

Philosophy of Logic and Language

Descriptions

Primary Readings

- (!) **Russell, B.**, '**On Denoting**', *Mind* 14 (1905), pp. 479-93. (Reprinted in Martinich (ed.), *The Philosophy of Language*).
- (!) **Strawson, P.**, '**On Referring**', *Mind* 59 (1950), pp. 320-44. (Reprinted in Martinich and Moore).
- (!) **Donnellan, K.**, '**Reference and Definite Descriptions**', *Philosophical Review* 75 (1966), pp. 281-304. Reprinted in Martinich (ed.).
- **Kripke, S.**, '**Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference**', in French, Uehling and Wettstein (eds) *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 2, pp. 255-76. Reprinted in Martinich (ed.).
- **Donnellan, K.**, '**Speaker Reference, Descriptions, and Anaphora**', in P. Cole (ed.), *Syntax and Semantics 9: Pragmatics*. New York (1978), pp. 47-68.
- **Neale, S.**, *Descriptions*, MIT Press (1990) - esp. chapters 1-2.
- **Sharvey, R.**, '**A more general theory of definite descriptions**', *Philosophical Review* 89 (1980), pp. 607-623.

Background Readings:

- Lycan, W., *The philosophy of language*, chapter 2.
- Ludlow, P., '**Descriptions**', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

Questions:

- (1) Must Russell's theory of definite descriptions be rejected?
- (2) How can Russell's theory of definite descriptions treat sentences such as 'The door is open', in which on the face of it uniqueness is not satisfied?
- (3) Does Donnellan's distinction between referential and attributive uses of definite descriptions show that definite descriptions are semantically ambiguous?
- (4) Are definite descriptions quantifier expressions, referring expressions, or are they ambiguous between the two?
- (5) How can we account for plural descriptions (e.g. 'The women are thinking')? Can we give a uniform account of the use of the definite article in 'The women are thinking' and 'The woman is thinking'?