

int.1 Definitions

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In order to carry out Hilbert's project of formalizing mathematics and showing that such a formalization is consistent and complete, the first order of business would be that of picking a language, logical framework, and a system of axioms. For our purposes, let us suppose that mathematics can be formalized in a first-order language, i.e., that there is some set of **constant symbols**, **function symbols**, and **predicate symbols** which, together with the connectives and quantifiers of first-order logic, allow us to express the claims of mathematics. Most people agree that such a language exists: the language of set theory, in which \in is the only non-logical symbol. That such a simple language is so expressive is of course a very implausible claim at first sight, and it took a lot of work to establish that practically of all mathematics can be expressed in this very austere vocabulary. To keep things simple, for now, let's restrict our discussion to arithmetic, so the part of mathematics that just deals with the natural numbers \mathbb{N} . The natural language in which to express facts of arithmetic is \mathcal{L}_A . \mathcal{L}_A contains a single two-place **predicate symbol** $<$, a single **constant symbol** 0 , one one-place **function symbol** $!$, and two two-place **function symbols** $+$ and \times .

Definition int.1. A set of **sentences** Γ is a *theory* if it is closed under entailment, i.e., if $\Gamma = \{\varphi : \Gamma \models \varphi\}$.

There are two easy ways to specify theories. One is as the set of **sentences** true in some **structure**. For instance, consider the **structure** for \mathcal{L}_A in which the **domain** is \mathbb{N} and all non-logical symbols are interpreted as you would expect.

Definition int.2. The *standard model of arithmetic* is the **structure** \mathfrak{N} defined as follows:

1. $|\mathfrak{N}| = \mathbb{N}$
2. $0^{\mathfrak{N}} = 0$
3. $!^{\mathfrak{N}}(n) = n + 1$ for all $n \in \mathbb{N}$
4. $+^{\mathfrak{N}}(n, m) = n + m$ for all $n, m \in \mathbb{N}$
5. $\times^{\mathfrak{N}}(n, m) = n \cdot m$ for all $n, m \in \mathbb{N}$
6. $<^{\mathfrak{N}} = \{\langle n, m \rangle : n \in \mathbb{N}, m \in \mathbb{N}, n < m\}$

Definition int.3. The theory of *true arithmetic* is the set of **sentences** satisfied in the standard model of arithmetic, i.e.,

$$\mathbf{TA} = \{\varphi : \mathfrak{N} \models \varphi\}.$$

\mathbf{TA} is a theory, for whenever $\mathbf{TA} \models \varphi$, φ is satisfied in every **structure** which satisfies \mathbf{TA} . Since $\mathfrak{M} \models \mathbf{TA}$, $\mathfrak{M} \models \varphi$, and so $\varphi \in \mathbf{TA}$.

The other way to specify a theory Γ is as the set of **sentences** entailed by some set of sentences Γ_0 . In that case, Γ is the “closure” of Γ_0 under entailment. Specifying a theory this way is only interesting if Γ_0 is explicitly specified, e.g., if the **elements** of Γ_0 are listed. At the very least, Γ_0 has to be decidable, i.e., there has to be a computable test for when a **sentence** counts as an element of Γ_0 or not. We call the **sentences** in Γ_0 *axioms* for Γ , and Γ *axiomatized* by Γ_0 .

Definition int.4. A theory Γ is *axiomatized* by Γ_0 iff

$$\Gamma = \{\varphi : \Gamma_0 \models \varphi\}$$

Definition int.5. The theory **Q** axiomatized by the following sentences is known as “Robinson’s **Q**” and is a very simple theory of arithmetic.

$$\forall x \forall y (x' = y' \rightarrow x = y) \quad (Q_1)$$

$$\forall x 0 \neq x' \quad (Q_2)$$

$$\forall x (x \neq 0 \rightarrow \exists y x = y') \quad (Q_3)$$

$$\forall x (x + 0) = x \quad (Q_4)$$

$$\forall x \forall y (x + y') = (x + y)' \quad (Q_5)$$

$$\forall x (x \times 0) = 0 \quad (Q_6)$$

$$\forall x \forall y (x \times y') = ((x \times y) + x) \quad (Q_7)$$

$$\forall x \forall y (x < y \leftrightarrow \exists z (x + z' = y)) \quad (Q_8)$$

The set of **sentences** $\{Q_1, \dots, Q_8\}$ are the axioms of **Q**, so **Q** consists of all **sentences** entailed by them:

$$\mathbf{Q} = \{\varphi : \{Q_1, \dots, Q_8\} \models \varphi\}.$$

Definition int.6. Suppose $\varphi(x)$ is a **formula** in \mathcal{L}_A with free variables x and y_1, \dots, y_n . Then any **sentence** of the form

$$\forall y_1 \dots \forall y_n ((\varphi(0) \wedge \forall x (\varphi(x) \rightarrow \varphi(x'))) \rightarrow \forall x \varphi(x))$$

is an instance of the *induction schema*.

Peano arithmetic **PA** is the theory axiomatized by the axioms of **Q** together with all instances of the induction schema.

explanation

Every instance of the induction schema is true in \mathfrak{N} . This is easiest to see if the **formula** φ only has one free **variable** x . Then $\varphi(x)$ defines a subset X_A of \mathbb{N} in \mathfrak{N} . X_A is the set of all $n \in \mathbb{N}$ such that $\mathfrak{N}, s \models \varphi(x)$ when $s(x) = n$. The corresponding instance of the induction schema is

$$((\varphi(0) \wedge \forall x (\varphi(x) \rightarrow \varphi(x'))) \rightarrow \forall x \varphi(x))$$

If its antecedent is true in \mathfrak{N} , then $0 \in X_A$ and, whenever $n \in X_A$, so is $n + 1$. Since $0 \in X_A$, we get $1 \in X_A$. With $1 \in X_A$ we get $2 \in X_A$. And so on. So for every $n \in \mathbb{N}$, $n \in X_A$. But this means that $\forall x \varphi(x)$ is satisfied in \mathfrak{N} .

Both **Q** and **PA** are axiomatized theories. The big question is, how strong are they? For instance, can **PA** prove all the truths about \mathbb{N} that can be expressed in \mathcal{L}_A ? Specifically, do the axioms of **PA** settle all the questions that can be formulated in \mathcal{L}_A ?

Another way to put this is to ask: Is **PA** = **TA**? For **TA** obviously does prove (i.e., it includes) all the truths about \mathbb{N} , and it settles all the questions that can be formulated in \mathcal{L}_A , since if φ is a **sentence** in \mathcal{L}_A , then either $\mathfrak{N} \models \varphi$ or $\mathfrak{N} \models \neg\varphi$, and so either **TA** $\models \varphi$ or **TA** $\models \neg\varphi$. Call such a theory **complete**.

Definition int.7. A theory Γ is **complete** iff for every **sentence** φ in its language, either $\Gamma \models \varphi$ or $\Gamma \models \neg\varphi$.

By the Completeness Theorem, $\Gamma \models \varphi$ iff $\Gamma \vdash \varphi$, so Γ is complete iff for every **sentence** φ in its language, either $\Gamma \vdash \varphi$ or $\Gamma \vdash \neg\varphi$. explanation

Another question we are led to ask is this: Is there a computational procedure we can use to test if a **sentence** is in **TA**, in **PA**, or even just in **Q**? We can make this more precise by defining when a set (e.g., a set of **sentences**) is **decidable**.

Definition int.8. A set X is **decidable** iff its characteristic function $\chi_X: X \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$, with

$$\chi_X(x) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } x \in X \\ 0 & \text{if } x \notin X \end{cases}$$

is computable.

So our question becomes: Is **TA** (**PA**, **Q**) **decidable**?

The answer to all these questions will be: no. None of these theories is decidable. However, this phenomenon is not specific to these particular theories. In fact, *any* theory that satisfies certain conditions is subject to the same results. One of these conditions, which **Q** and **PA** satisfy, is that they are axiomatized by a **decidable** set of axioms.

Definition int.9. A theory is **axiomatizable** if it is axiomatized by a **decidable** set of axioms.

Example int.10. Any theory axiomatized by a finite set of **sentences** is **axiomatizable**, since any finite set is **decidable**. Thus, **Q**, for instance, is **axiomatizable**.

Schematically axiomatized theories like **PA** are also **axiomatizable**. For to test if ψ is among the axioms of **PA**, i.e., to compute the function χ_X where $\chi_X(\psi) = 1$ if ψ is an axiom of **PA** and $= 0$ otherwise, we can do the following: First, check if ψ is one of the axioms of **Q**. If it is, the answer is “yes” and the value of $\chi_X(\psi) = 1$. If not, test if it is an instance of the induction schema. This can be done systematically; in this case, perhaps it’s easiest to see that it can be done as follows: Any instance of the induction schema begins with a number of universal quantifiers, and then a sub-**formula** that is a conditional. The consequent of that conditional is $\forall x \varphi(x, y_1, \dots, y_n)$ where x and $y_1, \dots,$

y_n are all the free variables of φ and the initial quantifiers of ψ bind the variables y_1, \dots, y_n . Once we have extracted this φ and checked that its free variables match the variables bound by the universal quantifiers at the front and $\forall x$, we go on to check that the antecedent of the conditional matches

$$\varphi(0, y_1, \dots, y_n) \wedge \forall x (\varphi(x, y_1, \dots, y_n) \rightarrow \varphi(x', y_1, \dots, y_n))$$

Again, if it does, ψ is an instance of the induction schema, and if it doesn't, ψ isn't.

In answering this question—and the more general question of which theories are complete or decidable—it will be useful to consider also the following definition. Recall that a set X is **enumerable** iff it is empty or if there is a **surjective** function $f: \mathbb{N} \rightarrow X$. Such a function is called an enumeration of X .

Definition int.11. A set X is called **computably enumerable** (c.e. for short) iff it is empty or it has a computable enumeration.

In addition to **axiomatizability**, another condition on theories to which the incompleteness theorems apply will be that they are strong enough to prove basic facts about computable functions and **decidable** relations. By “basic facts,” we mean **sentences** which express what the values of computable functions are for each of their arguments. And by “strong enough” we mean that the theories in question count these sentences among its theorems. For instance, consider a prototypical computable function: addition. The value of $+$ for arguments 2 and 3 is 5, i.e., $2 + 3 = 5$. A sentence in the language of arithmetic that expresses that the value of $+$ for arguments 2 and 3 is 5 is: $(\bar{2} + \bar{3}) = \bar{5}$. And, e.g., \mathbf{Q} proves this sentence. More generally, we would like there to be, for each computable function $f(x_1, x_2)$ a **formula** $\varphi_f(x_1, x_2, y)$ in \mathcal{L}_A such that $\mathbf{Q} \vdash \varphi_f(\bar{n}_1, \bar{n}_2, \bar{m})$ whenever $f(n_1, n_2) = m$. In this way, \mathbf{Q} proves that the value of f for arguments n_1, n_2 is m . In fact, we require that it proves a bit more, namely that no other number is the value of f for arguments n_1, n_2 . And the same goes for **decidable** relations. This is made precise in the following two definitions.

Definition int.12. A **formula** $\varphi(x_1, \dots, x_k, y)$ **represents** the function $f: \mathbb{N}^k \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ in Γ iff whenever $f(n_1, \dots, n_k) = m$, then

1. $\Gamma \vdash \varphi(\bar{n}_1, \dots, \bar{n}_k, \bar{m})$, and
2. $\Gamma \vdash \forall y (\varphi(\bar{n}_1, \dots, \bar{n}_k, \bar{y}) \rightarrow y = \bar{m})$.

Definition int.13. A **formula** $\varphi(x_1, \dots, x_k)$ **represents** the relation $R \subseteq \mathbb{N}^k$ iff,

1. whenever $R(n_1, \dots, n_k)$, $\Gamma \vdash \varphi(\bar{n}_1, \dots, \bar{n}_k)$, and
2. whenever not $R(n_1, \dots, n_k)$, $\Gamma \vdash \neg \varphi(\bar{n}_1, \dots, \bar{n}_k)$.

A theory is “strong enough” for the incompleteness theorems to apply if it **represents** all computable functions and all **decidable** relations. **Q** and its extensions satisfy this condition, but it will take us a while to establish this—it’s a non-trivial fact about the kinds of things **Q** can prove, and it’s hard to show because **Q** has only a few axioms from which we’ll have to prove all these facts. However, **Q** is a very weak theory. So although it’s hard to prove that **Q** represents all computable functions, most interesting theories are stronger than **Q**, i.e., prove more than **Q** does. And if **Q** proves something, any stronger theory does; since **Q** represents all computable functions, every stronger theory does. This means that many interesting theories meet this condition of the incompleteness theorems. So our hard work will pay off, since it shows that the incompleteness theorems apply to a wide range of theories. Certainly, any theory aiming to formalize “all of mathematics” must prove everything that **Q** proves, since it should at the very least be able to capture the results of elementary computations. So any theory that is a candidate for a theory of “all of mathematics” will be one to which the incompleteness theorems apply.

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Bibliography