I.
* Two functions of definite descriptions: attributive use and referential use. Donnellan claims that both Russell and Strawson’s theories suffer from not recognizing these distinct functions.

Strawson and Russell seem to me to make a common assumption here about the question of how definite descriptions function: that we can ask how a definite description functions in some sentence independently of a particular occasion upon which it is used.

II.
[Ignore]

III.
* Attributive use: “A speaker who uses a definite description attributively in an assertion states something about whoever or whatever is the so-and-so.”

Referential use: “A speaker who uses a definite description referentially in an assertion, on the other hand, uses the description to enable his audience to pick out whom or what he is talking about and states something about that person or thing.”

Example: “Smith’s murderer is insane.” The differences in these two uses are particularly clear when nothing satisfies the definite description (e.g., Smith committed suicide) or something other than what we think satisfies the definite description (a version of the martini example). There are also examples of non-assertions – e.g., “Who is the man drinking a martini?” or “Bring me the book on the table.”

* Strawson’s denial of the Law of the Excluded Middle might hold for certain attributive uses. But it won’t hold for referential uses.

IV.
* Which way an expression is used does not depend on the beliefs of the speaker.

“It is possible for a definite description to be used attributively even though the speaker (and his audience) believes that a certain person or thing fits the description. And it is possible for a definite description to be used referentially where the speaker believes that nothing fits the description.”

V.
* Both uses typically do presuppose that something fits the description. In the referential case, this is a means to getting people to think about the right person. In
the attributive case, we do not successfully make an assertion (Russell's analysis notwithstanding) unless something fits the description.

VI.
* Donnellan thinks that both Strawson and Russell mishandle the referential uses.

* Donnellan distinguishes *denotation* and *reference*. The 1960 speaker denotes Barry Goldwater, but he does not refer to him. Russell’s theory does not distinguish these.

VII.
* A sentence, on its own, does not reveal if an expression is used attributively or referentially. We need to know the speaker's intentions. And this uncertainty does not arise due to any syntactic or semantic ambiguity.

VIII.
* Can a statement with a definite description that fails to denote, but which is still used successfully to refer to someone, be true? For example: “Her husband is kind to her.” Donnellan argues that one can at least say something true of someone in this way.

    I am thus drawn to the conclusion that when a speaker uses a definite description referentially he may have stated something true or false even if nothing fits the description, and that there is not a clear sense in which he has made a statement which is neither true nor false.

IX.
* Definite descriptions, when used referentially, can almost function as proper names.