

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.