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Hotel Infinity

Lawrence Mark Lesser
Armstrong State University

ematician, to express a feeling of wonder, to signify the estrangement that possesses us at times, the same estrangement that is felt in the contemplation of the starry sky and the moral law, described by Kant at the beginning of his "Critique of practical reason." This feeling of estranged wonder is the opening to philosophical inquiry, as Aristotle was first to note. The question "What is mathematics?" may express the feeling of the wonder at the contemplation of the awesome edifice of mathematics.

The feeling of wonder that is sometimes expressed by the question "What is mathematics?" is not likely to be an "answer" to the question "What is mathemat-ics?" It will be the start of a philosophical journey that will eventually disclose of the "conditions of possibility" of mathematics. The disclosure of such conditions of possibility is the "answer" to the question.

Sadly, philosophers have neglected the task of giving a rigorous formulation of the method of reasoning that leads to the disclosure of conditions of possibility. If the day ever comes when the "logic" of conditions of possibility, i.e., philosophy, is developed with the standards of rigor that have been set by Fregean logic, then an "answer" to the question "What is mathematics?" will be possible in the form "mathematics is ..."

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Lawrence Mark Lesser
Armstrong Atlantic State University
Savannah, GA
lesserla@mail.armstrong.edu

May be sung to the tune of the Eagles' "Hotel California" by Don Felder, Don Henley and Glen Frey.

On a dark desert highway—not much scenery
Except this long hotel stretchin' far as I can see
Neon sign in front read "No Vacancy,"
But it was late and I was tired, So I went inside to plea.

The clerk said, "No problem. Here's what can be done—
We'll move guest in room N to the next higher one.
That will free up the first room and that's where you can stay."
I tried understanding this as I heard him say:

Chorus:
"Welcome to the Hotel In...finity—
where every room is full (every room is full)
Yet there's room for more.
Yeah, plenty of room at the Hotel In...finity—
Move 'em down the floor (move em' down the floor)
To make room for more."

I'd just gotten settled, I'd finally unpacked
When I saw 8 more cars pull into the back.
I had to more to room 9; others moved up 8 rooms as well.
Never more will I confuse a Hilton with a Hilbert Hotel!

My mind got more twisted when I saw a bus without end
With an infinite number of riders coming up to check in.
"Relax," said the nightman. "Here's what we'll do:
Move to the double of your room number:
that frees the odd-numbered rooms."

Repeat Chorus

Last thing I remember at the end of my stay—
It was time to pay the bill but I had no means to pay.
The man in 19 smiled, "Your bill is on me.
20 pays mine, and so on, so you get yours for free!."