

Re: Is the empty set a number?

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.math/2008-04/msg01447.html>

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 - *Date:* Tue, 08 Apr 2008 15:10:58 GMT
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On 2008-04-08, in sci.math, Herman Rubin wrote:

We cannot talk about what IS a number, but only what REPRESENTS a number.

Numbers are prior to any representation. In particular, our understanding of the naturals, and other such finitary inductively defined stuff, is more fundamental than any set theoretic representation. That the empty set happens to be the representation of 0 in this or that set theoretic reduction is just a technical artefact, and does not in any way entail that 0 is a set.

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"Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen"
– Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus

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