Mathematical Diagrams: A Kaplanian Account?

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Identity conditions play a fundamental role in the contemporary debate on the epistemological status of diagrams. Both the detractors and the supporters of diagrams as proof-tools share a common strategy in this regard, consisting in applying to them the traditional type/token distinction normally applied to words. In this paper, we intend to put into question this strategy. In the first part, we will show that the type/token distinction, as identity criterion for words, is not unanimously endorsed in philosophy of language. We will see in particular how David Kaplan has forcefully rejected this account and proposed an alternative approach, inspired by Kripke's common currency conception. In the second part, we will discuss the possibility of extending the Kaplanian approach to diagrams from both a theoretical and historical point of view.