The Problem of Insulation*

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In his essay 'The Sceptic in His Place and Time', M. F. Burnyeat begins with an example of a philosopher who puzzles about the reality of time, but who nonetheless applies for a research grant to work on the philosophical problem of time during next year's sabbatical—without doubting about the reality of next year's arrival. Burnyeat says of the philosopher that 'he *insulates* his ordinary first order judgements from the effects of his philosophizing'.[1] The subject matter of Burnyeat's essay is Pyrrhonian scepticism, and he tries to show that 'once upon a time scepticism was a serious challenge and no one thought to insulate it from affecting, or being affected by, the judgments of ordinary life'.[2] Pyrrhonian scepticism was, according to Burnyeat, practised at that time as a way of life; it was scepticism without insulation. My own conviction is that no normal human being can lead a life of Pyrrhonian scepticism, if to lead such a life is to live without believing that one knows this or that about the world, or even without believing anything at all. My concern in this essay, however, is not whether a Pyrrhonian life is possible, but the phenomenon of insulation, which is something quite noticeable in the case of most non-Pyrrhonian sceptics about human knowledge.[3]

Insulation is a puzzling phenomenon that has, I believe, never been satisfactorily explained. I have a good explanation to offer, but the explanandum itself needs to be clarified before we can see how puzzling it is and what would make a good explanation of it. I will

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[1] M. F. Burnyeat, 'The Sceptic in His Place and Time', in R. Rorty, J. B. Schneewind and Q. Skinner (eds), *Philosophy in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 225.

[2] Ibid., 227.

[3] Scepticism can be about different kinds of beliefs that human beings have, and does not have to be formulated in terms of the concept of knowledge. However, in what follows I will, for two reasons, speak mostly of scepticism about human knowledge: first, scepticism about human knowledge can be considered as scepticism in its most general form; and second, if our beliefs about a particular kind of thing are generally doubtful or unjustified, then we cannot have knowledge of that kind of thing.

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argue that Burnyeat lumps together two different problems when he speaks of insulation, and that only in the case of one of these problems is it clear that there is something puzzling to be explained. The explanation I will suggest is a psychological one; it consists in giving a plausible description of the psychology of those sceptics who experience insulation. This may seem to some to imply that the problem of insulation is not a philosophical problem at all, but a psychological problem concerning some individual sceptics. I am not sure how much the significance of the problem hinges on whether it should be called philosophical; in any case, towards the end of this essay I will briefly discuss the generality of the problem. Its generality makes it at least a metaphilosophical problem, a problem concerning a general feature of philosophizing. Whether one thinks it should be called philosophical depends on whether one thinks metaphilosophy is philosophy, but, again, nothing about the significance of metaphilosophy hinges on whether it should be called philosophical.

1. Two Problems of Insulation

In Burnyeat's discussion we can actually distinguish between two different problems, both of which can be called the problem of insulation. The first problem is about a certain relation between scepticism and common sense (i.e. what most of us take to be the case in leading our lives), and the second problem is about a certain relation between the sceptic's beliefs about the world and his sceptical belief. An important difference between the two problems is that the first does not have to be put in terms of a particular person's beliefs, while the second must be so put. Let us refer to the first problem as IP(A), and the second as IP(B). However, the two problems can, as in the case of Burnyeat's discussion of them, easily be lumped together if IP(A) is treated in a certain way. As we will see, it is IP(B) rather than IP(A) that is most puzzling and calls for a psychological explanation.

To distinguish clearly between the two problems of insulation, we must first of all have a more detailed formulation of them.

> IP(A): It seems to some philosophers that philosophical scepticism simply cannot be *refuted* by common sense. Burnyeat illustrates this with a Moorean argument against scepticism about the reality of space and time: 'It is true that *yesterday* my body was for some time *nearer* to the mantelpiece than to the bookcase;

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therefore, it is false that space and time are unreal'. Burnyeat's own experience is that 'nearly everybody protests that this argument of Moore's is the wrong *sort* of argument'. That is, even if the Moorean argument is valid and sound as common sense, it cannot refute the scepticism in question. Philosophical scepticism is insulated from common sense arguments like Moore's. And Burnyeat adds that insulation 'is a two-way business. It protects ordinary life from philosophy and it protects philosophy from ordinary life and G. E. Moore, and you cannot buy the one protection without the other'.[4] The question is, what makes scepticism and common sense insulated in this sense from one another?

IP(B): A person's belief in the truth of scepticism *does not have any effect* on his common sense beliefs. Burnyeat's example of the philosopher who works on the problem of time is supposed to be an example of this.[5] If insulation in this sense is also 'a two-way

[4] 'The Sceptic in His Place and Time', 226.

[5] Some may think that the sceptic's beliefs about the world must be affected in some way by his sceptical belief even when the sceptical belief has receded from the foreground of his consciousness. Thomas Nagel, for example, writes:

> Philosophical skepticism does not cause us to abandon our ordinary beliefs, but it lends them a peculiar flavor. After acknowledging that their truth is incompatible with possibilities that we have no grounds for believing do not obtain … we return to our familiar convictions with a certain irony and resignation. Unable to abandon the natural responses on which they depend, we take them back, like a spouse who has run off with someone and then decided to return; but we regard them differently (not that the new attitude is necessarily inferior to the old, in either case). (Thomas Nagel, 'The Absurd', reprinted in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 19–20)

I doubt that most sceptics would have the experience Nagel describes here. I tend to think that when the sceptic is not engaging in philosophical thinking, he would regard his 'ordinary beliefs' in the same way as ordinary people (i.e. non-philosophers) regard theirs. He is, perhaps, more like a spouse who has merely fantasized about running off with someone than like one who actually has done so and then decided to return. Hume thinks that what he calls 'mitigated scepticism' 'would naturally inspire [people] with more modesty and reserve, and diminish their fond opinion of themselves, and their prejudice against antagonists' (David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd edition, revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 161). What he refers to can be considered the effects of scepticism, but I don't think such effects imply

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> business', then the sceptic's common sense beliefs are not supposed to have any effect on his sceptical belief either. It is reasonable to think that the sceptic about the reality of time would not give up his scepticism simply because he is aware that he has just applied for a research grant during next year's sabbatical, an action which reveals his belief about the arrival of next year. The question is, what makes the sceptic's common sense *beliefs* and his sceptical *belief* insulated from one another?

There is a way of treating IP(A) such that an explanation for IP(A) would also be an explanation for IP(B), where the difference between the two problems would then become blurred. If IP(A) is understood as the problem of explaining how scepticism and common sense can be *compatible* with each other, then whatever that can explain that can also explain how the sceptic's common sense beliefs and his sceptical belief are insulated from—do not have any effect on—one another. For given this treatment of IP(A), the sceptic himself can take his common sense beliefs and his sceptical belief to be compatible, and there would then be nothing wrong if those beliefs do not affect one another. As a result, IP(B) is just the problem of how *the sceptic's* common sense beliefs and his sceptical belief can be taken to be compatible, which is nothing but IP(A) as restricted to the particular case of the sceptic's beliefs.

This is, I believe, the way Burnyeat treats IP(A), which may be why he does not distinguish it from IP(B). We can see this from his answer to the question 'Who invented insulation?'. According to Burnyeat, even though Hume recognizes that our 'beliefs do not go away when the reasons for them are invalidated by the sceptic's

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that the sceptic would regard his belief, say, about next year's arrival, differently after he has 'returned' from his philosophical thinking. In fact, Hume says very clearly that 'the first and most trivial event in life will put to flight all [the sceptic's] doubts and scruples, and *leave him the same, in every point of action and speculation*, with the philosophers of every other sect, and with those who never concerned themselves in any philosophical researches' (160; italics added). For related discussions, see, for example, Richard H. Popkin, 'David Hume: His Pyrrhonism and His Critique of Pyrrhonism', *Philosophical Quarterly* **1** (1951), 385–407, and Barry Stroud, 'Hume's Scepticism: Natural Instincts and Philosophical Reflection', reprinted in R. H. Popkin (ed.), *Scepticism in the History of Philosophy* (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), 115–34. In any case, if the sceptic's beliefs about the world are really affected by his sceptical belief (in the way Nagel describes or in some other ways), then we have to say that the former is not, or at least not completely, insulated from the latter. Our concern here is the explanation of complete insulation.

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critique', Hume did not invent insulation because Hume thought scepticism 'should clash *directly* and drastically with our everyday beliefs' in such a way that those beliefs are not 'insulated by some logical device from that critique'.[6] That Burnyeat treats IP(A) as mainly about the compatibility between scepticism and common sense is even clearer from the fact that he thinks it was Kant who invented insulation, 'who persuaded philosophy that one can be, *simultaneously and without contradiction*, an empirical realist and a transcendental idealist'.[7] And Burnyeat thinks that the kind of insulation he speaks of, and the compatibility it implies, is not only between realism and idealism; it can also be between our common sense (which we have as empirical realists) and scepticism, for '[o]nce the Kantian insulation by levels is established, scepticism itself goes transcendental'[8]—it is 'transcendental scepticism' that is insulated from common sense, and *vice versa*.

Although it is no place here to discuss what transcendental idealism or 'transcendental scepticism' is supposed to be, I must say that I don't see how the philosophical battle concerning scepticism can be fought 'at the transcendental level' because I don't see how anyone can speak or think 'at the transcendental level' about anything.[9] If 'transcendentalism scepticism' is no more than the thesis

[6] 'The Sceptic in His Place and Time', 249; italics added.

[7] Ibid., 250; italics added.

[8] Ibid., 250–1.

[9] Here I am taking 'the transcendental level' to be contrasted with 'the empirical level'. If (according to Kant) we *must* perceive and think 'at the empirical level' about things in the world, then we certainly can't speak or think at 'the transcendental level' about anything. Perhaps only God can be 'at the transcendental level'. There are, however, philosophers who consider 'the transcendental level' to be 'the level of philosophical reflection upon experience' (Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 7). In this sense of 'the transcendental level', Kant is surely 'at the transcendental level' when he argues for transcendental idealism, but so is Berkeley when he argues for his version of idealism. This way of putting the matter is highly confusing, for Kant himself thinks Berkeley's idealism is false precisely because it is idealism 'at the empirical level'. According to Allison, 'transcendental idealism must be characterized primarily as a metaphilosophical or methodological 'standpoint', rather than as a straightforwardly metaphysical doctrine about the nature or ontological status of the objects of human cognition' (25). So perhaps one is 'at the transcendental level' only when one philosophizes about human experience *with Kant's method*; and Berkeley should then not be counted as being 'at the transcendental level'. But if being 'at the transcendental

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that we do not know anything about (Kantian) things-in-themselves, then such 'scepticism' should not be threatening because we do not take ourselves to have knowledge about things-in-themselves. There is no philosophical battle to fight at all if the question is whether we know anything about things-in-themselves—of course we don't, for things-in-themselves are *by definition* not knowable by us.

At any rate, what we should note for our purposes is only that not all sceptics are transcendental sceptics, a fact which Burnyeat himself is well aware of. As he remarks, 'when scepticism goes transcendental, the expression 'the sceptic' has to lose the historical reference it still carries in Hume, its connection with what certain historical figures actually said and thought'.[10] What I would like to add is that even *after* the invention of transcendental scepticism and Kantian insulation, it is plainly not true that all (alleged) sceptics are transcendental sceptics. Peter Unger, for example, can certainly be considered a sceptic when he argues for scepticism in his 'A Defense of Skepticism' and, more elaborately, in his book *Ignorance: A Case for Scepticism*;[11] but it is quite clear that he is not arguing for any form of transcendental scepticism.

There may be other ways of explaining insulation which is understood in terms of the compatibility between scepticism and common sense. Perhaps they are compatible because the word 'know' (and related words) has different meanings, which are determined by the different epistemic standards employed in different contexts. But just as not all sceptics are transcendental sceptics, not all sceptics are contextualist sceptics. At all events, we are now in a position to see why IP(B) can be distinguished from IP(A). It seems that even if scepticism and common sense are *not* compatible, or, even if they are *not* taken to be compatible by the sceptic himself, there can still be insulation, as formulated in IP(B), between the sceptic's common sense beliefs and his sceptical belief. The philosopher in Burnyeat's example who has applied for a research grant during next year's sabbatical may not take his scepticism about the

[10] 'The Sceptic in His Place and Time', 251.

[11] Peter Unger, 'A Defense of Skepticism', *Philosophical Review* **80** (1971), 198–218; *Ignorance: A Case for Scepticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

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level' is simply a matter of employing a certain philosophical method, then it is not clear that there is a standpoint or viewpoint (in a robust sense) 'at the transcendental level' from which we can look at things (things, not things-in-themselves).

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reality of time to be compatible with his belief about the arrival of next year. Unger, a real life example, thanks people who gave him intellectual help as well as the institute which offered him financial assistance during the preparation of his defense of scepticism, while what he argues in his defense is that 'every human being know, at best, hardly anything to be so'.[12] His scepticism is not transcendental or contextualist[13] (nor does it in any other way imply the compatibility between scepticism and common sense), but his common sense beliefs are somehow insulated from his sceptical belief. IP(B), then, can be distinct from IP(A), and calls for a distinct explanation.

2. Insulation and Irrationality

Now let us see whether there is really something puzzling to be explained concerning IP(B). It should be, first of all, emphasized that the insulation involved is 'a two-way business'.[14] I think most philosophers would recognize, and some of them indeed try to explain, the fact that a person's belief in the truth of scepticism (and some other philosophical theses for that matter) cannot, or at least usually does not, have any effect on the beliefs about the world that he has in leading his life. But an explanation of this fact is not necessarily an explanation of insulation because it may not at the same time explain how the sceptic's belief in the truth of scepticism is also insulated from his beliefs about the world.

Insulation would not be very difficult to explain if it is only one-way, that is, if it is only insulation of beliefs about the world from scepticism. Some may, for example, try to explain the fact in question simply by appealing to the indispensability of beliefs about the world: if those beliefs are indispensable, then certainly they would not be affected by the sceptical belief. But this does not explain why

[12] 'A Defense of Skepticism', 198 and 219, footnote 7.

[13] Though Unger's views have changed a great deal since the publication of *Ignorance: A Case for Scepticism*. He formulates a form of semantic contextualism in *Philosophical Relativity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), though he does not endorse it. But he, according to Keith DeRose, 'finally joined the ranks of the contextualists' (Keith DeRose, 'Contextualism: An Explanation and Defense', in J. Greco and E. Sosa (eds), *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 193). DeRose is referring to Peter Unger, 'The Cone Model of Knowledge', *Philosophical Topics* 14 (1986), 125–78.

[14] From now on I will use the word 'insulation' to refer to the kind of insulation that is peculiar to IP(B).

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the sceptic's sceptical belief is insulated from his beliefs about the world, that is, unless the sceptical belief was also indispensable (and it obviously is not). Another problem with this explanation is that although the indispensability of beliefs about the world can explain why the sceptic cannot give them up even if he believes in the truth of scepticism, it cannot explain why those beliefs are not affected in other ways by his sceptical belief—why aren't those beliefs weakened by his sceptical belief? And why doesn't his sceptical belief make him feel uneasy about having beliefs about the world?

Another popular explanation appeals to the practical goals and concerns the sceptic has in leading his life: on the one hand, beliefs about the world are necessary for his practical goals and concerns; on the other hand, such goals and concerns would force his sceptical belief to recede from the foreground of his consciousness. Although this can explain why the sceptic's beliefs about the world are not affected in any way by his sceptical belief, it still cannot explain why his sceptical belief is insulated from his beliefs about the world, that is, unless it is assumed that the sceptic's beliefs about the world recede from the foreground of his consciousness when he is *not* engaging in his practical projects—when he is engaging instead in philosophical thinking. But such an assumption seems to be false given that, first, the sceptic does have beliefs about the world; second, philosophical thinking is both reflective and self-reflective in nature; and third, the target of scepticism is precisely our beliefs about the world.

So part of the reason why insulation is so puzzling is that the sceptic is supposed to be aware of, at least when he is philosophizing, both his sceptical belief and his beliefs about the world. If the sceptic is aware of both beliefs, then he, being normally rational, should also be aware of the problem with having both beliefs, and should then try to get rid of either the sceptical belief or all his beliefs about the world. Or at least he should feel very uneasy about having both beliefs knowingly, for it involves epistemic irresponsibility or even self-contradiction

Let me explain. Given that the sceptic has both the sceptical belief and beliefs about the world, he, being sceptical, is supposed to regard his own beliefs about the world as doubtful or unjustified. That is, with respect to any of those beliefs about the world that he himself is aware of having, he has a self-reflective belief of the form 'It is doubtful that p' or 'I am not justified in believing that p'. But it is epistemically irresponsible to believe something (especially when one believes it strongly) which one at the same time considers doubtful or unjustified. And since the sceptic presumably cares

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much about being epistemically responsible, he can be considered somewhat irrational when he allows himself to be epistemically irresponsible in this way.

The sceptic has beliefs about the world because those beliefs are indispensable to leading a human life; and I think it can be shown that *knowledge-beliefs* about the world are indispensable in the same way.[15] However, it would take some long and complex arguments to establish this, which is not something that I can do here. In any case, if the sceptic does, like everyone else, have knowledge-beliefs, then since his sceptical belief is directed against all knowledge-beliefs, he is, with respect to any of the knowledge-beliefs he is aware of having, supposed to have a self-reflective belief of the form 'I do not know that *p*'. The sceptical belief and the knowledge-belief are obviously contradictory, and it is patently irrational to have both beliefs *knowingly*.

It is natural to think that one cannot be *blind* to something that one *knows*, but I will try to show how this is indeed possible in the case of the sceptic. Not only is this possible, it is reasonable, I think, to take it that this is what is actually going on when the sceptic is in his sceptical frame of mind. By making sense of the sceptic's blindness to his own irrationality, we can thus explain why his sceptical belief is insulated from his beliefs (or knowledge-beliefs) about the world. And I will argue that it is an explanation that can provide us with resources to explain also why the sceptic's beliefs about the world are insulated from his sceptical belief. It is a unified explanation of *both* ways of insulation.[16]

3. Philosophical Detachment

I think the key to such an explanation lies in figuring out a certain kind of relation that one can have to one's own beliefs. We have just seen that one of the popular explanations of insulation is implausible partly because philosophical thinking is self-reflective in nature. So although self-reflection is clearly a relation that a person can have to his own beliefs, it cannot be the relation that we are looking

[15] A knowledge-belief about the world is a belief that a person or a group of persons know that *p*, where '*p*' is an empirical proposition about the world.

[16] Perhaps the two ways of insulation can be explained differently, but I think it is reasonable to assume that the two ways are somehow related, so that it is reasonable to look for an explanation that can explain both ways and how they are related.

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for. It would not help even if self-reflection is taken not as mere awareness, but as *critical* awareness, of one's own beliefs. For even if the sceptic is critical of his own beliefs about the world, which he surely is, he should still see himself as irrational as long as he still has both beliefs about the world and the sceptical belief knowingly. His criticism of his own beliefs cannot explain why he is blind to his own irrationality. However, although self-reflection as such cannot be the relation in terms of which we can explain the sceptic's blindness to his own rationality, the relation we are looking for should be compatible with self-reflection, for it cannot be denied that the sceptic has self-reflection on his own beliefs about the world when he engages in philosophical thinking.

The sceptic who interests us here is thus one who is aware of his beliefs about the world, but who is in a certain kind of relation to those beliefs such that he is blind to his irrationality of having at the same time the sceptical belief. I think a natural suggestion is that the sceptic must be in some way distancing himself from his beliefs about the world. A philosopher's term of art for this suggestion is 'detachment'—the sceptic is detached from his own beliefs.[17] As a matter of fact, the notion of detachment, or philosophical detachment, is invoked typically in discussions of scepticism, though there is no standard way of characterizing the notion, and the notion may be put into different uses. I have just suggested that detachment is different from self-reflection, but some philosophers may use the word 'detachment' to refer precisely to philosophical (self-)reflection.[18] In any case, I will discuss some characterizations of detachment as they figure in discussions of scepticism, and then suggest what I take to be the only characterization that can help explain the sceptic's blindness to his own irrationality, and hence explain insulation.

Some philosophers speak of detachment merely in a figurative sense, that is, take it as no more than a metaphor and do not even try to explain what the metaphor is metaphorical of. Indeed, it seems that the appeal of the notion of detachment depends much on its being metaphorical in nature. What I will try to do is to explicate such a metaphor, which is surely counter-aesthetic; but in philosophy truth is more important than beauty, or so I think.

[17] Some philosophers may prefer some other terms or expressions to 'detachment', such as 'disengagement', 'estrangement', and 'alienation'.

[18] Michael Williams, for example, speaks of 'the detached *or reflective* position of the philosopher' (Michael Williams, *Unnatural Doubts: Epistemological Realism and the Basis of Scepticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 178; italics added).

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The kind of detachment I am going to characterize is detachment *from one's own beliefs*. But philosophers who speak of detachment may have different understandings of what it is that we are supposed to be detached from. Some of the accounts of detachment I am going to consider do not explicitly take detachment to be detachment from one's own beliefs, but they are still relevant to the search for an explanation of the sceptic's blindness to his own irrationality. For the sake of convenience, I will refer quite often to Michael Williams' *Unnatural Doubts: Epistemological Realism and the Basis of Scepticism*, for in that book we can easily find most of the different characterizations of detachment I would like to examine.[19]

Let us begin with something that we have already touched on. It is reasonable to think, as we have seen, that the sceptic's engagement in his practical goals and concerns would force his sceptical belief to recede from the foreground of his consciousness. According to a widely accepted characterization, the sceptic is detached from his practical goals and concerns when he philosophizes. To have philosophical detachment is then, in Williams' words, to 'step back from our everyday projects and practices', to 'ignore the pressures to act', to 'forget particulars [i.e. 'particular objects and narrow interests']', to set aside 'practical concerns and limitations', or to have 'withdrawal from all practical considerations'.[20] I agree that this may very well be what the sceptic is doing when he philosophizes, but such detachment does not seem to be able to explain why he is blind to his irrationality of having both the sceptical belief and beliefs about the world.

Williams sometimes suggests that philosophical detachment consists in 'stepping out our ordinary view', and that it is more than mere detachment from our practical goals and concerns. As he remarks, 'there is indefinite scope for taking an interest in matters that are less and less practical without ever stepping outside our ordinary view. The step outside our ordinary view is therefore one to be taken in addition to the step outside practical constraints'.[21] But then the question is, what is it to 'step outside' our ordinary

[19] Though it should be pointed out that Williams does not have in mind the problem of explaining the sceptic's blindness to his own irrationality; what he tries to do in characterizing detachment is, I think, to capture the special feature of philosophizing, or at least the sceptic's philosophizing.

[20] *Unnatural Doubts: Epistemological Realism and the Basis of Scepticism*, 6, 172–74, 193.

[21] Ibid., 213.

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view, or, to 'step outside' *all* the beliefs we have about the world *while still having those beliefs* (for we cannot give up all our beliefs about the world)?

Perhaps to 'step outside' our ordinary view is, again in Williams' words, to 'command an objective view of the world and our place in it'.[22] Objectivity is, as we philosophers all know, a tricky notion. But for our purposes what should be noted is simply that as long as the objective *view* of the world is a *view* in a robust sense, then it must consists of beliefs about the world. The scientific view of the world, for instance, is supposed to be objective, and it is a view in a robust sense. And there is indeed a sense in which we can say that it is a detached view: a scientist, whose aim is to obtain objective scientific knowledge, has to set aside, or be detached from, whatever feelings, concerns, interests, opinions, or concepts and ideas he may have that are detrimental, or even merely irrelevant, to that aim. For example, a medical researcher who finds homosexuality disgusting, or morally wrong, is expected, as a medical researcher, to be detached from such feelings or moral judgment when his testing subject is a homosexual. Now it is clearly not because of adopting such a scientifically objective, detached view that the sceptic is blind to his irrationality. In fact, such a view does not even have room for the sceptical belief (though it has room for sceptical beliefs about different particular things, or kinds of things, in the world).[23]

On the other hand, if the objective, detached 'view' is not a view in a robust sense, then it may be nothing but a metaphysical ideal, a 'view' that no human being is capable of adopting. Thomas Nagel seems to have such a metaphysical ideal in mind when he remarks that to adopt the 'objective viewpoint' is 'to view the world not from a place within it, or from the vantage point of a special type of life and awareness, but from nowhere in particular and no form of life in particular at all'. He thinks that the essential character of such a 'viewpoint' is 'externality and detachment', and that the detachment is 'the *unreachable ideal* at which the pursuit of

[22] Ibid., 6.

[23] And if the scientific view is the only possible objective *view* that human beings can adopt, then anyone who tries to command an objective view *of human knowledge* should restrict himself to what W. V. Quine calls 'naturalized epistemology', which, as Stroud points out, involves the 'repudiation of an "external" detached position for the assessment of knowledge' (Barry Stroud, *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 231).

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objectivity aims'.[24] Bernard Williams, in referring to 'the idea that we consider the world as it really is only when we see it *from the outside*' as the 'absolute conception' of the world, also points out that it is an open question 'whether that is a possible view of the world even for science'.[25] If the objective, detached 'view' is not one that can be adopted by human beings, then *ipso facto* it cannot be because of the adopting of such a 'view' that the sceptic is blind to his irrationality.

There is still another characterization of philosophical detachment that is worth looking into. Michael Williams remarks that '[i]f we are to assess our knowledge of the world in its entirety, we must set aside not only all our practical interests but all our ordinary beliefs about the world and our relation to it'. To do so is to satisfy what he calls 'the totality condition', which is an 'aspect of detachment'.[26] Barry Stroud has a more elaborate exposition of such a notion of detachment:

> [W]e understand [the philosophical question about our knowledge of external things] as requiring a certain withdrawal or detachment from the whole body of our knowledge of the world. We recognize that when I ask in that detached philosophical way whether I know that there are external things, I am not supposed to be allowed to appeal to other things I think I know about external things in order to help me settle the question. *All* of my knowledge of the external world is supposed to have been brought into question at one fell swoop; no particular piece of it is to be available as unquestionable knowledge to help me decide

[24] Thomas Nagel, 'Subjective and Objective', in *Mortal Questions*, 208. Nagel's full development of such a notion of objective 'viewpoint' is in *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1986). The notion can be traced back to the distinction between 'the personal standpoint' and 'the impersonal standpoint' that he makes in *The Possibility of Altruism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press,1970). Although Nagel thinks the objective, detached 'viewpoint' is 'the unreachable ideal', he also thinks detachment is a matter of degree, which can be seen from his remarks that '[w]e can pursue a unified if very etiolated conception of reality by detaching progressively from our own point of view' ('Subjective and Objective', 213).

[25] Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 111; italics added. For the absolute conception of the world, see also Bernard Williams, *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1978), Chapter 8.

[26] *Unnatural Doubts: Epistemological Realism and the Basis of Scepticism*, 193.

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> whether or not another particular candidate is true. I am to focus on my relation to the whole body of beliefs which I take to be knowledge of the external world and to ask, from 'outside' it as it were, not simply whether it is true but whether and how I know it even if it is in fact true.[27]

I think it is clear that the detachment characterized here is methodological in nature: it is part of what it is to question or assess *generally* our putative knowledge of the world that we should be detached from—should not appeal to—any such putative knowledge in the assessment. To be detached in this sense from our putative knowledge is in effect to pretend not to know (or, not to believe we know) what we actually believe we know. And this is the only correct *way* of assessing generally our putative knowledge of the world.

According to Stroud, 'once we become familiar with the prospect from that lofty, detached philosophical standpoint, it becomes difficult to see how anything but scepticism could be the proper verdict on our putative knowledge of the world'.[28] This may be right if the 'lofty, detached philosophical standpoint' is meant to refer only to the methodological detachment explained above. For if we are not allowed to appeal to any putative knowledge of the world, then there may be no way that we can show that we do know something about the world. We can also say that anyone who believes in the truth of scepticism has the sceptical belief from that 'lofty, detached philosophical standpoint', if by that we mean methodological detachment is necessary for arriving at and maintaining the sceptical verdict. These are important points to make concerning scepticism, but they do not show that the sceptic can give up, not even momentarily, all his beliefs about the world; nor can they explain why the sceptic is blind to his own irrationality of having both the sceptical belief and beliefs about the world.

4. Taking an Other-Personal Position towards One's Own Beliefs

Michael Williams thinks that philosophical detachment is not 'a spectacular psychological achievement'.[29] But the kind of

[27] *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism*, 117–18.
[28] Ibid., 209.
[29] *Unnatural Doubts: Epistemological Realism and the Basis of Scepticism*, 179.

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detachment I am going to characterize in detail is precisely psychological in nature, for it must be, I believe, because of some psychological mechanism that the sceptic is blind to his own irrationality. Such detachment is essentially a psychological achievement, spectacular or not. To be detached in this sense from one's own beliefs is to be in a certain kind of psychological state in which one is in a special relation to one's own beliefs—it is to be in the psychological state of taking *an other-personal position* towards one's own beliefs.

But what is it to take an other-personal position towards one's own beliefs? It is a limited case of taking an other-personal position towards oneself generally, which is something that anyone who can distinguish between the first person and the second or third person is capable of.[30] To take an other-personal position towards oneself is to look at oneself as if one is another person, and consider or reflect on the situation one is in as if it is the situation another person is in. It is somewhat analogous to seeing one's own performance, say in a piano recital, on the television as if one is *merely* the audience. It is self-awareness being, so to speak, distorted. In taking that position towards oneself, one would refer to oneself in the third person—refer to oneself by means of the word 'he' or 'she' instead of 'I'.[31]

It has been argued by some philosophers that the first person pronoun 'I' sometimes cannot be replaced by other designations even if these other designations refer to the very same person as the one referred to by 'I' as being used by a particular person. Hector-

[30] It might be facilitated by something more than that if the psychoanalytic story of the self is true. According to Jonathan Lear, psychoanalysis can help explain why 'it does often *seem* as though in evaluating our lives we are standing outside, looking on', which he refers to as a 'sense of detachment'. This is because the super-ego (Lear calls it 'the super-I') 'is the internalization of an *observer* of the self. It is one of the ironies and paradoxes of human existence that the self comes into being by the internalization of a self-observer. Now if the super-I is this intrapsychic observer, we can account for the purported experience of self-observation in the activity of radical evaluation without having to assume that we are in fact taking up a mysterious external perspective' (Jonathan Lear, *Love and Its Place in Nature: A Philosophical Interpretation of Freudian Psychoanalysis* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990), 208). Lear is talking about 'radical evaluation' of one's values, but I think radical doubts about one's beliefs about the external world can be part of the radical evaluation *of one's life*.

[31] I take it that in taking that position it is natural for one to refer to oneself in the third person rather than the second person.

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Neri Castañeda, for one thinks that 'I don't exist now' is self-contradictory while 'Hector-Neri Castañeda doesn't exist now' is not, even when the latter is asserted or thought by Castañeda himself[32] John Perry, for another, points out in an example that his belief 'I am making a mess' can, while his belief 'the shopper with the torn sack is making a mess' cannot, explain his behavior in a supermarket, even if both 'I' and 'the shopper with the torn sack' refer to him, John Perry.[33] Psychological detachment as I understand it does not, however, depend on the complete interchangeability between 'I' as being used by a particular person and other designations which refer to that same person, though it does require the person's ability to refer to himself in designations other than 'I'.

But let me emphasize that a person who is detached from himself, and refers to himself as 'he' rather than 'I', is in a particular psychological state. Sometimes one would use 'he' or 'she' to refer to oneself for reasons that have nothing to do with psychological detachment, such as when one wants to conceal one's identity, or when one simply does not realize that one is referring to oneself. In the case of psychological detachment, the use of 'he' or 'she' to refer to oneself is the result, and the expression, of being in the psychological state of taking an other-personal position towards oneself; it is not what taking such a position consists in. Sometimes one has to *discover* that a certain designation refers to oneself (such as when Perry discovered that he himself was 'the shopper with the torn sack'), and the discovery may have the psychological accompaniment of the sense of one's having a certain identity. Being in the psychological state of detachment is to a certain extent the reverse of this: in such a state one is disfamiliarizing with oneself (or with whatever aspect of oneself that is the object of detachment), losing the sense of one's identity (or part of one's identity).

Detachment in this sense is not peculiar to philosophical thinking. If it can be called philosophical detachment, it is because such detachment is more easily induced in philosophical thinking, or, conversely, because being in the state of psychological detachment would help one make sense of, or even take seriously of, many philosophical problems. It can perhaps in this way be considered a

[32] See Hector-Neri Castañeda, 'On the Phenomeno-Logic of the I', reprinted in *The Phenomeno-Logic of the I: Essays on Self-Consciousness*, edited by J. G. Hart and T. Kapitan (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 89–95.

[33] See John Perry, 'The Problem of the Essential Indexical', *Noûs* 13 (1979), 3–21.

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type of what Wittgenstein calls 'the state of a philosopher's attention'.[34] At any rate, I would like to quote from James Joyces a wonderful description of what it is for a person to be psychologically detached from himself; it is in the story 'A Painful Case' in *Dubliners*:

> He lived at a little distance from his body, regarding his own acts with doubtful side glances. He had an odd autobiographical habit which led him to compose in his mind from time to time a short sentence about himself containing a subject in the third person and a predicate in the past tense.... Sometimes he caught himself listening to the sound of his own voice.... he heard the strange impersonal voice which he recognized as his own.

The character described can clearly be considered as taking an other-personal position towards himself. Some of us have, I believe, the same experience occasionally; as I have pointed out, it is something which anyone who can distinguish between the first person and the second or third person is capable of.

The sceptic is, I suggest, in this peculiar psychological state when he upholds his scepticism and maintains that all *his* knowledge-beliefs are false and all *his* beliefs about the world doubtful. Even though he still has all those beliefs, he is psychologically detached from them; he looks at them as if they are another person's beliefs.[35] Before I try to show how this can explain the sceptic's blindness to his own irrationality, I want to take a look at a similar notion of detachment suggested by Burnyeat.

In his essay 'Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism?', Burnyeat discusses whether the Pyrrhonian sceptic really advocates a life without belief. According to Burnyeat, the Pyrrhonian sceptic advocates only the abandonment of all beliefs about 'a real objective world', which do not include '[s]tatements which merely record how things appear'.[36] But since for the Pyrrhonian sceptic 'statements recording how things appear cannot be described as true or false',[37]

[34] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, third edition, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), Part I §413.

[35] I assume that the sceptic's psychological detachment is limited to his beliefs about the world. If the scope of a particular sceptic's detachment is larger than this, it is still *only* his detachment from his beliefs about the world that is relevant to explaining his blindness to his own irrationality.

[36] M. F. Burnyeat, 'Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism?', in J. Barnes, M. F. Burnyeat and M. Schofield (eds), *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 25.

[37] Ibid., 26.

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there is no such thing as belief about appearance, and it is in this sense of belief that the ideal life he advocates can be considered 'a life without belief'. Towards the end of his essay, however, Burnyeat questions whether the Pyrrhonian sceptic's 'philosophical pronouncements' can also be 'taken non-epistemologically', that is, as 'appearance-statements' which are 'not expressive of belief'.[38] His verdict is that the Pyrrhonian sceptic is in a certain state when he makes his philosophical pronouncement, and both the causes and effects of the state 'are such as to justify us in calling it a state of belief'.[39] Since the sceptic's philosophical pronouncement is expressive of belief, and since belief presupposes assent, 'it ought to make no sense for the sceptic to insist that he does not assent to it [i.e. the philosophical pronouncement] as true'; as Burnyeat continues:

> If the sceptic does insist, if he refuses to identify with his assent, he is as it were detaching himself from the person (namely, himself) who was convinced by the [philosophical] argument, and he is treating his own thought as if it were the thought of someone else, someone thinking thoughts within him. He is saying, in effect, 'It is thought within me that *p*, but *I* do not believe it.' In the right circumstances, that could be said. But not all the time, for every appearance/thought one has.[40]

It seems that the Pyrrhonian sceptic described here is in the state of psychological detachment as I have characterized it: if he 'is treating his own thought as if it were the thought of someone else', isn't he taking what I have called an other-personal position towards himself? Of course Burnyeat's Pyrrhonian sceptic is detached from his philosophical belief while my sceptic is detached from his beliefs about the world, but the structural features of the psychological states in the two cases appear to be the same.[41]

However, Burnyeat's description of detachment may be too suggestive of a case of split personality. He can be interpreted as saying that in the kind of detachment he describes, a single person (i.e. the Pyrrhonian sceptic) 'splits' into two persons, one of them has

[38] Ibid., 49–50.
[39] Ibid., 52.
[40] Ibid., 53.
[41] Some may wonder why Burnyeat does not appeal to his notion of detachment to explain insulation. But recall that Burnyeat does not distinguish between the two different problems of insulation, i.e. IP(A) and IP(B), and focuses on IP(A). Psychological detachment certainly cannot explain IP(A).

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the philosophical belief, and the other refuses to assent to it.[42] Indeed, in a footnote Burnyeat refers his readers to Part II §x of the *Philosophical Investigations*, in which Wittgenstein suggests that '[o]ne would have to fill out the picture with behaviour indicating that *two people* were speaking through my mouth' if one is to make sense of my saying something like 'It is raining and I don't believe it' or 'It seems to me that my ego believes this, but it isn't true'.[43]

Perhaps psychological detachment in extreme cases might lead to split personality (if split personality is really possible), but I do not think that it essentially involves something psychopathological in nature (cf. a habitual stealer is not necessarily a kleptomaniac). It is indeed a rather unusual psychological state, a state in which one sees oneself as another person. But there is still only one person, not two.[44] It may be tempting to speak of the 'detached self' here, but I think it could refer to no more than the same old self—the same old self in the state of psychological detachment. If one is in this state, one would feel and think as if one is the same old self *minus whatever that is the object of detachment*. For instance, if a person is detached from his religious beliefs, then his 'detached self' should consist in his feeling and thinking as if he does not have these religious beliefs.

I am not sure what significance there is to speak of the 'detached self' in this sense, but perhaps something interesting can be said in the case of the sceptic. Since the sceptic is detached from all his beliefs about the world, his 'detached self' should consist in his feeling and thinking as if he does not have any beliefs about the world. But feeling and thinking in that way would probably result in feeling and thinking as if one has no history, has no relations with anyone, and is not involved in anything that is taking place in the

[42] Cf. 'David Hume: His Pyrrhonism and His Critique of Pyrrhonism', where Popkin also speaks of the true Pyrrhonist's 'schizophrenic personality' or 'split personality' (406–7), though he is making quite a different point from Burnyeat's. With no sufficient knowledge of clinical psychology and psychiatry, I am here speaking of split personality in as simple terms as possible, and I am not even sure whether split personality as I understand it really exists. This would not, however, affect the points I am making.

[43] *Philosophical Investigations*, Part II §x, 192, italics added.

[44] The Joyce character I referred to earlier might seem rather mentally unhealthy, but it is still, I believe, quite clearly not a case of split personality. It may be interesting to compare the Joyce passage with Jorge Luis Borges' short parable 'Borges and I' (in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, translated by J. E. Irby, edited by D. A. Yates and J. E. Irby (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1962), 246–7). There Borges seems to be describing a case of split personality.

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world—all in all, as if one does not lead a life, a full-blooded normal human life. To put it another way, one would feel and think *like* what can perhaps be called 'the pure first person', the 'I' with no autobiographical content, who exists only here and now. And this might be what gives rise to the illusion of looking at the world from a 'lofty, detached philosophical standpoint'—an illusion, because there is no such a *standpoint*, as well as what gives rise to the fiction of 'the philosophical self', which, in the early Wittgenstein's characterization, 'is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world—not a part of it'[45]—a fiction, because it can be nobody's *self*.

5. The Psychological Explanation

Let us return to the explanation of the sceptic's blindness to his own irrationality. It should not be too hard to see why the sceptic is prone to be psychologically detached from—to take an other-personal position towards—his own beliefs about the world. First of all, we should recall that methodological detachment is necessary for arriving at and maintaining the sceptical verdict. Such a method of philosophical investigation can, I believe, facilitate psychological detachment (just as pretending can facilitate fantasy). More importantly, the sceptic's philosophical investigation is about human putative knowledge as such. That is, it is not merely about *his*, but about *all human beings'*, beliefs and putative knowledge about the world. He is *one of those* whose beliefs and putative knowledge are being questioned generally. If his philosophical conclusion is that human beings do not know anything about the world, he should see himself as *one of those* who do not know anything about the world. As far as his philosophical conclusion is concerned, there is no difference between his lacking knowledge about the world and other human beings' lacking knowledge about the world. He may use the word 'we' to refer to all human beings, but since the 'we' is the *object* of his philosophical investigation and conclusion, he is indeed treating it as a 'they'. The sceptic's 'I', being treated by the sceptic as one of *them*, is then treated as a 'he'.

If the sceptic is taking an other-personal position towards his beliefs about the world, then he is in the psychological state in

[45] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuiness, second edition (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), 5.641.

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which he treats:

(S1) I believe I know that *p*, but I do not know anything about the world.
(S2) I believe I know that *p*, but I do not know that *p*.

as if they are no different from, respectively:

(S1*) He believes he knows that *p*, but he does not know anything about the world.
(S2*) He believes he knows that *p*, but he does not know that *p*.

where 'I' and 'he' refer to the same person, namely, the sceptic himself. The sceptic is blind to his irrationality of holding (S1) and (S2) because he feels and thinks as if he is holding (S1*) and (S2*) instead, which are not irrational to hold at all.

The explanation gets a little trickier when we consider how the detached sceptic is supposed to treat what is the most direct expression of his contradictory beliefs:

(S3) I believe I know that *p*, and I believe I do not know anything about the world.
(S4) I believe I know that *p*, and I believe I do not know that *p*.

Not every single 'I' would be treated as a 'he' here. In the psychological state of detachment, the sceptic treats (S3) and (S4) as if they are, respectively:

(S3*) He believes he knows that *p*, and *I believe* he does not know anything about the world.
(S4*) He believes he knows that *p*, and *I believe* he does not know that *p*.

The sceptic is blind to his own irrationality of holding (S3) and (S4) because it is not irrational to hold (S3*) and (S4*). But why isn't the 'I' in the middle also turned into a 'he'? It is because the sceptic is presumably detached only from his beliefs about the world, while the 'I believe' which is retained in (S3*) and (S4*) is the expression of the sceptical belief.

The above explanation is only about the sceptic's knowledge-beliefs. I have argued that the sceptic is also epistemically irresponsible and irrational in doubting his strong beliefs (which are not knowledge-beliefs) about the world, doubts which can be expressed by 'I strongly believe that *p*, but I doubt that *p*' or 'I strongly believe that *p*, but I am not justified in believing that *p*'. Wittgenstein thinks '[o]ne can mistrust one's own senses, but not

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one's own belief',[46] but it seems that the sceptic can be taken to mistrust his own beliefs about the world when he considers those beliefs doubtful. It is irrational to mistrust or doubt one's own beliefs, but it is not impossible—irrationality is always possible. What needs to be explained is, again, why a normally rational person like the sceptic can be blind to his being irrational in this way. It should be an easy exercise to show how such blindness can be explained by the sceptic's psychological detachment from his strong beliefs about the world; I think I should just skip the repetition.

Now we are in a position to solve the problem of insulation (i.e. IP(B)). Insulation is two-way, and we want to explain both ways by the same explanation, or at least by the same set of explanatory ideas. I pointed out earlier that the sceptic's sceptical belief can be insulated from his beliefs about the world only if he is somehow blind to his own irrationality of having both beliefs knowingly. We have just seen that psychological detachment can explain such blindness. Thus, we already have an explanation of one of the two ways of insulation. What about the other way? It might be anticipated that I will say that it can be explained by the sceptic's detachment from his sceptical belief, which takes place when he is engaging in practical, non-philosophical activities. But in fact this is not what I am going to suggest.

I don't think there is any reason to assume that such reverse detachment would take place when the sceptic stops philosophizing, for the sceptic's practical activities, like everyone else's, are not typically directed at or concerned with his (or other people's) beliefs about the world. A person certainly has to have beliefs about the world to engage in practical activities, but these activities are in most cases not *about* those beliefs. We have already considered the suggestion that the sceptic's engagement in practical activities would force his sceptical belief to recede from the foreground of his consciousness, which seems to be an acceptable explanation of why the sceptic's beliefs about the world are insulated from his sceptical belief. However, in the light of what we have seen about the sceptic's psychological detachment, we can have a better, but compatible, explanation of this way of insulation.

Detachment is, I believe, a psychological state that no mentally healthy person can be in *all the time*. Now given the motivational role that a person's beliefs about the world play in his practical activities, and given that such a role would at least be weakened if the person is detached from those beliefs, the sceptic should not be

[46] *Philosophical Investigations*, Part II §x, 190.

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expected to be detached from his beliefs about the world when he is engaging in practical activities. Detachment is needed, however, not only for the sceptic to be blind to his own irrationality, but also for him to remain sceptical, or, to be in the sceptical frame of mind—he sees himself as investigating human knowledge generally (partly) because he is detached from his own beliefs about the world, and he upholds the sceptical conclusion also when he is in that psychological state. Consequently, when the sceptic ceases to be detached from his own beliefs about the world, his sceptical belief should recede from the foreground of his consciousness.

6. The Generality of the Problem

Insulation is not restricted to the case of scepticism; it may take place whenever a philosopher is holding a thesis which implies the falsity (or at least the unreasonableness) of some of the beliefs essential to leading a normal human life. For if the beliefs are essential to human life, it is difficult to see how the philosopher, who is leading such a life, can do without them. And since the beliefs are the target of self-reflective philosophical attack, the philosopher should be holding both the beliefs and the philosophical thesis knowingly. If he does not see anything wrong with that, it must be because the beliefs and the philosophical thesis are insulated from each other, which can in turn be explained by his psychological detachment from the beliefs concerned.

The following are some of the philosophical theses, besides scepticism, the holding of which may induce insulation: idealism, solipsism, eliminative materialism, scepticism about knowledge of other minds, hard determinism, and, perhaps, moral scepticism.[47] We cannot lead a normal human life without, I think, believing that there are mind-independent things, that there are also things with mental properties, that there are other people, that we have knowledge of what other people feel and think, that we are free and responsible agents, and, perhaps, that there is objective moral truth. Of course, all these philosophical theses can be formulated in various ways, subject to different interpretations, and supported by stronger or weaker arguments. And it might not be clear to some that the beliefs I have just mentioned are essential to human life. It certainly requires much philosophical effort to fully understand these

[47] I am using 'moral scepticism' to refer to the philosophical thesis that there is no objective moral truth.

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philosophical theses, to determine whether they imply the falsity of the beliefs concerned, and to show that the beliefs are essential to human life—none of which I can do here. But I think most of us would at least agree that it is extremely difficult, if possible at all, to give up the kinds of beliefs I have just mentioned.

Although nowadays there do not seem to be many idealists, solipsists, hard determinists, or sceptics about other minds around, it should not be very hard to find some eliminative materialists or moral sceptics. When we look at some of the *actual* eliminative materialists or moral sceptics, I think we would quite easily see that they have not given up any of their 'folk psychological' beliefs or moral beliefs simply because of the philosophical thesis they are holding, and that those beliefs and the philosophical thesis are insulated from each other. These philosophers have not given up the beliefs concerned probably because they cannot give them up, not because they do not want to. On the other hand, since the beliefs are insulated from the philosophical thesis, they probably do not feel the pressure from the philosophical thesis to give them up.

The significance of the generality of the problem of insulation is that it shows something about the nature of philosophy. It shows that philosophy sometimes requires us, to borrow a phrase from P. F. Strawson, 'to be more purely rational than we are'.[48] There seem to be some beliefs which we simply cannot give up, which are, as it were, part of our humanity.[49] When our philosophical investigations lead us to conclusions which imply the falsity of these beliefs, we have to accept the conclusions if we are to be rational; but we would not be rational *enough* if we merely accept the conclusions without giving up the beliefs in question. Since we cannot give up the beliefs, or, since we cannot philosophize away our humanity, the only way it can *seem to ourselves* that we have satisfied such requirement of pure rationality is psychological detachment. And the result of psychological detachment is insulation. We should, how-

[48] P. F. Strawson, 'Freedom and Resentment', reprinted in *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (London: Methuen, 1974), 13.

[49] Take the example of moral beliefs. There is, as Samuel Scheffler remarks, a 'range of powerful human emotions and attitudes that seem both to be capable of spurring us to action and, in their central forms at least, to presuppose moral beliefs, in the sense that they could not be experienced by someone who had no such beliefs', and 'someone who actually lacked any moral beliefs, and who therefore never experienced such emotions, would be bound to strike us as humanly incomplete' (Samuel Scheffler, *Human Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 68–9).

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ever, keep in mind that detachment and insulation satisfy us only psychologically—they cannot really make us more purely rational than we are, and may even blind us to this important fact precisely because of the psychological satisfaction they provide us with.

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