

Summary

Descartes' work is still the subject of controversial and polemical interpretations. One of them is John Schuster's book *Descartes-Agonistes: Physico-mathematics, Method & Corpuscular-Mechanism 1618-33*. In it, Schuster reconstructs the first fifteen years of Descartes' career as a path leading from the chimeric vision of mathesis universalis, through the development of this chimera into a universal method and the subsequent failure of these youthful dreams, when around 1628 Descartes realized the impossibility to found knowledge on the model of mathematics. From a young mathematician, Descartes gradually changes into a systematic philosopher, as we know him from his works of the mature period. Although something in this spirit has formed the basic consensus of historians of science for the last forty years, Schuster's book is unique in that it clearly and sharply formulates this opinion and substantiates it by several quotations from Descartes' correspondence and early manuscripts. It was the provocative content, the clear style, and the fact that it reflected the majority view of historians as a mirror, which led us to write a response to Schuster's book. We want to show that Descartes' vision of universal mathematics was not a chimera, and that his project of a universal method did not fail, but was successfully completed. This success entitles us to declare Descartes not only as a warrior (*agónistés*), but also as a winner (*nikétés*). In the book we try to present a new interpretation of Descartes' mathesis universalis. In the spirit of the subtitle of Daniel Garber's well-known book *Descartes Embodied*, which reads "*Reading Cartesian Philosophy through Cartesian Science*", our text can be considered another step in the direction set out by Garber, namely "*Reading Cartesian Science through Cartesian Mathematics*". Our book is not just a controversy with Schuster's approach. In our opinion, a misinterpretation of Cartesian physics is an obstacle on the way to a formal-epistemological reconstruction of the origins of modern science. When we place a new interpretation of Descartes' physics alongside similar interpretations of Galileo's and Newton's work, a certain cognitive dynamic arises that can be formally described. The book is thus part of a broader project of *formal epistemology*.