

Abstract

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This is a dissertation about language and method. A new method for conceptual investigations is presented and a major part of the dissertation is devoted to displaying this method in all of its elements as well as showing its applicability. The most salient characteristic of the method is the persistent analytic attention to the relationship between language and the world. Both the thought of creating a method for conceptual investigations, and the practice of letting the relationship between language and the world constitute the linchpin of the method, go back to reflections on Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1889–1951) philosophy.

In this method, three circumstances are of special importance. First, the meaning of concepts: what do dictionaries say and what meanings form part of everyday language? Second, the use of concepts: how does one usually speak, and what should a specific situation be like in order for an expression to be understood? Third, the limits of meaning and usage: how far do the meaning and use of concepts reach? The main example to show how the method is structured, and that it is usable, is the concept of *ethics*. Briefly, and given the above-mentioned questions, what does *ethics* mean, how is it used and how do we know the limits of its use? I have chosen Kant's moral philosophy and utilitarianism as an example of the richly nuanced *meanings* of ethics, while discussions about the rights of animals are brought in to illustrate the *limits* of ethics. My ambition is that the reader after having finished the book should be able to use the method on whatever concept she wishes.

Keywords: World and language, method, example, ethic, ordinary language philosophy, concept, use, limit, utilitarianism, animal liberation, God, personal concepts, lie, L. Wittgenstein, I. Kant, P. Singer.