

# Loginiai-filosofiniai tyrinėjimai

## HOW DO WE USE DEFINITE DESCRIPTIONS TO EXPRESS SINGULAR PROPOSITIONS?\*

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**Abstract.** *The paper is devoted to the question: under what conditions do we express a singular proposition (in the Kaplanian sense) when uttering a sentence containing a definite description as the subject term. It is argued that Wettstein's claim that singularity of a proposition is determined by the demonstration of the referent of definite description accompanying the utterance contains an inconsistency. An alternative criterion of singularity is proposed: we express a singular proposition if the definite description in question is to be evaluated at a single possible world, and we express a general one if the definite description in question is to be evaluated at a range of possible worlds. This criterion is effective in explaining controversial cases in which we manage to express a true singular proposition with a subject constituent that does not fit the definite description used in the utterance.*

**Keywords:** *definite description, reference, singular and general propositions, possible world semantics*

### 1. Definitions, symbols, and outline

The subject of this paper is propositions we express when we utter sentences like “The author of *Waverley* was a lawyer”, i.e. sentences of the form “The *F* is (was, will be) *P*”, containing definite descriptions in the subject position. For simplicity, I confine myself to the elementary sentences of this kind — to sentences that comprise simple definite descriptions and one-place predicates. So I shall not discuss descriptions that

contain embedded ones in the way that “the father of the author of *Waverley*” contains “the author of *Waverley*”.

I shall use the following symbols:

$PaW$  for the proposition ‘*a* is *P* in possible world *W*’.

$\iota xFxW$  for denotation of the definite description “the *F*” at the possible world *W* (the object uniquely fitting the description “the *F*” in *W*). If “*W*” is a variable then the denotation of “ $\iota xFxW$ ” is a function from possible worlds to objects.

*G* for the actual world.

I adopt the Kaplanian notions of *singular and general proposition* defined as follows:

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- *Singular proposition* may be represented as the ordered couple  $\langle o, P \rangle$  where “*o*” stands for an object. For instance, Walter Scott is a constituent of the proposition expressed by the sentence “Walter Scott was a lawyer”.
- *General proposition* may be represented by the ordered couple  $\langle \langle \text{“the”}, F \rangle, P \rangle$  where “*the*” is a quantifier indicating that the subject constituent of this proposition is the *unique* possessor of the property “*F*” (Kaplan 1990: 16–17). For instance, if the sentence “The author of *Waverley* was a lawyer” expresses a general proposition, it has the structure  $\langle \langle \text{“the”}, \text{being author of } Waverley \rangle, \text{being a lawyer} \rangle$ .

Propositions of both kinds are functions from possible worlds to truth values. Kaplan (1990: 17–18) defines their truth conditions as follows:

- the singular proposition  $\langle o, P \rangle$  is true at the possible world *W* if and only if *o* is *P* in *W*;
- the general proposition  $\langle \langle \text{“the”}, F \rangle, P \rangle$  is true at the possible world *W* if and only if there is one and only one object that is *F* in *W* and that object is *P* in *W*.

Note that the denotation of a definite description used to express a general proposition may vary in different possible worlds. In a possible world *W* a person other than Walter Scott might have been the unique author of *Waverley*. Then the truth value of the general proposition expressed by “The author of *Waverley* was a lawyer” at *W* depends on whether that person was a lawyer at *W* (and does not depend on Walter Scott’s

properties in *W*). But we may use definite descriptions to express singular propositions as well. This is the case when, uttering a definite description, we have in mind a certain object or person. Then the subject constituent of the proposition expressed (the object or person we have in mind) does not vary and the truth value of that proposition at *W* depends on the properties that object or person has in *W*. The singular proposition we may express uttering “The author of *Waverley* was a lawyer” is true at *W* if and only if the person we have in mind as the unique author of *Waverley* was a lawyer at *W*. Taking into account this circumstance, Kaplan (1990: 25) and Wettstein (1981: 249–250; 2012: 94) propose an interpretation of Donnellan’s distinction between *referential* and *attributive uses* of definite descriptions (Donnellan 1966: 285) in terms of singularity/generality of propositions expressed. According to this interpretation, when we utter a sentence of the form “The *F* is *P*”, we express a singular proposition if we use the definite description “the *F*” referentially, and we express a general one if we use it attributively. I adopt this interpretation too.

The question to be discussed in what follows is: under what conditions do we express a singular proposition when uttering a sentence containing a definite description as the subject term? Or, utilizing Donnellan’s terms: under what conditions do we use a definite description referentially?

The rest of the paper is outlined as follows. In the second section I discuss, as a starting point, Wettstein’s (1981) “demonstrative analysis” of definite descriptions. Wettstein suggests that the singularity of a proposition expressed by an utterance of

the kind specified is determined by an accompanying demonstration of the referent. I argue that there is an inconsistency in this argument and conclude that the demonstrative component, though it may be a sufficient condition for singularity, cannot be a necessary one. In the third section I suggest a modification of the Kaplanian criterion of singularity in terms of possible world semantics. The modified criterion says that we express a singular proposition if and only if the definite description in question is to be evaluated at a single possible world. In the fourth section I demonstrate that this criterion is more effective than many contemporary theories in explaining controversial cases in which we manage to express a true singular proposition with a subject constituent that does not fit the definite description used in our utterance.

## 2. Wettstein's criterion of singularity

Wettstein's (1981; 1983) starting point is the fact that we often manage to express quite determinate singular propositions (consisting of referentially determinate constituents) using incomplete definite descriptions<sup>1</sup>, i.e. descriptions that, taken literally, apply to more than one item. A paradigmatic example adduced by Strawson (1950: 232) is the description "the table" in utterances like "The table is covered with books". So the question arises what does determine the reference of the under-determinate incomplete definite descriptions?

Wettstein begins with a criticism of treatment of incomplete descriptions as el-

liptical for complete ("uniquely denoting") ones in the frame of Russellian analysis<sup>2</sup>. If such a treatment was right, he argues, then every incomplete description of an item might be filled up in many ways yielding different complete descriptions of that same item. For instance, the incomplete description "the table" used in a certain utterance might be expanded up to "the table in room 209 of Camden Hall at  $t_1$ ", "the table at which the author of *The Persistence of Objects* is sitting at  $t_1$ ", and many other complete descriptions of that same table (Wettstein 1981: 246). Then the interpreter of an utterance containing an incomplete definite description is faced with a question that Wettstein contends has no answer from the Russellian point of view:

The question now arises, which of this more complete (or Russellian) descriptions (or conjunction of such descriptions) is *the correct one*, the one that actually captures what the speaker intended by this use of the indefinite definite description "the table". The question is important for as noted, each of these non-equivalent descriptions determines a different Russellian analysis of the utterance. (Wettstein 1981: 246)

Taking into account that, as a matter of fact, both the speaker and the hearer are often not able to select a "Russellian" description as "the" one the speaker has in mind, Wettstein concludes that "in so many cases ... the indefinite definite descriptions we actually use are not elliptical for the uniquely denoting descriptions that Russell's theory requires" (Wettstein 1981: 247). As an alternative, he proposes a "demonstrative analysis" (*Ibid.*: 250) that assimilates incomplete

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<sup>1</sup> Following Donnellan (1968, fn. 5: 204), Wettstein also calls them "indefinite definite descriptions" (1981: 245).

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<sup>2</sup> Russellian analysis renders the utterance of "The  $F$  is  $P$ " as "One and only one entity is  $F$  and that entity is  $P$ " (Russell 1905: 488).

definite descriptions to demonstratives like “he” or “she”: in both cases the referential mechanism includes a *descriptive content* specifying a class of possible referents and a demonstration<sup>3</sup> *picking out* the one the speaker is speaking of. For instance, the demonstrative “he” specifies the class of male persons as possible referents and an additional demonstration picks out the one the speaker has in mind. So the demonstration completes the referential job the description has left unfinished<sup>4</sup>.

Now I find this account quite convincing with respect to many (though not all) cases of expressing singular propositions using incomplete definite descriptions. But Wettstein (1981: 249–250; 1983: 187–188) makes a further step I find premature and mistaken, viz., he asserts a strong correlation between attendance of an accompanying demonstration and singularity of the proposition expressed for such cases. In other words, in his view the demonstration of the reference of an incomplete definite description is a *necessary and sufficient condition* of singularity of the proposition expressed. This is the view I am going to criticize.

My critical claim is that there is an essential inconsistency in Wettstein’s argument. As cited above, he stresses the non-equivalence of co-referential complete definite descriptions insofar each of them “determines a different *Russellian* analysis of the utterance” (emphasis added). This thesis is doubtless correct since the Russel-

lian analysis puts the descriptive content of definite descriptions into the propositions expressed. But the view that incomplete definite descriptions may be used as elliptical for some (or many) complete one(s) is not bound to the Russellian analysis. This view is compatible with the *Kaplanian* analysis of utterances, insofar they are considered as expressing *singular* propositions, as well. Moreover, if we adopt the distinction of singular and general propositions, as Wettstein does, then we are *committed* to the Kaplanian analysis in regard to utterances expressing singular propositions. But the Kaplanian analysis permits only the referents of definite descriptions into propositions leaving their descriptive content outside. Therefore, in the frame of the Kaplanian analysis, all *co-referential* definite descriptions make the same contribution to the *singular* proposition expressed by utterances in question. Definite descriptions that are non-equivalent in the light of Russellian analysis become quite equivalent in the light of Kaplanian analysis given that they are co-referential and used to express a singular proposition.

Then the question posed by Wettstein in the passage quoted gets, with regard to utterances expressing *singular* propositions, a suddenly simple answer: *all* complete descriptions of the item the speaker has in mind are correct because each of them correctly individuates the subject constituent of the proposition the speaker intends to express and so each of them “captures what the speaker intended by this use of the indefinite definite description”. Since Wettstein adopts the notion of singular proposition, he endorses the Kaplanian analysis of utterances expressing singular

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<sup>3</sup> Wettstein notes that Donnellan (1968, fn. 5: 204) presented a similar argument but did not “fully appreciate its force” (Wettstein 1981: 245).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. an analogous account for demonstrative expressions in Wettstein 1979.

propositions, and so his appeal to the Russellian analysis in discussing utterances expressing singular propositions makes his argument inconsistent.

This is not to deny that, in many cases, incomplete definite descriptions have determinate references and so contribute to determinate propositions only due to accompanying demonstration. My point is that the correlation between the demonstrative character of the definite description used and singularity of the proposition expressed is not as strong as Wettstein suggests. It is plausible to assume that the demonstrativeness of description uttered is a *sufficient* condition of singularity of proposition expressed<sup>5</sup> but it is not a *necessary* one: when we use an incomplete definite description elliptically we may express a singular proposition without accompanying demonstration.

### 3. A modified Kaplanian criterion of singularity

If the demonstrativeness does not work as a universal criterion of singularity, what does? As an alternative, I propose the following one: we express a singular proposition if the definite description in question is to be evaluated at a single possible world, and we express a general one if the definite description in question is to be evaluated

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<sup>5</sup> Remember that we consider only simple definite descriptions that do not contain embedded descriptions. With respect to complex descriptions the claim that demonstrativeness is a sufficient condition of referentiality will not hold. For instance, we may use the description “the father of the author of *Waverley*” attributively while using the embedded description “the author of *Waverley*” demonstratively.

at a range of possible worlds. Speaking formally, a proposition of the form:

$$P(\lambda xFxV)W \text{ (the only } F \text{ in } V \text{ is } P \text{ in } W)$$

is singular if “ $V$ ” is a constant for a single possible world, and general if “ $V$ ” is a variable. (“ $W$ ” is variable for possible worlds in any case, therefore a proposition of this form is a function from possible worlds to truth-values.)

This criterion is based on the Kaplanian analysis of singular propositions expressed using definite descriptions. Since we may use the definite article or pronouns like “that” to express both singular and general propositions, Kaplan (1989: 521; 1990: 23), in order to avoid ambiguity, invents a special operator “*dthat*” for cases of expressing singular proposition. Followed by a definite description, i.e. in phrases of the form “*dthat*  $F$ ”, “*dthat*” indicates that we use the description “the  $F$ ” as a directly referential singular term standing for the object that uniquely fits that description in the actual world. Therefore, the expression “*dthat*  $F$ ” may be rendered in our symbols as “ $\lambda xFxG$ ”, where  $G$  is a constant for the actual world. And the utterance of “*dthat*  $F$  is  $P$  in  $W$ ” gets the form

$$P(\lambda xFxG)W.$$

Now I suggest generalizing the Kaplanian formula by dropping the restriction to the actual world as the only world where the definite description may be interpreted. In other words, I propose to relativize the Kaplanian operator “*dthat*” to possible worlds so that the Kaplanian formula “*dthat*  $F$  is  $P$  in  $W$ ” becomes “*dthat* <sub>$V$</sub>   $F$  is  $P$  in  $W$ ” where the subscript “ $V$ ” stands for a particular possible world, not necessarily the actual world. The Kaplanian criterion modified in such a

way makes the distinction singular/general depend on the distinction constant/variable in the position of “ $V$ ” in “ $P(\lambda FxV)W$ ”. It means that (1) each utterance of a definite description contains (explicitly or implicitly) an indication of the possible world(s) in which that description is to be applied, and (2) it may be either *a constant* for some particular (actual or possible) world or *a variable* defined on a range of possible worlds, and this difference determines the singularity/generality of propositions expressed using the description in question.

Note that this criterion fully accommodates Kaplanian truth conditions for singular propositions.

The proposed criterion is effective in solving some problems that are connected with Donnellan’s distinction between referential and attributive uses of definite descriptions. In the next section I shall discuss one of them, viz. the puzzle about controversial cases in which we manage to express a true singular proposition with a subject constituent to which the description used does not apply. Following Wettstein (2012: 99), I call such cases “Donnellan cases”.

#### 4. Donnellan cases

Donnellan contends that “a speaker may say something true even though the description correctly applies to nothing” (Donnellan 1966: 298). The formal setting he discusses is the following:

- 1) Uttering “the  $F$  is  $P$ ” the speaker refers by the description “the  $F$ ” to the object  $o$  (and believes that  $o$  fits uniquely the description).
- 2)  $Po$
- 3)  $\sim\exists xFx$

(All formulas are to be interpreted in the actual world.)

The second formula renders the true proposition the speaker has asserted, though it was, as the third formula shows, a mistake to point to its subject constituent ( $o$ ) by the description “the  $F$ ”. A famous instance of this setting is Linsky’s (1963: 80) example “Her husband is kind to her” as said about a spinster. Another example Donnellan (1966: 287) adduces is the question about a teetotaler holding a martini glass at a party: “Who is the man drinking a martini?” Asking this question, the speaker may refer to a certain person even if no one at the party is drinking a martini.

In order to avoid complications regarding the truth-value of propositions expressed by means of empty subject terms, and to make the problem most clear, Kripke (1977) modifies Donnellan’s setting to the effect that there *is* exactly one  $F$  but it is not identical with  $o$  and is not  $P$ :

- 1) Uttering “the  $F$  is  $P$ ” the speaker refers by the description “the  $F$ ” to the object  $o$  (and believes that  $o$  fits uniquely the description).
- 2)  $Po$
- 3)  $\exists!xFx$
- 4)  $\sim\lambda Fx = o$
- 5)  $\sim P(\lambda Fx)$

(As in previous setting, all formulas are to be interpreted in the actual world.)

Kripke’s (1977: 256) example is the utterance, “The man over there drinking champagne is happy tonight”. In his scenario the fellow the speaker refers to is indeed quite happy but he is drinking sparkling water. And there *is* exactly one man over there who is drinking champagne but he is sad because of his misery. In both cases the speaker has a false belief about what the person referred to is drinking,

and in both cases this mistake has an obvious explanation: in first case the person in question is the only one in sight holding a martini glass, in the second case the person in question has a sparkling drink in the glass and the speaker does not see the glass with champagne in hands of the sad man.

Utilizing Kripke's terms "semantic referent" (for the item fitting the description in the actual world) and "speaker's referent" (for the item the speaker has in mind), we may define the specificity of Donnellan cases as follows: there is a speaker's reference (in our formal setting it is  $o$ ), and the semantic reference ( $\exists xFx$ ) either does not exist or differs from the speaker's reference. Now the question arises: what determines the speaker's reference? Does the speaker refer to the item in question in accordance to or despite the conventional semantics of the language used? The related epistemological question concerns the grounds of interpretation of descriptions used referentially in Donnellan cases: should we, when interpreting a definite description used referentially, take into account conventional semantic rules or should we (to some extent) ignore them?

The latter answer is very widespread. Among its proponents are Kaplan (1990), Wettstein (1981, 1983), Stalnaker (1970), Kripke (1977), Devitt (1981), Recanati (1989), Patton (1997), Reimer (1998), Mendelsohn (2010), and others. The core of this theory is the contraposition of conventional lexical meanings of the spoken language and intentions of the speaker that may be not in line with the words used: contraposition of semantics and pragmatics. Here are some examples. Stalnaker considers the speaker's propositional attitudes ("prag-

matic presuppositions") as determining reference of definite descriptions, when they are used referentially, independent of whether they are true or false. "What is relevant is not what is true, but what is presupposed" (Stalnaker 1970: 285). But when the "pragmatic presuppositions" of an utterance are not true, its interpretation cannot be based on semantic rules of the language only, it needs pragmatic grounds as opposed to semantic ones. M. Reimer (1998: 94) qualifies Donnellan's claim "that one might utter a sentence of the form *The F is G* and say something that is literally true even if the (contextually) unique *F* is not *G*" as "counter-intuitive". Mendelsohn (2010: 168) urges that in Donnellan cases there is a conflict of semantic and pragmatic criteria of interpretation, and that "it is implausible to regard" the referential-attributive distinction as applied to such cases "as anything other than pragmatic"<sup>6</sup>. Wettstein analyses Donnellan cases in Kripkean terms of simple and complex intentions a speaker may have in the use of language. The simple intention in uttering a description is just "to use it in line with its lexical meaning" (Wettstein 2012: 99). The complex one includes an additional intention "to talk about a particular individual, maybe someone in view or someone whom we have been discussing" (*Ibid.*). In his view we have a Donnellan case if the two components of a complex intention diverge and "intention trumps literal meaning" (*Ibid.*: 97). In other words, Wettstein treats Donnellan cases as cases of success in communicat-

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<sup>6</sup> Mendelsohn himself proposes a syntactical interpretation of the referential-attributive distinction. Discussing the syntactical approach lies outside the scope of this paper.

ing a proposition by means of an irregular use of language. Epistemologically, this means that in our interpretation of definite descriptions in Donnellan cases we have to take into account that the speaker uses the language (to some extent) incorrectly and hence to bracket the conventional meanings of the words used. In short, all those above account for Donnellan cases in purely pragmatic terms and deny their semantic significance.

This position follows from the Kaplanian view that the evaluation of definite descriptions, when they are used to express singular propositions, is bound to the actual world. But if we drop this restriction then we are not committed to the Kaplanian position anymore. And, what is more essential, I find this answer to be counter-intuitive insofar as it ascribes to the speaker and recommends to the interpreter a kind of arbitrariness toward the language. I think that a more intuitively natural account for typical Donnellan cases must respect something like the *principle of charity* in regard to the speaker's linguistic competence and speech behavior. In order to do so we have, I think, to take into account the *semantic* significance of the speaker's beliefs that affect the truth conditions of the proposition expressed and so are relevant for interpretation of the utterances in question. As mentioned above, Stalnaker calls such beliefs "pragmatic presuppositions" (Stalnaker 1970: 279) and so stresses a kind of rivalry between semantic and pragmatic grounds of interpretation. I prefer not to call them "pragmatic" since I deny such a rivalry for typical Donnellan cases.

The intuitively natural analysis of Donnellan cases must accommodate the following intuitions:

- 1) The speaker uses the words conventionally<sup>7</sup>.
- 2) The inapplicability (in the actual world) of description to the object the speaker refers to is due to a false belief (or a number of false beliefs) the speaker has about the actual world.
- 3) The speaker is a rational agent. This allows us to assume that the speaker's beliefs that are relevant to the utterance to be analysed are coherent and determine a possible world that differs from the actual world, if it does, only in that it fits these beliefs. Let us call such possible world *speaker's possible world*.

The third intuition, when true, allows us to treat the speaker's referent not as a rival to "the" only semantic referent but as *another semantic referent* which the definite description in question gets with respect to another possible world. In Donnellan's martini-setting the speaker believes that if a man holds a martini glass then he is drinking a martini. This belief is relevant to the speech act to be interpreted in that it should be taken into account in correct analysis of the utterance in question, and it determines the speaker's possible world for this speech act<sup>8</sup>. Then the description "the man drinking a martini" does apply to the man the speaker has in mind at that

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<sup>7</sup> To be quite scrupulous, the minimal requirement for the typical Donnellan cases is that the speaker's use of the language be interpretable even if it is not conventional (Davidson 2005: 107).

<sup>8</sup> The concept of the speaker's possible world demands relativization to speech acts, not to persons. There may be different speaker's possible worlds for different speech acts of the same person.

possible world. Symbolically, the analysis looks like this:

$$P(\lambda xFxS)W,$$

where “S” stands for speaker’s possible world.

In Kripke’s champagne-setting two beliefs of the speaker are relevant: that if a man has a sparkling drink in his glass then he is drinking champagne, and that the speaker has seen all champagne glasses “over there”. It is now clear that with respect to the actual world and with respect to the speaker’s possible world the description “the man over there drinking champagne” has different *semantic* referents: (1) the man who drinks champagne and is sad in the actual world, and (2) the man who drinks sparkling water in the actual world, drinks champagne in the speaker’s possible world, and is happy in both worlds. In Kripke’s setting, two interpretations for “the F” are thus possible: “ $\lambda xFxS$ ” and “ $\lambda xFxG$ ”. It is crucial for the issue of semantics vs. pragmatics that both interpretations are based on conventional lexical meanings of expressions comprising the description. They diverge only in that they apply the description in different possible worlds. In this sense, *both referents* are *semantic* ones.

It should now be clear that the multiplicity of semantic referents of a definite description does not entail its lexical ambiguity. Sure, the sentence of the form “the F is P” may be ambiguous insofar as it may be used to express different propositions such as ‘ $P(\lambda xFxS)W$ ’, ‘ $P(\lambda xFxG)W$ ’, ‘ $P(\lambda xFxS)G$ ’, etc. But this is not because of the lexical ambiguity of words or phrases it contains. This kind of ambiguity pertains to sentences of the form in question simply because they

are, so to speak, multivalent abbreviations of the form “the F at ... is P at ...” where the gaps may be filled up in different ways.

The proposed semantic account for definite descriptions used referentially has two semantically relevant consequences.

- 1) In Wettsteinian cases, i.e. in cases of demonstrative use of a definite description, it is very possible that we have to interpret its descriptive content and the accompanying demonstration with respect to different possible worlds. Imagine there are many people holding martini glasses and someone says to us, pointing at teetotaler John: “That guy drinking a martini is happy tonight”. I think it would be quite plausible to analyse this utterance in a Wettsteinian way modified to the effect that it should not be bound to the actual world. The interpretation may go as follows:
  - first we apply the incomplete definite description “the guy drinking a martini” to a number of persons in the speaker’s possible world, taking into account that the speaker does not know that John is teetotaler. So we include John into the class of possible denotations of that description in the speaker’s possible world (though not in the actual world);
  - then we appoint John the appropriate semantic referent of the description *in the speaker’s possible world* by virtue of his having been demonstrated by the speaker *in the actual world*.

So the interpretation of incomplete definite descriptions used demonstratively may involve two possible worlds.

2) The modified criterion of singularity allows us to utilize in the analysis of utterances the relativity of (in) completeness of definite descriptions to the possible worlds. The description “The author of *Principia Mathematica*”, incomplete at the actual world, may well be complete at the speaker’s possible world relative to speech acts of a person who believes that Russell wrote this work alone. So a description incomplete at the actual world may be used referentially without accompanying demonstration and even without descriptive supplement to be interpreted in the actual world.

## 5. Concluding remarks

The singularity of the proposition expressed does not demand the demonstrative use of the definite description, and the definite description used to express a singular proposition may be interpreted in a possible world other than the actual world. These results allow treating the constancy of the indication of a possible world contained in the definite description as the criterion of singularity of the proposition expressed. The advantage of this criterion is that it provides, unlike many contemporary theories, a unified semantic account for both standard and Donnellan cases of referential use of definite descriptions.

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## KAIP APIBRĖŽIAMOSIOS DESKRIPCIJOS VARTOJAMOS SINGULIARINIAMS TEIGINIAMS IŠREIKŠTI?

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**Santrauka.** Straipsnyje keliamas klausimas: kokios sąlygos turi būti patenkintos, kad, ištarę sakinį su apibrėžiamąja deskripcija kaip sakinio subjektu, mes išreikštume singuliarinį teiginį (Kaplano prasme). Autorius teigia, kad Wettsteino įsitikinimas, jog teiginio singuliariškumas nustatomas ištarimo metu nurodant apibrėžiamosios deskripcijos referentą, yra nenuoseklus. Straipsnyje siūlomas kitas singuliariškumo kriterijus: teiginys yra singuliarinis, jeigu jame dalyvaujanti apibrėžiamoji deskripcija įvertinama vieninteliame galimame pasaulyje, o jeigu apibrėžiamoji deskripcija turi būti įvertinta daugiau nei vieno galimo pasaulio atžvilgiu, tai teiginys yra bendrasis (*general*). Šis kriterijus veiksmingas aiškinant kontroversiškus atvejus – kai išreiškiamo teisingą singuliarinį teiginį, kurio subjekto dėmuo nedera su apibrėžiamąja deskripcija, pavartota ištartame sakinyje.

**Pagrindiniai žodžiai:** apibrėžiamoji deskripcija, nuoroda, singuliarinis ir bendrasis teiginys, galimų pasaulių semantika.

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