EUCLID'S ELEMENTS OF GEOMETRY

The Greek text of J.L. Heiberg (1883–1885)

from *Euclidis Elementa, edidit et Latine interpretatus est I.L. Heiberg, in aedibus B.G. Teubneri, 1883–1885*

edited, and provided with a modern English translation, by

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NB: This excerpt from Euclid's Element contains the first two propositions (or theorems). Before proving these propositions, however, Euclid formulates definitions, postulates and common notions (or axioms, self-evident facts).
In reading the proofs of the two propositions, make sure you identify the definitions, postulates and common notions that are needed in the proof of the first two propositions (or theorems).

Ὅροι.

αʹ. Σημεῖόν ἐστιν, οὗ μέρος οὐθέν.

βʹ. Γραμμὴ δὲ μῆκος ἀπλατές.

γʹ. Γραμμῆς δὲ πέρατα σημεῖα.

δʹ. Εὐθεῖα γραμμή ἐστιν, ἥτις ἐξ ἴσου τοῖς ἐφ᾿ ἑαυτῆς σημείοις κεῖται.

εʹ. Ἐπιφάνεια δέ ἐστιν, ὃ μῆκος καὶ πλάτος μόνον ἔχει.

ϛʹ. Ἐπιφανείας δὲ πέρατα γραμμαί.

ζʹ. Ἐπίπεδος ἐπιφάνειά ἐστιν, ἥτις ἐξ ἴσου ταῖς ἐφ᾿ ἑαυτῆς εὐθείαις κεῖται.

ηʹ. Ἐπίπεδος δὲ γωνία ἐστὶν ἡ ἐν ἐπιπέδῳ δύο γραμμῶν ἁπτομένων ἀλλήλων καὶ μὴ ἐπ᾿ εὐθείας κειμένων πρὸς ἀλλήλας τῶν γραμμῶν κλίσις.

θʹ. Ὅταν δὲ αἱ περιέχουσαι τὴν γωνίαν γραμμαὶ εὐθεῖαι ὦσιν, εὐθύγραμμος καλεῖται ἡ γωνία.

ιʹ. Ὅταν δὲ εὐθεῖα ἐπ᾿ εὐθεῖαν σταθεῖσα τὰς ἐφεξῆς γωνίας ἴσας ἀλλήλαις ποιῇ, ὀρθὴ ἑκατέρα τῶν ἴσων γωνιῶν ἐστι, καὶ ἡ ἐφεστηκυῖα εὐθεῖα κάθετος καλεῖται, ἐφ᾿ ἣν ἐφέστηκεν.

ιαʹ. Ἀμβλεῖα γωνία ἐστὶν ἡ μείζων ὀρθῆς.

ιβʹ. Ὀξεῖα δὲ ἡ ἐλάσσων ὀρθῆς.

ιγʹ. Ὅρος ἐστίν, ὅ τινός ἐστι πέρας.

ιδʹ. Σχῆμά ἐστι τὸ ὑπό τινος ἤ τινων ὅρων περιεχόμενον.

ιεʹ. Κύκλος ἐστὶ σχῆμα ἐπίπεδον ὑπὸ μιᾶς γραμμῆς περιεχόμενον [ἣ καλεῖται περιφέρεια], πρὸς ἣν ἀφ᾿ ἑνὸς σημείου τῶν ἐντὸς τοῦ σχήματος κειμένων πᾶσαι αἱ προσπίπτουσαι εὐθεῖαι [πρὸς τὴν τοῦ κύκλου περιφέρειαν] ἴσαι ἀλλήλαις εἰσίν.

ιϛʹ. Κέντρον δὲ τοῦ κύκλου τὸ σημεῖον καλεῖται.

ιζʹ. Διάμετρος δὲ τοῦ κύκλου ἐστὶν εὐθεῖά τις διὰ τοῦ κέντρου ἠγμένη καὶ περατουμένη ἐφ᾿ ἑκάτερα τὰ μέρη ὑπὸ τῆς τοῦ κύκλου περιφερείας, ἥτις καὶ δίχα τέμνει τὸν κύκλον.

ιηʹ. Ἡμικύκλιον δέ ἐστι τὸ περιεχόμενον σχῆμα ὑπό τε τῆς διαμέτρου καὶ τῆς ἀπολαμβανομένης ὑπ᾿ αὐτῆς περιφερείας. κέντρον δὲ τοῦ ἡμικυκλίου τὸ αὐτό, ὃ καὶ τοῦ κύκλου ἐστίν.

ιθʹ. Σχήματα εὐθύγραμμά ἐστι τὰ ὑπὸ εὐθειῶν περιεχόμενα, τρίπλευρα μὲν τὰ ὑπὸ τριῶν, τετράπλευρα δὲ τὰ ὑπὸ τεσσάρων, πολύπλευρα δὲ τὰ ὑπὸ πλειόνων ἢ τεσσάρων εὐθειῶν περιεχόμενα.

κʹ. Τῶν δὲ τριπλεύρων σχημάτων ἰσόπλευρον μὲν τρίγωνόν ἐστι τὸ τὰς τρεῖς ἴσας ἔχον πλευράς, ἰσοσκελὲς δὲ τὸ τὰς δύο μόνας ἴσας ἔχον πλευράς, σκαληνὸν δὲ τὸ τὰς τρεῖς ἀνίσους ἔχον πλευράς.

καʹ Ἔτι δὲ τῶν τριπλεύρων σχημάτων ὀρθογώνιον μὲν τρίγωνόν ἐστι τὸ ἔχον ὀρθὴν γωνίαν, ἀμβλυγώνιον

Definitions

1. A point is that of which there is no part.
2. And a line is a length without breadth.
3. And the extremities of a line are points.
4. A straight-line is whatever lies evenly with points upon itself.
5. And a surface is that which has length and breadth alone.
6. And the extremities of a surface are lines.
7. A plane surface is whatever lies evenly with straight-lines upon itself.
8. And a plane angle is the inclination of the lines, when two lines in a plane meet one another, and are not laid down straight-on with respect to one another.
9. And when the lines containing the angle are straight then the angle is called rectilinear.
10. And when a straight-line stood upon (another) straight-line makes adjacent angles (which are) equal to one another, each of the equal angles is a right-angle, and the former straight-line is called perpendicular to that upon which it stands.
11. An obtuse angle is greater than a right-angle.
12. And an acute angle is less than a right-angle.
13. A boundary is that which is the extremity of something.
14. A figure is that which is contained by some boundary or boundaries.
15. A circle is a plane figure contained by a single line [which is called a circumference], (such that) all of the straight-lines radiating towards [the circumference] from a single point lying inside the figure are equal to one another.
16. And the point is called the center of the circle.
17. And a diameter of the circle is any straight-line, being drawn through the center, which is brought to an end in each direction by the circumference of the circle. And any such (straight-line) cuts the circle in half.[†]
18. And a semi-circle is the figure contained by the diameter and the circumference it cuts off. And the center of the semi-circle is the same (point) as (the center of) the circle.
19. Rectilinear figures are those figures contained by straight-lines: trilateral figures being contained by three straight-lines, quadrilateral by four, and multilateral by more than four.
20. And of the trilateral figures: an equilateral triangle is that having three equal sides, an isosceles (triangle) that having only two equal sides, and a scalene (triangle) that having three unequal sides.

δὲ τὸ ἔχον ἀμβλεῖαν γωνίαν, ὀξυγώνιον δὲ τὸ τὰς τρεῖς ὀξείας ἔχον γωνίας.

κβ΄. Τῶν δὲ τετραπλεύρων σχημάτων τετράγωνον μέν ἐστιν, ὃ ἰσόπλευρόν τέ ἐστι καὶ ὀρθογώνιον, ἑτερόμηκες δέ, ὃ ὀρθογώνιον μέν, οὐκ ἰσόπλευρον δέ, ῥόμβος δέ, ὃ ἰσόπλευρον μέν, οὐκ ὀρθογώνιον δέ, ῥομβοειδὲς δὲ τὸ τὰς ἀπεναντίον πλευράς τε καὶ γωνίας ἴσας ἀλλήλαις ἔχον, ὃ οὔτε ἰσόπλευρόν ἐστιν οὔτε ὀρθογώνιον· τὰ δὲ παρὰ ταῦτα τετράπλευρα τραπέζια καλείσθω.

κγ΄. Παράλληλοί εἰσιν εὐθεῖαι, αἵτινες ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ἐπιπέδῳ οὖσαι καὶ ἐκβαλλόμεναι εἰς ἄπειρον ἐφ᾽ ἑκάτερα τὰ μέρη ἐπὶ μηδέτερα συμπίπτουσιν ἀλλήλαις.

21. And further of the trilateral figures: a right-angled triangle is that having a right-angle, an obtuse-angled (triangle) that having an obtuse angle, and an acute-angled (triangle) that having three acute angles.

22. And of the quadrilateral figures: a square is that which is right-angled and equilateral, a rectangle that which is right-angled but not equilateral, a rhombus that which is equilateral but not right-angled, and a rhomboid that having opposite sides and angles equal to one another which is neither right-angled nor equilateral. And let quadrilateral figures besides these be called trapezia.

23. Parallel lines are straight-lines which, being in the same plane, and being produced to infinity in each direction, meet with one another in neither (of these directions).

† This should really be counted as a postulate, rather than as part of a definition.

Αἰτήματα.

α΄. Ἠιτήσθω ἀπὸ παντὸς σημείου ἐπὶ πᾶν σημεῖον εὐθεῖαν γραμμὴν ἀγαγεῖν.

β΄. Καὶ πεπερασμένην εὐθεῖαν κατὰ τὸ συνεχὲς ἐπ᾽ εὐθείας ἐκβαλεῖν.

γ΄. Καὶ παντὶ κέντρῳ καὶ διαστήματι κύκλον γράφεσθαι.

δ΄. Καὶ πάσας τὰς ὀρθὰς γωνίας ἴσας ἀλλήλαις εἶναι.

ε΄. Καὶ ἐὰν εἰς δύο εὐθείας εὐθεῖα ἐμπίπτουσα τὰς ἐντὸς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ αὐτὰ μέρη γωνίας δύο ὀρθῶν ἐλάσσονας ποιῇ, ἐκβαλλομένας τὰς δύο εὐθείας ἐπ᾽ ἄπειρον συμπίπτειν, ἐφ᾽ ἃ μέρη εἰσὶν αἱ τῶν δύο ὀρθῶν ἐλάσσονες.

Postulates

1. Let it have been postulated to draw a straight-line from any point to any point.
2. And to produce a finite straight-line continuously in a straight-line.
3. And to draw a circle with any center and radius.
4. And that all right-angles are equal to one another.
5. And that if a straight-line falling across two (other) straight-lines makes internal angles on the same side (of itself whose sum is) less than two right-angles, then, being produced to infinity, the two (other) straight-lines meet on that side (of the original straight-line) that the (sum of the internal angles) is less than two right-angles (and do not meet on the other side).†

† This postulate effectively specifies that we are dealing with the geometry of *flat*, rather than curved, space.

Κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι.

α΄. Τὰ τῷ αὐτῷ ἴσα καὶ ἀλλήλοις ἐστὶν ἴσα.

β΄. Καὶ ἐὰν ἴσοις ἴσα προστεθῇ, τὰ ὅλα ἐστὶν ἴσα.

γ΄. Καὶ ἐὰν ἀπὸ ἴσων ἲσα ἀφαιρεθῇ, τὰ καταλειπόμενά ἐστιν ἴσα.

δ΄. Καὶ τὰ ἐφαρμόζοντα ἐπ᾽ ἀλλήλα ἴσα ἀλλήλοις ἐστίν.

ε΄. Καὶ τὸ ὅλον τοῦ μέρους μεῖζόν [ἐστιν].

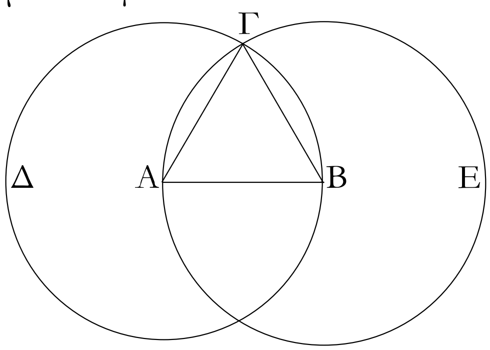
Common Notions

1. Things equal to the same thing are also equal to one another.
2. And if equal things are added to equal things then the wholes are equal.
3. And if equal things are subtracted from equal things then the remainders are equal.†
4. And things coinciding with one another are equal to one another.
5. And the whole [is] greater than the part.

† As an obvious extension of C.N.s 2 & 3—if equal things are added or subtracted from the two sides of an inequality then the inequality remains an inequality of the same type.

α΄.

Ἐπὶ τῆς δοθείσης εὐθείας πεπερασμένης τρίγωνον ἰσόπλευρον συστήσασθαι.



Ἔστω ἡ δοθεῖσα εὐθεῖα πεπερασμένη ἡ ΑΒ.

Δεῖ δὴ ἐπὶ τῆς ΑΒ εὐθείας τρίγωνον ἰσόπλευρον συστήσασθαι.

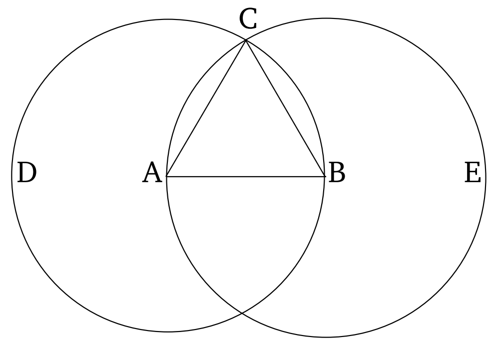
Κέντρῳ μὲν τῷ Α διαστήματι δὲ τῷ ΑΒ κύκλος γεγράφθω ὁ ΒΓΔ, καὶ πάλιν κέντρῳ μὲν τῷ Β διαστήματι δὲ τῷ ΒΑ κύκλος γεγράφθω ὁ ΑΓΕ, καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ Γ σημείου, καθ᾽ ὃ τέμνουσιν ἀλλήλους οἱ κύκλοι, ἐπί τὰ Α, Β σημεῖα ἐπεζεύχθωσαν εὐθεῖαι αἱ ΓΑ, ΓΒ.

Καὶ ἐπεὶ τὸ Α σημεῖον κέντρον ἐστὶ τοῦ ΓΔΒ κύκλου, ἴση ἐστὶν ἡ ΑΓ τῇ ΑΒ· πάλιν, ἐπεὶ τὸ Β σημεῖον κέντρον ἐστὶ τοῦ ΓΑΕ κύκλου, ἴση ἐστὶν ἡ ΒΓ τῇ ΒΑ. ἐδείχθη δὲ καὶ ἡ ΓΑ τῇ ΑΒ ἴση· ἑκατέρα ἄρα τῶν ΓΑ, ΓΒ τῇ ΑΒ ἐστιν ἴση. τὰ δὲ τῷ αὐτῷ ἴσα καὶ ἀλλήλοις ἐστὶν ἴσα· καὶ ἡ ΓΑ ἄρα τῇ ΓΒ ἐστιν ἴση· αἱ τρεῖς ἄρα αἱ ΓΑ, ΑΒ, ΒΓ ἴσαι ἀλλήλαις εἰσίν.

Ἰσόπλευρον ἄρα ἐστὶ τὸ ΑΒΓ τρίγωνον. καὶ συνέσταται ἐπὶ τῆς δοθείσης εὐθείας πεπερασμένης τῆς ΑΒ· ὅπερ ἔδει ποιῆσαι.

Proposition 1

To construct an equilateral triangle on a given finite straight-line.



Let AB be the given finite straight-line.

So it is required to construct an equilateral triangle on the straight-line AB.

Let the circle BCD with center A and radius AB have been drawn [Post. 3], and again let the circle ACE with center B and radius BA have been drawn [Post. 3]. And let the straight-lines CA and CB have been joined from the point C, where the circles cut one another,† to the points A and B (respectively) [Post. 1].

And since the point A is the center of the circle CDB, AC is equal to AB [Def. 1.15]. Again, since the point B is the center of the circle CAE, BC is equal to BA [Def. 1.15]. But CA was also shown (to be) equal to AB. Thus, CA and CB are each equal to AB. But things equal to the same thing are also equal to one another [C.N. 1]. Thus, CA is also equal to CB. Thus, the three (straight-lines) CA, AB, and BC are equal to one another.

Thus, the triangle ABC is equilateral, and has been constructed on the given finite straight-line AB. (Which is) the very thing it was required to do.

† The assumption that the circles do indeed cut one another should be counted as an additional postulate. There is also an implicit assumption that two straight-lines cannot share a common segment.

β΄.

Πρὸς τῷ δοθέντι σημείῳ τῇ δοθείσῃ εὐθείᾳ ἴσην εὐθεῖαν θέσθαι.

Ἔστω τὸ μὲν δοθὲν σημεῖον τὸ Α, ἡ δὲ δοθεῖσα εὐθεῖα ἡ ΒΓ· δεῖ δὴ πρὸς τῷ Α σημείῳ τῇ δοθείσῃ εὐθείᾳ τῇ ΒΓ ἴσην εὐθεῖαν θέσθαι.

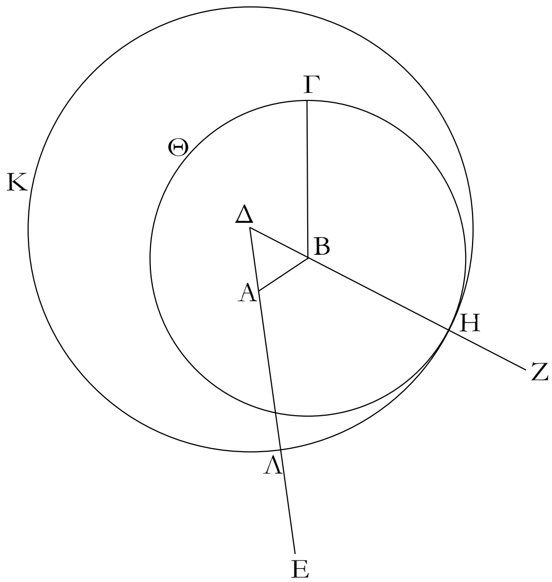
Ἐπεζεύχθω γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ Α σημείου ἐπί τὸ Β σημεῖον εὐθεῖα ἡ ΑΒ, καὶ συνεστάτω ἐπ᾽ αὐτῆς τρίγωνον ἰσόπλευρον τὸ ΔΑΒ, καὶ ἐκβεβλήσθωσαν ἐπ᾽ εὐθείας ταῖς ΔΑ, ΔΒ εὐθεῖαι αἱ ΑΕ, ΒΖ, καὶ κέντρῳ μὲν τῷ Β διαστήματι δὲ τῷ ΒΓ κύκλος γεγράφθω ὁ ΓΗΘ, καὶ πάλιν κέντρῳ τῷ Δ καὶ διαστήματι τῷ ΔΗ κύκλος

Proposition 2†

To place a straight-line equal to a given straight-line at a given point.

Let A be the given point, and BC the given straight-line. So it is required to place a straight-line at point A equal to the given straight-line BC.

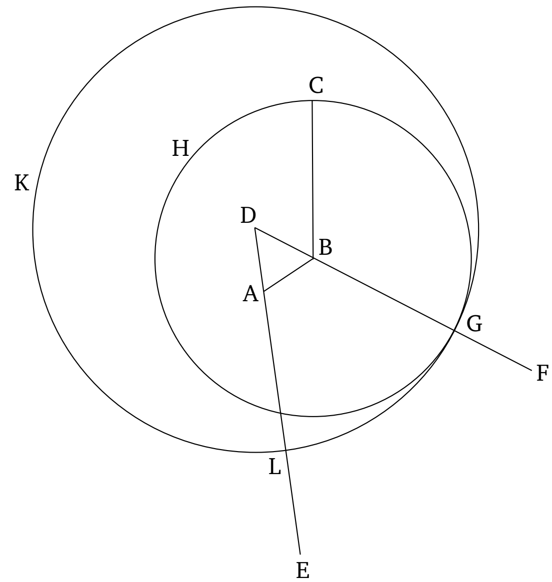
For let the straight-line AB have been joined from point A to point B [Post. 1], and let the equilateral triangle DAB have been been constructed upon it [Prop. 1.1]. And let the straight-lines AE and BF have been produced in a straight-line with DA and DB (respectively) [Post. 2]. And let the circle CGH with center B and raγεγράφθω ὁ ΗΚΛ.



Ἐπεὶ οὖν τὸ Β σημεῖον κέντρον ἐστὶ τοῦ ΓΗΘ, ἴση ἐστὶν ἡ ΒΓ τῇ ΒΗ. πάλιν, ἐπεὶ τὸ Δ σημεῖον κέντρον ἐστὶ τοῦ ΗΚΛ κύκλου, ἴση ἐστὶν ἡ ΔΛ τῇ ΔΗ, ὧν ἡ ΔΑ τῇ ΔΒ ἴση ἐστίν. λοιπὴ ἄρα ἡ ΑΛ λοιπῇ τῇ ΒΗ ἐστιν ἴση. ἐδείχθη δὲ καὶ ἡ ΒΓ τῇ ΒΗ ἴση· ἑκατέρα ἄρα τῶν ΑΛ, ΒΓ τῇ ΒΗ ἐστιν ἴση. τὰ δὲ τῷ αὐτῷ ἴσα καὶ ἀλλήλοις ἐστὶν ἴσα· καὶ ἡ ΑΛ ἄρα τῇ ΒΓ ἐστιν ἴση.

Πρὸς ἄρα τῷ δοθέντι σημείῳ τῷ Α τῇ δοθείσῃ εὐθείᾳ τῇ ΒΓ ἴση εὐθεῖα κεῖται ἡ ΑΛ· ὅπερ ἔδει ποιῆσαι.

dius BC have been drawn [Post. 3], and again let the circle GKL with center D and radius DG have been drawn [Post. 3].



Therefore, since the point B is the center of (the circle) CGH, BC is equal to BG [Def. 1.15]. Again, since the point D is the center of the circle GKL, DL is equal to DG [Def. 1.15]. And within these, DA is equal to DB. Thus, the remainder AL is equal to the remainder BG [C.N. 3]. But BC was also shown (to be) equal to BG. Thus, AL and BC are each equal to BG. But things equal to the same thing are also equal to one another [C.N. 1]. Thus, AL is also equal to BC.

Thus, the straight-line AL, equal to the given straight-line BC, has been placed at the given point A. (Which is) the very thing it was required to do.

† This proposition admits of a number of different cases, depending on the relative positions of the point A and the line BC. In such situations, Euclid invariably only considers one particular case—usually, the most difficult—and leaves the remaining cases as exercises for the reader.