

At the end of the extant text of his unfinished *Regulae* Descartes explained how the basic algebraic operations could be applied in geometry. In that connection he referred to a technique he needed for solving a particular geometrical problem. The problem was the “application of areas” and the technique can be identified as the use of the “gnomon figure” as explained and employed in the first two books of Euclid's *Elements*. This makes it possible to reconstruct, tentatively, the argument that should have followed immediately, as well as the kind of reasoning which Descartes explored in this context. The conjectural reconstruction should be of interest in connection with Descartes' early ideas about the certainty of mathematical reasoning and the nature of clear and distinct intuition as a means to attain such certainty.