Introduction to Marcia Homiak’s “Feminism and Aristotle’s Rational Ideal”

A well-known trend in feminist philosophy is to reject and denigrate much of the philosophical tradition prior to the 20th century because of its almost exclusively white, wealthy, male perspective that reifies individualism and reason over and against the types of understanding fostered in communal, familial, and emotional contexts. However, some recent feminists in the analytic tradition have made serious attempts to read traditional philosophy more charitably, noting and rightly criticizing misogynistic tendencies and areas of potential bias, but redeeming those ideas that seem universally relevant. Marica Homiak falls into this latter camp, arguing that Aristotle’s conceptions of reason and virtue are neither exploitative nor exclusively masculine, and therefore, quite compatible with our contemporary perspectives on gender and society.