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## Nonconceptual content and demonstrative strategies

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Filozofia Nauki 22/3, 5-26

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2014

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Sebastian Tomasz Kołodziejczyk

## **Nonconceptual Content and Demonstrative Strategies**

In speaking of Demonstrative Strategy (DS), we may have two different things in mind. First, we can mean that demonstratives constitute and organize logical-linguistic activity. Zenon Pylyshyn (2004, 2007) convincingly argues that demonstratives play a crucial role as preconceptual functions associated with so-called visual indexes. At that level, demonstratives are regarded as elements initiating subsequent stages of logical-linguistic (or, generally speaking, representational) activity. According to Pylyshyn — as well as Raftopoulos and Muller (2006) — they do introductory job of enabling classification and description of objects at advanced levels of cognition. It is undoubtedly a bottom-up line of argumentation. I call this function of demonstratives “Initiating Function of Demonstratives” (IFD) and precisely distinguish it from their most obvious and common use, introduced to the debate on nonconceptual content by Gareth Evans (1982) and John McDowell (1996), then discussed in detail by Bill Brewer (1999), Sean Kelly (2001b), and their followers. Although these authors — in contrast to Pylyshyn, Raftopoulos, and Muller — take into account at least two different understandings of demonstratives, they definitely follow a top-down strategy, which begins with analysis of the conceptual-linguistic employment of demonstratives and leads to the conclusion that demonstratives can (or cannot) constitute the contents of experience.

I will return to this issue — for now, it is sufficient to say that in both variants of the top-down strategy demonstratives are regarded as elements instantiating other mental or linguistic entities so as to either imitate full-blooded names (*that shade* = maroon; *that woman* = Princess Catherine; McDowell vs Evans) or discriminate objects or properties (*this shade* from *that shade*; *this figure* from *that figure*; Kelly vs McDowell). I will use a common phrase “Instantiating Role of Demonstratives” (IRD), which I hope neatly combines both above-mentioned functions.

If Kelly, Pylyshyn, and others are right in their considerations (at different levels of analysis), it could mean that DS — which seems to be the last resort for conceptualists — is a hopeless and fruitless strategy. However, I would not recommend haste in awarding laurels to the nonconceptualist camp. The common opinion is that there is something mysterious in the transition from the nonconceptual to the conceptual. By “transition” I mean the process that occurs when in perceiving something we smoothly proceed to form a belief about what we perceive. Demonstratives can accurately do this job. I will argue that, though DS does not seem to work in the way expected by conceptualists, it might — surprisingly — be recognized as working in a way that meets much weaker conceptualist expectations. Their role at the preconceptual and prepropositional level (a conclusion drawn from both IFD and IRD strategies) could consist in connecting the mind to the nonconceptual domain of the world and, at the same time, enabling the mind to start deploying concepts from the very beginning of the cognitive process.

We might concede that demonstratives do not carry conceptual content (do not allow us to identify an object), but we still are in a position to argue that they constitute, from the very beginning of experience, the conceptual content allowing the more advanced and full-blooded conceptual capacities to be exercised. My claim then splits into three more specific theses. (I) Demonstratives are real connectors of two incompatible domains (experience and concepts). It is possible because they take part in every cognitive process from the very beginning. (II) Although to be there does not mean for demonstratives to be full-blooded concepts (they individuate what is experienced but do not identify, that is, they do not exercise higher conceptual capacities), they have semantic properties (mainly they are referring expressions), and these properties make it possible to introduce the full-blooded concepts. Finally, (III) they are concepts that may occur in the highest cognitive processes at which there are not enough ordinary concepts. In such cases demonstratives seem to confirm both their subconceptual (preconceptual and prepropositional) and overconceptual (proconceptual and propropositional) properties. I am certain that we have no better candidates from the domain of the mind that could perform such sophisticated and fundamental functions.

## 1. SKETCHING THE PROBLEM

Imagine we wish to paint our apartment. We come to the store and start searching for a colour both attractive and acceptable for us and our spouse. We are looking at the colour sampler, trying to find one that meets our aesthetic expectations. So we say to our partner: “*That. That* shade of green is what we’re looking for. I don’t know the name of *that* colour but I like it, and I’m sure it will match our furniture. Let’s go to see the brushes, and in a few minutes we’ll come back to tell the seller which one we have eventually chosen.” In ten minutes we are back and once again

we are looking at the sampler. Our partner is asking: “Can you remember which shade of green you previously showed me? I can’t find it.” We are nervously going through the sampler, but we cannot recognize the colour we were ready to accept earlier. It seems to us that *this* shade of green is *that* colour and then we start hesitating and eventually change our mind. The procedure of choosing the shade of green has to be restarted.

This story belongs to everyday life. We understand that demonstratives give us opportunity to think and talk about objects and their aspects (properties and relations) without detailed knowledge about them and without concepts or linguistic expressions associated with them. Neither do we expect from the natural language that it is a set of particular and general terms associated with all objects and properties. Our only condition is that the natural language should, on demand, deliver an expression fitting a particular object or a particular property. Demonstratives seem to meet that requirement. Now we can see why the classical line of argumentation for the conceptualist position adopts demonstratives as the real answer to the question whether perceptual experience is conceptually dependent and constituted.

Before we sketch the conceptualist position, it is worth noting that the whole debate about nonconceptual content is closely associated with the question concerning the content of perception. Is perceptual content free from conceptual commitment that determines which and how things, properties of things, state of affairs, etc. are perceived by humans? The variety of answers to that question draws a map of different stances, from the most extreme nonconceptualist position, via moderate positions, to the strong conceptualist view.

Although the problem of conceptual involvement in the perceptual content has its roots in Kant’s famous statement “Intuition without concepts is blind and concepts without intuition are empty” (*Critique of Pure Reason*), in the 1980s it took a new shape. Evans’ book *The Varieties of Reference* opened a new chapter in discussing the whole range of problems with nonconceptual content. He famously states:

The informational states which a subject acquires through perception are non-conceptual or non-conceptualized. Judgments based upon such states necessarily involve conceptualization: in moving from a perceptual experience to a judgment about the world (usually expressible in some verbal form), one will be exercising basic conceptual skills. [...] The process of conceptualization or judgment takes the subject from his being in one kind of state (with a content of certain kind, namely non-conceptual content) to his being in another kind of cognitive state (with a content of a different kind, namely, conceptual content). (Evans 1982: 227)

Evans’ picture seems to be as follows: information is acquired through the sensory apparatus and induces nonconceptual informational states that have nonconceptual content. And this is the story about perceptual experience. Then it is reasonable to move to more advanced cognitive processes, states, and contents, e.g. judgements. On the one hand, judgements are based upon more primitive states and non-conceptual content associated with them; on the other hand, the processes of pro-

ducing judgements involve concepts and conceptualization; hence these cognitive states are both conceptual and associated with nonconceptual content.

As we may see, many things are said in such a short quote. For instance, one may struggle with multiplicity of content (at least two different types of content are assumed by Evans) or ask what “based upon” exactly means in that case. McDowell (1996) joins the discussion with something like the former question in mind. He wants to know how perceptual states with their contents may serve as reasons in inferential procedures that are distinctive of humans. To say that humans are in perceptual states with nonconceptual content means for McDowell (1996: 53) that higher-order cognitive processes lack any connection with lower order cognitive processes, namely perception:

Evans’ position has a deceptively innocent look. It can seem obvious that a possessor of one piece of representational content, whether conceptual or not, can stand in rational relations, such as implication and probabilification, to a possessor of another. [...] If experience is pictured as input to spontaneity from outside, then it is another case of fraudulent labelling to use the word “content” for something we can even so take experience to have, in such a way that reason-constituting relations can intelligibly hold between experiences and judgments.

The requirement (whether McDowell is right or not) on the reason-constituting relations can be put in other terms: we expect that various states and their contents occurring in the mind should be compatible. Thus McDowell’s introductory thesis is grounded in Compatibility Thesis (CT: all processes, states, and contents have to be compatible with each other). It sounds quite intelligible that higher-order states and contents (conceptual for both Evans and McDowell) cannot be accommodated to perceptual states with their content (nonconceptual in Evans’ view). Hence there is no room for nonconceptual content (if not for both nonconceptual states and nonconceptual content).

Still, CT seems to be merely a general claim about how things should fit each other within the domain of mind and eventually may be recognized as a transcendental argument rather than a well-argued position. McDowell seems to understand this and to realize that in the next step he must seriously challenge Evans’ theses, among which one looks particularly threatening. It is the thesis that perceptual experience is detailed, analogous, and context-dependent, simply — fine-grained (Evans (1982: 229): “Do we really understand the proposal that we have as many color concepts as there are shades of color that we can sensibly discriminate?” This somewhat Hamletic question leads Evans to the conclusion that the content of perceptual experience must be nonconceptual; since the conceptual capacity is coarse-grained while the perceptual experience is not, a subject cannot conceptually cover what is given in the experience.

However, Evans’ question refers to two different but interconnected problems. The surface problem is that of covering the reality of actual experience by means of the concepts we have in our conceptual repertoire. Evans’ claim is then intuitive and

evident. We have not enough concepts to cover all objects, their properties, relations they constitute, and so forth. If we accept the assumption that perceptual experience is fine-grained, whether we are conceptualists or not, we have to admit that our conceptual equipment does not allow us to cover all that belongs to the actual experience. We may call this Evans' thesis: Limited Covering Thesis (LCT).

Still, there is another problem, which is expressed in the language of discrimination. Evans seems to go far beyond LCT — he appears to claim that, for a content of perceptual experience to count as conceptual, the process of discrimination of objects, their properties, and so forth must involve concepts. When we look at a bunch of colour samples in the store, it seems obvious that we perceptually discriminate different shades of colour, while — according to Evans — it does not follow that we do it thanks to concepts. This thesis may be called Limited Discrimination Thesis (LDT).

McDowell's (1996) and Brewer's (1999) reaction is well known. Their strategy adopts demonstratives as a kind of conceptual skills that support full-blooded concepts in their function of covering the whole range of phenomena existing in the perceptual experience (McDowell 1996: 56-57):

But why should we accept that a person's ability to embrace color within her conceptual thinking is restricted to concepts expressible by words like "red" or "green" and phrases like "burnt sienna"? It is possible to acquire the concept of a shade of color, and most of us have done so. [...] In the throes of an experience of the kind that putatively transcends one's conceptual powers — an experience that *ex hypothesi* affords a suitable sample — one can give linguistic expression to a concept that is exactly as fine-grained as the experience, by uttering a phrase like "that shade", in which the demonstrative exploits the presence of the sample.

Brewer (1999: 171) expresses his opinion in the same spirit but stresses a slightly different function of demonstratives:

Demonstrative expressions perfectly easily figure in the expression of genuine judgments by the subject, and so contribute to the characterization of fully conceptual states. This is how I would propose to capture the absolutely genuine phenomena which motivate the present line of argument for nonconceptual experiential contents. My reply is that the fineness of grain in perceptual discrimination is matched precisely by the perceptual demonstrative *concepts* which the subject has in virtue of her conscious contact with the items in question. In other words, for any fineness of grain in perceptual content to which my opponent wishes to appeal in making this argument, the subject is capable of making a perceptual demonstrative *judgment*, "that is thus", with just that fineness of grain.

When I am looking at a colour sample in the store and I lack a suitable concept to build up my belief and then to communicate it to another person, I may simply use a demonstrative and say "I'm considering *this*" or "I'm considering *that* shade of green". Moreover, DS allows me to respond to LDT. By using them we are able to discriminate one shade from another even though we do not have suitable full-blooded concepts.

Demonstrative Strategy seems to be an answer to both LCT and LDT. But first we should tackle the issue of expectations we have in regard to the conceptual apparatus. It will help us put investigations focusing on DS (and other conceptualist strategies as well) into good order.

## 2. EXCESSIVE EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS THE CONCEPTUAL MACHINERY?

Let us start our analysis with a simple perceptual belief (PB):

(PB) I see that something is going on in this room now.

PB belongs to a linguistic representation of what we perceive and what we think about. It consists of at least eight different components:

- (a) It asserts that a kind of perceptual process takes place, i.e. *seeing*.
- (b) It asserts that I have access to this process.
- (c) It asserts that I am able to express it in the linguistic form, i.e. “I see that” sentence.
- (d) It asserts that there is a state of affairs, i.e. something is going on in this room now.
- (e) It asserts that I have access to this state of affairs.
- (f) It asserts that there is a content produced by a particular perceptual process, i.e. *that something is going on in this room now*.
- (g) It asserts that I have access to this content.
- (h) It asserts that I am able to express it in the linguistic form, i.e. “that something is going on in this room now”.

Points (a)-(h) shed a bit of light on how complicated the whole process is and how many elements are involved in it. They might be broadly understood in terms of semantics, and this broad understanding seems to be an answer to the questions about conditions which conceptualism requires to be met. Before I proceed to the analysis of those conditions, I need to clarify a distinction made above.

There is no controversy as to distinguishing processes from non-processes. It seems obvious that when I am drawing a picture, the act (process) of drawing differs — on the one hand — from the content of my imagination or thought, and — on the other hand — from objects with their material basis (paper, particles of paints, etc.). Kazimierz Twardowski (1894/1977) insisted that distinguishing those three components of the activity of the human mind is crucial in the context of representation (*Vorstellung*). The distinction throws new light on some problems raised by Franz Brentano in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (Brentano 1874/1973) — Twardowski saw the need of clarification, because some of Brentano’s followers (namely Husserl and his pupils) were ready to argue for an advanced idealist claim

that was grounded in identification of the content of representations with the object that exists independently from the mind.

Twardowski's distinction may look obvious, but there is a lot of room for controversy: different understandings of the concepts of content and object may lead to completely different views on the nature of mind and its relation to the world. I would like to define content always as an effect of a process. I am not claiming that there is one kind of content or something like that; what I am really saying is that each content is a result of a process. Why is it so important to be clear here? Because if at the bottom of the cognitive processes we found something like preconceptual but conceptually shaped activity leading to constitution of a content, it would mean that speaking of nonconceptual content is much more problematic than it seems to be. Moreover, DS — to which we are sympathetic here — is, as Pylyshyn surprisingly argues, simply the very first strategy that may play this role at the bottom of cognitive processes.

The aforementioned view allows us to regard the expectations we have in regard to the domain of concepts as a bundle of different accounts of the relationships between concepts on the one hand, and content and objects on the other. Points (a)-(h) show it very clearly. Although I cannot engage in the debate about the nature of content in general, it is evident that this problem is unavoidable. As I already said, my proposal here is to focus on the relationships between the domain of concepts and the domain of content. Thomas Crowther (2006) suggests that these relationships can be defined in two ways: a compositional way and a possessional one. Roughly speaking, concepts are related to content in the compositional way iff content is built up from them (Crowther 2006: 250): "Where  $S$  has an experience,  $e$ , with the content  $p$ ,  $p$  is a conceptual content if  $p$  is composed of concepts." On the other hand, concepts are related to content in the possessional way iff content is conceptually characterized by concepts (Crowther 2006: 252): "Where  $S$  has an experience,  $e$ , with the content  $p$ ,  $p$  is a conceptual content iff in order for  $S$  to be undergoing  $e$ ,  $S$  must possess the concepts that characterize  $p$ ." Whereas the former stance is substantial and regards concepts as constitutive of the content of perceptual experience, the latter one is attributive and sees concepts as elements in some respects independent from perceptual content, though without them content of experience remains unintelligible. Below I try to delineate three main possibilities of conceiving substantial and attributive way of understanding the aforementioned relation. I start with the attributive one.

Points (c) and (h) capture the most basic conviction we may have as far as conceptualism is concerned: that producing content involves *covering* all objects and states of affairs which are given in the perceptual experience by means of concepts and linguistic expressions. Then the conceptualist claim would be as follows (Overlaying Thesis):



- (OT) Concepts and linguistic units are capable of *overlaying* what is given in the perceptual experience in the most detailed way and, conversely, there is nothing in what is given in the perceptual experience that could not be *overlaid* by concepts and linguistic units. In particular, every object, its property, each relation the object (property) is involved in, all states of affairs, and so forth are conceptually and linguistically overlaid.

Of course, OT is a modal claim. It means that the strongest conceptualist view in the light of OT is that for any possible world  $W$ , there is a set of concepts and linguistic expressions that totally and entirely (in the least details) overlay the domain of objects, properties, relations, states of affairs, and so forth belonging to  $W$ , and conversely, there are no objects, properties, relations, states of affairs, and so forth belonging to  $W$  that are not fully and entirely (in the least detail) overlaid by concepts and linguistic expressions. The term “overlay” is meant in at least two ways: the descriptive way and the naming one. To overlay is then to supply a description or a name of what is given in the perceptual experience.

It is important to keep this distinction in mind, because talking about demonstratives immediately poses an intuitive question of how they could cover the domain. Although there are many approaches to the problem of demonstratives, and people still defend different positions, at least one thing remains stable: we expect from full-blooded concepts that they perform this task; and if they fail, we tend to undermine their nature as concepts *tout court*. Demonstratives are in real trouble here. Arguments show that they have problems with re-identification, which appears to be an essential feature of full-blooded concepts. If so, then maybe it is better to adopt the so-called subconceptual and overconceptual account of demonstratives. I will talk about it soon.

Another strategy that conceptualists may pursue involves the idea of accessibility. It is clearly seen in points (b), (e), and (g). Although they speak of different kinds of object, they share two salient characteristics: first, accessibility is regarded as a cognitive-semantic feature of an object as it is given to a subject in the perceptual experience, and second, it is regarded as a unique feature of cognitive-semantic activity of a subject. The Accessibility Thesis (AT) would run as follows:

- (AT) What is given to a subject (for instance in perception) is entirely accessible to the conceptual and linguistic apparatus and, conversely, the conceptual and linguistic apparatus has unrestricted access to what is given to a subject.

Again, AT is a modal claim and may be formulated in the language of possible worlds. The strongest claim in this case says that for any possible world  $W$ , objects, properties, relations, states of affairs, and so forth belonging to  $W$  are entirely conceptually and linguistically accessible and, conversely, concepts and linguistic ex-

pressions have unlimited access to objects, properties, relations, states of affairs, and so forth belonging to  $W$ . In the light of two abovementioned points about accessibility, it has to be said that again, there are at least two ways of understanding accessibility. First, accessibility might be conceived as a necessary condition of satisfying OT. It is hard to understand how what is going on in this room could be expressed if there were no access to the objects, properties, relations, states of affairs, and so forth, which take place in this room. Second, accessibility might be understood in terms of ways in which access really takes place. No one will deny that perception, broadly understood, is a capability that enables human beings to gain access to reality in its manifold manifestations, but it would not be a very controversial move if we assumed that if there is a real and essential difference between experience and concepts, we need tools that go beyond this difference and in that way enable access to the world. Again, demonstratives seem to meet our requirement both at the most basic perceptual level as well as at the most sophisticated conceptual level. I understand Pylyshyn's and Raftopoulos' arguments primarily in this way.

Both the OT and AT strategies seem to be mutually related and they generate various types of conceptualism, but at the same time it is clear that conceptualist position might be spelled out in a much stronger way. I call it the Constitution Thesis (CT):

(CT) All that is given to a subject and how it is given is constituted by concepts, *resp.* linguistic entities.

Here we reach the critical point of conceptualism. It is evident that both AT and OT are implied by CT. By looking at points (a)-(h) we can see that the question of constitution may be introduced in all eight cases at three different levels associated with the distinctions we made following Twardowski. It can be either constitution of an object (property, relation, state of affairs, and so forth), constitution of the produced content, or even of the processes that lead to producing the content.

CT is undoubtedly the strongest conceptualist claim. Even though there is some room left for moderate positions, all of them assume the holistic view on the involvement of concepts (language) in a cognitive activity and its correlatives. It is worth noting that there are three possible ways of interpreting CT. On the first construal, it is objects (properties, relations, states of affairs, and so forth) that are conceptually (linguistically) constituted. According to the second one, it is cognitive processes (acts) that are conceptually (linguistically) constituted. And eventually it may be said that the content of experience is conceptually (linguistically) constituted. These three ways — taken together or apart — give different conceptualist (and non-conceptualist) accounts. The strongest position combines all of them, whereas weaker ones pick out one or two of the aforementioned approaches and try to argue that it is enough for establishing conceptualism.

Since we are sympathetic to DS and demonstratives as taking part in CT, we need to ask once again: how can they constitute an object, a content, a process, or

one of them? It seems difficult to explain even how full-blooded concepts could do it. But at the same time it might be a good point of departure for the story about demonstratives as primitive preconceptual and prepropositional entities enabling and organizing higher-level (conceptual and linguistic) activities. Pylyshyn and Raftopoulos do so, although they deny that it follows from this whether perceptual contents or perceptual states are conceptual. We are talking here about a critical move. If we admit that demonstratives have at least one semantic property, it means that they belong to the domain of reasons, as McDowell puts it (roughly speaking, the domain includes acts and their products that may be considered in terms of truth values). Demonstratives have at least one semantic property, so they have conceptual job to do. I suggest thinking about the constitutive role of demonstratives in terms of being functional and in terms of structural units. The biological metaphor is very helpful; nobody denies that cells constitute tissues and then organisms, though it is hard to say whether a cell itself (cells themselves) is an organism. Demonstratives may constitute more complex semantic (conceptual) entities in a similar way. I will argue for this stance below.

I realize that once again we are touching upon the nature of perceptual content. At first glance it looks as if every theory of content implied a different solution in the field of employment of demonstratives. It would be so if I argued that demonstratives play more or less the same role as other concepts do. Otherwise, I can take the variety of accounts on the nature of content for granted and assert that all of them need to rely on demonstratives as constitutive of perceptual content as such. In the next step, I will discuss Kelly's (and his followers') arguments against DS. Simultaneously, I will argue that it does not matter that demonstratives do not meet requirements characteristic of concepts. In fact, this is even better, because it shows that among the three aforementioned theses only two are really interesting: AT and CT. In both cases demonstratives are regarded as tools thanks to which more advanced cognitive processes occur. My hierarchy of theses would be as follows: CT, then AT, and finally OT. That is why in addition to Kelly's arguments I will take into account arguments put forward by Pylyshyn and Raftopoulos (it is quite ironic that all of them argue against conceptualism) and only then proceed to present my own proposal.

### **3. INSTANTIATING ROLE OF DEMONSTRATIVES THE TOP-DOWN STORY**

We need to be clear when we are talking about the involvement of demonstratives in the cognitive processes. Twardowski helps us understand that each cognitive structure consists of very reach relationships between the object, the content, and the act (process). While the object remains a constant of all relationships, the content and the process may vary. My proposal is to treat contents as products of processes. It means that DS may be deployed either for objects or for processes and contents.

It seems intuitive to claim that demonstratives are most readily understood with respect to objects conceived as mind-independent, objective, and autonomous entities. When looking at the samples of colours in the store, we are inclined to think that the demonstrative “that” combined with “red” directly — and independently from any mental involvement — refers to a sample of red. Our conviction is even stronger when we simply say “This” in reply to the question “What colour are you talking about?” “This” seems to stand for the object/property as it is.

Frankly, I am tempted to deny that demonstratives refer directly to objects (that they are *de re* concepts), but it goes beyond my brief to do it here. Instead, I will argue for a much weaker position. Demonstratives are involved in all processes as primitive preconceptual and prepropositional cognitive tools that lead to the origin of perceptual content and then, at more advanced semantic levels, serve as elements confirming, instantiating, and expressing lower-level processes and objects associated with them; this function unearths the preconceptual and prepropositional nature of demonstratives.

Let us return to the store with samples of colours. Here is a fictional dialog between partners:

Woman: Have you thought about a new colour for our bedroom?

Man: Many times, darling. I did it even in a dream.

Woman: Really? You are so cute. Do you remember what colour appeared in your dream?

Man: Not really. It was something between red and blue. It’s really hard to tell.

Woman: Something between red and blue? Intriguing. Could you show me *that* colour among the samples?

Man: I’ll do my best, but please be patient.

I start with this dialog to show how extraordinary the task performed by demonstratives is and how far the McDowell-Kelly story about demonstratives and re-identification may be from what they really are. In order to show it, we have to focus on the woman’s question: “Could you show me *that* colour among the samples?” It is worth asking an additional question: what would our first thought be after hearing such a question? Two answers seem plausible: (1) “*That* colour” refers directly to the content of the dream; (2) “*That* colour” refers to what “between red and blue” stands for as a description of what was in a dream. Once again, we encounter the old problem of the relationship between sense and reference in the case of demonstratives. On the other hand, the woman clearly cannot refer directly to anything apart from what the man said. She uses “that colour” to replace an unknown colour her spouse is talking about, but she does it through the description “between red and blue”. The dialog then continues:

Man: I wouldn't imagine that there are so many shades. It's so difficult to find one that was in my dream.

Woman: Don't worry, darling. I am sure you'll eventually find it.

Man: I know you believe in my memory but you know, colours are really hard to remember.

Woman: You're right, but please try again.

Man: You don't believe me, but it must be *this*. *This* shade is what I told you and what was in my dream.

Woman: Ugly. Sorry, darling, it doesn't match anything. We must start our search from the beginning and forget about your dreams... Boring.

This time there can be no doubt that "this" refers to a sample of colour from the sampler, but there is also no doubt that "this shade" refers to the belief the man has and the experience he had. In the second case, "this" stands for a part of the belief "It seems to me that it was something between red and blue", namely — "it was something between red and blue"; whereas "this" in the first case simply refers to the colour from the sampler which is recognized (identified) as *the same* as that in the man's dream.

I would like to distinguish three claims about demonstratives occurring in the story.

(i) Demonstratives are links between contents of various states on the one hand and objects on the other.

(ii) These links consist in ability to instantiate the content.

(iii) Instantiation is grounded in individuation and identification.

Point (i) is obvious once we agree that prior to using demonstratives we need to have a belief. It does not mean that this belief entirely determines the reference of demonstratives, but only that there is no way of understanding the use of demonstratives without any mediation. For the sake of argument, I distinguish the Explicit Use of Demonstratives (where a belief is essential) from the Implicit Use of Demonstratives (where attention is essential). The shift from the Implicit to Explicit Use of Demonstratives occurs when mediation shifts from attention to belief or from individuation to identification.

When I am looking at the sampler of colours in the store, various shades draw my attention. I individuate colours, which means that I am ready to undertake more advanced semantic processes: to enter the stage that requires some sort of identification. Imagine that I am pointing to the maroon sample and say "this". "This" means something like "This is what I am interested in" or "This is what I have been looking for".

As for (ii), our common expectation is that the contents of our states (whatever they are) are examined in the light of facts. I am not talking here just about empirical facts, but I understand "fact" broadly as a truth-condition (even if it turns out to be

merely what was going on on the paper when we invented a proof of a logical theorem). But what does it mean to examine contents in the light of facts? In our view it means that we have to instantiate content with respect to a domain. When I have a belief about a shade with appropriate content, I have to be ready to instantiate this belief; the most basic option is to show what my belief is really about.

Someone may think that instantiation concerns objects, not contents. Yet a sentence like “This shade matches our bedroom” proves otherwise. Nothing is instantiated by means of “this” other than the content of the belief “colour that should match our bedroom”. In other words, a particular colour with its specific particular shade remains unaffected by us. Instantiation resembles cutting somebody down to size. Because the content of mental processes by and large meets the so-called Generality Constraint requirement (see below), sometimes we need to say “Check”, and then instantiation is essential.

Point (iii) says that instantiation is a process consisting of individuation and identification. The former is a low-level, implicit process that is not affected by our higher-level capacities (I will talk about it in the next paragraph), whereas the latter requires much more complex, advanced semantic tools. To instantiate content of my belief about a particular shade of colour I need to individuate it — that is, bring it to myself as separate and distinct from anything else in the domain — and then identify what has been individuated and what my belief is about.

To see the difference between individuation and identification we have to consider some facts about browsing the samples of colours. It would be even better to see browsing as scanning the big chart with colours (like the CMYK template). Colours change from one to another smoothly, it is really hard to tell where the beginning or end is, but we individuate colours by seeing them as distinct even though we are unable to draw exact boundaries between them. Pointing to a particular colour signals that we not only individuate colours but also identify them with the content of our mental states.

Based on what has already been said, my aim is to show that both proponents of DS and its critics do not notice that individuation and identification are two distinct processes, which constitute the instantiating function of demonstratives. It is worth examining Kelly’s arguments briefly and then discussing them in the light of our own account.

Nonconceptualists claim that experience is much more fine-grained than the conceptual capacity we are able to exercise. McDowell’s solution to this problem is to use demonstrative concepts that seem to be accurately and appropriately grained and allow them to pick out a particular shade of colour despite the lack of a full-blooded concept of this colour. Philippe Chuard (2006: 164) suggests that this strategy is based on two reasons: (1) “The formation and deployment of such demonstrative concepts seem to require mainly that one be *directly presented* in experience with the object or property such a concept picks out.” and (2) “demonstrative concepts are both *context-dependent* and *perception-dependent*.”

If we accepted the top-down instantiating role of demonstratives, we have to make a distinction between conditions for deployment (something is directly presented in experience) of demonstratives on the one hand, and their pragmatic and semantic function (referring to what is directly presented by pointing to it, but instantiating the content of a belief) on the other. (2) is more demanding, but again, at this stage we have to distinguish conditions of deployment (context and perception) from the pragmatic and semantic function (referring to something by pointing to it and instantiating the content of a belief). This distinction may lead us to a very interesting observation that is strictly connected with the so-called Re-Identification Constraint (condition for being a concept: if a subject  $S$  possesses a concept  $C$ , then  $C$  must be able to re-identify different objects  $o_1$  and  $o_2, \dots, o_n$ , which fall under the concept  $C$ ), which has been put forward by Kelly. McDowell, when introducing Demonstrative Strategy, speaks of “recognitional capacity” (McDowell 1996: 54), which allows one to identify two objects for a short period of time after experience. Kelly does not argue against recognitional capacity, nor does he reject the Re-Identification Constraint for demonstratives (which would deny that they are concepts). His strategy appeals to phenomenological insights. First, he says that perceivers (even shortly after experience) are not able to re-identify properties (objects) they have seen a few seconds earlier. Second, if demonstratives meet the Re-Identification Constraint, it will follow that they cannot manage the fine-grained content of experience. As a result, he rejects DS as the conceptualist answer to the fine-grained content of experience.

Chuard (2006: 177) is “dissatisfied with Kelly’s argument”. For two reasons. According to him, there are situations when demonstratives do not meet the Re-Identification Constraint, and there are situations when they meet all constraints required to be a concept. For the sake of argument he tells a story about a woman, Susie, sitting at the desk in her office when suddenly some unidentified stones land on her desk. Chuard analyses three cases.

In the first scenario (Chuard 2006: 183-185), one extraterrestrial stone lands on the desk. It is something entirely different from whatever Susie had seen. Somewhat surprised, she asks her colleagues “What’s this?” and adds as a manager: “Why is this on the desk?” Chuard is sure that by continuing this story he can argue that the Re-Identification Constraint does not need to hold. However, the demonstratives are properly used. The next part of the story is as follows: more stones land on Susie’s desk; all of them are different in all possible ways; she takes a careful look around focusing briefly on each stone. Then additional stones land, and she loses the stone she was looking at a few seconds earlier. Chuard (2006: 185) concludes:

In this particular example, it seems possible that a subject forms a demonstrative concept for an object without being able to later re-identify that object.

It would mean that demonstratives need not meet the Re-Identification Constraint. Chuard refers to Evans and eventually says:

Indeed, this seems to have been one of the main insights of Evans' (1982) seminal work on demonstrative concepts. For him, possession of a demonstrative concept essentially rests upon the ability to know *which* object one is referring to at the time (Evans 1982: 149, 171). And knowing *which* object one's demonstrative concept picks out requires only that one be *able* to (i) *locate* the object in one's perceptual field (Evans 1982: 149, 170), by focusing one's attention upon it (Evans 1982: 172-175). On Evans' view, there is no need to know which kind of object is picked out (1982: 178-179). Such demonstrative concepts lead to "identification-free knowledge" (Evans 1982: 173, 181*ff*).

Before I add my own comment, I will present the two other cases. There are three unfamiliar cosmic stones on Susie's desk. She is still unhappy, but she starts looking for something that would be shared by all of them. She says "This is dark grey", "That is a mixture of greyness and redness", "That looks more or less like buried piece of wood". Chuard (2006: 189-191) thinks that in this case the demonstratives meet at least four conditions he mentions as essential for being concepts: Generality Constraint, Distance Requirement, Discrimination Constraint, Inferential Constraint. Moreover, there are four additional requirements for demonstratives: Perception-Dependence Constraint, Context-Dependence Constraint, Location Constraint, and Attention Constraint. According to Chuard, demonstratives in this case meet all eight conditions and, therefore, they are full-blooded concepts. But Chuard does not assume that it is the right way of thinking about demonstratives. By expanding the story, he tries to argue that additional extraterrestrial bodies on Susie's desk make things more complicated and demanding. Susie loses part of her skills, she is unable to re-identify objects on the desk, but she continues to use demonstratives with ease. Therefore, the Re-Identification Constraint seems to be too stringent for demonstratives.

Finally, we have the third case (Chuard 2006: 192-193). Another woman, Jacqueline, "is presented with successive pairs of photographs of twins — one photograph for each twin shown simultaneously." The twins are almost identical, the only difference being some minute details of facial features. Jacqueline is able to detect these differences, and she does not even discriminate between the same twins in two different pictures. Still, as Chuard (2006: 193) says:

Jacqueline [...] is a complete amnesiac. When presented twice with photos of the same pair of twins, she is patently incapable to re-identify them. Indeed, she even denies that she has seen the pair of twins previously.

The conclusion is easily anticipated:

Being amnesiac, though, she cannot remember any of her previous experiences. And so, she cannot re-identify the twins she previously discriminated — or their specific and distinctive facial traits. Yet, it seems, the demonstrative concepts she forms for such facial characteristics are fine-grained.

Although Chuard's cases are not entirely convincing, they may help understand my own position. Chuard seems to shift too quickly between individuation, identifi-



cation, and re-identification. Women in all cases are able to individuate perceived objects — it is enough to ask “What the hell is this?” However, I am certain that every time a piece of cosmic matter lands on her desk, Susie is starting very advanced processes that should lead to finding out the answer without asking anybody else. Hence, at least one belief, “I don’t know what it is”, may be prior to the question “What the hell is this?”. We have here an example of a situation in which identification fails, and consequently this kind of demonstrative activity does not lead to full-blooded instantiation.

The second case shows how identification proceeds. Susie identifies when she forms beliefs about similarities and dissimilarities of the extraterrestrial bodies on her desk. Then she is able to instantiate contents of these beliefs, and identifying refers to what lies on her desk. She seems to lack this ability when more stones fall down on the desk. The question arises — where is re-identification? Three simple answers are plausible: (1) when the content varies, but the object remains the same; (2) when the content remains the same, but the object changes; (3) when the content varies, and the object changes. One thing is common to all these cases. The notion of re-identification is a semantic concept, and its role is to compare and confirm contents of beliefs. In his conclusions, Chuard emphasizes that the Re-Identification Constraint seems to be too much even for ordinary, full-blooded concepts. They may have the same difficulties, mostly because of context and perception. The third case is primarily the story about a dysfunction that makes recognition and re-identification almost impossible. It clearly and brilliantly shows that re-identification has something to do with contents of beliefs that are stored in memory. When memory fails, so does re-identification, though Jacqueline is able to use demonstratives properly.

These arguments are thought to be devastating for DS and conceptualism; and I would concede that they are, if there were no clear difference between identification and re-identification. Although re-identification might be disregarded as a sophisticated semantic tool applied at the level of beliefs and their contents, identification seems to be indispensable for the deployment of demonstratives, even if the prior beliefs have to be negative in character (Susie has no knowledge about the extraterrestrial entities at all, that is why she asks her colleagues “What the hell is this?”). Identification remains the condition of the correct use of demonstratives. This is the lesson we have learned from the top-down story. But there is another intriguing feature of demonstratives, about which the bottom-up story tells us more.

#### **4. INITIATING FUNCTION OF DEMONSTRATIVES THE BOTTOM-UP STORY**

We have distinguished the conditions of deployment of demonstratives from their semantic properties. Identification belongs to the set of such conditions, but it is dif-

difficult to imagine how a deployment might occur without a fundamental feature of demonstratives, namely their intrinsic ability to stand in a referential relation to something. It is clear that a conceptualist strategy must take this relation into account and be sympathetic to the claim that reference of demonstratives depends on meaning (that there is some kind of mediation in the referential relation to an object). In contrast to this view, we tend to think that demonstratives refer directly and no mediation is required. Otherwise, one may argue, we would have serious problems with introducing other conceptual and linguistic entities, i.e. proper and general names or complex descriptions.

It is worth asking what kind of basic properties of demonstratives are eventually responsible for determining reference regarded as a semantic property. Pylyshyn (2004, 2007) and Raftopoulos (2006: 251-284) argue that it is individuation that determines reference of demonstratives. In addition, they maintain that individuation (i) is prior to the process of reconstructing objects by means of binding together features found at the same location and (ii) is not associated with any concepts. This implies that demonstratives cannot be considered as the constitutive parts of conceptual content. Their individuating property actually confirms that there is something like nonconceptual content.

If I were a conceptualist — given that all conceptualist strategies must rely on the top-down story told with emphasis on re-identification — I would be worried. However, the determining power of individuation cannot be properly understood without advanced functions (instantiating) of demonstratives. This is my claim. Once again, conditions of deployment of demonstratives are slightly different from their semantic properties, but they are inseparable. Individuation must, therefore, go hand in hand with identification, even though they occur at different levels of cognition and at different levels of the process.

Suppose for the sake of argument that we take for granted Pylyshyn's and Raftopoulos' ideas and deny that identification has anything to do with demonstratives. At first glance, that would be a death blow to the Demonstrative Strategy and conceptualism. Nevertheless, there still remains the question about what really connects the domain of objects with the domain of thought (beliefs). In fact, conceptualism is so problematic and unacceptable precisely because the life of mind is conceived as a totally internal process that has nothing to do with the external world. The conceptualization of experience must lead to the conclusion that no impact of the world on our thoughts is really required. Someone may read this conclusion as a real threat to views that appreciate the richness and beauty of the world. In fact, conceptualism needs an anchor that would allow the realm of reasons to take root in the world. Since every fully conceptually engaged higher-level process will always lead to a kind of circularity, conceptualists are forced to concede that there must be something that has two "faces". Surprisingly, demonstratives have them — on the one hand, their reference seems to be determined by individuation, which has nothing (or little) to do with conceptual involvement. On the other hand, they are real and

indispensable components of conceptual activity and linguistic practice. Someone may even say in this context that demonstratives are the only expressions with direct reference to entities constituting the world.

Paradoxically, I read Pylyshyn's and Raftopoulos' arguments as supportive of the conceptualist view. Moreover, I see them as essential for every conceptualist strategy, not only the demonstrative one. They are essential because we clearly understand that there must be a way of enabling elements from the most basic level of cognition to be pursued at the most advanced levels. I call this function of demonstratives "Initiating Function of Demonstratives". IFD may be perceived in two ways. First, demonstratives initiate the conceptual processes. Creatures that lack demonstratives are unable to undertake higher-level processes that may lead to more complex forms of representation. Second, demonstratives introduce what is truly nonconceptual to the domain of concepts, but they carry no content — they rather supply points of reference for all processes from the next stage and draw our attention to what they refer to. In what follows I briefly present Pylyshyn's and Raftopoulos' arguments for individuation as the distinctive feature of demonstratives.

Pylyshyn (2004) emphasizes that the concept of Fingers of Instantiation (FINSTs), which is intimately connected with demonstratives,

provides a mechanism for referring to things even though, in an important sense, the referrer does not know what he is referring to just because the reference does not carry a conceptualization with it! (Pylyshyn 2004: 2)

Pylyshyn is deeply convinced that:

there must be a stage in the visual process where something like this happens, otherwise we could not construct our conceptual representations on scaffold of causal connections to the world. (Pylyshyn 2004: 2)

In *Things and Places* he clearly sums up the idea (Pylyshyn 2007: 56):

FINSTs give us nonconceptual access to what I have called a thing or a sensory individual or a visual object. [...] Because the representation is nonconceptual, these sensory individuals are not represented as objects or as Xs for any possible category X. They are just picked out transparently by a causal or informational process without being conceptualized as something or other. Early vision picks out and indexes a small number (4 or 5) of such sensory objects, roughly the way you might pick out a fish by placing a baited hook in the water — it happens primarily at the initiative of objects; we say it is data driven.

According to Pylyshyn, two things have to be distinguished. First, we need to represent things in a nonconceptual way, otherwise there is no connection with experience. To represent things in a conceptual way for Pylyshyn is to refer to things in terms of their category membership, so lacking roots in experience appears to be very easy. His proposal is that there must be something at the preconceptual level that does the job crucial for the whole cognitive system. Demonstratives, as the "visual indexes",

do the picking out, and the things that they pick out in the case of vision are what many people have been calling *visual objects* or proto-objects. (Pylyshyn 2004: 3)

Second, we need to represent things in a nonconceptual way, otherwise we lack direct contact (reference) with particulars. Since everyday life and psychology (focal or selective attention) confirm that we refer to particulars, there must be something that is responsible for it. Pylyshyn is certain that “visual indexes play its first theoretical role in our cognitive system.”

In general, Pylyshyn claims that:

we must have something like a visual indexing mechanism which *nonconceptually* picks out a small number of individuals, keeps track of them, and provides a means by which the cognitive system can further examine them in order to encode their properties, to move focal attention to them or to carry out motor command in relation to them. (Pylyshyn 2004: 4)

Again, we have IFD here.

We are only interested in one aspect of Pylyshyn’s account. He introduces a crucial distinction that convincingly grasps what I have already said. In his view, there is ample evidence suggesting that individuation is different from discrimination and recognition. So far as the latter are concerned, conceptual capacities have to be examined, while the former does not require conceptual involvement. If individuation precedes discrimination and recognition, and if it is a feature of visual indexes that are associated with demonstratives, it follows that at the most basic level demonstratives lack any descriptive, and hence conceptual, components.

Ontologically, as Raftopoulos (2006: 252) suggests, we face the problem of constituting objects in the process of vision (and consequently in the perceptual experience). We have two options: the binding theory or the object-file theory. The binding theory (called Feature Integration Theory, FIT) “assumes that objects are reconstructed in vision by binding together features found at the same location.” By contrast, the object-file theory assumes that objects are conceived as the centre of all further activities. Raftopoulos (2006: 252) adds that:

empirical findings suggest that conscious attention and feature encoding may not be indispensable for object individuation; that is for picking up objects in a visual scene. This may occur at an earlier stage by means of object-centered segmentation processes that index objects and attach mental particulars to things.

Pylyshyn frequently stresses that detection of properties, which is grounded in detection of *properties-of-object*, is always prior to detection of anything else. Roughly speaking, it means that objecthood is not only the root of any property but also of all advanced cognitive processes. Yet this is not enough for undermining the position according to which reference of demonstratives requires “ability to perceive spatial relations between perceived items” (Campbell 1997: 69). Pylyshyn also regards objecthood as suspicious and claims that we have to distinguish that which enables us to see things as objects even from a very primitive concept of object. Indi-

viduation, which occurs at the level of the mechanism of visual indexing, provides an answer to the first question — the only one Pylyshyn is concerned with. But another question arises: how is it done?

Pylyshyn does not hesitate to say that:

Certain proximal events (e.g. the appearance of a new visual object) cause an index to be *grabbed* (since there is only a small pool of such indexes, this may sometimes result in existing binding being lost). As new properties of the inducing element are detected they are associated with the index that points to that object. This, in effect, provides the mechanism for connecting elements of an evolving representation with elements (i.e. objects) in the world. By virtue of this causal connection, the cognitive system can *refer to* any of a small number of primitive visual objects. (Pylyshyn 2004:18)

(Of course, we are not talking about reference in the strict sense of the word — at the level of semantics; nor are we talking about the physical object. Pylyshyn emphasizes that many times.)

The consequences of Pylyshyn's theory (FINSTs) might be fatal for the Demonstrative Strategy. Conceptually unmediated causal connection with the world, via the visual indexing mechanism, is a promising solution to the problem of nonconceptual content. Conceptualists are in trouble. Admittedly, they might deny that we are talking about the level of cognition conceptualism is concerned with. In my opinion, it would be a wrong strategy. Raftopoulos (2006: 256-260) follows Pylyshyn and elaborates on his theory at the level of semantics, by adopting Garcia-Carpintero's theory of the reference of demonstratives (Garcia-Carpintero 2000). Although both of them stress that the distinction between "object individuation" and "object identification" makes things much simpler and allows us to see reference of demonstratives in the nonconceptual, causal way, they notice that it is a bottom-up line of thinking about demonstratives; presumably, a bottom-up line must be complemented by a top-down one. In our terminology it means that IFD is inseparable from IRD, which holds at more advanced levels, where avoiding concepts is practically impossible.

## 5. DEMONSTRATIVE STRATEGY RELOADED. CLOSING REMARKS

DS is an interesting way of thinking about the realm of mind mainly thanks to intrinsic features of demonstratives. Contrary to what conceptualists suggest, demonstratives perform a much more fundamental task than mere substitution of lacking concepts (when a subject faces experience with its fineness of grain) or discrimination of two different shades of colour. As Kelly and Chuard claim, the recognitional capacity (the Re-Identification Constraint), associated by McDowell with demonstratives so as to establish their conceptuality, can be applied to demonstratives only loosely; they work without meeting that constraint. Nonetheless, putting together the instantiating and initiating functions of demonstratives changes the picture of the debate.

As connectors of the domain of mind with the domain of the world, demonstratives give us access to reality, to its richness and abundance of presentations. It does not matter whether demonstratives are full-blooded concepts or not: in giving us access to reality, they simultaneously open up the possibility of conceptualization and thus build up the content which consists in concepts. In fact, in some sense they are also constitutive of the content (whatever it is). I would recommend understanding this essential role in terms of the process called by Pylyshyn “visual indexing mechanism”. Since this mechanism seems to be an indispensable part of cognition, its products (content) might be mistakenly interpreted as nonconceptual as well. Overall, demonstratives resemble a thread on which concepts may be strung. And only this process can lead to the formation of conceptual content.

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