

Formal Philosophy

edited by

Vincent F. Hendricks and John Symons

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This volume contains 21 interviews on five questions for formal philosophers. The questions are: (1) Why were you initially drawn to formal methods? (2) What example(s) from your own work illustrates the role formal methods can play in philosophy? (3) What is the proper role of philosophy in relation to other disciplines? (4) What do you consider the most neglected topics and/or contributions in late 20th century philosophy. (5) What are the most important open problems in philosophy and what are the prospects for progress?

This book brings together the opinions of some very distinguished scholars from Europe and North-America. Not every contributor replies to all questions, and the length of the interviews varies from one page (Adolf Grünbaum) to 26 pages (Wolfgang Spohn).

Dresden University of Technology
Heinrich Wansing

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What does this book achieve? First of all, it gives an impression of what formal philosophy is, not by definition but rather by examples indicating the range of formal philosophy. Second, it gives an impression of what kind of scientists are working in this field, what their motivations for doing formal philosophy are, and which or what kind of insights and results they have obtained and which methods they have developed or applied. Third, the book presents an interesting snapshot of intellectual history, and it is not for the least part that the latter aspect makes the book a very interesting reading.

It will come as no surprise that formal philosophy is a field of interdisciplinary research. Among the contributors there are some well-known mathematicians, and it is particularly interesting for a philosopher to see what they have to say about formal philosophy.