Richard Zach and Landon Elkind

'The Genealogy of ∨'

Abstract: The use of the symbol ∨ for disjunction in formal logic is ubiquitous. Where did it come from? Some sources say it was introduced by Peano; others suggest it that it originates as an abbreviation of the Latin word for "or", *vel*. The paper investigates these claims' and traces the origin of the symbol to Russell's first investigations into formal logic. The claims themselves are perhaps not very significant, and their connection to the history of logic and analytic philosophy not very deep. Investigating them, however, gives us an opportunity to discuss the role formal logic played in early analytic philosophy, especially Frege's and Russell's work using formal logic to provide accounts of the nature of mathematics and of analytic truth. These developments fare influential to this day. We will have opportunity to look at both later work influenced by Russell, such as the work of the Hilbert school and the logical empiricists in the 1920s and 1930s (Carnap and early Quine), and earlier work such as the Peano school and mathematicians working on logic and formal systems in the 19th century (Boole, Grassmann, Schröder, Peirce).

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