

Learning from Medieval Mathematics: Nicole Oresme’s approach to series and “qualities.”

JEFF BABB

Department of Mathematics and Statistics, The University of Winnipeg, Canada. email: j.babb@uwinnipeg.ca

ABSTRACT. This talk examines the mathematical work of the French bishop, Nicole Oresme (1323-1382), focusing on his contributions towards the development of the concept of graphing functions and his approaches to studying infinite series and proportions. His studies into “qualities” and the “latitude of forms” will be highlighted via his geometric proof of the Mean Speed Rule. The historical importance and pedagogical value of his work will be discussed in the context of an undergraduate course on the history of calculus.

This presentation has been published as: Babb, J. (2005). Mathematical Concepts and Proofs from Nicholas Oresme: Using the History of Calculus to Teach Mathematics. *Science & Education* 14, 443–456.

