

Mathematical objects as meaningful expressions

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Abstract

It is common to distinguish the empirical realm from the ideal realm that is the domain of mathematics and logic. How to understand the relation between these realms is one of the basic questions in the philosophy of mathematics. One strategy is to deny the reality of the ideal realm and move mathematics into the empirical realm. The dual strategy is to deny the reality of the empirical realm and hold that all true objects reside in the ideal realm. I shall propose a middle way where both realms are accepted and no abyss exists between them. Both realms are inhabited by meaningful objects. An object of the empirical realm is not just an object of nature, but an object with a certain value or meaning. Mathematical objects are meaningful objects in the more specific sense of being meaningful expressions. Most of my talk will be devoted to developing some of the details of this conception of mathematical objects as meaningful expressions.