

Foundations of mathematics

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1 Foundations of mathematics

Study of the basic mathematical concepts For the book by Hilbert and Bernays, see *Grundlagen der Mathematik*¹. **Foundations of mathematics** is the study of the philosophical² and logical^{1]} and/or algorithmic³ basis of mathematics⁴, or, in a broader sense, the mathematical investigation of what underlies the philosophical theories concerning the nature of mathematics.^[2] In this latter sense, the distinction between foundations of mathematics and philosophy of mathematics⁵ turns out to be quite vague. Foundations of mathematics can be conceived as the study of the basic mathematical concepts (set, function, geometrical figure, number, etc.) and how they form hierarchies of more complex structures and concepts, especially the fundamentally important structures that form the language of mathematics⁶ (formulas, theories and their models⁷ giving a meaning to formulas, definitions, proofs, algorithms, etc.) also called metamathematical concepts⁸, with an eye to the philosophical aspects and the unity of mathematics. The search for foundations of mathematics is a central question of the philosophy of mathematics; the abstract nature of mathematical objects presents special philosophical challenges.

The foundations of mathematics as a whole does not aim to contain the foundations of every mathematical topic. Generally, the *foundations* of a field of study refers to a more-or-less systematic analysis of its most basic or fundamental concepts, its conceptual unity and its natural ordering or hierarchy of concepts, which may help to connect it with the rest of human knowledge. The development, emergence⁹, and clarification of the foundations can come late in the history of a field, and might not be viewed by everyone as its most interesting part.

Mathematics always played a special role in scientific thought, serving since ancient times as a model of truth and rigor for rational inquiry, and giving tools or even a foundation for other sciences (especially physics). Mathematics' many developments towards higher abstractions in the 19th century brought new challenges and paradoxes, urging for a deeper and more systematic examination of the nature and criteria of mathematical truth¹⁰, as well as a unification of the diverse branches of mathematics into a coherent whole.

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- 1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grundlagen_der_Mathematik
 - 2 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy>
 - 3 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algorithm>
 - 4 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathematics>
 - 5 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mathematics
 - 6 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_of_mathematics
 - 7 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Model_theory
 - 8 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metamathematics>
 - 9 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emergence>
 - 10 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathematical_truth

The systematic search for the foundations of mathematics started at the end of the 19th century and formed a new mathematical discipline called mathematical logic¹¹, which later had strong links to theoretical computer science¹². It went through a series of crises with paradoxical results, until the discoveries stabilized during the 20th century as a large and coherent body of mathematical knowledge with several aspects or components (set theory¹³, model theory¹⁴, proof theory¹⁵, etc.), whose detailed properties and possible variants are still an active research field. Its high level of technical sophistication inspired many philosophers to conjecture that it can serve as a model or pattern for the foundations of other sciences.

1.1 Historical context

See also: History of logic¹⁶ and History of mathematics¹⁷

1.1.1 Ancient Greek mathematics

Further information: Ancient Greek mathematics¹⁸ While the practice of mathematics had previously developed in other civilizations, special interest in its theoretical and foundational aspects was clearly evident in the work of the Ancient Greeks.

Early Greek philosophers disputed as to which is more basic, arithmetic or geometry. Zeno of Elea¹⁹ (490 – c. 430 BC) produced four paradoxes that seem to show the impossibility of change. The Pythagorean school of mathematics²⁰ originally insisted that only natural and rational numbers exist. The discovery of the irrationality²¹ of $\sqrt{2}$, the ratio of the diagonal of a square to its side (around 5th century BC), was a shock to them which they only reluctantly accepted. The discrepancy between rationals and reals was finally resolved by Eudoxus of Cnidus²² (408–355 BC), a student of Plato²³, who reduced the comparison of two irrational ratios to comparisons of multiples of the magnitudes involved. His method anticipated that of the Dedekind cut²⁴ in the modern definition of real numbers by Richard Dedekind²⁵ (1831–1916).^[3]

In the *Posterior Analytics*²⁶, Aristotle²⁷ (384–322 BC) laid down the axiomatic method²⁸ for organizing a field of knowledge logically by means of primitive concepts, axioms, postulates,

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- 11 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathematical_logic
 - 12 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theoretical_computer_science
 - 13 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Set_theory
 - 14 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Model_theory
 - 15 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proof_theory
 - 16 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_logic
 - 17 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_mathematics
 - 18 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_mathematics
 - 19 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeno_of_Elea
 - 20 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pythagoreanism>
 - 21 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irrational_number
 - 22 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eudoxus_of_Cnidus
 - 23 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato>
 - 24 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dedekind_cut
 - 25 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Dedekind
 - 26 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Posterior_Analytics
 - 27 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle>
 - 28 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axiomatic_method

definitions, and theorems. Aristotle took a majority of his examples for this from arithmetic and from geometry. This method reached its high point with Euclid²⁹'s *Elements*³⁰ (300 BC), a treatise on mathematics structured with very high standards of rigor: Euclid justifies each proposition by a demonstration in the form of chains of syllogisms³¹ (though they do not always conform strictly to Aristotelian templates). Aristotle's syllogistic logic, together with the axiomatic method exemplified by Euclid's *Elements*, are recognized as scientific achievements of ancient Greece.

1.1.2 Platonism as a traditional philosophy of mathematics



This section **needs additional citations for verification**³². Please help improve this article³³ by adding citations to reliable sources³⁴. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. (*October 2014*)(*Learn how and when to remove this template message*³⁵)

Further information: Platonism (mathematics)³⁶ Starting from the end of the 19th century, a Platonist view of mathematics became common among practicing mathematicians.

The *concepts* or, as Platonists would have it, the *objects* of mathematics are abstract and remote from everyday perceptual experience: geometrical figures are conceived as idealities to be distinguished from effective drawings and shapes of objects, and numbers are not confused with the counting of concrete objects. Their existence and nature present special philosophical challenges: How do mathematical objects differ from their concrete representation? Are they located in their representation, or in our minds, or somewhere else? How can we know them?

The ancient Greek philosophers took such questions very seriously. Indeed, many of their general philosophical discussions were carried on with extensive reference to geometry and arithmetic. Plato³⁷ (424/423 BC – 348/347 BC) insisted that mathematical objects, like other platonic *Ideas* (forms or essences), must be perfectly abstract and have a separate, non-material kind of existence, in a world of mathematical objects independent of humans. He believed that the truths about these objects also exist independently of the human mind, but is *discovered* by humans. In the *Meno*³⁸ Plato's teacher Socrates asserts that it is possible to come to know this truth by a process akin to memory retrieval.

Above the gateway to Plato's academy appeared a famous inscription: "Let no one who is ignorant of geometry enter here". In this way Plato indicated his high opinion of geometry.

²⁹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euclid>

³⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euclid%27s_Elements

³¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syllogisms>

³² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability>

³³ https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Foundations_of_mathematics&action=edit

³⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Referencing_for_beginners

³⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Maintenance_template_removal

³⁶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platonism_\(mathematics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platonism_(mathematics))

³⁷ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato>

³⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meno>

He regarded geometry as "the first essential in the training of philosophers", because of its abstract character.

This philosophy of *Platonist mathematical realism*³⁹ is shared by many mathematicians. It can be argued that Platonism somehow comes as a necessary assumption underlying any mathematical work.^[4]

In this view, the laws of nature and the laws of mathematics have a similar status, and the effectiveness⁴⁰ ceases to be unreasonable. Not our axioms, but the very real world of mathematical objects forms the foundation.

Aristotle dissected and rejected this view in his *Metaphysics*⁴¹. These questions provide much fuel for philosophical analysis and debate.

1.1.3 Middle Ages and Renaissance

For over 2,000 years, Euclid's *Elements* stood as a perfectly solid foundation for mathematics, as its methodology of rational exploration guided mathematicians, philosophers, and scientists well into the 19th century.

The Middle Ages saw a dispute over the ontological status of the universals (platonic Ideas): Realism⁴² asserted their existence independently of perception; conceptualism⁴³ asserted their existence within the mind only; nominalism⁴⁴ denied either, only seeing universals as names of collections of individual objects (following older speculations that they are words, "*logoi*").

René Descartes⁴⁵ published *La Géométrie*⁴⁶ (1637), aimed at reducing geometry to algebra by means of coordinate systems, giving algebra a more foundational role (while the Greeks embedded arithmetic into geometry by identifying whole numbers with evenly spaced points on a line). Descartes' book became famous after 1649 and paved the way to infinitesimal calculus.

Isaac Newton⁴⁷ (1642–1727) in England and Leibniz⁴⁸ (1646–1716) in Germany independently developed the infinitesimal calculus⁴⁹ based on heuristic methods greatly efficient, but direly lacking rigorous justifications. Leibniz even went on to explicitly describe infinitesimals as actual infinitely small numbers (close to zero). Leibniz also worked on formal logic but most of his writings on it remained unpublished until 1903.

39 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platonism_\(mathematics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platonism_(mathematics))

40 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Unreasonable_Effectiveness_of_Mathematics_in_the_Natural_Sciences

41 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics_\(Aristotle\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics_(Aristotle))

42 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophical_realism

43 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conceptualism>

44 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nominalism>

45 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ren%C3%A9_Descartes

46 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_G%C3%A9om%C3%A9trie

47 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Newton

48 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gottfried_Wilhelm_Leibniz

49 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infinitesimal_calculus

The Protestant philosopher George Berkeley⁵⁰ (1685–1753), in his campaign against the religious implications of Newtonian mechanics, wrote a pamphlet on the lack of rational justifications of infinitesimal calculus:^[5] "They are neither finite quantities, nor quantities infinitely small, nor yet nothing. May we not call them the ghosts of departed quantities?"

Then mathematics developed very rapidly and successfully in physical applications, but with little attention to logical foundations.

1.1.4 19th century

In the 19th century⁵¹, mathematics became increasingly abstract. Concerns about logical gaps and inconsistencies in different fields led to the development of axiomatic systems.

Real analysis

See also: Mathematical analysis § History⁵² Cauchy⁵³ (1789–1857) started the project of formulating and proving the theorems of infinitesimal calculus⁵⁴ in a rigorous manner, rejecting the heuristic principle of the generality of algebra⁵⁵ exploited by earlier authors. In his 1821 work *Cours d'Analyse*⁵⁶ he defines infinitely small quantities⁵⁷ in terms of decreasing sequences that converge to 0, which he then used to define continuity. But he did not formalize his notion of convergence.

The modern (ϵ, δ) -definition of limit⁵⁸ and continuous functions⁵⁹ was first developed by Bolzano⁶⁰ in 1817, but remained relatively unknown. It gives a rigorous foundation of infinitesimal calculus based on the set of real numbers, arguably resolving the Zeno paradoxes and Berkeley's arguments.

Mathematicians such as Karl Weierstrass⁶¹ (1815–1897) discovered pathological functions such as continuous, nowhere-differentiable functions⁶². Previous conceptions of a function as a rule for computation, or a smooth graph, were no longer adequate. Weierstrass began to advocate the arithmetization of analysis⁶³, to axiomatize analysis using properties of the natural numbers.

In 1858, Dedekind⁶⁴ proposed a definition of the real numbers as cuts⁶⁵ of rational numbers. This reduction of real numbers and continuous functions in terms of rational numbers, and

⁵⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Berkeley

⁵¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_mathematics#19th_century

⁵² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathematical_analysis#History

⁵³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cauchy>

⁵⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infinitesimal_calculus

⁵⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generality_of_algebra

⁵⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cours_d%27Analyse

⁵⁷ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infinitesimal>

⁵⁸ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/\(\(%CE%B5,%CE%B4\)-definition_of_limit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/((%CE%B5,%CE%B4)-definition_of_limit)

⁵⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continuous_functions

⁶⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_Bolzano

⁶¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Weierstrass

⁶² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weierstrass_function

⁶³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arithmetization_of_analysis

⁶⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Dedekind

⁶⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dedekind_cuts

thus of natural numbers, was later integrated by Cantor⁶⁶ in his set theory, and axiomatized in terms of second order arithmetic⁶⁷ by Hilbert and Bernays.

Group theory

See also: History of group theory⁶⁸ For the first time, the limits of mathematics were explored. Niels Henrik Abel⁶⁹ (1802–1829), a Norwegian, and Évariste Galois⁷⁰, (1811–1832) a Frenchman, investigated the solutions of various polynomial equations, and proved that there is no general algebraic solution to equations of degree greater than four (Abel–Ruffini theorem⁷¹). With these concepts, Pierre Wantzel⁷² (1837) proved that straightedge and compass alone cannot trisect an arbitrary angle⁷³ nor double a cube⁷⁴. In 1882, Lindemann⁷⁵ building on the work of Hermite⁷⁶ showed that a straightedge and compass quadrature of the circle⁷⁷ (construction of a square equal in area to a given circle) was also impossible by proving that π ⁷⁸ is a transcendental number⁷⁹. Mathematicians had attempted to solve all of these problems in vain since the time of the ancient Greeks.

Abel and Galois's works opened the way for the developments of group theory⁸⁰ (which would later be used to study symmetry⁸¹ in physics and other fields), and abstract algebra⁸². Concepts of vector spaces⁸³ emerged from the conception of barycentric coordinates⁸⁴ by Möbius⁸⁵ in 1827, to the modern definition of vector spaces and linear maps by Peano in 1888. Geometry was no more limited to three dimensions. These concepts did not generalize numbers but combined notions of functions and sets which were not yet formalized, breaking away from familiar mathematical objects.

Non-Euclidean geometries

See also: Non-Euclidean geometry § History⁸⁶ After many failed attempts to derive the parallel postulate⁸⁷ from other axioms, the study of the still hypothetical hyperbolic geometry⁸⁸

66 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg_Cantor

67 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_order_arithmetic

68 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_group_theory

69 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niels_Henrik_Abel

70 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89variste_Galois

71 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abel%E2%80%93Ruffini_theorem

72 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Wantzel

73 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trisect_an_arbitrary_angle

74 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doubling_the_cube

75 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferdinand_von_Lindemann

76 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Hermite

77 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quadrature_of_the_circle

78 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pi>

79 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcendental_number

80 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group_theory

81 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symmetry>

82 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstract_algebra

83 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vector_spaces

84 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barycentric_coordinates_\(mathematics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barycentric_coordinates_(mathematics))

85 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Ferdinand_M%C3%B6bius

86 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-Euclidean_geometry#History

87 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parallel_postulate

88 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperbolic_geometry

by Johann Heinrich Lambert⁸⁹ (1728–1777) led him to introduce the hyperbolic functions⁹⁰ and compute the area of a hyperbolic triangle⁹¹ (where the sum of angles is less than 180°). Then the Russian mathematician Nikolai Lobachevsky⁹² (1792–1856) established in 1826 (and published in 1829) the coherence of this geometry (thus the independence of the parallel postulate⁹³), in parallel with the Hungarian mathematician János Bolyai⁹⁴ (1802–1860) in 1832, and with Gauss⁹⁵. Later in the 19th century, the German mathematician Bernhard Riemann⁹⁶ developed Elliptic geometry⁹⁷, another non-Euclidean geometry⁹⁸ where no parallel can be found and the sum of angles in a triangle is more than 180° . It was proved consistent by defining point to mean a pair of antipodal points on a fixed sphere and line to mean a great circle⁹⁹ on the sphere. At that time, the main method for proving the consistency of a set of axioms was to provide a model¹⁰⁰ for it.

Projective geometry

One of the traps in a deductive system¹⁰¹ is circular reasoning¹⁰², a problem that seemed to befall projective geometry¹⁰³ until it was resolved by Karl von Staudt¹⁰⁴. As explained by Russian historians:^[6]

In the mid-nineteenth century there was an acrimonious controversy between the proponents of synthetic and analytic methods in projective geometry, the two sides accusing each other of mixing projective and metric concepts. Indeed the basic concept that is applied in the synthetic presentation of projective geometry, the cross-ratio¹⁰⁵ of four points of a line, was introduced through consideration of the lengths of intervals.

The purely geometric approach of von Staudt was based on the complete quadrilateral¹⁰⁶ to express the relation of projective harmonic conjugates¹⁰⁷. Then he created a means of expressing the familiar numeric properties with his Algebra of Throws¹⁰⁸. English language versions of this process of deducing the properties of a field¹⁰⁹ can be found in either the

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- 89 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Heinrich_Lambert
 - 90 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperbolic_functions
 - 91 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperbolic_triangle
 - 92 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolai_Lobachevsky
 - 93 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parallel_postulate
 - 94 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%A1nos_Bolyai
 - 95 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauss>
 - 96 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernhard_Riemann
 - 97 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elliptic_geometry
 - 98 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-Euclidean_geometry
 - 99 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_circle
 - 100 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Model_\(mathematical_logic\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Model_(mathematical_logic))
 - 101 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deductive_system
 - 102 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circular_reasoning
 - 103 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Projective_geometry
 - 104 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_von_Staudt
 - 105 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross-ratio>
 - 106 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Complete_quadrilateral
 - 107 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Projective_harmonic_conjugate
 - 108 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_von_Staudt#Algebra_of_throws
 - 109 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Field_\(mathematics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Field_(mathematics))

book by Oswald Veblen¹¹⁰ and John Young, *Projective Geometry* (1938), or more recently in John Stillwell¹¹¹'s *Four Pillars of Geometry* (2005). Stillwell writes on page 120

... projective geometry is *simpler* than algebra in a certain sense, because we use only five geometric axioms to derive the nine field axioms.

The algebra of throws is commonly seen as a feature of cross-ratios since students ordinarily rely upon numbers¹¹² without worry about their basis. However, cross-ratio calculations use metric¹¹³ features of geometry, features not admitted by purists. For instance, in 1961 Coxeter¹¹⁴ wrote *Introduction to Geometry* without mention of cross-ratio.

Boolean algebra and logic

Attempts of formal treatment of mathematics had started with Leibniz and Lambert¹¹⁵ (1728–1777), and continued with works by algebraists such as George Peacock¹¹⁶ (1791–1858). Systematic mathematical treatments of logic came with the British mathematician George Boole¹¹⁷ (1847) who devised an algebra that soon evolved into what is now called Boolean algebra¹¹⁸, in which the only numbers were 0 and 1 and logical combinations (conjunction, disjunction, implication and negation) are operations similar to the addition and multiplication of integers. Additionally, De Morgan¹¹⁹ published his laws¹²⁰ in 1847. Logic thus became a branch of mathematics. Boolean algebra is the starting point of mathematical logic and has important applications in computer science¹²¹.

Charles Sanders Peirce¹²² built upon the work of Boole to develop a logical system for relations¹²³ and quantifiers¹²⁴, which he published in several papers from 1870 to 1885.

The German mathematician Gottlob Frege¹²⁵ (1848–1925) presented an independent development of logic with quantifiers in his *Begriffsschrift*¹²⁶ (formula language) published in 1879, a work generally considered as marking a turning point in the history of logic. He exposed deficiencies in Aristotle's *Logic*, and pointed out the three expected properties of a mathematical theory^[citation needed¹²⁷]

1. Consistency¹²⁸: impossibility of proving contradictory statements.

110 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oswald_Veblen
111 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Stillwell
112 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Number>
113 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metric_\(mathematics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metric_(mathematics))
114 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coxeter>
115 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Heinrich_Lambert
116 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Peacock
117 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Boole
118 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boolean_algebra
119 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus_De_Morgan
120 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Morgan%27s_laws
121 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer_science
122 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Sanders_Peirce
123 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relation_\(logic\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relation_(logic))
124 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantifier_\(logic\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantifier_(logic))
125 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gottlob_Frege
126 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Begriffsschrift>
128 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consistency>

2. Completeness¹²⁹: any statement is either provable or refutable (i.e. its negation is provable).
3. Decidability¹³⁰: there is a decision procedure to test any statement in the theory.

He then showed in *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik (Basic Laws of Arithmetic)* how arithmetic could be formalised in his new logic.

Frege's work was popularized by Bertrand Russell¹³¹ near the turn of the century. But Frege's two-dimensional notation had no success. Popular notations were $(\forall x)$ for universal and $(\exists x)$ for existential quantifiers, coming from Giuseppe Peano¹³² and William Ernest Johnson¹³³ until the \forall symbol was introduced by Gerhard Gentzen¹³⁴ in 1935 and became canonical in the 1960s.

From 1890 to 1905, Ernst Schröder¹³⁵ published *Vorlesungen über die Algebra der Logik* in three volumes. This work summarized and extended the work of Boole, De Morgan, and Peirce, and was a comprehensive reference to symbolic logic¹³⁶ as it was understood at the end of the 19th century.

Peano arithmetic

Main article: Peano axioms¹³⁷ The formalization of arithmetic¹³⁸ (the theory of natural numbers¹³⁹) as an axiomatic theory started with Peirce in 1881 and continued with Richard Dedekind¹⁴⁰ and Giuseppe Peano¹⁴¹ in 1888. This was still a second-order¹⁴² axiomatization (expressing induction in terms of arbitrary subsets, thus with an implicit use of set theory¹⁴³) as concerns for expressing theories in first-order logic¹⁴⁴ were not yet understood. In Dedekind's work, this approach appears as completely characterizing natural numbers and providing recursive definitions of addition and multiplication from the successor function¹⁴⁵ and mathematical induction¹⁴⁶.

¹²⁹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Completeness_\(logic\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Completeness_(logic))

¹³⁰ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decidability_\(logic\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decidability_(logic))

¹³¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bertrand_Russell

¹³² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuseppe_Peano

¹³³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Ernest_Johnson

¹³⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerhard_Gentzen

¹³⁵ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_Schr%C3%B6der_\(mathematician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_Schr%C3%B6der_(mathematician))

¹³⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathematical_logic#Symbolic_logic

¹³⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peano_axioms

¹³⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arithmetic>

¹³⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_numbers

¹⁴⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Dedekind

¹⁴¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuseppe_Peano

¹⁴² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second-order_logic

¹⁴³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Set_theory

¹⁴⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First-order_logic

¹⁴⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Successor_function

¹⁴⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathematical_induction

1.2 Foundational crisis

The **foundational crisis of mathematics** (in German¹⁴⁷ *Grundlagenkrise der Mathematik*) was the early 20th century's term for the search for proper foundations for mathematics.

Several schools of the philosophy of mathematics¹⁴⁸ ran into difficulties one after the other in the 20th century, as the assumption that mathematics had any foundation that could be consistently¹⁴⁹ stated within mathematics itself was heavily challenged by the discovery of various paradoxes¹⁵⁰ (such as Russell's paradox¹⁵¹).

The name "*paradox*" should not be confused with *contradiction*. A contradiction¹⁵² in a formal theory is a formal proof of an absurdity inside the theory (such as $2 + 2 = 5$), showing that this theory is inconsistent¹⁵³ and must be rejected. But a paradox may be either a surprising but true result in a given formal theory, or an informal argument leading to a contradiction, so that a candidate theory, if it is to be formalized, must disallow at least one of its steps; in this case the problem is to find a satisfying theory without contradiction. Both meanings may apply if the formalized version of the argument forms the proof of a surprising truth. For instance, Russell's paradox may be expressed as "there is no set of all sets" (except in some marginal axiomatic set theories).

Various schools of thought opposed each other. The leading school was that of the formalists¹⁵⁴, of which David Hilbert¹⁵⁵ was the foremost proponent, culminating in what is known as Hilbert's program¹⁵⁶, intending to ground mathematics on a small basis of a logical system proved sound by metamathematical¹⁵⁷ finitistic¹⁵⁸ means. The main opponent of the formalist school was the intuitionist¹⁵⁹ school, led by L. E. J. Brouwer¹⁶⁰, which resolutely discarded formalism as a meaningless game with symbols.^[7] The fight was acrimonious. In 1920 Hilbert succeeded in having Brouwer, whom he considered a threat to mathematics, removed from the editorial board of *Mathematische Annalen*¹⁶¹, the leading mathematical journal of the time.

1.2.1 Philosophical views

Main article: Philosophy of mathematics¹⁶² At the beginning of the 20th century, three schools of philosophy of mathematics opposed each other: Formalism, Intuitionism and

147 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_language

148 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mathematics

149 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consistent>

150 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradox>

151 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russell%27s_paradox

152 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contradiction>

153 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inconsistent>

154 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formalism_\(mathematics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formalism_(mathematics))

155 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Hilbert

156 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilbert%27s_program

157 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metamathematics>

158 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finitism>

159 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intuitionism>

160 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L._E._J._Brouwer

161 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathematische_Annalen

162 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_mathematics

Logicism. The Second Conference on the Epistemology of the Exact Sciences ¹⁶³ held in Königsberg¹⁶⁴ in 1930 gave space to these three schools.

Formalism

Main article: Formalism (mathematics)¹⁶⁵ It has been claimed that formalists, such as David Hilbert¹⁶⁶ (1862–1943), hold that mathematics is only a language and a series of games. Indeed, he used the words "formula game" in his 1927 response to L. E. J. Brouwer¹⁶⁷'s criticisms:

And to what extent has the formula game thus made possible been successful? This formula game enables us to express the entire thought-content of the science of mathematics in a uniform manner and develop it in such a way that, at the same time, the interconnections between the individual propositions and facts become clear ... The formula game that Brouwer so deprecates has, besides its mathematical value, an important general philosophical significance. For this formula game is carried out according to certain definite rules, in which the *technique of our thinking* is expressed. These rules form a closed system that can be discovered and definitively stated.^[8]

Thus Hilbert is insisting that mathematics is not an *arbitrary* game with *arbitrary* rules; rather it must agree with how our thinking, and then our speaking and writing, proceeds.^[8]

We are not speaking here of arbitrariness in any sense. Mathematics is not like a game whose tasks are determined by arbitrarily stipulated rules. Rather, it is a conceptual system possessing internal necessity that can only be so and by no means otherwise.^[9]

The foundational philosophy of formalism, as exemplified by David Hilbert¹⁶⁸, is a response to the paradoxes of set theory¹⁶⁹, and is based on formal logic¹⁷⁰. Virtually all mathematical theorems¹⁷¹ today can be formulated as theorems of set theory. The truth of a mathematical statement, in this view, is represented by the fact that the statement can be derived from the axioms of set theory¹⁷² using the rules of formal logic.

Merely the use of formalism alone does not explain several issues: why we should use the axioms we do and not some others, why we should employ the logical rules we do and not some others, why do "true" mathematical statements (e.g., the laws of arithmetic¹⁷³) appear to be true, and so on. Hermann Weyl¹⁷⁴ would ask these very questions of Hilbert:

What "truth" or objectivity can be ascribed to this theoretic construction of the world, which presses far beyond the given, is a profound philosophical problem. It is closely

¹⁶³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Conference_on_the_Epistemology_of_the_Exact_Sciences

¹⁶⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%B6nigsberg>

¹⁶⁵ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formalism_\(mathematics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formalism_(mathematics))

¹⁶⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Hilbert

¹⁶⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L._E._J._Brouwer

¹⁶⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Hilbert

¹⁶⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Set_theory

¹⁷⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formal_logic

¹⁷¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theorem>

¹⁷² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zermelo%E2%80%93Fraenkel_set_theory

¹⁷³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peano_axioms

¹⁷⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann_Weyl

connected with the further question: what impels us to take as a basis precisely the particular axiom system developed by Hilbert? Consistency is indeed a necessary but not a sufficient condition. For the time being we probably cannot answer this question ...^[10]

In some cases these questions may be sufficiently answered through the study of formal theories, in disciplines such as reverse mathematics¹⁷⁵ and computational complexity theory¹⁷⁶. As noted by Weyl, formal logical systems¹⁷⁷ also run the risk of inconsistency¹⁷⁸; in Peano arithmetic¹⁷⁹, this arguably has already been settled with several proofs of consistency¹⁸⁰, but there is debate over whether or not they are sufficiently finitary¹⁸¹ to be meaningful. Gödel's second incompleteness theorem¹⁸² establishes that logical systems of arithmetic can never contain a valid proof of their own consistency¹⁸³. What Hilbert wanted to do was prove a logical system S was consistent, based on principles P that only made up a small part of S . But Gödel proved that the principles P could not even prove P to be consistent, let alone S .

Intuitionism

Main articles: Intuitionism¹⁸⁴ and Constructivism (mathematics)¹⁸⁵ Intuitionists, such as L. E. J. Brouwer¹⁸⁶ (1882–1966), hold that mathematics is a creation of the human mind. Numbers, like fairy tale characters, are merely mental entities, which would not exist if there were never any human minds to think about them.

The foundational philosophy of *intuitionism*¹⁸⁷ or *constructivism*¹⁸⁸, as exemplified in the extreme by Brouwer¹⁸⁹ and Stephen Kleene¹⁹⁰, requires proofs to be "constructive" in nature – the existence of an object must be demonstrated rather than inferred from a demonstration of the impossibility of its non-existence. For example, as a consequence of this the form of proof known as *reductio ad absurdum*¹⁹¹ is suspect.

Some modern theories¹⁹² in the philosophy of mathematics deny the existence of foundations in the original sense. Some theories tend to focus on mathematical practice¹⁹³, and aim to

175 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reverse_mathematics

176 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computational_complexity_theory

177 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formal_logical_system

178 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consistency_proof

179 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peano_axioms

180 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consistency_proof

181 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finitism>

182 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%B6del%27s_incompleteness_theorem

183 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consistency_proof

184 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intuitionism>

185 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constructivism_\(mathematics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constructivism_(mathematics))

186 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L._E._J._Brouwer

187 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intuitionism>

188 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constructivism_\(mathematics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constructivism_(mathematics))

189 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luitzen_Egbertus_Jan_Brouwer

190 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Kleene

191 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reductio_ad_absurdum

192 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory>

193 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathematical_practice

describe and analyze the actual working of mathematicians as a social group¹⁹⁴. Others try to create a cognitive science of mathematics¹⁹⁵, focusing on human cognition as the origin of the reliability of mathematics when applied to the real world. These theories would propose to find foundations only in human thought, not in any objective outside construct. The matter remains controversial.

Logicism

Main article: Logicism¹⁹⁶ Logicism¹⁹⁷ is a school of thought, and research programme, in the philosophy of mathematics, based on the thesis that mathematics is an extension of a logic or that some or all mathematics may be derived in a suitable formal system whose axioms and rules of inference are 'logical' in nature. Bertrand Russell¹⁹⁸ and Alfred North Whitehead¹⁹⁹ championed this theory initiated by Gottlob Frege²⁰⁰ and influenced by Richard Dedekind²⁰¹.

Set-theoretic Platonism

Main article: Set-theoretic Platonism²⁰² Many researchers in axiomatic set theory²⁰³ have subscribed to what is known as set-theoretic Platonism²⁰⁴, exemplified by Kurt Gödel²⁰⁵.

Several set theorists followed this approach and actively searched for axioms that may be considered as true for heuristic reasons and that would decide the continuum hypothesis²⁰⁶. Many large cardinal²⁰⁷ axioms were studied, but the hypothesis always remained independent²⁰⁸ from them and it is now considered unlikely that CH can be resolved by a new large cardinal axiom. Other types of axioms were considered, but none of them has reached consensus on the continuum hypothesis yet. Recent work by Hamkins²⁰⁹ proposes a more flexible alternative: a set-theoretic multiverse²¹⁰ allowing free passage between set-theoretic universes that satisfy the continuum hypothesis and other universes that do not.

194 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_group
 195 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_science_of_mathematics
 196 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logicism>
 197 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logicism>
 198 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bertrand_Russell
 199 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_North_Whitehead
 200 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gottlob_Frege
 201 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Dedekind
 202 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Set-theoretic_Platonism
 203 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axiomatic_set_theory
 204 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platonism#Modern_Platonism
 205 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurt_G%C3%B6del
 206 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continuum_hypothesis
 207 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Large_cardinal
 208 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence_\(mathematical_logic\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence_(mathematical_logic))
 209 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joel_David_Hamkins
 210 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiverse>

Indispensability argument for realism

Main article: Quine–Putnam indispensability argument²¹¹ This argument²¹² by Willard Quine²¹³ and Hilary Putnam²¹⁴ says (in Putnam's shorter words),

... quantification over mathematical entities is indispensable for science ... therefore we should accept such quantification; but this commits us to accepting the existence of the mathematical entities in question.

However, Putnam was not a Platonist.

Rough-and-ready realism

Few mathematicians are typically concerned on a daily, working basis over logicism, formalism or any other philosophical position. Instead, their primary concern is that the mathematical enterprise as a whole always remains productive. Typically, they see this as ensured by remaining open-minded, practical and busy; as potentially threatened by becoming overly-ideological, fanatically reductionistic or lazy.

Such a view has also been expressed by some well-known physicists.

For example, the Physics Nobel Prize laureate Richard Feynman²¹⁵ said

People say to me, "Are you looking for the ultimate laws of physics?" No, I'm not ... If it turns out there is a simple ultimate law which explains everything, so be it – that would be very nice to discover. If it turns out it's like an onion with millions of layers ... then that's the way it is. But either way there's Nature and she's going to come out the way She is. So therefore when we go to investigate we shouldn't predecide what it is we're looking for only to find out more about it.^[11]

And Steven Weinberg²¹⁶:^[12]

The insights of philosophers have occasionally benefited physicists, but generally in a negative fashion – by protecting them from the preconceptions of other philosophers. ... without some guidance from our preconceptions one could do nothing at all. It is just that philosophical principles have not generally provided us with the right preconceptions.

Weinberg believed that any undecidability in mathematics, such as the continuum hypothesis, could be potentially resolved despite the incompleteness theorem, by finding suitable further axioms to add to set theory.

211 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quine%E2%80%93Putnam_indispensability_argument

212 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quine%E2%80%93Putnam_indispensability_thesis

213 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willard_Quine

214 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilary_Putnam

215 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Feynman

216 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steven_Weinberg

Philosophical consequences of Gödel's completeness theorem

Main article: Gödel's completeness theorem²¹⁷ Gödel's completeness theorem establishes an equivalence in first-order logic between the formal provability of a formula and its truth in all possible models. Precisely, for any consistent first-order theory it gives an "explicit construction" of a model described by the theory; this model will be countable if the language of the theory is countable. However this "explicit construction" is not algorithmic. It is based on an iterative process of completion of the theory, where each step of the iteration consists in adding a formula to the axioms if it keeps the theory consistent; but this consistency question is only semi-decidable (an algorithm is available to find any contradiction but if there is none this consistency fact can remain unprovable).

This can be seen as giving a sort of justification to the Platonist view that the objects of our mathematical theories are real. More precisely, it shows that the mere assumption of the existence of the set of natural numbers as a totality (an actual infinity) suffices to imply the existence of a model (a world of objects) of any consistent theory. However several difficulties remain:

- For any consistent theory this usually does not give just one world of objects, but an infinity of possible worlds that the theory might equally describe, with a possible diversity of truths between them.
- In the case of set theory, none of the models obtained by this construction resemble the intended model, as they are countable while set theory intends to describe uncountable infinities. Similar remarks can be made in many other cases. For example, with theories that include arithmetic, such constructions generally give models that include non-standard numbers, unless the construction method was specifically designed to avoid them.
- As it gives models to all consistent theories without distinction, it gives no reason to accept or reject any axiom as long as the theory remains consistent, but regards all consistent axiomatic theories as referring to equally existing worlds. It gives no indication on which axiomatic system should be preferred as a foundation of mathematics.
- As claims of consistency are usually unprovable, they remain a matter of belief or non-rigorous kinds of justifications. Hence the existence of models as given by the completeness theorem needs in fact two philosophical assumptions: the actual infinity of natural numbers and the consistency of the theory.

Another consequence of the completeness theorem is that it justifies the conception of infinitesimals as actual infinitely small nonzero quantities, based on the existence of non-standard models as equally legitimate to standard ones. This idea was formalized by Abraham Robinson²¹⁸ into the theory of nonstandard analysis²¹⁹.

²¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%B6del%27s_completeness_theorem

²¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Robinson

²¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonstandard_analysis

1.2.2 More paradoxes

See also: List of statements independent of ZFC²²⁰ and List of paradoxes²²¹ The following lists some notable results in metamathematics. Zermelo–Fraenkel set theory²²² is the most widely studied axiomatization of set theory. It is abbreviated **ZFC** when it includes the axiom of choice²²³ and **ZF** when the axiom of choice is excluded.

- 1920: Thoralf Skolem²²⁴ corrected Leopold Löwenheim²²⁵'s proof of what is now called the downward Löwenheim–Skolem theorem²²⁶, leading to Skolem's paradox²²⁷ discussed in 1922, namely the existence of countable models of ZF, making infinite cardinalities a relative property.
- 1922: Proof by Abraham Fraenkel²²⁸ that the axiom of choice cannot be proved from the axioms of Zermelo set theory²²⁹ with urelements²³⁰.
- 1931: Publication of Gödel's incompleteness theorems²³¹, showing that essential aspects of Hilbert's program could not be attained. It showed how to construct, for any sufficiently powerful and consistent recursively axiomatizable system – such as necessary to axiomatize the elementary theory of arithmetic²³² on the (infinite) set of natural numbers – a statement that formally expresses its own unprovability, which he then proved equivalent to the claim of consistency of the theory; so that (assuming the consistency as true), the system is not powerful enough for proving its own consistency, let alone that a simpler system could do the job. It thus became clear that the notion of mathematical truth can not be completely determined and reduced to a purely formal system²³³ as envisaged in Hilbert's program. This dealt a final blow to the heart of Hilbert's program, the hope that consistency could be established by finitistic means (it was never made clear exactly what axioms were the "finitistic" ones, but whatever axiomatic system was being referred to, it was a 'weaker' system than the system whose consistency it was supposed to prove).
- 1936: Alfred Tarski²³⁴ proved his truth undefinability theorem²³⁵.
- 1936: Alan Turing²³⁶ proved that a general algorithm to solve the halting problem²³⁷ for all possible program-input pairs cannot exist.
- 1938: Gödel proved the consistency of the axiom of choice and of the generalized continuum hypothesis²³⁸.

220 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_statements_independent_of_ZFC

221 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_paradoxes

222 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zermelo%E2%80%93Fraenkel_set_theory

223 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axiom_of_choice

224 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thoralf_Skolem

225 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leopold_L%C3%B6wenheim

226 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Downward_L%C3%B6wenheim%E2%80%93Skolem_theorem

227 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skolem%27s_paradox

228 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Fraenkel

229 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zermelo_set_theory

230 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urelement>

231 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%B6del%27s_incompleteness_theorems

232 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arithmetic>

233 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formal_system

234 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Tarski

235 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarski%27s_undefinability_theorem

236 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Turing

237 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halting_problem

238 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constructible_universe

- 1936–1937: Alonzo Church²³⁹ and Alan Turing²⁴⁰, respectively, published independent papers showing that a general solution to the Entscheidungsproblem²⁴¹ is impossible: the universal validity of statements in first-order logic is not decidable (it is only semi-decidable²⁴² as given by the completeness theorem²⁴³).
- 1955: Pyotr Novikov²⁴⁴ showed that there exists a finitely presented group G such that the word problem for G is undecidable.
- 1963: Paul Cohen²⁴⁵ showed that the Continuum Hypothesis is unprovable from ZFC²⁴⁶. Cohen's proof developed the method of forcing²⁴⁷, which is now an important tool for establishing independence²⁴⁸ results in set theory.
- 1964: Inspired by the fundamental randomness in physics, Gregory Chaitin²⁴⁹ starts publishing results on algorithmic information theory²⁵⁰ (measuring incompleteness and randomness in mathematics).^[13]
- 1966: Paul Cohen showed that the axiom of choice is unprovable in ZF even without urelements²⁵¹.
- 1970: Hilbert's tenth problem²⁵² is proven unsolvable: there is no recursive solution to decide whether a Diophantine equation²⁵³ (multivariable polynomial equation) has a solution in integers.
- 1971: Suslin's problem²⁵⁴ is proven to be independent from ZFC.

1.3 Toward resolution of the crisis

Starting in 1935, the Bourbaki²⁵⁵ group of French mathematicians started publishing a series of books to formalize many areas of mathematics on the new foundation of set theory.

The intuitionistic school did not attract many adherents, and it was not until Bishop²⁵⁶'s work in 1967 that constructive mathematics²⁵⁷ was placed on a sounder footing.^[14]

One may consider that Hilbert's program has been partially completed²⁵⁸, so that the crisis is essentially resolved, satisfying ourselves with lower requirements than Hilbert's original

239 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alonzo_Church

240 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Turing

241 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entscheidungsproblem>

242 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semi-decidable>

243 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Completeness_theorem

244 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyotr_Novikov

245 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Cohen_\(mathematician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Cohen_(mathematician))

246 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zermelo%E2%80%93Fraenkel_set_theory

247 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forcing_\(mathematics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forcing_(mathematics))

248 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence_\(mathematical_logic\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence_(mathematical_logic))

249 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregory_Chaitin

250 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algorithmic_information_theory

251 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urelements>

252 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilbert%27s_tenth_problem

253 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diophantine_equation

254 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suslin%27s_problem

255 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolas_Bourbaki

256 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Errett_Bishop

257 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constructivism_\(mathematics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constructivism_(mathematics))

258 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilbert%27s_program#Hilbert%27s_program_after_G%C3%B6del

ambitions. His ambitions were expressed in a time when nothing was clear: it was not clear whether mathematics could have a rigorous foundation at all.

There are many possible variants of set theory, which differ in consistency strength, where stronger versions (postulating higher types of infinities) contain formal proofs of the consistency of weaker versions, but none contains a formal proof of its own consistency. Thus the only thing we don't have is a formal proof of consistency of whatever version of set theory we may prefer, such as ZF.

In practice, most mathematicians either do not work from axiomatic systems, or if they do, do not doubt the consistency of ZFC²⁵⁹, generally their preferred axiomatic system. In most of mathematics as it is practiced, the incompleteness and paradoxes of the underlying formal theories never played a role anyway, and in those branches in which they do or whose formalization attempts would run the risk of forming inconsistent theories (such as logic and category theory), they may be treated carefully.

The development of category theory²⁶⁰ in the middle of the 20th century showed the usefulness of set theories guaranteeing the existence of larger classes than does ZFC, such as Von Neumann–Bernays–Gödel set theory²⁶¹ or Tarski–Grothendieck set theory²⁶², albeit that in very many cases the use of large cardinal axioms or Grothendieck universes is formally eliminable.

One goal of the reverse mathematics²⁶³ program is to identify whether there are areas of "core mathematics" in which foundational issues may again provoke a crisis.

1.4 See also



- Mathematics portal²⁶⁴
- Philosophy portal²⁶⁵
- Aristotelian realist philosophy of mathematics²⁶⁶
- Mathematical logic²⁶⁷
- Brouwer–Hilbert controversy²⁶⁸
- Church–Turing thesis²⁶⁹
- Controversy over Cantor's theory²⁷⁰
- Epistemology²⁷¹

²⁵⁹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ZFC>

²⁶⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category_theory

²⁶¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Von_Neumann%E2%80%93Bernays%E2%80%93G%C3%B6del_set_theory

²⁶² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarski%E2%80%93Grothendieck_set_theory

²⁶³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reverse_Mathematics

²⁶⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Mathematics>

²⁶⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Philosophy>

²⁶⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotelian_realist_philosophy_of_mathematics

²⁶⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathematical_logic

²⁶⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brouwer%E2%80%93Hilbert_controversy

²⁶⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church%E2%80%93Turing_thesis

²⁷⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Controversy_over_Cantor%27s_theory

²⁷¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistemology>

- *Euclid's Elements*²⁷²
- Hilbert's problems²⁷³
- Implementation of mathematics in set theory²⁷⁴
- Liar paradox²⁷⁵
- New Foundations²⁷⁶
- Philosophy of mathematics²⁷⁷
- *Principia Mathematica*²⁷⁸
- Quasi-empiricism in mathematics²⁷⁹
- Mathematical thought of Charles Peirce²⁸⁰

1.5 Notes

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3. *The thirteen books of Euclid's Elements, edited by Sir Thomas Heath*²⁸³. VOL. 2 (BOOK V). TRANSLATED BY HEIBERG. NEW YORK: DOVER PUBLICATIONS²⁸⁴. 1956. PP. 124–126. ISBN²⁸⁵ 0-486-60089-0²⁸⁶.
4. Karlis Podnieks, Platonism, intuition and the nature of mathematics: 1. Platonism - the Philosophy of Working Mathematicians²⁸⁷
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6. Laptev, B.L. & B.A. Rozenfel'd (1996) *Mathematics of the 19th Century: Geometry*, page 40, Birkhäuser²⁸⁹ ISBN²⁹⁰ 3-7643-5048-2²⁹¹
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Mathematical logic

Mathematics (areas of mathematics)

Major topics in Foundations of Mathematics

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