

1154-01-2333

Abram Kaplan* (adkaplan@fas.harvard.edu), Society of Fellows, 78 Mt. Auburn St.,
Cambridge, MA 02138. *Erudition and Algebraic Practice at the End of the Sixteenth Century.*

The last two decades have seen new research on the role of erudition in early modern European science. In this talk I argue for a central role for erudition in the emergence of symbolic algebra at the end of the sixteenth century. This role is twofold. First, traditions of classical scholarship are shown to play an important role in François Viète's epochal interpretation of Diophantus as an algebraist. I illustrate this role by comparing Viète's interpretation of Diophantus to the pedagogical aims of sixteenth-century French algebra. Second, I show that Viète's interpretation of his own mathematical practices owed much to traditions of erudite empiricism. I evidence this interpretation through examination of a particular theorem in Viète's writings. Time permitting, I will indicate some seventeenth-century instances of mathematical erudition that my reading of Viète can help explain. (Received September 17, 2019)