

Feigl, Georg | Encyclopedia.com

Complete Dictionary of Scientific Biography COPYRIGHT 2008 Charles Scribner's Sons

4-5 minutes

(*b.* Hamburg, Germany, 13 October 1890; *d.* Wechselburg, Germany, 25 April 1945)

mathematics.

Feigl was the son of Georg Feigl, an importer, and Maria Pinl, from Bohemia. He attended the Johanneum in Hamburg and began to study mathematics and physics at the University of Jena in 1909. A severe chronic stomach disorder forced him to interrupt his studies several times, and he did not finish them until 1918, when he received the doctorate with a dissertation on conformal mapping that was supervised by Paul Koebe. In 1919 Feigl became a teaching assistant to Erhard Schmidt, a well-known mathematician at the University of Berlin. Schmidt was the scientist who most influenced Feigl and also developed his gift for teaching. Generations of students in mathematics at the University of Berlin took the introductory course “Einführung in die höhere Mathematik,” which Feigl created and which after his death was published, in enlarged form, as a textbook (1953) by Hans Rohrbach.

In 1925 Feigl married Maria Fleischer, daughter of Paul Fleischer, an economist and member of the Reichstag. In 1927 he became assistant professor and in 1933 associate professor at the University of Berlin. From 1928 to 1935 he was, by appointment of the Prussian Academy of Sciences in Berlin, the managing editor of the *Jahrbuch über die Fortschritte der Mathematik*, at that time the only periodical that reviewed papers on mathematics.

Feigl's field of research was geometry, especially the foundations of geometry and topology. But his scientific activity was rather limited because of his illness, and he soon had to choose between research and teaching. His talents led Feigl to devote himself to a reform of the teaching of mathematics. He became a leading member of the National Council of German Mathematical Societies, and it was essentially through him that the new fundamental concepts of [Felix Klein](#) and [David Hilbert](#) and the modern mode of mathematical thinking based on axioms and structures were introduced into universities and even high schools.

In 1935 Feigl was called as full professor to the University of Breslau. There during [World War II](#) he formed a computing team that worked for the German Aeronautic Research Institute. In January 1945, when the Russians marched into Breslau, he moved with his team to the castle of Graf Schönburg at Wechselburg, Saxony, near Chemnitz (now Karl-Marx-Stadt). There it proved impossible to maintain his necessary medical supervision, a circumstance that led to Feigl's death a few months later.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Feigl's writings include “Elementare Anordnungssätze der Geometrie,” in *Jahresbericht der Deutschen Mathematikervereinigung*, **33** (1924), 2–24; “Zum Archimedesschen Axiom,” in *Mathematische Zeitschrift*, **25** (1926), 590–601; “Eigenschaften der einfachen stetigen Kurven,” *ibid.*, **27** (1927), 162–168; “Fixpunktsätze für spezielle n-dimensionale Mannigfaltigkeiten,” in *Mathematische Annalen*, **98** (1927–1928), 355–398; “Erfahrungen über die mathematische Vorbildung der Mathematik-Studierenden des 1. Semesters,” in *Jahresbericht der Deutschen Mathematikervereinigung*, **37** (1928), 187–199; “Geschichtliche Entwicklung der Topologie,” *ibid.*, 273–286, repr. in the series *Wege der Forschung*, vol. CLXXVII (Darmstadt, in press); “Das Unendliche im Schulunterricht,” in *Zeitschrift für mathematischen und naturwissenschaftlichen Unterricht*, **60** (1929), 385–393; “Der Übergang von der Schule zur Hochschule,” in *Jahresbericht der Deutschen Mathematikervereinigung*, **47** (1937), 80–88; “Ausbildungsplan für Lehramtsanwärter in der Fächern reine Mathematik, angewandte Mathematik und Physik,” in *Deutsche Mathematik*, **4** (1939), 98–108, 135–136, written with Georg Hamel; “Erfahrungen über das Mathematikstudium der Lehramtsanwarter nach der neuen Ausbildungsordnung,” *ibid.*, **6** (1942), 467–471. His textbook is *Einführung in die höhere Mathematik*, Hans Rohrbach, ed. (Berlin–Göttingen–Heidelberg, 1953).

Some biographical information may be found in *Neue deutsche Biographie*, V (1961), 57.

Hans Rohrbach