



The problem of ethics in mathematics and its teaching

A lecture by Professor Paul Ernest, University of Exeter

Wednesday 27 February 2019, 4.30–6pm | Boulind Room, Mary Allan Building, Homerton College

The problem of ethics in mathematics is the denial of ethical responsibility. Pure mathematics is viewed as neutral and value free, and therefore free of ethical responsibility. Applications of mathematics are seen as employing a neutral set of tools which are of themselves free from social responsibility. University and school mathematics are seen as bodies of objective truth unaffected by social, political and ethical – that is human – issues. So mathematics is relieved of any ethical responsibilities despite its pivotal role across the whole of society and life. It provides the foundations and algorithms underpinning information and communication technologies, finance from markets to everyday life and work, and the grading and distribution of life chances to students via the educational system. The denial of any responsibility by mathematics reduces the ethical agency of all users of mathematics, explicit and tacit, which encompasses most professionals including teachers in schools and universities.



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE
Faculty of Education

**Mathematics
Education**
Research Group

