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**Title:** Perception of Absence

**Abstract:** Sartre used a famous example of seeing that Pierre was not in the room. Would that involve seeing an absence? If so, how does an absent Pierre look any different from an absent Jean or an absent Statue of Liberty? In any causal theory of perception, one cannot directly see an absence since absences have no causal powers. But one certainly can acquire negative beliefs: beliefs that something is not the case. Such beliefs are inferential but the inferences are not deductively valid. Seeing various real objects cannot logically entail that some further object is absent unless one adds a further premise: either that the absent object is inconsistent with the presence of things seen or that these seen objects form a totality. Both of these premises themselves have to involve negative beliefs and cannot strictly concern only what is seen. I claim instead that negative beliefs are acquired through non-deductive inference. Coupled with a reliabilist and fallibilist epistemology, such beliefs can be a part of our negative knowledge: knowledge of what is not the case. Can a purely cognitive account explain the experiential aspect of seeing what is not there, though? There are challenging cases of filling in, perceiving impossible objects and the moving disc. Rather than support a role for sense data, however, it is an account in terms of belief that best demystify these examples.

**Bio:** Stephen Mumford is Professor of Metaphysics in the Department of Philosophy at Durham University as well as Professor II at Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU).

He is the author of *Dispositions* (Oxford, 1998), *Russell on Metaphysics* (Routledge, 2003), *Laws in Nature* (Routledge, 2004), *David Armstrong* (Acumen, 2007), *Watching Sport: Aesthetics, Ethics and Emotion* (Routledge, 2011), *Getting Causes from Powers* (Oxford, 2011 with Rani Lill Anjum), *Metaphysics: a Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2012) *Causation: a Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2013, with Rani Lill Anjum), *Glimpse of Light* (Bloomsbury, 2017), *What Tends to Be* (Routledge, 2018, with Rani Lill Anjum) and *Causation in Science* (Oxford, 2018, with Rani Lill Anjum).

His next book will be *The Metaphysics of Nothing*, which is under contract with Oxford University Press. He is editor of George Molnar's posthumous *Powers: a Study in Metaphysics* (Oxford, 2003) and co-editor of *Metaphysics and Science* (Oxford, 2013 with Matthew Tugby).