0. Introduction

Kaplan (1977/89) presents, and tentatively endorses, what he calls a ‘Fregean theory of demonstrations’ (FTD), and presses it into the service of solving what he calls ‘Frege’s Puzzle for Demonstratives’ (FPD). But the conditions Kaplan lays down on FTD are not obviously compatible with what Kaplan wants to say about demonstratives in general, and with the conditions of adequacy on the solution to FPD in particular. We explore a variety of options available to Kaplan.

1. Frege’s Problem for Demonstratives

Let’s begin with Frege’s problem for demonstratives:

(FPD) How can ‘dthat[α] = dthat[β]’ if true differ in cognitive significance from ‘dthat[α] = dthat[α]’? (ibid, 529)

Kaplan’s idea is that we solve FPD in the same way as we solve Frege’s Problem in general, or at least for descriptions; we distinguish the sense of α from the sense of β. But what are the senses of demonstratives? Surely ‘dthat’ means the same on both occurrences – has the same character. The difference is that demonstratives are incomplete and must be completed by demonstrations. As Kaplan stipulates it:
We can associate with each demonstration a character which represents the ‘meaning’ or manner of presentation of the demonstration. Demonstratives are incomplete expressions which must be completed by a demonstration (type). (ibid, 527)

What, for Kaplan, is the character of a complete demonstrative?

Character of a complete demonstrative: In any context c, d[δ] is a directly referential term that designates the demonstratum, if any, of d[δ] in c, and that otherwise designates nothing. (ibid, 527)

Here d is a demonstrative, δ is an associated demonstration, and a demonstration is “typically, though not invariably, a (visual) presentation of a local object discriminated by a pointing.” (ibid, 490) When one considers the completing demonstrations, then the identity statement can be informative:

For example, it might be informative to you for me to tell you that

[P-H] That [pointing to Venus in the morning sky] is identical with that [pointing to Venus in the evening sky].

(I would, of course, have to speak very slowly) The two demonstrations – call the first ‘Phos’ and the second ‘Hes’ – which accompanied the two occurrences of the demonstrative expression ‘that’ have the same demonstratum but distinct manners of presentation. It is this difference between the sense of Hes and the sense of Phos that accounts, the Fregean claims, for the informativeness of the assertion. (ibid, 514-515)

And in general: the content of ‘that[α]’ and ‘dthat[β]’ are the same whenever α = β. Thus the difference in cognitive significance cannot be attributed to content. (ibid, 530) The content of each utterance would be:

(P-PH) \[<<\text{Venus, Venus}, = >>\]

The cognitive significance is to be attributed to character:

E.(pistemological) Principle 1. Object of thought (Thoughts) =