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ARTICLE

# RETRACTED – Aristotelian Feminism and *Thumos*: A Thomistic Proposal

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## Abstract

Aristotle's views about the female body are commonly held to be an insurmountable obstacle to aligning his philosophy with feminism. Sarah Borden Sharkey, however, has attempted a robust Aristotelian feminism that alters only the minimum. She argues that to succeed it must give positive and detailed reasons for sexual equality, a task that she leaves open. Building on Sharkey's work, this essay argues that Thomas Aquinas' view of the will allows such a position, by combining it with Aristotle's notion of thumos as the main dividing factor between the sexes. The result is an Aristotelian–Thomistic view that keeps female biological difference, while allowing equality in attaining virtue and prudence.

**Keywords:** Aquinas; Aristotelianism; Aristotle; feminism; intellectualism; philosophy; Thomism; voluntarism

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The female body does not emerge favourably from Aristotle's biology. He infamously likens women to impotent men, claiming that to be female is through incapacity.[1] As a result, feminist appropriations of Aristotle tend to avoid building exclusively on the Stagirite's philosophical system. Ruth Groenhout, for example, uses the modern ethics of care to overcome Aristotle's contemplative view of the highest good, which has 'tendencies to produce hierarchical, oppressive systems'.[2] Charlotte Witt, being more faithful to the original, defends Aristotle's normative metaphysics of nature in principle, but keeps effectively none of his original content concerning the sexes.[3]

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[1] *GA*., 1.20.728a17-18.

[2] Ruthe Groenhout, 'The Virtue of Care: Aristotelian Ethics and the Contemporary Ethics of Care', in Cynthia A. Freeland, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Aristotle* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), p. 173.

[3] Charlotte Witt, 'Form, Normativity and Gender in Aristotle: a Feminist Perspective', in Lilli Alanen and Charlotte Witt, eds., *Feminist Reflections on the History of Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2004), pp. 120-122.

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An exception to this trend is Sarah Borden Sharkey, who has argued that while Aristotle's *conclusions* may be sexist, no element of his philosophy is. Indeed, she claims that a feminist modification has the potential to be *more* faithful to his thought than what the thinker wrote himself.[4] For it is not hylomorphism as such that commits Aristotle to the inequality of the sexes, but rather his very specific views about generation. Yet, Sharkey also indicates that more is needed for a robust Aristotelian feminism than the mere statement of metaphysical equality between the sexes. That both male and female bodies are equally good instances of the species form is one thing, but to specify *how* they are equal but different instances of it is another. Sharkey thinks that specifying the difference would require correcting Aristotle's neglect of possible female traits and the virtues these might enable.[5] In what follows, I will argue that there is a gap in Sharkey's account, which provides a path towards answering this very challenge, and it lies with a notion she neglects: *thumos*.

My argument is in three parts. First, following Sharkey, I will introduce the problem of the inequality of the sexes in Aristotle's philosophy as following from generation. Because Aristotle thinks the female provides only matter during conception, and matter is an inferior and passive principle relative to form, the female must therefore be inferior to the male. Second, I will side with Marguerite Deslauriers and claim that what Aristotle thinks the female precisely lacks is *thumos*: a spiritedness conditioned by vital heat. Aristotle thinks that an optimal amount of *thumos* is necessary for decisiveness and deliberation, which in turn are necessary for key virtues and for prudence (*phronesis*). Since the female has deficient *thumos*, she has an impaired ability to deliberate, which prevents her both from acquiring these virtues and from attaining prudence. Since deliberation is necessary to begin habituating a virtue, females must remain trapped in their impaired state. Aristotle sees *thumos* as a principle that divides the sexes relative to humans' political nature. It is important to Aristotle's conception of the household, which is itself vital to the working of the *polis*. Because it is built into his political philosophy, and this in turn follows from his biology and metaphysics, if one accepts these latter, one has *prima facie* reasons to not dismiss thumotic difference.

Third, I propose a way out of the dilemma of female deliberative incapacity, through a Thomistic view of the will not developed by Aristotle himself. I adopt two positions from the Aristotelianism of Aquinas: that the rational part of the soul can move its faculties, through will, as an efficient cause; and that the rational part that moves the will can be the inclination of human nature *as a substance*, rather than the overt deliberations of the intellect. If these two premises are given, then the will is both rational and external to the intellect. This lets the will initiate habituation by direct command of the sense appetite, bypassing any lack of deliberation caused by bodily dispositions.

I conclude by saying that if this Thomistic move is successful, it not only allows for an Aristotelian feminism, but also lets us speak of distinctively masculine and feminine ways of possessing virtues within Aristotelianism. The virtues cultivated through independent will remain non-thumotic, because will cannot command bodily dispositions to change. Combined with the premise that thumotic difference is according to human political nature, there will be equal but functionally distinct ways of exercising the same virtue.

In what follows, I will employ Greek and Latin vocabulary depending on whether I am discussing Aristotle or Aquinas. Thus, I use *phronesis* and *prudentia* as synonyms.

[4]Sarah Borden Sharey, *An Aristotelian Feminism* (New York: Springer, 2016), p. 135.
[5]*Ibid.*, pp. 128–135.

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## 1. Sharkey's Aristotelian feminism

A human being for Aristotle is a hylomorphic substance, a seamless unity of the principles of matter (*hulē*) and form (*morphē*, or *eidos*). He holds that sex is the reproductive capacity of animals, which inheres as an inseparable accidental quality of matter and exists as opposites: male and female.[6] The human substantial form, the repeatable universal principle that makes individuals instances of the kind 'human', has the essential capacity to be sexed, but is in itself neither male nor female.[7] Because sex is the reproductive principle, Aristotle builds the sexes out of what they do in generation. During generation, Aristotle believes that the female provides the material cause of the offspring, and the male provides the formal and efficient causes. The father's semen (*sperma*) carries form and acts as an efficient cause, while the female analogue of semen, *katamēnia*, provides the matter upon which the *sperma* acts.[8] Because Aristotle sees efficient and formal causes as superior and more divine than material causes,[9] he gives the female an inferior role in generation.[10] He then explains this inferiority in generation as the result of the female's inability to fully concoct blood into *sperma*, which must, in turn, be due to a deficiency of the female body. His explanation is that what allows the male to concoct *sperma* is a vital heat that the female lacks, due to a smaller heart and thinner blood. These features have the side effect of causing weakness both of body and character.

Sharkey's Aristotelian feminism consists of correcting the Stagirite's archaic biology of generation, then drawing out the outcomes. Both parents contribute DNA and chromosomes to the embryo, which carries an equal blend of the two. The sex of the offspring, further, results from the chromosomes carried by the male semen, not by the female ovum. Therefore, applying hylomorphism to generation, we must say that both parents act as formal, material, and efficient causes of conception.[11] Because male and female share the same human form, with all the powers that essentially flow from it, this one correction renders them equal. The deficiencies of the female body for Aristotle all arise from its inability to perfectly concoct blood into *sperma*, which is due to the female having a purely material role in generation. If the female does not exclusively provide matter, then her *katamēnia* is not inferior to *sperma* as a failure to concoct, and her body is not lacking relative to the male. Male and female become different but equal physical expressions of the common human form,[12] in the way that different accidents, like being tall or short, awake or asleep, all count equally as instances of the same form.[13]

However, Sharkey clarifies that this metaphysical position still needs empirical specification. Having created a space for sexual equality within hylomorphism, it still leaves unanswered the precise nature of this equality. As she writes, 'I do not think that we need simply to correct the points where Aristotle made problematic claims,

[6] *Met*., 10.9.1058b.
[7] *Ibid*., 10.9.1058a37–b3.
[8] *GA*., 1.2.716a4-18; 2.4.738b20-27.
[9] *Ibid*., 2.1.732a5-10.
[10] *Ibid*., 2.1.732a7-10.
[11] Sarah Borden Sharkey, *An Aristotelian Feminism* (New York: Springer, 2016), pp. 116–117.
[12] *Ibid*., pp. 122–124.
[13] Accidents can change without affecting the nature of a substance because the substance is part of the definition of accidents, but not *vice versa*. See: *Cat.,* 5.4a10-b19; and *Met*., 7.1.1028a35-36.

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but also to indicate oversights and mis-emphases in Aristotle's understanding of the human ideal'.[14] Since individuals with the same formal nature must have the same faculties, Sharkey proposes that equal difference would entail a difference in either the developmental order or emphasis of identical faculties in uniquely masculine and feminine ways.[15] Her own suggestion is that we might fault Aristotle for disparaging the traits of extreme empathy and interpersonal receptivity, which he thinks typical of women,[16] and attempt to build these out of features arising out of the feminine body.[17]

## 2. The problem of *Thumos*

Sharkey's proposal runs into a problem, because Aristotle's account of sexual difference is hierarchical for reasons different, if not entirely separate, from generation. In principle, male and female bodies differ because one provides matter, and the other form in generation. However, the manifestation of this inequality in the body is a difference in *thumos*. This is the spirited desire for honour and glory, caused by vital heat. It is closely related to anger (*orgē*), the desire to revenge a perceived slight.[18] *Thumos* is one of the three types of desire (*orexis*) that Aristotle gives humans, together with rational desire (*boulesis*), and sense appetite (*epithūmiā*).[19] While it is more similar to *epithūmiā*, since it is irrational,[20] it partakes slightly more of reason than *epithūmiā*, since it always requires some interpretation of events to rise up.[21] Females are colder by nature than males[22] due to their inability to concoct blood into *sperma*,[23] and thus have lower levels of *thumos* than males. *Thumos* in the right amount is the necessary (though not sufficient) condition for decisiveness, and decisiveness in turn, is necessary for the political virtues of courage and justice.[24] Without these virtues, the female lacks authority and is second to the deliberations of the male.

Importantly, Aristotle believes that *thumos* is a necessary precondition for certain virtues, such as courage and justice, as well as for *phronesis*. This is because, as a desire for honour, *thumos* is easily inflamed by perceived slights and injustices, and so makes one decisive in certain situations. For example, while courage requires the deliberate pursuit of the noble (*to kalon*) to be true courage, *thumos* aids it.[25] Likewise, it aids justice, and by extension friendship, because the instinct to protect honour makes one

[14] Sarah Borden Sharkey, *An Aristotelian Feminism* (New York: Springer, 2016), p. 129.
[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 70–72.
[16] *EN.*, 9.11.1171b4-10. Aristotle chides the habit of grieving for friends while in the company of others, because it is a womanly desire to have others share in one's sadness.
[17] Sarah Borden Sharkey, *An Aristotelian Feminism* (New York: Springer, 2016), pp. 130–135.
[18] There are disagreements over the nature of *thumos*. Giles Pearson sees it as coextensive, if not synonymous, with *orgē* and does not specify distinct objects, while Deslauriers broadens it into a desire for honour and glory. Given its proximity to reason, I side with Deslauriers. However, what matters for my argument is that *thumos*, though distinct from *orgē*, always functions through it. See: Marguerite Deslauriers, *Aristotle on Sexual Difference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 237–239; and Giles Pearson, *Aristotle on Desire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 128–129.
[19] *DA.*, 3.9.432b4-7.
[20] *EE.*, 3.1.1229a21-28.
[21] *EN.*, 7.6.1149a24-31.
[22] *GA.*, 4.6.775a14-21.
[23] *Ibid.*, 1.20.728a16-21.
[24] *EN.*, 3.8.1117a4-8; *EN.*, 5.8.1135b26-27; *Pol.*, 7.7.1327b36-39.
[25] *EN.*, 3.8.1116b31; 3.8.1117a4–5.

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sensitive to cases of injustice, and more prone to defend the honour of loved ones.[26] By extension, as Marguerite Deslauriers argues, *thumos* must be a condition for *phronesis*. *Phronesis* is the virtue[ of the rational deliberative faculty that lets us act relative to perceived goods.[27] If Aristotle thinks *thumos* is a necessary condition for decisiveness, it follows that only the adequately thumotic can have *phronesis*. Since *phronesis* is the precondition for rule, both over oneself and others, only the thumotic can rule.[28]

Aristotle thus assimilates women into natural subjects, by depriving them of the bodily condition needed for deliberation. It is not, as some have argued, that women's passivity and closeness to matter impairs their very reason. Since sex comes from matter rather than form, both sexes must share the same intellect as part of human nature. Further, Aristotle is careful to distinguish women from natural slaves. The slave entirely lacks deliberation, while the woman has a deliberative capacity, but it is 'without authority' (*akuron*).[29] The female body is incapable of producing the vital heat necessary to sustain the right amount of *thumos*. Without this aid, the female can never be moved to the decisiveness required for courage, justice, and authority.

An immediate possibility is to eliminate thumotic difference. After all, it flows from Aristotle's view of the female body as colder and closer to matter, which comes from his erroneous theory of generation. If we abandon the unequal model of generation, can we not also abandon the unequal model of *thumos*? We might, instead, claim that there is either no distinction of *thumos* between humans, or that the distinction exists, but is not connected with sex.

There are, however, *prima facie* reasons for giving *thumos* a fair hearing. While Deslauriers is correct to say that Aristotle assimilates females into natural subjects, she does not emphasise that they are natural subjects whose characteristic feature is insufficient *thumos* by nature. The point is obscured by the fact Aristotle never discusses whether some naturally free humans may have excessive *thumos* by nature. Yet Aristotle does discuss the effects of too much *thumos simpliciter*. The young, who are highly thumotic, are inclined to foolhardiness;[30] and Aristotle believes they are naturally subject to those in the prime of life, who have wisdom.[31] Northern Europeans, who have excessive *thumos* by climate, are indomitable.[32] They also lack true courage, having only its semblance.[33] Furthermore, in characterising natural slaves as lacking deliberation, Aristotle never specifies how their condition has come about, implying there could be multiple causes.[34] Granting the possibility of natural subjects with excessive *thumos*, the female is then not a generic natural subject, but one whose defining trait is thumotic deficiency.

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[26] *Pol*., 7.7.1327b36-1328a16.

[27] *EN*., 6.5.1140b20-22.

[28] Marguerite Deslauriers, *Aristotle on Sexual Difference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 245–246.

[29] *Pol*., 1.13.1260a7-15.

[30] *Rhet*., 2.12.1389a9-11; 2.14.1390a29–30.

[31] *EN*., 7.8.1329a4ff; 7.13.1332b35.

[32] *Pol*., 7.7.1327b23-36.

[33] *EE*., 3.1.1229b28-30.

[34] Peter L. P. Simpson, 'Aristotle's Defensible Defence of Slavery', *Polis 23* (2006), p. 108. I follow Peter Simpson in holding that Aristotle thinks that natural slaves may have a deliberative impairment for *whatever reason*, not just by birth.

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Aristotle thinks animals with political natures are divided according to functional types. The basis of this view is the principle that nature works with matter organised by *genus* and strives to produce the best result given its limitations.[35] For non-rational political animals, the types exist purely for material specialisation. Hence, bees come in different sizes for the sake of the division of labour.[36] Yet, because humans are rational political animals, these differences also exist for the *moral* end of society. First, humans' political nature demands division into functional subtypes for the sake of the *polis*, which prohibits a configuration where all humans do the same thing or have the same abilities.[37] Second, the unity of the community demands internal difference.[38] One reason is that certain virtues can only be shown towards those who do not have them, so that if everyone were virtuous in the same respect, they would never be fully expressed. The flourishing of the *polis* rests on a sort of reciprocity of virtue,[39] wherein each makes up for the lack of the others.[40] This is why Aristotle claims there are virtues proper to natural rulers, and those proper to natural subjects, such as women and slaves.[41]

Furthermore, this reciprocal difference between natural rulers and subjects is not unvarying but differs according to the sort of community being talked about.[42] A *polis* for Aristotle is by nature composed of households (*oikoi*) as its parts.[43] Just like the *polis*, the household is also a moral entity, because to exist its members must know the difference between good and evil,[44] and it originates both friendship and political association.[45] Sexually divided functions are part of the nature of the household,[46] as are various divisions of labour that run on a difference in *thumos* between husband and wife. These relationships are models (*paradeigmata*) of relationships in the wider *polis*,[47] and are the prototypes out of which political relationships are made.[48] Because one condition for a united moral community is reciprocal difference, and such differences are of different kinds, and because the household is the moral basis of society, the thumotic difference between male and female must be politically necessary for Aristotle. Thus, when Aristotle casts male and female in the household as ruler and ruled, he has

[35] *IA.*, 8.708a9-20. Snakes, for example, are blooded animals, and Aristotle thinks the *genus* 'blooded' carries a maximum of four limbs. Snakes are also long, and the optimal number of limbs for their length would be many, like a centipede. Yet because blooded animals cannot have more than four limbs, nature has taken the best option and given them no limbs whatsoever.

[36] *GA.*, 3.10.760b7-14.

[37] Joseph Karbowski, 'Political Animals and Human Nature in Aristotle's Politics', in Geert Keil and Nora Kreft, eds., *Aristotle's Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 227–229.

[38] *Pol.*, 2.2.1261a22–30.

[39] *Ibid.*, 2.5.1263b4-14.

[40] Marguerite Deslauriers, *Aristotle on Sexual Difference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 195–199.

[41] *Pol.*, 1.5.1259b27-28; 1.5.1260a2-5.

[42] *Ibid.*, 1.2.1254a21-31.

[43] *Ibid.*, 3.9.1280b33-34.

[44] *Ibid.*, 1.2.1253a7-18.

[45] *EE.*, 7.10.1242a40-1242b1.

[46] *EN.*, 8.10.1160b32-34.

[47] *Ibid.*, 8.10.1160b32-8.11.1161a30.

[48] D. Brendan Nagel, *The Household as the Foundation of Aristotle's Polis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 159.

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in mind a reciprocal pair, where the virtue of each complements the other, and whose characteristic features is a non-thumotic female and a thumotic male.

It follows that if one accepts Aristotle's views on human political nature, some thumotic difference between the sexes should be considered.

## 3. Aquinas' autonomous will as a solution

Aristotle then provides us with a double-edged sword. On the one hand, *thumos* serves to distinguish the sexes in a manner that casts them as reciprocal. On the other hand, this is couched in terms of superiority and inferiority. The reciprocation works because one side lacks what the other has and relates to it as natural subject towards ruler.

The problem arises from Aristotle's view of the relation of intellect, virtue, and will. As Bonnie Kent says, Aristotle views choice as internal to virtue. Unlike a skill which one may have, yet choose not to exercise, virtues have choice 'built into' them.[49] The cause is that Aristotle is an intellectualist about the will. *Prohairesis*, the ability to choose freely, exists entirely inside the faculty of intellect, since it is defined as being able to choose according to reason.[50] Such rational and voluntary choice is essential to and inseparable from virtue.[51] In moments of weakness where one acts contrary to reason (*akrasia*), it is not that there is reason on one side and appetite on the other, with some third element choosing to disobey the former. Rather, the one has already failed to subdue appetite to reason in previous training. Aristotle thinks one acquires virtue through habitually choosing the right actions. Since virtue requires the ability to choose freely, and choice is inseparable from rational deliberation, it follows that any compromise of the deliberative capacity also compromises choice. This precludes the possession of virtue. Furthermore, because deliberation is necessary to perform a right action, someone with an innate deliberative impairment is simply unable to start the chain of habituation that culminates in virtue. Such a person will either remain stuck in permanent indecision or may acquire deliberative *phronesis* only from someone else who already has it. This is the state of women: they have the same rational faculties as men, but lack authority by nature due to their indecision, and whatever authority they can develop must come derivatively from men.

The picture changes if there exists a will that can act independently of both intellect and appetite. This is not something Aristotle ever considers explicitly, but it is developed by Aquinas.[52] For Aquinas, the will (*voluntas*) is the same as the intellectual appetite and lies within the rational part of the soul together with the intellect (*intellectus*).[53] Yet the will acts differently to the intellect, in that it can act through efficient and final causality, distinct from the intellect's formal causality.[54]

[49]Bonnie, Kent, 'Losable Virtue: Aquinas on Character and Will', in Tobias Hoffmann, Jörn Müller and Matthias Perkams, eds., *Aquinas and the Nicomachean Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 108.

[50]*EN.*, 6.1.1138b1-34.

[51]*EN.*, 2.6.1107a1; *EE.*, 2.10.1227b5-11.

[52]Nicolas Kahm, *Aquinas on Emotions' Participation in Reason* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), p. 185. As Nicolas Kahm writes, the will as an efficient and final cause distinct from the intellect is an innovation of Aquinas' later texts and is a development away from Aristotelian intellectualism. My account of Aquinas' soul as *totum potentiale* closely follows Kahm's.

[53]*ST I*, q. 80, a. 2.

[54]*QMD*, q. 6.

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How can this be? According to Aquinas, we may think of the soul either as simple or complex depending on its role, *viz.* the body. As a form united with matter, the soul is a hylomorphic unity with no parts. As a mover (*motor*) of the various actions and functions of the person, the soul has parts: its various powers.[55] The soul viewed as having parts is singular as to its essence, but internally divided into powers, because its essence can only move through non-interchangeable powers.[56] Thus, it is a potential whole (*totum potentiale*).[57] Aquinas' distinction allows for the possibility that the soul can move its parts through efficient causality, without undermining hylomorphism. Because the same essence works through all its powers, the soul can move one of its parts through another without compromising its seamless unity with the body.[58] Within the rational part of the soul, the intellect acts as formal cause of action, and the will as the efficient and final causes. Since the final cause belongs to the will, and the final cause has priority over all others, it is the will that can both move itself and all the other powers.[59]

As a potential whole, we can speak of the soul as prior to its parts, since powers are divided into higher and lower, and the lower powers can do what the higher powers cannot. The soul, according to Aquinas, has its own natural inclination (*amor naturalis*), insofar as it is the form of an individual substance, and all substantial forms tend towards an innate end.[60] This natural inclination is both prior to, yet acts through, the soul's powers. This is because if the soul acts as an efficient cause, it must be prior to its effects and have its own end distinct from them. Yet, taken as a complex of powers, the soul cannot operate if not *through* those powers, which each has its own natural inclination. The will, according to Aquinas, is a power of the soul. Therefore, it simultaneously acts according to its own natural end, efficiently moved by the soul, and as part of the soul's own natural end.[61]

Taking the soul like this lets one create a space for an autonomous rational will in a manner not considered by Aristotle. The soul's natural inclinations prior to its parts are the same, in principle, as the natural inclinations of irrational animals, who instinctively pursue their proper ends. However, because the human soul is rational, these inclinations are those of a rational animal, and they tend towards the virtues, however inchoately, since these are proper to rational animals.[62] The final cause of natural inclinations (the object recognised as good) would then be implicitly rational, in the sense that while not overtly understood, it would nevertheless coincide with universal principles that *could* be understood were we to think about them.[63] The will can then be moved by natural inclination as final cause, and act on the sensible appetite as

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[55] *QSC*, q. 11, ad 2.
[56] *QDA*, q. 9, ad 14.
[57] *ST I*, q. 77, a. 1 ad 1.
[58] Nicolas, Kahm, *Aquinas on Emotions' Participation in Reason* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), p. 233.
[59] *ST I-II*, q. 9, a. 1.
[60] *ST I-II*, q. 27, a. 2, ad 3.
[61] Nicolas Kahm, *Aquinas on Emotions' Participation in Reason* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), pp. 93–94.
[62] *ST I-II*, q. 94, a. 2.
[63] Nicolas Kahm, *Aquinas on Emotions' Participation in Reason* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), pp. 188–189.

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an efficient cause, independently of the intellect but not against it. As Aquinas puts it, though nature precedes the will ('etsi sit prior quam voluntaria actio'), yet it is inclined to will ('tamen habet inclinationem ad quandam voluntariam actionem').[64]

The sense appetite has two motions, one of bodily disposition, the other of apprehension.[65] The will can affect it only as to the latter, and not the former.[66] By means of the cogitative power (*vis cogitativa*) the will can issue repeated commands that create a virtue. This virtue does two things. First, it can lower the vehemence of antecedent passions, making the appetite more responsive to further command.[67] For example, through repeated command, one may lower the vehemence of fear, thus making courageous action easier. It also inclines the appetite to receive the commands of prudence, by impressing its rationality onto it. For instance, a temperate appetite inclines to moderation in food, but only insofar as it has been modified to be in potency to receive commands from prudence.[68] Second, the will can trigger an 'overflow' (*redundantia*) of feeling into the sensible appetites, thus creating a consequent passion.[69] When the will is moved by rational nature towards some object or action, it does so by particularising a general principle. For example, the principle that it is good to comfort one's friends moves the will to desire to embrace this particular friend at this moment. Because passions are always directed at particular objects, the similarity between passion and will causes an overflow of the former into the latter.[70]

For Aquinas, as with Aristotle, all movements of natural appetite originate in the tendencies of things towards their ends. Aquinas calls this natural inclination 'love' (*amor*).[71] The love of living things causes an affect (*affectus*), Aquinas' closest analogue to emotion. Because both the sense appetite and reason have respective types of love, they also have respective affects.[72] The will is moved by simple affect (*simplex affectus*), which is a desire for the good[73] generated by rational human nature.[74] The love of the intellectual appetite is for the universal good, and because this is single, the will is not divided into concupiscible and irascible sub-affects as the sense appetite is divided into sub-passions but can incline *both* to the good as desirable and as difficult.[75]

The above considerations give a way out of the dilemma of how someone with a lack of *thumos* could acquire those virtues that otherwise require it. Females share the same species form as males and, hence, the same rational nature, together with intellect. They therefore share the same natural inclinations coming from rational nature, which incline to all the virtues. Their will, moved by natural inclination, can act as an efficient cause and command the appetite to pursue or avoid some object. At first, this

[64] *ST I-II*, q. 85, a. 1, ad 2.
[65] *QDM.*, q. 7, a. 6.
[66] *ST I*, q. 81, a. 3.
[67] For Aquinas' distinction between antecedent and consequent passions see: *ST I-II*, q. 77, a. 6.
[68] Nicolas Kahm, *Aquinas on Emotions' Participation in Reason* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), pp. 261–262.
[69] *ST I-II*, q. 3, a. 3; q. 4, a. 5–6; and *QDV*, q. 26, a. 3 ad 13.
[70] *QDV*, q. 26, a. 3 ad 13.
[71] *ST I*, q. 23.
[72] For a similar notion in Aristotle see: *EN.*, 3.9.1117b28-31.
[73] *ST I-II*, q. 31, a. 3 ad 2.
[74] *ST I*, q. 77, a. 8 ad 5; *ST I-II*, q. 31, a. 4 ad 3.
[75] *Ibid.*, q. 82, 5.

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would not be without difficulty, since virtue is necessary to consistently and easily do good.[76] Yet with each passing command, the appetite would be habituated until the virtue is formed. If lack of *thumos* is the result of a bodily disposition, no habituation can change it. However, the will can over time lower the vehemence of those antecedent passions blocking thumotic virtues (such as fear), readying the appetite to receive more easily the commands of reason. Further, even barring an overflow of affect into passion, the will still undergoes its own affects analogous to the passions of the appetite. The result is a virtue where the appetite easily obeys the will which undergoes its own affects analogous to the irascible passions, yet without an accompanying bodily passion. Prudence, for Aquinas, is acquired by two conditions: by acquiring the other moral virtues,[77] and having the right traits as components.[78] The latter all flow from solicitude,[79] which comes from the nature of the intellect and will.[80] If the female can acquire virtues by the route argued above, she can therefore also acquire prudence.

## 4. Conclusion

I have argued for a possible Aristotelian feminism built on the framework of thumotic difference between male and female. It takes up Sharkey's insight that it is not enough to remove inequality from Aristotle's sexual biology; one must also account for difference in positive. I identified an obstacle in Aristotle's psychology: in the right amount, *thumos* is a necessary condition for decisiveness, which is itself a condition for virtue and *phronesis*. Because he lacks a notion of a will external to reason, Aristotle cannot explain how someone with less than adequate *thumos* could acquire virtue by her own impulse. I proposed to borrow from the more autonomous will of Aquinas. By granting that the soul is in a sense prior to its parts, and can move them as an efficient cause, it becomes possible to say that reason *qua* substantial form can move the will, independently of any virtue or *phronesis* already possessed. The result is that the female can acquire virtues in a distinctively non-thumotic way, through repeatedly commanding her sense appetites.

This is not just to disarm *thumos* as a source of female inferiority. Another consequence is that some virtues will be exercised in a distinctly non-thumotic way. As seen above, Aristotle closely connects *thumos* with *orgē*. It is a desire for honour which arises most easily when honour is threatened or withheld, giving rise to anger. Aristotle defines various virtues narrowly, such that the situations in which they are best exercised are those requiring *thumos* and *orgē* (as courage in war). If, however, it is possible to have these virtues without them, then they are not necessary components. If they are not necessary components, then these virtues must come in both thumotic and non-thumotic varieties. For example, one may be courageous both with and without the aid of *thumos*.

[76] *ST I-II*, q. 58, a. 5.
[77] *Ibid.*, q. 65, a. 1.
[78] *Ibid.*, q. 49.
[79] *Ibid.*, q. 49, a. 3 ad 2.
[80] For this point, as well as an overview of how Aquinas thinks one acquires *prudentia*, see: Tobias Hoffmann, 'Aquinas on Moral Progress', in Jeffrey Hause, ed., *Aquinas' Summa Theologiae: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 144–145.

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But this creates another question. I began by noting that thumotic difference for Aristotle comes from human political nature and is vital to the division of the household, so there is a *prima facie* reason for wanting to keep it. Now it seems to have been dissolved. For if it is possible to have the same virtue and prudence both with and without *thumos*, does not *thumos* become irrelevant to human difference?

The answer is that Aristotle's narrow conception of the virtues remains alongside the expanded one, because some situations do, in fact, require the bodily passion of anger. Aristotelian emotions involve pleasure and pain.[81] Pleasure and pain are teleologically related to the function (*ergon*) of an organism. Thus, the correct pleasures and pains are felt by the best functioning example of a kind, against which all other examples are measured.[82] It therefore stands to reason that passions are natural and necessary that can be traced back to the unchanging needs of human nature. Human political nature manifests in *poleis* whose citizens are bound together through ties of family and communal solidarity. As Michael Pakaluk points out, given the small size of *poleis*,[83] one can assume the number of foreigners will always be greater than the number of citizens. This means that military attack is always possible, and, since the *polis* is ever vulnerable, there must be a relevant virtue to the defence of the community.[84] Furthermore, what distinguishes the courage needed for an activity like war is the presence of a physical enemy that needs to be fought, which provides a concrete target for anger and the desire for vengeance. Returning to the principle that an animal's political nature creates functional sub-types according to communal needs, it would be useful for it to produce a set of naturally thumotic humans. *Thumos* would be useful as an innate non-rational aid to unavoidable and extreme conflict, including war.

On the model that has been argued above, sexual difference entails a difference in the combination of faculties activated by some activities. The same virtue can be arrived at either with the aid of a spirited desire, or not. Because *thumos* influences one's entire personality, these different routes would also entail that different characters can achieve the same virtue while remaining distinct in temperament. Tying different temperaments to human political essence explains why they occur regularly by nature for some purpose. For example, a personality with less spirited desire could be courageous while cultivating the acute empathy that Aristotle faults. Thus, by injecting some Aquinas into Aristotle, it is possible to inch closer to meeting Sharkey's charge of making the Stagirite more accommodating to sexual equality.

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[81] *Rhet*., 2.1.1378a19-21.
[82] *EN*., 1.8.1099a11-13.
[83] *Pol*., 7.4.1326b8-26.
[84] Michael Pakaluk, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 163–164.

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