Forcing and the independence of the continuum hypothesis

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Abstract

In these notes, intended as the plaintext part of the Flypitch project, we give a complete account of the independence of the continuum hypothesis from ZFC, with special attention paid to comparing the different approaches: generic sets, Boolean-valued models, and double-negation sheaves.

1 Preliminaries

1.1 First-order logic

1.1.1 General logical symbols

Definition 1.1. We reserve the following general logical symbols:

$\neg$	not
$\vee$	or
$\wedge$	and
$\forall$	for all
$\exists$	exists
$=$	equals
$(,)$	parentheses
$(x_i)_{i\in\mathbb{N}}, (y_i)_{i\in\mathbb{N}}, (z_i)_{i\in\mathbb{N}}$	variables

1.1.2 First-order languages

Definition 1.2. A (first-order, one-sorted) **language** $\mathcal{L}$ comprises the following data:

(i) A collection of **constant symbols** $\mathsf{Const}(\mathcal{L})$,

(ii) a collection of **relation symbols** $\mathsf{Rel}(\mathcal{L})$,

(iii) a collection of **function symbols** $\mathsf{Funct}(\mathcal{L})$, and

(iv) an assignment of each symbol $S \in \mathsf{Const}(\mathcal{L}) \cup \mathsf{Rel}(\mathcal{L}) \cup \mathsf{Funct}(\mathcal{L})$ to a natural number $\mathrm{arity}(S) \in \mathbb{N}$.

Whenever we interpret a language on some carrier set A, we mean for constants c to be interpreted as elements of $A^{\mathrm{arity}(c)}$, relations R to be interpreted as subsets of $A^{\mathrm{arity}(R)}$, and for function symbols to always be interpreted as functions $A^{\mathrm{arity}(f)} \to A$.

Example 1.3.

- The language of groups comprises a 1-ary constant symbol for the identity and a 2-ary function for group multiplication.
- The language of rings comprises constant symbols 0 and 1 and 2-ary functions for addition and multiplication.
- The language of set theory comprises just one 2-ary relation $\in$.

1.1.3 Terms, formulas, and sentences

Definition 1.4. A **term** is a string of symbols defined by structural induction as follows:

1. Any variable v is a term.
2. Any constant c is a term.
3. If $t_1, \ldots, t_n$ are terms of arities $a_1, \ldots, a_n$, then $(t_1, \ldots, t_n)$ is a term of arity $a_1 + \cdots + a_n$.
4. If t is a term and f is a function symbol with matching arities, then ft is a term.

Whenever we interpret our language on a carrier A, we mean for terms to be interpreted as functions into A which we can construct by composing existing constants (constant functions), basic functions (i.e. the interpretations of the function symbols), and variables (identity).

Definition 1.5. A **formula** is defined by structural induction as follows:

1. If t_1 and t_2 are terms of the same arity, $t_1 = t_2$ is a formula.
2. If t is a term and R is a relation symbol, and t and R have the same arity, then Rt is a formula.
3. If φ is a formula, $\neg\varphi$ is a formula.
4. If φ and ψ are formulas, then $\varphi \vee \psi$ is a formula.
5. If φ and ψ are formulas, then $\varphi \wedge \psi$ is a formula.
6. If φ is a formula containing a variable v, then $\exists v\varphi$ is a formula.
7. If φ is a formula containing a variable v, then $\forall v\varphi v$ is a formula.

Definition 1.6. Let φ be a formula containing the variables $x_1, \ldots, x_n$. We say that the variable x_k is **free** if x_k is not contained in a subformula of the form $\exists x_k\psi$ or $\forall x_k\psi$.

x_k is **bound** if it is not free.

Definition 1.7. A formula is a **sentence** (or **statement**) if it contains no free variables.

We write $\mathsf{Formulas}(\mathcal{L})$ for all the first-order formulas of $\mathcal{L}$, and we write $\mathsf{Sentences}(\mathcal{L})$ for all the first-order sentences of $\mathcal{L}$.

By convention, we always include sentences called "true" and "false".

1.1.4 Predicate calculus and rules of deduction

Definition 1.8. A **propositional function** is a constructive $f : \mathsf{Prop}^k \to \mathsf{Prop}$, for some $1 < k \in \mathbb{N}$, which does not mention quantifiers. f is a **tautology** if $\vdash \forall \vec{p} : \mathsf{Prop}^k, f\vec{p} \leftrightarrow \text{true}$.

Every propositional function can be reified as a function $\mathsf{Sentences}(\mathcal{L}) \to \mathsf{Sentences}(\mathcal{L})$.

Definition 1.9. The **predicate calculus** comprises the following rules for deducing sentences from other sentences. We call deducible sentences **valid**.

(a) (Rule of the propositional calculus) if $\overline{f}$ is a reified tautology which takes k arguments, then for any k sentences $A_1, \ldots, A_k$, the propositional combination $\overline{f}(\varphi_1, \ldots, \varphi_k)$ is a valid sentence.

(b) (Rule of modus ponens) If A and $A \to B$ are valid, then B is valid.

(c) (Rules of equality)

  (i) $\forall x, x = x$, $\forall x \forall y, x = y \wedge y = x$, and $\forall x \forall y \forall z, x = y \wedge y = z \to x = z$ are all valid.

  (ii) Let $\varphi(x)$ be a formula whose only free variable is x. Then

$$\forall x \forall y, (x = y) \to (\varphi(x) \to \varphi(y))$$

  is valid.

(d) (Change of variable) If A is a sentence and A' represents A with all instances of a variable x switched to y, then $A \leftrightarrow A'$ is valid.

(e) (Rule of specialization "$\forall$-elimination") Let c be any constant symbol, and let $\varphi(x)$ be a formula whose only free variable is x. Then $(\forall x \varphi(x)) \to \varphi(c)$ is valid.

(f) ("$\neg$-introduction") If $\neg A \leftrightarrow (A \to \text{false})$ is valid.

(g) (Generalization of constants "$\forall$-introduction") Let B be a sentence which does not contain the constant c or the variable x. Let $\varphi(x)$ be some formula such that $\varphi(x) \to B$ is valid. Then $\exists x \varphi(x) \to B$ is also valid.[1]

(h) (de Morgan laws) Let $\varphi(x)$ have x as its only free variable. Let B be a sentence which does not contain x. Then the following are valid statements:

$$(\neg(\forall x \varphi(x))) \leftrightarrow (\exists x \neg \varphi(x))$$

$$((\forall x \varphi(x)) \wedge B) \leftrightarrow ((\forall x (\varphi(x) \wedge B)$$

$$((\exists x \varphi(x)) \wedge B) \leftrightarrow ((\exists x (\varphi(x) \wedge B)$$

Definition 1.10. Let S be a collection of sentences. We say that A is provable from S if there exist finitely many $B_1, \ldots, B_n \in S$ such that $(B_1 \wedge \cdots \wedge B_n) \to A$ is valid.

1.2 The completeness theorem

TODO(jesse)

[1] In particular, using the next rule, if $\neg\varphi(c) \to \text{false}$ is valid, so is $\exists x \neg \varphi(x) \to \text{false}$, so is $\neg \exists x \neg \varphi(x)$, and therefore so is $\forall x \varphi(x)$.

2 Generic sets: Cohen's original proof

3 Boolean-valued models

4 Sheaves and filterquotients