

Gödel's Theorem Without Tears

Essential Incompleteness in Synthetic Computability

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Gödel's Theorem Without Tears?

Peter Smith

Gödel Without (Too Many) Tears

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CHURCH'S THESIS WITHOUT TEARS

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§1. Introduction. The modern theory of computability is based on the works of Church, Markov and Turing who, starting from quite different models of computation, arrived at the same class of computable functions. The purpose of this paper is the show how the main results of the Church-Markov-Turing theory of computable functions may quickly be derived and understood without recourse to the largely irrelevant theories of recursive functions, Markov algorithms, or Turing machines. We do this by ignoring the problem of what constitutes a computable function and concentrating on the central feature of the Church-Markov-Turing theory: that the set of computable partial functions can be effectively enumerated. In this manner we are led directly to the heart of the theory of computability without having to fuss about what a computable function is.

Get to the heart of computational incompleteness proofs
without having to fuss about what a computable function is!

The First Incompleteness Theorem

Which formal systems $\mathcal{S}$ admit sentences φ with both $\mathcal{S} \not\vdash \varphi$ and $\mathcal{S} \not\vdash \neg\varphi$?

- Gödel: all sound, sufficiently expressive ones (Gödel, 1931)
- Rosser: all consistent, sufficiently expressive ones (Rosser, 1936)
- Church/Turing(/Post): Gödel's incompleteness follows from undecidability
- Kleene: Rosser's incompleteness follows from recursive inseparability (Kleene, 1951)
- We give synthetic computational proofs complementing mechanisations à la Gödel/Rosser: Shankar (1986); O'Connor (2005); Paulson (2015); Popescu and Traytel (2019)

Synthetic Incompleteness (Kirst and Hermes, 2021)

$P : X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}$ is **decidable** if there exists $d : X \rightarrow \mathbb{B}$ with $P x \leftrightarrow d x = \text{tt}$
 $P : X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}$ is **semi-decidable** if there exists $s : X \rightarrow \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{B}$ with $P x \leftrightarrow \exists n. s x n = \text{tt}$

Theorem

If Robinson's Q (or any sound extension) is complete, then the halting problem is decidable.

Sketch.

Systems like Q are semi-decidable, complete ones also co-semi-decidable and hence decidable. Thus all predicates soundly captured in such a complete system are decidable. $\square$

Shortcomings:

- 1 Not an explicit negation, only a computational taboo
- 2 No explicit independent sentence is constructed
- 3 Requires soundness to extract correct information from formal derivations

Stronger Synthetic Incompleteness Results

Abstract Formal Systems

Definition

A triple $\mathcal{S} = (\mathbb{S}, \neg, \vdash)$ is called a **formal system** if:

- $\mathbb{S}$ is a type, considered the **sentences** of $\mathcal{S}$
- $\neg : \mathbb{S} \rightarrow \mathbb{S}$ is a function on sentences, considered the **negation operation**
- $\vdash : \mathbb{S} \rightarrow \mathbb{P}$ is a semi-decidable predicate on sentences, considered the **provable sentences**
- Consistency holds in the form that for all $\varphi : \mathbb{S}$ not both $\vdash \varphi$ and $\vdash \neg\varphi$

Instances:

- First-order axiomatisations like Q, PA, HA, ZF, IZF, ...
- Second-order arithmetics and set theories
- Simple and dependent type theories

The Weak Church-Turing Proof

Lemma

Given a formal system $\mathcal{S} = (\mathbb{S}, \neg, \vdash)$, one can construct a partial function $d_{\mathcal{S}} : \mathbb{S} \rightarrow \mathbb{B}$ with:

$$d_{\mathcal{S}} \varphi \downarrow \text{tt} \leftrightarrow \vdash \varphi \quad \text{and} \quad d_{\mathcal{S}} \varphi \downarrow \text{ff} \leftrightarrow \vdash \neg \varphi$$

By this specification, $d_{\mathcal{S}}$ exactly diverges on the independent sentences of $\mathcal{S}$.

Theorem

Let $\mathcal{S}$ weakly represent $P : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{P}$, i.e. assume there is a function $\varphi_P : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{S}$ with:

$$Px \leftrightarrow \vdash \varphi_P(x)$$

If $\mathcal{S}$ is complete, i.e. satisfies $\vdash \varphi$ or $\vdash \neg \varphi$ for all φ , then P is decidable.

Proof.

If $\mathcal{S}$ is complete, then $d_{\mathcal{S}}$ is a total function $\mathbb{S} \rightarrow \mathbb{B}$ and $d_{\mathcal{S}} \circ \varphi_P$ is a decider for P . □

Church's Thesis

Consistent assumption in many variants of constructive mathematics:

- Kreisel (1970): “Every function can be captured by Kleene’s T-predicate”
- Richman (1983): “The set of partial functions is countable”
- Bauer (2006): “There are enumerably many enumerable sets”
- Swan and Uemura (2019): consistency proof for (homotopy) type theory

Axiom (EPF, cf. Forster (2021))

There is a universal function $\Theta : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow (\mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N})$ enumerating all partial functions:

$$\forall f : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}. \exists c : \mathbb{N}. \forall xy. \Theta_c x \downarrow y \leftrightarrow f x \downarrow y$$

Synthetic Halting Problem

Lemma

$K_{\Theta} x := \Theta_x x \downarrow$ is undecidable, in fact for every candidate decider $d : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{B}$ with

$$K_{\Theta} x \leftrightarrow d x \downarrow \text{tt}$$

one can construct a concrete value c such that $d c$ diverges.

Proof.

We first define a partial function $f : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{B}$ diagonalising against d by:

$$f x := \begin{cases} \text{tt} & \text{if } d x \downarrow \text{ff} \\ \text{undef.} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

Now using EPF we obtain a code c for f and deduce that $d c \uparrow$ by:

$$d c \downarrow \text{tt} \Leftrightarrow K_{\Theta} c \Leftrightarrow \Theta_c c \downarrow \Leftrightarrow f c \downarrow \Leftrightarrow f c \downarrow \text{tt} \Leftrightarrow d c \downarrow \text{ff}$$

□

The Improved Church-Turing Proof

Theorem

Every formal system $\mathcal{S}$ weakly representing K_Θ , i.e. providing $\varphi_K : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{S}$ with

$$K_\Theta x \leftrightarrow \vdash \varphi_K(x)$$

has an independent sentence of the form $\varphi_K(c)$ for some concrete value c .

Proof.

The composition $d_{\mathcal{S}} \circ \varphi_K$ is a candidate decider for K_Θ since:

$$K_\Theta x \Leftrightarrow \vdash \varphi_K(x) \Leftrightarrow d_{\mathcal{S}}(\varphi_K(x)) \downarrow \text{tt}$$

Thus there is c with $d_{\mathcal{S}}(\varphi_K(c)) \uparrow$, yielding that $\varphi_K(c)$ is independent. □

Only applies to sound extensions of $\mathcal{S}$...

Synthetic Recursive Inseparability

Lemma

$K_{\Theta}^1 := \Theta_x x \downarrow 1$ and $K_{\Theta}^0 := \Theta_x x \downarrow 0$ are recursively inseparable, in fact for every $s : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{B}$ with

$$K_{\Theta}^1 x \rightarrow s x \downarrow \text{tt} \quad \text{and} \quad K_{\Theta}^0 x \rightarrow s x \downarrow \text{ff}$$

one can construct a concrete value c such that $s c$ diverges.

Proof.

We first define a partial function $f : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{B}$ diagonalising against s by:

$$f x := \begin{cases} \text{tt} & \text{if } s x \downarrow \text{ff} \\ \text{ff} & \text{if } s x \downarrow \text{tt} \\ \text{undef.} & s x \uparrow \end{cases}$$

Now using EPF we obtain a code c for f and deduce that $s c \uparrow$ by simple calculation. □

Kleene's Proof (Kleene, 1952)

Theorem

Every formal system $\mathcal{S}$ strongly separating K_{Θ}^1 and K_{Θ}^0 , i.e. providing $\varphi_K : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{S}$ with

$$K_{\Theta}^1 x \rightarrow \vdash \varphi_K(x) \quad \text{and} \quad K_{\Theta}^0 x \rightarrow \vdash \neg \varphi_K(x)$$

has an independent sentence of the form $\varphi_K(c)$ for some concrete value c .

Proof.

The function $d_{\mathcal{S}} \circ \varphi_K$ is a candidate separator for K_{Θ}^1 and K_{Θ}^0 since:

$$K_{\Theta}^1 x \Rightarrow \vdash \varphi_K(x) \Rightarrow d_{\mathcal{S}}(\varphi_K(x)) \downarrow \text{tt}$$

$$K_{\Theta}^0 x \Rightarrow \vdash \neg \varphi_K(x) \Rightarrow d_{\mathcal{S}}(\varphi_K(x)) \downarrow \text{ff}$$

Thus there is c with $d_{\mathcal{S}}(\varphi_K(c)) \uparrow$, yielding that $\varphi_K(c)$ is independent. □

Immediately applies to consistent extensions of $\mathcal{S}$!

Instantiation: Essential Incompleteness of Q

To instantiate these abstract proofs to Q , we need a stronger assumption than EPF:

Axiom (CT_Q , cf. Hermes and Kirst (2022))

For every $f : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ there is a Σ_1 -formula φ with: $f(x) \downarrow y \leftrightarrow Q \vdash \forall y'. \varphi(\bar{x}, y') \leftrightarrow y' = \bar{y}$

CT_Q implies that Q and every consistent extension of it has an independent sentence:

- CT_Q implies EPF and that Q strongly separates the respective problems $K_{\emptyset}^1$ and $K_{\emptyset}^0$
- Claim follows from the abstract incompleteness result

CT_Q is implied by a more conventional formulation of Church's thesis:

- EPF_{μ} states that every $f : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ is μ -computable (Troelstra and Van Dalen, 1988)
- Mechanised DPRM theorem (Larchey-Wendling and Forster, 2019) yields f Diophantine
- Σ_1 -completeness and Rosser's trick yield that f can be captured as in CT_Q

Conclusion

Results Overview

- 1 Weak Church-Turing incompleteness
- 2 Improved Church-Turing incompleteness (using EPF)
- 3 Kleene's incompleteness (using EPF)
- 4 Essential undecidability of Q (using CT_Q)
- 5 Essential undecidability of Q (using EPF_μ)

Contributions

- Translation of several incompleteness proofs into abstract and synthetic setting
 - ▶ “Synthetic computability trivialises things that should have been trivial from the beginning”
- Popularisation of Kleene’s strong computational incompleteness proofs
 - ▶ Less well-known though way stronger and not much more complicated than Church-Turing
- Identification of CT_Q as suitable axiom for synthetic computability theory
 - ▶ Consistent assumption exactly factoring away Gödelisation tricks
- Coq mechanisation, systematically hyperlinked with paper
 - ▶ Only 200 lines for strongest incompleteness result, 2500 for instantiation to Q
 - ▶ Based on Coq libraries for undecidability (Forster et al., 2020) and FOL (Kirst et al., 2022)

Perspectives

- Sidestep the DPRM theorem for a less heavy-weight consistency proof of CT_Q
- Postpone/avoid the use of EPF by working against an abstract computability predicate
- Explore synthetic approaches to the second incompleteness theorem

<https://www.ps.uni-saarland.de/extras/incompleteness/>

Thanks for your attention!

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Mechanised Incompleteness

Shankar (1986)

First full mechanisation of G1
in the Boyer-Moore theorem prover

Paulson (2015)

Mechanisation of G1 and G2
in Isabelle/HOL

Kirst and Hermes (2021)

Weak G1 via synthetic undecidability
in the Coq proof assistant

O'Connor (2005)

Constructive mechanisation of G1
in the Coq proof assistant

Popescu and Traytel (2019)

Abstract preconditions for G1 and G2
in Isabelle/HOL