Four puzzles for a purely referential theory of names (and more generally terms).
(1) Informative identity statements.   Salt = sodium dichloride. Ludacris = Christopher Bridges.
(2) Meaningful non-referring terms.   Jack Frost. Homer, maybe. Vulcan. Phlogiston.
(3) Non-existence claims.   Vulcan doesn't exist. There is no such man is Homer.
(4) Attitude attributions. Alma doesn't realize salt = sodium dichloride.

Frege: solve all four with SENSE™.
(1) "Salt" and "sodium dichloride" agree in reference but not sense.
(2) "Vulcan" lacks reference but has sense.
(3) "Vulcan doesn't exist" says that the sense of "Vulcan" is uninstantiated. Nothing vulcanizes.
(4) Alma doesn't realize the condiment is the chemical.

Russell: a one-level, purely referential, theory can do all this and more. Today we try to understand Russell's theory. Critique will come later.

Knowledge by Acquaintance and by Description

Names stand for things we are directly acquainted with. How do we talk about other things, say, Mt Everest? Somehow it must be possible to build an expression denoting Mt Everest out of words for things known by acquaintance. ("Every proposition which we understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted" (Problems of Philosophy p. 32). 'On Denoting' asks how we do it.   We do it with *quantifiers*. These are different from names but are easily confused with them. "I see nobody."

Quantifiers (Something, Nothing, Everything)

Russell wanted to do everything (no pun intended) with a single quantifier: the universal. He does it by a cumbersome metalinguistic method:

C (everything) means 'C(x) is always true'
C (nothing) means '"C(x) is false" is always true' ……..why not 'C(x) is always false'?
C (something) means 'It is false that "C(x) is false" is always true'…..why not 'C(x) is not always false?'

(He says that 'C(x) is always true' is 'ultimate and indefinable'; but we can get some grip on it by thinking that 'always' (p.231) means 'no matter what x is, ' or 'for every instantiation of the variable').

Today we do it rather differently. ∀x C(x) is true just in case every object in the domain satisfies 'C' (an object satisfies 'C' iff it is C).

C (everything) means ∀x C(x)
C (nothing) means ∀x ~C(x)
C (something) means ~∀x ~C(x)   (=$_{df}$ ∃x C(x))

Descriptions (A, The)

These are analyzed into quantifiers.   'A cousin of Charles II is staying in my apartment' is analyzed as ∃x (C2(x) & SA(x)).   Note: the phrase 'a cousin of Charles II' disappears on analysis! Contextual definition. 'The father of Charles II was executed' becomes

(i)	Someone fathered Charles II	∃x FCx &
(ii)	At most one person fathered Charles II	∀y ∀z (FCy & FCz ⊃ y = z) &
(iii)	Everyone who fathered Charles II was executed	∀y (FCy ⊃ EXy)

Simplifying, 'The F is G' is analyzed as ∃x (Fx & ∀y (Fy ⊃ y=x) & Gx).
Simplifying even more: ∃x (∀y (Fy ≡ y=x) & Gx)
Simplifying even more: ∃x (F!x & Gx)

Informativeness of Identity

'Scott = the author of Waverley' = ∃x (∀y (y wrote Waverley ≡ y=x) & x wrote Waverley).
Nothing uninformative about that!

Non-Referring (or Non-Denoting) Terms

The first is impossible. Reference is a relation to objects of our acquaintance. We know them so intimately that there is no chance of their not existing.

The second is not a problem. Take 'the King of France.'   There is no such person. But we shouldn't conclude it designates a sense. Its meaning is a matter of how it contributes to sentences in which it occurs.   'The King of France is bald' means ∃x (∀y (y regally ruled France ≡ y=x) & x is bald). This is not nonsense, it is false.

Non-existence Claims

Russell agrees with Meinong that 'The golden mountain does not exist' ought to come out true. Must the golden mountain then have "being"? *Only if the function of "the golden mountain" is to pick out or denote an object.* It isn't, according to Russell.

'The King of France doesn't exist' means (first pass) ∃x (∀y (y regally ruled France ≡ y=x) & x doesn't exist).?????!!##@? Scope distinctions. There are two ways of negating 'The F is G.'

    (i)   ∃x (Fx & ∀y (Fy ⊃ y=x) & ~Gx). *There is a unique F and it is NOT G.*   [wide scope]
    (ii)   ~∃x (Fx & ∀y (Fy ⊃ y=x) & Gx). *NOT: there is a unique F and it is G.*   [narrow scope]

Russell would say the description has a "primary occurrence" in (i) and a "secondary occurrence" in (ii). Nowadays we say the description has wide scope in (i) and narrow scope in (ii). What we gave above was the wide scope reading of 'The King of France doesn't exist.' The wide scope reading contradicts itself. But the narrow scope reading — ~∃x (∀y (y regally ruled France ≡ y=x) & x exists) — does not. One more wrinkle: 'x exists' is nonsense according to Russell!

> You can assert that "the so-and-so exists", meaning that there is just one [thing] that has those properties, but when you get hold of a [thing] that has them, you cannot say of this [thing] that it exists, because that is nonsense: it is not false, but it has no meaning at all. So the individuals that there are in the world do not exist, or rather it is nonsense to say that they exist and nonsense to say that they do not exist. (*Lectures on Logical Atomism*)

So we just drop 'x exists' from our analysis of 'The King of France does not exist.' The final analysis is ~∃x (∀y (y regally ruled France ≡ y=x)). *It is not the case that someone uniquely regally rules France.*

Attitude Attributions

George IV wanted to know whether Scott was the author of Waverley? Not as *George IV wanted to know whether a = b.* But as *George IV wanted to know whether ∃x (x wrote Waverley, and ∀y (if y wrote Waverley, then y = x) and x = Scott).* Scope distinctions here too. Russell's example of the touchy yacht owner.

24.251 Introduction to Philosophy of Language
Fall 2011