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Kontos, Pavlos (ed.) *Evil in Aristotle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. viii + 277. Cloth, £75.00

This is the first and only volume devoted to Aristotle's thoughts on evil or badness (*to kakon*). The work calls attention to several relatively neglected areas of scholarship, and the contributions give any reader grounds for thinking that Aristotle has thoughts about *to kakon* that are sophisticated and worthy of deep philosophical engagement.

The volume is divided into three parts: metaphysics and biology in the first, practical philosophy in the second, and the "presence of Aristotle in post-Aristotelian philosophy" in the third. Though the topics vary widely—deformed animal kinds, the worst constitutions, the subhuman vice of brutishness, the misfortunes of the virtuous, etc.—the volume presents no clear and deep philosophical connections between these very diverse evils. Some contributions do discuss the same topics and texts, even at length, but no contribution seems to be aware of any other. Thus, it falls to the reader to determine whether, for example, the three discussions of brutishness are compatible or not. Yet the volume's general heterogeneity is partly due to the subject matter itself: Aristotle maintains that there is no single science of the good because good "is said in many ways" (*Nicomachean Ethics* I 6), and he similarly would seem to think that there is no single science of evil because evil is said in many ways.

In the first section, Jonathan Beere analyzes *Metaphysics* Θ 9, which is Aristotle's most important discussion of the metaphysics of evil. Aristotle believes that there can be no bad first principles, and his argument rests on two key claims: badness is posterior in nature to capacity, and first principles involve no capacity. Beere argues at length in support of the first claim, and in so doing he contends that human capacities exist "for the

sake of virtue” (46)—and so vice is always a corruption of a capacity that exists for the sake of virtue. This is a bold claim, and I would have liked for other contributors in the volume to have addressed it. (Here I should note that Beere refers the reader to his *Doing and Being* (OUP, 2008) for a “fuller treatment of Theta 9” (50n.11).) The chapter by C. D. C. Reeve ranges over topics in metaphysics, ethics, politics and psychology, concluding with an exploratory discussion of god, ethics and the principle of non-contradiction. Stasinou Stravianeas relies on recent work by Charlotte Witt to argue that there are bad ends in nature, and he rightly suggests that in order to understand such ends we must recognize that Aristotle employs a *scala naturae*.

The second section, which concerns practical philosophy, begins with three discussions of vice that focus on extreme cases. Pavlos Kontos differentiates the ways in which intemperance (*akolasia*) and brutishness (*thēriotēs*) are extreme vices, Howard Curzer discusses principles for ranking virtues and vices, and Giles Pearson contributes an exceptionally clear analysis of brutish behavior, plausibly arguing that Aristotle is a pioneer in psychopathology. Marta Jimenez argues that Aristotle’s virtuous people can often remain happy despite misfortunes because they “grasp the hierarchy between the shameful, the harmful, and the painful” (169), and Richard Kraut follows with a discussion of the lowest constitutions in which he shockingly contends that Aristotle has a “dark conception of human nature” according to which many desire “to get away with any form of aggression (including violent sexuality) against anyone they choose” (188).

The third section is described as dealing with “the presence of Aristotle in post-Aristotelian philosophy,” but it seems a bit of a hodgepodge. Paul Kalligas discusses Plotinus’s account of evil, but here Aristotle figures in a minor way. Kevin Flannery, S.J. reasonably detects “Aristotelian resonances” in Aquinas’ account of evil as the “privation of good.” However, neither here nor anywhere else in the volume is there an evaluation of whether Aquinas is right to think that Aristotle has a privation theory of evil; similarly, there is no discussion of whether the privation theory, which is of central importance to Thomistic philosophy, should be thought of as a faithful Aristotelian development. Stephen Engstrom offers a comparative analysis of virtue and vice in Kant and Aristotle,

arguing that their accounts are more similar than you might have thought. Daniel Russell closes with a contribution to contemporary virtue ethics in which he aims to identify a vice for failing to “correct for the fact that one is acting in ignorance” (241).

Any scholar working on the specific topics of the essays (especially on brutishness) will want take a look, but I doubt that there will be anyone seriously interested in every essay. Finally, given how many women work on Aristotle, it is a little surprising to see that all the essays, except for one, were written by men.