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Patricia A Blanchette*, blanchette.1@nd.edu. *Frege and What Philosophy of Mathematics Can(not) Do*. Preliminary report.

Philosophical questions about mathematics range from the subtle (“What do the incompleteness theorems show us about number theory?”) to the simple (“What are numbers?”). With respect to some of these questions, e.g. the second example just given, there can be something faintly embarrassing about both the questions and the answers. For both seem to

involve the philosopher making claims about the objects of mathematics that go well beyond anything that mathematics can ever tell us. And this conflicts with the idea that the science of mathematical objects is just mathematics.

The goal of this lecture is (i) to explain a view held by Frege about the line between the questions about mathematics that philosophy can answer, and those that it can't; and (ii) to defend this answer. The claim about Frege involves the view that he does not think that philosophy can or should answer questions like "What are numbers?" In defense of this view I will argue that this question and many like it are meaningless, despite the fact that there is an important range of significant questions about mathematics that philosophy is and should be in the business of answering. (Scholars of Frege will notice that this understanding of Frege's views is contrary to the usual understanding of his work.) (Received July 09, 2019)