Śālikanātha on Absence in the *Pramāṇapārāyaṇa*

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Abstract

This is a brief philosophical introduction to, and an annotated translation of, the section on absence from Śālikanātha's *Pramāṇapārāyaṇa* (*Study of the Instruments of Knowledge*), a foundational work of Prābhākara epistemology. In this section, which focuses on the epistemology of absence, Śālikanātha argues against the Bhāṭṭa view that there is a *sui generis* instrument of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) by which we learn of absence (*abhāva*). He does so by arguing for a subjective reductionist thesis about absence, according to which the absence of a perceivable (*dṛśya*) object at a locus is identical with a positive state of awareness (*buddhi*) whose content includes the locus but not the perceivable object. If correct, Śālikanātha argues, we should therefore learn of absence in the same ways we acquire self-knowledge more generally. While developing his reductionism about absence, Śālikanātha responds to a range of concerns, including the objection that his view cannot explain causation by absence.

1 Introduction

The following section of Śālikanātha Miśra's *Pramāṇapārāyaṇa,* or *Study of the Instruments of Knowledge,* is concerned with a central topic in Sanskrit epistemology. That topic is the epistemology of absence (*abhāva*): How do we learn that an object or property is absent? But this question, as Śālikanātha recognises, is arguably inseparable from another question about the metaphysics of absence: Is reality exhaustively positive, or do absences instead populate the world alongside positives? To see why the metaphysical question bears on the epistemological question, consider what we can call *eliminativism* about absence. An eliminativist argues that there is simply no such thing as absence, or that absences are unreal. In ordinary language, we often make claims about absence, such as when we cite absence in causal explanation. Since propositions about absence are true only if there are absences, an eliminativist would argue that statements about absence have no truth value or would take an error-theoretic approach according to which such statements are literally false. Eliminativism accordingly has immediate consequences for the epistemology of absence: There would be no true propositions about absence to learn.

This is the most dramatic case of the metaphysical question bearing on the epistemological question. There are, however, more moderate cases. Śālikanātha (§2.2; §2.2.3) agrees with the eliminativist that the world is exhaustively positive.[1] But he also thinks (§2.2.9) that we *do* make true statements about absence—in fact, he offers a semantics for the conditions under which statements about absence are true. He reconciles these two commitments by maintaining what we can call *reductionism* about absence. A reductionist argues that there is some kind of positive with which absence can be identified. According to this view, there *are* true propositions about absence to learn. Those propositions are just ultimately about positives. Depending on the positive with which absence is identified, reductionism can have straightforward consequences for the epistemology of absence. Śālikanātha is a *subjective reductionist*: He argues (§2.2) that absence reduces to a feature of *agents*, specifically that absence reduces to a *state of awareness* (*buddhi*) with certain content that obtains under certain conditions.[2] And as he argues (§2.2.7), the

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[1]Citations by section refer to the translated text below.

[2]Following Das (2021; Forthcoming), and in keeping with Matilal (1986), I will translate

epistemology of absence thereby reduces to *self-knowledge*, or our knowledge of our mental states. If absence is just a mental state, then we should expect to learn about absence in the same ways we learn about our other mental states.

Śālikanātha was a Prābhākara philosopher writing in the 9th century CE. Accordingly, he develops his views against a backdrop of competing Mīmāṃsā theories about the epistemology of absence. As Mīmāṃsā philosophers more generally, both Bhāṭṭa and Prābhākara philosophers share two canonical philosophical texts: the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*s, and Śabara's *Śābarabhāṣya,* a commentary on those *sūtras*. In his commentary, Śabara (ŚBh 24.24-25; 30.18-21; 32.1-8 ad 1.1.5) defines a series of *instruments of knowledge* (*pramāṇa*), or the means by which agents acquire knowledge. Bhāṭṭas and Prābhākaras agree on five irreducible instruments of knowledge: perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), similarity (*upamāna*), testimony (*śabda*), and 'postulation' (*arthāpatti*). But an interpretive rift forms over whether Śabara lists a *sixth* epistemic instrument. This is because Śabara (ŚBh 32.9 ad 1.1.5) seemingly ends his list by defining one further instrument, *absence* (*abhāva*), which he explains as the 'absence of the instruments of knowledge' (*pramāṇābhāva*).[3] The rift is over how to understand this phrase: Is this a definition (*lakṣaṇa*) of an instrument of knowledge? Or is Śabara *denying* that there is any instrument of knowledge called 'absence'? Bhāṭṭa and Prābhākara philosophers offer competing epistemologies of absence resulting from their competing readings of Śabara.

The founding Bhāṭṭa philosopher Kumārila (ŚV 409.1-2 *abhāva* 1) argues for an interpretation according to which agents learn that an object or property is absent just in virtue of not apprehending that object or property by means of the five instruments of knowledge (*pramāṇapañcaka*) by which one apprehends positives (*vastusattāvabodhārtham*). When one surveys a scene while searching for, or expecting to find, some object but does not apprehend it through

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terms such as *jñāna* and *buddhi* as 'awareness' or 'state of awareness', referring to any occurrent thought or experience, factive or non-factive. Accordingly, understand the relevant states of awareness to be occurrent mental states, rather than dispositional or standing mental states. As Das (2021, p. 154) argues, translating *jñāna* as 'cognition' is problematic. Many authors from the Sanskrit tradition admit of non-conceptual (*nirvikalpaka*) forms of perceptual *jñāna*, the contents of which are unavailable for verbal report and unable to affect our behaviour. Contemporary philosophers and cognitive scientists, however, commonly distinguish such forms of perception from cognition.

[3]In full: "Absence, in turn, is the absence of the instruments of knowledge. [It results in the awareness] 'it is not there' for that object which is not in connection [with the senses]." *abhāvo 'pi pramāṇābhāvo nāstīti asyārthasyāsannikṛṣṭasya* | (ŚBh 32.9-10 ad 1.1.5).

any of the instruments of knowledge that deliver knowledge of positives, one thereby learns directly and non-inferentially that the object is absent. The *absence* of the other five instruments of knowledge leads to knowledge of absence. According to this reading, Śabara is claiming that there is a special, *sui generis* route into knowledge of absence irreducible to any of the routes into knowledge of positives: a sixth instrument of knowledge called 'absence'. This becomes the standard view of Bhāṭṭa philosophers and the view Śālikanātha targets throughout this section.

But what about the Prābhākara view? According to Śālikanātha (ṚV 120.20-21) in his *Ṛjuvimalā,* a commentary on Prabhākara's *Bṛhatī*, Prabhākara (B 119.3-120.1 ad 1.1.5) reads Śabara very differently: 'The absence of the instruments of knowledge' means 'is not an instrument of knowledge' (*pramāṇam na bhavati*). Śālikanātha argues that Śabara is not providing a definition of an instrument of knowledge, but rather is stating that absence is not an instrument of knowledge. While there is the question of how faithfully Śālikanātha reads Prabhākara, this becomes the standard view of Prābhākara philosophers. The dispute in what follows, however, is not interpretive: Śālikanātha focuses on the epistemology of absence itself. He argues, through arguing that absence is a state of awareness, that Kumārila is wrong: Because we learn of absence in the same ways we acquire knowledge of our other mental states, there is no *sui generis* route into knowledge of absence distinct from the standard instruments of knowledge.

1.1   The Bhāṭṭa Opponent

After introducing the subject matter, Śālikanātha begins his discussion with a Bhāṭṭa *pūrvapakṣa,* or a series of arguments in favour of the opponent's view. In brief (and not to cover the details exhaustively), this portion of the text proceeds as follows. The Bhāṭṭa (§2.1.1) first considers two candidate positives with which to identify absence. According to the first view, the absence of a pot on the floor reduces to *the mere floor* (*bhūtalamātra*), or more generally that the absence of an object at a locus reduces to that very mere locus. The Bhāṭṭa immediately rejects this view. His argument is as follows: Suppose with this view that to learn there is no pot on the floor is to perceive merely the floor. But one could perceive just the floor, even if there were a pot on the floor. Therefore, this view incorrectly predicts that the agent should, in such cases, learn that the

floor lacks a pot even though there *is* a pot. The second view identifies the absence of an object at a locus with the bare (*kevala*) locus, construed as the *intrinsic nature* (*svarūpa*), or only the intrinsic properties, of the locus. The Bhāṭṭa raises a similar problem: Even if there is a pot on the floor, the floor's intrinsic properties do not cease to obtain. Therefore, one could apprehend a floor's intrinsic nature even if it housed a pot. But one would not thereby ascertain the absence of a pot, and so the Bhāṭṭa rejects this view. Śālikanātha will not push back on either of these results.

Having rejected two reductionist views about the metaphysics of absence, the Bhāṭṭa takes for granted that absence is plausibly irreducible to a positive. He prefers (§2.1.1) a view according to which absences are negative properties (*dharma*) of positive loci. He then proceeds to argue that there is a *sui generis* route into knowledge of absence. The structure of the discussion mirrors Kumārila's discussion of absence in the *Ślokavārttika* (ŚV 414.1-423.10 *abhāva* 18-58). First, the Bhāṭṭa argues (§2.1.2) that we do not learn of absence by perception (*pratyakṣa*). He provides Kumārila's (ŚV 413.3-4 *abhāva* 28) case of past absence. To fill in the details: Suppose you've just returned from a crowded gathering at a house. Someone then asks if your mutual friend was at the gathering. You think, and you notice in retrospect that your friend was not at the house, even though you did *not* notice their absence earlier. That is, you learn *now* that they *were* not there. Because their absence is in the past and spatially distal, your knowledge of their absence could not be perceptual.[4]

The Bhāṭṭa then argues (§2.1.4) that we also do not learn of absence by inference (*anumāna*). According to the inferentialist picture, we can infer absence from the following invariable relation of accompaniment (*vyāpti*): Wherever one does not observe (*adarśana*) a perceivable (*dṛśya*) object, that object is absent. What it is for an object to be perceivable is defined subjunctively:

> PERCEIVABLE. An object (or property) *P* is perceivable just in case the agent would perceive *P*, were it there.

According to this view, if one knows that one is not observing some particular perceivable object or property and knows the relevant generalisation, then one is in a position to infer that the object or property is absent. The Bhāṭṭa argues, however, that both items in the generalisation are absences: Not perceiving an object is an absence of a mental state, and the object that the inference targets is

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[4]For more on these cases, see Beaulieu (2021).

the absence of an object or property. To learn any generalisation, one must first have observed a case in which both items obtain together. But if we learn of absence by inference, and inferential knowledge of absence requires antecedent knowledge of the generalisation between these two absences, how are we to learn the generalisation in the first place? With perception and inference ruled out, the Bhāṭṭa concludes that there must be a *sui generis* route into knowledge of absence. The Bhāṭṭa then circles back (§2.1.6) to develop further arguments reductionism, leading us into Śālikanātha's response.

1.2 Śālikanātha's Positive View

Throughout the rest of the text, Śālikanātha primarily speaks in his own voice. He begins by stating his subjective reductionist thesis. On his view (§2.2), absence is a 'state of awareness whose only intentional object is a certain positive *L* and which arises when the counterpositive is perceivable' (*dṛśye pratiyogini tadekaviṣayā buddhiḥ*).[5] That is to say:

> MENTAL STATE REDUCTIONISM. Where *P* is a perceivable object
> or property, the absence of *P* at a locus *L* is just a state of awareness
> (of an agent), the content of which includes only *L*.

But what does this mean?

Consider the case of a familiar, bright blue pot that has gone missing from its usual location on the floor. This pot is highly perceivable: Not only do you expect it to be there, its vibrant colours are guaranteed to grab your attention. However, when you pass by its usual spot, you find it missing. When you perceive the bare floor where this pot usually sits, your perception is a state of awareness whose content includes only the floor but does not include the pot. According to MENTAL STATE REDUCTIONISM, your perception of the floor *is* the absence of the pot. What does this mean for the epistemology of absence? As Śālikanātha will observe (§2.2.7), it means that we learn of absence in the same ways we learn of our other states of awareness more generally. And

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[5]The counterpositive (*pratiyogin*) of an absence is its corresponding absent object or property. In the case of an absence of a pot, for example, its counterpositive is the pot. In translating *pratiyogin* as 'counterpositive', I am adopting Matilal's (1968) translation. Outside the case of absence, the term *pratiyogin* has a distinct, more general use whereby the term refers to the relatum towards which a given relation is borne. The translation 'counterpositive' successfully distinguishes its sense in the case of absence from its general relational sense. Note that, since absences have counterpositives, there are conversely counterpositives *of absences*. For more on these issues, see especially Matilal (1968, Ch. 6), "The Counterpositive of an Absence".

on Śālikanātha's view, states of awareness are *self-presenting* (*svaprakāśa*), or constitute knowledge of themselves.[6] Therefore, his view rules out any *sui generis* route into knowledge of absence.

Following an argument (§2.2.1) for his positive view, the rest of the text is largely devoted to considering, and responding to, objections to the view. Śālikanātha's response to one of the first objections is crucial to understanding his positive view. An opponent accuses him (§2.2.2) of being unable to explain causation by absence. Filling in the details for Śālikanātha (§2.2.3), consider the following case:

> MOVING OBJECTS. An agent is staring at a perceivable object on the floor. The object is then taken away. The agent, however, does not divert their gaze to track the object's movement. Instead, they continue staring at the empty space where the object previously was.

In this case, on Śālikanātha's view, the agent begins in a perceptual state whose content includes both the floor and the object. Afterwards, the agent transitions into a perceptual state whose content includes only the floor. What causes the loss of content? Presumably, the *absence* of the object does. But according to MENTAL STATE REDUCTIONISM, the absence of the object just is the agent's perception of the locus without the object. How could the mental state cause itself?

Śālikanātha's solution (§2.2.3) in cases such as MOVING OBJECTS is simply *to deny* that there are absences doing causal work. In general, not every apparent case of causation by absence is describable in terms of states of awareness. In such cases, his view is that there are only objective, positive states of affairs, but that those states of affairs are not to be identified with absence. In cases such as MOVING OBJECTS, for instance, he argues that it is the object's presence at the new location that causes the loss of content. This is all consistent with his view: According to MENTAL STATE REDUCTIONISM, absences are just states of awareness. Where purported cases of absence cannot be redescribed in terms of states of awareness, there are no genuine absences—only positive states of affairs.

Śālikanātha's responses to objections are not always convincing. When

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[6]For Śālikanātha's defence of the view that states of awareness are self-presenting, see his PP (187.3-193.4).

pressed, for instance, on what he means by the notion of an object's *mere intrinsic nature* (*svarūpamātra*), he will identify (§2.2.4) an object's mere intrinsic nature with a *solitary positive* (*ekākī bhāvaḥ*). He will not unpack this second notion any further, and thus only substitutes one underspecified notion for another. On the whole, however, Śālikanātha provides a sophisticated attempt at the difficult project of reducing absences to mental states. His project will also prove influential: The Nyāya philosopher Gaṅgeśa, for example, will engage closely with Śālikanātha's metaphysics of absence some roughly five hundred years later.[7]

2   Translation: *Study of the Instruments of Knowledge*

ye punar abhāvākhyaṃ ṣaṣṭaṃ pramāṇam icchanti, tatpratibodhanāya samprati yatna ārabhyate | tathā hi sarvaṃ pramāṇam prameyāvinābhāvi | na cābhāvākhyasya pramāṇasya prameyaṃ kiṃcin nirūpyate | (PP 283.3–284.1)[8]

An effort, then, is now undertaken to enlighten those who maintain that there is a sixth instrument of knowledge called 'absence'. To say more: Every instrument of knowledge is never without an object of knowledge. And no object of knowledge for an instrument of knowledge called 'absence' is determined.

2.1   The Bhāṭṭa View

nanu na pramāṇāntarabodhyaviṣayaṃ pramāṇam | kiṃ tu sarvam eva pramāṇam svamahimnaiva prameyam upasthāpayati | na khalu pratyakṣasyāpi prameyaṃ pramāṇāntaravyavasthāpanīyam, kiṃ tu tatpratītibalasiddham | evam abhāvākhyam api pramāṇam śaknoti svasāmarthyenaiva prameyam upakalpayitum | (PP 283.1–4)

[Bhāṭṭa:] An instrument of knowledge does not have an intentional object that could be apprehended through another instrument of knowledge.[9] But rather, *every* instrument of knowledge presents an object of knowledge just through its

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[7]See especially Gaṅgeśa's *siddhānta* in the *Abhāvavāda* at TCM (751-765).

[8]I translate from, and pagination for the Sanskrit text follows, Subrahmanya Sastri's 1961 edition of the *Prakaraṇapañcikā*. Where warranted, I have favoured readings from Mukunda Śāstri's 1904 edition. Emendations are noted with angle brackets. For an English exposition of this section of the *Prakaraṇapañcikā*, see Pandurangi (2004, pp. 253–267).

[9]Sections and subsections have been added to improve the readability of the translation. They are not present in the Sanskrit text.

own capability. Even an object of perception, of course, should not be established by another instrument of knowledge, but rather on the force of perceptual awareness. In this way, the instrument of knowledge called 'absence' too can bring us to posit an object of knowledge just through its own capability.[10]

2.1.1 Anti-Reductionism about Absence

> *tathā hi iha bhūtale ghaṭo nāstīti tāvad asti pratītiḥ | sā tāvad bhūtalamātraviṣayā na bhavati, saty api ghaṭe prasaṅgāt | atha kevalabhūtalaviṣayety ucyate, tatrāpi cintanīyam—kim idaṃ kaivalyam | yadi tāvad bhūtalasvarūpam eva, tadā saty api ghaṭe tasyānapāyāt ghaṭo nāstīti dhīḥ syāt | atha bhūtaladharmaḥ kaivalyam, tarhy asti tāvat prameyāntaraṃ kaivalyam | tatredaṃ vicāraṇīyam—kiṃ tat pratyakṣādibodhyam utābhāvapramāṇaprameyam iti |* (PP 283.5–284.1)

To say more: First off, there is the awareness 'there is no pot here on the floor.' To begin, this does not have the mere floor as its intentional object, because [that awareness] would arise [problematically] even if there were a pot. If one were to reply that it has the floor in isolation as its intentional object, then with respect to this too we should inquire: What is isolation? First, if it is only the intrinsic nature of the floor, then, even if there were a pot, there could be the awareness 'there is no pot'. This is because [the intrinsic nature of the floor] would not be absent.[11] If isolation is a property of the floor, then now isolation is a further object of knowledge.[12] Regarding this, we should investigate the following: Is isolation apprehensible through instruments of knowledge such as perception? Or is it an object of the instrument of knowledge that is 'absence'?

2.1.2 Against Perceptualism

> *tatra pratyakṣaprameyaṃ tāvan na bhavati, indriyavyāpāram antareṇa pratīteḥ | nanv idam ayuktam | vyāpṛtendriya eva hi iha bhūtale ghaṭo nastīty avabudhyate, nāndhādiḥ | atrocyate | kvacit kasyacid abhāvaṃ pratīyate | tena*

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[10]The argument proceeds from a surprisingly strong principle according to which an irreducible instrument of knowledge requires a corresponding unique class of objects, such that no other instrument of knowledge is a route into knowledge of those objects. Compare Kumārila's (ŚV 409.3 *abhāva* 2ab) argument that the existence of absence is 'based on' the fact that 'absence' is an instrument of knowledge (*tatprāmāṇyasamāśraya*).

[11]The view that an absence is just a bare locus is often attributed Prābhākara philosophers, such as by Chakrabarti (2019, p. 288). Other Prābhākaras might well hold a such a view, but Śālikanātha will make no attempts to defend the view against the Bhāṭṭa's result.

[12]Śālikanātha might be drawing on Kumārila's commentator Uṃveka (ŚVTṬ 409.15 ad *abhāva* 2), who does explicitly identify absence as a property (*dharma*) of positive loci.

yatrābhāvaḥ pratyetavyaḥ, tadgrahaṇāyendriyavyāpārāpekṣā nābhāvagrahaṇāya | kathaṃ punar ayaṃ vibhāgo 'vasīyate | ucyate | bhāvagrahaṇamātroparatendriyavyāpārasyāpy abhāvapratītidarśanād bhāvagrahaṇamātra evendriyavyāpārāpekṣeti vijñāyate | tathā hi svarūpamātreṇa gṛhādikaṃ pratipannavato deśāntaragatasyāpi tatra bhāvāntarasattāṃ jijñāsamānasyābhāvāvagamo jāyate | na ca śaky-ate vaktuṃ gṛhīta eva tatrāpi prāg evābhāva iti, bhāvāntarasyaiva tadānīṃ buddhāv anārohāt | tenendriyavyāpārānapekṣābhāvapratītir naindriyakīti na pratyakṣaprameyaṃ kaivalyam | (PP 284.1–10)

Among these options, first off [isolation] is not an object of perception, because there is awareness [of isolation] without the senses functioning.

[Objection:] This is untenable, because only someone whose senses are functioning undergoes the awareness 'there is no pot here on the floor', not someone such as a blind person.[13]

[Bhāṭṭa:] To this, we reply: The absence *of something* is apprehended *at some location*. Therefore, the functioning of the senses is required for grasping the locus at which the absence is to be apprehended, not for grasping the absence.

[Objection:] How then is this distinction determined?

[Bhāṭṭa:] We reply: It is known that the functioning of the senses is required only for grasping a positive, because awareness of absence is observed even in a person for whom the functioning of the senses has ceased merely in grasping a positive. To say more: Awareness of absence arises for someone who was aware of a location, such as a house, on its own, who went to another location, and who wonders about the existence of some other positive at that location.[14] Nor can it be said that the absence was in fact already apprehended at that location, because that very other positive did not appear in any awareness at that time. In this way, awareness of absence, which does not require the functioning of the senses, is not perceptual. Therefore, isolation is not an object of perception.[15]

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[13]The view that we learn of absence by perception is most often associated with authors of the Nyāya tradition. See Beaulieu (2021) for discussion.

[14]This case comes from Kumārila (ŚV 413.3–4 *abhāva* 28).

[15]The Bhāṭṭa accommodates the observation by granting minimally that knowledge of absence *requires* (*apekṣā*) perceptual knowledge *earlier* in the causal chain. This is because we must perceive a locus to notice any absence it houses. As Umveka (ŚVTṬ 413.5 ad *abhāva* 26) puts the point, there is a relation of ontological dependence such that awareness of absence does not obtain without perception (*tadbhāvabhāvitva*). Knowledge of absence, however, is not perceptual.

2.1.3 An Intermediate Concern

na ca vācyaṃ pravṛttinivṛttī dve gatī sarvapramāṇānām, tatra pravartamānam bhāvasādhakam, nivartamānaṃ tv abhāvasiddhinibandhanam iti |[16] yā nivṛttiḥ pramāṇasya svatas tāvad avagatirupā na bhavati, sā katham abhāvasiddhim āvirbhāvayati | pravṛttis tu pramāṇānām avagamātmiketi tāvad vyavasthāpayitum alam |[17] atha pramāṇanivṛttir avagatyantaraṃ janayitvābhāvaṃ vyavasthāpayati, āyātaṃ tarhi pramāṇāntaram | (PP 284.11–16)

Nor should one reply: "The two states of every instrument of knowledge are activity and inactivity. Among those, an instrument, when active, establishes positives. But an instrument, when inactive, is the basis for establishing absence."

[Objection:] How could the inactivity of an instrument of knowledge that first off does not intrinsically have the nature of awareness bring about the establishment of absence? However, the activity of an instrument of knowledge does have the nature of awareness. Therefore, it is sufficient in the first place to establish [absence].[18]

[Bhāṭṭa:] If the inactivity of the instruments of knowledge establishes absence after producing another awareness, then it follows that it is a further instrument of knowledge.

2.1.4 Against Inferentialism

bhavatu pratyakṣāt pramāṇāntaram | anumānād bhedo nāsti | dṛśyasya hi sattā darśanena vyāptā | darśanaṃ nivartamānaṃ dṛśyam api nivartayati | vyāpakanivṛttir hi vyāpyanivṛttyā vyāptā | vyāpyāc ca vyāpakāvagatir anumānam eva bhavati | tad idam ayuktam | sarvatra hi vyāpyaṃ vyāpakaṃ cāvagamya vyāptir avasīyate | iha ca vyāpyā vyāpikā ca nivṛttir eva, sā cābhāvātmikā na bhāvagrāhakapramāṇāvaseyeti, na vyāptyavadhāraṇaṃ sambhavatīti katham anumeyatā | liṅgabhūtapramāṇanivṛttyavagamānavaklpteś ca anumānatvāsambhavaḥ | (PP 284.18–285.4)

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[16]With Mukunda Śāstri (PP$_2$ 119.8), reading *iti*.

[17]With Mukunda Śāstri (PP$_2$ 119.10), reading *tāvad vyavasthāpayitum* rather than *tāṃ vyavasthāpayitum*.

[18]The argument is this: The inactivity of the standard positive instruments of knowledge, which does not amount to a *sui generis* instrument of knowledge, is best taken to serve as the *basis* for acquiring knowledge of absence. The concern is that the inactivity of the instruments of knowledge could not constitute a state of awareness, and therefore could not constitute an instrument of knowledge in and of itself. The *activity* of a positive instrument of knowledge, however, does constitute a state of awareness. This leads naturally into the inferentialist picture, according to which the inactivity of the instruments of knowledge serves as the basis for inferential knowledge of absence.

[Objection:] Let there be an instrument of knowledge [for absence] distinct from perception.[19] But it is not distinct from inference. This is because the existence of a perceivable [object or property] is pervaded by perception. Perception, when it has ceased, entails the cessation of a perceivable [object or property] too, given that the cessation of the pervaded feature is pervaded by the cessation of the pervader feature.[20] And awareness of the pervader feature on the basis of the pervaded feature is just inference.[21]

[Bhāṭṭa:] This is untenable. The reason is that, in all cases, one apprehends pervasion after having apprehended the pervaded feature and the pervader feature. And in this case, the pervaded feature and the pervader feature are cessations. And cessations, which are by their nature absences, cannot be apprehended through an instrument of knowledge that apprehends positives. Therefore, ascertaining the pervasion is not possible: How could [absence] be an object of inference?[22] And because it is not possible to undergo an awareness of the cessation of the instruments of knowledge which serves as the inferential mark, [knowledge of absence] cannot be inferential.

2.1.5 The Positive Bhāṭṭa View

> *tasmād   bhāvagrāhakapramāṇānanuvṛttir   evābhāvāvagamaṃ*
> *prasūte | tac cābhavākhyaṃ pramāṇam | yac ca pramāṇam*
> *yadbhāvagrahaṇayogyam,   tannivṛttir   eva   tadabhāvam av-*
> *abodhayatīti, nātiprasaṅgadoṣo 'tra jāyate | ato 'bhāvākhyam*
> *api   pramāṇam   svamahimnaiva   svaviṣayam   upakalpayati,*
> *bhāvagrāhakapratyakṣādipramāṇapañcakavat |* (PP 285.4–9)

Therefore, just the disruption of the instruments of knowledge that apprehend

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[19]The view that we learn of absence by inference is most often associated with Buddhist authors following Dharmakīrti. See Kellner (2001; 2003) for discussion.

[20]The causative verb *nivartayati* literally translates to 'causes to cease'. However, this yields the following translation: "Perception, when it has ceased, causes a perceivable [object or property] to cease." This is close to suggesting that perceivable objects endure only as long as they are perceived, and so I translate the verb less literally as 'entails the cessation'.

[21]In the inference, the target feature (*sādhya*), or the feature to be inferred, is the absence (*abhāva*) of a perceivable object. The prover feature (*hetu*), or the feature from which one infers the target feature, is non-observation of a perceivable object (*dṛśyādarśana*). The generalisation is that non-observation of a perceivable object is always accompanied by the absence of the object. The inference, therefore, would run as follows: 'I am not observing a perceivable object *O*. Wherever one does not observe a perceivable object, that object is absent. Therefore, *O* is absent.'

[22]Dharmakīrti (PVin 58.3–4), writing before Śālikanātha, was aware of this regress problem. He (PVin 59.4) accounted for the problem by cashing out 'non-apprehension' (*anupalambha*) as 'apprehending something else' (*anyopalambha*).

positives produces awareness of absence. And this is the instrument of knowledge called 'absence'. Just the inactivity of an instrument *K* suited to grasping some positive *O* brings about an awareness of the absence of *O*. Therefore, no problem of overextension arises in this case. So, the instrument of knowledge called 'absence' too, just through its own capability, establishes its intentional object, like the five instruments of knowledge beginning with perception that apprehend positives.

2.1.6 Further Arguments for Anti-Reductionism

> *api ca kaṇṭakādivirahiṇi bhūtalādau yo niśśaṅkaḥ pādavinyāsādivyavahāraḥ pravartate, sa tāvad bhūtalamātraparicchedanibandhano nābhyupagamanīyaḥ, kaṇṭakādisaṃyoginy api prasaṅgāt | atha keval-abhūtalādiparicchedanibandhana iti ucyate, tatrāpi vikalpanīyam—kiṃ kevalasya bhūtalādeḥ paricchedād vyavahārapravṛttiḥ | atha kevalād bhūtalaparicchedāt | tatrāgrimapakṣaparigrahe bhūtalādisvarūpātiriktakaivalyaparicchedābhyupagamād aṅgīkṛtam abhāvasya prameyatvam | paścimapakṣāvalambane tu bhūtalamātraparicchede jāte sūkṣmeṣu kīṭakaṇṭakādiṣv anavagateṣu vyavahāro yadi pravartate, tadā sūkṣmakīṭakaṇṭakajijñāsā niṣphalā bhavet | prayatnapūrvikayā hi jijñāsayā kevalabhūtalapariccheda eva labdhavyaḥ | sa ced vināpi prayatnaṃ labdhaḥ, niṣphalaṃ prayatnapūrvakaṃ sūkṣmakīṭakaṇṭādyanvīkṣaṇam | kaivalyaparicchedasya prayatnam antareṇāvagantum aśakyatvād yukta eva prayatnaḥ | dṛśyādarśanaṃ hy abhāvāvagame kāraṇam | na ca sūkṣmāḥ kīṭakaṇṭakādayaḥ prayatnam antareṇa dṛśyatām āpadyanta iti dṛśyatvopapattaye yuktaiva prayatnapūrvikā jijñāsā | api ca śaśādīnāṃ śṛṅgādyanumānaṃ syāt, abhāvasyāparicchedyatvāt | abhāvasya tu prameyatve bādhitaviṣayatvenānumānanirodho yukta iti | (PP 285.11–286.10)*

Moreover, with respect to surfaces such as a ground that lacks thorns, the unhesitating ordinary actions that take place, such as putting one's foot down, first off cannot be accepted as based on discrimination of the mere ground.[23] This is because such ordinary actions would [problematically] take place even with respect to something that has thorns. If one were to say that [such ordinary actions] are based on discrimination of the ground in isolation, to this too we should pose a dilemma: Do those [ordinary actions] proceed from the discrimination of *the ground* in isolation? Or from *discrimination* in isolation of the

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[23]This passage does not mirror any discussions in Kumārila or Umveka, but is rather Śālikanātha offering further arguments on their behalf.

ground?[24] Among these options, if one accepts the former view, then, since one would accept discrimination of isolation over and above the intrinsic nature of the ground, one would admit that absence is a [further] object of knowledge.[25]

But if one were to resort to the latter view, then inquiry into whether there are very small insects or thorns would be [problematically] pointless, given that ordinary action would take place (i) when there is discrimination of the mere ground and (ii) when one had not apprehended very small insects or thorns. This is because that very discrimination of the ground in isolation should be obtained through inquiry based on effort. If that discrimination of the ground in isolation obtained even without effort, then investigation based on effort into whether there are very small bugs or thorns would be pointless. [But], because it is impossible to obtain discrimination of isolation without effort, effort is in fact warranted. This is because non-observation of a perceivable object is the cause for awareness of absence, and small bugs and thorns do not become perceivable without effort.[26] Therefore, inquiry preceded by effort is in fact warranted to make them perceivable.

Moreover, there would be inferences to fictional objects such as the horns of the hare, because their absence could not be discriminated. But if absence is an object of knowledge, then it is tenable that the inference would be blocked, because its content would be rebutted.[27]

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[24]Śālikanātha is exploiting an ambiguity in the Sanskrit compound *keval-abhūtalādiparicheda*, whereby the adjective *kevala* could modify either *bhūtalādi* or *pariccheda*.

[25]On the first disambiguation, 'discrimination of the ground in isolation' involves apprehending the ground's *isolation*. However, the view that absence is just the locus in isolation, construed as the intrinsic nature of the locus, was already rejected. This first disambiguation therefore supposedly commits one to the view that apprehending absence involves apprehending a negative property, isolation, over and above any positive entity. The reductionist opponent accordingly must reject the first disambiguation and commit to the remaining alternative.

[26]According to the view under consideration, to notice the absence of thorns on the ground is to apprehend the ground without apprehending the thorns. The Bhāṭṭa raises the following issue: Suppose you find yourself in a garden where you are tempted to walk around barefoot. Since you are in a garden, you throw off your shoes only once you discern that there are not very small (*sūkṣma*) thorns or insects on the ground. The problem, however, is that very small objects are not *immediately perceivable*. Just as objects in the dark become perceivable by turning on the lights, small thorns are made perceivable by searching for them: One would not see them without looking for them. But if all it takes to apprehend the absence of thorns is to apprehend the floor without apprehending thorns, there should be no need to search for the thorns before going barefoot. Therefore, the Bhāṭṭa argues, apprehending their absence must be more than just apprehending the floor.

[27]The notion of 'rebuttal' (*bādha*) here requires *disagreement* (*visaṃvāda*) between the contents of one's states of awareness. Suppose S perceptually knows that *p*. But, in some confusion, S later attempts to infer that ¬*p*. S's knowledge that *p* is said to 'rebut' the content of their

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2.2 Śālikanātha's View

ucyate | bhāvānām avagatir dvividhā | ekā tāvad bhāvāntarasaṃsṛṣṭaviṣayā, aparā ca tadekaviṣayā | yāpi ca tadekaviṣayā buddhiḥ, sāpi dvividhā pratiyogini dṛśye 'dṛśye ca | tatra dṛśye pratiyogini yā tadekaviṣayā buddhiḥ, saiva tasya pratiyogino 'bhāva ity ucyate | (PP 286.12–287.3)

[Śālikanātha:] We reply: Awareness of positives is of two kinds. To begin, one has an intentional object associated with another positive and the other has only [a certain positive] *L* as its intentional object.[28] Awareness that has only *L* as its intentional object is, in turn, of two kinds, depending on whether the counterpositive is perceivable or imperceptible.[29] Among these, that very awareness whose only intentional object is *L* and which arises when the counterpositive is perceivable is said to be the absence of that counterpositive.[30]

2.2.1   An Argument for Mental State Reductionism

yo 'pi hi prameyam abhāvam aparam āha, so 'pi pratiyogini dṛśye tadekaviṣayāṃ buddhiṃ tāvad avaśyam abhyupaiti | na hi saṃsṛṣṭaviṣayabuddhyudayenāpy adṛśye pratiyogini abhāvo 'vagamy-ate | kiṃ ca dṛśyādarśanam abhāvāvagame pramāṇam | na ca pramāṇam antareṇa prameyasiddhir astīti yatrābhāvo 'bhyupaga-manīyaḥ tatrāvaśyam dṛśyādarśanam āśrayaṇīyam | tulyopalamb-

thought that ¬*p.* As this applies in this case, suppose that apprehending the absence of *O* is not to apprehend some negative entity, but merely to apprehend the locus without apprehending *O.* Then consider an agent who falsely 'infers' that hares have horns. According to the view under consideration, the agent has never previously apprehended *the absence* of horns on a hare. Rather, they have only apprehended hares without apprehending horns. The problem, therefore, is that there would be no prior state of awareness to rebut this agent's attempt to infer that hares have horns.

[28]I translate *bhāvāntarasaṃsṛṣṭa* as 'associated with another positive' in the singular for two reasons. First, Śālikanātha below will distinguish between the intentional objects of the two kinds of states of awareness he enumerates here: positives with a *second item* (*sadvitīya*) and *solitary* (*ekākin*) positives. Second, the paradigmatic cases Śālikanātha considers involve either an object at a locus or the absence of an object at a locus. There is, however, no reason to assume that Śālikanātha is committed to a general bottleneck on content of two items at once.

[29]Note that for Śālikanātha's purposes, the single intentional object will be the *locus* of the absent object or property. For this reason, I translate the pronoun *tat* (in this context, functioning as a variable) as *L.* However, *L* can be any positive object.

[30]Śālikanātha distinguishes between three kinds of states of awareness: (i) awareness with an intentional object associated with another positive; (ii) awareness whose only intentional object is *L* and which arises when the counterpositive is *imperceptible*; and (iii) awareness whose only intentional object is *L* and which arises when the counterpositive is *perceivable*. A case of (i) would be perceiving a pot on the floor. A case of (ii) would be, to use Śālikanātha's previous example, briefly glancing at an empty floor where a very small insect is absent. And a case of (iii) would be perceiving an empty floor where you excepted to find a large, bright blue pot.

hayogyārthāntaradarśanena dṛśyānupalambho 'vadhāryate | ato dṛśye
pratiyogini tadekaviṣayopalabdhir eva varam abhāvo 'stu | (PP 287.3–9)

This is because even someone who says that absence is a further object of knowledge must first off accept awareness whose only intentional object is *L* and which arises when the counterpositive is perceivable. The reason is that, if the counterpositive is imperceptible, as well as through the arising of awareness with an intentional object associated [with another object or property], one undergoes no awareness of absence. Moreover, non-observation of a perceivable [object or property] is the instrument of knowledge for absence. Nor does one establish an object of knowledge without an instrument of knowledge. Therefore, where one accepts absence, one must accept non-observation of a perceivable [object or property]. One ascertains his non-apprehension of a perceivable [object or property] by perceiving another object that is suited to being an object of a similar apprehension. Therefore, it is best to let absence just be apprehension whose only intentional object is *L* and which arises when the counterpositive is perceivable.[31]

2.2.2 Two Objections to Mental State Reductionism

nanu yady abhāvo nāsti, kathaṃ tarhi yatra prāk saṃsṛṣṭabuddhir āsīt,
tatra tadekaviṣayā buddhir āvirbhavati | pradhvaṃsābhāvābhyupagame
tu sā syāt | api ca vināpi tadekaviṣayāṃ buddhim abhāvāvagatir asti |
anumānādyekaviṣayāṇāṃ bhāvānām anumānādyabhave 'bhāvo dṛśyate
| tatra tulyopalambhayogyabhāvāntaraikaviṣayā buddhir nāsti, atha
cābhāvo 'vagamyata iti tadekaviṣayabuddhivyatirekeṇāpy abhāvo gamy-
ata iti | (PP 287.10–288.2)

[Objection:] If there is no absence, then how does awareness whose only intentional object is *L* arise in a case where previously there was awareness [of *L*] associated [with another object or property]? However, if we accept posterior

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[31]Śālikanātha develops an argument for taking absence to be a state of awareness. He first argues that the Bhāṭṭa opponent must accept that to learn of absence, an agent must perceive only the locus *and* the counterpositive must be perceivable: One does not learn that there is no pot on the floor by perceiving a pot on the floor, nor does one learn that there are no very tiny insects on the floor just by very briefly perceiving only the floor. Further, he argues, we require a means by which learn of absence. For the Bhāṭṭa, that means is non-observation of a perceivable object. But how does one learn that they are not observing a perceivable object? Śālikanātha answers: by perceiving only the locus. Therefore, learning of the absence of a perceivable object *P* at a locus *L* is always correlated with observing *L* without observing *P*. To explain this correlation, let the absence of *P* at *L* just *be* awareness of only *L*.

absence, there could be awareness whose only intentional object is L.[32]

Moreover, even without awareness whose only intentional object is L, there is awareness of absence. When there is [no indirect instrument of knowledge], such as inference, with respect to positives that would exclusively be intentional objects of [indirect instruments of knowledge] such as inference, absence is apprehended. In those cases, there is no awareness whose only intentional object is another positive L suited to being the object of a similar awareness. And yet, one undergoes an awareness of absence. Therefore, one apprehends absence even without awareness whose only intentional object is L.

2.2.3   Explaining Away Absence Causation

atrābhidhīyate | yasyāpi mate pradhvaṃsābhāvas svīkriyate tam api prati paryanuyogo 'yaṃ śakyate dātum | yasya yatra bhāva āsīt, kathaṃ tasya tatrābhāva iti | sa cet paryanuyukto brūte yat kāraṇopanipātavaśena tasminn evābhāvo jāyate iti, tato vayam api vaditum śaktāḥ kāraṇopanipātād eva tadekaviṣayā buddhir āvirbhavatīti | yathaiva sa vādī pradhvaṃsābhāvasya kāraṇam āha, tathaiva tadekaviṣayāyā buddher api vayaṃ vaditum kṣamāḥ | (PP 288.3–8)

To this, we reply: Even against someone on whose view posterior absence is accepted, we can give a rejoinder. How is there the absence of something at a location where there was its presence? If he, faced with this rejoinder, says that absence is produced at that very location in virtue of the presence of a cause, then we are also able to state that awareness whose only intentional object is L comes to exist from just the same presence of that cause. In the very same way that the opponent specifies the cause of the posterior absence, we can state the cause of awareness whose only intentional object is L.[33]

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[32]We have to understand the antecedent "if there is no absence" (*yady abhāvo nāsti*) in a restricted way, as Śālikanātha is not an eliminativist about absence. Rather, many philosophers in the Sanskrit tradition draw a distinction between *prior absence* (*prāgabhāva*), the absence of an object that does not yet exist; and *posterior absence* (*dhvaṃsābhāva*), the absence of something that did but no longer exists. The opponent notes that Śālikanātha will want to deny such distinctions between temporally-individuated kinds of absence and raises Kumārila's (ŚV 409.3–410.12 *abhāva* 2–8) argument that we require these distinctions to make sense of transitions between states in which objects or properties come in or out of existence.

[33]Suppose we explain the transition of an object existing at time t_n to not existing at t_{n+1} by appealing to posterior absence: At t_n the object obtains, and then at t_{n+1} its posterior absence obtains. Śālikanātha points out that this is just to redescribe the transition between states in terms of a temporally-individuated kind of absence. The explanation required is deeper: *Why* does the posterior absence obtain? Śālikanātha argues that whatever is cited as the cause of the posterior absence can be cited as the cause of awareness whose only intentional object is L.

athocyeta mudgarābhighātādiḥ kṣaṇiko 'bhāvasya kāraṇam,
sa kathaṃ kālāntare tadekaviṣayāṃ buddhiṃ janayatīti |
hanta tarhi kapālamālādyutpattis tadekaviṣayabuddhikāraṇam
astu | etena deśāntaranīte vastuni tadekaviṣayā buddhir
vyākhyātā | atrāpi deśāntaraṃ nītasya vastunas tatra sthitir eva
tadekaviṣayabuddhinimittam ity āśrayaṇīyam | (PP 288.8–13)

If one were to reply:

[Objection:] Momentary events such as the strike of a mallet are the causes
of absence. How does that produce, at another time, awareness whose only
intentional object is *L*?

[Response:] Well then let the arising of the group of pot pieces be the cause
for awareness whose only intentional object is *L*![34] In this way, with respect
to something that has been moved to another location, awareness whose only
intentional object is *L* is explained. Even in this case, we accept that, for a
thing that has moved to another location, just its being there is the cause for
awareness whose only intentional object is *L*.

nanu ca bhavatu svakāraṇopanipātāt tadekaviṣayā buddhiḥ,
saṃsṛṣṭaviṣayāpi tu kim iti na syāt | tasyāḥ kāraṇavināśāt sā na
syād iti cet, aṅgīkṛtas tarhi nāśāparaparyāyo 'bhāvaḥ | ucyate |
na vayam api saṃsṛṣṭabuddheḥ kāraṇavināśam abhāvaṃ brūmaḥ,
kiṃ tu bhāvāntarodaya eva kāraṇavināśa iti brūmaḥ |[35] nanu
niranvayavināśinīnāṃ buddhyādīnāṃ kasya bhāvāntarasyodayo
vināśaḥ | ucyate | dharmiṇaḥ svarūpamātreṇāvasthānam eva tatra
bhāvāntarodayo 'vagantavyaḥ | (PP 288.14–289.1)

[Objection:] Let awareness whose only intentional object is *L* be due to the
presence of its cause. However, why would there not also be awareness [of *L*]
associated [with another object or property]?

[Response:] Because the causes of that awareness would be destroyed, that
awareness would not arise.

[Objection:] Then you would accept an absence that would be synonymous
with destruction.

[Response:] We reply: We also do not say that the destruction of the causes
for awareness [of *L*] associated [with another object or property] is an absence.

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[34]The phrase *hanta tarhi* might suggest an intermediate view (*uttarapakṣa*), but I take this to
be Śālikanātha returning to his own voice. No other markers signal a return to his own voice,
and the view articulated in this response is entirely consistent with his own position.

[35]Favouring Mukunda Śāstri's reading at PP_2 (121.25–122.1), but with Subrahmanya Sastri
reading *bhāvāntarodaya* rather than *bhāvāntarādaya*. Subrahmanya Sastri reads: *na vayam api*
saṃsṛṣṭabuddheḥ kāraṇaṃ vināśaṃ brūmaḥ, kiṃ tu bhāvāntarodaya eva kāraṇam iti brūmaḥ |
(PP 288.16–17).

But rather, we say that the destruction of those causes is just the arising of another positive.

[Objection:] For entities such as states of awareness which are destroyed without continuity, the arising of which other positive is the destruction?

[Response:] Only the state of the property-bearer on its own (*svarūpamātreṇa*) must be understood to be the arising of the positive in that case.[36]

2.2.4 Intrinsic Nature as Solitary Positive

> *nanu kim idaṃ svarūpamātram | na tāvat svarūpam eva, tasya dharmodayakāle 'py avināśāt | tasmād dharmābhāva eva dharmiṇas svarūpamātram ity aṅgīkaraṇīyam | ucyate | na bhāvātirikto 'bhāvo 'ṅgīkrīyate | bhāva eva tv ekākī sadvitīyaś ceti dvayīm avasthām anubhavati | tatraikākī bhāvas svarūpamātram ucyate |* (PP 289.2–6)

[Objection:] What is this 'mere intrinsic nature' (*svarūpamātra*)?[37] First off, it is not [an object's] intrinsic nature itself, because that is not destroyed even at the time when a property arises. Therefore, one must accept that the mere intrinsic nature of a property-bearer is just an absence of properties.

[Response:] We reply: We do not accept that absence is distinct from a positive. However, positives in fact can be in two states: solitary positives, or positives with a second item. Among these, a solitary positive is said to be [that positive's] mere intrinsic nature.[38]

2.2.5 An Argument from Solitary Positives

> *yo 'pi cābhāvākhyaṃ tattvāntaram abhyupaiti, tenāpi tāvad ekākibhāvopalambhanam āśrityābhāvapramitir aṅgīkaraṇīyā | na hy apratīte bhāve 'bhāvaḥ pratīyate | tatra kīdṛśasya tāvad bhāvasya pratītir abhāvāvagatau nimittam iti cintanīyam | kiṃ sadvitīyasya | athavābhāvaviśiṣṭasya | athavā bhāvābhāvānapekṣasyaikākina iti |*

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[36]The property-bearer (*dharmin*) just being the locus that bore the absent object or property.

[37]The term *svarūpamātreṇa*, which Śālikanātha used in the previous passage, has the idiomatic sense of 'on its own', but literally means 'by its mere intrinsic nature'. The opponent now presses Śālikanātha on this notion.

[38]The opponent argues that we have to explain an object's mere intrinsic nature, or its isolated intrinsic properties, as an *absence* of extrinsic properties. This would undermine Śālikanātha's attempts to explain away causation by absence. He responds by introducing the notion of a *solitary positive* and identifies the intrinsic nature of a locus with the solitary locus. A solitary positive would be just a floor, while a positive with a second item would be a floor that houses a pot. However, a similar concern arises: Would a floor not simply be solitary insofar as it houses no further items?

tatra na tāvat sadvitīyasya bhāvasya jñānapurassaram abhāvajñānaṃ sambhavati, ghaṭavati bhūtale pratīte tadabhāvāvagamaprasaṅgāt | nāpy abhāvaviśiṣṭabhāvāvasāyanimittābhāvāvagatiḥ, ātmāśrayadoṣaprasaṅgāt | abhāvaṃ hi pratītya tadviśiṣṭaṃ bhāvam avasāyābhāvaḥ pratipattavya ity abhāvāvagatir evābhāvabodhodaye kāraṇam iti vyaktam ātmāśrayatvam | (PP 289.6–15)

Even someone who accepts that there is a further entity called 'absence' should first off also agree that one learns of absence on the basis of apprehending a solitary positive. This is because one does not undergo an awareness of absence if he undergoes no awareness of a positive. With respect to this, we should inquire: First off, awareness of what sort of positive is the cause for awareness of absence? Is it a positive with a second item? A positive qualified by an absence? Or a solitary positive independent of [other] positives and absences?

Among these options, first off awareness of absence cannot be based on awareness of a positive with a second item, because one would problematically undergo an awareness of an absence of a pot when one underwent an awareness of a floor that possesses a pot. Nor is awareness of absence caused by ascertainment of a positive qualified by an absence, because there would be the problem of self-dependence. This is because one would have to undergo an awareness of absence, after having ascertained a positive qualified by absence, after having undergone an awareness of the absence. Therefore, that very awareness of an absence would be the cause for the arising of awareness of [that] absence. This is clear self-dependence.

kiṃ ca bhāvapratītyanupraveśinyām abhāvāvagatau nābhāvākhyaṃ pramāṇāntaraṃ syāt | svarūpamātraṃ dṛṣṭvāpi paścāt kiṃcit smarann api | tatrānyanāstitāṃ pṛṣṭas tadaiva pratipadyate ||[39] iti abhāvasya pramāṇāntaratve yuktiḥ | prāktanabhāvasvarūpāvagatāv eva ced abhāvo 'pi pratītaḥ, na prameyam avaśiṣyate | prameyānavaśeṣe 'bhavo na pramāṇāntaram avakalpate | tasmād ekākinī bhāvapratītir evābhāvapratīter nimittam ity āstheyam | ato 'pratīte 'py abhāve svarūpamātraṃ pratīyata itītaretarābhāvo mātraśabdena pratipādyata iti | ato bhāvāntarodayād eva tadekaviṣayabuddhyudayaḥ | saṃsṛṣṭabuddhyanudayo 'pi sa eveti na kiṃcid dūṣaṇam | (PP 290.1–11)

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[39]Mukunda Śāstri reads: *svarūpamātradṛṣṭaṃ hi veśam ādyarthaṃ smaran punaḥ | tatrānyenāstitāṃ pṛṣṭas tad eva pratipadyate ||* (PP₂ 122.21–22). This reading provides a paraphrase, rather than a verbatim quotation, of Kumārila's verse at ŚV (413.3–4 *abhāva* 28). Versions of this paraphrase receive reuse, such as by Gaṅgeśa (TCM 722.3–4 *anupalabdhi*). Vācaspati (NBhVTṬ 89.10–12 ad 1.1.4) also reconstructs the objection in a way which suggests he read the paraphrase.

Moreover, if awareness of absence is included in awareness of a positive, there would not be a further instrument of knowledge called 'absence'.

> "Someone, having observed something just on its own, also later recalls that thing.
>
> When asked, right then he undergoes an awareness of the absence of something else there"—

this is [supposed to be] the reason that absence is a further instrument of knowledge.[40] If even the absence is apprehended in just the very earlier awareness of the intrinsic nature of the positive, no object of knowledge remains. If no other object of knowledge remains, then absence is not postulated as a further instrument of knowledge. Therefore, one must acknowledge that awareness of a positive on its own is the cause for awareness of absence. So, even when one undergoes no awareness of an absence, one undergoes an awareness of [the positive's] mere intrinsic nature. Therefore, the word 'mere' conveys mutual absence.[41] So, therefore, the arising of awareness whose only intentional object is *L* is due just to the arising of another positive. The arising of awareness [of *L*] associated [with another object or property] too is exactly that. Therefore, there is no problem.[42]

2.2.6   Non-Perceptual Knowledge of Absence

> *yac ca tadekaviṣayabuddhivyatirekeṇāpy abhāvo 'vagamyata ity uktam |*
> *atrocyate | na pratyakṣarūpaiva tadekaviṣayā buddhir abhāvarūpeṣyate,*
> *kiṃ tv anumānādyātmikāpi tadekaviṣayā buddhir utpadyate | saivābhāva*
> *iti vyapadiśyate |* (PP 290.12–13)

It was said that, even without awareness whose only intentional object is *L*, one undergoes an awareness of absence. To this, we reply: We do not accept that awareness whose only intentional object is *L*, which has the nature of absence,

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[40] This verse is from Kumārila (ŚV 413.3–4 *abhāva* 28). Translation of the verse modified from Beaulieu (2021, p. 612).

[41] Claims of the form '*x* is not *y*' are taken to express a mutual absence (*iteretarābhāva*). Mutual absence is often considered synonymous with *distinctness* (*bheda*).

[42] The dialogical structure of the latter portion of this passage is highly ambiguous. On one plausible (but incomplete) reading, Śālikanātha is arguing for the surprising claim that the agent in Kumārila's case *does* apprehend the absence at the time of encounter rather than only later notice its absence. The argument appears to exploit Kumārila's use of the phrase 'on its own', which again literally means 'by its mere intrinsic nature'. Śālikanātha apparently argues that apprehending a locus *on its own* involves apprehending a mutual absence, and so the agent in Kumārila's case apprehended some mutual absence in their earlier apprehension of the locus.

only has the nature of perception. But rather, awareness whose only intentional object is *L* that has the nature of an instrument of knowledge such as inference arises. Just that awareness is labelled 'absence'.

2.2.7 The Problem of Unrelated Counterpositives

nanu ca tadekaviṣayā yadi buddhir abhāvaḥ kathaṃ tarhi ghaṭābhāvādivyavahāraḥ | na hi tasyāḥ kaścid api ghaṭādibhis saha sambandho 'sti | ucyate | na tadekaviṣayabuddhimātram abhāvo 'bhidhīyate, kiṃ tu dṛśye pratiyogini yā tadekaviṣayā buddhiḥ, sā tad-abhāva iti vyapadiśyate | tena yasmin pratiyogini dṛśye yā tadekaviṣayā buddhiḥ, sā tadabhāva iti viśeṣavyapadeśaḥ pravartate | tena iha bhūtale ghaṭo nāstīti kim uktam bhavati | dṛśye 'pi ghaṭe bhūtalamātram upalab-hyata iti | tadekaviṣayā ca saṃvittis svaprakāśatayā na pramāṇāntaram apekṣate | (290.14–291.5)

[Objection:] If absence is awareness whose only intentional object is *L*, then how can there be ordinary actions pertaining to the absences of counterpositives such as a pot, since there is no relation between that awareness and objects such as a pot?[43]

[Response:] We reply: Mere awareness whose only intentional object is *L* is not referred to as 'absence'. But rather, awareness whose only intentional object is *L* and which arises when the counterpositive *P* is perceivable is labelled 'the absence of *P*'. In this way, the specific label 'that is the absence of *P*' is applied [to] that awareness whose only intentional object is *L* and which arises when the counterpositive *P* is perceivable. Therefore, what is expressed by the claim 'there is no pot here on the floor'? That one apprehends the mere floor, even though the pot is perceivable.[44] Moreover, awareness whose only intentional

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[43]The concern is this: Absences always have counterpositives, the absent objects or properties *of which* they are absences. But states of awareness do not have counterpositives, and so appear to be the wrong kind of thing with which to identify absence. Therefore, the opponent objects, absences will end up standing in no relation (*sambandha*) to their counterpositives. Moreover, Śālikanātha cannot replace the counterpositive relation with the intentionality relation (*viṣayatā*), as he explicitly identifies the absence of a counterpositive with a state of awareness, the content of which does not include that counterpositive. Śālikanātha is therefore also unable to exploit ambiguities in the term *pratiyogin* and appeal to its distinct relational sense. Since there there is no relation between the relevant awareness and the absent object, there is no relation between both in which the absent object could be a relatum. Gaṅgeśa returns this problem. As he (TCM 751.5-6 *abhāva*) objects: Where a pot is absent, *"of what* would the pot be a counterpositive?" (*kasya pratiyogī ghaṭaḥ*).

[44]On one plausible reading of this passage, Śālikanātha's solution is *instrumentalist*: There is no deep metaphysical connection between an absence and its counterpositive. Rather, based on the context, we simply *treat* a state of awareness as an absence of some object but not another. For instance, we might be expecting to find a pot on the floor, but have no expectations to find

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object is *L*, insofar as it is self-presenting, does not require a further instrument of knowledge.[45]

2.2.8   Regress Problem from Cases of Past Absence

> *kiṃ   ca   pramāṇāntaravādināpi   pramāṇābhāvas*
> *sattvamātreṇābhāvabuddhijanako nābhyupagamanīyaḥ kiṃ tu vidi-*
> *tatvena | tathā hi kasyacid vastunaḥ kvacid adṛṣṭasya punas tasminn*
> *eva dṛśyamānasyādarśanakālabhāvinam abhāvaṃ pratipadyate nāsīd*
> *ayam iheti | tadā tatra darśanābhavo nivṛttaḥ katham abhāvāvagamaṃ*
> *janayet | yadi sattayābhāvabodhaḥ tato na bhavet | buddhyupārūḍhasya*
> *hi janakatve 'tītasyāpi sampraty anusandhīyamānasya ghaṭata*
> *evābhāvabodhopapādakatvam | yathā cakṣurādikaṃ svasattāmātreṇa*
> *svakāryakāri na cātivṛttaṃ svakāryaṃ janayati | liṅgaṃ ca*
> *buddhiviṣayāpannaṃ laiṅgikāvabodhajanakam, smaryamāṇam atītam*
> *api sat svakālavṛtti laiṅgikam anumāpayati | tathedaṃ draṣṭavyam*
> *| evaṃ cātītasyāpi pramāṇābhāvasyābhāvāvagamakatvād bud-*
> *dhyārūḍhasya janakatvam aṅgīkaraṇīyam | tatra yadi pramāṇābhāvo*
> *yaḥ so 'bhāvarūpas tadā tasyāpy avagatir viditād eva pramāṇābhāvād*
> *aṅgīkartavyety anavasthā |* (PP 291.7–19)

Moreover, even someone who argues that absence is a further instrument of knowledge must accept that the absence of the other instruments of knowledge does not produce awareness of absence merely by obtaining, but rather by being known. To say more: For some object *O* that one did not see at some location and which one then perceives at that very location, one undergoes an awareness of its absence [as] occurring at the time that he did not perceive *O*: 'This was not here'. How could non-observation, having ceased at that time and location, produce awareness of absence?

If an agent becomes aware of absence through [non-observation] obtaining, on that basis there could not be [awareness of past absence now]. This is because, if [non-observation] that has entered into the content of an awareness produces [awareness of absence], then even past [non-observation] which is now being recalled in fact can produce awareness of absence. For example, senses such as the visual sense produce their effects just by existing and do not produce their effects long after occurring. And an inferential mark, having

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a piano or a cello. For that reason, when we perceive just the floor where the pot should be, we treat our state of awareness as an absence of the pot but *not* as an absence of a piano or as an absence of a cello.

[45]If absence reduces to a state of awareness, then the epistemology of absence should reduce to *self-knowledge*. Śālikanātha subscribes to a very strong thesis about self-knowledge according to which states of awareness are self-presenting (*svaprakāśa*), or constitute knowledge of themselves.

entered the content of an awareness, produces inferential awareness; when it is recalled, even a past [inferential mark] has the agent infer the target feature occurring at its own time. The [case of non-observation] is to be noted as being so.[46]

And in this way, because the absence of the other instruments of knowledge, even though occurring in the past, can bring about awareness of absence, one must accept that [the absence of such instruments] brings about awareness of absence having entered into the content of an awareness. In that case, if the absence of the other sources of knowledge is an absence by nature, one must accept that even awareness of that too arises from the absence of the other sources of knowledge only when [that absence] known. This is a regress.[47]

2.2.9 Summary

> *yadi tu bhāvāntarasaṃvittir eva pramāṇābhāvo 'bhyupagamy-ate, tatas tasyās svayamprakāśatayā nānavasthāpadyate | tathā sati bhāvāntarasaṃvittir eva svayamprakāśā pramāṇābhāvarūpā prameyābhāvo 'stu | kim apareṇa prameyābhāvena | ghaṭo nāstītyādiśabdaprayogo 'pi tasyām eva svayamprakāśāyāṃ bhāvāntaropalabdhau yujyate | na punar ghaṭo nāstīti buddhyantaram*

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[46]Śālikanātha provides a clearer positive view about these cases in the *Ṛjuvimalā*, and sees an opportunity to argue for his reductionist metaphysics:

> *ataḥ samprati nāstitvabuddhiḥ prāktanād eva kevalopalambhād adhunā smṛtisamārūḍhād upajāyata iti balād abhyupagamanīyam | tataś ca kevalopalambhalakṣaṇam eva nāstitvam astu | kim arthāntaraparigraheṇa* | (ṚV 120.8–11)

> "So, one is forced to accept that the awareness of absence that arises now is due to one's *prior* apprehension in isolation which now enters into recollective awareness. Therefore, let absence be defined just as awareness in isolation. What is the point of accepting any further object?"

On this view, the agent learns now that the object was absent just from recalling that one perceived only the locus without perceiving the absent perceivable object. Since learning that one was aware of just the locus entails learning that the object was absent, let awareness of only the locus just be the absence of that object. The entailment thereby follows constitutively.

[47]Śālikanātha raises a regress problem. The case involves an object that was absent at some location but is later present. To borrow a case from Beaulieu (2021, p. 620), consider a room with a piano that was recently removed for repairs. Suppose someone enters the room for the first time *after* the piano was removed. When they enter, they do not register the piano's absence. After they leave, however, the piano is returned. When this person next enters the room and sees the piano back where it belongs, they learn that it had been absent. But suppose agents learn that a perceivable object or property was absent from non-observation of that object or property. Presumably, to notice the piano's absence *now*, one must *be aware* (or recall) that they did not observe the piano. But non-observation, for the Bhāṭṭa, is itself an absence: the absence of observation. Therefore, because we learn of absence through non-observation, the agent must be aware of their non-observation of their non-observation of the piano. And so forth.

āvirbhavati, bodhyāntarānavabhāsāt | yo 'pi padanyāsādivyavahāraḥ so 'pi dṛśye pratiyogini tadekaviṣayabuddhinibandhana iti dṛśyatvopapattaye yuktaiva sūkṣmakaṇṭakādijijñāsā | tathāvidhapratipattyudaya eva cābhāvaḥ | tena tasminn anumānam abhāvasādhakaṃ na pravartate | (PP 291.19–292.7)

But if we accept that the absence of the instruments of knowledge just is awareness of another positive, then, insofar as that state of awareness is self-presenting, no regress follows. As much being the case, let just the self-presenting awareness of another positive, which is by its nature the absence of the instruments knowledge, be the absence of the object of knowledge. What is the need for any further absence of an object of knowledge?

Even the use of the expression 'there is no pot' is warranted only with respect to that self-presenting awareness of another positive.[48] No further awareness 'there is no pot', then, comes to exist, because no further object of awareness appears. Even ordinary actions such as putting one's foot down are based on awareness whose only intentional object is L and which arises when the counterpositive is perceivable. Thus, to make [the object or property] perceivable, inquiry into very small items such as thorns is warranted.[49] And absence just is the arising of that sort of awareness. In this way, with respect to that awareness, no inference that establishes absence arises.

2.2.10 Risk of Idealism

nanu yathā pramāṇābhāva evāvaśyambhāvitayā prameyābhāvo 'ṅgīkriyate, tathā pramāṇasadbhāva eva tarhi prameyasadbhāvas syāt | prameyasadbhāvavādināpi hi pramāṇasadbhāvo 'vaśyam āśrayaṇīya iti prāpto bāhyārthāpalāpaḥ |[50] naitad evam | prameyasya hi bahirarthasya pramāṇasvarūpātiriktasya svarūp⟨a⟩pratibhāsāt |[51]

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[48]Śālikanātha is providing a semantics for statements about absence, according to which the statement 'there is no pot' refers to awareness of just the locus under conditions such that the pot is perceivable. Where such a state of awareness obtains, the proposition 'there is no pot' *is true*. Śālikanātha, to repeat, is not an eliminativist.

[49]Śālikanātha returns to the problem of the thorns only being perceivable through searching. Since his view is that absence is a state of awareness whose only intentional object is L and which arises *when the counterpositive is perceivable*, his view explains why one should walk around barefoot in a garden only after searching for thorns: There is no absence until searching renders the thorns or insects perceivable.

[50]Reading *pramāṇābhāva eva* as *pramāṇābhāvaḥ eva*, an identity statement, to best make sense of the objection and Śālikanātha's response. Likewise, reading *pramāṇasadbhāva eva* as *pramāṇasadbhāvaḥ eva*.

[51]I remove the a-privative, emending Subrahmanya Sastri's (PP 292.11) reading of *svarūpāpratibhāsāt* to *svarūpapratibhāsāt*. This brings the reading closer to Mukunda Śāstri's

pramitir hi pramityekarūpatayaiva bhāsate, prameyaṃ nīlādyākāratayā | abhāvasya tu svarūpāvagatir nāstīti na pramāṇābhāvād anyaḥ prameyābhāvaḥ | pramāṇābhāvo 'pi ca svarūpāntarānavagamād eva na bhāvāntarapramiter bhidyate | bhāvāntarapramitiś ca svayam-prakāśarūpā na prameyatām anubhavatīti prameyam abhāvākhyasya pramāṇasya nopapadyate | prameyāsadbhāvāc ca na pramāṇāntaram avakalpata iti sthitam | (PP 292.8–17)

[Objection:] Just as it is admitted that necessarily the absence of an object of knowledge just is the absence of an instrument of knowledge, so too the existence of an object of knowledge would just be the existence of an instrument of knowledge. This is because even someone who argues for the existence of an object of knowledge must accept the existence of an instrument of knowledge. Therefore, the rejection of external objects follows.[52]

[Response:] This is not so, because the intrinsic nature of an external object of knowledge, distinct from the intrinsic nature of the instrument of knowledge, appears in awareness. This is because knowledge appears in the content of awareness just in the form of knowledge, and the object of knowledge just in the form of blue and so forth. However, one undergoes no awareness of the intrinsic nature of absence. Therefore, [in the case of absence], the absence of an object of knowledge is not distinct from the absence of an instrument of knowledge. Moreover, even the absence of an instrument of knowledge, because one undergoes no awareness of a further nature, is not distinct from knowledge of another positive. And knowledge of another positive, which is self-presenting by nature, does not achieve the status of an object of knowledge. Therefore, it is not possible that there is an object of knowledge for the instrument of knowledge called 'absence'. And because there is no object of knowledge, a further instrument of knowledge is not possible. This is established.

(PP₂ 124.20) reading of *bahirarthasya svarūpāntarapratibhāsāt*. This reading is also more consistent with Śālikanātha's views, as he would not deny that knowledge is distinct from its objects outside of the case of absence. Pandurangi (2004, p. 266) also reads *svarūpapratibhāsāt*.

[52]In the previous passage, Śālikanātha argued that the absence of an instrument of knowledge just is the absence of an object of knowledge. The opponent asks: Would the existence of an instrument of knowledge not then just be the existence of an object of knowledge? The concern is that Śālikanātha is dangerously close to affirming claims such as Prajñākaragupta's (PVBh 213.22) slogan that "existence is apprehension" (*sattopalambha eva*). Buddhist idealists who deny the existence of mind-independent external objects endorse such claims.

Abbreviations

B: Prabhākara (1934). Bṛhatī. In S. Sastri (ed.), *Bṛhatī of Prabhākara Miśra with the Ṛjuvimalāpañcikā of Śālikanātha.* University of Madras.

NBhVTṬ: Vācaspati (1996). Nyāyabhāṣyavārttikatātpāryaṭīkā. In A. Thakur (ed.), *Nyāyabhāṣyavārttikatātparyaṭīka of Vācaspatimiśra.* Indian Council of Philosophical Research.

PP: Śālikanātha (1961). Prakaraṇapañcikā. In S. Sastri (ed.), *Prakaraṇa Pañcikā of Sri Śālikanātha Miśra with Nyāya-Siddhi.* Banaras Hindu University.

PP$_2$:   Śālikanātha (1904). Prakaraṇapañcikā. In M. Śāstri (ed.), *Prakaraṇapañcikā.* Banaras Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series.

PVin: Dharmakīrti (2007). Pramāṇaviniścaya. In E. Steinkellner (ed.), *Dharmakīrti's Pramāṇaviniścaya: Chapters 1 and 2.* Austrian Academy of Sciences Press.

PVBh: Prajñākaragupta (1943). Pramāṇavārttikabhāṣya. In T. R. Sāṅkṛityāyana (ed.), *Pramāṇavārtikabhāshyam or Vārtikaālaṅkāra of Prajñākaragupta.* Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute.

ṚV: Śālikanātha (1934). Ṛjuvimalā. See B.

ŚBh: Śabara (1968). Śābarabhāṣya. In E. Frauwallner (ed.), *Materialien zur Ältesten Erkenntnislehre der Karmamīmāṃsā.* Kommissionsverlag der Örsterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

ŚV: Kumārila (1971). Ślokavārttika. In S. K. R. Sastri (ed.), *Ślokavārtikavyākhyā Tātparyaṭīkā*. University of Madras.

ŚVTṬ: Uṃveka (1971). Ślokavārttikatātparyaṭīkā. See ŚV.

TCM: Gaṅgeśa (1973). Tattvacintāmaṇi. In N. S. R. Tatacharya (ed.), *Tattvacintāmaṇi of Gaṅgeśophādhyāya with Prakāśa of Rucidattamiśra and Nyāyaśikhāmaṇi on Prakāśa of Rāmakṛṣṇādhvarin*. Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha.

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