

Back Cover Summary-

Descriptions, Prescriptions, and the Limits of Knowledge defies the recent specialization in analytic philosophy by providing an ambitious global view of the discipline. The proposed theoretical definitions of 'description' and 'prescription' have important ties to epistemology, metaethics, the philosophy of language, the philosophy of mathematics, aesthetics, formal semantics, metaphysics, and philosophical methodology.

The methodology of 'conceptual analysis' is practiced as a social scientific inquiry as opposed to highly metaphysical theories. Abductive and deductive arguments are offered to explain and defend various philosophical positions.

'Description' and 'prescription' are defined here:

A '**description**' is an assertion that purports to express a *correspondence* (or a representation) of some state of affairs, where its correctness (or incorrectness) is independent of its acceptance (or non-acceptance) by particular persons.

A '**prescription**' is an assertion that purports to express a *stipulation* (or rule) upon a practice, where its correctness (or incorrectness) is dependent upon its acceptance (or non-acceptance) by particular persons.

It is argued that descriptions can be knowable, but prescriptions are not knowable.

It is argued that the following assertions (in context) are *descriptions*: (1) empirical statements, (2) true-in-a-language sentences (e.g., theorems, valid entailments, analytic sentences, and tautologies), (3) reportive (lexical) definitions, (4) theoretic (natural kind) definitions, (5) aesthetic assertions, and (6) social science theories.

This contrasts to assertions (in context) that are *prescriptions*: (1) stipulative definitions, (2) 'sufficient evidence' assertions (especially in regress situations) (3) the axioms, vocabulary, syntax, and inference rules of formal deductive systems, and (4) normative ethical assertions.

Although the two volumes are written for philosophers and students, it is my hope that educators, politicians, journalists, psychologists, and the general public, will also be interested. The first volume is directed at a general audience, and the second volume provides details on technical issues that will be of greater interest to professional philosophers. I have attempted to make the chapters as clear and intelligible as possible.