

“What is Formalisation?”

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Abstract

Turning informal language into formal symbolism is the logician’s art. But what is this art, skill, possibly science, logicians are so adept at? What criteria guide it? You might expect the question to have an easy answer given that logicians are as a group excellent formalisers (almost by definition). But practice is one thing and theory another, and logicians or philosophers of logic have so far not greatly clarified what formalisation consists in.

My talk’s aim will be to take a step towards a more complete list of criteria of acceptable or good formalisation. It will thereby cast some light on the main function of a logic: capturing logical consequence. My talk will be self-contained but if anyone would like to read some related material on which it will build, they could look at two recent papers of mine: ‘Capturing Consequence’ (2019) or ‘Propositionalism’ (2021).