These days, classical descriptivism is widely rejected. There are numerous reasons, but the most influential and powerful reason is that full-scale conceptual analysis almost never succeeds. Almost every conceptual analysis that has ever been put forward has been a failure, in that it is subject to counterexamples. That said, a weaker form of conceptual analysis remains plausible. This is casewise conceptual analysis, where one describes a case and asks whether it is an instance of the concept.

Casewise conceptual analysis

- World considered as counterfactual
- World considered as actual

1. Watery XYZ in oceans is not water
2. Watery XYZ in oceans is water

If we presuppose the meaning of a first tier of expressions and use them to describe the cases, Carnap’s method can be used to ground a second tier of meanings for other words and concepts. These meanings are in effect grounded in inferences from descriptions of cases (e.g., the Gettier case) to judgments involving the concept in question (e.g., John knows that p). A raft of dispositions to make inferences along these lines constitutes the meaning of a term such as knowledge.

Dispositional analysis of wanting an ice cream cone:

- Ice cream cone in face
- Eats it
- “Do you want an ice cream cone?”
- “Yes”
- And so on...

Infinite set of conditionals

1957: A person who wants an ice cream cone will not be disposed to grasp it if he thinks it is a tube of axle grease or if he thinks he will incur an unacceptable obligation.

Lesson 1: the conditions under which a given mental state will issue in a behavioral disposition involves specification of other mental states

Lesson 2: Different combinations of mental states can issue in the same behavioral dispositions
Super-super Spartans: perfect pretenders

Genetic programming leads them to act as if they have congenital insensitivity to pain

Decoding their thoughts shows otherwise

A raft of dispositions to make inferences along these lines constitutes the meaning of a term such as knowledge.

OCD leads a person to avoid completing any 5 step logical inference, even in thought

I must stop reasoning now or the world will end!!

1. **Compelling**: The person finds the step compelling, even primitively compelling but is not disposed to take it
2. **Disposition**: The person is disposed to take it but does not satisfy the counterfactuals normally associated with the disposition
3. **Functional State**: The person is in a functional state that determines the relevant disposition if we set the “other” mental states to their “normal” values

“For our purposes compellingness should be understood as a psychological rather than a normative notion, in order to avoid the circularity issue. What matters for my purposes is that an inference is not psychologically based in accepting other claims (and in particular is not based in perception or in empirical judgment), whether or not it should be so based… it is not out of the question that these psychological correlates of apriority might be usable at least to a first approximation in building an inferential theory of content.”
Disposition: The person is disposed to take it but does not satisfy the counterfactuals normally associated with the disposition

Is the perfect pretender disposed to say “Ouch”? The case is constructed to avoid that interpretation

Functional State: The person is in a functional state that determines the relevant disposition if we set the “other” mental states to their “normal” values

Not clear how this helps

“...a weaker form of conceptual analysis remains plausible. This is casewise conceptual analysis, where one describes a case and asks whether it is an instance of the concept.”

How do we know whether in deciding if a case is an instance of the concept we tacitly and inadvertently change the concept?
When we decide whether a concept fits a new case in a world considered as an actual world candidate, we formulate the simplest theory of that case in that world candidate.

But that may involve adjusting the concepts in our web of concepts so that the target concept changes.

Bachelor = a man of marriageable age who has never been married and is not a member of a religious order that eschews marriage

By the late 1970s-1980s, as the institution of marriage was collapsing, it was common for couples who reject the institution of marriage to live together stably for decades, have children...

1. Technically, he is a bachelor
2. There is no matter of fact as to whether he is a bachelor
3. He is not a bachelor

Is he a bachelor?
1. Technically, he is a bachelor
2. There is no matter of fact as to whether he is a bachelor
3. He is not a bachelor

Suppose 3 is right

If the conditionals concerning worlds considered as actual (the casewise analyses) are the same at t₁ and t₂, there is no conceptual change; if the conditionals change, there is conceptual change.

If Putnam had used “casewise conceptual analysis” in 1962, he would have realized that there would be some doubt about whether Hartry is a bachelor.

So maybe 'bachelor' never meant man of marriageable age who has never been married and is not a member of a religious order that eschews marriage. BUT we can never survey all the weird cases, so we never know the meanings of words.

Do we ever know the meaning of a word?

“…a weaker form of conceptual analysis remains plausible. This is casewise conceptual analysis, where one describes a case and asks whether it is an instance of the concept.”

If we never know the meaning of a word, we never know whether the casewise conceptual analysis procedure changes the meaning.
“Class inclusion” analyticities:
- Cats are animals
- Pencils are artifacts
- Water is a liquid

World considered as actual in which cats are robot spies from Mars
World considered as actual in which pencils come out of the desks at night to fraternize and reproduce
World considered as actual in which water is a slippery granular solid

“Conceptual containment” analyticities:
- Cats are animals
- Pencils are artifacts
- Water is a liquid

“Oh but we should have realized all along that these “conceptual containment” analyticities” were false!

If we cannot survey the worlds considered as actual that test our hypotheses about the meanings of our terms, we can never know when casewise conceptual analysis changes meanings

Robots from Mars scenario
described in base language

Cats are robots from Mars

Let t1 be before Putnam published this scenario and t2 be afterward

Dave: If this conditional would have been accepted by us at t1 and is now accepted at t2, there is no change of meaning

But how do we know whether there would be a change of meaning both at t1 and t2? There being no difference between t1 and t2 has nothing to do with that key issue

“…a weaker form of conceptual analysis remains plausible. This is casewise conceptual analysis, where one describes a case and asks whether it is an instance of the concept.”

If we never know the meaning of a word, we never know whether the casewise conceptual analysis procedure changes the meaning
In 1962, we all would have said that the prior probability was zero of discovering a man who is not a bachelor but who is a man of marriageable age who has never been married and is not a member of a religious order that eschews marriage.

The Bayesian picture only applies when there is a fixed set of scenarios and hypotheses.