Raghunātha on Seeing Absence

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Abstract

Later Nyāya philosophers maintain that absences are real particulars, irreducible to any positives, that we perceive. The fourteenth-century Nyāya philosopher Gaṅgeśa argues for a condition on absence perception according to which we always perceive an absence as an absence of its counterpositive, or its corresponding absent object or property. Call this condition the counterpositive condition. Gaṅgeśa shows that the counterpositive condition is both supported by a plausible thesis about the epistemology of relational properties and motivates the defence of absence as irreducible. But against Gaṅgeśa, the sixteenth-century Nyāya philosopher Raghunātha and his seventeenth-century commentators Bhavānanda, Jagadīśa, and Gadādhara identify cases in which the counterpositive condition fails. In this paper, I examine the Nyāya-internal debate over this condition. I conclude that Raghunātha makes a compelling case that the counterpositive condition fails.

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According to later Nyāya philosophers, absences (*abhāva*) are particulars (*vyakti*) capable of entering into causal relations and irreducible to any kind of positive.[1] Their surprising metaphysics of absence accompanies their distinctive *epistemology* of absence. Suppose a piano in a room you frequent one day vanishes. Upon entering the room, you are struck by its absence: You come to know that it is not there. We learn of absence, but how do we do so? On the Nyāya view, often by *perception* (*pratyakṣa*). In many cases, to know that a perceptible (*dṛśya*) object is absent is not to fail to perceive the object (*anupalabdhi*) or to infer its absence (*anumāna*) on that basis. It is instead literally to perceive its absence, in much the same sense that we perceive colour.[2]

But a tradition in Nyāya maintains that further conditions must obtain for us to see absence, over and above those that enable us to see positives. Consider the following case:

> ABSENT VIOLIN. Gadādhara is staring at an empty space in contemplation. Since this space is empty, there is no violin there: He

[1] Absences, on this view, are not negative facts. Rather, absences are much closer to *negative objects*. From as early as Śivāditya (c. 1150), Nyāya philosophers explicitly treat absence as the seventh 'fundamental ontological category' (*padārtha*). See his SP (2–4). This view is primarily staked out against the views of Prābhākara philosophers such as Śālikanātha (c. 825), who argues (PP 291.1-2) that absence is reducible to a kind of positive state of awareness (*buddhi*). See Gaṅgeśa's *Abhāvavāda* (TCM 730-765) for arguments that absence is irreducible to any positive and Matilal (1968, 109–142) for a translation and commentary. Gaṅgeśa's predecessor Udayana explicitly argues (NKA 107.5 *stabaka* 1.10ab) that absences are causes (*kāraṇa*), just like positives (*bhāvo yathā*). The view that absences are spatio-temporal particulars will be brought out below.

[2] Udayana (NKA 427.5–428.1 ad *stabaka* 3.20) draws the analogy with colour (*rūpa*) perception. As he explains the view, awareness of absence is causally direct (*sākṣāt*), or directly caused by the senses (*indriya*) without any intermediate state of awareness (*jñāna*). Absence perception is unlike ordinary object perception on this view, in that we perceive absence *mediately* by perceiving its positive locus (TS 137.15–17). This puts absence perception in the company of colour perception, which Nyāya philosophers also understood to be mediated by perception of the coloured object (TS 137.10). For Gaṅgeśa's defence of absence perception, which precedes his discussion of the metaphysics of absence, see his *Anupalabdhivāda* (TCM 699–729). See Beaulieu (2021) and Vaidya et. al (2016) for further discussion of the Nyāya view. Bhāṭṭa philosophers rejected absence perception, favouring a view according to which we learn that a perceptible object or property is absent *just* from non-observation of that object or property under priming conditions. See especially Kumārila (ŚV 409.1–2 *abhāva* 1) for the canonical statement of the view, and Beaulieu (2021) and Freschi (2010) for discussion. Dharmakīrti's Buddhist followers held a view according to which we *infer* the absence of a perceptible object or property from non-observation of that object or property. See Kellner (2001; 2003) and Taber (2001) for discussion.

> is gazing in the direction of a violin's absence. But having never encountered a violin, Gadādhara is entirely unfamiliar with the instrument.

Gadādhara would see a violin in the corner, even if unfamiliar with violins. But does he see the absence of a violin without seeing that *a violin* is absent? Or is there no sense at all in which he sees its absence?

Nyāya philosophers traditionally answer that Gadādhara could *not* see the absence of a violin. That is because they often accept:

> COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION. An agent undergoes an awareness (*jñāna*) of an absence only if they undergo an awareness of that absence as characterised by its counterpositive (*pratiyogin*).[3]

Every absence is an absence *of* something: The absence *of a piano*, the absence *of a violin*. For any given absence, its *counterpositive* is its corresponding absent object or property. The COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION makes a claim about the content of our awareness of absence: We are always aware of an absence *as* an absence of its counterpositive.[4] According to this condition, we cannot notice an absence of a piano without noticing that *a piano* is absent. As the central later Nyāya philosopher Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya (c. 1320) puts the view (TCM 751.1), we are aware of an absence *along with its counterpositive* (*sapratiyogika*). Since perceiving absence is one way of becoming aware of absence, the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION delivers a verdict about ABSENT VIOLIN: Gadādhara is unfamiliar with violins, and therefore cannot see their absence.

If we accept absence experience, the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION looks highly plausible. Noticing an absence is bound up with searching for,

[3] My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting improvements to the formulation of this condition. An early version of the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION traces back to the Nyāya philosopher Uddyotakara (c. 530–630). He (NBhV 9.7–8 ad *sūtra* 1.1.1) draws a contrast with positive perception, arguing that absence perception is 'dependent' (*paratantra*) insofar as agents are always aware of non-existence (*asat*) 'by means of negation' (*pratiṣedhamukhena*). Vācaspati (NBhVTṬ 28.9–11 ad *sūtra* 1.1.1) comments that positive perception is 'independent' (*svatantra*) insofar as positive perception, unlike absence perception, does not depend on any absent object or property (*niṣedhya*).

[4] Following Das (2021, 154), I translate the Sanskrit term *jñāna* and its synonyms as 'awareness' or 'state of awareness', referring to any occurrent thought or experience (which may be, but need not be, factive). The term 'state of awareness' should therefore be understood as referring to an occurrent mental state, rather than to a standing or dispositional mental state.

or expecting to find, its counterpositive.[5] Consider the room with the recently removed piano. This room is replete with collocated absences: At the very same location the piano is absent, there is also no violin and no cello. But when you enter, you notice the absence of *the piano*. If we are always aware of an absence along with its counterpositive, absence perception requires awareness of the counterpositive. As Udayana (c. 984) notes, we apprehend absence only if we recall (*smaraṇa*) the counterpositive (NKA 335.3–4 ad *stabaka* 3.6). The COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION therefore explains why you notice only the piano: You recall the piano. In contrast, you do not recall the other counterpositives, and so do not notice their absences.

Gaṅgeśa argues that the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION is also supported by a plausible thesis about the epistemology of relational properties. If absences are causal, spatio-temporal particulars, what features distinguish them from positive objects? One feature is that absences have counterpositives, while positive objects do not. From the minimal assumption that absences have counterpositives, Gaṅgeśa motivates the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION:

> One undergoes a firsthand awareness of an absence along with its counterpositive, because one undergoes the firsthand awareness 'there is no pot', 'there is no cloth,' but not of a mere 'that'. Therefore, firsthand awareness indicates that the counterpositive is apprehended in the apprehension of absence and that awareness of absence depends on awareness of the counterpositive, like similarity to a cow (Gaṅgeśa, TCM 751.1–3).[6,7]

Because absences have counterpositives, absence is relational. Gaṅgeśa argues that we should expect to be aware of absence in much the same way that we are aware of relational properties such as similarity (*sādṛśya*). Plausibly, we cannot be aware of relational properties in isolation of their relata. All similarity, for instance, is similarity *to something*, and awareness of similarity always involves awareness of the analogue: We notice some animal is similar *to a cow*. With-

[5] For discussion of the role that visual searches and expectations play in noticing absence, see Farennikova (2013). For further contemporary defence and discussion of absence perception, see Sorensen (2008; 2015).

[6] All translations are my own. Primary texts are cited by author, abbreviated title, page and line.

[7] *sapratiyogiko 'bhāvo 'nubhūyate | ghaṭo na paṭo nety anubhavāt | na tu tanmātram | ato 'bhāvavittivedyatvaṃ pratiyoginaḥ pratiyogijñānādhīnajñānatvaṃ cābhāvasyānubhavasākṣikaṃ gosādṛśyavat |*

out a principled way to maintain that awareness of absence is *unlike* awareness of other relational entities, we should expect awareness of absence likewise to involve awareness of the counterpositive.[8] The success of the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION is tied to the success of a plausible condition on awareness of relational properties.

Gaṅgeśa argues further that, without the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION, we fail to capture what is distinctive of our awareness of absence. He continues:

> Nor is absence the bare locus or the awareness of the bare locus, because one apprehends the bare locus even without awareness of the counterpositive and because the counterpositive is not an intentional object in apprehension of the bare locus. And if [absence] is not [apprehended] along with its counterpositive, of what is the pot a counterpositive? (Gaṅgeśa, TCM 751.3–6).[9]

To notice a bare floor, Gaṅgeśa argues, is not to notice the absence of a pot on the floor. Rather, it is just to notice the floor. To continue his analogy: Exhaustive knowledge of an object's intrinsic properties is not knowledge of its relational properties. To know an object's dimensions *alone* is not to know that it is taller than some other object. Knowledge of a bare floor is likewise not knowledge of a pot's absence. But what distinguishes awareness of a pot's absence on the floor from awareness of the bare floor? According to Gaṅgeśa: a difference in content. The former involves awareness of the absent pot, but the latter does not. He argues that this feature of our knowledge of absence motivates the view that absence is irreducible to a positive. This is arguably his central motivation for maintaining the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION: Gaṅgeśa wants to draw conclusions about the metaphysics of absence from the content of our awareness of absence. The COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION motivates the defence of absence as irreducible to any kind of positive.

But what if the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION fails? Against Gaṅgeśa, the Nyāya philosopher Raghunātha Śiromaṇi (c. 1510) thinks that there are cases in which it must. He argues that we can see darkness (*tamas*, *andhakāra*),

[8] Shortly after this passage, Gaṅgeśa (TCM 753.1–7) further emphasises the connection between absence and relational properties. He argues that to undergo an awareness of an object's dimensions (*parimāṇa*) alone is not to undergo any awareness of the object as short (*hrasva*) or tall (*dīrgha*). Given that absences are also relational, awareness of a bare floor should likewise not constitute awareness of absence.

[9] *na ca kevalam adhikaraṇaṃ tajjñānam vābhāvaḥ | pratiyogijñānaṃ vināpi tadvitteḥ, tadvittau pratiyogino 'visayatvāc ca | sapratiyogikatvābhāve ca kasya pratiyogī ghaṭaḥ |*

which Nyāya philosophers understood to be the absence of light, without seeing darkness as the absence of light. My plan in this essay is to examine his arguments. Raghunātha, however, is a notoriously terse author. Accordingly, my reading of his arguments will be informed by his commentator Jagadīśa Tarkālaṃkāra (c. 1620), and to a lesser extent by his commentators Bhavānanda Siddhāntavāgīśa (c. 1600) and Gadādhara Bhaṭṭācārya (c. 1660).[10] I will argue that Raghunātha and his commentators give us compelling reasons to think that the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION fails.

1 Background

Later Nyāya philosophy often takes place through commentaries on Gaṅgeśa's *Tattvacintāmaṇi*.[11] Raghunātha writes his commentary against a backdrop of two centuries in earlier commentaries by philosophers such as Yajñapati Upādhyāya (c. 1460) and Jayadeva Miśra (c. 1470). Raghunātha's own commentators write their subcommentaries with these earlier commentaries in mind. In doing so, Raghunātha and his commentators assume familiarity with the theoretical resources and arguments that Gaṅgeśa and his commentators develop. To understand the debate over the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION, we need two pieces of background: Gaṅgeśa's view about the distinction between general absence (*sāmānyābhāva*) and specific absence (*viśeṣābhāva*), and his view about *universal-mediated perception* (*sāmānyalakṣaṇā*).

1.1 Gaṅgeśa on General & Specific Absence

Most small London flats lack any grand piano. In many cases, kinds of objects or properties are completely absent. But where there is a particular grand piano, the *other* particular grand pianos remain absent. Later Nyāya philosophers take the difference between such cases to motivate a metaphysical distinction between *general absence* and *specific absence*. Using the Nyāya technical language, N. S. Ramanuja Tatacharya (1928–2017) explains the distinction:

> General absence is absence whose counterpositivehood is delimited by a generic property. Specific absence is absence whose

[10] For secondary literature on the historical context of later Nyāya, self-styled as 'new' (*navya*) or 'modern' (*navīna*) Nyāya, see especially Ganeri (2011) and Wright (2021).

[11] For a complete translation of the *Tattvacintāmaṇi*, Gaṅgeśa's only extant text, see Phillips (2020).

> counterpositivehood is delimited by a specific property. The absence whose counterpositivehood is delimited by pothood, established by the state of awareness 'there is no pot', is a general absence. The absence whose counterpositivehood is delimited by blue-pothood and so forth, established by states of awareness such as 'the blue pot is not there' and 'the red pot is not there', is a specific absence (Tatacharya, BP 321.4–8).[12,13]

Generic high-level properties (*sāmānyadharma*) are properties shared across ranges of individuals, such as how the generic property pothood (*ghaṭatva*) is shared by all individual pots. In the technical language: Generic properties such as pothood delimit (*avacchedaka*) the counterpositivehood (*pratiyogitā*) of general absence. The best interpretation of this claim is perhaps that the counterpositive of a general absence is a generic or arbitrary object, such as an arbitrary pot.[14] In contrast, the more specific high-level property (*viśeṣadharma*) that an individual instantiates, such as *blue-pothood* (*nīlaghaṭatva*), delimits the counterpositivehood of a specific absence. This is to say that the counterpositive of a specific absence is an individual, such as a particular blue pot.

The difference is brought out clearly by Annaṃbhaṭṭa (c. 1600), who claims (TSD 313.7–8) that the general absence of a pot is distinct (*atirikta*) from the absence of *this or that pot* (*tattadghaṭābhāva*). Nīlakaṇṭha (c. 1680) then glosses this term (TSDP 314.23) as 'some pot' (*yatkiṃcidghaṭa*). In contrast, Tatacharya (BP 321.8–13) claims that agents would wrongly think 'there is no pot', which expresses a general absence, were there some pot. That is because the general absence of a pot does *not* obtain where there is a pot. The picture is that general absence obtains only if *all* associated individuals are absent. To say that there is the general absence of a pot on my desk is to say that there is no arbitrary pot on my desk, from which it follows that *all* individual pots are

[12] I quote from handbooks to explain concepts where authors of primary texts assume familiarity with, or otherwise do not explain, those concepts. This will be the case in Gaṅgeśa's passage on general absence below.

[13] *sāmānyadharmāvacchinnapratiyogitākābhāvaḥ sāmānyābhāvaḥ | viśeṣadharmāvacchinnapratiyogitākābhāvaḥ viśeṣābhāvaḥ | ghaṭo nāstīti pratītisiddhaḥ ghaṭatvāvacchinnapratiyogitākābhāvaḥ sāmānyābhāvaḥ | nīlaghaṭo nāsti, raktaghaṭo nāstītyādipratītisiddhaḥ nīlaghaṭatvādyavacchinnapratiyogitākābhāvaḥ viśeṣābhāvaḥ |*

[14] For the notion of an arbitrary object, see Fine (1983). Arbitrary objects are associated with a range of individuals and possess all and only the properties common to each associated individual. Interpreting general absence in terms of arbitrary objects therefore allows us to capture the relevant quantification: If an arbitrary pot is not on my desk, it follows that all individual pots are not on my desk.

not on my desk. To say that there is the specific absence of a blue pot on my desk is to say that some *particular* blue pot is not on my desk.

This brings us to Gaṅgeśa's question: Does general absence reduce to the *collection* (kūṭa) of all associated specific absences? That is:

> GENERAL ABSENCE REDUCTIONISM. For any kind of object or property K and the range of all the particulars $k_1 \ldots k_n$ that belong to K and exist at some time, the general absence of any instance of K is the collection of the specific absences of $k_1 \ldots k_n$.

According to this thesis, for example, the general absence of a pot is identical to all the specific absences of individual pots. Gaṅgeśa denies GENERAL ABSENCE REDUCTIONISM. Using the example of wind (*vāyu*), which he understands as completely lacking colour (*rūpa*), he writes:

> Absence whose counterpositivehood is delimited by a generic property is distinct. Otherwise, if one had apprehended the absence of all the familiar colours and [wind] as other than what possesses the familiar colours, he would undergo no uncertainty 'is there colour in wind or not?', 'does wind possess colour or not?', because he had ascertained the collection of specific absences (Gaṅgeśa, TCM_3 26.3–5).[15]

In his commentary, Yajñapati unpacks this passage:

> He writes: "Otherwise." The meaning is this: Were it the case that just the collection of specific absences was by its nature general absence, then in virtue of ascertaining the collection of the specific absences of colour in wind one would undergo no uncertainty taking the form 'is there colour in wind or not?' whose content was the general absence of colour. This is because it could not be the intentional object of uncertainty, insofar as it had been ascertained (Yajñapati, TCMP 26.11–13).[16]

[15] *sāmānyāvacchinnapratiyogitākābhāvaḥ pṛthag eva | anyathā sakalaprasiddharūpābhāve prasiddharūpavadanyatve cāvagate vāyau rūpaṃ na vā vāyū rūpavān na vēti saṃśayo na syāt viśeṣābhāvakūṭasya niścitatvāt |*

[16] *anyathēti | viśeṣābhāvakūṭasyaiva sāmānyābhāvarūpatve vāyau rūpaviśeṣābhāvakūṭasya niścaye sati tasya niścitatvena saṃśayaviṣayatvāyogād vāyau rūpaṃ na vā itirūpasāmānyaviraholleklhī saṃśayo na syād ity arthaḥ |*

What is the concern?

The problem begins with an implicit coarse-grained criterion for individuating content. Gaṅgeśa holds a *direct relations view*, according to which states of awareness are structured but direct cognitive relations to objects and properties rather than to any representational medium.[17] He also individuates properties extensionally: If all and only instances of a property P are co-instantiated with instances of a property Q, then P and Q are identical. If GENERAL ABSENCE REDUCTIONISM is true, the property of being all the specific absences of colour would therefore just be the property of being the general absence of colour. And if both properties are identical, then, according to Gaṅgeśa's direct relations view, apprehending wind as possessing all the specific absences of colour would entail apprehending wind as possessing the general absence of colour.

Consider the way Yajñapati formulates the argument: Ascertaining (*niścaya*) the collection of the specific absences of colour makes them the intentional objects (*viṣaya*) of the agent's ascertainment. Were GENERAL ABSENCE REDUCTIONISM true, then, in virtue of the identity, the general absence of colour must also be the intentional object of that ascertainment: There could not be any circumstances in which an agent ascertains that wind possess all the specific absences of colour but remains uncertain (*saṃśaya*) whether wind is colourless. The problem is that there can be such circumstances.

Gaṅgeśa's passage is ambiguous: He does not specify the circumstances he has in mind. But we only need to identify one relevant set of circumstances on his behalf. Suppose that the familiar (*prasiddha*) colours are all the colours. With Raghunātha ($TCMD_2$ 287.9–288.4), consider a case in which an agent has apprehended all the specific absences of colour *as all* (*yāvattvena*) the specific absences of colour. Then suppose that GENERAL ABSENCE REDUCTIONISM is true, but that the agent is unaware of, or even actively doubts, the identity between general absence and all the corresponding specific absences.[18] The agent has ascertained that wind possesses all the specific absences of colour. However, given their confusion surrounding the identity, they should remain uncertain whether wind possesses the general absence of colour. But according to Gaṅgeśa's view about content, if GENERAL ABSENCE REDUCTIONISM

[17] For an exposition and defence of Nyāya direct realism, see Matilal (1986).

[18] Compare Raghunātha's ($TCMD_2$ 288.7–10) remarks on whether the uncertainty could result from an additional doubt (*atiriktasambhāvanā*) about the kinds of substances in which colour inheres.

is true, to ascertain that all the specific absences of colour obtain just is to ascertain that the general absence of colour obtains. This scenario is therefore impossible on his view, and so he would reject GENERAL ABSENCE REDUCTIONISM.

Raghunātha suggests another plausible reading. He ($TCMD_2$ 287.9–290.3) argues that there are various scenarios under which the relevant uncertainty persists. According to his (TCMD2 286.7) proposal, Gaṅgeśa is arguing that the only explanation for this phenomenon is that general absence is distinct: The relevant uncertainty is *otherwise inexplicable* (*anyathānupapatti*). With Gaṅgeśa, Raghunātha apparently also rejects GENERAL ABSENCE REDUCTIONISM.[19] However, we will see below that he individuates content more finely than Gaṅgeśa. But as this discussion shows, awareness of all specific absences of colour and awareness of the general absence of colour plausibly have distinct content. And methodologically, Raghunātha is comfortable individuating entities to account for differences in content.[20]

Given the ambiguities of Gaṅgeśa's passage, the full range of readings and commentarial positions cannot be dealt with adequately here. But for our purposes, the takeaway is this: According to Gaṅgeśa, general absence obtains only if all associated individuals are absent, but general absence is *not* all the absences *of those individuals*.[21]

1.2 Gaṅgeśa on Universal-Mediated Perception

Nyāya philosophers take a liberal attitude towards what we perceive. Not only do absences feature in that list, so do *universals* (*sāmānya*). Later Nyāya philosophers traditionally argue for *universal-mediated perception*, a kind of perception in which an agent literally perceives all the particulars (past, present, and future) that instantiate a universal *by perceiving the universal*. Gaṅgeśa's

[19]For Raghunātha's motivation for rejecting GENERAL ABSENCE REDUCTIONISM, which involves specifics of the Nyāya theory of inference, see the preamble in his *Sāmānyābhāvagranthadīdhiti* at $TCMD_2$ (284.1–4) and connected remarks in the *Siddhāntalakṣaṇaprakaraṇadīdhiti* at $TCMD_2$ (214.4–218.6).

[20]For example, Raghunātha (PTN 67.34–35) maintains that the absence of the absence of a pot (*ghaṭābhāvābhāva*) is an absence, rather than the pot itself. He argues that, when we undergo the awareness 'there is no absence of a pot', we undergo an awareness of the absence of the absence of a pot *as an absence* (*abhāvatvapratyaya*). Raghunātha takes this to motivate individuating absences of absences from positives.

[21]My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for helpful suggestions related to this topic. For further discussion of the distinction between general and specific absence, see Ingalls (1951, 65).

sympathetic commentator Jayadeva will identify darkness with all the absences of light. He then argues that, given the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION, we cannot explain perception of darkness without universal-mediated perception. A less sympathetic commentator opposed to universal-mediated perception accordingly must address Jayadeva's argument from the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION. Raghunātha will be one such commentator. We examine Jayadeva's argument shortly.

As Viśvanātha (c. 1640) explains the notion (NSM 275.1–5), universal-mediated perception involves a sensory connection (*pratyāsatti*) taking the form of a universal (*sāmānyarūpā*). When one undergoes an awareness of smoke (*dhūma*), the universal smokehood (*dhūmatva*) enters into the content of their awareness. By perceiving smokehood, the agent then undergoes an awareness of *all* smoke-particulars:

> By means of the sensory connection that is smokehood, awareness taking the form 'smoke' whose intentional object is every instance of smoke arises (Viśvanātha, NSM 275.4–6).[22]

But what motivates such a strange view?

The concern is about accounting for how we acquire knowledge of certain generalisations from limited samples. How, for example, do we learn that smoke is always accompanied by fire just from perceiving a few instances of smoke and fire? Nyāya philosophers are interested in inference (*anumāna*), construed as a form of reasoning proceeding from generalisations to specific cases. Within the framework, inference requires agents to have knowledge of the *pervasion* (*vyāpti*) between two properties, the relation in which the *prover property* (*hetu*) is invariably accompanied by the *target property* (sādhya). The prover property is the property from which the agent infers the target property, and the target property is the property of which the agent acquires inferential knowledge. The standard example (TS 155.10–12) involves inferring that some specific mountain instantiates the property of possessing fire (*vahnimattva*) from the property of possessing smoke (*dhūmavattva*).

But how does the agent initially learn the generalisation that the prover property is always accompanied by the target property? According to Gaṅgeśa, by universal-mediated perception: "And grasping pervasion has all smoke and other properties as its intentional objects by universal-mediated perception"

[22] *dhūmatvena sannikarṣeṇa dhūmā ity evaṃrūpaṃ sakaladhūmaviṣayakaṃ jñānaṃ jāyate* |

(TCM_2 644.1). When an agent first sees a smoke-particular accompanied by a fire-particular, the agent perceives their respective universals and learns that all smoke is accompanied by fire. Through universal-mediated perception, we acquire the knowledge of generalisations necessary for inference.

The view looks implausible. Earlier Nyāya philosophers already had concerns: Bhāsarvajña (c. 950) argues (NBhū 217.4–5) that the view entails that everyone is *all-seeing* (*sarvadarśin*). Jayanta (c. 870) before him worries (NM 314.11–12) that, if agents can perceive everything in the way that universal-mediated perception suggests, inference would be pointless.[23] Even Maṇikaṇṭha (c. 1300), writing only a few decades before Gaṅgeśa, rejects (NR 63.1–67.4) universal-mediated perception.[24] But Gaṅgeśa and his sympathetic commentators are well aware, and structure the dialectic accordingly. They argue that the theoretical cost of *denying* universal-mediated perception outweighs its counterintuitive force. This dialectic is most obvious when Gaṅgeśa gives his preferred argument (*siddhānta*). He writes:

> We say: If there is not universal-mediated perception, then one would, without engaging in helpful suppositional reasoning and so forth, undergo no uncertainty about deviation with respect to smoke and other properties. This is because he would only be aware of the relation of fire to familiar smoke, given that he would not apprehend smoke at other places and other times in virtue of having no means of acquiring knowledge (Gaṅgeśa, TCM_2 660.17–20).

A recurring premise in arguments for universal-mediated perception is that thinking about a particular object requires acquaintance with that object. This follows from the direct relations view: Thoughts about an object directly *take that* object as their content.

This scales up: Thoughts about *all* particulars of a certain kind take all those particulars as their content. Gaṅgeśa's concern is that agents can wonder whether *every* smoke-particular, a group that includes smoke in distant

[23] Although Jayanta (NM 319.6–11; 323.8–11) ultimately suggests sympathies to universal-mediated perception. Precedent for the omniscience concern is found in Śālikanātha (PP 203.17–180). See Kataoka (2003). Jayarāśi (TUS 65.6–25), possibly writing before Śālikanātha, also raised the concern about omniscience.

[24] Śaśadhara (NSD 71.1–23), however, defends universal-mediated perception as an alternative view (*yadvā*).

places and smoke at times into the past and future, is accompanied by some fire-particular. Therefore, all such particulars must somehow directly enter into the content of their uncertainty. Gaṅgeśa argues this is only possible through universal-mediated perception: The agent must have previously perceived all smoke-particulars (past, present and future) by perceiving their universal. Without universal-mediated perception, agents therefore could not be uncertain whether *all* smoke-particulars are accompanied by some fire-particular. This would not be a matter of an agent reasoning to dispel their uncertainty.[25] Instead, the agent would *lack the necessary acquaintance* to be uncertain.

Specifics of the argument aside, the dialectic boils down to a series of indispensability arguments. As Yajñapati reads Gaṅgeśa, the argument is that "it is not possible in any way to explain the uncertainty about deviation" (TCMP 52.17) without universal-mediated perception. Gaṅgeśa's sympathetic commentators work to identify further phenomena that they argue only universal-mediated perception explains. This brings us to perceiving darkness.

2 Jayadeva on Seeing Darkness

Raghunātha's commentary on Gaṅgeśa's defence of universal-mediated perception is a surprising place to find discussions of the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION. But there is a reason: Gaṅgeśa's sympathetic commentators argue that the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION necessitates universal-mediated perception, and Raghunātha dislikes universal-mediated perception. While he apparently never explains his motivations for rejecting universal-mediated perception, we can tentatively assume that Raghunātha shares the same concerns as his predecessors.

Raghunātha reconstructs this next indispensability argument:

> [Objection:] To account for awareness of general absence we have to accept universal-mediated perception, because without it awareness of all the counterpositives is impossible (Raghunātha, TCMD 665.6–7).

To best make sense of the passage, we have to assume a metaphysics according to which general absence is the collection of all associated specific absences.

[25] Nyāya philosophers maintain that we can resolve uncertainties about pervasion through suppositional reasoning (*tarka*). See Gaṅgeśa's Tarkavāda (TCM_2 577–612) for his views on this kind of reasoning.

Then consider a case in which an agent sees general absence, such as when an agent sees that there is no pot on their desk. According to the operative metaphysics, this agent is perceiving the absences of every individual pot. Assuming the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION, they therefore see the general absence of a pot only if they are aware of every pot. This requires familiarity with all the pots, which in turn requires prior acquaintance with all the pots. Raghunātha's opponent argues that this acquaintance is only possible through universal-mediated perception: The agent previously perceived *all* the individual pots by perceiving *pothood*. If general absence is the specific absences of all associated individuals, then given the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION we need universal-mediated perception to explain how we perceive general absence.

Gaṅgeśa's sympathetic commentator Jayadeva runs a similar argument from perception of darkness. He writes:

> But we maintain that, without universal-mediated perception, there is the problematic result that no awareness of darkness would arise (Jayadeva, *Tattvacintāmaṇyāloka*).[26,27]

Jagadīśa reconstructs the argument:

> [Objection:] It is not possible for one to grasp darkness, which is by its nature all relational absences that have self- and other-illuminating heat as their counterpositives, without grasping all such heat. This is because awareness of the counterpositive is a cause for perception of absence, and it is not possible for one to grasp all such heat without universal-mediated perception (Jagadīśa, J 460.8–11).[28]

Note that Nyāya philosophers will talk of darkness as the absence of *heat* (*tejo'bhāva*). This is because heat is a substance (*dravya*) corresponding roughly to the fire element (TS 22.7). Within Vaiśeṣika natural philosophy, light (*āloka*) is understood as *a kind* of heat. For this reason, Jagadīśa defines darkness as the absence of *illuminating* (*prakāśa*) heat.

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[26] The *anumānakhaṇḍa* of Jayadeva's *Tattvacintāmaṇyāloka* is unedited. I translate from Bhattacharya (1978, 60), who quotes from the Calcutta Sanskrit College manuscript and identifies Raghunātha's opponent as Jayadeva.

[27] *vayan tu sāmānyalakṣaṇām vināndhakārapratyayānudayo prasaṅgaḥ* |

[28] *nanu svaparaprakāśatejaḥpratiyogikayāvatsaṃsargābhāvarūpasyāndhakārasya graho na tādṛśayāvattejograhaṃ vinā pratiyogibuddher abhāvapratyakṣe hetutvāt yāvattādṛśatejograhaś ca na sāmānyalakṣaṇām vinā saṃbhavatīti* |

Darkness is the absence of light. But how exactly should we construe this identity? Jagadīśa's Jayadeva attempts to tighten the definition: Darkness is identical to all the absences that have light as their counterpositives. This reconstruction appears faithful to Jayadeva's statement of his own view, which according to Bhattacharya (1978, 61) identifies darkness with all individual absences of heat (*yāvattejovirahavyakti*). Jayadeva's definition of darkness sets up the argument. To perceive darkness is to perceive the absences of every individual light. Assuming the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION, an agent sees darkness only if they are aware of *all the lights*. This requires prior acquaintance with all the lights. The thought, we can glean further from Jagadīśa (J 461.14–15), is that the agent must therefore have perceived *all* the lights by perceiving *heathood* (*tejastva*). So, given Jayadeva's metaphysics of darkness and given the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION, we need universal-mediated perception to explain how we perceive darkness. Note that this argument does not require any assumptions about the metaphysics of general absence. It is compatible with Gaṅgeśa's anti-reductionist view and only requires that *darkness* be identified with all specific absences of light.

In a break with Gaṅgeśa, Raghunātha uses his commentary to argue against universal-mediated perception. Given that the dialectic involves indispensability arguments for universal-mediated perception, the challenge is to show that the target phenomena can be explained without appeal thereto. And since the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION supposedly necessitates universal-mediated perception, Raghunātha attacks the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION.

3 The Argument from Uncertainty

Darkness is a special absence, in that darkness is not *obviously* an absence. In the Sanskrit tradition, there was disagreement over whether darkness is a distinct kind of positive substance (*dravya*) or the absence of light. The Nyāya philosopher Śaśadhara (c. 1300) writes:

> There is a disagreement over darkness: Does the property of being darkness occur in a positive or not? To this, the Tautātitas say that the property of being darkness occurs in a positive. The Vaiśeṣikas say "no." This is the thought of the others on this issue: Just as perception establishes that pots and other objects are positives, so

> it is for darkness as well. This is because 'darkness is black' is not an error (Śaśadhara, NSD 5.1–4).[29]

Vaiśeṣika philosophers maintain that darkness is an absence. Against this view, Śaśadhara claims, Bhāṭṭa philosophers ('the Tautātitas') cite the fact that we perceive darkness as *black* in favour of taking darkness to be a substance. Positives, not absences, instantiate colour. The committed Bhāṭṭa would look at darkness and see it *as a black positive*.

That darkness is not obviously an absence motivates Raghunātha's first argument against the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION. He begins his first response to the argument we saw in the previous section:

> That is not right, since awareness of a counterpositive is not a cause for awareness simpliciter of absence or for ordinary perception of absence. This is because there is deviation when, for you, one undergoes an awareness of absence through universal-mediated perception and when he undergoes an awareness of absence as 'this', and because there is no evidence. For this very reason, one undergoes uncertainty about whether darkness is a positive or an absence when it is presented as 'this', because one cannot undergo that uncertainty when darkness is presented as the absence of heat (Raghunātha, TCMD 665.7–10).[30]

Call this the *argument from uncertainty.* Raghunātha argues that there is deviation (*vyabhicāra*) whereby we have absence perception without awareness of the counterpositive. He has us consider an agent without prior beliefs about whether darkness is an absence. This agent then encounters darkness and is uncertain whether it is a positive. As Jagadīśa (J 456.22–23) describes the content, the agent wonders: 'Is *this* a positive or not?' ('*idaṃ bhāvo na vā*'). Raghunātha argues that in such cases darkness is not presented (*upasthita*) as an absence, but rather merely as 'this' (*idaṃtvena*). This aligns with the report of the content. And were the agent seeing darkness as an absence, the content

[29] *andhakāre vipratipattiḥ | andhakāratvaṃ bhāvavṛtti na vā | tatrāndhakāratvaṃ bhāvavṛttīti tautātitāḥ | neti vaiśeṣikādayaḥ | tatra pareṣām ayam āśayaḥ | yathā ghaṭādīnāṃ bhāvatvaṃ pratyakṣasiddham tathā tamaso 'pi | na hi nīlaṃ tama iti bhramaḥ |*

[30] *tan na | na hi abhāvasya jñānamātre laukikapratyakṣe vā pratiyogijñānaṃ kāraṇam, tava sāmānyalakṣaṇayā idaṃtvādinā ca bhāne vyabhicārān mānābhāvāc ca | ata eva idaṃtvādinā upasthite tamasi bhāvatvābhāvatvasaṃśayaḥ, tejo'bhāvatvenopasthite tadayogāt |*

of their uncertainty would look self-defeating. They would wonder: 'Is this *absence* a positive?'.

But quite plausibly, the agent can be rationally uncertain whether darkness is a positive or not. So, when the agent wonders 'is this a positive?', the indexical content of their uncertainty must be neutral on whether darkness is a positive or an absence. That is to say, since the agent is rationally uncertain whether darkness is a positive or not, they must not see darkness *as an absence*. They therefore do not see darkness as the absence *of light*, and so perceive darkness without any awareness of *what* is absent. This is a failure of the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION. The argument from uncertainty makes a convincing case that we sometimes see absence without awareness of the corresponding absent object or property. Darkness captures our attention pre-theoretically.[31]

Both Bhavānanda (TCMDP 666.4) and Jagadīśa note an objection: The indexical 'this' contextually refers to the absence of light, or in their words that the property *thisness* (idaṃtva) is just the property of being the absence of heat (*tejo'bhāvatva*). Jagadīśa writes:

> [Objection:] The thisness that belongs to the content of the uncertainty 'is this a positive or not?' is just the property of being the absence of heat. And so, there is no deviation, because there is awareness of the heat that is the counterpositive even in this case (Jagadīśa, J 456.22–24).[32,33]

The opponent argues that Raghunātha's case presents no counterexample, since 'absence of light' and the indexical 'this' are contextually co-referential. Wondering 'is *this* a positive or not?' thereby entails wondering 'is *this absence of light* a positive or not?'. By this entailment, the indexical content of the agent's uncertainty smuggles in the counterpositive.

But as Jagadīśa (J 456.24–25) suggests, this is why Raghunātha argues that agents cannot be uncertain about whether darkness is a positive when darkness

[31] For precedent for this argument, see Śaśadhara (NSD 10.17–19), who briefly argues that the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION only holds for darkness when it is *grasped as an absence*, but not otherwise.

[32] Although Bhavānanda, Jagadīśa, and Gadādhara often offer competing readings of Raghunātha, they are in broad agreement on the interpretation of the relevant passages we consider here. Accordingly, I select the commentary to quote based on how clearly the commentator explains the philosophical point of the relevant passage.

[33] *nanv idaṃ bhāvo na vētisaṃśayaviṣayībhūtam idaṃtvaṃ tejo'bhāvatvaṃ eva | tathā ca tatrāpi tejorūpapratiyogijñānasattvān na vyabhicāra iti |*

is *presented* as an absence. Like Gaṅgeśa, Raghunātha and his commentators take states of awareness to be direct cognitive relations to objects and properties. But Gaṅgeśa individuates properties, and consequently content, extensionally. In a break with Gaṅgeśa, Raghunātha and his commentators maintain that objects instantiate distinct but coextensive properties, allowing for content to be individuated finely.[34] According to this view, objects can be presented under one coextensive property but not another.

As this applies to the opponent's case: When one sees darkness and wonders 'is this is a positive?', darkness is presented under the property *thisness*. But were one somehow to wonder 'is the absence of light a positive?', darkness would be presented under the distinct property of *being the absence of light*. Given the differences in presentation, 'is this is a positive?' and 'is the absence of light a positive?' have distinct content: Seeing darkness as 'this' does not smuggle in awareness of the counterpositive. As Gadādhara summarises Raghunātha's argument:

> He writes: "For this very reason." The meaning is this: because, even without awareness of heat, there does in fact arise perception of darkness under the property thisness, which is not by its nature the property of being the absence of heat (Gadādhara, G 814.26–27).[35]

Appealing to the referent of the indexical therefore fails to disarm the objection.

4 Raghunātha's Epistemology of General Absence

Raghunātha's argument from uncertainty undermines Jayadeva's view by attacking the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION. But another strategy for undermining Jayadeva's view is to attack the metaphysics of darkness which, with the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION, jointly necessitates a role for universal-mediated perception. This is Raghunātha's next strategy: He argues that darkness is not the collection (*samudaya*) of all specific absences of light, but rather the *general* absence of light. But before returning to darkness, Raghunātha

[34] For more on the individuation of content in the post-Gaṅgeśa Nyāya tradition, see Das (2020, 272–276) and Ganeri (1996). For primary text, see especially Raghunātha's *Avacchedakatvanirukti* ($TCMD_2$ 257-286).

[35] *ata eveti | tejojñānaṃ vināpi tejo'bhāvatvānātmakena idaṃtvena tamaḥpratyakṣotpatter ity arthaḥ |*

argues that awareness of general absence, which is not the absence of any individuals in particular, need not involve awareness of all the associated absent individuals. If darkness is the general absence of light, seeing darkness would therefore not necessitate universal-mediated perception.

Raghunātha accordingly begins by discussing the epistemology of general absence:

> But awareness of absence qualified by a counterpositive does not violate the rule about awareness of qualification by a qualified feature. However, it is not established that awareness of general absence has all the counterpositives as its intentional objects. The reason is that, even if awareness of a counterpositive is a cause [for awareness of general absence], it is not in virtue of being awareness of all the counterpositives that it is the cause, due to the complexity. This is because awareness of general absence can arise just from awareness of any counterpositive qualified by the delimitor of the counterpositivehood (Raghunātha, TCMD 665.11–14).[36,37]

Raghunātha discusses a standard rule (*maryādā*) that specifies a plausible restriction on the content of certain states of awareness. In the technical language, the rule states that awareness whose primary qualifier is the delimitor of the qualifierhood (*viśeṣaṇatāvacchedakaprakārakajñāna*) is a cause for awareness of qualification by a qualified feature (*viśiṣṭavaiśiṣṭyabodha*).[38]

This is to say:

> QUALIFICATION RULE. An agent undergoes an awareness of an object as characterised by a feature *F* as characterised by a feature *G* only if they undergo an awareness of *G*.

As Viśvanātha (NSM 254.2–3) explains, consider the higher-order state of awareness 'I am aware of a pot' (*ghaṭam ahaṃ jānāmi*). Here, the object of

[36] With Bhavānanda (TCMD 666.15–16; 667.3), Jagadīśa (J 456.8), and Gadādhara (G 815.8; 815.16–17), reading *abhāvajñānam* for *tajjñānam*, and *sāmānyābhāvabhānasya* (or -*pratyakṣasya*) for *tasya*.

[37] *pratiyogiviśeṣitatajjñānan tu viśiṣṭavaiśiṣṭyabodhamaryādāṃ nātiśete | sakalapratiyogiviṣayatvaṃ tu tasyāsiddham, pratiyogijñānasya hetutve 'pi pratiyogitāvacchedakaviśiṣṭayatkiṃcitpratiyogijñānād eva tatsambhavāt, yavatpratiyogijñānatvena gauraveṇāhetutvat |*

[38] This principle is frequently cited in discussions of conceptual (*savikalpaka*) awareness. See, for example, NSM (255.2).

my higher-order awareness is myself (*ātman*). The qualifying feature ascribed to myself is awareness. But I have specifically registered my awareness as awareness *of a pot*, and so the pot further qualifies the awareness I ascribe to myself. In undergoing the state of awareness 'I am aware of a pot', I undergo a higher-order awareness of myself as characterised by undergoing an awareness as characterised by a pot. The QUALIFICATION RULE therefore states plausibly that I cannot undergo the awareness 'I am aware of a pot' without awareness of the pot.

Raghunātha's argument from uncertainty undermines COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION: We do not always perceive absence as characterised by its counterpositive. But he argues that, where we *do* perceive an absence as an absence of its counterpositive, absence perception does not violate the QUALIFICATION RULE. Jagadīśa (J 457.2–3) explains the background concern: When one undergoes the awareness 'there is no pot', they undergo an awareness of an absence as characterised by a pot. How could they do so without awareness of a pot? If we reject the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION, absence perception seemingly violates the QUALIFICATION RULE: Someone unfamiliar with pots could perceive that there is no pot.

But this concern is a misapplication of the QUALIFICATION RULE. Jagadīśa writes:

> The point is this: And thus, because the stated awareness ['there is no pot'] is an awareness of qualification by a feature qualified by pothood, just in virtue of the absence of awareness whose primary qualifier is pothood, which is its cause, the stated awareness would not arise (Jagadīśa, J 457.3–4).[39]

Recall that general absence is defined as absence whose counterpositivehood is delimited by a generic high-level property. The awareness 'there is no pot' is therefore an awareness of a general absence as characterised by an arbitrary counterpositive as characterised by pothood. The QUALIFICATION RULE therefore only states that awareness of pothood is necessary to undergo that awareness. Had one never encountered a pot, they would have undergone no awareness of pothood. For that reason, they could *not* perceive that there is no pot.

This observation motivates Raghunātha's view about the epistemology of

[39] *tathā coktabuddher ghaṭatvaviśiṣṭavaiśiṣṭyabuddhitvāt tatkāraṇībhūtasya ghaṭatvaprakārakajñānasya virahād eva na tasyotpāda iti bhāvaḥ* |

general absence. General absence is not the absence of any individuals in particular. By the QUALIFICATION RULE, perceiving general absence as an absence of a counterpositive need only involve awareness of the delimitor of the counterpositivehood, or the generic high-level property that characterises the arbitrary counterpositive of the general absence: Awareness of the pothood that is shared across all pots, rather than awareness of all the individual pots, enables an agent to perceive 'there is no pot'. Therefore, prior awareness of *any* (*yatkiṃcit*) associated counterpositive would be sufficient to acquire the relevant acquaintance with the high-level property. For this reason, Raghunātha argues, the view that awareness of *all* associated counterpositives is required to see general absence posits unnecessary cognitive complexity (*gaurava*). If acquaintance with any associated particular adequately explains how agents see that the general absence of a counterpositive obtains, why require acquaintance with all associated individuals?

5 The Argument from General Absence

Raghunātha's epistemology of general absence has implications for Jayadeva's argument from darkness. If darkness is the general absence of light, it would not be the absence of any lights in particular. Perception of darkness *as* the absence of light would therefore at most require prior awareness of some light, in which case perception of darkness would not necessitate universal-mediated perception. And while Raghunātha's next argument is ostensibly neutral on the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION, I will argue it further undermines the condition. We return to the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION shortly.

Having provided his view about the epistemology of general absence, Raghunātha now argues that darkness is the general absence of light. He writes:

> But darkness is the general absence of a kind of heat [namely, light], not a collection of absences. This is because it is impossible for all the absences of heat to occur in one place, and because it is not accepted that one perceives the constant and prior absences of a specific kind of heat when awareness of being that kind of heat and the causal conditions for heat are absent, since there would be complexity due to a lack of uniformity (Raghunātha, TCMD

667.7–10).[40]

Call this the *argument from general absence*. Raghunātha provides two arguments for his metaphysics of darkness. We take them in turn, with the help of his commentators.

5.1 Impossibility of Collocation

Gadādhara provides the clearest exposition of the first argument. Although Bhavānanda, Jagadīśa, and Gadādhara often offer competing readings of Raghunātha, they are in broad agreement on the interpretation of the relevant passages we consider here. Accordingly, I select the commentary to quote on the basis of how clearly the commentator explains the philosophical point of the relevant passage. He explains:

> He writes: "because it is impossible in one place". The point is this: because it is not possible for two posterior absences and two prior absences of two instances of heat with different loci to have one locus, insofar as posterior and prior absence exist only at the location of their counterpositive (Gadādhara, G 818.12–14).[41]

Gadādhara uses the standard metaphysical distinction between *prior absence* (*prāgabhāva*), the absence of something that does not but will exist; and *posterior absence* (*dhvaṃsābhāva*), the absence of something that *did* but no longer exists (TS 312.14–15). The thought is that, among all the absences of light with which Jayadeva identifies darkness, some absences will be prior and posterior absences. But Gadādhara points out that disputants are committed to the principle that individual prior and posterior absences are tied to the location at which their counterpositive will exist or did exist respectively: If I destroy a vase on my desk, then there is the posterior absence of that vase *on my desk*.

Consider two cases of posterior absence:

> (KITCHEN) I switch off the kitchen lights. There is now the posterior absence of their light in my kitchen.

[40] *andhakāras tu tejoviśeṣasāmānyābhāvo nābhāvasamudayaḥ, yāvattadabhāvānām ekatrāsambhavād ananugamād gauravāt tejoviśeṣatvādijñānasya tejaḥsāmagryāś ca virahe tejoviśeṣātyantābhāvaprāgabhāvānāṃ pratyakṣānabhyupagamāc ca* |

[41] *ekatrāsambhavād iti* | *dhvaṃsaprāgabhāvayoḥ pratiyogideśe eva sattvena vyadhikaraṇatejasor dhvaṃsadvayasya prāgabhāvadvayasya caikādhikaraṇyāsambhavād* |

(BEDROOM) I switch off the bedroom lights. There is now the posterior absence of their light in my bedroom.

In these cases, we have a pair of posterior absences of two lights with different loci. The light in (KITCHEN) illuminated my kitchen, and so by the principle Gadādhara identifies its posterior absence is located in my kitchen. And the light in (BEDROOM) illuminated my bedroom, and so its posterior absence is located in my bedroom. Now suppose my office is shrouded in darkness. According to Jayadeva's view, the darkness in my office is to be partially identified with the absences in my kitchen and bedroom. Given that these absences are tied to the disparate loci of their counterpositives, they cannot share a locus. But Jayadeva's view requires that both absences also obtain in my office, and so his metaphysics of darkness is implausible on the basis of a principle he would accept.

Raghunātha's statement of the objection, however, made no mention of posterior or prior absence. But we can provide an argument, consistent with Nyāya views and in the spirit of Gadādhara's argument, that captures Raghunātha's argument without relying on the notion of temporally individuated kinds of absence. To begin, consider how Jagadīśa formulates the problem:

> He writes: "in one place". The point is this: because the particular posterior and prior absences of heat belonging to one location are not in another location (Jagadīśa, J 460.23–24).[42]

Jagadīśa also frames the problem in terms of prior and posterior absence but uses the term 'particular absences' or 'individual absences' (*abhāvavyakt*i). Jayadeva himself used this term when he identified darkness with all individual absences of heat (*yāvattejovirahavyakti*). This notion was left implicit in Gadādhara's reconstruction of the argument. But for him too, the problem has to be about particular absences: that two individual prior or posterior absences cannot share a locus, because otherwise at least one individual absence would be in two places at once. Jayadeva, Jagadīśa and Gadādhara understand absences as spatio-temporal particulars that populate environments.

Consider, then, the following cases:

(OFFICE) My office lamp is off. Its light is absent from my office.

[42] *ekatreti | ekadeśīyatejodhvaṃsaprāgabhāvavyaktīnām anyadeśe virahād iti bhāvaḥ |*

(PARLIAMENT) My office lamp is off. Its light is absent from parliament.

These cases present a puzzle. The absences in (OFFICE) and (PARLIAMENT) have the same counterpositive. But are they the same absence? A coarse identity criterion maintains that two absences are identical just in case they share the same counterpositive. This criterion has the absences in (OFFICE) and (PARLIAMENT) come out identical. But *particulars* exist in only one place at one time, and the absences in (OFFICE) and (PARLIAMENT) are differently located. Nyāya philosophers are therefore committed to viewing (OFFICE) and (PARLIAMENT) as involving distinct absences, despite the identity of their counterpositives. This raises the question: What is the identity criterion for absences?

Nyāya philosophers have a view about which qualitative features distinguish absences. Maheśacandra Nyāyaratna (1836–1906), introducing the later Nyāya view, explains:

> Even though something is present by one relation at one location, it is absent by another relation. For example, even though a pot is present on the floor by the contact relation, it is absent by the inherence relation (Maheśacandra, NNBhP 29.1–2).[43]

Using the technical language, he continues:

> In this way, the distinctness of an absence is produced by a specific relation and produced by a specific property. And this distinctness of an absence is based on a distinctness in its counterpositivehood. Therefore, just this is said: The counterpositivehood of an absence is delimited by some relation and some property. … For example, in cases such as 'there is no pot on the floor by the inherence relation', the counterpositivehood of the absence of the pot is delimited by the inherence relation and by the property pothood (Maheśacandra, NNBhP 30.1–7).[44]

[43] *ekatra ekena sambandhena vartamānasyāpi sambandhāntareṇa abhāvo vartate | yathā bhūtale saṃyogena sambandena vartamānasyāpi ghaṭasya samavāyasambandhenābhāvaḥ |*

[44] *evaṃ abhāvasya sambandhaviśeṣakṛtaṃ dharmaviśeṣakṛtañ ca vailakṣaṇyam bhavati | tac ca abhāvasya vailakṣaṇyaṃ pratiyogitāvailakṣaṇyanibandhanam iti tad evocyate | abhāvasya pratiyogitā kenacit sambandhena dharmeṇa cāvacchinnā bhavati | … yathā bhūtale samavāyasambandhena ghaṭo nāstītyādau ghaṭābhāvasya pratiyogitā samavāyena sambandhena ghaṭatvena ca dharmeṇa avacchinnā |*

Maheśacandra identifies two features that distinguish absences. First, absences are distinguished by the properties (*dharma*) that delimit their counterpositivehood. This is to say that an absence is distinguished by the object or property that is absent: The absence of a pot is distinct from the absence of a cloth. Second, absences are distinguished by the relations (*sambandha*) that delimit their counterpositivehood. This is to say that an absence is distinguished by the relation in which its counterpositive would stand to its locus, were it present.

Maheśacandra uses the standard example of there being no pot on the floor by the inherence relation (*samavāya*). Inherence is the relation that obtains between two entities, one of which depends for its existence on the other (TS 310.15–8). But inherence is *not* the relation by which objects reside on their loci. Instead, a pot resides on the floor by the *contact* relation (*saṃyoga*). A pot would therefore reside on the floor by the contact relation while *not* residing on the floor by the inherence relation. Therefore, the absence corresponding to the pot by the contact relation must be distinct from the absence of a pot by the inherence relation, despite the identity of their counterpositives.

Nyāya philosophers can extend this strategy to explain why (OFFICE) and (PARLIAMENT) involve distinct particular absences, despite sharing a counterpositive. Consider one particular pot that is absent at two separate locations and would exist at both locations by the contact relation. Unlike in Maheśacandra's case, this pot would exist at both loci by the same *type* of relation. However, the *token* contact relation by which the pot would exist at one location would be distinct from the one by which the pot would exist at the other. By plausibly counting token relations among the qualitative features that distinguish absences, these two absences come out distinct. We can then tell a similar story about (OFFICE) and (PARLIAMENT). With a principled way to distinguish absences with identical counterpositives, a similar problem for Jayadeva's view arises. If darkness is identified with *every* individual absence of light, the darkness in my office will be partially identified with *both* the absences from (OFFICE) and (PARLIAMENT). But the particular absence in (PARLIAMENT) is located in parliament, in which case it must be in both locations at the same time. Jayadeva's view implausibly requires particulars to be in many places at once.

5.2 Imperceptible Absences

Raghunātha argues next that, according to Jayadeva's own principles, darkness should be imperceptible were it a collection of absences. This argument builds from nested objections. The commentators (TCMDP 668.5–8; G 818.15–18) suggest we imagine an opponent who objects that darkness is not every absence of light *unrestricted*. Rather, this opponent identifies darkness *at a location* with the absences of light *at that location*. In a technical passage, Jagadīśa puts the opponent's argument as follows:

> [Objection:] Allness is a qualifier of the counterpositive. And so, for all such heat, only the absences occurring at one location whose counterpositivehoods are located in those heat-particulars and are not delimited by a property other than the property of being those heat-particulars should be said to be darkness (Jagadīśa, J 460.24–27).[45]

First, the opponent concedes that darkness must be the absence of a specific kind of heat—namely, light. Then, the opponent argues that 'all' characterises the *instances of heat*, such that darkness is to be identified with the absences of *all the lights*. But darkness is not *all absences* of light, avoiding the problem of absences at disparate loci. Finally, darkness is identified with only (*eva*) the absences of all such lights occurring at one location (*ekadeśavṛtti*): all the relevant local absences.

This leads to Raghunātha's first concern: There would be a lack of uniformity (*ananugama*). Jagadīśa explains:

> For this reason, he says "due to a lack of uniformity." The point is this: There would be no awareness 'darkness' representing something uniform, because the stated absences lack a single uniform property (Jagadīśa, J 460.27–28).[46]

Nyāya philosophers maintain that a unified kind should exhibit a uniform or non-disjunctive (*anugata*) property, a property repeated across all instances of that kind. Defining darkness as the absence of light is meant to identify its

[45] *nanu yāvattvaṃ pratiyogiviśeṣaṇam | tathā ca yāvanti tādṛśatejāṃsi tattadvyaktitvetaradharmānavacchinnatattadvyaktiniṣṭhapratiyogitākābhāvānām ekadeśavṛttīnām eva tamastvaṃ vācyam |*

[46] *ata āha ananugamād iti | niruktābhāvānām anugataikadharmābhāvāt tama iti anugatākārapratītir na syād iti bhāvaḥ |*

uniform property. But by identifying darkness with the absences of light *at a location*, darkness is defined *disjunctively*: Darkness is the absences of light in my office *or* the absences of light in parliament *or* ... for all relevant local collections of absences. And so, with the plausible restriction to Jayadeva's view, darkness no longer meets the criterion for being a unified kind.

The lack of uniformity in turn gives rise to Raghunātha's next worry: Jayadeva's view posits unnecessary cognitive complexity (*gaurava*). Jagadīśa explains:

> The point is this: because, relative to positing that awareness of darkness has countless absences as its intentional objects, it is simpler if only the general absence of a kind of heat is the intentional object of such awareness (Jagadīśa, J 461.8–10).[47]

Even with the restricted definition that identifies darkness at a location with the relevant local absences, there are still countless (*ananta*) relevant specific absences of light at a location. According to Jayadeva's metaphysics, to perceive darkness is to perceive all those absences. Rather than suggest that the agent is somehow perceiving all those specific absences, Jagadīśa argues it is simpler to maintain that the agent is perceiving only the general absence of darkness.

The complexity runs deeper. Because darkness would not be a unified kind, darkness could not be uniformly presented under the property of being the absence of light. Instead, darkness at a location becomes identified with the local absences of the particular lights that are absent. But Jayadeva accepts the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION, and so on his view we perceive darkness only if darkness is presented as the absence of its counterpositive. That means we perceive darkness at a location only if it is presented as the absences of those particular lights that are absent.[48]

Perception of darkness would therefore require antecedent acquaintance with all those particular lights *as* those particular lights. But as Bhavānanda (TCMDP 668.12) points out, to perceive darkness at a location L would then somehow involve awareness of countless heat-particulars occurring at their re-

[47] *anantābhāvānāṃ tamaḥpratītiviṣayatvakalpanām apekṣyaṃ tejoviśeṣasāmānyābhāvasyaiva tādṛśapratītiviṣayatāyāṃ lāghavād iti bhāvaḥ* |

[48] As Gadādhara (G 818.24–27) explains, the opponent would not accept that the agent can perceive the constant absence of heat delimited by the property of being those heat-particulars (*tattadvyaktitvāvacchinnatejotyantābhāva*) without undergoing an awareness whose primary qualifier was the property of being those heat-particulars (*tattadvyaktitvaprakārakajñāna*).

spective loci (*tadadhikaraṇavṛttyanantatejovyakti*) as those particulars (*tattadvyaktivena*) that are absent at *L*. This renders perceiving darkness implausibly cognitively demanding: How could one become acquainted with all those particulars as the particulars that are absent? But since a uniform property has been lost, even universal-mediated perception cannot explain such acquaintance: The property of being those particulars is not a repeatable property shared across all instances of light. As Gadādhara writes, awareness of all those absent lights *as* those particulars therefore "is not explicable even by universal-mediated perception" (G 818.24). This is Raghunātha's main objection: If darkness cannot be uniformly presented as the absence of light, the necessary conditions imposed by the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION on perceiving darkness could not be met.

There is a further reason that darkness should be imperceptible on Jayadeva's view. Jagadīśa explains:

> He writes: "the causal conditions for heat." The point is this: And so, because prior absence is revealed by the causal conditions for the counterpositive, there would be no awareness of darkness at the time when the causal conditions for heat are absent (Jagadīśa, J 461.16–18).[49]

Nyāya philosophers traditionally accept a plausible restriction on perceiving prior absence, according to which agents see the prior absence of a counterpositive only if the causal conditions (*sāmagrī*) for the existence of the counterpositive obtain. The causal conditions trigger anticipation of the counterpositive's existence, thereby serving as an enabling condition for perceiving its (present) prior absence: The agent sees that the counterpositive will exist.

The problem is that the collection of every absence of light at a location includes *every prior absence* of light. But there are always many wicks not about to be lit: At any given point, the causal conditions for many lights do not obtain. Given the identified principle, their prior absences are imperceptible. But to perceive darkness would be to perceive *all* specific absences of light, and so Jayadeva's metaphysics of darkness again predicts that we cannot perceive darkness. A metaphysics of darkness as the general absence of light, however, suffers from none of the problems Raghunātha identifies.

[49] *tejaḥsāmagrīti । tathā ca prāgabhāvasya pratiyogisāmagrīvyaṅgyatvāt tejaḥsāmagrīvirahadaśāyām andhakārapratītir na syād iti bhāvaḥ ।*

6 The Counterpositive Condition?

For Raghunātha's purposes, the thrust of the argument from general absence is clear: Jayadeva's indispensability argument fails. Since darkness is best identified with the general absence of light, seeing darkness does not involve seeing that all individual lights are absent. Perception of darkness can therefore be explained without universal-mediated perception. But where does the argument from general absence leave the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION?

Raghunātha's discussion of perceiving prior absence is informative. There is a worry: Assuming the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION, to see the prior absence of a particular object involves seeing that the absent object will exist. This requires acquaintance with that object. But the object does not yet exist, so how could the agent be acquainted with it? All three commentators (TCMDP 669.4–8; J 461.18–20; G 819.1–4) imagine an opponent who argues that universal-mediated perception is the only way to become acquainted with future particulars, and is therefore required to explain perception of prior absence.

Raghunātha (TCMD 669.9–682.17; PTN 69.34) will argue that prior absence is not ultimately real (*pāramārthika*) and consequently not something we can perceive. But he argues that even perceiving prior absence plausibly would not obey the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION, and so would not necessitate universal-mediated perception. He writes:

> And awareness of prior absence too, which can obtain through an awareness having a primary qualifier such as pothood occurring in the counterpositive, does not require awareness of the counterpositive (Raghunātha, TCMD 667.10–11).[50]

Raghunātha argues that perceiving the prior absence of pot need not involve seeing that the *particular pot* will exist. Instead, it would only involve perceiving that whatever will exist is such that it instantiates pothood. According to Jagadīśa, this would make perceiving prior absence like perceiving general absence:

> The point is this: And thus, since the perception 'there is the prior absence of a pot' is an awareness of qualification by a qualified

[50] *prāgabhāvapratyayo 'pi ca pratiyogivṛttighaṭatvādiprakārakajñānasādhyo na pratiyogijñānam apekṣate* |

> feature, mere awareness whose primary qualifier is pothood is the cause for that perception. But individual counterpositives do not enter into [the content of] that perception (Jagadīśa, J 461.20–22).

Like perceiving 'there is no pot', perceiving 'there is the prior absence of a pot' is an awareness of an absence as characterised by a counterpositive as characterised by its high-level property.[51] By the QUALIFICATION RULE, perception of prior absence therefore minimally requires awareness of the relevant high-level property that the counterpositive will instantiate. But its content does *not* include its individual counterpositive, and so perceiving 'there is the prior absence of a pot' is not to perceive an absence as characterised by its individual counterpositive.

This is the significance of the argument from general absence. General and specific absences have counterpositives in very different ways: The specific absence of a pot is the absence of some particular pot, while the general absence of a pot is not the absence of any pots in particular. Raghunātha and his commentators make a compelling case that darkness is the general absence of light. Therefore, in cases where darkness *is* presented as the absence of light, perceiving 'there is no light' involves perceiving that nothing instantiates the property of being light. The content of such perception includes the high-level property shared across all instances of light, but not any individual counterpositives. The COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION appears unable to accommodate the epistemology of general absence. And ultimately, Raghunātha's argument from uncertainty shows that we can even fail to perceive darkness *as an absence*.

Gaṅgeśa used the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION to argue that absence is irreducible to a positive. We might worry, therefore, that Raghunātha's result undermines Gaṅgeśa's argument from content. But the core appeal to a difference in content remains highly plausible: Even according to Raghunātha's epistemology of general absence, to perceive a bare floor alone is not to perceive the floor *as* possessing the general absence of a counterpositive. A principle as strong as the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION may not be necessary to secure the relevant difference in content, in which case Raghunātha can plausibly deny the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION while maintaining that absence

[51] Raghunātha (TCMD 470.3–4) will deny that the folk (*loka*) undergo the awareness 'there is the prior absence of a pot here now'. This argument is strictly conditional on the opponent's view.

is irreducible to any positive. But either way, the takeaway is this: Raghunātha and his commentators provide a series of powerful arguments that show awareness of an absence sometimes entails no awareness of that absence as characterised by its counterpositive. In some cases, the COUNTERPOSITIVE CONDITION fails.

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Abbreviations

BP: Tatacharya, Ramanuja (1980). Bālapriyā. In N. Veezhinathan (ed.), *Tarkasaṇgrahadīpikāprakāśikā*. Madrapurī.

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

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NSM: Viśvanātha (1916). Nyāyasiddhāntamuktāvali. In A. Śāstry (ed.), *Kārikāvali of Mahamahopadhyāya Viśwanātha Panchānana With the Commentaries Muktāvalī, Dinakarī, Rāmarudrī.* Nirnaya Sagar Press.

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SP: Śivāditya (1932). Saptapadārthī. In D. Gurumurti (ed.), *Saptapadārthī of Śivāditya*. Theosophical Publishing House.

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TCMD: Raghunātha (1910). Tattvacintāmaṇidīdhiti. See TCM_2.

$TCMD_2$: Raghunātha (1983). Tattvacintāmaṇidīdhiti. See J.

TCMDP: Bhavānanda (1910). Tattvacintāmaṇidīdhitiprakāśa. See TCM_2.

TCMP: Yajñapati (2005). Tattvacintāmaṇiprabhā. See TCM_3.

TS: Annaṃbhaṭṭa (1980). Tarkasaṃgraha. See BP.

TSD: Annaṃbhaṭṭa (1980). Tarkasaṃgrahadīpikā. See BP.

TSDP: Nīlakaṇṭha (1980). Tarkasaṃgrahadīpikāprakāśikā. See BP.

TUP: Jayarāśi (1940). Tattvopaplavasiṃha. In S. Sanghavi and R. C. Parikh (eds.), *Tattvopaplavasiṃha of Jayarāśi Bhaṭṭa*. Oriental Institute, Baroda.

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