1. Examples: 'The dog', 'The queen of England' (both *singular* DDs), 'The chairs in this room' (a *plural* DD), 'My dog' (a *possessive*),

2. Some questions:
   - What is the meaning of 'The F is G'? Or: What proposition does it express? Or: What are its truth conditions? Or: What is its logical form?
   - What is the meaning of 'The F'? Or: What does it contribute to the proposition expressed by 'The F is G'? Or: What does it contribute to the truth conditions of 'The F is G'? Or: What does it contribute to the logical form of 'The F is G'?
   - What about 'The'?

A simple theory

1. The meaning of 'The F' (or: what it contributes …) is the unique thing which is F, and 'The F' *refers to* or *denotes* this thing. So the meaning of 'The Australian in this room' is me. 'The F is G' is true iff the thing that 'The F' refers to is G. The *logical form* of 'The F is G' is 'Ga'.

2. But here are some problems:
   a. 'The dog in this room' is meaningful, but there is no unique dog in this room.
   b. 'The person in this room' is meaningful, but there is no unique person in this room.
   c. 'The dog in this room does not exist' is not only meaningful but true (this is a *negative existential*)

Russell

1. Bertrand Russell proposed that the logical form of 'The F is G' is more complicated than 'Ga'. We do not use 'The F' to refer to anything. Rather, we use it as a device of *quantification*:

   a. There is at least one F, and there is at most one F, and everything that is F is G.
      $\exists x Fx \ \& \ \forall x \forall y((Fx \ \& \ Fy) \rightarrow x = y) \ \& \ \forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$

   b. There is something such that: it is F, and nothing else is F, and it is G.
      $\exists x(Fx \ \& \ \forall y(Fy \rightarrow x = y) \ \& \ Gx)$

   c. There is something such that: it is the only F, and it is G.
      $\exists x(\forall y(Fy \leftrightarrow x = y) \ \& \ Gx)$

2. On this theory, 'The F is G' is *false* if there is no F, or more than one F. So the following sentences are both false:

   a. The dog in this room is barking.

b. The person in this room is confused.

3. What does 'The F' mean? The question is ill-posed – we can only talk about the meaning of 'The F is G'. It does not mean, for example, that there is at least one F, and at most one F.

4. The theory allows that 'The F is G' can be meaningful (and indeed true or false) even if there are no Fs, or more than one F.

5. What about negative existentials? According to Russell, 'The F is not G' is ambiguous, between a reading on which 'not' takes wide scope, and a reading on which it takes narrow scope (this is a structural ambiguity).

   The wide scope reading:
   - Not(The F is G)
   - **It is not the case that** the F is G
   - **It is not the case that** there is at least one F, and there is at most one F, and everything that is F is G
   - $\neg(\exists x Fx \ \& \ \forall x \forall y((Fx \ \& \ Fy) \rightarrow x = y) \ \& \ \forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx))$

   The narrow scope reading:
   - The F is (not G)
   - There is at least one F, and there is at most one F, and everything that is F is **not** G
   - $\exists x Fx \ \& \ \forall x \forall y((Fx \ \& \ Fy) \rightarrow x = y) \ \& \ \forall x(Fx \rightarrow \neg Gx)$

   So according to Russell, 'The dog in this room is not barking' is ambiguous, between a reading on which it is true (the wide scope reading), and a reading on which it is false (the narrow scope reading).

6. The negative existential 'The dog in this room does not exist' is accordingly ambiguous, between two readings. It is on the wide scope reading that it is true.

   The wide scope reading:
   - Not(The dog in this room is existent)
   - **It is not the case that** there is at least one dog in this room, and there is at most one dog in this room, and everything that is a dog in this room is existent

   The narrow scope reading:
   - The dog in this room is (not existent)
   - There is at least one dog in this room, and there is at most one dog in this room, and everything that is a dog in this room is **not** existent

7. The reading on which 'not' takes wide scope can also be thought of as a reading on which 'The F' takes narrow scope – Russell calls this a *secondary* use of 'The F'.

The reading on which 'not' takes narrow scope can also be thought of as a reading on which 'the F' takes wide scope – Russell calls this a *primary* use of 'the F'.

If there is not exactly one F, then any primary use of 'the F' yields a false sentence.

<u>Strawson</u>

1. Russell's theory (1905) was widely accepted until Strawson's 1950 paper, 'On Referring' (in Martinich). Strawson revitalizes the idea that we use definite descriptions to refer (rather than to quantify, as Russell claims).

2. Strawson claims that 'The dog in this room' does not refer, even if there is exactly one dog in this room. Rather, it can be *used* to refer.

    It is meaningful, not because it refers to something (it doesn't), but because it *can* be used to refer to something; there are conventions governing its use to refer.

    [Need to be careful about using 'can' here: can 'schlog' be used to refer to something?]

3. Similarly, 'The dog in this room is barking' does not say anything, even if there is exactly one dog in this room. Rather, it can be *used* to say something.

    It is meaningful, not because it says something (it doesn't), but because it *can* be used to say something; there are conventions governing its use to say something.

4. Strawson: to give the meaning of an expression is to give general directions for its use in making true or false assertions; to give the rules, habits, or conventions governing its correct use.

5. If there is exactly one dog in this room then a speaker who utters 'The dog in this room is barking' succeeds in referring to something and saying something (which is then either true or false). Otherwise, the speaker does not succeed in referring or saying something – there is nothing that she has said to count as being true or false; her utterance is neither true nor false.

6. Strawson agrees with Russell that 'The dog in this room is barking' can only be used to say something true if there is exactly one dog in this room.

7. He disagrees with Russell about what happens if there is not exactly one dog in this room – Russell claims that something false is said (which is counterintuitive); Strawson claims that nothing true or false has been said (in fact, nothing has been said).

8. When a speaker tries to say something using 'The dog in this room is barking' she *presupposes* that there is a unique dog in this room (presupposition is different from entailment).

She does not *say* that there is a unique dog in this room. (Strawson accuses Russell of claiming this.)

9. What do I say when I utter 'The dog in this room is barking'?

   Russell:
   $\exists x Dx \; \& \; \forall x \forall y ((Dx \; \& \; Dy) \rightarrow x = y) \; \& \; \forall x (Dx \rightarrow Bx)$

   Strawson:
   Bd, if there is a unique dog d in this room
   Nothing, otherwise

   This what I presuppose:
   There is exactly one dog in this room
   $\exists x Dx \; \& \; \forall x \forall y ((Dx \; \& \; Dy) \rightarrow x = y)$

10. How does Strawson handle negative existentials? If there is no unique dog in this room then according to Strawson I do not say anything when I utter 'The dog in this room does not exist', so I do not say anything true or false. He needs some other account of what is going on here.

Donnellan

1. According to both Russell and Strawson, if there is not a unique F then a speaker cannot use 'The F is G' to say something true: according to Russell she says something false, according to Strawson she does not say anything.

2. Donnellan ('Reference and Definite Descriptions', 1966) agrees that there is such a use, and that either Russell's or Strawson's accounts of this use are correct. He calls this the *attributive* use of 'The F'.

3. But he claims that there is a second use of 'The F' which Russell and Strawson both overlook. He calls this the *referential* use of 'The F'. When 'The F' is used referentially, a speaker can succeed in saying something *true*, even if there is not exactly one F.

4. Examples of the use that Donnellan has in mind:

   a. The dog next door is agitated.
   b. Smith's murderer is insane.
   c. The man in the corner drinking a martini is a philosopher.
   d. Bring me the book over there.

5. The attributive use:

a. If there is not exactly one F, then nothing has been said to be G. He remains on the fence about whether Russell or Strawson's theory gives the correct account. Although he does claim that there is presupposition involved in this case.

b. 'The F' occurs essentially.

c. The speaker presupposes (in some sense) that there is an *x* such that *x* is the unique F. There is no particular thing that she presupposes to be the unique F.

d. The speaker wishes to speak about whatever is the unique F. For all *x*, if *x* is not F then she does not wish to speak about *x*. For all *x* and *y*, if *x* and *y* are both F then she does not wish to speak about *x* or *y*.

6. The referential use:

a. Even if there is not exactly one F, the speaker might succeed in saying something true.

b. 'The F' does not occur essentially.

c. There is an *x* such that the speaker presupposes (in some sense) that *x* is the unique F. There is a particular thing that she presupposes to be the unique F.

d. The speaker wishes to speak about this particular thing, even if it is not the unique F (i.e. even if it is not F, and even if something else is also F).

7. We cannot tell from the *sentence* that a speaker uses, 'The F is G', whether she is using 'the F' attributively or referentially.

8. Is this an ambiguity theory?

9. Whether or not the speaker is using it attributively or referentially is not determined by her beliefs about what, if anything, is the unique F:

a. It is possible for a speaker to use 'the F' attributively, even though she believes of a particular thing that it is the F. Example: 'The smartest kid in this class will get an A.'

b. It is possible for a speaker to use 'the F' referentially, even though she believes there is no unique F. Example: 'The chair of the philosophy department lives in Fall Creek.'

So to presuppose that *a* is the unique F is not to believe that *a* is the unique F.

10. Is Donnellan right about what the speaker says in the so-called referential cases? We should be careful to distinguish what the speaker says from what the speaker means. Lycan: *semantic reference* versus *speaker reference*.