule XVII

A concept should be treated as a provisional habitation. One
dwells within it for a time. One should not mistake it for the
world.

Rule XVIII

Disciplines are conveniences of navigation, not divisions of
reality. The world is continuous where institutions are
discrete.

Rule XIX

A successful inquiry transforms its own terrain. Every map
alters the field it maps.

Rule XX

Forms are stabilized trajectories. A city is not its stones. A river is not its water. A theorem is not its symbols. A form persists through replacement.

Rule XXI

The highest task of inquiry is neither certainty nor mastery, but the cultivation of passages through which forms may continue their journeys. For understanding is achieved not when movement ceases, but when movement becomes orientable.