

Predicativism about classes

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Philosophy of Mathematics Seminar
23 October 2017

What are classes? More precisely, what are the objects of the second sort of second-order set theory? Classes have sets as their members and behave just like sets. Allegedly, the subject matter of set theory comprises all the collections there are. If classes are collections of any kind, why can't we just count them among the subject matter of set theory? However, a plethora of paradoxes teach us that many classes are 'proper' and cannot be sets. Then, what are classes after all? We need to expose the concept of classes in the way that they are significantly different from sets.

The theme of this talk is predicativism about classes which holds that classes are predicates of sets. I will propose one form of predicativism, and argue for it in comparison with three other prominent views, namely, reductionism about classes, the plural interpretation of classes, and the mereological interpretation of classes.

A number of new developments in the use of classes in set theory, as well as in theories of classes per se, were recently made, and I think that it is a good time to re-evaluate predicativism in light of them. Predicativism has been considered to be too restrictive and not able to accommodate the use of classes in modern set theory. Most of the criticisms against predicativism are based on this diagnosis, but I will argue that it is only true of some specific type of predicativism and does not apply to my predicativism. My conclusion will be that predicativism is still a highly viable option and, in particular, my predicativism provides a sufficiently versatile and workable nominalist understanding of classes for set theory.