Descartes is known as the inventor of analytic geometry and of a universal method of deductive reasoning based on mathematics. In part because of that method, he is also known as the “father of modern philosophy.” But he is not widely known as a political philosopher. Descartes teaches that the primary goal of society should be the advancement of science—and by implication mathematics—for the benefit of society. He is not completely neutral on the question of what political regime best accomplishes that goal, but the existence of tyrannies that have supported science suggests that a wide range of regimes may serve the purpose. He does insist on the free exchange of doctrines within and among societies, which societies should allow based on a belief in the benevolence of science. In my paper I will claim that the centuries subsequent to Descartes have done much to undermine that belief. I will also note an objection closer to the core of Descartes’s teaching: His method of universal doubt, which would destroy our natural trust in the correspondence between image and thing, also undercuts our receptivity to mathematics and science and prepares the way for postmodern philosophy, in which any claim to supply an explanation of the workings of the universe is dogmatically rejected. (Received February 14, 2015)