

118. Formalizing Euclid’s first axiom. *Bulletin of Symbolic Logic*. 20 (2014) 404–5.
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► JOHN CORCORAN AND DANIEL NOVOTNÝ, *Formalizing Euclid’s first axiom*.

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Euclid’s *Elements* divides its ten premises into two groups of five.

The first five (*postulates*)—applying in geometry but nowhere else—are *specifically* geometrical. The first: “to draw a line from any point to any point”; the last: the parallel postulate.

The second five (*axioms*) apply in geometry *and* elsewhere. They are non-logical principles governing *magnitude types* both geometrical (e.g., lengths, areas) and non-geometrical (e.g., durations, weights). Euclid called axioms *koinai ennoia*: *koinai* (“shared”, “communal”, etc.), *ennoia* (“designs”, “thoughts”, etc.). The first axiom is:

Ta toi autoi isa kai allelois estin isa.

Things that equal the same thing equal one another.

One first-order translation in variable-enhanced English (cf. [2], p. 121) is:

(1) Given two things x, y , *if* for something z , x and y equal z ,
then x equals y .

Translation (1) overlooks Euclid’s plural construction not limited to two. Second-order translations avoid that objection.

(2) For any set S , *if* for something z , everything x in S equals z ,
then anything x in S equals anything y in S .

Translations (1) and (2) are “too broad”: they cover all magnitude types but by amalgamating them into a hodgepodge universe containing all magnitude types—a universe violating category restrictions and not itself a magnitude type.

Translation (3) is a *second-order axiom schema* (cf. [1]) having one instance for each magnitude type. ‘MAG’ is placeholder for magnitude words such as *length*, *area*, etc.

(3) For any set S , *if* for some MAG z , every MAG x in S equals z ,
then any MAG x in S equals any MAG y in S .

We treat several other translations and formalizations.

[1] JOHN CORCORAN, *Schemata*, *Bulletin of Symbolic Logic*, vol. 12 (2006), pp. 219–40.

[2] ALFRED TARSKI, *Introduction to Logic*, Dover, New York, 1995.