ARISTOTELIAN *DUNAMIS* AND SEXUAL DIFFERENCE

AN ANALYSIS OF *ADUNAMIA* AND *DUNAMIS META LOGOU* IN *METAPHYSICS* THETA

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As is well known, according to the Aristotelian theory of sexual difference, the female is a sort of deformed or mutilated male. The word Aristotle uses for this deformation of the female is *anapêria*, the most common usage of which refers to male castration.[1] In sexual reproduction, a female offspring is produced because of some fault in the proceedings, most commonly an inadequacy of heat in the reproductive process, and furthermore, in herself the female does not possess the capability to create a seed that would carry forth her form to subsequent generations. The female contributes matter to the offspring, not *logos,* movement, or form, and this is because she is, for Aristotle, characterized by "a certain inability" (*adunamia*).[2] Everywhere, then, the female is identified with lack, incapacity, falling short, and failure, while the male contribution, the sperm, is by contrast described as possessing "great potency" (*megalên echei dunamin*).[3]

This essay attempts to think through the account of *dunamis* given in *Metaphysics* Theta taking the question of sexual difference as a guide. In Theta, Aristotle carefully elaborates the definition of *dunamis* and in this way prepares the ground for the discussion of *energeia*, the teleological culmination of Aristotelian metaphysics and cosmology. He first gives the primary definition of *dunamis,* a "principle (*archê*) of change in another or in the thing itself qua other," about which much may be said in its own right.[4] Here, I will limit my investigation to two subsequent modes of *dunamis* discussed in Theta 1 and 2, namely *adunamia*, incapacity, and *dunamis meta logou*, potentiality according to *logos* or rational potentiality (given the range of meanings covered by Greek *logos*—word, account, formula, reason, narrative, discourse, calculation, etc.—I will leave it untranslated). While feminist philosophers have rightly focused on the connections between form and the masculine, and matter and the feminine in Aristotle's account of substance, Aristotle's formulation of being according to potentiality and actuality cannot be mapped so easily on to conceptions of gender. This issue has been largely ignored by feminist commentators, with the exception of Charlotte Witt, whose investigations lead her to conclude that Aristotle's hierarchy of gender is not fundamental to the constitution of his *Metaphysics*.[5] By contrast, in what follows I will show that paying close attention to the tropes and figures of sexual difference offered by the text will disclose an agonic encounter between the *dunamis meta logou*, the rational *logos* of the scientist, and materiality as *dunamis alogon*, irrational *dunamis,* in which the most fundamental stakes are those of gender. This approach will also assist in identifying and teasing apart a knot comprised by the anxiety of masculine impotence and the threat of feminine weakness and lack inherent in the notion of *adunamia*, as well as resolving some interpretive difficulties in Book Theta.

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At the close of *Metaphysics* Theta, Aristotle turns to the *dunamis-energeia* couplet in an attempt to provide a solution to the problem of the unity of substance. This, briefly stated, is the problem of how particular substance, a "this," *tode ti,* for example a bronze sphere, can be thought of as a unity. Up until this point, Aristotle has analyzed the "this" as a composite of matter and form, the bronze on the one hand, the sphere on the other. Neither in itself is sufficient as a candidate for substance, for neither fully accounts for the unified substance that one can hold in one's hand, that is, the "this," which is Aristotle's concern. However, if both matter and form are present in the "this," the hylomorph, what is it that subtends their apparent unity? He writes that "the proximate matter and the form are one and the same; the one exists potentially, the other as actuality (*men dunamei, to de energeia*). Therefore to ask the cause of the unity is like asking the cause of unity in general; for each individual

thing is one, and the potential and the actual are in a sense one."[6] Aristotle thereby seeks to resolve the question of the unity of the composite hylomorph via the concepts of potentiality and actuality, which presuppose a unity of the substance, but give an understanding of that unity in different ways, in different respects. Whether Aristotle coherently or convincingly solves this problem is a large and difficult topic, beyond the scope of this work, and it is also true that in the course of the investigation of *dunamis* and *energeia* in *Metaphysics* Theta he does not once even mention, let alone discuss, the question of the unity of the hylomorph. But what are some of the consequences of this rather mysterious turn in Aristotle's thinking?

Once we start thinking about potentiality, about possibility, we introduce not only the idea of otherwiseness, but also the idea of some future occurrence. *Dunamis* and *energeia* point to, fundamentally, the processes of coming to be occurring in and unfolding through time. In other words, though this remains unthematized by Aristotle himself, the introduction of the notions of *dunamis* and *energeia* into his account of metaphysics marks a shift in his analysis away from static causes of static phenomena, and toward a first philosophy and ontology involving change and generation, phenomena that are, at bottom, temporal. Reading *dunamis* and *energeia* in this way raises an obvious hermeneutic difficulty, since positing temporality as such as a fundamental category of philosophical analysis has perhaps only become possible in a post-Hegelian and post-Heideggerian world, while Aristotle's understanding of time is limited to a short analysis in the *Physics* in which it is understood not as fundamental to being or first philosophy but as dependent on and corollary to motion. What I would like to bring to the fore here, however, is that to begin to think about a thing in terms of its genesis over time is to introduce a certain insecurity into the question of substance. For if matter is understood as the sphere's potential to exist, and the form as its actual existence, then matter also represents the possibility that the sphere might also not exist, and the substantiality of the form is thereby called into question as less than guaranteed.

Dunamis covers a range of meanings in English, including capacity, potentiality, possibility, potency, power, and capability. *Energeia* can mean actuality, activity, being in act, literally it is *en ergon,* being in the work. It is tempting to think of *energeia* (or the *entelecheia* with which it is often substituted) as a process, a "being at work," or "being-towards-the-end," a kind of becoming in relation to a final cause. However motions, and by extension the processes of becoming, are defined by their incompleteness for Aristotle, while as Heidegger emphasizes it is in the work as *being at the end* that *energeia* is most fully realized: "In Greek thought *energeia* means 'standing in the work,' where 'work' means that which stands fully in its 'end.'" The relation to form is then made explicit when he says, "in Greek thought *telos* and *ergon* are defined by *eidos*; they name the manner and mode in which something stands 'finally and finitely' ['*endlich*'] in its appearance."[7] For Heidegger, then, *energeia* is the fulfillment of being as presencing: "*Energeia* fulfills the essence of intrinsically stable presencing (*Anwesen*)."[8] *Energeia* and *entelecheia* should therefore not be understood as processes, as realization or actualization or becoming, but rather as being at the end, being in completeness, without residue or excess. The work at the heart of *energeia* is therefore not the work of doing, but may also be exemplified as the product of that work, the work as artifact, the result of productive, technical activity, *poiêsis*, and thus represents the achievement of the active masculine mastery of the maker standing over what underlies, the passive, feminized, substrate.[9] In what follows I will keep *dunamis* and *energeia* largely untranslated so as to not lose the scope of their sense.

At the end of the definition of *dunamis* in *Metaphysics* Theta, Aristotle defines *adunamia* and the *adunaton*, incapacity and the incapable, as the privation, *sterêsis*, of *dunamis*. Incapacity is the contrary, the privation of a capacity, and this incapacity is an internal condition of possibility carried within every capacity. In coming-to-be according to the Aristotelian matter/form scheme, privation is a necessary element. In generation, a thing moves from one state to another in the process of becoming the thing it will eventually turn out to be: to use some Aristotelian examples, a

seed becomes a plant, an unmusical man learns music, wood and stones become a house. In each case, there is a preliminary state and a movement to a final state or *telos*, and an underlying substrate, the matter, that remains constant or at least abides throughout the process in some sense. In the *Physics*, Aristotle analyzes the preliminary state as an absence of, a privation (*sterêsis*) of the form of the generated object, though strictly speaking the prior state is not to be understood as form*less*, for matter cannot exist without some form. Matter, for Aristotle, is what provides the possibility that things in the sublunary realm may be and also not be, it subtends the possibility of all generation and destruction.[10] Neither form nor matter in themselves are generated or destroyed, but the capacity of the matter to admit of privation is what makes change and becoming possible.

In the context of the definition of *adunamia*, incapacity, in Theta 1, Aristotle writes that there are several senses of privation—the first distinction he gives is between a simple case of not having an attribute, and a thing not having something when it should possess it by nature. The latter case is further qualified—"if it does not have what it should by nature have, either (a) not at all, or (b) not when by nature it should have it.... In some cases, we say that things are deprived (*esterêsthai*), if by nature they would have something but by force (*bia*) they do not have it."[11] As is often the case with Aristotle's abstract classifications, there is some figure he has in mind which leads to the schema, and identifying this figure helps to clarify it. If we turn to the philosophical dictionary of Book Delta, we find such a figuration of *adunamia*. He explains, "For we would not use the expression 'incapable of begetting' similarly for a child, a man, and a eunuch."[12] The primary concrete referent for *adunamia* thus corresponds for Aristotle, as impotence does for us, to a lack of generative power on the part of the male. A child is incapable of begetting by nature, the man is incapable of begetting as a result of a fault in nature—impotence or "erectile dysfunction" as it is now known, and the eunuch has been deprived of his natural potency against nature, by the use of force.

The female, on the other hand, *qua* figure for matter and *qua* deformed being, has a certain *adunamia* as part of her very nature. In *Generation of Animals* Aristotle writes:

> But the male and the female are distinguished by a certain ability (*dunamis*) and inability (*adunamia*). Male is that which is able to concoct, to cause to take shape, and to discharge, semen, possessing the principle of the form.... Female is that which receives the semen, but is unable (*adunatoun*) to cause semen to take shape or discharge it. And all concoction works by means of heat. Assuming the truth of these two statements, it follows of necessity that male animals are hotter than female ones, since it is on account of coldness and inability (*adunamia*) that the female is more abundant in blood in certain regions of the body.[13]

The ability and inability, *dunamis* and *adunamia*, described here are on the one hand the ability of the male to form a potent residue in the form of the sperm, capable of acting as a primary motive force for the fetation, and on the other hand the inability of the female to produce a residue with a comparable active power. The presence of *dunamis* in reproduction is characterized by the heat of the male, enabling concoction, while the lack—*adunamia*—is shown by the female's coldness.

The implicit association of the feminine with privation, *sterêsis*, is further cemented when we remember that in Greek the womb, the *hustera*, is homonymically, and arguably etymologically related to *husterêsis*, a coming short, a want or need, and the *husteron*, the latter, inferior, weaker, later, or futural.[14] A man, on the other hand, is the *proteron*, the foremost, and only against his nature does he suffer a privation of *dunamis*, impotence (while the eunuch suffers this privation by force). The specter of castration in the definition of *adunumia* can therefore be read as a figure for the possibility that feminine matter, as the possibility of not-being, can always waylay, disrupt, or in some violent way prevent the unfolding of becoming. This specter finds resonance in the definition of privation given in *Metaphysics* Delta, wherein the example

given for all the kinds of privation is that of blindness. The types of privation follow the same scheme as that given in the section on *adunamia*: not having a thing by nature, for example the plant is said to be deprived of eyes; not having something by genus, like the blindness of a mole; not having something which by nature it ought to have, like a blind man. The fourth kind of privation is given as "the taking away of something by force."[15] Aristotle does not give an illustration in this case, but the absent figure of the man who is blinded by force is easily supplied, and the Freudian resonances of this image are inescapable.

Aside from Oedipus there are, of course, other blindings in Greek mythology. Notably, in this context, we may turn to the figure of Tiresias, the blind seer who predicts Oedipus's fate. There are two principal accounts of Tiresias's blinding, both of which foreground complex themes of sexual difference. According to the first, Zeus and Hera were arguing over who experiences the greatest pleasure, men or women, and consulted Tiresias. Tiresias had had experience of both: he had once attacked a pair of copulating snakes and been changed into a woman. After seven years, he attacked copulating snakes a second time, and was changed back into a man. He testified that women's share of pleasure was 9/10ths, while men's share only 1/10th. Hera was so angered by his response that she blinded him, but as a recompense, Zeus made him into a seer. In the other version, Tiresias inadvertently comes upon Athena bathing with her favorite nymph, Chariclo, who also happens to be his, Tiresias's, mother. He is blinded "for having trespassed all bonds when he beheld the goddess's naked body."[16] However, Chariclo pleads for her son's clemency and Athena takes pity on them. While she cannot reverse the law of Chronos, which decrees a heavy price for beholding a naked immortal unbidden, she instead grants him the power of foresight. In each case, a woman is responsible for depriving Tiresias of his eyesight. These other blindings, we might say maternal blindings, anterior to the more storied blinding of Oedipus, illustrate yet another association of the feminine with privation and impotentiality of the masculine. However, this passage from ontic deprivation of sight—or castration—at the hands of a woman, to possession of foresight, sight on the ontological level, can be read as a granting of the phallus, phallic power, in exchange for the penis. Callimachus explains that Athena is able to give this gift only because she was not born of a woman, but sprung from Zeus's head fully formed, and therefore is an agent of Zeus's masculine, phallic power. Nicole Loraux reads Tiresias as a figure for the openness to femininity of Greek heroic masculinity, that "a man worthy of the name is all the more virile precisely because he harbors within himself something of the feminine."[17] According to Loraux's logic, the *adunamia* or inability we find in the Aristotelian text, feminine passivity, the *dunamis tou pathein*, the capability of being acted upon, should be instead read as the desired and coveted feminine pleasure which the most virile of heroes should and do incorporate. While the epic and legendary figures she reads, such as Herakles, may indeed incorporate the feminine into their masculinity, Aristotle can apparently brook no such ambiguities, and the feminine in his texts is rather relegated to a threatening and symptomatic function.

Heidegger, in his refusal to countenance sexual difference as a philosophical issue, and in the profound teleologism that undergirds his understanding of *ousia* as *parousia*, presencing, entirely erases this dimension of *sterêsis* in his essay on *phusis*, nature or growing, in Aristotle. He reads *sterêsis* as absencing, but an absencing understood only on the basis of presence. In this way the lack, the "goneness" that he says irritates us, is constituted as a positive manner of being. In *phusis*, "while the blossom 'buds forth' (*phuei*), the leaves that prepared for the blossom now fall off. The fruit comes to light, while the blossom disappears."[18] For Heidegger, *sterêsis* is therefore an absencing *in* presencing, the presencing of an absencing, and there is no attention paid to the fact that it is the *dunamis* of matter as capacity for being and not being, as harboring the capacity for privation, that allows for these successive stages of presencing, nor that such privation could ever present a difficulty, a loss, a tragic dimension, for presencing. In fact, Heidegger's translation of the passage on *adunamia* as impotence entirely erases the relevant differences in aetiology we are foregrounding here, rendering it as, "for are we not inclined to call the boy, the

man, and the eunuch powerless to procreate in the same sense?"[19] And instead of noting the implicit anxiety of a masculinity under threat in Aristotle's categorizations, his translation of *dunamis* as force (*Kraft*) leads him to understand the relation of impotence to procreation as revealing only a positive and naturalized connection between potency and life: "This points to a special bond between 'force' and 'life' (as a definite mode of *einai*, of *being*), a bond with which we are acquainted from daily experience and common knowledge, without scrutinizing its inner essence and good."[20] So for Heidegger, privation and impotence are only seen in a positive sense, as a stage that is glossed over, surpassed, and overcome on the way to being.

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Turning now to the second chapter of Theta, we find Aristotle introducing a distinction between nonrational, *alogon, dunamis,* and the *dunamis* that pertains to *logos*, *dunamis meta logou.* He explains that some *dunameis* are present in inanimate things, while others are in living beings, and in the soul, and in soul that has reason, *logos*. Hence all the arts (*technai*), and what he calls the productive sciences, are *dunameis meta logou.* He then states the following: "every *dunamis meta logou* is capable of causing both contraries, but every nonrational *dunamis* can cause only one; for example, heat can cause only heating, but the medical art can cause sickness as well as health."[21] As he develops this position, he explains that the sciences (*epistêmas*) are potencies of both contraries, and the scientific man (*epistêmôn*) can produce both contraries, having both a soul that is a principle of motion, and *logos* which, through denial or negation and removal, makes the contrary clear. He concludes that "things which are capable with respect to reason [that is, things that have *dunamis meta logou*] produce contraries in things without reason, for the contraries are held together in a single principle, in *logos*."[22] *Logos*, then, encompasses and reveals contrariness, opposition, and its potency is precisely that of producing both contraries. That which has *dunamis alogon,* without reason, is, on the other hand, bound to one outcome only.

This formulation is certainly both surprising and puzzling in light of the Aristotelian definition of matter, given earlier, as the possibility of being and not being. Matter, the *alogon* par excellence, bears the potential for the most fundamental of contraries, that of being and not being. It is the source of the unexpected or chance outcome, the fact that although a certain outcome may be normal or usual, it is not inevitable, and its contrary may come to pass. In the very simplest example, it is certainly true that something with the power of heating, say fire, can only produce heat. Even if the material nature of fire means that something can go wrong, that heat may not be produced at all, it is still the case that fire produces heat and not cold, and certainly not heat-or-cold. However, this register of the inevitability of physical necessity is one that Aristotle consistently polemicizes against elsewhere—in the *Physics*, he argues that the kinds of regularity we see in nature, what happens "always and for the most part," issue precisely not from physical necessity but from final causes, for the sake of some good, for example to keep the cycles of nature going. Thinkers who believe that, "since the hot and the cold and each of such things are by nature of such-and-such a kind, certain other things must exist or come to be,"[23] are shown to be quite wrong. This is because all those phenomena which could be attributed to physical necessity alone, outside of final cause, are those which fall outside the expected—such as frequent rains in summer or heat waves in winter—and these are shown to be the result of chance, *automaton*, or coincidence, *sumptôma*. Matter and its motions provide less for a unitary outcome than for the possibility that something may be otherwise, that its contrary may come to pass, in defiance of our expectations.

Indeed, the unsustainability of this idea that potencies without reason lead always to the same outcome, while rational potencies lead to either contrary, is more sharply disclosed by Aristotle's other example in this section, when he says that in the medical art, "the healthy produces only health" but the doctor—the scientist or *epistêmôn*—may produce both health and illness.[24] Through his knowledge, his science, the doctor may indeed lead the body toward health, or toward sickness. That the body, the *alogon* here, may or may not comply with

the doctor's ministrations, and may also harbor within itself the capacity for both health and illness in spite of the doctor's art rather than because of it, is not afforded consideration. As soon as we leave the very simplest of contexts, the vagaries of matter begin to intervene and give contrariness—no *logos* is required. The scene of sexual reproduction illustrates this capacity of matter in its relation to *logos* with schematic clarity. The sperm is the vehicle of *logos*, the principle of motion and the formal principle for the fetation. However, it is the unpredicatability of the matter, its indeterminate potential for both the presence of heat and its privation, that determines whether the *logos* of the sperm will gain the mastery and result in a male offspring, or if instead it will be mastered, resulting in the destruction and change, *existasthai* and *metaballei*, the violent unmanning which results in the production of the contrary, the female.

How are we then to understand Aristotle's argument in this section of *Metaphysics* Theta? How may we account for his attempt to establish *dunamis meta logou* as a capability for contraries, when it is clear that there are many instances in which the specifically *alogon* also gives a capacity for contraries? His emphasis in this context on the productive arts and sciences would seem to indicate that he is interested in specifying and establishing the role of the craftsman, scientist, or doctor as definitively determining between contraries. The rational soul is distinctive in that it can make decisions, it is not merely driven by necessity, whether physical or teleological. It can desire or choose one thing over another. Indeed later in Theta Aristotle makes the following clarification: "So in the case of the rational *dunameis* there must be something else which decides, and by this I mean desire or choice. For whichever of two things an animal desires by decision (*kuriôs*), this it will bring about when it has the *dunamis* to do so and approaches that which can be acted upon."[25] Although matter provides the possibility that any given thing may be otherwise, perhaps the point here, and this is emphasized by Heidegger, is that the potentialities of the unreasoning world do not act by *retaining* the possibility of more than one contrary. Things in the realm of *logos*, on the other hand, constantly retain the possibility that they might go either of two ways, until the moment of decision fixes the course of events. As Heidegger puts it, "Thus *logos* . . . is constantly what excludes, but this means that it is what includes the contrary with it. What this says is that the contrary is 'there' and manifest in a peculiar way in the very fact of avoiding it and getting out of its way."[26]

In work, in *technê*, and in *epistêmê*, then, there is a decision, *kurion*, a mastery. The craftsman, the *poiêtês*, decides, creates a boundary in making the work. Heidegger draws our attention to the fact that in production of the *ergon*, the work, the *eidos*, its form, is already seen in advance:

> It is seen precisely in what it comes to in the end, if it is to be fully ended and finished. In the *eidos* of the *ergon*, its being-at-an-end—the ends which it encloses—is in advance already anticipated. The *eidos* of the *ergon* is *telos*. The end which finishes, however, is in its essence, boundary, *peras*. To produce something is in itself to forge something into its boundaries, so much so that this being-enclosed is already in view in advance along with all that it *includes and excludes*.[27]

Poiêsis, then, is understood here as the installation of a boundary, a decision, a cutting-off of other paths. It is a boundary that excludes that which is not, and may be understood both spatially—the potter determines the shape of the pot; and temporally—the potter determines the being-at-an-end of the productive process, decides when it is what it will be in its final form. In this de-scission, in the cutting away, in the mastery and decisiveness inherent in the *energeia* of production as the *ergon*, the work, takes shape and becomes concrete, we may discern a continual loss at every moment of what might have been, an annihilation of the contrary, even as the *dunamis* for the contrary is retained in the *logos*. The possibility of contrariness in the *logos* therefore puts the craftsman, the architect, the doctor, in a position of absolute mastery vis-à-vis the work and the body, in which he holds in his hands the responsibility for establishing boundaries, creating limits on space and time from the capacities given by the *logos*. On this reading, it may

then be unsurprising that Aristotle establishes the power over contraries, and in particular over the primary contrary of being or not being, of possession and privation,[28] in the hands of the craftsman and doctor, directly after the discussion of the possibility of privation, impotence, and its immediate resonances with castration. In the *dunamis meta logou,* the specter of castration is itself mastered and held at bay as the contraries of being and not being are held, both together, in the *logos*, and the very tools for decision and determination of an impermeable boundary between inside and outside, as the form of the work, are placed in the master's hands.

The problems caused in natural coming-to-be by the chance vicissitudes, coincidences, and compulsions of material necessity which act to thwart the ends of nature, are thus set aside in this explanation of *dunamis alogon.* Instead, Aristotle offers an image of necessity in nature that is not haunted by such contrariness: "when the agent (*poiêtikon*) and the patient (*pathêtikon*) approach each other, the former must act and the latter must be acted upon, each in the manner in which it is capable."[29] Every coming-to-be in nature is, therefore, on this view, exactly what it will have been; there are not two choices to be determined by decision. What is could not have been differently. At this moment in Aristotle's text the distinction between *alogon dunamis* and *dunamis meta logou* is seen from the point of view of the thing already at completion, in *entelecheia* or in *energeia.* Time has stopped. Becoming has come to an end and rests in being. Change and chance, the possibility of not-being, are cast aside. The phenomena of nature are now seen as absolutely necessary. Given the capabilities, the conditions, the various states of heat, cold, dry, damp, at any given moment, they could not have turned out differently. On the other hand, so the argument goes, the results of *technê* and science can always be different, due to the enduring co-presence of the contraries inherent in the *logos*. Heidegger, for whom the *logos* signifies "the laying that gathers," emphasizes not the decision-making power of the craftsman as a result of his possessing *logos*, but the ontological givenness inherent in *logos* itself: "No judgments and forms of judgment are meant here, but the inner movement and lawfulness which lies in the openness of the world and which presents itself for the Greeks primarily and essentially in *logos* and as *logos*."[30] Where Heidegger sees inner movement in the *logos*, in this account of *dunamis meta logou* we can see rather a vision of static eternity, of full and unchanging presence, in which no loss or privation may be countenanced. By paying attention to the figures through whom *logos* is manifested, and the product of their labor at the moment of completion, the *ergon* standing fully upright in its being-at-its-end, the healed body or indeed, the mutilated eunuch, we find the unassailable sign of the phallic, architectonic, power of the craftsman.

The point of view expressed at this stage in the definition of *dunamis* remains as symptomatic, an *aporia* in Aristotle's text and thought, in that it apparently abolishes in one gesture the possibility inherent in materiality that something might not come-to-be. At this moment, which is by no means the crowning moment of the discourse but a stage on the way to establishing the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis,* Aristotle instead foregrounds the figures of the craftsman and doctor as possessing rational power—*dunamis meta logou*—over the contrariety of being and not being, substance and privation, over *adunamia* as masculine impotence and feminine lack as its sign and threat. The contraries that inhere within matter, motion, nature, and *dunamis,* of being and not being, of being and its privation, among which we may count the exemplary contrary of sexual difference itself, are thereby absorbed into the contraries of the *logos*, and made subject to the choice and decision of the scientist and maker. The insecurity of the notion of *dunamis,* the fact that processes occuring through time may always be subject to the random interventions of materiality, is mastered. Through the fantasy of totalization circulating in the *logos*, the symptomatic threats of materiality and *sterêsis*, including the coming short (*husterêsis*) of the feminine matrix (*hustera*); the deformity (*anapêria* or castration) of the female; and the errant, obstructive, deviating, and mutilating possibilities of feminine matter, are thereby quelled and suppressed.

Giorgio Agamben reminds us in his essay on potentiality in Aristotle that *dunamis* also contains at its heart *adunamia*: "Every human

power is *adynamia*, impotentiality; every human potentiality is in relation to its own privation."[31] Agamben goes on to argue that human freedom itself consists in being "*capable of one's own impotentiality*, to be in relation to one's own privation."[32] In closing, I want to suggest that Agamben's call for acceding to one's own impotentiality and one's own privation, as well as for a "potentiality that conserves itself and saves itself in actuality,"[33] his call to understand freedom as radical passivity or receptivity, may be productively re-read in relation to the topology of sexual difference I have offered here. We may amend Agamben by calling for a non-anxious relation to castration, which would not need either the shield of a *logos* that defines itself in opposition to materiality, nor a dream of the *energeia* of full presence, to protect itself from the threats of feminine materiality and privation. At the same time, we should recall that feminine materiality is for Aristotle not only a supine, passive, receptive substrate accepting the imprints of masculine form, or even just a sign for privation or lack, but also a restless and symptomatic lability within materiality. Such restlessness gives an alternate kind of motion, opaque and incalculable, and thus also suggests another register of temporality, a feminine temporality of becoming as interruption, not tied to the inevitability of *entelecheia* and *energeia* as presencing. As a final gesture or indication, itself something of a *clinamen* or swerve, the motile incorporation of privation characteristic of matter may also be seen reappearing on the side of *logos*, not as its capacity for negation and the encompassing of contraries, but rather as the endless, restless push to multiple figurations that inhabits it as its necessary condition, and which makes thinking, and therefore philosophy, possible.[34]

ENDNOTES

1. "We should look upon the female state as being as it were a deformity (*anapêrian*), though one which occurs in the ordinary course of nature." Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, trans. A. L. Peck, Loeb Classical Library Vol. XIII (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), 4, 6 775a15-16 (henceforth cited as *G.A.*).
2. Ibid., 4, 1 765b9.
3. Ibid., 1, 19 726b12.
4. Aristotle. *Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Tredennick, Loeb Classical Library Vol. XVI (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933), 9, 1 1046a11 (henceforth *Met.*). I have also consulted Hippocrates G. Apostle, *Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Grinnell, IA: The Peripatetic Press, 1979); Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Hope (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960); and Martin Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics θ 1–3: On the Essence and Actuality of Force*, trans. Walter Brogan and Peter Warnek (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995). I use Apostle's translation unless otherwise indicated.
5. Charlotte Witt, *Ways of Being: Potentiality and Actuality in Aristotle's* Metaphysics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).
6. *Met.* 8, 6 1045b18-22 (Tredennick's translation, modified).
7. Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence and Concept of *Phusis*," trans. Thomas Sheehan, in *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 217.
8. Ibid., 219.
9. The bein-in-act of *energeia* is also, of course, exemplified by the self-sufficient and complege activities of seeing (which is at the same time the "has sen), and thinking (which is at the same time the "has thought") (*Met.* 9, 6 1048b33-4).
10. "Now all things which are generated, whether by nature or by art, have matter; for there is a potentiality for each of them to be, and also not to be, and this potentiality is the matter in each" (*Met.* 7, 7 1032a20-23). See also *De Generatione et Corruptione*, trans. E. S. Forster, Loeb Classical Library Vol. III (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), 2, 9 335a34.
11. *Met.* 9, 1 1046a33-36.
12. Ibid ., 5, 12 1019b18-19.
13. *G.A.*, 4, 1 765b9-19.
14. The connection between *hustera* and *husteron* is remarked upon orthogonally by Irigaray when she thematizes Plato's cave as the womb, in which men are prevented from turning around toward the *proteron*: "Head and genitals are kept turned to the front of the representational project and process of the *hystera*. To the *hystera protera* that is appar-

ently resorbed, blended into the movement of *hysteron proteron*. For *hysteron*, defined as what is behind, is also the last, the hereafter, the ultimate. *Proteron*, defined as what is in front, is also the earlier, the previous." Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 244. The etymological issue is more difficult and yet suggestive. Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la langue Grecque* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1977), tells us that any semantic connection between the two words is impossible, remarking with a surprisingly forceful paralipsis that "it is not even necessary to evoke the name of the belly, Gk. *huderos*, Skr., *udàram*" (vol. IV, 1162, my translation). The argument is that *husteron* (after, later), is a comparative form (from **ud* + *-tero*; the Sanskrit equivalent is *uttara*), while *hustera* (womb), far from being a feminine form of the same word, must derive from a different root entirely, *udara*, in Sanskrit the interior part, the belly. However Karl Brugmann's *A Comparative Grammar of the Indogermanic Languages* (New York: Westermann, 1891), in a discussion of the development of the comparative form, links the development of the Indo-European *–t-mmo-* to *–tero* with *–mmo-* to *–ero*, and illustrates this by juxtaposing *ud* + *-tero* (as the root of *husteron*) with *ud* + *-ero* (as the root of *huderos)*, thereby suggesting an earlier relation between the two words (ibid., 171). *Ud-* in Sanskrit (**ud-* in Indo-Eruopean) is a prefix meaning upwards,out, away. Both H. Frisk, *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1970), and E. Boisacq, *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Grecque* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchanglung, 1923), agree that *husteron* and *hustera* share this root, proposing that the protuberance of the pregnant belly provides the semantic link. A secondary meaning of the Sanskrit *ud-* is a flowing out, as a spring, also suggesting a primordial and elemental symbolization of materinity along Irigarayan lines.

15. *Met.* 5, 22 1022b32-33 (Apostle's translation).
16. Nicole Loraux, *The Experiences of Tiresias*, trans. Paula Wissing (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 11. Apollodrus, *The Library*, trans. J. G. Frazer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), vol. 1, writing in the second century BCE, gives both versions, attributing the first to Hesiod and the second to Pherecydes (c. 450 BCE) (3.6.7), but a fuller, post Aristotelian treatment of the second version can be found in Callimachus, Hymn 5, "The Bath of Pallas," in *Callimachus: Hymns and Epigrams, Lycophorn and Aratus*, trans. A. W. Mair and G. R. Mair (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921).
17. Ibid., 4.
18. Heidegger, *Phusis*, 227.
19. Heidegger, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 94.
20. Ibid., 95.
21. *Met.* 9, 2 1046b5-8.
22. Ibid., 9, 2 1046b23-24 (translation modified).
23. Aristotle, *Physics* (henceforth *Phys.)*, trans. Philip H. Wicksteed and Francis M. Cornford, Loeb Classical Library, Vols. IV and V (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929 [Vol. IV], 1934 [Vol. V]); Hippocrates. G. Apostle, *Aristotle's Physics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 2, 8 198b12-14. The translation used is Apostle's. From the context it seems he has in mind Empedocles and Anaxagoras as proponents of this theory.
24. *Met.* 9, 2 1046b18.
25. Ibid. 9, 5 1048a11-14 (translation modified).
26. Heidegger, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 121–22.
27. Ibid., 117–18.
28. "The primary contrariety is that of possession and privation" (*Met.*, 10, 4 1055a34-35 [Tredennick's translation]).
29. *Met.*, 9, 5 1048a6-8.
30. Heidegger, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 126.
31. Giorgio Agamben, "On Potentiality," in *Potentialities*, ed. and trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 182.
32. Ibid., 183.
33. Ibid., 184.
34. Short passages in this essay have appeared in footnote form in "Material Vicissitudes and Technical Wonders: The Ambiguous Figure of *Automaton* in Aristotle's Metaphysics of Sexual Difference," *Epoché* 11 (Fall 2006): 109–39. Many thanks to Sara Brill, Josh Hayes, Aryeh Kosman, Holly Moore, and Adriel Trott for comments on a presentations of an earlier version of this paper at Haverford College and the 2006 meeting of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, Philadelphia, PA.

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