James Doyle. *No Morality, No Self: Anscombe's Radical Skepticism*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2018. Pp. xi + 238. Cloth, $39.95.

James Doyle's book interprets and defends the arguments of G.E.M. Anscombe's essays "Modern Moral Philosophy" and "The First Person." Though both essays are widely cited, Doyle argues that in each instance Anscombe's readers have missed the force of her arguments, which when properly understood are able to withstand the common objections to them.

Anscombe's "Modern Moral Philosophy" is commonly read as arguing that talk of moral obligation, permission, etc., once had a legitimate place within conceptual frameworks that included the existence of a divine legislator, and can be vindicated outside that framework by adopting the schema of a neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics. But Doyle argues convincingly that this is all a misreading. For Anscombe, the concept of a divine lawgiver legitimizes the idea of unqualified requirements of good human action, but does *not* explain how any such requirements are distinctively "moral," and her recommendation to talk instead of what is just, chaste, honest, etc., is a proposal to *replace* talk of "moral" requirements rather than a way to justify it. Thus Doyle's slogan "no morality:" not because moral judgments are false or ungrounded, but rather because talk of *moral X* and what is *morally Y* expresses no concept at all, and only stands in the way of genuine understanding of the goodness and badness of human action.

By contrast, Doyle's slogan "no self" is somewhat misleading as a statement of Anscombe's central thesis in "The First Person," since her concern there is not with the metaphysical status of "selves" but rather with the *semantic* function of first-person discourse. The thesis of that essay is that *"I" is not a referring expression*, that is, that the role of "I" in statements like "I am hungry" and "I was in Oslo last year" is not to *name*, or *refer to*, anyone or anything. It is true that one of her arguments for this thesis is that the only possible referent for "I" would be an immaterial ego—a suggestion which she

then dismisses as untenable. But even there Anscombe's argument is not that there are no such entities as these, but rather that they cannot be what we *name* when we say "I", since there is no route by which this reference could be achieved. While Doyle's exegesis of "The First Person" is less detailed than his reading of "Modern Moral Philosophy," he succeeds again in showing that there are serious difficulties raised in Anscombe's essay, and so far unaddressed in the literature that aims to respond to her, for philosophers who take it for granted that the semantic role of "I" is to refer.

As the above suggests, Anscombe was not quite the "radical skeptic" of Doyle's subtitle. In "The First Person," her skepticism is only toward a philosophical account of the semantic role of a certain class of words—not of what Descartes claimed when he concluded "I think; I exist," nor even of the immaterialism that he used this conclusion to support. Her thesis in "Modern Moral Philosophy" is comparatively more far-reaching, since it is not just philosophers but ordinary people too who sometimes use the word "moral" as if it is supposed to pick out a special class of virtues or action-guiding principles. But even here there may be an important difference between Anscombe's target and the view of the common person: in ordinary speech, talk of "morality" often indicates that the guidance under consideration is traditional or commonly accepted, whereas in philosophical discussions talk of "morality" signals instead a kind of ultimacy. This means that for philosophers, if taking from the rich to feed the poor is sometimes right, then this shows that it is sometimes *morally* right, whereas for most people the idea that theft is sometimes permitted is taken to show instead that there are *exceptions* to "morality" as they understand it. And this latter view is not really Anscombe's target. Talk of "morality" as a motley category encompassing traditional prohibitions against theft, dishonesty, murder, suicide, and so on, may not be so bad by her lights as long as the fact that these are *moral* prohibitions is not supposed to be the explanation of their force.

Doyle has done a truly impressive job of working through these dense and difficult essays and drawing out their theses and main lines of argument. One hopes that this book will be read not only by scholars of Anscombe's work and of mid-century analytic philosophy, but also by philosophers working in ethical theory and the philosophy of language and mind, whose guiding assumptions are called into question by Anscombe's powerful arguments. So long as those assumptions set our background, the skepticism defended here is radical indeed, and deserves a careful hearing.

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