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Autor: Klein Jacob Precio: \$658.22

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Historians of science have usually assumed that the mathematicians of the Renaissance took up where prior mathematicians had left off. This important work argues that during the sixteenth century, a crucial change in the concept of number took place which distinguishes ancient and modern mathematics once and for all. The author regards Francois Vieta as "the true founder of modern mathematics" and demonstrates that to this development of symbolic algebra corresponds a fundamental change in the concept of the number.

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