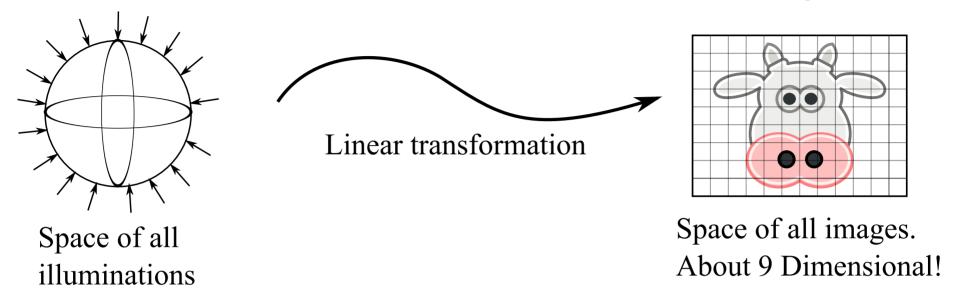
Using spherical harmonic basis functions, Basri and Jacobs* showed that 99.2% of the energy in the lambertian kernel lies in the first nine components.

*Lambertian Reflectance and Linear Subspaces, PAMI 2003



A beautiful result that helps us understand what's going on. Unfortunately...